



AAC Publications

Bhagirathi II, complete northeast ridge

India, Western Garhwal, Gangotri

A foreshortened view of the triangular facet on the lower northeast side of Bhagirathi II. Photo by Henri Eggenweiler

In 2022, we three young and ambitious alpinists planned to attempt Bhagirathi II (6,512m, 30°53'3.97"N, 79°8'6.34"E) as our first expedition to the Himalaya. At home, over mulled wine and Christmas cookies, we had discovered a picture of the mountain showing the northeast ridge. We searched for previous ascents but found none. Our excitement rose: It seemed a technically demanding objective, although not extreme. [While the upper northeast ridge has been accessed via the east flank and followed to the summit, there is no record of it having been climbed directly from the base.]

In late April 2022, Henri Eggenweiler, Simon Schiefer, and I arrived at Nandanvan base camp (4,450m). Henri was sick, so Simon and I headed up as a pair to check out the first part of the northeast ridge. Toward its base, the ridge forks, with the two branches enclosing a triangular face approximately 1,000 meters high. We started up the rocky right-hand ridge and found relatively enjoyable climbing, with difficulties around M4. However, we moved slowly, and given the ridge's length, we realized it would take several days to reach the apex, still only a third of the way up the full route to the summit. Disappointed, we returned to base camp.

Once Henri felt better, we continued acclimatization by climbing the normal route up the east face to a camp at 5,900 meters. We had planned to push to the summit, but alarming signs of altitude sickness forced us to descend.

On our way back to base camp, we spotted a possible weakness on the left side of the triangular north-northeast face. The steepness (50°–55°) and the well-consolidated snow promised a faster option. Two days later, we had moved up the lower Chaturangi Valley and put an advanced base at 4,800 meters, directly below the face.

Leaving at 1:30 a.m. on May 14, we climbed unroped, finding one tricky pitch (M3) where the rock was bare of snow. At 10 a.m. we reached the top of the triangular face and from the apex made a 50-meter rappel to the start of the steep, crevassed area that forms the middle of the northeast ridge. At 5,700 meters, we camped.

On the 15th, we started at 5 a.m., working our way around big crevasses. We belayed one steep section (65°), rappelled another rocky step, then arrived at our last camp at 6,100 meters. At 6 a.m. on the 16th, we began climbing the final section, a 45° knife-edge of névé. Clouds were building, and bad weather was forecasted for the afternoon. Fortunately, we escaped the clouds at the end of the ridge, and at 10 a.m. we stepped onto the summit.

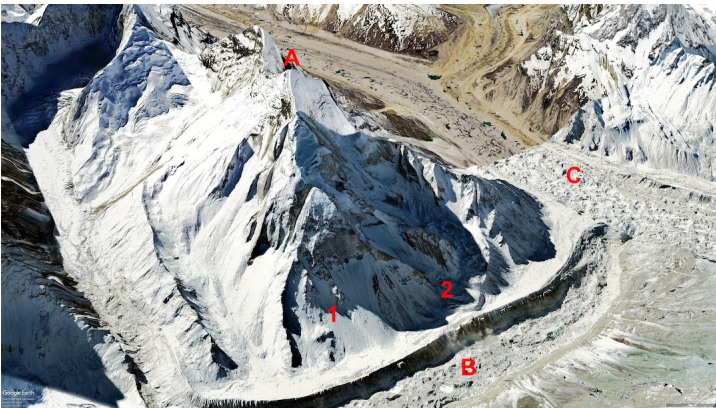
We descended the east face, which was exhausting due to soft snow, and reached the site of advanced base on the normal route at 4:30 p.m., just as it began to snow. The following day, three tired but happy climbers returned to base camp.

—Magdalena Ritzau, Germany

Images



Bhagirathi II from the northwest with Bhagirathi III on the right. (1) Northeast ridge (2022), (2) North-northwest face (1,700m, 35 pitches, Maguire-Rea-Stelfox, 1981; Maguire was killed on the descent). (3) West face to west ridge (Raveschietto-Sarchi, with initial help from Bonapace, 1984).



(A) Bhagirathi II (6,512m) from the northeast, rising above the (B) Chaturangi Valley and (C) Gangotri Glacier. (1) Start of the 2022 route up the complete northeast ridge. (2) Initial attempt in 2022 on the right side of the triangular north-northeast face. The normal route on Bhagirathi II ascends the east face, via the slopes on the left.



A foreshortened view of the triangular facet, which is around 1,000 meters in height, on the lower

northeast side of Bhagirathi II.



Magdalena Ritzau on the lower northeast facet on day one of the ascent of the northeast ridge of Bhagirathi II. The two high peaks to the right are Sudarshan Parvat (6,507m, left) and Chaturbhunj (6,654m).



The 6,100-meter camp on the northeast ridge of Bhagirathi II, with the final knife-edge ridge leading to the summit.



Magdalena Ritzau and Simon Schiefer on the final knife-edge ridge leading to the summit of Bhagirathi II, with the north face dropping steeply left toward the remains of the now receded Chaturangi Glacier far below.



Simon Schiefer and Magdalena Ritzau descending the normal route on Bhagirathi II in heavy snow. They are below the point where the route bends northward to reach the Chaturangi Valley, seen below.

Article Details

Author	Magdalena Ritzau
Publication	AAJ
Volume	67
Issue	100
Page	
Copyright Date	2026
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions