



Chaukhi Range, First Complete Traverse, Solo

Georgia, Caucasus, Chaukhi Range

In July 2015, after climbing a new route on Asatiani with Giorgi Tepnadze, I was surprised by a fine morning on July 15 and hurriedly packed a rucksack for a long traverse. (I carried 7mm and 9mm ropes, some gear, a little bit of kitchen and bivouac equipment, and electronics, a total of 14kg).

Using a line I'd climbed a few years previously, I reached the summit of Javakhishvili in less than five hours. I self-belayed a narrow chimney of UIAA IV/IV+. I then traversed to Leonidze (IV+), belaying for a whole rope length, then continued along unknown ground (for me) to Cameron. Next I reached Asatiani, where it began to rain. I looked on the positive side and used it to replenish my water supply. Going down to a col, I built a stone shelter, got inside my bivouac sack, swallowed some awful scrambled egg, and went to sleep. It was a cold night, which got me going at 5 a.m. the following day.

Two-thirds of the remaining traverse of the main Chaukhi peaks was unknown to me, and I had no useful information—this part of the range is wild and remote. Several hours along the crest led to the two summits of Pirosmani (3,858m, high point of the range). Here was a surprise: Between here and Mt. TSU were two summits of which I had not previously been aware. The first was difficult, with a section of 5c, which I back-roped. The way to the second “unknown mountain” proved to be longer, and on top of this I was attacked by a big bird. I rappelled the far side; the rope stuck and it took me some time to sort it out.

I crossed TSU and continued along a beautiful weathered ridge for 1.5km to a peak I had first climbed with my father when I was nine years old. Beyond this, the ridge, although only AD+, was quite dangerous and long. I crossed the summit of Takaishvili and in worsening weather slowly ascended Tikanadze, the last peak of the traverse. Lightning hit the top two minutes after I had left it, and I had an exciting time making a

rapid descent of the classic route. After waiting for the lightning to ease, getting thoroughly wet and frozen, I descended to base camp, where I was able to calm friends who had witnessed the storm. Unfortunately, they told me the dinner they'd prepared had been eaten by cows, so, with nothing else to do, we packed up and descended to the valley by headlamp.

The full traverse, which took 31 hours, crossed 11 summits above 3,500m. I graded it 5B. According to my GPS I had made a vertical gain of 2,300m. Apart from 360m, on which I either self-belayed or rappelled, everything else was free solo. [Editor's note: The author recorded GPS coordinates and elevations of all peaks crossed during this traverse. He has provided a document listing these coordinates that can be [downloaded here](#).]

– Archil Badriashvili

Images



Badriashvili on the last day of the Chaukhi traverse, with bad weather developing.



Partway along the Chaukhi ridge. Peaks in the background were free soloed and had already been crossed by Badriashvili when he took this picture.



Agmashenebeli (left) and on the right the ridge leading to Pirosmani.

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