



Rakaposhi, Southwest Ridge in Alpine Style

Pakistan, Karakoram, Rakaposhi Range

Hélias Millerioux and Patrick Wagnon (both from France) completed the first known alpine-style ascent of the rarely climbed southwest ridge of Rakaposhi (7,788m), summiting on July 26. This was the route used on the first ascent of the mountain in 1958 (summitted by Mike Banks and Tom Patey, U.K.) after six previous expeditions had failed.

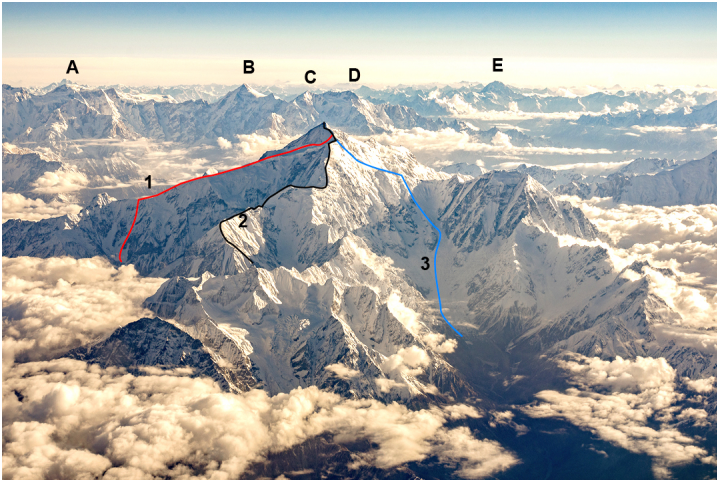
From a base camp at 4,200m, the French took four days round-trip on the route and later commented on its serious nature—altitude is not lost quickly during the descent, and an extremely long, sharp arête, which although not technically difficult needs to be carefully managed, must be downclimbed. A third member of the party, Yannick Graziani, was not feeling well enough to go to the top and decided to wait for the others at around 6,900m.

Prior to this, all three climbers had made the second alpine-style ascent of the north ridge of nearby Diran (7,257m) in a four-day round trip from base camp. One of their plans had been to ski the normal route from the summit, but having received a forecast that promised only a short weather window, they decided to leave the skis behind. Snow conditions were not good. High on the ridge is an exposed 200m traverse that has to be reversed on the descent. Descending in poor weather, this traverse was constantly on their mind, but fortunately everything went well.

The north ridge was descended by Edi Koblmuller and Fred Pressl in 1985 but wasn't ascended until 1989, when it was climbed with some fixed rope by a Japanese expedition led by Ken Takahashi. The only previous known ascent of the north ridge in alpine style was by a team of three Italians in six days during 1991. They estimated the ridge to rise 2,200m and be 5km in length.

— Lindsay Griffin

Images



Rakaposhi from the southwest with (1) the northwest ridge (1979), (2) southwest ridge (1958), and (3) south face and southeast ridge (2019). (A) Passu Sar. (B) Shispare. (C) Bojohaghur Duanasir. (D) Ultar. (E) Karun Koh.

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