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Neverseen Tower, Wind of Silence, and Other New Routes

India, Himachal Pradesh, Miyar Valley

Italian climbers Alessandro Baù, Lorenzo D'Addario, Jerome Perruquet, and Francesco Ratti arrived at base camp at about 4,000m in the Miyar Valley during the middle of a high-pressure system in September. This was an opportunity not to be missed, and as their plan was to inspect the unclimbed south-southeast face of Neverseen Tower (ca 5,750m), they left the next day for an eight-hour walk up the Takdung Glacier to establish an advanced base close to the wall. Conditions were good, and they spotted a possible line, but first they needed to acclimatize.

For this they chose the next peak to the north, Grandfather Enzo Peak, first climbed in 1992 from the opposite side (Chhudong Glacier) via the south face and upper southeast ridge. (The full south-southeast ridge was climbed by another Italian team in 2005.) In 2023, the four climbers made the first ascent of the straightforward east ridge, reached by an ascending traverse of the southeast face. After another night at advanced base, they descended to base camp for a rest.

After a week of unsettled conditions, they received a forecast for a few days of stable weather. On their return to advanced base, a different scene awaited them: The freezing level had plummeted by 1,000m and the wall was encrusted in ice. To see if an ascent was feasible, they climbed to the col separating Neverseen from Lotus Peak, where they found old fixed rope from a team that had approached from the Chhudong Glacier but climbed only one pitch up the southeast face. The four Italians decided to start a little lower and to the right, an aspect that would ensure the snow and ice melted faster.

That first day, they climbed a few pitches and left their ropes fixed. Next morning, September 21, the sky was clear. Returning toward the col, they ascended the ropes and continued upward, finding "really nice granite, always fun and never too difficult." They reached the summit at 2 p.m., naming their line Wind of Silence (500m, 6b+). Although they had identified a good bivouac site two pitches below the snowy summit ridge, it was not needed and they regained their camp just before dark. Only pitons and removable protection were used.

During reconnaissance, they had spotted a potential second objective lower down the Takdung Glacier: a southeast-facing pillar rising to around 5,400m on Mont Maudit (ca 5,800m, 33°3'30.92"N, 76°53'6.82"E).

The four began their ascent on September 25. The freezing level was now at 3,500m, so starting a rock climb at around 5,000m was unpleasant. They spent two days climbing the face. On the first they were hampered by light sleet and a cold wind; they returned to their tents below the pillar that night. The next day, they began under a beautiful starry sky and climbed the entire route—Super Thuraya (8 pitches, 6c)—finding exceptional granite. They placed bolted anchors to rappel.

— Lindsay Griffin, AAJ, with information from Alessandro Baù, Italy

Images



Seen from the Takdung Glacier, from left to right: Lotus Peak, Neverseen Tower, and Grandfather Enzo Peak. Marked are the approximate lines of the new routes climbed in 2023.



Wind of Silence on the southeast face of Neverseen Tower. On the left are the steep east-facing walls of Lotus Peak.



During the first ascent of Wind of Silence on the southeast face of Neverseen Tower. The approach couloir can be seen directly below, with the walls of Lotus Peak to the right. On the far side of the Takdung Glacier, the big peak is Ogre III.



On the first ascent of Super Thuraya on a 5,400-meter pillar of Mont Maudit. Behind, across the lower Takdung Glacier, are peaks south of the Ogre group.



The southeast face and east ridge of Grandfather Enzo Peak, climbed during acclimatization in 2023.



Super Thuraya on the southeast face of a subsidiary pillar on Mont Maudit.



Three climbers relatively low on the southeast face of a subsidiary pillar of Mont Maudit, during the first ascent of Super Thuraya.



Seen from the south, Mont Maudit (about 5,800m) is on the far left. In the center is the 5,400-meter pillar and the approximate line climbed in 2023 up the golden southeast face. To the far right is the upper Taktung Glacier.

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