



Tetnuldi: North Face, New Route

Georgia, Caucasus

Tetnuldi (4,853m, 43°01'52"N, 42°59'35"E) is a beautiful, pyramidal mountain of the Central Caucasus. It is located in Upper Svaneti and was first climbed in 1887 by the British mountaineer and explorer Douglas Freshfield and party, via the southwest ridge. The steep, icy north face was first climbed in 1937 by Mike Taylor and John Jenkins during a productive Oxford University Mountaineering Club expedition. Tetnuldi's summit lies south of the border with Russia, meaning the north face is entirely within Georgia. Maksym Kuraliesov and I visited Svaneti for the first time in July 2014, when we climbed the original route (AD-) on the southwest ridge of Tetnuldi, North Ushba (4,690m) by the northeast ridge (Distel, D-), and Shkhara (5,193m) by the long, 2,300m-high South Pillar (Khergiani, TD+). Svaneti is a pleasant place, with friendly people, great cuisine, and beautiful and impressive mountains. We enjoyed it so much we came back in July 2016 with plans for a few climbs. In the end we only completed one.

The north face of Tetnuldi had two existing lines: the British Route on the left and the 1982 Tulpanov Route in the center. However, since the latter was first climbed the face has changed dramatically and now has huge, dangerous serac barriers. The Tulpanov Route is probably unfeasible at this time. But on the right side of the face there were no routes, and it was there we planned to ascend. According to local climbers and border police, no one had visited the north face for many years.

From Mestia, Svaneti's capital, Maksym and I moved to the village of Jabeshi, from which the approach to the north face took two days via the canyon of the River Tsanner, the Tsanner Glacier, and the Oish Icefall. Afraid of the hanging seracs on the north face affecting our planned line, we spent a day observing the face for both ice and rockfall, but nothing fell near our proposed route.

At 3 a.m. on July 27, we left our camp at 3,570m on the glacier below the face. Luckily we were able to find an easy passage through the bergschrund. The initial slope was névé at about 50°. The slope became steeper and icy, and as we had spent no time on acclimatization we moved slowly. We only reached the top of the couloir at 2 p.m. Climbing up a little further, we came upon a big crevasse in which it was possible to camp comfortably. We decided to spend the night there.

The next morning we reached the upper northwest spur, which we followed to the summit. After half an hour's rest, we began our descent of the southwest ridge. Although it should have been possible to reach Mestia that day, when we arrived at Nageb Pass a thunderstorm struck and we made the decision to camp for the night. Next day we descended to Mestia.

The north face of Tetnuldi (1,100m, TD- WI3 55–60°) was our first experience of opening a new route in the mountains, and we liked it. Making a first ascent is really fun.

Mykhailo Poddubnov, Ukraine

Images



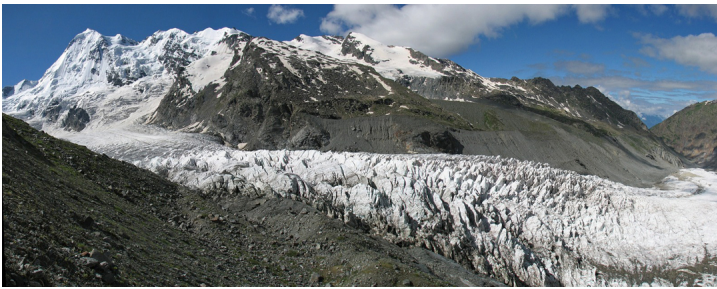
On the north face of Tetnuldi.



The original Freshfield Route (1887) up the southwest ridge of Tetnuldi, used by the Ukrainian team in 2016 for their descent after the north face.



Leaving the campsite at 4,420m on the north face of Tetnaldi with the crest of the northwest spur above.



Tetnaldi and the left side of the Oish Icefall, seen on the approach.



The north face of Tetnaldi. (1) Northeast ridge (4A, Shintlmeyster, 1931). (2) British Route (Jenkins-Taylor, 1937. A very similar line was climbed by Czechs in 1966 and graded 5B). (3) Tulpanov Route (5B, 1982). (4) Ukrainian Route (TD-, Kuraliesov-Poddubnov, 2016).

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