



Passu Diar, Northwest Face; Passu North, First Ascent via South Flank; Darmyani, South Ridge

Pakistan, Karakoram, Batura Muztagh

James Price near the top of the south ridge of Darmyani with the Passu Glacier below.

The Batura Wall rises more than 4,500m from the Hunza Valley to the south and stretches around 40km without ever dropping below 6,000m. I first set eyes on this playground in 2020, but with the COVID-19 pandemic in full bloom, the climbing season came to a quick end for me. Keen to explore this seldom-visited massif, I returned to Pakistan in the summer of 2021.

On July 11 my good friend Hassan Aljabbal and I started walking west up the Batura Glacier to climb the majestic Darmyani (Needle Peak, a.k.a. Maidon Sar, 6,090m). We gained the Passu Cwm via a new route on the north ridge of Hiriz (5,550m; for a history of both peaks see AAJ 2018). At this point, Hassan decided to stay at our high camp while I attempted Darmyani's east ridge. I quickly reached 5,900m, but due to dangerous snow conditions I turned back, abseiling from deep snow bollards in the sugary, sunbaked snow.

The following day I turned my focus to the unclimbed south ridge of Darmyani. I gained the ridge via a snow and rock gully at 5,200m and made good progress over mixed ground to a final delicate pitch of UIAA IV and onto the summit.

A few days later I attempted Bublomotin (a.k.a. Lady's Finger, 6,000m), the conspicuous rock tower above Karimabad in the Hunza Valley. Starting early from a camp on the Hasanabad Glacier to the west, I climbed 1,400m on 60° ice, reaching 5,800m by daybreak. Caught out by the power of the Karakoram sun, I watched as ice turned to water. I found myself climbing a waterfall with blocks of ice hurtling by, and so I carved a small hole into the hard ice of the couloir and took shelter for the day. Unfortunately, having no food or bivouac gear, I turned around just 200m below the summit. [Norwegian climbers first ascended Bublomotin from this west side in the early 1990s.]

The 2021 route up the northwest face of Passu Diar (7,295m) seen from the start of the ridge to Passu Sar.

On September 1, now well acclimatized and carrying 35kg of kit, I set off to repeat Passu Diar (7,295m), which has seen few ascents. [Generally, these have been from the Upper Passu Glacier and Passu Terrace, finishing up the northeast flank.] Using skis for the approach, I broke trail through a complicated icefall to reach the Upper Passu Glacier and set up a high camp at 6,500m. On the 11th, I reached the Passu Terrace and continued to the saddle at the start of the southeast ridge of Passu Sar. I then headed back up the northwest face of Passu Diar, climbing a 70° pitch of snow and ice over a serac and then continuing 300m up easy ground to the summit.

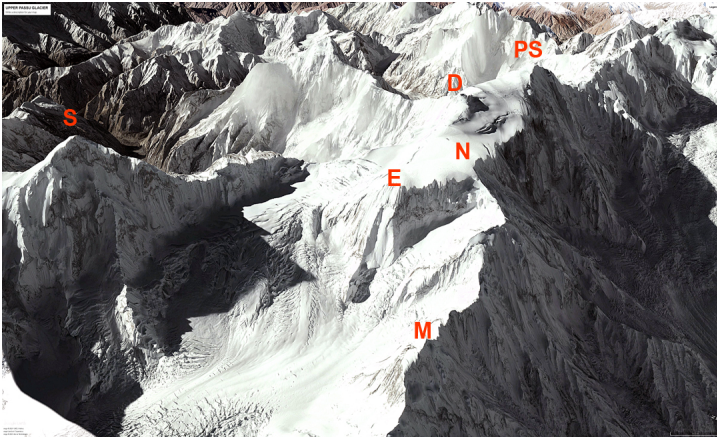
A day later, I skinned up the gentle south flank of Passu North (6,884m, 36°29'20.39"N, 74°38'20.90"E), making a probable first ascent of this remote peak. [In 1985, a Japanese expedition reportedly climbed the south flank/ridge of Passu Diar East (6,842m), a southeast subsummit of Passu North.]

The Batura Muztagh has phenomenal climbing potential with many unclimbed summits and new lines to explore. The proximity to the Karakoram Highway and the kindness of the local population make it even more desirable.

– James Price, U.K.

Editor's Note: The Passu peaks have been given various names over the years, but we have used those designated by the Polish cartographer Jerzy Wala on his recent maps, and by the German historian Wolfgang Heichel in his **Chronik der Erschließung des Karakorum (Part I)**.

Images



Looking west at (S) Shispare, (E) Passu Diar East, (M) Darmyani, (N) Passu North, (D) Passu Diar, and (PS) Passu Sar.



The south ridge of Darmyani (6,090m). Previous ascents of this peak have been via the snowy east ridge on the right.



The 2021 route up the northwest face of Passu Diar (7,295m) seen from the start of the ridge to Passu Sar.



James Price's route through the Passu Icefall to reach the Upper Passu Glacier (off picture). Shispare in the background.



James Price near the top of the south ridge of Darmyani with the Passu Glacier below.



A serac fall down the convoluted north face of Passu North, seen from Yashpirt on the Batura Glacier.



Skiing up to Passu Diar (center of picture). The higher Passu Sar is visible behind and to the right.



The magnificent northeast face of Shispare (7,611m), seen in profile from the approach to Passu Diar. The face was first climbed in 2017 via a line on the far side of the prominent central ridge by Kazuya Hiraide and Kenro Nakajima (AAJ 2018).

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