



## AAC Publications

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### **Shadzud Valley, Various Ascents**

Tajikistan, Pamir, Rushan Range

**At the end of August, Esther Baum, Stephanie Graßl (team doctor), Marie Hofmann, Veronika Krieger, Maria Pilarski, Susanne Süßmeier, Franziska Wiele, and I (team trainer) traveled to the Pamir in southeast Tajikistan as the last stage of the German Alpine Club's three-year young female alpinists' team program (DAV Expeditionskader).**

The only known expedition to have visited the valley was in 2010, and Andrew Stokes-Rees and David Gladwin, who were on that expedition, provided us with information and photos. Sharaf Saidrakhmonov helped us with the logistics. He is well-organized and responsive. That being said, there is little experience with mountaineering expeditions in the area, so don't expect the level of service you can find in Nepal, Pakistan, or India. Be prepared to assume more responsibility.

We flew to Dushanbe, then traveled by car to Khorog, a painful 16-hour drive. Here, we spent a day rock climbing with local young women at Tang, a small crag developed by Bo White and others. The contact was made through Christine Oriol, a Frenchwoman who has been doing great work teaching outdoor skills to local women.

From Khorog we continued northeast by car to Shadzud (ca 3,200m), a small town in the Ghunt Valley. We hired local shepherds, who, with their donkeys, took our kit up to base camp (ca 4,050m, 37.81338°N, 72.34961°E). This took two days, mostly due to our loads falling off the donkeys every few hundred meters.

We established base camp in the highest green meadow we could find, an old shepherds' camp. Once there, we realized that the glacier and mountains in this valley had changed dramatically since 2010. There was very little snow and ice, and the glaciers had receded significantly. We found much more loose rock and stonefall than expected. This made choosing objectives difficult.

We divided in two groups and explored three different side valleys, acclimatizing slowly and working our way up to the highest peaks in the range. In all we summited four peaks that we believe were previously unclimbed. Most of the climbing was on snow and ice, but we also established a very nice rock route that ascended perfect cracks in good granite.

During our five-week stay in Tajikistan we didn't have one day of bad weather. Temperatures were quite low, down to -20°C at 5,000m during the night.

The following is a summary of our climbs. The peaks' designated altitudes are taken from a Tajik or Russian map, the most detailed we could find, which can be viewed here: <https://slazav.xyz/maps/>.

- Peak 4,977m, which we named Point Samba and which has a real altitude of around 5,100m: south ridge (250m, much scrambling, with two pitches of French 4, Hofmann-Pietron-Wiele, September 12); west face (250m, six pitches, 6c A0 and some scrambling to the summit, Hofmann-Pietron-Wiele, September 16).
- Peak 5,411m, which we named Farihta (Shugni for "the goddess," 5,437m GPS, 37.85569°N, 72.32767°E): east face (500m, 80°, Baum-Pilarski-Süßmeier, September 17; descent required ten 60m rappels).

- Peak 5,595m, which we named Safed Haikal (Shugni for “White Giant,” 5,498m GPS, 37.85980°N, 72.27740°E): southeast face, a long glacier with a short summit headwall (120m, 60°, Hofmann-Pietron-Pilarski-Süßmeier-Wiele, September 23). This is the highest peak in the valley.
- Peak 5,210m, which we named Azhdar (Shugni for “Dragon Peak,” 5,264m GPS, 37.83476°N, 72.29471°E): north ridge (300m, French 3 60°, Süßmeier-Wiele, September 25). [It was later realized that the 2010 expedition climbed this same peak by the northwest ridge. The 2016 German expedition therefore made the second ascent of the mountain.]

There is more potential in the valley, but we recommend visiting in early summer, when there would still be a fair bit of snow. This advice applies to the entire region, which seems to be suffering significantly from climate change. Although there are many good rock walls up to 300m high, much of the rock is poor and there is considerable stonefall danger.

– Doerte Pietron, German Alpine Club

## Images



The 500m east face of Farihta.



Climbing the east face of Farihta (5,437m GPS).



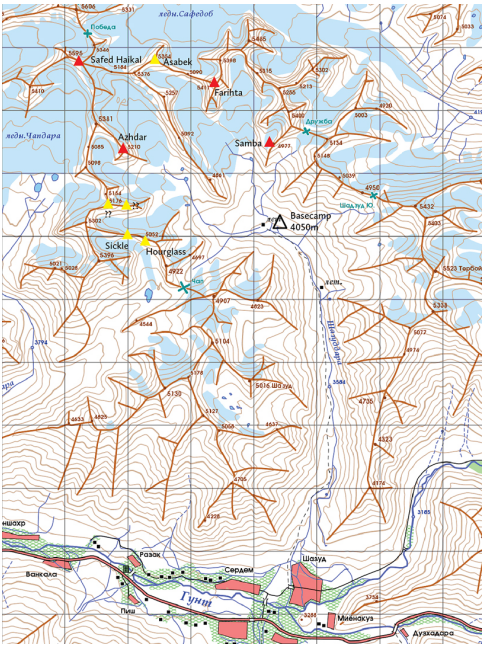
The west face of Point Samba.



On the fine granite of the west face of Point Samba, with the rocky pillars of the southeast face of Farihta behind. The left edge of the icy east face of Farihta, climbed by the German Alpine Club expedition in 2016, is just visible.



On the southeast face of Safed Haikal, with a view south toward the main Ghunt Valley.



Sketch map of the area surrounding the Shadzud Valley, showing the four peaks climbed by the German Alpine Club in 2016 (in red) and some of the peaks summited by the 2010 U.K. expedition (yellow).



Looking northwest to rocky Azhdar (left) and snowy Safed Haikal, the highest peak in the Shadzud Valley. The approximate German route lines (2016) are marked.

## Article Details

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