
LINDSAY GRIFFIN & DICK ISHERWOOD

Pakistan 2007

This summary was compiled from extensive notes collected by LG. We thank Mr Saad Tariq Siddique of the Alpine Club of Pakistan, and the climbers named below, for their assistance.

The Pakistan authorities approved 83 expeditions for 2007. As in Nepal, peak fees have been steeply discounted to keep the climbers coming, and a permit for K2 now costs only \$6000. Peaks below 6500m have no fee at all, and (perhaps the best news of all) liaison officers are no longer required outside the Baltoro region.

On **K2**, 29 climbers from eight expeditions reached the summit, out of 130 starters. A Russian expedition climbed the west face by a new route, much of it on the very steep central rock buttress, using plenty of aid but apparently little oxygen, and put 11 people on the summit on 21/22 August after over two months' effort. They considered the route to be more difficult than the 2004 Russian ascent of the north face of Jannu, and it is almost certainly the hardest route to date on K2. A good deal of gear was left behind.

Denis Urubko and Serguey Samoilov from Kazakhstan attempted a new line up a shallow spur on the north face of K2 late in the season, but abandoned their attempt low down in bad weather and traversed onto the Japanese route on the north ridge, reaching the summit on 2 October. This was the latest summit date ever for K2 and another impressive achievement for this pair, climbing fast and unsupported and without oxygen.

Among other parties on K2, Bruce Normand with American Chris Warner and Canadian Don Bowie made an ascent of the Abruzzi Spur after attempting two new lines on the east spur and south-east buttress. They climbed without oxygen but with a good deal of fixed rope, and were variously helped and hindered by a number of other parties, several using plenty of oxygen and some willing to both steal gear and abandon their weaker members high on the mountain. Bruce has written vividly about the selfishness and incompetence of many participants. A Czech climber, Libor Uher, was the sole member of a party on the *Cesen route* to reach the summit, and needed extensive assistance on the descent of the Abruzzi. A number of climbers were evacuated by the Pakistan Air Force at the end of the season.

On **Broad Peak**, 19 expeditions were successful, putting a total of 77 climbers on the summit. One was an Austrian party celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Buhl/Diemberger first ascent. Hidden Peak (**Gasherbrum I**) was climbed by 27 people, but the normally very popular **Gasherbrum II** had only one successful ascent as avalanche danger on the



197. The Russian line on the west face of K2. Six camps were used on the rock buttress over two months. (*Anna Piunova/Russian K2 Expedition*)

standard route killed one climber and deterred many others. **Nanga Parbat** was climbed by 17 people from five expeditions.

In the 2007/8 winter attempts on Nanga Parbat and Broad Peak were both unsuccessful. Simone Moro's party reached 7800m on the latter. No one has yet succeeded on an 8000m peak in winter in Pakistan, though some have come very close.

In July, the Spanish climber Luis Carlos Garcia Ayala made the first ascent of the south-west face of the **Red Queen**, a granite peak close to the Nameless Tower in the Trango group. His companion, Ali Mohammed, had been his cook on his only previous trip to the Karakoram seven years earlier, and had no technical climbing experience. Ayala quickly taught him the essentials and they made the ascent and descent of the 900m face in four days at a free climbing standard of 5.10b, with very little aid. This may be a landmark in the history of climbing instruction.

A large team of young climbers from the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk, Russia, completed two first ascents on the 2000m north-west face of **Great Trango (6286m)**. A four-man party climbed new ground close to the original 1999 *Russian Direct* route. On the upper section, they found traces of previous passage and their route seems to have shared some ground with both a 1990 attempt and the *Azeem Ridge*, climbed by Kelly Cordes and Josh Wharton in 2004. Although no grade has so far been quoted, the climb is reported to be 75% free. At the same time six of their comrades were on the left side of the face, attempting to finish the line climbed to within a handshake of the summit ridge in 2003 by an Odessa team, which is rather less amenable to free climbing. They completed the climb in 11 days at a standard of 5.11/A4, after enduring some bad weather. The combined team, all on their first visit to the Karakoram, then moved on to attempt Broad Peak.

Two new lines were established on the 5885m **Shipton Spire**. The



198. The American-Slovenian first ascent route on K7 West. The main summit of K7 is on the right; the rock spire in the centre remains unclimbed. (Marek Holocek)

Spanish climber Silvia Vidal, known for a number of hard solo ascents in Pakistan and India, spent 21 straight days on the north-east face in capsule style, making 20 solitary bivouacs before reaching the notch on the north-east pillar at c5300m. Her route didn't follow any strong features and therefore required continuous hard aid: several pitches of A4 and a crux of A4+, finishing with mixed climbing. She declined to continue to the summit over difficult mixed ground. Perhaps notably for today, during her stay at and above advanced base she was entirely alone and carried neither radio nor phone, commenting that it was 'a great experience'.

A four-man Russian team also spent 20 days on their route during very much the same period as Vidal was climbing hers. The Russians originally planned to attempt the unclimbed south face of the Spire but found the approach up the chaotic glacier too difficult and dangerous. Instead they switched to an independent line up the available rock between two previous routes on the south-east face, *Baltese Falcon* and *Women and Chalk*. The four Russians climbed capsule style, following a prominent right-facing corner/depression in the upper section. They reached the top of the wall after enduring a full week of bad weather and having climbed pitches of 5.10d and A4. They then continued up the taxing mixed summit ridge to the highest point, which they reached on July 30. In all 32 pitches were required for this 1300m route.

Two Americans, Cedar Wright and Renan Ozturk, made the first ascent of the higher south-west summit of the striking *Cat's Ears* (5564m) near the Shipton Spire. They encountered much dubious rock on a line that corkscrewed around the pinnacle via two long traverses and climbed the wobbly summit block at up to 5.11, A2.

In the Charakusa valley Steve House, Vince Anderson and Marko

Prezelj made the first ascent of **K7 West** (6858m) by its south-east face in four days with 5.11 rock-climbing, steep ice and some very steep and unstable snow near the top. This summit had seen several previous attempts going back to the seventies. Their subsequent attempt on **K6 West** from the Charakusa glacier was defeated by dangerous icfall conditions. A number of other difficult rock climbs were done by several parties on the lower peaks of the Charakusa valley.

On the west side of the Hushe valley a Polish party climbed the west summit of **Honboro Peak** (6430m, and about 20m lower than the main summit which may still be unclimbed.) Their route up the south-west ridge took 53 hours of almost continuous climbing, much of it on poor rock.

In the central Karakoram, an American party (Doug Chabot, Mark Richey and Steve Swenson) climbed the peak known as **Choktoi I** (6166m) from the south-east, making an alpine style first ascent of this beautiful triple-summitted mountain over two and a half days. The climbing was mostly on snow and ice, and the name Suma Brakk has been proposed: Suma means three summits in Balti. They subsequently attempted the north ridge of **Latok I** (7145m) but were forced to retreat from 5900m. This ridge, the 'Walker Spur of the Karakoram' has now had more than 20 attempts by a variety of highly talented parties, though none has come close to the first, Jim Donini, Michael Kennedy, George and Jeff Lowe, who reached c7000m in 1978.

Two young Chamonix climbers, Julien Herry and Roch Malnuit, climbed the south-west ridge of **Latok III** in mid-September to make the probable 4th ascent (third in alpine style) of this 6949m peak in a six-day push base camp to base camp. The original Japanese ascent in 1979 used 2000m of fixed rope, much of which remains in place.

In the western Karakoram Yannick Graziani and Christian Trommsdorff made the first ascent of **Pumari Chhish South** (7350m) by its 2700m south face in six days of difficult mixed climbing. This was their third attempt on this peak.

Pat Deavoll and Lydia Bradey from New Zealand attempted the first ascent of **Beka Brakkai Chhok** (BBC) (6882m) in the Batura Mustagh from the Baltar valley, but retreated from around 6000m in poor snow conditions. A Japanese party attempted **Pamri Sar** (7016m), also in the Batura, but had to retreat from 5500m in bad weather.

An eight-man Polish expedition attempted the west ridge of **Kampire Dior** (7168m), the westernmost major peak in the Karakoram, but retreated from 6500m in bad weather. This would have been the second ascent of the mountain, first climbed by a Japanese party in 1975.

A large Greek party attempted **Buni Zom** (6551m) in the Hindu Raj, but had to settle for its 6200m south summit. One party member died in a fall on a subsidiary peak. A French party made a new route on a 6058m summit in the northern Hindu Raj just south of **Koyo Zom**, the highest peak in this range, at a standard of Alpine Difficile. This peak had probably been climbed before, from the north side.