



## AAC Publications

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### Rongdo Valley, Rock Climbing

India, East Karakoram

Looking up the Rongdo Valley from Fatha Gompa to the summer herding village of Daksa. The two new rock routes established in 2019 are on the cliff with the prominent black streak (a waterfall) beyond Daksa and on the right. Photo: Todd Swain

**Motivated by Joie Seagram's quote concerning the Rongdo Valley in AAJ 2013 ("...we were once again astounded by solid-looking rock walls several hundred meters high on both sides of the valley—a rock climbers' paradise") and armed with great local information from Andy Selters, we visited the Rongdo in July.** Our logistics were arranged by Rimo Expeditions, and as a result things went very smoothly. The villagers in Rongdo were extremely friendly and helpful; it was a joy to spend time with them.

There is indeed a lot of granite in the central part of the valley, although upon closer inspection much has large expanses of exfoliated arches and flakes, making climbing less than perfect. There were three instances of spontaneous rockfall from the cliff we visited—once while we were on it and twice at base camp. Trying to avoid said loose rock, we established two fine routes up a solid wall about 90 minutes' walk above the summer herding village of Daksa (shown on some maps as Fatha, after the nearby gompa). The climbs are on a cliff on the right side of the canyon, where there are two prominent waterfalls. Both routes climb about 150m up the face to the left of the central waterfall.

The climbs require some cams and about a dozen quickdraws; we brought both a power drill and a hand drill to place bolts. Both lines can be rappelled with two 70m ropes. We had planned to climb a lot farther to the top of the cliff but stopped where we encountered steep, exfoliated rock. The two routes are: The Cavorting Kid (four pitches, 5.10) on the left, and Frolicking Yak (four pitches, 5.10+). It was generally too hot to climb in the sun; our cliff was in the shade until 10:30 a.m. And while most of the rock in the valley does not appear great, on the routes we climbed it was as good as the granite of Tuolumne Meadows.

Later, we met with local climbers in Leh and got a list of potential rock climbing areas to check out. We subsequently did a weeklong reconnaissance to the south and east of Leh. We drove over 800km and found decent roadside granite near Debring, Hymia, and Tangste. We established a half dozen new routes on this road trip and at Shey, which is just south of Leh.

– Todd and Donette Swain, USA

## Images



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Donette Swain following pitch four (5.10) of Cavorting Kid, Rongdo Valley.

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