



## AAC Publications

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### **Dechok Phodrang, Austrian-Spanish Classic & Dechok Direct**

China, Sichuan, Gangga Range

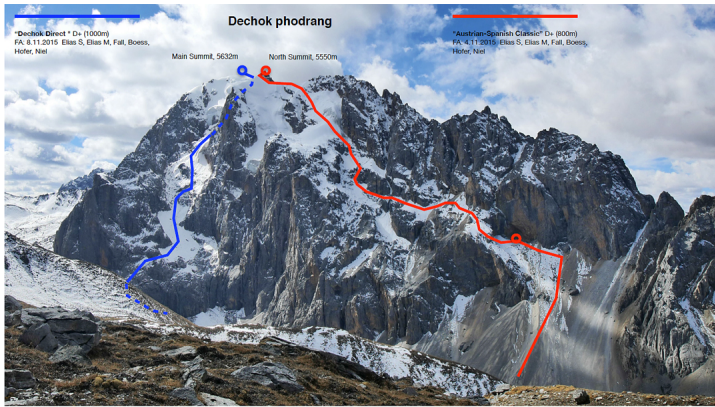
**Inspired by the published work of Japanese mountaineer Tamotsu Nakamura, an Austrian- Spanish expedition visited the eastern Gangga Massif in the autumn.** The expedition comprised mountaineers Gerald Boess, Judith Fall, and Paul Neil, filmmakers Lothar Hofer and Martin Sochor, and Spanish guides Martin and Simon Elias. Even though it was a guided trip, it was a team effort, as the three Austrian mountaineers organized the entire expedition, based on their previous visit to the area. They identified a peak in the middle of the eastern Gangga, east of the Zhuoda Qu valley and Ganbai Road, which local monks called Dechok Phodrang (Palace of Happiness). This, the main peak of the eastern Gangga, has two summits, and in wintry conditions, with temperatures down to -15°C, the team managed to climb both tops by separate routes.

The group approached via the Zhuoda Qu and then a short tributary valley that branched off southeast. On November 4, after a night in high camp beneath a protective rock wall at 4,740m, where the climbers experienced an earthquake that shook the region, all except Socher followed a traversing line across and then up the east-northeast face to reach the virgin north summit, which they measured at 5,550m. They named the route Austrian-Spanish Classic (800m, D+).

Four days later the same team set off for the main summit. There had been heavy snow the previous night, and they struggled for 12 hours, sometimes breaking trail up to their hips. After climbing a couloir on the left side of the east-northeast face, and then forcing a route through a gully alongside a serac barrier, they followed a ridge to the summit, measured at 5,632m (31.45275°N, 99.99795°E). The route was named Dechok Direct (1,000m, D+).

Lindsay Griffin, From Information Supplied By Simon Elias, Spain

## Images



Dechok Phodrang from the east-northeast. (1) Dechok Direct to the main summit. (2) Austrian-Spanish Classic to the north summit, with high camp marked.



The ice gully alongside the serac barrier on Dechok Direct.



On the final ascent to the north summit of Dechok Phodrang. In the distance are the two summits of Kawarani (5,992m and 5,928m) in the Gongkala Shan, the higher climbed in 2014 (AAJ 2015).



The narrow gully through the seracs on the first ascent of Dechok Direct.



Six climbers, in two groups of three, approach the serac barrier during the first ascent of Dechok Direct. The route above took the hidden gully alongside the rock wall on the right. The north summit is above and to the right.



Approaching the main summit of Dechok Phodrang during the first ascent of Dechok Direct.

## Article Details

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