

Indo-American-British 2009 Saser Kangri II Expedition



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The Joint Indo-American-British 2009 Sasser Kangri II Expedition included **Indians** Chewang Motup (co-leader), Ang Tashi, Konchok Tinles, Dahn Singh, and Tsering Sherpa; **Americans** Mark Richey (co-leader), Steve Swenson, and Mark Wilford; and **British** climber Jim Lowther. Other staff included Lakpa Boding, Pemba Norbu, Manbhadr Rai, and Soop Singh.



Our goal was to climb the East Summit of Saser Kangri II, 7,518m, the second highest unclimbed mountain in the world. The west summit was climbed by an Indo Japanese expedition in 1984. According to all our maps and information, the east summit is higher and therefore should be referred to as Saser Kangri Main.





Our expedition left the Nubra Valley (3,050 meters) near the village of Tigur on August 7th. Two days were spent hiking up the Chameshan Lungpa valley to the snout of the Sankang Lungpa Glacier.



Base camp was established in a side valley on August 11th above and to the southeast of the Sakang Lungpa Glacier at 5,180 meters. To reach our intended objective of the East (Main) Summit of Saser Kangri II, we needed to cross over onto

the South Shukpa Kunchang Glacier which was the next valley east of our base camp.



We made several acclimatisation and reconnaissance trips up the unnamed glacier behind base camp on August 12th and 13th and established a camp on an unnamed pass above the South Shukpa Kunchang Glacier at approximately 6,000 meters.

We dropped onto the South Shukpa Kunchang Glacier on August 14th to explore the route to the base of the south face of Saser Kangri II and then spent till August 16th acclimatising and exploring the area.



We returned to base camp on August 16th in deteriorating weather and waited there until August 24th when the weather improved enough to go back over the pass onto the South Shukpa Kunchang Glacier. We spent two nights camped high on the glacier at 6,500 meters to acclimatize and then returned to base camp on August 27th.



We received a weather forecast for at least a week of bad weather so we decided to hike back down to the Nubra Valley on August 30 to rest for a few days at a lower elevation.

We hiked back to base camp on September 2 in still unsettled weather but with a forecast for clearing in a couple of days.

On September 6th we climbed back to the pass in cold and windy conditions with only a forecast for a small window of good weather.

Because the weather window was not going to last long enough to climb Saser Kangri II, we decided to use the opportunity to go up on the route for a day and reconnoiter the route and assess snow conditions.



On September 7th we made an Advanced Base Camp below the face and on September 8th we climbed up the south face to approximately 6,700 meters before rappelling back down. The bottom of the south face is at about 6,000m and the map shows the east summit at 7,513meters. The face is all hard water ice and no snow so the lower slopes were all technical ice climbing.



The rock on SKII is high quality orange granite. It is a safe route with nothing above you to fall on you. There were a couple of ice cliffs on the left, but if you stay along the far right side of the couloir like we did then anything that falls from those ice cliffs is well to the left of you.





On September 10th we returned to base camp to wait again for a better weather spell in which to try and go to the summit.

Bad weather kept us from attempting the peak again until September 19th when we started up the face again with the intent of going for the summit. We reached a good bivouac site earlier in the day at 6,700 meters and spent the night there since there did not appear to be any good bivouac sites until a ledge system at 7,000 meters.



On September 20th we climbed up steep ice slopes in the main gully system to where we veered to the right into some mixed climbing that would take us onto the major ledge system halfway up the face.





We had a poor bivouac that night on small ledges chopped out of the ice and we were not able to erect the tents.

On September 21 we made progress onto the large ledge system and established a better bivouac by spending nearly 4 hours chopping a ledge out of the ice.

That night it snowed and due to the poor, cold and windy weather we decided to descend on September 22. Climbing this high in late September was very cold. We had nighttime temps of -13 to -17 C and highs during the day if we had sun of -5 to -9 C.

We left base camp on September 25th and arrived at the road in the Nubra Valley that same day.



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