

Numri first ascent. Numri is south of Cho Polu and east of Chukung village. The 6,677m mountain was first climbed by a German team led by Olaf Rieck in November. The seven-member expedition established their base camp at 5,140m on the Imja Glacier south of Island Peak. They made two camps above that. From camp 2 in a snow cave at 6,185m, three climbers (Rieck, Carsten Schmidt, and Lydia Schubert) ascended the west face to the summit on November 7. Their team had no Sherpas climbing with them, but they did fix a total of 800m of rope in sections above 6,000m. There was considerable danger from avalanches on the face, and one member's backpack was struck by a chunk of falling ice when he was at about 5,900m, but he was unharmed. Slightly higher up, a large part of a glacier broke away with a loud crash, but again no one was hurt. The climbers had problems with deep snow in several places along their route and a lack of good anchors; the average steepness was 30°.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY, *Nepal*

Ombigaichen, first recorded ascent of newly opened peak and first winter ascent. Ombigaichen (6,340m) is one of the new trekking peaks authorized by the Nepal Mountaineering Association in 2002. Our expedition consisted of Charles Burr (U.K.), Jo Cleere (U.K.), Marlies Sanders (The Netherlands), and myself as guide, with the assistance of Nepalese, Gyenye Lama, Ekka Rai, Syrendra Tamang, and Sonam Yeltsin.

We arrived in Kathmandu from Europe on November 12, flew to Lukla and trekked to Ama Dablam base camp, arriving on the 19th. Here, we spent two days in acclimatization and reconnaissance before moving up with yaks to camp at ca 5,000m. Half a day of load carrying by all the team across the debris of the Nare Glacier saw us established at our 5,200m base camp near an icy stream. Ama Dablam's south face was to our northwest, while Ombigaichen lay to the north-east. The shortest and most logical route to the summit was the south ridge from the Mingbo La. This was because access to the La was relatively straightforward (a 200m snow/ice slope at 50°) and it would enable us to place a tent at ca 5,800m, leaving just under 550m of climbing to the top of the mountain.

We made our first attempt on November 30. Above the La a delightful snow arête led to the "first gendarme." This was turned on its rocky right flank to reach a second snow arête leading to the "Snow Saddle." Above, a steep snow/ice slope rose to a series of gendarmes, all turned on their extremely loose, rocky, right flanks. A final steep 20m wall led to the "first notch." We left this section fixed.

Our second attempt took place on December 3, when Charles Burr, Sonam Yeltsin, and I were successful. On reaching the La we found that our tent had been destroyed by strong winds over the previous two days. Fortunately, we were able to locate the inner tent about a kilometer away across the glacier, and piecing together a couple of poles, managed a tolerable if short night.

Above our previous high point a short vertical rock arête led to more mixed ground and the second notch below the summit block. The last three pitches were spectacular and included a long (45m) steep pitch on completely rotten, loose shale interspersed with extremely unstable snow/ice mushrooms and an overhanging mushroom to finish. Several car-size blocks of ice fell during the climb, crashing noisily down the southeast face. The route was Alpine AD/D in standard and in common with nearby Ama Dablam, summiteers were rewarded with superb views of Everest, Lhotse, and Makalu. Extensive research, using all the normal sources, failed to reveal any previous recorded ascent of Ombigaichen

We noted that the southwest face would give a superb 800m snow/ice climb at around 55°. The Hunku (southeast) side looks loose and complex in the lower half, though the upper face is mainly snow/ice at 50°. The east ridge is the logical finish of the southeast face, while the west (Ama Dablam) ridge looks unattractive, with a number of overhanging snow obstacles. We were unable to properly observe the north (Chukung) face of the mountain.

Late autumn/early winter is normally an excellent period for climbing the lower peaks of Nepal. The main problem for us was the two days of high winds, which completely destroyed the tent on the Mingbo La, and the cold, which produced overnight temperatures of -20°C at the La. To conclude, there is huge potential in Nepal for new routes and new peaks between 6,000m and 7,000m but many of the new trekking peaks will be technically harder than the expedition peaks. For more information and photographs of this expedition see www.basecamp.co.uk/climb.html

VICTOR SAUNDERS, U.K.

JANAK HIMAL

Tinjung attempt, Pandra and Danga first ascents. The Danish Janak Himal Expedition comprised Allan Christensen, Bo Belvedere Christensen, Jan Mathorne, and myself as leader. All had made several expeditions to the Himalaya previously, most recently in spring 2000 to the Polish Route on the south pillar of Everest. We planned to fly to Ghunsa by helicopter to save time and avoid both monsoon and terrorist problems, but at the last moment permission was refused by the Nepalese Government because the police station at Ghunsa had been bombed earlier in the year. Instead we used the usual approach from Suketar, arriving at our 4,785m Lhonak base camp on October 1. Our journey had been hampered only by the monsoon and rumors of Maoists.

We decided first to attempt the peak generally considered to be Danga I (6,355m). This had been attempted by Chris Bonington's expedition in 2000. But at the col between the main summit and a subsidiary peak christened Danga II (6,194m), this team turned right and followed the southwest ridge to the latter summit. However, it quickly became clear to us that the new Nepalese map calls the higher summit Tinjung and the real Danga lies more to the southwest.

On October 4 and 5 we established a camp just below the glacier at 5,450m and inspected the glacier to 5,900m. On the 6th we left camp early and followed Bonington's route to the col. From here we ascended the Southeast ridge of Tinjung to a foresummit (GPS reading 6,137m: N 29° 49.803', E 87° 59.473'). So far the climb had been on steep, unstable monsoon snow at a standard of Alpine D-. The real summit lay to the north, appeared to be 100m – 200m higher and required crossing a long mushroomed ridge with loose snow and rock. It looked dangerous, so we retreated to base camp, where the weather also took a turn for the worse (the weather was generally poor for the first half of the month but improved considerably after).

On October 9 we established a camp at 5,250m on the moraine where the Lhonak Glacier splits. At this point I turned back due to a fever and throat infection. The other three continued up a side glacier southeast of Pandra (eventual GPS reading 6,673m: N 27° 51.897', E 87° 59.547') to see whether the attractive south face of this unclimbed mountain was feasible. After a bivouac at 5,500m it started to snow, so they returned to base camp. On the 14th Alan, Bo, and Jan returned to the bivouac and continued next day to a second at 5,700m, above which