



Wall of Dykes, Vivere la Vita

Kyrgyzstan, Pamir Alai, Karavshin, Ak-Su Valley

Niccolò Bartoli and I traveled to the Ak-su in the summer of 2022 and found a west-facing wall directly above base camp that has beautiful granite. The Wall of Dykes, on the south buttress (Pik 3,850m) of Pik Slesova, is about 800m high, and the slabs provide mainly friction climbing—right up Nic’s street.

We started with 100 8mm bolts, thinking we had plenty, and in the end it was just enough to finish the job. Opening a route on this wall was not easy: Reclimbing the pitches we’d already established each day to reach our high point was not the quickest tactic, but hauling a portaledge up the slabs didn’t seem like a great solution either. The difficulties were not extreme: around 6c with some pitches of 7a and a 7b. Despite the number of bolts, a double rack of cams, micro-cams, and nuts is required. The route is equipped with bolted rappel anchors (70m ropes).

Nic became ill when we’d reached a point only four pitches from the top, and with the weather good, I asked a Basque friend I’d met at base camp, Jon Segurola, if he’d join me for the final ascent. I led the full route, including establishing the last few pitches, in one long day. We called the route Vivere la Vita (“Living Life,” 24 pitches, 7b).

— **Federica Mingolla, Italy**

HISTORICAL NOTES ON THE WALL OF DYKES: The huge slab on the south buttress of Pik Slesova was named by the British team that climbed the first route on the face, The Great Game (5.12b, Green-Pritchard), in 1997. Two years later, another U.K. expedition added two routes: The Philosopher’s Stone (Arran-Arran), to the right of the original line, and The Last Laugh (Parnell-Pretty) on the far left side of the face. In 2005, Niall Grimes and Donie O’Sullivan climbed the are te on the right side. All of these routes were climbed with few or no bolts. The new route described above begins to the right of The Great Game, crosses that route partway, and then joins it for about five pitches higher up, before finishing independently to the left.

Images



Federica Mingolla during the first ascent of Vivere la Vita on the Wall of Dykes.



Niccolò Bartoli during the establishment of Vivere la Vita on Wall of Dykes.



Federica Mingolla drilling a bolt placement during the establishment of Vivere la Vita on Wall of Dykes.



Photo-topo for the new route Vivere la Vita on the Wall of Dykes.



The yellow line shows the approximate path of the 2022 route *Vivere la Vita on Wall of Dykes*. The earlier routes shown here are (1) *The Last Laugh* (Parnell-Pretty, 1999), (2) *The Great Game* (Green-Pritchard, 1997), and (3) *The Philosopher's Stone* (Arran-Arran, 1999). *Pik Slesova* is to the left.

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