

British-Dutch 2023 Shimshal Expedition



“Shinpak!”

Everyone



**The Jeremy Willson
Charitable Trust**





Expedition Summary

In August 2023, after almost a year of planning four friends headed east, travelling to the Shimshal valley in Hunza, northern Pakistan to attempt unclimbed peaks. This was a team with a lot of experience in the Alps and Scotland, but for all save Job, this was our first time climbing in the greater ranges. For us, the Gunj-E Dur region proved to be a perfect choice.

After 3 days of non-stop flights and driving, we reached Shimshal, from which a 3-day trek towards the Shimshal Pass brought us to base camp. We had arrived at the tail end of some unstable weather and were fortunate to have clear skies for most of our travel. Arriving at base camp, we quickly got to exploring the Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier, which contained most of the peaks we had marked as potential objectives.

During our acclimatisation, we quickly saw the effects of what is now being described as the hottest year on record. The summit temps at 6000m were barely going into the negatives, even at night. We could see debris from a couple of small avalanches and most of the rock we came across was extremely loose.

After our initial acclimatisation, the first objective we chose to attempt was Pk. 289 (Peak numbers from the [2014 Jerzy Wala Map](#)). After James was forced to turn back due to AMS, Jacob and Job made their way up the 35-degree slope to reach the col between Pk. 289 and Pk. 290 to access the SSE ridge. From here, Jacob and Job climbed through the bands of loose rock, before being forced to retreat by a steep rock band just below the summit.

On August 20th we made our second attempt on a new objective, Pk. 281, which we approached by the SSE ridge of Pk. 283. We climbed the ridge until reaching the base of the rocky summit, which we pitched. After summiting Pk. 283, which we later named “Tuki Sar”, we abseiled down and slogged across the summit snow slopes which brought us to the top of Pk. 281, which we named “AK Sar”.

While we ended up having less days for climbing than initially planned, this did allow us to spend some time exploring the stunning valleys of Hunza, which we would highly recommend if you ever have the chance.

Jacob Dyer, James Rigby, Job Klusener, and Will Dixon

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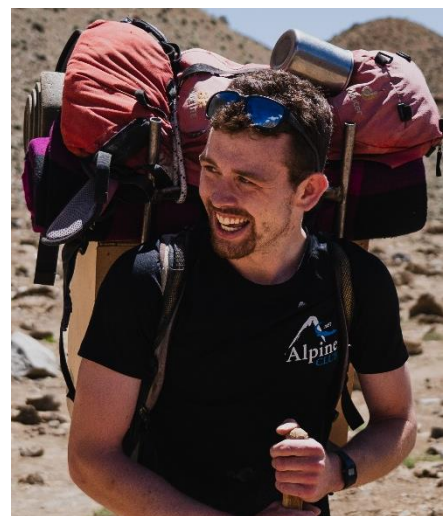
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The Team



Jacob Dyer (British, 26, Machine Learning Engineer) has been climbing in the alps since beginning his studies in Edinburgh, climbing many classic routes such as the Frendo Spur and the Liongrat on the Matterhorn. In Edinburgh he also took the opportunity for to do plenty of winter climbing, commonly climbing up to VI Scottish Winter. Now living near Frankfurt, Germany, he makes use of the shorter distance to the alps for many trips summer and winter. On this expedition Jacob was responsible for much of researching routes, making use of his experience and contacts at the European Space Agency to access and interpret satellite imagery of the region. Additionally, Jacob took the lead writing articles for the AC, AAJ, along with this report.

James Rigby: (British, 26, Civil Servant for Crown Estate Scotland) lives in Edinburgh and has climbed for 7 years predominantly across Scotland, Norway (where he lived for a short period) and the Alps up to E1, Scottish V and WI4+. He joined the Alpine Club in 2020 and has completed four long alpine seasons climbing routes such as the Migot Spur, Royal Traverse, Taschhorn Dom Traverse, Chere Couloir and Mallory Porter. He particularly enjoys the Scottish hills where he spends most weekends as well as the mapping and environmental aspects of planning expeditions.



Job Klusener: (Dutch, 31, Outdoor Instructor) has lived in Edinburgh the last five years where he started to dip his toes into Scottish mixed, climbing up to grade V. Having had only a couple of seasons in the Alps, he has been on two prior remote expeditions in Argentina, climbing Aconcagua, and Kazakhstan, climbing Khan Tengri. On this expedition, Job brought his knowledge from these expeditions to the group, along with the responsibility of taking amicable photos that could be used where required.

Will Dixon: (British, 28, Rope Access Technician) lives in the Yellow House in Deiniolen. He works an IRATA level 3 in offshore oil and gas industry. He is mainly psyched for ice, mixed, alpine, sea cliffs, and anything that allows him to put himself in serious, stunning terrain. While he has climbed harder, he describes himself as an HVS/ grade V climber.



Planning and Preparation

Choosing a location

Our planning for the expedition started by researching where we wanted to go. With this being the first expedition of this style of all the team members, we were almost spoilt for choice! After some initial discussions, we had decided that:

1. We wanted to head to the greater ranges, rather than anywhere in South America.
2. Nepal and India both looked expensive compared to alternatives and so were ones we felt would be better left for a future trip.

With this in mind, we focussed our attention on Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan and set to digging through recent expedition reports from the two countries for inspiration on more specific areas. We soon came across the report written by the 2017 British Shimshal Expedition, who had completed a couple of first ascents in the area, including Yad Sar.

Researching Objectives

Having chosen the Gunj-E Dur Valley as the location for our expedition, we set about researching the various potential objectives in the area. We already knew based on the reports written by previous expeditions to the area that there was a lot of potential for tackling unclimbed peaks, now we just had to attempt to learn as much as possible about them.

We very quickly saw the huge amount of potential around the Second East Gunj-E Dur glacier and so decided to focus here. A few peaks stood out. First, Pk. 289 which was two summits over from Pk. 5855 which had been climbed in the 2017 expedition. This meant we had a couple of great photos of the SSE ridge, which looked like the best choice of line. Later into planning we also learnt a 2022 expedition attempted this peak by this route, providing us with even more pictures from which we could get an idea of the potential challenges. This peak stood out to us for a few reasons. Firstly, it was above the start of the glacier, meaning a shorter approach would be required, and secondly, the ridge looked around AD in difficulty and so would be a good, interesting route to attempt.

The next potential objective which stood out to us was the ridgeline connecting peaks 284 and 287 which contained multiple subsidiary summits. Even with photos where we could get a bit of a view of the ridge, as well as satellite imagery, it was difficult to judge what the ridge would be like to climb. We also noted the descent from Pk. 287 looked very unideal and may require us descending the valley adjacent to the Second East Gunj-E Dur glacier and the hiking back up to BC. Despite this, it looked like a particularly interesting multi-day route, and so we opted to try get a better view of it from another peak when climbing, and judge whether it was worth attempting from there.

The final couple of objectives that caught our eye were peaks 275 and 281, alongside their respective subsidiary summits. Both peaks had multiple potential lines of climbing and would provide brilliant views of the entire range from their summits. Unfortunately, we lacked much photography that included these summits in much detail, and so were primarily reliant on satellite imagery for our planning.



Our Google Earth planning. Notes from the 2017 and 2021 expeditions are in red and purple respectively. Future potential objectives are in yellow. Full version available [here](#).

Outside of the Second Easty Gunj-E Dur glacier, we also were keen to establish a new route on Gunj-E Sar, as it is the highest peak in the Gunj-E Dur area. We noted a couple of potential new lines, the SW ridge, and a gully which led directly to the summit of Gunj-E Dur. Climbing on Gunj-E Dur was a stretch goal for the expedition, but one we were very keen on giving a shot if conditions allowed.

Having decided upon our objectives for the expedition, it was time to plan the logistics. We reached out to various mountaineering logistics organizations in Pakistan that had been recommended to us by various people. In the end we chose to go with Ali Saltero and [Alpine Adventure Guides Pakistan](#). Now all that was left was to apply for grants and book our flights!

Expedition Diary

Summary of Events

<i>Date</i>	<i>Expedition Diary</i>
<i>Aug 5th</i>	Depart various European airports.
<i>Aug 6th</i>	Land in Islamabad, fly to Skardu, drive to Passu.
<i>Aug 7th</i>	Drive from Passu to Shimshal. (~3000m).
<i>Aug 8th</i>	Trek from Shimshal to Past Furzin (~3500m).
<i>Aug 9th</i>	Trek Past Furyin to Arbob Peryan (~3900m).
<i>Aug 10th</i>	Trek Arbob Peryan to BC (~4350m).
<i>Aug 11th</i>	Rest and sort kit.
<i>Aug 12th</i>	Acclimatise and scout ABC, reaching ~5100m.
<i>Aug 13th</i>	Rest day.
<i>Aug 14th</i>	Establish ABC ~5000m.
<i>Aug 15th</i>	Scout Obj. A and acclimatise to 5300m, sleep at ABC.
<i>Aug 16th</i>	Attempt on Pk. 289 by JD and JK. Retreat from within 100m of the summit.
<i>Aug 17th</i>	Rest day at BC.
<i>Aug 18th</i>	Rest day at BC.
<i>Aug 19th</i>	Approach Obj. E and bivi.
<i>Aug 20th</i>	Successful attempt on Pk. 281 and 283 by JD, JK, and JR.
<i>Aug 21st</i>	Rest Day.
<i>Aug 22nd</i>	Attempt on Pk. 275 by WD.
<i>Aug 23rd</i>	Rest Day.
<i>Aug 24th</i>	Rest Day.
<i>Aug 25th</i>	Trek from BC to Arbob Peryan.
<i>Aug 26th</i>	Trek from Arbob Peryan to Shimshal.
<i>Aug 27th</i>	Explore Shimshal
<i>Aug 28th</i>	Drive Shimshal to Passu
<i>Aug 29th</i>	Explore local area around Passu
<i>Aug 30th</i>	Visit Altit Fort in Karimabad, markets in Aliabad, and Lake Attabad
<i>Aug 31st</i>	Visit Aliabad markets and Sost.
<i>Sep 1st</i>	Drive Passu to Naran.
<i>Sep 2nd</i>	Drive Naran to Islamabad.
<i>Sep 3rd</i>	Chill day in Islamabad packing for flights.
<i>Sep 4th</i>	Return flights to various European Airports

Day-by-Day Diary

August 5th – Departing Europe.

After over a year of staring at satellite imagery, applying for grants, and planning kit and logistics, the time had finally come for the four of us to head out to Pakistan. James and Will were the first to link up, given they were both departing from London Heathrow. In Istanbul, they were joined by Job, and in Islamabad, they were joined by Jacob, who had landed a few hours prior.

August 6th – Journey through Pakistan.

With the team now together in Islamabad, we had a few more hours to wait in the airport before we would meet up with our logistics coordinator, Ali Saltoro of Alpine Adventure Guides Pakistan, and then fly to Skardu. Knowing how common it is for flights to Northern Pakistan to be cancelled, the torrential rain we could see outside the airport was not the most reassuring. By around 7am local time Ali had arrived, the rain had dissipated, and we began checking in our baggage for the flight to Skardu. At this stage we had been travelling and waiting in the airport all through the night, so we had all had little to no sleep and so took the opportunity while waiting for our flight to get some rest.

After our short break, we were on the plane to Skardu. Despite the cloud blocking the best of the views, this flight was impressive. Not only did we get great views of the Indus valley and fly close enough to get a good view of Nanga Parbat sticking through the clouds, but we also had the co-pilot talking through everything that could be seen from the plane as if it was a tour. After landing in Skardu, we stopped for lunch and met Ali and Khadim, our two cooks who would be joining us for our entire journey.

At this point, we were all exhausted as we began the drive from Skardu to Passu. We made a couple of stops for tea and milkshakes, as well as stopping in the markets of Aliabad to purchase a variety of dried fruits and nuts for snacks on the mountains. An hour later we made it to Passu where we could finally get some sleep after our day and a half of non-stop travelling.

August 7th – Heading to Shimshal.

After a quick breakfast we loaded the land cruisers which were to take us and all the food and kit to Shimshal, here we were joined by Sabit, our local guide who would be managing porters, and guiding us to base camp. Here is also where we left Ali S, who we would meet again back in Islamabad. Leaving at around 9am, the drive took us along narrow trials with



extremely steep cliffs on either side. This rugged terrain meant the drive to Shimshal took just shy of 5 hours.

We reached our destination at the far side of Shimshal, the Shimshal Guest House, run by Hasil, who, like many in the village, had a range of mountaineering achievements under their belt from their younger days. Hasil himself had led the first ascent of Sunrise Peak, a stunning peak at the east end of the Shimshal valley, which we had a great view of once the clouds dissipated. We then spent some time preparing our bags for the mules with each bag having to be as close to 20kg as possible to enable even weight distribution. After this we had a little time to explore the local area and have a bit of a break from travelling and organising before we would continue the next day with the beginning of our approach to base camp.

August 8th – Shimshal to Past Furzin.

We met up with Sabit first thing after breakfast while the porters had already begun dividing up equipment between themselves and the mules. We set off with hiking initially along the flat plains east of Shimshal itself for around 5km before ascending almost 600m on steep trails to a small herder's hut. These huts were dotted along our entire approach and were mainly used by locals going to and from the Shimshal Pass. It was on the slopes just below our lunch spot that our first issues arose. Will had, as we would later learn, come down with Infective Gastroenteritis and so had begun to struggle quite a bit. After some reorganising of Wills' load between Sabit and Job, Will managed to soldier on. We only learnt the root cause of Wills' symptoms after contacting Oonagh – a friend of many of those on the expedition who is both a keen mountaineer and a doctor. This contact was only made after a few days at BC when it became clear the symptoms were sticking around.





Back at the lunch stop in the hut, we got the first opportunity to start chatting to the various porters. In a later section in this report, we will discuss the in-country logistics and will then go into more detail about the team of porters who were instrumental in making this expedition possible. Despite some language barriers, we were able to get to know the various porters a little. Many of them were students earning some cash on their summer breaks.

After lunch, we had just a couple more hours walking along the small ups and downs of the trail sometimes built on, and other times carved out of the steep sides of the valley. We then soon dropped down to Past Furzin, where our porters had already begun preparing the camp.

August 9th – Past Furzin to Arbob Peryan.

The second day of our approach trek was even hotter than the first, with most of the afternoon spent without shade from the surrounding mountains. The trek begun by dropping slowly down towards the base of the valley. Shortly before we reached the bridge to cross to the other side of the valley, we caught up with a few of the porters having a break at a herder's hut. Unfortunately, one of the porters, Akram, had got a nasty open blister on his right shoulder from the rubbing from the load he was carrying. After doing what we could for the blister, it was decided that Akram wouldn't be able to keep carrying without making it worse, so he headed back to Shimshal while the porters divided up his load.

Continuing, we crossed over the leaning bridge to reach the other side of the valley and began climbing up the slopes to regain the lost height. The existence of the bridge and the good quality of paths in such a remote region was impressive, made even more so when we learnt that these paths had existed in some form for herders travelling to and from the Shimshal pass for hundreds of years. After reaching the top of most of our ascent for the day, we continued along until we reached Purian Sar, which was our spot for lunch. We were told Purian Sar

Elevation plots for the 3-day trek to BC, recorded on Jacobs Garmin Inreach



translates literally to 'the way upwards', as this was the wooden arch built just before the hut was the gateway to the Shimshal pass and its surrounding peaks.

From Purian Sar, we continued along the flats which had opened up on our side of the valley until we reached Arbob Peryan where once again, the porters had already begun preparing our camp. Camping here at the same time as us was a group of German and Swiss trekkers from all over their respective countries. We chatted to them for a bit, and provided some dexamethasone to the doctor who was part of their group who was managing one of their members which, from what we heard, was struggling with AMS alongside other issues.

August 10th – Arbob Peryan to Base Camp

On the final day of our trek to base camp, we continued along the relative flats on our side of the valley before dropping back onto steeper terrain. After a couple of hours, we reached the base of the Gunj-E Dur valley, which is where we left the main trails heading to the Shimshal pass to head to our intended base camp. From this point the terrain became more gradual though the trail became less clear as while Gunj-E Dur was used for some yak grazing, it was not used nearly as much as the Shimshal pass.

At the lunch spot, at another herder's hut, as with the previous days the porters made and shared with us some milk tea and some local cake like bread which never got the name of but was great. We then continued along Gunj-E Dur until we reached a river no more than 300m from the green where we planned to create our base camp. The leading mule, who was carrying Jacobs bags, was the first to attempt to cross, the mule got around halfway before finding itself so deep that a couple of the porters had to rush in to keep its head above water, while recovering the load carried by the mule so that they could then get the mule out of the river. At this point, we tried looking for other points to cross the river, but to no avail. It was then decided, given the short remaining distance, to unload the mules and move the loads over the river by hand. This river was fed by glaciers a few kilometres higher up the Second East Gunj-E Dur valley and so was absolutely freezing. Loads which were convenient to carry were done so in pairs crossing the river barefoot (as can be seen in one of the below photos), while more awkward loads were moved by creating a line of people stood in the river passing the loads along. Once all the loads were on the other side of the river, everyone grabbed some bags, walked to basecamp, and then repeated until we had all the equipment at base camp.

At base camp we quickly got to establishing our base camp, once this was done, we spent some time chatting to the Sabit and the porters before giving Sabit a tip to divide amount the porters, making sure to ensure Akram was given his share as well, despite having to leave us on the 2nd day of the approach. We then gave Sabit a copy of our expedition timeline and





confirmed that the porters were to return on the 24th day of our expedition. For the observant reader, you will have noticed in the Summary of Events, we began our descent to Shimshal much earlier than the 24th day of our expedition, but this miscommunication, caused by the language barrier, would not be realised until much later in the expedition.

Sabit and the porters then began their journey back to Shimshal, leaving the four of us, alongside Ali and Khadim, the two cooks, at base camp.

August 11th – Recovering at Base Camp

After almost a week of non-stop travelling, now that we had reached base camp it was time for a well-earned rest. This rest had the side benefit of helping our acclimatisation, given base camp was located at just under 4400m in altitude. We also took the time to get more settled into base camp, setting up base camp facilities such as easy points to refill water in the stream next to camp. We then spent the afternoon planning our next few days. The weather forecast was looking positive and so we were psyched to start exploring these mountains that we had spent so long looking at on satellite imagery.

August 12th – Acclimatisation

After our day recovering, it was time to begin our acclimatisation above base camp. At this stage, Will was still out of action with infective gastroenteritis and so remained in base camp for the day. The plan for Jacob, James, and Job was to head up the valley towards the Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier with kit to establish an advanced base camp. This would involve reaching an altitude of 5000m for acclimatisation purposes. If we felt the ABC should be higher, the plan was to stash the kit.

Heading up the steep slopes above base camp, then contouring around the next slopes, we made good progress until around lunch. At this stage we decided that the valley hadn't opened as expected. After consulting with a map using the Garmin InReach carried by Jacob, we realised that our base camp was slightly further along its valley than expected, and as such, the valley of the Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier was not the valley directly above BC. The valley directly above camp was in fact a small one with the glacier between Pk. 281 (Obj. E) and Pk. 275 (Obj. F). It was at the foot of this glacier we now sat. Checking our various altimeters, we also realised we were almost at 5200m, in altitude, a decent amount higher than our original aim of 5000m.

While a little annoying at the time to realise that we had gone on a small misadventure, the views we got from where we sat working out the best plan for the afternoon were vital in recognising a potential route on Pk. 281 (Obj. E) that we would later climb when attempting Pk. 281. Additionally, these views gave us a good idea of conditions in the area.

Unfortunately, it was clear that conditions were very bare. We could see the debris from multiple avalanches, as well as evidence of a lot of recent rockfall. The general quality of the rock looked particularly poor in most places; this assessment would turn out to be correct with only a couple of bands of good quality rock being encountered on the expedition. We also expected conditions to only get worse, with the summit temperatures of the peaks just under 6000m reaching up to 6 degrees during the day, and only barely dropping below zero at night. These high temperatures would persist throughout most of the period we spent at or above base camp.

After our short break reassessing where we were, we descended back down towards the point where we could contour round some flats to reach the Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier, planning to stash kit once we confirmed we could reach the valley and that there were no obstacles such as cliffs in the way. On this short descent down very loose scree, a couple of small slips resulted in some cuts and grazes, but nothing worse. We then made it to the point for stashing kit, and returned to BC, where we rejoined Will, Ali, and Khadim for dinner.

August 13th – Rest, Recovery, and Animals.

With folks feeling the effect of the altitude after yesterday's acclimatisation, it was decided to have another rest day today. After consulting with Oonagh via the InReach regarding Will's ongoing symptoms, it was decided the best course of action was for Will to take the set of antibiotics we had with us and see if he improved. We then had some surprise visitors at base camp, Sabit, alongside Nahwaz and Muktar Karim arrived back from visiting the Shimshal Pass, bringing with them a goat which was to be eaten over the next week in base camp. They also came to herd some Yaks back down to the pass before the coming winter, taking 3 Yaks back down with them. There was still a very large herd of 40+ yaks grazing nearby and often coming close to the camp given we were pitched on a large area of fresh grass.



August 14th – Establishing ABC, for real this time!

Today, Jacob, James, and Job headed up to explore the Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier and find a location for an advanced base camp. With antibiotics, Will had started to recover though would still need at least a day or so before starting above BC acclimatisation. Jacob, James, and Job quickly headed up the slopes above BC to the small flats where we had stashed kit two days earlier. From here, we were able to drop down slightly before contouring round to maintain our height on our side of the valley below the Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier.

Around 45 minutes of walking later, we came across a herder's hut much alike to the ones we had stopped regularly at during our three-day approach to BC. Conveniently, there was a decent area of flat grass just outside the hut which was isolated by a combination of boulder fields and dry-stone walls. Our one concern regarding this camp as an ABC location was that it was perhaps a little low and a little far from the start of routes. Though this was further offset by the presence of a spring in one of the boulder fields next to the hut. In retrospect, the approach from this ABC to the peaks in the area was further than ideal, and there were a few options for an ABC higher up. This did not end up being a major disadvantage for us as, due to the poor conditions, we were only able to attempt one peak from this ABC. In the mountaineering report later in this full report, we will touch on good options for BC's and ABC's for future expeditions to the region.

We then headed back to BC, ensuring all our kit was stashed suitably for our return the next morning, just in time for another fantastic meal from Ali and Khadim.



August 15th – Scouting objectives on the Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier.

After breakfast we headed back to ABC, reaching the camp in just over an hour. Will was looking on the up and was planning to try some small acclimatisation over the 2 days we would be spending above BC. Once arriving, we found that one of the tents which had been let up had received some, thankfully not too major, damage. It appeared to be because of a Yak grazing near the tent and one of its horns likely catching and causing a small tear, while it somehow also managed to bend one of the tent poles. After Job had fixed the tent and we had dropped off our kit, we headed higher to further acclimatise and to scout out the approach through the moraine to the base of our potential objectives.

We headed up by continuing to contour along the side of the valley across the shallow slopes covered in loose scree until we reached the start of the moraine. After a little searching, we found a decent path up from where we were, though we had to constantly be very cautious due to the medium to large blocks around which were almost all extremely loose. Once established on the moraine, we were able to continue across the field of boulders to reach the end of the glacier.

On this approach, we got our first good views of many of the objectives on the Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier and the poor conditions were reaffirmed, with the glaciers looking extremely bare, and sheer ice visible on most slopes which we expected to be snow covered. The two main options we had for an initial acclimatisation objective were Pk. 289 and Pk. 290. We settled on Pk. 289, as while we were unsure of the rock quality, and what that would mean for tackling the peak, we were not confident that the ascent of Pk. 290 would be free from avalanche risk. After taking various photos of the peaks and potential routes, we decided it was then about time to head down.



Heading down we came across what appeared to be a rough yak/ blue sheep trail close to the river in the centre of the valley and so followed this back down. We made sure to make the trailhead at the base of the moraine on the InReach to ensure we would have no issues finding it in the dark early hours of the morning when we were would likely be setting off towards a route. We then settled into our ABC, boiling water for our appetising-as-ever boil-in-a-bag meals before heading to sleep more or less as soon as it got dark, given the next day would have a very early start.

August 16th – Attempting Pk. 289

A note to the reader: In this day-by-day diary, we are aiming to tell the story of the expedition. In the “Mountaineering Report” chapter, each attempted route will be discussed from a more technical perspective with a route description, estimated grades, and a discussion of other potential routes. These will naturally have some overlap.

With the current high summit temperatures, and our relatively low ABC, we elected to start early to give us the best chance of success. Waking up at 03:15, we had kitted up, eaten breakfast, packed away the tents (after the previous damages), and were ready to set off by just before 04:00. We made our way under torchlight to the base of the Yak trail that had been discovered the previous day. We then followed the trail up through the moraine to the base of the glacier where we had reached the previous day. From here, we headed onto the rock ridge on our right, electing to follow this along to reach a spot from which we could head up to the col between Peaks 289 and 290. Once we reached the rock ridge, it became clear that James was struggling with a worsening cough. James had had only recently recovered from a chest infection and so was the cough was likely caused by this as well as the altitude. James elected to head back to BC and so, after sorting out kit, Jacob and Job continued onwards while James headed down, reaching BC a few hours later.

Continuing along the ridge, we found ourselves making slow progress due to the number of very loose large boulders, reaching the base of the ascent up to the col at around 07:00, just as it was becoming properly day, though the sun was still hidden behind the col at this stage. We then opted to have a small break here while we ditched any kit, such as walking poles and extra warm morning layers, which we felt we would not require higher up. We also were about to use the morning glacier melt streams to refill our water. After around 30 minutes, we set off again. The base of the glacier coming down from the col was a cliff, so the only option to gain the col was to follow a narrow, loose gulley up the side of the base of the glacier on our left. Ascending this we made steady progress, whomever was in front had to take a lot of care not to knock down more rocks, given whoever was below would have little room to

Elevation plots for our acclimatisation and exploration during the 12th, 14th, and 15th.





manoeuvre out of the way. Despite these issues, we did manage to exit the gulley and gain the glacier proper after around 45 minutes. Here we were able to crampon up and begin our slog up to the col.

On the glacier, we began our slog up the snowy slopes. The snow was still frozen from the night, given the sun was maybe a half hour or so from coming over from behind the col. With the steep 30-35 degree slope up the glacier, we very quickly found the altitude a struggle, with regular 30-60s breaks being taken to recover breath and energy. The walking became much tougher when the sun did peak over, causing the temperature felt to increase by around 10 degrees. While it felt like much a lot longer, we reached the col at around 11:00 and took a moment to decide the best option forward. We were both knackered from the approach, our various options. Did we want to use the climb to the col as acclimatisation, and attempt a full acclimatisation peak after a day rest? This had been one of the initial plans for acclimatisation, though was swiftly rejected, given neither of us wanted to climb up the loose gulley or slog up the snow slope again. The debate then turned to which objective to go for, Peak 289 or 290? Still unsure of the avalanche risk on 290, and with no appetite for more slogging up snow, we elected to attempt Peak 289 as originally planned.

Jacob started up the 45–50-degree slope from the col, we had elected not to use a rope at this stage, due to the volume of loose rock that it looked like we would soon encounter, and lack of good rock for protection. This assessment proved correct, with awkward steady progress being made upwards, taking great care around the piles of rocks. After some more climbing following





the same pattern, we both made it to a spot with some more decent rock just below a large rock band. This rock band looked like it had a few lines through, but all of these started about 4-5 meters up, with steep and slightly overhanging blank faces below. The one option we spotted as a potential line through was slightly down and to our left as we looked up the mountain.

Here there was a narrow, short snow/ rock band which would likely have been Scottish winter IV. This would have been a simple rope up and climb, had the line not been east facing and so had already been in the sun for hours. This, combined with the reasonably warm (for the altitude) ambient temperatures meant the snow had already become very loose, and was no longer securely holding the rocks showing below. This meant our only option to continue up would have been a pretty sketchy 6-8m stretch, and then above that we had no idea what would be next. This also meant we had no idea how easy it would be to find suitable anchors for abseiling. Given it was also past midday at this stage, we decided the best option was to retreat from our highpoint which was just under 5700m. Given Pk. 289 was around 5775m, this meant we had reached within 100m of the summit.

A couple of abseils from the larger sturdier blocks we could find later, we were back at the col. The difference in the snowpack underfoot compared with a few hours earlier was immediately obvious. Whereas earlier the snowpack had been crisp, and we were glad to have crampons on, now that we were heading down, Job especially found himself sinking up to the knee with almost every step. We made it quickly to where we first joined the glacier and headed carefully back down the loose gulley. The stream running down this gulley that had been a trickle on the way up was now substantially bigger, adding to the awkwardness of the descent. We were soon back at where we had left our walking poles, trainers, and other kit, and were heading back down to our ABC.

Elevation plots for our attempt on Pk. 289, the ascent to our bivi on the 19th, and our successful ascents of Tuki Sar and AK Sar.



The rest of the descent went reasonably smoothly, and not far past ABC we managed to make radio contact to BC, to let them know our updated ETA. Reaching BC, we were greeted by James, Will, Khadim, and Ali, and shortly after we were all enjoying goat ribs before we crashed after our 15-hour day on the mountain.

August 17th – Setting our sights on Peaks 281 and 275.

After the big previous day, Jacob, James, and Job were firmly set on resting today, while Will, still on the up with the current course of antibiotics was looking to work more on the acclimatisation. From his previous acclimatisation walks, Will had set his sights on Peak 275 and so was planning to recce potential bivi sites below the peaks western ridge.

At base camp, we had a very relaxed start to the day, though after breakfast conversation quickly turned to which peak would be our next goal. While there was some desire to take another run at Peak 289, it was decided that our efforts would be better spent attempting Peaks 275 and 281. This was as, from what we had seen during our acclimatization on the 12th, there certainly looked like there would be lines on both peaks which would be achievable with the current conditions.

After lunch, Jacob, James, and Job headed back to the ABC which had been established on the Second East Gunj-E Dur valley. Given the decision had been made to focus on Peaks 275 and 281 for the time being, we could retrieve the remaining kit which had been left at the ABC.

August 18th - Resting

In preparation for the planned attempts on objectives over the next few days, today was spent lounging around base camp. Some time was spent improving the flow of the stream next to camp that we were using for water and making other minor improvements. Outside of these activities, which were mainly us killing time, there was very little of note done.





August 19th – Heading Skywards

In the early afternoon, shortly after lunch, it was time to start heading skywards towards our next objectives. Will was aiming for stashing kit at a bivi below Pk. 275, while Jacob, James, and Job were aiming for a bivi below Pk. 281 and its subsidiary peaks.

For Jacob, James, and Job the ascent to the bivi was similarly simple. After reaching the plateau above BC, we contoured round, before following the S ridge to regain a similar position as we had reached on our first acclimatisation day. After following the top of this ridgeline for a while, passing a few smaller outcrops, we reached a large outcrop which was impassable without dropping quite far down from the ridge. Given the ridge was consisting entirely of scree, we opted to descend the NW flank of the ridge, which was on our left, down to a small stream, where we could then continue along with the aim of finding a bivi spot, which we did after a short time.

For Will, the ascent to the bivi below Pk. 275 went smoothly, with him ascending a route he had scouted out in the previous days when acclimatising and seeing how his body was recovering from the infective gastroenteritis. After crossing the river, a little further up the main valley from base camp, Will was able to make his way up the moderately steep scree ridgeline until he reached the previously identified flat just below the where the scrambling on the ridgeline up to the summit would begin. After stashing a load of kit, including some extra water, Will returned to BC where he rejoined Ali and Khadim.

August 20th – Successful Summits

Waking up just before 0500 for the attempt on Pk. 281, none of Jacob, James, or Job felt the dehydrated breakfasts looked appetising, so instead we opted for the desserts we had brought up with us and not eaten the night before – Chocolate Chip – much more enticing! James also kindly offered to pop down to the stream below the embankment we were on and refill all our

water from the stream we had walked alongside the previous afternoon, only to return empty handed as the stream had disappeared with the lack of glacial melt overnight!

After stashing our bivi kit, we began our approach by continuing up the narrow ridgeline we were on. This ridge was made from entirely very loose rocks of all shapes and sizes, making progress slower as soon as we got to steeper terrain. It was extremely easy to dislodge



microwave and larger sized blocks if you misplaced your foot. By around 0630 we had made it to the snowline, where we proceeded to stash any excess layers that we had carried for the early morning and swapped from approach shoes into mountaineering boots. From here, we continued up, making quick progress over the crisp and frozen snow until we reached a good vantage point from which we could see not only most of the other unclimbed peaks in the area, including Pk. 289 which Jacob and Job attempted a few days prior, we had a great view of the the S face of Pk. 281, as well as the SE ridge. After some discussion, we decided that the ridgeline gave us the best chance of success and should finish on a subsidiary summit (Pk. 283) as a bonus.

We quickly reached the base of the ridgeline and climbed up the 50m or so 45 degrees snowbank required to gain the ridge proper. From here, we were able to follow the ridge directly with most of the obstacles being short gendarmes that we could bypass on the right by climbing 3-5m near vertical snowbanks. This pattern continued until we reached the base of the final rocky section of the ridge. At this point, we decided to rope up to pitch out way through the technical section ahead. Jacob took the lead and began up the initial rocky sections of the pitch, where some spikes and cracks presented themselves for gear. While it looked possible to climb the ridge directly, the uncertainty around rock quality meant a quick look for alternatives was done. Jacob found a delicate traverse round the right of the base of the rocky section, from here, an 8m mixed corner was found which was climbed with a combination of 1 axe used on the right which was icier, and 1 bare hand, which was used on the dry rock on the left, creating some very interesting, varied climbing. This section was around Scottish III 4. The pitch then finished a short distance further along easier terrain on the mixed ridge.

Around 10m into the second pitch, we found that we were on the summit of Pk. 283 and had a great view of the slopes between us and Pk. 281. Success! We also recognised here that the only way down from Pk. 283 in the direction of Pk. 281 was an abseil. As such, we quickly got to abseiling and once we were all down, began the slow slog over the now very soft snow towards Pk. 281. An hour later, we found ourselves stood on the summit with fantastic views of not only the mountains of the Gunj-E Dur valleys, but also in the distance of peaks such as Rakaposhi and K2.

For our descent, we followed our trail back to the base of Pk. 283, from there we opted to descend and then glissade down the S face we had debated climbing earlier. From there, a slog over the soft and sometimes knee-deep snow returned us to the edge of the snowline where we had stashed some kit and our approach shoes earlier in the day. From here, we made our way down to the bivi and then continued towards BC. During the last parts of our descent,





the sun dipped behind the western summits of the Gunj-E Dur valley, meaning the last part of our descent was done in the dark. Ali and Khadim, our two cooks, being the absolute legends that they are, came up to meet us about 15 minutes above base camp, with milk tea and biscuits in hand. Back in BC, we rejoined Ali and Khadim and tucked into another amazing meal before we all quickly crashed.

While the Jacob, James, and Job were climbing Tuki Sar and AK Sar, Will made his was back up to the bivi below Pk. 275, aiming for a solo attempt the next day.

August 21st – Attempts and Recovering

While Jacob, James, and Job relaxed and BC, will began his attempt on Pk. 275. The initial ridge gave was to a moderate scramble, with better quality rock then had been experienced elsewhere on the expedition. A few hours of this terrain led to some short snow gully. Unfortunately, due to the hot weather, the snow was sparse, and so gaining the gully was not possible. This meant Will had to retreat from the route, which was done by retracing the line climbed. After collecting the stashed kit at the bivi, Will made it back to BC shortly after lunch.



In the evening, we learnt that Sabit and the porters would be arriving on the 24th – much earlier than the 29th that we expected them. We found this out when discussing our next objectives with Ali and Khadim, they were surprised we were planning to try more peaks with so little time left. It was clear that the exact date of our departure back to Shimshal had been lost in translation. Additionally, as Ali and Khadim had been operating on the



assumption that we would begin the walk back on the 25th, there was no longer enough food to stretch for a departure on the 29th.

We first went about confirming this date with Ali S, after some confusing messages over the InReach, we had confirmed this was when Sabit was planning on arriving at BC. During this time, we realised the cause of the error. When initially planning the expedition, we had done so based on the day of the trip, rather than date of the month, as we had no firm dates at that stage. We had then kept this format when continuing to plan, when we first met Sabit, we had given him a copy of our expedition timeline, which included on it information to the effect of, “Day 24 – Porters arrive back at BC”. It was clear that “Day 24” had been misinterpreted due to the language barrier and had been understood as the 24th of August. Oh well, at this stage there was nothing we could do except make the most of the remaining time at BC, and of the additional time we would have in Hunza. Lessons learned for next time!

August 22nd/23rd – Biding Our Time

With the weather shifting towards more clouds and precipitation, and with us now knowing we didn’t really have the time to attempt another route given the lost days, we decided to spend these days relaxing at base camp and enjoying the stunning region we were in. We also spent some time playing a game of cricket using a shovel, chair, and a rock covered in duct tape and foil – which was a great opportunity for the Pakistanis to thrash the Brits. Outside of this, nothing much of note was done.

August 24th – Wrapping up at Base Camp

Today was our final full day at BC before we began our trek back to Shimshal. As such, the day was relatively quiet, with most of the time being spent preparing the bags for the mules



and enjoying our final bit of time at the camp we had spent the last couple of weeks at. Shortly after breakfast the first couple of porters, Nahwaz Karim and Muktar Karim, arrived at base camp. With them they had brought a 2L bottle of 7up for a little celebration drink, which was really kind of them, and went down a treat. After some time spent chatting with them about the expedition and what we had gotten up to in the couple of weeks since we first arrived at base camp, we



got back to packing. Due to the worse weather today, most of the porters were due to arrive the next morning.

August 25th – The Descent Begins

Today was the day we left base camp and began our two-day trek back down to Shimshal. While this was four days earlier than we originally planned, we were all happy with the success of the expedition and were looking forward to spending some time exploring Shimshal and Hunza. After breakfast, the first of the porters began arriving, the previous days weather meant many of the porters were running a little behind but would be all caught up by that evening. With that sorted we finished taking down all the tents, packing up all of camp so that it could be easily loaded onto the mules when they arrived, and began our descent.

The more overcast weather made for a much more amenable trek than the scorching heat we had on the approach to base camp. After around one hour we bumped into Sabit and the rest of the porters. Sabit joined us heading down, while the rest of the porters with their mules went to collect the rest of the kit at base camp. After another 3 and a half hours we reached Arbob Peryan. Given the porters were running behind, we decided to make camp there for the evening, and do the rest of the descent in one big go the next day.

At Arbob Peryan, knowing we had most of the day still to pass, we setup in one of the herders' huts, and got to building a fire, chatting, and reading. A few hours later the porters began to arrive, and we got to pitching the tents. A few of the porters had picked up minor



scrapes and grazes during the day, so we gave a quick hand cleaning up the scrapes before having dinner and then heading to our tents for the evening.

August 26th – Back in Shimshal

Our final day on the mountains began early, knowing that we had a long trek ahead of us, we set off after breakfast at 7am. We made quick progress, descending the valley to the bridge crossing, and then ascending to Past Furzin, where we had camped at the end of the first day of the approach. We reached Past Furzin in around 3 hours so took the opportunity to have a short break. After Past Furzin, we continued heading down to Shimshal, within a couple of hours we reached the final flats. The trek down was generally uneventful, until perhaps 100m from the Shimshal Guest House, where, having taken a wrong turn somewhere in the maze of fields and walls which lay on the outskirts of Shimshal, Jacob and Job found themselves balancing between rocks trying not to fall in the wet mud. Which went as well as you can expect given its inclusion here.

On reaching the Shimshal Guest House, Jacob and Job, who reached the guest house a little before the others, were met by the ever-welcoming Hasil. While asking about how the expedition had gone, Hasil provided us with perhaps the best tasting fresh apricots and cola we'd ever had, followed by a classic Hasil line "I remember, cold drink after mountains, very important." Jacob and Job were quickly joined by the rest of the group, with the porters beginning to arrive shortly thereafter. After an amazing chicken curry, we got to sorting all the kit that was arriving, and then turned in for an early night.

August 27th – Exploring Shimshal

For our day in Shimshal, we had arranged for Sabit to come by the guest house sometime in the morning. He arrived mid-morning, and so the four of us, along with Ali, Khadim, and Sabit went for a wander through Shimshal. Sabit was a great host showing us around the village, we stopped for lunch at Sabit's home, where his wife had kindly prepared a range of





local foods for us to try which were all fantastic! After our tour of the village, we headed back to the guest house where we relaxed for the rest of the afternoon.

August 28th – Returning to Passu

After almost three weeks spent in and above Shimshal, it was finally time to leave and start the long journey back to Islamabad. At this stage, it was still very unclear to us what the exact plan for the additional days we had in the valley because of the earlier miscommunications, and we hoped to be able to get some understanding once we reached Passu and in turn, reached a Wi-Fi connection. The drive back took us once again down the narrow Shimshal highway, this time we were all in a single vehicle alongside Ali, Khadim, and Sabit, with the kit piled on top and in the back. Most of the drive was uneventful, though there was plenty of evidence of landslides which had occurred in the time since we drove up the road. One recent larger landslide also required us getting out and essentially throwing rocks around to level out a couple of different sections of the road. On reaching Passu, we arrived at the Passu Ambassador Hotel, where we would be staying, and enjoyed a great meal. After lunch we were all able to enjoy the first hot showers we had had in over 3 weeks and make use of the Wi-Fi to let friends and family know how we were getting on.

August 29th – Exploring Passu

For our first full day down from Shimshal, we decided to explore Passu. After a short wander through the village, we found a little café perched on a hillside with a stunning view of the Passu Cones which did some lovely Hunza apricot cake. We then wandered back along the road towards our hotel, stopping at a couple of small shops we found along the way to purchase some snacks. Just down from the Passu Ambassador Hotel we decided to grab a late lunch at a new looking food stop on the KKH, here we were too early in the year for the “coming soon” Subway, but we were able to try out NFC – Northern Fried Chicken, which was a well-earned change from the (amazing) curries and dal’s we had been eating for the past few weeks.

In the evening, Ishaq, one of Ali Salto’s logistic managers arrived from Skardu to pick up our cooks, who had also spent the day exploring Passu, Ali Khan and Khadim. Additionally, Sabit arrived back from running some





errands while he was down from Shimshal. Together we all sat down to try work out where the mistake had occurred that led to us coming down from base camp a few days earlier than originally planned, and to work out a plan for the last few days before we headed back to Europe.

We quickly worked out the reason for the miscommunication – the confusion between ‘day’ and ‘date’ – and then got to discussing the plan for the rest of our time in Pakistan. It was here we also learnt of the recently started religious protests in the Skardu area. These protests had made it difficult for Ishaq to drive to Passu, as the road between Skardu and the KKH was often blocked by protesters. For us this also meant we wouldn’t be flying from Skardu to Islamabad and would instead be driving back. Even this option carried issues, as most of Ishaq’s usual drivers were not wanting to drive down to Islamabad, knowing that they may have issues driving back if the protests grew – which wasn’t unlikely.

Once it was time for Ishaq to head back to Skardu, we said our goodbyes to Ali and Khadim before returning to our relaxing in the hotel.

August 30th – Forts, Lakes, and Shopping

Today we had a whistlestop tour around the sights of the Hunza valley- a beautiful area south of Passu. Throughout the time we were overlooked by Rakaposhi, 7,788m- a huge peak that we saw from the summit of AK Sar.

This imposing mountain was first climbed in 1958 by a Scottish team of Tom Patey and Mike Banks which provided an interesting connection the big names of climbing history back home!

Within Hunza we primarily visited Baltit fort, offering a commanding position over the Hunza Valley. The fort was the seat of the Mirs of Hunza for centuries until 1947 and was a



warren of passageways lined with ceremonial polo sticks, antique matchlock muskets and ibex horns. In 1891 the British Empire invaded the kingdom as part of the Hunza- Nagar campaign under Colonel Durand during the “Great Game” to guard the northern approach to India from the Russians. After a valiant defence by a singular canon against the greatest power of the day the Mir Safdar Khan escaped to Xiangjiang. The British installed their favoured Mir and the kingdom became effectively a vassal princely state from 1892 until partition and the creation of Pakistan in 1947. This cannon overlooks Rakaposhi to this day.

After some shopping in the valley for some obligatory chitrali caps we bumped into one of the porters, Zamir who was just leaving his college in Aliabad where he was studying computer science. We exchanged greetings and updated him on the progress of the expedition after he left us after the approach.

On the way back to Passu we stopped off at the azure blue Lake Attabad. These surreal lakes almost looked like the Pakistani version of Lake Garda with boats in varying levels of seaworthiness floating next to terraced hotels under construction. At 20km long Lake Attabad was formed after a big landslide downriver temporarily dammed the Hunza River in 2010. It has since become a popular tourist attraction. We left the jet skiers zooming around the lake and headed back to the hotel in Passu having taken in another side of Northern Pakistan we were not expecting!

August 31st – Revisiting Aliabad

After breakfast, we decided to head back to the markets of Aliabad to pick up some more bits. The highlight of our shopping was Will’s purchase of 3 tailored outfits in the style more commonly worn in the hotter climates of the middle east through to the Indian subcontinent. After our shopping was done, we headed back to Passu, where we continued past to reach Sost, the last town before the Khyber Pass, and hence the Chinese border. After a little time exploring Sost and chatting with some truckers who had stopped there for the day, it was time for us to head back to Passu.

September 1st – The Long Drive Begins

Our driver that would take us back to Islamabad arrived just after breakfast. After meeting Amir, we quickly loaded up the land cruiser, and hit the road.

The journey followed the KKH and was mostly uneventful. We managed to get through Hunza without any issues or delays because of the ongoing protests, and followed the KKH until we reached the Chilas interchange. The Chilas interchange is one end of the section of





the KKH which was at the time classified by the British FCDO and the US State Department as “all travel advised against”. This meant we would instead be driving over the Babusar pass, which sat at 4173m in altitude. The drive up to the pass was slow and steady. The cars thermostat had read at 54C at the Chilas interchange, and it was clear the engine was struggling with the combination of the steep roads, heat, and altitude.

At the summit of the pass, we decided to stop to explore all the goings on. The Babusar pass

is an interesting place, with everything from small coffee stalls manned with kids probably around 10 years old (though that didn’t stop them having some serious grift!), to interesting looking zip wires. We had a coffee and watched Amir show off his horse-riding skills – it turned out he rode in the Shandur Polo Festival when he was younger – then it was time for us to continue the journey towards Naran, where we would be stopping for the day.

The rest of the journey was smooth, what stood out to us was just how variable and stunning the different climates we were passing through were. We started the day at the foot of the Passu Cones in the heart of the Karakorum, had driven along the KKH, taking in sights of Rakaposhi and Nanga Parbat, and now we were surrounded by beautiful, forested hills with large rivers where we could see groups rafting.

After reaching Naran, we drove around the town a few times searching for our accommodation, which we eventually found, and called it a day.

September 2nd – Back in Islamabad

We set off early at around 6am from Naran to pre-empt any roadblocks which may be present because of the ongoing protests. As we exited the mountainous terrain that makes up Pakistan’s north, and reached the lowlands, the cultural differences were visibly present. Whereas many people in Hunza follow the Ismaili branch of Shia Islam, which is reasonably socially liberal, most of Pakistan follows a more socially conservative Sunni Islam, with a growing minority following the Hanbali school of Sunni Islam due to Wahabi influence from the middle east, particularly Saudi Arabia.

For us, this meant when exploring the markets of Karimabad and Hunza we saw a reasonably diverse crowd, with many women travelling around independently, whereas, while driving



through markets as we passed through villages between Naran and Islamabad there we didn't see any women at all.

Once we reached the outskirts of Islamabad, we had the challenge of navigating to the address Ali had provided Amir. This was an entertaining challenge, as Amir wasn't particularly familiar with Islamabad, or cities in general, and there was a big language barrier. Job and Amir did great work and managed to successfully get us to our final destination just before lunch, where we rejoined Ali for the first time since we originally left Passu for Shimshal.

After some time catching up with Ali and enjoying air conditioning, we headed to a local Afghan restaurant with Ali, his son, and Amir to refuel. The food was amazing and just kept on coming! We then headed back to where we were staying and said goodbye to Amir and Ali and decided to use the afternoon to get some rest.

September 3rd – Preparing to Depart

We started our final day in Pakistan lazily, only really getting up just before lunch, knowing that tonight we wouldn't really be getting any sleep, given our 3-4am flights back to Europe. We met up with Ali for lunch again, before saying our goodbyes and getting to finishing packing all our kit for the flights. An afternoon of lazing around later and we headed towards the airport around 11pm.

September 4th – Goodbye Pakistan

Having arrived at the airport just before midnight we spent a few hours getting through the airport, having a bite to eat, before we all headed to the gates for our various flights back to Europe. And that was that. Our time exploring Pakistan was over, the expedition was a success, and we had all made friends and memories that will last a lifetime. Now all that was left to do was write this report and start planning the next expedition.

Mountaineering Report

Previous Expeditions

During our research when preparing for this trip, we spent some time researching previous expeditions to the Gunj-E Dur region. We found them extremely useful during our preparations, especially due to the plentiful good quality images of the various unclimbed peaks in the area. We have listed them in the hope they are useful to future expeditions.

Expedition	Details	Year	MEF #
Shimshal Expedition 2022	Attempts on peaks 289 and 290.	2022	22-30
Various Ascents by Polish team	First ascent of Gunj-E Sar and various peaks in the Northern Gunj-E Dur area	2018	N/A
British Shimshal Expedition	First ascent of Yad Sar and a peak on the Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier	2017	17-24
German Koh-E-Gulistan Expedition	Ascents and attempts in the wider area (Not Gunj-E Dur)	2013	N/A

Routes Attempted

During the expedition, we made attempts at first ascents on three primary peaks (and a subsidiary peak). Below are the details of these peaks and attempts.

Peak 289 (5775m) from the terminus of the Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier. The SSE ridge is visible on the summits right.



Pk. 289 – 5775m

Route: SSE Ridge of Pk. 289

Date: August 16th, 2023

Climbers: Jacob Dyer and Job Klusener

Location: 36.5508133N 75.6399638E

Route Description: *Note – route description is for reaching our high point on the ridge, given we didn't reach the summit, the description does not either.* Follow the Second East Gunj-E Dur valley to reach the base of the glacier that sits between peaks 289 and 290. Gain the glacier via a gully on the right, and then continue up to reach the col. From the col, head right to begin ascending Pk. 289. Begin by climbing through the loose boulder fields, pitching where required, for around 150-200m, until you reach the base of much steeper terrain.

Descent: Descend back down the line of ascent, using whatever large, stable blocks that can be found intermittently as anchors.

Notes for future attempts: For those parties looking to attempt the same line we did on Pk. 289; we would recommend aiming to have the ridge in cold conditions. We found that there was a vast number of loose blocks around that were particularly unstable due to the hot conditions and time in the day that we encountered them.

We also noted various snow gulleys along the south face of Pk. 289. We had debated these as options for ascent and if we thought there was less risk of rockfall, likely would have attempted via one of these. A couple of the gullies stood out as technically simple outside of

The upper rocky section of the SSE ridge of Pk. 289





Above: Retreating through the loose lower sections of the SSE ridge of Pk. 289.

1-2 short cruxes. It is worth noting that while we could see the path of the gullies most of the way to the peak, it was completely unclear what sort of terrain would be encountered above what we could see. In colder conditions, these gullies may prove a good option for any future parties attempting Pk. 289.

For parties looking to explore the Second East Gunj-E Dur glacier more broadly, we would recommend establishing BC higher up at a Shepards hut located at 36.5466171N 75.5984156E. We found a couple of small springs in the rocks around this hut even in the dry conditions and there is also the river of glacial melt not far below.



Right: The view from the start of the ascent up to the col. The loose gully used to gain the glacier is in the centre.



AK Sar hidden behind Tuki Sar on the right, with its SSE ridge on its right, and the unclimbed Pk. 282 on the left.

AK Sar – Pk. 281 – 5940m

Route: “Shinpak Direct” SE Ridge of Pk. 283

Difficulty: AD III+

Subsidiary Peaks: Tuki Sar – Pk. 283 – 5840m

Date: August 20th, 2023

Climbers: Jacob Dyer, James Rigby, and Job Klusener

Location: 36.5774637N 75.6051121E

Route Description: From a bivi below the glacier between peaks 281 and 275, continue up the ridgeline on the right-hand side of the glacier until you reach the snow edge. From here, continue around the edge of the glacier until you reach the bottom of the SE ridge of Pk. 283. Gain the ridge via a short snow slope, then continue up the ridge turning the various gendarmes on their right via short snow/rock steps. Continue like this until reaching the summit rock ridge. The summit ridge can be tackled by traversing around the right until you reach the base of a 15m rock/ice corner which can be climbed directly at around Scottish III 3, from here you are a few metres across from the summit of Tuki Sar (Pk. 283).

To reach the summit of AK Sar (Pk. 281) abseil the NW face of Tuki Sar, then a plod across the snow slopes making up the summit of AK Sar will gain you the summit within around 30 mins.

Descent: From AK Sar, continue back along the snow slopes used in ascent until reaching the base of Tuki Sar. From here, if avalanche conditions allow, descend the southern flank, and then cross the glacier to reach the snowline.



Above: James abseiling from the summit of Tuki Sar.



Notes for future attempts: Future parties could likely make use of this peak during acclimatization. If snow conditions allow for the peak to be climbed via the southern flank, there is little to no technical difficulty involved, likely at around PD/PD+. Additionally, there is still one unclimbed subsidiary summit, Pk. 282, which is just on the left above the southern flank. This could be climbed from the summit plateau without much difficulty. We chose not to attempt this summit due to it getting late in the day when we were passing below Pk. 282.

There is also a lot of potential for new routes of a wide range of technical difficulty on almost all aspects of this summit.

Left: James and Job at the top of the first of many short gendarmes on the "Shinpak Direct"



Above: Looking down towards Tuki Sar from the summit of AK Sar. Pk. 282 just off the right.

Pk. 275 – 5850m

Route: South Ridge of Pk. 275

Date: August 22nd, 2023

Climbers: Will Dixon

Location: 36.5729303N 75.5945593E

Route Description: *Note – route description is for reaching our high point on the ridge, given we didn't reach the summit, the description does not either.* Reach the bottom of the S ridge by hiking up steep scree. There are a couple of plateaus which provide good bivi spots. It is worth noting that, at least in the conditions we encountered, the closest source of water would close to the bivi used in the ascent of Tuki and AK Sar,

Descent: Retrace the line of ascent.

Below: Looking across to Pk. 275 from the summit of AK Sar.



Future Potential

In addition to the notes for future attempts we included in the above notes on routes attempted, there is ample opportunity for first ascents and new routes in the Gunj-E Dur Valleys. We have divided our discussion of future potential into two parts: the Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier, and all the potential there, and the First East Gunj-E Dur Glacier, including Gunj-E Sar.

The Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier.

Other than the one peak climbed during the 2017 expedition, the peaks accessed from the Second East Gunj-E Dur glacier remain entirely unclimbed. Given the range of peaks here, with a few easier peaks which could be used as acclimatisation, some more moderate ridges, and potential for more technical climbing, there is plenty of potential for multiple successful expeditions.

From our experience on Pk. 289, were we to plan another expedition looking at the Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier, we would look at establishing base camp where we established our ABC during this expedition. The herders hut (36.5466171N 75.5984156E) at which we established our ABC had a small spring next to it, was a short walk down to the glacial river, and had ample flat ground, on top of having the hut there. As such, as a base camp location, its no worse than where we used, and has the benefit of being around a steep 1h30 trek closer to all the peaks you could attempt on the Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier. We had originally, before seeing the conditions after our first days climbing, considered also doing some climbing on the First Gunj-E Dur Glacier, and so had opted for a lower base camp.

The first, set of potential objectives in this area are Peaks 289 and 290. Peak 289 has already been discussed in detail in the report of our attempted ascent of its SSE ridge. From the same col as the ridge we attempted, one could also attempt to climb Pk. 290. This peak is a simple snow route, likely very similar to the route taken in the ascent of Pk. 5885m detailed in the report from the 2017 British Shimshal Expedition.

Pk. 289 as seen from the summit of AK Sar.





The ridgeline running from Pk. 284 on the left, to Pk. 287 on the right, as seen from the summit of AK Sar.

The next set of potential objectives is the ridgeline at the end of the glacier. This ridgeline runs between Peaks 284 and 287 and includes Peaks 285 and 286 as subsidiary summits. This ridgeline is something we had identified as a potential objective prior to the expedition from satellite imagery. As we lacked any images of the ridgeline and had an abundance of options for objectives that we had better information and images of, we chose to focus our time on other objectives.

In the centre of the two forks at the end of the Second East Gunj-E Dur Glacier are two peaks. Pk. 269 and Pk. 270. From our research and pictures, these peaks have the potential to be climbed from either of the glacier's forks. These peaks stand out from the other peaks in this range as they are lower lying than the surrounding peaks and are distinctly different in character. Despite being of similar height, Pk. 270, is very rocky, while Pk 269 is was mostly snow covered, even in the hot conditions we saw it. In colder conditions, both peaks could make for shorter, while still interesting, objectives.

The edge of the summit plateau of AK Sar on the left, Pk. 270 on the right, and Pk. 269 back centre. Photo from below the ascent to the col between Pk. 289 and 290.





Pk. 269 low in the centre. Pk. 284 visible on the right. The summit of Gunj-E Sar visible high on the left.

The First East Gunj-E Dur Glacier.

The 2017 British Shimshal Expedition have provided a detailed overview of the various potential objectives on the First East Gunj-E Dur Glacier in their report, including some very useful photos of the various objectives.

When researching potential objectives on Gunj-E Sar (first climbed by the 2021 expedition), and its subsidiary summit Yad Sar (first climbed by the 2017 expedition), there were two lines that stood out to us. Firstly, the SW ridge, which stood out for its varied terrain and potential for some interesting technical difficulties. And secondly, the gulleys which are present directly under the summit of Gunj-E Sar in the photography from the 2021 expedition. These gulleys looked like they would be a reasonably safe, and not overly technical way, to reach the summit of Gunj-E Sar. For both options, and the various others available, colder conditions than we had would likely be optimal.

Gunj-E Sar and Yad Sar. Note the steep dark ice in the centre of the face. This is the line climbed in the 2017 expedition. The hugely different conditions present on the face compared to all previous years made it clear just how much damage the record-breaking temperatures are doing in these remote areas.



Logistics

In-country Logistics



Ali Saltoro (Left): Founder and manager of Alpine Adventure Guides (AAG) Pakistan. We liaised with Ali throughout the year leading up to our expedition and Ali with supremely helpful throughout. We would all highly recommend Ali and AAG Pakistan to anyone looking at organising an expedition to Pakistan soon, and we are already discussing with Ali regarding when we will be back next!

Sabit Rahim (Right): Our local guide from Shimshal, Sabit was fantastic at organising all the porters and mules for getting us and all our kit to base camp. While we were in Shimshal, Sabit was a fantastic host, showing us around the village and welcoming us into his home to try a variety of local foods.



Khadim Hussain (Left) and Ali Khan (Right): Coming from the Hushe Valley, Khadim and Ali were the real heroes of the expedition. Throughout our time spent above Shimshal, they kept us constantly provided us with amazing meals while also being a great laugh throughout.





The full team having arrived and established BC.

Back row L-R: Will, Nahwaz Karim, Jacob, Zamir, Morat, Sultan, Salin Dard, Nigeban Shah, Sahib, Muzamil, Hadir Karim, Muktar Karim, James.

Front row L-R: Mohammed Hassan, Sabit Rahim, Tavit Shah (with Job behind), Ajaz Karim, Aziz Baig, Murad Khan.

Expeditions are rarely just about the climbers spotlighted in reports; behind every successful expedition and ascent lies a dedicated team. While Sabit, Khadim, and Ali K were the standout stars whose contributions were pivotal to our expedition's success, it's important to recognize the collective efforts of our entire team, including the unsung heroes—the porters and their trusty mules. Their unwavering commitment and tireless efforts ensured our expeditions success. It's also crucial to acknowledge the sacrifices made by individuals like Akram, whose unfortunate injury forced an early return and so unfortunately, he is missing from the above photo. His determination with a smile, despite facing physical hardship, exemplifies the resilience and fortitude that defined all the porters.





Shimshal

Shimshal, from which our expedition was based, is a village lying at 3,100m in the far northern area of Gilgit-Baltistan province, Pakistan. Nestled between the raging Shimshal river and the towering massifs and glaciers of Disteghil Sar the community has a long relationship with the surrounding mountains stretching back to its founding in 1450 by Mamu Singh. The people of Shimshal have been traversing the mountains for centuries whether via trade routes from western China and the princely states of Hunza or further south or leading Yaks and Goats to high grazing pastures of Shimshal Pass in the summer. Many of the tracks we used on the approach have been plied for years by the Shimshali people for this purpose. The area was even used by the Mirs of Hunza as an area of exile given its remote location. This long history in the mountains has led to many famous mountaineers originating from Hunza including Abdul Joshi who was the first Pakistani to climb Annapurna. A lot of villagers have worked as high-altitude porters on 8000 metre peaks in the Baltoro and in Nepal- the income of which has produced a fledgling tourism industry in the valley offering treks to Shimshal Pass and the surrounding area.

Equipment

For Jacob, James, and Will this expedition was our first experience climbing in the greater ranges. As such, we opted to take the opportunity to update some of our existing kit to better suit the higher altitude environment. Our full kit list is available to see [here](#). You can see we have all taken slightly different approaches to our parts of the kit list, but the kit is primarily divided into individual and group kit. With the group kit divided based on both cost (where kit needed purchasing) and weight – as we knew we would likely all be cutting it close with our circa 30-35kg baggage allowances (baggage allowances varied slightly between our flights).



We were very grateful to have the support of Montane through the MACCF grant for rucksacks and clothing.

Below we have highlighted some of the kit that stood out to us during or after the expedition as equipment we will certainly bring with us on any future expeditions.

Kit Standouts

Garmin InReach Mini 2 (Jacob)

To complement the older model of Garmin InReach which James had and would be bringing, I decided to purchase an InReach Mini 2 for the purpose of the expedition. I was extremely impressed throughout with the device. While the device itself was very small, making it convenient to attach to a shoulder strap while trekking or climbing, most of its functionality is managed through a mobile app over Bluetooth. This is not required, messages can be sent and received over the device itself, but it was much more convenient to send messages to family or check the map on the larger screen a mobile phone provided. The battery life was impressive, with it using around 10-15% of charge on days when I had it tracking me on 10-minute intervals throughout the day. This tracking was then uploaded to the expedition Garmin Mapshare website which I had setup for anyone who wanted to follow. I very rarely had any issues with satellite connectivity (the InReach makes use of the Iridium satellite network) even when we were in the steeper valleys at the start of the trek to BC.

I have since lent the device to friends travelling in the greater ranges who have all found it similarly useful. The device would be worthwhile for the emergency communication features alone, but with the added benefit of the tracking, Mapshare, and app integration, I would not be surprised if I start trying it out in the Alps next season.

Kindle Paperwhite (Jacob)

On any expedition there is going to be ample time sat in a tent or at BC with little to do. While everyone had brought a book or two, I was fortunate to have been gifted a Kindle Paperwhite onto which I put what I thought would be plenty of books. The only issue I ended up having was realising I was reading the books too quickly and having to intentionally slow



down to not run out of material. I had bought 5 books for the kindle; I expect next time I will put 10 or more books onto the device. One book I read at base camp which I would recommend to anyone on an expedition to Pakistan was “The Nine Lives of Pakistan: Dispatches from a Divided Nation” by Declan Walsh. The book provides an interesting insight to how Pakistan went from its independence during the partition to the modern day.

Montane Fast Alpine 40L (Jacob and James)

This backpack from Montane was provided to Jacob and James as part of the MACCF grant. We both found the pack ideal for everything we required during the expedition; whether carrying larger loads carrying to ABCs or Bivi’s or climbing with a smaller amount of kit still in the rucksack. In general, we both found this pack to just be a solid all-round option with plenty of nice and nifty little features.

Montane Krypton Softshell Hoodie (James)

I found the Krypton to be a great robust alpine jacket which was reliably warm enough in the early hours of the morning, while not too hot when climbing on higher slopes in the sun. It was with me at most stages up above basecamp and proved to be a versatile piece of clothing which I have regularly used since when climbing in Scotland this winter.

Montane Featherlite Windproof (Job)

I found the Featherlite jacket a handy piece of kit due to it fitting into a trouser/jacket pocket and keeping the wind off me without running too hot. Having just a base layer underneath provided enough warmth whilst moving. It also held up well enough rubbing against the rock.

Camera (Job)

Plenty of research went into figuring out which camera would suit our needs for the trip. Having always used a heavy Nikon DSLR I ended up purchasing the Sony A7C Mirrorless with a 24-105mm workhorse lens. It was light and small enough to fit conveniently in the lid of the rucksack, as well as clipped to the harness in its camera bag for ease of access. This camera would produce quality images suiting any personal or sponsor needs (as we supplied Montane with photos of the products in use). James used an Olympus OM-D E-M10

mirrorless camera with a 12-32 inch lens. This camera proved ideal as it was small enough to carry strapped to a harness whilst climbing whilst still taking a wide variety of landscape and portrait shots. The minimal length of the lens did not get in the way climbing and it was easy to use at a moment's notice to capture iconic memories from the trip.

Food

For our expedition, logistics were taken care of by Ali S and Alpine Adventure Guides Pakistan. This included food up to and including at base camp. Prior to our departure, Ali S had offered us two options for the style of food at BC, local or western. We opted for the local option. After arriving in Skardu, we were quickly introduced to our two cooks who would be joining us: Ali K and Khadim. We couldn't have asked for a better team to be joining us, both in terms of the fantastic food they were able to cook up, but also, they were great people who we got on well with, even if there were limitations in communication due to the language barrier.

On the approach to and from BC, and while at BC, meals were generally as follows, with everything of course being freshly made from scratch, and with plenty of chapatis available with every meal.

Breakfast: Mix of omelette, various cereals, porridge, chapatis, and even sometimes pancakes.

Lunch: A wide variety of food. Often various dals/ leftover from the previous dinner. A couple of times we had some fantastic Mexican style wraps.

Dinner: Primarily various soups followed by various dals though sometimes there was creamy pasta and even once a freshly made pizza!

Above BC, food we would be eating was our preview. We had already come prepared with various packs of biltong and had the chance to quickly stop in Aliabad while driving from



Skardu to Passu where we bought a load of various dried fruits, nuts, and local snacks and sweets. For actual meals, we had a mix of freeze-dried meals. Jacob, James, and Job had opted for Expedition Foods, while Will had opted for Real Turmat. This is one area where we made a misjudgement in planning. In our planning we massively



overestimated the number of freeze-dried meals we would require. Given we ended up making more use of bivies before routes than longer standing ABCs and given that we ended up losing a chunk of our climbing days to reasons earlier discussed, we ended up still having most of the freeze-dried meals left at the end of the trip. This misjudgement was not really at all detrimental to the expedition and was rather a good learning point for us in future.

Insurance

Given the remote and independent nature of the expedition getting the correct insurance at a reasonable price required much research. We reached out to various providers, including Global Rescue and the BMC, before eventually we settled with Redpoint Insurance's [Ripcord](#) policy which covered independent mountaineering up to 6000m for rescue and repatriation alongside all the regular problems that could happen in country such as illness and road traffic accidents. Additionally, being a US based provider, we were able to ensure we all were using the same insurance provider, which we thought would streamline everything if any issues occurred. We had run into the issue early in looking at insurance that the BMC, and some other providers could not cover Jacob due to him not residing in the UK.

With the regular changes and rapidly increasing costs associated with insurance for mountaineering expeditions, we are aware that a group from the Alpine Club have been spending some time looking into this area. At the time of writing, we are not aware of any concrete outcomes, reports, etc. from this group, but for those interested it is likely worth keeping an eye on.

Finances

Expenses

Item	Per Person	Total
<i>Alpine Adventure Guides Pakistan Logistics</i>	£ 1650	£ 6600
<i>International Flights</i>	£ 1000	£ 4000
<i>Excess Baggage</i>		£ 200
<i>Insurance</i>	£ 200	£ 800
<i>Pakistan Tourist Visa</i>	£ 50	£ 200
<i>Mountain Meals</i>		£ 700
<i>Sat Phone Subscription</i>		£ 100
<i>Inreach Subscriptions</i>		£ 100
<i>Medical Supplies (Not inc. vaccines)</i>		£ 150
<i>Tips (Porters, cooks, drivers etc.)</i>	£ 100	£ 400
<i>Cash (Small costs e.g. snacks, gas, etc.)</i>	£ 300	£ 1200
Total		£ 14,450

In addition to the expedition expenses most of us purchased a decent amount of new kit, coming to around £1500 per person on average, this is in addition to the kit provided by Montane through the MACCF.

Income

Item	Per Person	Total
<i>Mount Everest Foundation (MEF)</i>		£ 5000
<i>Jeremy Wilson Charitable Trust (JWCT)</i>		£ 1000
<i>Alpine Club</i>		£ 1250
<i>Personal Contributions</i>	£ 1800	£ 7200
Total		£ 14,450

Environmental

One of the key reasons to go on an expedition is to be immersed in wild landscapes. As such, it was important for the team to minimise the inevitable environmental consequences of both international travel to Pakistan as well as more locally in the running of basecamp and higher camps.

By far the greatest environmental impact of the expedition were the international flights to Islamabad. Using the “Carbon Footprint Calculator for Business and Climate Impact Partners” international flights accounted for approximately 60% of the expedition’s total carbon emissions. As much as travelling overland to Pakistan would be an amazing experience, given the practicalities flights were the only viable way of travelling to Pakistan. However, the effects can be somewhat offset by using the Climate Impact Partners offsetting services whereby the team contributed £152 to numerous reputable environmental NGOs to offset the estimated carbon emissions. We chose Climate Impact Partners due to it focusing on sustainable development projects which are much more immediate, traceable and longer lasting than other offsetting methods like planting trees. In addition to this the team minimised additional flights before the expedition to minimise carbon emissions per member before the Pakistan flights. As such, the team ensured the carbon impacts of travel were somewhat mitigated.

The second way of reducing the environmental impact of the expedition was via a good waste management plan at basecamp. This predominantly involved three key factors:

- Carrying out all plastic and metal waste from basecamp to be recycled properly in Shimshal. Non toxic paper, organic and food waste was burnt in deep pits.
- All human waste was buried in deep holes, burnt and refilled so the waste would not re-enter the surface environment and would naturally biodegrade.
- Using biodegradable soap from LifeVenture when washing so potentially environmentally toxic substances would not wash downriver.

Medical

While we all had done emergency outdoor first aid courses of various levels in the recent past, and so didn’t partake in any courses specifically for the trip, we did consult with various GP’s. along with friends who are keen mountaineers and doctors before heading out to ensure we were adequately prepared and supplied.

The only medical issue we encountered during the expedition, beyond the usual small bumps and scrapes, was Will coming down with infective gastroenteritis at the beginning of the approach to BC. While this did take Will out of action for the first few days at BC, and made the approach a battle, Will improved quickly after beginning a course of antibiotics. We were thankful to be able to receive medical recommendations for Will from Oonagh, who is a fellow mountaineer and a doctor.

Medication List

Below is the list of medication we brought out with us, with additional notes where relevant.

Basics:

- Paracetamol
- Ibuprofen
- Aspirin

- Loperamide (Imodium)
- Antibiotics

Altitude Specific:

- Dexamethasone (Vials and Tablets)
- Acetazolamide
- Nifedipine

Other:

- EpiPen – None of us needed this, but we were able to source one for a reasonable price so thought it was worthwhile just incase.

Vaccines

Travelling to Pakistan, the only vaccine that is legally required is the Polio vaccine, this vaccine is required within the last twelve months to leave the country, though this was never checked for any of us. Outside of this, the following vaccines were recommended to us for the following reasons:

- Hep A/ Hep B – You shouldn't trust blood used in transfusions in Pakistan to be completely safe.
- Rabies – Due to the remote location of the expedition, the vaccine should give you at least a little more time to reach a hospital and begin treatment.
- Typhoid – Most cases in the UK are as a result of visiting the Indian subcontinent, hence it is worthwhile to get the vaccine.
- Cholera – In case of drinking and dodgy water. Also supposedly helps against other similar diseases.
- Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Whooping Cough – Ensure the basics are up to date.

Lessons Learned

We all made it back without injuries, still as friends, and having successfully made two first ascents, and having made solid attempts on two other peaks so we didn't do anything disastrously wrong. That said, it does not mean mistakes were not made and that there are decisions we can learn from to give ourselves the best chance of another successful expedition next time. We hope these are useful, particularly for those, who like we were, are looking at planning their first expedition. Here are some of our key takeaways:

Before Leaving

- Planning objectives – Various objectives, such as Pk. 275, looked like gentle ridges on Google Earth and Fatmap, and even on Sentinel Satellite imagery looking at shadows only looked a bit sharper. None of the Satellite imagery showed the teeth like summit ridge and in fact the only clue we had that this may be the case was the existence of subsidiary summits on the Jerzy Wala map we were using, but this was too large scale to see much detail.
- Do everything earlier than you need – No, even earlier than that.
- Join the AC – The grant is very generous and is dependent on the number of Expedition members who are also members of the AC, we would have received double the grant from the AC if everyone had been members. AC membership also has plenty of other benefits.
- Sponsorships – While we wanted too, time limitations meant we didn't make any real efforts to gain sponsorships beyond the usual grant applications, this is something that could have been helpful for us in keeping the costs of equipment down. When attempting to gain sponsorship, it would also be likely be helpful to have more web presence (a website, social media, etc.)

Travel

- Pakistani Rupees are a pain to source – The Rupee is a closed currency, and hence is very difficult to find outside of Pakistan. In Pakistan, we also found a lot of banks in the towns we visited in Hunza did not convert USD (or anything) to Rupees. Fortunately for us we had communicated the issue sourcing Rupees prior to heading to Pakistan, and so Ali S had brought a large stack of Rupees which essentially acted as our bank, converting our USD to his Rupees. When we found ourselves needing to convert some more during our few days stay in Passu toward the end of the trip, the owner to the Passu Ambassador Hotel where we were staying was happy to exchange Rupees for USD for us.
- Baggage Limits – We all had slightly different baggage limits due to taking different flights, but they were all in the range of 30-35kg. Given the cost of an extra bag was more than the cost of the flight (which is honestly ridiculous), we made a lot of effort to keep within weight, though still ended up needing to pay some baggage fees. Dropping some of the unused kit would have likely enabled us to keep within weight.
- Flight costs – We found that the flight costs from various European airports were hugely different. For example, Jacob departing Frankfurt had flights a couple of hundred Euros cheaper than James and Will's flight from Heathrow and provided the largest weight allowance. If it's possible, and you have friends you can stay at near other major airports, it's likely worth at least a look.

- Communication with porters/ local guides – We lost 5 days climbing due to communication mistakes. This could have been avoided if we had made sure to clarify exact dates after giving a copy of our planned timeline. Perhaps providing the plan in the format of a calendar would be the best way to avoid possible communication errors from the language barrier.

Equipment

- Repair kit/ spares – We made good use of the repair kits/ spares we brought with us. In particular, Job's tent at our ABC took a beating from some Yaks while we were away and required some fixing, including the replacement of a section of tent pole.

Camping

- Drybags were extremely useful both at BC, for keeping everything organised, and for stashing kit. They also proved invaluable on the approach for keeping kit dry inside duffel bags. While we were fortunate to not have much rain on the approach (or even throughout the expedition, Jacob's bags did go for a swim alongside a mule a few hundred meters before reaching BC.
- Imodium – given the likelihood of at least mild intestinal issues, no matter how careful one is with hygiene, it is worth having far more Imodium than you expect to need, just in case.

Food

- Planning freeze-dried meals – We had massively overestimated the number of freeze-dried meals required, though despite this, we had too few of some of the favourites e.g. we only had 5 of the chocolate chip deserts.
- Snacks – We had no issue finding ample good snacks in Aliabad, though all of us did enjoy and appreciate the Biltong that we brought out with us, I would expect we bring plenty again next time!

Other Considerations

- Plan in buffer days – The extra days we had planned into our exped proved invaluable given the political instability that prevented us from flying back to Islamabad via Skardu. In the best case, they turn into bonus climbing days, in the worst, you'll be glad you have them!
- Do plenty of climbing as a group beforehand – Due to our geographical quite separated locations, it was a struggle to get much climbing as a group beforehand. While we did manage some climbing as a group, it would have been great to do some more to ensure that all our systems and communication was down to a tee before heading out to Shimshal.

Report Writing

- Choosing where to write it – In this day and age, there are plenty of options for where to write the report collaboratively. We opted for Microsoft Word, though likely wouldn't in future. While you can in theory collaborate on Word without issue, given as soon as you add images, the entire document will turn into a mess as soon as you open it on a different machine or in a browser, it made collaboration much harder. Using Overleaf and Latex would be a good solution, but only if all expedition

members are familiar with it (this was not the case for us). I expect next time we will try using Google Docs, which we used extensively during our planning and writing of grant applications.

- Start early! – We were fortunate that we had taken a lot of notes day-to-day while at base camp to act as a reference, but even then, memories fade quickly, especially when it comes to details.
- Try get it done quickly rather than letting it drag on – the longer it takes to write the report, the more you will get sick of it, and again, the more memories fade. For us, we knew we wanted to write a detailed report from the start, but individual schedules and collaboration issues caused by Word meant that despite returning from Pakistan in September, the report was not complete until late May.
- Write a diary – Most of us took at least some notes as a diary, some more detailed than others, but between them all, we had a load of useful information that formed the basis of a large amount of this report. Even this chapter on lessons learned, is somewhat based on notes taken during discussions throughout the expedition.
- Formally divide up sections – ideally with some deadline to prevent some of the aforementioned issues.



Final Words

As I conclude this report, I find myself engulfed in a wave of nostalgia, reminiscing about our extraordinary journey through the breathtaking landscapes of Shimshal. It's a journey not only defined by the peaks that we conquered but also by the peaks that remained beyond our reach, reminding us of just how challenging mountaineering in the greater ranges can be. Despite falling short on some summits, our achievements stand as testaments to our perseverance and determination, serving as milestones in our personal lives and as mountaineers.

Throughout our expedition, we were deeply touched by the kindness and support of the people we encountered along our journey. From the moment we set foot in Pakistan, we were embraced by a warmth and hospitality that exceeded our expectations. Our success was not solely our own; it was made possible by the hard work and dedication of countless individuals who worked tirelessly behind the scenes. From skilled porters such as Tavit Shah, Akram, and Zamir who carried our gear with infectious smiles and shouts of "Shinpak!" – without whom we would have never made it further than Shimshal – to the incredibly talented cooks, Ali and Khadim, who consistently prepared hearty meals to keep us fuelled. Even our drivers, like Amir, were integral to our journey, navigating the challenges of the Shimshal and Karakorum Highways with skill and grace. And let us not forget the simple yet profound encounters with locals, like the children riding horses and selling coffee on the Babusar Pass, whose smiles and gift will forever be etched in our memories. Every interaction, every shared moment, enriched our experience and gave us ever more affection for the diverse range of amazing people who make up the beautiful nation that is Pakistan.

On behalf of the entire team, I extend my deepest gratitude to all those who played a pivotal role in making this expedition a reality. To the Mount Everest Foundation, Alpine Club, Jeremy Willson Charitable Trust, British Mountaineering Council, and Montane, your generous support empowered us to turn our expedition dreams into reality.

To my fellow mountaineers and expedition members – James, Job, and Will – I extend my deepest gratitude. Your courage, determination, and boundless enthusiasm were the bedrock of our expedition. Together we faced challenges, celebrated triumphs, and forged memories that will last a lifetime. I truly believe our collective spirit exemplifies the essence of mountaineering, and I am immensely grateful to have shared this adventure with each of you.

With fond memories and hearts full of gratitude, we bid farewell to Shimshal. Until we meet again on the trails of our next adventure.

Jacob Dyer

