

having mistaken the collection of flags and debris for the true summit. French climbers Eric Escoffier and Pascale Bessière were last seen on the summit ridge on 29 July and are thought to have died high on the mountain in worsening weather conditions.

**Gasherbrum I (8068m)** Seven expeditions attempted the standard *Japanese Couloir Route*. Four of these were successful and a total of seven climbers reached the summit. Three strong climbers from Henrik Hansen's Danish group made the first ascent of the season on 9 July, followed one day later by German Dieter Porsche. 20-year-old Yorito Iwashita was the only member of Hidenori Higashi's Japanese group to reach the summit on 29 July after two of his companions turned back near the top. Spanish brothers Jesús and José Antonio Martínez, who intended to climb all the Pakistan 8000m peaks in a single summer, reached the summit of Gasherbrum I on 31 July. On the same day Kazunori Kumata and three Japanese colleagues are thought to have fallen to their deaths from the slopes above Camp 3.

**Gasherbrum II (8035m)** Once again this proved to be the most popular 8000m peak with up to a dozen teams attempting the *Normal Route* from Pakistan. Some expeditions had secured permission for both G1 and G2 but the Spanish Martínez brothers were the only people to summit on both peaks. A total of 50 climbers are thought to have reached the summit of Gasherbrum II. The Martínez brothers made the first ascent of the season on 7 July, followed by 15 climbers from various expeditions on 9 July. 16 more climbers reached the summit on 22 July, with further successful ascents being recorded on 26 July, 31 July and 12 August.

American Daniel Mazur led a multinational team attempting to make the first ascent of Gasherbrum II from China. They occupied base camp by the Skyang Glacier from early September until early October and reached a high point of 6400m. While both K2 and Broad Peak have been climbed from the north this is thought to have been the first serious attempt on any of the Gasherbrum peaks from the Chinese side of the Karakoram.

**Gasherbrum VI (7003m)** The smallest of the six Gasherbrum peaks is thought to be unclimbed, although it may have had an 'unofficial' ascent in 1985. This year two expeditions obtained permits. A predominantly French group led by Jean Noel Urban tried to make an Alpine-style ascent of the SW Face overlooking the Abruzzi Glacier. Nicholas Gustave, a Dutch member of this group, was killed on 27 June when the unstable snow slope he was climbing avalanched. The accident was witnessed by dozens of climbers sharing the normal Gasherbrum base camp. Henrik Hansen's Danish team intended to climb the NE Face of Gasherbrum VI after their successful ascent of Gasherbrum I, but never set foot on the route.

**Savoia Kangri (7263m)** This unclimbed peak near K2 was visited by a seven-man Scottish expedition led by Ruaridh Pringle. Climbing from mid-July to mid-August they suffered from poor weather and dangerous conditions on the route, reaching a high point of c7000m on the SE Ridge on 22 July.

**Trango Tower/Nameless Tower (6237m)** Five Spanish climbers from Madrid, led by Jose Andres, made the second ascent of *Eternal Flame* on the S Pillar. They reached the summit on 6 July after spending 20 days on the face

and confirmed the climb as possibly the finest hard rock route in the Karakoram. During the same period, six Bulgarian climbers repeated the *Slovenian Route* reaching the summit on 5 July and 6 July, with 27-year-old Sofia Poteva becoming only the second woman ever to reach the summit of the tower.

The attractive peak of **Drifika (6447m)** east of Hushe received its second ascent by a five-person Italian team led by Angelo Rusconi. They repeated the N Ridge, first climbed by the Japanese in 1978, reaching the summit on 31 July. The route involves about 1500m of 50° snow and ice slopes from an advance camp at c5000m. However reaching this camp requires a moderately difficult 2-3 day trek from base camp close to the peak of **K7**. Americans Mark Richey and John Bouchard failed on their second visit to the compelling line of the N Ridge on **Latok I (7145m)**. It is not known if they made progress beyond the high point of 6000m which they reached in 1997. An experienced American team led by Jay Smith made an unsuccessful attempt on the unclimbed W Face of **Latok III (6949m)**. After overcoming ground of 5.10a/A2 and reaching a high point of 6050m they retreated on 25 July in the face of deteriorating weather. The summit of the peak has only been reached twice by the SW Ridge - a Japanese team in 1979 and an Italian team in 1988. Four expeditions visited the popular peak of **Spantik (7027m)**. A private Belgian group together with commercial teams from France and Italy all reached the summit, as did three Pakistani civilian climbers from an Alpine Club of Pakistan expedition.

The strong two-man British team of Jonathan Pratt and Andy Collins attempted the impressive unclimbed N Face of **Distaghil Sar (7885m)** from the Shimshal Valley. However, they found the glacier approach to be unsafe and failed to reach the start of the climbing. Austrian solo climber Thomas Bubendorfer failed to get very high on **Ultar (7388m)** in the Hunza valley after encountering large amounts of fresh snow on the S Face. A four-man British team led by Al Powell attempted the unclimbed 2600m W Buttress of **Sani Pakush (6885m)** between the Kukuay and Batura glaciers. One previous ascent of the peak had been recorded by a German team who climbed the NW Ridge in 1991. The British group climbed 1300m of mixed ground (mostly IV - VI) from an ABC at 4300m during the first two weeks of August. Poor weather, objective dangers, and the difficulty of the ground ahead forced a retreat from a high point of 5600m on 14 August. Permits were issued to a Japanese group for **Khunyang Khish (7852m)**, to a French group for **Batura (7794m)**, and to a British military group for **Kampir Dior (7268m)**. No further information is available on any of these attempts.

Only one expedition visited the high peaks of the Hindu Kush. Two members of a four-man Hungarian expedition led by D Klein repeated the popular *Czech 1967 (NW Ridge) Route* on **Tirich Mir (7708m)**, reaching the summit on 21 July.

**Nanga Parbat (8125m)** Eight expeditions visited Pakistan's most accessible 8000m peak. All of these groups concentrated on the *Kinshofer Route* on the Diamir Face, and 13 climbers reached the summit: two on 16 July, eight on 17 July, and three on 10 August. One Japanese climber fell to his death on 26 July after being hit by stonefall at c5000m. The bare statistics only tell part of the story. There were a number of potentially serious incidents on the mountain

with climbers falling victim to benightment, stonefall and AMS. Only good fortune prevented any of these incidents resulting in further fatalities. **Muli-ka Parbat (5290m)** is the highest peak in the Kaghan region located to the south of Nanga Parbat. It was initially explored and climbed by British Army teams in the 1920s (BW Batty) and in 1940 (Price and Willoughby). Another route was added in 1972 when F Hoflin and W Stefan climbed the NW Face. A group of climbers organised by the Alpine Club of Pakistan succeeded in climbing the peak on 5 July 1998, but tragically the expedition leader Rashid was killed during the descent.

Several expeditions visited sub-6000m peaks throughout Pakistan's Northern Areas, attempting both steep rock walls and mixed mountaineering routes. The Pakistan Government does not collect statistics on these activities and it is therefore difficult to assemble comprehensive information. **Shipton Spire (5852m)** in the Trango valley is gaining a reputation as one of the finest sub-6000m rock towers in the Karakoram. The strong American team of S Davis/K Harvey/S Shaw climbed a new route on the S Face close to the original *Boyd/Child/Foweraker 1996 Route*. The 1350m route was climbed free with maximum difficulties of 5.12, except for a 10m section which required two moves of A1. In the Hunza region Dave Kay led a six-man British team to attempt **Charakhand (5884m)** in the Naltar Valley. In early October they reached a high point of 5000m on the SE Face between the Main Summit and the South Summit before retreating due to heavy snowfall. It is thought that this peak was first climbed by the Pakistan Army in the 1980s.

**Charakusa Glacier** At least three teams visited the granite walls of this glacier east of the Hushe valley. The American/Canadian trio of G Rowell, C Anker & P Croft succeeded in climbing several fine new routes. Anker and Croft climbed **Lucky Shinmo Spire** and **Spansir Brakk (5300m)**. Rowell soloed **Nakpa Brakk (5300m)** and teamed up with members of a Lecco-based Italian team to climb *Iqbal's Wall* on one of the lower buttresses of **K7**. It is not known what else this Italian group climbed. A second Italian group visited the same area towards the end of July and climbed several fine new lines on the lower buttresses of **K7** to the west of the main summit. They have produced detailed topo diagrams of their climbs on the **Second Pillar (4950m)** VII+ A3 and **Fourth Pillar (4900m)** VII A2.

Four parties visited the rock walls of the Nangma valley east of Kande village in the lower Hushe valley. A five-person British team intended to climb the previously attempted wall of **Amin Brakk (5750m)** but turned their attention instead to a slightly shorter wall further to the right. This 1100m climb to the 5700m top of the wall was completed over a four-week period by E Jones/S Mayers/M Turner giving a 32-pitch route with maximum difficulties of British E3 and A3. On the other side of the valley L Peter and L Thomas completed a 19-pitch new route on the S Face of **Sotal Pa (4800m)** at a grade of British E3 5C A2. An all female Australian/New Zealand team and a two-man New Zealand team also made first ascents in the Nangma Valley. A Watkins/V Wong/N Woodford climbed a new line on **Changi Tower (5300m)** graded at 5.10 A2+. At the same time N Norton and P Weber spent ten days

establishing a 26-pitch climb further left on **Changi Tower (5300m)** graded at 5.10 A1. Earlier in the season Spaniards P Masip and S Vidal spent eleven days climbing a 540m wall on **Brakk Zang (4800m)**. This route involved much aid climbing of A2/A3 with free sections of F6a.

### Peak Fees

The Pakistan Government have announced increases in peak fees to take effect in 2000. A team of five or less climbers pays only the basic rate. Additional members are each charged the supplementary fee. The disproportionate increase in the 'additional members' rate seems designed to discourage different expeditions to the same peak from 'sharing' a single permit. Under the new fee structure two teams of five members would each pay \$9000 for an 8000m peak (giving a total cost of \$18,000). If they applied to climb as a single team the cost would be \$24,000. In practice the cost difference would not be so great, as the additional Liaison Officer would cost \$2000 - \$2500 and additional agency fees might be incurred.

Height of peak	Previous royalty fee: basic fee / supplement	New royalty fee: basic fee / supplement
K2 (8611m)	\$ 9000/\$1000	\$12,000/\$3000
8001m - 8500m	\$ 7500/\$700	\$9000/\$3000
7501m - 8000m	\$ 3000/\$300	\$4000/\$1000
7001m - 7500m	\$ 2000/\$200	\$2500/\$500
6000m - 7000m	\$ 1200/\$150	\$1500/\$300
Trekking	per person \$20	per person \$50