



## AAC Publications

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### **Kemailong, North Face and East Ridge**

China, Sichuan, Shaluli Shan

**In October, with the support of a Grit & Rock First Ascent Grant, the team of Galina Chibitok (Russia), Marina Kopteva (Ukraine), and Anastasia Petrova (Russia) completed the first route from the north on Kemailong (5,873m), making the second overall ascent of this elegant rock pyramid (see AAJ 2013).**

The team spent four days traveling by bus and jeep from Chengdu, and then a further four days to find an approach to base camp. (This northern side of the mountain reportedly had been visited previously only by monks.) Unfortunately, on arrival at base camp, Petrova was taken ill. Chibitok and Kopteva made the reluctant decision to attempt their planned route—the left side of the north face onto the lower east ridge—as a pair.

The approach to the wall ended with a 100m snow/ice couloir that was prone to rockfall and snow and ice avalanches. One rope was lost here. A first attempt was not successful and cost another rope and a lost day of good weather. The pair decided to retreat to base camp and arm themselves with aid gear. On their second attempt, starting on October 5, they climbed the steep, short north face (250m, mainly A2) to the ridge, with two nights spent in their portaledge. “There was just too much hammering,” Kopteva said, “but the reward was two extraordinarily beautiful nights on the wall.” Once on the east ridge, on day three, they began repacking for a lighter ascent, and in the process dropped a water container. They now had just 10 liters and a lot of dehydrated food. They decided to continue.

Although they originally estimated it might be possible to climb the east ridge to the summit in just two or three days, the higher they got the more it became apparent this would not be overall Russian grade 5, as expected, but grade 6. The ridge got steeper, their stomachs started to make pitiful noises, and the weather deteriorated. The compensation was a plentiful supply of water due to snowfall. When a grim and hungry retreat seemed increasingly likely, the pair got lucky, spotting a route that bypassed a difficult section of gendarmes via the east flank.

Above, they made the decision to lighten their loads further by continuing with just one rope, a tent, and an insulated pad, and to keep climbing nonstop. After 16 hours the angle eased, they took a short break, and at 7 a.m. on October 12, they reached the east (main) top. Their descent took a further 20 hours. The route took eight days to ascend and was named On the Way to Amsterdam (970m, 1,280m of climbing, 25 pitches followed by 140m of easy rock to the summit, 6A/ED 6b A2).

– Marina Kiptova and Masha Gordon, Russia

## Images



Kemailong from the south. (1) South ridge (ca 1,000m, 5.10 M5, Anderson-Yi, 2012). (2) East ridge (On the Way to Amsterdam, 970m, 6b A2, Chibitok-Kopteva, 2017).



Kemailong from the north showing the line of On the Way to Amsterdam (2017).



Marina Kopteva aid climbing the vertical corner system on the north face of Kemailong.



Marina Kopteva approaching the north face of Kemailong. The route followed the vertical corner system directly above.



Marina Kopteva on the east ridge of Kemailong.



Looking down toward a bivouac site from high on the east ridge of Kemailong.

## Article Details

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