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Changuch Expedition 1997

Region - Pindari Valley, Kumaon Himalaya, India.

Dates - 13 Sept 1997 to 13 Oct 1997.

Climbs - Lamchir West 5,600m
Changuch 6,332m



Team Members - Leader - Gary Murray - Mountaineering Instructor

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Aim of the Expedition - To make the first Ascent of Changuch and for Team Members to gain experience in the greater ranges.

Travel - The Team flew to Delhi from Belfast via Amsterdam with KLM for £480.00. This involved one night in Amsterdam on the outward leg, no excess baggage was granted so we freighted approx. 120 Kilo's of equipment, not recommended due to cost and the use of a day and a half before and after the Expedition in getting this out of customs.

Visa - 'X' Mountaineering Visas were obtained from Dublin Embassy.

Peak Fee and Arrangements - All liaison with IMF was completed by our agent which made for ease of organisation, but these services are costly and care must be taken over what is being charged for. If you are short of time employ an agent if not ask advice and do everything yourself.

Insurance - The BMC provided excellent cover.

Grants - The Expedition would like to thank the Mount Everest Foundation, BMC, MCI, Irish Himalayan Trust and Ulster Sport and Recreation Trust for their support.

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The Expedition - We arrived in Delhi on the night of 14 Sept and spent the next 2 days completing formalities at the IMF and more infuriatingly trying to get our freight out of customs.

We left Delhi on 17 Sept and spent the next 2 days travelling by private bus to the road head at Song with a night stop at Naintal.

An early start on 20 Sept saw us pack our 7 mules for the 3 day walk into Base Camp. The walk in was fairly straight forward with 2 other large expeditions having already proceeded up the Valley clearing the paths after damage from the heavy Monsoon rains.

Our first night was spent at the Rest House in Dhakuri which gave us our first view of Changuch and our first rain storm of the Expedition. The next day we walked the 14 km to Dwali along the banks of the Kafni river, this was completed in heavy rain which was to be the pattern of our stay in Kumaon, a clear start to the day, cloud closing in by 9.30am and rain or snow following shortly after. The last day was only a walk of 4 hours to our Base Camp at zero point at 3,800m.

After Base Camp was established a plan of action was drawn up with a reece planned to find the best line up Changuch and a possible acclimatisation foray.

The following 2 days we spent climbing up to 4,400m to get a good view of the South Face of Changuch and the Changuch Glacier. Changuch is a very impressive mountain with considerable access problems before one can get established on the peak.

It was felt that before an attempt could be made on the peak we should acclimatise on something smaller, so we decided to climb the Western Top of Lamchir at 5,600m.

We made two camps, one at 4,350m and the other at 4,800m just below the snow line. A 2.00am start saw us climb easily for 5 hours to the Western Top, the central Top would involve a long day of dangerous and technical climbing in it's last 200m. We arrived back at Base Camp that afternoon tired but very happy.

We decided to have a days rest before attempting anything further, however, for the next 10 days we experienced thick mist and snow each day, with only the odd break in the weather which always heralded a false hope. It was reluctantly decided that too much snow had fallen and no weather window was going to appear to make a successful attempt on Changuch.

We spent 2 hard days walking out to Song and a further 2 days drive back to Delhi.

Conclusion - The Expedition experienced unusually bad weather for the time of year, however, it does seem that the area is prone to afternoon storms, so very early starts are recommended.

The approach to Changuch is very complex and dangerous with moraines of over 400m high and 1.5 miles wide to approach the ribs on it's South Face. The South Face itself would appear to be topped by overhanging seracs.

The best approach to the mountain may be a direct one of fixing a line up the snout of the Glacier and establishing a camp below the obvious gully on the peaks right hand side, from here a camp could be established at the foot of the ridge which would give at least 2 days of hard climbing. Good Luck.

The area is a lovely remote one, with lots of opportunities to repeat some nice challenging routes.