



AAC Publications

Nanga Parbat, Nearly Complete Ski Descent; Spantik, First Ski Descent

Pakistan, Himalaya

Tiphaine Duperier descending the southeast ridge of Spantik, looking east southeast over the Basin Glacier to peaks on the northern side of the Chogolungma Glacier. Photo by Boris Langenstein

As with every trip, our month and a half of holiday in Pakistan begins with a long day of packing. One of our favorite games these days is to try to find the best fit for four pairs of skis, alpine climbing equipment, and massive amounts of food. A few days after leaving France, in mid-May, Boris Langenstein and I start from Arandu for the three-day trek to Spantik base camp, in the Spantik-Sosbun Mountains, where we hope to make the first ski descent. We acclimatize by ascending two lower peaks, finding unstable snow on all exposures.

The normal route to Spantik (7,027m) is the southeast ridge, easy and safe to Camp 2. Between there and Camp 3, at 6,400m, things are more complicated: The ridge becomes a dome of deep snow, and we have to forge a route up the middle. We arrive at camp tired after a day of uncertain and changing conditions. On May 30, summit day, we find luck is on our side. Avoiding the ridge to the west, we find wind-compacted snow, with little risk of avalanche. At 1 p.m., in full sunshine and with no wind, we are on top. Our ski descent goes smoothly, with one more night in Camp 3 to aid our acclimatization for Nanga Parbat (8,125m).

On June 10, our first day above Diamir Base Camp (where we are only the third expedition to arrive), we head up toward Camp 2 on the standard route, climbing 50m of the Kinshofer Wall and leaving a rope in place. After skiing down, we are forced to stay five days in base camp due to bad weather and Boris becoming ill.

On the 16th, in order to finish our acclimatization by climbing once again to 7,000m, we start up the Diama Face. Following a slightly different line to that taken by Elizabeth Revol and Tomasz Mackiewicz in the winter of 2018, we make Camp 1 on the glacier at 5,265m, Camp 2 on the col between 6,608m Ganalo Peak and Nanga Parbat (ca 6,200m, reached via a nice 300m gully of snow and mixed to M4), Camp 3 at 6,600m, and on the 19th reach a high point of 7,450m, almost at the top of the Diama Face and in relatively easy reach of the Kinshofer route. We ski down with another night at our 6,600m camp. With this foray into the heart of the Diama Face, the trip, in our opinion, is already a success.

Tiphaine Duperier on the lower southeast ridge of Spantik. The double-summitted high peak on the left is Shingu Kuru (5,990m). Photo by Boris Langenstein

On the 26th we leave base camp at 4 a.m. Climbing with full gear and skis, we reach Camp 2 (5,900m) above the Kinshofer Wall on the standard route in 11 hours. On the 27th, breaking trail through deep snow, we reach Camp 3 at around 6,500m, and next day, at 7 p.m., we arrive at the normal site of Camp 4 at 7,250m. Leaving at 5 a.m. on the 29th, we head for the summit. Making the trail requires determination. At around 6 p.m., in deteriorating weather, we decide to turn around: Boris at 8,040m, while I stop at 7,989m. It takes nearly an hour to put on our skis, by which time it is nearly dark. Having forgotten headlamps, we make the descent using the lights on our smartphones. We reach our tent at 7,250m at 9 p.m., already thinking of our next attempt.

After a day in the tent, we take off again at 3:30 a.m. on July 1. Sadly, our previous tracks have vanished in the wind. Our pace is depressing and we swap leads often. A little after 1 p.m., at 7,800m, I have to stop. Something is wrong in my head and my balance is affected—later I'll discover I had a

perforated eardrum. Boris is still strong, so I offer to wait while he continues to the summit. At 8,080m he leaves his skis 10m below the summit ridge, and continues up the crest, negotiating a few easy but unskiable rock steps, to the top. It is around 5.30 p.m. Returning to his skis, he starts down and we are reunited after a wait of 5.5 hours on my part. We both continue to ski to Camp 4, reaching it at 8 p.m. after a magnificent sunset.

Next day we are slow to move, waiting for the warmth of the sun. We abandon the idea of a 200m ascent to connect with the Diama Face—four nights at 7,250m have exhausted us. Leaving at 1 p.m., we ski the Kinshofer Route, meeting other expeditions above Camp 3, and holding onto fixed ropes to pass a critical 100m section of thinly covered ice below this camp. We avoid the Kinshofer Wall by using the variation to the east first climbed by Norbert Joos and Erhard Loretan in 1982, and skied in 2008 by Luis Stitzinger (the German skied the Diamir Face from Camp 3). This is the crux of the descent: 45° with difficult route-finding. By 3 p.m. we are skiing out onto the glacier at the foot of the face.

– **Tiphonie Duperier**, France, with additional information from Rodolphe Popier, Chronique Alpine, CAF

Editor's Note: Langenstein's descent from 8,080m, with skis on the entire way and only safeguarded by holding fixed ropes for 100m, is most complete ski of Nanga Parbat recorded. Prior descents started from lower on the peak and/or downclimbed or rappelled significant sections. Two days after the French descent, Cala Cimenti (Italy) and Vitaly Lazo (Russia) skied from the same 8,080m high point. They also held the fixed ropes on the icy section below Camp 3, and they downclimbed along the fixed ropes on the Kinshofer Wall. Cimenti then moved to the Baltoro and made the first ascent of Gasherbrum VII (6,955m) and skied down the peak; see report [here](#).

Images



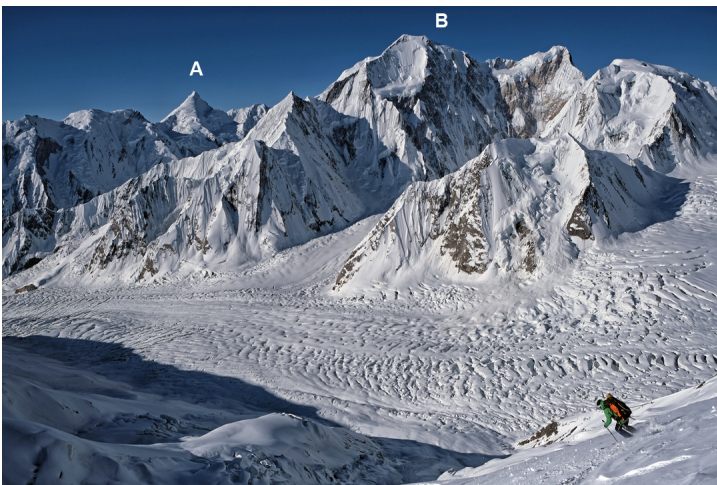
Boris Langenstein on the southeast ridge of Spantik above Camp 1.



Tiphaine Duperier descending the southeast ridge of Spantik, looking east southeast over the Basin Glacier to peaks on the northern side of the Chogolungma Glacier.



Tiphaine Duperier skiing the snow dome on Spantik toward the lower southeast ridge and Chogolungma Glacier.



Tiphaine Duperier skiing the snow dome on Spantik with the Chogolungma Glacier below and (A) Haramosh II (6,666m), and (B) Laila Peak (6,986m)



Tiphaine Duperier on the lower southeast ridge of Spantik. The double-summitted high peak on the left

is Shingu Kuru (5,990m)



Tiphaine Duperier descending from Camp 4 to Camp 3 on the Kinshofer Route, Nanga Parbat, with the Mazeno Ridge behind.



Camp 2 on the 6,200m col east of Ganalo Peak with the Diama Face up and right. Duperier and Langenstein climbed and skied this face from 7,250m prior to their climb and ski of the Kinshofer Route. Tiphaine Duperier



Skiing the Stitzinger variant to the Kinshofer Wall on the Diamir Face of Nanga Parbat.

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