

Sani Pakush Expedition 2019 Report

MEF reference: 19-28

Region: Pakistan, Batura Muztagh, Karakoram

Objective: To climb a new route alpine style on Sani Pakush 6952m up the northeast spur and east ridge, making the second ascent of the mountain.

Google Earth coordinates:

Sani Pakush lat 36.566627 lon 75.380186

Base camp lat 36.620382 lon 75.549274

Duration: 24th July to the 19th August

Expedition members: Peter Thompson, Philip De-Beger

Summary

In 1998 I climbed the northeast spur of Sani Pakush during during a solo attempt on Beka Brakai Chhok. At that time the 13km walk from my base camp at Lupdor to Sani Pakush was mainly easy, flat ice. However by 2019 the upper Batura Glacier had changed considerably. In 2019 we had hoped to make our base camp at China Camp close to Sani Pakush but our porters refused to go beyond Lupdor due to the difficult nature of the glacier. They told us that no one had been to China Camp for many years.

By 2019 the route had also changed. There were more seracs on the route. There were also several avalanche fault lines on the route and we feared there could be more avalanches. There had been a lot of snow during the winter. We witnessed an avalanche next to the route which swept across the approach to the route.

Nevertheless, we started acclimatising with several walks to 4600m above base camp. We then spent three days in the nearby Wartom Nala, sleeping at 4800m. However when we attempted to make a carry to Sani Pakush we found the glacier very difficult with no prospect of an easier way ahead. For this reason, and the avalanche danger on the mountain, we decided not to attempt Sani Pakush.

We summoned our porters and returned to Aliabad in the Hunza Valley. Here we were able to get permission to attempt an unclimbed 5920m peak in the Khunjerab National Park above the Karakoram Highway near the Khunjerab Pass. Walking up to a bivi site without porters, we attempted the peak. We reached 5800m but a very corniced final ridge and poor snow conditions prevented us reaching the summit.

Other Information

Nowadays there are more flights from Islamabad to Gilgit and it is easier to get on them. They can be booked on the PIA website. The luggage allowance is 20kg, but you can pay for excess baggage. Getting a connecting flight to Gilgit makes it possible to reach the Hunza Valley in a day from the UK.

Permits are cheap for non commercial peaks in open zones. We got ours through our agent Adventure Tours Pakistan for \$150. No permits are required for peaks below 6500m in open zones but they may require a No Objection Certificate from the Assistant Commissioner in Aliabad in the Hunza Valley. This takes a day or so. We got an NOC for our peak in the Khunjerab National Park.

Porter rates vary. A guide is useful in negotiations. For the Batura Valley they are easily arranged at the Passu Ambassador Hotel near the start of the trek. We paid 700 rupees per porter per stage for five stages to base camp, which took three days. We paid 350 per stage for the unladen walk back, five stages. Tips are usual.

Diary

1. Flew Manchester to Islamabad.
2. Flew Islamabad to Gilgit. Met our guide Mohammed Amin and drove to Karimabad in the Hunza Valley.
3. Shopped and drove to Passu.
4. In Passu awaiting permit formalities and arranging porters.
5. In Passu.
6. Trekked to Yashpirt in the Batura Valley with eight porters and guide.
7. Trekked to Guchism.
8. Trekked to base camp at Lupdor 3800m. We had hoped to have a base camp at China Camp close to Sani Pakush but the porters refused to go beyond Lupdor. Guide and porters left. Hiked to 4350m above base camp.
9. Hiked to 4620m above base camp. Observations of Sani Pakush.
10. Hiked to 4620m above base camp.
11. Hiked up the Wartom Nala to a bivi.
12. Hiked to bivi at 4800m.
13. Returned to base camp.
14. At base camp.
15. Attempted carry towards Sani Pakush. We both had falls and cuts to our legs. Decided not to attempt Sani Pakush for reasons given above. Called for porters on sat phone.
16. At base camp.

17. Six porters arrived and we trekked to Yashpirt.
18. Trekked to Passu.
19. Drove to Karimabad. In Aliabad applied for No Objection Certificate to climb in the Khunjerab National Park.
20. Got NOC.
21. Drove to KNP and walked to a bivi at 5200m from the Karakoram Highway.
22. Snowfall.
23. Attempted Peak 5920m (lat 36.874241 lon 75.349766) by the south ridge. We reached 5800m but couldn't climb the very corniced final ridge in poor snow conditions. Returned to bivi, arranged transport on the sat phone and walked down to the Karakoram Highway. Picked up and returned to Karimabad.
24. Drove to Gilgit. Unable to get a flight for a while. Phil took the bus.
25. Gilgit.
26. Gilgit.
27. Flew to Islamabad and Manchester.

Budget

Income £

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Mount Everest Foundation | 4400 |
| British Mountaineering Council | 1250 |
| Montane Alpine Club Climbing Fund | 1600 |
| | ——— |
| | 7250 |

Expenditure £

| | |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| International flights | 1600 |
| Visas and UK travel | 320 |
| Local flights and transport | 710 |
| Food and accommodation | 580 |
| Guide and porters including insurance | 2100 |
| Agency charges including permits | 740 |
| Gas, expedition food, equipment hire | 630 |
| Insurance | 620 |
| | ——— |
| | 7300 |



Approach from Lupdor and planned route.



Sani Pakush on the right in 1998.



Sani Pakush in 2019 and planned route.

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Report compiled by Peter Thompson

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