

Adventurer and Extreme Athlete Dave Watson First to Ski Upper Slopes of K2

Contributed by The Editors
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U.S. Climber and Skier Returns Home Safely, Begins Speaking Tour

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Minneapolis, MN - Dave Watson, internationally known climber and skier has become the first person to ski the upper slopes of K2, the second tallest mountain in the world. After climbing within 200 meters of the K2 summit, Watson was buried in chest-deep snow. Although he ultimately decided an ascent to the summit was too dangerous, Watson achieved his primary goal and became the first person to descend on skis from the upper slopes of K2 on August 4, 2009.

"My whole purpose for this expedition was to ski the bottleneck and shoulder of the mountain. No one has ever put turns there before and it's easy to see why," Watson said. "It would have been nice to reach the summit but I achieved the goals I set out to do on this trip by skiing the most difficult and dangerous parts of the mountain and returning back home alive. Most non-climbers don't realize that 80% of mountaineering accidents happen during the descent and of course skiing down increases the risk substantially." Watson added that despite the presence of several of the world's strongest high altitude climbers on K2 this year, no one was able to achieve the summit this year in 2009. K2, located on the border of Pakistan and China, is considered the most dangerous mountain in the world by many professional climbers.

Watson skied from an altitude of 27,400 feet down the bottleneck of K2, an area beneath an unstable 100-foot ice formation. While the shoulder of K2 rises to angles of steepness near 50 degrees, the bottleneck reaches as much as 60 degrees in steepness. The snow conditions include ice and breakable crust, making the descent even more difficult. "Pieces of ice as large as a car would occasionally break off from the serac. The snow conditions change so much from turn to turn that the skiing would be very challenging at sea level. At an altitude where it's hard to breathe and a slope with the angle of a bell tower, it took so much focus I had to just let go, trust my years of training, my mental and physical preparation and ski."

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The death of Italian skier Michele Faid shortly before Watson ascended K2 this past month was devastating to Watson. "Michele's accident was horrible and of course it made my own attempt that much more mentally challenging." Watson said. "In the back of my mind, I knew I was headed for a place where the smallest mistake could be fatal." In 2008 eleven people also died on K2, while two others were rescued by Watson himself.

"It must have been a gratifying experience to come dashing on skis from near the summit, all the way down to the bottom of K2, the world's second and most beautiful pyramid. I congratulate Dave on this memorable achievement," said Nazir Sabir, President of the Pakistan Alpine Club.

Watson will soon begin a tour of appearances and speaking engagements at shows throughout the country, where he will present a multimedia presentation of his expedition. Watson hopes to inspire others to challenge themselves and generate excitement for the upcoming ski season.

Sponsors such as 3M, Karhu Skis, Garmont footwear, Petzl climbing equipment, Smugglers' Notch Resort, SkiHimalaya.com, supported Watson on the expedition. For information about sponsorship please contact Jeff Meyer at 720-201-0895 or meyer.snow@gmail.com

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About Dave Watson

A native New Englander now living in Minneapolis with his wife, Watson has climbed to the summit of Mount Everest twice, first in 2004 and again in 2006. After learning to ski in the fourth grade, Watson eventually became a member of the National Ski Patrol. He has been a rock-climbing guide for many years and is considered an expert in rock and ice climbing, and telemark skiing. Watson has appeared as a climber and skier in several outdoors films and has been featured in magazines such as Backcountry, Climbing, Men's Journal and Outdoors. For more information about Dave Watson visit K2tracks.com.