



Obzorny Peak, West Face Ascent and Ski Descent; Verniy Peak, Attempted New Route

Kyrgyzstan, Tien Shan, Western Kokshaal-too

Grigoriy Chshukin leading the first steep ice pitch during the 2024 attempt on a new route on the west face of Verniy Peak.

On July 1, Evgenii Murin (Russia), Maxim Popov (Kazakhstan), and I, along with photographer Denis Lukyanchuk, rode from Bishkek in vehicles provided by Kokshaal-Too Adventures to reach a base camp by the outflow from the Kyzyl Asker glaciers. We traveled the last 20km in a tracked all-terrain vehicle. I had been to this area in 2022 as part of an expedition that completed two new routes ([see reports here](#) and [here](#)).

After some acclimatization, we moved to a camp at the foot of Obzorny Peak (4,857m), approaching it from the West Kyzyl Asker Glacier. Our goal was to get a close view of the 1,500m northwest face of Kyzyl Asker (5,842m), which has had only one prior ascent, in 1985, by a large Kazakh team led by Kazbek Valiev; they climbed the face over eight days and continued to the summit for the first ascent of Kyzyl Asker. Evgenii was unwell, but Maxim made a solo ascent of Obzorny by the right couloir of the west face (AD+) and completed a first descent on skis down the west slope. Meanwhile, I crossed the glacier to study Kyzyl Asker's face through binoculars and identified several potential routes.

Back at base camp, we rested for three days before heading to the East Kyzyl Asker Glacier, aiming for the west face of Verniy Peak (5,250m), where we hoped to climb a new route along an ice runnel on the right side—an 800m route with about 500m of steep water ice. Early on July 9, we started climbing. Initially, conditions were suitable, but soon we encountered heavy snowfall and strong spindrift. After eight 50m pitches, we were forced to turn back. We estimated we were only two rope lengths from reaching an easier couloir that leads to the summit.

Regrettably, the forecast predicted 30cm to 40cm of snowfall in the coming days. We would not have time to wait out the storm and allow the avalanche-prone slopes on the upper northwest face of Kyzyl Asker to stabilize for an attempt, so we left the area on July 12. [[Download a more detailed expedition report and additional photos here.](#)]

—Grigoriy Chshukin, Kazakhstan

Images



The west face of Obzorny Peak (4,857m), showing Maxim Popov's ascent route in blue and ski descent in red.



The six-kilometer-wide northwest wall of Kyzyl Asker North (left) and Kyzyl Asker (summits not visible). The approximate line of the 1985 Kazakh route is shown; the team continued to Kyzyl Asker's summit for the first ascent of the peak.



The west face of Verniy Peak (5,250m), seen from Kyzyl Asker, with the line of the 2024 attempt. The climbers completed eight pitches before retreating in heavy snowfall and spindrift.



Maxim Popov below the west face of Verniy Peak, with the ice line attempted in 2024 obvious above.



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