

Dangerous Conditions Impede Ericsson's K2 Ski

Contributed by Meghan Ward
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Fredrik Ericsson, the Swedish ski mountaineer determined to ski down K2 (8611m), had his most recent attempts at the summit impeded by dangerous conditions, which forced him to stop just short of Camp 4 (7800m) on July 26. With little snow covering the loose, steep rock between Camp 3 and 4 and a slower pace than expected, Ericsson and American alpine journalist, Trey Cook, ran out of time to reach Camp 4 and rest up properly before climbing to the top. Cook and Ericsson were back at the K2 Base Camp by July 28.

The pair arrived in Islamabad on May 30 to begin their journey to K2 as part of Ericsson's quest to ski the Big 3, including K2, Everest (8848m) and Kangchenjunga (8586m). They have spent the last few weeks acclimatizing, gaining reconnaissance of the route and waiting for a good weather window for their summit push. On July 14, Cook reported that Ericsson was preparing for the summit push as the projected weather windows in the Karakorum opened up, though this attempt of course resulted in retreat.

The expedition has not been without the usual challenges of an 8000m peak. Cook's time on the expedition may have come to an early conclusion due to severe frostbite on the last three fingers of his right hand, though so far he has pushed on until the most recent summit attempt regardless. The pair was also present at Base Camp when Petar Georgiev Unzhiev, a Bulgarian climber and member of the Adventure Tours Pakistan expedition, died at Camp 2 due to high altitude cerebral edema (HACE) after climbing too fast, reported Cook. As Cook explained, "like every other climber he saw the extraordinary good weather and couldn't resist getting up the mountain."

At this point the team is waiting to see if weather conditions will change enough to allow them another chance to climb to the summit. The next weather window will arrive in five to six days at the earliest.

Sources: chamonixinsider.com, fredrikericsson.com, explorersweb.com, skinet.com, novinite.com