



AAC Publications

Peak ca 5720m, North Ridge, Attempt

Pakistan, Karakoram, Ghujerab Mountains, Shuijerab Subgroup

Inspired by a British expedition to the Gunj-e-Dur Valley in 2017 (AAJ 2018), Rob Reynolds and I planned to return to the region to explore the little-visited Second East Gunj-e-Dur Valley. We aimed to make the first ascent of one of the numerous unclimbed mountains surrounding this valley. Lingering effects of COVID-19, poor weather, and the devastating heat waves and monsoon that plagued Pakistan in 2022 made for an interesting journey to Hunza. We finally arrived in Karimabad four days later than planned, but were grateful for the experiences we had along the way.

We reached our base camp in the main Gunj-e-Dur Valley (ca 4,400m) after a simply amazing, exposed, and committing three-day trek from Shimshal, traversing the canyon high above the Pamir-e-Tang River. We bade farewell to our fixer Wahab and the porters, and then spent two further days acclimatizing and load carrying before establishing advanced base at 4,800m in the Second East Gunj-e-Dur Valley. Two days of reconnoitring and acclimatizing followed, but the effects of the spring heat wave were clear. Conditions were not looking hopeful, but on the second day we spied two promising peaks, approximately 5,800m in height, with routes that shared the same glacial approach.

We bivouacked close to the terminus of a side glacier at 5,100m and set off before dawn on August 29. Initially, we ascended moraine, and then took a line up the glacier, reaching the col between the two peaks at

5,600m. By this point, Rob was suffering from acute mountain sickness, thwarting an attempt to climb the rocky, pinnacled ridge of Peak 5,775m (36.565067°N, 75.638771°E). We also had to turn back from the easier snow slope leading to a second peak of approximately 5,720m at 36.556427°N, 75.640865°E, despite deciding it would be a safer option, allowing a quick descent if Rob's AMS continued to worsen. After a short distance, wind slab prevented further progress and we returned to our bivouac. During the descent, we noted the debris of two recent avalanches on the summit slopes.

We made the extremely difficult decision to call an early end to the expedition, when we received worrying updates over the Garmin InReach of the devastating and widespread floods across Pakistan. This, combined with the difficulties we met traveling to Hunza, meant that we opted to use the few remaining days to ensure we made our flights home.

We would like to thank the British Mountaineering Council and the Mount Everest Foundation for their financial support. A comprehensive report can be found at <https://shimshal2022.wordpress.com/>.

— Jon Burgess, U.K.

Images



Looking northeast from the moraines of the Second East Gunj-e-Dur Glacier at two unclimbed peaks of 5,700–5,800m. The col (center) was reached in 2022 via the side glacier, but wind slab on the slope leading to the peak on the right prevented an ascent.



Close to the 5,600m col reached during the 2022 expedition. Above is the unclimbed rocky summit of 5,775m.



Unclimbed rock peak of around 5,720m in the Second East Gunj-e-Dur Valley.

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