



## AAC Publications

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### **Jiptik Valley, Pik 4,482m, West Face; Red Labyrinth, West-Northwest Ridge** Kyrgyzstan, Pamir Alai

Looking south up the Jiptik Valley before and after a major snowfall. The highest summit (at the back) is Pik Schurosky (5,490m). To its right is Muz Tok (5,066m), the expedition's goal before the snow put an end to attempts.

**In May and June, Rainhard Fuchs, Lisa Kranebitter, Christian Poglitsch, Nina Poxleitner, and I visited the Jiptik Valley, hoping to try the virgin northwest face of Muz Tok (5,066m),** previously attempted in July 2016 by John Proctor and Robert Taylor (AAJ 2017). We established base camp at 3,350m, below the Schurovsky Glacier, after a three-day trek from the last shepherds' settlement of Sary Zhaz. There were no political problems gaining access—in fact the military was pleasantly interested in what we were doing and where we lived.

Unfortunately, heavy snowfall a few days before our planned attempt on Muz Tok, combined with high temperatures during our stay, caused falling rock and ice and avalanches, and at 3 a.m. we were still breaking through a thin, hard crust on the glacier at 4,000m, turning what would normally be a three-hour approach into an eight-hour, hip-deep ordeal. These conditions made the northwest face of the mountain impractical for us in the time we had available.

Prior to the snowfall, we climbed Pik 4,482m (39°41'54.29"N, 70°36'0.59"E on Google Earth, named Piramida on OpenStreetMap). There were no major difficulties on the climb, with superb conditions at the time. We climbed the west face (AD-, 60°) to reach the northern and highest of the two summit rock towers.

Later we focused on Pik 4,690m, which we named Kyzyl Labyrinth (39°41'17.16"N, 70°36'18.04"E on Google Earth) due to its majestic southwest face of red rock and a myriad of narrow snow and ice gullies. We made a relatively straightforward three-hour approach to the saddle between the mountain and Pik Kiroksan, and then followed the east-southeast ridge to the summit (AD+). There were many ups and downs and large cornices on the ridge, and it took five hours to complete; for most of the journey we were unsure we would reach the top. We were lucky, too, on the descent, given a collapsing cornice and avalanche during the afternoon.

We also attempted a peak near base camp on the west side of the valley, with a fine icy gully (two pitches of approximately WI3 and 4+/5). Icefall early in the day, as well as hip-deep snow, forced a retreat.

– Philip Schreiner, Austria

## Images



Looking south up the Jiptik Valley after the big snowfall that put an end to the expedition's plans to attempt Muz Tok.



Looking south up the Jiptik Valley before the big snowfall mentioned in the report. The highest summit (at the back) is Pik Schurosky (5,490m). To its right is Muz Tok (5,066m).



Looking east to south during the approach into the Jiptik Valley. Kyzyl Labyrinth is the summit furthest left, the approach to its east-southeast ridge taking the side valley above the greenery. In the center distance are the high peaks at the head of the valley; the highest, the white snow pyramid, is Pik Schurosky (5,490m and actually just south of the watershed).



During the ascent of the east-southeast ridge of Kyzyl Labyrinth (Pik 4,690m). The big peak on the right is Pik Skalistiy (5,621m), while the fine pyramid to the left is Pik Boets (5,398m).

## Article Details

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