



Lung-Ta Buttress

Nepal, Mahalangur Himal, Barun Section

From the beginning, Jonathan Cooper, Japhy Dhungana, and I had the mindset of an exploratory expedition, seeking out previously unclimbed walls between the major Himalayan peaks. In November, we found many potential lines in the Barun Valley, which houses some of the best quality rock in the Nepal Himalaya.

We were armed for big wall, rock, and alpine climbing, in the hopes that the line would find us—and find us prepared. Our expedition lasted 24 days, and we were fortunate to find our line on only the fourth day of our approach trek, when a sweeping wall of granite was spied through a break in the rhododendron forest southwest of Yangle Kharka. The wall was situated above the south side of the Barun Valley, below an unnamed summit (ca 5,100m) on the long ridge extending southeast from Tutse (a.k.a. Peak 6, 6,758m). The wall is located at 27°44'55.89"N, 87°8'54.84"E, approximately 5.5 km southeast of Tutse, in an area marked on the HMG-Finn map as Charikharka. We spent our first day carrying loads up 1,000m slopes to the base, scouting the line, and climbing the first few pitches of the proposed route. I took the first block, which started with 45m of unprotected friction climbing, where I—rather desperately—attempted to link dry patches of rock to complete the pitch. One more pitch traversing a small hanging glacier lined us up with the main weakness of the wall, stretching all the way to its top. We fixed about 100m of rope and descended to the valley floor.

We returned in the evening of the second day and bivouacked at the base. We started climbing early next morning, each carrying bivouac gear. We climbed with two dynamic ropes, the leader freeing each pitch and the followers jumaring. If the leader anticipated more difficult climbing, he would leave his pack at the belay and the followers would employ a temporary haul system. Eight long pitches led to shadier chimneys and gullies laden with snow, forcing rock shoes off and requiring mixed techniques for upward progress. As darkness fell we were gifted with a small rock ledge and a steep snow slope for what we aptly named the Midnight Whipper Bivouac.

The next day we climbed two more mixed pitches to reach a large triangular block that represented a subsummit of the peak and the top of the wall. Our route had climbed several different aspects of the buttress, but the main weakness faced roughly east. The Lung-Ta Buttress (500m of climbing, V 5.9 X A1 M5, steep snow) was predominantly free, with a pendulum on pitch six. There is potential for several more lines on this peak, and others nearby of around 5,000m, where a high-quality band of granite forms several walls.

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Images



Lung-Ta Buttress seen from the north. The snow down low, adjacent to the route line, is the left side of the hanging glacier traversed to reach the main weakness on the face.



Japhy Dhungana jumaring on Lung-Ta Buttress. Behind are 5,000m summits on the opposite side of the Barun Valley.



Jonathan Cooper on pitch seven of Lung-Ta Buttress in the Barun Valley.



Zach Lovell heading out on pitch three of Lung-Ta Buttress in the Barun Valley.

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