



AAC Publications

Mulkila Glacier Area, Ski Descents

India, Himachal Pradesh, Lahaul

On May 4, the team of Giovanni Fortunato, Anna Fridlyanskaya, Leo Fridlyanskaya, Wyatt Jobe, Lillian Llacer, and Luke Smithwick established a base camp at about 3,350m (32.60496, 77.29053), near the mouth of the Mulkila Valley. From here the team evaluated potential skiing terrain. The Indian spring was in a diurnal cycle like I had never seen before: The intense melting of the snowpack had produced several previous size D4 wet slides. We caused a D2 R2 wet slide to occur during one ski descent.

Due to limitations on how far we could porter into the valley, and the time of day we needed to descend before the snow got too warm, our sights were set on couloirs we could see from camp on the northern aspects of a ridge of unnamed summits—still substantially far away. Our biggest day was on the southernmost couloir on this face: We began our push at midnight, hoping to reach the ridge with sufficient timing. This couloir had an angle of 60° just below our high point on the ridge, at 5,430m, about 60m vertically from the summit. We were already pushing the limits of timing for avalanche conditions and were experiencing the effects of ascending all the way from camp. The group opted to descend on rope for three pitches until reaching better snow. From there, we enjoyed beautiful ski and snowboard turns for nearly 2,000m of descent.

In all, we made five ski descents, with each climb and descent totaling 1,500m to 2,000m. We always stopped at the highest point of skiable terrain. Looking back at the expedition, establishing a base camp and making multi-day, alpine-style summit pushes would be a better approach to climbing and skiing peaks in the area.

— Wyatt Jobe, USA

Images



The team climbed one of the couloirs on this aspect to the ridgeline at about 5,430 meters and skied from three ropelengths below the top., making a total descent of about 2,000 meters.



Reaching the ridgeline at about 5,430 meters on the longest day of skiing.



A northeast aspect with multiple couloir lines skied or attempted.



Glacial ice climbing in the Mulkila valley.

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