

Alaska Expedition -Kichatna Spires 2017

Objectives

The teams intentions was to fly either into the Buckskin Glacier and attempt a line Twid spotted on a previous expedition or the **Kichatnas Spires** then attempt one of two lines on Middle triple peak. An ice line on the West Face of Middle Triple Peak right of the Charlie Porter route. The second objective was the East Face buttress to the left of the



classic East face buttress route up Triple Middle Peak. Both climbs required good conditions and weather. On arrival the team met a team who had completed the Buckskin project so the attention was turned to the Kichatnas climbs. The weather had been unusually good for the previous month with no precipitation in the range. Blue skies and stable temperatures. This was about to change on the teams arrival! So with this information the team headed to the Kichatna Spires. The weather turned for the worst for pretty much the whole period which made the Expedition climbing almost impossible. Some of the worst Alaskan weather the team had experienced.

Dates 22nd April till 13th May

The Team

The original team was Mike Turner and Paul Ramsden. But two days before departure Paul Ramsden pulled out of the Expedition due to visa issues. Paul could not get an American visa to travel to the US due to new regulations imposed by the Trump government. At a very late stage Miles Bright stepped in to replace Paul Ramsden. This was not ideal but Miles at least was a very experienced Mountaineer and excellent winter climber.

Mike Turner

50 yrs old. Climbing for 40 yrs. IFMGA Guide and MIC. 35 seasons in Alps climbing including: North Face Grand Jorrasse 3 routes, North face of Eiger, Les Doites, Fisch on the Marmalada, Divine Providence, Bonnatti Pillar, etc. Has climbed at E7 or above for 30 yrs

in over 20 different countries. Climbed many 8as, Winter VII in Scotland on ice VIII mixed, M8. Over 75 rtes at E7 or above.

Big Wall Climbing and Expedition Climbing

1987 Caucus reaching 5800m on Mount Elbrus

1989 'Caveman' Torres Del Paine, Chile Patagonia. ED 700M E5. 2 days alpine style

1990 Attempt on Cerro Torre. Retreated from high up. Argentina free climbing nr Baraloche.

Salethe, Nose in a day El Cap. Regular route Half Dome

1991 'Halucagen Wall' Black Canyon of Gunnison US.5 Days on route A4+.800m

1992 'For a Fist Full of Dollars' Torres Del Paine, Chile Patagonia, ED 800M 12 days.

1993 'Shield' El Cap A3 5 days on route. 'Moon light Buttress' Zion. US

1994 'Umweltern', Nalamortorsaq, Greenland. 700m 3 days , E5, A1. Free Route.

'Moby Dick' 1200m ,Greenland, 2nd ascent Greenland. First time climbed in one day..

1995 'The Excellent Adventure' Beatrice, Hushe Pakistan. ED 850M 14 days Big Wall

1996 'Endless Day' The Citadel, Baffin Island. ED 1000m 18 days on climb. Big Wall.

'Grains of Sand' Hands of Fatima, Mali. 650m E4. Free route.

1997 'Nawas' Nawas Brak- Amin Brak , Hushe , Pakistan. ED 1300m 18 days on Wall

'Always the Sun' . Madagascar. 500m 7c+. Free route. Many repeats

1998 'Norwegian Pillar' Greater Trango, Pakistan. Stopped 500m from top. 21 consecutive nights on portaledges after 2000m of big wall climbing at 6000m.

1999 'The Crucible' 850m New route in Lowes Gully Borneo E4 ,A4 (12 days on route)

2000 'For a few Dollars more' Torres Del Paine, Patagonia. 800m, E4 A1. Free route. Alpine style 3 days on route. Attempted a new line on the Central Tower of Paine (5 weeks!)

2001 'The Land that time forgot'Acapan. Venezuela, 700m , E5. Free route.

'Off the wall Bonkers' Kitchatna Spires, Alaska, Big Wall ED 850m. Big Wall. 7 days on route

2002 'The Supa Dupa Coulior' The Citadel, Kitchatna Spires. 1000m ED , 5+ French Ice.

Alpine.Piolet D'or nominated.

2003 'The Perfect Storm' Mnt Nevermore, Kitchatna Spires, 1000m ED E4, A2. Big Wall 12 days. Alaska. Mexico . Free climbing Puchero Chico.

2004 'Storm Pillar', Lofoten, Storen Pillar, 800m. Big Wall. 5 days on route. Norway

2005 Attempted a new line on East Face of Fixroy (7 week trip!)Patagonia

2006 'Biff Bash Bosh ED2 M71000m', 'Artist Coulior TD 800m', 'Cool Coulior 1000m'

Kitchatnas. Alaska 'The Good The Bad and the Ugly' Paine. South Tower. Patagonia, 1000m Big Wall ED E3 A4. 24 days.

2007 Taghia Morocco. repeats of major routes, first British ascents of Big Walls 16 pitch 7c.

Climbs in Cordillera Blanc.Peru. Alaska , Kitchatna Spires. Snow patch spire

2008 'Like a Pig in Shit'. Sardinia 500m new free route 7c. A1. 12 pitch sport route 'Devil

Rides Out' Torres Del Paine.800m E4, A4, 12 Days on route. Patagonia

2009 'Big Lips' 500m E56b new route. 6 new routes. 1st Brit ascent of 'Black Mamba' 10 pitch 7b Mali

2010 'Arctic Monkeys' 1400m Big Wall in Arctic Baffin. 23 days on the face with very hard climbing all the way. PIOLET nomination big list.

2011 'Ecstacey' new route on the Similestock in the Alps. Climbing up to 7c-c+. With climbing partner Andy Cave.

2012 'Hard Arteries' Alaska Mixed face and Big Wall. 8 days on the face climbing to summit on Middle Triple Peak.

2013 Alaska Shaken not stirred, Mooses Tooth, new big wall in Taghia Morroco.

2014 First ascent of East face of South Tower of Patagonia month trip, E7 Dangleberries in Morroco. COlton/Mc on the North Face of the Grand Jorasse.

2015 First ascent of 'No Country for Young Men', ED 1000m VI, Alaska, North Triple Peak, Kichatnas, Piolet D Or nomination. First ascent of No place for young boys E 7 Gogarth. 7c+ sports climbing.

Piolets d'Or Nominee 2003 : 'The Supa Dupa Coulior' ED 4 VI,M7,1000m. Kitchatna Spires

Miles Bright

52 years old

Climbing 34 years

IFMGA GUIDE for 20 years

Lots of Scottish winter and British rock

Lots of alpine mixed and rock, North faces include Les Doites, Eiger, Jorasses, Matterhorn by various routes



Expedition overview

On arrival in Alaska the team managed to get to Talkeetna straight from the airport by mini bus transfer. Arriving in Talkeetna the forecast showed that a big storm was on its way. So to save weighting for the weather to clear and a later date to fly in the team decided to fly straight into the Kichatna Spires. So with kittle time to repack for the plane the team packed their gear and food for a month into the Cessna and took off ahead of the storm. The flight to the Mountains was through some clouds but eventually Paul Roderick landed the small plane on the Tatina Glacier in the Kichatnas in strong winds. One if the scariest flights either of the mountaineers had endured. Not long after the plane had left the remote glacier the clouds had rolled in and it had started to snow.

The Kichatnas Spires lies about 1 hours flight west from Talkeetna, the nearest settlement to the range. It is in the extreme west end of the Alaska Range and is renown for bad weather. On this Expedition the weather was predictably bad! Once it started to snow the team couldn't move from their camp to climb for the first 5 days. It snowed constantly with strong winds esp high up. The Middle Triple Peaks were soaked in with bad weather. The team, once the weather improved slightly, the team made trips around the glacier to see what conditions where like. It was found that it had been a dry season in the Kichatnas for ice, with virtually no ice formed on the faces or gullies. This made it difficult for attempting the two lines we had hoped to have a bash at. The team climbed to the col between the Tatina Glacier and Monolith Glacier, which was a hairy experience with the

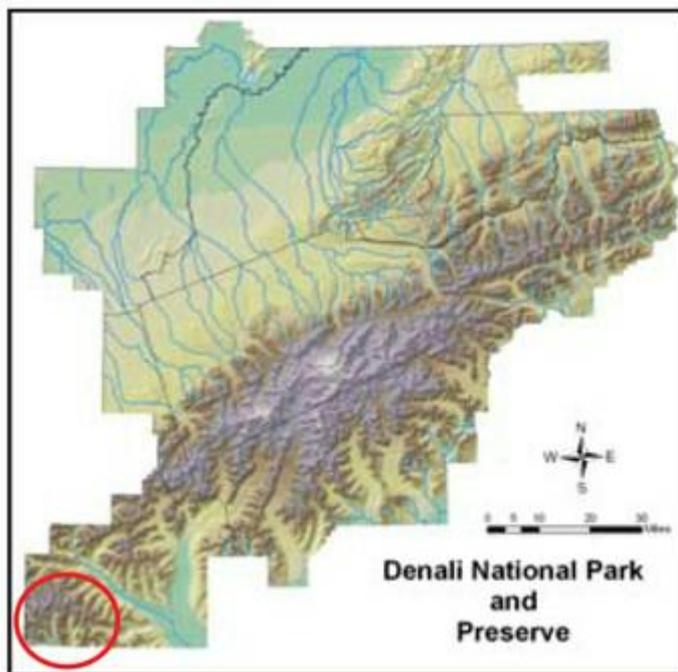
avalanche conditions. The Middle triple peak objective was totally dry of ice this season. All lines were chocked with snow and mushrooms after the recent monster dump of snow.

After the short respite the weather came in again for another series of storms. Endless cloud and snow storms. The peaks could not be seen for a week. A very frustrated team attempted two objectives safe from avalanche but the snow and climbing conditions were appalling. After two and half weeks of bad weather and little in the way of climbing the team managed to get flown out of the range. On a day weighting for flights in Anchorage the team managed a days rock climbing , with local Guide book writer Kelsey Grey. Certainly the area looked to have some good rock around Anchorage and it is well worth considering if Expedition teams have a day to kill before flying home.

Permits

The Kichatnas Spires is not in the Denali National Park and doesn't need a permit except for a standard National Park entrance fee which can be paid for at the Ranger base on arrival. The Ranger station will ask details of the expedition and what equipment you have including a Sat phone. Its sensible to leave your details with them in case of an emergency. They Ranger base can provide a weather forecast system also. This forecast is generally for Denali which does get very different weather patterns to the Kichatnas Spires.

For any visit to the US you will need an ESTA clearance visa which you can do online. Make sure you put an address for your stay in Alaska. We use TAT in Talkeetna.



Logistics

- **Travel** Getting to the Kichatnas is a long haul but if you get well organised can take quite a short period of time. The team met early at Geneva Airport and sorted out some gear to balance the loads. Twid flew **Virgin** via Washington and Seattle to Anchorage and Miles **KLM** via Paris, Seattle then Anchorage. The flights left around 7.30 from Geneva and arrived in Anchorage around lunchtime the same day, with the time changes. The team did a quick shop at Walmart, Macey's and REI for gas.

A taxi mini bus with **Go Purple** took the team straight to Talkeetna. A 3 hour ride via Wasilla. Both climbers paid for two hold bags along with the hand luggage.

- **Talkeetna Air Taxis** TAT service most of the climbers flying into the Alaska Range. They offer an excellent service and good value. They are climbers and understand the needs of the mountaineer while in such remote places. They do their utmost to get you in and fly you out. You get a standard weight allowance per person around 120lbs luggage then you pay per pound over this. Our plane carried the two of us plus our kit including skis. The flight was one hour plus to get in and you fly past some incredible mountains. TAT can provide fuel for stoves (we took gas) wands to make routes in bad weather and plastic sledges to haul your gear. They can hire some snowshoes but best bring your own. Paul Roderick the owner and head pilot knows the Kichatnas flying better than anybody else. Paul flew us in but one of his crew picked us up.
- **Gear** Getting all the gear across from Europe to Alaska is no mean feat. If you forget anything or need to buy anything last minute you have some great shops in Anchorage.

Rei Anchorage sells almost everything you would need for an Expedition.

Alaska Mountain Shop a more specialised Mountaineering shop selling top end climbing kit.

Hoarding Marmot an excellent second hand shop opposite REI. They are extremely helpful on line shop also and you can buy old and new gear at low prices. Even sell on your gear on your way home!

Kit list

One base camp tent

Bivi tent

Skis and boots

Snow shoes

Two stoves gas hanging jet boil and MSR.

Sleeping bags 650gm plus bivi bags

Matts and thermarests.

Full mixed climbing rack

2 sets of cams

Pegs , no bolts!

2 8mm ropes plus a spare.

Standard climbing kit helmet, harness etc

- **Food** Food is best bought in Anchorage. The team shopped in Walmart for basic food and Macey's food store for extra fine bits. Rei for dehydrated food. For hill food the team carried: cliff bars, dried fruit, chocolate and beef jerky. While on the glacier the team ate some fresh products veg and meat.
- **Sat phone** Its essential communication for the Kichatna Spires. The Sat phone was used to call in for weather forecasts and also to let the pilots know what the

weathers Doing in the area for landing. Its hard to know from Talkeetna what's happening with the wind and cloud in the area so the climbers weather call is essential. Its also the only way to contact any rescue should you need it. Generally they say you will need 3 days to be sure of a pick up from the Kichatnas. It took 3 days for us to be picked up once we decided enough was enough! Iridium sat phones work from the Tatina Glacier Global Sat phones dont! Take an iridium only to be sure.

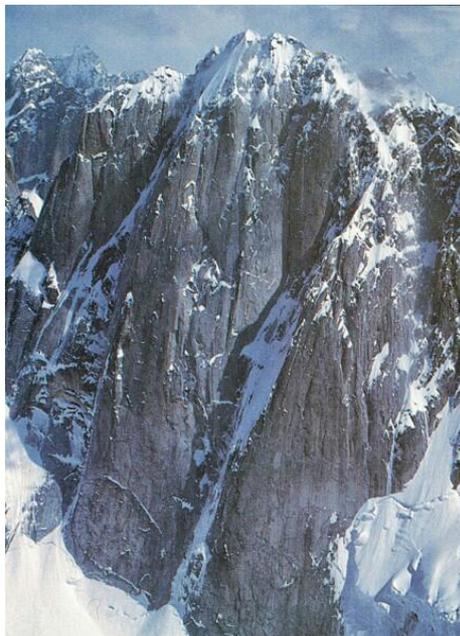
Environmental

We flew everything in and out including human waste in the bags provided by the Park office. Its a good system using the free High mountain cans and bio degradable waste bags. All cans where recycled in Talkeetna and all paper to the paper waste bins. Basically its easy with the planes to take everything out again. So no excuses.

Other than the odd bird we sore no wildlife and everything was plastered in snow. The level of the glaciers can easily seen to be retreating as else where in the world.

Potential of the area

The Kichatnas has more rock than the Fitzroy area in Patagonia and considering the scale of the development down in Argentina very little has been done in the Kichatnas. Theres still a huge amount of potential for climbing. Big Wall, mixed and rock climbing. The ice climbing when in condition is stunning but its very seasonal dependant. Too early in the season March early April and the ice hasn't had a chance to firm up too late May into June the ice is seriously threatened by avalanches. Its never the same each season. For details on what has Been done before the American Alpine Club journals are excellent. The ranger station files on the Kichatnas in talkeetna are pretty much accurate of everything. Certainly there is some activity from local Anchorage climbers that might not appear on this radar but generally its a complete climbing history in the files.



Finance

Sponsorship

- MEF £1650

- BMC £1250

Total Sponsorship £2900

Expenditure

- Europe to US Flights £850 each £1700
- Travel to airport £90
- Go Purple Transfer\$ 320+280 \$600.£462
- Accommodation Anchorage 2 nights £92
- Food Anchorage £50
- Food for hill £300
- Gas 12 × 5 £60
- TAT £1200
- Insurance £550
- Equipment (stove, abseil tat, gear) £200
- Permits £40
- SAT PHONE £160
- Sundry(£400) Extra food, books, travel food, cameras etc

Total Expenditure £4604(plus £400)

Contacts

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We would like to thank the Mount Everest Foundation and The British Mountaineering Council for their help supporting the expedition. We give our permission whole heartily for anybody else to use this report to help with future expeditions. Please feel free to copy the report to be used in any way.

