



## AAC Publications

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### **Raja Peak, north face, Transcendence; Peak 6,036m; James Peak, north face, Last Chance Saloon**

India, Himachal Pradesh, Lahaul, Miyar Valley

**John Crook and I arrived in the Miyar on September 19. Our primary objective was the north face of an unclimbed 6,294m peak, hidden from view in the remote Temasa Valley. This was to be our first trip to the Himalaya, and with only an old photo of the face and Google Earth to send us on our way, trepidation was high.**

We shared a permit with Ian Dring, Charlie French, Anette Kinde, and Martin Moran, who each had their own aspirations in the area. We had been invited on the trip by Martin, who had snared us easily by email: "I have attached pictures of the north face of Peak 6,294m. The face height is 1,200m. The mountain is unclimbed, as far as I know. It's the pivotal peak of the area geographically. To get to the face from here would be a real mission—totally committing. You'd have to go over Kang La (5,400m), down to 4,500m at Khanjur in the Temasa Valley, then up the Tidu Glacier to the base of the face at around 5,000m—all technically easy but long and rough. If anything went wrong on the face and you couldn't get back over Kang La you'd be stuck on the wrong side of the Himalaya. You'd have to go out to Padum in Zaskar (about 20km to a road). Then it is a major road journey via Kargil to Leh (300km, two days). From Leh you could fly back to Delhi. This has all the ingredients of a complete adventure. In 2011 we saw no one for 10 days—no shepherds or trekkers in these valleys at all". **After receiving an email like this he had us hook, line, and sinker!**

On arrival in the area conditions were good, and we wasted no time in establishing an advanced base camp high on the Miyar Glacier, at approximately 33°11'13.83"N, 76°46'37.35"E. This was done with the help of our high-altitude porter and now friend Chetan Pandey. Over the next two days we acclimatized on a nearby 6,036m peak (measured at 6,001m GPS, 33°14'15.93"N, 76°46'43.06"E Google Earth), which is situated on the ridge running south from Peak 6,294m. It served to give us a good overview of the area and a chance to scope possible descents from our peak. Keen to capitalize on the continuing good weather, we began the approach to our objective the following day. This would take us three days.

We camped on the Tidu Glacier under our peak, and after a day at the foot of the face, resting and observing it, we began climbing on September 30, crossing the bergschrund at 4:30 a.m. The climbing on the lower half was varied, of good quality, and contained the route's crux in steep corners. By the end of the first day we had been moving for 16 hours and had reached a bivouac site roughly two-thirds of the way up the wall. With no good ledges in sight and unable to erect the tent, we had a sitting bivouac at ca 5,800m in an incredible location. Next morning we awoke to perfect weather and climbed as direct a line as we could, summiting at 8 p.m. after another 16-hour day. We named the route Transcendence (1,200m, ED2 Scottish 6) and the summit Raja Peak, which we measured at 6,267m with GPS. We descended the far side of the mountain, following the south ridge toward Peak 6,036m, for about 300m to a col, where we spent the night. We returned to advanced base the following day.

With time and weather still on our side, and after a couple of days' rest at base camp, we decided to return to the mountains to attempt another unclimbed peak lower down the valley, on the Jangpar Glacier, east of Marikula Killa (climbed by Dring and Moran. We ascended to a bivouac site under the face on October 6 and established Last Chance Saloon (1,300m, TD- Scottish 4) the next day. We followed a wandering line on the north face, christening the summit James Peak (5,870m GPS) after

my nephew (not to be confused with the popular Point JAMES further south in the lower Chhudong Valley). We descended the same day.

– Dave Sharpe, U.K.

## Images



Raja Peak (6,294m) from the Tidu Glacier with the British route of ascent, and the one bivouac, on the north face.



The north face of James Peak (5,870m GPS). (1) Line used in descent. (2) (2) Last Chance Saloon. The true summit is marked. The obvious line of ascent is (1), but it was threatened by a large serac. The British pair only opted to descend this line when they saw nothing moving during their climb.



John Crook on the crux section of Transcendence on Raja Peak.



John Crook, day two on the upper section of Transcendence on the north face of Raja Peak. The upper Tidu Glacier lies below.



Dave Sharpe on day two of the first ascent of the north face of Raja Peak.

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