



AAC Publications

Bel Uluu Valley, Pik Espérance, Northeast Spur to Summit Ridge

Kyrgyzstan, Pamir, Zaalayskiy (Trans Alai) Range

In September, Nikolay Totmianin (sometimes spelled Totmjanin or Totmyanin), a climber and guide from Russia, and I explored the Bel Uluu Glacier in the western part of the Trans Alai. We had previously visited the eastern section of the same range (AAJ 2015).

The Bel Uluu Valley flows east into the Altyn Daria Valley, which rises to the south for 50km to the border with Tajikistan. On the far side lies the great Fedchenko Glacier. I could find no information describing previous exploration. However, I had discovered the Altyn Daria Valley one year previously in a book by the Frenchman Jacques Vernet (*Nos Amies les Cimes*), who visited in 1969 during an international expedition to Pik Lenin: "...The Altyn Daria is beautiful, fiercely beautiful, in its nakedness. Magnificent peaks are seen both left and right, rising to 5,000m." Vladimir Komissarov's authoritative *Mountaineering Regions of Kyrgyzstan* speaks of the area as terra incognita.

From Osh we traveled to the village of Daroot Korgon and then made a tentative probe south in our vehicle, passing a frontier post, until after three hours we reached the confluence of the Altyn Daria and Bel Uluu rivers. We were reassured to have made it so far without problems. From here we moved into the Bel Uluu and made our final base camp at 3,300m, after two military personnel asked us to move from our first location. A little later we established a high camp at 4,420m, a 6km walk from base camp, at first through meadows to around 4,000m and then boulder fields.

From this camp we reached the Bel Uluu Glacier, 3km in length and around 700m wide. There were few crevasses, and the glacier is definitely receding. We were flanked by virgin 4,000m and 5,000m peaks, but disappointingly the conditions were poor at the end of summer. Via a long and horrible boulder and scree slope, we reached 5,100m on a 5,284m peak (39°16'53.96"N, 72°10'47.83"E), from which we had a good overview of our surroundings.

Next day we wanted to climb Pik 5,080m by a steep couloir, but the ice was too thin and black. Instead we almost climbed Peak 4,782m (39°16'20.30"N, 72°12'3.84"E), following a northeast-facing spur of hard ice to the rocky east ridge, where we stopped on a foresummit. The 50m continuation to the main summit was rotten and uninspiring, so we reversed our route of ascent (D/D+, 60°). We named the peak Espérance after a two-year old French girl, whose family I know and who suffers from the rare and serious syndrome arthrogyposis.

– Henry Bizot, France

Images



Looking southeast from the flanks of Pik 5,284m to Pik 5,080m. Pik Espérance is the small rocky summit toward the left edge of the image, with the icy northeast spur falling to the left.



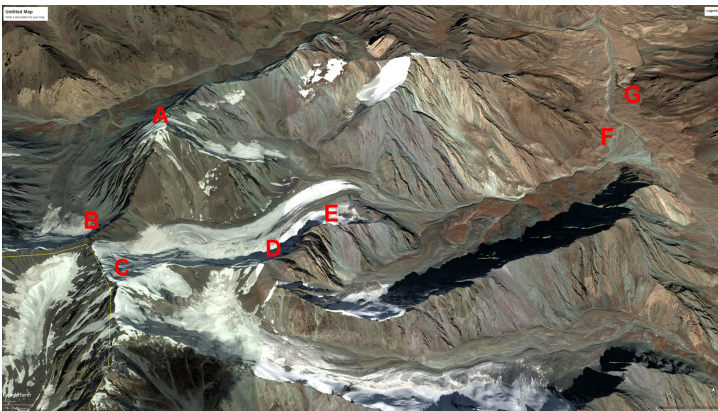
Pik Espérance (4,782m) from the northwest. The route of ascent to a high point (marked) on the summit ridge, about 50m from the highest point of the mountain, followed the steep icy spur falling left. The ridgeline to the right continues southwest toward Pik 5,080m.



The icy northeast spur (more or less on the right skyline) of Pik Espérance.



Looking up the Bel Uluu Valley toward the east flank of unclimbed Pik 5,080m.



(A) Pik 5,284m. (B) Pik 5,065m. (C) Pik 5,402m. (D) Pik 5,080m. (E) Pik Espérance (4,782m). (F) Base camp. (G) Altyn Daria Valley.



Henry Bizot on the northeast spur of Pik Espérance, with the Bel Uluu Glacier below.

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