



Kalanka North Face 2007 Expedition.

Supported by

Mount Everest Foundation. The B.M.C. Mammut. The Nick Estcourt Award. DMM.
Vasque, Mountain Hardware, Lyon Equipment and SIS.

Dates: 16th August-25th September 2007.

Location: Kalanka North Face from the Bagini Glacier. India.

Climbers: Nick Bullock and Kenton Cool.

Abstract:

An attempt to climb a new route Alpine Style on the North Face of Kalanka.

Introduction:

This 2000-metre face has only one route that was climbed by a Czechoslovakian team using fixed ropes in 1977. This was the mountains second ascent. Several teams have failed to climb the North Buttress, a line in the middle of the face. This, with other untried lines on the North Face remains one of the great prizes in the Garhwal.

The term alpine style in this case meant alpine style. Kenton and I acclimatised on a mountain behind B.C over two periods. The first to a height of 5200m and the second to 5800m, between the two trips we walked to a small lake on the moraine beneath Kalanka's North face stashing the ropes and rack and spending a night. After a period of rest at BC we returned to our ABC and began to climb the following night. The left side of Kalanka's North Face is dominated by a massive fluted snow field leading to a shoulder and the stunning North East Ridge. This was our intended line. To my knowledge no-one has ever ventured onto this section of the face. The face is approximately 2000m long and has never been attempted Alpine Style.

Expedition Diary:

- 16th August 2007-Fly from Heathrow Airport. Land in Delhi.
- 17th-Clear cargo at Airport. Interview with the IMF. Meet the Liaison Officer.
- 18th-Packing and shopping for gear.
- 19th-Travel to Srinigar.
- 20th-Travel to Joshimath.
- 21st-Interview with the park authorities and the army. Sort gear into porter loads.
- 22nd-Travel to Juma by jeep and walk to Dunagiri Village.
- 23rd-Walk from Dunagiri village to Kalanka BC.
- 24th-Sort gear and settle in at BC.
- 25th-Carry most of the rack and ropes to a half way point on the way to Kalanka North Face.
- 26th-Carry the remaining gear and food for the climb to the gear stash at the half way point.
- 27th-Walk from BC on an acclimatisation mission to a hill behind BC to a height of 5400m. Unfortunately the monsoon appeared to be in full swing making the afternoon wet and miserable.
- 28th-Return to BC in snow and rain.
- 29th-Day at BC in poor weather.
- 30th-Walk to find and set up an ABC near the base of Kalanka's North Face at approximately 5000m. Spend the night sleeping there.
- 31st-Return to BC.
- 1st-Rain, mist and snow up high. Rest at BC.
- 2nd-Rain, mist and snow. Rest at BC.
- 3rd-Stay at BC. Still bad weather.

- 4th-Second attempt to get high by climbing the peak behind BC. Reach the same camp spot as before at 5400m.
- 5th-Climb snow slope to approximate height of 5800m. Pitch tent before climbing an extra 150m and staying the night at 5800m.
- 6th-Return to BC.
- 7th-Rest at BC.
- 8th-Rest at BC.
- 9th-Rest at BC
- 10th-Walk to ABC.
- 11th-Move to beneath the face ready to start climbing in the night.
- 12th-Start climbing at 2.30am. Continue climbing until snow stops us at 3pm and a step is cut for a bivvy.
- 13th-Continue to climb the snow slope until once again snow in the afternoon forces us to dig a bivvy ledge.
- 14th-Continue to climb aiming for the left hand ridge at the top of the snow slope in the hope for a good bivvy. Reach approximately 60m beneath the crest of the ridge and dig a ledge to sleep.
- 15th-Climb the final section until the crest of the shoulder is reached. Traverse the crest to approximately half way before deciding the ridge is unjustifiable. Start to abseil until the first bivvy site is reached at 5pm.
- 16th-Continue to descend reaching the moraine at 2pm and ABC at 3pm.
- 17th-Pack everything and return to BC.
- 18th-BC
- 19th-BC. Arrange 4 porters.
- 20th-Leave BC. Walk to road-head at Juma and catch a bus(jeep) to Joshimath.
- 21st-Stay in Joshimath, sort kit and arrange for transport to Hardiwar.
- 22nd-Travel to Hardiwar.
- 23rd-Travel to Delhi.
- 24th-Sort kit and meet agent.
- 25th-Fly from Delhi. Land at Heathrow.

Travel:

We flew from Heathrow Airport, London, by British Airways. This flight was a little more expensive than some but it was direct and had convenient flying times. British Airways run daily flights to Delhi. The baggage limit was small at only 23-kilo but at the time B A had a policy of allowing an extra bag of sporting goods so our 60 kilo baggage was not questioned.

The two days travel from Delhi to Joshimath was by private transport supplied by the agent. This was a small bus and very comfortable. The first day of travel was from Delhi to Srinigar took nine-hours. The second day took five-hours.

Transport from Joshimath to Juma road-head was by two Tata jeeps transporting staff and equipment. This was also arranged by the agent.

The return transport should have been the same as going except Kenton and I returned earlier than expected. We had paid in advance for the return journey through the agent, but the transport was shared with two Dutch climbers who were still at BC so we arranged our own transport to Delhi. This was a jeep to Joshimath, a jeep to

Hardiwar and a large taxi to Dehli taking the same time as the journey in and costing approximately £100.

Environment:

Joshimath is a typical one horse Indian town with little to offer in the way of pleasantries. It is neither quaint nor quiet. Leaving the dirt, hustle and bustle and the continual peeping of car horns behind and escaping into the hills is recommended.

The walk from Juma Village at the road head to Kalanka Base Camp passes through the villages of Ruing and Dunagiri following the steep and spectacular Gannakhui Nala River. Levelling at the source of the river a wide moraine meadow is Base Camp. The approach valley is typical of the Himalayas, with monsoon-soaked foothills, mossy, evergreen forest filled with Cinnamon, Chestnut Birch and Plum. The sub-tropical vegetation of this region is referred to as Terai and is usually dominated by a single species-Sal.

Above the snow line hardy alpines can be found like Anemones, Edelweiss and Gentian.

Rock:

The rock on Kalanka is Granite. Our chosen line did not feature much rock but did pass through two bands lower on the face and around gendarmes on the shoulder. When encountered the rock was very compact not offering the chance for gear. In four days of climbing the only rock gear placed was two wires and two pegs.

Snow and ice:

The initial easier angled section of the snow slope was relatively firm snow covering ice. Runnels carved by spindrift were more firm but constantly poured powder. The section passing the first rock band was steep and gave protection-less climbing on insecure snow. The middle section of the face gave a mix of deep unconsolidated snow, hard ice, nèvè and powder. The upper snow ridge leading to the shoulder was very deep bottomless powder following deep flutings with no chance of protection. On the ridge the snow was knee deep and heavy, when we dropped onto the North Face to climb beneath gendarmes the snow was bottomless and nearly vertical.

The whole face had a covering of ice beneath the snow that proved a problem when attempting to dig bivouac sites as we could not dig deep enough to make comfortable ledges.

Weather:

Arriving at BC early was in hindsight a good move although at the time we thought that maybe we had made a mistake as the monsoon was still very active. Rain and heavy mist were prevalent in the first two weeks making acclimatisation forays and time at BC uncomfortable, but never bad enough to stop us from getting ready for a settled period. Fortunately the weather settled to the most stable period I have experienced in India giving warm and sunny days with only a small amount of

precipitation in the afternoon. Arriving early meant that we were ready to take advantage of the settled spell.

Unfortunately on the first two days of the climb we experienced an afternoon bubble-up resulting in snow and cloud. This probably would not have been a problem on some climbs but as we were on a 1300m snow face the smallest amount of snow resulted in constant spindrift making the first two bivvy's uncomfortable.

The weather remained stable for approximately 2 weeks until a storm hit after we had left BC, giving 1-metre of snow at BC and 2-metres at ABC.

Waste management:

As always being such a small expedition the waste was minimal. All waste was carried from the climb and from ABC to BC. From BC the waste was carried-out by porters and taken to Joshimath for disposal.

Climbing:

The left side of the north face was the line that most interested us. We guessed the snow slope was about 800-900-metres long and we hoped to climb in a single push through the night and the next day to the shoulder. We considered the upper ridge to be approximately the same length but more technical and guessed it would take two days to climb. Descending would probably take two days making the overall time on the face of 5 days. This turned out to be a little optimistic. The slope started at 5000m and when we eventually reached the shoulder at the top of the snow face, the height was 6300m making the slope length, 1300m.

We intended to walk to ABC and start to climb that evening, but snow in the afternoon and evening made us wait at ABC an extra day. After moving to a bivvy site the following afternoon we began climbing at approximately 0230 on the 12th with four days food. Following furrows cut by spindrift the large bergschrund was crossed at its narrowest point. A direct line was taken heading for the steepest, but what looked like the most guaranteed line cutting through the first rock band. Up to the rock band the climbing was on an angle of approximately 50°-70°. The snow was reasonably consolidated and the climbing was no more than of a Scottish grade of II. We moved together until beneath the rock band.

Two long pitches took us through the rock band. The climbing was steep, approximately 75°-85° with no protection as the snow was not formed well enough to place screws. The grade of the climbing was about Scottish IV.

Moving right from the top of the rock band into a hidden corner system running through a band of slabs, the snow changed from reasonably consolidated to deep powder and rotten ice over rock. We moved together for approximately 150-metre sections taking turns to brake-trail. The climbing was anything from Scottish grade I to III weaving a way through bulges.

At 3pm we stopped as it was snowing. A shallow step was all we could dig because of the hard ice beneath the initial snow layer. We both carried bivvy bags and also a

small single skin tent. Unfortunately the step could not be cut large enough for the tent to be erected, but it was still useful as it could be pulled over one of us to make cooking possible while spindrift poured down the face.

The following day (13th Sept) we started to climb at 8am. The snow had stopped but spindrift constantly poured down the face. Neither of us felt particularly rested after a night of no sleep. The climbing was similar to day one, encountering more deep powder and rotten ice over rock. The climbing grade as before fluctuated between Scottish I to III. We moved together for the day except for the last pitch. Ice screws were placed as running belays. It was hoped that we would reach the ridge and have a better bivvy but it soon came apparent that the slope was a lot bigger than first thought.

An extremely poor bivvy was cut from the top of a rock. The night was a long one. Once again the tent was pulled over the head of the designated chief to make it possible to cook in the constant spindrift and snow.

Starting a little earlier today (14th Sept) thanks to our bivvy, a left traverse was made aiming for the left hand skyline in the hope of a good bivvy site so we could recuperate and dry some kit.

The first section leaving the bivvy was pitched as the climbing was insecure ice covering steep rock. Once past this we moved together on a long rising traverse until beneath very deep flutings on the far left side of the shoulder at the top of the slope. The flutings were climbed direct and proved extremely tiring as they were made of deep bottomless powder that had to be mantle-shelved to make height. A very large cave/step was cut just beneath the crest of the shoulder at a height of 6200m where kit was dried and numerous brews consumed.

Day four (15th Sept) started with the final wallow to the crest of the ridge (6300m) where a bucket seat belay was dug from the deep unconsolidated snow. The crest was followed until a gendarme was reached and turned on the right by dropping down onto the North Face. This proved very insecure as numerous flutings had to be dug through and levitation proved the best technique to cope with the bottomless powder. Belaying on ice screws just beneath the crest after passing the gendarme, the ridge to the right looked very dangerous and insecure and would no-doubt take a long time to climb. To the right again, a large pointed gendarme needed passing but as we had already discovered the left side of the ridge was very overhanging rock making the thought of trying it on that side, "not very appealing", and now with closer inspection the right hand side (north) also didn't look very appealing as it was steep compact rock covered with a skin of rotten ice similar to that we had climbed lower down the face. Beyond the final gendarme the ridge leading to the summit looked technical and time consuming and given the fact we were on the last day of food faced with possibly another 2-3 days of climbing and 2 days of descent it was decided the best option was to go down.

The descent took the rest of that day and after a horrible night at our first bivvy site, all of the following morning until the moraine was reached in the afternoon of the 16th. All abseils were on ice-screw v-threads, approximately 25 of them, which given the amount of ice on the face were quite difficult to construct on numerous occasions.

Equipment:

All hardware, technical kit and ropes were supplied by DMM and Mammut. My clothing, gloves, hat etc and sleeping bag was supplied by Mammut. Mountain Hardware supplied all of kenton's clothing sleeping bag etc. The ropes were very good and the lightweight gear exceptional. The Mammut synthetic clothing proved to be very warm and I found worked very well not suffering like down with the damp.

My boots were supplied by Vasque. The model is the 9000. I have used these boots now for several trips and can honestly say they are the warmest, most comfortable boot I have used. Kenton climbed in a pair of Sportiva boots which as far as I can tell proved adequate.

We used a variety of tents. In BC I used a North Face and Kenton used a Mountain Hardware. Both performed well. The tents used for acclimatisation trips and ABC were both single skin tents made from Gore-tex fabric. One was a Mountain Hardware EV2 and the other was a Macpac. We found the EV2 very poor. The tent has too many seams, is over designed and heavy. In the poor weather while acclimatising, the tent leaked and really struggled to cope with the damp conditions. Everything in the tent became very wet. With this in mind we borrowed the Macpac tent from Brian Alder, a member of the three man team attempting the Bordman/Tasker line on Changabang. This tent very similar to a Bibler performed exceptional. The tent is simple, light and a lightweight porch proved very functional and well thought out. We took this tent on the climb, I cannot recommend it enough.

We used a Jet Boil stove on the hill supplied by Lyon Equipment, it was magnificent. The igniter failed due to the temperature, but it could still be lit with matches. The heat exchanger and the efficiency of the stove to melt snow were remarkable, and a 250 canister of gas lasts for 2 days. Originally I thought it needed a hanging device but having used a Jet Boil now for all of my expeditions and Alpine climbing I have found it doesn't matter as the best way to use it is to hold it or grip the gas bottle between the thighs while sitting.

Cylinder gas was used above BC. This was Imported from Britain.

Food:

Base Camp food was supplied and cooked by the agent and cook. A variety of local vegetables, breads and rice. The cook was the best cook I have had cooking for me on an expedition.

Above BC, all of the food used was imported from Britain. Cous cous, soup and noodles etc, a selection of biscuits, chocolate, musli bars etc were also imported and eaten for acclimatisation, and the climb.

We had a variety of rehydration powders supplied by SIS. All appeared to work very well.

Finance:

We were fortunate enough to receive money and grants from Mammut, The MEF, The BMC and The Nick Estcourt Award which eased the financial burden considerably.

What was also very useful and what made the trip viable was sharing the peak fee, the local area fee, the LO costs and the agent costs with two Dutch climbers.

An added expense but one very worthwhile was having weather reports emailed to us while at BC. This is the first time I have had reports sent while on an expedition and can say for a trip as expensive as this and climbing such a big face it is certainly worth the cost.

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| Income: | Mammut | £2500. |
| | The Nick Estcourt Award. | £1500. |
| | The MEF. | £1900. |
| | The BMC. | £1200. |
| | Personal contribution | £.5800. |
| | TOTAL | <u>£13000.</u> |
| Expenditure: | Peak Fee | \$3300. |
| | Local state Fee | \$1500. |
| | Liaison Officer | \$500. |
| | NR Environment Bond. | \$400. |
| | Agent Fees/bio diversity fee | \$13000. |
| | Insurance. | £1000. |
| | Flights. | £1200. |
| | Freight. | £350. |
| | Food. | £300. |
| | Gas. | £80. |
| | Visa's & collection charge | £120. |
| | Weather forecasts. | £400. |
| | Accommodation | £200 |
| | TOTAL | <u>£13000.</u> |

Agent Services:

Our Agent was Mr C. S. Pandey of Himalayan Run and Trek.
www.himalayanruntrek.com

I found Mr Pandey to be extremely professional and the service he gave without fault. The transport supplied was of a very high quality, the organisation good. The BC equipment supplied and BC tent were new and high quality and the cook whom works for Mr Pandey exceptional.

Also useful was the ability for us to choose exactly what we wanted from him and what we would pay for and organise ourselves.

The only fault I could find in his services was the expense of some of the services which I have received free of charge in the past with other agents, e g, pick up from the airport, phone charges while organising the peak fee etc and the transporting of equipment from his stores. The overall cost did seem quite a lot. This said, the service was without doubt of the highest standard and maybe the cliché of ‘you get what you pay for’ should be adhered. I would certainly recommend Mr Pandey if expenses are not an issue.

Bureaucracy:

The bureaucracy as normal was a hassle, and once again there appeared to be no dialogue between the IMF and the Indian Embassy in London resulting in stress getting X-visas. I sent my passport to a company called Travco who arrange the visa for £30 per passport and did a good job even though the Indian Embassy were, as usual, unhelpful and misinformed. Kenton personally visited the Embassy to receive his visa on the second visit after being refused on the first visit. I found the agent Mr Pandey useful in this confusion, contacting the IMF and speeding up the process in India.

The LO on the trip was perhaps the most affable and approachable LO I have encountered.

The clearing of the cargo in Delhi was an interesting one. Mr Pandey (the agent) has had problems in the past with imported food items (the import officials refused to clear the cargo meaning not only food was stopped but gear and the expedition at the time had to be cancelled.) and did not want to be involved with clearing our cargo as I could not get around sending food. Kenton and I went to the cargo terminal and using the freight company agent in Delhi (the freight company I use are SOS Cargo Ltd sited at Manchester Airport and are brilliant, helpful and cheep. E mail coling@sosaircargo.co.uk) cleared the cargo quicker than I have ever managed in the past with an expedition-agents services.

The Director of the IMF told us that in the future the cost of Changabang and Kalanka will be reduced. It has actually been reduced from last year by \$700 a fact we didn't know about until reaching India.

Thanks:

Thanks to The MEF, The BMC, The Nick Estcourt Award, Mammut, DMM, Vasque, Mountain Hardware, SIS, Lyon Equipment and Sportiva. Without your support this trip and others like it would never happen and for that both Kenton and I are very grateful.

Further info:

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