



MOUNT EVEREST FOUNDATION



The Northwest Ridge to Virjerab Sar

Part 1 - Cover Sheet

Expedition name: **Virjerab 2024**

MEF Reference: **24 - 30 Virjerab**

Expedition start and end date: **13th of July to the 2nd of Sept**

Expedition Leader with contact details:

Philip de-Beger
The Lodge
66A Mendip Road
Portishead, BS20 6DG
philip.debeger@btopenworld.com

Expedition members and nationalities:

Philip de-Beger, British
Emma Taylor, British
Lorenzo Heis, Swiss

Dr. Aleks Mujirishvili, Georgian

Location - Country and province and Ideally GPS coordinates of BC and objective

Pakistan, Karakoram, Gilgit–Baltistan, Shimshal

Key Objective: **Virjerab Sar 36.07027, 75.72608**

Base Camp **36.09040, 75.71061**

The Virjerab 2024 expedition, an international team led by Philip de-Beger and supported by the Fred Iseman award administered via the MEF, the MEF, and the Montane Alpine Club Climbing Fund, achieved a successful ascent of Virjerab Sar AD on August 9. Early logistical issues prompted a route adjustment from Shimshal, and the team tackled challenging glacier conditions and severe weather delays. On their second summit attempt, they reached the summit and recorded the height as 6,616m. This climb, reinforced the importance of flexibility, strong sponsor support, and environmental responsibility, with the team adhering to a leave-no-trace policy and offsetting their expedition's carbon impact.

Part 2



Summit photo!

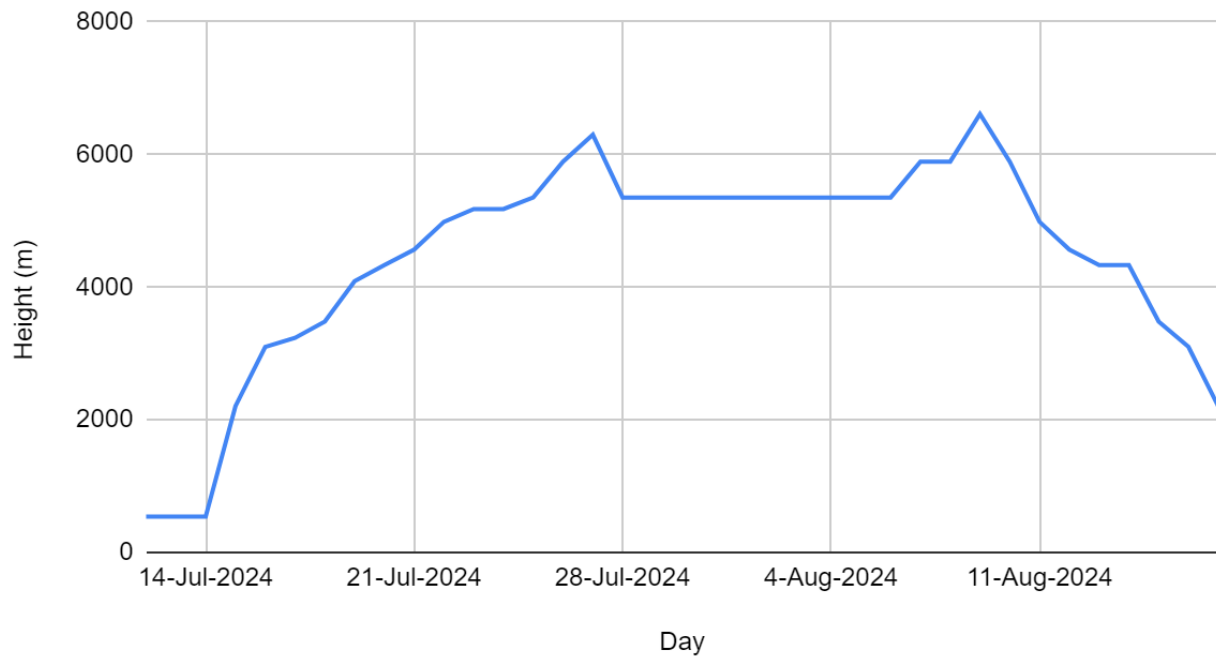
Firstly, we thank everybody who helped us make this ascent possible. Whilst not the world's most technical peak, it is remote and requires a lot of resources and careful planning to make it possible. Of particular mention is the Mount Everest Foundation (MEF) and we were honoured to be the inaugural recipients of the Fred Iseman Fund which was administered through the MEF, and the Montane Alpine Club Climbing Fund (MACC Fund), which also provided some of our kit. Also, thank Dr. Hidenori Kanazawa from the Japanese Society of Mountain Medicine for helping us source a 690g bivi tent from Japan. Thanks also to Trifish from Taiwan for loaning us an Inreach and additional snow stakes, and of course our in-country team members without whom we could not summit.

The expedition's objective was to climb Virjerab 36.07061, 75.72575, indicated on the map to be 6,501m, and attempt some of the adjacent peaks.

The initial plan was to approach via the Hispar Valley with the assistance of porters, then ski or snowshoe across Snow Lake unassisted using packs and pulks to the Virjerab Pass, hauling our gear over. Then, we would attempt Virjerab Sar and some of the other adjacent peaks before descending the Virjerab towards Shimshal, which is the faster way out.

This changed when we arrived, as our local agent based in Shimshal said we would now need high-altitude porters if we intended to go up the Hispar, which was out of our budget. There were also some concerns about the snow quality at Snow Lake. He persuaded us instead to approach as we intended to descend, which made things simpler.

Height (m) vs. Day



On arrival in Pakistan, we were initially delayed as our 3 bags of team kit, which were to arrive with Phil didn't arrive. However two days later on the 14th of July BA delivered the bags and it turned out, that the reason for the delay was they had been reweighed at the oversized baggage counter and were now tagged at being around 38kg each. Due to the delay the team took a car to Hunza, instead of the originally planned local bus, which needed to be booked ahead. The cost was 65000 Rupees for the Land Cruiser approximately £180, for the 567 km journey. One of the reasons we left so quickly was Ashura was starting on the 16th and we were concerned it may disrupt travel.

We arrived in Aliabad in Hunza on the 15th having travelled through the night. We were met by Wazir Baig, our agent. We purchased our local supplies and headed to Shimshal early the next morning.

On the 17th we started assisted by 7 porters and Wazir who guided/carried. We had 8.5 loads being portered, with a load being 20kg in this valley. In turn, our porters offloaded a number of the loads to a couple of mules, for the first two days. Then left the mules to relax in the grassy area near the huts, before we ventured further onto the Glacier on the 19th. At this point, the porters start carrying their load, and the extra load is distributed between Phil and Aleksi.

Whilst staying at Second Camp (the huts), a small dust devil came through the camp lifting our solar panel and dropping it a few meters down a rocky embankment. We later discover that it put two out of three of the panel segments out of action.

On the third day of hiking, we reached the Khurdopin Camp, carrying on 20 minutes further up the valley. We camped next in a nice grassy area with a small stream.

The fourth day, was the last day the Porters and Emma would join us, as she had to unexpectedly return home early. It was a slow start due to poor weather. Fortunately, it was a short day. At the camp we established a small cache including any gear we wouldn't need higher up, some food we would eat when we came down and the drone, as a software update that occurred in Islamabad required us to log in, which wasn't possible in the mountain, making it useless.

On the 5th day, we were assisted by two high-altitude porters, they had left the day after us and caught up. It was another short day, as the high-altitude porters were back, to bring up more gear the next day. The Glacier was fairly easy to move across as it was dry and there were very few crevasses.

The sixth hiking day gave us our first view of Virjerab Sar, we met with the HAPs around lunchtime and gave them some extra food and fuel for the night. They were going up and down as they were moving two very large loads up.

On the seventh day, we didn't get very far. Probably only 3km. We were finally on the wet glacier and Phil fell through several crevasses whilst carrying and breaking trail. The HAPs who were following behind didn't like the conditions, so dropped their loads and retreated down. So we made a camp and rewarmed Phil who was drenched.

On the Seventh Day, we left very early and carried up to the base camp; it didn't take long to move on to the crisp frozen glacier. The following day we moved up, leaving just a small stash behind of items that were less important/we couldn't physically carry. 1



Arriving at Base Camp, for the first time

On arriving at the Base Camp, we received the news on our Inreach that we had three days of good weather before it would start snowing. So the next morning, we immediately left for our summit attempt. On the way up, Phil scouted a possible climbing route; however, the team was keen to go up to the Col, the originally intended camp, and get a good view of the west ridge.

The next morning the team left late, around 03:00. Initially making good pace. However, the team slowed as the sun came up. There was one broken section of the ridge, that it was decided to avoid. However, this

moved us to the East side of the ridge, into the sun and slushy slopes. With some members uncomfortable with the conditions but close to the summit at around 6400m±, it was a difficult decision to descend. We descended early, carrying everything down, and getting to the Base Camp before the snow became heavy.

We spent the next few days eating and resting whilst waiting for a good window to try again. Our Thuraya satellite phone stopped working, after an attempt to charge it directly off the solar panel. We still had the Inreach but it made communication with our agent more difficult as the internet had gone down in Shimshal, in the end, he travelled to Hunza to receive our messages. We were told of a brief window of two days, not enough time to climb Virjerab BC to BC, so it was suggested we attempt the adjacent Peak 6,197m, 36.09844, 75.73538 during this window, It was unfortunately vetoed by one member who wished to rest more. So it remains a viable objective for a future expedition. Instead, Phil and Lorenzo used one of these days to go down to where the HAPs left and bring up the last supplies.

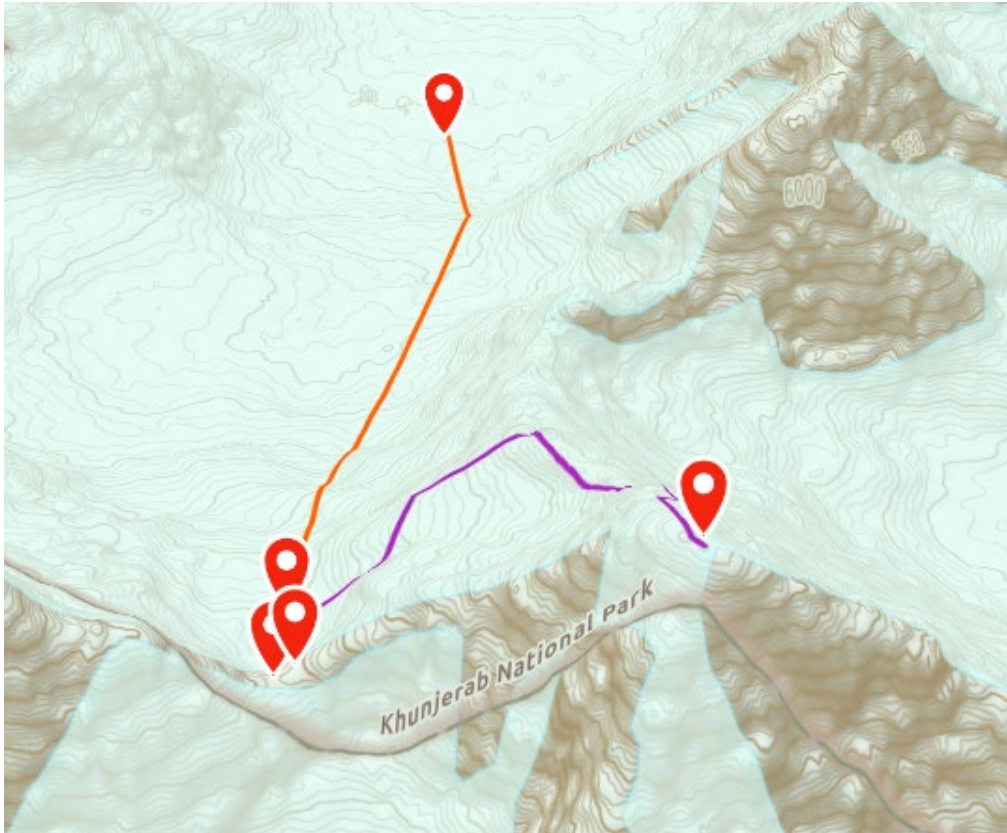
Early on the 7th of August, we moved up and bivouacked in the same place as before to make the most of a three-day good spell of weather. Resting for the 8th, we started early on the 9th, following the same route as last time, this time more rested, more efficient. We reached the Summit! The Soviet Maps show the height as 6,601m. At the website www.himalaya-info.org Virjerab Sar is recorded as 6,590m. Google Earth shows 6,563m and Gaia had the Summit at 6501m, however, the GPS the team used at the Summit showed it to be 6616m. The team rested in their Bivis on the 10th before descending to the “sixth camp”, stripping the base camp on the way. It’s difficult to grade, as most of the challenge came from the length and remoteness of the peak. However, we have settled on AD.



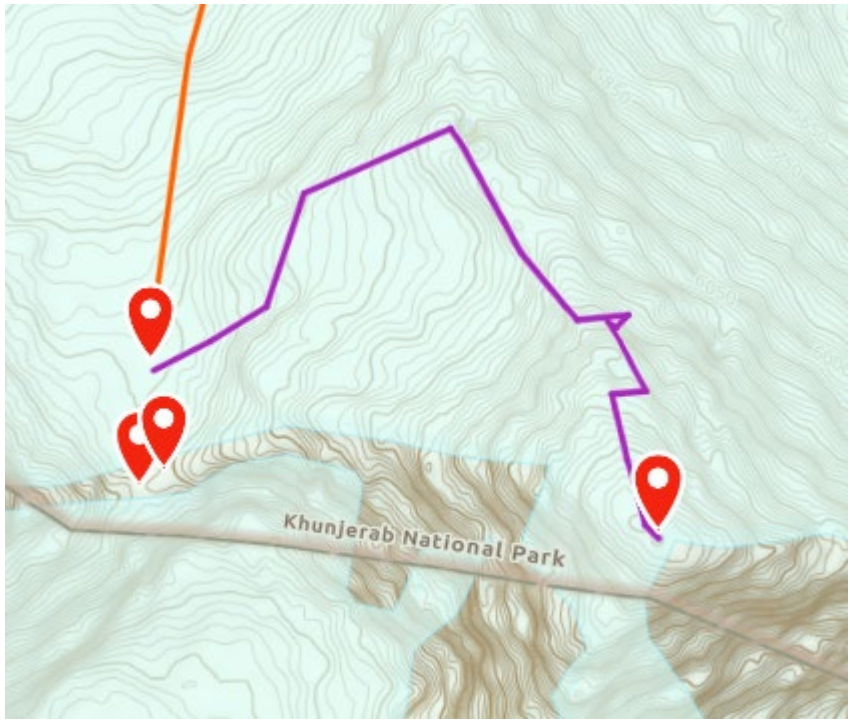
Garmin Calibrated off GPS at 6616m and the phone shows 6613m,



View from the Summit



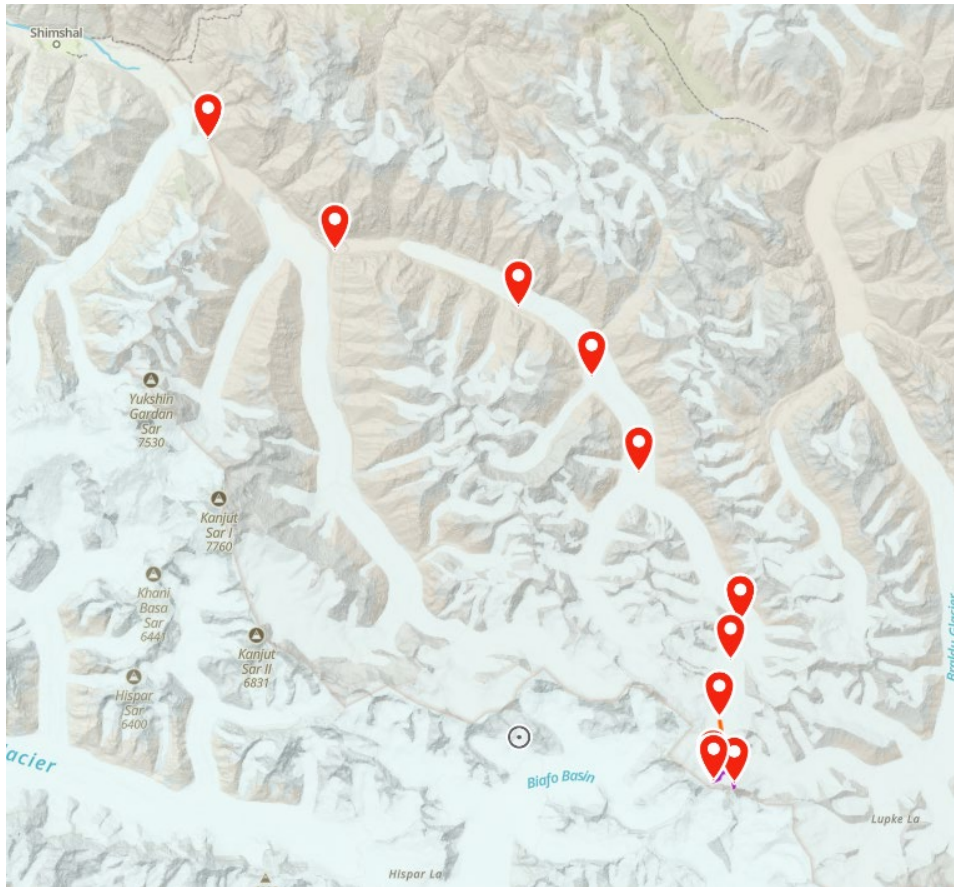
The summit route



Just below the last slope



Botton of the last slope



Our camps and summit route

Aleksi struggled with some mental health issues on the way down, as a result, he removed himself from the team for the days of the 11th and 12th. There had been plans to attempt some unclimbed peaks on the descent, in and around Khurdoping Sar. Supplies had been left in Shimshal, to be brought up but as Aleksi was out and Lorenzo had commitments in the Alps, this plan was cancelled.

Lorenzo and Phil took on 45kg of kit each and made slow progress, getting to the fourth camp around 16:00 on the thirteenth. 6 porters and one guide arrived on the fourteenth and spent the night there. They shared our load, and decided it was 7 loads! On the fifteenth we made it down to the second camp, picking up Lekso early morning. Then on the 16th, we made it to Shimshal, for celebrations!! On the 17th we left for Hunza and had several issues with Mother Nature. First off, we lost several hours when our vehicle got stuck.



Treated to fresh vegetables



Then we were stopped by a landslide, further down the valley but were able to carry our kit across the path of falling rocks, to another Jeep. Then after passing Passu, we experienced strong winds and rain, which caused further landslides making any travel beyond Aliabad impossible for that day. On the 17th, Aleks and Lorenzo headed to Islamabad to fly home. Phil stayed an extra day before heading to Khand, near Skardu, for some trekking in and around Nangma Valley. As the expedition was scheduled to finish on the 2nd of September he was unable to change his flight.

Environmental

This was a leave-no-trace expedition. We carried off all our rubbish and left no gear on the route. We estimate that our Carbon Footprint was 5.786 tonnes of CO₂e. Therefore we have offset 6 t through Circular Ecology.

Lessons Learned

We had to provide food and gas for the high-altitude porters and we purchased the items our local guide suggested (the high-altitude porter's brother). These ended up being too heavy and impractical for them, so we ended up sharing our epi-gas and expedition food with them. This wasn't an issue but it meant that a full porter load was largely unnecessary. In the future, we consult directly with the high-altitude porters on their provisions.

| Day | WGS84- Decimal Degrees | Height (m) |
|-----|------------------------|------------|
|-----|------------------------|------------|

| | | | | |
|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------|--|-------|
| 12-Jul-2024 | Arrived in Islamabad | | Phil's bags didn't arrive | 540 |
| 13-Jul-2024 | Waiting in Islamabad | | Phil's bags didn't arrive | 540 |
| 14-Jul-2024 | Took the Car to Hunza | | Bags Arrived | 540 |
| 15-Jul-2024 | Arrived in Ali Abad | | Shopping | 2,206 |
| 16-Jul-2024 | Jeep to Shimshal | | Weigh and pack loads | 3,100 |
| 17-Jul-2024 | Hike to first Camp | 36.38790, 75.41030 | Short day 3hrs | 3234 |
| 18-Jul-2024 | Hike to second Camp | 36.33210, 75.48828 | As far as the Mules went Solar Panels get damaged | 3482 |
| 19-Jul-2024 | Hike to the third Camp | 36.30342, 75.60004 | Phil and Aleksy take on the extra load | 4090 |
| 20-Jul-2024 | Fourth Camp | 36.26894, 75.64460 | This is as far as the porters and Emma go | 4333 |
| 21-Jul-2024 | Fifth Camp | 36.22140, 75.67272 | Assisted by High Altitude Porters | 4567 |
| 22-Jul-2024 | Sixth Camp | 36.14856, 75.73314 | The first time we can see our peak | 4986 |
| 23-Jul-2024 | Seventh Camp | 36.12953, 75.72671 | As far as the high-altitude porters could go | 5178 |
| 24-Jul-2024 | Carry to BC and back | 36.12953, 75.72671 | | 5178 |
| 25-Jul-2024 | Move up to BC | 36.10174, 75.71930 | Establish BC | 5353 |
| 26-Jul-2024 | Bivi | 36.07353, 75.71397 | Visited the col (6000m), to scout route options, camped lower | 5894 |
| 27-Jul-2024 | Summit Attempt | 36.07353, 75.71397 | Started late and got stopped by slushy snow | 6300 |
| 28-Jul-2024 | Bivi to Base Camp | 36.10174, 75.71930 | Early start down to cross the snow bridges | 5353 |
| 29-Jul-2024 | Rest/snowing | 36.10174, 75.71930 | | 5353 |
| 30-Jul-2024 | Rest/snowing | 36.10174, 75.71930 | | 5353 |
| 31-Jul-2024 | Rest/snowing | 36.10174, 75.71930 | | 5353 |
| 1-Aug-2024 | Rest | 36.10174, 75.71930 | Down to Deposit for more supplies | 5353 |
| 2-Aug-2024 | Rest | 36.10174, 75.71930 | We had the option to climb the adjacent 6000m+ | 5353 |
| 3-Aug-2024 | Rest/snowing | 36.10174, 75.71930 | peak, but it was vetoed by Aleksy | 5353 |

| | | | | |
|-------------|----------------------|-----------------------|---|-------|
| 4-Aug-2024 | Rest/snowing | 36.10174, 75.71930 | | 5353 |
| 5-Aug-2024 | Rest/snowing | 36.10174, 75.71930 | | 5353 |
| 6-Aug-2024 | Rest | 36.10174, 75.71930 | | 5353 |
| 7-Aug-2024 | Bivi | 36.10174, 75.71930 | Moved up to Bivi | 5894 |
| 8-Aug-2024 | Bivi | 36.10174, 75.71930 | Prepared for an early start | 5894 |
| 9-Aug-2024 | Virjerab Sar summit! | 36.10174, 75.71930 | Success!!! | 6613 |
| 10-Aug-2024 | Bivi | 36.10174, 75.71930 | Sleep at Bivi Camp | 5894 |
| 11-Aug-2024 | Sixth Camp | 36.14856, 75.73314 | Descend 1000m, stripping Base Camp on the way | 4986 |
| 12-Aug-2024 | Fifth Camp | 36.22140, 75.67272 | Phil and Lorenzo carry team kit, 45kg each!! | 4567 |
| 13-Aug-2024 | Fourth Camp | 36.26894, 75.64460 | | 4333 |
| 14-Aug-2024 | Fourth Camp | 36.26894, 75.64460 | Spent the day waiting for the 6 porters + guide, who arrived in the evening | 4333 |
| 15-Aug-2024 | Hike to second Camp | 36.33210, 75.48828 | | 3482 |
| 16-Aug-2024 | Shimshal | | | 3,100 |
| 17-Aug-2024 | Ali Abad | | Team split | 2,206 |

Porters cost PKR 35500 each, plus tips (8 up + 7 down)
High-altitude porters cost us \$350 each (2) plus tips, fuel and food
Guide per day is PKR 6000
\$100 for invitation letter

| Expedition Costs | | Expedition Income | |
|----------------------|------|---------------------|------|
| International travel | 3800 | MEF | 7000 |
| Domestic transport | 260 | Montane Alpine club | 2500 |
| Hotels | 480 | Philip deBeger | 2000 |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| Porters | 1600 | Peter Bays | 300 |
| Food and fuel | 2300 | | |
| Agency fees if applicable | 800 | | |
| Equipment | 1130 | | |
| Miscellaneous | 230 | | |
| Insurance | 1200 | | |
| TOTAL | £11,800 | TOTAL | £11,800 |