

At an altitude of 6,604m, we dug out a 50cm-wide ledge above the vertigo-inducing northeast face. For three days our team climbed from Camp 3 to the exit point, hoping to jump. However, low cloud over the Meru Glacier obscured the landing area. Finally, on May 23, after waiting at the exit point for five hours, we had a brief opening in the clouds. Heather and I jumped at 2:15 p.m. Our wingsuits took about four and a half seconds to inflate, after which we rapidly accelerated away from the wall. We took 45 seconds to fly about one kilometer down the Meru Glacier, passing Meru Central, before opening our parachutes near the bottom of the southwest pillar of Shivling. The jump set a new world record for altitude BASE jumping and wingsuit BASE.

Although our team spent 23 days on the mountain, the route could probably be climbed in lightweight style in less than a week. We graded the route alpine 3+ (North American Alpine III WI2 5.5). For more information or a copy of the documentary film, visit www.baseclimb.com.

GLENN SINGLEMAN, *Australia*

Meru Central, northeast face, variation. Yasuhiro Hanatani, Hiroyoshi Manome, Yasushi Okada, and I planned to climb Meru Central (6,310m) by the oft-tried line of the Shark's Fin or northeast pillar. We had attempted the route in 2004 but retreated above 6,000m, when Hanatani took a fall and broke both legs.

Last year our team reached Tapovan base camp on September 1 and established an advanced base at 4,800m, from where we hoped to attempt the line in capsule style. We placed our first camp at 5,300m, close to the rock ridge that forms the left edge of the lower snowfield, but were pinned down for days by bad weather. Deciding that the Shark's Fin would be consequently out of condition, we instead opted to slant right across the lower snowfield. Starting on September 24, we took only three ropes and six ice screws, and climbed more or less in alpine style. We climbed onto the ridge taken by the original Babanov route on the face, Shangri La, via three difficult pitches of loose rock. From here we followed the Babanov line, bivouacking, without sleeping bags, at 5,800m, just under the cornice of the summit ridge at a little over 6,200m. On the morning of September 26, we pulled onto the northwest ridge and quickly reached the summit at 7:30 in a bitterly cold wind. This appears to be the third ascent of the peak, the second having been made by Australians earlier in the year. We returned to our 5,300m camp the same day, rappelling mainly from Abalakovs. We graded the route 5.10a M5 WI3 75°.

MAKOTO KURODA, *Japan*

Meru Central, northeast face, variation. On September 17 Marek Holecek and I reached base camp at Tapovan, with the intention of climbing the Shark's Fin on Meru Central (6,310m). From the 18th to the 23rd we acclimatized and bouldered. On the 24th we transported our equipment to the base of the northeast face of Meru, crossing a 5,200m col. The next day we started on a capsule style-ascent, taking one portaledge, 200m of rope for fixing, the usual climbing hardware, and a few bolts. The following day we established our first camp, on the left edge of the lower snowfield at 5,250m. On the 28th, after moving our equipment up to the top left corner of the snowfield, we made our second camp at 5,650m, at the point where the snowfield joins the rock ridge. By October 2 we'd climbed 200m up the rock ridge and made our third portaledge camp at 5,900m, more or less at the base of the Shark's Fin itself. The next