



## AAC Publications

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### Gupta, Northeast Face and East Ridge

India, Kishtwar Himalaya

**In the last few years eastern Kishtwar has been on the radar of an increasing number of climbers, drawn to a paradise of unclimbed granite walls and peaks. I already knew about the 5,618m unclimbed peak called Gupta, so I was determined to get there before anyone else.** I sent a picture to my good American friends Mark Richey and Mark Wilford, with whom I had last been on a trip in 2009 (Saser Kangri II), and they signed on for a trip in the fall.

Military sensitivities required us to approach Kishtwar via Manali and the Rhotang Pass, and then make a scary, two-day jeep journey along the Chandra Bhaga Gorge. After completing formalities with the police at Gulabgarh, we started trekking up the Dharlang Nala on September 12, using horses to carry our gear. On the 14th we found a decent base camp opposite Gupta, but unfortunately on the wrong side of the river. [Gupta lies on the south side of the Dharlang River, directly opposite the entrance to the Chomochior Valley.] Richey came up with the bright idea that one of us—which was me—should swim across the river with a safety line, which then could be tensioned across a shorter span of river between the framing of a collapsed shepherd's bridge. Amazingly, this worked.

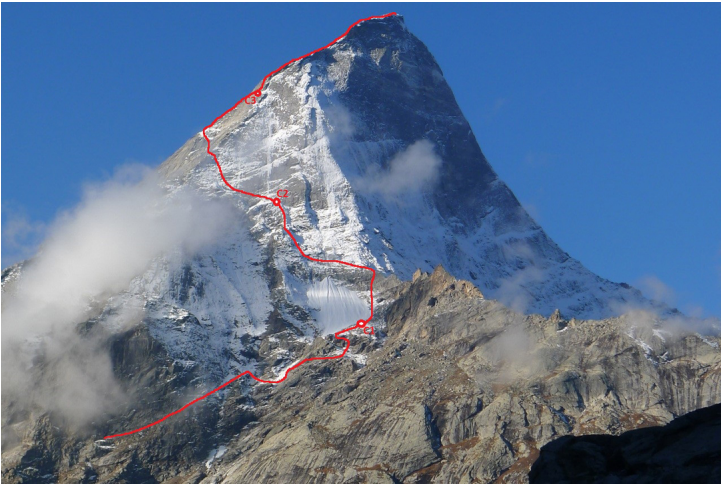
On September 26 we ascended scree and a small snowfield to the base of a rope we'd fixed during acclimatization. We jumared this to the top of a pinnacle ridge that connected to the main northeast face of Gupta. Over the next six hours Richey led about six pitches up snow-covered rock to a decent bivouac site tucked well into the northeast face. Richey and I had the bivouac tent to ourselves; Wilford slept outside on an enormous, blow-up mattress.

Next morning Richey led across a snow ramp and then scratched his way up a strenuous overhanging chimney, followed by a snow-filled rake. The third pitch that day was the best of the climb: an upward-slanting, leftward traverse across snow-covered slabs, with frozen turf placements for tools and tiny incuts for mono points, all about M5. This led to the sunlit east ridge, where Wilford and I were greeted by an ebullient Richey. I led a couple of pitches, Wilford led a couple, and then Richey took us up to a snow patch that cut through the ridge onto the broad south face. Scrambling up for 100m, we reached a superb bivouac site perched hard on the east ridge, with the summit beckoning above. So far, no nasty surprises, so spirits were high.

On the 28th, Wilford set off with rock shoes, climbing three straightforward pitches. Richey led on for two harder pitches (5.9), climbed in big boots on truly immaculate, grippy granite, with lots of gear placements and chicken heads. I continued up snow to the summit ridge. The top was an arrangement of tottering blocks with unrestricted views into Zanskar, Pangi, and toward Kashmir. We spent the remainder of that day rappelling to our top bivouac, and the whole of the following day making 10 rappels to our launch pad and then descending to base camp.

– Jim Lowther, Alpine Club, U.K.

## Images



Gupta from the northeast showing the Anglo-American route and bivouacs.



Jim Lowther traversing the northeast face of Gupta on day three.



Mark Richey traversing mixed ground on the northeast face of Gupta on day three.



Spot the vehicle on the road through the Chandra Bhaga Gorge.



The summit slopes of Gupta. Looking northeast, the dominant peak on the right is Kishtwar Kailash, and above the foreground snow dome it is possible to make out the summits of Chomochior and Cerro Kishtwar.



Mark Wilford on the east ridge of Gupta, day four of the ascent.

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