



AAC Publications

Denyai Tokpo, Two Ascents and One Attempt

India, Zaskar Region, Kishtwar Range

Hector Sanmiguel on the summit ridge of Peak 5,660m on the eastern rim of the Denyai Tokpo. Peaks on the far right are at the head of the glacier and are mostly unclimbed. Photo by Alberto Urtasun

Alpinism, unpackaged and unpolished. Two friends, a set of cams, eight screws, a few pitons, and an ocean of unclimbed summits. No idea how to go up or down. Regaining the tent exhausted. Two new routes, one attempt, and countless laughs in the solitude of our kitchen tent. Searching for the spirit that continues to beat within us, surviving not only in our memories.

In late August 2025, a delayed, cold tail of the monsoon left the Zaskar region covered in a layer of snow—an inviting sight. In September, after acclimatizing up to 6,000 meters in Spiti, Alberto Urtasun and I established base camp in the Denyai Tokpo at around 4,500 meters. At the time, we believed the only previous climbers to visit this valley came in 2016, when Anastasija Davidova and Matic Jošt took many photos of peaks but did no climbing (see AAJ 2017). [In the weeks before the arrival of the two Spanish climbers, the Denyai valley was visited by a large Dutch team that completed many ascents; see their report [here](#).] We stayed 15 days at base camp, planning to climb light and fast (10 to 12 kilograms maximum on our backs) in single pushes from camp.

On September 19, we climbed the north face of a peak of around 5,700 meters at 33°33'55.97"N, 76°38'27.74"E, on the eastern rim of the valley. We named the route Lymca Dahl (800m, M5 WI4 55°) and completed it in ten hours, finishing via a long, mixed ridge with two technical pitches at the top. [This route is to the right of a line climbed by the Dutch, who named the peak Nochung Ri.] We descended the northeast ridge, downclimbing and making three rappels, and returned to camp about seven hours after leaving the summit.

We next attempted the east face of Peak 5,850m, on the west side of the valley at 33°35'21.91"N, 76°35'54.60"E. On the 23rd, we climbed for 500 meters before retreating around 150 meters below the top due to poor snow.

Finally, on September 27, back on the eastern rim, we climbed Peak 5,660m (33°32'53.83"N, 76°37'28.87"E), finishing up a spectacular granite needle. We named our route One Lakh (600m, UIAA IV 75°). The ascent took 7.5 hours and was made mostly unroped or with simul-climbing. From the summit, it took almost five hours to descend to camp.

The style in which we climbed, using much the same gear as in the Pyrenees or Alps, is the most rewarding for us. Although the weather was magnificent throughout our stay in September, the snow was of very poor quality. Nonetheless, we enjoyed every moment.

—Hector Sanmiguel, Spain/USA



Hector Sanmiguel on the summit ridge of Peak 5,660m on the eastern rim of the Denyai Tokpo. Peaks on the far right are at the head of the glacier and are mostly unclimbed.



The two 2025 routes to the summit of Nochung Ri: (1) Committed to the Cause (Dutch route up north face and northeast ridge), and (2) Lymca Dahl (Spanish route on the north face). To the right are the twin summits of Chorten Rigib.



Hector Sanmiguel climbing through the rock barrier on Lymca Dahl, the 2025 Spanish route up the north face of Nochung Ri.



Alberto Urtasun atop the summit pinnacle of Peak 5,660m on the eastern rim of the Denyai Tokpo. The high, rounded summit behind and to the left is Khang Chan Chenmo (6,135m), climbed by the 2025 Dutch expedition. The pointed peak to the left is unclimbed.



Unclimbed peaks at the head of the Denyai Tokpo.

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