



## AAC Publications

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### **Deosai Mountains, Peak Nic, Good, No Good**

Pakistan, Karakoram

**After months of waiting—and in the end only four weeks before we were due to leave Italy—Federica Mingolla, Simone Pedferri, and I received a permit to climb in the Kondus Valley.** The idea for this trip had been in my mind for four years, ever since a friend, Natale Villa, showed me a picture of a peak in the valley shaped like a ship's prow. That picture had been taken in 2001, when the Kondus was still open for climbing. Since then the area had been closed due to its proximity to the India-Pakistan conflict.

[Editor's note: The Kondus Glacier and Saltoro Mountains were put off-limits to non-military activities after 9/11. One year earlier, Americans Dave Anderson, Jimmy Chin, Steph Davis, and Brady Robinson gained a special permit to climb above Karmanding, a village at the entrance to the Kondus Valley, completing the first ascent of a prominent buttress they named Tahir Tower (likely the "ship's prow" in Villa's photo). In 2016, after three years of working closely with a former Pakistani soldier who now organizes expedition and trekking logistics, a group of French climbers managed to obtain a permit to climb in the Kondus. Even so, they were stopped at Karmanding due to the onset of a military exercise further up the valley, and were forced to turn their attention to granite spires in the nearby Lachit Valley.]

**We flew to Skardu, and after a long day's drive, negotiating many checkpoints, arrived at Khorkondus village (35°18'12"N, 76°44'40"E), a little beyond Karmanding and one hour's walk below the start of the Sherpi Glacier. There we made a five-star base camp in a small building with adjacent hot springs.**

A reconnaissance showed what appeared to be many exciting possibilities, and we chose a 1,200m rock wall close to base camp as a "warm-up route." However, we soon met unexpected difficulties. Contrary to appearance, the granite was sandy and the cracks choked with vegetation. After 400m we realized there was no chance of success and descended. We tried a shorter line elsewhere, but the result was the same. These walls lie between 4,000m and 5,000m, and we soon realized that every wall and spire in the area had the same rock, except perhaps two higher objectives, finishing at around 6,000m. However, we only had three weeks in Pakistan and these would have needed more time and better acclimatization. [The 2000 American team reported a mix of good and bad rock on Tahir Tower.]

With only 10 days left, we decided to take the risk of moving to a new area: Federica and Simone went to inspect the neighboring Lachit Valley, while I went back to Skardu with our liaison officer to examine a valley I had seen once in a picture.

The Kiris Valley (on some maps the Shigarthang Lungma) lies to the west of the road between Gilgit and Skardu (Indus Valley), a little north of Skardu, and is on the eastern fringes of the Deosai Mountains. There, I saw an interesting south-facing granite wall and we decided to make this our new objective. We may have been the first Westerners to venture into this valley, and certainly the first to climb there. The 800m wall we climbed is situated at 35°19'27"N, 75°19'E, begins at 4,100m, and is composed of three tiers.

We established base camp at 3,700m, and over three days, July 14–16, climbed Good, No Good to the summit, using neither pegs nor bolts for protection or aid. A walk-off ledge above the first pillar allowed us to return to base camp each day. (The route name came from a repeated question by our cook as to whether what we were doing was good or not.) In all, there were 16 pitches with difficulties

to 7b (6b obl) A2. When we arrived at the 4,900m summit, we found it to be a large, grassy plateau, good enough for a picnic. Hence we called the mountain Peak Nic. We descended easily along the west ridge and down a couloir to base camp as our perfect three-day weather window came to an end.

Luca Schiera, Ragni di Lecco, Italy

## Images



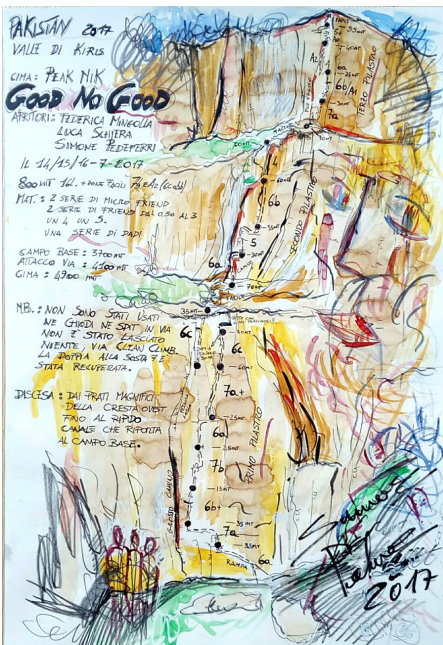
Luca Schiera bridging one of the initial pitches of Good, No Good on Peak Nic in the Kiris Valley, during the first ascent. The ropes had been fixed the day before during the team's first trip up the lower pillar.



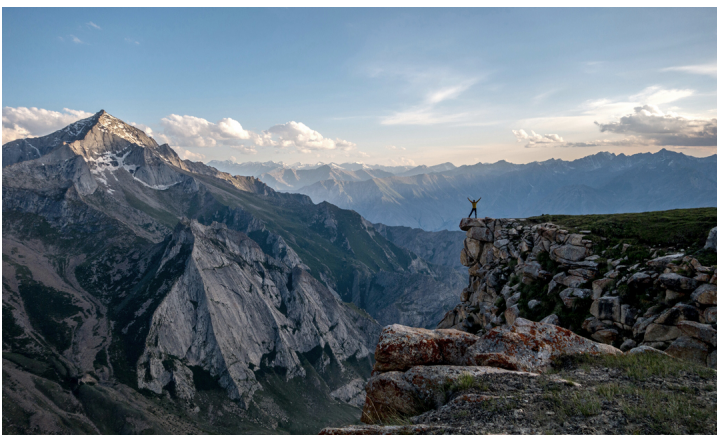
Peak Nic in the Kiris Valley, showing the line of Good, No Good.



Federica Mingolla starting the third pillar of Good, No Good on Peak Nic in the Kiris Valley. This is pitch 13 (of 16 total) and 7a.



The topo for Good, No Good on Peak Nic in the Kiris Valley.



Evening sun and the summit of Peak Nic.



## Article Details

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