



AAC Publications

Latok Thumb, First Ascent, via Southwest Face

Pakistan, Karakoram, Panmah Muztagh

Latok Thumb is a 6,380m rock tower with a precipitous southwest face. Its northeast flank drops to a high col on the south-southwest ridge of Latok II; the upper section of this ridge, approached via the southeast spur, was climbed by an Italian team in 1977 to make the first ascent of Latok II (AAJ 1978). Mixed ground on the southwest face of Latok II, left of Latok Thumb, was ascended in 2012 by French climbers to reach the upper south-southwest ridge (AAJ 2013). But the rock formation that we named Latok Thumb was still unclimbed.

Miquel Mas and I spent 12 days on the southwest face in 2022. The face drops more than 1,000m from the summit: a very steep granite wall with significant mixed sections at the beginning and end. We established base camp on the Latok Glacier at 4,470m and advanced base at 4,950m, and then spent many days studying potential routes and their objective dangers. To reach the foot of the wall at 5,300m, we first had to climb a snow/ice couloir of about 350m (70° max). This had to be completed by 9 a.m.—later, it was raked by rockfall and avalanches.

The first six pitches of the wall provided difficult mixed climbing up to M5. This took us to 5,650m, where we established our first portaledge camp. Above, we continued to the top of pitch 14, with several run-out sections of 7a and A2+ at around 5,900m. We moved slowly, as the sun only reaches the wall at 11 a.m. and leaves at 4 p.m., giving a five-hour window for rock climbing in reasonable temperatures. At other times, it was very cold.

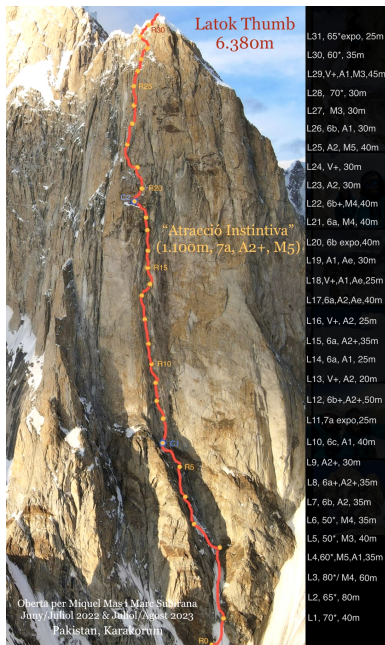
Above our high point that year was a steep section with obviously difficult roofs. Bad weather forced us down, and as we had no time for a second attempt, we fixed ropes down the route and left most of the equipment at Camp 1 for a return match the following year.

In July and August 2023, Miquel and I spent 18 days on the face. After negotiating the section of roofs, we moved the portaledge up to Camp 2, at 6,030m, 19 pitches up the wall, where there was snow to melt for water. We then climbed the top of the face in three intense days, arriving at the summit of Latok Thumb on August 18. Two more days were needed to rappel the route and remove all our gear from the face.

We named our route Atraccio Instintiva ("Instinctive Attraction," 1,100m, 7a R A2+ M5). On pitches 17–19, some 8mm bolts were used for aid moves.

— Marc Subirana, Spain

Images



The 2023 route Atraccio Instintiva on the southwest face of Latok Thumb.



The southwest face of Latok II, showing the 2023 route on Latok Thumb (6,380m). The first ascent of Latok II, in 1977, began on the southeast spur (hidden behind Latok II) and finished on the south-southwest ridge (right skyline). See AAJ 2013 for other route lines on this face.



Nearing the summit of Latok Thumb with the Latok Glacier below and the Biafo Glacier in the far distance.



Miquel Mas surmounting the big roofs of pitch 17 (6a A2), the steepest section of the southwest face of Latok Thumb.



Miquel Mas on belay at the start of pitch eight (A2+) on the first ascent of Latok Thumb.



Miquel Mas climbing the approach couloir in early morning, with the southwest face of Latok Thumb above. This image was taken during the 2022 attempt.



Climbing above the portaledge Camp 2 at 6,030m (Pitch 20, 6b).



Marc Subirana on pitch 19 (A1), just below Camp 2, negotiating a steep and icy aid section on the southwest face of Latok Thumb.

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