



## Gasherbrum II, Complete Southwest Face

Pakistan, Karakoram, Baltoro Muztagh

Gasherbrum II from the south showing the line of Honeymoon (1,935 meters of climbing above the bergschrund). The normal route up the peak follows the spur coming directly toward the camera, traverses right under the rocky summit pyramid, and climbs back left to the top. To the right is the summit of Gasherbrum II East, while to the left is Gasherbrum III and, far left, Gasherbrum IV. Photo by Denis Urubko

**I had dreamed about climbing this line since 2001. At that time I planned to climb the rock buttress to the left of the couloir: It would be more technical but would avoid the threat of serac fall.** In 2019, moving quickly up the snow and ice of the couloir was more attractive. My girlfriend, Maria Cardell, would have been the perfect partner, but during the trek to base camp she fell, injured her back, and spent the next month and a half in great pain. I had to act alone.

The right equipment is crucial for a high altitude ascent—minimal yet workable. I took two axes, a harness, two ice screws, 20m of 4mm cord, two carabiners, a descender and carabiner, one carbon ski pole, headlamp, goggles, and rucksack. I had minimal clothing and took only two energy bars and four gels. I approached on snowshoes and left them near the foot of the normal route, to be collected during my descent.

I left Camp 1 (ca 5,900m) at 7 p.m. on July 31 and crossed the bergschrund (6,100m) below the couloir at 8:40 p.m. The sun hit the rock barrier below the seracs at around 4:30 a.m., just as I was approaching it. I was on the plateau below the upper triangular face at 11 a.m., then climbed more or less directly to reach the 8,034m summit at 8:40 p.m. I descended the normal route through the night, arriving back at Camp 1 at around 9 a.m. on the August 2. [Urubko had already climbed the normal route 12 days earlier for acclimatization. In between, he had taken part in several rescues at altitude.]

The difficulties on this line centered around the sustained frontpointing on ice slopes and passing the rock barrier—120m of unroped climbing that I felt to be quite risky. Due to recent snowfall, there was much deep snow above 7,000m, and avalanche risk was real. It was hard work opening the trail: I lost a lot of power and spent a long time. I called the route Honeymoon (1,935m from the bergschrund, TD WI3 M6).

I did a number of interesting routes on 8,000m peaks during the period of my life when I lived in Kazakhstan, but then came emigration, work, troubles, and I found myself being influenced far too much by the opinions of other people. I was not able to concentrate completely on my own personal “art.” Now I have managed to realize my idea of freedom with a new line on Gasherbrum II. It is possible to be true to oneself. [Download a detailed photo-topo of the route [here](#).]

– Denis Urubko, Russia-Poland

## Images



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The upper triangular pyramid of Gasherbrum II and the line of Honeymoon (there was more snow on this face at the time of Denis Urubko's ascent). On the right is part of the normal route. On the upper triangular southwest face the ridge on the right was first climbed in 1995 by Carlos Carsolio, while that to the left was possibly climbed in 1990 by Georg Rudiger Lang. In 2018, Felix Berg and Adam Bielecki started up the middle of the face and then slanted up to the left skyline ridge. The right side of the giant serac barrier, under which Urubko climbed, is clearly visible.

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