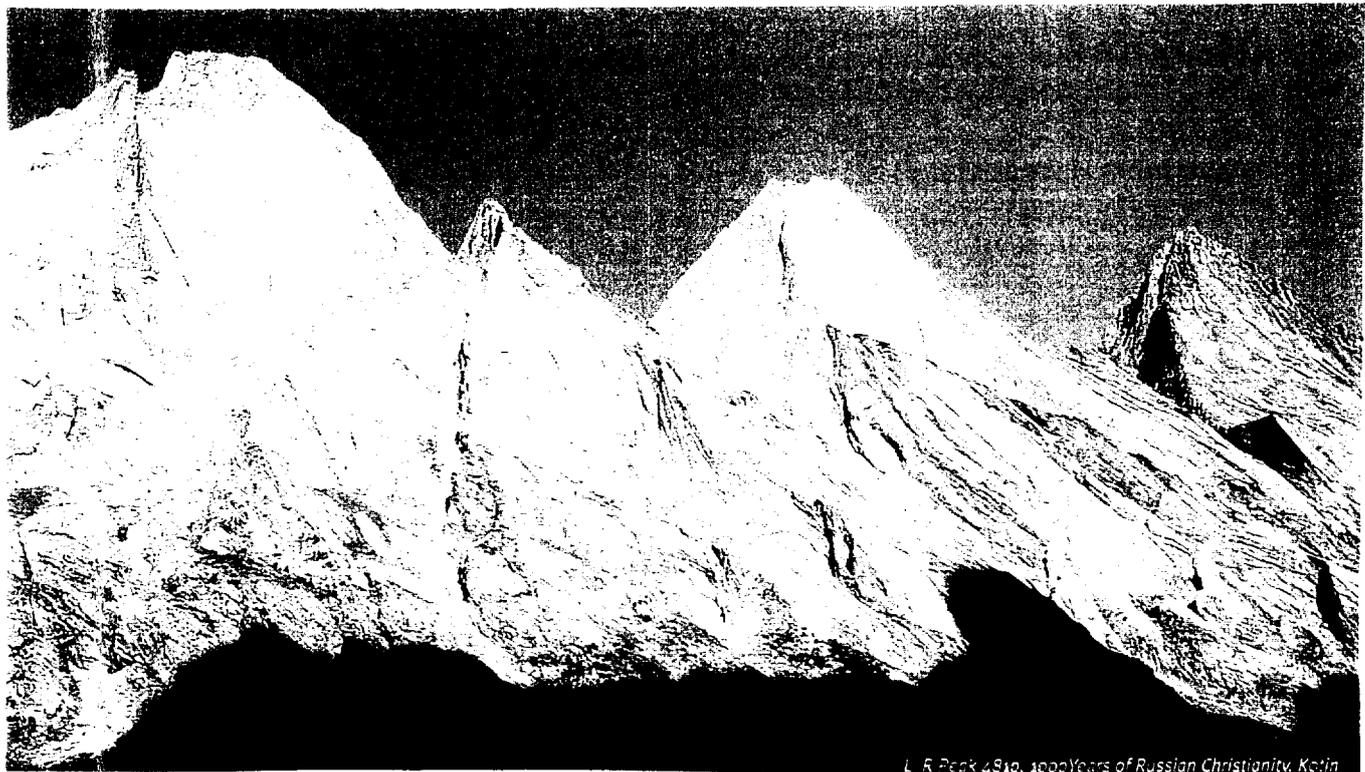
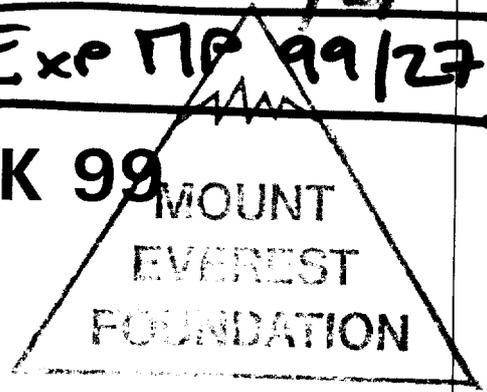


BMC

99/27

Exp NP 99/27

# KARAVSHIN-LIALIAK 99 EXPEDITION



L.R. Peak 4810, 1000 Years of Russian Christianity. Kc:In

## FINAL REPORT

Supported by THE BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL  
MOUNT EVEREST FOUNDATION  
THE SPORTS COUNCIL

18.7.99 – 12.9.99

# Karavashin-Liailak 99 Expedition

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## **Expedition Summary**

The aim of the Karavashin-Liailak 99 expedition was to climb new routes and free existing Russian aid routes on the granite towers of the Liailak and Karavashin valleys of Kyrgyzstan. Due to the superb range of unclimbed rock the team decided to ignore the existing aid routes and concentrate on new routes. In total 10 new routes were established on 5 different peaks before an early departure from the region was forced by the threat of kidnap by invading Afghan Taliban guerrillas.

All the routes were climbed in an adventurous lightweight style, a contrast to the approach used by some other visitors to the area. All routes were done ground up and free (with the exception of two pendulums), with almost no pegs used and only one bolt placed by hand. A very small amount of fixed rope was used on a few routes, in particular on the route the Philosophers Stone. No portaledges or hauling were used. Italian, German and French teams who had previously operated in the area had relied on bolt protection for belays and some protection.

It is interesting to note the contrast in styles between our approach and many of the participants in the Russian Championships which took place in the Karavashin valley during our visit. We very much operated on a "see-it climb-it" cragging approach. Where speed and free climbing ability were essential to complete the routes before bad weather approach. The Russians seem to revel in the art of suffering, several teams spending 12 days on 2<sup>nd</sup> ascent of routes. Not wishing to decry the obvious abilities of Russian mountaineers who could justly claim to be the dominant force in world mountaineering at the moment, it was surprising to see teams sticking to existing routes in standard slow big wall style. The format of the Russian competition seemingly dictating an approach which will lead to stagnation not innovation.

Needless to say our routes scored very low on the Russian grading scale as they were very quick and so couldn't be hard.

## **Team members**

John Arran, aged 36. British. University Lecturer. 25 years climbing experience. Regularly onsights E7 on most rock types. Has onsighted 8a and redpointed 8b sports routes. New routes to E9 and E7 onsight. First free ascent Long Hope Route, E7 23 pitches on Hoy. Several alpine seasons and Scottish winter climbing to grade VI.

Anne Arran, aged 30. British. BMC Training Officer. 8 years climbing experience. Has climbed E6s such as the Cad (without the bolt) and 8a sports routes. Winter climbing to Scottish grade IV. Two Alpine seasons including an ascent of L'Eau Rance du Arabie ED on Red Pillar of the Blatiere.

Ian Parnell, aged 30. British. BMC Officer. 13 years climbing experience. Climbed over 70 E5s and 25 E6s. 40 Scottish winter grade Vs and 10 VIs. 150 new routes throughout England, Wales and Ireland. 3 Alpine seasons. 8 grade VI routes in Yosemite including Wyoming Sheep Ranch, new wave grade A4 in 8 days.

Mark "Zippy" Pretty, aged 35. British. Unemployed. 24 years climbing experience. Has climbed regularly at E6, onsighted 8a sports routes and redpointed 8c. Over 60 new routes up to 8c and E6 6b in Britain, America, France and Israel. 3 seasons in the Alps. Several ED+ rock routes in the Dauphine and routes such Kastile, 7c 300m, in the Verdon.

Alun Richardson, aged 41. British. UIAGM Guide. 21 years climbing experience. Has climbed all around the world up to E5 standard. Notable alpine ascents include many of the classic north faces including the Walker Spur and the Eiger north face. Recent

expeditions include Chimborazo 6310m and Cotapaxi 5897m both in Ecuador. Pik Korshenyevskya 23,600ft (first British ascent) and Pik Cetyrek 21,000 ft in Pamirs. All successfully summited.

Steve Richardson, aged 40. British. MIA instructor. 10 years climbing experience. Currently leads E4 and Scottish winter V. Seven alpine seasons. Notable routes include Walker Spur, Comici on the Cima Grande and the American Direct on the Dru. Recent expeditions include 11 ascents of peaks up to 6500m in the Cordillera Blanca and Cordillera Real during 1997, including new route on Wyoming (5,380m). 1998 successfully summited Khan Tengri with 3 clients as guide for Himalayan Kingdoms.

Unfortunately due to the pressure of work both Steve and Alun had to withdraw from the expedition at the last moment.

### **Expedition Timeline**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
18 July	IP & MP fly Birmingham-Bishkek
19 July	Arrive Bishkek
20 July	Fly to Osh
21 July	Drive to Katran
22 July	Walk-in to Liailak
23-29 July	Liailak Valley
30 July	Descended to Katran
31 July-1 August	Walk-in to Karavashin
2-21 August	IP & MP in Karavashin
15 August	AA & JA fly Birmingham-Bishkek
16 August	Arrive Bishkek
17 August	Fly to Osh
18 August	Osh
19 August	Bus to Vorukh
20 August	Truck to road-head
21 August	JA & AA walk-in to Karavashin
22 August	MP leaves Karavashin
31 August-1 September	IP leaves Karavashin, walk out to Katran
2 September	IP bus to Batken and taxi to Osh
3 September	IP fly to Bishkek JA & AA leave Karavashin, walk out and truck to Vorukh
4 September	JA & AA bus to Osh
5 September	IP fly Bishkek-Birmingham JA & AA fly to Bishkek Taxi to Ala-Archa
6-10 September	JA & AA in Ala-Archa
11 September	Taxi to Bishkek
12 September	JA & AA fly Bishkek-Birmingham

### **Diary of expedition – A personal record by Ian Parnell**

#### **July**

Sun 18<sup>th</sup>. Arrive at Birmingham airport to find Kyrgyzstan Airline flight delayed by 4 hours. Although even this isn't certain as there are at least 3 different flight times published. The bonus though is that our well over the limit baggage slips in unweighed. The flight is uneventful with an hours stop-over at Istanbul.

Mon 19<sup>th</sup>. We seem to be the only ones disembarking at Bishkek; the rest of the passengers continuing to Delhi. Bishkek arrivals hall is a classic of its kind. A prefab of cardboard and hardboard with toilet facilities that looked to have been brutally mugged. The manual conveyor belt finally discharges our bags as eager hands in search of dollars offer help. Zippy has his first brush with bribes, emerging half an hour later without paying. I had made it through unscathed but with all the money. We are met by a member of the ITMC staff and are ferried to the stockade of the ITMC office in downtown Bishkek. Zippy and I take a walk around central Bishkek. Looking for stamps Zippy joins the most likely looking queue which after an hour turned out to be the telecom office. Another hour later at the Post Office and Zippy comes away with what turn out to be the wrong stamps. A little later in the afternoon we then get arrested as cocaine dealers! A young policeman on asking me to produce my papers promptly grabs them and rushes off into a small room in a deserted building. We join a deaf-mute who is being accused of robbery, our two "cases" seem to be connected. After half an hour of sign language accusations, I get angry. Shouting solves the issue and I get my passport and Visa card back. An interesting first day.

Tues 20<sup>th</sup>. After a night camped inside the ITMC stockade we meet our cook/interpreter/guide Backet. Backet doesn't speak very good English or cook but he has been to the area once before. Nether the less he seems like a nice bloke. Together we take an internal flight to Kyrgyzstan's second city Osh. By now we are getting used to the Kyrgyz way and are only mildly surprised by the passenger shuffling that goes on to load up our baggage; not in the baggage hold but in the middle of the gangway. After an hour flight we are met at Osh airport by ITMC employee Roma and his son who put us up at their hotel (i.e. house). Beautifully bright coloured blankets hang from the walls and fresh fruit and soup are ready waiting for us. Bliss. That afternoon we go shopping at Osh bazaar; a mad brilliant place. We were told by all our contacts previous to arriving to buy our own provisions to avoid guaranteed mix-ups. Inexperienced at this we make a few educated guesses at amounts and come away with 7 weeks of food for 3 people for £40. Feeling pleased with ourselves little do we realise how misjudged we'd been with quantities.

Wed 21<sup>st</sup>. After a very heavy rainstorm we load up the hired Lada and set off on the drive from Osh to Katran. 12 hours of dusty roads and no road signs hence much wandering in circles we arrive. Most memorable were the 4 border crossings. The first cost a karabiner, the second \$20 followed by later extra payments to our driver and interpreter who had also seemingly paid bribes. Slept at the guard house to the Liailak national park after an evening of doom: no horses, take 5 days rather than 2, horses twice as much etc.

Thurs 22<sup>nd</sup>. 6am and the horsemen arrive and quickly load up. Manage 2 day walk in in one 8 hour session. Nearly lost Zips to the heart of the local school teacher. His first proposal of marriage of the trip. Beautiful campsite; good view of Aksu, great bouldering and daily visits by the local kids. Given bread and yoghurt.

Fri 23<sup>rd</sup>. Woke up to good weather and walked up to the head of the small glacier beneath the stunning Ak-Su North face. We excitedly point out possibilities on the amazing rock spires of the cirque. Our proposed line on admiral looks particularly good. A direct start and finish are on the cards for a free ascent. But cloud soon enshrouds the face and light snow falls which points out the potential problems.

Sat 24<sup>th</sup>. First route. On the peak opposite camp called House Peak. Poor rock and hailstorm but glad to be moving.

Sun 25<sup>th</sup> Rest day. Lots of rain, lots of reading.

Mon 26<sup>th</sup> Walked down to where two valleys join. Good granite bouldering. Amazed myself by doing some of the moves on Zippy's traverse: 6b/c sloper thing.

Tues 27<sup>th</sup>. Back up to House Peak. Spent ages trying different very bold E5 starts. Eventually committed to one and pulled hold off and then ripped my 3 bits of gear to take 25ft ground fall. Finally managed worrying E4 pitch before retreat. Disappointing day.

Wed 28<sup>th</sup>. Day taking photos of flowers and butterflies. Huge lemon yellow, smaller orange-brown, smaller deep blues and small grey-whites with spots. After noon of rain and cooking meals for planned big route.

Thurs 29<sup>th</sup>. Rained all night. Aksu now an icicle.

Fri 30<sup>th</sup>. Very disappointed. Have made decision to descend and go early to the Karavashin in search of good weather.

Sat 31<sup>st</sup>. From Katran the first stage of the trek round to the Karavashin proves a long day. 13 hours of walking, perhaps 25k with most of that uphill. Stopped at one of the horseman's Mums for lunch. Apart from that no sight of settlements until the evening camp.

### **August**

Sun 1<sup>st</sup>. Another long day. 10 hours of walking through a dusty desert gorge and climbing to the mountain plains and the amazing spires and towers of Karavashin.

Mon 2<sup>nd</sup>. A rest day with lots of eating plus a little walking and lots of gawping at the myriad of unclimbed objectives.

Tues 3<sup>rd</sup>. Not too early start before a new route on the lower tier of the Central Pyramid. Superb line, rock and climbing. This is what we had been looking for and T feel better for having left the Ak-Su. We descended into the gully to the right running down the side of the "Warm Up Tower". We leave the rope fixed to access the upper walls for future routes.

Wed 4<sup>th</sup>. An early start this time for a line of nine 60m new pitches on the top tier of the Central Pyramid. 300m of scrambling gain the summit ridge in light rain. A little nervously we commit to an abseil descent in the area we hoped would be the finish of Black Magic. Despite two stuck ropes and darkness, everything links together and we descend safely if a little knackered to base camp.

Thurs 5<sup>th</sup> Rest day. Walked up to look into the Ak-Su glacier and the superb looking Bird Peak.

Fri 6<sup>th</sup> More resting and a walk round to the Kara-Su valley. Russian teams still finishing their competition. Got caught in a rain storm on way back and ended up a bit hypothermic. Found Zippy desperately rescuing the tent from an instant lake that had formed around it.

Sat 7<sup>th</sup> Decided to do another route up on the Central Pyramid. Went up and fixed 3 pitches and then bivied near its base for the push the following day. Unfortunately stomach flared up again, no sleep and lots of toilet trips.

Sun 8<sup>th</sup> descended to base camp to recover.

Mon 9<sup>th</sup> another rest day feeling better.

Tues 10<sup>th</sup> 5.30am start and clear skies. Finished route, superb climbing some of it quite hard. Topped out in a hailstorm with thunder and lightning. Got back to tent just after dark.

Wed 11<sup>th</sup> Rest day. No sign of the eclipse.

Thurs 12<sup>th</sup> More resting and a little bouldering. Walked up to North face of central tower. Definitely a big line that will go.

Fri 13<sup>th</sup>. Mountains covered in snow. Relax in base camp while a Spanish team and their cook go to war!

Sat 14<sup>th</sup> Better weather. Personal stereo worked for the first time in a while due to the increased temperatures. Met American team and cooked pancakes and Christmas pudding (almost!)

Sun 15<sup>th</sup> 10 pitch route on Pamir Pyramid. Up and down in 9 hours. Fun day.

Mon 16<sup>th</sup> Rest – still no sign of the horseman with our money and food.

Tues 17<sup>th</sup> Scrambled up to left side of the wall of dykes and fixed three pitches on a new line.

Wed 18<sup>th</sup> Rest – assume horseman has now done a runner.

Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> Got up 7am-ish and climbed the rest of the route - 750m. Long descent down gully, but back in camp by 7pm

Fri 20<sup>th</sup> Rest day. Finally horseman arrives with our extra food. Big relief to have something you enjoy eating. Also brings back news of Taliban guerrillas who seem to have invaded the area and kidnapped 4 Japanese tourists.

Sat 21<sup>st</sup> walk up to base of the north face of the Russian Tower. The new route the Spanish have done looks eminently freeable. John and Anne arrive, hope to persuade them to join me on the Russian Tower.

Sun 22<sup>nd</sup>. Zips has decided to descend with a neighbouring American team due to a long bout of fever and Giardia.

Mon 23<sup>rd</sup>. Route with Pete Scott, a New Zealander who travelled in with John and Anne.

Tues 24<sup>th</sup>. Rest

Wed 25<sup>th</sup> 4.30am start did big route solo on Kotin. 13 hour trip camp to camp. Massive personal experience and highlight of trip so far.

Thurs 26<sup>th</sup>. Rest day.

Fri 27<sup>th</sup> Rest day.

Sat 28<sup>th</sup>. Everything going a bit pear shaped. Bucket wants to descend now! Because of the Taliban. I'm planning 3 days solo on Bird Peak.

Sun 29<sup>th</sup>. Night of fever and a day of super-ill.

Mon 30<sup>th</sup>. Still ill. John and Anne well stuck into their routes. Decide to descend early.

Tues 31<sup>st</sup>. Still no sign of John and Anne. Leave messages and head off with horsemen to Vorukh. Incredibly long day and some of night walking.

### **September**

Mon 1<sup>st</sup>. More endless walking. Arrive in Vorukh after 13 hours.

Tues 2<sup>nd</sup>. Amazing mad bus journey with about 120 other people on one bus to Batken. Then taxi to Osh.

Fri 3<sup>rd</sup>. Early to airport and flight to Bishkek. Afternoon shopping at the bazaar.

Sat 4<sup>th</sup>. Rest day.

Sun 5<sup>th</sup>. Flight to Birmingham. Half of baggage doesn't make flight but comes on the next one a week later.

### **Team member John Arran's thoughts on the trip**

The 1999 British Kyrgyzstan expedition proved to be a triumph of alpinism over political adversity. The team twice had to redefine its objectives; once due to the poor quality of the rock in an area that appeared to have huge untapped climbing potential, and the other time because of the critical situation which developed as a result of terrorist activity in the region.

Indeed half of the team was almost prevented from accessing the Karavshin at all. John and Anne Arran were met at Bishkek airport by the British Consul, who advised them not to continue with their planned itinerary to the Kara Su valley due to several Japanese tourists having been taken hostage in the region by heavily armed Taliban Islamic Fundamentalist rebels. Travelling with members of a Welsh expedition to the neighbouring Ak Su valley, the combined group was faced with having to abandon its Tien Shan tour company if it was to have any chance of passing the great many borders required on the approach. Instead, the team hired local drivers, guides and interpreters in the city of Osh and made the journey successfully, though this added some delay and the approach took longer than planned.

The team was united when John and Anne met up with Ian Parnell and Mark Pretty at the Ak Su valley base camp. We quickly decided to revise our objectives and concentrate our attention on the vast untapped free climbing potential of the Ak Su valley.

John and Anne set out to try a new line on the 650m Pamir Pyramid. The pair climbed many pitches mixing leads up to E4 standard on excellent rock, but were forced to retreat due to a bad weather. Returning two days later, the pair managed to complete the headwall up to the junction with the Italian route Missing Mountain, which provided a convenient bolted descent. The headwall climbing proved challenging, with a long and sustained E5 layback pitch providing the crux and establishing the 12-pitch line as the hardest route on the face.

The Arran's had arrived in the Ak Su valley in late August and quickly realised that the season would be drawing to a close sooner than they had expected. Of the many inspiring objectives available, the pair focused on a huge and striking unclimbed line on the Wall of Dykes. It was hoped that the relative accessibility of this face would facilitate a safer retreat if the snows were to arrive early.

Three days were spent fixing over 300m of fixed line up the lower walls of the face. The predominantly slabby climbing was characterised by long sections of smooth and compact rock which offered little in the way of protection. The pair overcame two

itches of E6 and one of E5 standard before exhausting its supply of line to fix. One bolt was placed on the first (crux) E6 pitch, originally to protect the thin climbing above but later also used as a belay. After a rest day the pair returned and, jugging to their high point in the dark, attempted to climb the remaining 500m of wall and the summit ridge in one day. A large band of roofs was negotiated by means of a long traverse, after which the pair unexpectedly found themselves below the crux pitch of Paul Pritchard and Dave Green's The Great Game, which had been thought to have taken a line some way farther left. This E5 6b pitch was climbed on sight, after which the routes diverged once again when the Arrans succeeded in finding a direct line up the huge expanse of flaky wall above.

The summit ridge was reached just as a storm was gathering. The pair managed to climb another 250m of easy ground before the storm broke, forcing a bivouac on a good ledge. The following day the top was quickly reached, though the scree descent took about 6 hours in total, which was substantially more than anticipated.

The team descended from the valley earlier than planned. Anne and John Arran, having been last to arrive were the last members of the team to leave, their departure largely a result of a local authority order that the mountain valleys in the area be cleared of people (we understood this to be to allow the Kyrkz military to use bombs or other weapons on terrorist rebels in the region if necessary).

The journey out of the troubled area was predictably fraught. The vehicle was stopped a total of fifteen times and all the occupants were searched and individually questioned at border crossings where the border guards were clearly on full alert.

As they had a few days to spare before our return flight, John and Anne joined up with members of the Welsh expedition to explore the Ala Archa alpine region close to Bishkek. This was found to be an impressive, compact and heavily glaciated region with many accessible peaks up to around 5000m offering a lot of potential for mixed climbing objectives.

### **Recommendations**

Both areas visited offer a superb range of objectives mostly of a rocky nature. The Liailak has a serious bigger mountain feel to it and many of the remaining lines would need 3 to 5 days to complete. This would inevitably involve sitting out the odd storm which could add considerable time. A portaledge would be a great advantage.

The Karavshin has an even bigger range of possibilities. Numerous free climbing routes are within easy access of base camp ranging from 300m to 1300m and from VS to E7. The big faces on Peak 4810, the north face of the Russian Tower and the north face of Central Pyramid offer outstanding challenges for 1000m+ free climbs. A portaledge would be essential. Perhaps the most interesting challenges lie just beyond the immediate rock towers with a large range of big alpine rock faces often unclimbed or with a solitary ascent.

We visited from mid July to early September. The best weather was found in August with September noticeably colder and with increasing snow showers.

### **Thanks**

The expedition would like to thank the Mount Everest Foundation and the British Mountaineering Council without whose generous support the financing of this trip would have been very difficult.

Thanks also to Dr Dave Hillbrandt who gave valuable medical advice prior to the trip. Unfortunately we didn't pay enough heed to some of Daves advice in terms of base camp hygiene and therefore were forced to administer several of the recommended potions to treat the various diseases we had picked up.

### **Budget**

Item	Expenditure	Income
Flights	£1840	
Visas	£292	
Excess baggage	£280	
Internal Travel	£480	
Interpreter	£750	
Horses	£850	
Food and fuel	£220	
Medical kit	£38	
Equipment	£240	
Official registration papers	£150	
Accommodation during travel	£115	
Film and processing	£190	
Insurance	£676	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6121</b>	
MEF grant		£800
BMC grant		£1150
Personal Contributions		£4171
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6121</b>	<b>£6121</b>

### **List of routes climbed**

#### **Lialak Region**

##### House Peak 3800m

1. "The Kyrgyz Way" E4 5c 1150m (700m, 12 pitches technical, 450m ridge to summit)  
F.a 24.7.99 Mark Pretty, Ian Parnell, alternate leads.  
Central spur on West face. Some poor rock especially on the flux pitch.
2. Attempt on black/red walls left of central spur. Parnell took 25 ft ground fall when hold and gear ripped on possible E5 start. Eventually 1 pitch of E4 5c and 1 of HVS to ramp system before retreat. Very poor rock and gear.

#### **Karavashin Region**

##### Central Pyramid 3850m (Lower Tier)

3. "The Little Tease" E3 5c 270m (5 pitches)  
F.a 3.8.99 Ian Parnell, Mark Pretty, alternate leads.  
Superb climbing starting in the large corner right of A Better World (Italians 98).  
Very good rock

##### Central Pyramid 3850m (Upper Tier)

4. "Smetana Moon" E5 6a 1 pendulum 820m (520m, 9 pitches technical, 300m scramble to summit ridge)  
F.a 4.8.99 Ian Parnell, Mark Pretty, alternate leads.  
Excellent crack climbing 200m left of top section of Black magic. Abseil descent of Black Magic.

5. "The Big Joke" E5 6a 1 pendulum 1000m (700m 14 pitches technical, 300m scramble to summit ridge)  
F.a 7.8.99 and 10.8.99 Ian Parnell, Mark Pretty, alternate leads.  
Particularly fine line linking amazing features starting 100m left of Smetana Moon.

Pamir Pyramid 3700m

6. "The Reluctant Chef" E3 5c 530m (10 pitches to junction with Missing Mountain, Italians 98)  
F.a 15.8.99 Mark Pretty, alternate leads.  
Nice direct up centre of face. Descended Missing Mountain.

Russian Tower/Wall of Dykes 4240m

7. "The Last Laugh" E5 6a 680m (12 pitches)  
F.a 17.8.99 and 19.8.99 Mark Pretty, Ian Parnell, alternate leads.  
Brilliant adventure 100m right of prominent waterfall at junction of Russian Tower and Wall of Dykes.

Pamir Pyramid 3700m

8. Attempt E2 5c solo by Parnell. 22.8.99  
250m stopped by lichen and impending rainstorm.

Central Pyramid 3850m (Lower Tier)

9. "Albino Boys" E4 6a 345m (7 pitches)  
F.a 23.8.99 Ian Parnell, Pete Scott.  
Committing climbing leading to fine upper corner pitches. Start 100m left of start of Black Magic. Climbed with the member of another British expedition in the area.

Pamir Pyramid 3700m

10. "The Hostage" E5 6a 550m (13 pitches to junction with Missing Mountain, Italians 98)  
F.a 22.8.99 and 24.8.99 Anne Arran, John Arran, alternate leads.

Russian Tower/Wall of Dykes 4240m

11. "The Philosopher's Stone" E6 6b 1300m (25 pitches)  
F.a 26.8.99, 27.8.99, 28.8.99 and 30.8.99 John Arran, Anne Arran, alternate leads.  
Pitch 9 shared with The Great Game (Pritchard, Green 97).

Kotin 4521m

12. "The Isolationist" E2 5c 1200m  
F.a 26.8.99 Ian Parnell solo (no back roping)  
Central Spur on East face. Very big personal experience.

Mark Pretty also repeated A Better World Fr 6c (Italians 98) 350m on the Central Pyramid (Lower Tier) with Leif, an American climber. A quality outing.

**Articles (To be published in an edited form in Climber Magazine)**

**The Philosopher's Stone                      John Arran**

A 3am start to jug 300m in the dark is not an ideal way to start a day's cragging, but then this wasn't an ordinary day and it certainly wasn't an ordinary crag. The 1000m-plus Wall of Dykes towers directly above the 3000m basecamp in Kyrgyzstan's Ak Su valley and thus far the only route up its monstrous West Face

was Paul Pritchard and Dave Green's The Great Game. Their E5 line is one of the harder free routes in the valley and weaves deviously up the left side of the wall, the exact line of which we were unable to make out from our poor photocopied info. We were trying the wall further right, following a striking 'why-has-no-one-ever-done-this-before' feature - a compelling white streak weaving like an enchanted pathway to the very apex of the barrier roof. We'd fixed all our spare rope and after a protracted struggle we'd tamed the lower wall. Now it was time for commitment, for once we launched out over the roofs turning back would no longer be an option.

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The fledgling independent states of Central Asia have been carved up on ethnic grounds from ex-Soviet states to form a tangled patchwork of bordering nations, each with its own government, political strategy and economic prosperity. We knew we would have borders to cross - the map showed the road passing in and out of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, through towns orphaned from their parent nation, like if Betws-y-Coed was part of France and Llanberis part of Germany - so we had expected a few difficulties. But when we were met at Bishkek International Airport by the British Consul with tales of terrorists and hostages in the very mountains to which we were heading we began to appreciate just what kind of a mess we had flown right into. The Consul told us the terrorists belonged to the "Islamic Rebirth Party of Uzbekistan" and advised against continuing, our tour company suggested another climbing area, and our attempts at gaining more detailed information about the situation were invariably met with sharp intakes of breath.

Our ITMC tour company had charged a great deal and arranged very little so we bid a delicate farewell and spent a frustrating couple of days assembling a local crew of guides, interpreters, drivers and negotiators prepared to try and get us there, before heading off into the minefield of political uncertainty.

We were six climbers in the minibus; Anne and I, a trio of highly qualified Plas y Brenin instructors (Jon, Mark and an already lassitude-ridden Chris quietly dying in the back) and Pete "fakyeh" Scott - our own kiwi court jester. Besides ourselves and a large mountain of gear there was young Ahad (our super-negotiator and translator), everyone's friend Aibek (who would be staying up in the valley with us), our driver ("the ox"), a driver's mate, and Des, whose role no-one could quite work out but who seemed to complain rather a lot. Shielded by such an entourage we hoped that no border would stand in our way.

Sure enough Ahad came up with the goods, sweet-talking the heavily armed guards at eight border controls in a variety of local languages, amazingly having to part with nothing more than a few cigarettes, a lot of handshakes and a huge amount of being nice. We learned a lot from the soldiers; the hostages (which included the local Mayor) had now been released in return for a large wodge of cash, many of the rebels were still hiding in the hills nearby, and the Uzbek and Kyrgyz armies were bombing the area in the hope of flushing them out. Nevertheless we seemed to be getting through, sweetened by giving military officers rides between border posts.

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We had already climbed half of the pitch above on the last rope-fixing day, looking for a line through the great roofs before lowering to the stance and abbing our five fixed lines. But at six in the morning and with a sack full of bivvy supplies the initial E3 overhang now felt depressingly hard. Above this the tiered roofs loomed

impenetrably, guarding access to the vast expanse of slabs and walls above. The only option was an awkward traverse down leftwards to cross the roof at its narrowest point by gymnastic monkeying on a spike. Abandoning a quadcam to backrope an equally rucksack-laden Anne on the tricky descent seemed the quickest option and soon Anne appeared over the roof, pausing to recover from the unfamiliar early morning exertion. Unfortunately by this time I was suspended cross-legged from my hanging stance, shouting impatiently at Anne to f---ing hurry up please as I couldn't hold the contents of my bottom where they were for much longer. She duly obliged and in return was subjected to the unenviable privilege of sharing my hanging belay while I dropped my thankfully releasable legloops and exploded a torrent of pungent brown liquid streaming and steaming down the wall beneath our feet. "You look white as a sheet", she commented reassuringly, but I'm sure I felt much worse than I looked. Time to move on, I thought, already queasy with the stench, so I grabbed enough gear and raced away in pursuit of an odour-free belay ledge. Sure enough I found a ledge, but what I hadn't bargained for here in the middle of first ascent nowhere was finding an in situ belay bolt.

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Arriving at the roadhead in Vorukh after kipping by the roadside we were faced with a much thornier negotiating task. The more we argued about the price of the beaten-up old truck to take us 25k up the rough valley road the higher the price became. Finally Chris could take no more and very nearly came to blows with the shark in charge. This dangerous tactic surprisingly worked and pretty soon we were all being thrown around the back of the open truck as the driver negotiated the clearly undriveable track up the steep sided valley, getting off on occasion to put planks under the wheels for traction on the loose rubble hillside. With morbid fascination we couldn't resist peering over the edge to see where many sections of the track had given up and crashed down hundreds of metres into the raging torrent below. I swear I've felt far safer doing E5 solos on sight. The remaining eight hour uphill hike into Ak Su was easy by comparison, but by the time we arrived we felt like we'd come through a trauma. It had taken us a full week to get here and, like Sassenach weekend lemmings who fling themselves at Scottish winter regardless of conditions, we were determined to make it worth the effort.

Ian Parnell was there to meet us when we arrived, he and Zippy having been in the area for a few weeks already ticking off new lines. He gave us a quick tour of the existing routes and the staggering potential while we struggled to keep our enthusiasm in check. We couldn't help but drool at the sight of clean rock towers rising like enormous monoliths either side of the valley, so close you felt like you could reach out and touch them. The nearest bit of rock to the camp - the 550m Missing Mountain - Ian told us had only three routes on it. 'That's just silly', we thought, and Anne and I determined to help rectify this absurdity the following day by way of warm-up and acclimatisation.

Swinging leads on pitch after pitch of clean, solid rock we began to realise quite how big the walls hereabouts really were. Everything was foreshortened and we found ourselves having to double every guesstimate we made of time or distance. We followed disappearing cracklines in vast compact slabs, with runout friction moves providing cruxes to numerous E3 and E4 pitches. With rain having stopped play, we returned to finish The Hostage and discovered laybacks on the headwall like we'd never seen before, culminating in a nervy but staggeringly good sixty metre E5 that raced up a blind, inescapable and largely unprotected flake. I'd never seen such immaculate rock and compelling lines outside of Yosemite, and we descended more excited than ever to get on something even bigger and even nastier.

The news back at camp was that there were now 450 fundamentalist Islamic mercenaries ('Taliban' rebels mainly from Afghanistan and Chechnia) in the hills around the town of Batken and that they were now holding four Japanese hostages. As this was on our exit route we weren't quite sure how or even if we would be able to leave, but we felt relieved to be up here out of harm's way for now.

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We quickly realised the belay bolt must have been on Paul and Dave's route. Convinced they must have gone back up left from here, I looked up at our binocular-scoped disappearing flakeline which led steeply and committingly up rightwards. I wasn't convinced I was up to the task, especially at seven in the morning during a bout of diarrhoea and with a rucksack-shaped albatross on my back, so I left the sack on the ledge and set off up the pitch hoping to use only one of our 8.3mm twin ropes, leaving the other free for hauling. Fifteen metres later the flake melted into blank granite, another bolt appeared, and it dawned on me painfully that we'd stumbled onto Paul and Dave's crux pitch without the option of working the impossible-looking moves, redpointing and retreating back down fixed lines. And despite the ridiculously early hour we were very conscious that many hundreds of metres of wall lay ahead of us, so time was precious. But even reaching to clip the bolt was an ordeal, achieved only by the creative use of three interleaved wires and a skyhook. The ensuing traverse - albeit now well protected - required all the friction, technique and confidence I could muster, and I ended up laying one on for the finishing holds rather than trust to marginal friction for a moment longer. By now I was shaking from the exertion, from my medical condition and from the sheer excitement of our situation. Relieved to see climbable rock above, I pulled my sack up on the spare rope and started belaying, privately relieved when Anne found the traverse hard too.

Some hours later it seemed like we'd been laybacking for days. The hoped-for easing we'd expected hadn't materialised and pitch after pitch looked easy and felt desperate. Laybacking with a sack on is hard at the best of times but as someone had apparently stolen all the footholds it was seriously wearing us out. The whole wall was peppered with 5-10m layback flakes and it became quite a challenge to stay on flakes that connected; we often had to plan our line four or five flakes ahead to avoid blank sections which we quickly learned could be very blank indeed. I managed to spare Anne a repetition of earlier unpleasantness by coinciding my next anal urgency with her lead, and as we progressed ever upward the rock horizon above seemed if anything to grow further away.

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We'd hoped to be able to fix all our ropes on the wall in one day, but a combination of hard climbing and poor weather meant it ended up taking three. Just getting to the start of the hard climbing was an ordeal in itself, my cunning plan to save rucksack weight on the approach pitches by trailing rather than carrying most of the ropes having badly backfired when I got 60m up and realised I now had the full weight of all the ropes plus 300m of rope drag! But all our travails were soon forgotten when we arrived at the base of the clean white streak and gazed up at the magnificent sheet of rock above. The surface undulated like waves on the ocean, its recesses suggesting just enough potential to give our voyage some hope of success. A few introductory flakes provided gear and holds but these were never to last for long. Mantling onto a small ledge after only fifteen metres the gear was already well below, as were most of the holds, and the options above for either looked minimal. I reluctantly conceded the need for a bolt and began hammering, but it took almost two hours to place and left me

completely knackered. The white streak that made the line so compelling was apparently made of a quartz-filled granite of near diamond-like hardness.

A good night's sleep and I was psyched. I passed the bolt by thin moves and equalised a poor offset wire and skyhook higher up. With unwarranted confidence I crept up the slab above, linking blind ripples and occasional edges with delightful friction moves, finding no pro at all until another hook some fifteen metres higher. 'This ought to do until I get into that corner over there', I thought, and tiptoed nervously across a 6a traverse to an obvious knifeblade crack. Sadly the blade went in only half an inch, but by then I had little option but to tie it off and continue. Besides, I could see more gear potential above, which turned out to be two brass offset micros hammered into flared placements, an aluminium copperhead and another hook. 'Almost enough for a belay', I thought, but deciding not to risk a factor two I brought Anne up only as far as the bolt and continued leading. The crux arrived five metres higher, was very thin and wasn't at all reversible. With nothing but more blind ripples to aim for a leap of faith found me committed to a further twenty five metres of unprotected climbing, thankfully easing to ledges and a good peg just as the 60m ropes came taut. Anne followed with a huge smile on her face, giggling all the while with enjoyment at the sheer quality of the climbing, and both of us agreed it had to be the finest single pitch either of us had ever done.

Still only a fraction of the way up the white streak, we spent another day creating two more superb long E6 and E5 pitches before we ran out of rope to fix. Whatever difficulties remained in the 500m or so ahead would now have to wait for 'the big push', which at this rate seemed to have all the chances of success of a WWI campaign.

Back at camp Ian had returned from a mammoth and impressive solo frenzy and the politics were closing in. Horsemen had come up from the nearest village with news of more hostages: the Japanese were now accompanied by twelve Kyrgyz military personnel, including a General, and the rebel numbers were now said to be over 600. Worst of all it was feared they may decide to escape through the mountains, and the local authorities had ordered all local hillspeople to go down to the towns for safety. 'Best get our route done quickly', we thought, as we may not be able to stay much longer. Thus our preparations for the big push included stashing money, passports and valuables behind nearby rocks, in case some Taliban came through in our absence and raided the camp.

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The rain arrived in the afternoon, but at this altitude it was falling as hail. Sadly it was also my lead, and I climbed a cold and urgent pitch brushing hailstones off the holds before being able to pull on them. Thankfully the storm was also short-lived, and when the clouds swept away the sun revealed only one pitch to go before the easier summit ridge. As usual one pitch turned into two, but even then we still weren't there. Three pitches of simulclimbing later we arrived, the ridge led interminably off into the distance and a bigger and badder storm was brewing. The race was on, and our tired limbs speed-climbed up Idwal Slabs terrain for pitch after pitch before finally admitting defeat in the gathering thunderous gloom and stopping at a well-appointed bivi ledge.

It hailed again and I shivered all night, sleeping barely a wink, and rising in the morning freezing, starving and miserable. Anne had a good night's sleep. It turned out we'd been half an easy pitch from the summit moraine, so topping out was easy enough, but the allegedly three-hour blocky scree descent took us six in our exhausted and undernourished state. Two abseils became five as we could

now barely lift our sacks let alone scramble with them, and we returned to camp to be greeted by a ready-prepared meal (so there is a God, and His name is Mark) and the biggest storm yet which, were it to have arrived a day earlier, would have left us buggered.

The decision had been made to leave while we still had the option of getting horses to help with our gear, and we weren't about to argue as we weren't in a fit state to climb again for days anyway, so the following day we retrieved the fixed lines and we packed up camp.

On the descent the truck driver tried hard to kill us all by overdoing the Colin MacRae act, eventually having to slow down when he smashed a rear wheel into a track-side boulder and exploded the tyre. But thankfully Ahad had got our message to arrive early with the minibus and was there to guide us back through the troubles. Fifteen times we were stopped, searched and interrogated in one day. The guards were now on full alert, hiding behind concrete shelters with fingers on triggers, but we made it through again thanks to our fantastic team of aides.

Keen to go back? Too right we are, there are unclimbed lines enough to sustain us through many a weary winter's training session, but it would be nice if we could plan another trip with some certainty of actually getting there.

### **Super-Unknown**

Ian Parnell describes his first ascent of The Isolationist a 1300m route soloed on Kotin (4509m)

Six inches in front of my face is a borrowed watch. I've been staring at the glowing dial for the last couple of hours. The numbers tell me the alarm will go off at 4.30am in just under 15 minutes. No point waiting any longer. Kitting up is hilariously simple. All of my clothes join the 70 metres of 8mm and the krab of nuts in my day pack. I'm left with just boots and gaiters; 200 yards from camp is the best river crossing and there's no point in starting with soggy strides. I streak away before the others 'early starts' hoping not to bump into any Taliban terrorists that are rumoured to be converging on the area. An earlier practice crossing had swept me 30 feet down the river, losing a shoe and cutting my feet badly, but this time I'm quickly on the other bank, getting dressed and recovering my breath from the glacial flow.

I've been in Kyrgyzstan for 6 weeks now, until a few days ago together with my climbing partner Mark 'Zippy' Pretty and our interpreter Baket. Those weeks seem like a surreal blur of insane taxis, generous smiling faces, corrupt officials, giardia, giggling kids, endless chai and creamy smetana. In between all these adventures we have also been climbing. 6 long new routes free and quick on perfect granite. Maybe it was because the cultural experiences had been so strong, or the climbing so perfect or my partner just too darn good, but I've felt a little underwhelmed by our new routes so far. I'd psyched myself up so much for this trip that I feel I needed something a little extra special to really seal a perfect first expedition.

Unfortunately the lingering 'Aksu Arse' has taken it's toll on Zippy and, having lost almost a stone in weight from an already slender nine and a half, he decided to return early with a departing American team. As Zippy left, John and Anne Arran arrived and with typical forcefulness have quickly applied themselves to a major challenge. Their route on the Wall of Dykes is highly likely to become the hardest freeclimb in the valley. Sitting watching them from my tent push higher each day I feel simultaneously alone and inspired. If they could push themselves then why couldn't I?

The answer to the desire building within challenged me across the valley every time I woke up in the morning. The west flank of the valley had a ridge of three stunning peaks with sweeping granite walls between 1000 and 1300m high. Of the three the distant Kotin seemed to offer the best chance of adventure. Rumours of only one previous route at 5.9 kept the mystery high, while the north ridge seemed to connect quite easily to a descent I knew had been rapped before.

The downside is that regular afternoon storms have been building, the last one caught me out exploring a neighbouring valley leaving me hypothermic and the peaks coated in ice. Caught high up alone in that would be ugly. But the really serious question marks were all internal. What was I really doing here? miles around the globe away from the people who really cared about me about to risk it all on a solo of a 1300m rock face. And behind it all, the fear that I was a fake; that I had the words but not the action.

These doubts began to rattle around my head as I stumbled in the dark, conserving my headtorch batteries and still reeling from my early start. A voice very like mine cursed me, "How can you call yourself an Alpinist when you can't even walk properly." And "You're moving way too slow; you'll never climb the face in a day." The voices were reaching a cacophony of fear and recrimination. Their criticism cut into my self-belief. I remembered reading about Steve House describing his solo new route "Beauty is a Rare Thing" and how he'd never visualised his death before in the mountains. I saw myself fall a thousand times.

Despite the visions of mortality, at each turn around point during the 2 hour approach I continue, reaching the base of the wall as dawn breaks and the pale light begins picking out the beautiful spire of the Russian Tower, the broad sweep of the Central Pyramid and the delicate quartz veins of the Wall of Dykes. Memories of my recent adventures with Zippy bring back some of the belief as my spirits rise with the gathering sunlight. O.K time to have a little look.

A series of juggy corners warmed me up as I start to pick my way from one groove to another, to the left the granite falls away its blankness only broken by a frail cascade of morning run off. At each move higher I begin to feel that I am in the right place after all. The first test arrives 200ft up as I pause beneath a roof blanking the corner line. A little probing, deep breaths, poor jams but good smears and I'm out dangling on the arete. Out on the rock the lessons learnt at Gogarth, on Grit and in Range West filter through and I begin to relish the contact and commitment.

Another 200 feet of granite jams sink past before things rack up another level. The crack has blanked out but the real worry is the seepage line that's trickling down the left wall. An attempt at stemming, then smearing and finally laybacking only flares up the fear monitor. Eventually I commit to a shallow tips jam but the next holds are crap. The voice starts up again "400 foot down you idiot". Shut up, think positive! Right, time to improvise. With my body squirming, suddenly I find a kneebar. Bliss. Jumping the knee bar up the corner gets me past the slopes on to better jams and then I'm off flowing again. Well it's certainly not going to be HVS anymore.

500ft further on and I reach the end of the first steep section. The climbing has been superb swapping from crack system to face, from fist jam to chicken head: it's shaping up to be a great route. The middle 800ft is much easier and I have to pace myself as I gain altitude. Intuitively I seem to stop for a breather every 150ft or so as though I'm pitching it. Above me is a dramatic sight; the headwall soars up in a series of cracks and spires reminiscent of the Chamonix Aiguilles. I've been heading for a central spur but it soon becomes plain that some of the gendarmes are actually overhanging. Strangely, where earlier such a challenge would have brought waves of doubt crashing

through my psyche, I feel instead inspired and compelled by the striking purity of the rock.

The face steepens further and I consider traversing in search of alternatives but above me is a stunning crack, the sort of pitch that has queues beneath it at Bosigran. I can't resist. The rope and rack are forgotten in the pack as I begin to layback the initial finger crack. The shallow corner disappears so feet join hands as the crack widens and then as it begins to overhang it opens up to perfect fist jams. I hang secure and feet soak up the exposure beneath my feet. Its one of those immaculate cracks that only granite seems to provide, OK well maybe gritstone too, but not with 3000 feet of air beneath.

Past this crux I'm locked in now. Utterly engaged, even the increasing seepage lines aren't slowing me. Then I hit a sudden impasse. The next 60 feet offer a frightening prospect. A crack 6 to 8 inches wide, too shallow to arm or knee bar and dripping wet. The only choice is to layback the edge. I don't leave myself long enough to think through the consequences and gingerly test the friction. It seems to be working as I pad and shuffle my way up. Maybe it just looks worse than it is but then the sharp edge goes and the layback becomes rounded. I'm beginning to pump, my boots oozing water, eyes wide searching for something quick. Then I spot it - a couple of crystals out on the wall, they barely constitute a hold but it's all there is. At head height is a clump of moss, two more moves and if it holds I've got a foothold. I watch my hand shake its way to the crystals and then stare in horror as my legs try to follow flailing inside the runnel. I feel like a drunken disco-dancer. Someone starts screaming "You stupid fucker!" Standing on the still-intact sod I forgive them for their language; they're only scared, but I also know they're right.

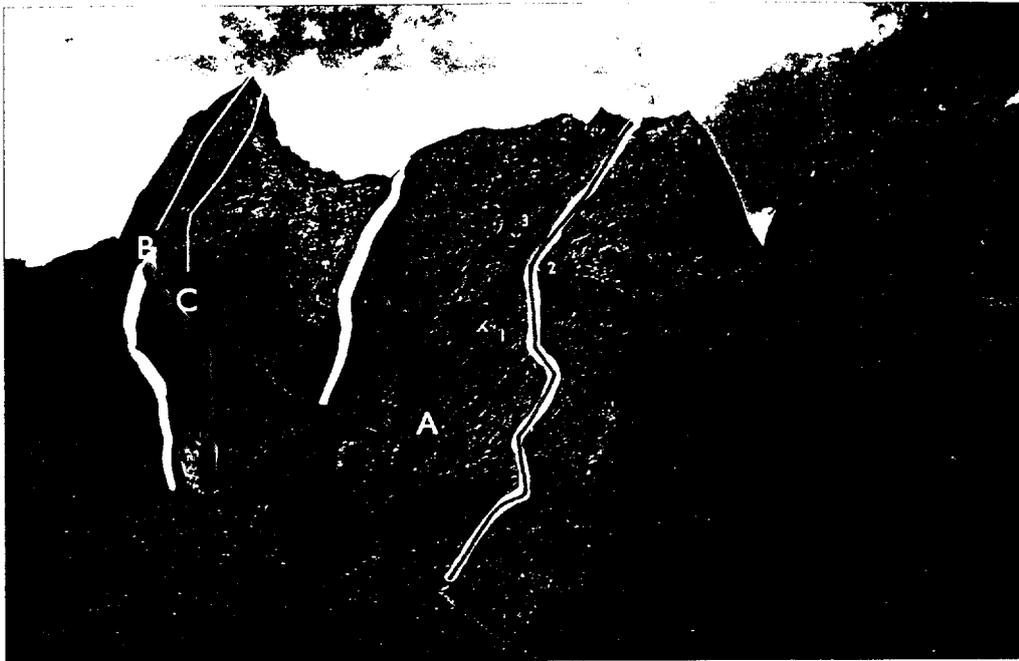
As the ground eases I relax a little and become aware I've been climbing non-stop for 5 hours. I need to rest but I can't seem to stop. False summits appear again and again as I wearily wind between the snow patches and verglassed rock. And then the view into the adjacent Kara-su valley opens up. I let my fears drain away as I lose myself in the sight of Asan Peak, Usan and the awesome north face of Pyramidalny already filling with storm cloud. It's 1600 metres down but somehow I know I'll be OK. In those moments on the summit the huge weight of doubt, fear and loss is lifted with the wind. Questions blown away. Not just why I climb, but a search for authenticity and identity, of who I am and what I can be. The irony of my isolation contrasts with the gentle hallucinations of my friends and family that surround me. I promise them I'll be back home soon.



**Above:** Base Camp in the Ak-Su Valley with (A) Central Pyramid and (B) The Russian Tower. (1) The 1988 Kant Route (25 pitches: F6b). (2) Totem (23 pitches: F6c and A1). (3) The 1988 Russian Direct (F6b and A2 but climbed free at 5.12b by the 1997 American team). (4) Papillon (24 pitches: F6c and A3/C2). (5) Voie Francaise (19 pitches: F6c and A1/C2) with (6) the 1997 Yellow Moon Variation which allows the route to be climbed all free at 5.12a. (7) Black Magic (500m: 5.12a) climbed by Americans and British in 1997. (8) Spanish Dihedral (F6c and A4). (9) Morozov Route. (10) Semiletkin Route. Also here is the Russian Shield (5.10 and A4), (11) Klenov Route (6B), (12) Perestroika Crack (F7b).  
 The Big Joke E5 6a 1000m  
 Smetana Moon E5 6a 820m  
 The Little Tease E3 5c 270m  
 Albino Boys E4 6a 345m  
 Descent



**Below:** The Lower-West Face of the Central Pyramid showing (A) Für Matthias (Böhmer/Lange, 1998). Pitch 1: 55m 6a, 2: 60m 4c, 340m 6a, 4: 55m 6a+, 5: 50m 6a, 6: 55m 6b+/6c, 7: 40m 6a+. (B) Der Kleine Prinz (Böhmer/Lange, 1998). Pitch 1: 40m 6b+, 2: 50m 6b+/6c, 3: 55m 5c, 4: 55m 6a, 5: 55m 6c+, 6: 60m 6b+. (C) A Better World (Brambati/Miraldi/Vitali, 1998). Pitch 1: 40m 6a+, 2: 40m 6a+, 3: 50m 6b, 4: 45m 6a+, 5: 45m 6c, 6: 50m 5c, 7: 50m 5b, 8: 30m 3. Not shown is the line of Black Magic by the Americans Donahue and Harvey in 1997. This climbs left of, but seemingly quite close to, Für Matthias before crossing it rightwards above its junction with Der Kleine Prinz. (D) is part of the Pamir Pyramid, the right flank of which was climbed by the Germans, Groeger and Pickel, in 1998 (five pitches to 7a+).  
 The Little Tease E3 5c 270m  
 Descent



PAUL PRITCHARD

**Above:** A very foreshortened view of The Wall of Dykes showing (A) the line of the 1997 Green/Pritchard Route, Great Game (1,200m: 5.12b, British E5 6b). (1) marks the first crux protected by a bathook, (2) the second and main crux and (3) the high point of the fixed ropes. From (3) to the top of the wall is c700m. On the left is the Russian Tower (4,240m) with (B) Perestroika Crack (Favre/Gentet/Givet/Roche, 1991: 7a and A2: all free by Pallandre in '93 at 7b) and (C) Fat City (Calhoun-Grissom/Smith, 1995: 18 pitches: 5.12). The pillar to the right is probably that climbed by Borghetti, Invernizzi and Righetti in 1996 at F6c.

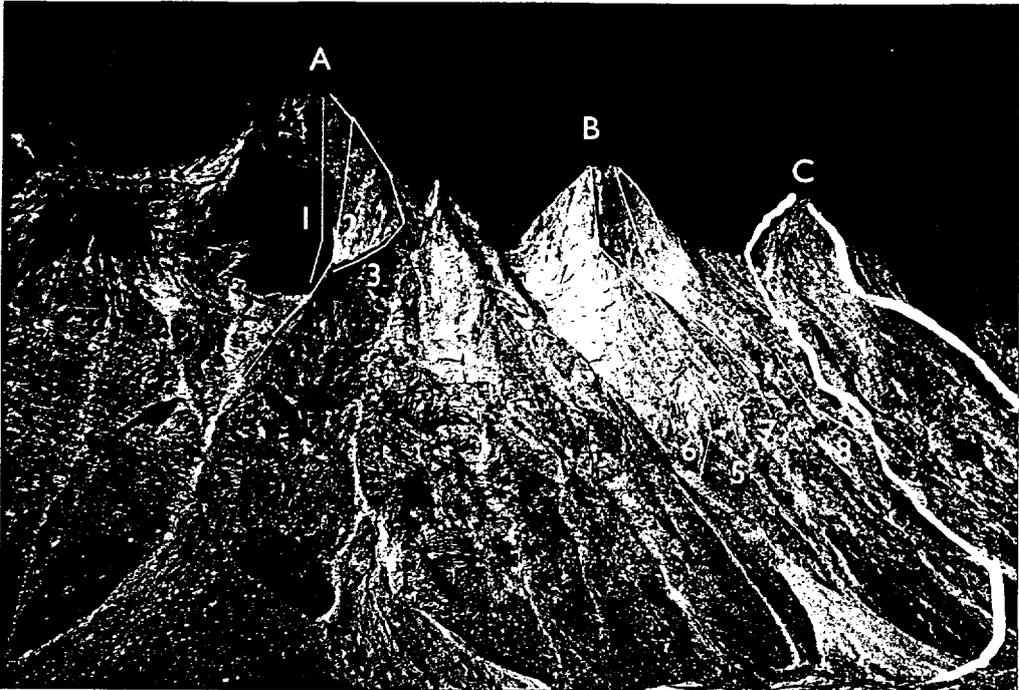
- The Last Laugh E5 6a 680m
- The Philosophers Stone E6 6b 1300m —
- The Great Game (Pritchard/Green 1997) .
- The Reluctant Chef E3 5c 530m
- The Hostage E5 6a 550m ●●●



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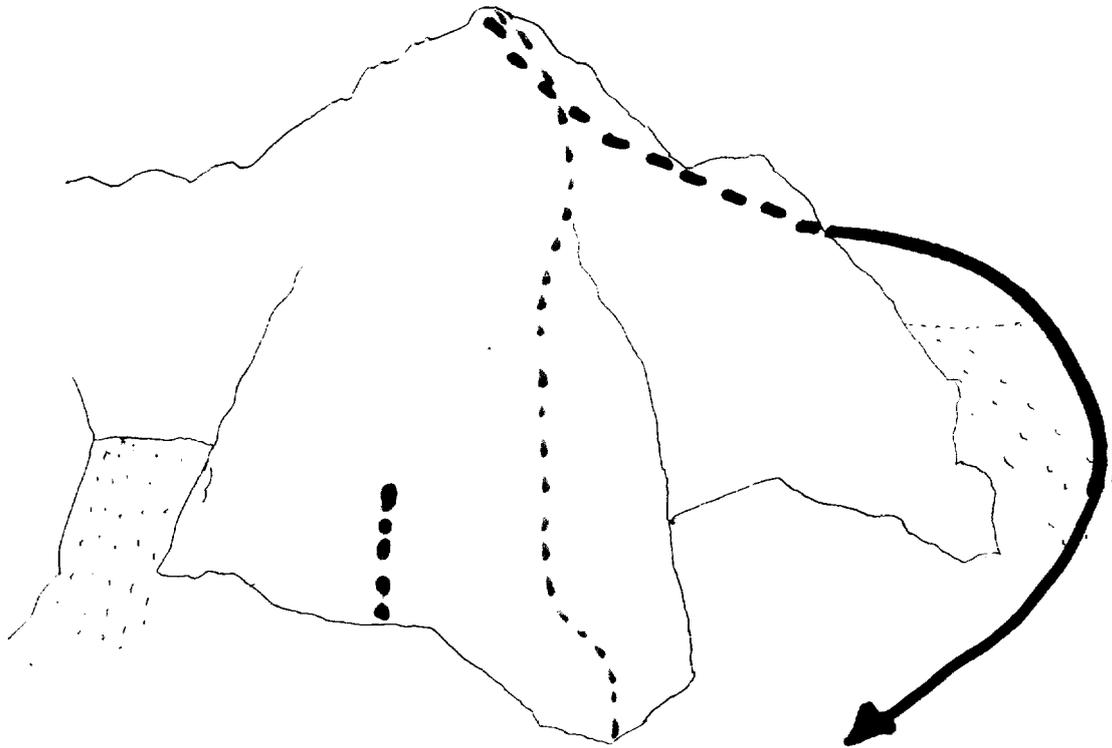
**Above:** The c3,700m pyramid below the west side of the Russian Tower showing the line of The Missing Mountain (Brambat/Miraldi/Vitali, 1998). Pitch 1: 55m 6a+, 2: 40m 6a, 3: 45m 6a, 4: 50m 5b, 5: 55m 6a, 6: 50m 5b, 7: 45m 5b, 8: 40m 5a, 9: 45m 5c, 10: 45m 6a, 11: 45m 6a, 12: 40m 6b, 13: 50m 6a, 14: 50m 3. The slabby walls between this route and the prominent white rock scar are taken by Trenta Passi nella Meta del Cielo (Borghetti/Invernizzi/Righetti, 1996: 6c+17a). (A) marks the walls of the Russian Tower and (B) the left side of the Wall of Dykes.

- The Reluctant Chef E3 5c 530m —
- The Missing Mountain (Brambat/Miraldi/Vitali 1998)
- The Hostage E5 6a 550m
- Solo attempt – Parnell ●●●
- The Last Laugh E5 6a 680m



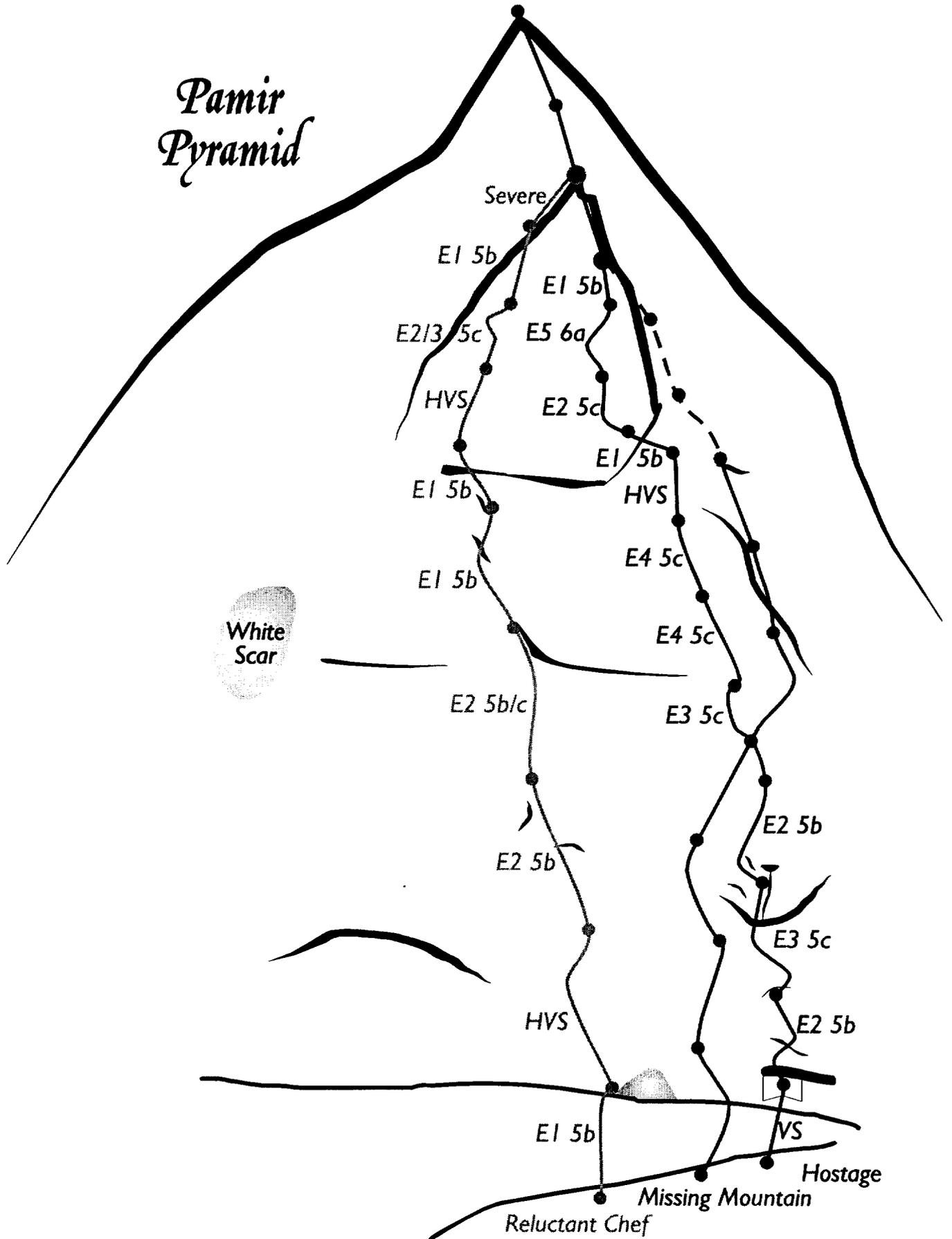
**Above:** The west wall of the Ak-Su Valley, Pamir Alai. (A) Pic 4,810m (aka Pic Boston), (B) Pic 1,000 Years of Russian Christianity and (C) Pic Kotin. (1) and (2) are the approximate lines of the two hard Russian Routes put up in 1993 and 1989 respectively (6B). (3) Spanish Ridge (F6a). (4) South East Face - Russian Route. (5) Russian East Pillar and (6) Sugar Daddy (800m: F6c/7a). (7) East Face Direct (1,200m: F6c and A1). (8) North East Pillar (1,300m: 6a: soloed in 1997 by Stephanie Davis).

The Isolationist E2 5c 12000m  
 Descent 



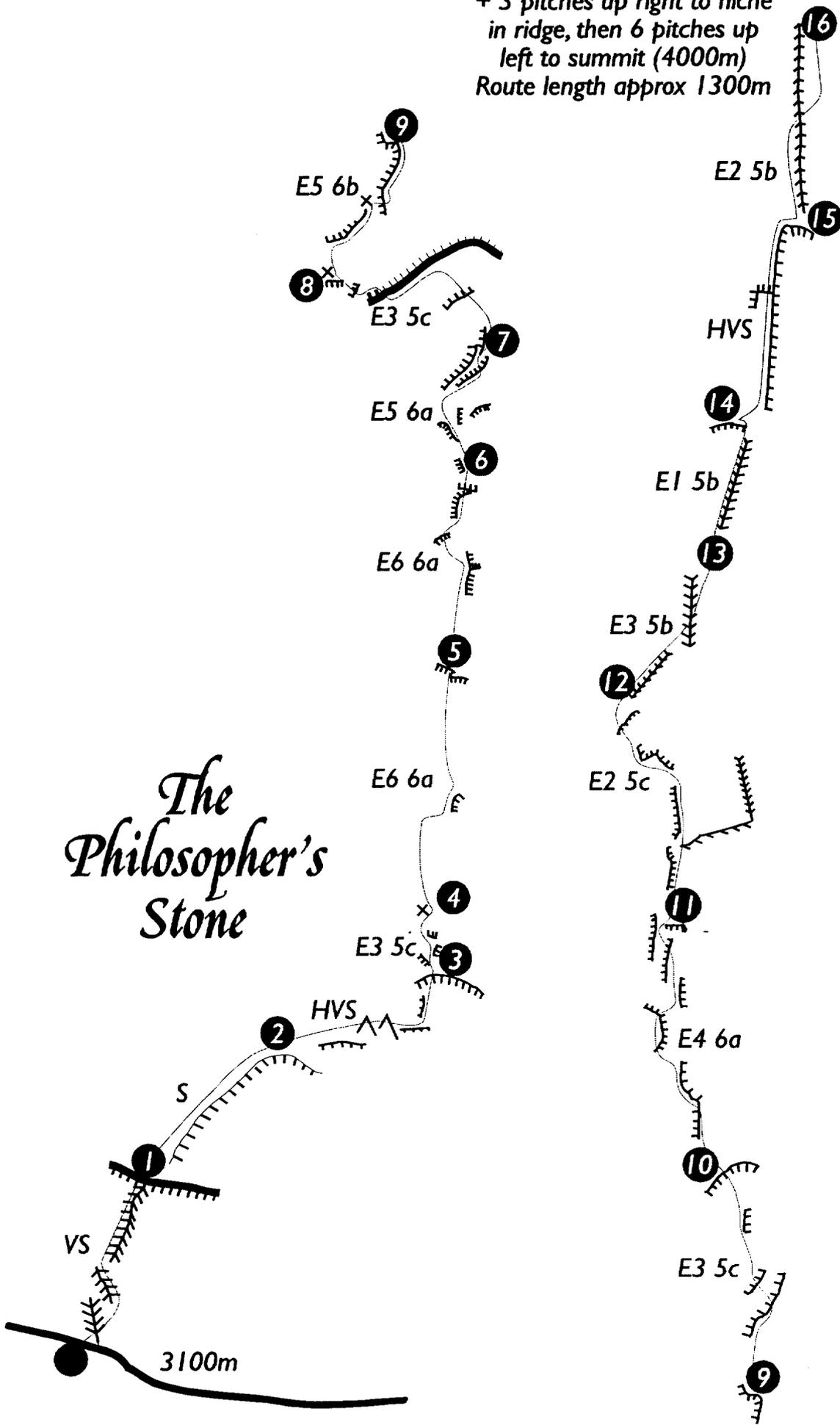
The Kyrgyz Way E4 5c 1150m  
 Descent   
 Attempt E4 5c 

# Pamir Pyramid

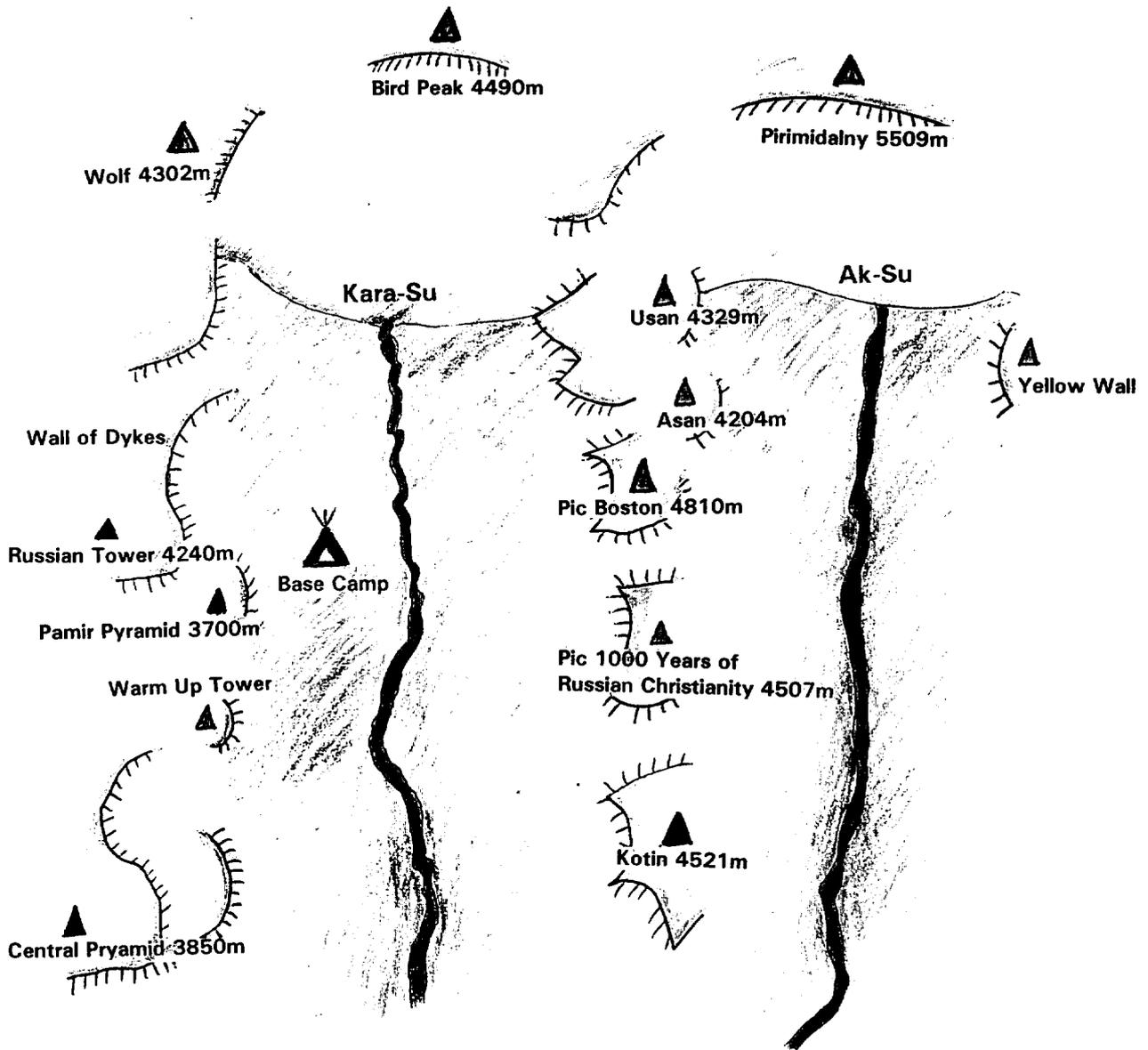


+ 3 pitches up right to niche  
in ridge, then 6 pitches up  
left to summit (4000m)  
Route length approx 1300m

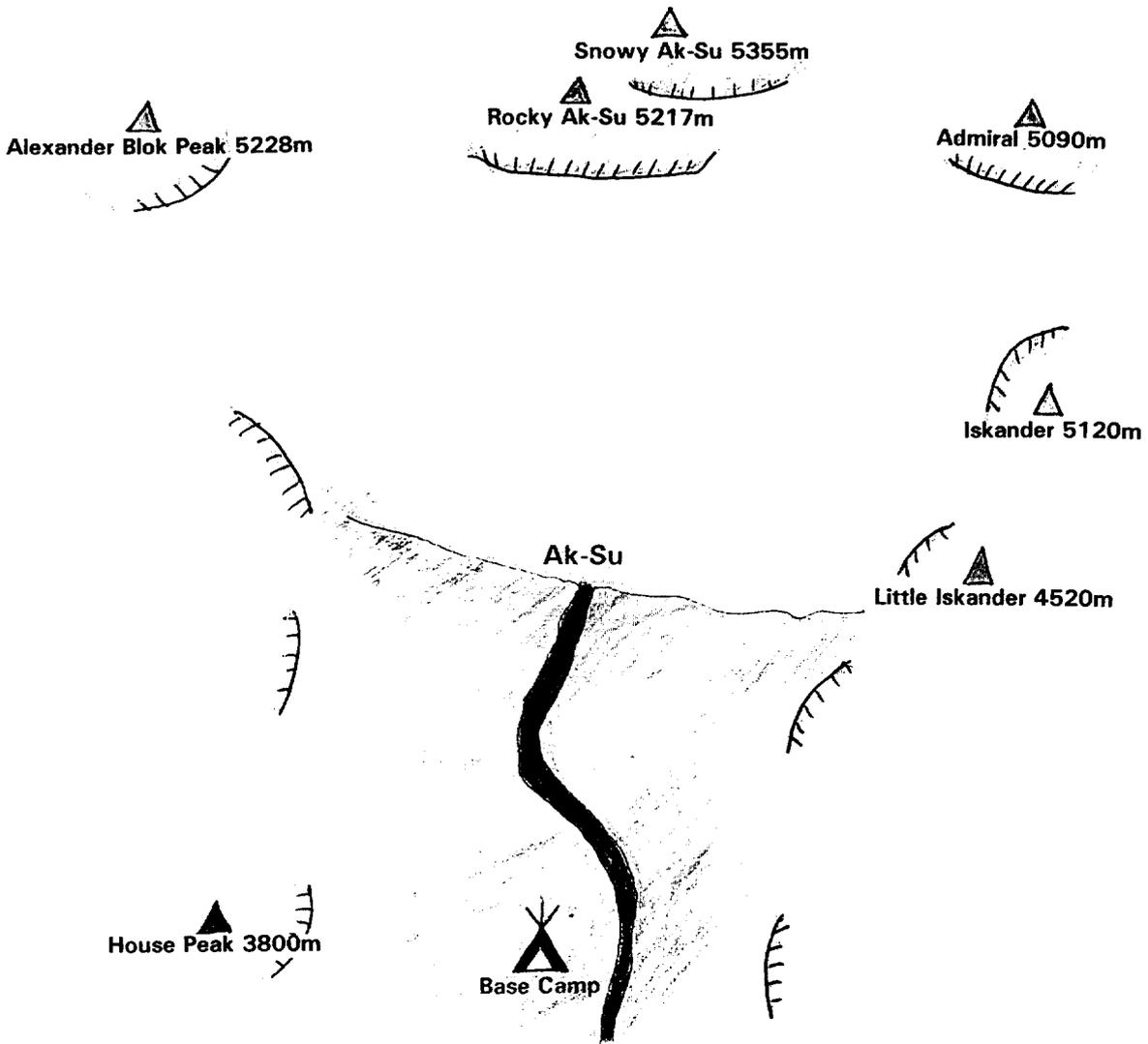
# The Philosopher's Stone

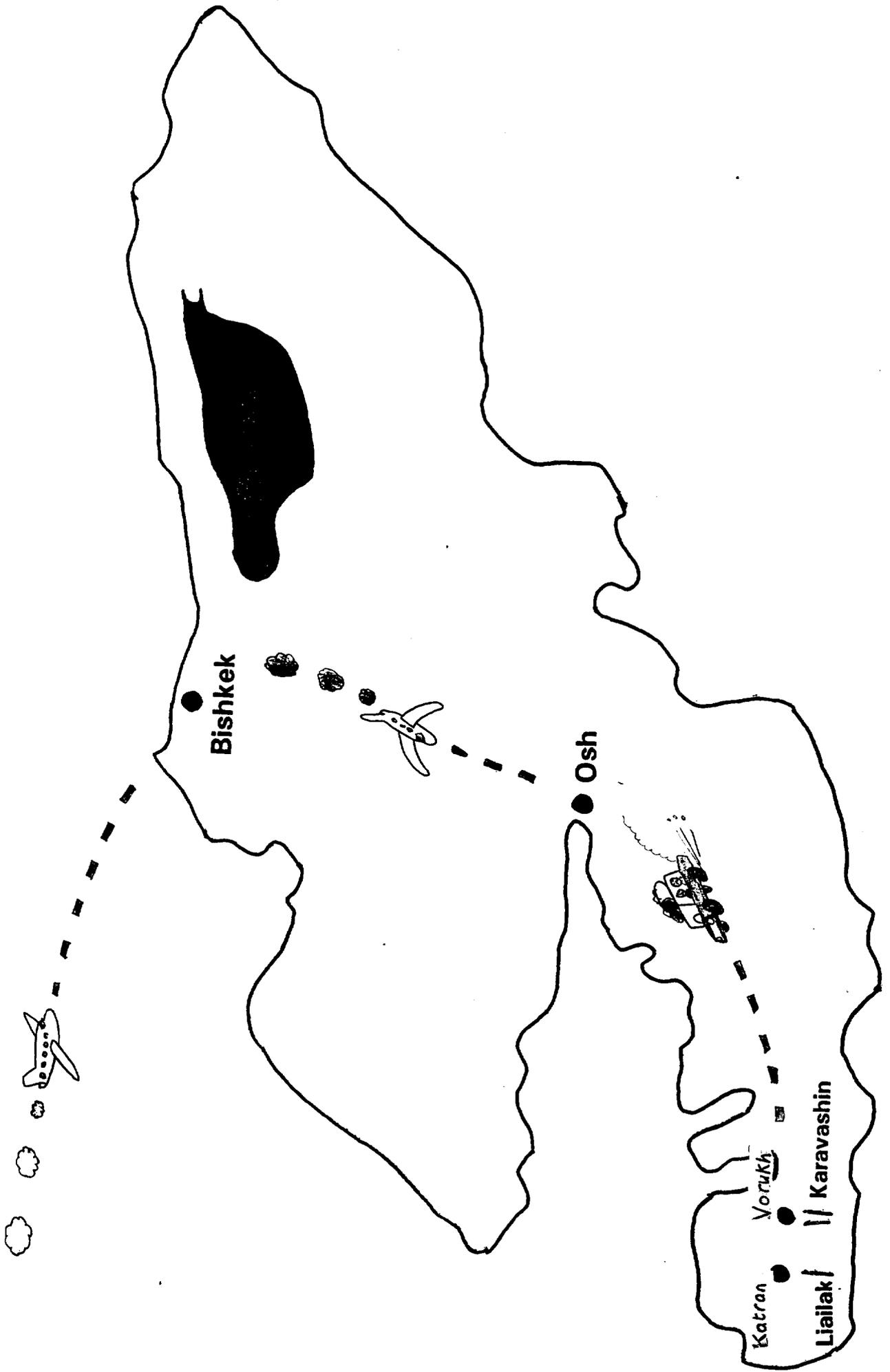


# Karavashin



**Liailak**





Bishkek

Osh

Katran

Vorukh

Lialak

Karavashin





Russia

Iran

Turkmenistan

Uzbekistan

Kazakhstan

Tajikistan

China

Afghanistan