

# Glacier de Talèfre

*Aiguille du Moine*

*La Nonne*

*Aiguille Verte - South Face*

*Les Droites - South Face*

*Les Courtes - South Face*

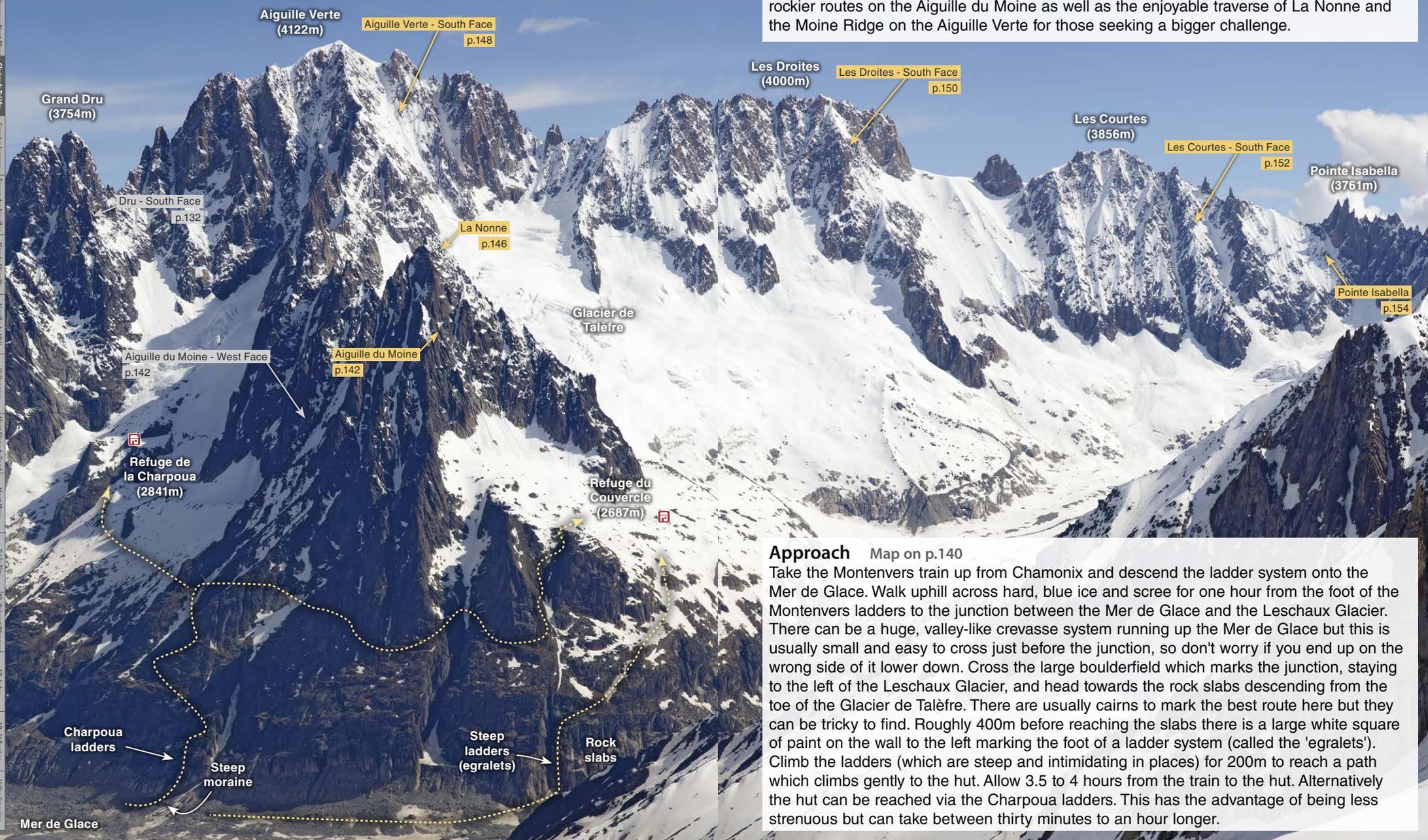
*Pointe Isabella*

Joe Brindley high up on the Aiguille du Moine *South Ridge* (D+) - *p. 143*. The Talèfre basin sits almost bang in the middle of the massif and many of the peaks offer astounding 360 views. In the backdrop here you can see the North Face of the Grandes Jorasses, the Rochefort and the Dent du Géant. Photo: Luke Davies

A classic range of peaks, perched high above what is widely considered to be one of the best situated huts in the Alps, a trip to the Glacier de Talèfre is always a pleasure. There are some fantastic routes and, whatever you climb, the scenery is breathtaking even by the high standards of Chamonix.

### Conditions

The Glacier de Talèfre used to be much more popular but the thinning of perma-snow and glaciers has made good conditions rarer on the classic routes. However, the variety of routes means that there will always be something to go at. Early summer here can be wonderful for the classic ridge traverses on Les Droites and Les Courtes. Later in the season, when conditions are too dry for anything snow based, there are still the superb rockier routes on the Aiguille du Moine as well as the enjoyable traverse of La Nonne and the Moine Ridge on the Aiguille Verte for those seeking a bigger challenge.

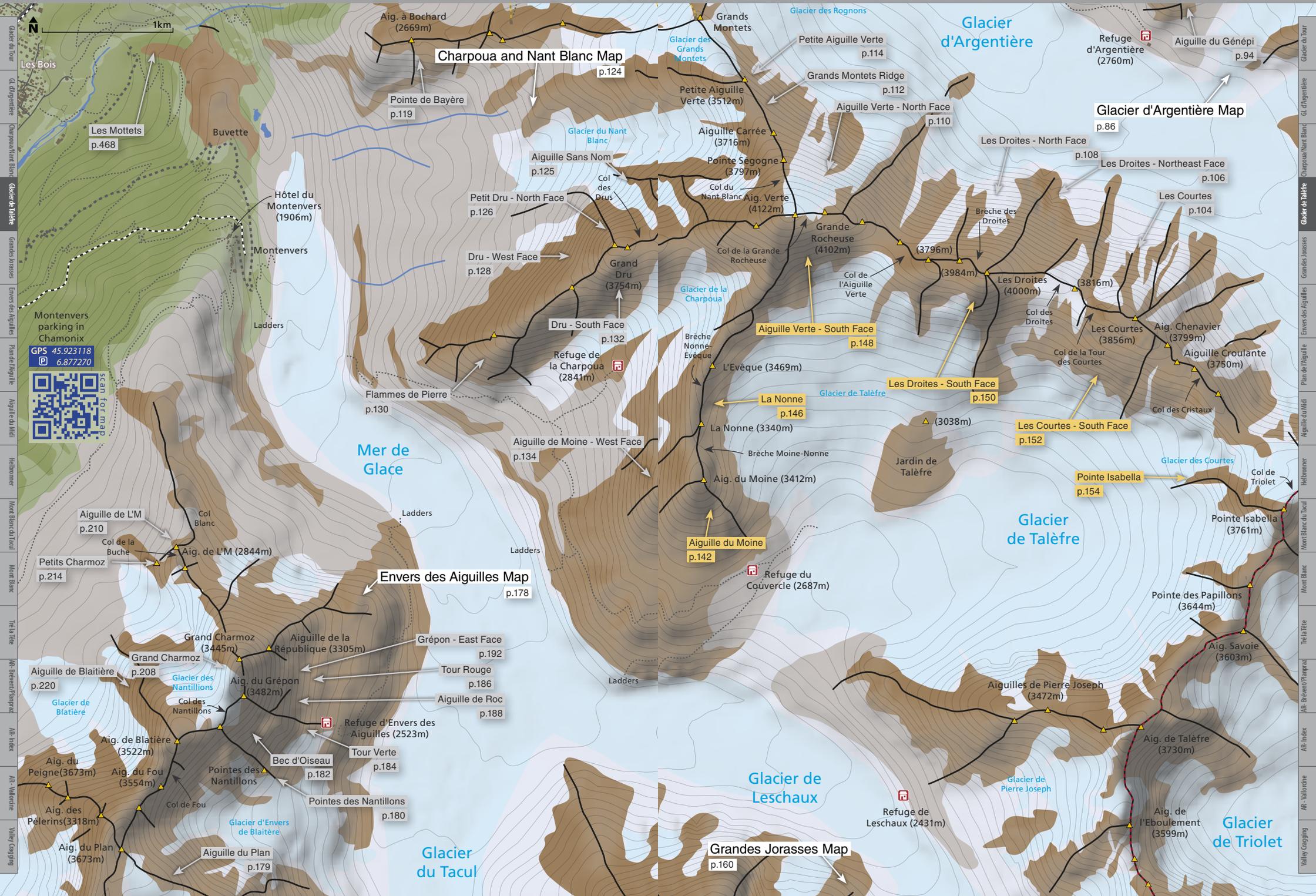


### Approach Map on p.140

Take the Montanvers train up from Chamonix and descend the ladder system onto the Mer de Glace. Walk uphill across hard, blue ice and scree for one hour from the foot of the Montanvers ladders to the junction between the Mer de Glace and the Leschaux Glacier. There can be a huge, valley-like crevasse system running up the Mer de Glace but this is usually small and easy to cross just before the junction, so don't worry if you end up on the wrong side of it lower down. Cross the large boulderfield which marks the junction, staying to the left of the Leschaux Glacier, and head towards the rock slabs descending from the toe of the Glacier de Talèfre. There are usually cairns to mark the best route here but they can be tricky to find. Roughly 400m before reaching the slabs there is a large white square of paint on the wall to the left marking the foot of a ladder system (called the 'egralets'). Climb the ladders (which are steep and intimidating in places) for 200m to reach a path which climbs gently to the hut. Allow 3.5 to 4 hours from the train to the hut. Alternatively the hut can be reached via the Charpoua ladders. This has the advantage of being less strenuous but can take between thirty minutes to an hour longer.

Glacier de Talèfre  
 Gl. d'Argentière  
 Charpoua/Mont Blanc  
 Glacier de Talèfre  
 Grandes Jorasses  
 Evros des Aiguilles  
 Plan de l'Aiguille  
 Aiguille du Moine  
 Helbronner  
 Mont Blanc du Tacot  
 Mont Blanc  
 Tré la Tête  
 Mt. Brevent/Pirapraz  
 Mt. Index  
 Mt. Vallorcine  
 Valley Gouging

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 Mt. Vallorcine  
 Valley Gouging



Charpoua and Nant Blanc Map

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Glacier d'Argentière Map

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Envers des Aiguilles Map

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Grandes Jorasses Map

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Les Mottets p.468

Montenvers parking in Chamonix  
GPS 45.923118  
6.877270



Scan for map

Aiguille de L'M p.210

Petits Charmoz p.214

Aiguille de Blaitière p.220

Aig. de Blaitière (3522m)

Aig. du Peigne (3673m)

Aig. des Pèlerins (3318m)

Aig. du Plan (3673m)

Hôtel du Montenvers (1906m)

Montenvers

Ladders

Flammes de Pierre p.130

Aig. de L'M (2844m)

Grand Charmoz (3445m)

Aig. du Grépon (3482m)

Aig. du Fou (3554m)

Aiguille du Plan p.179

Pointe de Bayère p.119

Petit Dru - North Face p.126

Dru - West Face p.128

Grand Dru (3754m)

Refuge de la Charpoua (2841m)

Aiguille de Moine - West Face p.134

Aig. de L'M (2844m)

Grépon - East Face p.192

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Refuge d'Envers des Aiguilles (2523m)

Tour Verte p.184

Pointes des Nantillons p.180

Aiguille Sans Nom p.125

Col des Drus

Dru - South Face p.132

Refuge de la Charpoua (2841m)

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Aiguille Carrée (3716m)

Pointe Ségogne (3797m)

Col du Nant Blanc Aig. Verte (4122m)

Grand Dru (3754m)

Refuge de la Charpoua (2841m)

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Aig. de L'M (2844m)

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Grande Rocheuse (4102m)

Col de la Grande Rocheuse

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L'Evêque (3469m)

La Nonne (3340m)

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(3796m)

(3984m)

(3796m)

(3984m)

(3038m)

Jardin de Talèfre

Aig. du Moine (3412m)

Refuge du Couvercle (2687m)

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Les Droites (4000m)

Col des Droites

Les Droites - South Face p.150

Les Droites (4000m)

Les Droites - South Face p.150

(3038m)

Aig. du Moine (3412m)

Refuge du Couvercle (2687m)

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Les Droites - North Face p.108

Les Droites - Northeast Face p.106

Les Droites (4000m)

Les Droites - South Face p.150

Les Droites - South Face p.150

(3038m)

Aig. du Moine (3412m)

Refuge du Couvercle (2687m)

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Les Droites - North Face p.108

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Les Droites (4000m)

Les Droites - South Face p.150

Les Droites - South Face p.150

(3038m)

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Refuge du Couvercle (2687m)

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Les Droites - South Face p.150

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(3038m)

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Refuge du Couvercle (2687m)

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Aig. Chenavier (3799m)

Aiguille Groulante (3750m)

Col de la Tour des Courtes

Les Courtes (3856m)

Les Courtes - South Face p.152

Pointe Isabella p.154

Aig. du Moine (3412m)

Refuge du Couvercle (2687m)

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Les Droites (4000m)

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Les Courtes (3856m)

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Les Droites (4000m)

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(3038m)

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Les Droites (4000m)

Les Droites - South Face p.150

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(3038m)

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(3038m)

Aig. du Moine (3412m)

Refuge du Couvercle (2687m)

Grépon - East Face p.192

Tour Rouge p.186



**1 South Ridge Integrale ...** [Icon: Rock, Ice, Sun, Moon] **D+ 5c**

**III, 600m, 6 - 7 hours.** A stunning and logical line, this is one of the best granite ridges in the massif. The lower section is an amazing journey around and over some beautiful towers. We've provided a lengthy route description, but much of the terrain is quite intuitive and feels logical throughout. The only odd thing about the route is the fact that it is so quiet.

*Photo p.145 and p.155.*

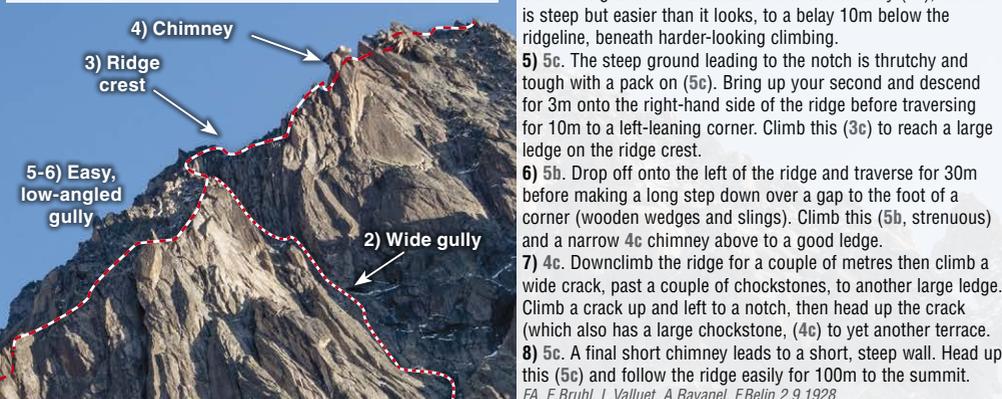
- 1) 4a. Climb a gully (3c) to a notch with a distinctive thin tooth marking it. Traverse for 10m on the right of the ridge and then climb a short chimney (4a) to gain the crest.
  - 2) 4b. Traverse across a slab and then climb a chimney (4b) to the crest. Stay on this for 100m to the foot of a round pinnacle. Move onto the left of the ridge and climb a crack (with a distinctive jammed block in it) to come out just past the pinnacle. Continue on the right of the crest, across a featured slab, and gradually descend until underneath a notch.
  - 3) 4c. Climb up to the notch on the left side (4c). Stay just on the left of the crest to go around one pinnacle and then come back onto the right of the ridge. Pass a second pinnacle to arrive at a small notch overlooking a deep gully to the left of the ridge.
  - 4) 4c. Make a 25m abseil from a fixed anchor down the left-hand side of the ridge. (There are bolted anchors on the right-hand side of this section of the ridge as well. These look tempting but actually form the start of an abseil line which is irreversible. If you abseil from these you will be forced to abandon the climb!) Follow a ledge and then gully easily for 60m to a chimney (4c) which takes you back onto the ridge crest through an opening.
  - 5) 4b. Follow the ridge to a large pinnacle and move left around it on a ledge system. Climb another chimney (4b) to regain the crest. Follow the crest (dropping off left and right occasionally to avoid anything too tricky looking) to a wide, low-angled gully on the left of the ridge crest.
  - 6) Fire up the gully easily for 50m to meet the *South Ridge*.
  - 7) 5c. Finish up the *South Ridge* sections 3) to 8).
- FA. W.Birkenmajer, J.Bujak, B.Chwacinski, W.Ostravski 13.8.1932



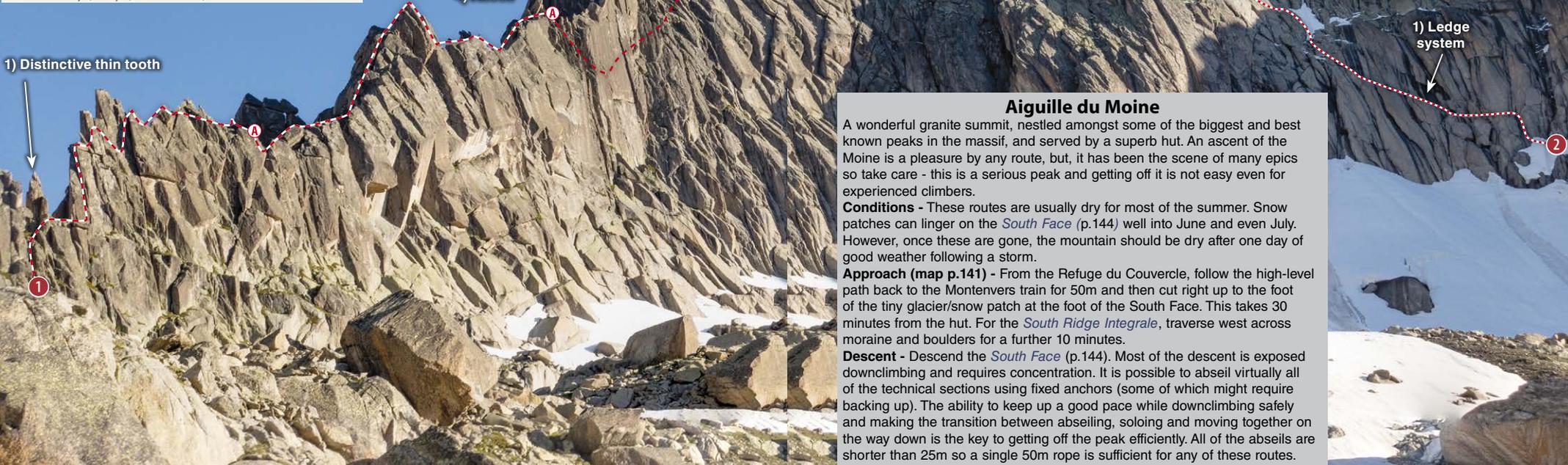
**2 South Ridge.....** [Icon: Rock, Ice, Sun, Moon] **D+ 5c**

**III, 400m, 4 - 5 hours.** A brilliant climb which sees far more ascents than the *Integrale* and was included as one of Gaston Rébuffat's *100 Finest Routes*. It shares its difficult sections with the *Integrale* but reaches it by moderate climbing up the face. *Photo p.136.*

- 1) Cross the bergschrund and climb up 50m of glacier-polished slabs and runnels to reach a long ledge system leading out left. Follow this across the foot of the face to where it steepens into a wide chimney with a boulder blocking it.



- 2) 4b. Climb the chimney (4b, awkward) to access another ledge system, this time leading up and right. Follow this for 50m and then climb a wide gully on the left (4a maximum) for 100m to hit the south ridge itself and junction with *South Ridge Integrale*.
  - 3) Drop onto the far side of the ridge and climb up an easy broken gully for 50m before moving left onto the ridge crest and going along this for 25m. Cut left across a ledge system for 20m to the foot of a 70m chimney system, below and left of a boulder which is somehow perched on top of a pinnacle on the ridge.
  - 4) 4c. Climb the chimney (4b) for one pitch onto a large ledge. Traverse right for 5m and climb a second chimney (4c), which is steep but easier than it looks, to a belay 10m below the ridgeline, beneath harder-looking climbing.
  - 5) 5c. The steep ground leading to the notch is thrutchy and tough with a pack on (5c). Bring up your second and descend for 3m onto the right-hand side of the ridge before traversing for 10m to a left-leaning corner. Climb this (3c) to reach a large ledge on the ridge crest.
  - 6) 5b. Drop off onto the left of the ridge and traverse for 30m before making a long step down over a gap to the foot of a corner (wooden wedges and slings). Climb this (5b, strenuous) and a narrow 4c chimney above to a good ledge.
  - 7) 4c. Downclimb the ridge for a couple of metres then climb a wide crack, past a couple of chockstones, to another large ledge. Climb a crack up and left to a notch, then head up the crack (which also has a large chockstone, (4c) to yet another terrace.
  - 8) 5c. A final short chimney leads to a short, steep wall. Head up this (5c) and follow the ridge easily for 100m to the summit.
- FA. E.Brühi, L.Valluet, A.Ravanel, F.Belin 2.9.1928



**Aiguille du Moine**

A wonderful granite summit, nestled amongst some of the biggest and best known peaks in the massif, and served by a superb hut. An ascent of the Moine is a pleasure by any route, but, it has been the scene of many epics so take care - this is a serious peak and getting off it is not easy even for experienced climbers.

**Conditions** - These routes are usually dry for most of the summer. Snow patches can linger on the *South Face* (p.144) well into June and even July. However, once these are gone, the mountain should be dry after one day of good weather following a storm.

**Approach** (map p.141) - From the Refuge du Couvercle, follow the high-level path back to the Monteverns train for 50m and then cut right up to the foot of the tiny glacier/snow patch at the foot of the South Face. This takes 30 minutes from the hut. For the *South Ridge Integrale*, traverse west across moraine and boulders for a further 10 minutes.

**Descent** - Descend the *South Face* (p.144). Most of the descent is exposed downclimbing and requires concentration. It is possible to abseil virtually all of the technical sections using fixed anchors (some of which might require backing up). The ability to keep up a good pace while downclimbing safely and making the transition between abseiling, soloing and moving together on the way down is the key to getting off the peak efficiently. All of the abseils are shorter than 25m so a single 50m rope is sufficient for any of these routes.



Glacier du Tour  
Gl. d'Argentière  
Champon/Neut Blanc  
Glacier de Talèfre  
Grandes Jorasses  
Ecrins des Aiguilles  
Plan de l'Aiguille  
Aiguille du Moine  
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Mont Blanc du Tacot  
Mont Blanc  
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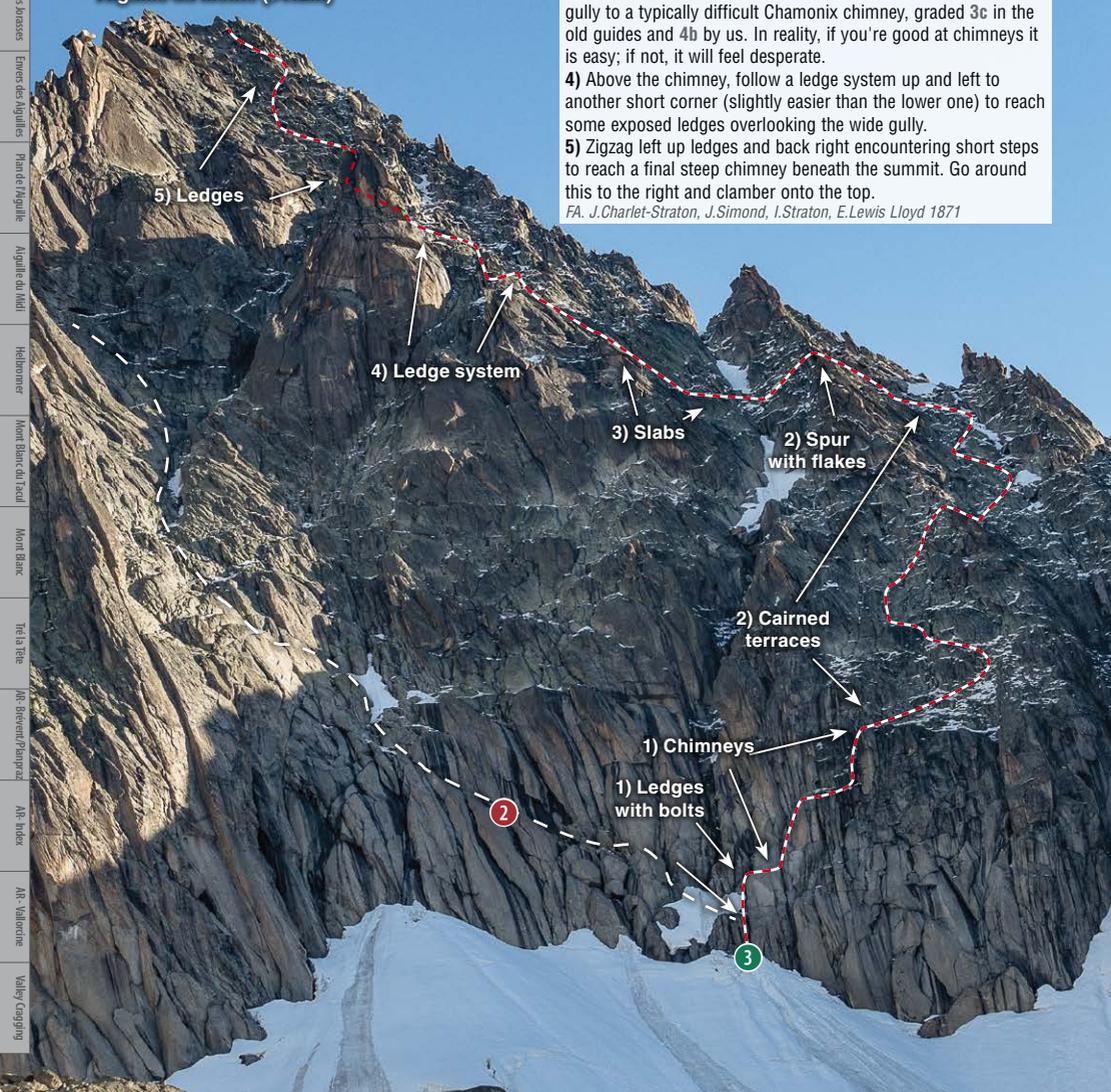
### 3 South Face ..... PD+ 4b

**III, 450m, 3 - 4 hours.** An excellent mid-grade alpine route which is a perfect place to check whether you are moving well enough to tackle some of the longer routes in Chamonix. None of the terrain is hard but equally, not much of it is walking. Being efficient with transitions and rope work is vital if you are to make good time. Plenty of climbers have underestimated this route - don't be one of them!

This line also serves as the best descent off the Moine but descending it is no pushover. There is a lot of terrain to cover and much of it quite exposed, so allow plenty of time and keep concentrating all the way down.



#### Aiguille du Moine (3412m)



The route is vague and many variations are possible (often with cairns). Although this route description should be useful, route finding skill is vital. Should you find yourself slightly off route, just try to take the line of least resistance to the next clear landmark on the route.

**1) 3c.** Cross the bergschrund and climb up 50m of corner next to the glacier polished slabs to reach a long ledge system leading out left (memorial plaque). This is where the *South Ridge Classique* goes left. Go to the right end of the ledge system (3b) to a bolt belay (used as an abseil anchor on the descent) and climb the three chimneys above to a ledge (3c - don't be tempted by the large loose gully above).

**2)** Continue on moderate ground, much of it walking, some of it easy scrambling, up gullies and terraces rightwards (cairns) until 100m below the Southeast Ridge. Here, traverse leftwards to the spur marked by several flakes. Pass this and continue traversing into the gully beyond.

**3) 4b.** Climb well-worn slabs and steps up the other side of the gully to a typically difficult Chamonix chimney, graded 3c in the old guides and 4b by us. In reality, if you're good at chimneys it is easy; if not, it will feel desperate.

**4)** Above the chimney, follow a ledge system up and left to another short corner (slightly easier than the lower one) to reach some exposed ledges overlooking the wide gully.

**5)** Zigzag left up ledges and back right encountering short steps to reach a final steep chimney beneath the summit. Go around this to the right and clamber onto the top.

FA. J.Charlet-Straton, J.Simond, I.Straton, E.Lewis Lloyd 1871



Joe Brindley low down on the Aiguille du Moine *South Ridge Integrale* (D+) - p.142. A route where the crux is in the route finding. Photo: Luke Davies



## La Nonne

A great little peak that is often quiet. Glacial shrinkage has made the first pitch more tricky. This does alter the nature of the route, but it's worth getting through this to access the excellent climbing above. Doing this route one day and then a line on the Moine (p.142) the next, provides a fantastic trip on some excellent granite.

**Conditions** - The route just needs to be dry, so summer and autumn are best. It gets plenty of sun and doesn't have many big ledges so it is usually ready to climb after a short spell of good weather. If you approach the hut the day after bad weather, the route could well be climbable by lunchtime and makes for a superb half day.

**Approach (map p.141)** - Follow a vague, cairned path northeast from the Refuge du Couvercle to the foot of the Aiguille du Moine's southeast ridge. From the foot of this, walk up onto the glacier and head directly for the foot of the route.

**Descent** - From the flat-topped boulder, follow cairns down ledges on the South Face for 60m to where a ledge system leads out left. Follow this to the couloir coming down from the Brèche Nonne-Evêque and descend this. When dry it should be possible to downclimb most of this but there are some fixed abseil anchors for the trickier bits. No abseils longer than 20m should be required and there are cairns to mark the way. A 20m abseil is usually necessary right at the end of the couloir just to get over the bergschrund and back onto the glacier.

## 1 La Nonne Traverse ...

**AD+ 5a**  
**II, 350m, 3 - 4 hours.** The route begins at a couloir 100m further north of the gully running down from the Brèche Moine-Nonne.

- 1) 5a. Climb the steep, left leaning chimney at the back of the recess to gain the blunt spur of rock on the left of the gully. Earlier in the season, it's possible to climb the spur on the left of the gully directly by lower ramp on the left (easier).
- 2) 4a. Climb 100m of rock (4a or easier) up the middle of the spur to reach a notch in the summit ridge.
- 3) 3b. Turn right and go directly over the first small tower on the ridge (3b) and traverse for 10m on the ridge crest.
- 4) 4b. Move onto the left of the ridge and traverse to some wide cracks that lead back onto the ridge crest. Go straight up the crest of the ridge via a corner then descend a couple of metres before a final pitch (4b) leads onto the summit of La Nonne.
- 5) Make a 20m abseil on the right of the summit and traverse under the rocky spike on a wide ledge to reach easy scrambling across blocky ground. Follow this to the beginning of the famous 'rasoir' section. It is possible to tag the summits of the various pinnacles on this section if you have the time/inclination.

- 6) 4a. The 'rasoir' section is, not surprisingly, very narrow and sharp. It is also very exposed but thankfully pretty straightforward. It is possible to do it 'à cheval', or as a hand traverse - combination of both techniques seems to work best. Go along the 'rasoir' for 100m to reach a small summit, after which the ridge begins to descend. There is a line of abseils down a gully, 50m before the end of the 'rasoir', which look tempting. Don't follow it because the normal descent is better.
- 7) Follow the ridge to a platform and then drop off the ridge to the right where it starts to climb dramatically. After passing a large flat-topped boulder (cairned), follow a ledge system that leads gradually downwards towards the gully below the Brèche Nonne-Evêque (some slightly steeper sections).
- 8) Just before the gully are some large blocks. Either abseil here or down climb depending on the state of the glacier  
*FA. C.Pasteur, M.Pasteur, E.Pasteur, C.Wilson, A.Cupelin 23.7.1890*



4) La Nonne (3340m)

Brèche Moine-Nonne

5) Easy scrambling

3) First small tower

6) 'Rasoir' section

Brèche Nonne-Evêque

7) Flat-topped boulder

2) Rock spur

7) Drop off to right

1) Chimney

8) Possible abseil

Glacier de Talèfre



### Aiguille Verte - South Face

Perhaps the most legendary summit in the whole Mont Blanc massif, local guides maintain that you are not a 'vrai alpiniste' (real mountaineer) until you have stood on top of the Verte. This is primarily because getting up it and back down is no easy task by any route. The two lines described here are considered the easiest on the mountain but both are serious.

In a frenzy of achievement that has surely never been matched in the Alps, Edward Whymper made the first ascent of the Verte, Grandes Jorasses and Matterhorn in less than a month in the summer of 1865. The history of Whymper's amazing 1865 season, and the events preceding it, is fascinating and well worth reading up on. Whymper died in Chamonix in 1911 and his grave can be found, along with those of countless other legendary climbers, in the cemetery next to the Montenvers train.

**Conditions** - The *Moine Ridge* is best when dry but can be climbed in snowy conditions. When snowy it feels much harder and is more difficult to protect. The *Whymper* requires a good covering of firm snow and a very early start. The couloir is prone to rockfall and if you're planning on descending it, you need to be on the way back down by daybreak if the rockfall danger is not to be too high.

The *Whymper* makes a good early summer option, while the conditions in the *Moine* will likely improve as the season progresses and the mountains dry out.

**Approach** (map p.141) - Both routes are approached by crossing the Glacier de Talèfre. Follow a vague cairned path northeast from the Refuge du Couvercle to the foot of the Aiguille du Moine's southeast ridge and go from here onto the glacier and head directly for the routes. The glacier can be heavily crevassed so good route finding skills are required.

**Descent** - Either downclimb the *Moine Ridge* or abseil the *Whymper* using fixed anchors on the left side (when facing down) of the couloir. Descending the *Whymper* is only really feasible in spring or early summer - the rockfall danger is too high in the height of summer. If descending the *Moine Ridge* follow the ascent route, mainly by downclimbing. Generally a few 25m abseils are required (including two on the ridge crest around section 4 of our description) but the length of the terrain means that downclimbing is the only way of descending quickly.

### 1 Moine Ridge ..... AD+ 2

**III, 700m, 5 - 6 hours.** This route doesn't see many ascents since it is better known as a 'safe' way off the Verte. However, it makes for a good adventure in its own right and is a worthwhile way up a wonderful peak.

It is worth bearing in mind that descending the route involves a lot of downclimbing and only the occasional short abseil. This usually takes as long as going up and since it usually takes at least 6 hours to climb the route, it makes for a very long day and should not be underestimated. However, it is relatively safe from objective danger so if in any doubt about descending the *Whymper*, choose this instead.

- 1) Cross the bergschrund beneath a deep, right-facing couloir. Climb up to this for 10m and then traverse up and left across a vague ledge system to reach the foot of a wide, shallow gully.
- 2) Scramble up on the left of the gully to where it widens.
- 3) Head towards the ridge crest via some easy mixed ground and, 20m below the crest, follow a short ramp rightwards.
- 4) The ramp leads to the ridge. Follow this to the snow ridge just below the summit. Avoid anything that looks difficult by dropping down onto the right-hand side of the ridge but generally stick on, or just to the right of the crest.
- 5) The last 20m to the summit is a lovely snow ridge - climb this, sit down and enjoy the view!

FA. G.C.Hodgkinson, C.Hudson, T.S.Kennedy, M.Croz, M.A.Ducroz, P.Perren 5.7.1865

### 2 Whymper Couloir ..... AD+ 2

**III, 700m, 4 - 5 hours.** A legendary route up the mountaineers' mountain - this is as good a snow climb as you will find anywhere. It is also possible to climb the main couloir in good conditions. Judging the best line to take is part of the seriousness of this route.

- 1) Cross the bergschrund, which is usually easiest on the right, and climb a secondary snow gully to the right of the main couloir to reach a rock spur.
- 2) Climb this (Scottish II) and move left onto 50 degree snow/mixed ground, still to the right of the main couloir.
- 3) Head up the snow/mixed ground to where it begins to steepen considerably. At this point a snow ramp leads left into the main couloir.
- 4) Climb the remainder of the main couloir, which steepens to 55 degrees near the top, to emerge just below the Col de la Grande Rocheuse (4051m).
- 5) Follow the stunning snow ridge to the summit of the Verte. In good conditions this is a wonderful part of the climb, but in bad conditions it will feel scary and exposed.

FA. E.Whymper, C.Almer, F.Biner 29.6.1865. The Chamonix guides of the early to mid-1800s believed that the Verte would never be climbed given how impenetrable it looks from every angle. The successful ascent of this route by Whymper and the two Swiss guides caused quite the stir when they returned back to town, with something resembling a riot breaking out in the main square!

Glacier de Talèfre

Glacier de Tour  
 G. d'Argentières  
 Champouillet Blanc  
 Glacier de Talèfre  
 Grandes Jorasses  
 Evens des Aiguilles  
 Plan de l'Aiguille  
 Aiguille du Midi  
 Helbronner  
 Mont Blanc du Sud  
 Mont Blanc  
 Tête à Tête  
 AR - Brevent/Planpraz  
 AR - Index  
 AR - Vallorcine  
 Valley Cooging

Glacier de Tour  
 G. d'Argentières  
 Champouillet Blanc  
 Glacier de Talèfre  
 Grandes Jorasses  
 Evens des Aiguilles  
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 Aiguille du Midi  
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 Mont Blanc  
 Tête à Tête  
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 AR - Index  
 AR - Vallorcine  
 Valley Cooging



**Approach (map p.141)** - From the Refuge du Couvercle, traverse northeast onto the Glacier de Talèfre and head towards the Aiguille Verte. Pass to the left of the Jardin de Talèfre and, once above this, turn right and make a rising traverse to the foot of the snow couloir at the start of the *Les Droites Normal Route*.

**Descent** - It is possible to descend the *Les Droites Normal Route*, but if you've done the traverse, descend the 40 degree snow/mixed couloir which leads from the eastern end of the Col de l'Aiguille Verte down to the Glacier de Talèfre and comes out near the foot of the *Whymper Couloir* (p.149). Both descents are threatened by rockfall in hot conditions so climb them on a cooler day, get up early and bail if you aren't making good time.

**Descent from Brèche des Droites** - The couloir dropping down the South Face from the Brèche des Droites can be abseiled from fixed anchors on 2 x 50m ropes. This is the most popular descent off the North Face routes and also a bail out option from the *Les Droites Traverse*.

**Les Droites - South Face**

A stunning and iconic alpine peak, Les Droites is best known for its huge 1000m high North Face (p.108). However, the south side of the mountain is also a wild and untamed place to climb. If you do either of the routes listed here, you will almost certainly be alone in some spectacular scenery. If you get the *Traverse* in good condition, it is an amazing mid-grade adventure on which you need to move quickly over every type of alpine terrain and use a variety of rope techniques.

**Conditions** - Best climbed when they have a good covering of firm, well-frozen snow. If dry, the initial snow couloir is prone to rockfall and much of the traverse will be loose, unpleasant and time consuming. Early to mid-June is usually the best bet.

**1 Les Droites Normal Route** **AD+2**

**III, 600m, 4 - 5 hours.** A good route and the easiest way to the summit of one of the Alps' less accessible 4000ers. Having said that, it is a long and remote-feeling route commanding respect.

- 1) Climb the 40 - 45 degree snow couloir for 200m to emerge onto the southEast Face.
- 2) Follow a ramp, which leads up and gradually rightwards over moderate ground to a 100m high rock/mixed band.
- 3) 4b. Climb the rock/mixed band (sections of 4b) and then head leftwards to reach a snow slope.
- 4) Go left up the snow slope to hit a snow ridge and follow this to the summit ridge. Once on the ridge, scramble left easily onto the east summit.

*FA. H.Cordier, T.Middlemore, J.Oakley Maund, J.Jaun, A.Maurer 7.8.1876*

**2 Les Droites Traverse** **D-3**

**IV, 200m (in addition to the normal route), 7 - 8 hours.** The *Traverse* is not climbed often but those who have done it are usually full of praise. The description begins where the *Normal Route* finishes on the East Summit. In good conditions virtually all of the terrain other than the ridge crest should be snowy, but with plenty of rock to provide protection. The technical difficulties on section 4 are highly condition dependent. The route is exposed throughout and covers a lot of ground - allow at least 14 hours for the round trip from the hut.

- 1) Follow the ridge crest easily down to some beautiful rock teeth. Pass onto the right of the ridge to get round these and then come back onto the ridge after the final one.
- 2) Make a 30m abseil down a chimney onto a snow/mixed slope beneath the Brèche des Droites.
- 3) Traverse under a triangular pinnacle and then scramble back onto the ridge crest.
- 4) Follow the crest, avoiding anything too technical by dropping off to the right of the ridge, to the west summit.
- 5) Scramble south down a short a gully and then make a long mixed traverse across the top of the South Face, under the Tour des Droites, to rejoin the ridge at a wide col.
- 6) Continue down the ridge to the Col de l'Aiguille Verte.

*FA. (Going from west to east) L.Distel, H.Pfann 17.8.1904*

Glacier de Tour  
Gl. d'Argentières  
Champon/Valant Blanc  
Glacier de Talèfre  
Grandes Jorasses  
Ecrins des Aiguilles  
Plan de l'Aiguille  
Aiguille du Midi  
Helbronner  
Mont Blanc du Sud  
Mont Blanc  
Mont Blanc  
Tête à Tête  
AR - Préventif/Préparé  
AR - Index  
AR - Vallonnée  
AR - Vallonnée  
Valley Grogging

Glacier du Tour  
Gl. d'Argentières  
Champon/Valant Blanc  
Glacier de Talèfre  
Grandes Jorasses  
Ecrins des Aiguilles  
Plan de l'Aiguille  
Aiguille du Midi  
Helbronner  
Mont Blanc du Sud  
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Tête à Tête  
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AR - Vallonnée  
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Glacier de Tour  
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Plan de l'Aiguille  
Aiguille du Midi  
Helbronner  
Mont Blanc du Tacot  
Mont Blanc  
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Valley Cooging



**1 Les Courtes Traverse. ....** **AD 2**  
**III, 800m, 6 - 7 hours.** A magnificent mixed traverse that is a serious undertaking.  
**1)** Climb the 400m long, 40 degree snow slope and cut right at the top to go up a short couloir that gives direct access to the Col de la Tour des Courtes.  
**2)** Follow the wide snowy ridge to the summit (turning the rock buttress halfway up on the left). Although most of this is low angled (roughly 30 degrees), it is stunning, with huge views across pretty much the whole of the Mont Blanc massif. In good conditions, it should take roughly 5 hours from hut to summit.  
**3)** 4b. Go down the snow ridge leading from the summit to the Aiguille Chenavier. Climb this (4b) and then make a 30m abseil down a chimney on the Talèfre side of the peak.  
**4)** Stay on the Talèfre side of the ridge and traverse across mixed ground to pass under the Aiguille Croulante. Get back onto the ridge just past this and follow a narrow snow arête to the foot of the Aiguille Qui Remue.  
**5)** Go onto the Argentièrre side of the ridge and traverse underneath the Aiguille Qui Remue, then return onto the crest once past it.  
**6)** Follow the ridge to a sharp rock tooth, 50m above the Col des Cristaux and the start of the descent.  
*FA. E. Fontaine, J. Ravanel, L. Tournier 11.7.1904*

**Les Courtes - South Face**

A beautiful peak better known for its meaty 800m North Face (p.108), Les Courtes also has a low-angled and interesting south side. This traverse doesn't see much traffic but it is superb and deserves to be climbed more. Its lack of popularity is for two main reasons. Firstly, the approach and descent are on large, south-facing slopes which are seldom in prime condition; secondly, the route is longer and more difficult than expected for this grade and plenty of climbers have been humbled by it! Make sure conditions are good, don't underestimate the route and you will have an amazing alpine adventure.  
**Approach (map p.141)** - From the Refuge du Couvercle, traverse scree, rock slabs and snow towards the Jardin de Talèfre (a large rock buttress in the middle of the Glacier de Talèfre) and pass under this. Once level with the Col des Droites, cut up directly to the snow slope at the start of the route.  
**Descent** - Downclimb 30 - 40 degree snow and mixed ground, drifting gradually right (when facing down) to reach the Glacier des Courtes at the foot of the couloir that comes down from the Aiguille Croulante.  
**Conditions** - It is vital that the approach and descent slopes have plenty of firm, well-frozen snow. The route takes in a lot of technical ground and the descent is no pushover, so it is essential to be able to move quickly and a good covering of solid snow should allow this. Early summer is almost certainly your best bet.



Aiguille de Triolet (3870m)

Pointe Isabella (3761m)

5) Summit rocks

Col de Triolet

4) Easier snow ridge

3) Spur

2) Rock band

1) 30 degree snow slope

Glacier des Courtes

**Approach (map p.141)** - From the Refuge du Couvercle, traverse scree, rock slabs and snow towards the Jardin de Talèfre (a large rock buttress in the middle of the Glacier de Talèfre) and pass under this. Once level with the Col des Droites, cut up towards Les Courtes to reach a flatter section at around 3100m, roughly 200m below the South Face of Les Courtes. Follow this relatively flat section to the foot of the icefall from where the route starts. In good conditions it is possible to go straight up the middle of the Glacier des Courtes to the route, but if the crevasses are too open, hug the left of the glacier and then cut right directly to the foot of the route. The complexity of the terrain leading to the route means that you may need to take a different line. When you arrive at the Refuge du Couvercle, ask the guardian which way he recommends getting to the route.

**Descent** - Reverse the route.

### Pointe Isabella

This mountain is rarely climbed, and is now difficult to access due to glacial retreat. In early summer, when the glaciers are well filled in and snow conditions are reliable, this remains a good easier route. Given how much walking is required to get to and from the mountain, it makes sense to check that conditions are good before committing to the route.

**Conditions** - The route is only possible when there is plenty of snow to make the crevasses on the approach acceptably safe. Good cramponing conditions are also vital so a good overnight freeze is required; if you get out of the hut in the morning and the snow on the approach is not well frozen, then pick a different objective.

① Normal Route ..... PD+  
III, 400m, 2 - 3 hours. A great way to reach this seldom-climbed summit.

- 1) Climb the 30 degree snow slope that leads up to Pointe Isabella's northwest ridge.
- 2) Head up the ridge and pass through a 60m band of rock via some excellent and moderate scrambling.
- 3) Carry on up the spur on some exposed 40 degree snow to reach the large glacial plateau beneath the Col de Triolet.
- 4) Continue up the ridge on easier terrain to reach the summit tower, which is sometimes guarded by a bergschrund.
- 5) Cross the bergschrund and climb a 30m snow slope to reach the summit rocks. Scramble up these and take in the view.

FA. I.Straton, J.Estérel, P.Charlet 1875



Joe Brindley on the *South Ridge Integral* (D+) - p.142 - on the Moine with the Mer de Glace behind. Photo: Luke Davies