



AAC Publications

Trango Tower, Southwest Face, Claire de Lune with New Start

Pakistan, Karakoram, Baltoro Muztagh

Alexei Kurochkin, Konstantin Markevitch, and Dmitry Skotnikov (all from Russia) established a direct start to the Swiss route Claire de Lune on the southwest face of Trango Tower (6,250m), adding around 600m of difficult climbing.

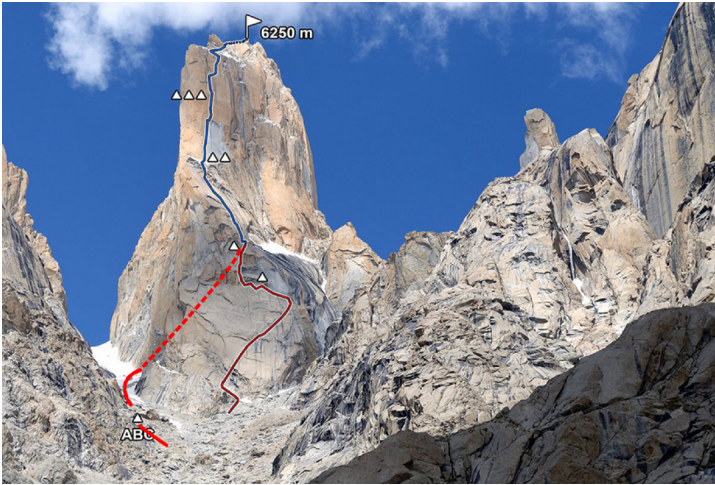
In 1999, Gabriel Besson, Claude-Alain Gaillan, David Maret, and Frédéric Roux (Switzerland) climbed their route, Claire de Lune, on the southwest face: It follows the gully system taken by the tower's original ascensionists in 1976, then continues directly via the left side of a prominent gray rock scar. The 1,200m line, of which around 900m were new, was graded 6b A3.

The three Russians climbed the usual dangerous approach gully (ca 1,200m) for Trango Tower and established an advanced base below the wall. Taking a portaledge, they then climbed the front face of the tower from its base, to the right of the upper gully followed by earlier routes. There were several pitches of A3, many skyhook moves, and often-poor natural protection. This section of new ground involved around 600m of climbing (400–450m of vertical), and due to the weaving line it was often harder for the followers, with loads, than for the leader.

The Russians' original intention had been to force a new line via the right side of the huge gray scar above their start, but having reached Claire de Lune they realized that it would be far better to continue on the beautiful and logical existing line. The three spent a total of six and a half days reaching the summit and a further one and a half days in descent, using the original gully system. The overall grade was Russian 6A 6c A3+.

– Lindsay Griffin, with information from Elena Dmitrenko, Risk.ru

Images



Southwest face of Trango Tower (6,250m). The blue line is Claire de Lune (Swiss, 1999), while the red line shows the new Russian start. The dashed line shows the original start to Claire de Lune in a hidden couloir.



The southwest side of Trango Tower (6,250m) seen from Uli Biaho Tower. Marked is Claire de Lune with the Russian direct start. The dashed line is the original approach gully, climbed during the first ascent of the tower in 1976. This gully was also used by the Swiss (Claire de Lune, 1999) and Spanish (1989) to start their routes. The section below the junction of the two lines is the new Russian start. The large peak on the left is Biale (6,772m), while the two pyramids, one behind the other on the right, are Muztagh Tower (7,284m) and K2 (8,611m).

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