



AAC Publications

Pik Berneline, Pik Trener, and Other Ascents

Kyrgyzstan, Tien Shan, Djangart Range

In August, a team of six climbers—Niels Brack, Miel Cox, Annelore Orije, Loïc Puylaert, Cedric De Smet, and me, Christian Suys—spent four weeks in the beautiful Djangart Range. After three days of driving from Bishkek, we made it to some barracks used by hunters during winter at the southern end of the Kaichi Valley.

Our initial plan was to reach the Djangart Valley by driving up to Djangart Pass (4,158m) then descending into the valley, with our gear carried on horses, as a Dutch team did in 2018. Unfortunately, our GAZ-66 military truck was unable to get up the road to the pass. Instead, we decided to establish base camp at the hunters' barracks. Although this meant we had to hike an extra day over the pass on each outing to the Djangart Valley, we had a lot of luxury, including an oven and a sauna.

We left base camp on August 7 with backpacks up to 33kg and camped a few kilometers after the pass at 3,900m.

From there, we noticed an easy-looking mountain to the south that was 4,870m, according to the map. Over the next two days, we attempted and then climbed it. We thought this might be a first ascent, but later we learned a Slovenian team had climbed it in September 2022, calling the peak Ak Ayuu, or "polar bear" in Kyrgyz. ([See report here.](#))

Back at base camp, we split into two teams. Miel and Niels did some rock climbing and bouldering near the Djangartynbashi Glacier. Annelore, Cedric, Loïc, and I went to explore the highest summit north of the Djangart Valley. We had only one picture of this mountain, made by a 2008 Russian team, showing its spectacular north face. We wanted to explore the mountain from the south, as that looked easier on Google Earth.

After a reconnaissance below the mountain, we planned a rest day, but I didn't fancy staying in camp. Another easy-looking mountain was nearby, and so Annelore and I headed up. After traversing the glacier and a moraine, approaching from the west, we climbed a 30° icefield to the summit via the north-northwest face (PD). We named this mountain Pik Berneline (4,512m GPS, 41.726667°N, 78.864444°E), in honor of Annelore's mother (Bernadette) and my sister (Eline).

The next day, August 15, we went for our main objective, which we had been calling Pik Trener (4,891m, 41.745278°N, 78.828611°E) since we left Belgium. Pik Trener is the Russian translation of "Mount Coach," the two-year training program we had all followed.

An unclimbed summit bordering Pik Illumination, seen from the latter's summit at 5,040m. We left camp at 4 a.m. and headed north toward the peak, then made a long western turn following the glacier toward the saddle between Trener and a lower top to its south. We crossed some massive crevasses before heading up steeper terrain (40°) to the col. From there, we got into the loosest terrain I had ever seen. After two 50m pitches, we made it to the top of Pik Trener (4,891m GPS; the route was AD). Looking down onto the north face, we saw a challenge for another time—or perhaps another team. We did two rappels down the ridge, then downclimbed the east face to the glacier.

During the third rotation, we all went to the Djangartynbashi Glacier, where Lore, Loïc, and Niels

unsuccessfully attempted Pik Howard-Bury (4,766m), while Cedric, Miel, and I went for Pik Illumination. On our first attempt, we descended due to avalanche danger. We went back the next day, August 24, and climbed a line farther to the right, on the northwest face, which almost entirely avoided loaded slopes. After crossing the bergschrund, we climbed a 60° ice face that eased to 50°–55° until we reached the north ridge. From there, we followed the first-ascent route on the northeast face to the peak (5,048m map, 5,104m GPS) on the frontier. Just like the first ascensionists, we decided to stop here. A higher summit is about 350m away and fully in China, but the traverse looked too long and difficult, given the time we had. In descent, we followed the same line, doing around 12 rappels off V-threads.

We also did some multi-pitch rock climbs on “Kaichi Mountain,” the name we’d given the 4,100m prominence that splits the Kaichi Valley where the route to the Djangart Pass turns east.

— Christian Suys, Belgium

[Click here to download a trip report with more information and photos, including details on the rock routes this team climbed.](#)

Images



The team in front of their Kamaz GAZ-66. From left to right, Christian Suys, Niels Brack, Azamat (cook), Loïc Puylaert, Viktor (driver), Miel Cox, Cedric De Smet, and Annelore Orije.



The road to Djangart Pass.



The east face of Pik Trener in the first sun of the day.



The south ridge of Pik Trener, a pile of rocks tilted at 45°.



The route climbed on the east face and south ridge of Pik Trener.



Djangart Valley mountains Howard-Bury (4,766m) center and Illumination (5,040m) in back left. The 2023 team made a new route on the latter and turned back on the former. Both peaks were first

climbed in 2010.



Approaching the new variation to the northwest face of Pik Illumination (5,040m).



An unclimbed summit bordering Pik Illumination, seen from the latter's summit at 5,040m.



The route climbed on Pik Berneline.



Pik Illumination, showing the 2023 route in red. The start of the original line in 2010, continuing to the summit, is shown in green.



Detail of the 2023 variation on the northwest face of Pik Illumination, shown in red. The start of the original 2010 route is in green.



An unclimbed mountain in the back of the Kaichi Valley.



The route climbed on the peak near Djangart Pass that the Belgians called Pik Obello. The same peak was climbed one year earlier by a Slovenian team, who called it Ak Ayuu.



Map showing the 2023 Belgian expedition's activity in the Djangart Valley. The mountain labeled Pik Obello was climbed the year before and named Ak Ayuu.

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