

Min-Teke Expedition Report

French team summer 2019

Kyrgyzstan, Turkestan Range



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14/07/2019 – 17/08/2019

I. Summary

Expedition to the remote (2 days walk in and out), wild and very partially explored Min-Teke valley, Kyrgyzstan. Opening of a new route on Tobokel Peak (5004m, AD+, 1000m). Repeating and equipping a trad route on Aksu Peak (4500m, 6a, 350m).

II. Expedition planning

14-15/07 Arriving Osh and transfer to Uzgorush

16-17/07 Trek Uzgorush - Kara Su

18-28/07 Climbing at Kara Su and Ak Su

29-31/07 Trek Ak Su - Min-Teke

01-13/08 Min-Teke exploration

14-15/08 Trek Min-Teke - Sary Jaz

16-17/08 Flight back

This report only focuses on Min-Teke exploration.

III. Team



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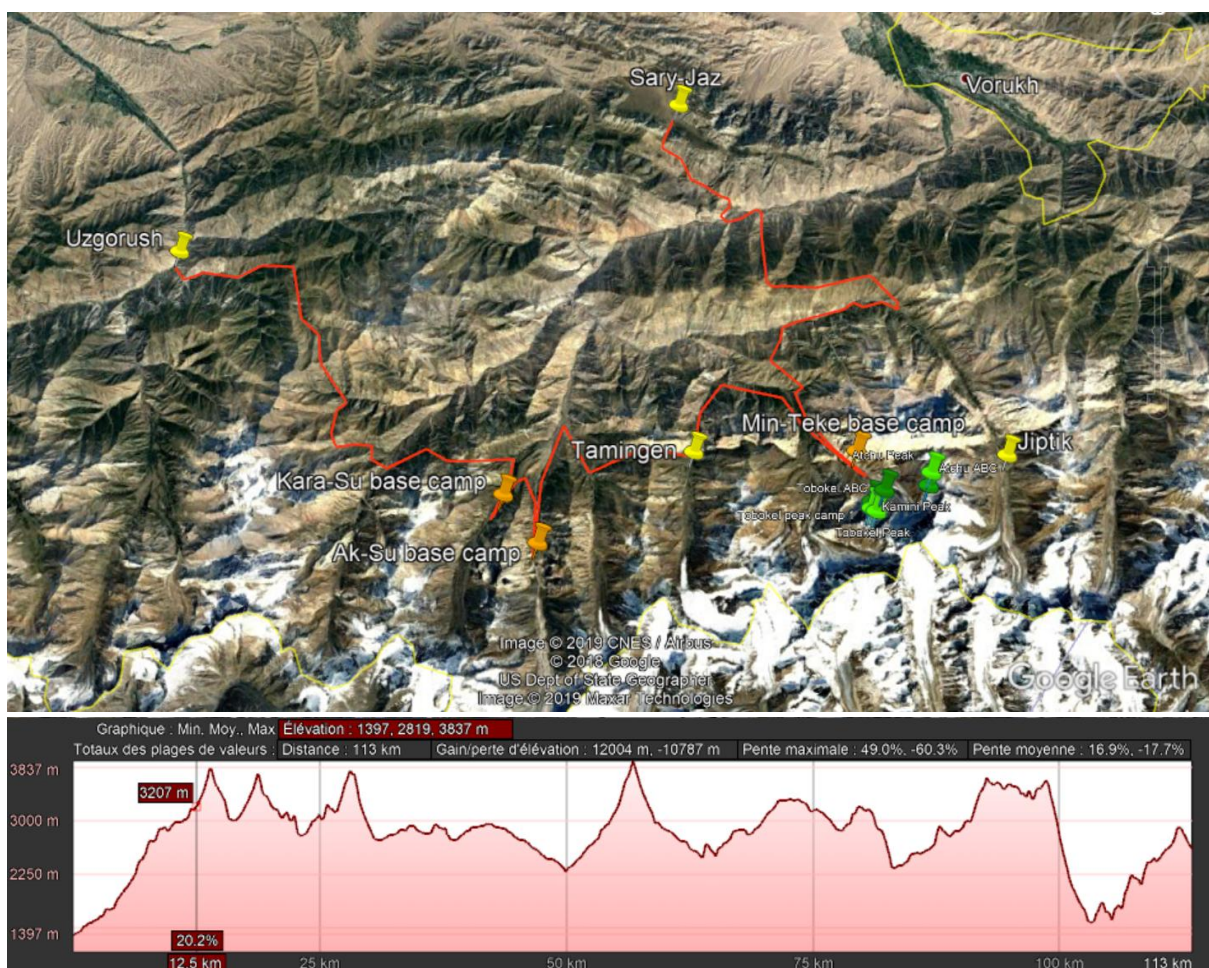
IV. Min-Teke Valley

Situation and access

Min-Teke base camp coordinates: 39°39'27.30"N 70°29'43.45"E (3300m)

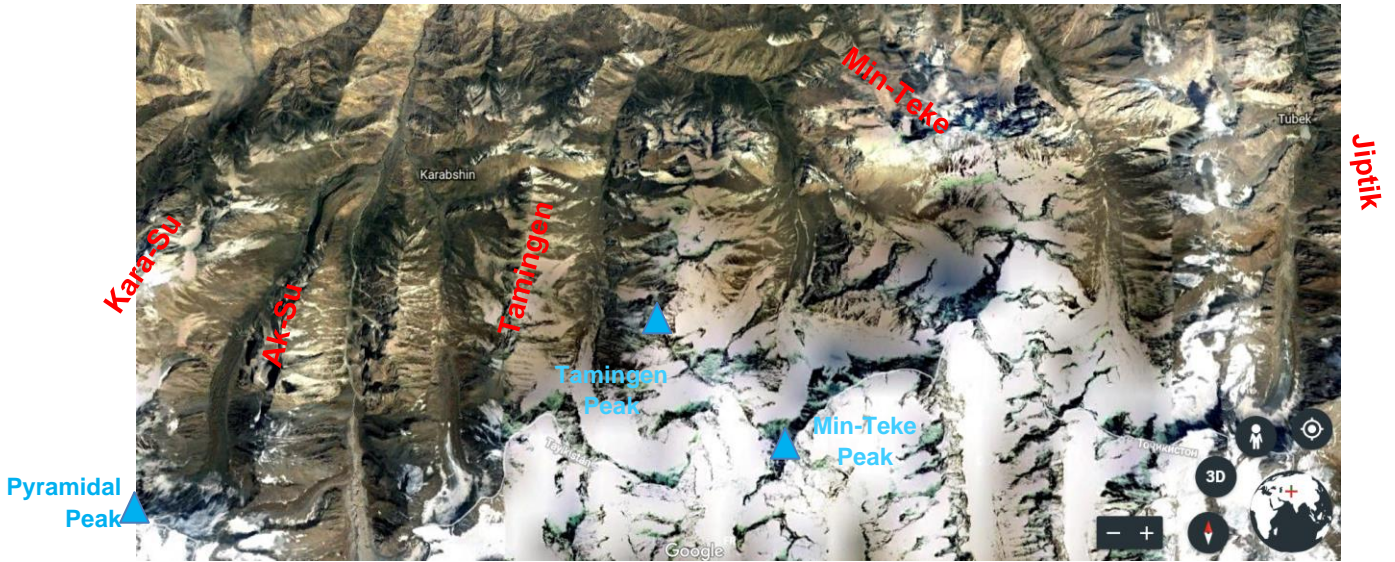
We landed at Osh airport, took a car to reach Batken city and then Uzgorush village. It was made in one day. All logistics was organized by Batken Travel Service (contact: Zhunusbek Karazakov). We contracted a cook for the 5 five weeks (highly recommendable).

We climbed 2 weeks in Kara Su and Ak Su before going to Min-Teke .



We started the first trek at Uzgorush and finished it at Sary Jaz. We visited Kara Su, Ak Su, Tamingen, Min-Teke valleys. Every trek is approximately 2 days long.

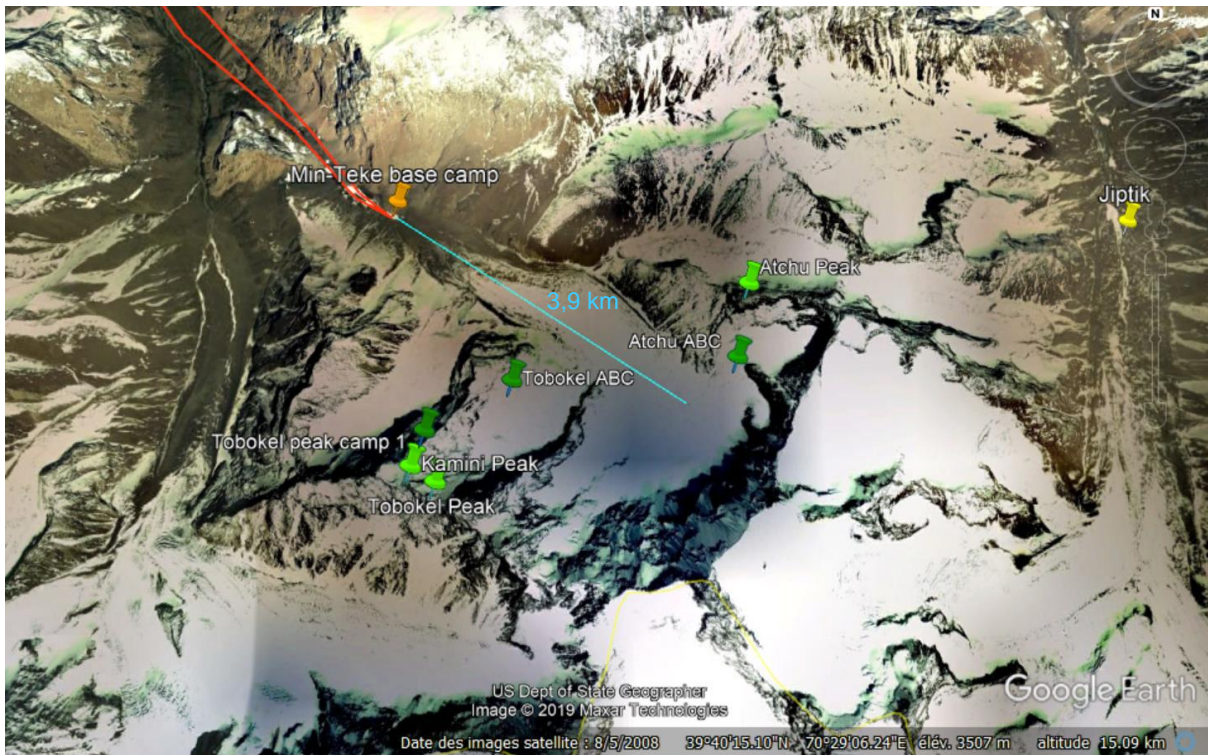
Min-Teke valley is located between Tamingen and Jiptik valley, just next to an unnamed valley which includes Min-Teke Peak (Min-Teke Peak is not in Min-Teke Valley, just next to it ...).

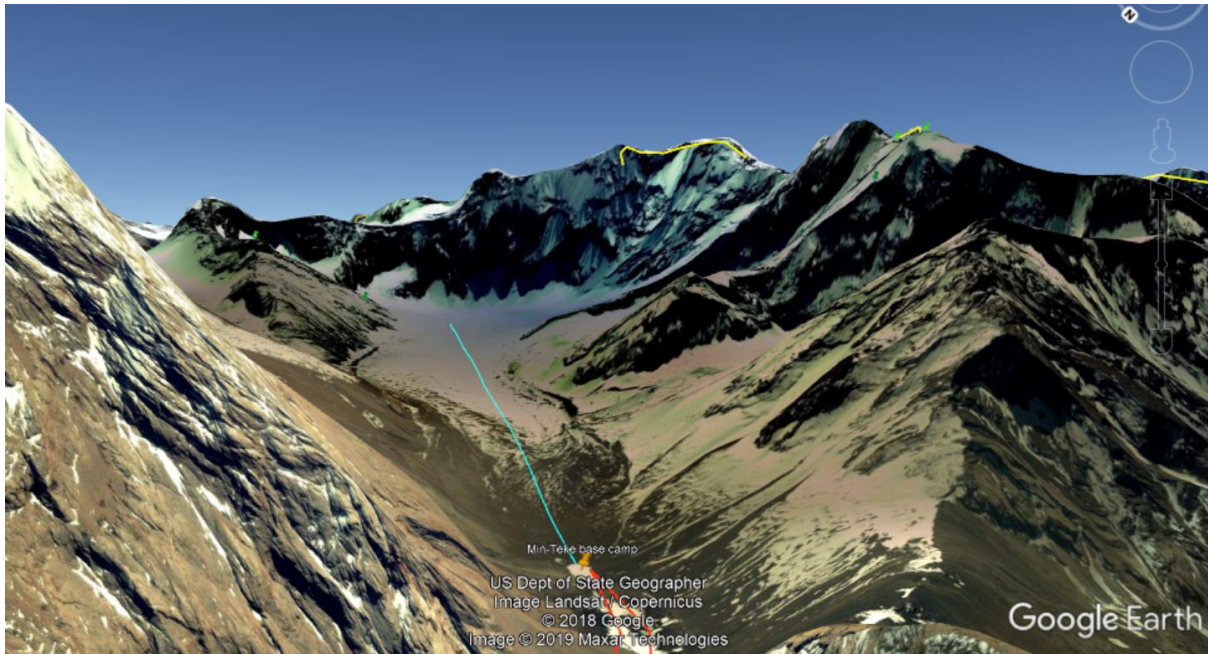


Valleys

Main climbed summits

Min-Teke Description





Min-Teke



Min-Teke from base camp

Base camp was in a flat swamp next to the river going out of the glacier. It was a good place, surprisingly without humidity. We had 3 days of rain/thunderstorms in 15 days but no snow (mid-August). The rest of the weather was quite unstable with clouds building on most afternoons but mostly no rain consequently. The zone is known from local shepherds for Yaks pasture and goats hunting.

There are some very small clean water sources and a quite large clear stream that is polluted by yaks. We filtered the clean water and boiled the polluted one without issues.

The rock is limestone for the lower part of the valley (under base camp), and granite upper base camp. Rock quality is variable, depending on the side/altitude of the valley. A lot of potential routes are exposed to rock and serac falls. The base of the faces is between 1h30 and 5h walk from base camp, including glacier crossing. Even if some opened crevices are to be found in the glacier, crossing is not a problem. A moraine surrounds it.

Various other glaciers, smaller, are in different places located around the glacier cirque.

V. Routes made by our team

The only information we had from the zone was a trekker website who visited the valley in 2011.

<http://ai.stanford.edu/~latombe/mountain/photo/kyrgyzstan-11/turkestan/leg5.htm>

We saw some glacier cirque pictures and thought that interesting routes could be opened, so we decided to go.

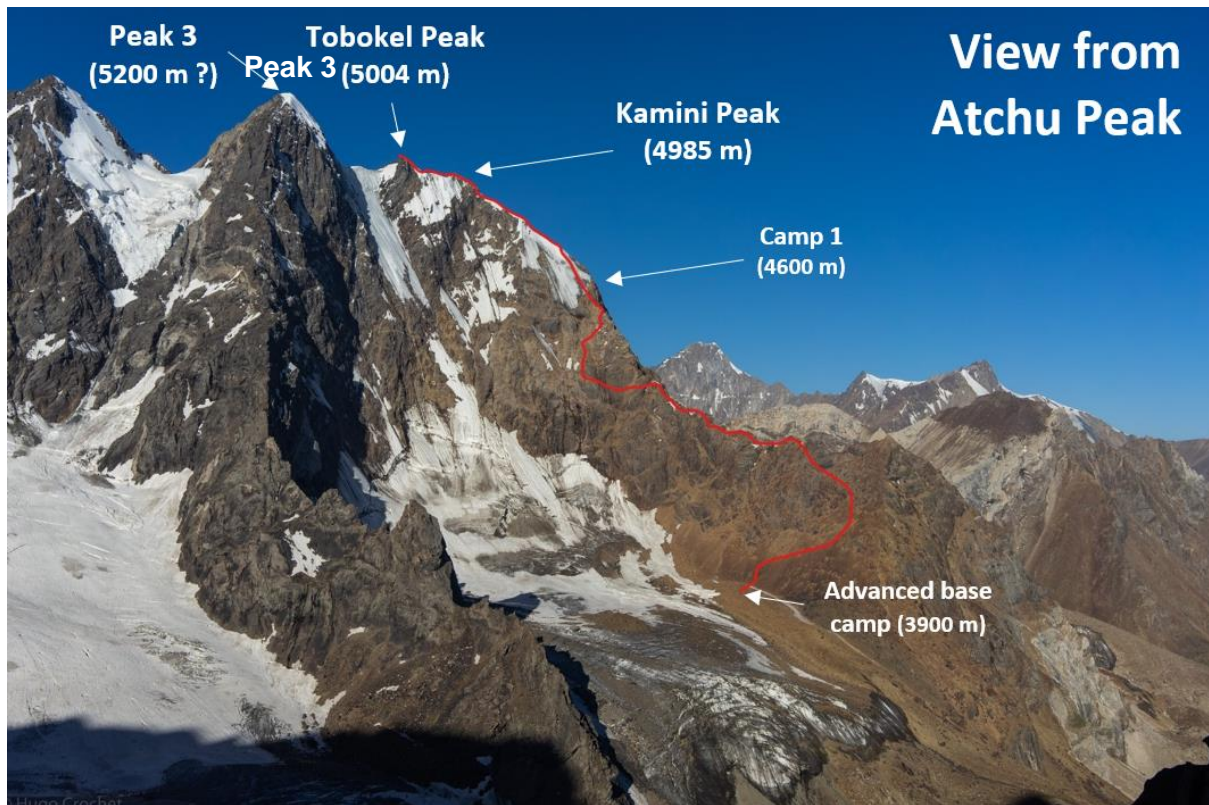
After having inspected the zone after a 2h walk with binoculars, we decided to try one ascent on the south west peaks (Kamini peak, Tobokel peak and peak 3) and one ascent climbing on the north east part of the cirque (Atchu peak). The main summit of the cirque, which is the most "beautiful", was too hard for us (long ridge difficult to reach from Min-Teke side).

Note that all peaks can be reach by other faces, which can have easier access than from Min-Teke.

As we didn't find any summit names from local shepherds, Russian maps or previous expeditions, we decided to name the peak we climbed. Altitudes were measured using Garmin In Reach GPS.



Tobokel and Kamini peaks ascent

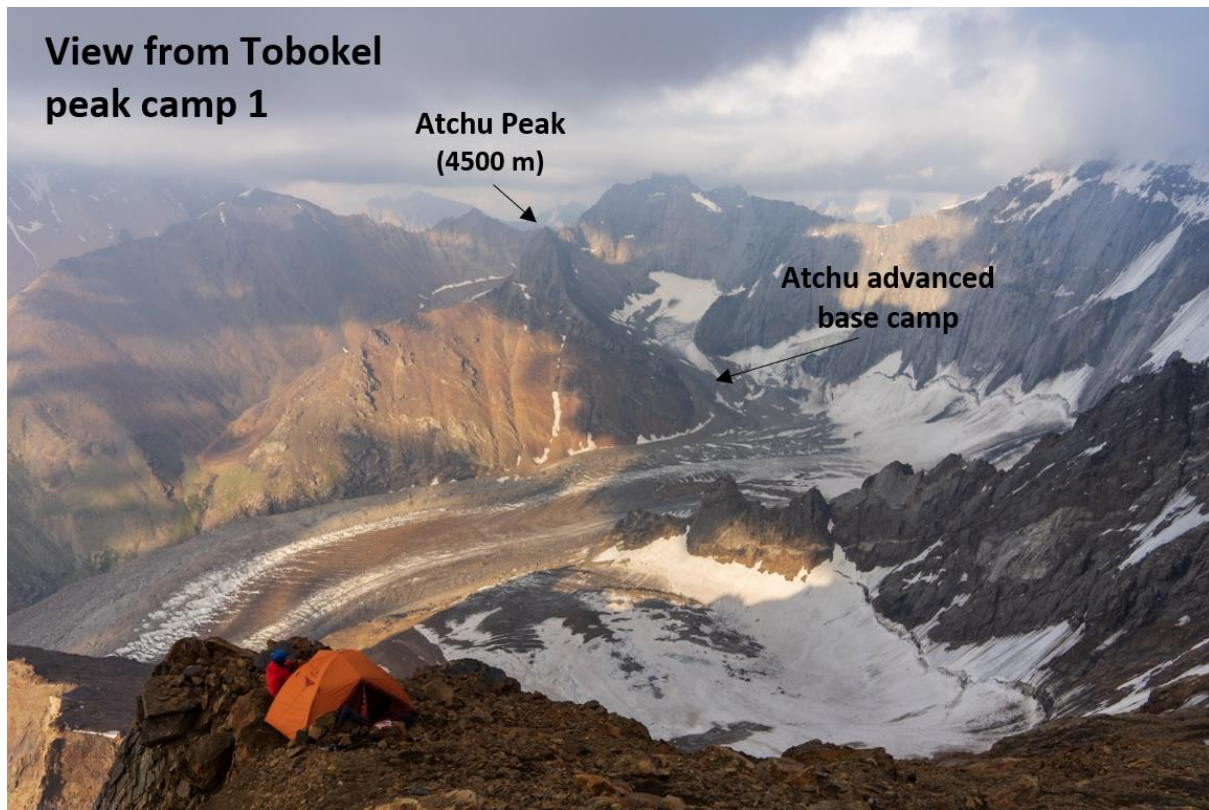


Ascent made on August 6th - 7th – 8th, after establishing advanced base camp.
No signs of previous climb. We only left 2 pitons and rope rings for abalakov abseils.

We first planned to climb Kamini, Tobokel and peak 3, but we didn't reach peak 3 because of bad ice and snow conditions.

[Topo](#) attached here under.

Atchu peak ascent

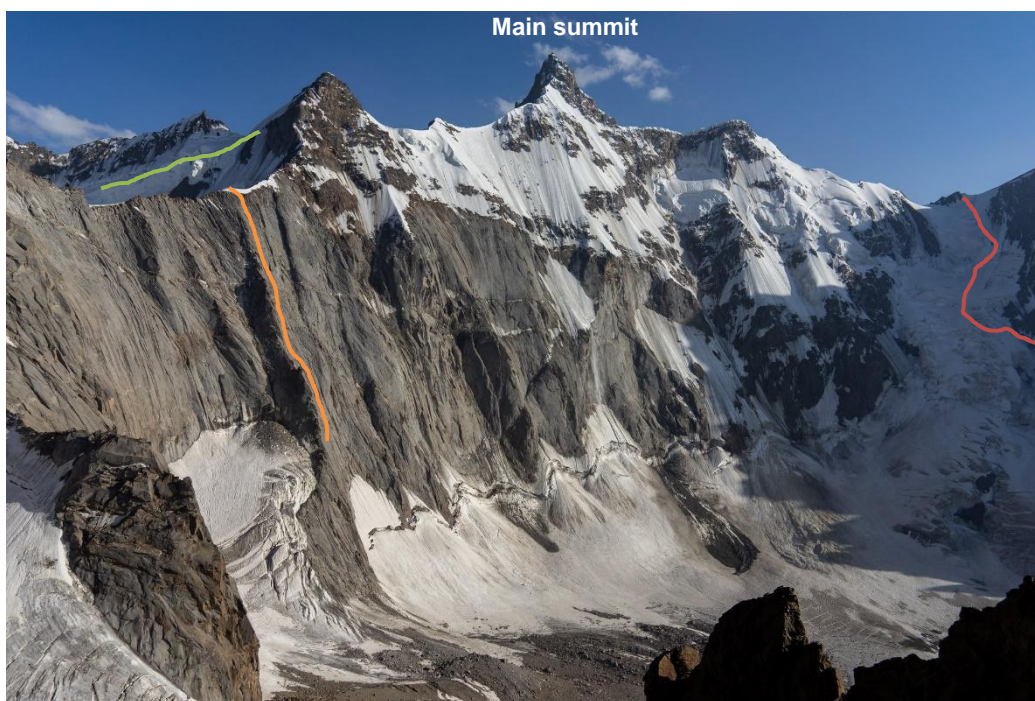


Ascent made on August 11th after establishing advanced base camp.
We found rope rings in the south face of the peak, so we were not the first ones to climb it.
We think (giving the old kind of rope it was) the previous ascent was made by Russian climbers
at the end of Soviet Union.

We equipped the abseils with bolts when necessary. French climbing level V+.
[Topo](#) attached here under.

VI. Future climbing possibilities

We made 2 inspections in the cirque with binoculars. We mainly observed very interesting climbing lines (high quality granite cracks) in the face under the main Min-Teke peak. The problem was often that the lines were exposed to rock falls or serac falls (we saw various falls every day). However, a lot of routes are still possible to be opened, here below a few examples:



View from Atchu on Min-Teke north west face

Potential accesses to Min-Teke main summit:

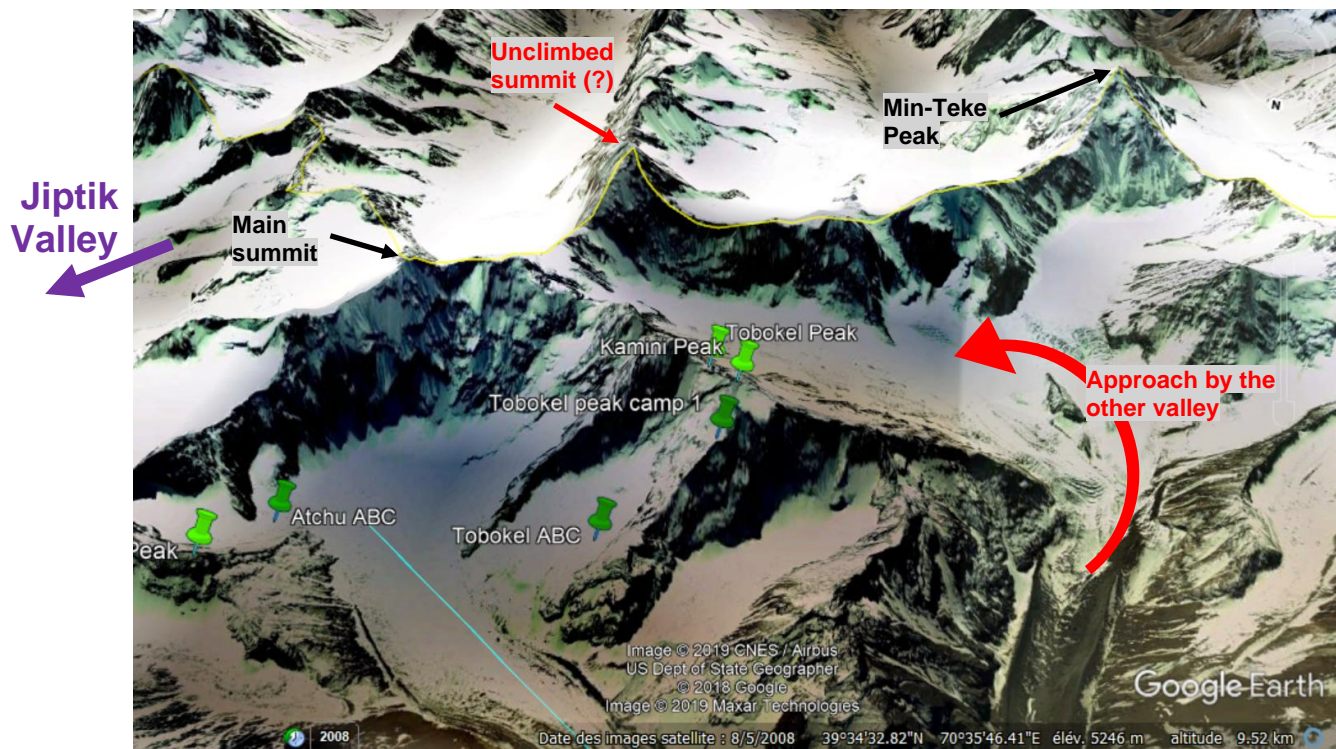
Access from the other side of the cirque (next to Jiptik).

Access from a rocky ridge (exposed to rock falls).

Access from Min-Teke glacier (exposed to serac falls).

Another new route would be to finish our attempt to climb peak 3, passing by Kamini and Tobokel.

Note that another interesting climbing would be to climb a peak (unclimbed as far as we know) just below the main summit. It is located between Min-Teke Peak and Min-Teke valley and seems difficult to be climbed:



The photos we took are available here:
<https://www.flickr.com/gp/152316755@N07/o7yK08>

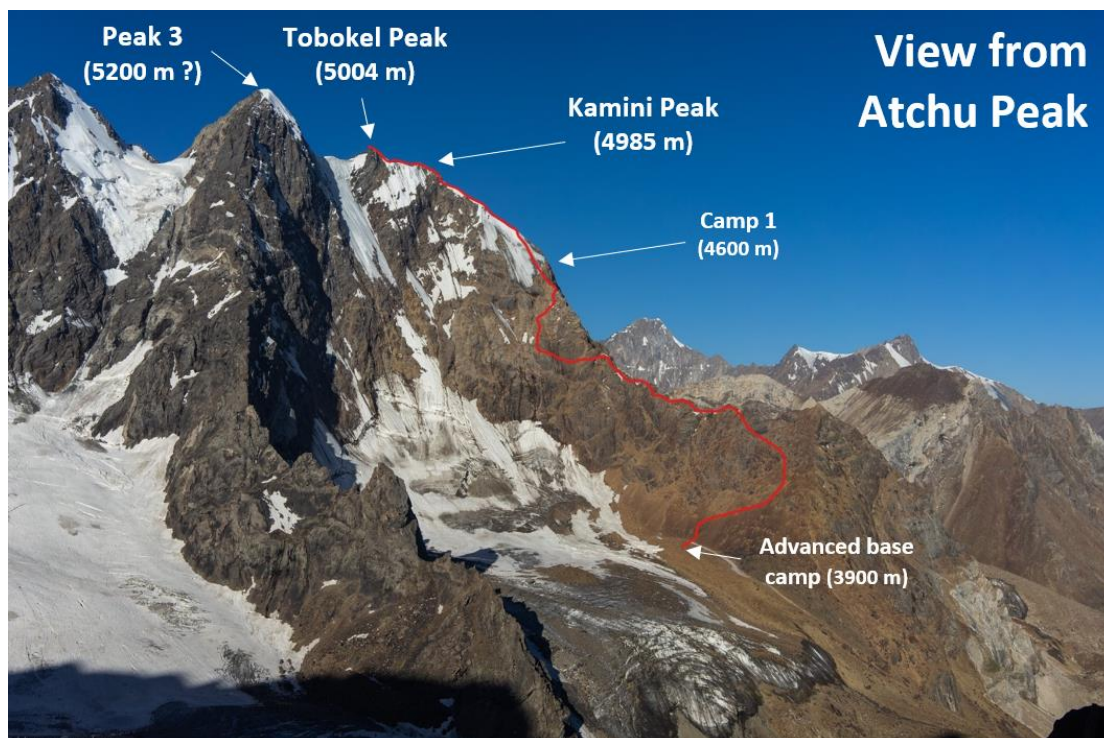
VII. Topos

Tobokel Peak (Adventure in Kirghize) - 5004m, North Ridge

39°37'47.3"N 70°30'12.8"E



Face seen from BC. The snowy N ridge is visible in the top right corner



Route seen from Atchu peak



Start of the climb, before start of the difficulties



Turn left towards the face

General commentary

We opened this route thinking it would give us access to Peak 3 through the snow pass between Peak 3 and Peak Tobokel. Unfortunately, the route was in poor snow conditions. The itinerary is still interesting for its snowy part without major difficulty but on a very aesthetic ridge. Some parts of the rock ridge are exposed to rock falls.

Opening

Route opened on 5/6/7/8 august 2019 by H. Crochet, F.Geoffre et M.Jooris (France)

Difficulty

AD+ (French alpine grading), 45°snow/ice, 4+ rock climbing

Timing

- It took us 4 days from BC but could be done in 2 big days with stable weather and light backpacks (bivy bag vs tent for example)
- Day 1 : BC → ABC : 3 hours with big backpacks
- Day 2 : ABC → Camp 1 : 10h but doable in 7 with no itinerary mistake
- Day 3 :
 - Camp 1 (start at 3h30) → Kamini Summit : 4h
 - Kamini → Tobokel : 1h
 - Tobokel (10h20) → Camp 1 : 4h, good snow conditions, descending the ridge later on maybe tricky
- Day 4 : Camp 1 → BC : 8h with breaks

Gear

1 set of friends up to 2 + 1 set of nuts

Abseil pitons in place

6 to 8 ice screws

50 m rope

2 technical ice axes per person

Route

ABC → Camp 1 (4600m)

Join the ridge

From ABC at the base of the face, get up the rock scree on the right to join the ridge at a small pass (overhang). It is possible to join the ridge through a small couloir that can be snowy but there is a risk of rockfall between members of the team.

Rocky ridge

From the pass, follow the ridge looking for the easiest way. Go around the needles by the east face. The itinerary is first very easy before getting more complex with some parts in sandy stone, easy but hard to protect (1 piton). After a descending traverse under a roof, join the ridge that can be covered with snow. Continue up to a needle that looks uncrossable and get around it by the left side. After a muddy slope, take left again until you can see the face. **WARNING** Do NOT take a scree couloir on the right which seems to join the ridge line through a wide sandy chimney : rock quality is very low, choss (bail bolt on the top, where we turned back).

Follow a fine ledge down below to the left which crosses a small stream (be careful, frequent rockfall in the couloir!) until you are protected by the small spur on the other side. (see photo)

Spur and terraces

Get up the spur up to its summit (IV then III) then go up-right in terraces with relatively good rock.

Get back to the ridge with 15m of straight crack (IV), a scree and finally a few meters of grade IV until we reach the rocky bivy ledge at the base of the ice field.

Beware of rockfalls that follow the stream in the ice field. Try to take water as far right as possible. Camp 1

Camp 1 → Tobokel Summit

Follow the ice slope then the obvious snow ridge (45° snow/ice parts) until Kamini Peak pass (cairn, 4h).

Get to Kamini summit (4985m) by a few easy moves in very bad rock before following the ridge toward Tobokel Peak.

There is one grade IV move in chossy rock that leads to an easy rocky ledge to the summit.

Descent

Descent by the same itinerary. At least 4 abalakovs to get back to camp 1. One abseil on the spur after the grade III terraces at the start of the slabs, behind a big bloc (piton + nut + quick link).

Atchu Peak (Kirghize for spicy), South West Edge - South Face [english]

39°38'52.05"N 70°32'23.02"E

General comment

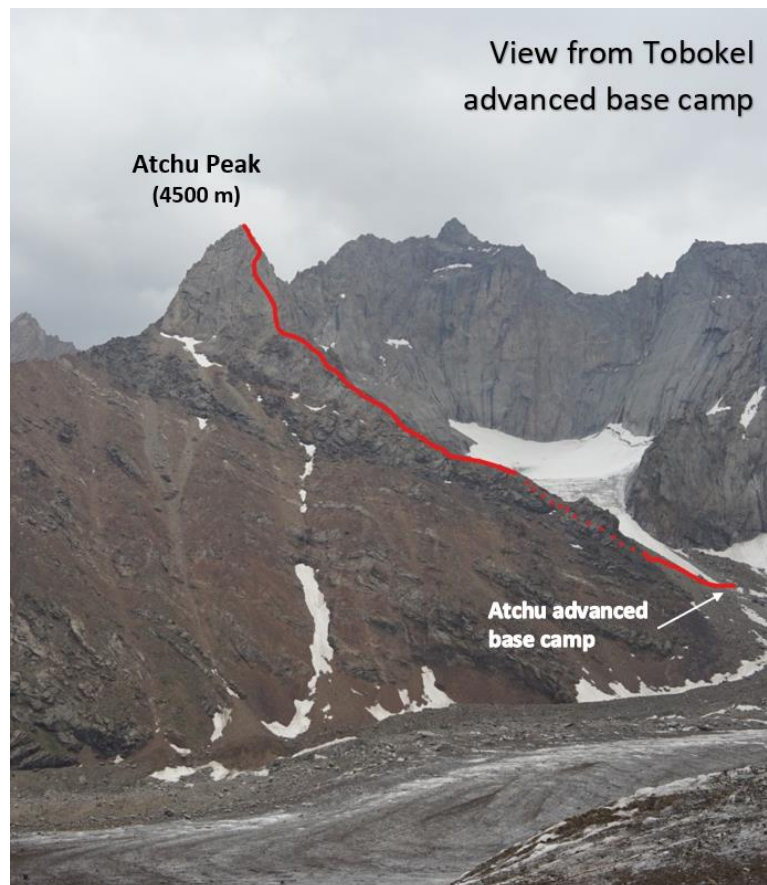
Very nice little route (French V+ max) on a good granite even if there are some little screes at some points. The ridge segment has very good rock quality. Abseils equipped with 10mm spits.

Elevation of the difficulties 350 m

Material

1 set of friends (until 3 and doubled until 2)

1 set of nuts



Approach

From advanced base camp (39°38'28.70"N 70°32'19.99"E), go up along the south west ridge in the scree to reach the base of the difficulties.

South West Ridge

Various ways possible to reach the top of the ridge. We chose an easy diedral oriented north. One pitch of french V+ (55m) and then 30m easy metres enable to reach the ridge (one V+ move).

Then 150m of very good quality ridge with various IV moves.

The ridge reaches the south face (old white rope under a bloc) where it is possible to let stuff. Abseil for the descent with 2 bolts a few meters down the east face of the ridge.



Start of the ridge

South face

P1 V+ (50m)

Begin in a hand crack which goes right, then straightforward with easy slabs until a piton, and finally climb to the left until a wide diedral. Abseil with one bloc and one bolt (white and green rope).

P2 V (55m)

Continue in the diedral before crossing to the left to reach an easy dulfer. Pass left under a big bloc which has a 2 bolts abseil. This abseil is used for descent, don't use it now. Make a friend/nut abseil a few meters upward the block in a comfortable and scree ledge.

P3 V+ (55m)

Continue straight forward under a block with an obvious crack, and bypass it by left to reach a wide diedral. Go up crossing on the right (easy field with a snatched old piton abseil with white rope on the floor) and then zigzag left in cracked blocs. Abseil in a ledge, 2 bolts.

P4 III (45m)

Go right horizontally to continue in direction of the summit (big block), easy. Abseil with friends/nuts.

P5 (option A) 6a+ (20m)

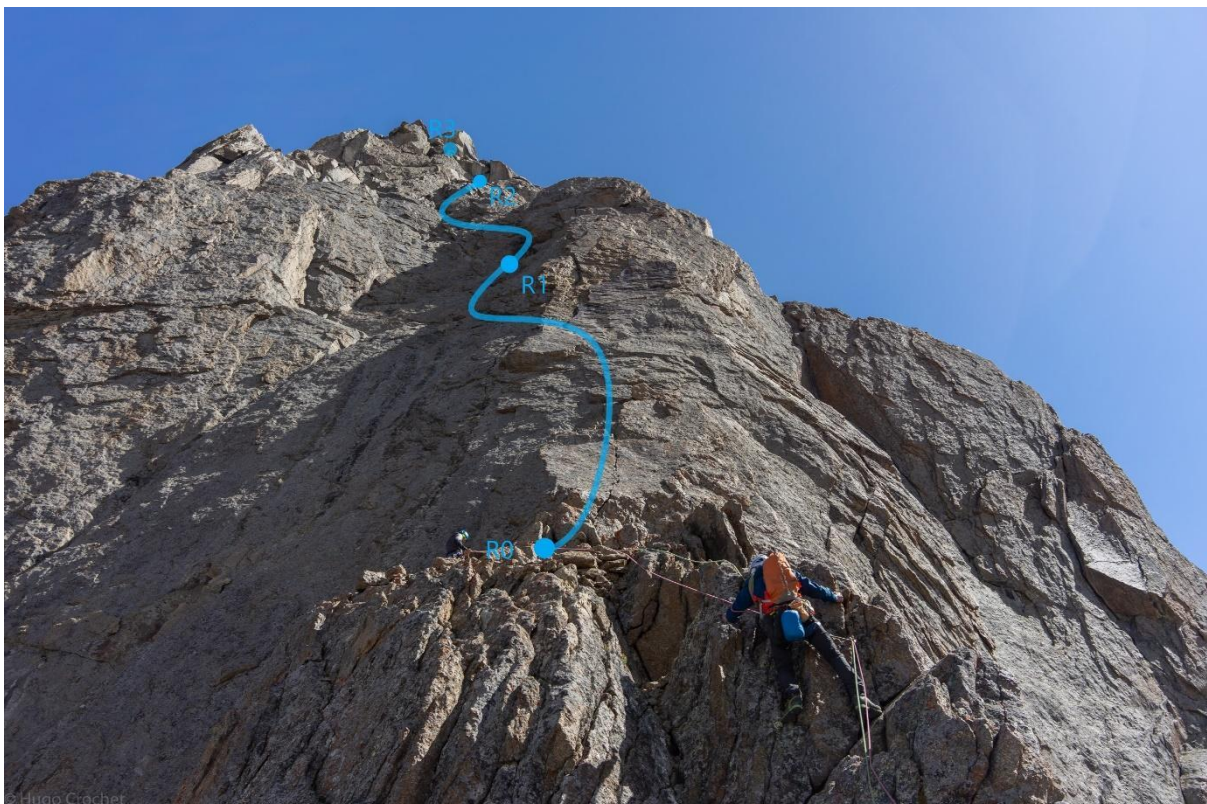
Directly climb the summit block by an obvious crack. One 6a+/6b move hardly protectable with nuts and little friend (0.1).

P5 (option B) IV+ (30m)

Bypass the summit block by right and follow various easy steps.

P5 (option C)? (25m)

Beautiful 5 meters finger crack then hand crack between option A and option B.



Start of the south face

Descent

Downclimb the summit block by the easy side (east), and then follow P4 until the 2 bolts abseil. 60m abseil arriving below a block with 2 bolts (seen during P2). Exposed to rock falls.

50m abseil arriving at P1 abseil (rope ring around a block and 1 bolt). Exposed to rock falls.

50m abseil arriving under the departure of P1 (2 bolts).

50m abseil arriving in the east face (2spits).

40m abseil arriving at the base of the east face.

Walk down until the base of the ridge, and then walk back to the advanced base camp by the sree.



South West ridge and 2 last abseils