



AAC Publications

Debsa Valley, Exploration; Ratiruni Tibba, Northeast Ridge

India, Himachal Pradesh, Spiti

Looking northwest toward Ratiruni Tibba (5,570m, left) and unclimbed Peak 5,655m. Ratiruni Tibba was climbed by its right skyline ridge. Photo by Gerry Galligan.

In July, Hugh Reynolds and I (Ireland) visited the Debsa Valley in Spiti. Our aim was the first ascent of Peak 6,130m at the head of the Bauli Valley, on the Kullu-Spiti divide. However, very bad weather over four days ruled this out.

Instead, we decided to attempt a first crossing of both upper tributaries of the Debsa, starting in the west upper tributary, continuing to its head, then crossing one of two unknown cols to the east upper tributary, before descending this glacial valley and returning to our 4,340m base camp at the Debsa confluence. (This is marked Thwak Debsa on some maps—approximately 31°58'49.21"N, 77°50'44.48"E—accessed from the east via the Pin Valley.) This would be a circuit of approximately 30km.

We set off with six days of food and fuel. Initially, it was hard going, scrambling over the moraine waste, and we soon found it got worse on the glacier, where we were post-holing up to our knees. We slowly and tediously worked our way up the west upper Debsa, reaching the valley head on the 17th.

Early the next morning, we climbed unroped up the snow slopes of the headwall to gain one of the cols at 5,629m (31°54.9033'N, 77°49.6130'E). The view into the east upper Debsa included several unclimbed 6,000ers, each technical and magnificent. There were many adjoining smaller peaks, all in a gloriously remote white amphitheater. We descended the east upper Debsa over three days and crossed the hazardous Debsa River to return to base camp.

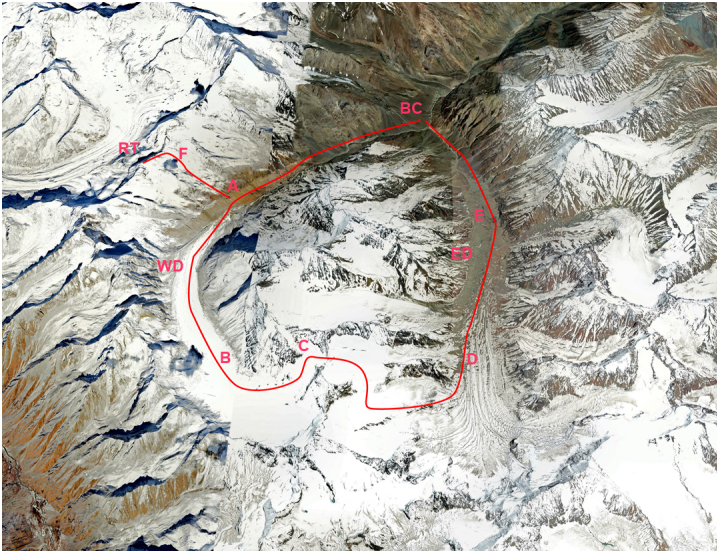
After two days' rest, we decided to attempt the first ascent of a 5,570m snow pyramid (31°57.7375'N, 77°46.7013'E) that we had spotted on the west side of the west upper Debsa during our ascent of that valley. Over the next two days, we reached a high camp on the glacier at around 5,100m. Our peak stood on the watershed between the Debsa and Ratiruni valleys, and was connected by a ridge to the higher peak of 5,655m to its northeast. (On certain online maps, Peak 5,655m is erroneously labeled Ratiruni Pyramid, but this is a mountain of 5,852m elsewhere in the Ratiruni Valley, first ascended by Kenneth Snelson in 1952. Peak 5,655m, which looked even less of a pyramid than our objective, is also unclimbed.)

We left high camp at 4:30 a.m. on the 26th and headed up snow slopes onto a long, left-trending ramp that took us to the basin east of Peak 5,570m. The snow quality was not good, and we had to resort to the now familiar method of stamping each foot into it, up to the ankle, to gain compression beneath.

Dawn broke as we reached the basin, where we cut right to a col on the northeast ridge. The summit was no more than 200m distant, but my big toes were in trouble. On examination, I found them frostnipped and swollen by infection. There was only one thing for it: return to the tent and warm them. Thankfully, Hugh was able to press on and reach the summit. We named the peak Ratiruni Tibba and graded the ascent PD.

— Gerry Galligan, Ireland

Images



(BC) Thwak Debsa base camp. (A) to (F) various camps made throughout the 2023 expedition. (WD) West upper Debsa Valley. (ED) East upper Debsa Valley. (RT) Ratiruni Tibba.



Looking northwest toward Ratiruni Tibba (left) and unclimbed Peak 5,655m. Ratiruni Tibba was climbed by its right skyline ridge.



The view up an eastern side branch of the east upper Debsa Valley to unclimbed Peak 6,080m.



Unclimbed Peak 6,110m (center) at the head of the east upper Debsa Valley.

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