



## **Buzchubek Valley: Karasak from the West**

Tajikistan, Pamir, Sarykol Range

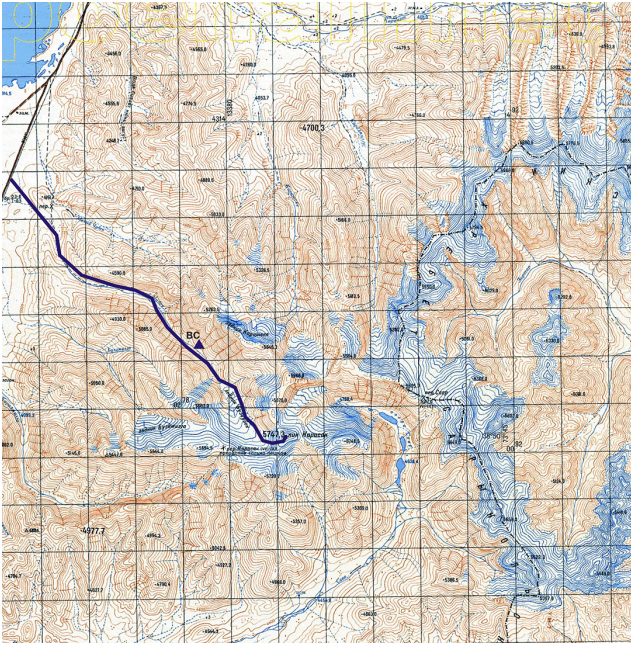
**The Sarykol Range forms part of the frontier between Tajikistan and China and is officially off-limits. Virtually everything to the east of the Pamir Highway (the famous road from Osh in Kyrgyzstan to Khorog in Tajikistan), between the border post at Kyzyl Art and the town of Murghab, is off-limits, and locals will refuse to take you there.** However, the rules are rather vague and they appear not to be really upheld in the wild. The peaks of the Sarykol Range, most of which are probably unclimbed, are visible from the roads and pastures that surround Karakul Lake, so Kyrgyz herders gave them names a long time ago.

In September, Stefan Matuska (Slovakia) and I made the long drive from Osh to the Buzchubek Valley in the Sarykol. From the highway, we set off walking southeast up this desolate and arid valley, and after 90 minutes came upon pastures and running water. After three hours we set up camp at 4,500m in the upper valley, by a stream flowing from the Buzchubek Glacier. Two years earlier, when we were in the Alai Range, not far from here, we found peaks at the same altitude with extensive glaciers. In the extremely arid climate of the eastern Pamir, we now found a sort of high-altitude desert, albeit with grass and water.

The highest peak of the surrounding mountain group is Karasak (5,747m, 38°49'52.86"N, 73°38'39.74"E Google Earth). After a walk of one hour above camp, we gained the Buzchubek Glacier by outflanking its lower section via scree slopes on the left. The glacier proved long and tiring, turning to the left after nine kilometers and rising more steeply to the east to reach the southwest ridge of Karasak. We followed this on snow and a little ice to the summit, where we made a cairn. There was no trace of previous passage, though this is due to location rather than any difficulty. The ascent was similar to Elbrus—without the cable car. We rated it Russian 2A.

Michal Kleslo, Czech Republic

## Images



Russian map of the Sarykol Range showing the approach from the Pamir Highway and the route of ascent on Karasak. A small part of the great Karakol Lake is just visible in upper left.



Looking southeast up the Buzchubek Glacier. The summit of Karasak is hidden around to the left.



An evening descent from Karasak, with unclimbed Peak 5,729m to the southwest. In the distance is the Muzkol Range.



View from Karasak (5,747m) over the Sarykul Range

## Article Details

Author	Michal Kleslo
Publication	AAJ
Volume	59
Issue	91
Page	0
Copyright Date	2017
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions