



Pik Simagina, North Face and East Ridge, Aquadiskothèque

Kyrgyzstan, Tien Shan, Ala Archa

The north face of Pik Simagina. (1) Aquadiskothèque (5A, 2021). (2) Belinski Route (5B, 1969). (3) Polivoi (5B, 1969). (4) Rodikov Route (4B, 1990). Just visible to the right is the left edge of the north face of Pik Free Korea. Photo by Alexey Boyko

On February 18, 2021, Anatoly Syshchikov from Yekaterinburg, Pavel Tkachenko from Chita, and I from Irkutsk (the latter two cities close to Lake Baikal in Siberia) climbed a new route on the north face of Pik Simagina (4,400m), the summit immediately east of Svobodnaya Korea (Pik Free Korea, 4,778m). Although this was a great time for winter ascents in the area, there were few people, and the huts were almost empty. High flight costs within Russia and Asia due to the pandemic were leaving their mark.

We began to the left of the lowest point of the bergschrund, then slanted up left for five pitches, following the ice slope between the bergschrund and the walls above. On the fourth pitch we needed to make a pendulum across steep ice around the base of a rock spur. We then climbed a broad snow couloir through the lower rocks of the face for more than 200m. A ramp now led up left toward a big chimney system slanting in the same direction to the east ridge. Four mixed pitches up this chimney system (70° M5, 70° M5, 80° M5 A2, and 80° M5) led to the ridge. For the belay below the last of these pitches, we placed two bolts, and on the pitch below this we found it necessary to climb very carefully due to large loose blocks.

We climbed along the loose east ridge for around 300m (moves up to III+) to the summit, from which we continued to follow the 1990 Rodikov Route (4B) steeply west to the col before Free Korea, then down the north couloir to the glacier.

The new route, which we named Aquadiskothèque, has a vertical interval of 550m, a climbing length of 995m, and a grade of 5A M5 A2. We think a fit and competent party should manage the climb in 15 to 17 hours; (not including the approach and descent, which will add a further five or six hours). Winter is a logical time for this route; in summer it would be too threatened by rockfall.

— Alexey Boyko, Russia

Images



The steep mixed chimney system on the north face of Pik Simagina. Most of the last three pitches to the east ridge are visible.



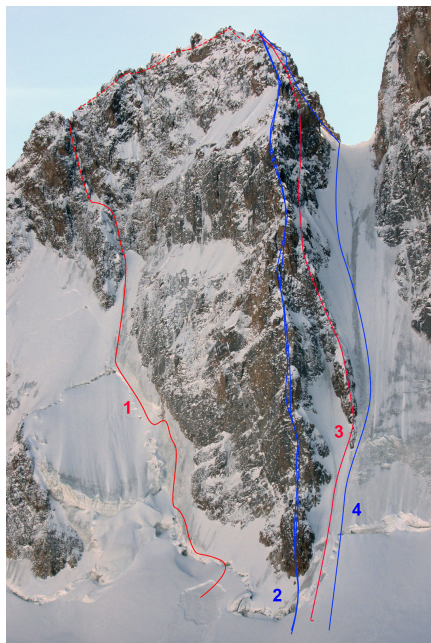
At the top of the broad snow couloir on Aquadiskotheque, a new route on Pik Simagina, where the route slants left toward the big chimney system.



The start of the crux area of Aquadiskotheque, a new route on Pik Simagina, the first of three difficult mixed pitches leading to the east ridge.



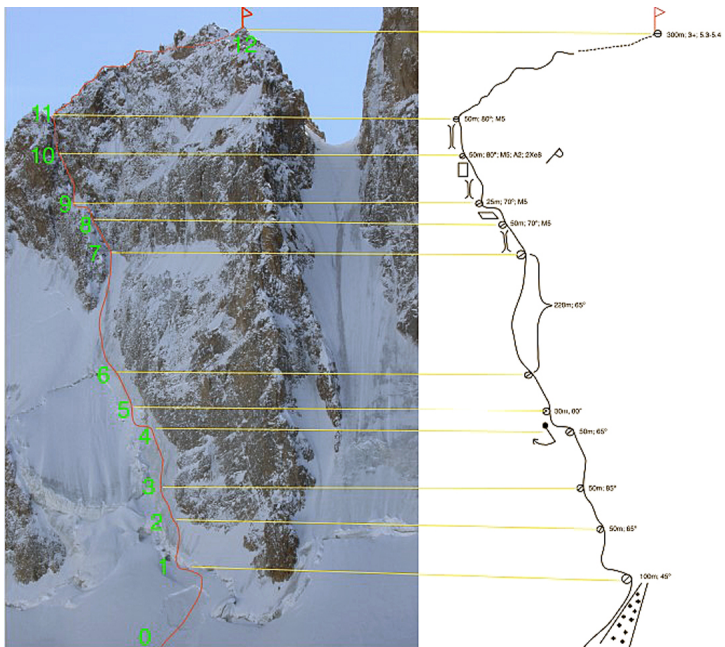
The last pitch in the chimney system on Aquadiskotheque, a new route on Pik Simagina, before reaching the east ridge.



The north face of Pik Simagina. (1) Aquadiskotheque (5A, 2021). (2) Belinski Route (5B, 1969). (3) Polivoi (5B, 1969). (4) Rodikov Route (4B, 1990). Just visible to the right is the left edge of the north face of Pik Free Korea.



From left to right, Pavel Tkachenko, Alexey Boyko, and Anatoly Syshchikov in the area of the Ratsek Hut (3,300m) in the Ala Archa.



Aquadiskothèque on the north face of Pik Simagina. This topo shows only four pitches between the top of the couloir and the ridge; the 2021 team did that section in five pitches.

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