

Eric Gilbertson

EDUCATION

PhD in Mechanical Engineering – MIT
2015

MS in Mechanical Engineering – MIT
2010

BS in Mechanical Engineering – MIT
2008



WEBSITE

www.countryhighpoints.com

Personal Statement

I am a mountaineer working on climbing the highest mountain in every country on earth. I have so far climbed the highest mountain in 156 out of 196 countries. Sometimes the highpoint of a country is unknown or even unclimbed, and I bring professional surveying equipment to figure it out.

This project has required a range of skill sets. I've climbed many high-altitude technical peaks like K2 without oxygen and without Sherpa support, and Peak Pobeda (7439m) in Kyrgyzstan alpine style via the Abalakov route. I've attempted to climb Mt Everest solo without oxygen but had to turn around at 8500m after spending 40 hours in the death zone waiting out high winds. I've also climbed all the Snow Leopard peaks, the third American to do so.

I've done expeditions in Yukon climbing Mt Logan, in northern Ellesmere Island making many first ascents in the British Empire Range, and in the Ragged Range in the Northwest Territories putting up new big wall routes up to 30 pitches on unclimbed peaks.

I've discovered and surveyed new country highpoints in nine countries (Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Gambia, Togo, Guinea Bissau, Colombia, Botswana, Benin, and Guyana). The Uzbekistan highpoint, Alpomish (4668m), was previously unclimbed and unsurveyed, and I made the first ascent.

I learned mountaineering skills while studying mechanical engineering at MIT and climbed all 50 US state highpoints while in graduate school there. After completing my PhD in 2015 I moved to Seattle, where I am currently a associate teaching professor in Mechanical Engineering at Seattle University.

When not on international expeditions, I've done many first winter ascents of peaks in the Cascades, and put up several new technical rock routes. I've so far made 46 first winter ascents, such as Hard Mox, one of the most difficult peaks in Washington. I've also made notable second winter ascents, such as Forbidden Peak in January 2021.

News Articles

"Twins' Peaks: The Gilbertson Brothers Want to Rewrite Your Country's Map," Sarah Scoles, The New York Times, Dec 28, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/28/science/eric-matthew-gilbertson-mountains.html>

“Mount Rainier is shrinking and has a new summit,” Conrad Swanson, The Seattle Times, <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/climate-lab/mount-rainier-is-shrinking-and-now-has-a-new-summit/> , Oct 6, 2024

“Duo Claims First Ascent of Highest Peaks in All The ‘Stans,” Andrew McLemore, ExplorersWeb, <https://explorersweb.com/climbing-all-seven-stans/> , Sept 12, 2023

“196 countries, 196 summits – our definition of vacation isn’t lying on the beach,” Christiaan Brungger, Sueddeutsche Zeitung, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/panorama/eric-gilbertson-matthew-gilbertson-kletter-zwillinge-usa-hoechste-punkte-alle-laender-1.5691505> , Nov 9, 2022 (Article in one of the largest daily newspapers in Germany)

“Country Highpoints – Brothers try to be the first to reach the highest mountain in 196 countries,” Magdalena Brys, National Geographic Poland, <https://www.national-geographic.pl/traveler/artykul/country-highpoints-bracia-jako-pierwsi-chca-zdobyc-najwyzsze-szczyty-gorskie-w-196-krajach?fbclid=IwAR2q3kY4TICGYz7jiXl2Y0j6O0pE6WnrkBAmCu7ropIXDuBXkqVnfjANoVg> , Nov 6, 2022

“Twin Peaks: brothers Matthew and Eric Gilbertson rewrite mountain record books,” Keiran Southern, The Times of London, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/twin-peaks-brothers-matthew-and-eric-gilbertson-rewrite-mountain-record-books-khr6c8jkb> , Nov 2, 2022

“Sometimes at Gunpoint, Twins Discover New Highpoints Around The World,” Andrew McLemore, ExplorersWeb, <https://explorersweb.com/mit-bros-discover-new-highpoints/> , Oct 31, 2022.

Speed Records/FKTs

Rocky Mountain Grand Slam (60 days 9 hours 20 minutes, earning FKTOY 3rd place award 2020)

Wyoming 13ers (16 days 17 hours)

Colorado Hundred Highest (Centennials) (33 days 23 hours self supported)

Mt Fairweather (24 hours Haines-to-Haines)

Luna Peak (16 hours 29 minutes car-to-car)

Washington Top 100 Peaks (1 year 8 months 8 days)

Washington Bulgars (1 year 1 month 15 days)

North America Country Highpoints (5 years 16 days)

Whit Hill, Nova Scotia Highpoint (3 hrs 58 minutes car-to-car)

Podcast Interviews

“Twins To The Tops Part I/II w/ Eric and Matthew Gilbertson,” The Climbing Majority Podcast, Dec 30, 2024, Jan 13, 2025

“What Does it Take to Climb the World’s Country Highpoints? We Talk with Mountaineer Eric Gilbertson,” We Like It On Top Podcast, Oct 10, 2023

“Twin peaks: Brothers’ mission to climb every national highpoint,” BBC Newsday interview, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0dhxlyl> , Nov 22, 2022

Radio interview on Extra Time with Paul Ross on talkSport radio, UK, <https://talksport.com/radio/listen-again/1668128400/1668133800/> (starts at 10:45), Nov 11, 2022

“K2 2022: No O’s, Unsupported Summits on Broad Peak and K2 – Interview with Andreas Frydensberg and Eric Gilbertson,” Alan Arnette, The Blog on alanarnette.com, <https://www.alanarnette.com/blog/2022/08/12/k2-2022-no-os-unsupported-summits-on-broad-peak-and-k2-interview-with-andreas-frydensberg-and-eric-gilbertson/>, Aug 12, 2022

“Fastest Known Time of the Year Award 2020 – Winners Announced,” Buzz Burrell, Fastest Known Time, <https://fastestknowntime.com/article/fktoy-na-2020-winners-announced-pt-1>, Jan 1, 2021.
(I got 3rd Place FKTOY award 2020)

“FKT Episode 104: What route has 432,500ft of gain? Eric Gilbertson is here to tell you,” Buzz Burrell, Fastest Known Time Podcast, <https://fastestknowntime.com/podcast/104-eric-gilbertson>, Oct, 2020.

Presentations

“Climbing K2 with No O₂,” The Mountaineers, Seattle, WA, Nov 4, 2023

“Surveying Washington’s 100 Highest Peaks,” The Bulgers, Seattle, WA, Nov 11, 2023

“Climbing the World’s Country Highpoints,” Oxford Exploration Club, Oxford, UK, Feb 28, 2023

“Climbing the World’s Country Highpoints,” The MIT Outing Club Winter School Guest Lecture, Cambridge, MA, Jan 24, 2023

“Beyond Winter School – Climbing Country Highpoints,” The MIT Outing Club Winter School Guest Lecture, Cambridge, MA, Jan 25, 2022

Selected Publications

Gilbertson, E., Gilbertson, M., “Determination of new national highpoints of five Asian and African countries – Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Togo,” Progress in Physical Geography: Earth and Environment, 2025. Link to article: <https://doi.org/10.1177/03091333251401102>

Gilbertson, E., Abatzoglou, J., Stanchak, K., Hotelling, S., “Rapid shrinking and loss of ice-capped summits in the western USA,” Arctic, Antarctic, and Alpine Research Journal, 2025
Link to article: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15230430.2025.2572898>

Gilbertson, E., “Greenland, Umiammakku Nunaat Region, West Coast, First Southeast-Northwest Traverse, Plus Various First Ascents,” The American Alpine Journal, 2025

Gilbertson, E. “Hard Mox, First Winter Ascent,” The American Alpine Journal, 2024

Gilbertson, E., “Alpomish, First Ascent, New Country Highpoint of Uzbekistan,” The American Alpine Journal, 2024

Gilbertson, E., Gilbertson, M., “[Twins to the Tops: The Highpoints of Canada’s Provinces and Territories](#),” 2023

Gilbertson, E., Gilbertson, M., "[Twins to the Tops: The Quest for the North American Country High Points](#)," 2018

Gilbertson, E., "British Empire Range," The Canadian Alpine Journal, 2018

Gilbertson, E., "[Many First Ascents Near Barbeau Peak](#)," The American Alpine Journal, 2018

Gilbertson, E., "Third Time a Charm," The Canadian Alpine Journal, 2018

Gilbertson, E., "[Thunder Mountain, West Face to North Face](#)," The American Alpine Journal, 2018

Gilbertson, E., "Nirvana", The Canadian Alpine Journal, 2017

Gilbertson, E., "[Thunder Mountain \(Mt. Nirvana\), Unsupported Ascent, and Peak 46](#)," The American Alpine Journal, 2017

Gilbertson, E., "Thunder Mountain," The Canadian Alpine Journal, Volume 99, 2016.

Gilbertson, E., "[Thunder Mountain \(Mt. Nirvana\) Attempt and Other Ascents](#)," The American Alpine Journal, 2016.

Gilbertson, E., Gilbertson, M., "[The Great Quest: 50 US State High Points and More](#)," 2013

Selected First Ascents (96 total)

Alpomish, Highest Peak in Uzbekistan, First Ascent (4668m, IV, 7 pitch 5.8), Gissar Range, Uzbekistan/Tajikistan (8-23-2023)

Hard Mox, First Winter Ascent, Cascade Mountains, Washington ([12-27-2023](#))

Dumbell Mountain, First Winter Ascent, Cascade Mountains, Washington ([2-11-2023](#))

Tower Mountain, First Winter Ascent, Cascade Mountains, Washington ([2-4-2023](#))

Lick of Flame via West Face (5.8, 3-pitch), Cascade Mountains, Washington ([10-01-2022](#))

Sherpa Peak, First Winter Ascent, Cascade Mountains, Washington ([2-5-2022](#))

Holliway Mountain, First Ski Descent, Cascade Mountains, Washington ([5-8-2021](#))

Mt Nirvana via West Face to North face (5.9, 30 pitches), Ragged Range, Northwest Territories ([8-11-2017](#))

Peak 2350, Ragged Range, Northwest Territories ([7-30-2017](#))

Peak 2258, British Empire Range, Nunavut ([6-17-2017](#))

Mt Nirvana First Unsupported Ascent, Ragged Range, Northwest Territories ([6-21-2016](#))

Hoodoo Peak First Winter Ascent, Cascade Mountains, Washington ([2-20-2016](#))

Paija via west face, 5.8, 8-pitch, Ragged Range, Northwest Territories ([7-1-2015](#))

Awards

Explorers Club Member (2025)

Snow Leopard award for climbing all 7000m peaks of the former Soviet Union, 2022 (third American to get award)

Nomad Mania Nominee for Most Intrepid Traveler of the Year Award 2023

Baggers Without Borders Hall of Fame Award, 2022

Fastest Known Time of the Year (FKTOY) 3rd place, 2020, for Rocky Mountain Slam

American Alpine Club Research Grant for surveying the last icecap peaks of the contiguous US (2024, 2025)

Athletic Highlights

2026

- 1) Climbed country highpoints in Brazil, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, South Sudan, Somalia, Guyana, Venezuela, Peru
- 2) Discovered/surveyed new country highpoint locations in Benin and Guyana
- 3) Completed the Highpoints of the Americas, the first person to climb all 35 country highpoints of North and South America.
- 4) First ascent of two previously-unclimbed peaks in WA – Argyros and Lightning Bolt
- 5) Conducted first temperature measurements on summit of Mt. Rainier, showing it regularly gets above freezing in summer.

2025

- 1) First winter ascents of six Washington Bulgers (Lago, Austera, Easy Mox, Cardinal, Lake, Kimtah)
- 2) Discovered new 14er in Colorado, East Crestone
- 3) Discovered new state highpoint of Michigan, Mt Curwood
- 4) Discovered/surveyed new country highpoint of Botswana – Monalanong Hill
- 5) Two American Alpine Journal articles
- 6) Three scientific journal articles published on surveys, making nearly all ~60 mountain surveys to date scientifically recognized
- 7) Climbed country highpoints in Suriname, Turkey, Angola, Namibia
- 8) Climbed new route on Alpomish, Uzbekistan highpoint

2024

- 1) First SE-NW traverse of Greenland, kite skiing traverse (1500 miles) including 4 first ascents on west coast
- 2) Surveyed Mt Rainier to discover Columbia Crest summit has melted 21.8ft as a result of climate change

- 3) Discovered/surveyed new country highpoint of Colombia – Pico Bolivar. Measured the former highpoint, Pico Colon, has melted over 60m since last survey in 1939.
- 4) Five articles published in the American Alpine Journal in 2025

2023

- 1) First person to climb the Highpoints of the 'Stans, with partner Andreas (country highpoints of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), finishing on Turkmenistan
- 2) Climbed 140th country highpoint on Ayrybaba, Turkmenistan
- 3) First Ascent of Alpomish (4668m, IV, 7 pitch 5.8), I surveyed to discover new highpoint of Uzbekistan
- 4) Snow Leopards Completion (3rd American to climb all 7000m peaks of former Soviet Union)
- 5) Pik Kommunisma (7495m), Tajikistan highpoint
- 6) Pik Korzhenevskaya (7105m)
- 7) Kangchenjunga (8586m)
- 8) Mt Everest Solo No O2 attempt to 8500m
- 9) Completed surveying the 100 highest peaks in Washington with professional survey equipment (theodolites, survey-grade differential GPS units). Discovered five peaks that were previously unsurveyed that were added to list, and five removed.
- 10) First winter ascent of Hard Mox, most difficult of the Bulger peaks (hundred highest peaks in WA)

2022

- 1) K2 (8611m) No O2, unguided independent climb
- 2) Broad Peak (8050m), No O2, unguided independent climb

2021

- 1) Pik Lenin (7134m)
- 2) Khan Tengri (7010m)
- 3) Pik Pobeda (7439m) via Abalakov (Russian grade 6A), alpine style
- 4) Forbidden Peak second winter ascent (Cascades, Washington)
- 5) Discovered and surveyed new country highpoints of Gambia, Togo, Guinea-Bissau

2020

- 1) Rocky Mountain Grand Slam FKT
- 2) Wyoming 13ers FKT
- 3) Montana 12ers
- 4) Colorado Centennials FKT (self supported)

2019

- 1) Noshag (7492m), Afghanistan highpoint, via west ridge (5.6 M3)
- 2) Completion of climbing highpoints of all Canadian provinces and territories, 5th person to complete

2018

- 1) FKT for Washington Bulgers (100 highest peaks)
- 2) Mt Fairweather smash-and-grab ascent (24 hrs Haines to Haines)
- 3) Determined and surveyed new country highpoint of Saudi Arabia (Jabal Ferwa)

2017

- 1) First ascent of West Face of Mt Nirvana (30 pitch 5.9 route, 5-week expedition in Ragged Range, Northwest Territories, Canada)
- 3) Barbeau Peak, Nunavut highpoint (3 week expedition to Ellesmere Island with 14 first ascents in British Empire Range)

2016

- 1) Mt Nirvana First unsupported ascent, Northwest Territories (4 week expedition involving packrafting, 22-pitch rock climb, and lots of bushwhacking)
- 2) Attempt on Shkhara (Georgia highpoint) via NE ridge. Retreated after climbing 18 pitches of ice to 5000m.

2015

- 1) Attempt on Mt Nirvana Unclimbed West Face (7-week expedition, reaching highpoint 16 pitches up, 5.9 A0). Made 12 first ascents of surrounding peaks and paddled 2 weeks out Nahanni River
- 2) Mt Logan, Yukon (2.5 week expedition)
- 2) First person to climb highpoints of all North American countries, finishing on Pico Turquino, Cuba with brother Matthew

2014

- 1) 2000-mile bicycle tour through eastern Europe to finish climbing the Europe Country Highpoints
- 2) Completed 10th year as volunteer mountain guide for MIT Outing Club (leading technical ice, backcountry skiing, winter backpacking, and other trips).

2012

- 1) Completed climbing the highpoints of all 50 US states while in grad school at MIT
- 2) Ran 7th Boston Marathon
- 3) Accomplished world record for most objects juggled while unicycling (7 rings)
- 4) Qualified juggling 9 balls, flashing 10 balls

2010

- 1) 3,000-mile bicycle tour through northern Europe climbing country highpoints

2008

- 1) 3,000-mile bicycle tour from Prudhoe Bay, AK to Montana

2006

- 1) Hiked the Appalachian Trail (2100 miles) from Georgia to Maine

Contact Information

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