

On Quest to Ski the Big 3, Ericsson Arrives at K2 Base Camp

Contributed by Meghan Ward
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Swedish ski adventurer Fredrik Ericsson, who has his sights set on being the first person to ski down the world's three highest peaks, has just reached base camp on K2...

Click Image to Zoom{rokzoom album=|k2| title=|Fredrik Ericsson took a side trip to acclimatize on Laila Peak (6096m) en route to K2, with Broad Peak and the Gasherbrums in the background. The mountaineer, who plans to ski K2 (8611m) as part of his project to ski down the three highest mountains in the world, has now reached K2's base camp. [Photo] www.fredrikericsson.com/images/stories/erik/news/k2-1.jpg{rokzoom}}

Swedish ski adventurer Fredrik Ericsson, who has his sights set on being the first person to ski down the world's three highest peaks, has just reached base camp on K2. Located on the China/Pakistan border in the Karakoram Range, K2 (8611m) is the second highest mountain in the world. Ericsson plans to ski down K2 this summer, Mt. Everest (8848m) in autumn 2010, and Kangchenjunga (8586m) in autumn 2011.

On May 30, 2010, Ericsson and his partner, Trey Cook, an American alpine journalist, arrived in Islamabad with plans to approach K2 via the Baltoro Glacier. With unusually deep snow conditions on the Baltoro, they changed their plans and approached via the Gondogoro-la, taking a side trip to climb up Laila Peak to acclimatize and let deep snow consolidate.

After travelling from Islamabad to Hushe, the team started their trek into Laila Peak (6096m), which they attempted to climb--only to be turned back 300 meters from the summit by deep, unstable snow. Regardless, Ericsson enjoyed a 1000-vertical-meter descent on Laila's pristine, 45-degree northwest face.

Click Image to Zoom{rokzoom album=|k2| title=|Laila Peak is in the Hushe Valley of the Karakoram Range of Pakistan. In June 2005, Fredrik Ericsson made an attempt on Laila Peak, but was turned around 100 meters from the summit by 60-degree blue ice; he skied down from 5950m. [Photo] www.fredrikericsson.com/images/stories/erik/news/k2-2.jpg{rokzoom}}

Following their attempt on Laila Peak, Ericsson, Cook and 18 porters took three days to reach the K2 Base Camp. On their website, Cook explained that difficulties with their porters, unstable snow conditions and missing gear caused delays along the way. With their route taking them through the Gondogoro-la, however, the scenery seemed to offer a sufficient remedy. As Cook wrote, "This area of the Karakorum (sic) mountains is the highest concentration of 8000m peaks in the world and seeing them from this altitude is a mind-blowing experience."

From Base Camp, the team reported that conditions on K2 were favorable and that on June 25 they would be heading up the Cesen Route to Camp 1 to acclimatize and scope out the route.

This is Ericsson's second attempt to ski down K2. He made an attempt on the peak in June 2009, but his partner, Michele Fait, fell to his death while skiing down from Camp 2 before they were able to make their summit attempt. Ericsson said he has already skied on five other mountains higher than 8000m, with successful descents from the

summits of Shishapangma (8013m) and Gasherbrum II (8035m).

Sources: fredkericsson.com, everestnews.com, chamonixinsider.com