



AAC Publications

Ultima Thule Peak, southwest ridge

Alaska, Alaska St. Elias Mountains

The 2013 climbing season in the University Range proved to be challenging. Dangerous snow conditions and temperamental weather brought close calls, false starts, and more failures than successes—and just plain tough climbing.

However, on April 20, persistence paid off, and Jay Claus and I were able to make the second ascent of Ultima Thule Peak (10,950'). We chose the long, prominent, unclimbed southwest ridge. [Editor's note: Paul Claus, Ruedi Homberger, and Reto Reuesh made the first ascent of the then-unnamed Ultima Thule Peak (then estimated to be ca 10,500') in 1996 via the south face, joining the upper southwest ridge to the summit (AAJ 1997). The complete southwest ridge lies left of the south face. The peak is located at the head of Canyon Creek, in the University Range.] The 16 hours of climbing under blue sky was fantastic, the climbing varied. Mixed climbing wove around and over stone gendarmes; there were long, exposed corniced ridges; and steep snow culminated in a truly classic and steep Alaskan ridge traverse to the top.

We stood one at a time, as close as we dared, on the overhanging summit, and then chose a fairly direct descent to the left of the south face first-ascent route to avoid having to reverse the slow, horizontal mixed pitches. We celebrated with fireworks in base camp.

Kevin Ditzler

Images



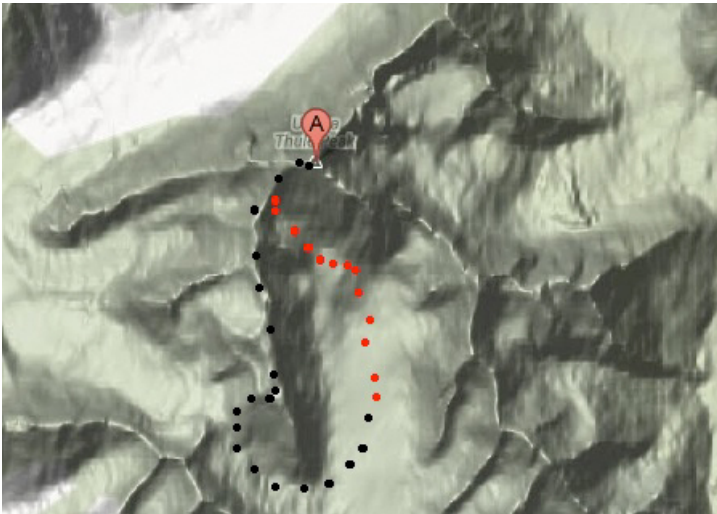
The summit of Ultima Thule.



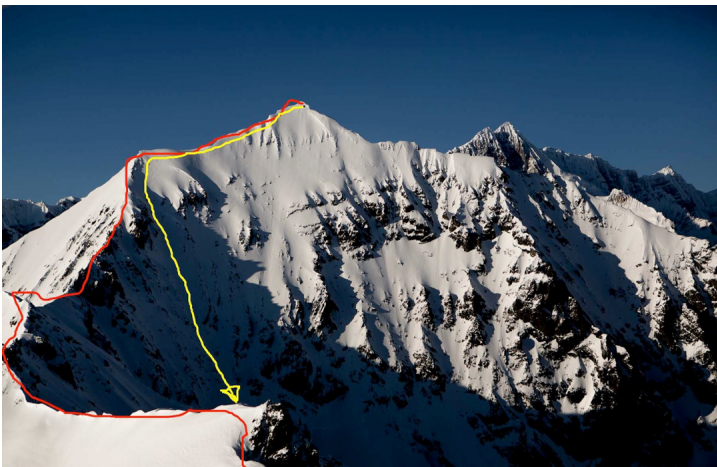
The southern aspect of Ultima Thule Peak. The southwest ridge ascends the ridge on the left skyline (this photo only shows the upper portion). The first-ascent route is believed to go more or less straight down from the summit on the center-left side of the broad south face.



Downclimbing from Ultima Thule Peak.



An overview of the ascent line (black) and descent line (red).



The upper part of the ridge showing the ascent line (red) and descent line (yellow). The first ascent line lies right of the yellow line.

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