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Samuli Mansikka returning from C3 in bad weather on July 16th; an abrupt change in weather made the descent difficult and tiring.

courtesy Samuli Mansikka, SOURCE

Exweb Interview with Samuli Mansikka | "We might see many summits this year on K2, or then not. This is the magic of K2."

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Posted: Jul 19, 2014 07:36 pm EDT

(By Raheel Adnan) He leads treks and expeditions to less challenging mountains/passes throughout the year, but climbs 8000m peaks unassisted and independently, "to look back at life, live in the moment and plan the upcoming". Finnish climber Samuli Mansikka has summited eight eight-thousanders so far and is currently attempting K2 unsupported and without bottled oxygen.

Having returned from C3 (7450m) earlier this week, and currently resting at BC, today we caught up with Samuli for an interview about K2, about the expedition and about himself.

Exweb: Hi Samuli, how are you doing? How are the conditions on K2, this year?

[Samuli Mansikka] Greetings from K2 Basecamp! I am doing very well indeed, thank you! I am in understanding that the conditions are quite okay on K2 this year. Not too much snow on the lower part of the mountain although the amount is much bigger when you get closer to the Shoulder. I was mainly concerned about rock falls but I don't think it's been a problem so far.

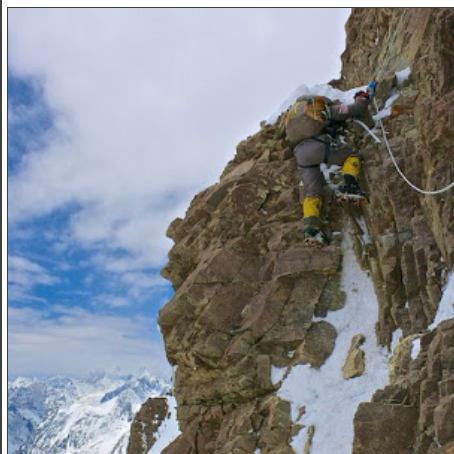
Exweb: You've been upto 7450m, so far. How do you compare the difficulty level of K2 with other mountains you have climbed?

[Samuli Mansikka] On all my 8000-meter climbs I've stuck to normal routes (except for attempt on Inaki Ochoa variation on Shishapangma). Compared to other 8000ers normal routes, K2 really is a completely different case. Climbing is steep and sustained all the way from the base of Abruzzi ridge. Very physical climbing on mixed terrain in all and a lot of that on rock. I am very comfortable with that as it reminds me a lot of climbing in the Alps. Problem is that the terrain also makes rescues very demanding, if we end up with such.

Campsites are all at an angle and with little space which makes it tricky making camps, if there's many teams on the route, as there this season is.

K2 really is more like a big pyramid of rock and ice rather than a glacier walk at high altitude.

Exweb: There was a sudden change in plan and you are climbing K2 - how difficult it was to get used to the idea? What were main challenges?



"Compared to other 8000ers normal routes, K2 really is a completely different case. Climbing is steep and sustained all the way from the base of Abruzzi ridge" - Samuli Mansikka. Photo: a Polish climber negotiating a section of House' Chimney.

courtesy Samuli Mansikka, SOURCE

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Mansikka at the summit of Kangchenjunga on May 20th, 2014; he climbed the mountain unsupported and without bottled oxygen.

courtesy Samuli Mansikka, SOURCE

[Samuli Mansikka] Yes, I was first planning to go to Broad Peak to have a leisurely "small 8000-meter-climb" after this spring's Kangchenjunga. The permits and sharing teams have been an issue here this year so I was more easily joined with an International K2 team.

Over the years I have been collecting a lot of information on K2 and was not too concerned about change in plans. Climbing K2 is of course a dream come true for many climbers, me including.

Of course I first had to make sure I had enough supplies to switch to a bigger vertical climb and maybe more camps. It ended up not being that much of a concern to skip Camp 1 and get away with less gear including what I brought with me for BP.

In fact, I've quite enjoyed being on K2 and climbing the "mountain of mountaineers". You may not be able to summit it in first attempt, so at least I am trying now.

Exweb: You prefer climbing unassisted and without a partner? Any advantages (and/or challenges)?

[Samuli Mansikka] I am very much used to climbing alone in the Alps and have felt comfortable doing the same on 8000ers. I find it rewarding especially in that sense that I feel that the experience is more complete and more intense. You have to be completely aware of the surrounding and conditions and perfectly know what you are doing. Climbing alone makes me feel more free and at the same time more sensitive to changes in conditions and weather. This turns into making decisions faster as well as being able to move faster or let's say retreat from the mountain faster in case conditions start going to worse.

Downside is that you need to carry more stuff although with modern lightweight gear I don't think it is much of a factor. Then, of course, you have no margin for error or anyone to assist if you end up in a tricky situation or get injured. This on the other hand sometimes makes you think twice and be more aware and alert which is never a bad thing on mountains, even with a partner.

Don't forget that most of the year, I lead treks and expeditions everywhere in the world and share the mountain experience with groups and climbers with maybe less background. I love that, but still I consider climbing the 8000ers alone as my time-off. It gives me time to look back at my life, live in the moment and plan the upcoming.

Exweb: Looking forward, what are your plans for summit push?

[Samuli Mansikka] We now had a period of some snowfall, so I think there is too much snow at above Camp 3. It also is very windy on the summits. I don't think we are getting summit attempts prior to July 25th to 27th. There are many teams on K2 this year and as it is a very demanding mountain, I am expecting teams to join forces for the push when the conditions are right. We might see many summits this year on K2, or then not, if the weather does not allow any. This is the magic of K2 - you really can't force it!

Exweb: Anything else you may want to share with our readers?

[Samuli Mansikka] Thanks for following what is going on at Karakorum this season! Pakistan is home to some of world's most amazing mountains and I wish the country will, in the future, be more able to improve everyone's ability to explore it themselves. Enjoy summer, mountains, beaches, all of nature wherever you are!

Born and living in Helsinki, Finland, Samuli Mansikka, 35, is a professional mountaineer and expedition leader. He spends most of the year climbing and leading treks and expeditions around the world, mainly in Nepal. If successful, K2 will be his 9th 8000er. Follow Mansikka on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) to hear the latest about his adventures at world's mountain ranges.

Eight Thousander Summits:

1. Cho Oyu (2006, 2008, without O2)
2. Lhotse (2008, with supplemental oxygen)
3. Everest (2009, with supplemental oxygen)
4. Manaslu (2009, unsupported, without O2)
5. G II (2010, unsupported, without O2)
6. Dhaulagiri (2011, unsupported, without O2)
7. Makalu (2013, unsupported, without O2)
8. Kangchenjunga (2014, unsupported, without O2)



K2 Base Camp under snow storm on July 18th morning.

courtesy Alan Arnette, SOURCE



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SALTORO SUMMITTS
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Treks to BC and the valleys.

Based in Lahore, Pakistan, telecom engineer and mountaineering enthusiast Raheel Adnan is a reporter for Explorersweb's mountaineering sections. He shares regular updates on [Twitter](#) and runs his own blog at [Altitude Pakistan](#) posting initiated climbing news from Himalaya and Karakoram.

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