



## AAC Publications

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### **Amaiur Peak and Many Rock Routes**

India, Ladakh, Zaskar, Suru and Shafat Valleys

**Our five-member Basque expedition to the Suru and Shafat valleys had eyes for the north face of Shafat Fortress, but on arrival at base camp, those same eyes were immediately drawn to a beautiful rock spire.** This peak of about 5,760m is situated on the ridge extending north from Rungofarka (6,495m, climbed in 2017 by Americans Alan Rousseau and Tino Villanueva; see AAJ 2018); it lies south of the main Suru Valley at 34°2'50.78"N, 76°6'2.94"E. The peak was attempted by Jordi Mons in 2022. **(See TK for a report on this expedition.)**

After climbing a few rock routes in the main Suru Valley, Joseba Iztueta and I decided to attempt the northeast ridge of the unclimbed spire, which, as far as we could see, would be largely a snow and ice ascent, with a few small rock sections. We set off thinking we were well prepared with some rock gear, a 60m 8mm rope, and six ice screws. On reaching snow level, we immediately realized we would have a hard job, as we began to sink in above our knees.

On finally reaching the base of the peak, we were surprised to find we would have to climb a 300m rock wall to reach the start of the ridge, and the first section of the latter, which we had not previously been able to see, featured less snow and appeared more difficult than the upper ridge.

We left our tent at 4 a.m. on July 16 to find the snow had not consolidated at all. We had worked up a good sweat by the time we reached the wall. Fortunately, the rock was better than expected and presented no major difficulties (V+). Above, a snowfield (50°–60°) led to shoulder below the northeast ridge. The snow was unchanged, and we again sank below the knee—the altitude started to become noticeable.

At around 5,300m, we started up the main ridge, and it soon became clear we would have to fight for every meter. The granite was good and offered protection, but any slab was covered with unconsolidated snow. A section of M6 was followed by more mixed terrain at M3–M5. We climbed to a small shoulder, from where it appeared the difficulties would decrease. In fact, it was the opposite. I was now thinking of the descent, which would certainly be as complex as the ascent, and for which we might barely have enough anchor material. These thoughts were a backpack that became heavier the higher we climbed.

We reached a point where we had two options: a vertical wall leading to a roof or a slab covered with loose snow. I opted for the slab and, after placing a good piton, tiptoed out right. This proved to be the crux pitch (M6), though the next lead also was M6, involving a roof exit on an ice-covered wall protected with screws. Above that, a rib led to the snow-covered summit dome. Despite scratching everywhere with my axes, I couldn't make the final moves up the dome, so I stayed put at the last exposed rock. The GPS registered 5,760m.

Various hang-ups on the descent and a block cutting the rope six meters from one end meant we arrived back at the 5,300m shoulder at dark. After more careful rappelling of the initial wall, we stumbled into camp at 10:30 p.m., drank some tea, and fell asleep.

Our 750m route (V+ M6) had about 1,500m of climbing. Nowhere did we find any indication of previous passage, and local people, guides, and agencies knew of no ascent. We named the mountain

Amaiur Peak—it was one of the most intense and beautiful ascents I've done.

Our group also put up many new rock routes in the Suru and Shafat valleys, mostly on smaller formations in the area. On Shafat Peak (5,900m, 34°00'48"N, 76°11'48"E), Joseba Iztueta and Ibon Mendia climbed Delinkuentzia Bertikala (450m, 7b+/A1, 5 pitches followed by 200m at III-IV). This lies on the southwest face, left of the line climbed by Jordi Mons and Tasio Martin in 2022.

On the south face of Askatasunaren Dorrea (ca 4,800m, 34°4'31.71"N, 76°11'39.20"E), above the Suru Valley, there are now five routes on the steep buttress at the end of the south ridge. These are between three and five pitches, with difficulties up to 7b, though two of the routes continue along the upper ridge (III-IV), to the summit, giving 630m of climbing.

Another long route was Zuentzat Idatzita (1,000m of climbing, 7a) on the Shafat Wall (34°02'44"N, 76°10'28"E) by Mikel Ezkurdia, Ibon Mendia, and Urko Zabala.

Technically, the hardest route completed was Nassau Errepublika (200m, 6 pitches, 8a) at 34°04'38"N, 76°10'13"E on the north side of the Suru Valley. It is located on the central tower of the Pilaes de la Tierra and was climbed by Mikel Ezkurdia, Urko Zabala, and me over three days.

— **Ekaitz Maiz, Basque Country**

## Images



Amaïur Peak from the east-northeast. The right skyline ridge was the route of the first ascent in 2023; the lower part of the route is hidden by a foreground ridge. In cloud to the left lie the north flanks of Rungfarka.



Amaïur Peak, showing the route of the 2023 ascent on the northeast ridge.



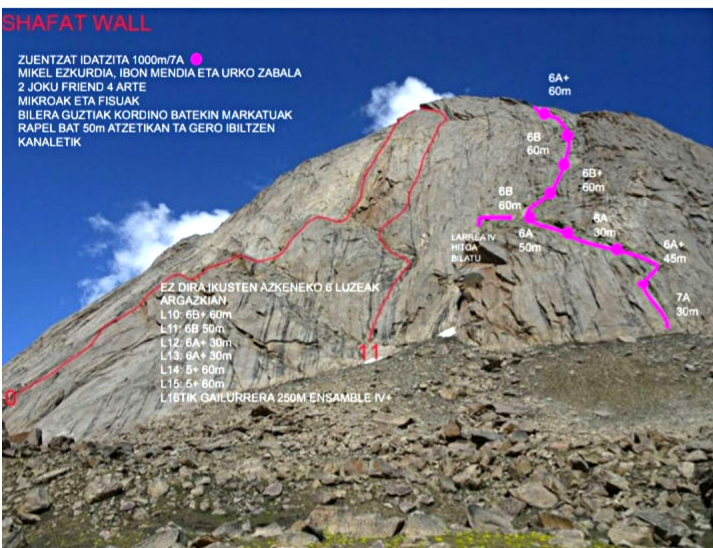
Climbing the 300m lower wall to reach the start of the northeast ridge of Amaïur Peak, seen up to the left.



Looking south from near Gelmothungos in the Suru Valley. From left to right: Amaiur Peak, Rungofarka, and Lingsarmo. The 2023 route to Amaiur climbs along the left skyline.



Routes on the Askatasunaren Dorrea formation, above the Suru Valley. Routes 1 and 3 continue beyond the top of the wall, along a ridge to the ca 4,800m summit.



This wall lies near the entrance to the Shafat Valley. The purple line shows Zuentzat Idatzita (2023). The routes marked to the left are previous Spanish ascents.



Mikel Ezkurdia on the fourth pitch (7a+) of Nassau Errepublika on the north side of the Suru Valley.



Urko Zabala on the first pitch (7a+) of Nassau Errepublika on the north side of the Suru Valley.



Mikel Ezkurdia on the sixth pitch (7b, largely offwidth) of Nassau Errepublika on the north side of the Suru Valley.



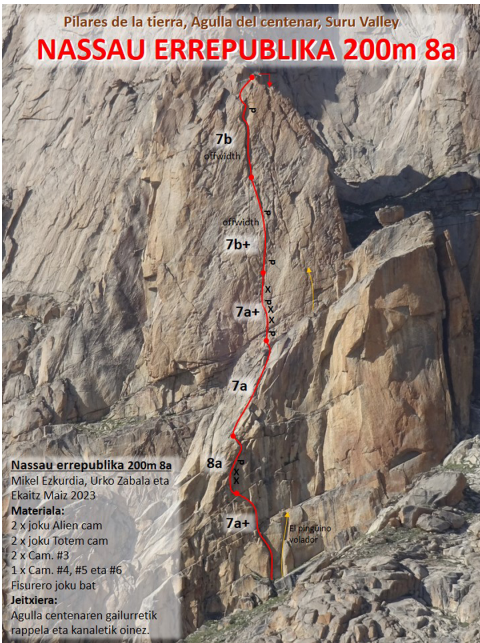
Ibon eta Iztu Askatu on the south-facing Pilares de la Tierra in the Suru Valley.



Arrastaka (green line) on the Pared de la Cascada. This formation lies at 34°04'39"N 76°09'46"E, on the north side of the Suru Valley, close to base camp. Other routes marked are previous Spanish ascents.



This formation lies at 34°03'36"N, 76°10'18"E on the south side of the Suru Valley.



Nassu Errepublika on the south-facing Pilares de la Tierra in the Suru Valley.



The Pilar Gorria lies at 34°04'40"N, 76°10'05"E on the north side of the Suru Valley, just to the east of the Pared de la Cascada. Azken Dantza (330m, 6c+) follows a line to the right of the marked route, before traversing left to finish up similar ground.





Delinkuentzia Bertikala (white line) on the southwest face of Shafat Peak. Tukcheche was climbed by Baró and Sancho in 2022. Jordi Mons and Tasio Martin climbed a line further right again in 2022.

## Article Details

Author	Ekaitz Maiz
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	98
Page	285
Copyright Date	2024
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions