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BRISTOL DJANGART EXPEDITION 2013

MEF: 13/21



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Introduction

Our expedition's objective was to further explore the glaciated valleys in the Tien Shan that run into the Djangart valley. The initial objectives centred around attempts on three unclimbed peaks which had been the subject of interest from several previous trips: Pik 5318, Pik 5112 and Pik 5025.

However upon arrival we changed our plans as Pik 5318 had been climbed a fortnight previously and the helicopter we used dropped us 7 miles from our intended base camp location leaving Pik 5112 too far away to access. Instead, we began with a successful summit of Pik 5025 and made 6 further first ascents of previously unclimbed mountains as listed below:

Name*	Height	Route Name	Grade	Climbers	Date
Pik Currahee	5025m	Limbo Ridge	D-	C Conlon, R Davidson	10/08/13
Pik Little	c.4850m	Consolation Route	AD-	G Cave, H Kingston	10/08/13
Pik Betelgeuse	c.5100m	Mulberry Surprise	AD-	H Bloxham, A Docherty	15/08/13
Pik Kasparov	4822m	The Willatt Ridge	AD	G Cave, C Conlon, R Davidson, H Kingston	15/08/13
Pik Ozon	4971m	Enrichment Route	AD	R Davidson, H Kingston	16/08/13
Pik Feto	4831m	Brian Roberts Route	AD+	H Bloxham, A Docherty	18/08/13
Pik Topor	c.4970m	Improv Gully	D-	H Bloxham, A Docherty	19/08/13

** All peak names used in this report are proposed and yet to be confirmed by Kyrgyzstan mountaineering Federation.*



Acknowledgements

The expedition members would like to thank the Mount Everest Foundation (MEF), British Mountaineering Council (BMC), Alpine Club and University of Bristol Alumni Fund for their generous financial support which made this expedition a possibility.

We are also grateful for the equipment given or loaned to us by Berghaus, Buffwear, Alpkit and Dick's Climbing. Finally, thanks to Will Attridge for his weather reports (he only missed one!) and to Will & Liz Tromans for acting as our emergency contacts back in the UK.



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Expedition Team

All six expedition members were current or former members of the University of Bristol's Mountaineering Club (UBMC) and Expeditions Society (UBES).

Ross Davidson (22) – Expedition Leader

Climbing CV: Climbing and mountaineering for the past 5 years: Alpine routes up to TD+, Scottish winter with ascents up to V. Trad climbing throughout the UK (E4 O/S, E5 RP) and sport climbing (7a O/S, 7b RP). Has completed ML and SPA training courses and have helped run Silver and Gold DoE expeditions in the Lake District.

Key skills: Quiet and focused climber with eternal psyche for climbing hard routes, organizational skills and excellent motivation for getting stuff happening.

Harry Bloxham (22)

Climbing CV: Four and a half years climbing and mountaineering experience including trips to the European Alps (summer 2008,11,12, spring 2011,12), ice climbing in Norway (2012,13), sport climbing in the south of France and UK summer and winter climbing. Climbing alpine routes up to TD on rock and TD- mixed, trad up to E2 and sport up to F6c.

Key skills: Longest time ever spent on Valkyrie in the Roaches and master of the art of yoyo leading (climbing half way through a crux, downing climbs to regain his composure and repeating this between 2 – 10 more times)

Al Docherty (21)

Climbing CV: Climbing and mountaineering for the past 15 years with summer and winter climbing all over the UK trad climbing to E2, sport climbing in France up to F7a+, alpine climbing in Chamonix with ascents of rock routes to UIAA VI and mixed routes to D-. Geological mapping in NW Scotland.

Key skills: Geology, delicate fragrances.

Clay Conlon (23)

Climbing CV: 4 years of mountaineering and climbing including trips to Norway (2009) and two Alpine seasons in Chamonix (2010 & 2011) up to Alpine grade D. Spent three weeks in August 2012 mountaineering in South Chuyiski range, Russian Altai (MEF reference 12/22). Climbed extensively across the UK in both summer and winter. Currently leading E1 on rock, three seasons of winter climbing across UK (inc. Northern Ireland & Scotland) up to grade IV.

Key skills: Northern personality coupled with quiet demeanour, new-found ability to grow facial hair, legs of steel from recent biking achievements.

George Cave (24)

Climbing CV: Climbing and mountaineering for past 7 years, recent remote expedition experience in Russian Altai mountains (MEF 12/22). Other expeditions over past few years include Pyrenees, Sweden & Greenland (2011), Norway & Corsica (2009). Alpine routes to AD with 3 trips to European Alps (Chamonix, Les Ecrins, Saas Fee). Scottish winter climbing to IV, trad to E1, sport to F6b+. ML qualified.

Key skills: Promo skills on and offline to sort out website and gear sponsorship, also knows how to climb.

Harry Kingston (22)

Nobody is quite sure, but Harry could probably climb a lot harder than he does. An absolute machine of a mountaineer, his background and skills remain shrouded in mystery.





Expedition Summary

It was 5am on Monday 5th August and the minibus was horribly ventilated. Our team of six were on the road east out of Bishkek, swapping the sweltering heat of Kyrgyzstan's capital for the edges of the picturesque Issy-Kul lake. Our destination was the seldom frequented Djangart valley, 30km of peaks on the country's eastern border with China.

The border post of Madia-Adyr was reached by road that evening. Assuming we wished to be flown to the far more popular Khan Tengri region we endured a few hesitant moments as our paperwork appeared inadequate, but all was soon swiftly resolved. Morning was announced by the roar of a massive helicopter which had clearly seen better days but found no problem in lifting us and our 400kg of possessions into the valley. It was a breath-taking journey, gliding the final 50km to the border across the river-carved valleys of rock and dust beneath.

Chief among our targets for the expedition was the first ascent of Pik 5318, the range's highest summit and still unclimbed after many attempts. To our annoyance, some pesky American alpinists had had the same idea, headed out two weeks earlier and summited just before we left the UK. As if we needed further reminder, confusion with the decidedly non-English speaking helicopter crew saw us dropped at a basecamp site nowhere near our preferred destination but instead at an ideal spot for mounting an ascent on the now climbed mountain.

After establishing basecamp, debate soon began about the best approach to begin our acclimatization. For Harry, Al & George, the decision to hike up to an overnight bivy on the N1 glacier was rewarded with our first view of Pik 5318 (now known as Pik After-You). It is difficult to describe how it feels to set eyes on a mountain you first saw in a photo nine months previously but there was little chance to stop and admire for the sky was soon filled with thick black cloud as they sat out the first big mountain storm in Djangart.

Warm-up over, our thoughts turned to the unclimbed border peak of Pik 5025 two valleys to the east. Misguided beliefs that the glacier would be a casual day's stroll away were soon dispelled for the approach was an arduous and gruelling 12 hour slog across two rivers, endless glacial moraine and finally the glacier itself. At 7pm the team of Ross, Harry K, Clay & George called time and set up camp at 4300m, gazing up at the stupendous northern face of the mountain. After such a taxing approach they unanimously agreed that they never wished to visit the valley again and what had begun as a simple reconnaissance trip suddenly switched to preparations for an attempt on this unclimbed 5000m summit.



Ross led off from the advance basecamp at 3am and an hour later Harry began kicking steps up the corner towards the Western col. The route steepened, screws were placed to protect the awkward bergschrund crossing and we slowly tired before topping out at 4600m. With thick clouds gathering high above, Harry and George were exhausted by the altitude and exertion so early into the trip. Ross & Clay headed up left onto the easy summit ridge whilst Harry and George turned right to claim the first ascent of a subsidiary peak (Pik Little, c.4850m) and descend the NW face as the snow began to fall.





Safely back down, Harry's food-starved stomach (they had bothered to bring only one day's food to the valley) took over his decision making and he left to make the entire return journey to basecamp that afternoon alone. As nightfall approached the winds picked up, whipping across the ice and sending the tent fabric into a frenzied dance. George cowered inside, peering back up at the mountain shrouded in clouds above. It was 6pm and there was still no sign of Ross and Clay.

Back in camp the following evening we celebrated with our first drink from our bottle of victory vodka. Ross and Clay's 29 hour ascent had seen them pitch their way back and forth along the heavily corniced summit ridge before returning to the col too late to descend, ultimately bivying out at 4800m. Attempting to down climb the ascent line at 1am, Ross fell into a crevasse in the dark just metres from where they had sat to rest earlier that day. They wisely shivered it out until first light and followed George and Harry K's tracks down.

Fired up by the trip's early success, Al and Harry B set off for the N1 glacier the following morning with their eyes on a line up the west face of an unclimbed 5100m peak. Unknown to us, this was to be the last time anyone saw them for over a week.

The remaining party of four walked the opposite way down the Djangart valley towards the Akoguz glacier, the head of which was dominated by an impressive peak barely identifiable on our somewhat illegible Soviet maps. The route up was reminiscent of Chamonix's classic Cosmique Arête but we named the summit Pik Kasparov in recognition of the endless games of chess played both at basecamp and also at the ABCs (using our Russian map for the board and trail mix for the pieces). The following day, Ross & Harry K claimed a second border summit (Pik Ozon, 4971m. Many abalakovs and packet

noodles later and the four were on the return walk, a now familiar journey of dry glacier, relentless moraine and stunningly unspoilt green valleys below.

Back in basecamp, time was passed debating cycling's doping controversies and baking ever more elaborate bread on the feeble gas stove. All of a sudden a faint but familiar cry came over the top of the driving rain, Al stood grinning and soaked on the opposite bank of the swollen Djangart river. The duo had returned having ticked off more first ascents than any other climbing pair on the trip.

In the N1 glacier near to camp they had reached the expedition's high point of ~5100m, summiting Pik Betelgeuse (c.5100m). In celebration Al had enjoyed a delightful summit lunch of mulberries, a surprise present from back in the UK, whilst Harry sat suffering from the cold with his hands thrust firmly inside Al's armpits. They christened the route Mulberry Surprise.

The far Eastern end of the Djangart valley ends in the 4000m Djangart pass. The Djangartynbashi Glacier to the south of the pass was explored by the Anglo-American 2010 and British & Spanish 2011 expeditions amongst others. It is here that Harry & Al climbed Pik Feto (4831m) before descending to their advance basecamp at the far end of the glacier. With the weather window closing in the pair slept in through their early alarms the next day and finally crawled out of their bags around 4am. There was just time for one final route.

The climb to the summit of Pik Topor (c.4970m) was a west facing ice climb on impeccable ice although Al was lucky to avoid injury after falling ice struck him in the face as he belayed Harry up the final summit pitch. After a successful descent the arriving storm clouds brought 32 hours of snow and on 23rd August we flew out of basecamp after 18 days in the valley.

We may have been a team of 6, but rarely is a trip completed without the support of others. We are indebted to the weather forecasts and safety backup of Will Attridge back in the UK. We are also extremely grateful for the financial and gear sponsorship from Berghaus, the BMC, MEF, Alpine Club and our other sponsors. To have the chance to visit and climb with friends in such a remote location is a real privilege, new routes and summits are nothing but a bonus.



Day by Day Account

Date	Activities	Weather
Wed 31 st July	RD, HK, HB, AD depart London Gatwick for Bishkek	-
Thu 1 st August	RD, HK, HB, AD arrive in Bishkek. Sleep and shopping	-
Fri 2 nd August	Shopping & sorting logistics in Bishkek	-
Sat 3 rd August	Shopping & sorting logistics in Bishkek	-
Sun 4 th August	GC & CC depart London Stansted for Bishkek	-
Mon 5 th August	GC & CC land 5am Bishkek. Collected and drive to Karakol (6hrs) and change vehicle before travelling on to Madia-Adyr (arrive 7pm)	-
Tue 6 th August	Team fly in to Djangart by helicopter and set up camp	Clear & hot
Wed 7 th August	GC, HB & AD walk in to overnight acclimatization camp in glacier. RD, HK & CC ascend to 3800m for day walk and return to camp.	Clear followed by hail & storm overnight
Thu 8 th August	GC, HB & AD return early to basecamp. All rest in camp.	Hot & sunny with overnight rain
Fri 9 th August	RD, HK, GC, CC walk-in and set up ABC on glacier	Clear & hot
Sat 10 th August	RD, HK, GC, CC attempt Pik Currahee. HK & GC descend over Pik Little, RD & CC bivy on mountain after summiting Pik Currahee. HK returns to basecamp	Overcast with light snow, rain & hail, clearing in pm.
Sun 11 th August	RD & CC descend from Pik Currahee. Meet GC and return to basecamp.	Showers, drizzle & low mist all day
Mon 12 th August	Rest day in camp.	Showers all day
Tue 13 th August	AD & HB walk in to glacier.	Light rain all day
Wed 14 th August	AD & HB recce potential route in glacier. RD, HK, GC & CC walk in to glacier.	Sunny
Thu 15 th August	AD & HB climb Mulberry Surprise and return to basecamp. RD, HK, GC & CC climb Pik Kasparov and return to ABC.	Clear and hot all day
Fri 16 th August	RD & HK climb Pik Ozon	Clear & hot
Sat 17 th August	RD, HK, CC & GC walk back to basecamp. HB& AD walk in to Hillary.	Overcast & dry
Sun 18 th August	HD & AD climb Pik Feto	Clear & hot
Mon 19 th August	HB & AD climb Pik Topor	Sunny then overcast

Tue 20 th August	HB & AD return to basecamp.	Rain all day
Wed 21 st August	Rest day in basecamp	Rain
Thu 22 nd August	Rest day & trad climbing near basecamp	Showers all day
Fri 23 rd August	Fly out by helicopter AM. Overland travel with change at Karakol to Bishkek (12 hours). Party in Bishkek	Clear with light showers PM
Sat 24 th August	Bishkek	-
Sun 25 th August	Bishkek	

Camp life

We spent quite a lot of time in basecamp during days of rest and bad weather. Maintaining good hygiene and proper food storage were just two of the tasks that kept us occupied, below is a brief idea of how we fared:

- **Where to camp?** Upon arrival, we were fairly limited as to the best place to choose to set up our camp, we didn't fancy lugging 400kg of kit a long distance. We settled on a site 10m from the river and set up our large base camp tent along with 3 more sleeping tents.
- **Where to find clean water?** Although we pitched right next to a river, it was full of silt that could not be filtered, so another solution had to be found. At first, we chipped in with the other team to dig a hole in a boggy moist area so it would fill up with fairly filtered water. We then found a stream close by that had clear water. Harry Bloxham's water filter bottle broke in Bishkek, but the filter still worked, so we glued it into the lid of a 5l water bottle. We filtered all drinking water from the stream through this before using.





- **Where to poo?** We made a joint toilet trench with the other group, a 5 minute walk away from our base camp and downstream of the river. We had a policy of burying human waste as we went along and burning toilet waste, to prevent any illnesses. There was an ongoing expansion of the trench as the days went by, and we took turns with the digging.
- **Where to store food?** Most perishable food was kept in the large tent and zipped up to prevent animals at getting at it. We also built a fridge for the meat and cheese, see the Food section.

When not obsessing over personal hygiene we found other ways to keep ourselves occupied. The chess board was constantly out being used and was probably the most vital piece of entertainment we brought.

We also brought lots of books and were able to swap them throughout the trip. The books were read fairly rapidly and Ross and Harry B's e-readers proved the best idea for literature. Top Djangart reads included Game of Thrones, various road cycling tales, Mills & Boon and Roger Moore's autobiography although it should be noted that the latter was burnt before we left the camp.



Routes

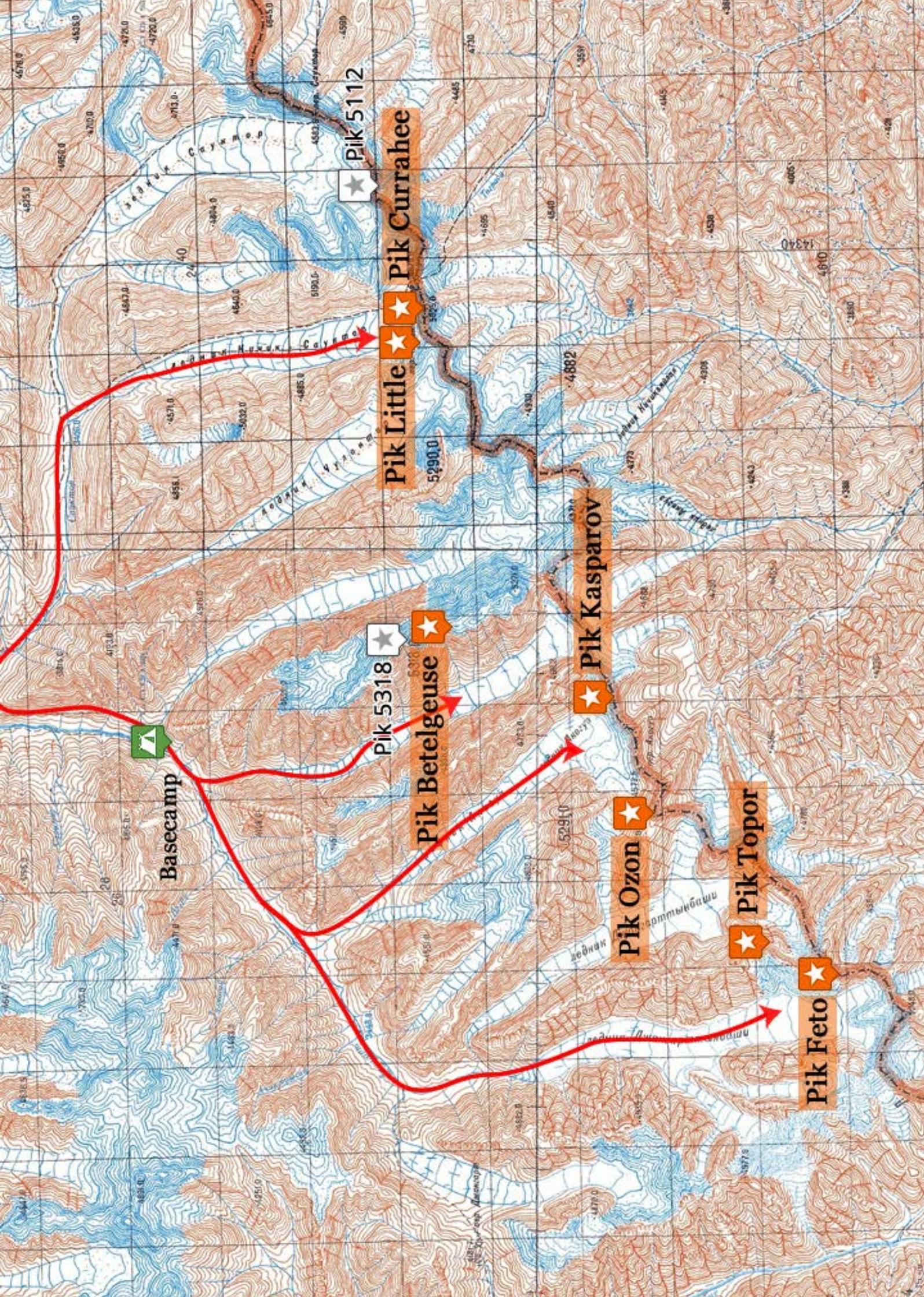
We climbed seven new routes in Djangart:

Name	Height	Route Name	Grade	Climbers	Date
Pik Currahee	5025m	Limbo Ridge	D-	C Conlon, R Davidson	10/08/13
Pik Little	c.4850m	Consolation Route	AD-	G Cave, H Kingston	10/08/13
Pik Betelgeuse	c.5100m	Mulberry Surprise	AD-	H Bloxham, A Docherty	15/08/13
Pik Kasparov	4822m	The Willatt Ridge	AD	G Cave, C Conlon, R Davidson, H Kingston	15/08/13
Pik Ozon	4971m	Enrichment Route	AD	R Davidson, H Kingston	16/08/13
Pik Feto	4831m	Brian Roberts Route	AD+	H Bloxham, A Docherty	18/08/13
Pik Topor	c.4970m	Improv Gully	D-	H Bloxham, A Docherty	19/08/13

In addition to the four valleys we visited to establish ABCs, we also explored two smaller rock ridges, spent some time trad climbing (in the rain) near to basecamp and climbed a handful of boulder problems in the main Djangart valley.

The following page contains a map of Djangart showing the glacial approaches and peaks.





Basecamp

Pik 5112

Pik Currahee

Pik 5318

Pik Betelgeuse

Pik 4882

Pik Kasparov

Pik 5291.0

Pik Ozon

Pik 5178

Pik Topor

Pik 5178

Pik Feto



1) Pik Currahee (5025m)

Route: Limbo Ridge, III D-, 600m
Climbers: C. Conlon, R. Davidson
Date: 10th August 2013
Location: [41.6888°N, 79.0646°E](https://www.google.com/maps/place/41.6888°N,+79.0646°E)

Approaching from the glacier, head towards the right side of the mountain, over crevassed terrain, to the North-East facing snow slopes. Climb 50-65 degree snow slopes for 150m up to the first bergschrund. Move left across the bergschrund to a ledge with a second bergschrund behind. From here move onto the East facing slopes and climb 200m to a col. From the col, move back onto the North face of the mountain. A faint ridge leads up the face, stay off the West facing part of the ridge until it disappears. Climb the north face on 50-60 degree snow slopes for 200m. Traverse the ridge, changing sides to keep away from the cornices.

Descent - go back to the col via the same route. From here, head North to a West facing snow slope. Move to the top of the snow slope to a large ledge with a snow wall ahead. Climb over the snow wall and down climb the slope, crossing a bergschrund to a basin that leads back onto the glacier.

The ascent, by Ross

We set our alarms for 2am, George and Clay waking in a comfy tent, Harry and I in our bivi bags. The temperature wasn't too cold so we didn't complain. We eventually headed off at 3am deciding to rope up as a four due to the numerous crevasses we knew we had to cross. I lead the 1km approach to the base of the route and only managed to break through into a crevasse once.



At the base of the climb, we split into 2 pairs. Myself and Harry went first, moving together with Harry at the front breaking trail. The snow slopes were not frozen properly and at times we went waist deep into the snow. We headed towards the bergschrund where the slope steepened and hardened allowing Harry to place a couple of ice screws. Eventually we reached a ledge with a large bergschrund behind it. We had a quick breather and then raced up to the col which acted as a wind funnel and battered us. Inside a bivi bag we were both feeling fairly knackered and sat waiting for the other two who emerged 20 minutes later in a worse state than us. After transferring into Clay's larger four man bivi we discussed what to do next.

Our forecast had been fairly mixed but the mood was of a Scottish north face to be attempted in miserable weather rather than an alpine north face where any hint of bad weather should deter us. We understood from previous trip reports that perfect weather windows were rare; these were the climbing conditions we had expected to endure. Dark clouds were moving in from the south and we spent 20 minutes discussing our options. If we were to get off the mountain, which way should we go? Harry and myself headed south to scope out a possible descent and came back to the col reporting that we had three options. We could climb down the way we came, we could head west into the glacier or we could try and head over the small satellite peak to the south of Pk 5025 and see if there was a better way down from there.



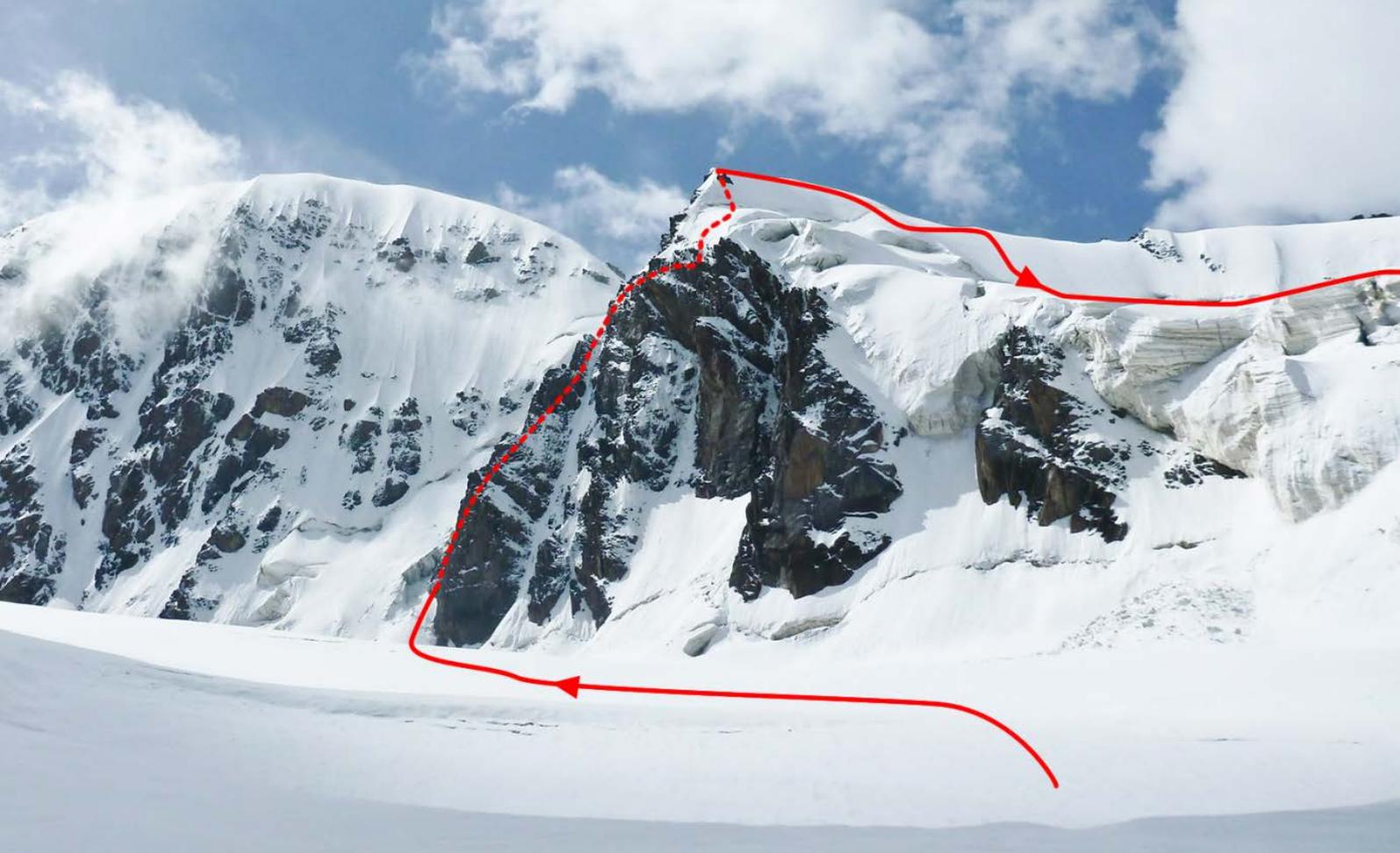


Despite the bad weather, Clay and I were determined to carry on as we didn't think we would like to do the arduous 12 hour walk in from our campsite again when there were plenty more unclimbed mountains nearer. This was to be our only shot at the mountain. In hindsight, my judgement was perhaps clouded by the excitement of getting a first ascent and this seemed to outweigh the prospect of being stuck in a storm. The wind lulled slightly and we decided to all give it a shot, heading up to the north face via a blunt ridge that had better snow on its west facing slope. Less than 20m up George and Harry called me down as another dark cloud was heading our way. We got back into the bothy and had the same chat. I was still not put off and neither was Clay, so I made the suggestion that we change partners so the other two could go down. We all agreed and I started leading off again roped up this time with Clay, whilst the other two headed to the satellite peak and the descent beyond.

We climbed the initial 200m and moving onto the north face encountered horrid crystalline ice with the odd patch of harder ice that would hold an axe placement. We moved together for most of the face with the option of belaying if the leader came to a rare ice screw placement. We eventually arrived onto the summit ridge in strong winds and poor visibility and got into the bivvy bag for 20 minutes to recover and plan our final attack on the summit. It was only going to be a flat snowy walk to the summit right?

How wrong we were.

The story continues at <http://www.djangart2013.co.uk/pik-currahee.html>.



2) Pik Little (c.4850m)

Route: Consolation Route, AD, 400m

Climbers: G. Cave, H. Kingston

Date: 10th August 2013

Location: [41.691°N, 79.0571°E](#)

As for Pik Currahee, approach from the glacier and head up 50-65° slopes for 300m, crossing the bergschrund to reach the col between Pik Little and Pik Currahee. Here, turn right to traverse around the opposite side of the mountain a short way before climbing on good ice to the rocky summit above.

Descent - continue to head west over the top of a snow wall and traverse across the top of this before descending down across the bergschrund into the basin below which will lead back to the glacier.





3) Pik Betelgeuse (c.5100m)

Route: Mulberry Surprise, AD-, 1000m
Climbers: H. Bloxham, A. Docherty
Date: 15th August 2013
Location: [41.6822°N, 78.9811°E](https://www.google.com/maps/place/41.6822°N,+78.9811°E)

A west facing snow route which takes in some atmospheric positions underneath the south face of Pik After You (5318), evading the sun until later in the day.

Ascend moraine then scree to the foot of the small well-formed hanging glacier which descends from Needle Col (col to the south of Pik After You named because of an obvious small rock spike at its north end). Move up steeply at first to a small plateau past some crevasses through a serac debris field. Move up an avalanche prone 45° snow slope to the south end of the col. Take in the view (and the sun) to the east and follow a rising traverse southwards, steering clear of the east facing cornices, to the snowy summit. Descend via the same route.

The ascent

We awoke at 1am in order to get the best snow conditions for the long snow slog up onto the ridge. Before the route started proper there was a loose scree approach up to the snowline proper. This led to a bowl below the west face of Pik After You. Our head torches illuminated some sizeable (obvious) crevasses and small serac debris. We raced through this and started the slog up to the col between Pik After You and Pik Betelgeuse. We climbed through some small avalanche debris which reassured us that the slope had stabilized after the last snowfall.



The going was tough with Alistair trail breaking in soft snow. This continued as the sun began to rise unseen behind the col. At this point Harry, who was easily following the tracks left by Alistair, began to get very cold. Even with thick gloves he was suffering from severe chill blains and encouraged Alistair to keep moving up to the col where we could poke our heads up into the sunlight. The snow slope continued over many false summits for what seemed like a small eternity.

Alistair finally reached the corniced ridge and cut a small snow ledge which was, to Harry's dismay, still out of the sun. At this point Harry was very cold and so Alistair sort to warm him by improving his clothing situation and offering Harry's hands some respite in the form of plunging them into his own armpits. This was a somewhat surreal experience for the pair and lead to the name of the mountain – Betelgeuse is the star denoting the armpit of Orion.

The warmth (or the embarrassment) seemed to revitalize Harry somewhat and the pair moved along the corniced ridge on great snow to the summit and at last into the sunlight. Harry was still cold but was able to bask in the (slightly) warm rays offered by the sun at 7am. Here Harry presented Alistair with a "first summit of the trip" present from a friend at home. This turned out to be a pack of Mulberry's which went down a treat, and provided the name of the route.

With the first summit climbed the pair descended carefully and easily. The release of tension allowed the pair to admire their surroundings as the mountains grew around them once more. On returning to the tent at about midday the pair felt the call of basecamp, striking their ABC and speeding off down the complex N2 glacier to feast on freshly baked bread in the valley bottom.





4) Pik Kasparov (4822m)

Route: The Willatt Ridge, AD
Climbers: G. Cave, C. Conlon, R. Davidson, H. Kingston
Date: 15th August 2013
Location: [41.6517°N, 78.9647°E](#)

From the glacier, head up the right hand side of the north face, which steepens towards the top. Join the ridge near its lowest point and follow this on a mixture of loose and good quality granite to the summit.

To descend continue in the same direction along the ridge, staying on the large snow slope on the Kyrgyz (north) side. After a tricky section through a rock buttress, make a 30m abseil off an abalakov. Further traversing brings you to a large rock buttress. From here, three 60m abseils on abalakovs will get you over the bergschrund and onto the glacier below.

The ascent

The old, Soviet-era maps we were using didn't have any spot heights marked at the very end of the Akoguz glacier and so we were pleasantly surprised to see a triangular shaped peak rising from the glacier as we walked in. Our initial aim for the first day on the glacier had been to climb the peak to the west (climbed two days later by Harry K and Ross – Pik Ozon), however on seeing this mountain and realising it was unclimbed, we changed our plan.

The following day we woke at 2am to a clear and bitterly cold night. Leaving our tents on the glacier, we followed the footprints which we had made the previous evening in case of poor visibility, heading

in the general direction of the peak. Despite the clear sky, a layer of mist hung across the glacier, causing us some navigational problems when our footprints ran out.

We reached the bottom of the face before first light and set off up as two pairs; Ross and Harry K in front with Clay and George following. The lower section of the face was shallow enough to zig zag up, although the quality of the snow was poor, something which became a common theme of the day. The face steepened in the last 100m; front pointing became necessary and ice screws placements were dug out whilst still moving together.

This brought us onto the rocky ridge near its lowest point. After initially taking a wrong turn and finding an impassable section near the start we made good progress up the ridge, moving together as two pairs and placing good rock gear as we went. With large amounts of good quality granite and interesting mixed climbing the ridge was somewhat reminiscent of the popular Arête des Cosmiques above Chamonix.

A short, easy angled snow slope at the top of the ridge brought us onto the summit at around 8am. After taking a few photos we continued in the same direction with the intention to traverse the mountain. The first obstacle was a steeper section of poor quality snow which required a careful approach. After this we headed across the top of the large snow slope on the Kyrgyz side of the ridge which was technically easy but felt avalanche prone having already seen the early morning sun.

On reaching the small rock buttress at the top of the snow slope, we found a snow ledge leading through the middle of it. We climbed this in a single pitch, again on poor quality snow, but with some decent ice underneath which took ice screws. From the end of this ledge, a single 30m abseil on an abalakov was necessary to get back down to the snow slope. Traversing for another 100m brought us to the edge of the large snow slope, and from here three 60m abseils on abalakovs delivered us down onto the glacier below.





5) Pik Ozon (4971m)

Route: Enrichment Route, AD, 600m
Climbers: R. Davidson, H. Kingston
Date: 16th August 2013
Location: [41.6431°N, 78.9299°E](https://www.google.com/maps/place/41.6431°N,78.9299°E)

A straight forward outing providing excellent panoramic views of the highest peaks in the range. The route is approached via the heavily crevassed Djangartinbashi glacier. The route then follows the steepening snow/ice slope to gain the ridge at its lowest point before following to the summit. Gentle snow slopes lead to the bergschrund which can be passed without much difficulty. Climb 60° ice trending leftwards towards the shallow gully near the top of the slope. Before entering the shallow gully proper cut back right over a rocky step to gain the ridge. From here easy scrambling leads along the ridge to the summit.

Reverse the route in descent: 4 abseils on solid abalakovs before pitching across the bergschrund due to poor ice on the lower slope.

The ascent

We were both feeling the ascent from the day before so decided to give ourselves a nice lie in..... alarms set for 3am. Cheeky cup of tea and cake and we were off just before 4. We'd scouted out the glacier the day before from the top of Pik Kasporov and had decided on a route which would cut out most of the crevasses, well that was the plan. In practice it hadn't worked, our approach saw us jumping crevasses most of the way with only a couple of sketchy moments. Finally making it off the glacier we could relax a bit and think about the route ahead.

The route gets sun early in the morning so we wanted to get off the snow slope fairly quickly. Setting off up the initial slope saw us ploughing through deep powder and avalanche debris emphasizing the need for a quick ascent. Once across the bergschrund we were able to pick the pace up a bit with a layer of fairly rotten snow covering decent ice. The conditions allowed us to move together placing ice screws and a couple of rocky outcrops took rock gear easily. As we got higher the ice got more firm and we were fully on our front points most of the time. Calves burning we continued stopping only to whack in an ice screw every so often. Almost reaching the ridge we hit a section of soft powder and were forced to step back right and over mixed ground which provided a welcome change from front pointing up the steep ice. Once at the ridge we had a quick rest giving us the opportunity to shake out the calves and swap gear for the final push up the ridge.



The ridge itself looked broken and undefined allowing us to initially make quick progress. As we neared the summit a combination of deep powder, dehydration and generally being a bit shagged from the last couple of days slowed us down however we were able to reach the summit around 8.30.

The original plan had been to complete a traverse of the ridge however in the state we were in and with the snow conditions we decided to head back down the route we'd come. The ridge proved as easy on descent and after a stop to enrich our surroundings we made it back to the top of the ice "psyched" for the abseil descent. The first abseil took a while to create, however by the 4th we were working like a well-oiled machine smashing out the descent. After the 4th abseil the quality of the ice deteriorated massively and unable to find suitable ice to build an abalakov we had to pitch over the bergschrund which proved to be trivial if a little sketchy. All that was left to do was give ourselves a pat on the back and try and pick a less crevassed route back to basecamp for some celebratory trail mix..... I'd even saved myself a cake.



6) Pik Feto (4831m)

Route: Brian Roberts Route, AD+, 200m

Climbers: A. Docherty, H. Bloxham

Date: 18th August 2013

Location: [41.6055°N, 78.8868°E](https://www.google.com/maps/place/41.6055°N,78.8868°E)

A short north facing mixed route with a long approach. Gain the obvious col below the north face from the Djangartinbashi glacier directly through and around small seracs or more easily following a north trending ramp and avoiding the large crevasses near the col. The route follows the obvious right hand line on the face. Cross the bergschrund and climb 50-55° snow slopes for 100m. From here, the face steepens. Follow ice and mixed gullies up to 70° to the pre-summit ridge. Traverse this short rocky ridge and continue easily to the true summit, a perfect rock pyramid, a further 30 meters away.

Descend by the same route using abolakov threads where necessary.





7) Pik Topor (c.4970m)

Route: Improv Gully, D-, 800m
Climbers: A. Docherty, H. Bloxham
Date: 19th August 2013
Location: [41.6188°N, 78.8948°E](#)

A west facing ice climb on impeccable ice. The difficulties are confined to the top 240m of climbing up to the knife edge ridge of Pik Topor. The route starts at the eastern edge of the Djangartinbashi glacier on snow to the right of the moraine that extends from Pik Rahkmat.

Head up the avalanche prone 40° snow slope passing some small crevasses. The shallow Improv Gully can be seen to the left of a conglomerate rock buttress. Cross the bergschrund and climb 70° ice to the left of the rock buttress. Cross 3 short thinly iced or snowy rock steps of 75°. Climb to the ridge up another 80m of 70° ice. The snow on the ridge and east face was found to be of poor quality after a few hours in the sun. The summit is poorly defined as the ridge traverses at a similar height for a few hundred metres.

The ascent

The weather window was closing. Pik Topor was to be our second route in two days and we were tired, sleeping through our 2:30am alarms to finally crawl out of our bags at 4:00am. Hurriedly packing we set off up the glacier towards the axe like ridge of Pik Topor.

By 5:30am we had begun the initial slog of a snow slope, the fabulous background of Pik Illumination (climbed by the 2010 Anglo-American expedition) living up to its name. We took comfort in the knowledge that the westerly aspect of our slope meant we had a few more hours before the snow destabilised in the sun. Originally we had planned to attempt the north ridge of Pik Topor where the majority of the height gain would have been on the snow slope followed by approximately 500m of mixed ridge. However after closer inspection we decided on Improv Gully, hankering for the same ice quality we had encountered on the previous day's ascent of Pik Feto. The snow slope seemed endless and we began to wonder if the bergshrund and gully above were merely a mirage. Noticing lots of slough debris after the previous week's snowfall, we speculated that a descent of the north ridge could prove to be quite amenable. This was not a slope to be on after heavy snowfall!

We crossed the bergshrund easily below the rock buttress and moved together diagonally up and left to below the first rock step, periodically stopping to rest Harry's calves and allow some blood to return to my toes. With near perfect ice and good pick penetration gave a feeling of security, I lead off from the ice screw belay on a 55m pitch through 3 thinly iced rock steps. The last of these was more snowy with underlying choss and felt slightly insecure on lead. Harry lead through and continued up the last 70° ice slope to the right of a small rock outcrop in a 70m pitch reaching the summit ridge at 9:00am. I had belayed in the fall line for this pitch and was struck in the face and arm by falling ice, luckily without injury. Once on the ridge, we traversed along some sketchy snow to reach what appeared to be the ill-defined summit.

Due to the poor conditions encountered on the ridge we opted to descend the route whilst it was still in shade. Harry did a great job setting up the abs on solid abalakovs and had the next one built before I had stripped and descended from the previous. We comfortably crossed the bergshrund in 4 abs and on reaching the snow slope set about trying to melt our solidly frozen water bottles. I tucked my fancy water filter bottle down my bib pants only to see it skidding off down the slope never to be seen again. Momentarily furious it put a downer on the rest of the descent until I realised that actually in the grand scheme of things it was a rather petty matter. We were overjoyed at having managed two first ascents in two days in a beautiful valley before the bad weather had closed in. It snowed for the next 32 hours.





Equipment

Climbing

We climbed all routes as pairs and this is reflected in the amount of gear we took:

Ropes

We took 3 sets of 60m double ropes with us. Pik Currahee and Pik Little were climbed using a single half rope in order to reduce weight on the long walk in from base camp. All other routes were climbed using one half rope with another carried in a rucksack until the descent. Most of the routes were descended by several abseils off abalakovs and so having two ropes was essential to minimise the number of abseils needed.

Rack

We took 3 basic alpine racks. These consisted of a stripped down rock rack: a full set of nuts, 1 - 2 hexes, 2 - 3 cams, 2 - 3 pegs, 6 - 8 extendable quickdraws and a few slings. This was supplemented with ice gear consisting of 6 - 8 ice screws and an abalakov threader. The majority of the climbing was on snow/ice and this was reflected with the rack carried on routes and the gear we placed. We often reduced the rock rack to half a set of nuts, 1 hex, 2 cams, 2 - 3 pegs and slings, whilst still carrying all 6 - 8 ice screws and a threader. Harry B and Al chose not to carry any pegs.

We also took a spare set of nuts in case any party had to leave any behind when retreating from a route. Over 50m of tat was taken out with us, and each pair carried around 10m whilst climbing. A large amount of this was used while descending routes on abalakov threads.

Emergency Shelters / Bivvy gear

We took two bivvy bags (emergency shelters) with us, and these were carried on all routes by Harry K, Ross, Clay and George. The bivvy bags saw a lot of use on Pik Currahee, being used for shelter from the bad weather during rests and one was used by Ross and Clay for their unplanned bivvy during the descent. Thankfully after Pik Currahee the shelters stayed packed away at the bottom of our bags. Harry B and Al preferred to carry one sleeping bag and one survival bag between them for Pik Betelgeuse and opted to save weight and only carry a belay jacket each for subsequent peaks.



Tents / Shelter

Basecamp – Alpkit kindly provided us with a 4-man Heksa tent which was used as a basecamp tent. This comfortably fitted the six of us when we were sitting around during bad weather, but it was hard to move around in it and we couldn't stand up. We stored all the food in the tent too and we were able to cook safely in one of the doors when the weather was bad, you can read more in Ross' in depth review: <http://www.djangart2013.co.uk/heksa-review.html>. The team who came out with us opted to rent a base camp tent which was a lot bigger. They also rented a table and chairs which made life more comfortable. Our tent was a lot warmer though as it had two shells. On any future expeditions, we would still opt for the Heksa tent, but we would recommend bringing a lamp and legless chairs.



The Heksa tent was not big enough to all sleep in so we used personal tents at basecamp too. We were all comfortable with 2 people each in a tent.

A nice addition in future would be a large tarpaulin we could use to make a marquee, so we wouldn't be confined to the Heksa during periods of rain.

Mountains – All mountains we climbed required at least one night camping on a glacier below the route. Each pair differed in their approach to this situation; Harry B and Al used a lightweight bivvy tent, Clay and George carried up the 2-man tent they were using at basecamp and Ross and Harry K used either bivvy bags or their basecamp 2-man tent, depending on the length of the walk in. Each option has a variety of advantages and disadvantages, but every pair was happy with their decision.

Food

All food was bought on arrival in Bishkek and knowing we would be dropped at basecamp by helicopter there was no need to avoid buying bulky or heavy items. Not speaking Russian or Kyrgyz we tasted any food we weren't sure about before buying it in bulk and relying on it in the mountains. This is something we'd recommend doing as some of the local delicacies are an acquired taste, the "cheese balls" being one that stands out in particular.

When buying food we decided it best to overdo it instead of underdoing it. We decided to prepare for 12 nights at the basecamp and 12 nights in the mountain and with being away for 3 weeks we tried to take as much fresh fruit and vegetables with us as possible to keep a healthy diet. We researched ways to preserve specific vegetables such as wrapping cabbages in newspaper and adding a few apples to our sack of potatoes.

A big addition to the expedition's food was homemade bread. As we had to make it ourselves without



the use of an oven, we ended up with flat bread. What started out as plain bread, soon turned into cheese bread, raisin bread, walnut and date loaf and calzone.

As we had bought lots of meat and cheese with us into the valley we needed to find a way of refrigerating it. Using a large screw top water-tight barrel we tried to build a rock pool to contain it safely in the river, however the ferocity of the river nearly washed it away so we instead dug a hole deep into the side of the river bank which seemed to do the trick.



Breakfast

Our staple breakfast at basecamp was porridge with added raisins and honey. We also added milk powder but found it not the same as the stuff you get in the UK. The porridge oats we bought in the bazaar were salty and had to be washed before being used. Our mountain breakfast varied between bread, trail mix and ready cooked porridge which although heavier to carry on our walk ins saved time cooking it in the mornings as it only required heating up.

Lunch

Lunch was a mixture of bread, boiled eggs, trail mix and cakes. Near end of the expedition when we had leftover food we started making calzone pizzas for lunch (see photo above).

Dinner

In the mountains we used packet noodles to which we sometimes added sausage. At basecamp dinner consisted of a pasta sauce of vegetables, tomato sauce, cheese and meat. We mixed up different types of noodles, pastas and rice to introduce some sort of variation.

Snacks

Our main snacks were chocolate bars, trail mix, cakes and biscuits. We bought lots of snickers and mars bars from the supermarket but found that we could have done with a lot more as we could easily eat two a day whilst out in the mountains. We bought approximately 22kg of trail mix from the market which consisted on various types of raisins and nuts, by the end we had quite a lot left and were fairly sick of it. Cakes and biscuits were also bought from the market, we could have done with more of these too.



Cooking

Basecamp – We hired a double burner gas stove plus two 25kg gas bottles from Tien Shan Travel and used this as our main way of cooking whilst down at basecamp. It worked well and there was never any worry about running out of gas. The first stove provided for us was faulty but thankfully we tested it whilst still in Bishkek and were able to return it and get a fully functioning stove.

Cooking on the stove did require some patience due to the amount of time it took to boil water but this wasn't a problem given the lack of any urgency when down at base camp. We bought several pots and pans from the market, deciding it would be a better idea than renting from the logistics company as it wouldn't matter if they ended up in a bad condition. We also took a wind break built from a roasting tin that reflected the heat back towards the cooking vessel - we could have done with a few more of these.

Mountains – All teams used gas stoves when in the mountains; Harry K, Ross, George and Clay using two basic MSR stoves, whilst Harry B and Al took a Jetboil. 20 medium sized gas canisters were purchased from Tien Shan Travel, and less than 7 of these were fully used. Despite advice often given that gas isn't very good at altitude, we had no problems using our stoves up to 4200m for boiling water, cooking noodles and melting snow. We ended up using half of these gas canisters and managed to sell them off for a very low price to another team in Bishkek who were preparing to go out into a neighbouring range.

We would recommend that other teams buy one large gas balloon and cook with leftover gas from the small canisters after returning from the mountains. It is also worth noting the quality of gas canisters you get given when in Kyrgyzstan, we were given propane gas which doesn't perform as well as butane when at high altitude.

Communication

Satellite Phone

An Inmarsat satellite phone was borrowed from a friend of the expedition free of charge. The phone required clear line of sight to the west to connect with the satellites which was easy to achieve at base camp but proved harder in the glacial valleys or on east facing routes.

We received daily weather forecasts on the satellite phone and when the six of us split up to go climbing in different valleys, it stayed with the larger group.



SPOT Satellite GPS Messenger unit

This was primarily used as our back up method of communicating with the outside world. We never had teams in more than two different valleys and the SPOT was carried by the team that didn't have the satellite phone. The device is capable of sending out three different messages at the push of a button: the first two are pre-programmed with a personal message and the third is an SOS button that notifies the relevant rescue services of your location and state of distress.

We used the first of the messages to regularly post updates to Twitter and our expedition website during the trip, however we reserved the second as an emergency button for situations in which we needed extraction but the situation wasn't life threatening. This was as a backup to possible satellite phone malfunction which would have prevented communication directly with the helicopter team.

Walkie Talkies

We took a pair of 8km range walkie talkies with us and carried them when two pairs planned on climbing in the same valley. They would have allowed the pair without either the satellite phone or SPOT device to alert the other team if they needed help. With the exception of on Pik Currahee, when Ross and Clay were able to let George know they would have to spend the night on the mountain, the walkie talkies were largely redundant.

Power Packs

Three power packs with a total storage size of roughly 30Ahr were used. They provided power via USB and were used recharge the satellite phone, Harry B's headtorch and multiple cameras and kindles. We only consumed roughly half of the available battery power stored.



Logistics

Logistics preparation began 6 months prior to our departure. We looked for a company that could provide transportation from arrival at Manas Airport in Bishkek to a basecamp site in the Djangart Valley and back again. We initially spoke to two companies both based in Bishkek: Tien Shan Travel (TST) and ITMC, and decided to use TST as they offered the most competitive price for the use of a helicopter. They were able to sort out all of our road transport whilst in the country, accommodation in Bishkek, visas and the hire of extra kit for basecamp.

Flights

We flew out to Kyrgyzstan in two separate parties. Ross, Al and both Harrys flew out on 31st July as an advance party while George and Clay came out a few days later due to work commitments. The first party flew out with Ukraine's flag carrier UIA from Gatwick airport via Kiev. The second party flew out with Pegasus airlines (Turkey's answer to Ryanair) from Stansted, travelling via Istanbul. In the future we would recommend UIA due to their inflight meals, larger bag allowance and cheaper rate for bringing an extra bag (50 € each way).

Transport to and from Valley

We were initially taken to Karakol via minibus, travelling along the northern shore of Lake Issyl Kul. This was on metalled roads (mainly) and so we were able to make good time. From here we swapped into a 4WD Gaz-66 which travelled much slower but was able to take us over dirt tracks and mountain passes. This took us to the airbase at Maida Adyr. From here, we were picked up by a Kyrgyz military Mil-8 that dropped us off at our basecamp. Unfortunately we were dropped over 10km from where we wanted to be because the pilot assumed we wanted to go to the same place as the US expedition a few

weeks prior. It would be recommended to double and triple check the pilot knows the drop site as communication between Maida Adyr and the main TST office in Bishkek is not great.

The only difference on the trip back to Bishkek was the Gaz-66 was replaced with a smaller 4WD van that looked like an old VW campervan.

Accommodation

During our stay in Bishkek, we were taken to a climber's hostel in the north of the city. It was run by a Russian family who had apartments in their back garden. We did not know the name of the place we stayed but think it is the main place TST send their clients.

When we arrived at Maida Adyr, we had to spend the night there as the helicopter wasn't due until the next morning. There was hardened accommodation available, and there was also dinner and breakfast offered at a premium. We decided to stay in our tents for the night, and were told we would be charged 3€ per person to stay on the grounds. However, we were not charged in the end, maybe due to being dropped off in the wrong place.

It's worth noting that we had a bit of trouble when we arrived at Maida Adyr as we didn't have the paperwork required. We finally worked out that the staff at the base thought we were flying out to the manned basecamp for Khan Tengri which is where most climbers go from Maida Adyr. If anybody reading this also has a problem with paperwork, point this out.

Visas

There are no visas needed to enter Kyrgyzstan as part of the government's initiative to attract tourism to the country. We did require a border permit for being so close to the Chinese border but this was sorted out by TST before we arrived in the country and there shouldn't be any reason to be declined one as it seems to just be a money making scheme.





First Aid and Injuries

Due to the remote location of the expedition it was important that any minor medical problems could be dealt with by the team and hence an extensive medical kit was produced. All of the team members had previously attended 16-hour remote area first aid courses, however this was the extent of our experience.

There were no notable injuries or illnesses during the trip with team members suffering only minor stomach upsets which were left untreated (except in one case where a dose of Loperamide was administered). Small cuts were treated using antibacterial cream to prevent any further infection. The only issues with altitude we encountered were general tiredness and exhaustion, we were fortunate that climbing so high so quickly seemed to affect us very lightly.

Medical Kit

Each team member carried their own general medication such as paracetamol and diarrhoea relief (one team member was known to be allergic to penicillin and hence required specific antibiotics). The group medical kit was to be used for specific ailments requiring stronger prescription medication:

Medication

- 3 Courses Co-Amoxiclav - Broad Spectrum Antibiotic, Not for use if allergic to Penicillin.
- 2 Courses Ciproflaxacin –Bacterial Stomach Infections
- 2 Courses Metronidazole – Giardiasis, Bacterial Infections
- 2 Tubes Bactroban Ointment- Cuts and Soft Tissue Infection
- 1 Course Rifaximin – Traveller’s Diarrhoea
- Naproxen – Anti- inflammatory
- Dihydrocodene 100X2 – Strong Painkiller
- Loperamide
- Antihistamine Tablets
- Ibuprofen 32x3
- Paracetamol
- Dioralyte – Rehydration Salts
- Acetazolamide Diamox – Altitude sickness prevention
- Bandages
- Triangular Bandage
- Bandages, Adhesive fabric x 20
- Dressing, Gauze x5
- Dressing, Non-adhesive
- Antibiotic Ointment x5
- Steri-strips x4
- Suture Kit x2

Vaccinations

Information about vaccinations was provided through <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk>:

- Confirm primary courses and boosters are up to date as recommended for life in Britain
- Courses or boosters usually advised: Hepatitis A.
- Other vaccines to consider: Hepatitis B; Rabies; Tetanus; Typhoid.

Most of the team members opted out from getting optional vaccinations due to the remote location of the expedition and low risk. It is worth noting that the other British expedition in Djangart at the same time left a few days later and were evacuated by helicopter back to the north of the country due to an outbreak of the bubonic plague!

Expedition Accounts

We were grateful for the large quantity of grants received from the Mount Everest Foundation, British Mountaineering Council, Alpine Club and University of Bristol. This generosity meant that the trip costs per person were only £629, a figure we considered very reasonable given our location, helicopter transport and the length of the trip!

Item	Expenditure	Income
Flights	£2,640.00	
Insurance	£1,866.00	
Airport transfers	£90.00	
Land transport to/from Maida-Adyr	£502.00	
Helicopter to/from Djangart	£1,757.00	
Gas + stove rental	£50.00	
Gas cartridges	£100.00	
Accommodation in Bishkek	£305.00	
Food/Personal Items/Luxuries in Bishkek	£245.00	
Food and consumables for Djangart	£510.00	
Excess baggage	£85.00	
Border Permits	£75.00	
Total Expenditure	£8,225.00	
MEF Grant		£1,650.00
BMC Grant		£800.00
Alpine Club Grant		£800.00
University of Bristol Alumni Grant		£1,200.00
Total Grant Contributions		£4,450.00
Personal contributions		£3,775.00
Total Income		£8,225.00

The Djangart Valley

Kyrgyzstan is 93% mountainous and the Djangart valley sits on the Chinese border between two regions of higher peaks to the north east and the south west.

We approached the region from the capital Bishkek around the northern shores of Issyk Kul via Karakol.



Previous Expeditions

The Djangart region was first visited by Russian mountaineers in 1932 during an exploratory expedition, however no mountains were climbed. Access to the region was heavily restricted throughout the Soviet era and the next recorded expedition was in 2004 when the first attempt on Pt 5318 was made by Ingrid Crossland and Graham Sutton. They were unsuccessful in their attempt on the highest peak in the area, something that was to become a common theme amongst expeditions.

It wasn't until a Russian expedition visited the area in 2008 that the first mountain in the valley was climbed - Pik Letaveta. The area increased in popularity over the following years with a total of four expeditions from 2010 - 2011. The summer of 2013 saw three further expeditions; the American VICE expedition in July, followed by our own along with a British-New Zealand expedition in August.





The map above summarises all of the climbed peaks in the Djangart valley that we are aware of. An interactive version of the above map is available online if you wish to view the locations more accurately: <http://www.djangart2013.co.uk/map.html>. Previous expeditions to the region were:

1) British-New Zealand 2013

Expedition members: Hugh Thomas, Neil Thomas, Tom Bell, Reg Measures, Max Folkett, Tim Elson

We made contact with the British-New Zealand expedition before we went out, and agreed to share a helicopter out to Djangart valley. They made their basecamp in the same location as us and focused their efforts in the surrounding area, and in particular the N2 glacier.

Peak Kinmundy (4950m)

Route: PD, 400m

FA: Hugh Thomas, Neil Thomas, Tom Bell, 18.08.13

Pk Vinton-Boot (5168m)

Route: Open Misère, TD (Scottish V), 500m
FA: Reg Measures, Max Folkett, Tim Elson, 16.08.13

Pk Macmillan (5051m)

Route: Frima Face, D-, 45-60° short sections of 70°, (Scottish III), 950m

FA: Reg Measures, Max Folkett, Tim Elson, 14.08.13

Djanghorn and Traverse (5278m)

Route: ED (HVS, A2, Scottish IV), 2.5km traverse
Climbers: Reg Measures, Max Folkett, Tim Elson, 27.08.13

Peak Fotheringham (4871m)

Route: AD, 400m

FA: Hugh Thomas, Neil Thomas, Tom Bell,
15.08.13

2) VICE 2013 (American)

Expedition members: Rob Gleich, Nick Levin, Austin Lines, Jeff Longcor, Zach Matthay, and Ryan Stolp

The VICE 2013 expedition were dropped in the Djangart valley between the heads of the N1 and N2 glaciers and made their basecamp here (the same location we used for our basecamp a few weeks later). Their main objective was Pik 5318 and they were successful on their second attempt.

Mount Skimmins (4860m)

Route: Kidney Stone Gully

FA: R.Gleich, N.Levin, A.Lines, Z.Matthay,
27,07,13

Pik After-You (5318m)

Route: Turd-Burg Indirect

FA: R.Gleich, A.Lines, J.Longcor, Z.Matthay,
R.Stolp, N.Levin, 23,07,13

Pik Buddyness (5172m)

Route: Last Crusade

FA: J.Longcor, R.Stolp, 26,07,13

3) Danish 2011

Expedition members: Carsten Cooper Jensen, Simon Lund Jensen, Anders Hedeager Pedersen, Kristoffer Szilas, Jim Broomhead, Jakob Fisker, Sune Buur

The Danish expedition flew into the east end of the Djangart range by helicopter and made their basecamp at 3400m near the outflow of the Kichik Sauktor Glacier. They made four first ascents in the area which until then had remained untouched by mountaineers. They also attempted Pik 5025 (Pik Currahee) and recommended it as a future objective.

Peak Pernille (5190m)

Route: AD, 700m

FA: A. Hedeager Pedersen, J. Fisker, S. Buur,
26/07/11

Peak Kathryn (4885m)

Route: Russian Roulette, AD, 700m

FA: S. Lund Jensen, C. Cooper-Jensen, 30/07/11

Peak Alexandra (5290m)

Route: Bivouac - French for Mistake, D, 700m

FA: J. Broomhead, K. Szilas, 25-26/07/11

Peak Lea (4950m)

Route: Mermaid, D, 500m

FA: J. Broomhead, K. Szilas, 25-01/08/11

4) Spanish 2011

Expedition members: Cati Llado, Tomeu Rubi

We know few details about this expedition, however the American Alpine Journal contains a summary of their expedition here:

<http://aaj.americanalpineclub.org/climbs-and-expeditions/asia/kyrgyzstan/tien-shan/2011-rakhmat-5144m-north-face-and-northeast-ridge-pik-4887m-west-face-and-south-ridge-tushunbodum-5081m-north-face-by-cati-llado-and-tomeu-rubi-mallorca-spain/>

Pt. 4887m

Route: He Perdut el Guant i les Forces, 550m
FA: C.Llado, T.Rubi, July 2011

Pik Rakhmat (5144m)

Route: Customized Ice Axes and Wet Boots, D IV,
700m
FA: C.Llado, T.Rubi, 24/07/11

Pik Tushunbodum (5081m)

Route: Si la Cornisa Vol, MD+, IV+
FA: C.Llado, T.Rubi, 04/08/11

5) Brighton-Tremellen 2011

Expedition members: Richard Tremellen and Alex Brighton

The pair had planned to use horses to transport gear across the Djangart pass, however this proved unfeasible and so they made basecamp on the east side of the pass. This meant an arduous two day walk in for all their routes. As well as two first ascents, they also attempted Pik 5381m.

Pik Laetitia (4952m)

Route: Phoenix, TD, 1,300m
FA: A.Brighton, R.Tremellen, 05/08/11

Pik Emma (4,803m)

Route: AD
FA: A.Brighton, R.Tremellen, 22/07/11



6) Anglo American 2010

Expedition Members: Matthew Traver, Michael Royer, Daniel Clark, Christopher Parenteau, James Maddison

The Anglo-American expedition used horses to transport their food and equipment into the Djangart valley, via the Djangart pass at the west end of the valley, setting up basecamp near the outflow of the Akoguz glacier. After an accident early in the expedition Despite an accident resulting in Clark and Maddison returning to Bishkek, the expedition made three first ascents. It is fair to say that it is this expedition which was the catalyst and inspiration for many of the subsequent trips.

Pik Howard-Bury (4766m)

Route: Horseman's Horror, D+, 700m

FA: M.Royer, M.Traver, D.Clark, 14/07/10

Peak Sutherland (5080m)

Route: Will Your Anchor Hold, TD-, 700m

FA: M. Royer, M. Traver, 19/07/10

Peak of Illumination (5048m)

Route: Postcard for the Chief, AD+, 650m

FA: M.Royer, M.Traver, 27/07/10

7) Russian 2008

The expedition comprised of six Russians from the Moscow City Central Tourist Club. They completed an extensive circuit of the area, including the Djangart valley. They climbed Pik Letaveta in the Djangart range, along with two mountains to the east of Djangart (not plotted on the online map).

Pik Letaveta (5285m)

FA: 05/08/08

Pik Engelhardt (4826m)

FA: 30/07/08

Pik Morozov (4704m)

FA: 31/07/08

8) Crossland – Sutton 2004

Ingrid Crossland and Graham Sutton visited the Djangart region in 2004. After accessing the valley by helicopter, they set up their basecamp between the head of the N1 and N2 glaciers. From here they explored both valleys and made two unsuccessful attempts on Pik 5318.





The Natural Environment

At first glance the flora in the area doesn't appear too spectacular. However take a closer look and there are some diamonds in the rough. The main Djangart valley contains a many different types of grasses which can be pleasant to walk through although the southern side of the valley is inundated with waist high thistles which are much more awkward. Consequently walking the length of the Djangart is a much easier proposition from the northern bank. Harry and Al came across a very large partially opened Tien Shan lotus flower near the Djangart pass at 4000m (photo). This plant was rooted in an infertile shale substrate, with no loam to retain water or nutrients - a truly harsh environment!

The fauna in the area are very diverse and kept us on our toes on more than one occasion. We had heard of reports of bear footprints from previous expedition reports but despite causing some anxiety among our team we saw no sign of bears.

Marmots were often sighted in the valley bottom and their holes litter the landscape. We were worried about our food getting eaten by these ravenous beasties. This however didn't happen and we believe it is because, unlike in the Alps, the marmots haven't encountered humans very much and were afraid of entering our camp.

We spotted some very large eagles with a deep brown plumage circling above us and found a huge skeleton of presumably the same species. The wingspan was approximately 2m and maybe more!

We also came across a marco polo skull which was easily identified by its curved horns. However we sadly didn't see a living example of this rare subspecies of sheep. A herd of around ten ibex were also spotted running along a dry glacier, moving in a perfect single file.

A large herd of cattle and wild horses were living in the western part of the main valley. These were alarming to walk through as they stared in amazement at us, despite never showing any sign of

aggression we still tried to stay out of their way. Their movements in the valley have created some small paths, predominantly on the north side of the valley, which are useful to walk along.



The geology of the area is dominated by a large granite intrusion. Almost all of the in-situ rocks we encountered and climbed on were granite of varying quality. The Tien Shan are a much younger mountain range than the European Alps, by comparison the compact granite of Chamonix (for example) has had more time to be eroded to the compact core of the originally giant intrusion. In the younger Djangart area erosion rates are much higher and rock fall was heard on most nights up on the glaciers and seen multiple times throughout the day. That said the unstable slopes were usually obvious and could be circumnavigated.

The boulders in the valley bottom show a more diverse provenance. There are abundant examples of mylonites showing evidence of intense shearing related to mountain forming orogeny in the form of intensely folded alternating light and dark bands.

Towards the west in the Djangartinbashi valley the rock at the head of the valley is a matrix supported conglomerate which was encountered on Pik Feto and Pik Topor. This rock offers little scope for mixed or rock climbing due to its friability and lack of solid cracks for protection.





A Guide to Bishkek

We thought adding this quick guide would make life easier for anyone planning on preparing for an expedition from Bishkek. It took us some time to get our heads around the city as we had only an outdated Russian map as our guide and had focused much of our research on the Djangart valley itself.

Osh Bazaar

The Osh Bazaar is the cheapest place to buy food and equipment. What is on offer depends on whether it is a weekend or weekday. The map attached shows where to find all the main items needed for an expedition, although this may change from year to year.

1. This is the main food hall of the bazaar and the first area you come to when entering from the main entrance. Items we found here included fruit, vegetables, rice and noodles and trail mix. We would recommend buying a few bunches of 'Kyrgyz noodles' which can only be described as a bunch or thin wire folded in half and tied around with a ribbon. Not the most appetising description but once boiled for ten minutes they are a tasty substitute for base camp noodles and rice. The trail mix stands sell every type of nut and dried fruit you can think of. They are sold per kilogram so you can mix and match as much as you like. We also bought lots of mini cakes at the same stalls. Note that the 'cheese balls' sold here seem to go down well with the locals but didn't fit with our continental palate. They look like bonbons and are not recommended.

2. This area was full of longer lasting vegetables such as potatoes and onions, which for some reason had their own area away from the other vegetables.
3. This was our most visited area as it was home to the make shift police station. We were stopped every time we passed here (more than once a day sometimes) due to our foreign looks and large rucksacks. The police are friendly and say they are just checking for narcotics, their searching entails little more than a sniff in your rucksack and a search of your wallet. We thought they were more interested in polishing up on their English and were very friendly, so don't be alarmed if this happens to you. There are also a few stalls selling other useful foods. There was a stall selling honey, and others selling tins and canned goods. Also nearby was a permanent hall where we bought lots of cheese, we found the cheese with the red skin (looks like edam but isn't) much tastier than the smoked cheese. We also found halva here and tubes that looked like they contain either cheese or meat. They were in fact a novel Kyrgyz way to package mayonnaise, so take this into consideration. There is a meat hall in this area, but we didn't buy any from there because of the rancid smell when entering it.
4. This is Osh Bazaars answer to Wilkinson's, selling everything from light bulbs to microwaves. There is a military software area too. We bought all our pots and pans in this area, as well as hessian bags to carry all our kit, and a large plastic screw top container that we made into a fridge. When going to this area of the bazaar from the food area, you have to cross a road that has several currency exchange shops. We found these to have the best exchange rates.
5. This is the clothing market. Although nothing here should be needed for the expedition, we picked up all our souvenirs from here.

Walking around the bazaar there will no doubt be countless other stalls selling useful items by hopefully this guide serves as a good introduction to the the main areas. One important point we would like to make is that Osh Bazaar isn't a market you haggle in, everybody seemed to be offended when we tried.



Transport

The cheapest way to get around the city (apart from walking) is by using the buses. There are several types of buses with electric buses that follow the wires above the streets as well as normal buses. Both of these cost 8 som (10 pence) per journey. There are also minibuses that drive around, called Marshrutkas that cost a pricier 10 som (13 pence). We found that these buses generally just travel in straight lines, sometimes moving only one block over. Combining this with the rigid grid-like nature of the city's roads we found we could simply board a bus that was going in the direction we wanted and invariably arrive in the right place. We found after returning to the UK, that there is extensive bus map at <http://bus.kg/> although it is more enjoyable just getting on a bus and seeing where you end up.

The other transport alternative is taxis. Generally, a taxi ride would cost around 300 som, although we did manage to haggle when using them before we found the courage to use the buses.



Supermarket

We bought around half of our food from the supermarket. It is worth visiting after the bazaar so you know what is more expensive there and what isn't. The main items we bought were meat, tinned sardines, porridge oats, chocolate and noodles. There were canned meats as well with pictures of pigs, cows, horses and Vikings (not sure what that contained). We tried a can of cow before leaving for Djangart and were glad we didn't buy any more as it smelled horrible and looked bad too. The main supermarket we went to was a chain called 'Narodny'.

Future Potential of the Djangart Area

Over the past decade the Djangart range has attracted nine separate expeditions and this alone should highlight the quality of the area for new routing and first ascents. A record of all ascents made during these expeditions has been compiled at <http://www.djangart2013.co.uk/map.html> and should prove a useful resource for anyone planning future expeditions to the area. There are many unclimbed peaks in Djangart, far too many to individually describe here. Inevitably not all of these peaks are aesthetically pleasing or significant and the focus of the earlier expeditions has been on the better quality peaks but some unclimbed gems still remain. There are few remaining unclimbed summits above 5000m in height and those seeking such objectives would do best to head to the far eastern end of the valley.

The parallel ridge and valley topography of the area lends itself to a high concentration of easily accessible peaks. All of the valleys extending northwards from the Chinese boarder have access to unclimbed peaks on either side. During this expedition we found the best technique was to simply walk up a valley and decide on an objective on first seeing it, making sure we knew to the best of our knowledge what had already been climbed.

The N1 Glacier (to the west of Pik After You) contains some great looking snow and ice lines on the east face of Pt 4783 (photo below taken from the west face of Pik Betelgeuse looking SW). However it is important to note that we found east facing slopes rapidly became unstable when the sun hit them in the morning. We tended to stick to west or north facing slopes, climbing at night and descending in the morning while the slopes were still shaded.



There are many snow, ice and mixed lines similar to this throughout the region and no doubt many hidden away that we did not come across. Some of these are more technical challenges on climbed peaks, a good example being the south face of Pik After You which is the best granite buttress we saw in the area. It holds a c.400m corner leading straight to the summit on pristine granite (see photo below). There is also a nice mixed line leading to the summit of Pik After You from the south col.



This is by no means an exhaustive list of potential lines in the area and should serve merely to highlight that the area is still ripe for both technical and easier new routes, some of which are on unclimbed peaks. Most of these routes are relatively short (less than a day) allowing an expedition to summit multiple peaks in a short space of time. This gives a high chance of success and allows climbers to attempt very different routes across the area all in the same trip.

Good luck!