China 1987

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There were 33 expeditions to China during 1987. In parallel with other areas of the Himalaya, the 8000m peaks were by far the most popular, with Everest heading the bill with eight expeditions, none of which were successful because of the weather. Second in the popularity list was Xixabangma, with seven expeditions of which four were successful – the difference of size – and then three to Muztagh Ata and two to Cho Oyu. The limited number of expeditions to the smaller peaks is partly due, no doubt, to the high cost of all climbing in China and the difficulty of getting sponsorship for small peaks.

The Chinese authorities certainly seem much more relaxed about giving permits for unclimbed peaks. In this respect we were extremely fortunate in getting permission for Menlungtse, Gaurishankar's beautiful sister peak. One thing we did discover, however, is how expensive it is if there is a long trek to Base Camp. Expeditions to mountains near a road-head are comparatively inexpensive – for instance a small expedition to Everest would probably be cheaper to run than one to Menlungtse.

The expeditions going to China were as follows. I am greatly indebted to Mr Ying Dao Shui of the Chinese Mountaineering Association for providing this useful information.

Expeditions to China in 1987

1. *The Swedish Mount Everest Expedition*
39 members (including 8 Nepalese), from 5 March to 3 June
(N col route of Mt Qomolangma).
Leader, Ebbe Wahlund, MD.
Unsuccessful

2. *The 1987 Arkansas/Mount Everest Expedition*
15 members, from 6 March to 9 June (N face route).
Leader, Jack Allsup
Unsuccessful

3. *Spanish Qomolangma Expedition*
8 members + 5 Nepalese, from 21 June to 15 September (N col route).
Leader, Antonio Ramos Villar
Unsuccessful

4. *China Everest 87*
21 pax, from 4 August to 13 November (N col route).
Leader, Steve van Meter
Unsuccessful

5. *Everest 87 (UK)*
12 pax, from 31 August to 4 November (NE ridge route).
Leaders, Doug Scott and Rick Allen
Unsuccessful

6. *87 American North Face Expedition*
13 members, from 24 July to 11 November (N face route).
Leader, Scott Fisher
Unsuccessful

7. *Japan National Defence Academy Alpine Club Mt Qomolangma Expedition 1987*
30 members, from 15 July to 18 November (W ridge route).
Leader, Takashi Kawakami
Unsuccessful

8. *Tsuneo Hasegawa and U-Tan Club Qomolangma Winter Expedition 1987–88*
4 members + 5-member filming crew, from October 1987 to January 1988 (N col route).
Leader, Tsuneo Hasegawa

9. *The 1987 Colorado Xixabangma Expedition*
8 members, from 29 March to 2 May (Chinese route).
Leader, Dr Richard D Dietz
Unsuccessful

10. *The New Zealand Mt Xixabangma Expedition1987*
6 members, from 27 April to 25 May (Chinese route).
Leader, Mike Perry
Successful

11. *Italian Xixabangma Expedition*
7 members, from 7 August to 4 September (Chinese route).
Organizer, Trekking International, Mr Beppe Tenti

12. *Italian Xixabangma Expedition*
9 members, from 20 August to 25 September (Chinese route).
Organizer, Trekking International, Mr Beppe Tenti
Successful

13. *The Hungarian Tibet Expedition 1987*
9 members, from 6 September to 17 October (N ridge).
Leader, Dr Sandor Nagy
Successful

14. *Xixabangma 1987 – Expedition Jade Venture*
29 members, from 18 September to 10 November (SE face).
Leader, Lt Col Henry Day
Unsuccessful

15. *Polish Xixabangma Expedition*
13 members, from 17 August to 27 September (N side).
Leader, Jerzy Kukuczka
Successful

16. *Japan Kamoshika-Dojin Cho Oyu Expedition 1987*
10 members + 11 pax of supporting group, 18 August to 7 October (Chinese route).
Leader, Mrs Takahashi Michiko
8 members reached the summit, 20, 21 and 22 September

17. *Australian Changtse Expedition 1987*
6 members, from 26 August to 13 October.
Leader, Louis Whitton
Successful (2 members reached the summit)

18. *The Irish Zhangzi Tibet Expedition*
12 members, from 31 August to 2 November.
Leader, Joss Lynam
Unsuccessful

19. *The Norwegian/British Tibet Expedition*
6 members, from 9 March to 3 May (Menlungtse).
Leader, Chris Bonington
Unsuccessful

20. *Japan–China Friendship Joint Expedition 1987 to Mt Labuche Kang (Xizang)*
9 Japanese + 9 Chinese, from 10 September to 9 November.
Chinese Leader, Chen Tian Liang. Japanese Leader, Kinichi Yamamori
Successful

21. *Doshisha University Mt Siguniang Expedition 1987*
13 members, from 24 September to 29 November.
Leader, Miyazaki Takafumi
Successful

22. *The Japanese Academic Alpine Club of Shizuoka Mt Crown Expedition*
14 members, from 1 June to 18 September (Mt Crown, 7295m, located in Xinjiang).
Leader, Yamamoto Ryozo
Unsuccessful

23. *Mendizaleak Kongur 87 (Spain)*
4 members, from 28 June to 13 August (SW ridge – C Bonington route).
Leader, Javier Iraola
Unsuccessful

24. *1987 International Friendship Expedition*
9 members, from 6 July to 20 August (Muztagh Ata: N and S summits).
Leader, Michael Jardine
Successful

25. *The Italian Expedition to Mt Muztagh Ata*
19 members, from 2 August to 2 September (Qiaodumak route).
Organizer, Trekking International, Mr Beppe Tenti

26. *The Austrian Muztagh Ata Expedition*
5 members, from 1 September to 21 September.
Leader, Bruno Baumann
Successful

27. *Japanese Xinqin Feng Expedition*
9 members, from 25 July to 15 August (reconnaissance).
Leader, Hideyuki Uematsu

28. *American Expedition to Sigunian*
18 members, from 30 September to 16 October.
Organizer, Mr Peter Klika
Successful

29. *The American Jade Dragon Expedition*
9 members, from 28 April to 16 May.
Leader, Mr Eric Salz Perlman
Successful

30. *The British Amne Machin Expedition*
5 members, from 31 August to 26 September.
Leader, John Town
Unsuccessful

31. *The Fukuoka Alpine Club Kunlun Expedition 1987*
9 members, from 18 July to 31 August (6699m Peak).
Leader Kyushiro Morooka
Unsuccessful

32. *The Japanese Mt Hai Zi Expedition*
13 members, from 25 July to 23 August.
Leader, Kazuo Tobita
Successful

33. *International Expedition to Cho Oyu*
Successful

(*Editor's Note.* Expeditions should not necessarily be considered 'unsuccessful' if they fail to reach the highest point. See, for example, John Town's article on pp 77–83 of this volume. And what if 'success' is achieved at high cost in life?)

Henry Day adds:

Climbers returning from Tibet after the post-monsoon season had to contend with two hazards in addition to the usual red tape. The road between

Kathmandu and Friendship Bridge on the Nepal/China border had been blocked during the monsoon in several places, the worst being between Barabise and Lamasangu. By November the obstructions had been reduced to a single two-hour portage, with vehicles available at either side of it. The Nepalese have thrown a battalion of para-military engineers on to the job and expectations were for a serviceable motor road again to the frontier in time for the start of the spring climbing season. On the other side of the border the Chinese Mountaineering Association were less sanguine about getting vehicles to Zhangmu, the Tibet side of the border. The exceptional snowfall of late October blocked the road over the Lalung La (5020m), about 100km north of the border, as well as causing rockfalls that blocked the road 10km south of Nyalam. Snowploughs cleared the pass by 3 November, but the journey down from Nyalam to the frontier required porters for the whole distance of 25km. The CMA cannot guarantee that the situation will be improved by the spring. The other problem was political. Notices had appeared after disturbances in Lhasa on 1 October. They warned visitors not to interfere in the internal affairs of the country. Individual travellers were no longer admitted and those already in Lhasa were moved on. Only previously organized groups, including CMA-arranged expeditions, were allowed to travel through Lhasa.

There are indications that the CMA is being challenged over its monopoly on the issue of climbing permits. China International Sports Travel Corporation may be subsuming the CMA completely; similarly-titled China Tibet International Sports Travel offers a full service 'for expeditions, travels and tours' in its own region and has its own telex number. The acid test will be whether a letter or telex of invitation from the C(T)ISTC is honoured by visa-issuing authorities abroad.

The CMA continue to update their regulations and provisions governing mountaineering and trekking parties and, when negotiating with them, it is always worth bearing in mind the last rule: 'The right to interpret and revise (alter) these regulations (provisions) belongs to the CMA'. They make a high proportion of their foreign exchange from their tariff for transport and accommodation, charging well above the market rate. For example, the local charge for an overnight stay at the Chinese hotel in Nyalam is 7 yuan (about £1/US$2); the CMA charge 80 yuan even if meals are not available. For vehicles they now charge all journeys as if they started in Lhasa, even if much of the trip is notional (some trucks remain at Xegar). The distance from Lhasa to Zhangmu off the latest map and consistent with roadside marker stones is 827km but the CMA charge for 900km. The exchange rate has moved steadily in favour of those with hard currency, so much so that costs have effectively halved since the first foreign expeditions went in 1980/81. However, the charges are presently pegged at 3.7 yuan to the US dollar. Those who are climbing in China on a budget may wish to take a few precautions: read the odometer of vehicles at start and completion of journey; avoid overnight stops where possible; send a powerful negotiating team to settle the account in Beijing at the end of the expedition; note that the joining expenses of CMA's Liaison Officer and interpreter (if taken) are charged to the expedition. (They could come from Beijing and take a week on the journey.)

The published list of authorized peaks (see *Mountain 113*) lags behind those upon which attempts have been permitted. The message seems to be that, provided there are no political complications and the CMA can arrange transport, there is a chance that a permit will be issued. It is certainly worth asking.

Those wishing to hire high-altitude porters have found those provided not yet as effective as Sherpas. Permission has been given for a few Sherpas to climb in Tibet as long as they are represented as team members. There are still no rescue facilities on offer, although a helicopter is now in the Tibet region at least. It was reported to have been sent to Nyalam as part of the government's efforts to release foreign tourists trapped on their way to the Lalung La in late October. It was not seen near any expedition's camps. Casualty evacuation in Tibet remains an expedition's own responsibility.

H Adams Carter adds:

An expedition to Mount Everest, led by Jack Allsup, very nearly succeeded. They approached the Great Couloir somewhat to the east between the flanks of Changtse and the N face to 6700m. Although they established Camp 3 at 7600m at the bottom of the Great Couloir on 17 April, it was not until 14 May that they were able to set up Camp 4 at 8170m. On 21 May Eric Simonson and Ed Viesturs made a summit try. They climbed straight out of the top of the Great Couloir rather than traversing right above the Yellow Band, because of the lack of snow. Upon reaching the final summit snow-field, Simonson traversed to the W ridge, climbing ahead of Viesturs, but he turned back at 8750m below a steep rock-step. Three other summit attempts failed. On 19 June Roger Marshall, a Canadian born in England but living in Colorado, set out, hoping to make a solo ascent of the Japanese and Hornbein Couloirs. At the end of the second day, he was at the foot of the Hornbein Couloir. On the morning of 21 June he was observed to begin to descend. On the very hard ice of the Japanese Couloir he slipped and fell to his death.

Józef Nyka adds:

The First Hungarian 8000m Peak

A nine-member Hungarian team jointly led by Dr Sándor Nagy (organization) and Peter Dékány (technical leader) completed the ascent of Xixabangma (8046m) by the normal route. From Base Camp at 5000m three camps were established: 1 at 6400m, 2 at 6950m and 3 at 7400m. Peter Dékány became seriously ill. On 1 October 1987 the top was reached by Dr Sándor Nagy and Attila Ozsváth. The weather worsened. A week later the second ascent followed, made by Zoltán Balaton, László Vörös, József Csíkos and László Várkonyi. These were the 25th and 26th ascents of Xixabangma, but we are not sure if all the earlier summiteers reached the main summit of the mountain (for example, on 17 September 1987, the members of the Swiss–Austrian–German expedition stopped on the Central Summit, c8030m).

Zbigniew Kowalewski adds:

Xixabangma 1987

The lowest of the 8000m peaks, Xixabangma (8027m) rises approximately 120km north-west of Mount Everest. It received scant attention until recently, the main obstacle being political. The summit was first reached by a large Chinese expedition in 1964. The expedition followed a route up the NW face.

In 1982 a small British party climbed the SW face in alpine style. Up to 1987 no other routes had been recorded.

In September 1987, a 13-member International Expedition led by Jerzy Kukuczka put nine members on the summit via three independent routes. Hajzer and Kukuczka climbed a new route via the W ridge and the W summit (c7950m). Avila, Carsolio (Mexico), Navarette (Ecuador), Rutkiewicz and Warecki (Poland) repeated the Chinese route. These climbers reached the top on 19 September. Meanwhile, Hinks (Britain) and Untch (USA) completed a difficult new route on the NE face, reaching the top on 24 September.

The International Expedition was based on the Yebonkal Glacier. On the far side of the mountain, a British expedition was based on the Phola Glacier. Two members of the team, Venables and Hughes, climbed a new line on the SE ridge to a point about 300m below the main summit of Xixabangma. See Luke Hughes's article, pp 63–70.

(*Editor's Note – the height of Xixabangma.* This is variously given as 8013m, 8027m and 8046m. According to *The Shishapangma Expedition* by Doug Scott and Alex MacIntyre (1984), p26, the Survey of India gave 8013m in the last century and 8046m in 1978; a more recent Chinese recalculation gave 8027m. We have adopted 8027m in this volume.)