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Simond rope team Nicolas Jean & Benjamin Védrines on top of Jannu East, with the new Woma* ice axe in hand.

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A rope team at the summit

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Conquering one of the Himalayas' last great frontiers: Jannu East (7,468 m)

Setting off at the end of August, the French rope team made up of Nicolas Jean (26yo) and Benjamin Védrines (33yo) targeted the unclimbed East peak of Jannu, deep in the Kangchenjunga region of eastern Nepal. Their goal: open a new route on the vertical 2,250m north face in pure alpine style, no oxygen, no fixed ropes, no external support.

This wasn't their first attempt. In the Fall of 2024, their first try was brought to an early end when one of their teammates suffered the onset of cerebral edema. This time, it was just the two of them, fast, light and fully committed. They left nothing to chance and underwent a tough and demanding preparation in order to rise to this extreme challenge and reach a summit no one had ever summited before.

They are no strangers to ambitious goals: in the Spring of 2025, they made headlines with two major achievements: in May, they traversed the full Mont Blanc massif on steep walls only in just three days, followed in June with the ascent of all four faces of Mont Blanc in one single push. That's 7,900 meters of vertical gain in 21 hours. **Their reputation for technical precision, mental strength and speed is already well established.**



Anidesh Chuli (6 808 m)

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Meticulous acclimatisation and a virgin summit as preparation



Arriving on the 6th of September at the base camp on the north side of Jannu (4,700 m), the rope team benefited from favourable weather conditions and took the time for optimal acclimatisation before committing to the north face. As part of their preparation, the two alpinists achieved a first ascent on the 26th of September by climbing Anidesh Chuli (6,808 m) via its north ridge – a previously unclimbed summit.

Jannu East summit reached — A historic first!
15th of October at 1:40 p.m., after two and a half days of ascent.



With an ideal weather window, despite recent heavy snowfalls in the region, all conditions were met to launch the climb. On Sunday the 12th of October, they set off, beginning the approach and spending their first night at the foot of the impressive face. After two further nights on the wall — the first bivouac at around 6,200 m, the second at 6,900 m — the rope team reached the summit on Wednesday the 15th of October at 1:40 p.m. (local time). A world first ascent in pure alpine style — a remarkable achievement that opens a new chapter in the history of mountaineering.

Interview

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Nicolas Jean and Benjamin Védrines' words

"At the summit, there was great joy — though fairly contained. The last 500 metres were particularly gruelling, with unconsolidated snow up to our hips on very steep slopes, almost impassable steps, and a complex search for the true summit: what we believed to be the top of Jannu East turned out to be only a subsidiary peak, with the main summit lying slightly further west. It was mentally and physically exhausting, but together we decided to keep going, traversing the exposed snowy ridge about 150 metres westwards to reach the summit dome. We were in a state of deep fatigue, and it was crucial to stay lucid and focused for the descent — which became another battle in itself!

In the end, it's a profound, almost intimate satisfaction, because this ascent is unique. It brings together everything that, to me, defines alpinism: alpine style, minimalism, high altitude, a big face, a virgin summit, and the pursuit of speed. Without a doubt, it is the most important ascent of my career. I also want to thank the Simond teams for their support and the gear they provided us, which I fully trusted during the ascent."

_ NICOLAS JEAN

"We had been dreaming of this summit for such a long time... Today, I am very happy, deeply moved, but also exhausted as rarely before. We had incredible conditions: a lot of snow, intense cold, and the freezing level at 4,500 m — something quite rare in the Himalaya. We had stacked all the odds in our favour: optimal preparation, a light logistical setup, and above all, the strength of our partnership.

Since 2019, our perfect understanding of one another, our shared decision-making, and our complementarity — both technical and physical — made this success possible. For me, it's the climb of a lifetime."

_ BENJAMIN VÉDRINES



Simond, technical partner

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Cutting-edge gear

Beyond fitness and mindset, gear was critical. On a vertical ice wall, their hands turn into ice axes, their feet become their crampons, so total trust in their gear is non-negotiable.

As part of the Simond team, Nicolas and Benjamin worked closely with Simond's design team in Chamonix to co-develop prototypes for the expedition. Each piece was pushed to its limits in the months before their departure, **resulting in gear that is light, reliable, durable, and designed with, for and by two of the world's most committed alpinists.**



Woma ice axe

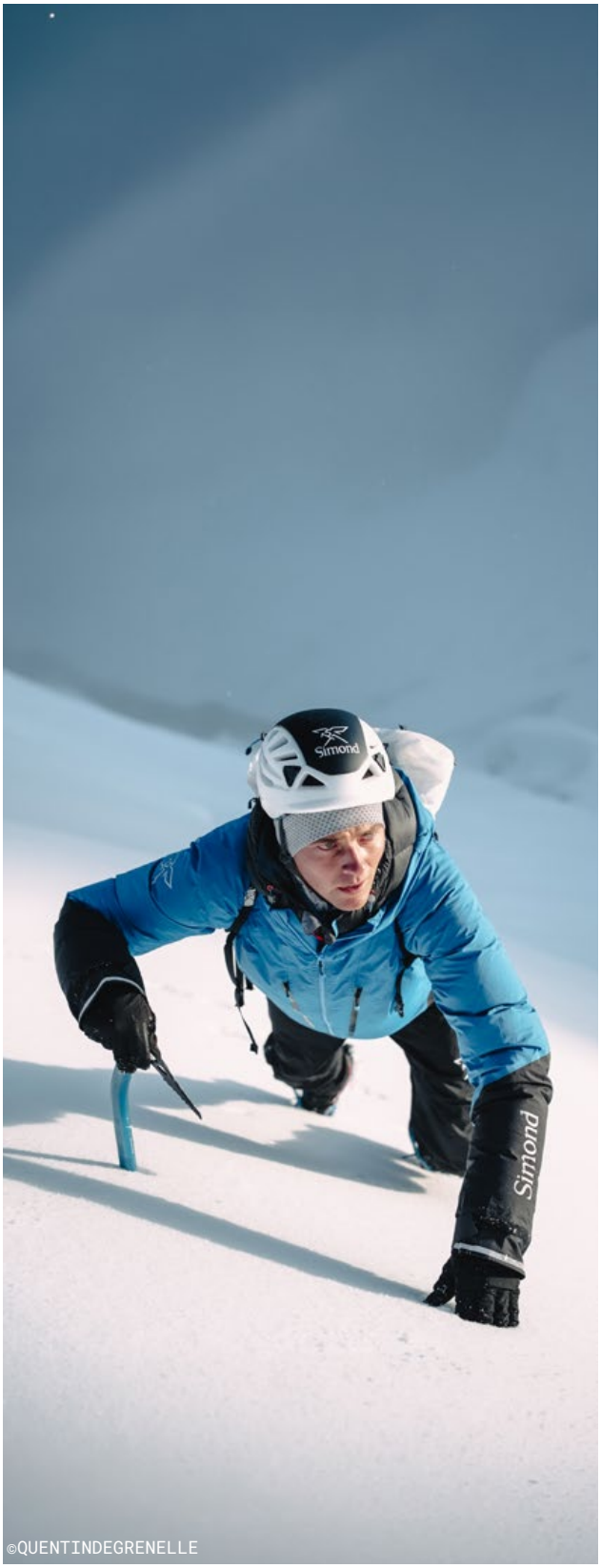
270g (adze), 280g (hammer). Ultra-light, with a technical pick and spur designed for steep gullies and frozen waterfalls. Nicolas and Benjamin had been testing it for months and relied on it for the ascent of Jannu East, alongside the Simond Mamba technical ice axe. The WOMA will be available in April 2026.

Ultralights crampons

During the acclimatization climbs, the pair tested two Simond prototypes: a full aluminium model, and an ultralight hybrid version. These are now the foundation for the next generation of Simond crampons, which will be released in 2027.

Sprint harness

A fully custom, ultralight harness was designed specifically for Nicolas and Benjamin. A commercial version, directly inspired by this prototype, will soon be available under the name Sprint.



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Sprint 40L backpack

Based on the Sprint 33L, Simond's pack design team created an even more stripped-down prototype to meet their requirements. The lead climber carried a 40L pack made from UHMWPE, weighing in at just 222 grams.



Makalu Assault tent

For their acclimatization period and the multiple bivouacs during the ascent, Nicolas and Benjamin chose a trusted Simond classic: the Makalu Assault tent. A two-person shelter weighing just 1.00kg, already available in stores (€449.99)

Upon their return from Jannu East, their feedback will become the foundation for fine-tuning and finalizing this next generation of high-performance gear. From the very beginning of this project, Simond's goal has been to co-create the future of mountaineering and to keep it accessible to all, while staying true to the values of alpine style: self-reliance, speed, lightness, humility and simplicity.



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About Decathlon

A global multi-specialist sports brand catering to everyone from beginners to elite athletes, DECATHLON is an innovative designer of sporting goods for all levels of practice. With 101,100 teammates and 1,817 stores worldwide, DECATHLON and its teams have been working since 1976 toward a continuous ambition: making the benefits of sport truly accessible to all.

About Simond

Based in Chamonix since 1860, Simond is an iconic brand in the field of mountain equipment. Specializing in mountaineering, climbing, trekking, and ski touring, Simond has a long-standing expertise in metalwork. In 2008, Simond joined the Decathlon group. The brand continues to design and manufacture all of its metal products (ice axes, crampons, carabiners) in its Chamonix factory. Its design teams apply their expertise to enhance equipment durability, ensuring technical and reliable products for demanding users.

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