



AAC Publications

Marikula Killa, North Spur

India, Himachal Pradesh, Lahaul, Miyar Valley

Between September 26 and October 2, Ian Dring and I (both U.K.) made the first ascent of Peak 5,755m in the upper Miyar Valley. We climbed the 1,300m north spur via a route we named Crocodile Rock (ED, 21 pitches between III and 6a+ A0).

Peak 5,755m (33°4'10"N, 76° 47'39"E) is the rock bastion lying immediately north of Dali Got base camp, at the junction between the Miyar and Jangpar glaciers. A prominent pinnacle of ca 5,350m on the southwest ridge was climbed in 2004 by a British party and named Lammergeier Spire. However, despite its accessibility, the full mountain had not been climbed.

The north spur is an eye-catching line rising in a series of sweeping steps to a cluster of pinnacles. Our ascent was made in alpine style over six days. We were fortunate there had been a light snowfall two days before we started. Without the fresh snow patches, we would have had no water during the first three days of the climb.

The lower half of the route gave sustained, mid-grade slab climbing (UIAA IV and V), reminiscent of the Piz Badile north ridge or the Cassin on the north face. The pinnacles formed the crux, with strenuous cracks and corners to V+. A smooth slab was encountered under the largest pinnacle, named the Flaming Tower. The team carried five bolts and a hand drill, and with no alternative, all five bolts were placed to protect the slab, with 6a+ climbing complicated by patches of snow. Beyond the Flaming Tower, a beautiful section of granite pinnacles led to awkward climbing (V) on snowed-up rock.

On October 1, we reached the junction of the spur and the northwest ridge at 5,600m, dumped most of our gear, and traveled light to the top with a deviation onto the west face. After a cold bivouac near the summit, we rappelled to our gear and descended the west face, using a combination of 14 rappels and downclimbing.

We propose the name Marikula Killa for the mountain, the citadel of the goddess Marikula. Marikula is an ancient local devi (goddess) for the people of Lahaul. The 1,000-year-old temple at Udaipur, at the bottom of the Miyar Valley, is dedicated to her.

The route was beautifully positioned, of high quality and consistent grade, and with good rock bivouac sites, comparable to an extended Frendo Spur or Gervasutti Pillar in the Mont Blanc massif. A younger and faster party, utilizing our bivouac sites and in situ gear, could repeat the climb in three to four days, given dry conditions.

– Martin Moran, Alpine Club, U.K.

Images



Ian Dring climbing grade IV slabs on the first day of the ascent of the north spur of Marikula Killa.



Ian Dring leading the crux slab below the Flaming Tower on the first ascent of Marikula Killa.



Martin Moran leading grade V "off-kilter" cracks on day five of the first ascent of Marikula Killa.



Ian Dring enjoying great ridge climbing above the Flaming Tower during the first ascent of Marikula Killa. At the head of a side glacier north of the Jangpar stands an unnamed peak of around 6,000m.



Looking at the crux section of the north spur of Marikula Killa and the impressive, unclimbed north face headwall to the left.



Photo diagram of key points on the north spur of Marikula Killa.



The line followed up the north spur of Marikula Killa for the first ascent of the peak.

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