



## **Laylak Valley, Pik Alexander Blok, West Face, Summer Bouquet**

Kyrgyzstan, Pamir Alai

**Martin Grajciar, Ondrej Huserka, Jozef Kristoffy, and I (Slovakia) spent seven weeks in Kyrgyzstan, from July 27–September 10, with the aim of making a new route on the west face of Pik Alexander Blok (5,239m).**

After travel by minivan from Osh to Uzgurush, we transported 500kg by horses and donkeys to the moraine of the Ak-su Glacier. Over the next few days of poor, windy weather, we carried gear up the Aktjubek Glacier to beneath the west face. On August 6, having identified an unclimbed line on the right side of the face, we fixed rope up four pitches of 60° ice. Two days later we added another 70° pitch to reach the base of the wall, where we climbed the first rock pitch at UIAA VIII. Bad weather continued over the next few days, but we continued up the overhanging wall, using a mixture of free and aid, to establish a portaledge camp at the top of pitch seven. Temperatures were consistently low—rarely above freezing during the day and -10°C at night.

By August 24 we had reached a point close to the summit ridge and decided to push for the top next day. On the 25th, after reascending the ropes to our high point, we took an hour to complete one more pitch. We then traversed 30m left to join the Gunko Route and followed this for 80m in a snow couloir (55°) toward the ridge. Before reaching the crest we were hit by a thunderstorm, forcing us to sit it out in the couloir for around half an hour. Finally, at 6 p.m. we were all on the summit.

Over the next three days we free climbed all the aid pitches. The hardest, pitch 13 (50m), was at around 5,000m and was led by Jozef at IX+ (5.13a/b). It features a bouldery start past four bolts, followed by hard slab climbing to an overhang. Jozef felt he was lucky to do this in a short weather window when the sun was shining for half an hour.

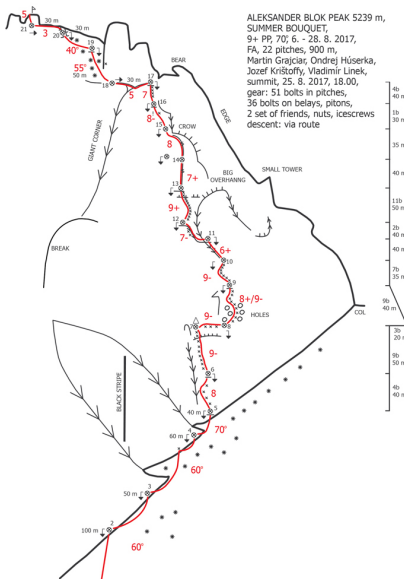
We spent from August 6–28 establishing the route, during which we only had one complete day of fine weather. Summer Bouquet (900m, 22 pitches, IX+ 70°, 51 protection bolts, 36 on belays) is probably the hardest free line in the area.

Vladimir Linek, JAMES, Slovakia

# Images



The west face of Alexander Blok, showing the line of Summer Bouquet. Below and to the right is the 2017 line of Alexandra Supernova on Pik 4,800m.



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Martin Grajciar at the portaledge camp with the glacier approach below.



Portaledge camp on the west face of Alexander Blok seen from partway up pitch eight.





Jozef Kristoffy on the crux pitch (IX+) of Summer Bouquet, west face of Pik Alexander Blok.



Vladimir Linek, belayed by Ondrej Huserka, prepares pitch eight on Summer Bouquet.



Ondrej Huserka on the sixth pitch (VII) of Summer Bouquet, west face of Alexander Blok.

## Article Details

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