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Verniy Peak, Northwest Face, New Route

Kyrgyzstan, Tien Shan, Western Kokshaal-too

The line of the 2022 route up the northwest face of Verniy Peak. The rock wall is about 700 meters high and was climbed capsule style, with six nights in four portaledge camps. Other routes are not shown.

In July 2022, seven members of a Kazakh expedition—Zakirzhan Abduraimov, Leonid Krupa, Stanislav Lainopulo, Roman Shesternin, Maxim Ten (leader), and national team coaches Artem Skopin and Vyacheslav Titov—climbed a very difficult new route up the northwest face of Verniy Peak (5,250m).

The team reached the area in early July and established advanced base camp (4,200m) on the East Kyzyl Asker Glacier on July 8. Snowshoes were needed on the glacier. Their target was the left wall of the enormous corner that runs up Verniy's northwest face. Two routes had been completed some distance to the left and right of the corner: No Shachlik (700m, 6c A3 M6, Christie-Gal-Gal-Gottofrey, 2010), on the left, and a route on the right climbed in 2009 by Nikolai Bandalet, Dmitry Golovchenko, Alexander Malakhovski, Sergey Mikhailov, and Sergey Nilov (700m, 6B). Several other teams had attempted new routes, but a direct route up the corner walls had never been done.

The ascent began on July 15, with the climbers working in teams, one to push the route and the other to carry and haul loads. After a steep initial snow and ice slope and two pitches on rock, they established their first camp. Above this, they climbed capsule style, with a total of four portaledge camps (six nights in all). The steep wall required extensive aid. On July 21, the climbers finished the last two pitches of the rock wall and continued up a snow and ice ridge to the summit, carrying packs weighing more than 30kg. They reached the top at 8:20 p.m. and dug in for a final bivouac on the summit.

Early the next morning, they headed down to the col between Verniy and Unknown Soldier Peak, followed by six long rappels to the east toward the glacier below Unknown Soldier, then down the glacier and icefall to base camp. Their route was graded Russian 6B (970m, with 1,670m of climbing distance). All of the climbers lost eight to ten kilograms during the adventure, and Ten, the leader, "even developed six-pack abs that he hadn't had before," according to the team report. [The team's full report with many photos can be [downloaded here](#).]

—Dougald MacDonald, AAJ

Images



Complex aid low on the 2022 route up the northwest face of Verniy Peak.



Stormy conditions in the chimney section at the middle of the 2022 route up the northwest face of Verniy Peak.



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