



AAC Publications

Farol Far East (6,200m), First Ascent, and Other Ascents

Asia, Pakistan, Charakusa Valley

The Swiss team of Simon Riediker, Mirco Stalder, and I completed several routes in the Charakusa Valley, including the first ascent of a 6,200-meter peak. We arrived in the valley on July 19 and left August 15. In order to acclimatize, Mirco and I repeated a free-climbing route on a 5,400m rock tooth that we called “Dru Peak” after its strong resemblance to the famous Dru in Chamonix. The climb was six pitches (6a to 6c) on perfect rock. We had no information about the route, but we found evidence of previous ascents. The next day we tackled a beautiful crack system on a possibly unclimbed rock needle, south of Dru Peak, that we baptized Lady Finger. We placed two bolts on No More Immodium (180m, 7a).

Difficult rock climbing (6c) below the lower summit of Farol Far East. Courtesy of Simon Oswald

Our next goal was the far eastern summit of the Farol group. This 6,200m peak had been tried several times without success. We hoped to reach the summit by the east ridge, which had been attempted by two Frenchmen in 2006. Simon Riediker had contracted pulmonary edema during the first night in base camp and was still recovering, so it was just Mirco and I again. We camped on the glacier at 5,000m and then climbed to the saddle below the east ridge at 5,600m. However, that night brought 20cm of snow, and with no improvement in the weather we returned to base camp. Two days later, the weather seemed to be getting better, so we returned to Camp 1 with 150m of extra rope, and the next day climbed to Camp 2 in the saddle and fixed three pitches above. The ridge above the saddle had perfect rock and challenging mixed climbing. The more demanding passages in the rock forced us to change into climbing shoes.

Early in the morning we jumared up the fixed ropes, moving agonizingly slowly. Above, four more time-consuming mixed pitches brought us to a secondary peak. The main summit seemed miles away. A tough rocky ridge with huge cornices lay ahead; knowing that we had to return along this entire ridge the same day, we sped up as much as we could. A steep rock face below the foresummit provided some demanding crux pitches, but around 4:30 p.m. we finally made it to the main top (6c+ M6+). We raised our home-sewn Swiss flag to commemorate our country’s national holiday, August 1, and then set off down the ridge. Just around dusk, after 17 hours of climbing, we returned to our high camp, and the following day we descended all the way to base camp.

The daunting view along the east ridge to the highest rocky summit of Farol Far East. “Knowing that we had to return along this entire ridge the same day, we sped up as much as we could.” In back: Farol East (6,350m). Courtesy of Simon Oswald

In the meantime, fortunately, Simon Riediker had completely recovered and was more than eager for action. The three of us climbed Naisa Brakk via the north ridge. If this perfectly symmetrical rock pyramid were in the Alps, this ridge would be hopelessly overcrowded. Next we completed a two-day approach to a camp at 5,800m at the foot of the north ridge of Drifka (6,480m). The ridge provided us with demanding mixed climbing, bare ice, and powder snow, but our efforts were rewarded with a gorgeous panoramic view of the Karakoram.

Back at base camp, we planned a couple of rock climbs before we had to head home. The highest summit of the Iqbal Wall has a top shaped like a human head, and we called it Gandel Peak because gandel means “head” in Balti. Four straightforward but beautiful pitches led to a seemingly blank 20-

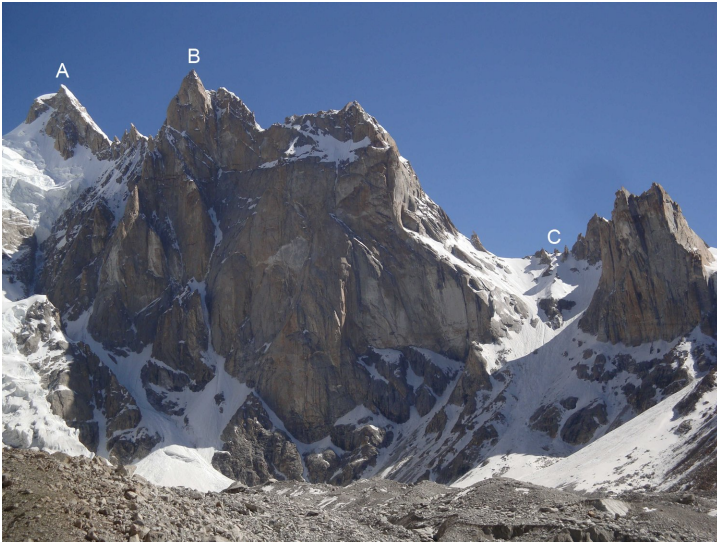
meter wall. But to our surprise we found small protruding grips that allowed us to traverse to a perfect crack leading directly to the head (Human Touch, 300m, 7a).

With the weather still great, we were highly motivated to make good use of our last day in the valley, and we applied our remaining strength to the left edge of the Iqbal Wall. An easy pitch accessed fantastic crack climbing. Midway up the wall, a band of quartz allowed us to switch cracks. In all it was a fantastic route, despite some occasional crumbly rock (The Last Move, 250m, 7b).

The line of No More Immodium (180m, 7a) on "Lady Finger." Courtesy of Simon Oswald

We returned via the Karakoram Highway, which, due to a shortage of diesel, was empty of traffic. Thanks to our officer's far-reaching connections, we were able to fill up our tanks and proceed toward home without impediment.

Images



(A) Farol East (6,350m), first ascent, solo, by Maxime Turgeon, September 2007. (B) Farol Far East (6,200m), first ascent by Simon Oswald and Mirco Stalder in July-August 2009. (C) The 5,600m saddle from which Oswald and Stalder attacked the east ridge.



Difficult rock climbing (6c) below the lower summit of Farol Far East.



The daunting view along the east ridge to the highest rocky summit of Farol Far East. "Knowing that we had to return along this entire ridge the same day, we sped up as much as we could." In back: Farol East (6,350m).



The line of No More Immodium (180m, 7a) on "Lady Finger."



The line of Human Touch (300m, 7a) on "Gandel Peak."

Article Details

Author	Simon Oswald, Switzerland
Publication	AAJ
Volume	51
Issue	83
Page	0
Copyright Date	2009
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions