Ritschergipfel, Second Ascent and New Route

Antarctica, Queen Maud Land

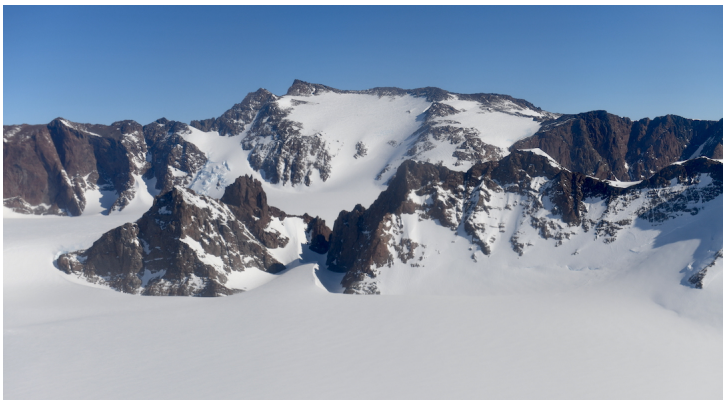
On my seventh expedition to Queen Maud Land, I and the experienced New Zealand mountain guide Mike Roberts climbed a new, short, and relatively safe route up the eastern flank of Ritschergipfel (2,791m, 71°24’21”S, 13°20’52”E). From Novo Airbase, we flew to a plateau east of the peak and reached the summit on November 6 after four hours of ascent and 800m of vertical gain using skis and crampons. On the summit it was bitterly cold, with a temperature of -32°C and strong wind.

Ritschergipfel is the highest peak of the Gruber Mountains in the northeastern part of the Wohlthat Massif. It was discovered on February 3, 1939, on a reconnaissance flight during the third German Antarctic Expedition, using a Dornier Wal flying boat catapulted from the MS Schwabenland. The peak was named after the expedition leader, Captain Alfred Ritscher.

The first ascent was made on December 17, 1991, by German scientists Wieland Adler and Gerold Noack, based at the former GDR Georg Forster station in the Schirmacher Oasis. They reached Lake Unter-See with tracked vehicles and from there climbed the mountain in 10.5 hours. On February 9, 1996, the German geologist Joachim Jacob and Austrian mountain guide Joe Rainer reached the summit after a helicopter landing and ten-minute walk—a practice that has been quite common in the mountains of Antarctica.

— Christoph Ho benreich, Austria

Images



Ritschergipfel from the east. The 2023 route ascended the big snow slope, gained from the left.

During the ascent of the east face of Ritschergipfel, looking northeast along the Gruber Mountains.

Christoph Höbenreich on the summit of Ritschergipfel on a cold day in November 2023.

Wieland Adler on the summit of Ritschergipfel after the first ascent in December 1991.

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