



Djenghi-Djer: Ascents and Exploration

Kyrgyzstan, Djenghi-Djer

In mid-July, Mark Chonofsky, Sandy Fowler, Sam Newmark, Calum Nicoll, Neil Smith, and I set out for unexplored and poorly documented valleys in the Djenghi-Djer, a subrange between the At Bashi and Borkoldoy. The Dejnghi-Djer, which in Krygyz means "new land," runs about 70km in an east-west direction, with the most prominent peaks clustered at the eastern end. We decided to travel on horseback for speed and flexibility, and to attempt unclimbed peaks at heights of 4,000–4,700m. We were confident that the area would have potential for exciting first ascents, and we weren't disappointed.

After a ride of three days (which would have taken a week on foot with our kit) to the northern valleys, we explored widely, establishing four different base camps, using the horses to move camp every four or five days. Our second camp, at approximately 41°16'23"N, 77°4'36"E, proved to be the best for accessing a range of peaks.

We made five ascents of peaks up to 4,436m, as well as climbing one prominent point. Of the five peaks, we believe four to be first ascents. Two of the peaks gave nice mixed climbs, while three were on rock. Grades ranged from PD to D. The range still offers much potential for ambitious mixed-climbing first ascents in an extremely remote area. The nearest permanently inhabited settlement is 70km away, and we saw no evidence of other humans in most of the range.

On July 21 some of us climbed Pik 4,224m (PD), a little trip uphill from the first base camp to reconnoiter access to other nearby peaks. A cairn was found on the lightly iced summit. On the 23rd, Mark, Sam, and I climbed Mt. Stann Chonofsky (4,412m, PD), a simple climb up steep scree and a small glacier directly to the summit. Also climbed was Pointsystem (4,157m), a prominent rocky pillar directly east of our base camp, offering challenging climbing to a point on the ridge north of Stann Chonofsky. We proceeded up scree and loose rock before gaining the ridge via a short chimney. We crossed several false summits before arriving at the highest point, and descended via a rappel of the east face, then down a scree gully. We named our ascent route Kaleidoscope (D, F4 A0).

On the 26th, Mark, Sam, and I climbed Mt. Тризуб ("Trident," 4,436m GPS, 4,410m map, AD). The route we chose up the north ridge was long, steep, and punishing due to massive scree fields below the snow line. The mountain has a high glacier, but access to this was blocked from our side by vertical rock buttresses. After a very steep scree gully, there were long stretches of névé scattered all the way to the ridge. On reaching the rocky ridge, we climbed past several false summits, the last of which was reminiscent of Skye's Inaccessible Pinnacle, to reach the top.

On the 27th, Neil and I had a big day, making an 18km round trip to a valley west of our third base camp to explore and scramble to two rock summits: An Trus (4,168m, PD-) and Clachan Niall (4,135m, PD-); the latter was the most westerly peak we reached during the expedition and had a good panoramic view, including peaks of diminishing size farther west.

We then moved base camp to this valley and on the 30th attempted Pik 4,370m, which cut quite a nice jagged profile on the horizon. The scree route to reach the plateau, above which the peak rose

sharply, was one of the most laborious we encountered, with abysmal granular rock. Once we reached the snow line it became more interesting, with mixed climbing then continuous 55° névé leading to a rock stack on the summit. The snow became softer and softer, and we eventually retreating around 50m below the top (PD+ to this point).

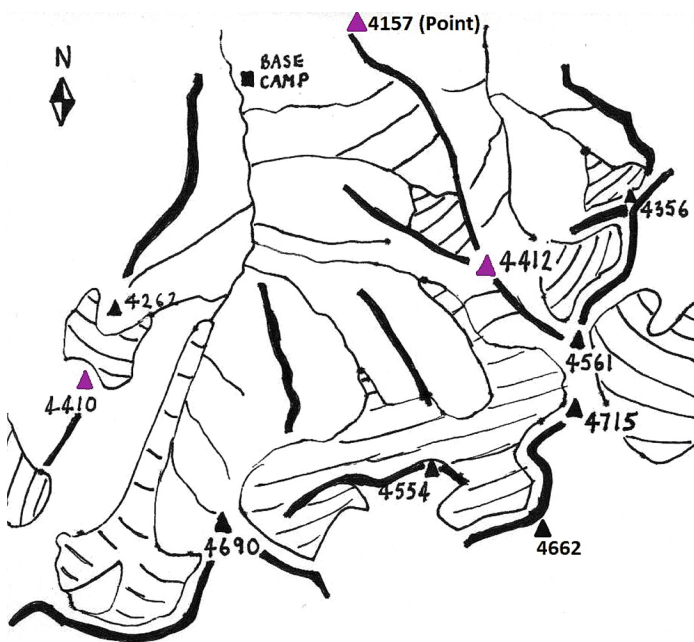
The weather was generally excellent and the terrain was great for riding, which was ideal, as none of us had much riding experience. By the end of the trip we'd certainly learned—although some of this had been the hard way with our highly strung Kyrgyz horses, including a kick to the thigh and a front somersault over the reins and into a river. In general the horses were very beneficial and increased enormously the potential for exploring. There was also a lot of wildlife, including howling wolves, ibex, and many fish that we scooped out of rivers to supplement our rations.

– Struan Chisholm, Alpine Club, U.K.

Images



The final ridge of Pik 4,370m, where the party had to retreat around 50m below the summit. Djenghi-Djer Expedition 2016



Map of the area round the second base camp in the Dejnghi-Djer, at approximately $41^{\circ}16'23''\text{N}$, $77^{\circ}4'36''\text{E}$.



View south from the summit of Stann Chonofsky toward Piks 4,561m (very far left), 4,715m (left of

center), 4,662m (just right of center), and 4,554m (far right), and the moraine below where the 2016 British expedition encountered a pack of wolves.



Mount Тризуб east face (center) from below Mount Stann Chonofsky.



View southeast from the summit of Mount Stann Chonofsky to unclimbed Pik 4,561m.



The north face of unclimbed Pik 4,719m seen from the British expedition's horseback approach to

their fourth base camp.



Unclimbed Pik 4,787m (right) seen from the valley approach to the fourth base camp.

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