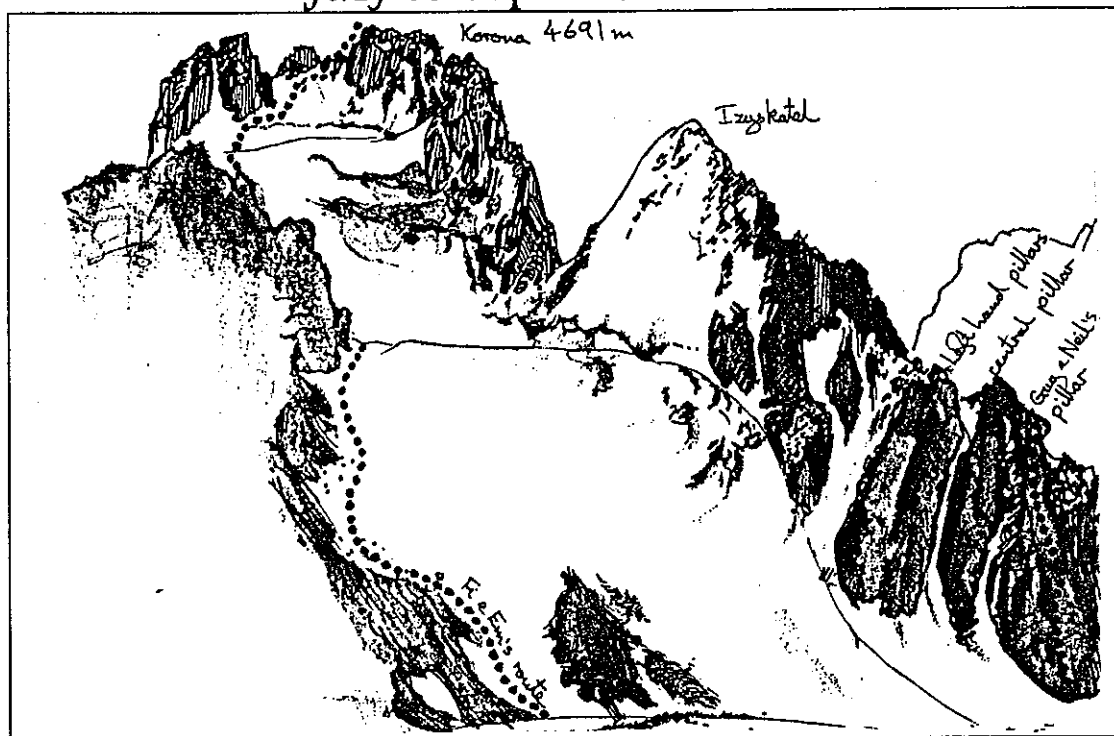


# Bristol Tien Shan Expedition

Patron: Jim Curran

July to September 1995



An Expedition by 6 former students combining exploration  
with new routes, first British, and first ascents of some  
'Celestial Mountains'

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# **Bristol Tien Shan Expedition 1995**

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## Summary

In July 1995 six former students of Bristol University travelled to Kyrgyzstan, previously part of the Soviet Union, to climb and explore in the mountains of the Tien Shan. The aim was to split the expedition into two main phases; a two week training and acclimatisation phase in the alpine Ala-Archa region in the west of the country, and a five week period in the Central Tien Shan climbing virgin summits from the unexplored Konsomolets glacier, with an attempt on Khan Tengri (6995m) if time allowed. Food and bureaucracy were dealt with in the capital, Bishkek before each stage. During the period in Ala-Archa the team made three first British ascents of peaks in the cirque, two enjoyable unclimbed routes (on a rock pillar and an ice face), and repeated one easier alpine peak. This provided good grounding for climbing in the Konsomolets, where we made first ascents of four independent summits, one top, and came within 150m of a fifth summit but were turned back by somewhat hostile snow conditions on the ridge. We explored the glacier fully, and spotted several climbing possibilities for the future, ruling out summer ascents on others because of the considerable danger from seracs on many faces. Five day's load carrying allowed an attempt on Khan Tengri, but the team was turned back at 6600m on the normal route via the west ridge by a combination of illness, poor late season weather, and lack of time. A four day walk-out down the Inylchek glacier was a good period of transition from the mountains to the green valleys of normal life. Each stage of the trip would have been almost impossible without the help of our tour operators, Dostuck Trekking in Bishkek. (See also Preliminary report - UK Chupi Orco Expedition 1995).

## Introduction

The expedition was originally conceived when the entire team were still studying at Bristol University two years ago, and its objective until 6 weeks before leaving had been new routes in the Apolobamba range in Bolivia. At this stage the Peruvian 'Shining Path' terrorist group decided to set up their base camp where ours had been planned for, and at the same time the teachers of Bolivia tried to start a civil war. So, not needing anything more exciting than a bit of snow and ice, we thought it would be best to find some peaceful mountains on the other side of the world to climb in. This all coincided with final exams for the veterinary half of the term, and so the destination decision was left to the rest, with the vets willing to follow anyone anywhere like sheep once their exams were over.

We chose the Tien Shan range, which follows the western border of China, because the original expedition objectives of first ascents, first British ascents, and new routes, could be achieved equally well here as in Bolivia. The Konsomolets glacier was chosen as there were no records of its peaks being ascended, apart from the 6000'ers which have all been done in the course of the Russians' epic traverses. There also appeared to be a variety of peaks that would suit the different abilities within our group, plus the opportunity to go to 'serious' altitude on Khan Tengri for amusement at the end.

Apart from the main objective of mountaineering and exploring in a remote and previously untouched environment, the team was also very intent on the less stated aims that turn a trip from a series of climbs into a cohesive and balanced expedition. We had all climbed together for several years, which was a huge advantage as far as the team atmosphere went, helped by a bit of intense training in the Lake District and Bristol. We also wanted to have as much to do with the local people and environment as possible, in order to build a more complete picture of the country we were climbing in, and we thought that load carrying both in and out of the mountains would be a good way of achieving this, as well as getting fit and being completely self sufficient once we set off. Perhaps most importantly, we needed to clear our heads of five years' of lecture notes and put something more useful back in!

### **The Team**

We had all climbed together a lot over the years and consequently were confident we would gel together well as a team. Collectively, we had quite a good scope of experience in the group and a healthy mixture of ability (HS/VS to E2, II/III to V) which allowed a wonderful combination of mellow and more intense experience.

**Guy Willett**, 23. Dundee medical student and Bristol graduate. He has summer and winter UK climbing experience and has climbed two Alpine seasons, a handful of routes in the Rockies/Cascades and Denali in Alaska. He was introduced to expeditioning by Operation Raleigh in Australia in 1989.

**Neil Sambridge**, 21. Sheffield medical student and Bristol graduate. He has been on expedition to Iceland and climbed a season in the Alps. He also has rock and winter climbing experience in the UK.

**Emma Garrett**, 20. Bristol dental student. She is a relative newcomer to climbing but has experience of summer and winter conditions in the UK and climbed in the Alps in 1994. She has also been on expedition to Svalbard with BSES.

**James O'Keefe**, 24. Graduated from Bristol University as a vet this summer. He has climbed two Alpine seasons and some alpine routes in the Canadian Rockies and the Dolomites. He has wide experience of UK climbing and has been on conservation expeditions to Belize and Western Canada.

**Fiona Hatchell**, 24. Graduated as a vet from Bristol University this summer. She has been on expeditions with BSES to Greenland (Stauning Alps) and Svalbard in both spring and summer (as a leader). She has also arranged smaller expeditions to the Mulanje Massif, Malawi and to the Rwenzoris, Uganda.

**Richard Vecqueray**, 23. Graduated from Bristol University as a vet this summer. In addition to rock and winter UK climbing experience, he has spent a long season climbing in the Dolomites and in the Aiguilles Rouges. He has also spent two months travelling and trekking in India.

## Itinerary

- July 13th** - Five of us fly from Gatwick to Moscow to Almaty  
- Jok flies from Heathrow to Istanbul to Tashkent to Almaty
- July 14th** - Arrive Almaty 6.30am, 29 degrees C. Met by Valeri (the 'Chief') from Dostuck trekking. By road from Almaty to Bishkek (6 hours).
- July 15th** - To Dostuck Trekking to sort out itinerary and pay for most of the expedition in advance. Bazaar in afternoon.
- July 16th** - Bazaar am. and pm., plus post office. Sorted and packed kit.
- July 17th** - Sorted out visas and the bank.  
- Drive to Ala-Archa (25km) which took 6 hours! Night in large tent behind the mountain rescue (KCN) hut in Ala-Archa, 2100m.
- July 18th** - Load carry to camp 1, 3200m, while our interpreter guarded the rest of our kit in Ala-Archa. Four of us did 2nd load carry, arriving at hut just after dark. Spent night in the hut.
- July 19th** - Recce up Ak-Sai glacier in the afternoon.
- July 20th** - Load carry to base camp, 3600m, opposite side of glacier to Russian camp 2. Em and Rich down to 3200m for the night, Jok and Guy did 2nd load carry.
- July 21st** - Guy and Jok climb Teke-Tor, 4479m. Fi, Neil, Em and Rich load carry up to base camp.
- July 22nd** - Fi, Em, Jok and Guy cross to Korona. Jok and Guy climb north face of Izyskatel, 4570m. Fi and Em on recce up Korona, scrambling up a pinnacle above the north wall.
- July 23rd** - Guy and Jok climb east face of Ak-Too col, 4200m, new route. Forced to descend west side because of threatening weather and poor snow, and spent the night in the sauna with the KCN in Ala-Archa drinking vodka and sangria. Em, Neil and Rich attempt Teke-Tor but turned back by unstable snow on north ridge. Storm late afternoon.
- July 24th** - Guy and Jok have hot barley and cocoa with 'Random' and Leningrad climbers (befriended a few days earlier) at camp 1. Neil and Rich descend to find Guy and Jok. Met above camp 1 and all back to base. Still snowing.
- July 25th** - Rest day, avalanches in morning, more snow in afternoon.
- July 26th** - Rest day, sun in morning, avalanches began midday.
- July 27th** - Rest day, sun in morning, so took two tents over the low dividing ridge between Ak-Sai and Tien Shanski glaciers. Sun in afternoon and weather back to normal.
- July 28th** - All up at 2am to attempt Tien Shanski, 4895m. Jok, Rich and Em turned back at north ridge, Guy summited, Fi and Neil one pitch below.
- July 29th** - Jok and Rich climbed Tien Shanski. All back over ridge to base camp.
- July 30th** - Fi and Em climbed Korona, 4691m. Guy and Neil climbed their rock pillar at the southern foot of Korona, new route.

- July 31st** - Packed and down to Ala-Archa, 5 hours from base camp. Dostuck van to Bishkek. Tried ringing UK.
- August 1st** - Dostuck office in the morning, and sorted out visa extension. Three of us to the bazaar in the afternoon. Impromptu beer session with some Khyrgyzi soldiers at hotel.
- August 2nd** - Dostuck am. plus bazaar morning and afternoon and supermarkets to buy anything that was missing. Packed all food into sacks.
- August 3rd** - Travel to Karakol, 6 hours. Stay in KCN chalet.
- August 4th** - Travel by truck to Maydadir, via 'Granny' for tea in the Inylchek village. Camp at army border post.
- August 5th** - Fly by helicopter to Konsomolets glacier (35 minutes). Establish base camp at middle junction on west side moraine, 3900m.
- August 6th** - All up Winnie peak, 5045m.
- August 7th** - Rich and Fi attempted 5235m peak ('Fi and Jok's' peak-to-be) but turned back by bad weather below the col. Guy and Jok attempted 5330 peak but turned back at 4600m by white-out and scree. Fi and Em explored glacier in the afternoon.
- August 8th** - Rest day. Fi and Rich set off in the evening to bivi below 5235m peak again.
- August 9th** - Fi and Rich to col between 4905m and 5235m peaks and half way along ridge to 4905m peak ('Neil and Em's' peak-to-be), but turned back by melting snow. Neil and Em climbed first top (5000m) on the ridge to 5631m peak. Guy and Jok climbed their 5330m peak.
- August 10th** - Rest morning. Afternoon, all climbed icefall on approach to 5448m peak to north-west of camp. Turned back in upper glacier bowl by excessively dangerous snowbridges over wide crevasses and incoming storm. Camped at half way plateau on icefall. Mild storm at night.
- August 11th** - Day spent evacuating Jok (with bad diarrhoea) from icefall.
- August 12th** - Fi and Em broke trail to saddle between Winnie and Fluted peaks. They carried on to traverse Winnie and descended to base camp. Rich and Guy followed their tracks and camped on the saddle.
- August 13th** - Poor early morning weather forced a rest day for Guy and Rich on the saddle. Fi, Em, Jok and Neil climbed to col between 4905m and 5235m peaks, where they camped.
- August 14th** - Em and Neil climbed 4905m peak, back to col by 8.30am. Fi and Jok climbed 5235m peak, back to col at 8.30pm. Rich and Guy got close to Fluted peak, 5736m and a bit too close to the cornice.
- August 15th** - All returned to base camp. Storm in afternoon.
- August 16th** - Rested as it rained all day.
- August 17th** - Rest day as weather still bad and avalanches rife. Expedition conference decided to go over to Khan Tengri.
- August 18th** - First load carry down to mouth of the Konsomolets, 2 hours. Stashed the kit next to the main river and returned to base camp. Weather overcast, then snowed heavily on the way back.
- August 19th** - Packed and cleared up camp completely, then did 2nd load carry down to the mouth of the Konsomolets, where we camped.

- August 20th** - First load carry up the Inylchek, but stopped from getting onto the central red moraine by a river, so set up camp and went back for a second load carry.
- August 21st** - Load carried up the central red moraine and dumped gear opposite the Khan Tengri base camp, as we were stopped from getting off the red moraine by a river on the other side. Storm in the afternoon, and had to abseil back over the first river to camp.
- August 22nd** - 2nd load carry up the central red moraine, where we camped opposite the Khan Tengri camp.
- August 23rd** - Woke at 2am to give us enough time for a double load carry across to the Khan Tengri camp before the rivers rose. Both carries finished by 11am. Valerie arrived in a helicopter at the Dostuck camp by chance, to meet some other climbers and gave us the key to stay in the hut.
- August 24th** - Packed and left for Khan Tengri in the afternoon, all camped at the base of the Seminovsky glacier.
- August 25th** - Woke at 3am and Fi, Guy, Jok and Neil up the Seminovsky to attempt Khan Tengri. Storm came in early so dug tent in at the top of the glacier, 5200m. Rich and Em had a rest day.
- August 26th** - Khan Tengri team climbed to snowholes at col on west ridge, 5800m. Rich and Em explored glacier south-east of base camp.
- August 27th** - Jok, Guy and Fi attempted Khan Tengri summit but turned back at 6600m when Guy suddenly developed vomiting and diarrhoea and needed assistance to get down. A lot of wind and clouds on Khan Tengri, but not severe.
- August 28th** - Fi also vomiting by morning so hard work getting down off Khan Tengri. All back to advance base and then decided the Dostuck hut would be better so back there by evening.
- August 29th** - Took 2 drag bags of kit up to the main base camp to fly it out on the last helicopter of the year. Major rest day after that. Guy's birthday so we drank the traditional vodka and sangria we had been load carrying, but Guy was still too ill so had to go without. See 'Random' and Leningrad climbers again - have had a 9 day frostbitten epic on Neru peak.
- August 30th** - Rest day. Fi and Rich down Inylchek in the afternoon to the mouth of the Konsomolets, intending to check our old base camp and next day for anything we had left under the heavy snow. Late afternoon storm made this a pointless exercise.
- August 31st** - Fi and Rich had a rest day on the central red moraine. Start of the great walk-out for the rest of us. All camped opposite mouth of Konsomolets.
- Sept 1st** - Walking on central red moraine most of the day, then crossed to south bank and camped on grassy slopes at the junction of the north and south Inylchek.
- Sept 2nd** - Walked along south bank of glacier, crossing back onto it to get down the snout. The southern glacial outflow river was dry, so easy to cross. Camped 8km further down the valley.

- Sept 3rd** - Easy walking along flat valley bottom and alpine meadows. Rivers easy to cross. Passed the roadhead and a camp of Kyrgyzi horsemen and camped next to the track.
- Sept 4th** - One hour's walk to Maydadir and one hours' wait for the guards to let us through. We collected our drag bags from the army camp that we had flown out, and bought food from them, then Valerie picked us up in the truck and took us to Granny's in Inylchek village for all the food we could eat. Night in KCN chalet in Karakol.
- Sept 5th** - Washed clothes and swam in sacred lake Issyk-Kul.
- Sept 6th** - Drive to Almaty, 8 hours.
- Sept 7th** - 5 flew from Almaty.
- Sept 8th** - Jok flew from Almaty.



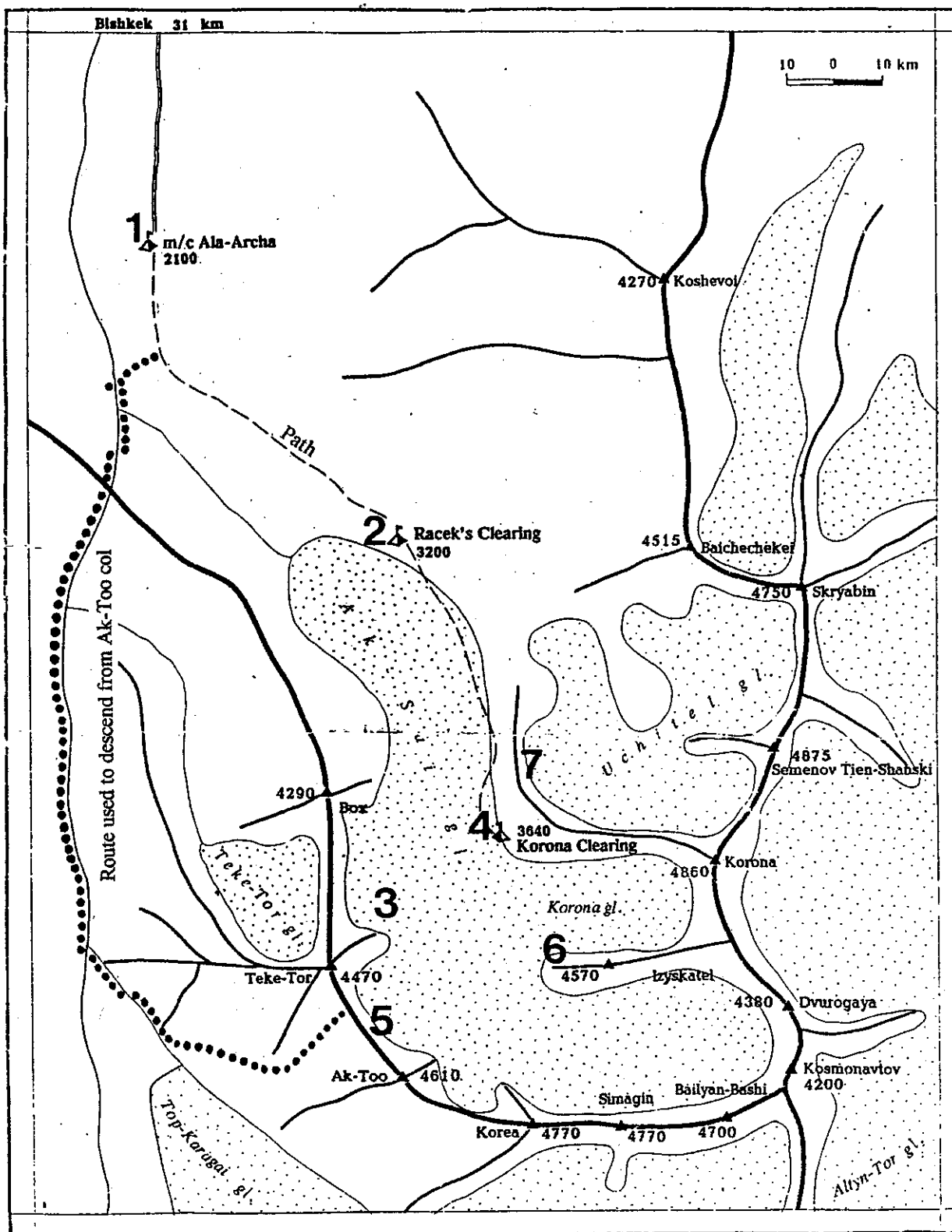
# **Map 1 Kyrgyzstan**



- (1) Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan
- (2) Map 2
- (3) Map 3

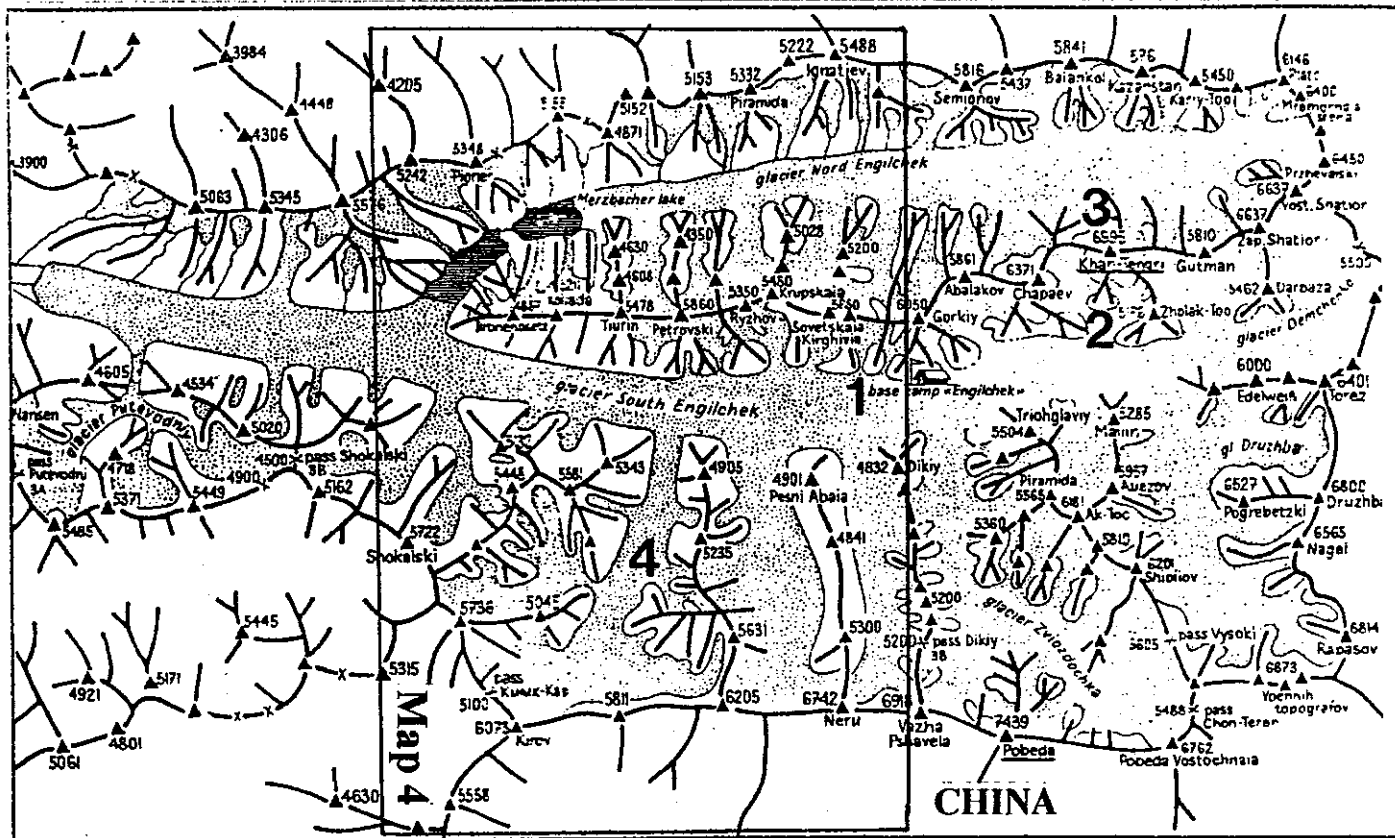
## Map 2

### ALA-ARCHA M/C REGION



- (1) Village and Mountain Rescue at the roadhead
- (2) Russian Camp 1
- (3) Our Base Camp
- (4) Russian Camp 2
- (5) East Face of Ak-Too col, Plate A
- (6) Guy and Neil's pillar, Plate C
- (7) Col used to cross over to Tien Shanski

### Map 3 Inylchek Glacier



- (1) Main Khan Tengri Base Camp
- (2) Advance Base Camp
- (3) Khan Tengri, 6995m, *Plate G*
- (4) Konsomolets Glacier

## Map 4 Konsomolets Glacier



- (1) Base Camp, 3900m
- (2) 'Winnie Peak', 5045m, Plate D
- (3) 'Guy and Jok's Peak', 5330m, Plate D
- (4) 'Em and Neil's Lump', 5000m
- (5) 5448m peak attempted, Plate F
- (6) 'Fi and Jok's Peak', 5235m, Plate E
- (7) 'Em and Neil's Peak', 4905m, Plate E
- (8) 'Fluted Peak', 5736m, Plate D

## The Climbing Regions, Map 1

The Tien Shan range stretches westwards from northern China, covering almost all of Kyrghyzstan and petering out in Kazakhstan. The whole area was out of bounds to Westerners until the collapse of the Soviet Union. There have therefore been Russian ascents of the highest mountains and most severe routes, but there is still the potential for the first ascents of summits and routes throughout the range. All on pristine alpine-scale peaks surrounded by a sea of untouched mountains in one of the largest ranges in the world - for enjoyable mountaineering, who could ask for more? We visited two areas of the range within Kyrghyzstan, as this is the country most prepared to receive Western mountaineers and is much cheaper than China:

**ALA-ARCHA, Map 2** - supposedly one hour's drive south of Bishkek, this area closely resembles an unspoilt version of the European Alps and the cirque of peaks around the Ak-Sai glacier where we were based is a fair replica of a Chamonix valley at a slightly greater altitude. The Ak-Sai is a full day's walk-in with food from the road-head through flocks of sheep on the high meadows and then up piles of moraine, which it is best to only do once. The glacier itself is flat and safe for camping, so you never have to encounter the squalid alpine huts that provided the bases for the competitive climbing of the old Soviet days and still do for most Russians today. The Ak-Sai seemed to be the testing ground for the style of mountaineering they developed, and so many of the existing routes are extreme and unenjoyable, though on immensely impressive faces. Several of the more natural lines have therefore been ignored and so even here, let alone in the less developed neighbouring valleys, there are perfect routes on pillars and faces that nobody has thought of doing, and that would have been done 100 years ago in the Alps and be classics by now. Its reputation has spread quickly and so that camps, if not the mountains, are getting crowded again, mainly with trekking parties and mainly from Leningrad. For some reason Sundays are the time to climb, when there is nobody on the glacier at all.

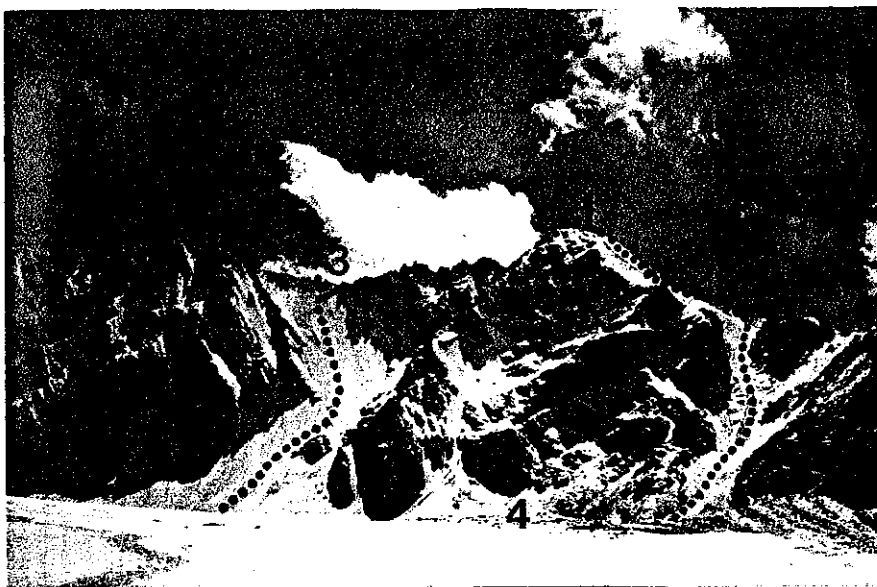
**Weather** in the area is more or less perfect for alpine routes, and apart from a two day storm, every day of our trip was a dream, with clear skies at night giving a reasonable freeze (though not as hard as the Alps), hot sun by midday to dry clothes in after the climb, usually light snow in the afternoon, and then a clear evening. Periods of good weather can apparently last weeks, and the storms in-between appear to be only minor. Temperatures are considerably warmer than in the Alps, so early starts are mandatory as the snow quickly turns to granulated sugar on sunny slopes. The ice on the faces was plastic low down and pretty well perfect for climbing, but became brittle higher up. The rock is granite and on the steeper pillars is at least as solid as comparable routes in the Alps, even on new routes.

**CENTRAL TIEN-SHAN, Map 3** - this large range stretches eastwards from the sacred lake Issyk - Kul, and it is centred around the impressive highway of the Inylchek glacier, third longest in the world. The peaks increase in height towards the glacier's source, culminating in the lump of Pik Pobeda to the south and the symmetrical pyramid of Khan Tengri on the north side, both of which dominate most views in the range. The surrounding peaks are also splendid, and although all the '6000'ers' have been climbed (though not by British) in the course of the epic traverses

at which the Russians excel, the mountains lining their glacier bays especially to the south of the Inylchek, are equally as magnificent and mostly unclimbed, particularly if some distance from the main climbing camps.

**Weather** generally seemed to follow the same pattern of morning sun and afternoon snow as in Ala-Archa, but periods of fine weather rarely lasted more than four days, with two to three days of more continuous snow in between. Storms once again were extremely short-lived and all weather could be seen coming up the Inylchek valley for several miles. Unlike Ala-Archa it was rarely warm enough for T-shirts in camp during the day but usually fine enough to air sleeping bags and eat most meals outside the tents. In general, temperatures on the glaciers and lower peaks were similar to the Alps in summer and higher up on Khan Tengri, the temperature decreased accordingly, but never became uncomfortable, though the wind-chill was considerable. The impression we got from the trip and talking to people was that the weather gradually gets worse towards the end of the official climbing season (end of August), though Valerie said that climbing in September can be very good and safe because the mountains and glaciers are so free of snow.

**Conditions** here are slightly less stable in general than in Ala-Archa (not surprisingly for bigger more 'grown-up' mountains) the slopes are often severely threatened by serac and cornice-fall, especially the east-facing slopes, and the snow is less consolidated in general, but just as susceptible to the heat of the sun at midday. Granular snow is even more prevalent on the alpine-scale peaks, and avalanches are common, especially after heavy snowfall. For these reasons all the routes we attempted were based upon ridges, often via a safe approach to a col. Most of the Konsomolets glacier was dry and flat, so unroped travel was safe and fast as it was on the Inylchek. A half rope may be all that is needed for load-carrying trips in order to cross the rivers, though before about 11am these usually give no trouble. There was always a way across them but it may not be worth the long walk to the next ice-bridge and be easier to wait till morning.



## Climbs in Ala-Archa

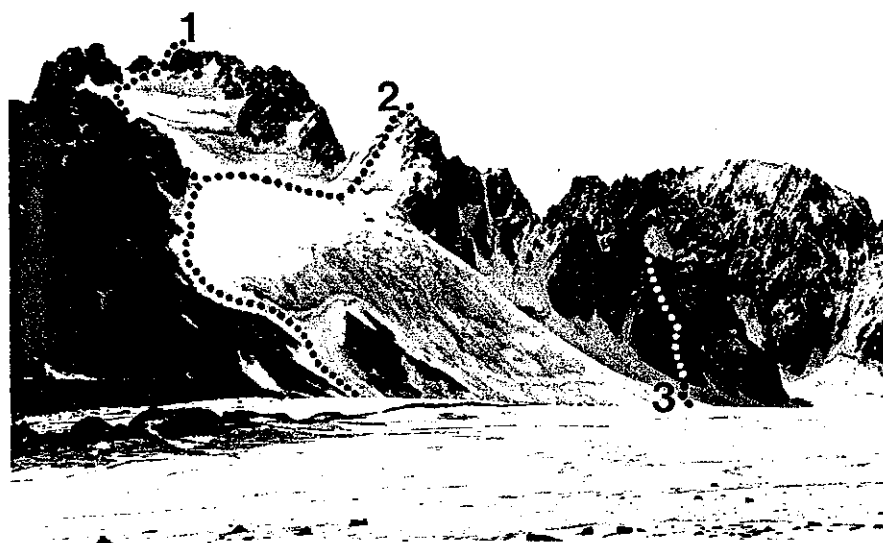
**Plate A:** East face of Teke-Tor viewed from the opposite side of the Ak-Sai.

- (1) Teke-Tor, 4479m
- (2) North ridge
- (3) East face of the Ak-Too col
- (4) Our base camp



**Plate B:** The west face of Tien Shanski, viewed from the low ridge dividing the Ak-Sai and Tien Shanski glaciers.

- (1) Tien Shanski, 4895m
- (2) North ridge
- (3) Alternative route to upper glacier bowl



**Plate C:** View of the west side of Korona and the Korona glacier, from base camp.

- (1) Korona, 4691m
- (2) Izyskatel, 4570m
- (3) Guy and Neil's pillar

## Diary

### Routes - ALA-ARCHA, Map 2

Mountain	Height	Date	Route	Grade	Team	Status
Teke-Tor	4479m	21/7/95	North Ridge	AD-	Jok & Guy	1st British
Izyskatel	4570m	22/7/95	North Face	AD+	Jok & Guy	1st British
Ak-Too col	4200m	23/7/95	East Face	TD-	Jok & Guy	New Route
Tien Shanski	4895m	28,29/7/95	North Ridge	AD	Guy, then Rich & Jok	1st British
Korona	4691m	30/7/95	West Face	PD+	Em & Fi	1st British
Guy & Neil's Pillar	3900m	30/7/95	West Side	HVS	Guy & Neil	New Route

**Teke-Tor - north ridge** 4479m - 21/7/95. AD-, 700m (Guy and Jok, first British ascent). *Plate A. A lovely simple route on steep neve to 45 degrees in the gully to the col and then the north ridge.*

The normal route from the Ak-Sai follows the scree-choked gully to the col between Teke-Tor and Boks to the north. The snow in this provides easier going, but may get unstable once the sun hits it. Then turn left up the impressive north ridge of Teke-Tor, which gradually steepens and a couple of small crevasses can be crossed at the crest, but there are no problems. The rock bench on the summit is an ideal place for breakfast. Descend by same route, 4 hours round trip, preferably finish early so the snow on the ridge is still good in descent. (Several days after this ascent, Rich, Neil and Emma tried it but were forced back by very unstable snow on the upper ridge, despite an early start).

**Izyskatel ('Explorer Peak') - north face** (left couloir) 4570m - 22/7/95, AD+, 350m (Guy and Jok, first British ascent). *Plate C. The route involves variable neve to an angle of 60 degrees, very similar to the north face of the Tour Ronde on the Vallee Blanche.*

Approach from the normal route up Korona, on the left-hand side of the Korona glacier. Leave this at the halfway plateau and cross easily to Izyskatel, keeping half an eye on the slope above as it is prone to avalanches set off by the seracs at the top. The normal route goes straight up the centre of the symmetrical face and gets embroiled in the easy mixed ground near the summit. A pair of Russians were already on that, so we passed them in the shallow couloir to the left. This is neve all the way but with underlying ice and rocks on either side for belays if needed. The couloir opens out onto the corniced east ridge just below the summit. The view is magnificent as the peak happens to be in the middle of the cirque, so you get a full 360 degrees of all the great faces - a good recce point. Once again the summit is ideal for breakfast.



Descent is easiest via the snowy east ridge (PD+) which stays in remarkably good condition despite the early morning sun and has an unnecessary fixed rope over an innocent boulder in the middle. However, the fixed abseil point from the col is useful to get over the bergschrund. 4 hours round trip from the bottom of Korona (+/- breakfast).

**East face of Ak-Too col - 23/7/95 - TD-, 600m (Guy and Jok, new route).** *Plate A. a classic simple ice face topping out at 4200m, mostly 60 degrees, rising to 90 degrees at the end of the last pitch. Incidentally it was the best pure ice route I have done.*

The route took a central line up the pristine, fluted ice face. The first 300m can be done moving together on deep 45 degree snow runnels which then turn into ice. After that 6 perfect pitches of steeper ice lead to the corniced lip, which we crossed to the left of the obvious pillar in the centre of the face, where the cornice was narrower as it abutted the rock. The last pitch gave steep mixed climbing on the left wall of the rather loose pillar, or amusing vertical ice and an unamusing hand jam or 'beach' to exit over the soft cornice. The route is threatened by stone fall, particularly from the left wall and the rock pillars at the top of the face, though you should be safe if you are off the face by 11am. Avalanches clear the face very quickly after a storm. The size of the cornices may dictate the exact line taken, but a central one seemed most aesthetic and safest at the time. 5-6 hours from the foot of the face.

In theory the descent should be simple - along the rocky south ridge to the summit of Teke-Tor and then descend by the normal route (an abseil back down the face is probably too risky). In practice the ridge is extremely broken, time-consuming and tedious, and by the time you reached the north ridge of Teke-Tor the snow would almost certainly have melted, and be thigh deep and so extremely unstable (as experienced by our second team who attempted Teke-Tor). With bad weather coming in we elected to drop into the next valley to the west, down probably the largest and most dangerous scree gully I have been in. The going is easy though and if you are lucky the bridges will still be standing and you won't get haematomas under your toe nails. Do the route on a Sunday so you can get a sauna down in Ala-Archa at the mountain-rescue hut that night, if you are too knackered to walk the 2000m back up to the Ak-Sai.

**Tien Shanski - north ridge 4895m (the highest peak in the Ak-Sai) - 28&29/7/96, AD, 1200m (Guy, then Rich and Jok, first British ascent).** *Plate B. Snow plod up a glaciated slope with a 10 foot vertical bergschrund wall to cross on the headwall, and two pitches of Scottish grade III gullies to the summit ridge, followed by similar ground for a pitch along the ridge to the summit. The mountain is a huge symmetrical pyramid, similar to the Weisshorn but more broken.*

Approach either over the low boulder-filled col from the Ak-Sai or taking the left fork of the valley to start with from Camp 1. From the moraine on the Tien Shanski glacier, the ascent is easy via the bottom of the corrie, which is crossed between some large but easy crevasses. The headwall can be climbed directly, and is threatened by seracs whichever way you go though they seemed to be stable when we were there. A bergschrund at half height was crossed easily, and can be jumped on the way down. The slopes above seemed prone to windslab, but safe enough, and these lead to the long north ridge. All the rock pinnacles were turned on the right making for long

traverses on the snow slopes. The best gully back to the ridge was the last one that led almost directly to the summit, and it was only tricky because the ice in it was hard but thin and overlaid loose blocks. There is a solid block to belay (and abseil) from the top of the gully, from where the last pitch leads up some delicate rock steps on the right side of the ridge crest. Then a few feet of snow arete to the summit, and probably the best view in the area. Big enough for two but a puzzle how you would do it.

**Korona - West face.** 4691m - 30/7/95, PD+, 1000m from camp. *Plate C. A simple snow slope takes you to a Grade III mixed route at the summit. If you chose the south rock buttresses, plenty of room for different routes. Have to be aware of avalanche prone slopes.*

Snow conditions perfect - crisp and dry for an easy ascent until near the top and if the sun has melted the snow on the descent, glysading is appropriate. Ascend up the northern side of the glacier, close to the rocks, easy angle most of the way. Have to cross one large crevasse half way up the slope on a snowbridge - gets more interesting as the day went on. Have to be aware of the slopes, as some avalanches had obviously been set off by climbers. Hidden crevasses near the top and dodgy snowbridges. Unconsolidated slopes at top are probably why most people ascend the lower northern rock summit. To go (as we did) for the 'true' high rock point, you must cross very avalanche prone slopes, these in fact did avalanche after our descent. The actual rock summit is a mixed pitch, with a very hard first move.

**Guy and Neil's Rock Pillar** 30/7/95, HVS, 250m (Guy and Neil, new route). *Plate C. The pillar is the tallest and most southerly of the three west-facing pillars on the southern arm of the Korona 'armchair'. They line the end of the south ridge of Izyskatel, and were reached in half an hour from our base camp. The route is fairly direct and involves about 250+m of completely free climbing on generally very good granite, particularly on the harder pitches.*

#### Pitch 1 - (4c) 45m

Start at the toe of the pillar, up the 2nd crack from the right, which is slightly recessed and looks significantly easier than its right-hand neighbour. Follow crack until it peters out in a loose blocky recess, moving slightly right at the top to avoid an overhanging section. Well protected.

#### Pitch 2 - (4a) 45m

Traverse left 3m and make several steepish moves to gain much gentler slabs. Follow these, zig-zagging a bit to reach an easy leftward traverse to a huge block/flake belay below some parallel cracks.

#### Pitch 3 - (4c) 50m

Climb the crack just left of the corner crack, directly behind belay. This was heavily verglassed (a tad scary!) on the way up and just very wet on the way down. At the

top, climb a series of loose ledges to reach a large block-flake below a short crack (small friend) to bypass the overhang on the left (trickyish). Belay from cracks just above the overhang at the edge of a large recess. Nut key essential for excavating gear slots.

#### Pitch 4 - (4a) 25m

Walk to the back of the recess, traverse right and climb the broken wall to the right of the chimney. Spike belay in a fantastic position looking down the gully bounding the right side of the pillar.

#### Pitch 5 - (5a/b) 50m

Make an easy and obvious rising leftwards traverse back into the centre of the main face. Climb the centre of the face for 20m(ish), on unpositive layaways, and traverse left into the obvious corner at the level of a sloping ledge and jammed block. Continue up the corner-crack and belay in a large niche above. Protection is adequate, but faith in gear-slot appearance is required at all times! Small to medium Friends are probably essential for all but the bravest.

#### Pitch 6 - (4b) 35m

Climb two parallel cracks just right of the corner to avoid loose material and then continue up corner/right wall to finish. A lovely flat, exposed top just big enough to accommodate a party of two + kit for lunch. The top is connected to the south ridge of Izyskatel by a short jagged rock ridge probably involving a couple of pitches. Abseil back down the route, and avoid falling down the otherwise undetectable bergschrund 50m from the bottom of the pillar - we didn't - twice!

#### Routes - CENTRAL TIEN SHAN, Maps 3,4

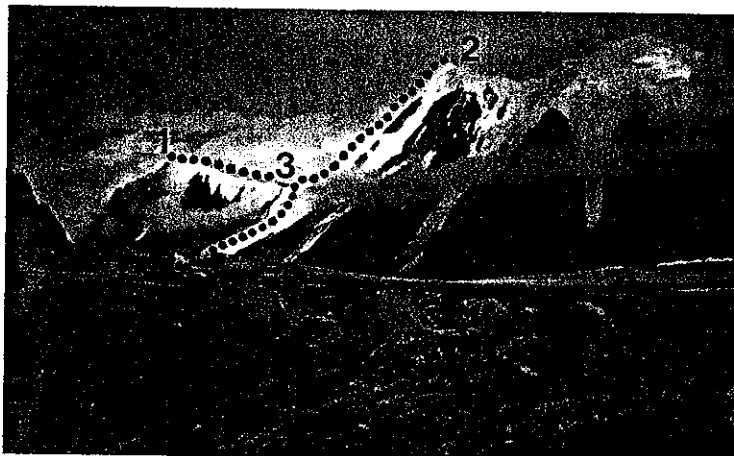
Mountain	Height	Date	Route	Grade	Team	Status
'Winnie Peak'	5045m	(a) 6/8/95	NE Ridge	PD	All of us	1st Ascent
		(b) 12/8/95	West Ridge	PD	Fi & Em	1st Traverse
'Guy & Jok's Peak'	5330m	9/8/95	SE Ridge	AD+	Guy & Jok	1st Ascent
'Em & Neil's lump'	5000m	9/8/95	West Ridge	PD+	Em & Neil	1st Ascent
'Fi & Jok's Peak'	5235m	13-15/8/95	North Ridge	AD+	Fi & Jok	1st Ascent
'Em & Neil's Peak'	4905m	13-15/8/95	South Ridge	PD	Em & Neil	1st Ascent
'Fluted Peak' attempt	5736m	12-15/8/95	East Ridge	AD	Guy & Rich	Attempted New Route
Khan Tengri attempt	6995m	24-28/8/95	West Ridge	D	Guy, Fi, Neil & Jok	Nothing Special



## Climbs in the Central Tien Shan

**Plate D:** View of the middle junction of the Konsomolets, from Fi and Jok's peak, 5235m.

- (1) Base camp
- (2) Winnie peak, 5045m
- (3) Fluted peak, 5736m
- (4) Guy and Jok's peak, 5330m
- (5) 5722m peak
- (6) Camp 1



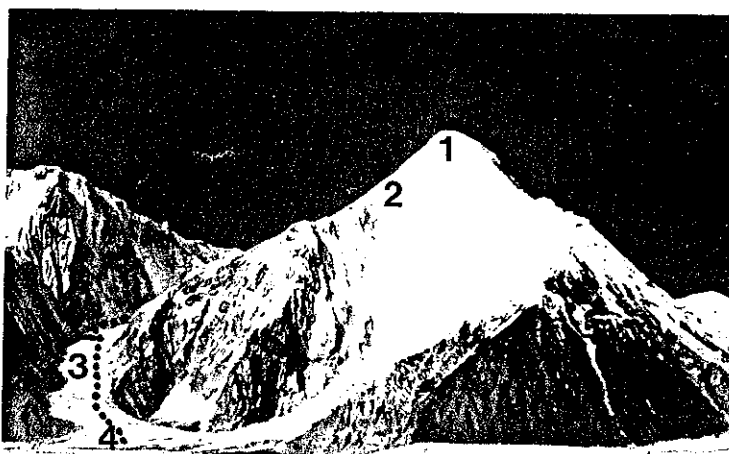
**Plate E:** View of base camp looking north-east down the Konsomolets glacier.

- (1) Em and Neil's peak, 4905m
- (2) Fi and Jok's peak, 5235m
- (3) Camp 1 on col



**Plate F:** View of mountains on the west bank of the Konsomolets, looking north from Winnie Peak.

- (1) 5448m peak
- (2) 5581m peak
- (3) Icefall used on approach to 5448m peak
- (4) Our high point on the glacier



**Plate G:** View of the south face of Khan Tengri from the upper Inylchek basin.

- (1) Khan Tengri, 6995m
- (2) Marble ridge
- (3) Seminovsky glacier
- (4) Advance base camp

**'Winnie' Peak - north-east ridge 5045m - 6/8/95, PD, 700m** (the whole team, first ascent). *Plate D. Nothing to it except stamina. The mountain looks easy from all angles, but the line of least effort from our base camp took the NE ridge.*

Starting at the foot of the ridge, we gained a snow runnel to the left of the glacier tongue, which took us to the crest of the ridge proper and a short steep ice-step can be avoided by crossing into the glacier as the snow runnel joins it. The snow on the north side of the ridge gives easy plodding to join the main snowy ridge above the shoulder. This ridge acts as a watershed for seracs, so crevasses and ice-blocks cross it in odd directions but they mostly seem safe. The large overhanging serac that seems to block the ridge near the summit can be passed easily on the right, but probably also on the left via some steeper ice or a ramp through a tunnel of icicles. Further zig-zagging across leaning seracs leads to the summit, which is indistinct, and was probably only reached by Fi and Em in their traverse of Winnie on 12/8/95. They followed the west ridge from the col below the 'Fluted Peak' 5736m., and then descended the NE ridge again. The NE ridge takes 4 hours there and back again. Named after a pit-bull terrier we know and love.

**'Guy and Jok's' Peak - south-east ridge 5330m - 9/8/95, AD+ 1000m** (Guy and Jok, first ascent). *Plate D. Scree and snow plods lead gradually to a steep 100m snow slope requiring two axes, and then the broad summit ice crest. The route follows the initially indistinct SE ridge of the mountain.*

The first attempt up the loose rocky ridge itself was abandoned because we could not hack the scree any longer. A much faster and easier way is via the snow runnel in the next small gully to the west. This was reached via the wide scree slope on the ridge, traversing left into the runnel at a small shoulder so as to be above the path of ice-fall from the threatening serac. This happened to be a good option, when small lumps of ice shot past us as soon as the sun came up. The shallow gully leads up to one of the typical south-facing slopes of the region - sugary hollow snow on top of ice. This is fine when it is frozen in early morning, but extremely unstable once it melts, so speed is needed on this route. At the top of the slope a shallow ridge leads to the left, across a small bergshroud to the foot of the broad and slightly corniced ridge, or 'ice-crest'. This was all reasonable and easy neve when we were there, with protection possible but not needed. As the ridge flattens out it seems interminable, but the position is amazing, and the wide flat summit feels like it is the epicentre of the range. The descent was by the same way and needs some nifty daggering to be off the steep sugar snow before it starts to slide. We were down at the glacier before 11am and would not have liked to be much later.

**'Fi and Jok's' Peak - north ridge 5235m - 13-15/8/95, AD+, 1600m from Konsomolets, 600m from col (Fi and Jok, first ascent). Plate E.** *A pure snow and ice climb with a long but easy day from the Konsomolets to the col between this peak and 'Em and Neil's' 4905m peak. The col is a kilometre wide and perfect for camping next to the rocks, with a pond for water. The north ridge itself is interesting throughout, being a mixture of traverses, knife-edge ridges and clambering over serac blocks and crevasses (which may become impassable at times).*

The first two attempts on the mountain failed because the route from Konsomolets to summit is too long to do in a day, as the snow conditions deteriorate in the sun. We succeeded by having an advance camp at the mid-way col. The glacial tongue that extends from the col to the Konsomolets was used in ascent, providing easy plodding on fairly dry ice to 35 degrees, to the comfortable camp sheltered behind the small rock tower on the col. The following morning, the north ridge was gained at its lowest point by a 150m 50 degree ice slope covered with the usual sugar snow. In future years it may be safe to pass through the seracs from the col to gain it much higher up. The ridge has small cornices to the east and it is quicker to traverse under these on the east side to begin with, until they get too large to cross back. Once on the ridge there are knife edged and crevassed sections to be negotiated, and small steep sections through the leaning serac blocks near the summit. Snow stakes were useful for this part. Incredible view from the summit. The snow conditions on the ridge stayed good all morning despite the sun. However, the initial ice slope used to gain the ridge was avalanching spontaneously in the sun, so we had to wait on the rock buttress at the top of the slope until the sun went down in the evening and the ice froze again. Hit by a small avalanche on the way down, but slopes were stable enough to descend before dark. Back to tent by 8.30pm. As this slope faces southwest it seems that an afternoon waiting on the rock buttress is almost compulsory to do this route safely.

**'Fluted Peak' - east ridge 5736m - 12-15/8/95, AD, 1400m from Konsomolets (Guy and Rich attempted). Plate D.** *The north face of this peak, which dominates the Konsomolets, is a beautiful maze of delicate flutings. The climbing is on snow the whole way, with 100 feet of free fall below the cornices!*

A 3/4 hour approach on the glacier leads to the foot of the easy north slope from where a fairly obvious route between seracs leads to the large flat col between 'Winnie' and a subsidiary top of the Fluted Peak. We camped here at 5000m+. It is possible to camp on the next col to the west, though this is inadvisable as it is more threatened and you would be more cut off after a storm. The morning of the second day was spent sitting out poor weather, and by the afternoon the snow conditions had deteriorated too much to be useful, even at this altitude.

On 14th August we set off at 4am traversing below the subsidiary peak and onto the next col (beware bergschrunds). We then gained the ridge proper by climbing 20m of horrifically steep unconsolidated sugar just round on the north slope and then continuing directly up another slope to the ridge. A simple traverse leads to a knife edge section. Here our progress faltered. The snow was very poor - a thin crust over a layer of air and then sugar - and the ridge heavily corniced. Unable to traverse with one of us either side of the ridge, we set up a belay and gently probed forwards. The

cornice overhung even more than we thought, and then promptly snapped off, plunging Guy 100ft down the north face. The belay failed but we came to rest dangling either side of the ridge, thanks to Rich's good body belay skills! Having regained the ridge, we were not thrilled with the idea of continuing along it in the current conditions and we turned back.

The cornice snapped at 7am and there was only perhaps 2-300m to go to the summit, so I am confident that it is possible to complete the summit day before the snow turns. However, I do not think the conditions this summer would ever have been suitably safe on the knife-edge portion of the ridge - maybe it would be better to try it in winter when there is less snow and lots of bullet proof ice that at least won't snap off on you.

**'Em and Neil's Lump'** 5000m - 9/8/95 PD+ (1,100m) (Em and Neil, first ascent). *A route with a lot of variety. Fun at first getting to the bottom of the scree gully with a nightmare scramble up the scree, followed by some firm steep snow where front pointing was necessary. Once past a rocky outcrop, undulating snow slopes steepen to the summit, which is a cornice.*

Ascend a scree filled gully on s.w. slopes, after some tricky glacier crossing. 75m of front pointing up good ice (OK for descent later as west facing) leads to manoeuvring over a few rock outcrops. Then an easy path takes you up undulating snow slopes between avalanche fields on the convex slopes (deep soft snow). The gradient steepened towards the summit (corniced). Potential to continue along ridge to saddle, then to 5671m peak.

Descend same way, 5 hours round trip from camp, rivers and glacier tedious to cross in afternoon.

**'Em and Neil's Peak' - south ridge.** 4905m - 13-15/8/95, PD, 1000m from Konsomolets, 300m from col. *An easy gradient traverse, gaining very little height from the col where we camped. A few obstacles on the way, seracs, need careful planning; would not like to cross beneath them any later. Stunning views from the summit which is a cornice, are rewarding.*

Set off from the mid-way col between peaks 4905 and 5235m. From the east side of the rocks cross a mini cornice and then traverse, a few metres from the ridge top, on the western slopes. Ice very thin in places, mostly crisp snow and in three places have to skirt under rocky outcrops. Rapid traversing required under and round active seracs (lots of debris). Ridge then becomes much wider, may meet a few 'holes' because of large cornices, and then steeper to the cornice at the top. Views superb both up and down Inylchek. Descent in reverse, beware sun activated seracs. From the col a pleasant 3 hour trip.

**Khan Tengri - west ridge via Seminovsky glacier (south side) - normal route**  
6995m - 25-28/8/95, D on ridge up to 6600m, 2800m from advance base (Guy, Neil, Fi and Jok attempted). *Plate G. The route is the focus for the international 'Khan Tengri races' that are held throughout the summer and as such, it is peopled like no other stretch of the Tien Shan. We attempted the mountain at the end of the season between races, so only came across competitors low on the Seminovsky in ascent and descent. The first part of the route was therefore enjoyable, in immense mountain scenery. However, beyond 6100m the whole west ridge is a dustbin of old fixed ropes, human excreta and rubbish. So even if you avoid the ropes, you cannot avoid the evidence that hundreds of careless people before you have left behind. Frankly, it is the most disgusting route we have been on and we would only use it another time if forced to descend from the summit in a white-out when the ridge was covered in snow. The ridge is not climbing as we know it and so, we see no point using it as a summit route. The mountain is too beautiful to be dragged up it by fixed ropes through human waste.*

From the Dostuck base camp follow the moraine path to the far end of all the huts and follow spaced cairns into the centre of the glacier. Then head up the flat glacier to advance base camp, crossing to the north side at about 2/3 way to avoid a dynamic river crossing (2 hours). The official advance base camp is amongst more piles of rubbish at the end of the last strip of moraine before the Seminovsky. We camped higher up (4300m?) on the wide foot of the Seminovsky glacier, so gave ourselves an hour's head start in the morning. The Seminovsky cuts a deep and narrow gorge between Khan Tengri and Chapayev to the west, and is threatened by avalanches from Chapayev and serac fall from Khan Tengri. Without doubt it is an early morning route: Em and Rich watched avalanches fill the whole gorge from 11am onwards, the morning we had gone up it. The safest route goes up the right hand side of the glacier, crossing to the left as the glacier curves rightwards. There is no way of avoiding the fans of avalanche debris, so speed is the only option once you are in the gorge. You are safe from 5200m, where a plateau leads up to the 5800m col on the west ridge, which a fixed rope breaches at the lowest point. The three snow holes on the col have been dug by commercial climbing groups and are huge, comfortable and dependable. They are marked with poles at their entrances and are unlikely to go anywhere in the next few years.

The west ridge rises above the col in a beautiful straight line on the huge black and orange west buttress. Approaching it over the mixed ground at the bottom of the ridge is an impressive experience on such a magnificent mountain, but as soon as you hit the fixed ropes at 6100m you are transported to a filthy climbing wall and the ropes do the climbing for you. From there on, the route is on loose but easy rock steps, with your senses smothered by the fixed line. We were turned back at 6600m due to a sudden rebellion by Guy's guts, but were not sad to go. The fixed lines finish at 6700m, we were told, and a snow crest is supposed to lead from there to the summit. Good luck if you still want to do it.



## **The Inylchek Glacier**

Travel on the Inylchek is hindered by numerous glacial rivers which often during a large part of the day are not safely crossable (about 11am onwards). This makes load carrying up or down and particularly across the glacier awkward and time consuming as progress is often halted prematurely. We spent 5 days carrying from our Konsomolets base camp to the Khan Tengri base camp, but this could be done quicker with a fully healthy team if you were not double carrying.

Walking from Khan Tengri to Maydadir, we single carried and it took 4 days (see itinerary). It is not necessary to rope up on the Inylchek as it is very dry with obvious avoidable crevasses/towers.

## **Conclusion**

After 8 weeks of quite intense expeditioning and several bouts of diarrhoea we were all tired and ready for something other than slop for breakfast and noodles for supper. The walk out and last 2 days in Karakol/swimming in lake Issyk-Kul, were a great way to end the trip, allowing a transitional period and a time for reflection on what had been a very enjoyable trip. It seems we had a good balance - superb climbing in a pristine, isolated and spectacular range, a great team and some fascinating and endearing cultural experiences. From Valerie and Andre at Dostuck, to the guides we met, to Max the interpreter, to the Ala Archa KCN crew, to the soldiers in Bishkek, to 'Random' and the Leningrad climbers - all these people (and others) greatly enriched our experience and certainly showed us Brits a thing or two about hospitality!

## Appendices

### **Further possible objectives**

We burnt or carried out all our rubbish and so, hopefully left the mountains we touched as if people had never been there, and so as magnificent for anyone who may follow. Had it been possible, we would gladly have carried out all the piles of garbage from the Russian camps around Khan Tengri, particularly the advanced base and the snow holes at 5800m, plus the tins scattered along the central red moraine, but this has already become a job for helicopters. It would certainly be a fantastic objective for an environmentally orientated expedition to clean up that area of the Inylchek and perhaps pave the way for alpine huts where there are already sprawling camps (on the Ak-Sai as well), so that waste disposal and environmental damage can be better controlled before it becomes irreversible.

In both the Ala Archa area and Konsomolets glacier there is much scope for new routes and 1st British ascents. We were only the second British group to go to the Ak-Sai. Mountains such as Simagin, Bailyan-Bashi, Kosmonavtov, Dvurogaya and possibly Ak-Too have almost certainly not had a British ascent, although routes up these peaks are generally quite hard (TD or ED) with tortuous descents round the back. A traverse of all these peaks would be amazing (but tough!), apparently it takes about a week. We also spotted several natural unclimbed lines on two rock pillars on Izyskatel and an ice couloir on the North side of Korona that was 'new' and gagging to be climbed. There are some impressive rock walls on the flanks of Korona already climbed but not by Brits and then there is Korea's intimidating mixed north wall, the site of a handful of desperate Russian routes.....

Although temperatures are severely low during winter in the Central Tien Shan, it would probably be a good time to attempt some of the more dangerous summer lines as the seracs are less active, slopes/faces are less snow loaded, and some of the difficult glacier approaches covered. Apparently, the ice is bullet-proof though. Winter routes we would consider in the Konsomolets include the west ridge of 6205m peak, Meringue 6073m, the Fluted Peak, and the approach to 5448m peak.

There is also scope for new routes and 1st British ascents on other 6000ers in the Central Tien Shan.

If you would like to know more, please do not hesitate to contact us, as we have lots of slides and photographs.

## **Expedition Logistics**

This section is aimed at providing some sort of help to future expeditions in the practical details. It is not comprehensive as all the local organisation and administration for our expedition was set up through Dostuck Trekking; no doubt they were pulling strings that we were unaware of. We would strongly recommend that other expeditions also use a local company to reduce hassle. It was invaluable to have the bureaucratic details arranged by people who not only understood the system but also spoke the language!

### **Travel to Kyrgyzstan**

We flew to Almaty in Kazakhstan. Five of us travelled on British Airways to Moscow and then Transaero to Almaty. This meant that we had to recheck our baggage at Moscow and also pay excess baggage for the Transaero flight (British Airways had not charged us.) Transaero only allow 20kg per person (including hand luggage) and they are really strict, charging \$3 per kilo; you are able to pay by Visa or travellers cheques.

One of the group flew by Turkish Airlines via Istanbul and although this was a slightly more expensive ticket it did have the advantage of a single check in. They were less strict about excess baggage and did not weigh hand luggage.

Dostuck Trekking met us in Almaty and took us to Bishkek where they had organised a cheap hotel for us. The cost of this service was \$200 (close to public transport cost) and worth every penny as it meant that we did not have to do any organising or even change money in Kazakhstan.

### **Staying in Bishkek**

We stayed at two different hotels in Bishkek (~ 70 com/night/person) and it seemed that the standard was double rooms with shared bathroom/toilets. We also had balconies at each place and this meant that we were able to use our MSR cookers; no one complained about this despite the black smoke! Alternatively, the concierge responsible for each corridor provided a saucepan and a heating element (a '*chai-nik*') which meant that we could make tea and boil eggs.

We also ate out a few nights and could generally get soup/stew type meals with quantities of naan bread for between 120 and 300 com for the six of us.

### **Food shopping**

We bought all the food in Bishkek. Food can be bought from small stalls at the side of the road or the main bazaar or various shops. We hired an interpreter, Max for \$10 a day and also used his car (\$25 a day). This made the food shopping less of a nightmare. Most items were bought at the bazaar but where this was not possible Max was able to guide us to the correct shop.

The main bazaar sells basics such as biscuits, rice, oil and fruit. There is another (more crowded) bazaar where clothes, hardware and imported goods such as chocolate and drink sachets can be bought. A detailed list of the amount and cost of all the food we purchased can be found at the end of this report. Petrol stoves are the best option as fuel can be bought cheaply locally - you may have severe problems finding gas or meths.

## **Money**

The currency in Kyrgyzstan is the com. The exchange was approximately nine com to the dollar. Money was a problem for us as we took travellers cheques in dollars. There is only one place in Bishkek where travellers cheques are changed and they charged us \$321 for the privilege (7-8%). The only reliable option at the moment is dollars as cash; the notes must be more recent than series 1993 or even they are regarded suspiciously. There is nowhere (not even banks) that will accept Visa or Mastercard. We looked into the possibility of wiring money into the country. We were unsuccessful but it seemed that it may be possible via Commercial Bank of Kyrgyzstan and Midland Bank in London.

## **Registration/Visas**

A visa is necessary to enter the country and this is most easily arranged via a company such as Dostuck Trekking who must invite a group into the country. The Russian ministry of tourism, contactable through the embassy in London, can also arrange visa invitations. However, it is only possible to get a month long visa in London and so it must be extended for longer stays. We extended ours by a month but it still expired three days before our flight home. This (coupled with a query over transit visas for Kazakhstan, which we did not have) caused quite a degree of delay and stress at both Almaty and Moscow on our return.

It is necessary to register within three days of arrival in Kyrgyzstan. This involved paying about 40 com each at one unmarked office in Bishkek and then showing passports at some other unmarked office on the other side of Bishkek. We cannot attempt to explain the location of these offices as this was an area that Dostuck Trekking sorted for us.

## **Travel to Ala - Archa**

Dostuck drove us to the road head at Ala - Archa (\$60 each way). It took 6 hours due to repetitive breakdown, but should only take 1 hour. From the road head we load carried onto the Ak - Sai glacier.

## **Travel to the Inylchek**

Dostuck arranged a bus to take us to Karakol (217km from Bishkek). We stayed at the mountain hostel built in the style of a Swiss chalet. It has rooms for 2 to 6 people (total capacity 20?) and is self catering with a small but adequate kitchen provided.

Dostuck then took us by truck to Maydadir where the helicopter base is located. This was 180km of rough track from Karakol. Inylchek town is a deserted conglomeration of empty blocks of flats reached about 20km before Maydadir. It would have nothing to recommend it if it was not for the Dostuck contact who lives there - an incredibly hospitable woman who supplied us with more naan bread, raspberry jam, tomatoes and salami than even we could eat on the two occasions we passed through.

The helicopter has a weight limit of 10 people and 3 tonnes of kit. It cost \$640 for an hour to hire and this was enough for us to reach the Konsomolets with all our kit. It generally only flies in the mornings when the weather is more reliable.

At the end of the trip, Dostuck met us in Maydadir and drove us to Almaty via Karakol.

### List of our food

Item	Cost	Amount for six people	Comments
<b>Evening meals</b>			
Salami or	14-18c each	half/meal	Really good but don't eat if soggy and protect from roaming Airedale dogs.
Corned beef or	4c/small tin 6c/big tin	2 small or 1 big tin/meal	Complicated sign language required to get the right thing as there are no labels on the tins. Beware the random pieces of cartilage/gristle.
Tinned fish	8c/kg	2 tins/meal	Some tins are fish with vegetables and contain very little fish but still taste good.
Noodles or	6 com/kg	1kg/meal	Looks like balsa wood but cooks very well (~5mins boiling). Probably the best carbohydrate to get.
Rice (white) or	5 com/kg	750g/meal	Takes ~20mins to cook so much more hassle than noodies.
Rice (brown) or	14 com/kg	750g/meal	Supposedly better quality than white but actually just full of red soil.
Spaghetti	9c/kg	1kg/meal	Cooks really badly in the mountains and no good for anything except glue.
Stock cubes(beef) (chicken)	2.5c/4 cubes 2c/2cubes	2 cubes/meal	Made a big difference to sauces and good for soups.
Onions	2.5 com/kg	1 large/meal [= 1.5 kg/week]	
Carrots	2 com/kg	2/meal [=1.5kg/week]	
Tomato puree	11c/litre	1 jar/4 meals	Really good concentrated tomato but heavy and in glass jars.
Sunflower oil	17c/litre	1 litre/2 weeks	Safer to buy the 2 litre metal drums. It was solid and resembled margarine.
Garlic Spices/pepper etc. Salt	0.5c/clove 3c/pkt 2c/kg	0.5kg/5 weeks	Spices are sold on the corner of the fruit & veg stalls of the bazaar.
<b>Lunch</b>			
Biscuits or	9c/kg Around 45 to the kg but varies alot.	10/person/day	These were a mixture between shortbreads and army compo biscuits and they even tasted good. People at the bazaar will always let you taste before you buy.
Sweetbreads	9c/kg	1kg/day	Very hard sweet stale bread. The first day these made a pleasant alternative to biscuits but the novelty rapidly wore off.
Cheese	22-38 com/kg	third of a kg/day	Big variety in the types of hard cheese but the most expensive were not the best. Buy at the bazaar or cheaper often in the shops.
Apricots	14-20c/kg	2kg/week	Its worth paying the higher price.
Almonds	20c/kg	0.5 kg/week	
Sultanas	14-20c/kg	2kg/week	Good in porridge and better than the raisins which contained lots of stray hairs/grit. It's worth paying more.

Item	Cost	Amount for six people	Comments
<b>Breakfast</b>			
Porridge	5c/kg	~50g/person/day	Looks like semolina. Tastes OK especially with sugar, cinnamon and sultanas. Sprinkle powder onto the top of boiling water. If not boiling then it won't thicken properly.
<b>Miscellaneous</b>			
Chocolate	4 c/Mars bar or 5c/100g bar	1 Mars or half a bar per day	Not very significant energy wise but still essential. We would have doubled this if we weren't on so much sugar.
Sugar	10c/kg	1 kg /day	This is plenty but we managed to eat it all and even run out on some of the harder trips.
Milk powder	17c/kg	250g/day	This was not quite enough. Mix it to a paste in cold water or mix it in slowly to heating water. Don't put it into boiling or it gets very lumpy.
Tea	11c/250g	500g/4 weeks	This was not enough and meant tea rationing was necessary. We treated ourselves to a strainer as the leaves are quite ferocious.
Coffee		1 jar total	We should have got more.
Hot chocolate	6c/sachet 18c/jar	1 sachet or 1 jar per week for two people.	The sachets (gold and red) had to be mixed with milk and sugar but were really good.
Powdered drinks	2.5c/sachet	2 sachets/person/3 days	Each sachet makes up 2 litres. Large variety of flavours. We found this the best way to drink when it was difficult to boil stuff.
Honey	25c/kg	1.5kg/week	Good treat but heavy and several of the glass jars cracked.
Bog roll	3.5c - 5c	2 large rolls/week	Massive over estimation of need.
Pan scourers			
Cigarette lighters	3c each	3/week	
Cabbage			cheap and CRUNCHY! but heavy if the chopper doesn't carry them. Vitamins!
Cucumber	1 com/kg		good value and tasty but a susceptible to freezing. Vitamins!

**Expedition Expenses (six people) paid through Dostuck Trekking**

Almaty to Bishkek	US\$200
Bishkek to Ala Archa	\$60
Ala Archa to Bishkek	\$60
Bishkek to Karakol to Maydadir	\$350
Helicopter	\$640
Maydadir to Karakol to Almaty	\$470
<b>Peak fees - Ala Archa area</b>	<b>\$ 15 per person</b>
Inylchek - Khan Tengri or Pobeda	\$100 per person
- other peaks >6000m	\$ 30 per person
Dostuck commission	\$430 (20%)
Visa invitation	\$60
Border permission	\$24
Maps - Inylchek	\$6 each
- Ala Archa	\$4 each
Interpreter	\$10/day
Car	\$25/day

**Other Expenses (six people)**

Flights - BA + Transaero	£3150 (630*5)
- Turkish Airways	£670
Food + fuel	£420
Hotels + meals etc.	£300
Insurance (BMC)	£1218 (203*6)
Excess baggage	£180
Admin.	£100
Traveller's cheque fees	£200

Equipment not included

**Financial Summary**

Total expenditure	£8868
Sponsored income	£4745

The deficit was filled with personal contributions from the team (£687 each).

## **GENERAL EQUIPMENT REPORT**

Overall we took more warm gear than we needed, wrongly anticipating that as it was the northern Himalayas it would be cold. Only when venturing up the 6000m+ peaks do you really need to consider taking any more than you would for the Alps. Having said that, duvets and down sleeping bags made life significantly more comfortable and luxurious, and must be very highly recommended.

The following is a list of kit that we took, all of which worked at least adequately.

### **Tents**

We used three 2/3 man geodesic dome tents which was ideal and we little problem with condensation.

### **Stoves**

We took multi-fuel burning stoves which required frequent cleaning but are necessary as petrol is the only available fuel.

### **Sleeping Bags**

Rab Premier 900 and Ladakh 1000 with Shelter outers. Down has to be recommended.

### **Down Jackets**

Rab Glacier and Kinder Smock (with Shelter outer). Again, these are so luxurious that they are necessary - particularly with a Shelter coating.

### **Sleeping Mats**

One is sufficient, but nice to have 3 per tent.

### **Ropes**

Cairngorm Skye, 9mm x 50m, 6 of. Brilliant ropes, just a shame the company has recently gone bust...

### **Glacier Glasses**

Essential. We took Vuarnet.

### **Other**

We also took fleece tops and salopettes, thermal underwear, thin gloves, winter mitts, Gore Tex jackets and salopettes, liner and thick socks, plastic boots, Gore Tex bivvy bags, balaclavas etc. etc.

Water tight stuff sacks were, as usual, very useful for keeping kit/food dry and organised. We also took 2 enormous, pulk-sized hold alls which, again, were invaluable. We borrowed jerry- cans for fuel from Dostuck.



## **MEDICAL REPORT**

On the whole we had a fit and healthy expedition with thankfully few medical problems. The following list gives some of the problems we encountered:

### **Diarrhoea**

Everyone suffered from at least one bout of diarrhoea at some point during the trip, resulting in some weakness and discomfort lasting several days. One member had a very bad case of diarrhoea brought on by an unknown cause whilst high on the glacier. This lasted for 48 hours and left him quite weak for several days. He recovered after a few days rest with plenty of fluids and two sachets of Diarolyte. Immodium worked well for two members who wanted a more pleasant plane journey home.

### **Altitude Sickness**

Several members suffered to some degree from the effects of altitude. Acetazolamide was used with variable effect to alleviate the symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness (but not taken prophylactically). Paracetamol was taken to help relieve associated headaches. Please remember lots of fluid, rest and (if necessary) descent is the best therapy, and proper acclimatisation is the best prevention (it also makes the climbing more fun!).

### **Blisters/Sore skin/Rubbing**

Second Skin was used extensively to alleviate the discomfort and to help the healing of blisters etc. It was found to be very good and to be recommended.

### **Antibiotics Used**

Amoxycillin was taken to treat Fi's chest infection and was followed up, due to recurrence, a few weeks later by a course of erythromycin. Rich took flucloxacillin to treat infected sores on his lower legs.

### **Other**

Zinc oxide tape was very popular for just about everything from cuts and scrapes to tent and gaiter repairs.

### **The Medical Kits**

The expedition had three recently qualified vets as members which enabled us to take medical equipment that perhaps would not be suitable for a less medically skilled expedition. We therefore included a number of different antibiotics, suture kits and intramuscular analgesia. We took a main kit (with emergency pack kept on top) to be kept at base camp and three mobile kits (contents adjusted depending on the planned excursion from basecamp).

Please refer to our references for a description of what each drug/dressing etc. is for, however, I think it is fair to say that if you don't know what they are for, then perhaps you are best not using them!

## Main Medical Kit, main part

Item	Number
Medicine For Mountaineering	1
AMS Guide	1
British National Formulary, relevant parts of	1
pre injection swabs	10
gauze swabs	5 packs of 5
melolin, 10x10cm	2
elastoplast dressing strip, 3.8cm x 5m	1
steristrips	5 packs, assorted sizes
zinc oxide tape	8 rolls (all used)
crepe bandage, 10cm x 4.5m	1
conforming bandage, 7.5cm x 4.5m	2
tweezers	1
scalpel, blades, stitch cutter	1
safety pins	5
telfa, 5x5cm	5
thermometer	1
paracetamol, 500mg	40
voltarol retard, 100mg	20
bradsol plus	48
immodium, 2mg	40
erythromycin, 500mg	3 courses
otrivine nasal spray	1 bottle
amethocaine drops, 1%	8
fluorescien drops	3
emergency dental kit	1
ibuprofen, 400mg	20
diorolyte	15
tineafax powder	1 bottle
grasolind, 10x10cm	1
fuicidin intertulle, 10x10cm	1
oxycodone	20
dexamethasone, 4mg	20
acetazolamide, 250mg	20
sudacreme	1 small tub
metronidazole, 200mg	2 courses
amoxycillin, 250mg	2 courses
flucloxacillin, 250mg	1 course

### **Main Medical Kit, emergency pack**

Item	Number
wound dressing, large	2
melolin, 10x10cm	1
crepe bandage, 10cm x 4.5m	1
zinc oxide tape	1 roll
safety pins	3
diclofenac, 75mg; needle;syringe	4
pre injection swabs	4
suture kit inc. amethocaine	1
scissors	1
oropharangeal airway	1
triangular bandage	1
instructions for drugs	1

### **Mobile Medical Kit, x3**

Item	Number
zinc oxide tape	1 roll
paracetamol, 500mg	5
dexamethasone, 4mg	5
acetazolamide, 250mg	5
telfa, 5x5cm	1
steristrips	1 pack of 5
oxycodone	5
immodium, 2mg	6
wound dressing, medium	1
bradsol plus	8
plus for longer trips...	
diclofenac, 75mg; needle; syringe	1
suture kit; amethocaine 1% drops	1

### **Medical References**

Wilkerson J.A., *Medicine For Mountaineering and Other Wilderness Activities*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., The Mountaineers, Seattle, 1992

Juel Jensen B., *Expedition Medicine*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., Expedition Advisory Centre, Royal Geographical Society, 1994

Marsden A.K. et al, *First Aid Manual*, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed., Dorling Kindersley, London, 1992

British Medical Association, *British National Formulary*, Number 29, The Pharmaceutical Press, London, 1995

## General References

**CLIMBER (April 1995).** Tien Shan - Review. *Littlejohn, P. and Komissarov, V.*

**CLIMBER AND HILL WALKER.** *Cousins, D.*

**GREAT CLIMBS (1994).** The Cold Breath of a Mountain - *Valery Khrischaty.*

*Edited by Bonington C. and Selkeld, A.*

**ALPINE JOURNAL (1996).**

## Titbits

Several locals offered their services as porters (one 25kg load/day) for \$10/day at Ala-Archa.

Dostuck could easily have arranged Guides, cooks, etc.

As a suggestion - If you wanted to go straight to the Central Tien Shan, a good plan would be to helicopter your kit in (much cheaper than flying yourselves in) and walk from Maydadir up the Inylchek (4 or 5 days to Khan Tengri base camp at 4000m).

## Useful Addresses

Guy Willett, 36 Albany Terrace, Dundee DD3 6HS, 01382 221 267.

Richard Vecqueray, Roecliff House Vet Hospital, Crown Square, Penrith, Cumbria

Fiona Hatchell, The Croft, Cumberley Lane, Knowbury, Ludlow, Shropshire.

Emma Garrett, 14 St Matthew's Road, Bristol BS6 5TS. 01179 247472

James O'Keefe, 29 Wilson Street, Alexandria G83 0EG. nr Glasgow.

Neil Sambridge, 10 Claremont Place, Sheffield S10 2TB.

continued overleaf

Paul Knott, Doctoral Programme, Manchester Business School, Booth Street West,  
Manchester, M15 6PB.

e-mail: p.knott @ ss4.mbs.ac.uk.

Paul is very knowledgeable on the Tien Shan (went in 1990), and is very helpful. If this address is out of date then the Alpine Club will have his new one.

Dostuck Trekking, Valeri Denisov is the man who dealt with us, and is to be thoroughly recommended. We would not hesitate to use Dostuck and in particular Valeri again. Little extra cost, massive hassle reduction and you meet interesting people.

18th line 42-1, Bishkek, Khyrgyzstan 720053, CIS.

tel/fax: 007 3312 419 129

e-mail: nikolai @ dostuk.bishkek.su

Please use e-mail where possible as fax is ridiculously expensive in Khyrgyzstan.

UIAA Mountain Medicine Centre Dr. C. Clarke, St Bartholomew's Hospital,  
London EC1A 7BE. Useful information sheets and advice.

## **Sponsors**

We would like to thank **CONSOLTEX GROUP INC.** for supporting us at the last minute and providing by far the largest proportion of our funds, thereby making the trip possible.

We would also like our other sponsors for their kind (and also crucial) support:

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**Sports Council**

**University of Bristol**

**Cairngorm Ropes**

**Rab Down Clothing**

**Vuarnet**

**Mountain Range**

**Taunton Leisure Group**

**Rolls Royce**

We would also very much like to thank our patron, Jim Curran.