

Vrang Lakes (4305m) – Vnukut Valley (3875m)

Distance: 17km

Ascent: 710m

Descent: 1140m

Trail: very hard – vague or no trail, exposed terrain

Accommodation

Camping

This stage is one of the hardest on the Pamir Trail, as you tackle the highest pass on the entire route: the 5010m high Vrang Pass. Head up the valley, following the river and across a rocky stretch. Start climbing the looker's right part of the valley before you reach the main glacier. You can enter the rock covered glacier further up. Walking the glacier itself is fairly straightforward. Stay slightly on the right side as you approach the final climb of the pass from the looker's right. The last 100m is on a snow-covered slope but crampons and axe are not needed as the gradient is not steep at all. The pass itself is a large flat area with majestic views across the Shakh dara peaks and in the distance the Hindu Kush. The first part of the descent in the Vnukut Valley is steep, but it's soft underfoot with some rocky sections. Those who are confident can descend quickly while others may struggle with this terrain. Once you've reached the lower part the walking is a little easier. Head into the main valley and cross the broad valley floor, littered with rocks. At the end of this you can choose to take either the right or left bank. Both are hard, with an ever-fading path, big blocks. You pass the memorial plaque in memory of Russian alpinists who died while climbing Pik Karl Marx. There's a shepherd camp at 4200m, but it's not a great spot. Descend further through some tricky terrain to 3875m where there's a perfect camp spot looking out on a wall that must be over 1000m of vertical rock.