

SNAPSHOTS



The summit descent starts against sunbathed magnificence. PHOTOS BY ZHOU XIN / FOR CHINA DAILY



From left: A celebration of conquering the summit at 6:40 am; The team leader (right) needs to carry the bulkiest pack up the mountain.



From left: Nothing is more satisfying than hot noodles at 4,625 meters; Vegetation is scarce between C1 at 4,290 meters and C2 at 4,625 meters.



Every climber must have a partner.

WHERE THE ICE IS NICE

A glacier atop Sichuan's Banji Peak is luring a growing number of amateur mountain climbers

The glacier that crowns the 5,430-meter-high Banji Peak in the Aba Tibetan and Qiang autonomous prefecture is not far from Chengdu, capital of Southwest China's Sichuan province, but has long remained difficult to access.

Until recently, it had been a destination for professional mountaineers, not ordinary people. But the growth of outdoor adventure tours and the standardization of relevant clubs have made the ice giant an ideal place for newbie climbers, since it is easy enough to ascend for amateur climbers with on-site training.

Training and equipment are required for those who hope to tackle Banji and are provided at the base camp in Bipenggou.

Expeditions also require a team leader, and every climber must have a partner.

Climbers also get tips on managing altitude sickness, crossing the anchor point's rope road, dodging falling rocks and the like.

High-altitude snow mountain climbing is very different from ascents at lower elevations. Small problems can become major catastrophes.

It takes three days starting from base camp at 3,570 meters above sea level to summit C1 at 4,290 meters and C2 at 4,625 meters. Teams return to base camp from the peak in about 11 hours.

They spend about six hours a day climbing for the first two days, as they adapt to the high altitudes.

It's a test of physical and mental strength. Those who undertake the challenge are rewarded with spectacular views of the frozen, desolate landscape.

Indeed, ascending snowcaps is punishing. But it's about more than conquering a towering peak. It's also about appreciating nature's sublimity.

That makes it worth the hardships and risks to those who undertake the journeys.

The story by Zhou Xin is translated by Zhang Lei.



Cooking is not an easy task at the summit C1.