

JOPUNO EXPEDITION 2010



Expedition Members

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Paul Swinton

Supported by

Barap Namgyal Bhutia
Sanjeev Tamang
Karma Sherpa
Bhai-Chung
And the staff of Sikkim Holidays

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The compilers of this report and the members of the expedition agree that all or part of it may be copied for the purposes of private research.

Introduction

The mountains of Sikkim were ventured into quite early in the history of Himalayan mountaineering. In 1883 W.W.Graham led an expedition to west Sikkim which apparently climbed both Kabru and Jopuno, and at the end of the nineteenth century Douglas Freshfield made an important exploratory tour of Kanchenjunga which greatly clarified the topography and brought back wonderful photographs by the inimitable Vittorio Sella. In the early years of the twentieth century Dr Alexander Kellas climbed many high and remote Sikkimese peaks, and then in the 1930's there were several expeditions to Kangchendzonga and successful ascents of important peaks around the Zemu glacier by German and Swiss climbers. After the second world war while Nepal was opened up access to Sikkim became harder for western mountaineers. However within the last six years much has been done to facilitate access by trekkers and mountaineers. In particular, Roger Payne has worked tirelessly with the Sikkimese to broaden access and has written important survey articles in the British and American Alpine Journals (see bibliography).

It was on the inspiration of Roger's accounts that Geoff Cohen decided to try and organise an expedition to Sikkim. After initially recruiting old friends Dick Isherwood and Steve Kennedy the group expanded to include two more 'Highlanders', Bob Hamilton and Dave Ritchie, and Paul Swinton, whom Geoff had met while climbing in the USA. Throughout the long process of selecting an objective and organising the trip the team received invaluable help and advice from Roger, and from Roger's recommended agent in Sikkim, Barap Bhutia Namgyal.

There are only five peaks on the permitted list in Sikkim, of which two are in north Sikkim and three in west Sikkim. We chose the latter area as it appeared that the walk-in to base camp would be more interesting and the opportunities for climbing and exploration more varied. This walk-in starts from the village of Yoksam about six hours drive from Gangtok, and takes the popular trek to Gocha La that first climbs up to a famous viewpoint at Dzongri (4000m) and then follows the Prek Chu valley. On the east of this valley is a formidable ridge running south from the sacred peak of Pandim (6691m) to Tinchengkang (6010m), Jopuno (5936m) and Lama Lamani (about 5650m). Both Tinchengkang and Jopuno had been climbed starting from this valley, however nothing is known about the east side of this mountain range.

Initially we speculated that it might be possible to approach the east side of the range by going up the Talung Valley (from near Mangang) and then the Rungiang Chu. However a reading of Tilman's account of descending the Talung through extremely difficult vegetation discouraged us from this idea. It might require a great deal of persuasion of the Sikkimese authorities to allow such an approach, it would probably take a great deal of time and effort and there would be a possibility of never reaching the mountains at all. We opted instead for the standard approach to the Prek Chu, with the hope that we might find a crossable col permitting some exploration of the east side of Jopuno.

Expedition diary in brief

April 29	GC, RH, SK, DR depart Glasgow; PS departs Washington DC; RI departs Seattle
April 30	GC,RH, SK, DR arrive Kolkata in morning, PS arrives in evening
May 1	GC, RH, SK, DR and PS fly Kolkata- Bagdogra and meet RI who has flown in via Delhi. All drive to Gangtok
May 2	Visit to Rumtek monastery; checking equipment and food supplies and meeting Sikkim Holidays staff
May 3	Drive Gangtok - Yoksam
May 4	Walk Yoksam - Bakkim
May 5	Walk Bakkim – Dzungri
May 6	Acclimatisation day at Dzungri (4000m)
May 7	Walk Dzungri – Tangshing, establish base camp (3960m); first attempt to locate suitable higher camp
May 8	Second attempt to locate suitable high camp; rain; loads taken to 4750m
May 9	High camp established at 4900m. DR stays at Tangshing owing to oedema in face.
May 10	Exploration of route from high camp to glacier and foot of W face of Lama Lamani
May 11	New route on W face of Lama Lamani up to N top (5600m), descent by NW face (SK, RH, GC and PS)
May 12	Rest day at high camp. DR comes up to high camp.
May 13	DR and RH climb peak (5500m) between Jopuno and Lama Lamani; SK and PS explore approach to W ridge of Jopuno; GC and RI explore glacier between Lama Lamani and Peak 5480 and reach col at 5257m. SK and PS descend to Tangshing
May 14	GC and RH explore ground to N of high camp and observe potential route on NW face of Jopuno
May 15	DR worried about oedema in face. DR and RI descend to Tangshing; SK and PS return to high camp
May 16	SK, RH, PS and GC, assisted by Karma Sherpa and Bhai-Chung, carry loads to camp at 5100m below W ridge and NW face of Jopuno
May 17	Poor weather and snowfall overnight; planned ascent postponed
May 18	SK, RH, PS and GC climb to 5600m on W ridge of Jopuno and return to top camp
May 19	Assisted by Karma Sherpa, SK, RH, PS and GC pack up top camp and return to high camp at 4900m. DR ascends from Tangshing to high camp; SK, PS and GC descend to Tangshing; RH stays with DR at high camp
May 20	Uncertain weather prevents DR and RH from climbing
May 21	SK, RI, PS, GC and Sanjeev walk to viewpoint for Gocha La (4500m). Mixed weather again; DR and RH descend from high camp to Tangshing with Karma and Bhai-chung
May 22	RH visits Lam Pokri
May 23	RH and DR visit Gocha La viewpoint; SK visits Lam Pokri; base camp packed up. Descend via contouring path to Choka. Heavy rain in evening
May 24	Descend to Yoksam in very heavy rain
May 25	Visits to royal palace and Dabde monastery at Yoksam
May 26	Drive to Pelling via Kechoiperi Lake and visit to Rabdentse palace at Pelling
May 27	Visit Sangacholing and Pemayangtse monasteries at Pelling; drive to Darjiling
May 28	Train rides and shopping in Darjiling
May 29	GC, RH, SK, DR and PS drive Darjiling – Bagdogra and fly to Kolkata
May 30	Election day in Kolkata, everything closed!
May 31	RI leaves Darjiling; all depart Kolkata for home

To Base Camp

The four Scottish members flew by Emirates via Dubai, arriving in Kolkata in the morning of 30th April. Paul Swienton from Maryland USA flew in that evening, minus his baggage which had been held up in New York. Next morning the five of us took a pre-booked flight on Spicejet airways from Kolkata to Bagdogra, with Paul having been assured that Air India would get his baggage to Bagdogra the next day. Dick Isherwood, who had travelled from Seattle via Frankfurt and a long tiring wait in Delhi met us in Bagdogra, as did Barap Bhutia, our agent and Sanjeev Tamang, the guide that Barap had assigned to us. We then took the 5 hour drive to Gangtok, arriving late in the evening.

The next day was spent in Gangtok, partly surveying equipment and food arrangements with Barap. He had agreed to supply us with some mountain tents and stoves and most of our mountain food, as well as full base camp support. We inspected the equipment together with a 'Sherpa', Karma and 'liaison officer' Bhai-Chung, whom Barap had assigned to our trip. In addition Barap had very hospitably arranged for us to visit the Rumtek monastery near Gangtok, and to dine at his home – where he presented each of us with a very fine recent book detailing the history of Kangchendzonga¹.

We drove on Sunday 3rd May to Yoksam, the first capital of Sikkim, a journey of about 6 hours. Yoksam is a very pleasant village at about 1750m that has developed a small tourist industry as the starting point for the most popular trek in Sikkim, up to the Gocha La. We were put up in an excellent hotel, the Tashigang. All baggage was arranged on yaks and horses and next day we started our walk-in, though Steve was very unwell with gut problems. The path first climbs gently, through very thick forest, along the side of the Rathong Chu valley, with numerous ups and downs. After crossing the Prek Chu we climbed steeply up through the forest for about 500m to reach Bakkim (2750m), where we stayed the night in the Forest Rest House. From Bakkim it is less than an hour's climb to Choka (3005m), a small village with a number of rest houses and even a small cafe/bar. Then the path continues up the steep wooded ridge crowded with splendid rhododendrons on a path greatly improved by a succession of logs in places where it must previously have been extremely muddy. We emerged in rain and mist at about 3950m onto a horizontal section which leads with a slight descent to a cluster of huts at Dzungri (4030m) - where shelter and chang can be obtained. We camped a little higher on a flat grassy plain. We stayed here for two nights in order to allow time for acclimatisation.

Dzungri has been known to westerners since the mid-19th century as a fabulous viewpoint for the mountains of the Kangchendzonga range and those of west Sikkim. It also is a stop on the way to the peaks Ratong and Koktang which lie south of Kabru, and to the Kang La pass to Nepal. Unfortunately our day at Dzungri was marred by continuous low cloud, but the following morning we were able to join crowds of trekkers at a famous belvedere about half an hour from the campsite (about 4100m). At dawn we had gorgeous views southward over the forests of our approach and our first clear view of the whole range from Narsing around to Pandim and, directly north, the magnificent panorama of Kangchendzonga and the ridge running south over Kabru to Ratong and Koktang..

The same day we made a very pleasant trek from Dzungri to the base camp at Tangshing (3950m). The route contours for a few miles, drops about 300m through forest to the Prek Chu and then climbs gently up the valley to the grassy plain of Tangshing. Here there are a few stone huts and a chowkidar (caretaker) in residence during the trekking season. There is a pretty steady flow of horses, yaks, porters and trekkers going to and returning from the Gocha La, as this trek terminates at the La and it is necessary to return by the same route. The same day we climbed a few hundred metres above the valley to the site of a ruined former trekking lodge where some expeditions have placed their base camp. However at this time of year there was no water anywhere close to the site.

On May 8th we made another attempt with laden porters to establish a high camp, but the weather was cold, wet and cloudy, and the loads were left at about 4750m without having located the site. Finally, on the following day Karma managed to locate the campsite previously used by Roger Payne and other expeditions, and the porters made a double carry from the previous dump to establish us there. The

camp is located at about 4900m among the moraines below the Jopuno glacier. We made room for four tents close to a convenient overhanging boulder which provided shelter for the equipment. At this time there was water about five minutes walk away, and after snow-melt and a storm a few days later there was a stream running by the camp. But later in the expedition the site had no water at all close by, and buckets had to be carried from a lochan a good 20-30 minutes walk away, involving a scramble up rocks for about 150m.

Lama Lamani North Top



***Route on W Face of Lama Lamani. Apparent summit is N top, the higher S top is hidden.
Descent was on the NW face below and left of the summit***

From our camp the easiest approach to the glacier between Jopuno and Lama Lamani was to follow a line of cairns through the moraines in a south-easterly direction. The first morning we found perfect neve covering some of these moraines, and soon emerged onto easy snow slopes below the W face of Lama Lamani. We identified an obvious line going up to a col to the south of the final elegant snow arête of Lama Lamani's north top. This arête had been taken on the first ascent in 2005 by Roger Payne's party, but they had started from a camp higher up the glacier and had climbed the NW face to gain the arête. We explored the glacier close under the base of the W face, climbing around to the left up to about 5200m and found no serious obstacles. With the intention of returning next day we left some gear in the boulders below the W face.



Approaching the West face of Lama Lamani

On May 11th Steve, Bob, Paul and Geoff set off about 4 am to climb Lama Lamani. (At this time Dave was still feeling unacclimatised and had not come up to the moraine camp.) We retrieved our gear from the boulders under the face and started climbing about 6 am. The weather was excellent, snow conditions good and dawn views west to Kabru and Kangchendzonga exhilarating. Apart from one pitch, Steve and Bob soloed, while Geoff and Paul moved together placing runners. The face up to the col was largely mixed climbing at about Scottish grade II. The route started below and to the right of left-trending ramps leading into a snow couloir that runs up to the col. Steve and Bob followed the highest, narrow ramp tucked up against a steep rock wall, while Geoff and Paul took an easier ramp below. We all then followed a blocky ridge on the right of the couloir. In the upper part we moved into the couloir, and climbed out on the left to reach the col. At the col an impressive rock tower to the south lent a dramatic air to our perch. We could look across to the main (South) top of Lama Lamani, which is connected to the North top by a pinnacled rock ridge. We climbed up an interesting mixed ridge at about Scottish grade III above the col. After about 80m Geoff and Paul decided it would be easier to traverse left and join the lower part of the final snow arête but Steve and Bob continued on the rocks, climbing a through route at one point and a steep wall on the south side. When the rock ridge gave out at a level section they joined the snow arête and made steps up the final section of about 100m to the North summit (5655m).



Geoff and Paul on the upper snow arete of Lama Lamani



***Another view of the upper aretes
(looking S from Jopuno)***

As remarked by Roger Payne, this summit is remarkably sheltered. At the top of the snow arête (which on this day was in perfect condition) we dropped onto a small level area of snow right on the summit, with a kind of snow parapet protecting us from exposure to the west where we had come from and a few rocks forming a similar kind of parapet preventing exposure on the other side. Unfortunately by the time we reached the summit, around noon, the afternoon cloud had already started to come in. We did not get a very clear view to the east, but we could see the impressive face of P.5833 (sometimes mistaken for Narsing), and we got a tiny glimpse of the top of the E face of Jopuno, which seemed extremely steep. Although the S ridge of Jopuno looks feasible, it seemed likely to have some quite technical and time-consuming sections. The top section where the rock is black (and reportedly much less sound) appears to have some rather tricky pinnacles.



***Paul Swinton on the North summit of Lama Lamani (5600m).
South-west face of Jopuno behind, with S ridge on the right, W ridge on the left.***

Looking the other way we could see why Roger Payne had not continued along the connecting ridge to the higher North top of Lama Lamani. Although the distance was not great, there were several pinnacles that might be difficult, though it was hard to tell for sure. In any event, this being our first peak and with a cold wind and cloud coming in we felt it more prudent not to attempt it.

We descended the ridge towards Jopuno a short way, then began abseiling down the NW face. After a couple of long abseils (we had 60m ropes) we down climbed on snow for about 100m then moved a little to the left (north-east) and abseiled again. Finally more down climbing on reasonable snow (getting some afternoon softness) got us above a last steeper section which we abseiled to get onto the glacier.



Looking down an abseil on the descent of the NW face of Lama Lamani

Lama Lamani South Side

After a rest day, on May 13th Geoff and Dick went to explore the glacier and peaks south of Lama Lamani. The SFR 1:150,000 map is not on a large enough scale to depict very precisely the topography of this area. There is a spot height of 5480m which presumably represents the double headed rocky peak south of Lama Lamani. It appeared from a conversation with Karma that Lamani (meaning female lama) may be the name of this peak, while Lama Lamani may refer to the whole group of peaks from the N top we had just climbed right through to P.5480m. But it would be very confusing to adopt this nomenclature. As previous reports have referred to Lama Lamani, we have retained this name in relation to the peak whose North top both Roger Payne and we climbed.

To the south of the glacier approach to our W face route on Lama Lamani, some very steep cliffs could be seen in profile from our camp. We found that it was not difficult to traverse a boulder field immediately under these cliffs, losing very little height from the Jopuno glacier, and gaining the next glacier south in about two hours. This glacier was gently angled and apparently crevasse free. It gives access to the SW face of Lama Lamani, and its S ridge. This line had been previously mentioned by Roger Payne as offering an attractive but challenging route to the highest (South) top of Lama Lamani. We would concur with this judgement. In a very cold wind we reached a col at 5257m at the head of this glacier, between Lama Lamani and P.5480. To the east a descent appeared possible to a long glacier draining east and then south. However there appeared to be no possibility of getting around to the north to access the east side of Jopuno. All we could see on the north bounding side of the glacier was steep ground rising to a pinnacle ridge running east, and in the distance further east a group of pointed peaks that we took to include Narsing (5825m). North-east of the pinnacle ridge the flat top of peak 5833m was visible, but accessing its steep W face from this col would be extremely time consuming. To the south of the 5257m col it appeared possible to climb in about 200m to the summit of P.5480m by a mixed route that would possibly not exceed grade III in difficulty. But a more aesthetic line was the snow couloir rising between the two tops of P.5480m which could be climbed from the snow bowl below the col. We did not attempt this route although it looked eminently feasible in the conditions.



On the far left the lower part of the S ridge of Jopuno. The N and S tops of Lama Lamani are in the centre. Right of this is col 5257m with the flat-topped P.5833m behind. At the right is the double headed P.5480m. View taken by telephoto from Dzongri belvedere.



P.5480m as seen from N top of Lama Lamani. The col 5257m is just hidden at bottom left.



The S ridge of Lama Lamani runs directly towards the camera on the right of this photo, taken from col 5257m

Peak 5500m between Jopuno and Lama Lamani

Also on 13th May Bob and Dave left camp at about 4am with Steve and Paul. We all climbed together up to a point below the glacier well right of the start of the west ridge of Jopuno. Steve and Paul then went left to explore the approach to the west ridge, while Bob and Dave climbed onto the glacier at a point directly below the line of the Payne Clyma route on the SW face of Jopuno (October 2009). Bob and Dave then traversed across the straightforward glacier under the face of Jopuno before climbing steeper ground and reaching the lowest bealach between Lama Lamani and Jopuno. From here we traversed right on steep snow and ice for a couple of rope lengths to gain a snow arete. We followed this for a rope length to gain the summit rocks of P.5500m. Two further short pitches up mixed grooves led to a few exposed moves to gain the summit block.

In descent we down climbed a short way then did one abseil to gain the snow arete which we down climbed to another bealach. From here we down climbed a further two rope lengths of steep ground before regaining the glacier. Neither of us carried an altimeter but we thought the top was no more than 100 metres lower than the north summit of Lama Lamani.



Summit of P.5500m. Ridge behind runs approximately South-east



On bealach north of P.5500m. S ridge of Jopuno on left, with a ridge running NE behind

Jopuno NW Face

The following day Bob and Geoff explored in a northerly direction from the high camp. Our aim was to investigate the possibility of accessing the col between Tinchenkang and Jopuno, and the potential for routes on the NW face of Jopuno or the SW face of Tinchenkang. We stayed at a relatively low level, below 5200m, and contoured around two spurs separated by intervening corries until we were below the gully that falls from the col between Tinchenkang and Jopuno. The slopes on the face left of this gully looked feasible, but were not particularly attractive, especially as it would necessitate a long climb up a possibly gendarmed ridge to reach either summit from near this col. Below the SW face of Tinchenkang there is a small flat area of glacier above a horrendous icefall that looked out of the question, so any attempt on the face would require a diagonal approach from near the base of the dividing gully between Tinchenkang and Jopuno. On the right of this gully things looked more promising. The eye of faith could make out a line up the NW face of Jopuno that would be mainly on snow and might, in the right conditions, be shorter and quicker than the W ridge (see photo).

In order to investigate access to the base of this face and of the W ridge we scrambled up broken rocks for about 200m and established that there were ledges offering potential campsites.



NW Face of Jopuno. The line contemplated (but not attempted) went between the two ice cliffs and then up left and possibly behind the banded rock buttress.

Jopuno W Ridge

Steve and Paul had explored direct approaches from our high camp to the West ridge of Jopuno, but had not found any particularly good way. They had then descended to the Tangshing base camp. Meanwhile Dave continued to suffer from oedema-like swelling in his face even after his ascent of P.5500m with Bob. On May 15th Dave decided that the safest thing was to descend to base camp, and Dick accompanied him, while on the same day Steve and Paul returned to high camp after two nights recuperation in the Tangshing fleshpots. We reviewed our options and decided that our best hope of a new route was the possible line on the NW face of Jopuno that Bob and Geoff had identified. Accordingly, on the following day, with the sterling assistance of Karma and Bhai-Chung, Steve, Bob, Paul and Geoff carried a camp up to the ledges below the face (5100m). Excavation of snow ledges and arrangement of a boulder-protected cooking area consumed a good deal of energy and time.

The weather in the morning, following some night snowfall, was somewhat doubtful, so it was decided to stay put for a day. With Bob not feeling very well, Steve, Paul and Geoff reconnoitred the first 150m of snow leading to the W ridge. All things considered we felt that we were more likely to reach the summit if we attempted the W ridge.

At 2.45am on May 18th the four of us left camp to climb the W ridge. Bob was still not well, but decided to accompany us. Above the point reached the previous morning was a short icy section where a belay on ice screws was taken. We then climbed unroped up snow for several hours to a height of perhaps 5450m. Here the ridge became quite icy and it was necessary to rope up again and belay on screws. After two quite time-consuming pitches, with a traverse right under the next rocks, we got established on the firm brown rock mentioned by the previous American party that first climbed this ridge in 2008. The rocks had a fair bit of snow on them and though broken up gave climbing of about Scottish grade III standard. Steve and Bob reached the foot of the looser black rock that forms the summit of the mountain at about 11am, with Geoff and Paul a pitch behind. The black rock section is easier angled than the brown section that we had climbed, but it is longer (maybe 300m) and likely to take quite a lot of time. The party was climbing quite slowly and it appeared unlikely that we could reach the summit and descend safely before evening. So it was decided to turn around. A succession of 60m abseils, including two from abalakov threads, got us down the rocks and the icy section. We could see at this time that the NW face was very icy and would undoubtedly have been too time-consuming for our party. We continued slowly reversing our route and regained the tents at about 5.30pm. In view of our slow speed it seemed that we had made the right decision. Although disappointed not to have reached the summit we all agreed that we had had a very good 15 hour day of Alpine climbing in a splendid mountain setting.



Bob on icy section below mixed ground



Bob climbing the mixed golden rock section



Two views of W ridge of Jopuno. High point was at top of brown rocks, below first black tower.

Final days in the mountains

Karma appeared next morning and was hugely helpful in packing up our top camp. We descended to the 4900m camp to meet Dave who had come up from Tangshing that morning. Bob elected to stay up at this camp with Dave in the hope of getting another route done in our last couple of days, while Steve, Paul and Geoff continued down to Tangshing. In the event uncertain weather prevented Dave and Bob from attempting another climb, although they did some rock climbing with Bhai-Chung and taught him some belaying techniques. Down at Tangshing the chowkidar's hut was the scene of much drinking and singing, with Dick impressing everyone by his capacity for 'tumba' (bamboo vessel for imbibing chang through a straw), and the locals evidencing a very proper appreciation of our Scotch whisky. On the 21st Steve, Paul, Dick and Geoff walked about 4 hours up to a viewpoint at about 4600m near the Gocha La. We got excellent views of the huge west face of Pandim, but unfortunately cloud partly obscured views to the north and west preventing the best view of Kangchendzonga. A couple of days later in the morning before leaving Tangshing Bob and Dave repeated the walk and got better views. Visits were also made by Bob and Steve to Lam Pokri, a pretty loch on the west flanks of the mountains south of Lama Lamani, which lies on a fairly recently opened trekking route from Tangshing to Tashiding.



Dick and Sanjeev looking towards Gocha La



West ridge of Pandim

Sikkim tourism

Our guide Sanjeev had arranged for the yaks and horses to come back up to Tangshing on May 22nd so that we could start our walk down on the 23rd. In principle we could have had a couple more days in the mountains had we been sure from the beginning that we would need them. However Barap and Sanjeev had determined a somewhat complex timetable for our last week in Sikkim, so we just went along with this. On our first descent day we avoided the re-ascent to Dzongri by taking a long contouring path from the Prek Chu that rejoins the ascent route about 250m above Choka. Although of potentially great interest to botanists thanks to the profusion of rhododendrons, this path has quite a lot of small ups and downs, and is not in our view any better as a descent route than going via Dzongri. We spent a night in Choka, which has a couple of good rest houses (and a bar provided with beer!), and next day descended to Yoksam in torrential rain which made us think the monsoon had arrived.

A further day was spent in Yoksam visiting the site of the first palace in Sikkim and the ancient Dabde monastery on the hill above the village. Barap came to join us at Yoksam that evening and for reasons that we could not quite fathom he had arranged that instead of returning to Gangtok we should travel by way of Pelling and Darjiling. Pelling, situated on a ridge opposite Yoksam (but separated from it by a deep valley) was the second capital of Sikkim. We were treated to a very worthwhile visit to the ruined palace of Rabdentse and the ancient monasteries of Sangacholing and Pemayangtse. As it was the birthday of the Buddha we were able to witness the celebrations. None of this had been expected by us, it was just laid on by Barap as part of his package. Next day we descended to the Rangit river and then climbed up a very steep interesting road to Darjiling, with a fascinating visit to a tea factory en route. After a day in Darjiling, including a ride on its famous train and the even more famous dawn view of Kangchendzonga, we were taken to Bagdogra and flew back to Kolkata. Our final day there coincided with the West Bengal elections, thus precluding any more tourism.



Cricket at base camp



Trainee monks at Yoksam

Appendix 1 – Travel

The Scottish four flew on Emirates from Glasgow to Kolkata via Dubai. This avoided the hassles of Heathrow. We were unable to get more than the standard 30 kg allowance for checked baggage, though this was interpreted quite liberally on both outward and return journeys.

From Kolkata to Bagdogra we flew with Spicejet. There appear to be several competing Indian flights for this leg, and Spicejet were the cheapest. We obtained a discount for buying five return tickets, with a total price of about 17,500 rupees. There was no problem with booking this online, and Spicejet appeared to run efficiently. Weight restrictions are more severe on this flight : 20 kg checked baggage plus 10 kg carry-on baggage. Excess baggage was charged at 100 rupees per kilo. We were helped by the fact that Paul's baggage was delayed between USA and Kolkata so that on the outward flight to Bagdogra we only had four persons' baggage between five. However we ended up paying a total of £192 in excess baggage for the two flights outward and return.

After Bagdogra our travel was entirely managed by Barap's team from Sikkim Holidays. We were driven everywhere in comfortable vehicles by impressively careful drivers.

Appendix 2 – Logistics

We were recommended by Roger Payne to use Sikkim Holidays (www.sikkimholidays.com), run by Barap Namgyal Bhutia, as our agent. Barap was extremely helpful both in email correspondence over the year of preparation and for the duration of the expedition. He obtained all necessary permissions, so we did not need to have any dealings with the Sikkim government or the Indian Mountaineering Federation. He gave us a per person price quoted in euros, with a discount for the sixth person. We paid 40 percent of the total a few months in advance and the balance when we left Yoksam.

For the walk-in and base camp Barap supplied base camp tents and all the usual paraphernalia of dining tent, cooking tent, toilet tents etc. We had a very good cook, Suresh, and several cook's assistants. Transport of food and equipment by yaks and horses from Yoksam to Tangshing was arranged by our guide Sanjeev through local pony men used regularly by Sikkim Holidays. We had no need to concern ourselves with these arrangements (beyond providing expected tips at the end).

Barap also supplied us with some tents for high camp and butane gas stoves and cylinders for use on the mountain. He purchased a reasonable supply of local food for our use above base camp and we supplemented this with a small stock of instant potato, cheese, salami and other high energy foods brought from UK and US.

In retrospect we would have been wise to pay more attention to the food provided for above base camp. It had not been made clear to us that this was meant to feed Karma and Bhai-Chung as well as ourselves. Indeed we had not understood that these two would be living with us above base camp. It seemed as though they had a very different model of mountaineering in mind, whereby Karma would fix ropes and haul us up the mountain. When we explained that we wished to climb independently there was no problem, and they were of great help with carrying loads, siting camps, fetching water etc, but they did require to be fed!!

Overall the support provided was on a reasonably lavish scale, as seems to be normal these days for commercial trips, though it was in excess of what we really needed and far greater than what some of us had been used to in the past.

Appendix 3 – Equipment

We took a good range of rock and ice gear plus snow stakes and lots of spare tat for abseiling. In the event we used very little gear. On the two mountain climbs each pair used one lightweight 60m rope,

allowing us to combine for 60m abseils in descent. By using Abalokov threads we avoided having to leave behind expensive ice screws. On Lama Lamani we were able to find rock spikes for abseiling.

Appendix 4 – Medical

We took a very comprehensive medical kit thanks to the good offices of the Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team, of which Steve and Bob are members. The most serious medical event was Dave's mountain sickness. Dave knew from previous Himalayan experience that he was slow to acclimatise.

Unfortunately on this trip he suffered from quite severe oedema in his face and hands. When we initially established high camp he decided to stay down at Tangshing as his cheeks had become puffed up after our push to about 4750m the previous day. However he came up to high camp (4900m) a few days later and succeeded in reaching P.5500m with Bob. But the swelling returned and although he took diamox he felt it best to descend to Tangshing. He returned to 4900m after 3 more nights below at 3960m and probably would have been fit to climb higher had we had the weather and time to do so.

Appendix 5 – Visas and Sikkim Government Permits

Visas are easily obtainable by post or in person, but you need to allow enough time. The procedure has been improved and, at least in Scotland, seemed to work quite smoothly. At the time of obtaining an Indian visa it is possible to apply for a permit to enter Sikkim. However it is much simpler to do this at the border. We expended quite a bit of effort completing Sikkim Government entry forms which Barap had sent to us, and emailing them back to him with photographs etc. But there was still a delay of about an hour when we crossed the border into Sikkim. It is likely that it would have been no slower if we had not sent any forms beforehand but simply completed all formalities at this time. Of course plenty of spare passport photographs are required.

Appendix 6 – Maps and Names of Features

The most detailed map available seems to be that produced by the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research (SFR). Sikkim Himalaya, scale 1:150,000, contour intervals 100m. It is shaded in two colours but not particularly easy to read, as the typeface is quite faint. It covers the whole of Sikkim, so the detail around Jopuno and Lama Lamani is limited. It is obtainable from Stanfords, 12/14 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LP (www.stanfords.co.uk) price £23.95 (in 2009). A rather poor copy of the area we visited is attached to the end of this report.

Those with expertise in using Google Maps can easily follow the route we took from Bagdogra to Gangtok and thence to Yoksam, and the return journey via Darjiling. However as an introduction to Sikkim a simple tourist map showing a few main places is appended.

There seems to be no accepted spelling of most of the geographical features mentioned in this report. For consistency we have adopted the spelling on the SFR map wherever possible. However we saw almost every conceivable variation of the spelling of Jopuno on our travels (Juponu, Joponu, . . .). The book by Wangchuk and has an interesting discussion of the history spelling of Kangchendzonga.

Appendix 7 – Bibliography

Roger Payne has a review article, *Sublime Sikkim*, in the Alpine Journal, 2009 (Vol 114), pp 147-160. This article has a selection of historical references.

Roger also has a review article, *Emerging from the Mists*, in the American Alpine Journal 2008. A pdf is available at www.rogerpayne.info/AAJ%202008%20final%20draft.pdf.

Roger's website www.rogerpayne.info is a useful source for reaching the reports of Roger's numerous Sikkim expeditions.

The Alpine Journal 2009 also has a historical article by Blaser and Hughes about the first ascent of Kabru (AJ 2009, pp 219-228) with specific historical references

A fascinating survey of the culture of Sikkim and the history of mountaineering around Kanngchendzonga is given in : Wangchuk, P and Zulca, M (2007), *Kangchendzonga, Sacred Summit*, Little Kingdom, Gangtok.

An account of the American ascent of the West ridge is in the American Alpine Journal. Some pictures can be found online at <http://www.themountaininstitute.com/reports/india/jopuno.html>. A fuller set of photos from this expedition is at <http://picasaweb.google.com/halladay/IndiaExpedition2008>

Two books by Trevor Braham : *Himalayan Odyssey* (1974) and *Himalayan Playground* (2008) recount a number of interesting trips to northern Sikkim.

Accounts

Expenditure	£
Air travel to India (including one from Eastern USA and one from Western USA)	3935
Air travel Kolkata – Bagdogra (5 persons, including £192 excess baggage costs)	444
Visas	305
Insurance	451
Food for altitude brought from UK/USA	100
Paid to Sikkim Holidays (agent)	9700
Tips to Sikkim staff	569
Food and drink in India	456
Hotels and taxis in India	250
Medical drugs bought by rescue team	29
Total	16239
(excludes personal equipment etc bought by individual members)	
Income	
Mount Everest Foundation	1100
Mountaineering Council of Scotland	800
Member contributions	14339
Total	16239



Section of SFR 1:150,000 map of Sikkim

