



AAC Publications

Rakcham Plateau, Various New Routes; Raldang Spire, Baba Ji

India, Kinnaur, Baspa Valley

Alexander Blümel starting the 11th pitch of Baba Ji, Raldang Spire, Baspa Valley. Photo: Much Mayr

On the first day of our 2018 trip to the Baspa Valley, Hansjörg Auer and I hiked to the base of Raldang's big wall, and then planned to come back the following year with the right equipment. Things changed tragically in April 2019.

In September, Alexander Blümel, Matthias Wurzer, and I returned as mentors for seven members of the Austrian Alpine Club's Young Alpinists Group (Domenic Barbist, Julian Gahbauer, Magdalena Hofinger, Tobias Holzknicht, Peter Mühlburger, Hannes Wechner, and Simon Wolsegger). With these young guns, we opened a few lines on unclimbed peaks above the Rakcham Plateau. These were largely non-glaciated granite peaks that gave good rock climbs.

On September 11, a four-member group climbed Tororang (4,770m) via the northeast flank: Austrian Direct (6b). This involved climbing a gully to a height of around 4,500m, then breaking out left over grassy terrain at II-III and onto a pillar for the final ascent.

On the same day, another group reached the summit of Hace and Charas (4,850m) via the north flank and west ridge. This gave a 450m route of UIAA VI A1. Descent was by downclimbing the northeast ridge with three rappels.

On the 16th, an ascent was made on a massif dubbed Ray Peak. This has a number of west-facing granite pillars leading to different high points on the summit ridge. The team climbed the Third Pillar, finishing on a point of around 5,200m. Starting at 4,850m, this pillar gave around a dozen pitches up to 6b+. The party descended the south ridge to a notch before the Fourth Pillar, then rappelled the west-facing ice gully below, and returned to the start of the route.

From September 14–17, a six-member group, including myself, climbed the foresummit (ca 5,500m) of Shiva's Tooth, calling it Shiva's Milk Tooth. This involved crossing a pass from the Plateau, rappelling 60m to a glacier on the far side, and making a high camp at 5,000m. From there we climbed a southwest-facing ice slope (200m, 55°) to reach a glacier plateau, traversed this north to reach the 200m-high rocky west ridge, and climbed seven pitches of UIAA IV and V (F5a) to the foresummit of the peak. We rappelled the route.

On the 19th, a group climbed Muppet Peak (5,000m) via Eagle Ridge (five beautiful pitches up to 5a, plus easier climbing). Some of the team also created a number of short sport routes in the main valley.

After this, we three mentors and Peter Mühlburger stayed longer to have a closer look at Raldang. With the help of locals and porters, we carried heavy loads in two trips—five days in total—to the base of the wall, where we established our portaledge camp. [This impressive granite wall, almost 1,000m high, terminates at around 5,250m on the southern flanks of Raldang (5,499m), and was climbed in 2010 by Silvia Vidal; see AAJ 2011.] The main wall looked too blank for free climbing, so we opted for a logical, aesthetic line on a spire on the lower left side of the face, which reached a height of around 4,900m. I'd already had this in mind the year previously. [This spire is left of the line attempted in 2015

by Quinn Brett, Whitney Clark, and Crystal Davis-Robbins; see AAJ 2016.]

For two days we fixed lines, returning to the portaledge to sleep. On the third day, October 11, we reached the top of the spire. Most of the anchors have one or two 8mm bolts. In addition to those, we placed three more bolts to protect pitches. We left most of the pitons and beaks in place. The climbing varied from wide to thin cracks, plus technical face climbing, sometimes better than expected. We named the route Baba Ji (500m, 17 pitches, 7b). On some pitches the rock might require more cleaning.

We began the climb in cold conditions, one day earlier than Matty Hong, Jacopo Larcher, Matteo Mocellin, and Siebe Vanhee, with whom we had made our first carry to the base of Raldang. They chose a line over to the right, avoiding the first steep section of the pillar (our first five pitches) via a large ledge system, then climbed into a dihedral that started around 100m to the right of the top of our pitch 10.

– Much Mayr, Austria

Images



Much Mayr on Pitch 4 of Baba Ji, Raldang Spire, Baspa Valley.



Much Mayr on the 15th pitch of Baba Ji, near the top of Raldang Spire, Baspa Valley.



The portaledge camp on Raldang Spire.



Alexander Blümel starting the 11th pitch of Baba Ji, Raldang Spire, Baspa Valley.



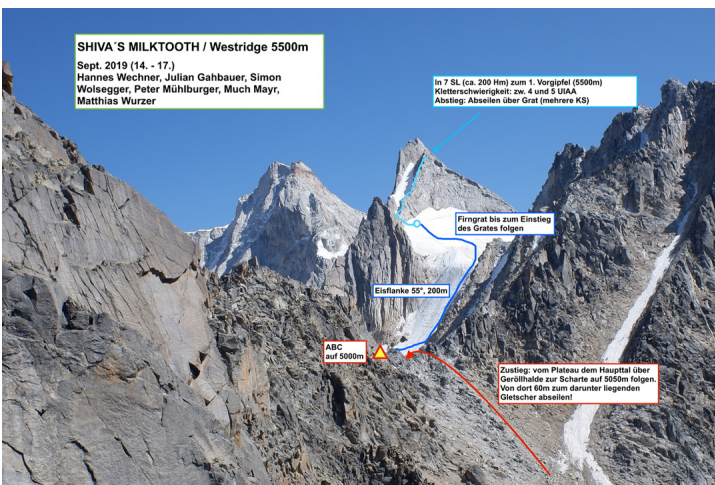
Mattias Wurzer on the 13th pitch of Baba Ji, high on Raldang Spire. The cwm below leads down toward the Baspa Valley.



Peter Mühlburger on pitch 10 of Baba Ji, Raldang Spire.



Raldang Spire above the Baspa Valley. (1) Baba Ji (2019). (2) American-Belgium-Italian route (2019). (3) American attempt (2015).



Austrian route on the west ridge of Shiva's Milk Tooth Foresummit.

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