



Chola Range, Peak 5,560; Zhuqing Range, Peak 5,538 and Peak 5,590

China, Sichuan, Shaluli Shan

The 2023 route up the west face of Peak 5,560m (GPS) in the northwestern Chola Shan. The snow slopes below the face were reached by climbing to a saddle off the bottom of the picture from the northeast (left). Photo by Xueer Yu.

In August 2023, Haoyu Wen and I went to the northwestern Chola Shan in search of easily accessible summer ice. Our objective was a peak about three kilometers southwest of the Cho La Mountain Tunnel (4,378m) on the Sichuan-Tibet Highway (G317). The peaks in this area are sharp granite towers and rise to an altitude much higher than designated on available maps. (Our objective was 5,489m on the map, at 31°53'08"N, 98°55'52"E, but turned out to be around 5,560m.) I flew a drone toward the west face of our objective and saw that the top section was a vertical rock wall.

After camping, we climbed the northeast ice face, unroped much of the way but belaying sections of AI2. After 300m, we reached a ridge connecting our summit to a large rock tower to the north. We followed the crest south to an area of snow-covered crevasses at 5,470m. We couldn't see the final west-facing wall, but assumed it would be difficult, so we retreated.

On the northeast face of Peak 5,560m (GPS) in the northwestern Chola Shan. The 2023 route climbed this glacial face to a saddle between 5,560m and a similar rock tower farther north. Photo by Xueer Yu.

Haoyu returned in July 2024 with Qiyun Fu and ascended the same route, though this time it was misty and they belayed most of the ice. Reaching the final, steep west face in the afternoon of July 25, Haoyu led the first pitch. At the top of this section, she realized the weather was quickly turning bad and there would be no time for Qiyun to follow. She soloed the last 30m of 5.9 to the summit, then immediately began rappelling. A horrific rainstorm hit the pair, making the descent tough and cold. The 450m route was 5.9 AI2.

During my 2023 trip, I had tried to find an approach from the south to peaks in the Zhuqing Range. I went to the Shengxian (a.k.a. Shenwonlu) valley and was amazed by the proliferation of giant granite boulders and rock walls. I returned in 2024 with Haoyu Wen, Qiyun Fu, and Peifeng Xie, but the monks living in the valley told us the approach to the glaciers, which they had done in the past, had recently been destroyed in a flood. As I was quite satisfied with our earlier ascent of Gangga I ([see report here](#)), I decided to return to Chengdu. The other three crossed the flooded boulderfields and reached the mountains.

On August 5, all three climbed Peak 5,538m (32°1'38.78"N, 98°51'10.12"E) via the north ridge, accessed from the southwest. The grade was around PD+ (5.6 50° ice).

They then moved base camp farther east, and on August 7 climbed Peak 5,590m (32°0'32.03"N, 98°52'0.57"E) via the north face, accessed from the west. The grade was around AD (AI2+ 70°), and the climbers measured the summit altitude as 5,529m, which they felt was more accurate than the map height. This area offers good potential for alpine ice and rock routes.

—Xueer Yu, with information from Haoyu Wen, China

Images



Unclimbed granite west of Peak 5,538m in the southeast Zhuqing Range.



The approach from the northeast, base camp (C), and the 2023 route to the summit of Peak 5,560m (GPS) in the northwestern Chola Shan. The final section is hidden.



The 2023 route up the west face of Peak 5,560m (GPS) in the northwestern Chola Shan. The snow slopes below the face were reached by climbing to a saddle off the bottom of the picture from the northeast (left).



On the northeast face of Peak 5,560m (GPS) in the northwestern Chola Shan. The 2023 route climbed this glacial face to a saddle between 5,560m and a similar rock tower farther north.



On top of Peak 5,538m in the southeast Zhuqing Range. The ice-covered peak behind and to the right is Peak 5,590m (measured at 5,529m).



The 2024 route up the north face of Peak 5,590m (measured at 5,529m), Zhuqing Range, accessed from a camp to the west at 4,930m.

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