



AAC Publications

Tengi Ragi Tau, North Top, West Face, Trinité

Nepal, Rolwaling Himal

The first bivouac on the French-Swiss route on the west face of Tengri Ragi Tau. Below is the Drolambo Glacier and in the distance Likhu Chuli. Photo by Symon Welfringer

Climbing the west face of Tengri Ragi Tau was my idea, but it soon became a joint dream. Charles Noirot and I had already shared great adventures in the mountains, as we were both members of the Young French Alpinists team. Silvan Schüpbach is the coach of the Swiss ice climbing team, and we'd seen each other several times at competitions. What brought us together was our common taste for adventurous climbs.

We established base camp on October 8 at 4,700m beside the Drolambo Glacier. Taking part in an expedition essentially means you will spend a lot of time walking. I'm not a huge fan of trekking, even on the most beautiful trails of the Himalaya, but I love the feeling of time getting slower, reflecting on what I am doing here, and why. A "big up" to Nepalese porters, who have impressed me so much. They can carry bags of more than 60kg and still walk 20–40 km a day. That keeps one's humility in check.

We spent over a week, until October 16, acclimatizing. During this period, we witnessed Alan Rousseau and Tino Villanueva complete the first ascent of the west face [see report here]. We decided to go for another line farther left on the same wall, finishing on the lower north top (ca 6,820m GPS). Sadly, at this point, Charles got very sick and was unable to climb for the rest of the expedition.

Silvan and my first attempt ended in retreat, due to snowfall and strong winds. We made our second attempt around one week later, starting on October 26.

Our first day included two pitches of steep ice, followed by moderate snow and ice slopes up to 60° to a small ledge at 6,100m, where we bivouacked. Wind and spindrift had made it cold. The next day the weather improved, but the angle steepened, the climbing became more technical, and the air thinner. We succeeded in finding a bivouac spot at dusk. The altitude was around 6,450m, and we knew that the next 300m would be the hardest.

We progressed up very steep ground the following day, the ice becoming rarer, as did the protection. On the hardest pitches, around M6, the leader hauled his pack. Climbing pitches like these above 6,500m was one of the most exhausting undertakings I have experienced. Especially the last pitch: After many meters of ice flutes, the summit looked close, but one final rock wall stood in the way. This pitch will be forever engraved on my mind as the toughest I've managed to lead. Combined with the joy of reaching the summit a few meters later, I think we both momentarily entered heaven. It was hard to leave.

We rappelled to our top bivouac in four hours, using headlamps, then the following day rappelled the remaining 1,000m to the base of the wall. We named the route Trinité (1,400m, AI5 M6): Although we climbed as a pair, the route we established came from the strength of all three minds.

– Symon Welfringer, France

Images



Silvan Schüpbach at around 6,500m on the new route Trinité on the west face of Tengri Ragi Tau, where the climbing is about to become very steep and run-out.



Silvan Schüpbach leaving the top of the ice flutes and heading toward the summit ridge on Tengri Ragi Tau.



Silvan Schüpbach in the narrow ice couloir, heading toward the main difficulties high on the west face of Tengri Ragi Tau.



The first bivouac on the French-Swiss route on the west face of Tengri Ragi Tau. Below is the Drolambo Glacier and in the distance Likhu Chuli.



The west face of Tengri Ragi Tau. On the left the start of Trinité, to the right the line of Release the Kraken. Both routes were climbed in October 2019.



The west face of Tengi Ragi Tau (6,938m). (1) Trinité, to the north top. (2) Release the Kraken. Both routes were climbed in October 2019.

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