

the fixed lines and Inaki begins the final four pitches that separate us from the summit, which we reach late in the day.

The granite on the wall is a bright orange color and is very solid and abrasive. Most cracks are rounded and flaring, requiring much work in engineering placements. The Ak-Saitan route is 600m in height, VI, 5.10+ A3+ 85°. It begins with a 450m rock tower and continues via an airy ridge where we encountered steps of UIAA grade IV rock, snow, and 65° ice with occasional short sections of 80°.

CECILIA BUIL, *Spain* (translated by M. Loomis and Oriol Solé-Costa)

*Editor's note: The summit of the point that Ak Saitan reaches was first crossed by Guy Edwards during his solo traverse of the Ochre Walls in 1998, and then reached again in 2001 by Scott de Capio and Sean Isaac via their ascent of Beef Cake (see AAJ 2002).*

*Pik Unmarked Soldier, China View.* In the summer of 2001, we put up a previously unreported route on Pik Unmarked Soldier (5,322m). "China View" ascends the east face on snow and ice to the right of the main gully (560m, 50° to 70°).

IRENA MRAK, *Slovenia*, AND GARTH WILLIS



The final steps of the west ridge of Ak-bai-tal, above the Ak-bai-tal Glacier in the West Kokshaal-too. Pat Littlejohn

*At-Bashy Range and West Kokshaal-too, first ascents.* In early September an International School of Mountaineering expedition comprising Pat Littlejohn, Adrian Nelhams, Vladimir Komissarov (guides), Julian Duxfield, Peter Kemble, Nigel Kettle, Ursula Mulcahy, Mark Pontin, John Porter, and Dr Jane Whitmore reached the West Kokshaal-too range on the Kyrgyzstan-China border.

This was the fifth visit to this area by an ISM team. Recent snowfall and waterlogged ground stopped the expedition approaching its intended base camp beside the Aytaly Glacier, so they decided to acclimatize by exploring the At-Bashy (Horse's Head) Range—limestone peaks immediately north of the Kizil Asker group in the West Kokshaal-too. Having no peaks above 5,000m, there are no records of anyone having climbed in the At-Bashy range before.

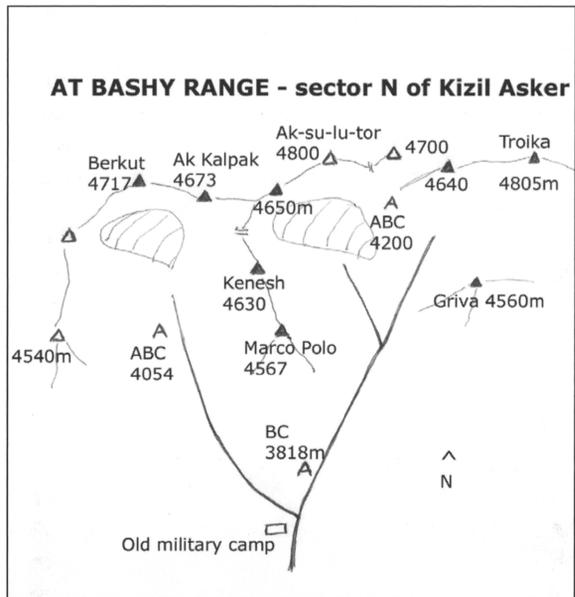
Base camp was established at 3,800m in the valley of Aksu-lu-tor above a wrecked ex-Soviet military base. After acclimatizing on a couple of easy peaks, advanced bases were established at 4,054m and 4,200m. Peaks ascended included

the snow dome of Ak-Kalpak (4,673m; PD), the long west ridge of Pik Troika (AD), a traverse of the impressive Berkut (beak) (4,717m; AD+) and the icy dome of Kenesh (4,630m; PD+).

More settled weather prompted a move across the valley to the Kokshaal range and after an exciting 25km off-road drive up a river bed, the Ak-bai-tal valley was reached. This is the third valley to the West of Kizil Asker and had probably never been visited by mountaineers. Advanced base was established on the edge of the Ak-bai-tal glacier at 4,200m, from where attention focused on the twin-summited snow peak (4,981m), which dominates the glacier. The easiest routes to each summit involved arduous trail breaking (PD+), then the steep and rocky West Ridge was ascended to give a mixed climb at AD+.

A big team traversed the elegant snow fan (Pik Belyi Veer, 4,757m), which bounds the left side of the glacier and is a prominent landmark for the area. After this, with the weather again ominous, the expedition struck camp and drove for a day to a series of limestone rock domes which Littlejohn had spotted on earlier trips. These were christened Nomad Domes (being surrounded by people living in yurts) and a number of routes were climbed, mostly three pitches and up to British E2. Very little rock climbing has so far been developed in Kyrgyzstan and this area will be of interest to anyone climbing in the West Kokshaal-too, either for acclimatization purposes on the approach or a fun stop-off on the way out.

PAT LITTLEJOHN, *Alpine Climbing Group*



Map of the At Bashy Range courtesy of Pat Littlejohn