

First Ascent of Korlang Pari Tippa – Home of the Yeti

by Brian Jackson



Korlang Pari Tippa - Making headway on the high trail - Brian Jackson

In November 2017 myself and a team of 5 returned to the Rolwaling Valley in Nepal to attempt a first ascent of Korlang Pari Tippa (5,738m) on the Nepal/Tibet border.

Starting at Lambagar, the first day of the trek was much tougher than expected as no-one had trekked the low route through the gorge for over a year, the last 2 people being our climbing Sherpas, Mindu and Dawa Rita. We had to machete our way through bush, make temporary bridges to span some water flows and climb around large rock falls that were caused by the devastating 2015 earthquakes. The gorge narrows to just 20m at one point and we were suspended 150m high above the raging river on a narrow precipice of rock with no edge, delicately traversing the cliff to reach more dense forest. After Day 1, the route became much easier as there is a well walked local path between the villages of Lumnan and Lapche. We passed the settlements of Thanchhemu and Thasing where the locals greeted us in Tibetan and not Nepali, '*Tashi Delek*' as opposed to '*Namaste*'.

As we approached Lapche monastery, the valley opens and we could see the unclimbed peak of Chomo Pamari (6,109m) and other 6,000m peaks on the Tibetan border. Our first flat campsite and rest day of the expedition was fantastic and meant that we had reached the end of any civilisation

and would now be even more isolated as we trekked to the Tibetan border and then climbed up to the plateau above the Kidibu Khola, up to our Base Camp at 4,800m.

Off the beaten track, off the map and into Tibet. We set off up the North-East valley as the valley splits into two at Lapche and both lead into Tibet. Upon reaching our camp at Kidibu Khola, a river tributary running off the glacial lake at our intended ABC, we set up camp and then walked the final 300m into Tibet, spending 7 minutes in Tibet! We were now also off the map as all of the new Nepalese trekking maps finished at Lapche and we were following this small protrusion of Nepal into Tibet using Google Earth images.

The next day up to Base Camp was extremely tough gaining 700m straight up the steep unforgiving valley side until we reached our plateau. The plateau was surrounded by a cul de sac of rock towers and peaks, all devoid of snow; something more akin to the Cerro Torre area of Patagonia, than the usual snowy peaks of Nepal. We still had no view of our peak, as the plateau curved around to the right and there was a glacial lateral moraine in front of our camp. Base Camp provided us with two rest days, which we used to sort out all our technical equipment, practice our jumar skills and have the Puja ceremony, the important and necessary Buddhist ceremony on the mountain, to appease the mountain for our use of sharp equipment and ask for safe passage. Dawa Rita, one of our climbing Sherpas, who has studied for 10 years to become a monk, performed the ceremony.

Without the Puja ceremony, we could not have continued as the climbing Sherpas would refuse to go up the mountain and we were completely reliant upon the climbing Sherpas to put all the fixed line in that we would need to ascend and descend safely. They deserve all the real credit for assisting our team to achieve our dream of reaching an unclimbed peak summit.



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Korlang Pari Tippa, the team at the summit - Brian Jackson



Korlang Pari Tappa, at the summit - Brian Jackson

High cirrus clouds informed us that we might have some weather to contend with soon as we set off to the Advanced Base Camp (5,300m) at the foot of our peak, near to a high glacial lake. This day was an easy walk along the lateral moraine to gain 500m and where we hit our first real snow and saw the first views of our peak covered with rock towers along a convoluted ridge. It was amazing to stand in a complete cul de sac of rock towers and ridges where no one has ever stood before.

We set up camp and awaited the possible storm. It hit us overnight with high winds and more snow but petered out the next day to provide us with a glorious morning of clear skies and clean air on our rest day, whilst the Sherpas set up the 450m of fixed line with pitons into the unstable rock.

After an early start we began our ascent on large scree and moving rocks, straight up the West Face. We were extremely careful that we did not kick any rocks down that could sever the fixed line we were all attached to. At one point we reached a gendarme that we could not go around or over so found a route directly through it, crawling through in something more akin to caving moves, removing our day sacks to enable us to squeeze through. This allowed us to get to the South Ridge line and the border: we were now walking with one foot in Nepal and the other in Tibet. Around another gendarme we finally reached the highest point possible on this tower and were stunned at the view. We could see 5 of the 8,000m peaks (Everest, Lhotse, Cho Oyu, Makalau and Shishapangma) and several 7,000m and 6,000m peaks, all laid out before us in a complete 360-degree panorama. WOW! We recorded several different heights on our GPS devices and satellite tracker so decided to go in the middle with the government stated height of 5,738m.

The climbing team were Brian Jackson (Expedition Leader), Mark Rowland, Ian Stead, Rob Boulton, Joe O'Connor and Dan Walker, led by climbing Sherpas, Dawa Rita Sherpa and Mindu Sherpa.



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The First Ascent of Korlang Pari Tippa, The team - Brian Jackson