



AAC Publications

Ulises Vitale Peak, Northeast Face

Argentina, Central Andes

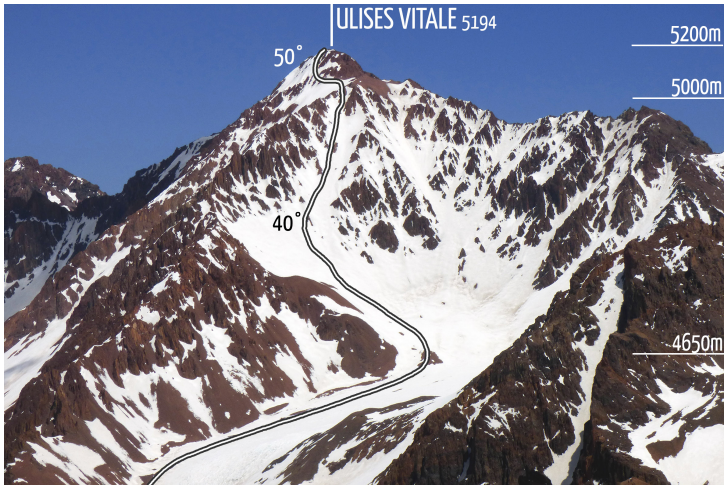
Even in the 21st century, in the Central Andes of Mendoza Province there are believed to be approximately 50 unclimbed summits above 5,000m with at least 200m of prominence. One of those unnamed peaks (5,194m, 33°43'30.7"S, 69°32'47.9"W), is situated in the Portillo Range. Meiji Peak (5,215m) is the nearest higher peak, and the col between them is approximately 4,900m. The unnamed peak was first attempted in 1955 by local climbers Jesus Casanova, Alfredo Flury, Richard Gallop, and Ulises Vitale, via the southeast face. Unfortunately, they did not reach the highest point because Casanova felt unwell, and they retreated just 100m from the summit. Since then, the southeast face has changed considerably since due to glacial retreat.

After restrictions eased from COVID-19, a large group made up of Gerardo Castillo, Ulises Corvalán, Claudio Fredes, Adrian Miranda, Heber Orona, Lito Sánchez, and I decided to climb this mountain, 65 years after that first attempt, looking for signs of other expeditions. We started the approach on December 1, 2020, from the little village of Manzano Histórico, in Tunuyán Department, and walked 10km south and west along the Pircas Creek Valley to a camp at 3,100m. The second day, we continued west-southwest for 11km more to reach the base of the mountain at 4,200m.

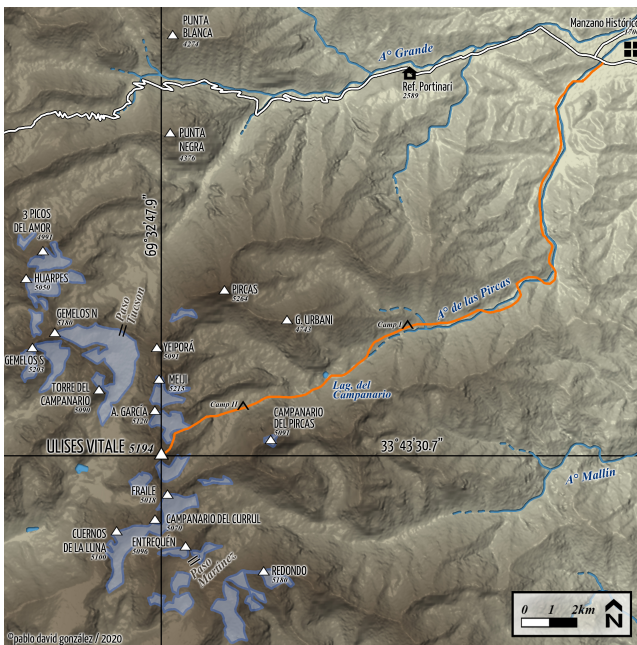
On December 3, we started our climb at 6 a.m. From our campsite to the east, we first had to traverse a large, steep moraine to reach the foot of the northeast face. Once at the base of a large snow couloir, we faced the consequences of a dry winter season: The couloir was completely covered in penitente snow formations. After seven hours of climbing up the snow slope, all members of the group reached the summit (5,500m, 40–50°). Though we did not find any traces of our predecessors, we agreed to name this mountain in honor of our friend Ulises Vitale, a tireless mountaineer and the last living member of the 1955 expedition. We descended by the same route.

– Pablo David González, Argentina

Images



The first ascent of Ulises Vitale Peak (5,194m) in December 2020 followed the route shown on the northeast face (550m, 40–50°).



An overview map indicating Ulises Vitale Peak (5,194m), located in the Portillo Range, along with the team's approach route, camps, and surrounding peaks.



Ascending the penitente-laden slope on the northeast face of Ulises Vitale Peak (5,194m).



Ascending the penitente-laden slope on the northeast face of Ulises Vitale Peak (5,194m).

Article Details

| | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| Author | Pablo David González |
| Publication | AAJ |
| Volume | 63 |
| Issue | 95 |
| Page | |
| Copyright Date | 2021 |
| Article Type | Climbs and expeditions |