



AAC Publications

Badakhshan National Park, Lake Yashilkul Region, Various Ascents

Tajikistan, Pamir

Looking south from Pik Wolfi. (1) Northwest face of Pik Elo. (2) Northeast flank of Gora Riri. (A) Peak of about 5,450m. (B) Pik Anto (southeast flank, climbed in 2019, not visible). Marc Andri Riedi

In late June we flew from Switzerland to Osh, a lively town in southern Kyrgyzstan that provides the most convenient starting point for trips to the eastern Pamir. Two days on the Pamir Highway brought us to the village of Murghab, Tajikistan, from which another four hours saw us to the Yashilkul Dam. From here, two friendly local men and their donkeys helped us carry our gear and supplies in a single long day to a base camp at 4,235m. One of us had discovered this place on a previous hiking traverse of the area, and according to our contact from the Pamir Alpine Club, it had never been visited before by mountaineers.

The region is generally very dry during summer, with only sparse vegetation along the streams that are fed by glaciers. Accordingly, agricultural use and human presence is limited: Only a few yaks and their herders visit the valleys once in a while. Needless to say, this remoteness makes proper planning essential—and provides a marvelous playground for adventure.

After acclimatizing around base camp, we started to explore the surrounding peaks. The rock consists of some sort of gneiss that is generally OK for climbing and takes mostly medium-size cams and pitons. At the time of our expedition, there was still plenty of snow and névé above base camp. This allowed us to move efficiently in the cold morning hours, but often made for challenging conditions and even some spontaneous avalanches later in the day. In total, we managed to summit four major peaks over the course of two weeks. We climbed all of them as day trips from base camp, after we had scouted the approaches and established gear caches at the foot of the climbs.

Southeast face of Pik Anto (5,343m, AD+, 50°, one pitch of IV). Photo by Moritz Waelde
Three of the peaks required rappelling from the top, and since we didn't find anchors (or any other signs of previous attempts), we strongly believe they had never been climbed. We named them Pik Elo (4,872m, 37.89205°N, 72.68248°E), Pik Anto (5,343m, 37.90976°N, 72.65083°E), and Pik Wolfi (5,104m, 37.92598°N, 72.68853°E)—the latter two in memory of our missing friends Angi, Tobi, and Wolfi.

All three climbs made use of snow couloirs (up to 50°) that led to rocky sections, with the last two or three pitches to the tops being a bit more technical (AD with rock/mixed climbing up to UIAA IV). We left small aluminum containers with a short message on these summits and rappel anchors on the descents.

The fourth peak we called Gora Riri (5,291m, 37.87541°N, 72.66000°E). It is a long but rather easy glacier/snow hike all the way to the top, and although we didn't find any sign of previous ascents, we cannot exclude the possibility that it had been climbed in the past.

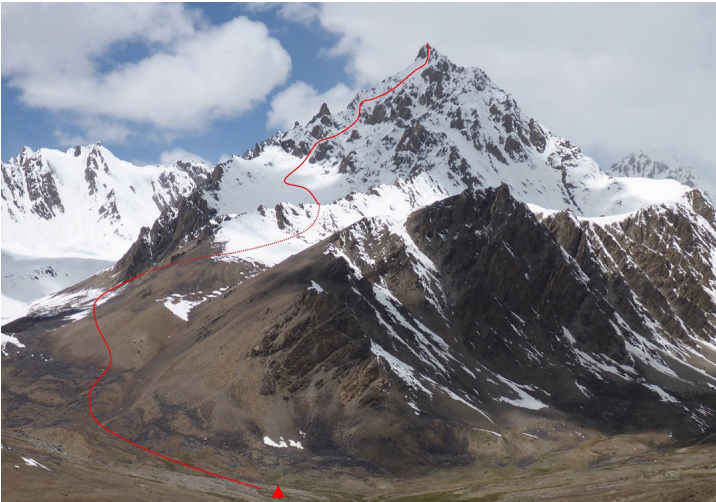
The climate here can be pretty harsh, with cold nights, high solar irradiation during the day, and strong, dry winds. Nevertheless, we recommend the region to climbers. Most peaks are still unclimbed, and they provide plenty of possibilities, with a wide variety of styles and difficulties. And even though the area could be considered very remote (we witnessed no signs of civilization during our stay, not even airplanes), access is still relatively fast and convenient, thanks to the Pamir Highway.

– **Marc Andri Riedi and Moritz Waelde**, Switzerland

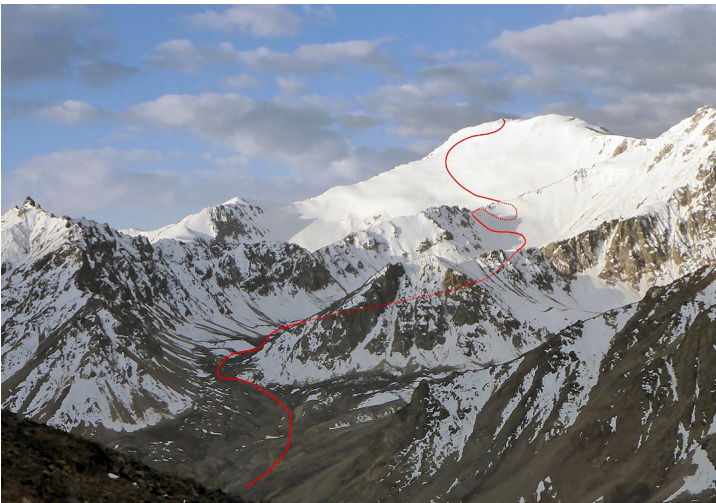
Images



The northwest face of Pik Elo (4,872m, AD+, 45°, two pitches of IV). Moritz Waelde



Southeast face of Pik Anto (5,343m, AD+, 50°, one pitch of IV).



Northeast flank of Gora Riri (5,291m, PD, 40° and a little scrambling).



Southwest face of Pik Wolfi (AD, 40°, one pitch of mixed/IV).



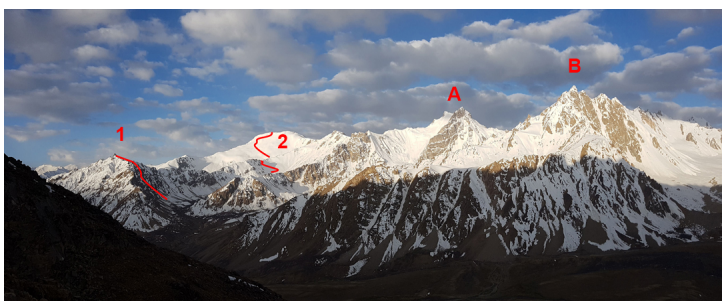
The last pitch on the southeast face of Pik Anto.



On the summit of Gora Riri, with Pik Anto visible in left background. The high peak distant right is likely to be Gora Kulin (5,931m).



Halfway up the southwest face of Pik Wolfi.



Looking south from Pik Wolfi. (1) Northwest face of Pik Elo. (2) Northeast flank of Gora Riri. (A) Peak of about 5,450m. (B) Pik Anto (southeast flank, climbed in 2019, not visible).

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