



Sano Kailash I, North Flank and Northeast Ridge

Nepal, Damodar Himal

When trekking from Mustang to Saribung Pass, the view to the south of the holy lakes of Damodar Kunda is dominated by the conspicuous north face of a mountain resembling Kailash in Tibet. This is probably why the local name for the peak is Sano Kailash (Little Kailash).

However, this rock and ice north wall does not belong to the highest peak in the range, only to the second-highest, Peak 6,417m, which I call Sano Kailash II. The highest summit (6,457m) is hidden behind at 28.928885°N, 84.133329°E. The whole group comprises four peaks above 6,000m, and all were unclimbed before 2019.

After flying to Jomsom and then making a long jeep ride, Elisabeth Bartmann, Lawang Tamang, 14 camp staff, and I left Charang on April 16 and arrived at Damodar Khunda (approximately 28.976384°N, 84.167375°E) on the 22nd. There was significantly more snow than when I had climbed in this area the previous spring. Our first challenge was to find a suitable place for base camp high enough on the mountain that we could reach the summit in a day trip. I knew that during spring we would not find running water above 5000m, so we carried enough fuel to melt snow and ice for our whole group during an 8- to 10-day stay at base camp.

On the 25th we crossed the Jampta Khola and established base camp at 5,400m in the Itiya Khola valley, not far from the lower end of the glacier. On the 26th, after a cumbersome approach over moraine, a tiring climb with serious rockfall danger led to the gentle northeast ridge at around 6,000m, where we cached climbing equipment and descended. By now the weather had returned to the usual spring pattern of clear mornings and cloudy afternoons. During the night of the 26th, a storm seriously damaged our kitchen and dining tents.

Lawang and I left for the summit at 3 a.m. on the 28th, Elisabeth still trying to recover from Kathmandu flu. At 6:30 a.m. we arrived at our cache and then continued walking easily up the ridge. When we arrived at the summit glacier, we could see that it was free of crevasses and other surprises. We left the rope and cramponed to the summit, arriving at 8:30 a.m. in clear, windless weather. What a view! The panorama extended from Manaslu in the southeast to Dhaulagiri in the southwest, and to Mustang and Tibet to the north. In descent we were able to follow a steep snow gully that started shortly below the summit and led quickly to the valley, regaining our base camp at 11:20 a.m.

With Elisabeth still feeling weak, we abandoned plans for Sano Kailash II and trekked over Saribung Pass to Phu, where we enjoyed our first celebratory beer.

– Wolfgang Drexler, Austria

Images



Annapurna from Sano Kailash.



Dhaulagiri from Sano Kailash.



Loinbo Kangri in central Tibet from Sano Kailash.



Manaslu and Ngadi Chuli (right) from Sano Kailash.



Panorama (southeast to west) from the summit of Sano Kailash.



Looking south at the Sano Kailash group from camp at Damodar Kunda.



Sano Kailash and the route of ascent, as seen from above base camp. The summit is at the right-hand end of the snow ridge.

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