

UK - NZ
CENTRAL TIEN SHAN EXPEDITION
1991

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Successful ascents of Khan Tengri 7010m and Pik Pobeda 7439m,
the world's most northerly 7000m peaks, in Khazakstan, U.S.S.R.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The expedition members gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Mount Everest Foundation, British Mountaineering Council and Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. In addition we would like to thank equipment manufacturers The North Face, Invicta-Ventura, EPIgas, and Bolle, and Noyac Brandy for the liquid refreshment!

EXPEDITION TIME CHART

13 July depart London 9am (local time) - arrive Moscow 4pm (local time)
14 July Moscow sight seeing - depart Aeroflot flight 11.30pm (local)
15 July arrive Alma Ata 7am (local time) - 5hr bus journey to Karkara 2200m intermediate camp.
16 July 40min helicopter flight to base camp South Inylichek Glacier c.4000m.
17-
22 July rest and acclimitisation days around base camp.
23 July depart for advance base camp c.4,300m for attempt on Khan Tengri.
24 July depart 4am and ascend Semenovskiy Glacier to c.5700m. Camp.
25 July depart 9am and ascend to snowcaves at c.5900m below W Col. Rest for a few hours then begin ascent of W Ridge. IP and AF to c.6400m. JAC and RP to c.6200m. Camp.
26 July IP and AF to summit Khan Tengri 7010m. JAC and RP descend to base camp because of poor acclimatisation.
27 July IP and AF return to base camp.
28 July JAC and RP depart for Khan Tengri.
29 July JAC/RP ascend to snowcaves at W Col c.5900m.
30 July JAC/RP reach summit Khan Tengri 7010m. IP/AF to advance base camp c.4300m of Pobeda.
31 July JAC/RP return to base camp. IP/AF to c.5800m on Pobeda.
01 Aug IP/AF continue to c.6200m on Pobeda but stopped by bad weather.
02 Aug IP/AF return to base camp.
03-
04 Aug rest days.
05 Aug whole team to advance base camp c.4300m of Pobeda by helicopter.
06 Aug depart 3am. Ascend to Dickey Pass c.5200m and up N Ridge of W Pobeda Peak to snowcaves c.5800m.
07 Aug bad weather - remain at snowcave.
08 Aug continue ascent to reach summit of W Pobeda Peak 6918m. Continue to snowcaves c.6900m.
09 Aug IP/AF traverse W Ridge and reach summit Peak Pobeda 7439m. Return to snowcaves c.6900m. JAC/RP stay at snowcaves due to illness.
10 Aug IP/AF descend to c.5200m. JAC/RP traverse W Ridge and reach summit Peak Pobeda 6439m. Return to snowcaves c.6900m.
11 Aug all descend back to base camp.
12-
14 Aug rest days.
15 Aug helicopter from base camp to intermediate camp at Karkara.
16 Aug bus journey from Karkara to Alma Ata.
17 Aug depart Alma Ata - arrive Moscow.
18 Aug depart Moscow 5pm (local time) - arrive London 8pm (local time).
19 Aug Coup announced in Moscow!!

REPORT

Our expedition was arranged in traditional fashion through an invitation to join one of the well established Soviet mountaineering 'Camps'. Our contact was Kazbek Valiev, Director of International Mountaineering Camp (IMC) Khan Tengri. We were fortunate to meet personally with Kazbek when he visited the UK in February '91, and had an opportunity to discuss possible objectives and arrangements for an expedition.

On his return to the USSR, Kazbek faxed us with details of the itineraries his company was offering, and a price list. We in turn specified our preference and sent off payment. Kazbek then issued a formal invitation and duly contacted the local Ministry to ask them to prepare the way for our visa application to the Embassy in London. In fact processing the visas went very quickly, with only about three weeks elapsing between Kazbeks first instruction and our being informed we could collect the documents.

IMC Khan Tengri was to take care of all arrangements once we arrived in Moscow, so we were left with little to do but arrange insurance, book our flights London to Moscow, and sort out some freight.

On our arrival in Moscow we were wined, dined and toured around, and then put on an internal flight to Alma Ata, capital of Khazakstan. We were taken direct from the flight and transported via minibus to our first camp at Karkara c.2200m in alpine meadows. After one night there, a 40 minute helicopter flight brought us to base camp on the South Inylichek Glacier c.4100m.

Base camp was well appointed by any standards, with a large army mess tent holding the kitchen and dining area, around 20 two-person tents for camp staff and visitors, and a base camp cold store and sauna! Provisions were regularly flown in by helicopter and ranged from joints of meat to fresh bread, water melon and grapes. The camp was run with military precision, with our days punctuated by breakfast (9am), morning tea (12pm), lunch (3pm), afternoon tea (5pm) and dinner (8pm).

Our first days at base camp were spent making short walks along the glacier to look at our objectives and make plans for acclimatization trips. On these excursions the potential of the area soon became obvious, with many attractive peaks sporting routes at all grades of difficulty. We chose an un-named 6000m peak as our first objective, spying a reasonably straightforward and safe ridge to attempt. We hoped to travel from base camp and start on the route one day, have a high bivouac, and perhaps complete the route and descend to the glacier again on the second day. In any event, the approach to the mountain was much longer than anticipated, the route was under deep snow, and no apparent bivouac sites appeared to hand when we were overtaken by the heat and tiredness. After a rather ignominious retreat we returned to base camp and decided to turn our attentions to Khan Tengri (7010m). Given that we were not fully acclimatized we approached this first attempt as another acclimatization trip, but with the possibility of going for the summit should we be strong enough.

We packed our bags and set off on the afternoon of 23 July to go to advance base camp c.4300m, a three hour walk from base camp. From this point, the approach to the W Ridge of Khan Tengri is via the Semenovskiy Glacier to the W Col at c.5900m. The Semenovskiy glacier rises in a series of steps and is fairly free

of crevasses so the going underfoot is quite reasonable. However, the glacier is quite narrow and contained on either side by high walls, which regularly send down serac debris which sweeps the width of the glacier. We made an early start on this section, leaving ABC at 3am and reached the next safe campsite at c.5400m after about 8 hours. We pitched the tents and spent an uncomfortable afternoon suffering from the heat, and an equally uncomfortable night being buffeted by the wind. The next morning on the 25 July we made a late start but continued ascending to snow caves beneath the W Col at c.5800m. The caves are dug by each of the mountaineering Camps and are intended for the use of climbers from each specific camp. We stopped here for a couple of hours to rest, and then set off again as two pairs towards the W Ridge. Iain and Allen continued to c.6400m on the ridge, while Julie-Ann and Roger stopped at c.6200m before bivouacing for the night. The following day on the 26th July J-A and RP descended from the mountain with J-A suffering from an altitude headache. IP and AF continued their ascent and reached the summit 7010m, before descending back to the snowcaves. Over the next few days the whole team returned to BC and rested for a few days, and then J-A and RP set off for another attempt on Khan Tengri. Much better progress was made this time, going to ABC on the 28 July, to the snowcaves on the 29th, and reaching the summit on the 30th.

While J-A and RP were on their summit day, IP and AF were setting off for the advance base camp for Pik Pobeda 7439m. Over the next two days they started an ascent of the mountain, reaching a high point of c.6200m on the 1 August before being turned back by very bad weather. The whole team were once again back at BC together on the 2 August, and spent the next few days resting and sitting out bad weather.

Finally on the 5 August, by a spot of good timing, we were flown to the advance base camp of Pik Pobeda to begin another ascent. On the 6 August everyone ascended via the Dickey Pass C.5200m to snow caves at c.5800m. The weather was still fickle and gradually deteriorated, necessitating spending two nights at this point. However, it dawned fine again on the 8th and in a very long days climbing everyone ascended to the W Peak of Pobeda (Vashep Cheval) 6918m and along the W Ridge to a second set of snowcaves at c.6900m. AF and IP having arrived earlier in the day dug themselves a separate snowcave, while J-A and RP arriving later, shared a very congested cave with 11 Soviet climbers. Again, although these caves were supposed to be primarily for the use of 'Camp' members, many other climbers also used them. On the 9 August, after a sleepless, uncomfortable night neither J-A or RP felt fit enough to go to the summit and opted to have a rest day. IP and AF having had a slightly better night continued with their ascent. The pair made the summit (7439m) despite extremely cold temperatures and strong winds, and returned to the snowcaves for a second night. The following morning of 10 August dawned still and clear, and J-A and RP continued their ascent, also reaching the summit before returning to c.6900m for the night. IP and AF had started their descent of the mountain, and on the 11 August both parties returned to base camp.

The next few days passed with some exuberant partying, and much exchanging of Western gear for titanium ice screws until our departure back to Karkara on the 15 August. Another couple of days passed in much the same fashion as on our arrival, with a great deal of travelling, sight seeing, eating and drinking. Its not easy having a good time all the time (!), and a tired team thankfully boarded the British Airways Jumbo, bound for home on the 18 August.

APPENDICES

1. CONTACTS

Contact address for the camp we used is as follows:

Kazbek Valiev	
Director	
International Mountaineering Camp	Phone: 429947 (office)
'Khan Tengri'	330712 (home)
48 Abai Avenue	Telex: 251232 pTB SU
480072 Alma Ata	Fax: (7 3272) 636634
Khazakstan	(7 3272) 631207
USSR	

The easiest form of communication was by fax, being speedy and with written messages being less open to misinterpretation. The agency does employ interpreters who speak English, but if calling by telephone there was no guarantee that they would be in the office to take the call.

2. FOOD

The expedition purchased most high altitude food, stoves and gas, in the UK and freighted this to the USSR. Food items included oatcakes, cheese, pates, chocolate and muesli bars, instant soups and pasta, powdered milk and beverages. Useful items which could be obtained from base camp supplies were dried fruit, butter, bread, sausage and cheese.

3. CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

Both routes were very exposed to the weather, and above c.6200m strong winds and cold temperatures were a problem. Everyone used a down jacket or waistcoat in conjunction with the usual layers of clothing. On the coldest days on the mountains every item of clothing was needed and it was necessary to keep moving to stay warm.

Expedition-standard boots were needed. We used Asolos with alveolite innerboots. Gaitors were only standard weight or super gaitors. Overboots were not needed.

With regard to technical equipment, neither route we climbed required more than a single ice axe and a ski pole. Both routes are fixed with rope, and jumars could be used, but are not essential. However, in the Tien Shan range there are many attractive technical routes (ice and mixed) which would require a good technical rack.

Tents (North Face 'Bullfrog') were only used on the first attempt on Khan Tengri and were taken to 6400m. Thereafter tents were only used to advance base camps and snow caves were used above glacier level.

Stoves used were EPIgas with propane/butane cartridges.

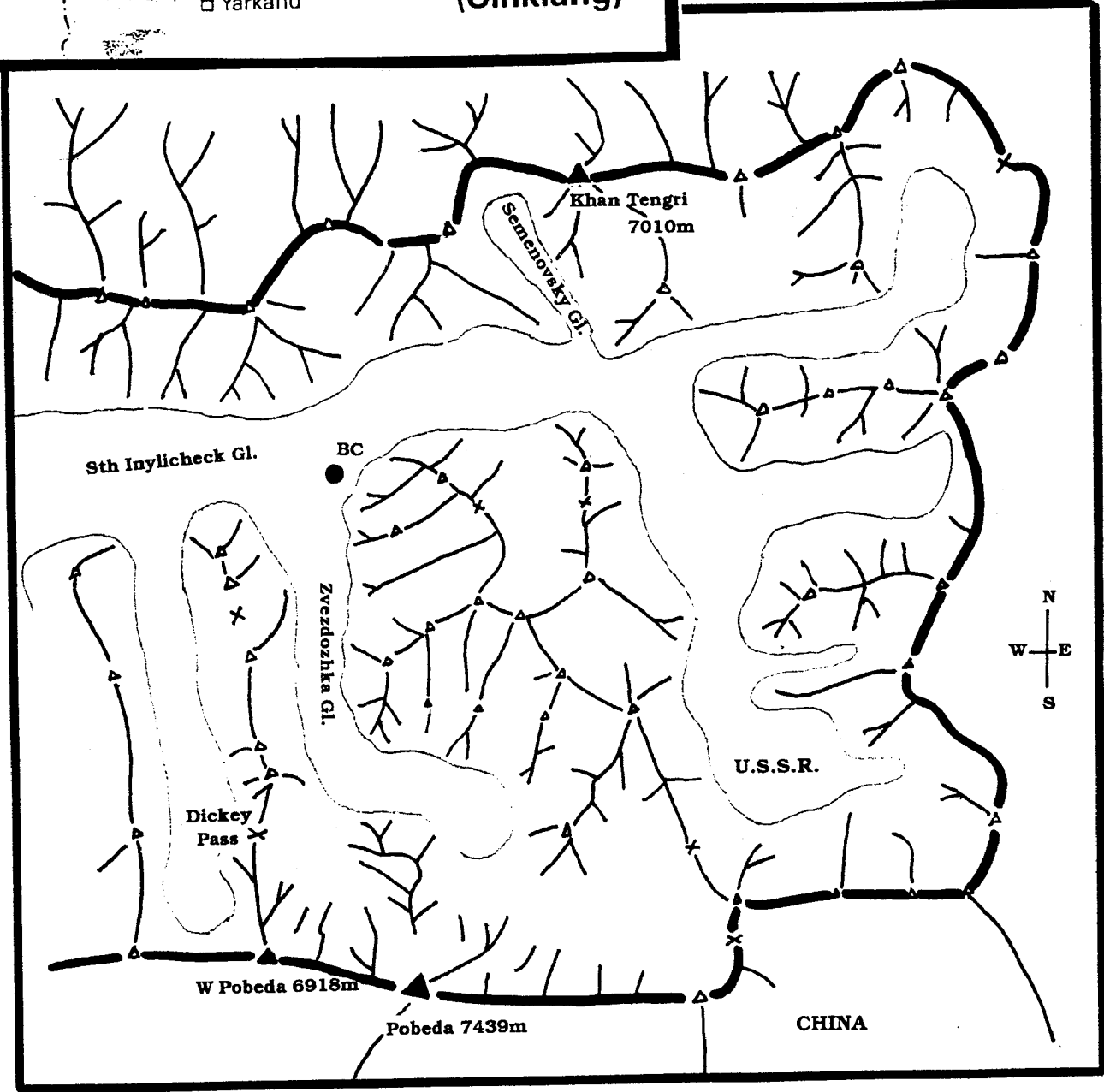
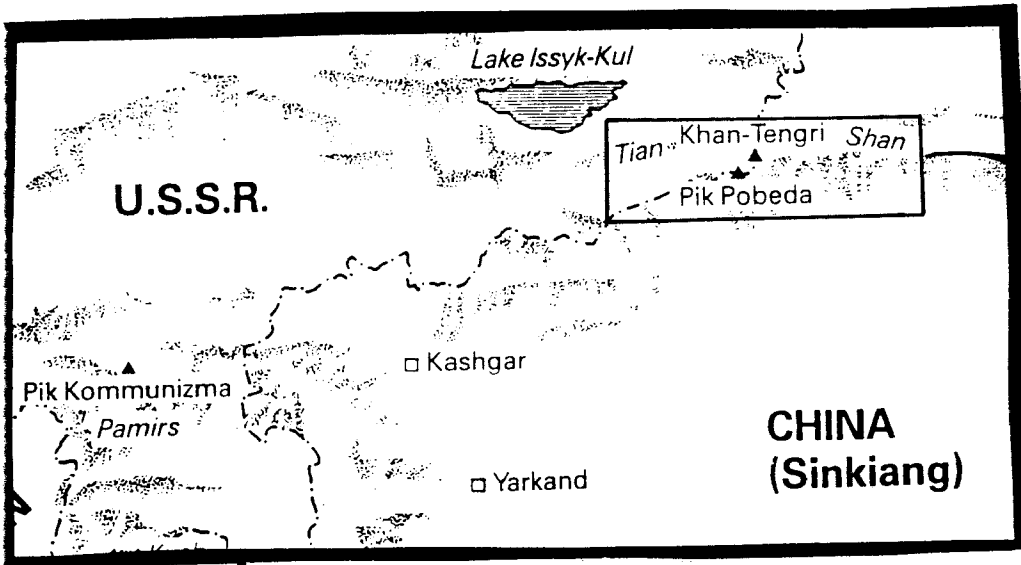
If planning a trip to the USSR it is necessary to take all technical equipment, stoves and gas, headtorch batteries, etc. and it would be advisable to take some specialist high altitude food. It is impossible to purchase any specialist items - with the outstanding exception of titanium ice screws!

4. EXPEDITION ACCOUNTS

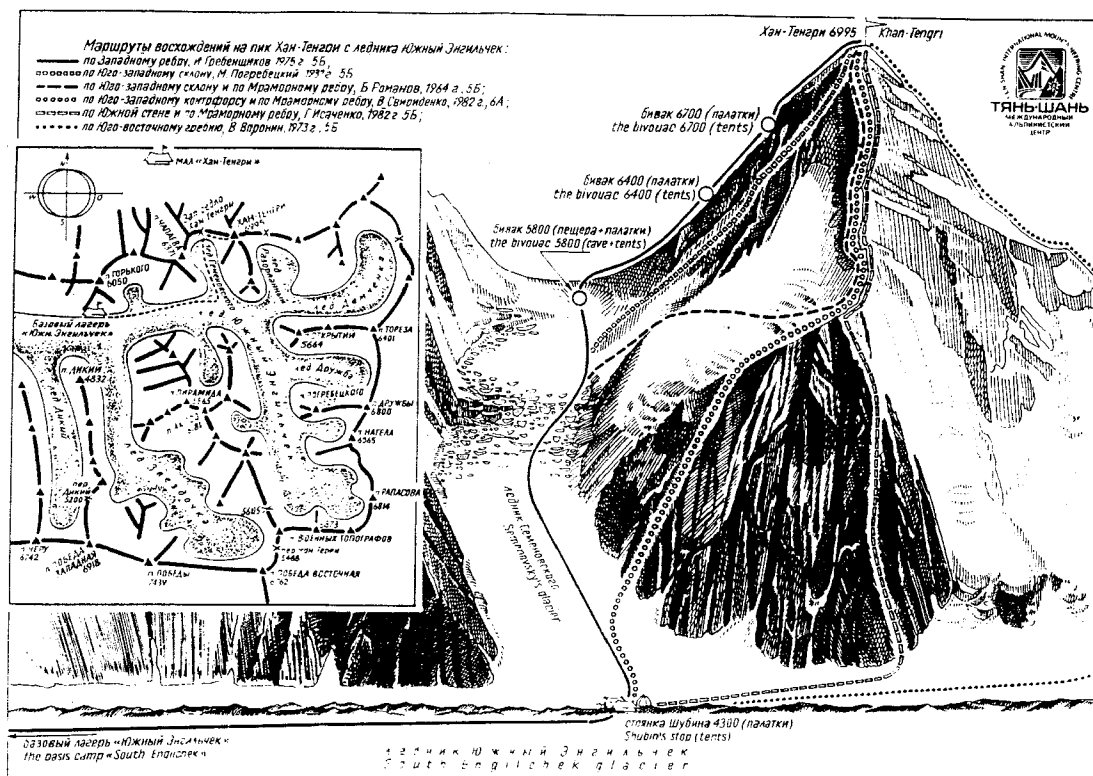
Income		Expenditure	
MEF Grant	1200.00	USSR Fee	4222.00
BMC Grant	1000.00	Flights	1050.00
Personal		Freight	175.00
Contributions	3727.00	Provisions	150.00
		Insurance	330.00
Total	£5927.00	Total	£5927.00

The above figures are for three expedition members only, as Julie-Ann Clyma was fully funded by a travelling scholarship from the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust.

CENTRAL TIEN SHAN



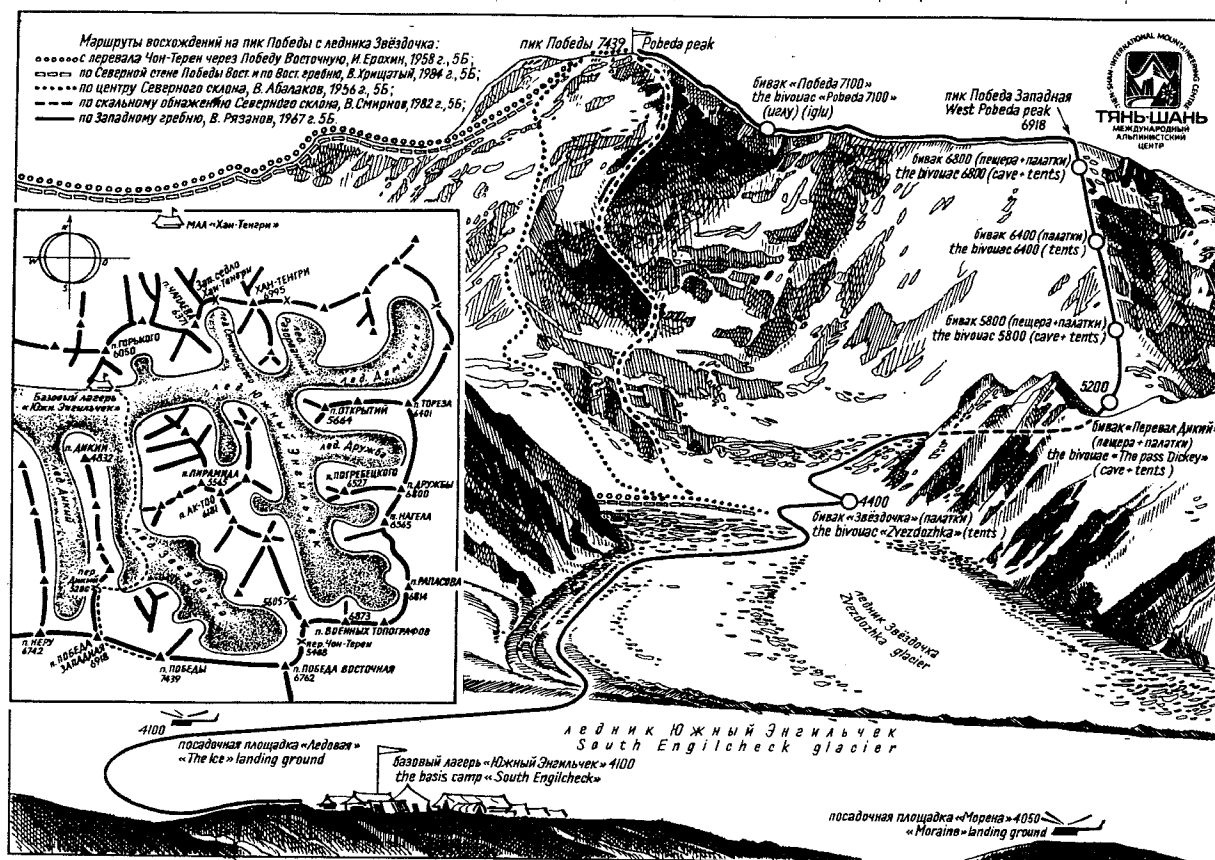
KHAN TENGRI 7010m - W RIDGE



From base camp on the S Inylicheck Glacier it is a straightforward walk to advance base camp (Shubin's Stop) c.4300m, taking 2-3 hours. From advance base camp the next section of the route follows the Semenovskiy Glacier to the W Col. The lower section of the glacier is bound by high walls on either side, and is subject to regular serac fall from these. It would be advisable to start this part of the journey in the very early hours of the morning. At c.5400m is the first safe campsite, and from ABC to this point takes about 8-10 hours. Above this the route takes straightforward snow slopes to reach established snowcaves beneath the W Col at c.5800m. This section can be done in around 3 hours. From the snowcaves a steeper slope leads to the W Col and then a traverse of about 200m leads to the foot of the W Ridge. The line of the ridge is followed until c6700m, where the route then trends rightward and back left before ascending summit snow slopes. It is possible to reach the summit from snowcaves in 8-10 hours. It is more usual to attempt the summit from around 6400m which takes about 5 hours.

Climbing on the route is straightforward for the most part, over rock steps linked with snow patches. A vertical rock step at c.6800m requires care (about Severe standard), but is fixed with rope. Almost the entire ridge is fixed, but the rope needs to be used with caution as the condition of it, and some of the anchors is variable. There are a number of small bivouac sites on the W Ridge at c.6200m, 6400m and 6700m. These sites will only take one or two small tents and are in safe, though exposed, positions. In terms of equipment needed once on the route, a single ice axe is sufficient, although the addition of a ski pole might be useful.

PIK POBEDA (7439m) - W RIDGE



From base camp on the S Inylchek Glacier the approach to Pobeda is via the Zvezdozhka Glacier to advance base camp c.4400m. This approach takes about 5 hours, and the upper section of the glacier is very broken. From ABC the route traverses beneath, and then rises through an unpleasant barrier of seracs. Fixed ropes are in place on the steeper sections. This section needs to be approached in the early hours of the morning. Above the serac barrier the route is relatively safe, and contours round a broad shelf before rising to the Dickey Pass c.5200m on the N Ridge of the W Peak of Pobeda. The route continues up the ridge, on snow at first, and then mixed ground (fixed with rope) to reach the summit of the W Peak (6918m). The W Ridge is followed for around 4 kilometres to a prominent monolith and possible campsite. The final summit ridge (around 600m) is a pleasant climb on snow crests and rocky steps.

There are established snowcaves at c.5200m, 5800m and 6900m, and other good camp sites between these altitudes. In terms of equipment needed on the route, a single ice axe is sufficient, but a ski pole is helpful.