



AAC Publications

Baihaizishan, Traverse of All Three Summits

China, Sichuan, Tatsienlu Massif

Baihaizishan from the west showing the 2022 traverse Pilgrimage (left to right, with descent from col between the main and south summits). Photo by Tamotsu Nakamura

Baihaizishan (a.k.a. Tshungpingling, 5,924m on the official PLA map, 29°57'24.16"N, 102°2'6.79"E) is the second-highest peak in the Tatsienlu massif and did not receive an ascent until 2014, when it was climbed by Dili Xiati and Li Zongli. The area was first explored by mountaineers—and several summits climbed—in the 1990s by two expeditions led by Fred Beckey.

In addition to the main summit, Baihaizishan has both a north top (Haopingling, 5,864m) and south top (Tshienpingling, 5,612m). In 2021, Song Yuancheng and I made an attempt on the north face of Haopingling, but bad ice forced us down from 5,300m. [This face had also been attempted in 2012; see AAJ 2013.]

We returned to Kangding on August 1, 2022, for a second attempt. We reached base camp at 3,900m two days later and advanced base at 4,800m on the 4th. We set off the next day, hoping to make a traverse of all three Baihaizishan summits.

After moving together to 4,900m, we climbed seven ice pitches on the north face of Haopingling to a flat bivouac platform at 5,120m, where we spent a stormy and uncomfortable night.

On the 6th we climbed scary terrain through high seracs, deep crevasses, and steep ice cliffs. At mid-day, atop a serac, we had a choice: left through a couloir that was exposed to avalanche danger or to the right by a serac. The serac turned out to be overhanging, so we hurriedly climbed the couloir to emerge onto a 30° slope of knee-deep wet snow over older, more hardened snow—textbook avalanche conditions. Moving carefully from serac to serac, we found a sheltered site for a bivouac at around 5,600m.

It was another cold night, and next morning we stepped onto frozen snow. At 8:47 a.m. we stood on the summit of Haopingling, where my GPS recorded an altitude of 5,821m. We named the route Ice Cream Kingdom, after my daughter's favorite food.

Song Yuancheng about to start the descent to the south summit of Baihaizishan (down to the right at the end of the snowy ridge), with the Minya Konka (Gongga Shan) massif in the distance. Photo by Liu Yang
We now had to continue along a sharp, 1.5km-long ridge to the main summit. For around 80 percent of the distance, we had to crab-crawl just below the knife-edge crest, making an estimated 2,400 steps. The sun burned down, and by mid-day we decided to stop and shelter beneath a cornice. By 6:30 p.m. the snow hadn't really improved, so we stayed for the night, again freezing due to the strong wind.

On the 8th we set off at 7 a.m. to continue our endless sideways movement, this time on much firmer snow. My eyes were burning from the sun. We reached what we initially thought was the summit at 9 a.m. but then saw another top 60m to the south. We reached this and found it to be 6m higher, measuring the altitude at 5,886m. We now continued toward the south summit, which our map showed to be 2km distant. We descended to a large shoulder, where we were confronted with a steep and extremely loose rock wall. We rappelled six times to reach a small glacier plateau on the ridge

beyond and stopped there for the night, demotivated for a final summit push to Tshienpingling.

The following morning, we both awoke with swollen and painful eyes, but after climbing unroped on moderate terrain, we reached the top of Tshienpingling at 9 a.m., naming our short ascent Two Peaches (referring to the size of our eyes). In 40 minutes we regained the tent and set off down to the west, hungry and exhausted. There were difficult rappels, but by 7:30 p.m. we had returned to Kangding, feeling that while our spirits had been in heaven, our bodies had been in hell. We named our whole traverse Pilgrimage.

– Liu Yang, China, translated by Xia Zhongming

Images



Baihaizishan from the west showing the 2022 traverse Pilgrimage (left to right, with descent from col between the main and south summits).



Baihaizishan from the west. (A) North summit (Haopingling). (B) Main summit (Tshungpingling). (C) South summit (Tshienpingling). The five-day traverse in August 2022 was made from left to right.



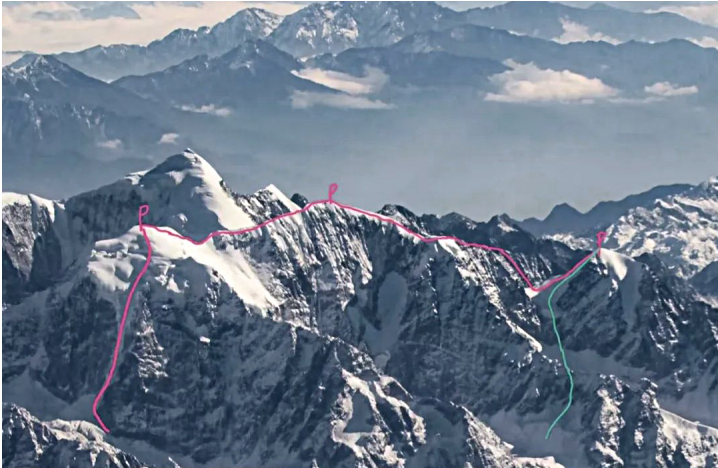
Song Yuancheng during the north to south traverse of Baihaizishan. The snowy pyramid of Minya Konka (Gongga Shan) is visible in the distance to the left of the foreground peak.



Song Yuancheng about to start the descent to the south summit of Baihaizishan (down to the right at the end of the snowy ridge), with the Minya Konka (Gongga Shan) massif in the distance.



Liu Yang during the first north to south traverse of Baihaizishan.



The north to south (left to right) traverse of Baihaizishan. The higher snow peak immediately behind is Lamo-she.

Article Details

Author	Liu Yang
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	97
Page	345
Copyright Date	2023
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions