



Muchu Chhish, Attempts via South Ridge of Batura VI

Pakistan, Karakoram, Batura Muztagh

The Batura massif from the south. (G) is unclimbed Muchu Chhish (7,453 meters). See below for the complete caption. Photo by Jon Bowles Photography.

Despite very few foreign expeditions reaching the Karakoram in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions, two teams headed for Muchu Chhish (7,453m), generally considered to be the second-highest unclimbed peak in the world—and the highest for which it is possible to obtain a permit. (The highest unclimbed summit is Gangkar Punsum, 7,570m, in the Bhutan Himalaya.) Muchu Chhish lies almost 2km east along the main watershed (the Batura Wall) from Batura VI, in the direction of Pasu Sar (7,478m).

All attempts to climb the mountain have followed a prominent ridge that extends to the south from the Batura Wall. This was the route followed in 1983 by a Polish-German team led by Wladyslw Wisz that made the first ascents of Batura V (7,531m) and Batura VI (7,462m), the two most easterly summits of the Batura Group (not Batura IV, as reported in AAJ 1984). The objective of Muchu Chhish suitors has been to repeat the 1983 route to the top of the Batura Wall and then make the committing ridge traverse to the east, all of it above 7,200m.

The first expedition in 2020 to arrive at base camp on the Muchuhar Glacier was a three-member team from the Czech Republic: Pavel Ben (a former mayor of Prague and member of the Czech parliament), Jiri Janak, and Pavel Korinek. The trio was not able to enter the area until late August. In the past this would have been considered the end of the climbing season in this area, but climate change has pushed the season later: In 2019, members of this team had inspected the approach and enjoyed almost three weeks of perfect weather during September.

The lower south ridge of Batura VI is very sharp, necessitating a long traverse across its west flank. The Czechs did this from their Camp 2 at 5,300m, reached via 60+° mixed terrain. They traversed about 100m below the crest across 50–70° ice and snow, before climbing up to the ridgeline (80°) at 6,400m. This was a 12-hour endurance test on front points. After two nights here in snowfall, the team retreated. Lack of acclimatization had led to slow progress (the team felt it was hard to acclimatize to any meaningful height in the Muchuhar valley), the high campsite was poor, and the weather was unsettled. They left base camp on September 7.

Two days later, Philipp Brugger (Austria) and Jordi Tosas (Spain) arrived. These two spent much of September acclimatizing and inspecting the route. On the 28th, Tosas left base camp at 4,000m, picked up Brugger, who had been staying at 5,000m, and progressed to 5,800m, at which point Brugger decided not to go any higher. Both descended to base camp, and the next day Tosas headed back up alone, carrying skis. He reached more than 6,900m on the ridge but decided the avalanche risk would be extremely high on the slopes above. He stepped into his skis and descended all the way to the glacier, in ideal skiing conditions and great weather.

In 1999, Luis Lopez's six-man Spanish team established three camps on the south ridge and reached a height of 6,650m, then abandoned the mountain in poor weather. In 2014, Phil De-Beger, Tim Oakes, and Peter Thompson attempted the same line in alpine style. They found hard ice in the lower section, making progress too slow to complete the route in a lightweight style, and retreated from 6,000m (AAJ 2015).

– **Lindsay Griffin**, with information from Jordi Tosas, Spain

Images



The south side of the Batura Massif. (A) Batura IV (7,594m). (B) Batura III (7,729m). (C) Batura II (7,762m). (D) Batura I (7,785m). (E) Batura V (7,531m). (F) Batura VI (7,462). (G) Muchu Chhish (7,453). (H) Pasu Sar (7,478m). The route line shows the unrepeated 1983 Polish-German route to Batura V and VI via the south ridge, attempted by 2020 teams as a way to reach unclimbed Muchu Chhish (G).

Article Details

Author	Lindsay Griffin
Publication	AAJ
Volume	63
Issue	95
Page	179
Copyright Date	2021
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions