

We descended steep and alarmingly soft snow on the northeast ridge, regained high camp, dismantled it, and returned to base, crossing a cold, unpleasantly high and fast-flowing river.

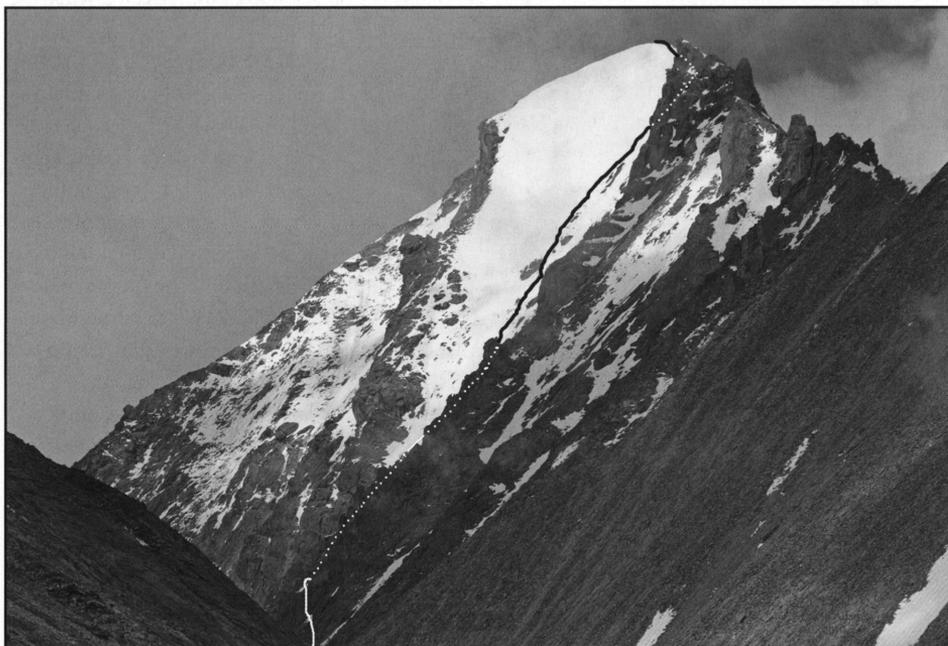
We ended the trip by reaching Leh via a two-day trek south over the Lassermola La (Lasirmou La, 5,550m). Soft snow prevented the horses from making the crossing, providing us with an unforeseen forced march, while they took the long way round. On our first night back in Leh, the unseasonable weather culminated in a cloudburst that devastated the city and surrounding area. Expedition members were unscathed, and after a 24-hour delay while the airport was cleared of debris, we were able to make our way to Delhi and connecting flights home.

Other members of the expedition were Colin Bainbridge, Henry Latti (Finland), David Moseley, and Matt Powell (US). Special thanks to Mr. J. K. Sharma, First Secretary of the Indian Consulate in London, for helping with the X Visa process, and support staff and Sherpas at RIMO expeditions in Leh for making the impossible possible.

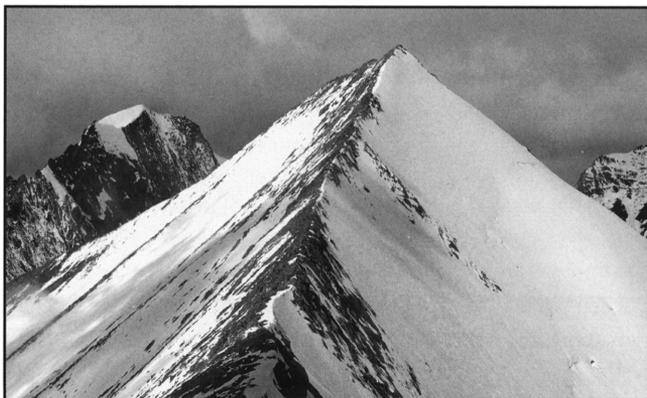
CHRIS HOROBIN, UK

*Ibsti Kangri (6,340m), southeast face; Dzo Jongo, east (6,200m) and west (6,265m) summits.* We had initially hoped to attempt a peak in Ladakh's Angtung Valley, but due to bureaucratic difficulties in obtaining mountaineering visas for our American members, we decided to try one of the newly opened peaks that did not require the X Mountaineering Visa. We zeroed in on Pk. 6,340m in the Nimaling Topko region, southeast of Leh.

We flew to Leh and drove the Leh-Manali road as far as Lato, from where we trekked across the Puja La (4,930m) and a second, 5,354m, pass (sometimes referred to as Lalung La) to a 5,200m base camp at Nimaling Topko. During this approach we experienced fierce thunderstorms



Southeast face of Ibsti Kangri. Dave Adams



Connecting ridge leading to Dzo Jongo West. Divyesh Muni

and torrential rain but had no inkling of the tragedy that had struck elsewhere in Ladakh. Later on the radio we heard the magnitude of the calamity. Initial estimates listed 140 people dead and 600 missing. Roads were damaged, entire villages swept away, and there was chaos everywhere. We immediately sent a message to friends and family that we were safe.

We moved to advanced base camp at 5,620m on August 10, our peak still hidden from view. After reconnaissance and deliberation, we decided to attempt the southeast face and placed a high camp near the foot. On the 14th Dave Adams, Don Goodman, Dawa Sherpa, and I set off up easy soft snow and rock to a gully. Keeping to the edge of the gully, we weaved around rock outcrops on snow and ice. It was a fairly steady 45-50°, and the weather remained cloudy, keeping the snow firm and allowing unroped progress. We fixed one rope on the final slope before reaching the east ridge. Carefully climbing 100m along the crest, we reached the summit, in low visibility at 9:30 a.m., where we were surprised to find a small cairn toward the west ridge of the peak. The summit had been reached before, though the IMF has no record of a previous ascent. Mountaineering history in this region is vague, but it is likely the previous party took a more direct approach from the Nimaling Valley to the west. We decided to refer to this summit as Ibsti Kangri.

Next day the weather seemed more settled, and we decided to capitalize on it by attempting the twin peaks of Dzo Jongo, which lay above our camp. My wife Vineeta and I established a high camp at 5,800m, while Dave, Don, his wife Natalia, Dawa Sherpa, and Phujung Bote climbed directly from advanced base. We met on the 16th at 6,000m on the east ridge and continued together to the east summit (6,200m), which we reached at 9:30 a.m.

The higher west summit (6,265m) lay one kilometer along a connecting ridge. It proved too tempting, so Dave, Don, and I made the traverse. The rock was surprisingly solid, allowing us to move unroped, and after an hour and a half we reached the top, which showed no sign of previous visitation. After our return home, research showed that while the east summit has been climbed several times (as witnessed by various flags and cairns on top), there is no record of any attempt on the west peak.

Contacting Leh, we learned that 15km of road between Upshi and Lato had been washed away, forcing us to return across the Kongmaru La (5,250m) and descend to Shyam Sumdo, where vehicles could meet us. Most of the track had been washed away, but we were found a passable route for horses. We arrived in a deserted Leh on the 22nd; only those involved in rescue and rehabilitation, army personnel, and a few trekkers and climbers on their way home, were present. We were saddened to see the effect on those that were hit and determined to do our bit to help Ladakh recover.

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