



## AAC Publications

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### **Gulba, Southwest Face, Amaia eta Iker**

Georgia, Caucasus Mountains

**Our initial plan was to open a new route on the south face of the main (south) summit of Ushba (4,710m).** However, the weather forecast was not very good, with a risk of storms in the afternoons. So our trio—Basque climbers Julen Berrueko, Jon Inoriza, and myself—changed plans to attempt a quicker objective that wouldn't require bivouacs on the wall.

We opted for Ushba's smaller neighbor Gulba (3,725m) and its 700m southwest face. Our planned line went up a buttress to the right of Khachapuri (7b) and Ivasuxari Roza (6b+), established in 2021 and 2014, respectively.

We started climbing early in the morning on July 6, following weaknesses that we had seen from our tents the previous day. The first four to five pitches turned out to be very nice, around 6a+, and we were able to climb quite quickly. Then our first doubts about the path ahead began. We opted to take a dihedral that ended up being more complicated than it seemed. We used aid to overcome a couple of meters, protecting with small nuts, though our seconds climbed it free at 7a+. The next pitch was the most beautiful on the route: a small, sustained, and technical 7b dihedral. We were able to open this pitch onsight, a jewel of an experience that made us feel like kids again. Following that invigorating success, we climbed two more pitches of 6a before reaching easier terrain, simul-climbing the remaining 200m to the summit.

For the descent, we used the same route as the team who climbed Khachapuri in 2021, following the south ridge. After plenty of downclimbing and one rappel, we reached a couloir. From here we rappelled to the glacier.

Our new route, Amaia eta Iker, was protected entirely with cams and nuts. The route's name, Amaia eta Iker ("Amaia and Iker"), is in memory of our two friends, Amaia Agirre and Iker Bilbao, who died in Patagonia in January 2023. *Beti bihotzean*—always in our hearts.

During our effort, other members of our team—Adria Fidalgo, Rafa Gomez, and Mikel Larraya completed a west-to-east traverse of Gulba, pushing through difficulties up to 6a on the lower southwest face before taking easier terrain and the ridgeline to the summit, and then following the same descent line we did. They believe a similar line has likely been climbed before.

—Tasio Martin Elorrieta, Basque Country

### **GULBA, SOUTHWEST FACE, IVASUXARI ROZA (2014)**

Previously unreported in the AAJ, in 2014 the Basque team of Kepa Eskribano, Raul Gonzalez, and Mikel Saez de Urabain put up a 550m climb on Gulba's southwest face. Their one-day effort, christened Ivasuxari Roza, followed seven technical pitches up to 6b+ before a steep ridge scramble to the summit. The team reported that the initial two pitches of their route seemed previously trafficked; beyond that terrain appeared untouched. They descended via four short rappels and much downclimbing, including an extremely loose chimney. The trio named their line in honor of the hostess at their guest house in the nearby village of Mestia.

## Images



Starting the 7a+ dihedral, the first difficult pitch of the 2023 route Amaia eta Iker on Gulba.



Following the 7a+ dihedral on Amaia eta Iker (650m 7b), Gulba.



Approaching the first difficult pitch on Amaia eta Iker, a dihedral system that went at 7a+.

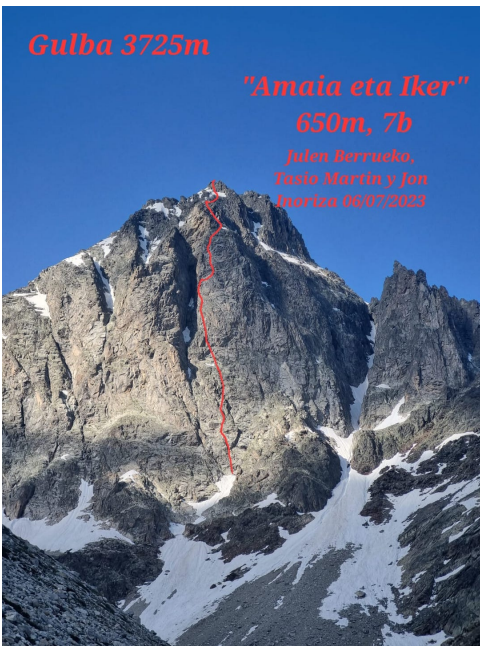


On the crux pitch (7b), a short but sustained dihedral, of Amaia eta Iker on Gulba.





Rappelling down to the glacier after descending the south ridge of Gulba.



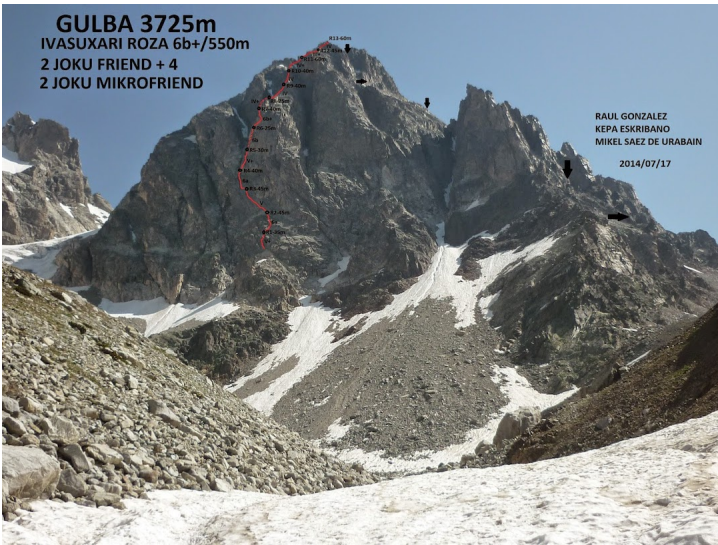
The line of Amaia eta Iker on the southwest face of Gulba.



A west-to-east traverse (6a) on Gulba (3,725m) in the Georgian Caucasus, completed in 2023.



During the west-to-east traverse of Gulba completed in 2023, with difficulties up to 6a.



The line of the 2014 route Ivasuxari Roza on the south side of Gulba.



The four known routes ascending Gulba (3,725m) from the south and southwest: (1) West-to-east traverse (2023); (2) Ivasuxari Roza (2014); (3) Khachapuri (2021); and Amaia eta Iker (2023). Remarkably, all four routes were established by climbers from the Basque Country or Spain during

three separate trips.

## Article Details

Author	Tasio Martin Elorrieta
Publication	AAJ
Volume	66
Issue	98
Page	
Copyright Date	2024
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions