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## Pakistan 2001

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During the summer of 2001 weather conditions in the Karakoram were unexceptional. Fine weather predominated from June to mid-July when the summer deterioration set in. Unsettled conditions continued throughout late July, August and September when spells of stable weather alternated with storms and heavy precipitation. Ministry of Tourism statistics show that 68 expeditions received 72 permits to climb peaks over 6000m. A total of 39 permits were issued for the five 8000m peaks, resulting in 24 teams making successful ascents. The remaining 33 permits were issued to expeditions attempting 14 different peaks in the 6000m-8000m range. Only nine of these resulted in success. There were five mountaineering fatalities, three on 8000m peaks.

The total number of expeditions visiting Pakistan was similar to previous years. The 8000m peaks again attracted the largest number of climbers. Approximately half of these were concentrated on **Gasherbrum II** where overcrowding is becoming a serious problem. The most popular sub-8000m mountains were the challenging rock walls of **Baintha Brakk (Ogre)** and the **Trango** group, plus the straightforward peak of **Spantik**. Several teams attempted technically challenging routes on 7000m peaks throughout the Karakoram Range. Unfortunately few of these teams were successful. Continuing the recent trend, there were many groups attempting high standard big wall climbs on lower peaks, with a considerable amount of success. Compared to recent years there were fewer teams attempting innovative or new projects, and the small number who did were almost all unsuccessful. Pakistan continues to attract mountaineers from all corners of the globe. In addition to the traditional mountaineering nations of Western Europe, North America and Japan, increasing numbers of climbers from Australasia, South America, Asia and Eastern Europe are becoming regular visitors to the Karakoram and Hindu Kush Ranges. While this is a positive development it makes gathering comprehensive information about climbing activity difficult. This is particularly true for the sub 6000m peaks, which require no documentation from the Pakistani authorities.

**K2 (8611m)** Three expeditions attempted the world's second highest mountain from the Pakistan side. A total of 9 climbers reached the summit on 22 July, some following the *Abruzzi Spur* and others following the

*SSE Spur*. Korean Park Young Do fell to his death on the same day after turning back 150m below the summit. Five of the seven expeditions attempting the *Normal Route* on **Broad Peak (8047m)** were successful in placing members on at least one of the summits. The first ascent of the season took place on 30 June. It is believed that the majority of climbers reaching the summit ridge turned back at the fore summit and did not continue to the slightly higher main summit. Three of the five expeditions with permits for **Gasherbrum I (8068m)** were also attempting Gasherbrum II. Four of these were successful and a total of eighteen climbers reached the summit, twelve on 13 August. All the ascents were made by the standard *Japanese Couloir Route*. On 10/11 July Claudio Galvez, leader of the Chilean expedition, fell to his death while descending from the summit. As usual **Gasherbrum II (8035m)** proved to be the most popular 8000m peak in Pakistan with up to seventeen teams attempting the *Normal Route*. Most of these teams were successful. The first ascent of the season occurred on 9 July when British and Japanese teams who had prepared the route reached the summit. In the following weeks there were significant problems with overcrowding on the fixed ropes between camp 1 and camp 3. This seems to have been a contributory factor in the fatal fall suffered by Belgian climber J M Bassine on 20 July.

There were five expeditions attempting some of the larger mountains in the Hushe area. Russian Lev Loffe made his third visit to **Masherbrum (7821m)** aiming to repeat the 1960 American *Original Route* on this accessible peak rising above the Hushe valley. However his USA/Russian team was thwarted by deep snow in the final gully leading to the summit ridge, less than 100m from the top. Later in the year Peter Royall led a predominantly UK team attempting a peak sometimes referred to as **Masherbrum II** but shown on Japanese maps as **Cathedral Peak (6000m)** on the other side of the Masherbrum valley. They turned back on 21 Aug after experiencing considerable snowfall. Two teams from the USA visited the spectacularly steep and difficult peaks at the Eastern end of the Charakusa glacier. Jimmy Chin led a group to the unclimbed *S Face* of **K7 (6934m)** located to the right of the *SW Face* that had previously been attempted by two UK teams. After 15 days on the wall they retreated in the face of bad weather in early July. Immediately SE of K7 lies the unclimbed peak of **Link Sar (7040m)**. This received only its second ever visit from Steve Swenson's strong USA team. They chose to approach the peak from the East side via the recently reopened Kaberi glacier system. They investigated two possible routes on the South side of the peak but concluded that both were unacceptably dangerous. A six person Dutch team led by Coenradd Doeser hoped to make the first ascent of **Kapura (6544m)** on the south side of the upper Charakusa glacier. They tried routes on the *W Flank* and *NW Ridge*, but found dangerous snow conditions. The same group then attempted **Drifika (6447m)** by a variety of routes, but were again turned back high on the peak by poor snow conditions.

Four parties visited the Trango group aiming to climb high standard rock routes on the famous granite walls. **Trango Tower (6245m)** was attempted by two expeditions. Waldemar Niclevitz's Brazilian team repeated the 'standard' *Slovenian Route* on the SE Face. Japanese climbers led by Shogo Kada intended to scale a new route on the E Face, but only reached 5100m. Two very different expeditions attempted **Great Trango (6286m)**. Twid Turner led a UK team hoping to climb a new route on the 1400m E Face to the left of the Norwegian Pillar above the Dunge glacier. However poor weather forced them to retreat from a high point of 5700m. Glenn Singleman led an Australian team intending to film a base jump from close to the summit of Great Trango. Two members of the group reached the summit via the NW Ridge route on 13 June before progress was stopped by a storm and the climbers retreated to base camp. The whole team then travelled to Australia before returning to Pakistan to mount a second summit bid. On 2 September six members of the group reached the summit but conditions were not thought to be ideal and plans to jump from the top were abandoned.

Three expeditions established base camp on the Choktoi glacier aiming to climb high peaks of the Latok group. Halvor Hagen led a four man Norwegian team attempting the unclimbed *N Ridge of Latok I (7145m)*. They made four camps and reached a height of 6300m before retreating in a snowstorm. A Polish/Japanese trio intended to try the same route but changed their plans in the face of poor weather and opted to climb a shorter new route on **Central Biacherahi Tower (c.5700m)**. A strong Russian team met with tragedy during their attempt on the unclimbed *W Face of Latok III (6949m)*. On 19 July Igor Barikhin was killed by stonefall at a height of approx 6200m. Reports indicate that this route has considerable objective dangers.

Four expeditions hoped to make the long awaited second ascent of **Baintha Brakk/Ogre (7285m)**. All chose to approach the peak from the South using base camps beside the Biafo glacier. The Austrian pair of H Kammerlander and A Brugger attempted a lightweight ascent of the original *British Route* early in the season, reaching a high point of 6200m on 21 June. A USA team led by Hans Johnstone spent most of June climbing the *S Pillar*, reaching a high point of 6400m on 30 June, before retreating. A strong Slovenian team led by Silvo Karo climbed from mid-June until mid-July on the *SE Pillar* reaching 6350m before retreating in bad weather. By far the most successful group climbing in this area was the young Swiss/German team led by Thomas Huber. On 1 July all three members of the group completed the first ascent of **Ogre III (6800m)**. After a short rest at base camp they turned their attention to the *S Pillar* of **Baintha Brakk (7285m)**, eventually reaching the summit on 21 July. This was the first time that the *S Pillar* route had been used to reach the summit of the Ogre, and only the second time that the main peak had been climbed.

Seven expeditions attempted the *SE Ridge* of **Spantik (7027m)** making this easily the most popular sub 8000m peak in Pakistan. Previous years

have seen high rates of success on this peak, but in 2001 only one party from Japan managed to reach the top. Heavy snowfall and poor weather were cited by the other parties as reasons for their lack of success, but unrealistic schedules also played a part. **Diran (7257m)** above the Minapin glacier is often thought of as a straightforward and accessible peak. However a reputation for avalanche danger is reducing its popularity and only two expeditions attempted the *Normal Route* in 2002. Neither the Japanese nor Polish groups were successful. A small French/Pakistani expedition led by Manu Pellissier aimed to climb **Rakaposhi (7788m)** by the *NW Ridge Route* late in the season. However poor weather and snow conditions prevented much progress being made.

Only one team visited the region lying to the west of the Karakoram Highway (KKH).

Damien Gildea's Australian group obtained a permit for **Passu Sar (7478m)** believing it to be unclimbed. On arrival at base camp in June they found the glacier approach more dangerous than expected, and also learnt that a German group had climbed the peak in 1994. Three expeditions are known to have climbed in the Hindu Kush. **Tirich Mir (7706m)** was visited by two expeditions both climbing the 'normal' *NW Ridge Route*. J P Franchon, leader of a French group, reached the summit alone on 1 August, and Mauro Penasa, leader of an Italian group, reached the summit alone on 12 August. A French team led by Michel Cormier report climbing **Irg Zom (6825m)** in early August, but no further details are known.

Four expeditions received permits to climb **Nanga Parbat (8125m)**. Michael Beek's German group were the only people to attempt the *Schell Route* on the Rupal Face. They reported that the route was unacceptably dangerous and retreated from 5800m on 2 July. A total of 17 climbers from three different expeditions reached the summit on 30 June via the *Kinshoffer Route* on the Diamir Face. 13 of these climbers were members of Ralf Dujmovit's multinational expedition. Three other summiteers were from Italy and one from Finland.

Details about sub 6000m ascents are more difficult to collect, however it appears that many small groups from around the world visited different parts of the Karakoram. Most of these climbers attempted high standard rock climbs on the region's many granite walls and towers, but there were also significant exploratory ascents being made on mixed mountaineering routes.

A Polish pair and a Canadian solo climber visited the rock walls of the Nangma Valley. Both groups intended to climb routes on Amin Brakk, but finding conditions too dangerous switched their attentions to nearby **Denbor Brakk (4780m)**. Each group climbed independent new lines on the W Face (Belczynski/Tomaszewski, *Dancer in the Dark*, 450m. Madaloni, *Against the Grain*, 13 pitches). Small groups from Spain and Italy climbed a number of high standard rock routes on the subsidiary pillars of **K7** in the Charakusa glacier area. There were two ascents of **Shipton Spire (5852m)** an

increasingly popular peak on the W side of the Trango glacier. An all female USA/Spain team repeated the 1998 route *Inshallah*, and an Italian trio climbed a hard new 'all free' route *Women and Chalk*. A UK trekking group made the second recorded ascent of **Hanipispur (5885m)** from the Nobande Sobande glacier. They reported that the route was straightforward and objectively safe, although being far from the popular areas, it is unlikely to receive frequent visits. Three Italians climbed a new 700m route on the S face of **Ogre's Thumb (5500m)** above the Uzun Brakk glacier. Dave Wilkinson's small British party visited the Solu glacier, north of the Arandu valley. They attempted three peaks reaching the summit of **Ice Cream Peak (5800m)**, and failing on **Solu Peak (5901m)** and **Sugulu Peak (6102m)**. There were two attempts on **Bubulimotin (c.6000m)** the prominent rock spire above Karimabad in the Hunza valley. On 19 July Spanish climber Alfonso Vizan was killed by stonefall while climbing the approach couloir on the *NW Face* with two companions. A seven strong Korean group led by Seo Ki Seok also attempted Bubulimotin but retreated low on the route due to poor weather and stone fall. Prior to this attempt they made a number of probable first ascents in two other areas. In the Arandu valley they climbed **Khache Brangse (5560m) E Face** and **Ghonboro (5500m) N Face**. In the Yasin valley they climbed **Shikari (5928m) NE Face** and **Mustum (5620m) NE Face**. Muzaffar Faizi's Pakistan expedition climbed **Koksil (6483m)** in the Kunjerab region but further details are lacking. A UK climber and Pakistani guide climbed a new route on **Minglig Sar (6200m)** in the Shimshal region, reaching the summit on 18 June. Three USA climbers attempted **Kampur (5499m)** late in the season but abandoned their climb in mid-September after learning of the terrorist attacks in the USA.

**Prospects for 2002** The events of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent conflict in Afghanistan will have serious consequences for mountain tourism in Pakistan for the foreseeable future. Permit requests for the 2002 season were already significantly down on the 2001 figures before the possibility of a major India/Pakistan conflict became a worldwide news headline in Spring 2002. In a belated attempt to reverse this decline the Pakistan Government Ministry of Tourism announced a 50% reduction in permit fees for the 2002 season in recognition of the United Nations International Year of Mountains (IYM). This is unlikely to encourage climbers to return to Pakistan in 2002 and it remains to be seen if this concession will be extended to future years. However there seems little doubt that the Pakistan tourism industry has suffered a major setback and it may take several years to recover.