



## AAC Publications

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### **Pathibhara Southeast, First Ascent, via Southwest Ridge**

Nepal, Kangchenjunga Himal

The route up the southwest ridge of Pathibhara Southeast. Photo by Xtreme Climbers

**After their success** on Sharphu VI in March, Hernán Leal (Chile) and Lhakpa Chhiri Sherpa joined Lhakpa Chhiring Sherpa, Kunga Gyaju Sherpa, and Pema Tasi Tamang (all with Nepalese agency Xtreme Climbers) for another climb in the autumn season. The goal was the first ascent of Pathibhara Southeast by the southwest ridge, the logical route from Nepal.

Pathibhara Southeast (6,868m, 27°48'37.32"N, 88°11'5.91"E) is on the Nepal-Sikkim border, along the ridge connecting the main summit of Pathibhara with Kirat Chuli. It was added to the permitted list in 2023 and until this year had no known attempts.

The team arrived at base camp at 5,150 meters, close to the standard north-side Kangchenjunga base camp at Pangpema, on September 28. For acclimatization, they climbed the 5,936-meter summit directly north of base camp, sometimes called Drohmo Ri. A heavy snowstorm at the beginning of October then stopped progress for some days.

A higher camp was placed on the lower moraines of the Pathibhara Glacier, at 5,408 meters, six hours from base camp. Camp 1 was set in the lower section of the icefall, and Camp 2 was at the base of the southwest ridge, at around 5,800 meters. The section through the icefall was the most dangerous of the route, with many crevasses and nearly vertical walls of ice.

Very early on the morning of October 14, Lhakpa Chiring and Kunga Gyaju left Camp 2 to find the best route ahead and fix ropes. All climbers had left Camp 2 by 1 a.m. After climbing sections of ice, mixed, and snow ridges, everyone reached the summit at 1:50 p.m. They returned to Camp 2 around 9 p.m. and the next day descended to base camp. The route was thought to be comparable in difficulty to the standard route on Ama Dablam. About 1,000 meters of rope were fixed (300 meters between camps 1 and 2, and the remaining 700 meters on the southwest ridge).

Pathibhara Chuli (a.k.a. Pyramid Peak, 7,140m), the main summit of the group, was first climbed in 1993 by a large Indo-Japanese expedition, which approached from Sikkim and followed the northeast ridge over the Sphinx (Pathibhara East, 6,825m, first climbed by a British team in 1936). The mountain has only received one other ascent, from Nepal, via the southwest face, by two Slovenians in 2007. Well to the northeast of the Sphinx stands an unclimbed 6,857-meter summit that has been named Pathibhara Northeast and was added to the permitted list of climbing peaks in 2023.

—Lindsay Griffin, AAJ, with information from Pemba Sherpa, Xtreme Climbers, and Tobias Pantel, Himalayan Database

## Images



The southwest ridge of Pathibhara Southeast (6,868m) seen from near high camp on the lower Pathibhara Glacier.



The route up the southwest ridge of Pathibhara Southeast (6,868m) from a camp on the moraines of the Pathibhara Glacier.



Pathibhara Southeast (6,868m) seen through the icefall of the upper Pathibhara Glacier. The southwest ridge faces the camera, angling up from left to right.



Descending the upper southwest ridge of Pathibhara Southeast (6,868m) after the first ascent of the mountain.

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