



## AAC Publications

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### **Lugula, Northwest Ridge over Bhrikuti Shail; Selka Kangri, East Ridge**

Nepal, Damodar Himal

Lugula from the southwest showing the partially climbed west ridge as the left skyline and the elegant unclimbed south ridge in the center. Photo by Sergio di Léo

**Lugula (6,899m) is a beautiful summit located on the Nepal-Tibet border between Phu Valley and Mustang. We had planned to climb it from Mustang and the Damodar Kunda Lakes to the north, and then continue with a crossing of Bhrikuti Shail. However, the Nepalese government decided otherwise.**

In mid-August, a friend informed me that the regulations in Restricted Area Zones (such as Upper Mustang or Upper Dolpo) had changed. Earlier, an expedition climbing a peak in a restricted area was exempt from paying for a trekking permit or TIMS (Trekking Information Management System, a basic permit for all treks in Nepal). Now teams are required to buy these as well as their expedition permit. The result for us was a large per-person cost increase on top of an already substantial budget. We had to think again.

Keeping our main objective as Lugula, we approached from Phu to the south and established ourselves at Bhrikuti Shail base camp (5,015m). This itself could be a problem, because although Bhrikuti Shail is on the permitted list, the only "caravan route" (the approach route listed by the tourism ministry) is from Mustang. Nevertheless, from there we established Camp 1 on the south ridge of Bhrikuti Shail at 5,650m. On October 1, after a period of bad weather, we made Camp 2 on the Tirthawa La (ca 6,200m), west of Bhrikuti Shail. This was the same route I had climbed in 2005 while making the first ascent of Bhrikuti Shail.

From this high camp, we were able to make a west-east traverse of Bhrikuti Shail (6,361m) and reach the broad, gentle Minerva Snowfield on the west flank of Lugula. [This snowfield, named later by Korean climbers, was first reached in October 2010 by Renaud Guillaume from a French expedition that climbed Bhrikuti Shail. From a bivouac above 6,000m on the south face of Bhrikuti Shail, the Frenchman moved east to reach the snowfield and followed its south side until able to climb onto the upper west ridge of Lugula, where it turns to the northeast and leads to the summit. This was the first ascent of Lugula. The same route was repeated in 2014 by Koreans, who reached the Minerva snowfield directly from the south by climbing a couloir to the col (Korean Gate) between Bhrikuti Shail and Lugula.]

After establishing Camp 3 at 6,350m on the Minerva snowfield, our Dutch-French team slanted north to gain the northwest ridge and followed it to Lugula summit. The overall grade was PD. On October 5th, Luc Gianetti, Isabelle Guillaume, Philippe Henry, Dipeen Bothe, Sajjan Gale, and I reached the top, followed the next day by Folkert Bloembergen, Jean-Pierre Desforges, Menno Frantzen, Marjolein Meere, Sergio di Léo, and Reinier Zuidhoff, with Dhan Magyar, Karma Sherpa, Dipeen Bothe, Sonam Sherpa and Amrit Tamang.

Previously, on the 2nd, five of us had headed west from Camp 2 to the summit of Julie Peak (6,337m, first climbed and named in 2010 by Renaud Guillaume and his girlfriend Julie Vesz, the day before Guillaume's solo of Lugula). On the 4th, this was repeated by Sergio di Léo and Karma Sherpa, who then continued west to make the first ascent of Selka (Shelka) Kangri (6,358m). On the 8th, Isabelle Guillaume and I, with Dipeen Both and Anil Rai, traversed Bhrikuti Shail from the Minerva snowfield by

climbing the north ridge and descending the east ridge.

In conclusion, Lugula is a particularly interesting summit belonging to the "almost 7,000m" category. In Nepal this category of peaks has much interest for mountaineers able to distance themselves from the ego associated with attaining 7,000m. In addition, we were completely alone at base camp, while 15 expeditions crowded into nearby Himlung base camp. There is still plenty of space in Nepal to enjoy an intimate adventure.

– Paulo Grobel, France

## Images



Bhrikuti Shail from the Minerva snowfield to the northeast. Four members of the Dutch-French expedition in 2019 traversed the mountain from this snowfield by following the skyline from right to left : up the north ridge and down the east ridge.



The eastern slopes of Bhrikuti Shail from Camp 3 on the Minerva snowfield.



Karma Sherpa leading his rope on the northwest ridge of Lugula. Directly behind and below him is Bhrikuti Shail. Down to the left is the Minerva snowfield, bordered on the left by the sharp, wavy west ridge of Lugula. In the far distant left are the Annapurnas.



Lugula from the southwest showing the partially climbed west ridge as the left skyline and the elegant unclimbed south ridge in the center.



Camp 2 at around 6,200m on the Tirthawa La. Up to the right is Julie Himal, and a party can just be seen returning to camp from an ascent of the east ridge. The flat-topped peak at the head of the small glacier on the left is Chhiv Himal (6,650m), while the taller peak in the center is Khumjungar (Khamjung, 6,759m).



Traversing Bhrikuti Shail toward Lugula. The two existing routes on the west flank of Lugula are marked: on the left the Dutch-French route of 2019; on the right the French route of 2010, repeated in 2014 by Koreans. The pointed peak behind and to the right is Chako (6,704m).



Looking west-southwest from high on the northwest ridge of Lugula.  
(A) Dhaulagiri. (B) Chhiv Himal. (C) Saribung. (D) Bhrikuti Shail. (E) Julie Peak. (F) Selka Kangri. (G) Kumjungar.

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