

**New Zealand
Qala Panja Glacier Expedition
Wakan Corridor
Afghanistan**



Ascent of Koh-e Rank

July/August 2012

Final Report

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The compiler of this report and the members of the expedition agree that any or all of this report may be copied for the purposes of private research.

SUMMARY

The following account gives a brief description of a three person expedition to the Qala Panja Glacier in North Eastern Afghanistan and the first ascent of the peak Koh-e Rank, 5930m, via the East Ridge.

Patricia Deavoll returned to climb in the Hindu Kush range after a successful trip in 2011. The initial objective was to climb the south peak of Rahozon Zom, 6535m, but three days before departure from New Zealand her climbing partner pulled out of the expedition. Pat and the two remaining members, Maryrose Fowlie and Bill Byrch, decided to go ahead with the proposed trip.

From a high camp at 5000m, it was decided the unclimbed peak of Koh-e Rank, 5930m, would be a more achievable goal. The climb was achieved in one day from the high camp and was not technical; the descent was by the same route as the ascent.

Afghanistan was entered from southern Tajikistan at Ishkashim thus hopefully avoiding the Taliban. We felt safe in the Wakan area and with the local people. There was a problem with getting back into Tajikistan as the Tajiks had closed all borders with Afghanistan because of political unrest. After three days of waiting anxiously our group of eight stranded tourists was allowed across the Tajik boarder and it was promptly closed again.



Maryrose Fowlie and Patricia Deavoll after their climb with the peak of Koh-e Rank left rear. The left hand sky line ridge was the route taken.

INTRODUCTION

The shape of Afghanistan vaguely resembles an oak leaf with the Wakan Corridor being the stalk of that leaf protruding to the North East. This 350 km narrow strip of land is sandwiched between Tajikistan to the north, Pakistan to the south and China to the east with mountain ranges creating natural borders to the south and east. The Panj River in the base of the valley swells in summer to a swift grey torrent from the snow melt. A stony road runs up the base of the valley as far as Sarhad-e Broghil, crossing side rivers that drain the Hindu Kush Range with some of the larger rivers being bridged. There are a few sparse villages scattered along the length of the road. The people of these villages are very friendly, helpful and curious.

This area has been central to conflict from before the invasions of Alexander the Great and Ghingis Khan. In 1893 the British drew up the present borders to create a buffer between the then British Pakistan to the south and the Russians to the north. The Hindu Kush Range (meaning dead hindu) is on the south of the Wakan Corridor and contains Afghanistan's highest peak, Nushaq, at 7492m. The Hindu Kush was visited by westerners in the 1960s and 70s and was part of the overland trail to Asia but has not been frequented by climbers since then until recently, due to the Soviet Invasion in 1979. A small number of trekkers have discovered the Little and Big Pamir areas, at the head of the Wakan, are a remote and unique experience.

The Wakan provides easy access to the many side valleys and glaciers of the range and there are still unclimbed peaks and routes. The surrounding mountain ranges seem to shelter the Hindu Kush Range from severe weather conditions.

Before entering the Wakan Corridor you pass through the small dusty village of Ishkashim (3030m) which is a boarder town to Tajikistan. Here with the help of a guide or interpreter, you can get police clearance, army clearance and permits to enter the valley. Guides and interpreters materialized out of nowhere after our proposed guide was found to be in Kabul. There are a few guest houses scattered on the outskirts of the village. The fact that the rest of the country is a war zone and the Taliban a constant threat appear to be a long way from this region which seems to be safe and remote from those dangers at the moment.

MOTIVATION

Patricia Deavoll and her sister, Christine Byrch, had had a successful expedition to the Hindu Kush the previous year (2011) and climbed a new route on Koh-e Baba Tangi (6516m). Pat was keen to go back to the area so researched another new route that appealed to her and organized a small group of four people, two climbing and two for support. Three days before the team left New Zealand Pats climbing partner announced that he would not be coming on the trip because of "security issues". The remaining members decided to go ahead with the expedition with Maryrose attempting to climb with Pat. The initial goal was to be the south summit of Rahozon Zom (6535m). This peak had been climbed from Pakistan in 1969 by an Austrian expedition but not by any route in Afghanistan. The ease of access up the Wakan Corridor to the base of the glaciers is one of the appealing aspects of this area. The availability of porters, english speaking guides and the friendliness and willingness of the locals to help are also appealing aspects of the Wakan. The guide book "Peaks of Silver and Jade. A Mountaineering Guide Book of the Afghan Hindu Kush" written by Carlo Alberto Pinelli and Gianni Predan published in 2007 was a source of inspiration and information.

Pats experience from the previous year, negotiating the bureaucracy and permit difficulties of accessing these countries and the contacts she had made, was a huge advantage but, as always, there were still challenges.



Below- Location of Hindu Kush





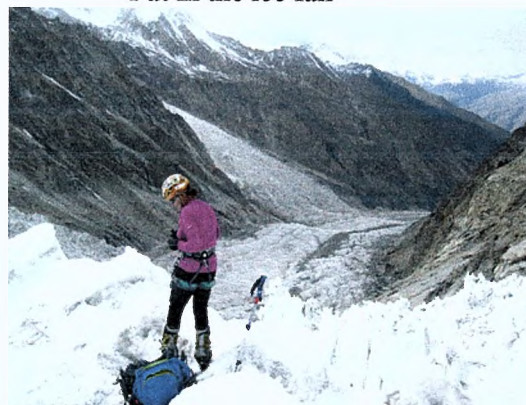
The Wakan Corridor



Tajikistan

EXPEDITION MEMBERS

Pat in the ice fall



Patricia Deavoll

52 years of age, New Zealander, Journalist/Event Manager/Climber

Pat has alpine, rock and ice climbed at a high level for 35 years. Pat began her climbing career in 1977 and by 1980 had climbed all the 10,000ft peaks in New Zealand. She was the NZ Woman's Sport Climbing Champion in 1994. More recent mountaineering highlights in NZ include ascents of the Caroline Face of Mt Cook, 'Logans Run' (grade 6+) on the South face of Mt Hicks and the Hidden Balfour Face (grade 6) on Mt Tasman.

She spent 1985/86 in the Himalayan and Karakoram Ranges, completing many unsupported traverses and ascents in remote regions. Recently she spent 120 days waterfall ice climbing in the Canadian Rockies, leading water fall ice to grade 7 including lead ascents of 'Sea of Vapours' (WI 7), 'Acid Howl' (WI 6+) 'French Maid' (WI 6+) and a new route on the Terminator Wall, 'Stuck in the Middle' (M7, WI 6). She now specializes in making first ascents of mountains in the Greater Ranges and has taken part in eleven expeditions since 2001 to; Pakistan(3), India(3), China/Tibet(2), Nepal(1), Afghanistan(1) and Alaska(2). She is very experienced at organizing expeditions to Asia and has six first ascents to her name.

Maryrose Fowlie

56 years of age, New Zealander, Semi Retired.

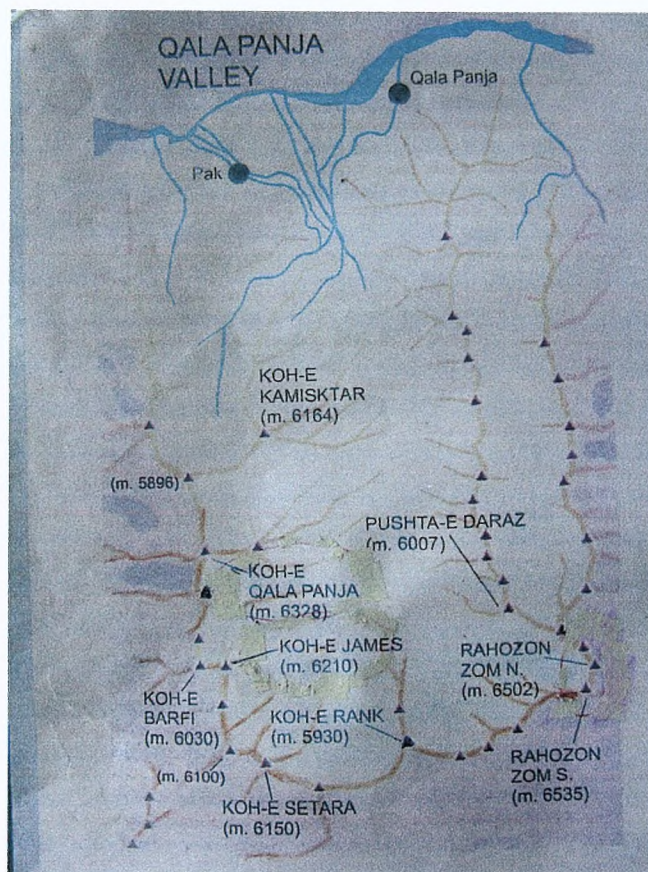
Maryrose started climbing in the mid 70s on her local volcanic mountain of Mt Egmont/Taranaki then progressed onto Mt Cook and the Southern Alps of New Zealand. She has climbed Mt Cook seven times by five different routes including South (Hillary) Ridge, and several Grand Traverses. Some other climbs in NZ include Syme/Silberhorn traverse of Mt Tasman, South Face of Aspiring, South Face of Mt Douglas and East Face of Mt Sefton. Maryrose has worked as an outdoor instructor in New Zealand and in the Antarctic and was on the professional Search and Rescue team at Mt Cook for five years. She did a season as a trek leader in Nepal. She enjoys skiing and has been a volunteer ambulance officer with St John.

Maryrose has ice climbed on Ben Nevis and sea stack climbed in NW Scotland. Over seas expeditions include a new route in the Cordellera Vilcabamba on Mt Choquetacampo(6039m) Peru, attempts on Mt Shivling, India, Mt Biale, Pakistan, climbs of Island Peak, Nepal and Mt Kuitin, Mongolia.

Bill Byrch

44 years of age, New Zealander, Agricultural Pilot/Farmer

Bill is an experienced fixed wing pilot who does aerial crop spraying and has a good understanding of technical equipment such as engines, fuels, primus cookers etc. His farming back ground has lent him to be resourceful, capable and adaptable. Bill is also a hunter, fisherman and a white water jet boater.



QALA PANJA VILLAGE AND GLACIER

The drive from Ishkashim up the valley to the village of Qala Panja is about 100 kms but can take most of the day in a 4WD because of the slow gravel road with irrigation ditches frequently crossing it plus the police check point stops, vehicle break downs and flat tyres. The Wakan people look after their own and seem to know where the homestay/guest houses are. The village of Qala Panja is sprinkling of houses with a school and a guard post with a barrier arm across the road. Two of the sons of the guest house owner in Qala Panja spoke English. Another guide (Afiat Khum, who climbed Noshag with the French) was working on a local military project and called into have a chat with us.

After the porters had prepared themselves for a couple of nights away it was a short walk up the valley to a camp site above the moraine wall on grass amongst willow type trees with a small source of water. Next morning it was only a two hour walk along the moraine shoulder before we had to descend to the glacier and the porters deposited our gear and we set base camp. The glacier is receding much the same as the rest of the world's glaciers. The weather was generally fine and mild with cloud about and some showers at night. We did have one day and a night with light snow fall.

The next seven days were spent carrying our food and gear up the glacier to a mid way dump and then up to an intermediate camp. The lower glacier was easy going, free of snow and not very cut up. The middle area had a section of deep open crevasses that were very time consuming zig zaging from one side to the other to get through. From the intermediate camp we chose to go up the true right ice fall then gain the rock knob that divided the icefalls. Pat and Bill went on an exploratory trip into the ice fall and left a gear dump near an ice bridge that gave access to the rock knob. The ice fall didn't show any signs of recent activity and the fissures were generally passable. We took everything from intermediate camp through the ice fall, picked up the gear from the ice dump and with extremely heavy packs climbed up the rock knob. The

conditions on the steep snow slope on the knob were fresh snow on hard ice so we went up through mixed ground onto rock and hauled our heavy packs for one section.

We were delighted to find a large flat rocky area that was warm and even had flowers growing at 5000m. There was running water during the day and pools of good water under large rocks. We found the location of the 1968 French expedition's camp site and some of their tin cans with "Camembert" still legible. The weather for the next eight days was perfectly fine and warm with night time temperatures no lower than about -8C.

Looking south from our camp site was a 180 degree view of the head of the glacier, an expansive accumulation zone of snow and ice. The glacier is split in two, by the rocky knob we were camped on, as it descends down the ice falls and reforms the Qala Panja Glacier below. For more acclimatization we roped up and walked to the ridge line (5600m) that was the boarder between Afghanistan and Pakistan and looked out onto the seemingly endless Karakorum.

THE CLIMB

Patricia's initial objective to climb the south peak of Rahozone Zom (6535m) was re-assessed. Maryrose had agreed to climb with Pat when Pat's partner pulled out of the expedition at short notice. Maryrose felt her old gear, (plastic boots that were 26yrs old) her fitness, general motivation and skills were not up to Pat's level. The nearby and unclimbed peak of Koh-e Rank (5930m) was agreed upon as an alternative.

Pat and Maryrose started out for the climb from their high camp at 4am in the early morning light. They walked across the snow plateau to the base of the climb in firm neve conditions. The schrund running around the base of the mountain had an airy ice bridge across it then the climb was up soft sugary snow on the east facing slope to gain the east ridge. The ridge was straight forward varying from shin deep snow to icy patches around rocky outcrops. The climbers were not roped up although one rope was carried to the top but not required and the other rope was left where the ridge was gained and picked up on the way down. The summit was reached about mid day in cloudy but warm and calm conditions. The route back was down the same ridge with the schrund being abseiled over using a sling around a large rock as an anchor. They were back at high camp 12 hours after setting out. Maryrose was relieved her boots has not shattered in the cold as old plastic boots can do.



Ice bridge over schrund at base of climb

VISAS AND PERMITS

Tajikistan

We all got our double entry visas from the Tajik consulate in Brussels.

www.tajikembassy.be/node/60 This took the excruciatingly long time of over two months with phone calls to chase up why they were taking so long. Without the phone calls the wait would have been even longer. This is in contrast to the previous year when the process was quick and easy for Pat. It is necessary to get a GBAO permit when travelling to or through the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast i.e. the Pamir's. This was obtained together with the visa in Brussels. (NZ\$170pp) Lonely Planet suggests that this permit is to be done away with but with the unrest in Khorog in August I now doubt it.

Afghanistan

Our visas were obtained from the Afghan Embassy in Canberra, Australia, at a cost of NZ\$190pp. Also in contrast to last year the visas were processed quickly. A letter of introduction is necessary. Pat got a letter for each of us at a cost of NZ\$44pp from Adab Shah Gouhari, agarkan@gmail.com whom she had met the previous year in Ishkashim.

There are no peak fees or permits required to climb in the Hindu Kush.

A permit is required to go up the Wakan Corridor which can be obtained in Ishkashim. It is necessary to have at least four passport photos and four copies of your Afghan visa and passport information. There is a shop in Ishkashim that will do passport photos and photocopies of passport info. The Wakan Permit cost us US\$30pp apparently reduced from \$40. It is essential to take a local guide to get the permit, visit the border police and the Governor of Ishkashim at the army post. This process took us about three hours with a lot of waiting around in the heat. The guides' assistance cost \$20 but it would be "impossible" without him.

There are various check points up the Wakan Corridor where the paper work we were given was checked.

China

We needed a single entry visa for China as our flight itinerary had one stop over that was longer than 24 hrs. It took 5 days to get a visa from the Chinese Consular Office in Christchurch.

(NZ\$145pp) This was done by dropping the application forms, passports etc off personally and collecting them five days later. www.chinaembassy.org.nz/eng/lsqz/prcd/t39420.htm



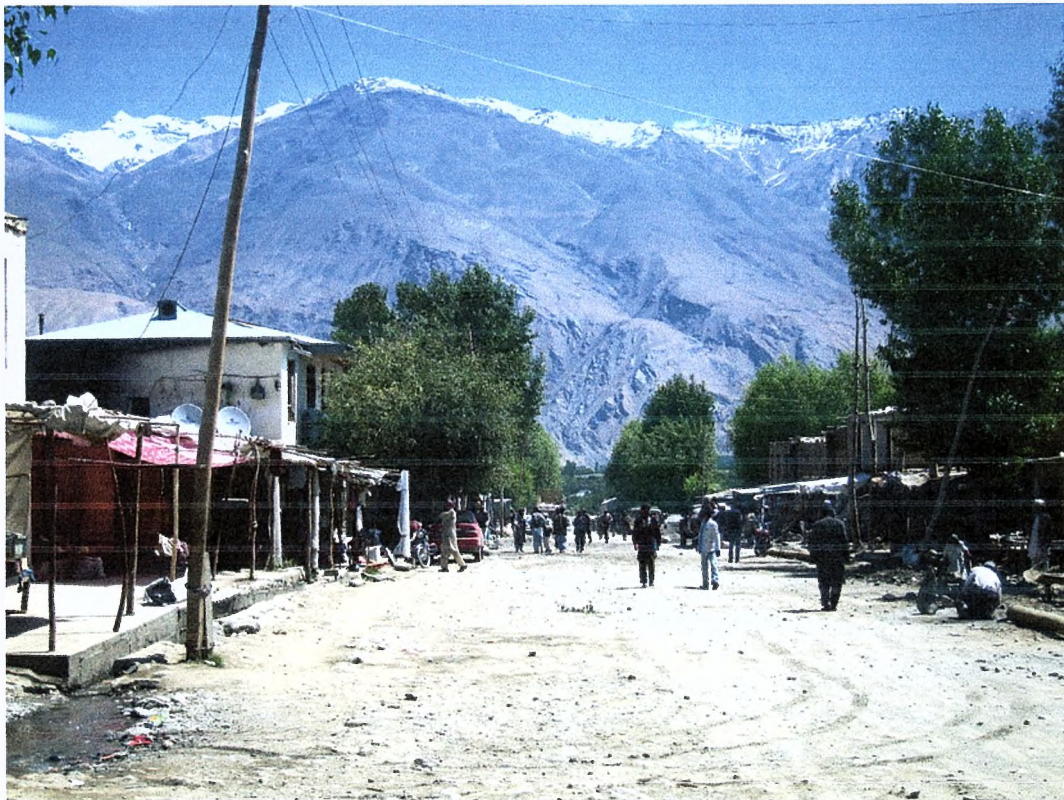
Bazaar in Dushanbe

FOOD AND EQUIPMENT

We bought six packets of dehydrated food from New Zealand. More would have been good but luggage allowance means essential equipment comes first. We had a 30kg baggage allowance with China Southern Airways. Pat and Maryrose also had climbing food from NZ such as energy bars and sachets. The bulk of our food was bought in Dushanbe. The bazaar that Pat bought food from last year was no longer there so food was purchased from various small grocery shops on or near upper Rudaki Ave. We bought; porridge, semolina, milk powder, sugar, tea bags, coffee sachets, instant coffee, drinking chocolate, chocolate, instant noodles, spices, canned fruit, rice, salami, clothes washing soap and body soap. From the fresh food market (Shah Mansur Bazaar) on Nissor Muhammed St we bought dried apples and apricots, raisins, bulk biscuits, sweets and almond nuts. From Khorog we bought canned fish, canned tomato puree, onions, garlic, pasta, and potatoes. In Ishkashim we managed to get flavoured drink powder. It is advisable to get as much as possible in Dushanbe as the availability of supplies in Khorog and Ishkashim seem to be unreliable. We could only find a small quantity of potatoes in Khorog and most shops were closed on the day we were there which was a Sunday. We could not find any cheese, butter or jam which had been available the previous year.

Cooking and Fuel

An MSR multi fuel primus was brought from NZ with clean empty Sig bottles for fuel. Petrol for this cooker was purchased in Ishkashim and we filtered the petrol through a chamois cloth brought from NZ. A 5kg gas cylinder and cooker head were bought in Ishkashim for use at base camp. This proved to be very easy and convenient. A bucket for water at base camp was also purchased. Pat also had a "Jetboil" gas cooker to use on the proposed multi day climb and had successfully arranged Dimitri, an agent in Dushanbe, to get a number of gas canisters for this. The canisters were not used and were left in Ishkashim on our return. We left some gear at the guest house in Ishkashim while we were away climbing. The porters and our minders used wood and dung fires to cook on.



The main street of Ishkashim, Afghanistan

TRANSPORT

Getting around these countries was by far the most expensive cost. Our driver and vehicle for the journey from Dushanbe to Ishkashim was pre arranged by our agent Dimitri in Dushanbe. This was a lot more expensive than organizing the return trip ourselves but would have been difficult to find someone without an agent in Dushanbe. Lonely Planet Central Asia has names and contacts of several agents including Dimitri Melnichkov. We were stopped on numerous occasions by road side police for checks. Only two hours out of Dushanbe our 4WD vehicle developed a fault. We had a four hour wait in the heat at an isolated petrol station, which did not do vehicle repairs. Another Pajero 4WD and driver arrived and we continued with the original driver also squeezing in. The vehicles have no air conditioning except to open a window which lets in clouds of dust. The petrol station owner feed us for nothing and was very hospitable. We went the shorter but higher route to Kali Khum over Sagirdasht Pass (3252m) unfortunately in the dark so missed the sights. More than half of Tajikistan is over 3000m. The roads away from main towns are dusty gravel and often pot holed. When we arrived in Khorog the next day there was an alarming rumour of Taliban activity near the Wakan corridor so we stopped in Khorog the night to reconsider our situation. Our drivers left us there and went back to Dushanbe. After some consideration we decided to continue to Afghanistan the next day. An agent of Dimitri called Ishmail arranged transport for the two and half hour journey to the Afghan boarder for which we had to pay another US\$240. Ishmail was half way through preparations for us to climb Peak Karl Marx which we had to halt as he was very eager to help us do something!

Once we crossed the boarder into Afghanistan a taxi that was returning to Ishkashim village took us the few kilometres for US\$20. Taxis will ask for more than double that price if they can get away with it. Our transport up the Wakan was arranged by Malang who had climbed Noshag with the French and has some understanding of western ways. He said it should cost US\$250 to Kala Panja but the driver wanted US\$300. A compromise of US\$270 was reached. We had a flat tyre on the journey and several stops for engine problems. The journey back down the valley cost US\$230 for the 100 or so kilometres which took five hours. The driver and vehicle were arranged for us by Ahkem, son of the guest house owner at Kala Panja. The driver had waited a couple of days for us as he was unclear as to when we were due out. There were no mechanical problems this time.

When we arrived back at Ishkashim after our climb we learnt that there had been a 'one day war' in Khorog and the boarder between Afghanistan and Tajikistan had been closed for about two weeks by the Tajiks. We made several trips to the boarder over the next three days each time for US\$20 for the return trip.

When we finally crossed back to Tajikistan, one person in our group, of eight stranded tourist, who spoke Russian, hitched into the nearby Tajikistan village, also called Ishkashim. She found two local drivers who were very pleased to take us back to Khorog, our little van taking three of us and our gear cost US\$84 and over heated several times. There was a strong military presence in Khorog and we were advised not to stop there. Our driver contacted Ortenbeck, whom Pat had met last year. He was not prepared to make the 18hr trip to Dushanbe that night so we stayed.

We left next morning, taking the lower route (about 555km), and arrived at our hotel in Dushanbe at midnight. US\$280

Dimitri's Costs; Dushanbe to Ishkashim US\$730

Included hotel for 1 night for three people, Airport pick up, Gas canisters

Khorog to Afghan boarder	4WD	US\$280
Boarder to Ishkashim	4WD	US\$ 20
Ishkashim to Kala Panja	4WD	US\$270
Kala Panja to Ishkashim	4WD	US\$230
Ishkashim to Boarder	four times	US\$ 80
Boarder to Khorog	Van	US\$ 84
Khorog to Dushanbe	4WD	US\$280

ACCOMMODATION

The hotel we stayed in Dushanbe was booked for us by Dimitri and was expensive but worth it for the air conditioning, good showers, breakfast and space to sort gear. Hotel Koyan 2, off Rudaki Ave between Bukhara and Husseinzoda St. US\$100 per room. Most hotels seem to be in the mid to upper end of price range. A cheaper hotel that was recommended was Vakhsh. There are a variety of dining options in Dushanbe from good cheap places where locals eat to more ritzy places on the main street. There was always tomato and cucumber salad available which was refreshing in the heat

In Kali Khum our driver took us to a leafy, clean home stay at which we arrived at 10.30pm and were given food. US\$25 included breakfast as well. A music festival was in progress when we arrived in Khorog so most places were booked out. Ishmail, an agent of Dimitri's, met up with us on the outskirts of Khorog and knew of a place on the south side of the river that was available for US\$35 including breakfast and dinner. We never found its name.

In Ishkashim we stayed at Marco Polo Guest House, the same place that Pat stayed last year. The Guest House had a garden and was in a walled compound with coiled barbed wire atop of the wall. This was also US\$35 per night and included three cooked meals a day. We safely stored some gear there. There are other cheaper places to stay in Ishkashim according to Malang and Lonely Planet but they are not easy to find. It is possible to camp in some village "camp grounds"

At Kala Panja our driver took us to the only guest house in the village. This had been considerably up graded and added to since Pat was there last year.

The Aga Khan has implemented a clean water initiative in most of the villages. Cool spring water is piped down from the mountains under ground and gravity fed to a communal tap for all to share.

COMMUNICATION AND PORTERS

English is spoken mostly by those in the tourist industry in Tajikistan and Afghanistan in my experience. The local people in eastern Tajikistan and the Wakan have their own tribal languages. The ability to speak Russian can be very helpful in Tajikistan and is known by a few in Afghanistan. English is taught in schools in Khorog and up the Wakan. Teenagers can speak it to some degree.

Cell phones are a common and essential part of life for any business and the efficient grape vine had a way of letting the locals know that we were coming. Pats cell phone had global roaming which was expensive. Cell phone coverage in Ishkashim to Kabul was possible. Tajikistan shut down its cell phone net works after the trouble in Khorog. When Pat was told the interpreter she had last year was in Kabul, Sayed appeared from nowhere. The guest house owner had phoned around. Sayed could not come with us but then two interpreters turned up one claiming he had walked for five hours down the Wakan to get to us. He said we must take someone from the Wakan Corridor. There seemed to be some contention from the Wakan guides about taking our chosen guide called Ya Mohammed who was not from the Wakan. As it turned out Ya only came to Kala Panja with us then returned to Ishkashim because of a health problem.

The guest house in Kala Panja was run by one of the owners' sons, 18 year old Mukmood Ahkem who spoke fairly good English. Ahkem arranged to get six porters (plus himself) for us through the village head man who seemed to choose the most needy or deserving. The village head man insisted that we have one of his people with us the whole time. This chore fell onto Ahkem who would not stay by himself so we ended up paying for two people to sit and wait for us for three weeks. They could not come with us up the glacier as they had no snow/ice equipment, experience, sleeping bags, clothes or food. We provided them with our cook tent and they got their own food by slipping back into the village un-noticed. They camped above the moraine wall and cooked with twigs and dung. How much we were to pay them was a contentious issue and was continuously negotiated. They did not want to be paid less than the porters had been paid. For the two day trip up to base camp the porters found shelter amongst large rocks. The porters were paid US\$20 each per day. The loads were about 20kg. We had no

scales but divided the loads equally. To get our gear back down the glacier Ahkem went down the night before and a different group of porters came up to our base camp on the glacier and carried loads back out to Kala Panja in one day. They were paid US\$28pp. The porters were delighted to work for us and one thanked us (through Ahkem) for making the village so rich. We were there during Ramadan when Muslims do not eat during daylight hours. The locals do not observe this custom very strictly and those in the tourist industry had no problem accommodating westerners' needs.



Pat descending Koh-e Rank looking into Pakistan

FINANCES AND EXPENSES

The local currency in Tajikistan is the somani. US\$1= 4.8 somani. There are numerous money changing kiosks on Rudaki Ave in Dushanbe. US dollars are accepted at hotels and some guest houses we stayed at. Dimitri, our agent, would take either US dollars or Somani for our transport and other costs.

In Ishkashim, Afghanistan, there are no banks or ATMs. We changed our currency with money changers in the bazaar. US\$1= 50 afghani. They also changed somani into afghani at a fair rate. The people we encountered were honest and trust worthy. Transport up the Wakan was paid for in US dollars as were the guest house owners and our English speaking helpers. The 4WD taxis that took us to the boarder (and back) were also happy with US dollars. The porters preferred to be paid in local currency but accepted US dollars when our interpreter assured them they had received the correct amount.

It would be wise to take plenty of US cash for unforeseen circumstances. If we had been stranded in Ishkashim much longer our credit cards would have been of no use what so ever.

Trip Expenses per person in US dollars;

Airfares -----	\$2278
Visas -----	\$ 551
Wakan Permit -----	\$ 30
Food -----	\$ 144
Accommodation ----	\$ 635
Transport-----	\$ 648
Porters and Minders-	\$ 261
Meals & Misc -----	\$ 100
Fuel & Gas-----	\$ 50
Food & Equipment	
From NZ-----	\$ 130
Medical 1 st Aid-----	\$ 100
Cell phone calls to	
Embassy in Kabul----	\$ 80
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>\$5007</u>

Medical Kit

We had with us a comprehensive first aid kit with a range of high altitude drugs, antibiotics, strong pain killers and various remedies for stomach problems. Diamox was taken throughout as a precaution. Bill had the worst stomach problems and arrived back in NZ 16 kgs lighter. The medicines we had only helped him temporarily before he became ill again.

Travel log time line

10 th & 11 th July	Fly from NZ to Guangzhou (Canton) China. Guangzhou to Urumchi China, Urumchi to Dushanbe Tajikistan.
12 th July	Bought bulk of food for expedition and sorted gear into bags.
13 th July	Left Dushanbe, four hour breakdown, arrived Kali Khum 10.30pm.
14 th July	Left Kali Khum 8.30 to Khorog 4pm. Dilemma whether or not to proceed to Afghanistan. Contemplated alternatives.
15 th July	Decided to continue Afghan plan. Bought more expedition food.
16 th July	Drove to Afghan boarder, (2.5 hours) crossed to Ishkashim, met up with guides, purchased bit's and pieces from bazaar.
17 th July	Got permits and permissions in Ishkashim, left at 11pm. Arrived at Kala Panja at 4pm. Arranged porters. Sorted gear into porter loads.
18 th July	Walked up Kala Panja Valley with seven porters. Left 9.30am because our minders needed to get prepared at short notice. Camped on moraine terrace 1.30pm.
19 th July	Left moraine camp at 6.30am, arrive base camp 8.30am. 3300m. Porters left, set up base camp.
20 th July	Carried food and gear up glacier (3940m) left in cache, returned to base.
21 July	Carried second load to glacier cache. Back down to base.

22 nd July	Rest day.
23 rd July	Dismantled base camp. Took remaining gear up glacier, past cache, and set up Intermediate camp, 4200m.
24 th July	Down to get everything from cache up to intermediate camp. Pat & Bill reconnoitered route through ice fall and a left gear dump in ice fall.
25 th July	Snowed during night. Took more gear into icefall and made higher gear dump at 4800m.
26 th July	Snowed lightly all day. Rest day.
27 th July	Dismantled intermediate camp. Carried everything into ice fall. Picked up gear from ice fall gear dump. Very heavy packs. Climbed up "The Knob" Set up High Camp at 5040m.
28 th July	Rest day
29 July	Acclimatization trip to saddle of boarder of Pakistan. 5600m.
30 th July	Pat not well. Rest day.
31 st July	Left for climb at 4am. Summitted Koh-e Rank ,5930m, around midday. Back at camp 4pm.
1 st August	Rest day
2 nd August	Bill and Pat to explore Col to east of Rohizon Zom and look into upper Wakan.
3 rd August	Rest day.
4 th August	Packed up high camp and walked down length of glacier back to base camp.
5 th August	Packed everything into porter loads. Walked down to Kala Panja village.
6 th August	Drove Kala Panja to Ishkashim. Heard that Tajikistan had closed boarder about two weeks ago.
7 th August	Attempted to cross boarder with local guide but Tajik side deserted. Five more foreign travelers arrive from upper Wakan wanting to cross boarder.
8 th August	Tried boarder again. Closed. In touch with NZ and German Embassy's in Kabul who initiated military helicopter evacuation plan.
9 th August	Polish traveler who spoke Russian contacted Russian boarder guard chief Boarder open briefly for eight of us to cross then closed again. Drove to Khorog where over 150 people had been killed. Kept low profile.
10 th August	Left Khorog 7am. Arrived Dushanbe mid night.
11 th August	Flew out of Dushanbe back to NZ.

CONCLUSION

This expedition for me was very successful and worth while. Exploring this unique geographical area that is seldom visited by westerns today and travelling to the head of a glacier that hasn't seen a human being since 1968 was very special. To do a first ascent of a peak was a bonus. There is plenty of scope for more climbing, to do first ascents and new routes. The Hindu Kush is not an extreme range as far as weather and terrain are concerned and the locals are very willing to help. The cash injection our visit gave to the area is very much needed for the people who have so little. We thought if there was any risk it would come from Afghanistan but as it turned out the problem was in Tajikistan. No insurance policy would have covered us for an act of war in Afghanistan or Tajikistan. We would have had to pay for our helicopter evacuation to Kabul and new visas and air fares as these would have expired. These areas are unstable. For anyone planning to go there the possible risks and extra costs should be taken into serious consideration.

CONTACTS

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Dushanbe
Tajikistan
dmelnichkov@hotmail.com
www.tajikaviatour.tj

For arranging accommodation and transport, and providing contacts in Khorog.

Ortenbeck,
Pamir Silk Travel Co
Tel +992378824392
+935 777555
Transport and tours.
Based in Khorog

English speaking guides in Ishkashim that can help getting permits and transport.
Malang Darior Local number 0794766067

Sayed	0799677858
International	00992934338626

Afiat Khum	00992936005869
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Abdul Gelly	0794284048
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The local guides are very willing to help and there seems to be a communication net work between them to help tourists or "foreigners" as they call us.

SPONSORS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The expedition members are grateful to the following organizations for financial support and equipment.

Mount Everest Foundation
New Zealand Alpine Club
Southern Approach/Black Diamond
Jet Boil
Gu
Macpac

Ae

Qala Panja Glacier Expedition
Wakan Corridor—Afghanistan
July/August 2012

12/15



MOUNT
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FOUNDATION

The following account gives a brief description of a three person expedition to the Qala Panja Glacier, Wakan Corridor in North Eastern Afghanistan and the first ascent of the peak Koh-e-Rank, 5930m, via the East Ridge by two of the members.

After a very successful expedition to the Wakan Corridor in 2011, Patricia Deavoll was interested in returning to climb another peak in the Hindu Kush range. Her initial objective was an unclimbed route on the peak Rahozon Zom, 6535 (South Peak) but three days before leaving New Zealand her climbing partner pulled out of the trip because of "security issues" in Afghanistan. Pat and the two other members, Maryrose Fowlie and Bill Byrch, decided to go ahead with the climb.

The team carried their food and equipment to a high camp at the head of the Qala Panja Glacier at 5000m via dumps and relaying. The head of the glacier has a large catchment area and a huge plateau. The glacier is split in two by a rocky outcrop and it descends steeply from the plateau to the lower glacier. Once the team was acclimatized it was decided that a more achievable goal for Maryrose, who was originally a base camp support person, would be the peak of Koh-e-Rank, 5930m.

Koh-e-Rank rises from the plateau to the south west. The climb was achieved in one day and was not technical, the schrund at the base of the climb being the only obstacle. The decent was by the same route as the ascent with the schrund being abseiled over.

Afghanistan was entered from southern Tajikistan at Ishkashim, thus hopefully avoiding the Taliban. We felt safe in this area and with the people. We did however have a problem with getting back into Tajikistan as there had been a "one day war" in the Tajik town of Khorog and the Tajiks had closed their side of the boarder with Afghanistan. After an anxious three days waiting our group of eight tourists was allowed through the boarder and it was promptly closed again.

Expenses per person;

Airfares	US\$2278
Visas	US\$ 551
Medical 1 st aid	US\$ 100
Wakan permit	US\$ 30
Food	US\$ 144
Accommodation	US\$ 635
Transport	US\$ 648
Porters & Minders	US\$ 261
Meals & Misc	US\$ 100
Fuel & Gas	US\$ 50
Food & Equip	
Ex NZ	US\$ 130
Cell phone calls	US\$ 80
To Embassy in Kabul	
TOTAL	US\$5007