

Russian Christianity (4507m), simulclimbing the route on-sight in about nine hours. We took 22 hours in total for the route, including approach and descent. Mathias and Will started on the route the same day, climbing it in the “usual” way, and reaching the bivy after the 25th pitch on the first day. On the second day, Will reached the top of the climb and dislodged a big rock while flipping the rope that hit Mathias on the back. He could neither stand nor walk, but he was able to rappel. They rappelled down to the bivy on the second day and on the third reached the base of the climb.

On August 25, Robert and Bettina climbed the first four pitches of a new route on the 300-meter lower walls of the Central Pyramid. On the 26th, we rescued Mathias from the base of the Northeast Pillar and brought him down to Base Camp. He was flown to Tashkent the next day by helicopter. On August 28, Robert and Bettina made the first ascent of the seven-pitch route *Für Mathias* (5.10d, 300m) on the lower wall of the Central Pyramid. One bolt was placed at the fourth belay. On August 29, Robert and Will made the second ascent and first red-point of the German Route (5.12a) on Pik du Pamir. The route had been put up by Rainer Pickel, Michaela and Dirk Groeger the week before. On September 1, Robert and Will climbed the Voie Francaise (5.12a, 700m) on the Central Pyramid (3895m) via the *Yellow Moon* variation in a day. The route has 19 pitches, with its greatest difficulties in the middle. We bivied near the summit, because the rappel was hard to find in the dark. Robert managed to on-sight the route—its first on-sight. We rappelled the route *Black Magic*, put up by Kennan Harvey and Topher Donahue the year before. On September 4, we prepared the first four pitches of the route *Der Kleine Prinz*, an eliminate line to *Für Mathias*. On September 6, Robert and Will made the second ascent of *Take It Easy* (5.11b) on the lower Central Pyramid.

On the 7th, Robert and Bettina started for Fishtower (ca. 3800m), the formation that stands between Pik 1,000 Years.... and Pik Kotin, with a haulbag and portaledge. We ascended the first three pitches (difficulties up to 5.11d), then bivied after the third pitch. The next day, we continued from the bivy through the right part of the wall. Robert climbed the second pitch on his second try after placing six bolts and estimated the difficulties to be 5.12c. The third pitch involves aid and free climbing up to 5.11b. Then it began to rain, and thunder and lightning started when it got dark, so we decided to finish our route to the top from the bivy by an easier line, which led us through the left and central part of the tower. We called the route *Vogelfrei* (“Free Like a Bird,” 5.12c A1).

On September 9, we finished the first ascent of the route *Gül* (Kyrgyz for “sun,” 5.10d) that we had started on the first day on the 400-meter high east face of Fishtower. The last four 60-meter pitches from the bivy to the top we equipped with one bolt at each belay. Meanwhile, Will repeated *Für Mathias* rope-solo. He then left on the 11th to climb the 400-meter south face of Pik 4810 rope-solo, but retreated on the second day after the fifth pitch—the unexpected 13-hour approach took all his food. On the 12th, Robert and Bettina made the first ascent of *Der Kleine Prinz* (5.11b) on-sight. The route leads straight through the whole face and has six pitches with a bolt at each belay. On the 14th, a foot of snow forced us to leave Base Camp. We hiked down to Bapyx in three nice days.

ROBERT LANGE, *Germany*

Karavshin Region, Various Ascents. On August 5, Guy Edwards, Hermien Freriksen, Brian Webster, Kevin Christakos and I (Canada) flew from Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, to Osh in the west, where our week-long epic approach to the mountains began. After intense

border crossings, military bribes, food poisoning and heated dealings with the Tadjik donkey men, we finally arrived at Base Camp beneath the towering walls of the Ak-Su Valley. Already our three week trip to these stunning spires had been cut back to two due to the red tape "approach;" I then spent another week sprawled in my tent, delirious with a high fever and painful cough. This left just one week in alpine rock paradise!

While I was sick, Brian and Kevin climbed one of the smaller towers, Pyramid du Pamir, by its 300-meter west face (5.10-). Guy soloed a similar route to the right at the same time. Once I had recovered, Guy and I made a 27-hour round trip of the highest spire, Peak 4810, by its 750-meter south face (V 5.10+). We climbed 15 pitches of cracks and face on good granite to top out just below the summit at dusk, then spent all night descending back to camp for sunrise. During the same time, Brian and Kevin climbed the 1300-meter French route on the northeast buttress (V 5.10-) of Pik 1,000 Years of Russian Christianity in a little over two days up and down.

With only three days left, Guy and I started up our primary objective, the *Perestroika Crack* (VI 5.12, 900m) on the beautiful Russian Tower (Pik Slesova, 4250m). We climbed 12 pitches of 5.10 cracks on rock as good as Yosemite's finest while snow squalls blew through, soaking the stone, until the weather worsened and forced us into an early bivouac perched on top of a chockstone in a chimney. With the 5.11 and 5.12 pitches still to come and the rock plastered from the night's snow storm, we began rappelling with only half the route completed.

On the last day, Hermien and I climbed the Pyramid du Pamir by the line that Guy had soloed, eight pitches of 5.10-, just behind Brian and Kevin. Meanwhile, Guy hooked up with a German climber for a sub-24-hour round-trip of the French route on 1,000 Years of Russian Christianity. They climbed the 35-pitch route in ten simul-climbed pitches, then made 25 rap-pels through the night, arriving at Base Camp just in time to leave.

SEAN ISAAC, *Canada*

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Akshirak and Pamir Alai Ranges, Various Ascents. In July, Chris Seashore, Carol Petrelli, Blase Reardon and I went to the Akshirak Range in eastern Kyrgyzstan for ski mountaineering. The range is a day's drive (by old slow Russian army truck) due south of Lake Issykul. Base Camp was reached by driving about 20 kilometers up river from the small town of Kara Se to the end of the dirt track, then pushing another ten kilometers overland by truck, and finally walking about ten kilometers to the confluence of two large glaciated valleys that join to form the Kara Se River. The region is remote and untouched; we climbed and skied five unnamed and previously unskied peaks immediately surrounding the confluence. Peak heights ranged from 4500 to 4800 meters. The skiable terrain ranged from 350 to 500 meters of 35-45°. We judged anything steeper than 45° to be too dangerous because the thin layer of new snow was hanging on old blue ice. I would recommend skiing in the area earlier in the summer or late in the spring when there is more snow and colder temperatures.

After two weeks in the Akshirak Range, Chris Seashore and I traveled to the Pamir Alai where the peaks are higher. We skied three peaks near Peak Lenin. One, Ukana (5100m), is routinely climbed from the Peak Lenin Base Camp. The other two were approached by hiking straight up the valley as you trek from lower Base Camp toward Peak Lenin. (The path to Lenin turns left over a small pass). All the ski runs had pitches of consistent 45°, and all were, I believe, unskied. I ski-cut one oozing slide because we were too greedy and made a