



AAC Publications

Minteke Valley: Achu, South Face, and Other Ascents

Kyrgyzstan, Pamir Alai

Pik Minteke (5,482m). The Swiss route of ascent followed the right skyline—the northwest ridge. Photo by Silvan Schüpbach

A group of seven Swiss female alpinists (Anne Flechsig, Florence Nikles, Lisa Pfalgraz, Rahel Schönauer, Ramona Volken, Caroline Ware George, and I) accompanied by Swiss Alpine Club coordinator Silvan Schüpbach, cameraman Thomas Senf, and his safety officer, Martin Rerrer, climbed in the Minteke Valley during September. The Minteke is the next valley west of the Jiptek Valley, and we found very little information on the area in English. Although most of the peaks have been climbed in the past, it was difficult to know by which routes.

We established base camp (ca 3,145m) in the east branch of the valley at 39°40'8.7276"N, 70°28'46.0128"E, and from there climbed Kyzyl-Muz, Pik 3, and Pik Minteke, and opened a new traditionally protected rock route on Achu.

Our first summit, which also acted as an acclimatization ascent, was Kyzyl-Muz (5,127m, formerly known as Harturtay, 39°40'39.9036"N, 70°31'38.2512"E). We climbed a couloir starting at 39°40'40.45"N, 70°28'25.85"E to a plateau at 4,200m, where we camped. Next day we reached the east ridge of Kyzyl-Muz, followed it over rock and ice to the summit, and descended the same way. All expedition members reached the top. This peak was first climbed by non-Soviets in 1996 and almost summited again from the north 12 years later (see AAJ 1997 and 2009).

All the group then climbed Pik Minteke (5,482m, 39°35'0.8196"N, 70°27' 51.4398"E) at the head of the Kara Tur, the right branch of the Minteke Valley. We climbed the northwest ridge (mainly rock and ice) in a four-day round trip from base camp.

Anne, Ramona, Thomas, and Martin then left to climb Pik 3 (5,070m, 39°37'44.00"N, 70°30'24.68"E), which they achieved via the northeast spur and northwest ridge (rock and ice) in a two-day round trip from base. In the meantime, Caroline, Florence, Rahel, and I climbed a new rock route on the south face of Achu (4,300m, 39°38'52.05"N, 70°32'23.02"E), a western outlier of Pik 4,708m, as shown on the Soviet military map. We named the route Djöruk sol jak (350m, TD- 6c) and climbed it in seven pitches: 45m 5c, 55m 6c, 60m 5c+, 50m, 5c, then two long easier pitches to the east ridge, and a final pitch along the crest to the summit.

There is still much potential in this valley for new routes. During our stay we had no precipitation, the temperature was optimal, ice conditions were good, and there was little rockfall.

– Lydiane Vikol, Switzerland

Images



The south face of Achu and line of Djöruk sol jak (350m, TD- 6c).



Pik Minteke (5,482m). The Swiss route of ascent followed the right skyline—the northwest ridge.



The northeast spur (facing camera, right of center), leading to the northwest ridge of Pik 3 (5,070m). The highest summit is just left of center.



Looking southwest at Pik 3 (5,070m, the right-hand of the two pointed peaks) from the glacier below Achu. The route of ascent more or less followed the right skyline: the northeast spur to the northwest ridge.



Spectacular "Pik Stalin" above the head of the left branch of the Minteke Glacier, as seen from Kyzyl-Muz to the north. This peak lies at $39^{\circ}37'24.14''\text{N}$, $70^{\circ}32'2.74''\text{E}$ and is approximately 5,190m. It likely has been climbed, but it's history is not known; this name was the one used by a local shepherd visiting the Swiss base camp, and the peak may have another name.

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