

AN EXPLORATION ON HORSEBACK OF THE DJENGHI-DJER MOUNTAIN RANGE



DJENGHI-DJER EXPEDITION

KYRGYZSTAN 2016

CHISHOLM, NICOLL & PARTNERS

EXPEDITION REPORT



OVERVIEW

The aim of our expedition was to explore and climb in a set of unexplored and poorly documented valleys in the Djenghi-Djer mountain range in south-eastern Kyrgyzstan. We decided to travel on horseback for speed and flexibility, and also intended to attempt unclimbed peaks at heights of c.4,000 – 4,700m.

The name Djenghi-Djer / 'Jangy-Jer' means "New Land" in Kyrgyz, and this is a fair description of the range from the mountaineering perspective. The range is approximately 70km in length (west-east) and the most prominent peaks (4,000m – 4,700m) are clustered on the east of the range. We were sure that the area would have potential for exciting first ascents, and we weren't disappointed.

In planning a previous expedition to India, we were inspired by the exploratory expeditions led by Kimikazu Sakamoto in Zanskar in 2009, 2011 and especially in 2012, which opened a set of valleys up to future expeditions. We were also irritated when in India, by the limitations of exploring on foot. Horses are the best way to explore mountainous areas quickly and properly, with swift movement between locations. We therefore had the ambitious goal to 'do a Kyoto Zanskar' on horseback – to sketch, photograph and document the mountains of the Djenghi-Djer.

We intended to:

- travel into the mountains of Djenghi-Djer on horseback;
- photograph and sketch the valleys and peaks;
- gather and share information about the area;
- identify prominent routes and open up the region for pioneering climbing expeditions;
- make first ascents of mountains above 4,000m;
- plan and execute all of our own logistics and expedition support.

The attempt to combine exploring *and* mountaineering meant, perhaps, that we were limited in both. For example, spending many days at base camps waiting for weather windows to climb meant that the exploration was nowhere near as thorough as the Kyoto inspiration. But as jacks of all trades, it was very enjoyable to combine both these aims. Between July and August 2016, we rode in to the northern valleys of the Djenghi-Djer, explored widely and established four base camps. We made five ascents of peaks up to 4,436m, as well as climbing one prominent point. Of the five peaks, we believe four to be first ascents (one was more accessible and had a cairn on the summit). Two of the peaks were nice Alpine climbs, while three were scree / rock scrambles. Apart from that, the range still has an abundance of prospects for ambitious mixed climbing firsts.

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1. PLANNING

1.1 TEAM

Our expedition team was made up of individuals with a wide range of experiences and skills suited to an expedition of exploration and mountaineering challenge. All members of the team were competent in general expedition skills including mountaineering at altitude and long-distance hiking, and had been trained in outdoor First Aid. All of us had climbed and hiked together on many previous trips, so had a good ability to work together.

Calum Nicoll + Neil Smith + Struan Chisholm + Sandy Fowler + Mark Chonofsky + Sam Newmark

The team's collective experience includes previous climbing expeditions to India ('Katkar Nala'), Tajikistan ('The Silk Road' which included a 15,000 mile drive from Inverness and back), Iceland, as well as several seasons in the Alps and many days and nights exploring the Scottish hills. Previous first ascents - *Sgurr a Mhadaidh Fuar* (5,897m) in the Indian Himalaya in 2015, *Mount Christopher Ward* (4,922m) and *Mullach Siseal Scott* (4,495m) in Tajikistan, both in 2013. Team members have completed many Scottish winter new routes up to VI. Most of the team also walked 650km across Iceland from south to north in 2012.

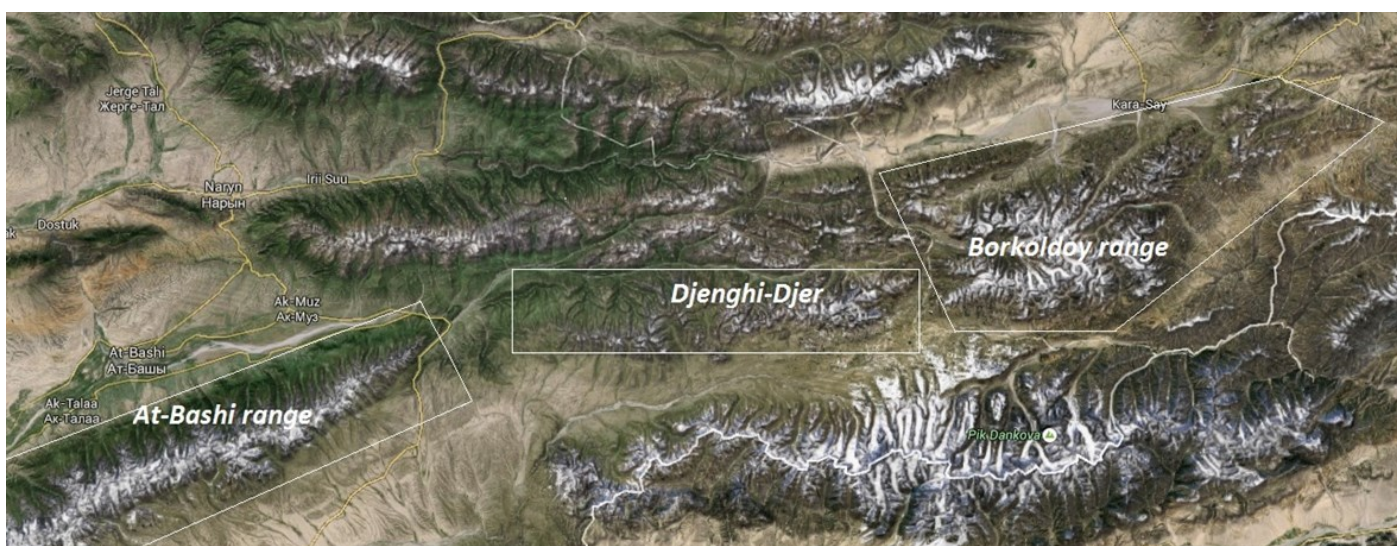


Above: Two-thirds of the team among the mess of base camp. Calum, Neil, Struan, Sandy.

1.2 IDENTIFICATION & OBJECTIVES

We identified the mountain range on Google maps, but could find no information about the range, and noticed that no mountaineering expeditions appeared to have been there. There had been one expedition further south (Pat Littlejohn, Mustyr canyon, 2003) as well as various trips to the At-Bashi (e.g. ISM / Pat Littlejohn, various) and Borkoldoy (e.g. Harvard, 2005) ranges.

The Djenghi-Djer range is situated to the east of the At-Bashi range, and to the west of the Borkoldoy range in south-eastern Kyrgyzstan. The distance from the mountains to the Chinese border, to the south, is a matter of only 15-25km at various points in the range. The location is illustrated in the satellite view below (the prominent white line lower right being the Chinese border).



A closer view of the range showed a cluster of large, snowy peaks in the east, accessible from the northern and southern plains. The valley to the north offered a good route for exploration in a westerly direction from the north-east. Similarly, the southern plains close to the Chinese border would offer excellent open access if an approach were made from Ak-Muz (west).



Just about all that is written about this range is included below, taken from Vladimir Komissarov's *Mountaineering Regions of Kyrgyzstan*, a very detailed summary of the country's mountainous areas:

“It is situated to the east of the Atbashi range as its continuation and divided by Kindy pass. The region is administrated by Atbashinskyi raion of the Naryn oblast. The best climbing is in the eastern part. The range is barely explored. (...) There are about 50 unclimbed peaks over 4,000m in the ridge.”

(See: <https://docs.google.com/file/d/OB2-VwKVVUIq-N3BzYmN6WVnHRWs>)



This sounded like a perfect area to explore and climb.

The range is shown above, outlined in blue within its wider context, and again below:



The locations of our base camps, ascents, and further prospects spotted are shown on p.19-22, and p.28.



We were guided mainly by maps, as photographs of the region were sparse - we could only find one of the mountains (above left), and one of a hunting camp on the far east of the range, separating it from the Borkoldoy range (above right). This hunting camp, a collection of caravans and huts, turned out to be the closest seasonal habitation to the mountain range, and we spent our second night on the trail camped beside it. The camp is passed when transiting through the valley which links the northern and southern plains.

We had the option of exploring from the north or the south of the range, and opted for the northern access due to the openness of the plains and long, narrow valleys suitable for gradual glacier approaches. It turned out that the low-lying glaciers shown on the maps were fairly few and far between - the majority had receded and were less substantial than the maps indicated - and we didn't use any of the low-lying glaciers to access peaks.

The topography of the mountains is complex, with many sharp summits and freshly glaciated features. Accessing the mountains involved ascending on grass slopes initially which gave way to scree slopes. We found these scree slopes to be quite common, and the integrity of the rock was poor in many places. The amount of snow present on the hills varied; the summits we climbed had some snow cover on the tops, but in general large snow fields were limited to the glaciers.

Photo credit and copyright: Left: www.panoramio.com/photo/2587643 ; Right www.panoramio.com/photo/61350897.

1.3 TRAINING

Training was an important part of our expedition planning, and was carried out as a team, as well as on an individual basis. All members of the team maintain fair standards of fitness, which was built upon through climbing, running and cycling as well as hikes in the mountains. A communal log of activity was kept to enable goal-setting and to add a competitive aspect to individual fitness training. As only one team member had much prior experience of sitting on a horse, we tried to develop our horse riding skills, and the ability to look after and manage horses in their daily routine. We practiced first aid and emergency response procedures, trialling mock disasters in realistic settings. Crevasse rescue, self-arrest and general climbing emergency response were also practised on a short training trip to the Spanish Sierra Nevada. One member of the team brushed up on his Russian language skills, committing several horse and mountain related Russian and Kyrgyz phrases to memory.



2. JOURNEY

2.1 ETHOS

The ethos of the trip was to be minimalist, lightweight, and to have minimal impact on the environment we passed through. This played into how the journey was structured.

Most expeditions to the Kyrgyz mountains use large military 4x4 vehicles or helicopters, but we thought that horses would serve our purposes much better. Flying to Kyrgyzstan was not our preferred, nor the most carbon-efficient mode of transport to the country, but it was necessitated by time constraints on the expedition.

We weren't able to minimise our 'expedition stable' as much as we had hoped. The local horsemen were uncomfortable with us taking and managing horses alone for three weeks as we had intended. We had to enlist two horsemen in a sort of "take ten horses, get two more free / but take us too" scenario. They were very helpful in managing the horses, and we were very glad to have their support. We did the navigating - although they knew their region well, the horsemen were not too good with maps.

We decided against using expedition time to gather food and supplies in Bishkek, with no idea of the quality available. Instead, we took food from the UK, including a large quantity of home-baked oatcakes, flapjacks and fruit cake.

2.2 LOGISTICS

We sought to minimise costs as far as possible without compromising outcomes, and to minimise wasted time by planning effectively. Nineteen days out of the full twenty-two days in Kyrgyzstan were spent on horseback / in the mountains. We tried to pack the greatest number of calories and value-adding pieces of equipment whilst keeping the weight low enough that the horses could keep up a good pace into the mountains.

Several of the key logistical themes are described below:

Currency

The currency of Kyrgyzstan is the Kyrgyz Som. At the time of the expedition there were around 89 som to the pound - far fewer than the 113 som we could have purchased when we started planning the trip. Most of our large expenses were incurred through travel, which was pre-paid, but in order to pay for transport on the ground, cash was carried, divided between all members of the team. International bank cards were taken as a reserve, but were not used. We carried most of our cash in USD, which is easy to exchange in Kyrgyzstan as long as the notes are pristine. In fact, the Bishkek currency exchanges have the tightest exchange spreads on USD we have ever seen - so competitive that it would not make sense to source som in advance of arriving in the country. GBP spreads were wider but still competitive. An interesting ploy in the currency exchange kiosks was for the trader to claim that lower denomination USD bills command a lower som value than higher denomination bills (i.e. 60 som instead of 68 som, a 12% discount). This is opportunistic nonsense, which we dealt with by leaving any kiosk that made the claim, and giving custom to traders who behaved sensibly.

Weather / climate

The Djenghi-Djer range is a high-altitude, mountainous semi-desert environment, with extensive glaciers and permanent snow cover at the higher levels, and grass plains at lower levels. As we expected, grass gives way to scree, rock and ice very abruptly, making approaches to peaks quite feasible and fast. The snow line was higher than we had hoped for - close to 4,000m. Climbing earlier in the season might cut out some of the gruelling scree walking we encountered before reaching the snow line. We expected rain and snowfall to be infrequent, but it wasn't. The weather was mixed, with alternating days of sunny skies, rain, snow, hail and low cloud. The temperature was usually pleasant for riding, but the cloud and rain wasn't ideal for climbing. The daily maximum temperature was about 20°C in the valleys, with a minimum experienced of -5°C at altitude. Most nights were cold enough to freeze sufficiently for approaches over ice even at 3,500m, although a few were warmer. That said, it did thaw quickly under the intense sunlight. The wind was not particularly strong, except in the most exposed locations.

Maps

We brought several USSR military maps of the area, which we found to be good quality. We also used Google maps and satellite imagery for reference.

Visas and entry permits

Visas are not required for British citizens visiting Kyrgyzstan for less than 60 days.

Permissions and permits

Mountaineering permits were not required for the expedition. The government of Kyrgyzstan has an excellent policy of minimising bureaucracy in order to encourage tourism. A border permit was required for the area (south of the Kara-Say). These were cheap (\$10 each, although we were originally quoted \$30) and easy to source through any tourist agency operating in Kyrgyzstan.

Expedition medicine

We took a comprehensive medical kit from the UK including analgesics and antibiotics, which was kept accessible in one person's rucksack. During excursions from camp we carried a stripped-down first aid kit, but the base camp one was very comprehensive. The only items we used were cleansing wipes for cuts, paracetamol, ibuprofen, and co-codamol for pain from horse kicks and shoulder injuries.

High altitude medicine / altitude sickness

Although we did reach a high altitude quickly (Kara-Say, c.3,300m on day one), the altitude did not cause major issues. We each carried about 3 litres of water whilst on horseback and tried to stay hydrated. The minimal exertion required for riding was advantageous to acclimatisation.

Travel health / vaccinations

NHS Fitfortravel indicated the south-eastern part of Kyrgyzstan to be a very low risk zone for malaria. It recommended that no vaccinations were necessary for Kyrgyzstan except for ensuring that primary vaccinations and boosters are up to date for the UK, including tetanus. To avoid mosquito and other bug bites, we carried spray deterrent for use when there were insects, but there weren't many biting insects. The risk of rabies was also low, and none of the team brought their rabies vaccinations up to date.

Nutrition

We all tried to gain a small amount of additional weight in preparation for the trip, to give better insulation and energy. This was more successful than on previous trips because it was supported by an

active 'get fitter' effort, which went some way to ensuring food turned into actual reserves. In the mountains, we budgeted food consumption at around 4,000 calories per person per day, in a rough breakdown of 35% fat, 40% carbohydrates and 25% protein. This is a higher percentage of fat than normal, but fat is energy-dense (over twice as much as protein / carbohydrates), and this diet had worked well for us in the past. Large amounts of carbohydrates, in the form of oats, cous cous, pasta, smash, were built into our diet, and the fat came from butter (ingredient), olive oil and nuts. We over-catered - a repeat offence - mainly because our appetites diminished at altitude and we were too conservative with portions early on. We only had one defined meal per day, which was dinner. Throughout the day, we snacked on oatcakes, flapjack, fruit loaf, shortbread, chocolate biscuits and beef jerky at regular intervals. We added soy mince, stock and salt to our evening meals to increase protein intake and to help rehydration. The diet was varied because some members of the team were unwilling to retry the 'two items only' approach we tried out a year previously.

Horses

We had one horse per person, and four horses to carry all gear. We arranged in advance to source the horses from the hunting horsemen of a village not far from Kara-Say. Logistically, the horses were hugely beneficial to the expedition. The advantages over motor or foot transport were numerous. Riding allowed us to access the mountains quickly and with great flexibility, averaging between 5km/hr and 8km/hr, with no breaks, covering terrain which could not be covered on foot (e.g. crossing rivers in spate) or by vehicle (e.g. right up to the foot of the moraine). Rather than draining energy and time on long approaches, we conserved both for ascents. We were able to strike and saddle the entire base camp within two hours, to relocate it or retreat in case of emergency. This speed would not have been possible had we used an expedition vehicle or helicopter, which would usually have to be arranged in advance.

The disadvantage of the horses was that they were treacherous, and we weren't experienced riders (until after the trip). This increased the risks, and the expedition involved more incidents (all of them horse-related) than any trip we have done in the past. One of the team was thrown off and landed on his head, one was kicked by a horse in the thigh, and one horse rolled over on its rider and then bolted, dragging the rider along for several metres and kicking him repeatedly. However, we learned how to handle horses. For any expedition that chooses to ride, we would emphasise the importance of wearing riding boots or old work shoes with a heel and smooth sole, rather than mountaineering boots, while riding. Also, holding the back of the saddle while on steep downhill slopes will help the rider stay on the horse. We wore climbing helmets while riding, and we also learned to be aware of biting insects landing on the horses, which makes them more likely to buck. During climbing periods and rest days, the horses remained within

the vicinity of base camp with their front hooves tied together. Snow clumps up under a horse's hoof like on a crampon without anti-balling plates, and they do not move well over glaciers. Although very sure-footed, they were largely confined to below the scree level and had to be led over moraines.

Environmental impact

Horse riding is a low impact form of travel compared to motorised transportation. We attempted to mitigate our environmental impact as much as possible. Solid human waste was disposed of by burying away from water sources, and toilet paper was burned. Liquid waste was disposed of locally away from water sources. Batteries were returned to the UK for disposal. Plastic / packaging waste was removed and disposed of in Bishkek, and all remaining waste was burned.

Water

Water was sourced from streams and we didn't have to melt snow. This water was purified and sometimes boiled as well. We used a 20L flexible plastic jerrycan, which took up very little space. Maintaining high levels of hydration was very important due to the heat and height, and so we each consumed about 3 litres daily.

Fuel

We took three liquid fuel stoves and used petrol from a petrol station. Deep frying for six often called for the simultaneous use of two stoves. These stoves operated effectively at low temperatures and at altitude.

Clothing / footwear

We dressed appropriately for the conditions, layering clothes as one might for Scottish winter. It was never inhibitingly cold, but the few hours spent on horseback during hail and snow falling were the most challenging and called for use of all layers, including multiple pairs of socks. We took care to protect skin and eyes from the sun by applying sun / lip cream and wearing CAT 4 sunglasses, especially at higher levels where the sun was reflecting off snow and ice.

Tents

We used a 4-man North Face tent and a 2-man Alpkit Kangri tent, both of which have been used on previous expeditions. We each brought one mat and an expedition-grade goose down sleeping bag. Two bivvy bags were taken in case of emergency, or if climbing required them, and these were useful for storing rucksacks and supplies outside the tents in all weathers.

Glacial travel / climbing equipment

Harnesses, ice axes and crampons were brought, along with a file to allow the metal gear to be kept sharp and in top condition. Two half ropes were brought for large glacial sections and ascents, to minimise weight while still allowing reasonable distances to be crossed as a group. A well-equipped rack with several lightweight ice screws was brought for ice sections on ascents. Surveying and climbing was carried out in pairs and in a trio, with the remainder of the team at base camp while others were away.

Communications

The team remained together or within line of sight for most of the trip while riding, as did the climbing trios whilst away from base camp. We did not encounter any instance of high winds impeding communication. We borrowed a satellite phone and a Spot Tracker from the Alpine Club. We arranged for a UK expedition coordinator to monitor external factors, assist us in arrangements and keep us informed with weather updates, and we kept them informed of our progress and mishaps via satellite phone.





3. LOCATION

3.1 DJENGI-DJER

South-eastern Kyrgyzstan is highly mountainous, like the rest of the country. The mountains here are part of the enormous Tien-Shan, the largest mountain range in Asia.

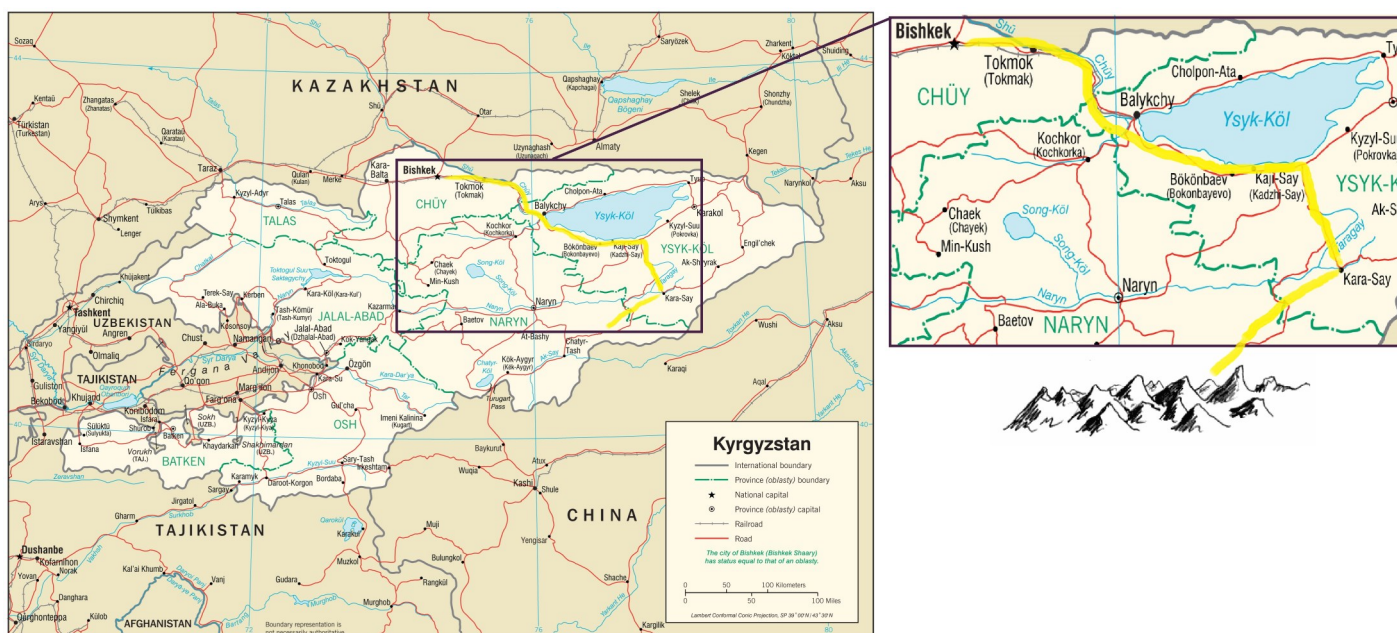
The Djenghi-Djer is a relatively small, remote range situated in Naryn Province, which at around 45,000 square kilometres is the largest province in the country.

The wider province is sparsely inhabited, with an average of just six people per square kilometre and generally very poor. 98 per cent of the population is of Kyrgyz origin. The religion of most people in Kyrgyzstan is, nominally at least, Islam, but many people do not attend mosques or follow the teachings of the Quran. Alcohol is drunk widely, and is actually a problem in some areas. Many Kyrgyz hold to a mixture of beliefs drawn from both Islam or some other major religion, and a local folk religion.

The town of Naryn is situated about 70km to the east of the Djenghi-Djer range. Temperatures range from an average maximum of 25 degrees Celsius in July to an average minimum of -19 degrees Celsius in January. The southernmost point of the range is only c.15 kilometres north of the Chinese border. To the east is the larger and slightly better known Borkoldoy range, which has been partially explored. Also explored, to the west is the At-Bashi range, which translates as 'horse's head' in Kyrgyz.

3.2 ROUTE

The team met in Bishkek (various flights from Aberdeen, Edinburgh, London and Perth, Australia) and travelled by taxi from there to Kara-Say, where we gathered the horses and set off in a westerly direction towards the Djenghi-Djer range. The driving route is summarised below:



Indication of route highlighted in yellow.

The journey from Bishkek to Kara-Say was split in the small town of Tamga, near the shores of the huge Lake Issyk-Kul. From there, the route headed up a major pass, the road climbing to over 4,000m (Suek Pass) amidst impressive scenery. Kara-Say is a tiny, damp and desolate hamlet, nestled in the valley of the Naryn River, a major river running east to west across the middle of the country.

We departed Kara-Say and followed the river west for a few kilometres until we branched off to the south-west. We rode for three days over a wide variety of terrain: grassy slopes, crumbling hillsides of scree, and braided rivers, before setting up our first base camp in the east of the range.

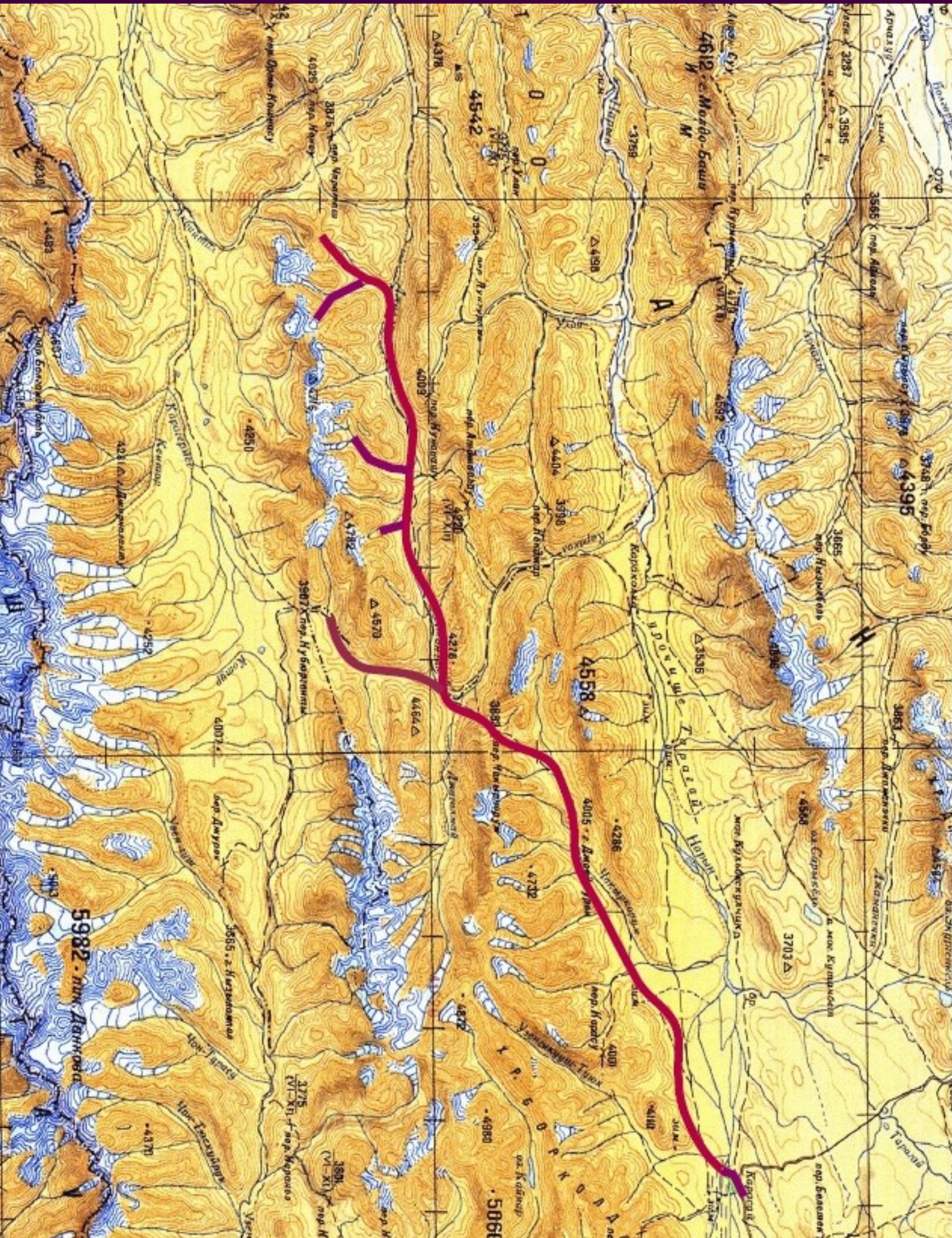
We rode further west gradually over the next two weeks, establishing a further three camps and staying at each for between two nights and a week.

Our furthest (westerly) base camp was c.80km from Kara-Say as the crow flies - closer to 90km following our route through the valleys - a distance which would take between three and four days' riding back to Kara-Say.

The area felt - and was - extremely remote. Only once did we see any other people - on the return journey, not far from Kara-Say, we crossed paths with some hunters on horseback.

Below: Our riding route from Kara-Say (north east starting point) to base camps, including a detour south.

Total distance c.90km.



3.3 BASE CAMPS

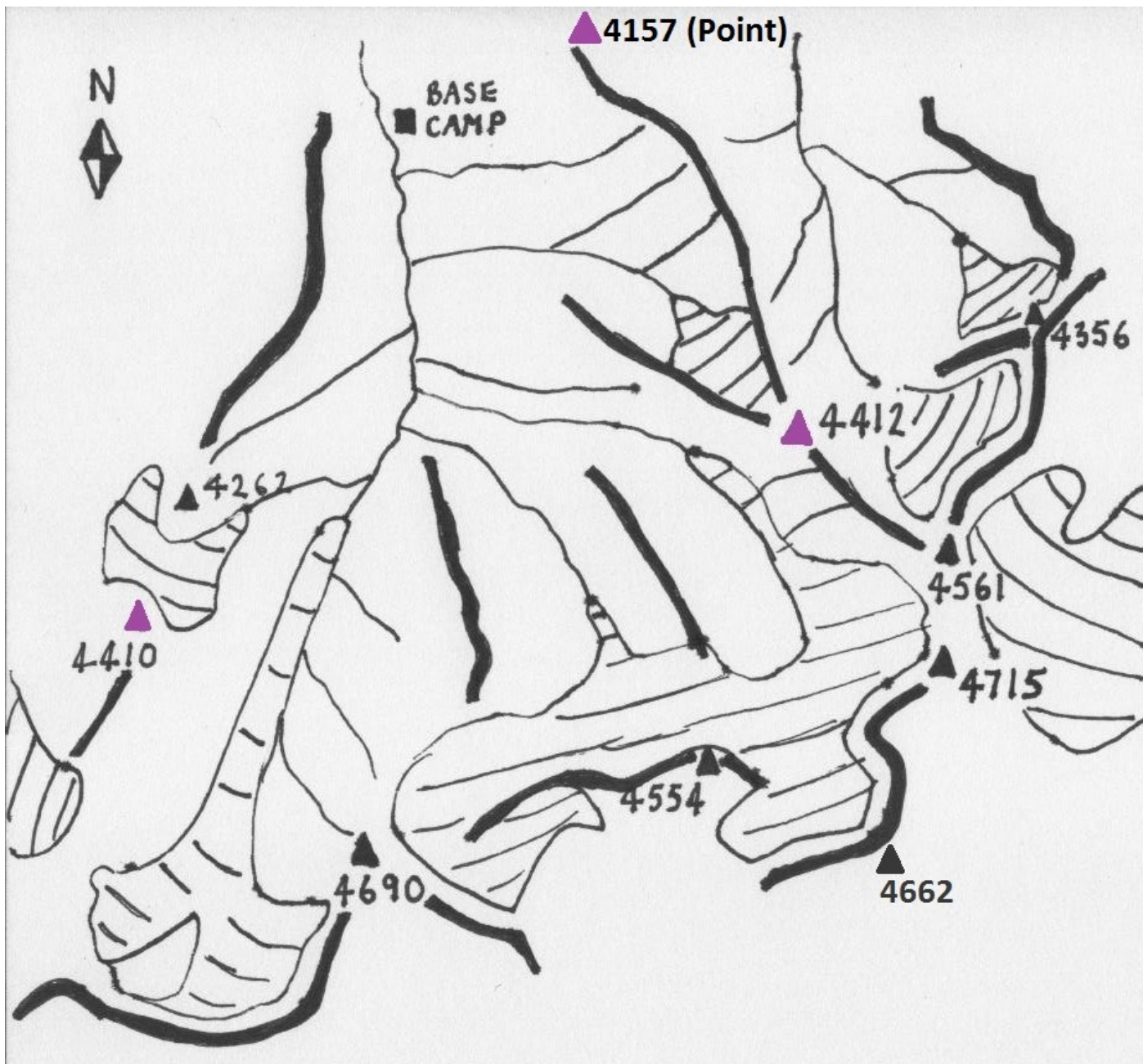
We set camps in four locations along the northern edge of the range. All of them were grassy but allowed good access to the peaks nearby, usually with 1 hour's walk or less to the scree / rock line. There were streams at each camp, and although all were glacial, none stopped flowing completely at night time.

The base camps are shown overleaf on the Soviet-era map we used, numbered chronologically.



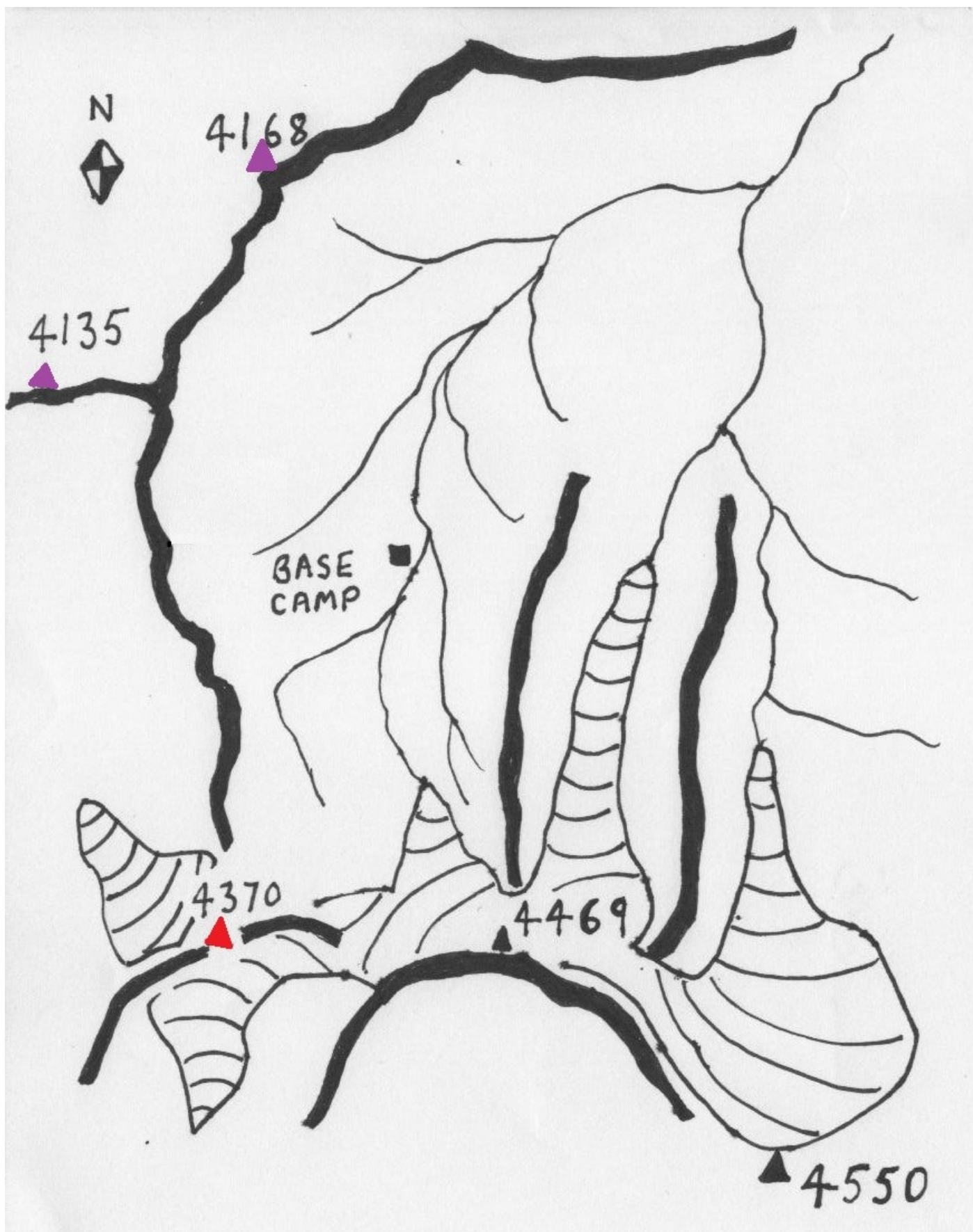
Sketches of the two camps from where we explored and climbed most (BC2, BC3) are shown below, to illustrate the positions of the mountains we climbed and those which are still unclimbed.

Below: **BC2** location and surrounding features. Ascents marked in purple. This was the best camp for access to a range of peaks.



- P4561 looked awkward to get up, as a very messy ridge separated it from P4412 and there was steep scree on the west face. Possibly better with more snow cover.
- P4715 looked accessible from a challenging scree/rock gully then steep snow slope NNW of the summit.
- P4662 also looked appealing as a straightforward glacier ascent.
- P4554 could be accessed by the same glacier route as P4662, changing direction at the top of the glacier.
- A long ridge connects P4262 and P4410 (the latter was 'Mount Tpuzy6', GPS height logged as 4,436m).
- P4690 is a very impressive conical peak - probably the most technically demanding in the vicinity.

Below: **BC3** location and surrounding features. Ascents marked in purple. Failed attempt marked in red.



- P4469 has a long, narrow and near-vertical snow slope on the north face. An alternative route might be taken from the summit of P4370, but we could not ascertain how feasible this route was. It might be challenging given that there is a split in the ridge.

4. MOUNTAINS

We climbed and explored in pairs and trios with several people at base camp at any time. Our routes were planned visually and using maps, and we scouted out suitable routes by exploring at lower levels and using a zoom lens to look upwards. We recced several routes more than we attempted. Weather conditions during our period in the mountains were very mixed, but fortunately the good weather and the bad weather came in daily 'chunks' so that we could either commit to an ascent at 2am upon seeing a clear sky, or write off the next day entirely upon seeing a cloudy or rainy sky. The pattern almost seemed to be 1-2 days of clear skies and sun, followed by 1-2 days of cloud, rain and sometimes snow and hail. Temperatures during the night were sufficiently cold to freeze the terrain for approaches over ice, but several mornings we awoke to find an inch of fresh snow, which then melted by early afternoon. The main off-putting factor was the combination of fresh snow, rain, and fairly high temperatures some nights.

We made five ascents, four of which we understand to be firsts, and made an attempt on another peak but were unable to complete it. We also climbed a prominent rocky point, which required ropes. All of these are outlined in the following pages.

Below: P4370 - the one peak we had to turn back from, some 50 metres below the summit.



4.1 MOUNT Трузыб (4,436m) - ASCENT

The route we chose from BC2 was long, steep and punishing due to massive scree fields below the snow line. The mountain had a high glacier, but access to this was blocked from our side by vertical rock buttresses. The summit was on the ridge above the glacier, too far from camp to be visible. Ascending the scree gully was very steep. There were long stretches of hard snow scattered all the way to the ridge higher up. There was one very long, incredibly steep stretch of gravelly loose scree after that. Re-joining the biggest snow slope then, it was a very enjoyable but tiring last 200m of steep ascent – kicking steps in with the blades, leaning on ice axes to rest every few metres. Reaching the ridge, it was rock, with snow beneath it on both sides. We walked along the ridge and there were several false summits – the last of which was like the Inaccessible Pinnacle rock stack / chimney (visible in picture on p.2), where we started to rope up with a view to climbing that last 20m or so, until we discovered that the real summit was further on, and we only had to use gear for the last section. Grade: overall AD, although the rock stack near the summit was closer to D.

Below: View up to Mount Трузыб (centre, above glacier) from below Mount Stann Chonofsky.



4.2 MOUNT STANN CHONOFSKY (4,412m) - ASCENT

From BC2, we followed a stream up SE until we cleared the grass and traversed steep scree to reach the bottom of the snow field. The small glacier blanketing the north slopes of this peak was steep enough to offer excitement picking the best angles over the snow, but not steep enough to require gear placing in the fairly soft snow conditions we met in day time (although it may have, if frozen solid). The snow slope was unbroken up to the summit thereafter, corniced at the very top and with patches of rock on the flat summit. Grade: PD.



Above: Mark ascending the snow field towards the glaciated north face.

Overleaf: View from the summit of Mount Stann Chonofsky to P4561.



4.3 AN TRUS (4,168m) - ASCENT

A walk on rock and scree and a scramble summit in the valley of BC3. Grade: PD-.

4.4 CLACHAN NIALL (4,135m) - ASCENT

Another scramble peak enchainned after 'An Trus', further south close to BC3. The most westerly peak we climbed, with good views all around and to the mountains of diminishing scale further west. Grade: PD-.

4.5 POINTSYSTEM (4,157m) - ASCENT, POINT via ROUTE "KALEIDOSCOPE"

Directly east of BC2, a prominent rocky pillar which offered some challenging climbing. We proceeded up considerable scree and loose rock until it was possible to gain the ridge via a short chimney. Continued up the ridge across several false summits and an exposed a cheval section until the final summit was reached. Descended by abseil of east face then down the scree gully. Grade: D, F4, A0.

4.6 P4224 - ASCENT

From BC1, we moved south-east and south up a gentle ridge, the incline and exposure of which became more aggressive higher up as the rock gave way to a meagre ice slope above the snow line. This was a little trip uphill to recce access to other peaks nearby, and a cairn was found on the summit. Grade: PD.

4.7 P4370 - ATTEMPT

Located to the south-south-west of BC3, this peak cut quite a nice jagged angle on the horizon. The scree route from BC3 to reach the plateau above which the peak rose sharply, was one of the most laborious we encountered. The rock in this part of the ridge was granular and abysmal. Once we reached the snow line, however, it became more interesting, with large steps over and between the snow-rock overlaps (as pictured on p.23). The snow slope was continuous up to a rock stack on the summit, at an angle of c.55 degrees / lessening higher up. We got some way up the snow slope before retreating - the angle was steep enough to cause damage if we slipped, and as we had started late, the snow had melted too much to secure screws. Grade: PD+.

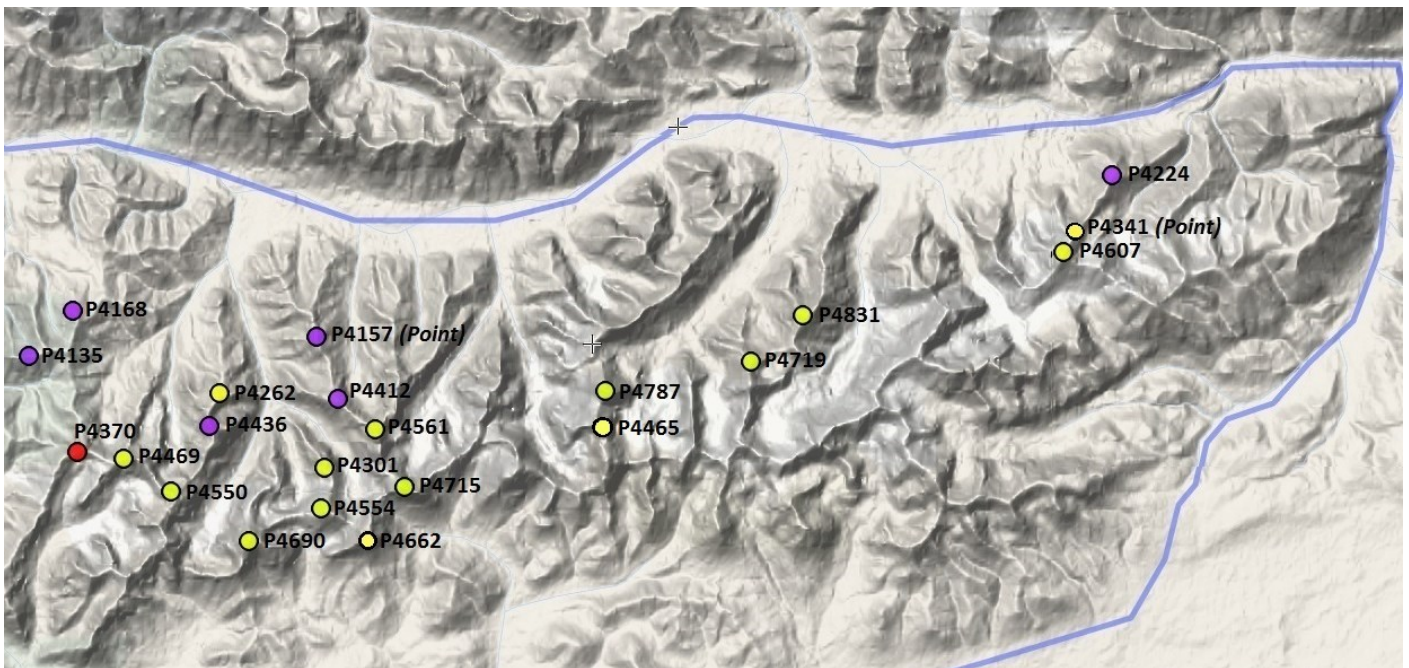
5. FURTHER PROSPECTS

There are numerous mountains still to be climbed in the Djenghi-Djer - far more mountains than those which we have marked below. The peaks mapped below and the unclimbed peaks detailed in the following pages are only those which we have reced in enough detail to be able to say something useful about, or show pictures of.

Ascents marked in purple.

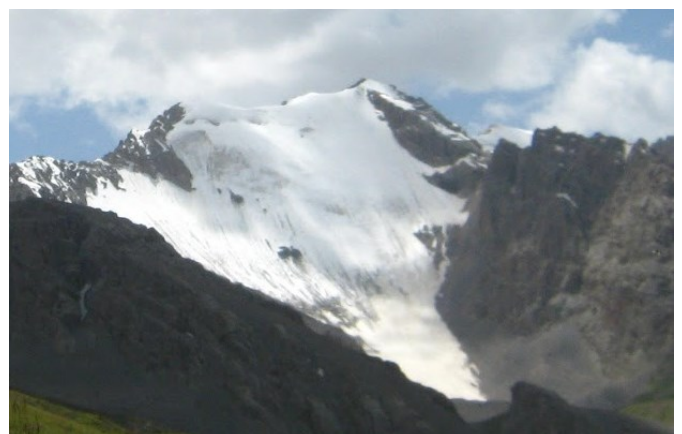
Failed attempts marked in red.

Further prospects marked in yellow.



1. P4469

North face shown, narrow steep snow slope in centre left of photo. Taken from below P4370.



2. P4550

View of P4550 north face glacier (summit centre left) and P4469 which appears higher to the right.



3. P4262

View up towards P4262 on the ridge and Mount Трузыб (east face) at the centre rear.



4. P4690

View from BC2, showing north rock face.



5. P4662

View of north face. Ascent of glacier looked feasible from recce at top of moraine, below.



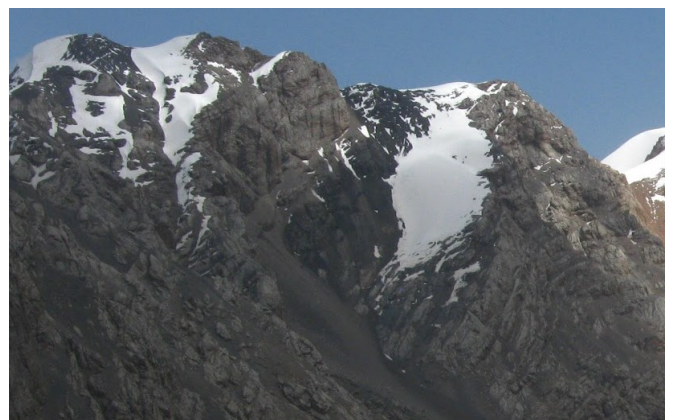
6. P4554

View of north face - same glacier approach as for P4662.



7. P4301

View south from above BC2. Rock buttresses of P4301 in centre, P4554 at rear right.



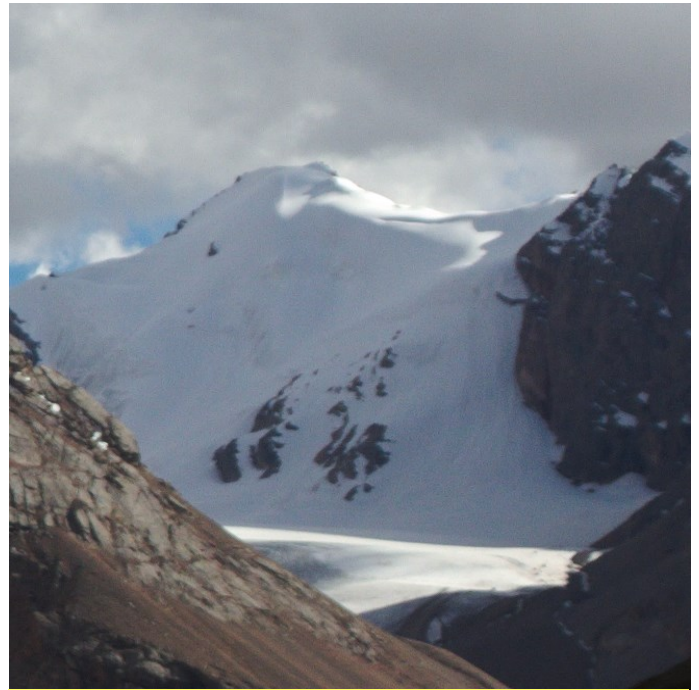
8. P4561

Looking eastwards to west face. Direct approach may be better than linking the long / jagged ridge from P4412.



9. P4715

Looking eastwards at NW face. Best access recced was the lower snow patch at centre-left of photo.



10. P4465

Large lump, well covered with snow, to left / south of P4787. Viewed from BC4.



11. P4787

North-east approach, viewed from BC4. Glacier extended to lower right, potential good route.



12. P4719

View from near BC4 to north face. Best approach not visible - lower left below glacier, hidden black moraine offers best access to NE ridge.



13. P4831

View from north, valley entrance en route to BC4.



14. P4607

Summit at rear / very top right of photo. North slopes shown, P4341 (point) in front.



15. P4341 (point)

View from P4224 summit to P4341 (point) and P4607, both in top right of photo. Photo looking SW.

P4561

P4715

P4662

P4554



Above: View from the summit of Mount Stann Chonofsky (4,412m) towards P4561, P4715, P4662 and P4554, and down into the corrie with moraine where we encountered a pack of wolves.

Below: View from the summit of P4135 towards P4690, P4550 and P4489. Location of BC3 just out of view directly below P4489.





6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are very grateful for the support of the organisations and companies that made the expedition possible due to their support through funding and generous donations of equipment, clothing and even home-baked shortbread. We're proud to be associated with all of them.

- Christopher Ward (London) Ltd.
- The Captain Scott Society
- The Mount Everest Foundation
- The Jeremy Willson Charitable Trust
- The BMC
- The Duke of Edinburgh's Trust No.2
- Jack Wolfskin
- CiloGear
- Snickers Workwear
- Sealskinz
- Lyon Outdoor
- BLOC Eyewear
- Meatsnacks Group
- Wool & Prince
- GetmieSafe Ltd.
- Crocs
- Komperdell
- Fisher & Donaldson
- Pulsin'
- Clearspring Ltd.
- Pip & Nut

Christopher Ward



cilogear

Snickers
WORKWEAR



SEALSKINZ

LYON
OUTDOOR

The Jeremy Willson Charitable Trust



BMC

BLOC

Getmie Safe

WILD WEST
BEEF JERKY

KOMPERDELL

Wool & Prince
well endowed fibres

Clearspring

Authentic & Organic Fine Foods

crocs[™]



Pulsin'



Thanks also to those who helped in planning, with gear, and 'in the field':

- Calum McLellan (UK Expedition Coordinator)
- Geoff Birtles, Gemma Curran & Becky Curran
- Dr Simon Green
- The Alpine Club

APPENDIX A - ROUTE LOG / DIARY

15th - 17th July - Neil, Calum and Mark arrive first and get to Kara-Say a day before Sam, Struan and Sandy. Taxi from Bishkek to Kara-Say takes 5-6 hours. Sorting gear on the grassy plain, mess everywhere. We realise that most of the luggage each of us has taken is food, and it looks like a lot. Rain clouds all around, Calum already sunburnt.

18th July - Drizzly morning but it clears and we load up / choose horses. Seven hours' ride across the flood plains, river beds and vast smooth plains, over one pass. Horses trotting, cantering and even galloping caused us all pain. Neil's horse being exceptionally badly behaved and Struan's did 'impromptu galloping'. Passed two shielings / peat drying enclosures and numerous mountain goat and ibex skulls washed up on the river banks. Torrential rain started just as we reached a shepherd's hut. Competition for dinner portions was intense. Sleeping on mattresses.

19th July - Rode down a huge red and beige ravine today, down to a little stream surrounded closely by cliffs, high and impressive (like the painting of the Army of the Indus forcing the Bolan Pass, pre roads). Walked the horses up a moraine, tough short cut. Camped beside a hunting camp on a rough track. Good conditions all day but stormy hail / snow evening, grim conditions for cooking. Fairly sure we have come too far south and heading for the southern access to Djenghi-Djer.

20th July - Good layer of snow on tent. Morning re-navigation. Great view southwards of the large white Chinese border area peaks (Pik Dankova etc.) and some nice 4,000m+ peaks visible at south of Djenghi-Djer (Google maps location 41.240654, 77.308499). We were too far south so retreated c.5km north and turned left, steeply downhill to the entrance to the northern valley / plains to the north of the Djenghi-Djer. Valley entrance is narrower than expected, but opens out as we ride west. Stunning route, sun shining, fast pace over the rocky river beds sparkling silver, up onto the steppes and along the edge of a ravine when the valley narrowed. First base camp. Two impressive snow-clad pyramids immediately south of camp - mapped as P4607 (peak) and P4341 (point). Calum keeps enacting ridiculous 'expedition policies'. E.g. "Soup is now banned" (soup before dinner last night meant that no one could finish their dinner).

21st July - Early start - Struan, Neil and Calum start at 4:40am to climb P4224, immediately east of camp, a good subsidiary peak to assess all nearby prospects. Scree then rocks, then a long patchy ice and scree walk. Sun up at 5am, showing the valley below like a large green battle-gaming table, firmly enclosed by all the peaks around it. Summit reached at 6:15am and there's a cairn at the top. Clear that best access to P4607 would be from the other side, up one of two rock ridges. Descent, rest, snacks. In the afternoon we

set off up the nearer ridge leading up to P4341 and P4607, walking c.2km from camp and ascending the ridge with a scramble to a rock stack with excellent views upwards. The best route would be to continue up the ridge we were on, rock and then mixed to the level of P4341, then turn right and ascend the snow ridge on the horizon to P4607. The top looks exposed, possibly corniced, but doable - hopefully one we can attempt on the ride back.

22nd July – Eventful day as we rode c.25km further west. A horse kicked Calum in the thigh and he is on co-codamol, unable to move his right leg. That was at the end of the day when he loudly suggested we ride further - the horse must have heard him. He was shivering like a tumble dryer and we covered him in all the team sleeping bags before pitching the tent and dragging him in. Struan's horse bucked and threw him off in the morning - front flip and landed head first on a scree slope, helmeted so no major dents. The rain started in the afternoon, then hail. Very cold, very uncomfortable. This camp is excellent - in a valley which splits into three valleys / shown on the maps as glaciers to the south. It's still pouring rain.

23rd July – It snowed last night. We woke up at 4am to attempt P4412 but the tent was clad in snow thickly and thickening, so we slept in instead. Lazy morning reading and eating, but the sky was clearing well by midday. Sam, Struan, Mark set off up P4412 after all, at least to recce. The climb wasn't technical and we ended up reaching the summit. View from the top was great. Snow line disappointingly high on all surrounding peaks - climbs to reach most will be tough (if steep rock) or awful (if scree). Sandy cooked butteries with chorizo, dried garlic, onion, chili, fried - a stroke of genius, best dinner of the trip.

24th July - We explored the left / easternmost valley about 4.5km south of camp and encountered four wolves in the corrie. Shook an ibex skull at them to pre-empt a mad wolf pack charge. They thought better of attacking us. All glaciers were way up on the slopes of the peaks, seriously diminished. P4715 and P4554 look like exciting climbs but we'd have to move a camp up the corrie to attempt them. Jelly for dinner, set in the glacier stream. Mark bloodthirsty Chonofsky made the mistake of telling the horseman Ruslan about the wolves, and before long Ruslan and his companion had ridden off, wide-eyed, wolf hunting.

25th July - The horsemen were away all last night but didn't track down the wolves. Struan, Mark and Sam up at 2am for P4262 / P4410 attempt but retreated to tent due to low cloud and mist. Heavy rain, tent-bound all day.

26th July – Sky was clear and crisp at 2am - Sam, Mark, Struan went for P4410. Steep scree gulley then some good but thin névé, chopping with crampons and axes up a long snow slope, scrambling rock stacks at the top. Ascent by the north ridge, P4262 was not enchainned on the route up. Summit height showed 4,436m on the GPS. Views! P4690 seen to be an absolute monster from that position. Very tiring descent.

27th July – Calum back on his feet after several days lying down, hobbling slowly. Everyone's encroaching on a huge area of the tent means Sandy is threatening to "write a very strongly worded letter". Big day for Struan and Neil - 18km round trip walking exploring the valley about 4km to the west of camp. Reached two scrambly rock summits at 4,168m and 4,135m, as well as point 4,045 en route (all map heights). Sandy and Sam did some wandering and trad climbing on the ridges above camp.

28th July – Full day of rubbish weather. All piled into yellow tent with an inflatable beach ball for the tournament of the year. It dried up as the light faded, so we moved the beach ball outside for games and then a wrestling match between Sandy and Ruslan, which was concluded quickly due to Ruslan being a tank.

29th July – We struck, saddled and moved camp west into the furthest valley Neil and Struan visited the other day. In the morning, Calum came back from a solo climbing excursion and claimed to have just missed capturing an ibex - recovery evidently on track. New base camp is high above a field of large, scattered boulders (just like the hills of Harris), c.3,700m. Horses were lumbering and exhausted getting uphill due to the slightly higher altitude. Arrived just in time to pitch tents and shelter from the latest flush of rain.

30th July – Up at 2am, back inside. Up at 4am, back inside. Up at 6am, back inside. The clouds scared us away every time, and the misty drizzle stayed all morning. Sandy, Sam, Struan, Neil ventured uphill around midday when the sky cleared, aiming for P4370 south of camp. A long scree slog, horrendous walking like a 45 degree sand dune. We attempted the snow slope to the summit but the thaw had progressed too far and it was sketchy on at least 55 degrees, so we retreated from the last few dozen metres.

31st July – Darkness, and we just heard the most terrifying loud growling outside the tents. Mark and Sandy got their knives out and shouted vulgarities at whatever creature it was. It was Ruslan! The most realistic wolf impression ever, legendary. He asked us afterwards if we were all "normal" (apparently Kyr-gyz for shaken but sound), which we were. We were tent-bound all day as the valley was soaking and misty, raining like rapturous applause.

1st August – Started the week (and month) in sunshine after a watery Sabbath. We descended with the horses, putting in the first good distance in many days. Flying, biting insects were irritating the horses and causing them to buck and kick and be rowdy, causing us to want to shoot them. Struan's horse almost bucked him off again. Neil's horse sat down, rolled on top off him and then bolted. A scary incident - very bad injury was (narrowly) avoided as the ground was grassy and Neil's boot fell off and released him from the stirrup after a few metres. Quite a long day in the saddle - we turned south-west up another long valley and set base camp 4 next to a vast pebble-strewn flood plain, criss-crossed with streams.

2nd August – Fishing all day. Very enticing peaks all around (especially P4719 and P4787) but the pursuit of small trout was a greater prospect - we built dams in one of the streams and walked four-abreast in formation upstream, chasing the fish into the shallows and netting them in midgie nets or flicking them out of the water with our grizzly paws. We only caught 17 but the horsemen came back from their own fishing trip with a sack full of fish - maybe 150, maybe more. An efficient gutting line was established along the river bank with everyone gutting until all our hands were blistered and freezing, then we spent the afternoon salting, deep frying and feasting. Games all evening - walking pole javelin, left-handed javelin, wrestling, beach ball.

3rd August – Moved to the valley north of the Djenghi-Djer turn-off, now camped on an elevated and windy site, the tent corners weighed down with rocks. Rain and hail. Several soups, toffees, chorizo and smash for dinner.

4th August – Four of the horses were missing in the morning - concerning as it had been a stormy night. Ruslan rode Neil's horse off to search (Neil noted Ruslan's position on the horse, as opposed to being dragged behind it, for future reference). Ruslan found them. Down the moraine and back up the ravine, on to snowy smooth ground at the top, and gradually down hill to a yurt and hut / hunting settlement not far from Kara-Say.

5th August – Snow falling heavily and lying, so we didn't start the ride until early afternoon, a brief gap in the snow. Layered up with all clothes and all pairs of socks, then a brisk, cold trot all the way to Kara-Say. Struan's horse made one last break for freedom, galloping straight at the Kara-Say military checkpoint. The rivers had risen up to 4 feet deep, fast flowing - testing even for the horses.

6th - 8th August – End of the trip. Feasting in Tamga and then Bishkek. Many meals: lagman, pancakes, plov, compote, shashlik, omelettes. Tea in the Osh bazaar. Vodka toasts abound: "to being better!" and "to the Broch, and getting an education in the big toon!" The team scatters homewards by various flight routes, better and better educated.

APPENDIX B - KIT LIST

Category	Item	Quantity
CLIMBING	60 cm sling	10
	120cm sling	3
	240cm sling	2
	Quickdraws	5
	Krabs	7
	Screwgates	5
	Set of Cams with Crabs	5
	Rope	3 x 50m halves
	Threaders	3
	Ice screws	10
	Pegs	4
	Bulldog	1
	Prussiks	6
	Tat	10m
	Ice axe	6
	Assorted rack (nuts, hexes etc.)	1
	SHELTER	North Face 4-man tent
Alpkit Kangri 2-man tent		1
Tent repair kit		1
Spare pegs		6
Plastic bags (for tent anchors in snow)		10
Tentatious tape		1
Bivvy bags		2
COOKING	Large light pan	3
	Liquid fuel stove	3
	Stove repair kit	1
	Fuel bottles (1L)	4
	Matches / ignition source	6
	Water Purification tablets	600L
	Windshield for stove	3
	Water carriers (10L, 20L)	2
2L water bottles	12	
TOOLS	Leatherman	2
	Knife	4
	Spare headtorch	1
	Allen key for crampons	1
	Sewing kit	1
	Mosquito / fishing net	6
	Duct tape	1
	Beach ball	1
Superglue	1	
NAVIGATION	Print-outs of target location	12
	Compass	4
	GPS	1
FOOD	Flapjack	7kg
	Oatcakes	3kg
	Fruit cake	6kg
	Chocolate biscuits	2kg
	Shortbread	9kg
	Butteries	8kg
	Cous cous, pasta, noodles, rice, smash	18kg
	Chorizo, salt, chilli, garlic, dried onions	3kg
	Olive oil	2kg
	Iced tea powder	4kg
Dried meals	36	
CAMERA	Canon 600d body	2
	24-105mm lens	1
	10-20mm lens	1
	Batteries	6
	DJI Drone & case	1
	Memory cards	5
Flash	1	
FIRST AID	First Aid kit	1
	Prescription medicines	1
EMERGENCY	Copy of passports	2
	Copy of insurance documents	1
	List of numbers for local helicopter companies	3
	List of Bishkek emergency phone numbers	2
	Copy of flight tickets	1
	Copy of border permits	2
	Satellite phone	1
	SPOT Tracker	1
Mobile phone	6	

APPENDIX C - FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Although the currency impact of the 'Brexit' vote increased the costs of the expedition, costs were broadly in line with expectations.

Item	Cost	Number	Total cost
GENERAL			
AAC Insurance	£ 36.00	6	£ 216.00
Admin / printing / post etc.	£ 144.42	1	£ 144.42
TOTAL GENERAL			£ 360.42
TRANSPORT			
Misc. UK transport	£ 116.98	1	£ 116.98
Flights	£ 592.00	6	£ 3,552.00
Taxi: Bishkek - Tamga	£ 58.00	2	£ 116.00
Taxi: Tamga - Kara-Say	£ 150.00	2	£ 300.00
Taxi: Kara-Say - Tamga	£ 150.00	1	£ 150.00
<i>Overnight Tamga, 6 pax</i>	£ 32.00	1	£ 32.00
Taxi: Tamga - Bishkek	£ 62.00	1	£ 62.00
<i>Overnight Bishkek, 6 pax</i>	£ 22.90	2	£ 45.80
Miscellaneous taxis	£ 27.00	1	£ 27.00
TOTAL TRANSPORT			£ 4,401.78
HORSES			
Horses x 12	£ 120.00	19	£ 2,280.00
Horsemen x 2	£ 40.00	19	£ 760.00
Riding boots	£ 9.99	3	£ 29.97
Horse riding lessons	£ 25.00	8	£ 200.00
TOTAL HORSES			£ 3,269.97
FOOD			
Ration packs	£ 4.70	60	£ 282.00
Baked goods	£ 55.00	1	£ 55.00
All other food & iced tea powder	£ 220.04	1	£ 220.04
Eating in Bishkek	£ 147.60	1	£ 147.60
TOTAL FOOD			£ 704.64
EQUIPMENT			
Ab tat, misc. climbing gear	£ 156.69	1	£ 156.69
Half rope	£ 122.00	1	£ 122.00
Maps, printing only	£ 0.20	12	£ 2.40
Fuel bottle	£ 17.99	1	£ 17.99
Petrol (4L)	£ 3.00	1	£ 3.00
Water carriers (10L, 20L)	£ 22.89	1	£ 22.89
Glue, duct tape	£ 4.50	1	£ 4.50
Tent repair materials	£ 14.00	1	£ 14.00
First Aid equipment	£ 45.96	1	£ 45.96
Purification tablets	£ 17.28	1	£ 17.28
Prescription medicines	£ 125.05	1	£ 125.05
Camera equipment	£ 390.00	1	£ 390.00
Batteries, chargers, spares etc.	£ 239.01	1	£ 239.01
TOTAL EQUIPMENT			£ 1,160.77
TOTAL EXPEDITION			£ 9,897.58
INCOME			£ 9,700.00