



AAC Publications

Chobutse, Northeast Pillar

Nepal, Rolwaling Himal

In October 2023, Maciej Kimel and I made the first ascent of the northeast pillar of Chobutse (6,686m), naming our route Just Breathe (1,600m, M5 WI4 R/X). The pillar had one previous known attempt, by Romanian Mihnea Prundeanu and Cypriot Kyriakos Rossidis, who reached 5,965m in 2019. The peak itself had no more than five ascents since the first in 1972, by a German team, via the northeast face and east-southeast ridge.

After a four-day (28km) trek, we made our base camp in the village of Na (4,200m), and after a brief rest, and with the help of two porters, established advanced base at 4,900m near the Rolwaling Glacier moraine.

We left here on October 14 and began climbing the pillar on terrain that reminded us of the Tatra at home. By mid-day we had reached our intended bivouac spot, so we kept climbing and eventually spent the night at 5,750m on a snow hammock. There was no option to pitch our tent, and we spent a cold, uncomfortable night, with spindrift pushing snow into our sleeping bags.

The next morning, we pushed on to reach an icy face covered with sugar snow. It was longer and in worse condition than expected, giving no opportunity for placing protection. We eventually found a snow cave inside a serac at 6,200m, and this flat, windless space allowed us to remove our harnesses and have a decent rest after the previous sleepless night.

On October 16, we set off with hopes of summiting and descending the same day. However, the terrain proved challenging, with technical climbing on a snowy ridge that had sections of 70°, icy overhangs, seracs, and unstable snow with no protection. Feeling the effects of altitude, we reached the summit at 3:30 p.m., took a quick selfie, and began our descent of the southeast face. This turned out to be far more complex and dangerous than expected, and we needed to bivouac twice before regaining base camp on the 18th, exhausted but safe.

—Wadim Jabłoński, Poland

Images

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