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Khumjungar, First Ascent, Via South-southwest Face

Nepal, Damodar Himal

The first ascent of Khumjungar (a.k.a. Khamjung, 6,750m, 28°53'19.65"N, 84°7'37.07"E) was undertaken by the "Project Together" team of Pur Bahadur Gurung and me, in December 2023. The expedition began in Kathmandu on the 15th.

After a rugged jeep ride from Jomsom, we reached Tange village at 3,359m, then took four days to trek the Tange Khola valley to a camp at 4,800m, at the base of the glacier that flows northwest from the south side of Khumjungar. We established a high camp on the glacier at 6,060m, not far from the northwest base of the mountain. The overnight temperature here dropped to -20°C.

On December 21, we left at 4:30 a.m. and climbed the glacier, curving left to reach the bottom of the south-southwest face. This face had steep ice and crevasses, which required screw and snow-stake protection and belays. After only 4.5 hours and some precarious climbing along ridges, we reached the summit, where we were rewarded by fine views of four 8,000m peaks: Annapurna, Dhaulagiri, Manaslu, and Xixabangma (Shisha Pangma). We descended the same way and were back in Kathmandu on the 24th.

Employing pure alpine style during the winter season, the "Project Together" team set a benchmark for minimalist mountaineering and aimed to inspire more Nepali mountaineers to explore uncharted peaks. In the coming years, Project Together will continue to focus on exploration and promoting zero waste in the mountains.

—Prakash Gurung, Nepal

Historical Notes on Khumjungar: Despite half a dozen attempts and near misses, no team had stood on this summit until this ascent in December 2023. Khumjungar was reconnoitered by American climbers in 2007 and was attempted via the northwest ridge (to 6,195m) by a French team in 2011, by an unspecified route to 6,200m by Japanese in 2016, via the north face by another French team in 2017 (when Nima Sherpa is reported to have reached 6,600m), and via a line that was probably on the south-southwest face in the fall of 2023, by Americans who were turned back by bad weather on the summit ridge at 6,700m.

Images

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