



TO THE MEDIA

Ljubljana, September 2011

THE DREAMERS OF THE GOLDEN CAVES, a new Slovenian route in Himalaya

A team of 4 alpinists returned home from Charakusa 2011 expedition on 24th of September, which was mainly founded by Alpine Association of Slovenia. The expedition that took place in Charakusa (Karakoram mountain range, Himalaya) started on 15th of August and consisted of 4 men: team leader Urban Novak (age 25) and three members David Debeljak (26), Luka Stražar (22) and Nejc Marčič (26).

Their main goal was the main summit of K7 (6934 m) above Charakusa valley, which they wanted to climb in alpine style and possibly over a new route. When they arrived to the base in the valley, the mighty pillar K7 West was the one that caught Nejc's and Luka's attention. They were overwhelmed by it. They have set up a new direct, fast, alpine-style route. They named it "The Dreamers of golden caves" (original: **Sanjači zlatih jam**). This is only the second route that tops out on the summit of K7 West. The first one was climbed by Marko Prezelj, Steve House and Vince Anderson in 2007.

The description of the new route on K7 West (6615 m), main characteristics:

VI/5, M5, A2, 1600 m, climbed by Luka Stražar and Nejc Marčič from 6. to 9. September 2011.

Luka described the ascent and the hard parts: *"We climbed the route in 4 days. The lower part was mainly ice and upper part was mainly rocky passes and mixed climbing. We tried to climb on the ridge as much as possible because of the presence of overhanging seracs. We started from the base at 3 a.m., which was followed by 2 hours approach over scree, followed by climbing snow and ice until the first bivy on the ridge at 7:30 p.m. The next day was technically most demanding and consisted mainly from mixed climbing. It was harder than we'd expected. On this day we only climbed 250 m and set up our bivy on the ridge. The next day we figured that continuing the planned path with our gear would not be possible in the given situation so we passed around the rocky upper part to the right of the ridge and continued under the seracs. We topped out at 9 a.m. and descended to bivy No. 1. We continued our descent to the base camp the following day in bad weather. The weather was (except for the last day) perfect."*

"The Charakusa valley offers a real playground for all-around alpinists, since it offers hard climbing in rock, mixed terrain, ice and snow in alpine style. Because of this diversity one can choose between different goals depending on the given conditions. An alpinist can develop here and show his true talent, right judgment, intuition and imagination with every ascent," says team leader **Urban Novak**. He also stated that: *"I can say that the expedition was really successful and Luka and Nejc climbed an awesome new route. We climbed a lot, acclimatization went great. Weather also served us well, except for the final part of the expedition and prevented us from finishing some other first ascent. The atmosphere during the expedition was perfect and we are thrilled by the gathered experience and climbed routes. It is important to stress out that the ascent made by Nejc and Luka is truly amazing – it is amazing to come to Himalaya for the first time, see a new line and climb it in first try, and especially a hard line like this one."*

We asked **Marko Prezelj** for his insight on the climb. He knows the area well since he climbed a lot of first ascents above the valley of Charakusa and also the first route to top out on the summit of K7 West. He stated that: *"I congratulate the boys, for they were really active during the expedition. A new route on K7W is an excellent achievement – and only the second one to top out on its summit. Charakusa offers a wide range of climbing choices and is therefore of great importance to choose the optimum line in the given conditions. I am really glad about the success of young generation, since it shows that classical alpinism still has its place in the future."*

Tone Škarja, the Chief of Commission for expeditions into foreign mountain ranges at the Alpine Association of Slovenia, states: *"This is a great ascent. They went uncompromisingly for the new, hard routes, even though most of them were new to the Himalaya. The main charm of alpinism is that there are always new challenges. The Himalaya's baptism? Yes, they have broken the ice with great success."*



Miha Habjan, the Chief of Commission for alpinism at the Alpine Association of Slovenia: *“The Charakusa 2011 expedition was chosen on the basis of the proposed goal and the selected team. The team members are all alpinists with a lot of experience from other mountain ranges and with some really good ascents in their career. The area that they have chosen was great since it offers great potential for new routes and Nejc and Luka are a good example that with the right approach really good ascents are possible. They have climbed a lot in past years, especially last winter. The results are here. The new route is amazing, alpine-style, with no side summits, but goes without hesitation directly to the summit of K7W. This is what counts in modern day alpinism!”*

We asked Nejc where he came up with the name. He smiled and stated: *“We, young guys, are often without money and thus often dream of golden caves.”*

With the expedition Charakusa 2011 David, Nejc and Luka visited Himalaya for the first time, but as they said not for the last.

Climbs done during Charakusa 2011 expedition:

- Iqban wall ridge over the base – Nejc Marčič and David Debeljak,
- Naysler Brakk (5200 m), British rout – all members,
- pillar to the left of Naysler Brakk, repeat of Marko Prezelj, Vince Anderson and Steve House 2007 route *with a variation* (upper 300 m) – Nejc Marčič and Urban Novak,
- a ridge right of Naysler Brakk, ridge route – Luka Stražar and Urban Novak,
- Sulu Peak (5950 m) – all members,
- Beatrice (5800 m) – Nejc Marčič, Urban Novak and Luka Stražar,
- K7 West, Sanjači zlatih jam (Dreamers of golden caves), **first ascent**– Luka Stražar and Nejc Marčič,
- Iqban wall, first dihedral on the left side of the wall – David Debeljak and Urban

Author: Zdenka Mihelič, spokesperson for Alpine Association of Slovenia
(Representative of the Alpine Association of Slovenia for public relations)

Translation: Matevž Fazarinc

Additional information:

Zdenka Mihelič, Representative of the Alpine Association of Slovenia for public relations, zdenka.mihelic@pzs.si