



AAC Publications

Kuilu Range, Pik 4,788m (Perseverance Peak)

Kyrgyzstan, Tien Shan

The Kuilu (Kuylyu) is a seldom-visited range south of the Terskey Ala-Too, with abundant unclimbed 4,000m peaks offering plenty of opportunity for exploratory mountaineering at a reasonable technical difficulty. Bound to the north by the Kuilu River and to the south by the Uchkul River, the range stretches for nearly 50km with a northeastern orientation. The highest point is Pik Constitucia (5,281m), first climbed in 1937 by Soviet mountaineer I. Cherepov. The Alpine Club Kyrgyzstan Expedition 2021, postponed from 2020 due to the global pandemic, departed the U.K., bound for the Kuilu Range, on July 31. The team was Sam Davis, Tom Davis-Merry, Sam Mace, Alex Metcalfe, and Tom Simpson.

Despite months of detailed planning, travel uncertainty due to the Covid-19 pandemic meant funding from the Mount Everest Foundation and Alpine Club Climbing Fund couldn't be released until just days before the expedition flew out, and clothing support generously provided by Montane arrived with just hours to spare. Davis-Merry and Simpson then missed their flights to Bishkek when their fit-to-fly COVID test results got lost by the laboratory courier, and they had to fly the following day.

From Bishkek, the group took three days to travel overland to the Kuilu and establish base camp at the confluence of the Bardytor and Kuilu rivers at 3,100m. Ferrying loads, they then established an advanced base camp on the East Bordlu Glacier at 4,050m. [This glacier lies in the valley branching southeast from the main Bardytor drainage.] While hauling loads, Sam Mace developed an infection, and after returning to base camp to recover, the decision was made to evacuate him by helicopter. He underwent minor surgery in Kyrgyzstan before flying back to the U.K.

Returning to ABC the following day, the remaining team of four prepared to start climbing and exploring the glacier. On August 13, in stable weather, the remaining four members of the expedition summited Pik 4,788m (42°5'46.56"N, 78°50'10.28"E), on the east side of the glacier, via its west flank and the broad northern summit ridge. From the glacier, the route is approximately 2.5km long with 700m of height gain and graded PD; the team moved together throughout. This is believed to be the first ascent of the mountain, which they called Perseverance Peak.

The next day, the team climbed a second line on the same peak, reaching a col 100m below the summit on the west flank via a broken ridge and snow slopes (AD/AD+, depending on conditions).

Returning to base camp on August 15 to rest, the team discovered the expedition cook had been attacked by a local farmer and robbed at knifepoint, and several of the tents had been damaged. Expedition agent ITMC was immediately informed, and a quick reaction by the border security guards meant the perpetrator was captured the following day. Several days of dealing with the Kyrgyzstan police force followed before the team could leave base camp and return to Bishkek. This incident cut short the climbing window by approximately eight days, and no further objectives were attempted.

With the exception of the base camp security incident and medevac of Sam Mace, the expedition ran smoothly once in country. The climbing was adventurous and exploratory, in a superb setting. This expedition was made possible by support from the Mount Everest Foundation and Alpine Club Climbing Fund.

– Tom Davis-Merry, U.K.

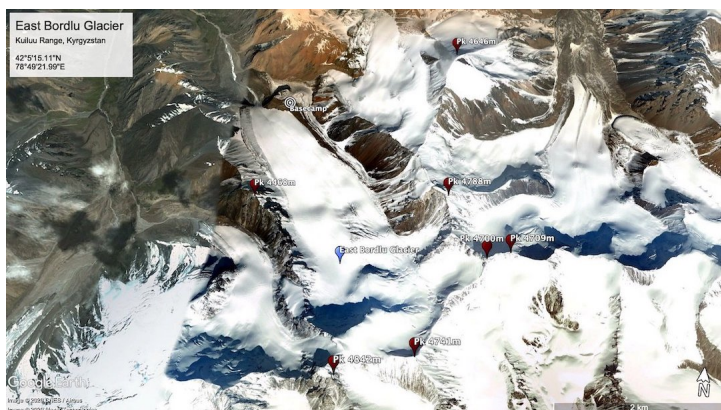
Images



Team members looking southeast up the East Bordlu Glacier from advance base camp.



Tom Simpson and Tom Davis-Merry descending from Pik 4,788m on the east side of the East Bordlu Glacier.



Overview of the East Bordlu Glacier, showing the location of base camp and Pik 4,788m (Perseverance Peak) on the east side of the glacier.

Article Details

Author	Tom Davis-Merry
Publication	AAJ
Volume	64
Issue	96
Page	253
Copyright Date	2022
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions