



Muztagh-Ata 2011 Expedition REPORT



**for
Championships of Mountaineering
of Baltic States
High mountain category**

Tallinn

Route passport

Club: Jaan Kännapi Alpinismiklubi (<http://www.jkalpiklubi.ee/>)

Category: High altitude expedition

Expedition type: Independent, no support and no guiding above BC

Area of mountains, country:

Kunlun Shan (some says China Pamir), Xinjiang , Peoples Republik of China



Name of the peak, height, title of the route:

Muztagh-Ata , 7546m,
West Face, Normal route.

The name Muztagh Ata means Father of Ice Mountain in the local language (Uygyr).

History: The first recorded attempt to climb the peak dates back to 1894. It was famous explorer and cartographer Sven Hedin who first tried to ascend. He failed and so did other expeditions in 1900, 1904 and 1947. The last was lead by famous and experienced climbers Bill Tilman and Eric Shipton. They got close to the summit but had to turn back due to deep snow and extreme cold. Muztagh Ata was finally climbed by a huge Soviet-China team in 1956. Beletskiy was the formal leader and they used the west ridge.

Information of the group leader and team members:

1. Uko Nõulik , group leader, Jaan Kännapi Alpinismiklubi, Estonia
2. Anu Nõulik , team member, Jaan Kännapi Alpinismiklubi, Estonia

Category of difficulty: 5A (RUS)

Route characteristics: mixed (moraine,snow,ice,glacier)

Height difference of the route: 3146m (BC – Summit)

- **Length of the route:** BC (4400m) – C1(5400m) – 2 – 4h
C1(5400m) – C2(6200m) – 3 – 8h
C2(6200m) - C3(6800m) – 3 – 7h
C3(6800m) – Summit (7546m) – 4 – 10h

- **Description of the route, technical parts and steepness:**

BC – C1: steep scree and moraine of 35° – 55° , C1 – C2 : vertically 100m steep snow and ice of 45°, 60m traverse snow of 20° small crevasses ,140m steep snow of 45°-55° ,begining of icefall, 50m snow and ice ridge with crevasses and snow bridges,10m descent ice of 65°, 150m steep snow of 35° - 50°, 20m very steep snow-ice of 70°-75°, end of icefall, 280m steep snow of 45°- 55°,some crevasses. C2 – C3: some crevasses, snow of 35° - 50°, 120m snow of 45°, 180m snow of 30°-35° huge crevasse,300m snow of 35°-50°. C3 – Summit:vertically 746m ,one featureless snow slope after another ,some hidden crevasses, snow of 30°- 45°.

Placed and removed technical hardware on route (totals):

4x20m of rope, fixed with snow-stakes.

Hours spent on the route : 34 hours (summit ascent without camping and sleeping time)

Number of overnights on route: 8 nights above BC

C1 (5400m) – 3 nights

C2 (6200m) – 3 nights

C3 (6800m) – 2 nights

Departure from the base camp (summit attempt): afternoon 31.07.11

On top: 03.08.2011 16.10 local time

Arrival at the base camp: evening 04.08.2011

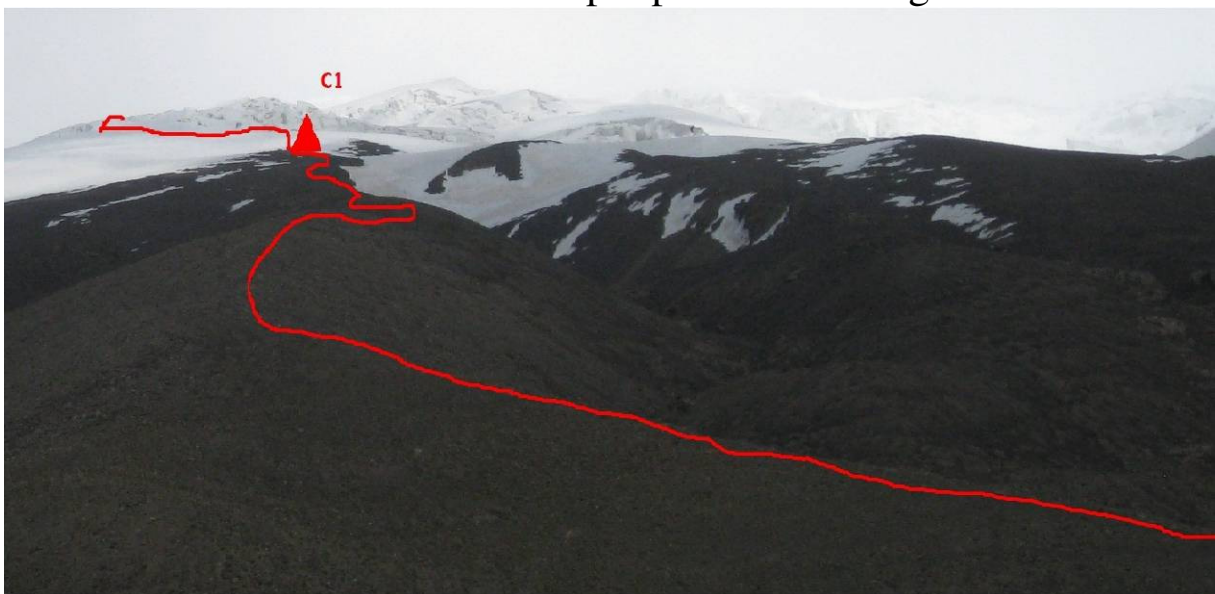
Weather conditions: sunny most days, some snowfalls , high winds and cold (- 30°night) on the higher reaches. Snowstorm hit us on the route (6000 – 6200m) 1.08 at noon and lasted few hours , very strong winds/no visibility .

Description of the route

Route cheme:



From the base camp to the first camp: the track begins with an ascent on loose moraine, an approximately 20 m high very steep slope, the ascent becomes flatter. Route continues towards the ridge. Flattish sections are mixed with some steeper parts on the ridge.



Before the first camp there is a steep ascent (350 m vertically) on

loose moraine, 45 – 50°. The first camp is situated on the boarder of moraine and a glacier with the snow slope beginning right above it.



The normal C1 is located on 5250-5400m. You have to dig a platform in the snow or use existing scree-moraine platforms.



From the C1 to C2: on snow, traversing steep slope. Icy, slippery. Roped together, because slipping equals downfall.



The first crevasses are relatively narrow, the hill takes a steep curve up to the right. This is the beginning of the icefall.



Using the fixed ropes while roped up together. Route goes on a ridge, where you have to look out for at least one big crevasse. Jumping over the wider crevasses while belaying each other and assisting with the

hiking poles. The route drops a little bit on the end of the ridge.



The seracs are near, on both sides of the icefall.



At the end of the icefall, there is a very steep slope (about 25 m high). We go up by ascender, which is safer.



Slipping would mean falling in the crevasse here.
When crossing the icefall one should have an iceaxe for safety.
The final stretch up to C2 is a long steep slope where there are some crevasses.



The camp 2 is situated in a snowbowl, underneath a steep slope.

From C2 to C3: with snowshoes, the snow is deep. The ascent angle is approximately 35-50 °. Long slopes, always heading slightly right are slowly taking you towards C3. There's a slight crevasse danger here. At about 6500-6550m there's a huge crevasse. It's marked now. A fall into this one is probably fatal.

A short steep section takes to C3, which is located on another small flat shelf with a slight angle.

Altitude: 6800m.



We have to dig into the deep snow for an even ground for the tent.

From C3 to the Summit: It's hard to describe the route from C3 to the summit, as the route is going up one featureless snow slope after another. The air is -25 °C. When going "around a corner" and heading more to the east, you can all of a sudden see two round seracs and a scree hill. The hill is the false summit of Muztagh Ata. The route heads towards the gap in between the seracs and the scree hill. The summit plateau is now in front of you and take aim for the other side of it, where you can see a small hill marked with flags. At the summit there is bear rock with little snowcap.



Muztagh Ata Summit 7546m.

03.August 2011

Uko & Anu Nõulik (second Estonian woman at the peak so high)

Our highest peak before was Elbrus 5642m



Anu with club shirt

The most difficult: high altitude, the technique for icefall, the crevasses changed at the time period that we spent crossing the icefall. The steep slopes (up to 60 ° angle), the heavy gear, the extreme cold from the third camp on, the string side wind, snow storms. The CONSTANT ascent, where you cannot sit and rest. Morally overcoming the long days between camps, endless fields of snow, hard to keep motivated.

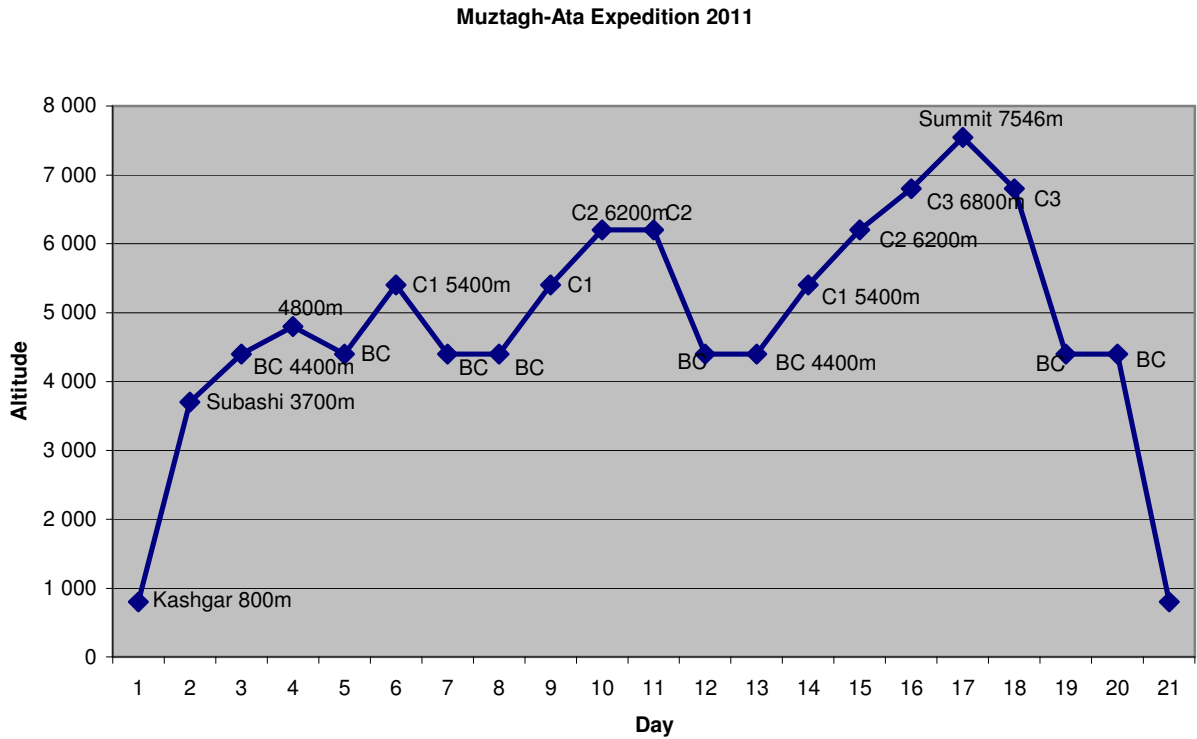
Suggestions: depending on the seasonality the whole ascent to the summit can be in deep snow, so one should use snowshoes or skis. Crossing the icefall without the use of crampons could become dangerous, so one should definitely use the crampons. Attempting the summit should not be in smog, because it is difficult to keep oriented and to maintain a steady course on the plateau.

Day-by-day description of the ascent:

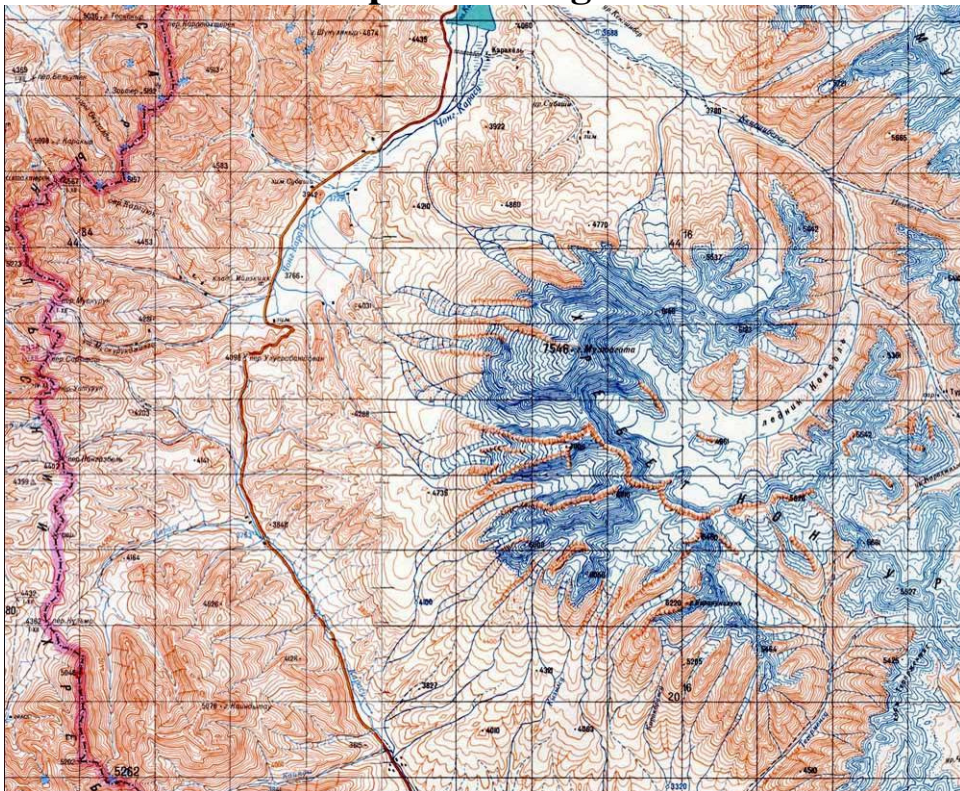
1. Hike to the base camp (altitude 3800 – 4400 m above sea level), light load, hiking poles and light hiking boots. Getting established in the base camp.
2. Radial ascent to 4800 meters, overnight at base camp.
3. Ascent to the first camp (5400 m), transferring the equipment to the camp, setting up the tents and staying overnight.
4. Descent to the base camp, rest.
5. Rest day
6. Ascent to the first camp, bringing the equipment for the second camp (the tent). Staying overnight at the first camp.
7. Ascent to the second camp (6200 m), double boots, crampons, poles, iceaxes, rope. Setting up the tents, staying overnight.
8. Radial ascent to 6400 meters, descent to the second camp, rest and overnight.
9. Descent to the base camp.
10. Rest day
11. Rest day
12. Ascent to the first camp.
13. Ascent to the second camp.
14. Ascent to the third camp (6800 m), snowshoes.
15. Ascent to the summit. Descent to the third camp.

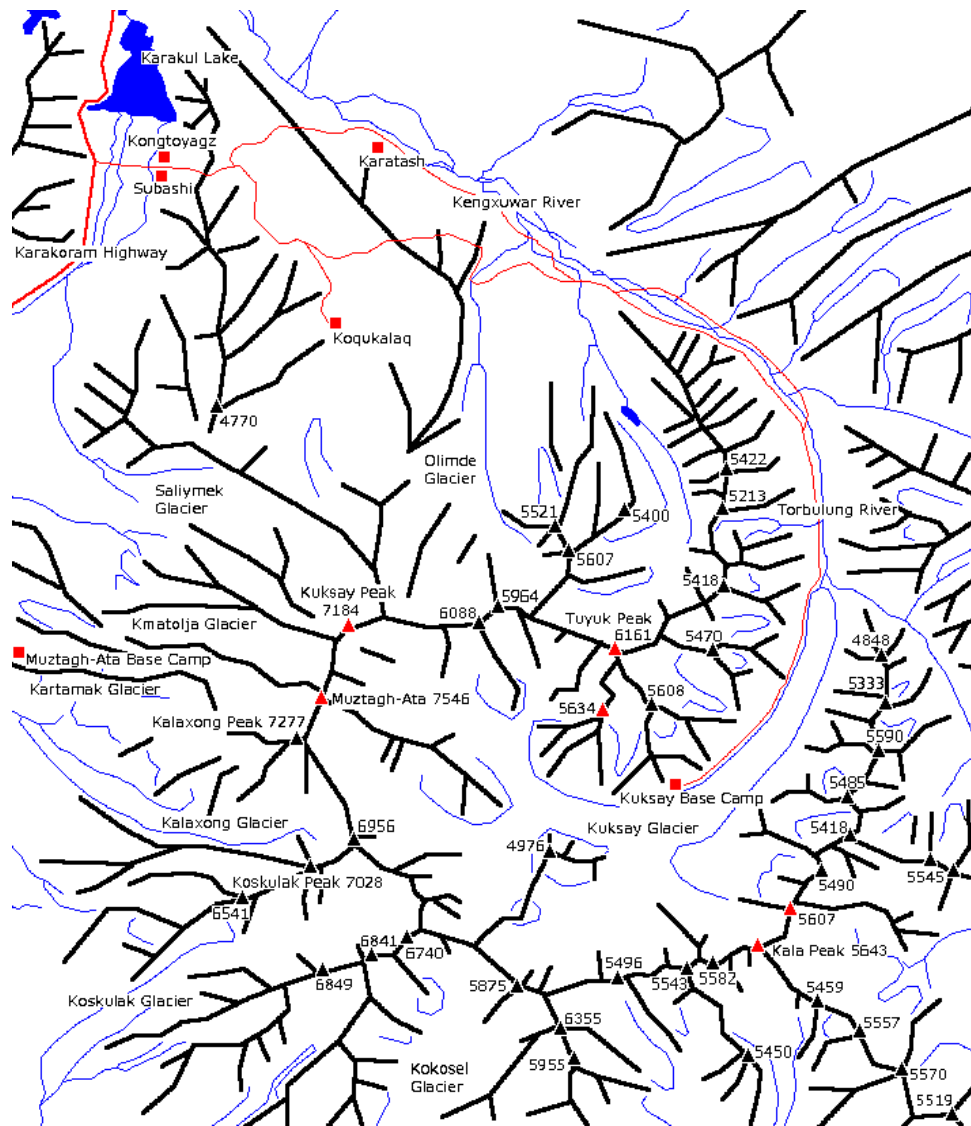
- 16. Descent to the base camp.
- 17. Rest day
- 18. Base camp to Kashgar

Day-by-day progress chart



Maps of the region:





Expedition pictures:



Snow bridges and crevasses



„Low angle slope“



Kongur



Acclimatization . C2 6200m



Summit view