



AAC Publications

Pik Chapaev, Saber; Pik Irbis, First Ascent via North Face

Kyrgyzstan, Tien Shan, Tengri Tag

The Khan Tengri base camp (ca 4,000m) on the South Inylchek Glacier is a crossroad of both time and people. Here you can find real characters: from the mountaineering past and future; from Europeans to Africans; from alpine-style athletes to commercial guides. Everyone is flaunting ideas and it is easy to be charged with positive energy. The South Inylchek is still a great place for creativity.

Maria Cardell (Spain), Vera Rogovaya and Vladimir Ryazantsev (Russia), and I arrived here on August 8 after a three-day trek. A few days later we climbed Khan Tengri by the standard route from the South Inylchek. Cardell returned with numb toes but decided to accompany me on a new route up nearby Pik Chapaev (6,372m). Chapaev stands just west of Khan Tengri, and a shoulder of the peak forms part of the normal route up Khan Tengri from the north. There are several routes on Chapaev (some with uncertain lines), but it seemed that a potential route on the left side of the 2,000m south face was still unclimbed.

Maria and I left base camp (ca 4,000m) on the South Inylchek at 3 a.m. on August 25 and climbed through the icefall to a plateau at 4,700m. We stepped onto the west ridge at ca 6,100m and followed it to the summit a little before 3 p.m. on the 27th, having climbed 35 pitches with technical difficulties of IV/4 M4 90°. We descended the same way. We took no tent, made three open bivouacs (in crevasses), and named our route Saber, rating the overall ascent 5A.

We then turned our attention to an unnamed peak of ca 5,350m at 42°6'48.06"N, 80°7'53.45"E. This is a distinct high point midway along the long ridge that runs southwest between Pik Piramida (5,565m) and Pik Parashutny (5,360m) before dropping to the Zvezdochka Glacier. Despite the close proximity to both Khan Tengri and Pobeda, there appeared to be no known previous ascent. Maria had to stay behind with her frostbitten feet, but Vera, Vladimir, and I left early in the morning of September 1, taking only chocolate and a few warm clothes. The north face looked to have maybe 12 to 14 pitches. We left our sacks at the bottom and started to climb. I'd drunk a cup of coffee before leaving and reasoned that I'd get another one back in the warmth and comfort of the tent that evening. This is climbing!

Twelve hours after leaving base camp, our group was not only far from any warmth and comfort, but also far from the summit. After 22 pitches we reached the summit ridge as the sun was setting. There were two tops. We'd arrived near the west top, which we went to first, and then walked along the ridge to the east top, just to make sure we had climbed the highest point. We named the summit Pik Irbis ("snow leopard") and our route Twenty-two Ropes. We rappelled our line of ascent and returned to base camp 29 hours after leaving, greeted near camp by Maria with sweets and a flask of tea, our first liquid since setting out. This is training!

– Denis Urubko, Russia and Poland

Images



The new route Saber on the south face of Pik Chapaev (6,372m). Bivouac sites are marked (the upper site was used on both the ascent and descent of the route). Other routes on this face are not shown.



The north face of Pik Irbis (ca 5,350m) and the line of Twenty-two Ropes. Both the east and west tops were reached—possibly the first ascent of the peak.

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