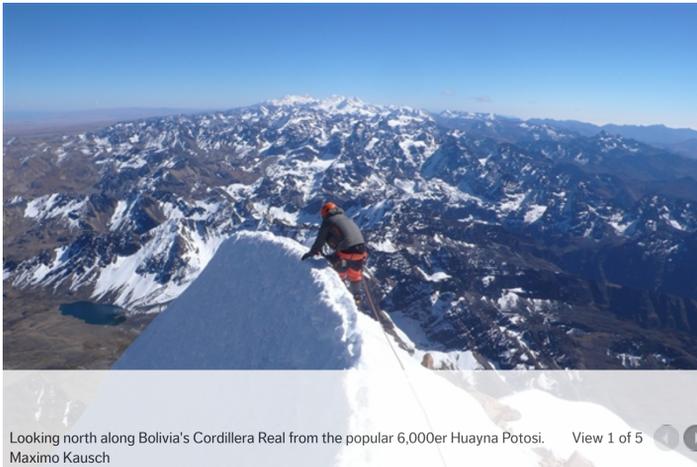


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BMC member's quest to climb all Andean 6,000m peaks

Posted by [Lindsay Griffin](#) on 06/09/2013

Looking north along Bolivia's Cordillera Real from the popular 6,000er Huayna Potosi. Maximo Kausch

View 1 of 5

BMC member Maximo Kausch is attempting to climb all the 6,000m peaks in the Andes. Currently, he has summited 59, which is most likely more than anyone else to date.

Born in Argentina, Kausch is a mountain guide who works as an expedition leader in the Andes and Himalaya, and has his own company based in Brazil.

However, he lived in the UK for nine years and holds British citizenship.

Noted authorities on the Andes, such as John Biggar, have produced lists designating around 102 summits over 6,000m, based on a prominence of 400m.

However, Kausch has adopted the more widely used UIAA prominence of 300m and come up with 117 summits. It took him three years of studying satellite data before producing his final list.

Kausch realized that existing mapping of high peaks, notably in Argentina-Chile, used old methods and recorded erroneous altitudes. Nomenclature also proved a challenge, as sometimes up to five different names had been used for one mountain.

Sorting out this muddle began as a hobby, Kausch downloading gigabytes of NASA, ASTER and SRTM data before finally getting foot approaches mapped and logged into his GPS.

At the start he would often climb four or five peaks a week, after which he moved to a schedule of climbing once or twice a week but summiting two peaks in one day.

To date most of his climbs have taken place in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile, so progress will slow once he embarks on the more technical 6,000ers of Peru's Cordilleras Blanca, Huayhuash and Vilcanota.

In his comprehensive list of the **117 Andean 6,000ers**, marked in red are those Kausch has climbed to date.

A motorbike seemed the most logical form of transport over volcanic ash and untrodden terrain, so he learnt to ride one. After dozens of falls he now reaches an average altitude of 4,700m on the approach to desert 6,000m peaks.

Lack of water in the Atacama can be a problem, and often Kausch was reliant on melting snow he collected from the summit area of the mountains. Thirst provided a great incentive to reach the top.

He also found interesting Inca archaeology on the summits of high peaks, and big fossils (ammonites and other sea creatures) on some of the southern 6,000ers in Argentina and Chile.

Some of the approaches, particularly in the Atacama were likely new, and occasionally not without danger: on one he had to bypass an area of land mines.

All the routes followed are tracked on GPS and published using Wikiloc, Kausch seeing this as a kind of payback for his amazing experiences, while hoping it will encourage more people to visit the Andes.

Prior to Kausch's quest the largest known collection of Andean 6,000ers by one man belonged to Michael Siegenthaler.

From 15 September 2004 - 18 June 2005 this Swiss guide climbed 60 6,000ers at the age of 60. An impressive achievement, which began with San Pablo (6,092m) in Chile and ended on the summit of Ecuador's Chimborazo (6,310m). Siegenthaler had much prior experience of the high Andes, having guided there over the years.

However, Kausch notes that at least three of these peaks are no longer considered 6,000m summits, either because they have been more accurately remeasured, or are subsidiary tops that simply do not have enough prominence.

You can follow Kausch's progress on his [Wikiloc channel](#)

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