



AAC Publications

Pathan Brakk (ca 5,410m), southwest flank, second ascent; K7 West (6,615m), Southwest Pillar, Attempt

Asia, Pakistan, Charakusa Valley

In April 2010, Tim DeRoehn and I were awarded one of the inaugural Copp-Dash Inspire Awards. It would be our first trip to Asia. We had big goals, specifically to make the first complete ascent of the southwest pillar of K7 West, and to explore the endless rock spires ringing the Charakusa Valley.

After settling into base camp (ca 4,500m) along with our friend and cook Fida Hussain and his assistant Abbas. We acclimatized by climbing on beautiful granite boulders a minute's walk from camp, and hiking the area, scoping almost limitless objectives.

After a week in camp Tim was floored with altitude sickness, resulting in a resting heart rate of ca 100. After keeping an eye on him for a day, I left for a solo mission near Farol Peak. Several days previously a group of Swiss climbers had made the first ascent of a peak they named Pathan Brakk, a ca 5,410m summit on the watershed ridge running south-southeast from Farol Far East. They described enjoyable mixed climbing and a beautiful granite top. For me it sounded like perfect acclimatization, and an opportunity to scope a still-unclimbed mixed line on the south face of Farol Far East.

After ascending the South Farol Glacier immediately north of camp, and seemingly endless snow slopes, I bivouacked several hundred meters below the summit on a shoulder overlooking the entire valley. The next morning I awoke at 4 a.m. and climbed steep snow (up to 65°) and moderate mixed terrain (up to M4) to the spectacular granite spire. Straddling the summit spire I took in a view of K2, Chogolisa, and Broad Peak. After a rappel and much down-climbing I headed back to base camp in time for dinner. There are many small unclimbed peaks similar to Pathan Brakk in the Charakusa Valley.

Naisa Brakk (ca 5,200m) stands over the entrance to the valley and has Egyptian Pyramid-like architecture. With Tim feeling better, we bivouacked below the start of Tasty Talking (5.10+, 300m, House-Prezelj-Swenson, 2005) on the upper southeast ridge. Earlier in the trip we had bailed from a point around a pitch and half from the summit after underestimating the route, thinking it would be a good warm-up.

Despite its relatively moderate grade, this route served a full course of excitement, complete with pitch after pitch of what felt more like run-out 5.11 than 10+. True to form last season, it began to rain a couple pitches below the summit, but we were not going to bail this time. I led the last two pitches, including a particularly fun and exposed final pitch, in the pouring rain. This may have been the third complete ascent. Dirty rainwater spurted from our belay devices and soaked us to the bone as we rappelled down. This would become the norm for the rest of the trip.

Our remaining time in the Charakusa was highlighted by two attempts on our main objective, the southwest pillar of K7 West. Each attempt would find us dubiously eyeing dark clouds coming up the valley, and stubbornly deciding to press upward, only to be soaked by heavy rain. We were attempting to climb the first five or six pitches of Badal and then break left onto the west face where a line of ramps and corners led to mixed climbing just below the top. A direct start to this line was attempted by Italians [see elsewhere]. The initial corners of Badal are 5.11+, but they were wet, making free

climbing difficult. The southwest pillar is an amazing objective, which in my opinion has not had a true ascent. The Belgian-Polish team came closest, but Luna appears to end very far from the summit.

The summer of 2010 brought one of the wettest monsoons in the country's history. Thousands of people were killed and even more displaced by the devastating flooding that followed. Each day we would hear more bad news on Fida's radio: our qualms about the weather from a climbing perspective seemed trivial.

Pakistan is the subject of endless bad press in western media. Many of our friends and family expressed concern about us traveling to this country, which in their eyes was overrun with anti-American sentiment. Right from our arrival in Islamabad we found only kind and generous people, who often went out of their way to have a conversation with us.

Images



Pathan Brakk from southwest showing the route soloed by Matt McCormick.



Tim DeRoehn on Tasty Talking.

Article Details

Author	Matt McCormick, AAC
Publication	AAJ
Volume	53
Issue	85
Page	0
Copyright Date	2011
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions