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Parbati South 6128m

1998

REPORT

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Climbers

John Cousins

Rob Collister

Trekkers

Gill Cousins

Helen Berry

who accompanied us to Base Camp and stayed on during our initial reconnaissance / acclimatization period.

Liaison Officer

Mr Raj Dogra

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to the following:

Financial Support

British Mountaineering Council

Mount Everest Foundation

Dr Doug Dean

Equipment Sponsorship

Lowe Alpine UK

Terra Nova Equipment

Extra Baggage Allowance

Air India

Dates

August 22 - October 2, 1998

Aim

To make the first ascent of the SW Ridge of Parbati South, 6128m in the Kulu region of northern India.

Background

This was a return visit for Rob Collister, who made the first and, to date, only ascent of Parbati South in 1973 with Dick Isherwood. An attempt was made on the SW ridge and, though unsuccessful, it had remained at the back of Rob's mind as a superb objective to return to one day.

Approach

A two day bus journey on wet and very busy roads took us from Delhi to Manikaran in the Parbati valley (via Kulu town, where the Liaison Officer reported our arrival and the bus was repaired). A leisurely six day walk followed up the stunningly beautiful Parbati valley. Base Camp was established half a mile beyond the shrine at Mantalai in an idyllic spot beside a small lake at 4100m.

Reconnaissance

An initial acclimatizing journey was made towards the Pin Parbati Pass. Considerable confusion seems to exist as to exactly where the pass is and which is the best route to reach it. The description in the Lonely Planet Guide to Trekking in Northern India is very misleading.

A reconnaissance was then made towards the peak: up the main valley until the glacier river disappeared and we could cross over to the so-called Glacier IV; then up this on unpleasant moraine to put a camp at 4600m on a bench where the glacier forks. A number of day trips were made from here in unsettled weather, one to the col beneath P.6128m and another to the top of P.5470m (Twin Peak).

Climbing

At this point we were fit, acclimatized and ready to go. Unfortunately, it was at this point also that the weather broke with a vengeance. During the next fortnight we had prolonged spells of heavy rain and snow, which kept us in our tents most of the time, and eventually destroyed Base Camp. We never set foot on the mountain.

Weather

Ironically the weather was fine for most of the walk-in, and turned fine again the day before we left Base Camp to walk out. It became unsettled as soon as we arrived at Base Camp but the real turning point was September 12, when snow fell down to 4000 metres. Thereafter the snow-line never rose above 4500m and even had the weather improved, the mountain was totally plastered.

Logistics

These were handled for us admirably by KVT Ltd. Although obviously more expensive than buying our own food in Delhi, arranging our own transport and arranging porters for ourselves, it undoubtedly saved us a great deal of time and hassle and we regarded it as money well spent.

Our Liaison Officer, Mr Raj Dogra, could not have been more helpful and pleasant as a travelling companion, as were our kitchen staff Lalit Kumar and Darum Singh.

We were greatly helped by a 35kg baggage allowance from Air India which enabled us to avoid the hassle and delay of sending anything cargo.

Diary

August	22-23	Fly Manchester - Delhi
	24-25	Delhi
	26-27	Bus to Manikaran, via Mandi and Kulu
	28 - 3 Sept	Walk in to Base Camp - weather fine.
September	4-11	Reconnaissance & acclimatization - weather unsettled.
	12	First snow at Base Camp
	13	Trekkers depart
	13-26	Climbing phase - weather appalling.
	27-29	Walk-out - weather good.
	30-31	Drive back to Delhi
October	1	Delhi
	2	Fly Delhi - Manchester

Finances

Income

BMC	£850	
MEF	£750	
Dr Doug Dean	£500	
Personal contributions	£5200	
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Total		£7300

Expenditure

Flights x 4	£1896	
UK expenses	£194	
IMF:	£1630	
(peak fee, LO's gear, environmental levy)		
KVT Ltd:		
(transport, cook, porters, food etc)	£3050	
Delhi (hotel, meals, taxis)	£300	
Gas canisters	£80	
Tips	£150	
	—————	
Total		£7300