



## AAC Publications

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### **Koh-e-Rank (5,930m), second and third ascents, west-east traverse**

Afghanistan, Hindu Kush

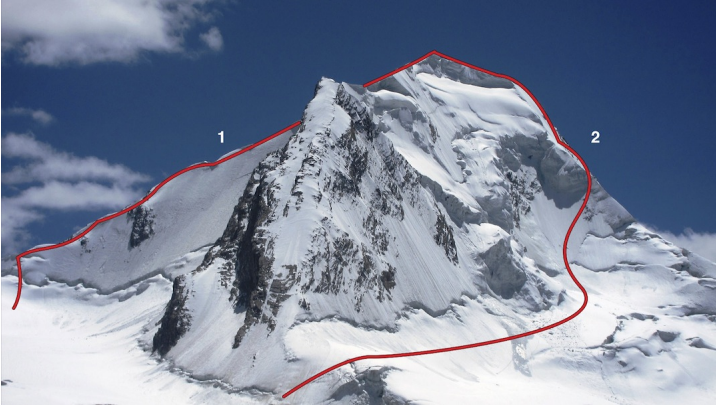
With Mary-Rose Fowlie (who hadn't climbed for 20 years) and my brother Bill (who'd never climbed) both coming along as base camp support, two of us planned to visit the upper Qala Panja Glacier and attempt Rohazon Zom (6,535m) from the northwest. [This peak has only been climbed once, in 1968 by Austrians from the southwest (Pakistan). In 1976 Poles climbed the northeast ridge from the next valley east of the Qala Panja, but only reached the north top.] When my climbing partner pulled out, we decided to go anyway, and after a number of delays arrived in the Wakhan. As happened last year, all the organization (guide, transport, etc.) I'd put in place evaporated, but fortunately Malang, whom I had met last year, helped us procure our traveling permit and a translator to help with porters. We reached Qala Panja after a six-hour drive from Ishkashim in a battered Land Cruiser. Here, the police commander insisted we pay for two porters to guard base camp during our stay.

We were forced to establish base camp relatively low at 3,200m, and consequently spent the next eight days ferrying gear to a high camp on a rocky knoll at 5,000m, the final section involving several belayed pitches on granite. After a day of rest and acclimatization we walked four hours across the upper névé to reach the frontier ridge, where we could see Rohazon Zom and a closer, smaller, and attractive peak called Koh-e-Rank. Mary-Rose and I decided this would make a suitable acclimatization ascent prior to an attempt on Rohazon Zom, and after a day back in high camp set off at 3 a.m. for an ascent of the east ridge. Accessing the crest involved a nasty snow bridge, followed by steep, unconsolidated snow, but the ridge itself proved straightforward. On the descent we made a huge rappel over the bergschrund and reached camp 12 hours after leaving.

Mary-Rose and I decided it would probably take five to seven days round-trip to summit Rohazon Zom, and wondered as a team if we'd be strong enough. We turned again to Koh-e-Rank. The east ridge had been climbed in 1968 by Isobel and Henri Agresti, but the northwest ridge remained untouched, so we made a west-east traverse in 14 hours after trying unsuccessfully to get onto the east face (a bergschrund precluded this.) The ascent involved another troublesome bergschrund crossing, followed by a nasty pitched traverse across the bottom of the north face under a series of large ice cliffs. This gave access to the northwest ridge about 200 meters above the base of the mountain. We belayed several pitches of moderately steep ice up a beautiful knife-edge ridge to gain access to the summit snow slopes, up which we slogged to the top. We descended the east ridge and used our previous abseil anchor to get back to the glacier.

Pat Deavoll, New Zealand

## Images



Koh-e-Rank showing (1) east ridge and (2) northwest ridge. In 2012 the east ridge was first climbed up and down for the second ascent of the route and mountain, then a new traverse was made via an ascent of (2) and descent of (1).

## Article Details

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