



## Chunker-kel Valley, Various Ascents

Kyrgyzstan, Terskey Ala-Too

**Maria Dixon, John McEvoy, Will McEvoy, Claire Stringer, Guy Williams, and I (all U.K.) drove to the village of Tamga, south of Issyk-kul, where we stayed in a brilliant guesthouse run by the parents and sister of mountain guide Misha Danichkin, whose Kyrgyzland agency we used for logistical support.** We first made several local acclimatization trips from Barskoon Pass and then drove over Tosor Pass (3,900m) to reach a point 5km our intended base camp next to Chunker-kel lake (3,600m, 41°56'24.27"N, 77°27'7.8336"E). At this point the terrain was deemed too tricky for 4WD vehicles, so we loaded horses and carried what we could up to our proposed site. Our driver accompanied us, and after deciding it might go, skillfully got the vehicle and remaining kit to base camp.

The next 11 days were spent exploring the nearby mountains, climbing a variety of routes on six peaks above 4,000m, while experiencing the best and worst of Kyrgyzstan's weather. Nearly all the surrounding mountains were no more than spot heights on our Soviet map, but one next to camp actually had a name, Pik Sronicova (4,356m), and previously had been climbed.

The big east-west valley where we camped was incredibly boggy, making travel slow and hard work. As a result we ruled out some peaks as being too far from base camp. South-facing slopes and ridges tended to have loose scree and boulders lower down, with more solid rock higher up (although not consistently), while north-facing slopes generally had small glaciers interspersed with rocky ridges. Although we think most, if not all, the peaks we summited had been climbed before, we did some new routes. With only old Soviet maps, no guidebooks, and our own judgment to rely on, it certainly felt exploratory.

The following peaks were climbed: Pik 4,379m via the southwest ridge (PD+) and descent of the west-northwest flank (PD); Pik Sronicova (4,355m) via the west ridge (an easy scramble made in approach shoes); Pik 4,296m via an ascent of the south ridge and descent of the east ridge at F; Pik 4,347m via the southwest spur and south ridge (PD); Pik 4,244m via the west ridge at AD; Pik 4,272m via an ascent of the large buttress below Pik 4,021m (various routes possible on good granite, at British S 4a), followed by scramble up the loose southwest ridge at PD, then a descent of the east ridge at F. An attempt on Ibex Ridge, the 4,000er behind Pik 3,647m, was made via an ascent of the western end at PD+/AD, but the harder continuation was too icy. Several rock routes were climbed on some of the smaller crags west of Sronicova.

– Mike Ferguson, Alpine Club, U.K.

## Images



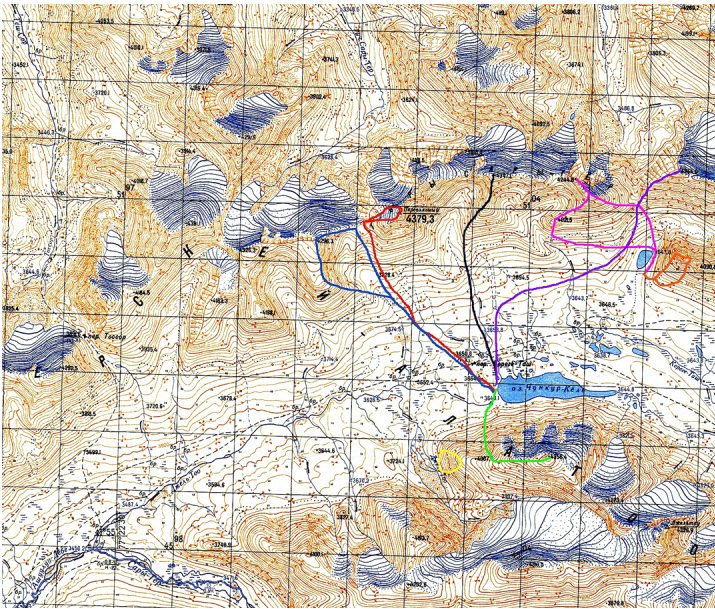
On the west ridge of Pik 4,244m.



The northern flanks of the attempted Ibex Ridge, seen from the top of Tamga Pass en route to Pik 4,244m.



Looking southeast from the summit of Sronicova along the main ridge on the south side of the Chunker-kel Valley.



Map showing 2016 routes from base camp at Chunker-kel Lake: Pik 4,379m (red); Pik Srnicova (green); Pik 4,296m (blue); Pik 4,247m (black); Ibex Ridge attempt (brown); Pik 4,244m (purple); Pik 4,272m (magenta); crags and bouldering area (yellow).

## Article Details

Author	Mike Ferguson
Publication	AAJ
Volume	59
Issue	91
Page	0
Copyright Date	2017
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions