



Paradise Lake, Peak 4,539, Northeast Glacier and Southeast Ridge

China, Xinjiang, Tien Shan

Paradise Lake with (A) Peak 4,539m, climbed in 2024, (B) Peak 4,359m, (C) Peak 4,171m, and (D) Peak 3,700m showing the line of Dry Martini, also climbed in 2024. Photo by Expedition.

Deng Tao, Li Bo, and Zhang Xinyi arrived at Paradise (a.k.a. Akekule) Lake in August, with part of a group aiming for the glaciated 4,000m peaks around the lake, all unnamed. (See report here for an introduction to Paradise Lake.) Peak 4,539m rises to the south-southwest of the lake at 42°32'40.27"N, 82°22'3.83"E.

The three climbers established their base camp next to the lake at 3,050m and on August 14 they moved toward Peak 4,539m and camped at 3,450m, where they could see a logical route to the top.

The next day, they left at 10 a.m. and quickly reached the glacier that rises to the southwest below the rocky east face of the peak. As they put on crampons, a falling rock hit Deng. While the rockfall didn't stop the ascent, later medical examination showed one rib was broken. Deng led up bare ice at 50°–65°, placing intermediate protection as the others followed simultaneously. Higher, when they reached more crevassed terrain, they began belaying. They didn't find a place flat enough to bivouac until 9 p.m., when they discovered a small crevasse at 4,350m in which they could spend the night.

At 10 a.m. on the 16th, they left their bivouac gear and continued to the southeast ridge, finishing through a three-meter-wide, hard-ice couloir between rock buttresses (25m, 75°). The ridge itself was loose and broken. (Though from a distance the rock here looks like granite, it is actually a sort of poor metamorphic stone formed by the recrystallization of limestone.) Fifth-class climbing took them through exposed terrain to a final 40m pitch of 5.6. At 4 p.m. they were standing on the two-meter-square summit.

Peak 4,539m from the east, showing the route of ascent. The arrow marks the site of the upper bivouac. Photo by Expedition.

They descended by making three rappels on the ridge, one in the ice couloir and two more on the icy slope, to reach the bivouac site. They then continued down into the night, reaching the 3,450m camp at 2:30 a.m. on August 17. During this descent, much of it in moderate to heavy rain, Li's left hand was broken by rockfall. With help from other members of the team, all three walked through the stormy night to reach base camp. The climbers named their route Knockin' on Heaven's Door (1,100m, D 5.6 AI2+ 60° snow).

—Lindsay Griffin, with information from Zhan Fang, China, and Xia Zhongming, Germany

Images



Unclimbed rock along the eastern arm of Paradise Lake.



Peak 4,539m from the north. The route of ascent climbed the glacier slope east (left) of the summit and finished up the left skyline (southeast) ridge.



Peak 4,539m from the east, showing the route of ascent. The arrow marks the site of the upper

bivouac.



The final section of the southeast ridge on Peak 4,539m.



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The three-meter wide ice couloir below the southeast ridge of Peak 4,539m.

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