



AAC Publications

Mizhirgi West, Southwest Buttress

Russia, Central Caucasus

Mizhirgi West (5,018m) and the new route up the southwest buttress. Photo by Alexander Lobyrev/Wikimedia Commons

A Russian team comprising Ivan Koblyakov, Ivan Kuchkin, and Alexander Sokolov completed the first ascent of the southwest buttress of Mizhirgi West (5,018m, 43.04417N, 43.14836E), between Pushkin Peak and Mizhirgi East in the Bezengi region. All previous ascents on Mizhirgi West followed the classic south and west ridges, first climbed in the 1930s. The southwest buttress is the only entirely rock route on a 5,000-meter peak in the Bezengi mountains.

After acclimatization carries to Jangi Kosh Base Camp (3,200m) and Camp 1 on the Sella Glacier (ca 4,000m), they started climbing at 8 a.m. on August 16. The lower section featured steep corners, compact slabs, and sections of loose rock that required careful climbing. Protection was generally good, and the entire route was climbed free. A narrow ledge high on the buttress offered the only viable bivouac site. Anticipating no water sources on the wall, the team had carried all their supplies.

On August 17, the trio followed a mixed rib toward the summit. Snow lay along the north side of the rib, though most of the climbing stayed on rock. On the summit tower, they moved around to the southeast side, avoiding an ice couloir by climbing rock to the right. They reached the top at 5 p.m. Their route was 27 pitches, with difficulties reaching French 6a+ in short sections.

To descend, the climbers rappelled directly down the ice couloir, then moved back onto the southwest face and continued down their line of ascent, installing rappel anchors as needed. They returned to the bivouac around midnight, then completed the descent on August 18, reaching Jangi Kosh that evening.

—Anna Piunova, AAJ, with information from Ivan Koblyakov, Russia

Images



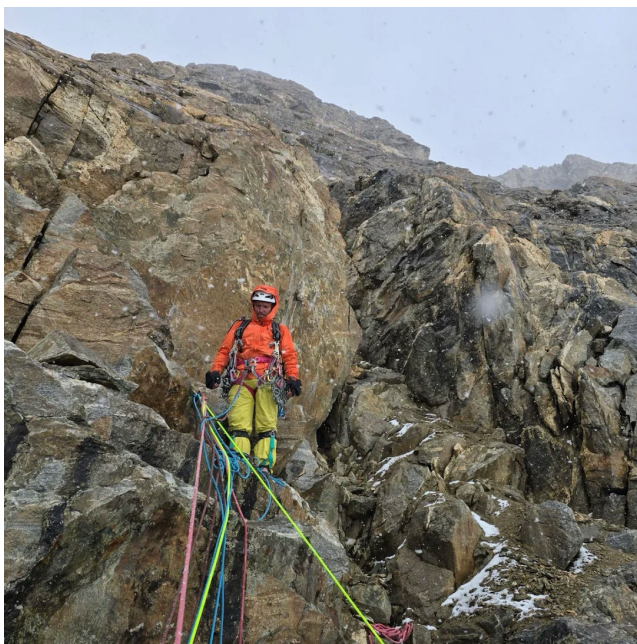
Three routes to the west summit of Mizhirgi (5,018m). Blue : the first ascent of the peak, climbed in 1934, by the south ridge (5A). Green : the west ridge, first climbed in 1936 and rated 4B. No new routes were recorded on the peak for the next 89 years. Red : A team consisting of Ivan Koblyakov, Ivan Kuchkin, and Alexander Sokolov completed this a new route up the center of the southwest buttress.



Mizhirgi West (5,018m) and the new route up the southwest buttress. The face was drier than in this photo during the August 2025 ascent. The only previous routes ascended the west and south ridges, on either side of the southwest face, and were established in the 1930s.



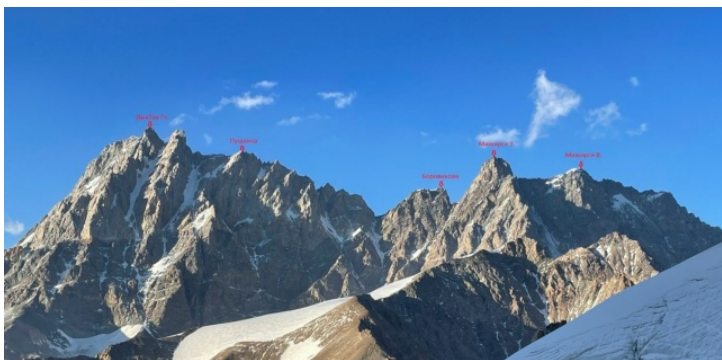
The first section is complete, but the climb is only beginning. The weather is still favorable. The lower part of the route is exposed to rockfall from adjacent couloirs once the sun reaches them, so the team is eager to move quickly through this hazard zone to higher ground, where the risk of rockfall is significantly lower.



Around noon, snow began to fall and the wind strengthened, leaving everything wet and cold. Rather than stop and wait, the team chose to keep pushing upward. As this was a first ascent, they had no way of knowing what difficulties lay ahead, so they accepted a slower pace rather than risk losing valuable time. Alexander Sokolov is pictured.



The team on the summit of Mizhirgi West (5,018m). Left to right: Ivan Koblyakov, Alexander Sokolov, Ivan Kuchkin.



This photograph shows Mizhirgi West from the south. To its left are Dykhtau Main, Pushkin Peak, and Borovikov Peak. Mizhirgi East is visible to the right.



View of the Bezingi Wall and the Sella Glacier below Mizhirgi West, photographed from the team's bivouac at approximately 4,600 m.

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