



## AAC Publications

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### **The Bayonet, North Buttress and East Ridge**

Russia, Buryatia Republic, Ikatsky Ridge

**In February 2011, I came across a panoramic photo of a mountain wall, visible in the distance, that immediately captivated me.** Then followed weeks of searching for options for getting there, multiple calls and meetings, and finally we were ready to go. We were four: Andrey Afanasiev, Svyatoslav Emanov, Ilya Ogleznev, and me. It took us one day in a cross-country vehicle, three days of snowmobiling, and three days of cross-country skiing to reach the area of the Ikatsky Ridge (also spelled Ikatski or Ikatskiy). We saw in front of us numerous walls that nobody had ever climbed.

This massif in Buryatia Republic, east of giant Lake Baikal, consists of five peaks of around 2,500m. The Bayonet stands in the center and has steep northern and southern walls. To the west is Yakov Pokhabov's Peak (named for the founder of Irkutsk), the highest point of the region (2,574m), also with two walls: northeast and northwest. To the east of Bayonet is Ostrog (ca 2550m), which has three walls: north, west, and south. To the northeast one can find Fighter Peak, with its own north wall. **These walls all are 500m or higher.** [ The Ikatsky Ridge lies to the east of the Barguzin Range, between the Barguzin and Upper Tsypa valleys. At its north end, the Ikatsky mountains meet the North and South Muiski ranges. These mountains can be reached from Kurumkan via the upper Barguzin Valley, but the road along the Barguzin River can only be used in winter.]

That February, we carried loads to the base of the Ostrog wall, then went down to rest in base camp, and then nature let us understand we were in Siberia. The temperature dropped from a rather comfortable -20°C to below -40°. Having climbed three pitches on the wall, we retreated to save our lives. After spending some time in the safety of base camp, we made the first ascent of the Yakov Pokhabov's Peak by an easy 2B route.

Three years passed, and my current climbing partner, Vasily Ilyinsky, and I served in the army and summited many mountains. But the desire to really unlock this area never left. We found a third team member for support—Ilya Resnyansky—and left for a 20-day trip at the end of March.

Twenty-four hours after leaving Irkutsk we arrived at Dzherzhinsky Reserve. A car came for us, and we traveled 150km, 90 of which were on the frozen winter road. By 6 p.m. we reached the winter hut on the banks of the Barguzin River, and from there we went on foot. After a three-day approach we found ourselves under the wall. As soon as we got there we did the first ascent of a new peak, subsequently named Fighter. The views were incredible—the sheer 600m wall of Ostrog Peak particularly impressed us, reminding us of the Karavshin.

Our next goal was the north face of untouched Bayonet peak, the first technically difficult route in the area. Initially we planned to climb this mountain nonstop in a day as a warm-up before climbing Ostrog. However, on the first day we ascended only five pitches, climbing smooth slabs and cracks filled with ice. We sometimes climbed 15–20m without placing protection. We descended to the camp for the night and started again the next day. We managed to free the sixth pitch, thanks to the light boots we took with us, but the seventh pitch took many hours. It was a flaring, periodically disappearing crack that we could not hook, nor did we want to drill holes in the rock and turn it into Swiss cheese, as long as there was a possibility to climb it in a different way.

By sunset we climbed to the ninth pitch and decided to keep climbing through the night. To tell the truth, night climbing was much easier psychologically—you could not see how many hundreds of

meters were beneath your feet. I met the dawn standing on a skyhook and cautiously looking to the left, where my last protection was 10m away on the wall of a corner. The sun had risen, but did not warm us. The hook placement was crumbling, so I hammered a hole—the only skyhook hole on the route. When we reached the top of the lower buttress we saw there were several more pitches along the knife-edge to reach the summit tower.

On the summit ridge every crack and cavity was packed with snow and frost, there were many snow mushrooms, and the wind blew constantly. After working out five challenging pitches, we got to the final ridge. The sun was setting, so we took only bare necessities and ran to the top with the last rays. We summited at 9 p.m. on April 14. To descend, we rappelled our route on the summit tower, then followed a snow ledge and couloir to the west of the north pillar.

Bayonet was planned as a warm-up, so the next morning we packed up and moved under Ostrog. But when we put up the tent, the wind and snow swooped in and the temperature dropped to -25°C. We had only enough food left for three days, and when the storm did not abate next day, we realized that we would not be able to climb Ostrog during this expedition.

Alexander Klepikov, Russia, translated by Ekaterina Vorotnikova

## Images



The 500m-plus north walls of Ikatsky Ridge. (A) Ostrog. (B) Bayonet, with the line of the 2014 first ascent. (C) Yakov Pokhabov. Only one wall route had been completed in this area by the end of 2014.



Approaching the Ikatsky Ridge along the frozen Barguzin River.



The north face of Ostrog from a neighboring peak.



Ostrog's north face from base camp.



Vasily Ilyinsky leading on the lower north face of the Bayonet.



Alexander Klepikov in the middle section of first ascent of the north face of the Bayonet.



Ostrog's west and south faces, photographed from near the top of the Bayonet.



The north face of Ostrog after poor weather.



North face of the Bayonet.



North face of the Bayonet with the 2014 route marked.

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