

FABRIZIO CALEBASSO - MATTEO PASQUETTO

MONT BLANC

The complete rock climbing guide. ITALIAN SIDE

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Note

Climbing is a potentially dangerous sport in which participation is entirely at your own risk. All the information in this guide has been updated based upon information at the time of publication, however it is vital to evaluate every situation yourself before placing yourself in a life threatening situation or to seek the advice of experienced and qualified individuals.

FABRIZIO CALEBASSO
MATTEO PASQUETTO

MONTE BIANCO

All the rock routes. ITALIAN SIDE

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Opening Remarks

Dear Reader,

Allow us to introduce ourselves and start with a few lines on the work that, if you are patient and want to continue reading, will accompany you in the discovery of a world of rugged ridges, sharp spires, foreboding walls and tormented glaciers; some of which are amongst the most beautiful and enticing of all our beloved Alps. We are Fabrizio Calebasso and Matteo Pasquetto, two young men born respectively in Geneva and Varese, with an innate passion for nature and a profound curiosity that has brought us on numerous adventures both on our Alps and around the world.

Moving on from the necessary introductions, let us span for a few more lines on how the idea for this guidebook was born and tell you a little bit about the body of research, documentation, and obviously all the climbing, that is hidden between these pages.

It all started a few years ago in a pleasant crag in Ticino, when Roberto Capucciati, director of Versante Sud, proposed this project to Fabrizio. Without any hesitation and fascinated by the prospect, Fabrizio accepted the task and brought his climbing partner Matteo on board. The team was formed and a huge and stimulating adventure began!

As this is our first editorial endeavour, albeit one of notable commitment, it took almost a year of trial and error before we were able to find the right method and rhythm for both collecting the necessary information and organising it effectively. After this first year of research and experimentation we developed an effective strategy that involved collecting information both on the field, through the observation and repeating of countless routes, and by analysing guidebooks and specialised websites, only to then organise and archive everything in a structured manner using Google Drive; which proved to be a game changer as it allowed us to both consult and update the files independently and at any time. In fact, this proved to be a turning point in our efforts and allowed us to bring this at times daunting endeavour to a close in little more than nine months.

From the very beginning it was clear to us that the job would not just entail climbing a wide variety of beautiful routes of the Mont Blanc massif, but that the most important and strenuous part of the work would involve researching and reading a wide range of information. That said, worry not: we have climbed many routes and personally visited all the places described in this volume.

Therefore, we would like to thank those that have come before us and also undertook similar journeys: Gino Buscaini, with his complete and encyclopaedical guides TCI-CAI; Giovanni Bassanini, for the guidebooks published with Alp and Monte Bianco Supercrack; Vallot, Michel Piola and Patrick Gabarrou, for their beautiful volumes, which have been of fundamental support in our work!

Some of the most intriguing aspects to composing this volume have been both the possibility of exploring and deepening our knowledge of a massif that we have always visited and measured ourselves against, as well as the possibility of sharing with you readers our vision and way of living and experiencing the mountains. We believe that shutting ourselves in our own convictions and valleys, with no desire to learn, share and explore, brings no benefits. From the sharing of experiences and

points of view, even if diametrically opposite to our own, arises a great opportunity for comparison and growth, an opportunity that it would be a huge mistake not to take advantage of. Therefore, we thank all the people and Mountain Guides that offered to listen to us, share their excellent recommendations and a little of their time: it was a pleasure to share thoughts and stories with you around these beautiful mountains!

As you will have gathered from the lines above, curiosity and research are the engines that drive our movements through the mountains. Our objective with this guidebook is to stimulate in you that same curiosity and the same desire to know that accompanies and influences this very guidebook. Far from being a finished product, we would love for this book to push you outwards and live to the fullest all those feelings that being in the mountains can offer: from the smallest and most delicate sensorial perceptions, to the adventure that only an alpine route can offer. Because, in the end we all know that being able to "rough it out" and count on your own ingenuity and grit is what makes these experiences a little spicier and eventually satisfying!

That said, in our guidebook you will find all the necessary information with which to move safely through these mountains, helping you find the routes you are looking for and navigate the walls without getting lost; you will also find some words on the history that permeates the nooks and cracks of these mountains and which contributes to making them so fascinating.

What we ask of you is the ability to read the information we give critically: all decisions have to be taken independently and although we can give you indications and suggestions, we most certainly cannot replace your own independent evaluations!

Finally, to you dear readers, we ask a big favour that for us is of vital importance: share your thoughts and experiences at the guidamontebianco@versantesud E-Mail. Send us a report or simply the tale of your day in these mountains; let us know when you climb one of these beautiful routes; do not hesitate to suggest corrections or improvements to our work, even flagging mistakes that you will inevitably encounter (yes indeed, after all we are fallible human beings!); or even just let us know if you have appreciated our work.

We thank you for the kind attention that you have given us by reading this far and we hope that we have managed in our intention of capturing your imagination and making you dream from here to the very last page of this book.

Your authors

User's Guide

As we are practical people this guidebook is organised in a very simple and linear fashion: in the next few lines you will find a series of indications that will help you understand and decipher all the information contained within.

The basic idea behind all our work has been to give the reader a layout that is simple to comprehend and easy to navigate and for this reason the various indexes used throughout the book will be your compass.

The various indexes work on different scales: firstly, the index right-and-proper which gives you the routes in the order in which you will then find them in the book; then there will be an individual index for routes organised by grade, one by name and finally one by length.

The structure of the guide is developed on three different levels, let's look at them together.

MACRO AREA: there are three distinct macro areas: Val Veny, Brenva and Satelliti and Val Ferret. They form the backbone of this guidebook, the three-way crossing that you will face when you reach Courmayeur. The question that led to the division of the guide in this way was a simple one: where do I park my car if I want to tackle any given route? The answer was this three-way division. At the beginning of each macro area you will find an introduction that will help you orient yourself and give you some information about the history, curiosities, ideal conditions and season.

AREA: each of the three macro areas has then been divided into different areas, of which there are different amounts for each macro area. The areas rotate around the starting point, whether this be the nearest or most accessible Rifugio, Bivacco or parking lot for the climbs that you want to tackle. Attention: this does not mean that to reach a given climb you have to pass by the access point described in any given Area, this is just a way to make the division of the various areas clearer and more practical. Just as with the macro areas, each area is accompanied by a page of information that describes the most notable characteristics, some history and peculiarities.

SECTOR: this is the final step of the division and describes the specific wall in question. Within each sector you will find the single routes and an outline of their itineraries, as well as annotated photos that will help you find your bearings during your vertical adventures. As with the other subdivisions, each sector includes a few lines of introduction to each individual wall. Each of these subdivisions will go with a map on which we will outline the approach and the necessary information for easy yet thorough route reading.

For each individual route there will be a description:

6. Divine Providence

P. Gabarrou F. Marigny - 1984

Length: 1500m – 25P (P = pitches)

Grade: 7c (7a obl.)/V (obl. = obligatory or mandatory i.e. the maximum obligatory difficulties you will encounter)

Exposure: East

Gear: Double set of Friends (0.3 - 1) a 2 and a 3, a set of Micros, a set of nuts

- Index number followed by the routes name
- First ascensionists and year of first ascent
- The length of the route in metres followed by the number of pitches
- The grade: this is given, where possible, with three different values that are divided by a slash (/). The maximum technical grade (using the French or UIAA grading systems), followed by the protectability (or ease with which you can place gear), and the "overall commitment" grade (see the explanatory table in the following page entitled "Protectability" and "Overall Commitment"). For the sake of clarity let's just remember the difference between the French and UIAA grades: the first is overall difficulty of a single pitch when free climbed, the second is the difficulty of a single move that we could find on a route
- The routes exposure and hence if it is in the sun or not
- Gear: the gear needed always includes your standard alpine climbing tools. This is taken for granted and not reiterated for each route. Each individual is free to choose what they regard as their basic gear as this varies greatly according to preferences, experience and knowledge of the area. The gear outlined for a significant portion of the routes described is therefore to be considered in addition to your standard alpine climbing set-up. Furthermore, for certain routes we do not include a description of the gear needed. We believe that those who choose to embark on these routes will not require suggestions for the material needed.
- A description and a detailed pitch by pitch itinerary
- Descent: for all routes we recommend and describe a descent, in the case that there isn't one consult the description for the neighbouring route or the sector's introductory notes where you will find the information you are looking for
- Another fundamental part of this guidebook are the annotated photos. For almost all routes you will find an annotated photo where we trace the routes itinerary, this will be your main source of direction and that to which we entrust the hard task of giving you accurate directions.

Everything you will find in this guidebook's pages is presented in a specific order: clockwise from left to the right, so as to make all the information you read standardised, with a clear and linear layout.

Finally, we use the grading system found in all Versante Sud guidebooks. Below is their description:

PROTECTABILITY			
S1	Normal crag style bolting. Space between bolts is never more than 3-4 m. Falls are just a few metres and without consequences.	R1	Easily protected with solid gear placement. Short obligatory sections. Falls are just a few metres and without consequences.
S2	Spaced out bolts, and some obligatory sections between bolts. Falls can be up to ten metres at the most but without objective dangers of injury.	R2	Not always protectable but the gear you can place is solid and safe. Some obligatory sections between gear placements. Falls can be up to a few metres at the most but without objective dangers of injury.
S3	Spaced out bolts and almost always obligatory climbing. Distance between bolts can be above 5 metres with potential big falls although not excessively dangerous.	R3	Hard to protect with gear placement often sparse and hard to identify. Long obligatory sections. Length of potential falls up to 7-8 metres at the most although you could get injured.
S4	Extremely spaced out bolts (over 7 metres) with obligatory moves. A fall could cause injury.	R4	Hard to protect with gear placement often sparse, hard to identify and mostly unreliable and adequate only for catching small falls. Long obligatory sections. Length of falls up to 15 metres with the chance of blowing the anchor and a high chance of injury.
S5	Bolts over 10 metres apart, obligatory moves and sections where a fall would almost certainly cause injury (due to the presence of ledges, terraces or the ground).	R5	Hard to protect with gear placement often sparse, hard to identify and mostly unreliable and adequate only for catching small falls. Long obligatory sections. Falls could be long, blow anchors and potentially mean hitting the ground, resulting in certain injury.
S6	Only partially bolted and not at the cruxes, often extremely spaced out, even above 20 metres, where a fall could prove fatal.	R6	Cannot place gear if not for brief and insignificant sections that are far from the crux pitches of the route. A fall could have lethal consequences.

OVERALL COMMITMENT

<p>I Short route requiring a few hours, close to the road and with easy access. Easy environment and easy retreat.</p>	<p>V Very long wall in a big wall style, usually requires a bivvy on the wall. Hard to retreat and severe environment.</p>
<p>II A route with various pitches on a wall over 200 metres long, easy approach even if it could require moving fast. Easy to retreat from the route.</p>	<p>VI Big-wall that will require multiple days on the wall, alpine environment, hard to retreat.</p>
<p>III Route over 300 metres long, severe environment, requires most of the day. Could entail a long approach and retreat could be cumbersome.</p>	<p>VII All the characteristics of the VI grade but turned up a notch, such as in the case of Himalayan big walls that require an expedition if they are to be faced effectively.</p>
<p>IV Route that is far from the valley. Will take an entire day. Retreat could be difficult and not necessarily along the same route.</p>	

INTERNATIONAL LAND-AIR RESCUE SIGNS FOR HELICOPTERS AND PLANES

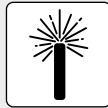
WE NEED HELP

Land-air signs



Yes

Red flare or light



WE DON'T NEED HELP

Land-air signs



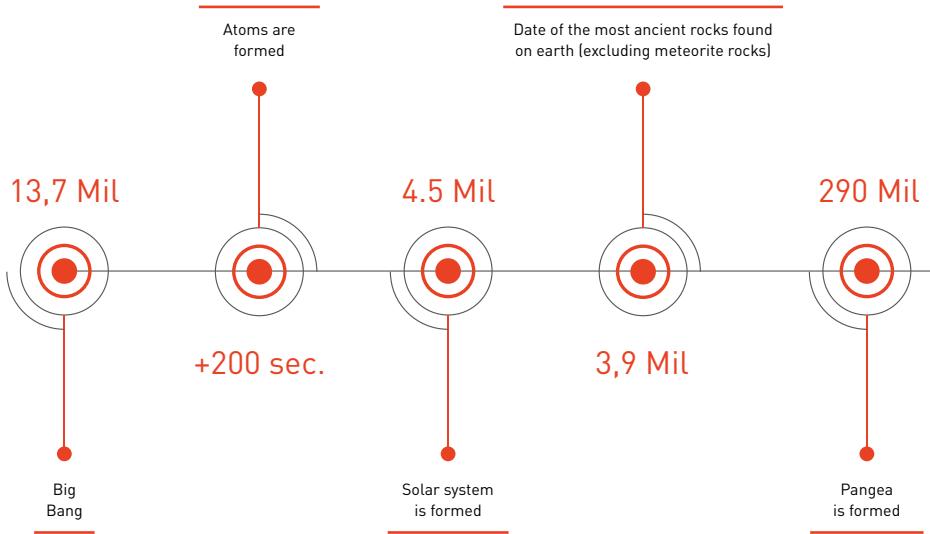
No



Red Gear / red flag

Square shape 100x100cm.
Red central circle (60cm diameter).
White ring 15cm

Geology



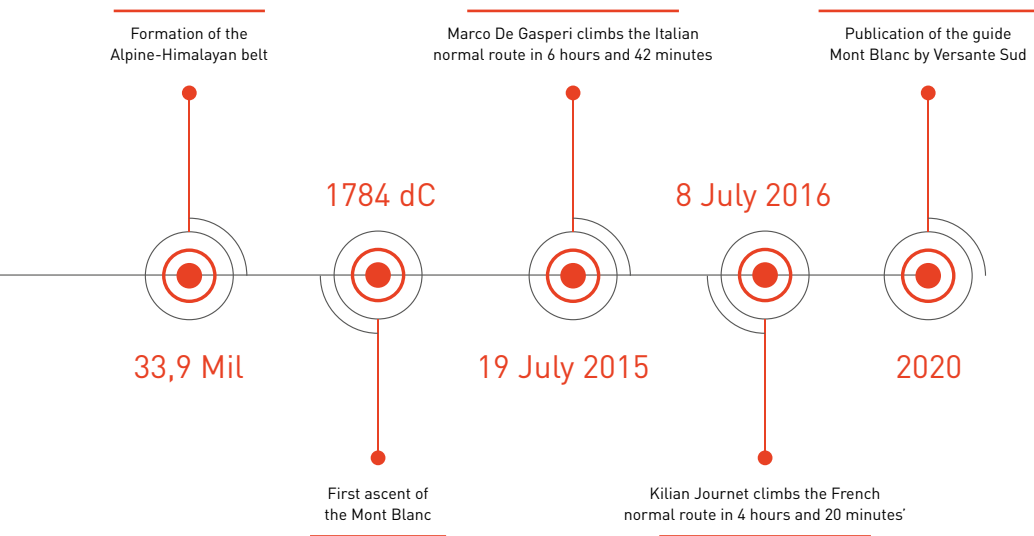
The Mont Blanc massif is found on the Cenozoic Orogenic belt of mountain chains which stretches all the way to the Himalayan Alps.

The Alps arose from the collision of the African and Eurasian tectonic plate, that exerted huge force on the Alpine Tethys basin that spread from East to West and which in the geological era between the Permian and the Miocene, separated Northern Africa and Asia. The huge amount of force generated was dispersed with the rise of the Eurasian plate on top of the African plate, sending it into subduction and leading to the formation of the Alps.

In an initial phase of this process, around 280 million years ago, there occurred an initial orogenic phase that led to the formation of a smaller chain of geological features: this phase is of great interest when studying and understanding the lithotypes that are later involved in the Alpine orogeny. In this phase the movement of the two plates, thanks to the heat generated by the friction, allowed for the formation of magma that went on to create a pluton of significant proportions and a depth of around 20km. This pluton, both due to its large size and the isolating effect of the rocks in which it was enclosed, was subject to a slow and constant cooling process that allowed for the crystal lattices to develop in an orderly fashion. This in turn led to the creation of large and medium sized structures.

In fact, this is clearly noticeable for us climbers, whereby the size of the crystals found on the Mont Blanc's granite gain in size as we get closer and closer to the central part of the massif. This is because of the reduced heat dispersion and the slower cooling that characterised the central and more internal parts of the pluton.

Once this intrusive phase was complete, the mass of cooling magma was subject to a significant



evolution that led to it being exposed over the course of millions of years. Almost 70 million years ago the Alpine orogeny commenced and lifted this gigantic batholith of magmatic rock. During the Alpine orogeny the pluton of the Mont Blanc gradually rose and during this process sedimentary and metamorphic rock was both deposited and eroded. This layer is still easily recognisable to this day both as deposits at the feet of the granite structures and as a sort of shell that encloses the entire Mont Blanc massif. For example, the rocks found at the base of the Skyway's first pillar are of alternating sedimentary layers of dark slate schist and calcareous schist. On the Brouillard Ridge we can see a clear example of how the outer shell, originally made up of carbonate sedimentary rock (limestone) formed around 542 to 251 million years ago, which was subject to contact metamorphism which transformed it into extremely fragile calcschists that are highly susceptible to erosion.

During its rise, the pluton body was exposed to huge pressure and forces that led to fractures; these fractures are the very ones that we seek to climb with so much passion and admiration. However, they were also the vents for rising hydrothermal fluids that are extremely rich in minerals. During their venting these hydrothermal fluids, encountering significantly lower pressure levels and temperatures, deposited crystals that gave life to beautiful and rare structures that can often be admired across the massif. These quartz crystals have enabled researchers to date these structures, using radiometric dating, as far back as 18.5 million years old. Furthermore, some of these quartzes contain bubbles of water, that are known as "Enidri", that have allowed for the calculation and discovery of the thermodynamic conditions in which these processes occurred, revealing temperatures of around 400°C at a depth of 16 kilometres and pressures of up to 380Mpa.

The Mont Blanc massif as we see it before us covers an area of around 650 km² and includes 28 peaks above 4,000 metres that are connected by an infinite web of ridges and spires of a mesmerising beauty.





The Permafrost

Reading this guidebook, you will certainly have noticed the numerous references and warnings related to the “conditions of the glacier” and the “changing of the seasons”. This is because over the last few years we have been witnessing a radical and profound change in the climate, that in turn affects the conditions and hence the safety of the alpine environment. We will not address the causes of this phenomenon as they are too long and complex for these pages and would deviate from our primary goal. Instead we will attempt to explain what the primary effects of these climatic changes are on the alpine environment.

Let's start by clarifying certain essential aspects for a proper understanding of the change that is occurring. You have certainly already heard about Permafrost, but what exactly is it? Permafrost is a specific thermal condition in which a given area of the planet's surface can find itself in. To date, around 25% of the world's land is in this condition, distributed amongst high altitude and latitude areas. Any area of ground or rock that remains frozen for over two years is definable as permafrost. Here it is essential to define the difference between active surface permafrost that is more susceptible to climate change and deeper layers that are insulated and hence should never be subject to melting. The summer of 2018 was the third out of the last four summers to register average temperatures that can be defined as significantly higher than average. This has led to a rapid degradation of the alpine environment.

This rise in temperatures has caused an accelerated melting of the layer of permafrost that has been present for millennia within some of the Mont Blanc's rock structures. This permafrost has acted as a sort of cement that keeps massive structures glued together, supporting spires and ridges, and whose melting has caused them to give way and collapse. Not to mention the retreat of the glaciers. Furthermore, on top of these anomalous heatwaves and sudden changes of temperature, a further phenomenon that is intensifying is freeze-thaw weathering, namely the breaking up of rocks through the normal freeze and thaw cycles of water that is present in the rock's cracks.

During the summers of 2018 and 2019 there were significant collapses of structures that were deemed solid and far from being considered in a state of advanced degradation. In fact, on the August 22, 2018, spires on the Arête des Cosmiques collapsed and on the September 25, a significant section of the Trident du Tacul collapsed, a coveted satellite peak that included routes of a huge interest to climbers. On top of these two massive rockfalls, there were hundreds of other ones of smaller proportions that involved the entire massif. The research being conducted, that tries to measure these events (850 significant collapses on the massif in 2017), highlights some shocking facts including that the ice that is being brought to light and melting below our feet is incredibly ancient. Suffice to think that the collapse that occurred in 2017 on the north face of the Aiguille du Midi, involving around 50m³ of rock and revealed a layer of ice that has been dated to four thousand years ago. And that is not all, the ice that emerged on the newly exposed Tacul face was dated as far back as 2,650 years. Although this might seem as an irrelevant piece of news, next time you are climbing remember that you are on ice that is 2,000 years old and that we are tapping into historic reserves.

All of which should serve as a warning. The collapse on the Trident du Tacul during the night of 25/09/2018 moved around 80,000m³ of rock and affected the extremely popular route "Lepiney", as well as the first pitches of the south face including "Les Intouchables". During the 2018 season the Lepiney route seemed to be frequented but we would not recommend climbing in this sector at least for a couple of seasons due to instability. We would recommend letting nature take its course and allowing it to clean up the remaining unstable rock left on the face. But worry not, even if you pass on these routes there are countless others that you can climb instead.

📷 The Trident du Tacul before (left) and after (right) the collapse.



Notes on Flora and Fauna

The flora and fauna of the Mont Blanc massif has a rich and varied heritage. In fact, all the typical animal and plant species that are found in the Western Alps can be found here. However, the soil on the Massif is quite acidic due to the magmatic rocks that it is made of. Furthermore, the steep walls of the mountains and the strong forces exerted by the glaciers have made the area tough for flora and fauna to prosper.

As often happens in the animal and plant kingdom the various species are subdivided by the elevation at which they can proliferate. At different elevation ranges there are different habitat niches that certain species of animals either stick to or shift between; as for example the fox and the chamois.

The various levels that define the different elevation habitats are:

- **Sub Alpine:** ranges from 800-1,000 metres to 2,000-2,200 metres above sea level
- **Alpine:** ranges from 2,000-2,200 metres to 2,600-2,800 metres above sea level
- **Nival:** extends from 2,600-2,800 to the summits that exceed this elevation

Each of these elevations has its own peculiar characteristics in terms of both flora and fauna.

In the Sub Alpine you will find mostly coniferous plants such as larch and fir trees whose underbrush is home to species such as the *Lilium Martagnon* and the *Acetosella Vulgaris*. On the other hand, the species of animal that inhabit this elevation are the chamois that also shifts between habitats, stags and roe-deer. It is also common to find squirrels, as well as the red, green, and black woodpeckers. At the top section of this elevation, between 1,900-2,200 metres, where the forest of coniferous plants starts to thin out and give way to lower bushes that are more resistant to the altitude, you will find an abundance of blueberries and rhododendrons. In this belt you also find animals such as the pheasant that are well known for their mating antics that are often times violent.

The Alpine area is characterised by thin and pointy grasslands that are resistant to the snow and cold, different types of moss and lichens and a multitude of spectacular flowers, the most renowned of which are the *Stella Alpina*, the *Genziana Acaule*, the *Genziana di Clusius* and the rare *Campanula Tiroside*. The higher part of this area is scarce in vegetation and is often characterised by glacial moraines and rocky glacial deposits. In this habitat the animal species that you are most likely to meet are ibexes, marmots, royal falcons and (thanks to a species reintroduction project carried out in the 80s) the *Avvoltoi degli Agnelli*. You may also encounter more elusive animals such as the Mountain Hare, the *Ermellino* and the *Lagopede* of the alps, all of which are species that change colour according to the season.

In the Nival plain vegetation is virtually inexistent if not for a limited number of plants that are able to adapt and grow in this extremely tough environment. These include the *Ranuncolo dei Ghiacciai*, and the *Sassifraga a Due Fiori*. This belt is inhospitable to large mammals and they will only spend a limited amount of time here. You will however find some species of birds such as the *Gracchio Alpino* and the *Picchio Muraiolo*.

The various exposures and types of soil found on the massif mean that in different areas you will encounter different plants and animals, even if the variation is minimal: for example, the *Genziana delle Alpi* is often found on the Swiss and French sides and not on the Italian side.

An admirable project that allows us to gain a good and immediate understanding of the areas flora is the well-maintained botanical garden found just outside of the Pavillon station of the Skyway. Here you can observe and learn about the various species that inhabit these valleys.

We also take the chance to remind you that many of these plants and animals are protected by regional and national laws and we invite you to respect them and use appropriate behaviour.

📷 Chamois



📷 Great spotted woodpecker





📷 Blueberries



📷 Fern



📷 Larch Tree



Camping on the Glacier

RULES AND SUGGESTIONS

A contentious topic on which there is a lack of clarity is that of high elevation camping and whether it is permitted. Let us clarify:

On the **Italian side** each individual region holds legislative authority. We therefore refer to the Valle d'Aosta regional law:

The Law in question is the **Legge regionale 24 giugno 2002, n. 8** of which we are most interested in article 19: *attendamenti occasionali e campeggi mobile in tenda* (temporary and mobile tents). The law reads as follows:

1. Can be authorized – for a maximum period of forty-eight hours – occasional attendances organized by non-profit entities or associations for social purposes, in places not served by outdoor accommodations and in any case located at a distance of not less than 500 meters from the nearest active complex.
2. Mobile tent camps, organized exclusively for the benefit of its members, by non-profit organizations or associations for the realization of social purposes and placed in public or private areas – in which, in addition to convenient access for vehicles, the general services indispensable for ensuring compliance with hygiene and health standards and safeguarding public health are ensured – may also be authorized for a maximum period of sixty days.
3. The Mayor authorizes the occasional attendances and mobile campsites referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2, after hearing the regional structure responsible for hydrogeological restrictions, as well as the local health authority regarding the health of the chosen area.
4. The provisions of this article do not apply to mountaineering bivouacs in tents, at altitudes above 2,500 meters.

And the following **Art. 20: Divieti (prohibitions)**

1. Except for the cases referred to in Article 19, any form of stop or stay in a tent is prohibited, even for periods of less than twenty-four hours.

While **Art. 21: Sanzioni (sanctions)**

1. The violation of the provisions of articles 19, paragraphs 1 and 2, and 20 entails, against offenders, the application of the administrative pecuniary sanction for the payment of a sum of money from € 300 to € 1,700.

In summary, this means that beneath 2,500 metres above sea level any type of overnight bivvy is not permitted, whereas above this elevation the only formal restriction is that you must be at least 500 metres away from the nearest private property.

With regards to **French territory** we must refer to **Law N°102/92** that states:

Art 2: camping or stationing of camper vans is forbidden across the entire territory

Art 3: you can set up a bivvy at high altitudes from when the sun sets to when it rises

What can we make of these laws?

For the Italian side what we stated above is valid. For the French side, and specifically for the area covered in this guidebook which includes the Mont Blanc du Tacul Satellite Peaks, alpine bivvys in tents are allowed in the measure by which you set and dismantle your tent with each setting and rising of the sun. Often this rule is ignored, and tents are left mounted for multiple days on the glaciers of the satellite peaks. Strictly speaking this is illegal. However, in this particular area it seems that the practice is tolerated by the authorities.

In any case, on top of the laws outlined above the rules that must always be respected are those of common sense: it is always good practice to avoid leaving traces of excrement, waste and food on the glacier; respect the people around you by not pitching tents on the trails that lead to the walls or in areas that are subject to a lot of traffic; take care to pitch your tent in a place that is not bothersome to others which will allow you to both sleep peacefully without the risk of rockfall or ending up in a crevasse.

SOURCES

For the Italian side we consulted the official Courmayeur website: www.comunedicourmayeur.ao.it

For the French side: www.chamoniarde.com/montagne/conditions-montagne#



The Disputed Border

Unbelievable as it may seem, in the heart of Europe two countries that are part of the G8 are still involved in a border dispute. As too often occurs, it appears to be little more than a game that is made possible by incapable politicians. We will now try and summarise the most important historical moments that make up this story, almost 300 years in the making, but which are still pertinent today due to the recent revisiting of online mapping by online cartography giants such as Google Earth.

1720

Kingdom of Savoy, the capital is transferred to Turin and the entire massif is included in the Kingdom of Sardinia. No border divides the Mont Blanc.

1796, TREATY OF PARIS

Napoleon Bonaparte's army imposes grave sanctions on Vittorio Emanuele II of Savoy and various Savoy lands are taken over. However, what interests us the most for this small piece of research is that for the first time a border is established that divides the massif: this division sees the taller peaks residing in French territory whereas in the Italian side we find only some of the lesser peaks.

1815, CONGRESS OF VIENNA

As the Napoleonic era comes to an end there is an attempt to reinstate the "Ancien Regime". The lands return to the rule of the King of Sardinia; which means that the borders on the Mont Blanc are no longer national but internal and the Mont Blanc is split up between the Duke of Aosta and the Duke of Savoy.

1860, TREATY OF TURIN

This treaty sanctions the annex of Nice and Savoy to France. A concession that is mediated by Cavour with the French Emperor in exchange for his support of the unification of Italy brought about by the Savoy monarchy. In so doing, the border that was previously between the different Dukes of the same reign becomes a national border. It is worth noting that the border was defined exactly as had been done by the Dukes of Savoy and Piedmont, without however going into detail on the highest parts of the massif which were defined as inhospitable (for practical reasons at the time it was impossible to perform accurate cartography of the more remote areas of the massif). The summit of the Mont Blanc is therefore divided between the two states.

1865

Jean-Joseph Mieulet, leader of the French army, draws up a topographic map of the massif. In this map there appears for the first time a new border: the summit of Mont Blanc is completely within the French territory, completely ignoring the breakwater line and the morphologic division of the two sides of the mountain. In this way all previous bilateral treaties are ignored. Here begins a significant difference in how the two nations define the border, whereby Italian maps depict the border as was established during the Savoy reign, whereas the French version is updated arbitrarily.

On this topic, Laura and Giorgio Aliprandi, two eminent experts on historical cartography of the Western Alps, state that Mont Blanc is Franco-Italian and that the cartography of J.J. Mieulet is a

fraud that has no legal basis. According to scholars, there is irrefutable proof that the summit is also Italian such as a letter by Napoleon III in 1860 to the Milanese Count Francesco Arese, entrusted by Cavour to negotiate in secret with the Emperor for the annexing of the Savoy Kingdom. In this letter, just before the signing of the treaty of succession, it is clarified that the summit of Mont Blanc would define the border between Savoy and Aosta.

FIRST HALF OF 1900

The political chaos of war does little to help clarify this situation and actually adds still more confusion, whereby the various regions that encompass the summit of Mont Blanc squabble over where it resides. This confusion continues up until the Treaty of Paris in 1947 which establishes bilaterally the reinstatement of the borders according to the Treaty of Turin in 1860, which made no mention of any change to the border on the massif.

1957-1965, MONT BLANC TUNNEL

During the planning and construction of the tunnel the two countries establish a border so as to finance the construction of the tunnel equally. Coherent with the Treaty of Turin, without taking into consideration the errors present in the cartography of Mieulet, the border is established on the summit of Mont Blanc and the tunnel establishes the constitutional border.

1988

For the first time in this issues "modern" history, during a revision of responsibilities for the maintenance of the tunnel, disputes on the border arise once again.

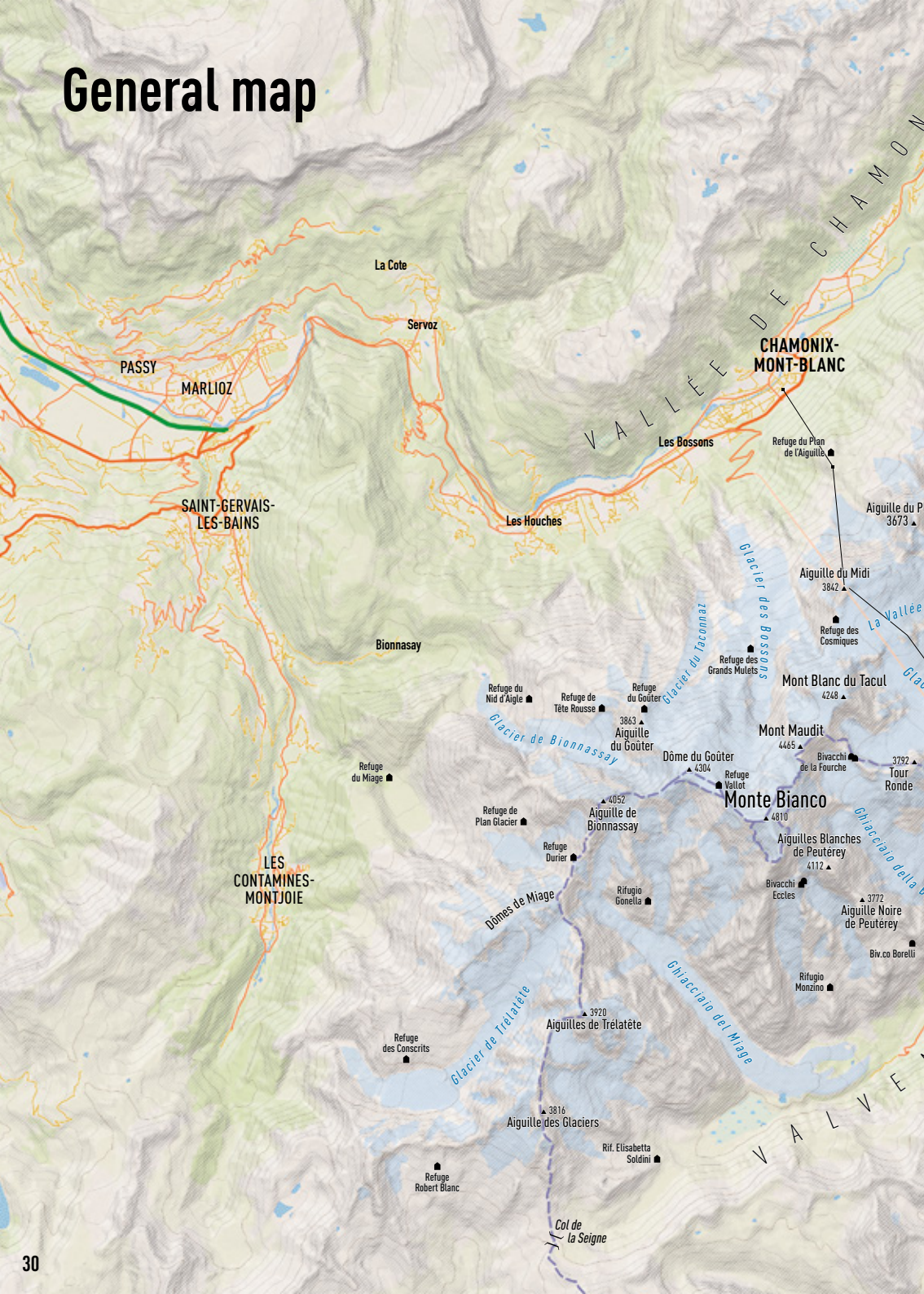
1995

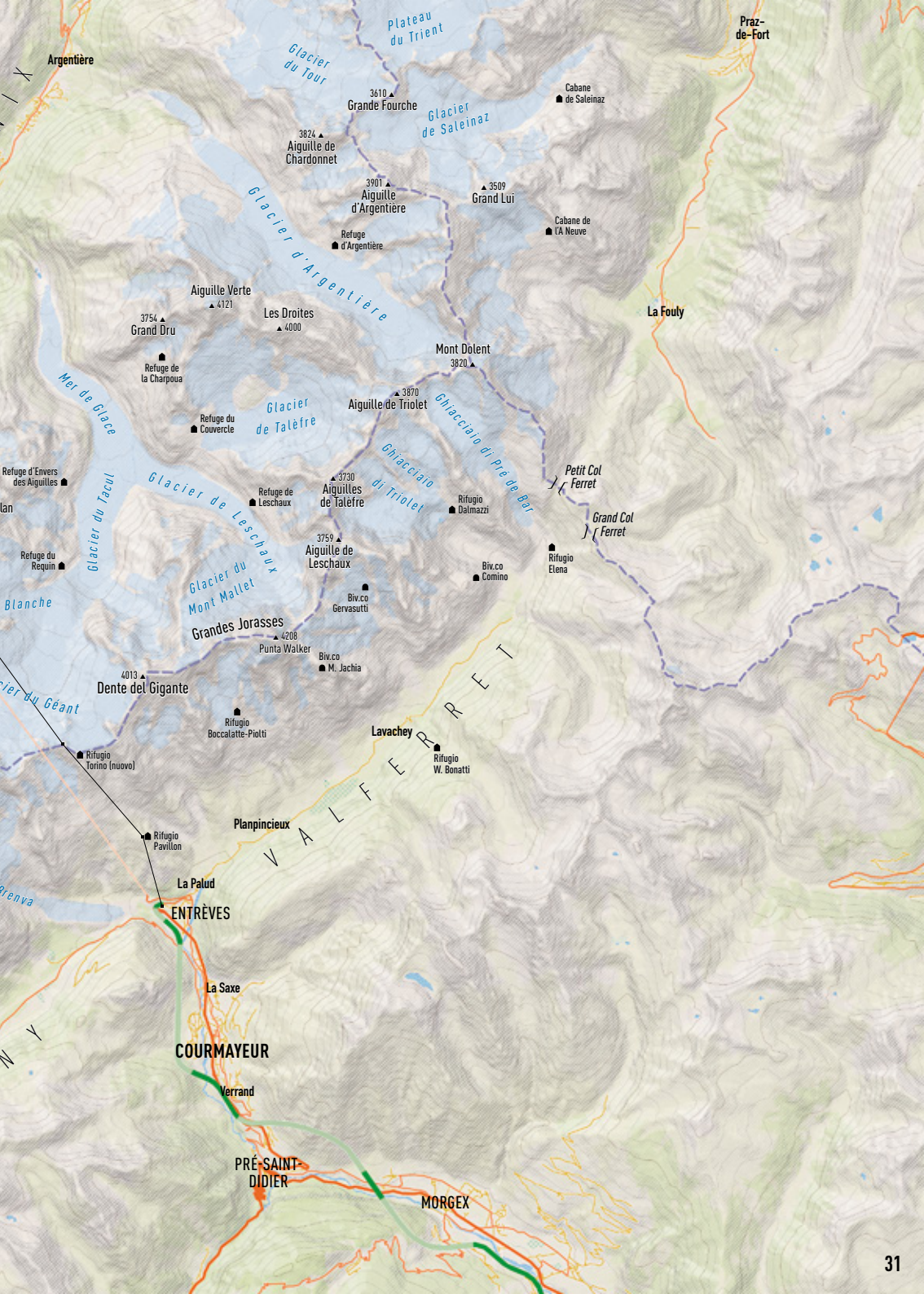
The Italian state creates a working group to establish and clarify the dispute on the border; the answer by the French state highlights that the dispute is not limited to the summit of Mont Blanc but also involves the area around the Dome du Gouter and the Colle del Gigante, also worsened by the fact that the French historical cartography was lost during the world wars.

2015

You are probably wondering what all this history has to do with alpinism and this guidebook: first of all, it is interesting how to this day there can still be border disputes between two countries that are both part of the European Union. Secondly, the fencing that we are forced to jump over when we go climbing has been placed arbitrarily by the mayor of Chamonix after he decided that it would be too dangerous to access the Ghiacciaio del Gigante from the Rifugio Torino, thus imposing a ban on entry that lacks any legal basis. Furthermore, this act of provocation was also worsened by the managers of the Chamonix cable cars that increased prices for those that were intending to do the Aiguille du Midi – Punta Helbronner traverse without first consulting the managers of the Italian lifts.

General map





Aiguille Croux 3,251m

INTRODUCTION, HISTORY AND NOTABLE EVENTS

L'Aiguille Croux presents itself as the final buttress of the Innominata. It is characterised by extremely steep north-east and south-east faces that are made up of very solid and steep granite, in particular the wall that faces the Freney basin. The most interesting climbing routes are found on the north-east face, which however, particularly in the more dry and hot seasons, can present some serious approach issues. On the other hand, the routes that go up the south-east face are of undoubted elegance even if they have some sections where the rock is not up to the standard of the best granite in the Mont Blanc massif. That said they are still pleasant to climb and, for a partnership that doesn't waste time in chit chat, are great options for those that have only a day at their disposal.

LOGISTICS AND INFORMATION

Using the indications for the Monzino hut: go up the second section of ferrata where you will arrive at the presence of the buttress where slightly further up you can find the Rifugio Monzino. From here it is possible to walk along the bottom of the wall along trails without having to go up to the hut; pass a moraine and arrive at the base of the wall. The approach to the routes is perfectly feasible in a day, even if many prefer to sleep at the hut and then attack the routes the following day. **200mins for the direct route to the wall; 30mins from the Rifugio Monzino**

1. La Déscente aux Enfers

S. Badier, R. Vogler - 1992

Length: 150m

Grade: 7a (6b obl.)

Esposizioni: South-East

Gear: You will need a Friend #4

Descent: Rappel down the route

6a+, 6b, 6b+, 7a, 6c

2. Visite guidée

L. Amstutz, R. Vogler, G. Long - 1991

Length: 250m

Grade: 6b (6a obl.)

Exposure: South-East

Descent: Rappel down the route

6a+, 6b, 6b, 5b, 6a+, 6b, 5c

3. Souvenir d'Italie

M. Motto, R. Vogler - 1992

Length: 320m

Grade: 6c (6b+ obl.)

Exposure: South-East

Descent: Rappel down the route

6a+, 6a, 6b, 6c, 6b, 6c, 6b+, 6c

4. Que cherches tu Jean-Marie

M. Motto, R. Vogler - 1992

Length: 320m

Grade: 6c (6b obl.)

Exposure: South-East

Descent: Rappel down the route

6a+, 6b, 6a+, 6b+, 6a+, 6c, 6a+

5. Eurotem

G. Long, M. Motto - 1992

Length: 350m

Grade: 6c (6b obl.)

Exposure: South-East

Descent: Rappel down the route.

6a, 5b, 6c, 6b, 6b, 6b+, 6a, 6a+, 5b



Monte Bianco
▲ 4810

Mont Blanc
de Courmayeur
▲ 4748

Grand
Pilier d'Angle
▲ 4263

3557 ▲
Pic Moore

Col Major
4740
Haut Glacier
du Mont Blanc

3934 Col de
Peutèrey

Aiguilles
Blanches
de Peutèrey
▲ 4112

Ghiacciaio della Brenva
1790m

Pic
Luigi Amedeo
▲ 4460

4022 Col Eccles
4044
Pic Eccles
Biv.co
Lampugnani
Biv.co
Crippa

Pic Gugliemina
▲ 3893

Glacier oriental
des Aiguilles Blanches

4027 Col Emile
Rey
4069 ▲
Mont du Brouillard

Punta
Innominata
▲ 3729

Bivacco
Craveri

Aiguilles des
Dames Anglaises

Aiguille Noire
de Peutèrey
▲ 3772
▲ 3746
Punta Bich

Pointe Baretti
4013 ▲

Ghiacciaio di Brouillard

3256 ▲
Aiguille Croux

Pointe Brendel
▲ 3497
▲ 3355
P. Welzenbach

▲ 3067
Pic Gamba

2741 Col des
Chasseurs

Mont Rouge
de Peutèrey
2941 ▲

Fauteuil des
Allemands

Bivacco
Boretti

3350 Colle del
Brouillard

3349 ▲
Aiguilles Rouges
du Brouillard

Rifugio
Monzino

2525 ▲
Aiguille de Châtelet

Jardin du Miage
Lac du Jardin
du Miage



📷 Daniele Nardi on the A. Croux (© Fabrizio Calebasso)





Grand Pilier d'Angle

INTRODUCTION, HISTORY AND NOTABLE EVENTS

The most beautiful Pillar on the Italian side of the Mont Blanc, it rises for almost 1,000 metres above the lower Brenva Glacier; its east face shows itself as a wall that is divided into three sections, the first around 400 metres long is a steep spur that is not particularly compact and slightly dirty, the second part is made up of the famous and imposing red shield of beautiful compact granite and the pitches that go up this section will give you goose bumps, and bring you to live incredible and unforgettable experiences. On these 300 metres of granite you will find some of the most isolated and committing routes of the entire massif, among which the famous Divine Providence, masterpiece of Gabarrou and Marsigny. The third and final part of the wall is made up of a rock face that is around 300 metres high although less steep and compact than the famous shield. Depending on the time of year this final part can be snowy and covered in ice. On the other hand, the north face presents itself as an interesting and imposing wall, dotted with beautiful ice formations.

LOGISTICS AND INFORMATION

From the Bivacco Borgna, rappel directly of the railing (it is easier to rappel on the left side looking towards the Gran Pilier), the subsequent four rappels are on anchors made up of bolts connected with cords, you will find them easily on the right-hand side (facing the valley) of the gully of debris that runs directly to the left of the refuge. After the four 25 metre rappels, and crossing a brief and steep snow slope above the bergschrund of the Brenva, which you must cross whilst paying particular attention after having reached the right hand side of the snow slope, so as to reach the flat levelled Brenva Glacier; you will cross it in the direction of the snowy col that you will see before you, the Col Moore. Once you reach the col, after having overcome its bergschrund, move to the left (looking at the Grand Pilier) and find the first rappel, you will find it behind a rocky outcropping, and it is made up of a pink cord. Recently, the usual suspects, bolted new anchors in the more compact and vertical rock face to the left. However, when we repeated the routes, we were unable to find them and used the old pitons. With five 25/30m rappels, often not linear, you will reach the underlying glacial basin, cross the bergschrund and quickly move along it until you reach the base of the wall and the start of the routes. Attention: the crossing of the Fourche and the Col Moore, as well as the glacial basin below the wall, are extremely susceptible to discharges of snow, ice and rocks from the seracs and rock face above. Choose the time of day and season for crossing carefully. **120/180 mins.**



Aiguille de Saussure
3839 ▲

▲ 3970
Triangle

Pointe Lachenal
3613 ▲

Tunnel du Mont Blanc

4248 ▲
Mont Blanc du Tacul

▲ 3468
Pyramide du Tacul

Pointe Durier
▲ 3997

Col Maudit
4029

▲ 4114
Aiguilles du Diable

Le Petit Capucin
3693 ▲

Pointe Adolphe Rey
▲ 3535

Pointe Mieulet
▲ 4287

Pointe de l'Androsage
▲ 4107

▲ 3913
Aiguillettes du Tacul

▲ 3838
Le Grand Capucin

▲ 3639
Trident du Tacul

Ritugio Torino

Mont Maudit
4465 ▲

Biv.co Borgna

Biv.co Ghiglione

Tour Ronde
3792 ▲

Aiguille d'Entrèves
3600 ▲

4303
Col de la Brenva

Refuge du Gôter

Haut Glacier de la Brenva

La Fourche

Trident de la Brenva
3720 ▲

Glacier de la Tour Ronde

3504 ▲
Pic de la Brenva

Monte Bianco
4810 ▲

Col Major
4740

Haut Glacier du Mont Blanc

Mont Blanc de Courmayeur
4748 ▲

Grand Pilier d'Angle
4243 ▲

Col Moore
3524

▲ 3557
Pic Moore

Bivacco della Brenva

Pic Luigi Amedeo
4660 ▲

4027 Col Emile Rey
▲ 4069
Mont du Brouillard

4044 ▲
Pic Eccles

Biv.co Crippa
Biv.co Lampugnani

3934
Col de Peutère

Aiguilles Blanches de Peutère
▲ 4112

Pic Guattermina
3893 ▲

Bivacco Craveri

Aiguilles des Dames Anglaises

Pierre à Moulin





1

7

5

8

2

3

4

6



Mont Maudit

Anticima
Mont Maudit

Clocher du Tacul

Fourche

Pointe de
L'Androsace

Pilier rouge du
Clocher du Tacul

Chandelle
du Tacul

Trident
du Tacul

A

A.2

34

35

36

37

38

39

40

33

32

APPROACH

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- 40. Trident du Tacul p. 254
- 41. Grand Capucin p. 258
- 42-43. Petit Capucin and Roi du Siam p. 276
- 44. Pic Adolphe Rey p. 284

- A. Fourche
- A.2. Fourche Variant
- B. Couloir Macho



Mont Blanc du Tacul

Petit Capucin

Gran Capucin

Roi du Siam

Pic Adolphe Rey

Aiguilles
du Diables

41

B

42-43

44



📷 Via Bonatti, Grand Capucin (© Matteo Della Bordella)



and exposed. Once you pass the big roof it would be very hard to retreat back the way you came. The varied climbing is physically strenuous. Even if a lot of the gear used to establish the route has been removed, you will find a certain number of pegs and therefore it isn't necessary for you to bring any with you. Various anchors need to be built.

P1: Same start as "Alta Tension"; climb along a significant crack followed by a thin one until you reach a debris ledge. 50 metres, 6a

P2: Follow the dihedral and leave it when the crack stops and traverse to the left on blind cracks until you reach the anchor. Bolted anchor. 40 metres, 6b

P3: Goes straight up from the anchor via dihedrals and cracks. Bolted anchor. 40 metres, 7a

P4: Go up the large dihedral on the right until you reach a peg with a carabiner; pendulum and reach the anchor. Bolted anchor. 40 metres, 7a

P5: Go up the magnificent crack and enter the nook above the jammed boulder. Bolted anchor. 20 metres, 6c

P6: Exit the roof and face the large crack. When it ends continue up to a small terrace. Build your own anchor. 40 metres, 7c (6b-A2)

P7: Go up the chimney and arrive at the base of the 40 metre Bonatti wall. Anchor on bolts and pitons. 6a

P8: Here the pitch is the same as the Bonatti's until you reach the terraces. Anchor on bolts and pegs. 40 metres, 7a.

P9: From the terrace identify the crack that grooves the slab on the left of a nice positive dihedral that is topped by a triangular roof and climb the crack that was already clearly visible from the last pitch. Bolted anchor. 30 metres, 5c.

P10: Follow the dihedral above and the overhanging crack on the left. Old abandoned anchor and a protrusion. 30 metres, 6a+

P11: Climb to the right of the flakes reaching a peg with a carabiner. Traverse to the right and follow a crack until you reach an arête under the large and dark overhangs. Anchor on pegs which you can back-up with gear. 30 metres, 6c

P12: Go up the dihedral until you reach the roof; mantle on the left to reach a peg. Fragile flakes. Exit the overhang on the left and go up the dihedral.

Anchor on a small ledge. Build your own anchor with gear. 30 metres, 6c

P13: Follow the dihedral and exit on a terrace that is often snowy.... go up the overhanging dihedral with a peg at the top. Anchor outside of the dihedral. 40 metres, 6c

P14: On flakes and cracks to the summit. Bolted anchor. 40 metres, 5a. (pitch that isn't described in the original line, but it is useful to reach the rappel on "Echo".)

Descent: rappel down "Echo des Alpage"

20. Russkaya Zima (Russian Winter)

M.Devi e A.Klenov - 13,15 febbraio 1999

Length: 400m

Grade: A3 / 6c / III

Exposure: South

Descent: rappel down the route.

21. Voyage Hivernal

A.Routchkine e R.Zaitov - 13,17 febbraio 1999

Length: 400m

Grade: A4 / 6c / III

Exposure: South

Descent: rappel down the route.

22. Odyssey

J. Bridwell G. Groaz - 1999

Length: 400m

Grade: VI / 5.9 / A4 / EX

Exposure: South

Descent: rappel down the route.



composed of Max Boinniet, Pierre Labbre and M. Romain free climbed all its pitches. The route develops along a system of dihedrals and slabs with two decidedly harder pitches through enormous roofs: the third pitch of 7b and the seventh, 7a. In this guide you'll find the grades as suggested by the French climbers.

P1 V+: follow the dihedral looking out for bad rock, 55 m, set up the anchor to the left.

P2 6a: follow the dihedral moving onto the left-hand slab now and again until you come out of an overhang, then build your anchor in the crack at the end of the dihedral, 55 m, build your anchor.

P3 7b: easy dihedral up to the roof, here you'll find two pitons and some cracks in which to place some excellent friends. Difficult boulder move to come out of the roof, afterwards you'll stay to the right until you reach a comfortable terrace, 45 m, build your anchor.

P4 6b: beautiful little crack on a slab, aim for the roof above your head and go around it to the right, soon after you'll find good terraces to anchor yourself, 40 m, build your anchor.

P5 6c+: the best pitch of the route, amazing! Follow the dihedral with a crack until the end and with some acrobatics and balance get back on it 3 metres up. At this point, follow the dihedral past a terrace with an old piton and a small roof to reach the niche in which to set up the anchor, 40 m, build your anchor.

P6 6a: easy pitch leading to the following roof, follow the evident cracks underneath the roofs all the way to a bolt, which is hard to see, under the following overhang, 20 m, anchor on two bolts.

P7 7a: hard, physical boulder problem to top out of the roof protected with an excellent #0.3 friend, mantle onto the next slab, then you'll encounter another move to protect using two excellent pitons: beware of the wobbly flake! Afterwards, continue left then set up the anchor on a small ledge, 35 m, build your anchor.

P8 6b: slab leading to a roof that you'll go around to the right, then delicate slab with a small crack all the way to the following terraces, 40 m, build your anchor.

P9 V: begin to the right of the anchor and traverse,

remain where the climbing is easy: careful, the rock towards the end is really bad, 50 m, build your anchor, though there's also a piton.

From here, follow the broken and unstable rocks paying a lot of attention not to move them too much. These 200 metres are easy but very unstable and there's no obligatory route to go up. Aim for the ridge and follow it to the top.

8. Borat

M. Bonniot, S. Ratel - 2013

Length: 750m to the summit, the wall is 350m - 8 P

Grade: 7b (6c obb.)/IV

Exposure: South

Gear: Double set of #0.3-#2 friends, a #3 and a double set of micros, a set of Offsets is also recommended.

Starting point: a beautiful dihedral of amazing rock is clearly visible about 60 metres above the ledge, the route begins directly below this, a little to the right of Groucho Marx.

The last route established on this beautiful wall, its authors are young and strong GMHM climbers! It was free climbed when established and follows dihedrals and cracks on the right-hand side of the wall, it's extremely vertical and the rock quality seems superb. There's no information about a first repetition of this route.

9. Cresta des Hirondelles

Just for information. Classical style ascent.

DESCENT

For all the routes of the East Wall of the Grandes Jorasses, follow these indications:

follow the beaten and evident normal route of the Grandes Jorasses. Pay attention to the time of descent due to snow bridges and rockfall.



📷 The exposed ridge of broken rocks leads to the summit of the Grand Jorasses after climbed the East Face (© Leonardo Gheza)

Alessandro Zeni and Riccardo "Sky" Scarian, Empire State Building, Monte Bianco, ph Luca Rolli for Grivel

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