



AAC Publications

Gasherbrum III, Northwest Face, Attempt

Pakistan, Karakoram, Baltoro Muztagh

Ales Cesen (Slovenia) and I reached Gasherbrum base camp on July 15, with a plan to attempt rarely climbed Gasherbrum III (7,952m). After acclimatizing to 7,000m (Camp 3) on Gasherbrum II's normal route, we set off for our main objective on August 4, stopping at Camp 1 (6,000m) and then moving away from the normal route to camp at 6,800m and at 7,100m. It snowed on the latter two days, with very strong winds at high altitude.

We moved up the Gasherbrum South (Hidden) Cwm and started up the unclimbed northwest face, bivouacking at 7,600m. It was still windy and snowing when we set off the next day. We climbed to 7,800m, where we were stopped by a rock tower about 100m high that was too difficult to climb under the circumstances and couldn't be bypassed easily. That same day we made it back to the 7,100m campsite, and over the next two days returned to base camp. There, the forecast predicted worse weather for the next two weeks, so we decided to return home.

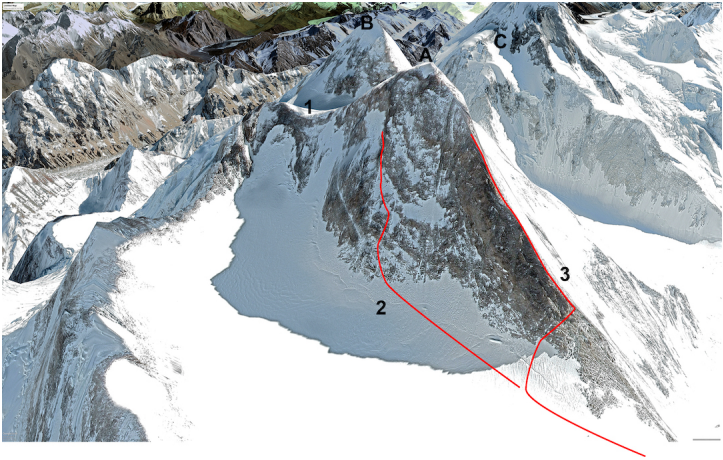
It was fine to be there in July and August, although the glacier between base camp and Camp 1 opened a lot, and the consensus timing for the 8,000m peaks here now seems more toward July. There were many people attempting the normal routes on Gasherbrum I and II. They left piles of rubbish, didn't care about the mountain, had a poor "conquering" attitude, were supported by many high-altitude workers (from Pakistan and Nepal), and helicoptered between their "speed attempts." They often appeared to jumar on poor anchors that were melting out, and most fixed ropes were abandoned.

— Tom Livingstone, U.K.

Historical Notes on Gasherbrum III: Before 1975, Gasherbrum III was considered the highest unclimbed summit in the world. It was climbed in August of that year by the southeast face, via a traverse from Camp 3 on Gasherbrum II's normal route, by Alison Chadwick-Onyszkiewicz (U.K./Poland), Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Wanda Rutkiewicz, and Krzysztof Zdzitowiecki (all three Polish). It remains the highest peak on which women have been in the summit party on the first ascent.

Prior to the ascent, Halina Krüger-Syrokomska and Wanda Rutkiewicz made an attempt on the northeast ridge from the Gasherbrum II–III col. They were unable to climb the initial 100m rock band on the ridge and retreated. In 1985, Geoff Cohen and Des Rubens (U.K.), climbing alpine style, made a spirited attempt on the southwest ridge, retreating from around 7,700m due to bad weather and lack of time (AAJ 1986). In 2004 the original route was repeated by Jon Beloki and Alberto Iñurrategi (Spain).

Images



(A) Gasherbrum III. (B) Gasherbrum II. (C) Gasherbrum I. (1) Northeast ridge attempted in August 1975 by Halina Kruger-Syrokomska and Wanda Rutkiewicz prior to the latter's first ascent of the mountain 10 days later. They accessed the ridge from the Gasherbrum II-III Col (7,591m) and retreated from ca 7,700m, not far above the foot of the ridge. (2) The 2022 attempt on the northwest face. The large snowfield left of the high point was visible on Google Earth but did not exist in reality. (3) Southwest ridge, attempted from the South Gasherbrum (Hidden) Cwm to 7,700m in August 1985.



Crossing the Hidden Cwm to reach the northwest face of Gasherbrum III.

Article Details

Author	Tom Livingstone
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	97
Page	300
Copyright Date	2023
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions