Chris Craggs

A rock climbing guidebook to the Côte d'Azur area of France

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Cover: Mich Kemeter on the brilliant *Debiloff profundicum* (6c) - page 232 - in the Verdon, Photo: Alex Buisse

This page: Climbers on Super Sirène (6b) - page 94 - at Calanque En Vau. Photo: Mark Glaister



This book belongs to:

Massif de 'Ésterel

Gorges

Nonaco Area



Pilier de Soleil (6a) - page 288 - on the crag called Pilier de Soleil

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can be fun and inspiring places to climb and train. Awesome Walls Climbing Centres aim to provide frequent well set routes and boulder problems in a clean and friendly atmosphere!





4 Côte d'Azur Introduction Introduction Côte d'Azur

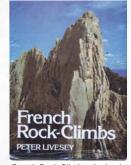


For UK climbers our affair with the cliffs of the south of France started in the early 1980s when the guru of the day, Pete Livesey, published a small hard-backed book entitled French Rock-Climbs - and our eyes were opened to the possibilities. An Easter trip became a regular fixture on many climbers' calendars, giving a focus for winter training, and a way of getting a sustained quick-fix at the start of the season, which was always so weather dependant back in the UK.

The Rockfax series of books to France has introduced a new generation of climbers to a fantastic set of cliffs, a benign climate and a wonderful series of locations. The crags included both the well known venues and many lesser known spots too, through

the current five volumes; Côte d'Azur, Languedoc-Roussillon, Ariège, Haute Provence and the 2016 book Chamonix though there is more cold snow than hot rock in that one.

The crags included in the book are many and various; the gleaming white sheets of Sainte Victoire, the sunken valleys of Les Calanques, the gaping abyss of the Verdon Gorge, the rocky mountain of Saint-Jeannet, the hard sport of Châteauverte and Gorges du Loup and the jutting headland of La Turbie, all brilliant crags in their own different ways. Despite their excellence, many of these had rather slipped off climbers' radar but the first edition of this book published in 2010 brought them back to the forefront.



French Rock-Climbs, the book that started it all in 1980



This 2017 book is a minor update to the 2010 edition. It has been updated to the more modern Rockfax format, had a Top 50 added and includes QR codes for parking spots. There are some updates and corrections plus a few new routes added on some of the crags.

France: Côte d'Azur offers a selection - and really it is only a small selection - of the climbing available along the Côte d'Azur and its rocky hinterland. If you have never been here, or haven't visited for the past 20 years, I hope this book will be a source of encouragement and inspire a renaissance of northern visitors to the warmest, driest and sunniest part of France; the well named Blue Coast.

Chris Craggs, January 2017

Guidebook Footnote

The inclusion of a climbing area in this guidebook does not mean that you have a right of access or the right to climb upon it. The descriptions of routes within this guide are recorded for historical reasons only and no reliance should be placed on the accuracy of the description. The grades set in this guide are a fair assessment of the difficulty of the climbs. Climbers who attempt a route of a particular standard should use their own judgment as to whether they are proficient enough to tackle that route. This book is not a substitute for experience and proper judgment. The authors, publisher and distributors of this book do not recognise any liability for injury or damage caused to, or by, climbers, third parties, or property arising from such persons seeking reliance on this guidebook as an assurance for their own safety.

Access

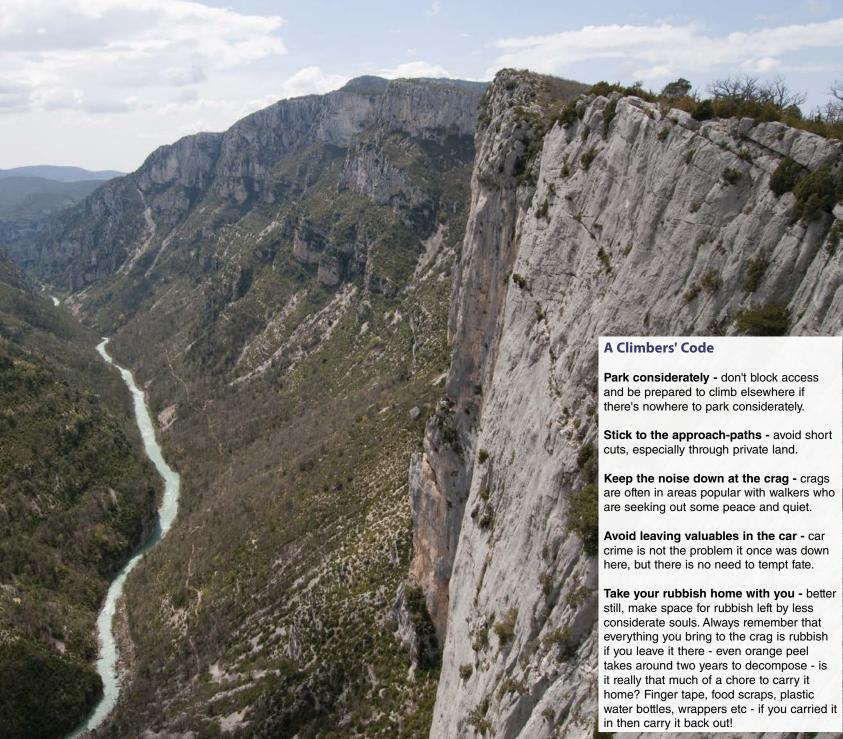
All the crags covered in this book are well-publicised, have their own guidebooks and have been popular for a long time, indeed some have been climbed on for over 100 years. Unless indicated otherwise, you can assume there is a right of access, please follow the detailed instructions carefully and be aware of the possibility of changes. We would appreciate notification of any difficulties or problems that occur so we can amend future editions and keep climbers up-to-date via the Rockfax website.

Local Guidebooks

All the areas covered in this guidebook are described in other publications. Local guidebooks include more routes and other cliffs than those in this selective volume. If you enjoy an area in this book, consider tracking down the local guidebook for more detailed information.

In the introduction to each section the current local guidebook is featured so you know what it looks like. You can usually get hold of these from the tourist information office or, if there is a climbing shop in the area, then that is an obvious place to look. Local Decathlon stores often hold stock too. Most can be ordered online from SOeScalade.com.

It has never been the policy of Rockfax to replace local guidebooks, but rather to introduce climbers to new areas, typically climbers who may be unaware of the wealth of climbing available and who are unwilling to plan a trip away without solid information to go on. Rather than competing with local guidebooks, we hope that the increased number of visitors will lead to more sales of local guidebooks and give a boost to the local economy.



The magnificent Gorges du Verdon.

navigation

This France: Côte d'Azur guidebook is also available on the Rockfax App which brings together all the Rockfax climbing information with UKC Logbooks and presents it in a user-friendly package for use on Apple iOS devices (Android version available in 2017).

The heart of the app is the Rockfax crag and route information which is downloaded by way of paid in-app purchases for individual crags, or bundles of crags. You can purchase each crag or area individually, or a whole 'book'. The main data on the app is downloaded and stored on your device so you don't need any signal to be able to use it. The app uses location services on the device to display your location as a blue dot on both the system maps, and our climbing-specific maps. There is a free sample crag for each area and some of these are quite extensive, enabling you to get a really good impression of what the app is like without shelling out any money.

The Rockfax App is a free download and incredibly useful in its own right without having to make any purchases.

It contains a detailed crag map linked to the UKClimbing crags database of over 20,000 crags and 4,000+ listings from the UKClimbing Directory of climbing walls, outdoor shops, climbing clubs, outdoor-







Geo-located maps

specific accommodation and instructors and guides amongst others.

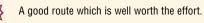
To find the app, search for 'Rockfax app' in Google or in the appropriate app store.

Version 2.0 (January 2017) now with UKC Logbooks

An incredibly popular method of logging your climbing is to use the **UKClimbing.com** logbooks system. This database lists more than 389,000 routes, over 20,700 crags worldwide and, so far, more than 31,500 users have recorded over 5 million ascents! To set up your own logbook all you need to do is register at **UKClimbing.com** and click on the logbook tab. Once set up you will be able to record every ascent you make, when you did it, what style you climbed it in and who you did it with. Each entry has a place for your own notes. You can also add your vote to the grade/star system linked to a database on the Rockfax site used by the guidebook writers.

The Rockfax App can be linked to your **UKClimbing.com** user account and logbook so that you can record your activity while at the crag and look at photos, comments and votes on any of the routes listed in this huge database. To do this you will need a 3G/4G data connection. You can also look at the UKC logbooks to see if anyone has climbed your chosen route recently to check on conditions.

Route Symbols



A very good route, one of the best on the crag.

A brilliant route, one of the best in the area.

A significant route which is one of the best of its type in the book. (There are more than 50).

Technical climbing requiring good balance and technique, or complex and tricky moves.

Powerful climbing; roofs, steep rock, low lock-offs or long moves off small holds.

Sustained climbing; either lots of hard moves or

steep rock giving pumpy climbing.
Fingery climbing with significant small holds on

the hard sections.

Fluttery climbing with big fall potential and scary

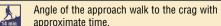
run-outs.

A long reach is helpful, or even essential, for one or more of the moves.

A 'trad route' which isn't fully bolted. A rack of cams and wires is needed.

Some loose rock may be encountered.

Crag Symbols



Approximate time that the crag is in the direct sun (when it is shining).

A buttress with some multi-pitch routes.

A buttress where an abseil approach is required to get to the start of the routes.

An exposed buttress that may suffer in windy conditions or when the Mistral is blowing.

The crag can offer shelter from cold winds and it may be a good suntrap in colder weather.

The crag suffers from seepage. It may well be wet and unclimbable in winter and early spring.

The crag is steep and may well offer some dry rock to climb when it is raining.

Deserted - Currently under-used and usually quiet. Fewer good routes or remote and smaller areas.

Quiet - Less popular sections on major crags, or good buttresses with awkward approaches.

Busy - Places you will seldom be alone, especially at weekends. Good routes and easy access.

Crowded - The most popular sections of the most popular crags which are always busy.



Although there is only one name on the cover, as ever the book is a team effort. Sherri Davy has supported me from start to finish down this long road - her name should really be on the cover too. The usual suspects, Colin Binks and Dave Gregory have been happy to have their foreign holidays where I needed them to be - cheers guys. Colin in particular is always happy to pose in the most ridiculous of positions and he does a mean line in winching when needed. As ever, Alan James and Stephen (FB) Horne have been in the shadows, overseeing the project, offering support and encouraging whenever I floundered. Stephen in particular has been instrumental in creating the Rockfax App version.

Thanks to Jack Geldard, Mark Glaister, Bridget Glaister, Alex Buisse, Alan Leary, Fraser Harle, Dominic Proctor, Rob Brown, Neil Foster, Kevin Gibbs, Tudor Griffiths, Phil Murel and Roman Bayon for their photographic contributions. Thanks also to James Rodgers and friends for feedback.

A special thanks must go to Alan Carne 'our man in the Verdon' whose encyclopaedic knowledge of the area and ability to work to a tight deadline has been incredibly useful in describing the great routes at this magnificent venue. His input helped expand my original plans for minimal coverage of the big classics to a section of the book that should keep most climbers happy for years.

Mike and Elaine Owen, more ex-pat Brits who have lived on the Côte d'Azur for many years, popped up at the last minute and despite the fact I hadn't seen them for 21 years (!) proved to be a mine of information on the crags - and especially the hard routes - around the Gorges du Loup and Monaco areas. Their ability to work to a tight deadline was almost as impressive as the quality of their information - cheers guys.

Chris Craggs, January 2017

Rockfax is grateful to the following companies who have supported this guidebook.

Alan Carne - Page 233 alanduverdon.com

Alauzon - Inside front cover alauzon.com

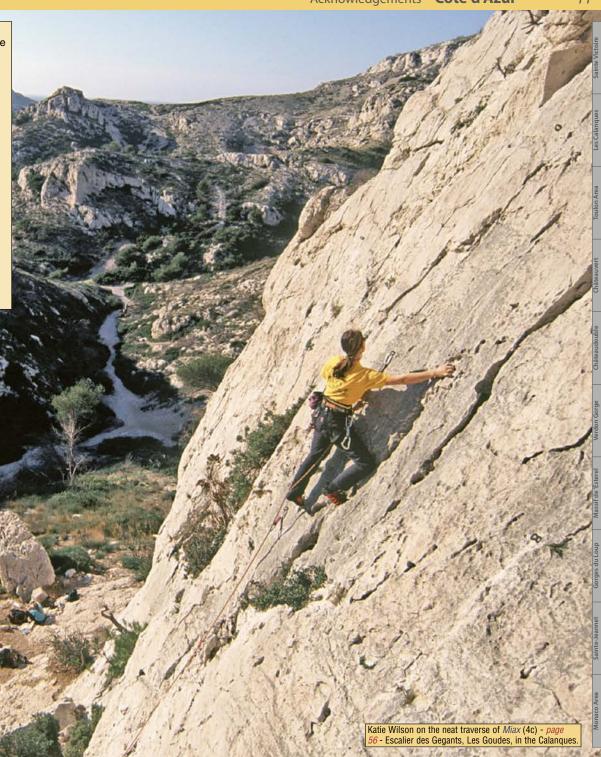
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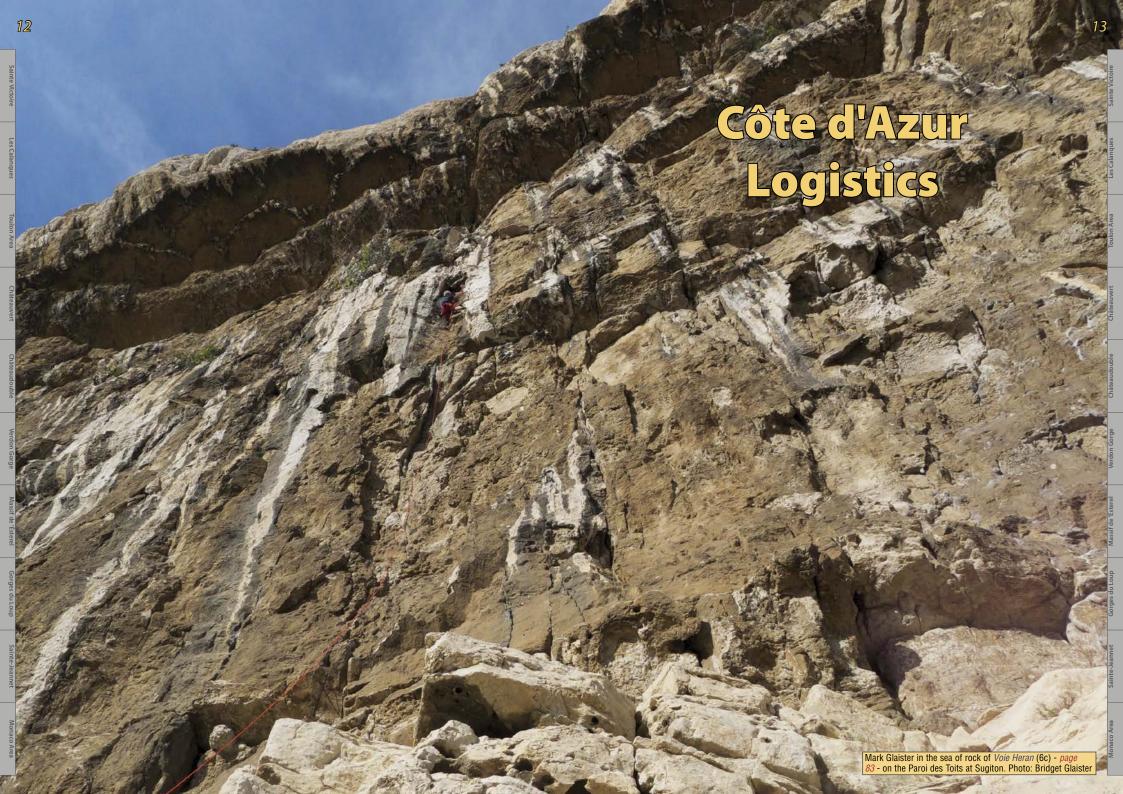
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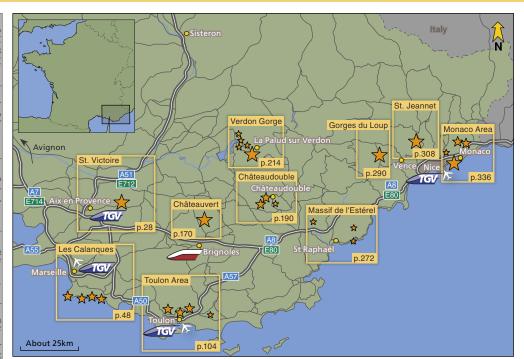


erel Gorges du Lou

Sainte-Jeannet

Monaco Area





Driving

The French autoroutes are fast and usually uncrowded. The cost of the tolls is considerable, but the time saved avoiding all the small towns on the route nationals is priceless. If you've got a long drive, it is possible to break the journey by sleeping in one of the rest areas. If you're looking for a bed without spending too much then there are plenty of low-cost hotels by the roadside.

Flying

There are a number of airports in the South of France served by budget airlines. Nice, Toulon and Marseilles are the closest but Grenoble, Nîmes plus Genoa in Italy are also options. Expect to pay more at popular times like weekends, the summer months and school holidays. Air France and British Airways run regular services into the area.

Train ASV

Eurostar operates a direct service from London to Marseilles and onward to Toulon and Nice. At other times of year, an indirect service is possible on the TGV. Luggage restrictions are far less than those imposed by budget airlines, and the journey only takes around 8 hours station to station.

Getting around without a car

A little tricky, although a number of areas covered in this guide can be accessed by public transport, or by hitch-hiking. If you are visiting at the busier times of year, you may be able to hook up with other climbers with cars. The guide covers an extensive area, and to make the most of a trip, access to a car is recommended.



Where to Stay

The Côte d'Azur is a popular holiday venue with the French and foreigners alike. A comprehensive listing of all the places to stay would require every page of this book.

Camping is very well provided for especially in the summer, though the area is very busy and hot then. Some campsites are listed in the introductions to the areas.

Apartments and gîtes are best found using the internet by searching for 'gites france' and you will find a number of listings sites that allow you to book online.

Tourist information offices are found in most towns, and will point you at a campsite or find you somewhere to stay, and also give ideas to keep you busy on a rest day.

When to Go

The area developed a reputation long ago for benign winter weather. Wealthy Brits discovered the micro-climate of the coastal region and were wintering down here long before the Spanish Costas became popular. While researching this book, the author spent two winters (December to Easter) living on the Côte d'Azur. On both visits there were less than a dozen wet days, which equated to 3 or 4 a month.

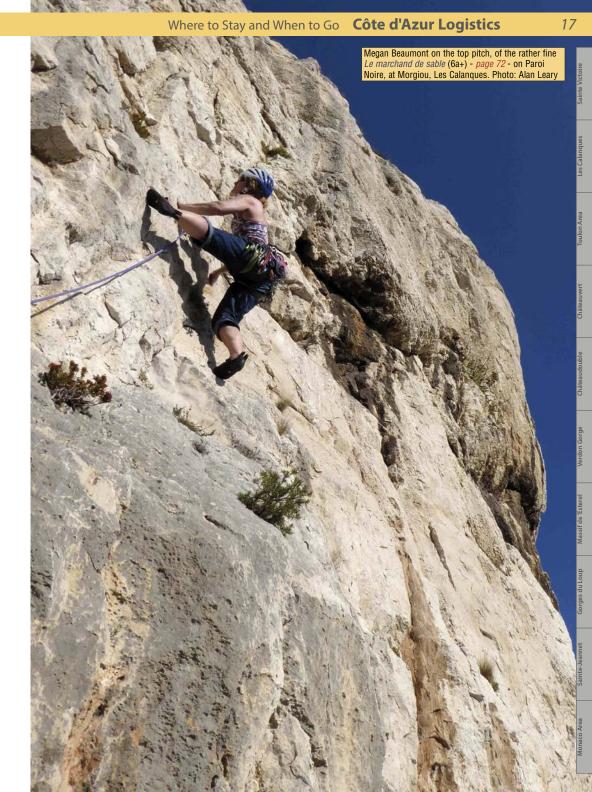
The Mistral can be a problem at times - a ferocious and bitter wind that blasts down the Rhône Valley for days at a time in the winter. The western cliffs are markedly more affected than the eastern ones. Pick a low-lying, sheltered, south-facing crag and you should be able to get something done.

Average Temp °C	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Marseilles (maximum)	10	12	15	18	22	26	29	28	25	20	15	11
Marseilles (minimum)	2	2	5	8	11	15	17	17	15	10	6	3
Nice (maximum)	13	13	15	17	20	24	27	27	25	21	16	14
Nice (minimum)	5	6	7	10	13	17	19	20	17	13	9	6
Verdon (maximum)	8	8	10	12	17	20	25	26	20	15	11	8
Verdon (minimum)	-1	-1	2	5	8	11	14	14	11	7	3	0

Climbing in the sun on winter's day in France is always delightful, we have climbed at Châteauvert in December wearing shorts and T-shirts, whilst the puddles by the road were frozen solid and the trees in the shade were covered in frost. Spring and autumn are the best times for the lower crags when you can choose between cool climbing in the shade or seek out the warmth of the sun. Summer is not the best time for many of the crags but seek out shady sectors, or the high crags like the Verdon, and you may not overheat too much. The number and variety of crags on the Côte d'Azur means there's always somewhere to climb, no matter what time of year you choose to visit.

The average rainfall for the areas covered by in book is relatively low. The high figures in September to December tend to result from storms rather than full days of rain. This may mean that there is a bit of seepage on some routes but you are very unlikely to lose too much climbing time unless you are the unlucky type.

Rainfall cm / month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Marseilles (average)	43	32	43	42	46	24	11	34	60	76	69	66
Nice (average)	80	75	70	60	50	35	15	30	55	100	100	75





The routes in this book are graded using the usual sport grade system, or 'French Grade' as it is often known. Many of these venues were developed in the early days of sport climbing and they later acquired a reputation for stiff grading, certainly in the lower and mid-grades. It is worth remembering that this is where the system was invented so, if the truth be told, it is the other areas that are out of kilter.

Colour-coding

The routes and pitches are colour-coded corresponding to a grade band. The idea is to give a rough comparison between trad routes and sport routes. For example, if you are happy on orange grades on trad, then you should be happy on orange grades on sport. **Green Spots - Everything at** grade 4c and under. These are good for beginners and those wanting an easy life. Orange Spots - 5a to 6a+ inclusive. General ticking routes for those with more

Red Spots - 6b to 7a inclusive. Routes for the very experienced and keen climber.

Black Spots - 7a+ and above.

The hard stuff!

experience.

Sport Grade	British Trad Grade	UIAA	USA
1	Mod	1	5.1
2	Moderate Diff	Ш	5.2
2+	Difficult		5.3
3a _3h _	Very Difficult HVD	IV-	5.4
_ 3c	Hard Very Difficult	IV	5.5
4a	Sev Bold Severe	IV+	5.6
4b	Severe HS BOLD Hard Severe 4a	V-	5.7
4c	Hard Severe 45 SAFE Very Severe 80LD	V	5.8
-5a - 5b	SAFE	_V± . VI-	5.9
50_	Hard Very Severe 5a	VI	5.10a
6a	BOLD SAFE	VI+	5.10b
6a+	SAFE E2 BOLD	VII-	5.10c
6b	6a 5b		5.10d
6b+	SAFE E3 BOLD 5c	VII	5.11a
6c	SAFE	VII+	5.11b
6c+	E4 6a	VIII-	5.11c
7a	BOLD SAFE E5	VIII	5.11d
7a+	Gb		5.12a
7b	BOLD 6c	VIII+	5.12b
7b+	E6 BOLD SAFE	IX-	5.12c
7c	6c 6c	IX	5.12d
7c+	6c E7 BOLD	IX+_	5.13a
8a	F.Q. 7a	χ-	5.13b
8a+	SAFE BOLD	**	5.13c
8b	7a E9 7a	_ X	5.13d
8b+	SAFE	X+	5.14a
8c	7b E10	XI-	5.14b
8c+	SAFE	_XL_	5.14c
9a	7b.		5.14d
9a+	SAFE	XI+	5.15a

Multi-pitch Routes

There are plenty of long multi-pitch routes covered in this guide in particular at crags like Saint-Jeannet and of course in the Verdon Gorge. Double ropes and a light rack of gear is a good idea on these routes, even the ones that are fully bolted. There is also a selection of two pitch routes (at Châteaudouble for example) where the pitch grades are markedly different. We have given these routes two entries so you can choose whether to do the whole thing or just part of the climb.

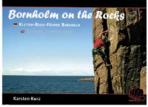


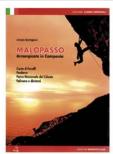
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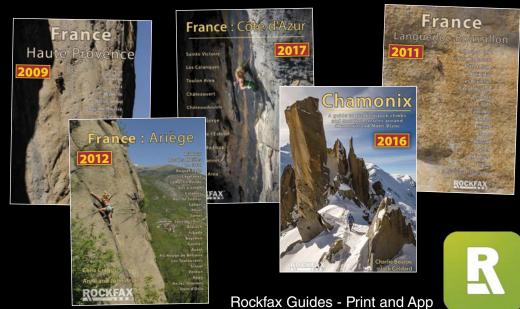


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www.climb-europe.com



France Series



Ropes, Route Lengths and Lowering Off

The most crucial item of gear is your rope. At the very least, you need a 60m rope, but if you're buying a new rope for a trip to France, you might want to consider getting a 70m. Single ropes are now available in thicknesses previously associated with half-ropes. The thinner your rope, the lighter it is to hike up to the crag, the easier it is to pull up to clip. Thicker ropes last longer and are better for working projects. For multi-pitch routes requiring an abseil descent, you may find that using a pair of half-ropes is preferable. The photo-topos have approximate heights, indicated next to some lower-offs. These are

quideline heights only and it is important to remember that crag bases are not always level and people stand in different places when belaying. Also, many climbers don't even know exactly how long their rope is, having chopped worn sections off the ends in the past. The golden rule is always be aware of longer pitches and ALWAYS tie a knot in the end of the rope to prevent dropping a climber when lowering them.

Other Gear

For the sport routes in this book all that is needed is a single rope and a set of quickdraws - 15 or 16 quickdraws is plenty for all but the longest pitches. For the many multi-pitch undertakings it is well worth considering double ropes and a light rack to supplement the fixed gear. On these climbs there are usually bolt-belays in place and a selection of old and new gear on most of them, especially where the difficulties are concentrated. On the other hand the easier sections can be very run-out, placing some of your own gear can reduce the fear factor significantly.

Gear Côte d'Azur Climbing

Beyond these essentials you may find tape useful for bandaging your fingers if the prickly rock starts to take its toll. For multi-pitch routes a small sack with some water, a long-sleeve shirt and a sun hat are good ideas. A good pair of approach shoes are also worth packing as a number of the walk-ins/walk-offs are guite long.

Belays and Extensions

Routes are bolted so that an ascent ends when you have clipped the belay, grabbing the chain is not considered to be the French way! Multi-pitch routes are graded assuming you are taking each belay. Single pitches often have additional sections added to them to offer a longer and more difficult route, these are known as extensions - Châteauvert for example is a crag with a lot of extensions. Most extensions are given extra grades in the route description, and sometimes have different names. Extensions are not classed as second pitches, and the grade of an extension assumes you have not rested on the belay - which would make it easier than the given grade.



4	Destination Planner	Routes	up to 4c	5a to 6a+	6b to 7a	7a+ and up	Approach	Sun	Shelt- ered	Dry in Rain	Seep- age	Multi- pitch	Summary	Page
	Sainte Victoire	179	27	96	41	15	15 - 25 min	Lots of sun	Windy			Multi-pitch	An impressive sheet of limestone. South-facing slabs of high quality rock. The gear is often spaced - boldness is the name of the game.	26
	Les Goudes	107	5	35	38	29	5 - 20 min	Afternoon	Sheltered			Multi-pitch	A good mixture of climbing on a variety of cliffs. Sunny and/or sheltered with something for most tastes.	52
dnes	Sormiou	107	20	60	22	5	2 - 5 min	Lots of sun	Sheltered				Small cliffs, close to the city, and very popular - especially at weekends. Sheltered from the worst of the Mistral. Crime is a problem hereabouts.	62
Calanques	Morgiou	41	4	20	14	3	10 - 15 min	Lots of sun	Windy			Multi-pitch	Big classics on the Paroi Noire plus face routes on the Abri Cotier which are popular due to its accessibility and sheltered position.	70
Les (Sugiton	121	7	22	44	48	30 - 40 min	Lots of sun	Sheltered	Dry Ton the rain		Multi-pitch	The Paroi des Toits is one of the most popular cliffs in the area. Steep with great climbing. There is some of easier-grade stuff in the area too.	76
	Calanque d'en Vau	45	4	25	14	2	35 - 45 min	Sun and shade	Sheltered			Multi-pitch	The classic Calanques venue, with lots of great routes. Popular, especially in the summer and lots of the routes are polished now.	90
<u>დ</u>	Baou de Quatre Ouro	121	9	61	32	19	1 - 20 min	Lots of sun	Windy			Multi-pitch	The Toulon area's prime destination with loads of routes across the grades. Easy access is an added bonus to the cliff's attractions.	108
Toulon Area	Mount Faron Crags	184	39	90	47	8	5 - 10 min	Afternoon	Windy				An array of cliffs that are tricky to locate. Plenty of routes to go at. Lierres is sheltered and Citerne is good for afternoon sun.	120
onlo	Mount Coudon	161	20	71	50	20	1 - 15 min	Lots of sun	Windy			Multi-pitch	A good selection of cliffs along the edge of a mini-mountain. Superb positions, great rock and loads to go at across the grades.	144
-	Fenouillet	40	6	20	10	4	5 - 8 min	Sun and shade	Sheltered				A minor venue of volcanic rock - good for something a little different. There are great beaches only 10 minutes away - another plus point!	162
	Châteauvert	178	13	59	51	55	2 - 5 min	Morning	Sheltered	ory the rain	Seepage		A major venue in a secluded and sheltered valley. Something for everyone from beginners' routes to huge stamina pitches.	168
	Châteaudouble	158	19	59	49	31	5 - 20 min	Lots of sun	Sheltered			Multi-pitch	A rocky gorge with an interesting collection of cliffs that are home to some big pitches. The cliffs generally face south and are sheltered.	190
	Verdon Gorge	170	1	49	74	46	5 - 40 min	Lots of sun	Windy			Multi-pitch	The Main Event. One of Europe's prime climbing destinations which has a massive collection of stunning classics. High and cold in the Winter.	214
Gorge	Felines	24	4	14	6	-	5 15 min	Lots of sun	Windy				A small cliff above Moustiers - La Palud road. Single and two-pitch routes on generally slabby rock.	256
lon G	Le Galetas	20	9	10	1	-	15 - 20 min	Afternoon	Sheltered				A couple of small, slabby and popular cliffs looking out over the upper end of the Lac de St Croix and the lower end of the Verdon Gorge.	260
Verdon	Les Hauts Vernis	63	12	18	23	9	18 - 25 min	Afternoon	Sheltered			Multi-pitch	A west-facing crag in a great setting. There are over 80 routes here, the easy ones are quite popular though the harder ones see little action.	262
	Col d'Ayen	29	4	18	7	-	8 min	Lots of sun	Windy				A pleasant little crag in a lovely sunny setting and with great outward views. Many of the climbs are polished - accessible and popular.	270
sterel	Gorges du Blavet	33	2	12	16	8	3 - 20 min	Morning	Sheltered			Multi-pitch	A granite gorge that is worth a visit to escape the crowds. A mixture of single and multi-pitch and the long routes get afternoon shade.	274
sif de l'E	Pic du Perthus	19	1	12	6	-	20 min	Sun and shade	Windy			Multi-pitch	A spectacular granite tower in a peaceful setting with a nice array of short multi-pitch climbs on interesting rock.	280
Mass	Pilier de Soleil	27	9	15	\$	-	12 min	Afternoon	Sheltered				A sunny little crag composed of red granite (of variable quality). The sea-side setting is great. Pity it isn't a bit more extensive.	286
	Gorges du Loup	135	-	6	16	113	5 - 32 min	Sun and shade	Sheltered	Dry Ton the rain	Seepage	Multi-pitch	A towering canyon with some impressive climbing. Mostly steep and hard, or very steep and very hard. Afternoon shade and dry in the rain.	290
	Saint-Jeannet	249	38	93	87	31	12 - 35 min	Afternoon	Sheltered			Multi-pitch	A conspicuous landmarks in the area, with routes ranging from 8m boulder problems to 200m walls, and most stations in between.	308
ea	La Trinité	32	10	15	6	1	Readside Roadside	Not much sun	Sheltered		Seepage 4			340
Monaco Area	La Turbie	270	36	121	65	48	5 - 15 min		Sheltered	Dry Ton the rain		Multi-pitch	An extensive crag that has been popular for years. Loads to do across the grades in an amazing setting. Plenty of polish and overcrowded.	344
Tonac	Peillon	149	-	34	59	56	20 - 30 min		Sheltered	Dry Con the rain	Seepage 4	Wolfli-pitch	g J,	368
2	Gorbio	53	-	26	18	9	15 - 18 min	Lots of sun	Sheltered				Fine, grey and sunny walls with plenty of long pitches and a variety of styles. Long drive up but at least the walk-in is nice and easy.	344
	TOTALS	2715	299	1061	799	555	Faded sy	mbol m	eans that	only so	me of	the ro	utes are sheltered / dry in the rain / suffer from seepage / multi-pitch	