

WEST KOKSHAAL-TAU

Dankova Group, Various Ascents. It was reported that a 1996 expedition to the eastern end of the West Kokshaal-Tau resulted in the first non-C.I.S. climbers to enter the range, which is the southernmost range of the Tien Shan mountains and lies on the border with China. Michail Lebedev (Russia) had visited the eastern end in 1993, and made the first ascent of the north-east face (6A) of Peak Alpinist (5492m) a striking limestone pyramid somewhat overshadowed by the higher and equally striking pyramids of peaks Dankova (5982m, the highest in the range), Koroleva (5819m) and Chon-Tura-Su (5982m, still unclimbed). The German Kai Würster arranged with Lebedev to return to the range in 1996, and the expedition grew to include Frenchmen Alexis Deschamps, Francois Onimus and Oliver Renault, Germans Juergen Christ and Gesa Weyhen-Meyer, plus 20 Russian climbers. Upon arrival at base camp (ca. 3300m), Weyhen-Meyer, who has a heart pacemaker, quickly developed pulmonary edema and had to be evacuated by helicopter. The team remained behind, and on August 24, Christ, Deschamps and Onimus climbed the north ridge of Alpinist in two days, finding good limestone down low and horrible rock higher up. They attempted to descend the east ridge, which Lebedev et al had used to descend the mountain on its first ascent, but lost the way. By the time they regained their bearings it was night. They continued by moonlight, meeting up with Russians Valeri Boiko, Roman Saliy and Vladimir Vishniakov, who were preparing to ascend the east ridge the next day. After eating and resting with the Russians, the trio continued down, reaching advanced base camp at noon the next day after 55 hours on the go.

Meanwhile, Renault, soloed the west ridge of Peak Zhenit (ca. 5150m), making a possible second ascent up a 2B snow and ice climb.

All four Europeans then made the first ascent of Peak de l'Entre Aide (5030m), a snow pyramid in front of Peak Zhenit, via the north face (50° max) in six hours from ABC, descending south to the col between it and Zhenit. The Russian climbers, meanwhile, had made a reconnaissance circumnavigation of Peak Koroleva to assess the possibility of a new route on the east face. During the same period Starostin and friends had attempted Kibalchichi but had lost some gear and been forced to descend. A team composed of Lebedev, Shimohin, and



unnamed others had attempted Chon-Tura-Su via a pillar on the north face, where a very corniced summit ridge prevented them from reaching the top. Romanov, Shimohin, Smirnov and Stgarostin made the first ascent of Peak Trapez (5240m) via a 5B route on the southeast face. Team members also climbed the previously ascended Maron (4900m).

In 1997, a 15-member guided expedition headed up by Pat Littlejohn (U.K.) traveled to the area in the second week of September. They started their activity with a warm-up on a 4785-meter peak southwest of base camp, which they named Sabaday, finding two and half pitches of 45-50° hard ice on the northeast ridge. Peak Zhenit was climbed by the east ridge (55°, AD+). Peak de l'Entre Aide was ascended by a new route up the east ridge (AD), which gave eight pitches of hard ice overlaid with slabby snow. A third group made the possible first ascent of a 4910-meter peak immediately north of Peak de l'Entre Aide via a snow/ice couloir on the southwest flank followed by an exposed narrow ridge of poor rock to the summit. It was named Peak Serpentine, and descent was made by climbing directly down the south flank. (*High Mountain Sports* 182)

West Kokshaal-Tau, Various Ascents. I traveled to Kyrgyzstan in August, beginning my trip once again in Ala Archa National Park outside Bishkek, the capital. The area offers a perfect chance to shake off jet lag and get one's mountain boots banged around a bit, which I managed to do in the company of Lindsay Griffin (Britain), Matthias Engelién (Germany) and Garth Willis, an American ex-pat living in Bishkek. After 12 days of climbing we returned to Bishkek, where, on August 31, we were joined by Nick Green and Brian Davison (Britain). We left for the West Kokshaal-Tau on September 3, arriving September 6 to begin our exploration. All research indicated that we were the first climbers to visit our area, which is one valley to the right of Peak Kizil-Asker (5842m) at the confluence of the three prongs of the Komorova Glacier (the mountains around which we called the Moonshadow Mountain group). We also believe we were the first climbers to enter through the western end of the range since Kazbek

The Dankova group, West Kokshaal-Tau. From left to right: Peak Zhenit, Peak Molodyozhny, Peak Alpinist, Peak Dankova, Peak Dzhalda. The glacier is the Essledovateley Glacier. RUSSIAN MOUNTAINEERING FEDERATION

