



The climbing team crosses crevasses using an icefall ladder as they attempt to climb the Muztagh Peak.

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and Wei Mingkai

Wu Xiaoyan stood on the summit of Muztagh Peak at 7,546 meters, feeling the cold wind brush against her cheeks.

She took in the breathtaking view of layers of snow-capped mountains stretching beneath her. The rising sun bathed the summits in a warm glow, resembling a “platinum feast.”

“At that moment, I suddenly felt enlightened,” Wu, a native of Jiading District’s Anting Town, said.

The wind roared in her ears, nearly drowning out all sounds, yet her thoughts remained clear.

“The ‘lofty snow mountains’ from the Chinese textbook were suddenly a vivid reality before me.”

As she took a photo at the summit, she caught a glimpse of herself in the camera, bundled in a bulky climbing suit, and realized that every effort had been worth it.

Muztagh Peak is situated in the Pamir Plateau of northwest China’s Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The peak’s oxygen-deficient

environment poses challenges, and climbers must navigate treacherous, ice-cracked terrain.

Since December, Wu has been gathering information related to Muztagh Peak and has begun training in mountaineering.

In March, the Mountaineering Association of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region announced registration information for those wishing to scale Muztagh Peak.

Previously, Wu had ascended the 6,178m-tall Yuzhu Peak in northwest China’s Qinghai Province. Muztagh Peak was her next goal.

The attempt to scale Muztagh was set before the ice-melting phase to avoid risks, but it coincided with the active period of ice cracks.

There are two must-see spots connected only by a snow bridge tens of centimeters wide, with bottomless glacier cracks on both sides, “which were like the mouth of the earth opening.”

The ice crack at 5,900m could still be crossed using a sledge, but only one person at a time.

When Wu was descending the mountain, she discovered



The mountaineering team ascends Muztagh Peak. — Photos by Ti Gong

that the snow bridge had melted.

The road construction team of the Xinjiang Mountaineering Association built a temporary bridge with metal ladders and wooden boards.

“I counted every step and silently said to myself, ‘Slow down, be more stable.’”

When she stepped onto the snow slope on the other side, she sat down, only to discover that snow grains had gotten into her gloves and her hands were numb.

“That tens of meters of bridge seemed to take a lifetime to walk.”

But, looking back, she felt fortunate. On the other side of the bridge, the guide from another team reached out to assist the last team member in balancing his body.

“People in the snow mountains are all teammates.”

Wu worked in the medical services industry and is aware of her physical state.

She began training seven months in advance. The most

7,546

At 7,546 meters, Muztagh Peak poses a challenge to climbers who must navigate treacherous ice-cracked terrain.

agonizing experience was climbing stairs with weight. She found a stair climber at a local gym, packed more than 10 kilograms of dumbbells into her backpack, and climbed for an hour.

The altitude where she lives is merely a few meters, whereas Muztagh Peak is 7,546 meters.

“The body is like a sponge, and it has to slowly adapt to the ‘weight’ of the altitude.”

The team’s glacier training became a battleground for her to compete against her body.

The significance of the training became clear at the 6,900m camp. Her blood oxygen saturation was only around 70.

“Reaching the summit is only half the battle; being able to return safely is the ultimate goal,” Wu said.

The scariest part was the tiredness at 7,000m. She leaned against her trekking pole, feeling the snow slope beneath her boots shake.

“The guide was shouting beside me, ‘Don’t sleep!’” She then realized that she had been yawning at the time.

She pinched her cheeks and followed the guide’s tracks one by one.

“Every step was a fight with my oxygen-deprived body.”

There are plenty of warm details. At the 6,200m camp, the guide removed a pot from his bag, which turned out to be a pot of chicken soup. The pot of soup weighed more than 5kg.

“I don’t know how they carried it up.”

Wu drank the hot soup and glanced at her companions, instantly feeling that “no matter how difficult the road is, it makes sense to walk together.”

Mao Xiaoyan from Anting Town in Jiading District proudly displays the banner of her hometown, Tamiao Village, atop Muztagh Peak.

