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Phurbi Chhyachu, West-Southwest Ridge, Attempt

Nepal, Jugal Himal

Drawn to Phurbi Chhyachu (6,637m) by its aesthetic appearance and sparse mountaineering history, Rosa Morotti and I aimed to repeat the original route on the west-southwest ridge in a light, alpine-style approach.

In 1982, a large Japanese-Nepalese expedition established three camps and fixed 2,000m of rope on this difficult ridge, and 16 climbers reached the summit over two days (AAJ 1983). The mountain had never been attempted before, and there has been no ascent since, although in 2023 a Spanish team almost completed a new route up the southeast ridge (AAJ 2024), reaching 6,570m.

From Kathmandu, we took a half-day jeep ride to the village of Bolde, then trekked for four days to a base camp at 3,900m.

Starting our climb on October 27, we discovered significant changes to the glacier at the base of the route. This necessitated climbing a difficult 400m variation start to the left of the original line, with sections of mixed climbing, ice, and inconsistent snow. Over four days, we progressed up the 1,600m route, encountering difficulties up to M5 80° ice. At approximately 6,200m, we encountered the sole remnants of the Japanese expedition: a single ice screw and a section of fixed rope.

From our top camp at around 6,300m, we planned to make a light push to the summit. Unfortunately, pulmonary edema forced me to stop here. Rosa continued alone and reached the start of the summit plateau at about 6,550m, where she turned back in deep snow, preferring to conserve energy for the descent. The summit was around one kilometer away.

Our descent was demanding and complicated by the scarcity of suitable ice for Abalakov anchors. After one and half days of rappelling, we finally reached the glacier.

—Tito Arosio, Italy

Phurbi Chhyachu Northwest Face Exploration: In the fall of 2024, Marek Disman and Jan Kreisinger from the Czech Republic planned to climb the previously untouched northwest face of Phurbi Chhyachu, but seracs overhanging all potential routes deterred them. Instead, they tackled a mixed route to the right. After two and a half days of hard work navigating a challenging glacial maze of crevasses, seracs, and rock, they were unable to find a passable route.

Images



Tito Arosio belays in steep mixed ground on the lower section of the west-southwest ridge of Phurbi Chhyachu.



The west-southwest ridge of Phurbi Chhyachu, showing (1) the 2024 Italian start and (2) the approximate line of the 1982 Japanese-Nepalese route, the first and only ascent of the mountain. A Czech team explored the face just to the left in 2024.



Rosa Morotti on the west-southwest ridge of Phurbi Chhyachu. Behind, across the Jugal Glacier, is (A) Jugul Spire (6,593m, climbed in 2022), (B) Dorje Lhakpa (6,966m, climbed in 1979), (C) Jugul I (6,591m, climbed in 2024), (D) Leonpo Gang (6,979m, climbed in 1962), and (E) Leonpo Gang East (6,733m, climbed in 1955).



Rosa Morotti on the upper west-southwest ridge of Phurbi Chhyachu.



Base camp with the west and northwest sides of Phurbi Chhyachu behind.



The west side of Phurbu Chhyachu with (1) the proposed route by Marek Disman and Jan Kreisinger, attempted in 2024, and (2) the west-southwest ridge, climbed in 1982 and attempted alpine-style in 2024.

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