



AAC Publications

West Harsil Horn, Alpine-style second ascent

India, Gangotri

Climbing on the west-southwest ridge of the Horn of Harsil. Photo by Ankit Mahato

On June 10, Cyrus Wirls and I completed the second recorded ascent of the Horn of Harsil (4,823m; the peak has two summits, with the west horn being higher). The first ascent was achieved in June 2020 by a large expedition from the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering (NIM) in Uttarkashi that fixed ropes and climbed in expedition style (see AAJ 2021). Our ascent followed a similar but not identical line but was carried out in pure alpine style, with no fixed ropes, high camps, or external support.

Approaching from the Harsil Valley, we made our first camp at around 2,900 meters near Cholmi village and our second at 3,500 meters, after which we climbed steeply to a ridge and dropped down the far side to the basin just below the glacier on the north flank of the peak. Here, at 4,000 meters, we made our base camp.

On the 10th, we left at 7 a.m. and started up the same wide snow couloir climbed by the NIM team. In the upper part of the couloir, our line deviated from the original by moving more to the northwest and climbing rocky ground to the northwest ridge. We then slanted across the west face to the west-southwest ridge. Cloudy conditions meant our views were intermittent, and our exact line may have been different in parts to the original ascensionists.

We followed the crest until 70 meters below the top, where we traversed the southeast flank to reach the summit at 2 p.m. We spent significant time on top and only regained base camp at 7:30 p.m.

We took one 50m rope and used it primarily for rappelling from natural anchors on the descent. We left no gear. The round trip from Harsil village on the Bhagirathi River took seven days. The Horn of Harsil is a beautiful and challenging objective for future climbers seeking technical routes that combine rock and snow in a rugged alpine setting.

—Ankit Mahato, India

Images



On the west-southwest ridge of the Horn of Harsil.



Climbing on the west-southwest ridge of the Horn of Harsil.



The Horn of Harsil seen from the north. The ascent started up the snowy couloir immediately right of the peak then slanted right, close to the two small rock towers, before crossing the skyline (northwest) ridge and traversing the hidden west face to finish via the west-southwest ridge.



The Horn of Harsil seen from the last day of the approach to base camp.

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