

Expedition Report

Uchat Range 2018

Access

We accessed the range from the West via the Taldybulak Valley. We drove to Engylchek and hired horses. The locals took us down the right bank of the Sarydjaz. We crossed the Terekmy River on horseback and were dropped by a cable car (41.932888, 79.053632) that crosses the Sarydjaz. This cable is located North bank of the Uchkel River, rather than the South bank as the Soviet maps indicate. On our return the level of the Terekmy River was lower and the locals were able to drive a 4X4 all the way to the Uchkel River.

We also explored the left bank of the Sarydjaz because we had to return to Engylchek on foot to arrange transport for the return. There is a good road on the left bank Sarydjaz that will allow vehicle access all the way from Engylchek to the Kaindy. The cable car across the Kaindy no longer exists, but locals have erected a cable crossing at 41.956341, 79.093953. There is a small nomad camp on the North bank of the Kaindy near the cable, where it may be possible to hire horses.

From the Uchkel-Sarydjaz confluence, we continued South along the true left of the Sarydjaz on the old Soviet road (it is a few hundred metres above the river). This road vanishes at 41.919760, 79.071273 and a small track winds down to the banks of the Sarydjaz and continues to the Taldybulak confluence. Passage through this section may be hard if the water level in the Sarydjaz is high.

There is a cablecar across the Sarydjaz at 41.96999, 79.08774 which means it is possible to reach the Taldybulak without crossing either the Terekmy River or the Kaindy river.

A well-formed path provides fast passage up the Taldybulak. It crosses the river several times to avoid scree fields, cliffs and landslips. If the water level in the Taldybulak is too high for it to be crossed, passage up the valley may be slow but not impossible.

There were signs of horses and human visitation in the Taldybulak valley. It should be possible to arrange horse transport to the upper valley. The locals tell us that many parties visit the Taldybulak to prospect for gold - possibly a profitable activity for rest days!

Camping

There is plentiful camping along the Sarydjaz, and many small campsites in the Taldybulak valley, including at confluence. The upper Taldybulak has large grassy meadows where many idyllic campsites can be found.

Our Routes

Our climbing time was limited by the time spent moving gear and exploring.

We (James Bailie, Alistair Bell, Daniel Comber-Todd and Vasili Trigas) climbed Peak Ushat (5142m) from the North branch of the glacier. We accessed the West ridge via the North face, which required moderate then steep snow and ice climbing, some of which was pitched. We simulclimbed the ridge, which was mostly covered in poor snow, to reach a corniced summit. Descent was by the same route. Our satellite phone recorded the altitude as 5071 m.

We also (the same group as before) attempted Peak 4680 but we were turned back by a steep and complex icefall that guards an upper glacial cirque. Passage through this icefall is probably possible given more exploration. The peak is particularly beautiful.

James and Vasili also climbed a rock route to the summit of Peak 4420. The rock is not consistently steep and pitched climbing was not always necessary. The rock quality varies from good to steep scree, with most being passable at best.

Climbing Potential

Much remains to be done in the range. Many long routes on ice and rock are possible.

Peak 5140

The North face of this mountain offers up to 500m of steep ice climbing, some of which is threatened by seracs.

Peak 4775

The North face of this mountain should provide a number of ice and mixed routes of varying difficulty. Walking down the SE ridge should provide an easy descent.

Peak 4680

This is a particularly beautiful peak, situated above a high cirque which is guarded by a steep icefall. Once the icefall is negotiated, moderate snow on the North face or either of the ridges leads to the summit.

Peak 4420

This is a craggy peak composed of slightly better rock than the rest of the range. The rock quality varies from poor to decent. Many long rock climbing routes should be possible by stringing together steeper sections of the South face, but protection may be sparse. Descent can be made with only a few abseils in to gullies East or West of the summit, but steep, icy snow may be encountered near the summit and on the descent.

Other

Many long rock and mixed routes are possible on peaks at the head of the North glacier.

Previous Exploration:

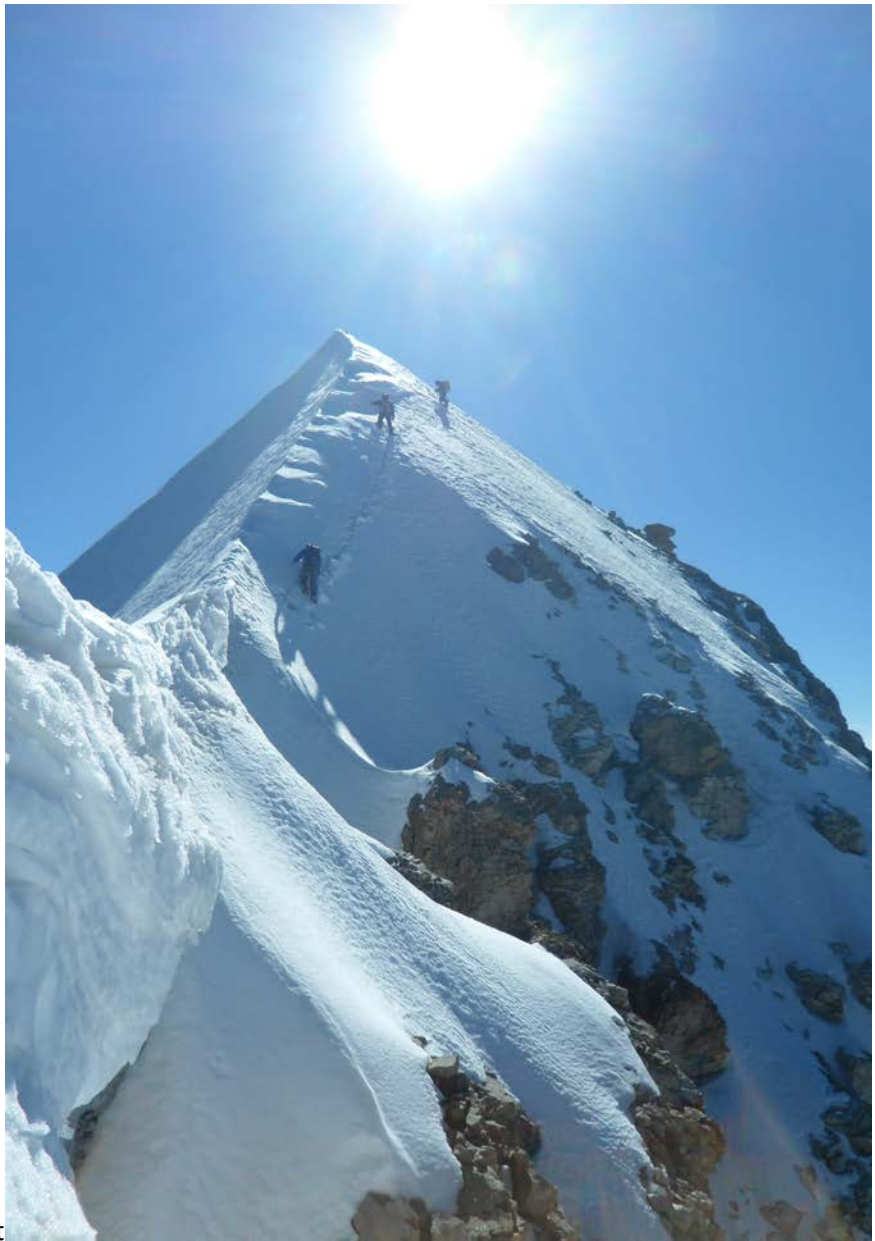
A group of hikers visited the area in 2010 and crossed several passes in the Taldybulak valley. Their report can be found [here](#).

The expedition was supported by the Australian National University Mountaineering Club's Expedition Fund.





Peaks at the head of the North glacier



Summit ridge of Peak Uchat



GPS reading on summit of Peak Ushat



North face of Peak 5140



Peak 4680.SAM_3408: Peak Ushat with our route indicated (the ridge obscures)



South face of Peak 4420

Peak 5140 from Peak
Ushat



North face of Peak
5140

