



AAC Publications

At Bashi: Ski Mountaineering Exploration

Kyrgyzstan, At Bashi Range

Isolated by wide longitudinal valleys, the At Bashi Range extends 100km in a southwest to northeast direction, with an average width of 25km, and has a collection of mostly rocky peaks reaching about 4,790m. It is bordered on the northern side by the At Bashi River and the large town of At Bashi (2,200m), which is about 360km from Bishkek. Temperatures here can range from 40°C in summer to -40°C in winter.

Sonja Brambati, Franz Carrara, Gianni Corti, Mirco Gusmeroli, Denis Ganz, Vigilio Ganz, Giulia Meregalli, Renato Pizzagalli, Fedorino Salvadori, Franco Scotti, Ruggero Vaia, and I arrived at At Bashi in early April and stayed in the house of Eve Aka Turunkan, who offers half-board accommodation.

On April 6 we drove to the eastern end of the chain, past the village of Ozgorush, and entered the Karaili Bulak Valley, where we attempted Pik 4,125m, retreating in poor weather and visibility from 3,674m. On the 8th we drove to the Sary Tal (valley), which lies immediately west of the Karaili Bulak. There, we climbed Pik 4,159.2m, skiing from the summit on perfect névé until about halfway down, followed by more gentle slopes and a long valley, with a final surprise on reaching the last meadows, where afternoon melting plunged us up to our waists. Vladimir Komissarov (from the ITMC agency) later confirmed this peak had not been summited before, so we gave it the name Choku Chichi-bel.

On the following day the weather was poor and only a few of us decided to force an entry into the Acha Kayindy Valley, directly south of At Bashi town. This resulted in an ascent of Pik 3,671m, at the start of a ridge leading to several 4,000m summits. Access to this valley is complex, and with limited time available we decided to look elsewhere for 4,000m peaks. So, on the 10th we headed back east as far as a village called Birinchi May, and then south into the beautiful wide valley of Tuyuk Bogoshti. Ascending this, we eventually branched right and reached the crest of the ridge at 3,954m. From there the ridge leading to the main summit is rocky, so we left our skis and continued on foot, finally reaching the top (4,016m GPS). We subsequently named it Choku Kiara.

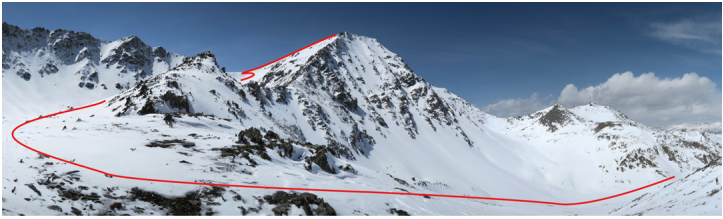
On our last day, the 11th, we headed for a highly visible peak just southeast of At Bashi. Our vehicle reached the beginning of the forest, where we put on skis and continued through the trees. On emerging from the forest we saw immediately above us a beautiful snow-covered peak of 3,650m, which we reached easily and descended on good névé.

As a rule, I would not use the word "exploratory" to describe such trips, as I feel it is often used out of turn by those traveling for the first time in a place that has already been described and mapped. However, our experiences around At Bashi can only be described as true "ski mountaineering exploration." Who knows how many places like this still exist, hidden in the folds of the planet?

Editor's note: The At Bashi Range has been visited extensively in August and September, and many of the highest peaks have been climbed. However, many lower summits remain unclimbed, and the ski mountaineering potential has barely been tapped.

– Paolo Vitali, Club Alpino Italiano

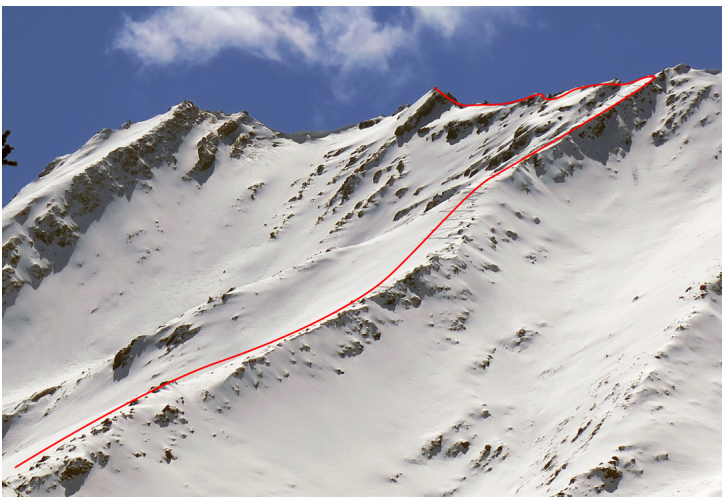
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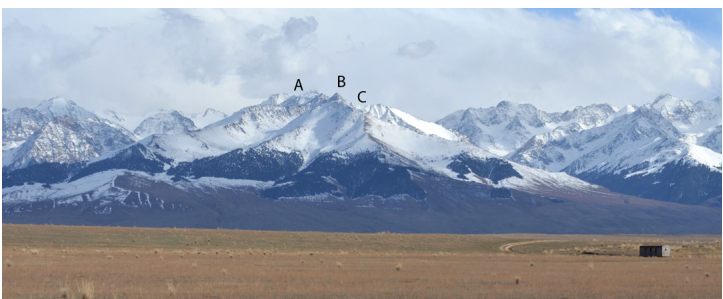
Choku Chichi-bel (Pik 4,159.2m) and the Italian route of ascent from the Sary Tal (the valley bottom right).



The view north from the summit of Choku Chichi-bel. The approach valley, below and to the left, is the Sary Tal. The distant snowy mountain above the climbers is Pik 4,331.4m.



Route of ascent to Choku Kiara, first to Point 3,954m on the crest, then along the ridge to the true summit.



Part of the At Bashi Range from the north. (A) Choku Kiara. (B) Pik 3,808.6m. (C) Pik 3,560m.



Reaching the ridge of Choku Kiara at an elevation of 3,954m. Behind, the Tuyuk Bogoshti Valley descends toward the At Bashi River in the wide snowless valley beyond. Snowy peaks of the Naryn Range behind.

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