



AAC Publications

Pregar, South Face

Pakistan, Karakoram, Ghujerab Mountains, Karun Koh Subgroup

In July, a team of three Chamonix-based alpinists—Bruno Dupety (France), Giovanni Rossi (Italy), and I (U.K.)—made the first ascent of Pregar (6,185m GPS, 36°36′35.13″N, 75°1′50.74″E) in the Morkhun Valley. We chose the area due to its relatively quick and simple access, given our time window of three weeks, and good background information from several expeditions to the area between 1984 and 2016.

From Morkhun, we trekked two days through a spectacular gorge to a base camp at 4,000m. This was located on beautiful turf with a spring-fed stream at the entrance to a side valley leading to the north side of Zartgarbin (ca 5,850m). We arrived on July 5.

Three possible unclimbed objectives—Jur Jur Khona Sar (6,055m), Zartgarbin, and Pregar II (ca 6,000m)—were discounted for various reasons; the obvious and highly attractive line up Pregar II was an avalanche trap in the prevailing conditions. We set sights on Pregar and established advanced base camp on the north bank of the Morkhun Glacier at 4,900m, directly below the south face.

We set off from there on our summit attempt at 4 a.m. on July 17. In 2016, Peter Thompson (U.K.) had made a solo attempt, reaching a point about two rope lengths from the summit, and he had kindly shared photos and information (AAJ 2017). We chose a route starting farther left, which involved five rope lengths in an atmospheric, canyon-sided couloir to reach a long glacial shelf, a serac barrier (turned on the south side), and a final 10 rope lengths up an icefield to the summit block. The final pitches sported insecure snow undercut by cornices and were poorly protected with horizontal stakes buried deeply. Given the length and prevailing conditions, AD would seem about right.

The top of the mountain has a double summit, the slightly higher one, in good mountaineering fashion, being hidden until the last moment. We reached it at approximately 1:30 p.m. Doug Scott used to say it was respectful of the sacred nature of mountains to stop just below the top, at a point where the climber can see over the highest point. That is what we did.

The descent was prolonged by fast-deteriorating snow conditions. We made 10 rappels to where the crisp surfaces of the glacial shelf and serac barrier had now become thigh-deep porridge, producing conditions that were simultaneously tiring and hazardous. The access couloir was rappelled in deteriorating conditions, small streams of water flowing where there had been early morning ice. The descent took as long as the ascent, and we only regained our tents at 11 p.m. The next two days it rained constantly, and on the 20th we walked out.

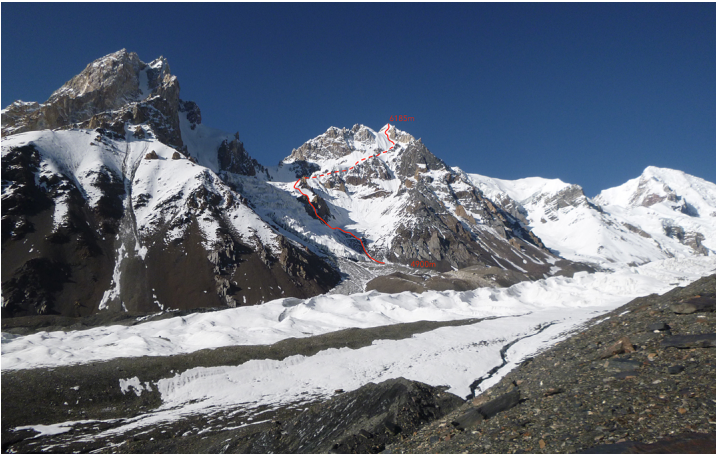
We received regular weather forecasts on an inReach communicator from weather4expeditions.com. These proved very useful. The local population in Hunza was highly COVID-19 aware, and masks were worn in all public spaces. Our two base camp staff were vaccinated, and on the trek the porters kept social distance from us. Altogether, we were generally impressed by the level of COVID-19 compliance in rural Pakistan.

— Victor Saunders, France

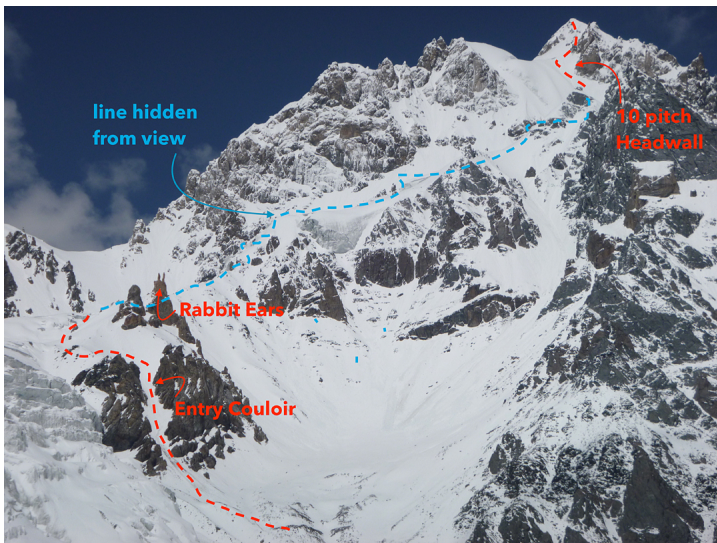
Earlier Ascents Near Pregar: In 1984, an Austrian expedition made the first ascent of Karun Koh

(variously 7,164m or 6,977m) via the west-southwest ridge. In their report (AAJ 1985), they mention climbing a 6,200m peak west of Karun Koh. In his own AAJ report about the 2016 attempt on Pregar, Peter Thompson speculated the Austrian 6,200m peak probably was Pregar, which was not a name used on maps at the time. However, the Austrian leader, Harry Gru n, has confirmed they climbed two peaks of more than 6,000m, but that these were small, snowy tops on the long ridge connecting Pregar and Karun Koh, easily accessible from the upper Morkhun Glacier (most probably those marked 6,040m and ca 6,000m on the Jerzy Wala map). See the media gallery below for a photo showing the two peaks climbed in 1984.

Images



The route of ascent from the 4,900m advanced base to the summit of Pregar. In 2016, a solo attempt nearly reached the summit via a different line, starting far to the right but finishing up the same headwall. On the left is unclimbed Pregar II.



The main part of the first-ascent route on Pregar.



Near the top of the south face of Pregar. The flat-topped rocky peak on the right is unclimbed Pregar II. Across the glacier on the left are peaks of the Tupopdan Group, while in the distance are the high, triangular summit of Shispare and the Passu peaks to the right.



Looking southwest from Pregar to Tupopdan (6,106m, pointed snow summit on left) and, to the right, Jur Jur Khona Sar.



Karun Koh (ca 7,000m) seen from the top of Pregar. The two snow summits climbed during the 1984 Austrian expedition, which made the first and only ascent of Karun Koh, are the foreground peak and

a smaller top further along the ridge.



Looking south from the slopes of Pregar to (A) Trivor (7,720m), (B) the three Lupghar summits (7,200m), and (C) Diran (7,266m). The prominent north ridge of Diran, facing the camera, had its second alpine-style ascent in 2021 by a three-man French team. The large snowy peak nearer to the camera and between A and B is Dut Sar (6,858m).



This image, taken from approximately 6,100m on the west-southwest ridge of Karun Koh during the 1984 first ascent, shows the two snow summits (X) climbed by the expedition. The peak outlined with a dotted line is Pregar.

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