



Karakoram Summer 2016: The Arduous Task of Climbing K2 Begins

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The summer climbing season in Pakistan is now officially underway. Most of the teams have now arrived in their respective Base Camps, with some already starting their first acclimatization rotations. It'll be a good month or more before they even consider taking a crack at the summit, but the foundation for those ascents is now being put into place.



Most of the focus this summer will fall squarely on K2, where commercial operations have ramped up significantly in the past couple of years. More than 100 climbers have registered for permits on the second tallest mountain in the world in 2016, where the weather usually dictates who actually has a chance of topping out. Traditionally speaking, summit bids won't begin until the last week of July or the first week of August, but for now the climbers are taking advantage of good weather and are preparing for the challenging ascent ahead.

The [Madison Mountaineering](#) team climbed up to Advanced Base Camp yesterday, and plan to proceed to Camp 1 at 6096 meters (20,000 ft) today. Once there, they'll spend at least one night before dropping back to BC for a rest. This starts the long process of getting their bodies accustomed to the higher altitudes that will eventually culminate with a summit push. That is still a long way off at this point, but this is the first of many steps in the right direction.

Meanwhile, the International team led by [Vanessa O'Brien](#) has already moved up to Camp 2, as her squad continues to make solid progress. O'Brien is looking to become the first American woman to summit K2, and so far everything is going according to plan.

[ExWeb reports](#) that the Sherpa teams on K2 have begun installing the ropes above C2 as more teams move up the mountain. There is still a long way to go before they get anywhere close to the summit, but it seems that the team fixing the lines is taking advantage of the good weather while they can. The ExWeb article also rightfully points out that there isn't a lot of room on K2 for tents, so it will be interesting to see how the season unfolds as the climbers work through the logistics.

At the moment, there are six teams in K2 Base Camp, with at least one more yet to arrive. That will make for a crowded mountain, but hopefully one that will remain safe. Climbing K2 is much more difficult than Everest, which compounds the challenges dramatically. This is not a place where traffic jams and long waits are advisable, as this is a mountain that is far less forgiving than its taller counterpart.

We'll be watching the season unfold with interest. The commercialization of K2 is now in full-swing, and this year will show begin to give us an idea of how wise it is to open the peak up to so many climbers. It should be fascinating to see unfold. Lets just hope everyone stays safe.

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