

of technical ridge climbing). Difficulties encountered included 3-4km of cornices, 75° snow, mixed climbing to M5 and rock to 6a.

After a 15-day acclimatization trek along the paths of Gosainkund Lake (the sacred lakes of Shiva), we met our team of 10 porters and cooks in the village of Tatopani. Buildings were grouped around thermal hot springs, and the place is a pilgrimage destination. It was the last village we would see for 23 days. Our acclimatization was uneventful, other than our change in diet to Dal Bhat, a traditional Nepalese dish that caused intestinal problems. Following a pattern of three days at altitude, then three days rest, we established our advanced base camp at 5,500m, sheltered by a small cliff. Our first bivouac was at 6,200m, where we left a cache of bivouac equipment, food, and gear. After one final rest at base camp we decided to “put to sea” and try for the summit. The expression is fitting, as a marvelous sea of clouds accompanied us, as though we were sailing on an ocean of cotton. However, these clouds eventually began to transform into wet cumulus, dropping snowflakes in the afternoon. The change in weather forced us to adapt, as the climbing became more mixed and was swept by small snow slides. Sometimes we had to stop for a few hours to wait for a clearing, in order to get oriented. On the evening of the fourth day, when we bivouacked at ca 6,500m, we were informed that 100 km/hour winds were forecast for the following day till evening. The temperature was already low, each night dropping to -20 or -25°C, and we realized a further drop would prove unbearable.

Knowing that we would not have a second chance, we set our hearts on the most easterly of the three summits of Ganesh V. This was the rockiest and in our opinion the most beautiful. On the fifth day we climbed 250m of granite (mixed and 6a) to the top, about 30m lower than the main summit. The forecast allowed enough time for a quick descent, and the immense joy of successfully reaching the top made us forget, during the bivouac that followed, the cold and the fear of being ripped off the wall by the wind. It was late on the sixth night that we reached base camp, where we were greeted warmly by Kamal and Rai, our cooks, who were happy to join in our celebrations.

AYMERIC CLOUET, *France*

JUGAL HIMAL

Gurkarmo Ri, first known ascent. Paulo Grobel organized two commercial expeditions for Nepal's post-monsoon season. On October 2 Grobel, two Sherpa companions, and five French clients reached the summit of Saribung (6,328m) in the Damodar Himal. This, the fourth ascent of the mountain, more or less followed the original route up the northeast face and northeast ridge, pioneered in 2003 by Jim Frush and Steve Furman. The leader then returned to Kathmandu to collect a new group, for a more demanding ascent of Langtang Ri (7,205m) in the Langtang Himal, a peak which has been attempted at least seven times, four times successfully.

Grobel established his base camp, near the foot of the Langtang Glacier, at a spot known as Pemthang Karpo. [Also referred to as Morimoto Peak Base Camp—6,150m Morimoto Peak, officially named Bhemdang Ri, lies to the northwest—the site is immediately below and north of 6,412m Langshisha Ri—Ed.]. A quick probe north convinced the French team that with all the fresh snow on the moraine-covered glacier, just reaching the foot of the mountain would take too long and would be particularly difficult for their porters. It was time for a rethink.

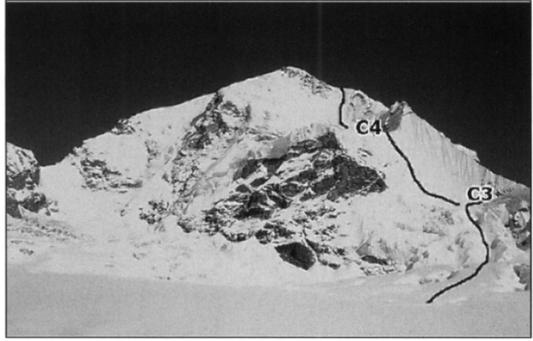
The weather forecast, which predicted clear skies but winds up to 60km/hour at 6,500m,

made the west ridge of Gurkarpo Ri (6,889m) seem the best alternative. However, Grobel knew nothing of Gurkarpo Ri's history, had no idea whether it was on the government's list of permitted peaks, and was unaware that it had never been climbed. Time was getting on, and calculating that he only had around 10 days left to make the ascent, Grobel realized the climb would have to be made in a more or less continuous push.

He and his team quickly established Camp 1 at 4,800m on a side glacier, and Camp 2 on a huge flat glaciated col between Langshisha Ri and Gurkarpo Ri. Realizing that two more camps would be needed, Grobel had 800m of

static line and 25 snow stakes air-dropped, something of an (expensive) novelty in Nepal but necessary in order to give his clients the best chance of success. The sharp snow and ice spur leading up the northwest flank of the west ridge was dubbed the Arête des Rapiettes. The team placed Camp 3 to the left of the arête at 5,800m. As a training/acclimatization exercise, they climbed this arête to a small summit at a grade of PD+. Grobel and his two Sherpas, Cho Temba and Zangbu, climbed and fixed the broad glaciated couloir left of the arête. The 400m snow/ice slope led to a plateau and the site of Camp 4 at 6,200m. On October 31, while the other members rested in this camp, Grobel, Cho Temba, and Zangbu fixed rope on the 45-50° slopes above, leading to a vague col on the upper west ridge at 6,600m.

The next morning, November 1, Cho Temba awoke with a bad headache, and Grobel thought it wise for him to descend to Camp 2, accompanied by Zangbu. The remaining five climbers continued. One member stopped before the ridge due to a bronchial infection, but the other four, Pierre-Oliver Dupuy, Marc Kia, Jean Francois Males, and Grobel, reached the crest and were surprised to find the southern slopes quite gentle. They made good progress, finding only one short section of 40° surmounting a bergshrund, before reaching the summit in excellent if cold weather. The descent went without incident, and three days later all members were back at Kyanchin Gompa in the Langtang valley. They named the route *Some More Rice?*, grading it alpine D.



The summit of Gurkarpo Ri (6,889m) seen from the high glacier plateau lying between the mountain and Langshisha Ri (6,412m). Marked is the upper section of the first ascent route. Camp 3 is at ca 5,800m to the left of the prominent Arête des Rapiettes. Camp 4 is at 6,200m and the point where the route above gains the upper section of the west ridge is 6,600m. From here the route follows relatively gentle slopes on the far (southern) side. *Paulo Grobel*

From information supplied by PAULO GROBEL, France

Editor's note: Gurkarpo Ri had been attempted at least five times prior to the French ascent. The first known attempt was by Koreans in the winter of 1993. They reached 6,100m on the west ridge but gave up due to technical difficulty. Japanese tried in the autumn of 1998 by what they refer to as the northwest ridge, but gave up at 6,150m. A German expedition the following year was prevented from coming to grips with the west ridge due to deep snow. A Korean team tried in the winter of 2001 but gave up low on the south face due to avalanche and cold. In autumn 2003 another