

**THE GONGGA E 2004 EXPEDITION TO THE NAN MEN GUAN
VALLEY**

SICHUAN, CHINA

MEF Ref. 04/13A

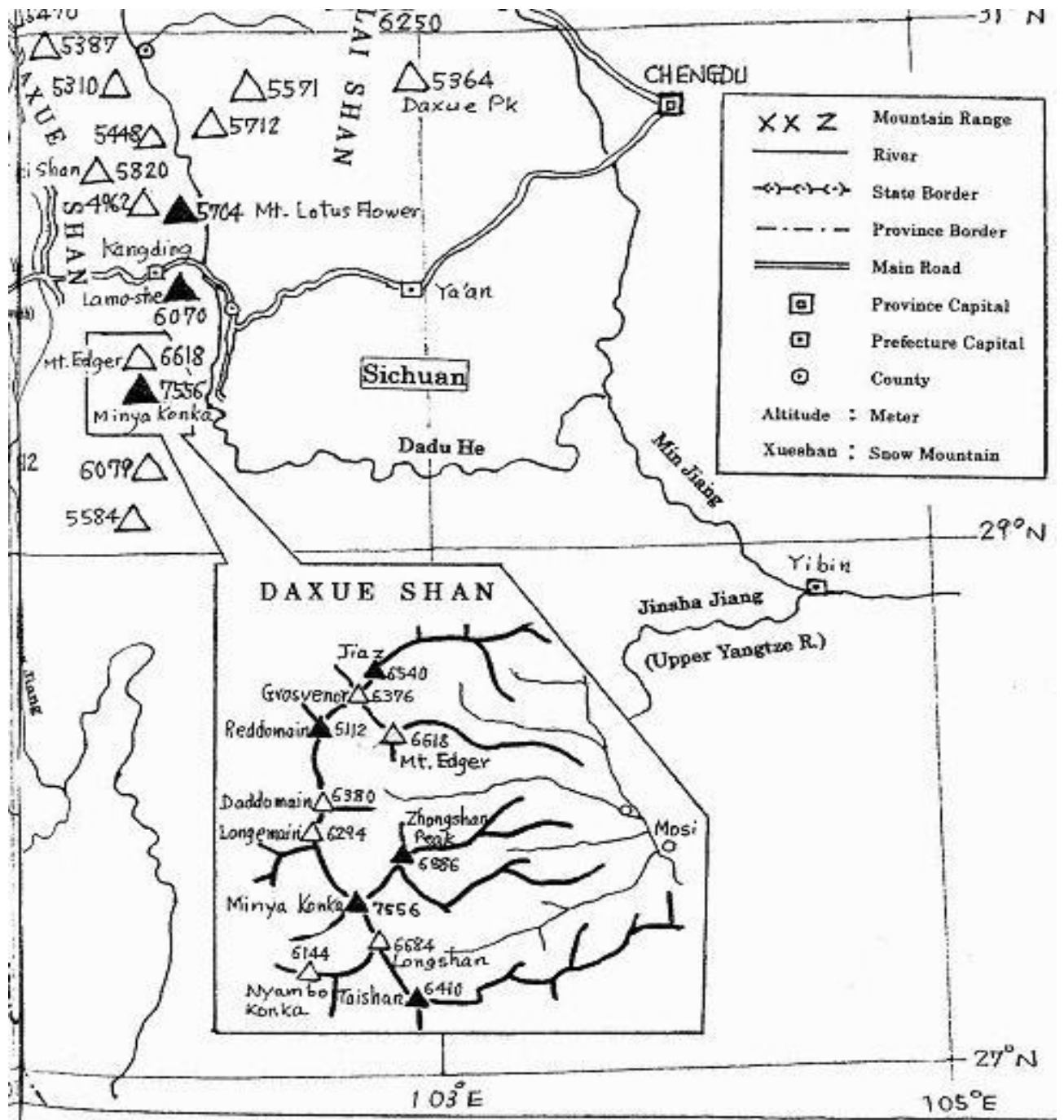
LAND OF THE CATERPILLAR FUNGUS COLLECTORS



Gongga E

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MAP OF SICHUAN, CHINA showing CHENGDU, DAXUE SHAN and MOUNT EDGAR/GONGGA E 6618 m.

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Colin Knowles and Chris Smart	Organisation, travel and information
Stuart Hepburn	Slide show, photographs and information
Roger Payne	Information and introduction to Lenny
Mick Fowler	Information
Dr Kevin Hickey	Medical advice and prescriptions
Roly Arnison	UK support and advice re: medical kit
Tamotsu Nakamura	Information and journals
First Ascent	Equipment – MSR hanging stoves

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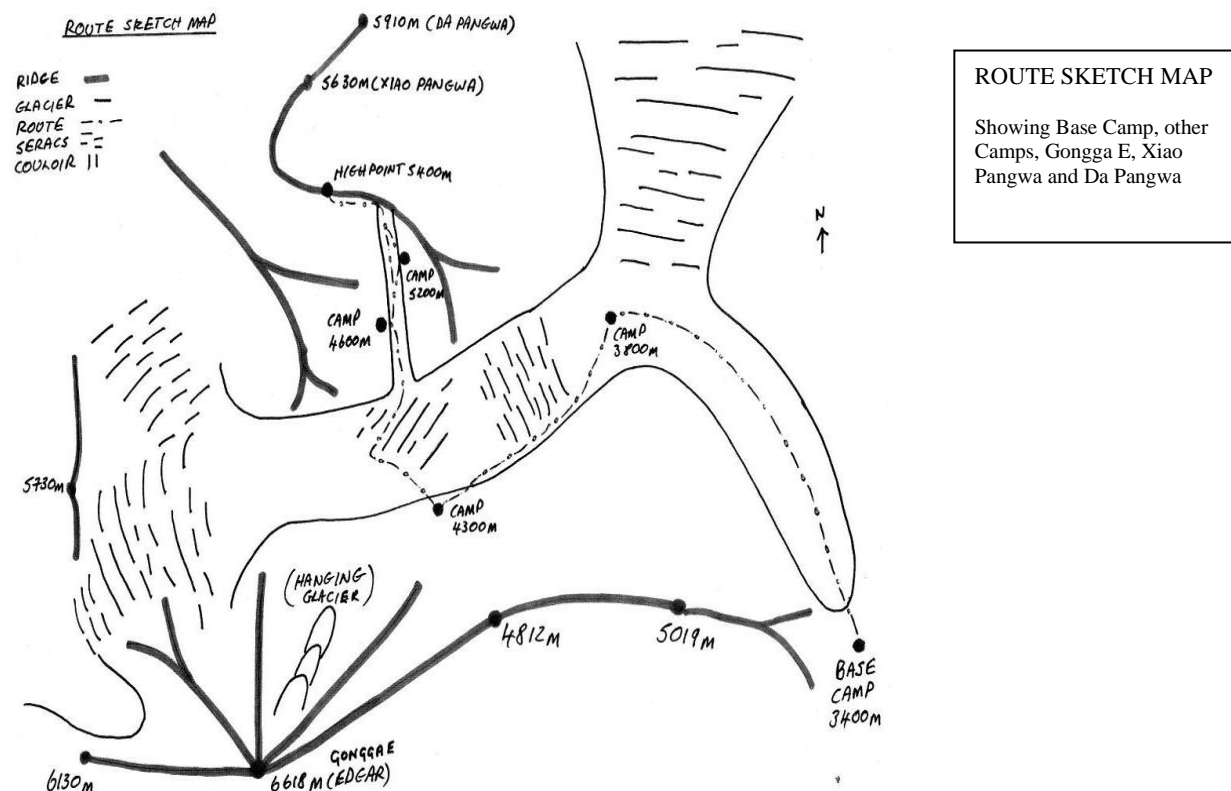
Summary

In April 2004 four UK-based climbers undertook an exploration of the Nan Men Guan Valley in the Daxue Shan mountains, six hours' drive along good roads, south west of Chengdu, Sichuan, western China.

The primary objective was to attempt a first ascent of Gongga E (also known as Mount Edgar) 6618 metres 29° 43' 59", 101° 54' 0". The intended route was via the glacier basin on the northern side of the mountain, approaching via the Nan Men Guan Valley. The secondary objective was to explore the glacier basin and record information of importance to mountaineering. Local people informed us that no foreigners had progressed further up the valley than what is known as the Black Dragon Head Gorge. Our understanding is the 1981 British Army expedition team led by Henry Day had visited this valley.

Poor weather conditions throughout the expedition, with constant risk of avalanche, meant that it was not possible to find a safe route through serac barriers and approach and climb Gongga E.

Consequently the team turned its attention to two unclimbed peaks Point 5630 and Point 5910 metres, which we named Xiao Pangwa (Little Fat Boy) and Da Pangwa (Big Fat Boy) after two members of our team. Dangerous snow and ice conditions and a threatening thunderstorm at 5400 metres on the long ridge leading to the top of the mountain made the team decide to abandon an attempt on the summit. They retreated safely despite the storm breaking. Continued poor weather meant another attempt was not possible.



The Expedition Participants

The UK-based participants, all members of the Red Rope club were:

Angela Benham	Expedition Leader/Treasurer	Leicester
Titch Kavangh	Medical Officer	Bradford
Andrew Phillips	Food	Nottingham
Chris Drinkwater	Equipment	Littleborough,Lancs

Colin Knowles had been the original leader of this expedition. Titch and Andrew had been members of the successful expedition to CB11 (c6000m) in India under his leadership in 1997. Angela and Chris joined them on the 2001 expedition to the Siruanch Glacier in India when the team successfully reached the summit of Shambhu Ka Qilla (c.6160m). Unfortunately due to an injury Colin had to withdraw from the Gongga E expedition. Another team member withdrew due to unforeseen circumstances.

The Chinese participants were:

Zhengling Cheng (Lenny)	Guide/Interpreter/Cook	Chengdu
Gao Wei	Lenny's Assistant	Chengdu
Lao Gwei and Mr Cheng	Drivers	Chengdu
Alex	Lenny's helper	Rilong



Lenny and a party of caterpillar fungus collectors

Background Information

The Daxue Shan is the most eastern range in the Himalaya, at the very eastern edge of the Tibetan plateau. These mountains are on the traditional trading route from Beijing to Lhasa. Notable among recent explorers is Tamotsu Nakamura, who documents the range in a special issue of the Japanese Alpine News, *East of the Himalayas - to the Alps of Tibet* (vol. 4, May 2003). Nakamura notes that, in the 70 years between 1932 and 2002, only 20 teams climbed in the Daxue Shan. Stuart Hepburn, whose team made the first reconnoitre of Gongga E / Edgar, referred to below, described the region:

The mountains of the Daxue Shan are well hidden, complex and big for their altitude. Deep cut valleys, steep approaches and often even steeper summit cones contrive to make attempts on the peaks of this range extremely difficult and hazardous. Yosemite Valley with the Alps plonked on top would not be an entirely inaccurate analogous description of the main topographical features of the area. Route finding is a problem. Also, the range has had a disproportionate number of fatal accidents compared with other areas of the Himalaya but this is hardly surprising. The objective dangers are legion.

The highest mountain in the range is Gongga Shan, or Minya Gongga (7556 m) first climbed, in Alpine style, by an American team, in 1932.

Gongga E / Mount Edgar, Gongga Shan's highest satellite peak, derives its unusual name from J Huston Edgar, an archaeologist with the China Inland Mission in Kangding, who was in important figure in the development of historical and topographical knowledge of the area. Edgar was among those who hosted the Americans, Richard L Burdsall, Arthur B Emmons III, Jack T Young and Terris Moore, who made the first ascent of Gongga Shan.

In the spring of 1981, a British Army team, led by M W Henry Day, approached Jiazi peak by way of the Nan Men Guan Valley. Day described a "difficult approach through a ravine filled with thick forest", revealing "a lost world, never before entered by man". Access from there to Jiazi "was everywhere denied by chaotically fractured glaciers". The team gained probably the first ever sighting of Gongga E / Edgar from the north. It "looked formidable".

Stuart Hepburn, leader of an expedition to the region in the summer of 1982, was told by Day that "E Gongga looks fantastic from the north; in this case I think it would be worth looking at the southern side!" He remarked upon the "particularly dangerous ice falls", that denied the British Army team access to the face of Jiazi. Even so, Hepburn's team did not rule out an attempt on Edgar from the north. In the event, an approach from the Nan Men Guan Valley was denied them, because of heavy flooding in the valley, just prior to their arrival. Instead, they macheted their way through five to six kilometres of dense forest and crossed the complicated and heavily crevassed Yantsoko Glacier, in order to make two attempts upon the mountain, from the south and west. Their first attempt was defeated by a vertical 600m rock tower, "of doubtful stability". Finally, heavy, soft snowfall and shortage of time forced a retreat.

Inspired by descriptions such as those above, of the mountain and the range, and by photographs - a solitary one of Edgar from the north, taken by Day's team, many great ones from the south, kindly copied for us by Stuart Hepburn, and finally a great shot, again from the north, sent us by Roger Payne - our team planned to make the first ascent of Mount Edgar.

Shortly before our departure date, we heard from our prospective guide, Zhengling Cheng (Lenny), that Edgar had been climbed in the year 2000, by a Korean team, who had not yet officially reported the ascent.

After discussion, we decided that we would keep the ascent of Edgar as our primary objective, and that we would attempt the first ascent from the north. This promised to give us an enviable opportunity to explore the enticingly named Nan Men Guan Valley. We have not regretted our decision.

EXPEDITION ITINERARY			
Day	Date	Location/Travel	Activity
Sat	27th March	Depart London Heathrow Flight BA39.	
Sun	28th March	Arrive Beijing at 10:45. Internal flight to Chengdu. Arrive approx 19.00	Meet Lenny/Gao Wei. Stay Lhasa Grand Hotel, Chengdu.
Mon	29th March	Chengdu	Shopping for provisions
Tue	30th March	Chengdu	Shopping for equipment
Wed	31st March	Depart for Moxi	Stay at Long March Hotel, Moxi
Thu	1st April	Meet porters at Xin Xin bridge 1925 m. Trek to Lower Camp.	Sleep at Lower Camp (2700m) Nan Men Guan Valley.
Fri	2nd April	Trek to Base Camp. Porters unwilling to go higher.	Establish Base Camp (3400m) just below the snout of the glacier.
Sat	3rd April	Rest Day	
Sun	4th April	Walk up moraine to Boulder Camp. Returned to Base Camp in afternoon.	Leave some gear at Boulder Camp 3800m in view of a serac barrier leading towards Gongga E. Catch glimpses of Gongga E through breaks in cloud.
Mon	5th April	Rest Day	
Tue	6th April	Early start for Boulder Camp.	Snow during afternoon and evening.
Wed	7th April	Still snowing. Whiteout.	After night at Boulder Camp decide to return to Base Camp due to weather.
Thu	8th April	Remain at Base Camp.	Snow most of the day. 50m visibility.
Fri	9th April	Return up moraine to Boulder Camp.	
Sat	10th April	Climb past first serac barrier to 4300m. Then descend to Boulder Camp.	Stash gear at 4300m. AB makes the decision not to attempt the second serac barrier due to concerns about reserves of strength.
Sun	11th April	Heavy snowfall.	All decide to return to Base Camp because of the poor weather conditions.
Mon	12th April	Heavy snowfall. Poor visibility.	Remain at Base Camp.
Tue	13th April	Heavy snowfall. Poor visibility.	Remain at Base Camp.
Wed	14th April	Heavy snowfall. Poor visibility.	Remain at Base Camp.
Thu	15th April	Heavy snowfall. Poor visibility.	Remain at Base Camp. Temperature drops.
Fri	16th April	Clear, blue sky. Avalanches. TK, CD, AP leave for Boulder Camp	AB remains at Base Camp.
Sat	17th April	TK, CD and AP remain at Boulder Camp.	Wait for snow conditions to settle. Avalanches at side of first serac barrier.
Sun	18th April	TK, CD and AP remain at Boulder Camp	Two huge powder snow avalanches off Xiao Pangwa and Da Pangwa.
Mon	19th April	TK, CD and AP depart at 2 am to climb past first serac barrier.	TK, CD and AP arrive 8.15 am 4300m stash. Thigh deep snow. Avalanches.
		TK, CD and AP do recce to 4400m to assess safety of second serac barrier.	Decide 2nd serac barrier is too dangerous. Attempt on Gongga E not possible.
	20 April	The three turn their attention to Point	Meanwhile AB and Lenny climb to top of

Tue		5630. They explore the glacier between the first and second serac barrier that they must cross.	ridge at side of Base Camp and have clear views of the glacial moraine and Gongga E.
Wed	21st April	TK, CD and AP cross the glacier and begin to ascend couloir.	For 8 hours TK, CD and AP ascend the couloir.
Thu	22nd April	TK, CD and AP reach 5400m.	Poor snow and ice conditions, clouds gathering and extreme exhaustion bring the three to decide the best and safest option is to retreat. Descend to 5200m and camp. Rock and ice cascade down couloir from 9 pm to 10 am the next morning. One rock tears through tent, narrowly missing AP's head.
Fri	23rd April	TK, CD and AP continue down-climbing to 4300m camp, retrieve gear and continue to Boulder Camp.	A thunderstorm breaks as the three cross the glacier to 4300m. TK, CD and AP have to wade through waist deep snow on descent to Boulder Camp. Meanwhile AB and Lenny walk up the glacial moraine and ascend the left-hand side of the moraine. They discover a hidden valley, which flanks Gongga E. Descend using the caterpillar fungus collectors' more direct route to left of glacier snout.
Sat	24th April	TK, CD and AP leave for Base Camp at 11 am.	TK, CD, AP. arrive at Base Camp at 14.20. Meanwhile AB and Lenny follow the caterpillar fungus route up to the hidden valley. Walk up to 3805m and look over the lip of the moraine onto the glacier.
Sun	25th April	Rest Day - Fine weather	Wash, dry and sort gear.
Mon	26th April	Rest Day - Non-stop rain.	
Tue	27th April	All day trek back to Xin Xin bridge.	Fine weather. Stay at Long March Hotel, Moxi.
Wed	28th April	Travel back to Chengdu.	Stay at Sam's Guesthouse.
Thu	29th April	Chengdu	
Fri	30th April	Chengdu	Shopping for provisions for trek in Mount Siguniang Nature Reserve.
Sat	1st May	Travel to Rilong	Stay at Alex's hotel, Rilong.
Sun	2nd May	Trek to Siguniang Base Camp area	British Team attempting Mt Siguniang
Mon	3rd May	Explore valley.	
Tue	4th May	Trek back to Rilong.	Stay at Alex's hotel, Rilong.
Wed	5th May	Souvenir shopping	Stay at Alex's hotel, Rilong.
Thu	6th May	Bus back to Chengdu	Stay at Sam's Guesthouse.
Fri	7th May	Depart from Chengdu to Beijing	Stay at Beijing Airport
Sat	8th May	Depart from Beijing Flight BA38 leaving at 11.25	Arrive Heathrow Terminal 4 at 15.00.

Route up the Nan Men Guan Valley

DAY 1.

1. Start on vehicle track on left of river. Small settlement on left. Larger building on right.
2. Easy walking sometimes through bush/forest, sometimes alongside river on visible path for approx. two and a half hours. Path used by loggers.
3. When you reach two very large boulders on each side of the river forming a kind of gateway and the first significant waterfall the path rises steeply on the left through thick forest and traverses several distinct unstable landslip gullies. The Head Porter called this the first difficulty. There was a second similarly difficult section later on. The path constantly moved from the riverbank up into the forest. Cut down branches and trees help identify the path although it is not always easy to follow.
4. Approximately two hours later you reach a Y fork in the river. Take the right fork to a massive black ravine feature called the Black Dragon Head Gorge. A flat camping area is in front of the gorge.
5. Go steeply up to the left of the gorge at first following a small stream that runs parallel with the gorge. Continue up through forest and tall grass. The angle eases and on the right there are large rock slabs with water cascading down them. Go along the left bank for approximately half an hour to an obvious campsite with a big blackened boulder shelter. This is the Lower Camp. Give yourself about 8 hours. The height is approx. 2700m.

DAY 2.

1. Follow the left bank of the river for about half an hour. Cross the river at a log bridge just before a large boulder and then follow the right bank - sometimes going up into wood and bush and then dropping down to the riverbank.
2. You have to cross the river again via boulders and continue for approximately half an hour until you see two large boulders with moss and trees on top where there is another log crossing.
3. Follow the river on the right hand side until there is a Y in the river with large moraine in between with trees, rhododendrons and azaleas on top. Take the left hand fork and follow the river until you come out of the woods onto a flatter area of big boulders. Base camp is half a kilometre short of the snout of the glacier, 500 metres up right from a very large square cut boulder. It is parallel to a rock fall area with a good drinking and bathing stream on the right.

The attempt to climb Gongga E and Xiao Pangwa – Point 5630 m.

- Friday 16 April Blue sky, sunshine, avalanches. Approx 2.40 pm Titch Kavanagh, Chris Drinkwater and Andrew Phillips left for Boulder Camp 3800m. Arrived 7.15 pm. Hard going in knee-deep powder snow. Bibler tents buried under snow.
- Saturday 17 April Snowed overnight. Heavy snow flurries during day. Waited for snow conditions to settle. Powder snow avalanches at side of first serac barrier. Noted one serac tower had collapsed.
- Sunday 18 April Starry night. Crystal clear, sunny morning. Heavy crust on snow. Two huge powder avalanche off Points 5630m and Point 5910. Wind direction from north indicated good weather. Plumes of cloud streaming off Gongga E.
- Monday 19 April Left at 2.30 am under starlight to ascend side of first serac barrier. Thin snow crust made progress difficult – frequently thigh deep in snow. Arrived at Gear Stash 4300m at 8.15 am. Blazing sun and many avalanches.
- Tuesday 20 April Did recce of second serac barrier through knee-deep snow to 4400m. No obvious safe route visible, either side or through 45 degree angled serac barrier to give access to basin below Gongga E's NW face. Saw other possible mixed routes up the mountain. Returned to sleep at Camp 4300m.
- It was decided 1) Lack of time
2) Lack of acclimatisation
3) Objective danger from avalanches & serac falls made it unwise to attempt to climb Gongga E. At 6 pm a huge wet snow avalanche came down the route confirming our decision. On recce to 4400m TK, CD and AP noted the glacier between the first and second serac barriers was a flat area approximately 1 kilometre square – possible future camping area? Also observed a possible second objective almost directly opposite camp 4300m. There was a couloir, judged to be about 750m in length, which appeared to lead directly to a 3 km long ridge. According to the map, this ridge would lead to Xiao Pangwa. At 9.20 pm, having had no sleep due to the need to avoid climbing the east-facing couloir in daylight and make progress, TK, CD and AP set out to cross the glacier to the couloir's base. The first part of the glacier crossing was straightforward. The second part involved a large amount of zigzagging and backtracking in order to avoid large crevasses. The three explored the glacier for two hours and then decided that they needed daylight to find a safe route across. There was a snowstorm and a team member needed to return to Camp 4300m to retrieve his rucksack hip belt.

Wednesday 21 April Slept on glacier from 12.30 – 4.30 am. Underway by 5.30 am and able to see a safe route across the glacier, which involved one short, thin exposed section. Climbed slowly and steadily up frozen avalanche debris in couloir to 4650m when sun appeared. Dug a platform out of avalanche line and camped. Several small avalanches came down the couloir in the afternoon. At 9 pm continued up 45 degree couloir, moving together in two 4 hour leads hoping to camp on reaching the ridge.

Thursday 22 April The couloir seemed endless. At 5400m and approx 5.15 am the team reached a sharp, soft snow gap with rocks on both sides and a precipitous drop. There was no place to camp and the snow and rock conditions had become increasingly rotten, loose and soft the further up the couloir they progressed, despite the low temperature. CD retreated from the gap and looked to the left for a place to camp. None was visible. Desperate for water, food and sleep they hacked out a small bivvy ledge, which enabled them to use the tent as a shelter. Belays were insecure due to the friability of the rock. There were excellent views of the base camp valley and Gongga E but clouds were gathering in the east. CD and AP explored to left and right and confirmed that they were on the ridge system leading to the summit of Point 5630 m. CD reported that there might be an area suitable for a tent further along the ridge. A lot of gear was left behind because the three thought progress along the ridge would be straightforward. Instead once CD had led half a pitch he realised that the climbing would be much more serious and slower than expected. The exposed ridge was covered in a thin, slushy layer of snow on old, hard, black ice. The team decided that the safest option was to retreat. They were desperately tired, weak and dehydrated. The ridge ahead of them was between 2 to 3 kilometres long and they could not see a suitable campsite. Weather conditions were also deteriorating. TK, CD and AP retreated to the bivvy ledge. They decided abseiling was unsafe due to rock friability and started to down climb. Paradoxically snow conditions were more secure and consolidated on the climb down despite it being 2 pm and the sun having been on the couloir for several hours. At 5200m and 4 pm they stopped and dug a snow platform where a boulder offered partial protection from couloir debris. At approx 9.30 pm heavy showers of ice and rock of various sizes hurtled down the couloir, intermittently hitting the tent. One fist-sized rock tore through the tent narrowly missing AP's head. Helmets were put on. This bombardment continued for 12 hours causing much anxiety and no sleep. As well as a hole the Bibler suffered several cuts in the fabric.

Friday 23 April

At 10 am the ice storm eventually stopped and a 2-foot high accumulation of ice ‘ball bearings’ blocked the tent door. The night had been very cold (the coldest night of the trip) and there was a wind coming up the couloir. The team wondered what had caused the night’s phenomenon.

After re-hydration the three resumed down climbing and reached the bottom of the couloir by 5.30 pm. Surprisingly no couloir debris fell during this time. Many more crevasses were visible. The weather and snow conditions worsened. Cloud cover came down and wet snow fell. A thunderstorm broke as they crossed the glacier via a slightly different route. Ice axes hummed and shortly afterwards there was the sound of a massive avalanche from the direction of the second serac barrier, which sounded in the poor visibility as if it were heading straight for them. By 7 pm they reached Camp 4300m, thoroughly soaked. They retrieved all the gear and decided to continue to the relative safety and comfort of the Boulder Camp at 3800m. The descent involved ploughing through waist deep, wet, slushy snow. At Boulder Camp by 9.15 they ate, drank and then slept until 7 am Saturday morning.

Saturday 24 April

Left for Base Camp at 11 am, arrived at 2.20 pm and had a cup of tea.

Conclusion

Although the team did not achieve its primary objective of climbing Gongga E from the Nan Men Guan Valley it succeeded in its secondary objective of exploring the glacier basin on the northern side of Gongga E. and recording information of importance to mountaineering.

The Gongga E expedition team hopes that the information and photographs in this report will assist future expeditions in their enjoyment of this beautiful and fascinating area and further attempts at climbing Gongga E.

Medical Report

A First Aid and Rescue Emergency and Care day course was provided by Wilderness Expertise Training Ltd, Medical Expertise, The octagon, Wellington College, Crowthorne, Berkshire, RG45 7PU. Tel 01344 774430 Fax 01344 774480 E-mail info@wilderness-expertise.co.uk Website www.wilderness-expertise.co.uk Many thanks to the Red Rope Walking and Climbing Club for a grant of £300 towards the costs of this course.

Medical supplies taken were certainly less than we had taken before (to India in 1997 and 2001). One of the main things we decided not to take after our first aid course was Morphine. (We did however take needles and syringes for flushing wounds and in case somebody ended up in a hospital needing an injection).

There were no major injuries and perhaps the most positive piece of information was the complete lack of illness from waterborne sources. This was obviously helped by the fact that everywhere you went there was either boiled (served warm and cooled) water available, or bottled water. This meant that water purification products were not used (but could have been used to clean wounds if we had needed). Such simple health promotion goes a long way. There were no obvious problems with acclimatisation, other than the usual headaches and breathlessness.

We took the supplies listed below with us. These were distributed in 250ml 'Tupperware' personal first aid kits (which included drug protocols, casualty assessment cards and a pen). At Base Camp there was a slightly larger kit available.

We were very pleased to see Lenny and Gao Wei using 'no water needed' hand gel and supplement their supply with our own.

Some drugs were sold on to another British expedition who had hoped to buy drugs in China but experienced translation and supply difficulties. One of their team was a medical doctor. With time we are fairly confident you could get most of what you need in chemists in the major Chinese cities.

Supplies taken from the UK Prescribing GP Kevin Hickey, Shipley, Bradford.

<i>Ambulance dressings, Acetazolimide, Amoxycillin, Anusol, Bactrigras dressings, Bandages, bendy leg split, Chlrorpheniramine, Cicatrin, Ciprofloxacin, Clotrimazole, Co-dydramol, Dexamethasone, dental putty, Diaolyte, digital thermometer, Gaffa tape,</i>	<i>Ibuprofen, Iodine, Lemsips, Loramide, Metronidazole, Micropore tape, Needle kit, Nifedipine, Paracetamol, plasters, rubber gloves, safety pins, scalpal, Steristrips, syringes, Temgesic, throat lozenges & triangular bandages.</i>
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Two medical books were taken: Bezruchka 1994 and Wilkerson 1992 - see bibliography



Xiao Pangwa and Da Pangwa from Base Camp



The hole torn in the Bibler by a rock during the icestorm of the night of 22 April



The 1200 metre long couloir leading to Xiao Pangwa

Equipment Report

Availability in Chengdu

It was possible to purchase a basic but haphazard supply of varied climbing equipment in various shops around Chengdu. Future expeditions might be advised to e-mail companies to ensure what is needed is available. We bought gas, pegs, a rope and climbing guides.

Gear Shops

1. Mountain Dak Outdoor Sports Club
Near Traffic hotel Tel 028-854266 Fax 028-85457750
E-mail mt344@sohu.com Website www.mt8850.com

2. Piton Shop (Name unknown)
028-87765489 87741650-88
E-mail dd517@dd517.com Website www.dd517.com

3. Snow Peak Outdoor Equipment
Tel 028-66189569
E-mail outdoors@tom.com

1. Boondocks
Near Sam's Guesthouse Tel 028-861155998
Website www.boondocks.com.cn

On the mountain

Bibler Eldorado 2 door 2 man tent

This tent proved to be exceptionally hard wearing in the heavy ice storm of 22/23 April and protected the team from serious injury. Three large climbers could sleep in it in relative comfort. The tent is highly recommended.

XKJ and MSR Hanging Stoves

Both models of MSR stove functioned extremely well at high altitude. The XGK ran on local petrol bought from the Moxi petrol station. The self-ignition switches on the hanging stoves were not always reliable. These stoves were also adapted to secure the windshields.

Gongga E Expedition Statement of Accounts

INCOME

Team members' contributions	8728.00
BMC grant	900.00
MEF grant	600.00
Red Rope grant	300.00
TOTAL	10528.00

EXPENDITURE

AIR FARES – UK/BELJING	2041.00
AIR FARES/TAXESBELJING/CHENGDU	860.00
INSURANCE	1000.00
VISAS	120.00
AGENT(incl.accommodation, travel,food, porters & miscellaneous)	4380.00
PEAK FEE+ ENVIRONMENTAL TAX	450.00
FIRST AID COURSE+TRAINING	436.00
EQUIPMENT	310.00
MEDICAL SUPPLIES	165.00
HIGH ALTITUDE FOOD	146.00
FOOD (£50 worth supplementing HA supplies and miscellaneous)	90.00
BUS TRAVEL IN CHINA	20.00
TRAVEL IN UK	25.00
ACCOMMODATION+ FOOD - RILONG	48.00
Entry Fee to Siguniang Nature Reserve	7.00
ACCOMMODATION+FOOD-CHENGDU	18.00
HIRE OF HALL - UK	100.00
FILM	200.00
EXPEDITION REPORT	85.00
STAMPS , PHOTOCOPIES, FAXES	15.00
MISCELLANEOUS	12.00
TOTAL	10528.00

NOTE – All figures are rounded to the nearest £ for convenience

Food Report

In General

As three of the team are vegetarians we decided that our trip would be meat free. One of the advantages of employing Lenny was that we were able to use him to experience a very good range of excellent food in Chengdu, on our journey to the mountains and in Moxi. (We would recommend anyone visiting Sichuan province to try 'tiger skin peppers').

Lenny and Gao Wei also turned out to be excellent hosts at base camp, cooking a very good and plentiful supply of varied, filling and nutritious food. Lenny's pancakes at breakfast are to be savoured!

High Altitude Food

We knew from other reports and from discussions with participants of recent expeditions that there was a reasonable selection of food available in Chengdu. We still thought it advisable to purchase some high altitude food/liquid in the UK. We spent £146 on Peronin, Go Bars, Gels, and re-hydration sports drinks as well as fruit tea bags - the total weight of these items was 8 kg.

The sports drinks went down reasonably well. The Go bars were all eaten, but the Gels and Peronin were not that popular.

As expected the supermarkets of Chengdu did stock other essential items of high altitude food. One problem we encountered was the rather large amount of packaging that seemed to accompany every item. We spent the equivalent of £50 in a Chengdu supermarket supplementing our high altitude supplies.

For breakfast we were able to buy packets of sweetened porridge, biscuits and dried fruit. For lunch we bought chocolate (mainly Snickers and Cadbury fruit and nut bars), some sweets and a variety of nuts. For our main meals, inevitably perhaps, we purchased packets of egg noodles, although we could also have bought other varieties of (rice) noodles. For hydration and flavouring we were able to buy soups (Hot & Sour, Vegetables and Bean Curd being the only vegetarian flavours). However we also found some tomato-flavoured seaweed soup that went down a treat. To bulk out our main meal we bought some cheese (very limited in selection, i.e. processed, 'plastic' cheese). Importantly for us however we also found and bought a large selection of very flavoursome tofu. We wished we had bought more of it!

Conclusion

What we brought from the UK and were able to buy in Chengdu did for our basic needs. Lenny's excellent cooking at base camp was a real morale booster for us however - something which is very important on a long trip.

On reflection, although the noodles were able to 'fill' us up, it probably would have been wise to take some other carbohydrate sources from the UK for high altitude use. For instance at one point or other we all craved something other than noodles - like mashed potato.

Weather Conditions

The success of the expedition was seriously hindered by the frequency of heavy snow, rainfall and thick cloud. At least half of the team's twenty seven days on the mountain were lost due to adverse weather conditions and this inevitably limited opportunities to acclimatise and explore. The local head porter said that the weather conditions were normal for the time of year and stated that August and September had the best and most stable weather.

Flora and Fauna

Although the Nan Men Guan glacier has been little visited by foreigners, local men scour it at the beginning of spring in search of the rare and rather nondescript looking root called the Caterpillar Fungus. This root is prized for its medicinal properties and sold at great profit in China, Korea and Japan. Collecting Caterpillar Fungi is one of the main occupations of the locals and on our return journey down the valley we had fewer porters than was ideal because the men found gathering caterpillar fungi more profitable. One of the collectors we met told us that there were hundreds of Caterpillar Fungus Collectors in the next valley.

Many moraine boulders were covered in distinctive red-coloured lichen. Lenny pointed out a plant called snow tea, which in a solution could be used as a remedy for snow blindness. There were many rhododendrons and azaleas on the trek up the Nan Men Guan valley and in the 'hidden' valley. Other plants seen were pussy willow, primulas, thyme and a blue poppy plant not yet in bloom.

We saw Lammergeiers, wild snow doves and Alpine choughs. On one occasion we saw animal tracks on the glacier near the Boulder Camp at 3800 metres.

In the 'hidden' valley Lenny and Angela spotted what looked like a ginger stoat or polecat.

Waste Management

Our small team of six people made every attempt to minimise its impact on the environment during the expedition.

Human waste was deposited in one appropriately sited latrine at Base Camp and thoroughly covered on departure. Despite enquiries it was not possible to purchase lime for sterilisation as originally intended. Individuals either burnt toilet paper or used snow or moss. An attempt was made to incinerate all burnable rubbish at Base Camp. Our original intention was to remove non-burnable waste. However, a combination of poor weather the day before (continual rainfall for 28 hours) and over-enthusiasm on the part of the porters to burn everything meant inappropriate items were incinerated rather than being carried out.

On our trek out of Base Camp we were dismayed at the number of sweet papers, noodle packaging etc. we saw which had been dropped by the locals en route to collect fungi from the glacier. While at Base Camp I witnessed our mountain guide asking one of these men to pick up a cigarette packet he had tossed down on the ground. Lenny then tried to explain the importance of protecting the environment. Lenny told us that there was no recycling centre in Chengdu so we brought all our old batteries back to the UK. Empty gas canisters were carried out of Base Camp for disposal in Chengdu. We gave our unused gas canisters to Lenny and another British team who were at the start of their expedition.

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