



AAC Publications

Aphrodite and Zeus, First Known Ascents

Tajikistan, Pamir Alai, Gissar Range

Andreas Parparinos traversing pitch eight on the west face of Zeus in the Gissar Range. Photo: Constantinos Andreou

I had Tajikistan on my list for 2024, and I'd started to look into various ranges for possible first ascents when I came across Eric Gilbertson's report about his trip to the Gissar Range (a.k.a. Hissar Range; see AAJ 2024). The place looked amazing, and Andreas Parparinos and I, both from Cyprus, started planning a trip.

After six days of travel and a big logistical exercise to find gas for our stove, we arrived at Sarytag village on September 26. It took us two days to carry our food and equipment southwest along the Dikondara River to a base camp at 3,050m.

On the 30th, we got up very early and ran up the northwest ridge (300m, 5.7) of the unnamed peak east of base camp, marked 3,627m on the old Soviet map. We named it Aphrodite (38°58'14"N, 68°14'6"E); our GPS showed 3,630m.

From the top, we had a good look at the west face of the prominent peak above us, marked 4,207m on the map. The next day, we carried our climbing equipment up the dry glacier at the base of the wall to around 3,600m. Our proposed route would go more or less up the middle of the west face.

After a rest day, we started from our tent at 3 a.m. and arrived at our gear cache just before sunrise. The first two pitches were in a gully with poor rock and difficulties around 5.9. After the second pitch I traversed to the left to very good rock, then went straight up a thin crack system (60m, 5.11b) that ended up being the crux of the route.

Andreas took the lead following a nice crack system (60m/5.10b), then I led, climbing to the right (60m/5.10a). Andreas led the next pitch, climbing straight up big blocks (60m/5.10b). We traversed easy ground to the right to avoid a big overhang above us (20m/5.8), then I led pitch going up some big blocks (60m/5.10a). The next pitch went up some very nice cracks and a small overhang at the end of the pitch (60m/5.10c). The weather was very good, with no wind and only few clouds. I led the last pitch over some big blocks (60m/5.10c) that got us to just below the summit, then we climbed an easy 15m to reach the top.

We arrived at the summit as the sun was setting. After a quick photo, we downclimbed around 200m on the south ridge, then did five 60m rappels in the dark to reach the bottom of the wall and start walking back to our tent, which we reached by 1 a.m.

In all we climbed 11 pitches and around 605m. We called the peak Zeus (4,200m GPS, 38°58'3"N, 68°14'34"E).

—Constantinos Andreou, Cyprus

Images



Aphrodite (foreground) and sunlit Zeus behind.



Zeus in the Gissar Range.



The line climbed on the northwest ridge to make the first known ascent of Aphrodite (3,630m).



Foreshortened view of the craggy west face of Zeus (4,200m), with the general line of the first ascent, which gave around 600 meters of climbing up to 5.11b. In the foreground is part of the northwest ridge of Aphrodite (3,630m), also climbed in 2024.



Constantinos Andreou on the third pitch of the west face of Zeus.



Constantinos Andreou starting pitch five on the west face of Zeus.



Andreas Paraparinos traversing pitch eight on the west face of Zeus.



Andreas Paraparinos on pitch nine of Zeus.

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