



## AAC Publications

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### **Pik Ushat, North Face, and Other Ascents**

Kyrgyzstan, Tien Shan, Ushat-too

**James Bailie, Alistair Bell, Vasili Trigas, and I left Bishkek for Karakol on August 14, ultimately heading for the Ushat-too, south of the town of Inylchek (Engilchek). The Maida Adyr Base Camp for the Inylchek Glacier is a little to the east of this town, and the standard Khan Tengri base camp on the South Inylchek Glacier is another ca 80km beyond. Research revealed that the German explorer Gottfried Merzbacher had visited the Ushat Range in 1902, but there appears to be no record of anyone ever climbing there.**

We traveled to Inylchek by truck and then left town on the 16th, after arranging horses. We followed the Sarydjaz River valley on abandoned Soviet roads until about 2.5km from the entrance to the Taldybulak Valley, which flows west from the Ushat mountains. Here, a cable got us to the other side of the river, and then we proceeded on foot. (There are several cables across the Sarydjaz that should allow access to the Taldybulak Valley without having to cross any tributaries. In the valley itself a small track is used by locals but requires crossing the river on several occasions. If the state of the river makes this too dangerous, bluffs and scree slopes above would make trekking into the valley more difficult. However, with the proximity of Maida Adyr camp, it should be possible to get an inexpensive helicopter ride into the valley.)

After several days of load carrying and exploration we established base camp on grass-covered drumlins at nearly 3,500m (41°54'21.63"N, 79°9'31.65"E). The weather was generally benign throughout our stay—sunny days with only a few periods of sustained rain. Glaciers were dry and allowed easy access to peaks from base camp.

We made the first ascent of Pik Ushat (41°55'27.13"N, 79°13'18.71"E GPS, 41°55'30.70"N, 79°13'10.28"E Google Earth), the highest in the range, from the north tributary of the Taldybulak Glacier. We climbed easy snow slopes to the base of the north face, where several pitches of moderate ice led to the top section of the west ridge, which we simul-climbed to the summit (500m, AD/D). Depending on which Soviet map you use, Ushat is either 5,042m or 5,142m. Our GPS read 5,071m.

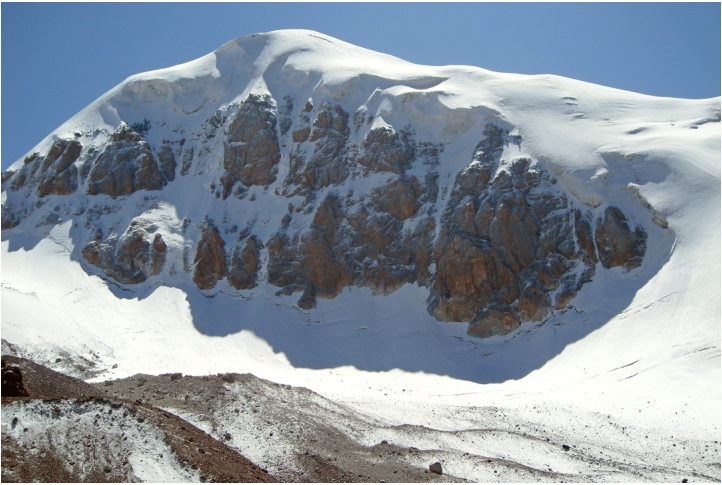
We next made an attempt on Pik 4,642m (41°53'12.22"N, 79°10'43.15"E; the higher summit just east is 4,680m), a picturesque mountain above a high cirque guarded by an icefall. Despite our best efforts, we were turned back by the complex terrain of the icefall, though we feel it should be possible to find a way through with more exploration. James and Vasili then made the first ascent of a peak of around 4,600m (41°55'34.54"N, 79°9'53.65"E) visible to the north of base camp. Because of its distinct mottled appearance, we nicknamed this mountain "the Beehive." The pair climbed the south face (600m, 5.9 A0) on passable rock interspersed with the occasional steep scree ledge.

The area has plenty of potential. Given the ambiguities of the Soviet maps, unclimbed Pik 5,140m to the southwest of Pik Ushat might be the highest in the range; when looking from the summit of Ushat at Pik 5,140m, we could not be certain which peak was higher. Its north face offers 500m of steep rock and ice. Also steep, with many lines of varying difficulty, is the north face of Pik 4,775m, west of Ushat. There are also some good lines on the peaks at the head of the north tributary of the Taldybulak Glacier. Our expedition was supported by a grant from the Expedition Fund of the Australian National University Mountaineering Club.

– Daniel Comber-Todd, Australia

**Editor's Note:** The AAJ later learned of at least two prior ascents of Pik Ushat. See the story in AAJ 2020 for details.

## Images



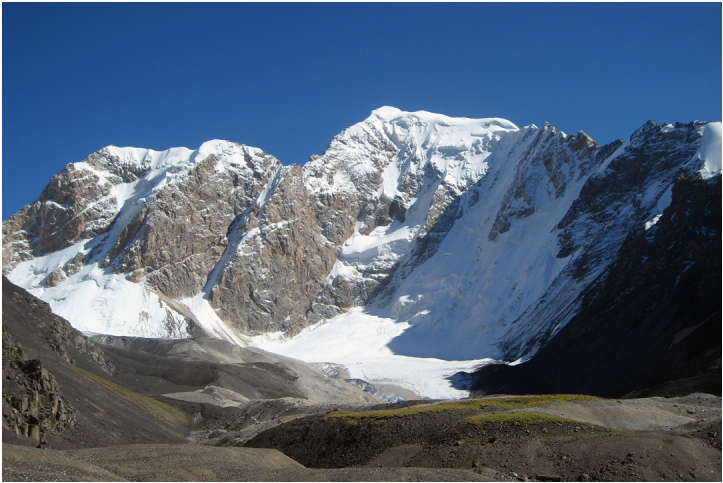
The north face of unclimbed Pik 4,775m, west of Pik Ushak.



Pik 4,642m from the north, showing the icefall that thwarted the 2018 attempt.



Unclimbed Pik 5,140m seen from the summit of Ushat. The climbers were unable to determine which peak is higher and thus which is the highest in this range. Mountains in the distance are in the Djangart Range.



The north side of unclimbed Pik 5,140m, southwest of Pik Ushak.



The southeast face of Pik ca 4,600m (main summit behind), seen from an attempt on Pik 4,642m.



On the summit ridge of Pik Ushak after ascending the north face.



Pik Ushat and the route of ascent on the north face.



The Ushat-too from the northwest. (A) Pik Ushat. (B) Pik 4,475m. (C) Pik 4,642m. (D) Pik ca 4,600m. (BC) 2018 base camp.



First climbs of Ushat-too

## Article Details

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