



Pathan Peak and Pathani Peak

Pakistan, Karakoram, Tagas Mountains

In 2016, Frenchman Mathieu Maynadier visited the Lachit Valley, and during the trek out he saw several relatively accessible big walls in the Tagas Valley. (This is the next valley west of the Lachit, running north-northeast from the village of Tagas/Thagas.) Maynadier returned in July 2018 with an international team comprising Nicolas Favresse, Jean-Louis Wertz (both from Belgium), and Carlitos Molina (Argentina).

Probably the first foreign mountaineers to explore this valley, the team approached via a good path and aqueduct, establishing base camp on an alpine meadow. Their first attempt on one of the rock walls ended well below the top due to poor quality granite. They then turned their attention to the west side of a beautiful rock tower in the cwm of the Second Tagas Glacier, above the East Upper Tagas Glacier (as designated on Jerzy Wala's Polish map). The summit, approaching 6,000m, was named Pathan Peak; it lies on the ridge northwest of "Ogre" (6,058m).

The first attempt was straight up the front face of the pillar, but after two days they bailed: There were few natural lines, and the rock was mostly choss. A less steep line was then chosen on the left flank, and the team spent three days fixing the first 300m, installed a portaledge camp, and then spent another two days fixing a few more pitches and making a push for the top. While better than expected, the rock was still mediocre for much of the climb. All four reached the summit at 5 p.m. on August 4, having climbed 900m at 6b A1 (estimated to go free at 7a).

The descent began well, and by 10 p.m. they had reached the top of the fixed ropes and began removing them as they descended. At the top of the last rope above the portaledge, they decided to place one of the few bolts on the route. This was around 10m lower than the original anchor, placed above a loose ledge. Favresse and Maynadier had just completed fixing the new anchor when the ledge above, on which Molina was standing, collapsed. Maynadier was hit and suffered a concussion, an open fracture of the right elbow, and two compressed vertebrae. When Maynadier came around, he was incoherent but able to be lowered to the portaledge, from which a rescue call was made. The next morning he was in better shape and was able to descend to the base of the wall. At midday, an Army helicopter evacuated him to Skardu.

The rest of the team spent the following week recovering gear from the wall; one of the portaledges was completely crushed by rockfall. On the 15th, in a nice weather window just before their departure from the valley, Favresse and Molina climbed the west side of Pathani Peak, to the north of Pathan. An initial 300m snow ramp led to a steep ridge, then an ascent of this ridge at 6a M6. The route Pathani was completed in a 17-hour round trip from camp.

— Information from **Nicolas Favresse**, Belgium

Images



The Argentinian-Belgian route on the west side of Pathani Peak, Tagas Valley.



The Pathan Pillar (2018) on the west side of Pathan Peak, Tagas Valley.

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