

Climbers' playgrounds—Europe

3 Saussois

Claude Davies

Le Saussois is the name of a small hamlet with an adjacent limestone escarpment situated within a short distance of the autoroute A6 south-east of Paris, fifteen miles south of Auxerre. For those returning early from the Alps it provides a very convenient stopping-off place, where a large number of varied routes on solid limestone can be enjoyed in the relaxed atmosphere of France away from the main tourist routes. The rocks overlook the river Yonne, surrounded by very pleasant wooded countryside interspersed with very small villages.

The easiest way of approach is via the Auxerre south autoroute junction which leads on to the N6. This road is followed south towards Avallon, until a minor road west is reached signposted Mailly-la-Ville and beyond Coulanges-sur-Yonne. This road passes beneath the escarpment of Le Saussois, a short distance behind Mailly-la-Ville. It is approximately forty minutes drive from Auxerre.

Excellent camping facilities are available across the river in the village with additional attractions in the form of boating, fishing and swimming in the nearby river. There is also a C.A.F. hut situated on top of the rocks, but it is not recommended.

The climbing is generally of a steep nature demanding strong fingers and an athletic approach. There are, however, several interesting chimney and crack routes of easier standard. All the necessary pitons are in place with the occasional threaded chain providing unusual additional assurance. The average length of route is approximately 100 ft, but there are several much longer routes of around 200 ft. The nature of the holds is such that fairly stiff boots are recommended rather than the flexible lightweight type.

RECOMMENDED ROUTES

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| La Martine | The very prominent chimney route towards the right-hand end of the largest buttress. This is about Hard Severe standard and serves as a very good introduction. |
| L'Echelle à Poissons | The wall immediately left of La Martine containing two traverses at high level. This is Hard Very Severe standard and justifiably very popular. |



71 *Saussois*. Photo: H. Nicol

La Rech

Is on the buttress towards the left-hand end of the rocks which throw down a spur almost to the road-side. A pleasant slab followed by a very strenuous chimney leads to the final wall which is followed with some difficulty. A Medium Very Severe route.

There are obviously dozens of routes on the rocks with an infinite number of possible variations, details of which can best be obtained at week-ends when French climbers often attend in force.

References

Alpine Climbing 1971, 59.

La Montagne 1950, 57.

4 The Calanques

Ernest Shepherd

In Provence, to the west of the Maritime Alps, only one of the climbing areas is of major importance, the Calanques (fjords in miniature), a wilderness of about twenty square miles, situated only a few miles from the city of Marseilles. From La Madrague on the southern outskirts of Marseilles, the Calanques coast runs south for one mile, then east for nine miles to Cassis (camp site, base for climbers). Due to the fact that no road runs along the coast-line (a triumph for the conservationists), and access is not easy, the area remains unspoiled.

Between the massifs of the Marseillevyre (435 m) and Puget (564 m), two narrow roads run from Mazargues to the beautiful Calanques of Sormiou and Morgiou. Walkers have free access, but permits (obtainable from the City Hall, Marseilles) are now required for cars. Police road blocks enforce this requirement.

Further east there is also an access road (rough) for cars to the plateau above En Vau (no permit required). Some other (better) roads are for fire engines only.

Money and valuables should not be left in a parked car, not even in a locked boot, particularly near En Vau, where professional thieves use keys!

Drinking water is available in abundance outside the Calanques at Cassis and Les Goudes, otherwise the area is normally dry, and enough drinking water should be carried. It is forbidden to light fires and cooking stoves because of fire risk.

The Calanques guide-books list eighteen different crags and more than 500 climbs of all standards, including XS and artificial, have been recorded. Most climbs are between 150 ft and 300 ft. A few are 500 ft and one is almost 1000 ft. This limestone is remarkably sound (loose rock does occur but not much). Some holds are becoming polished, but finger holds tend to be good. Pitons,



72 *Calanques*. Photo: E. Shepherd

where needed, are normally in place, and the important ones are renewed occasionally by the C.A.F.

First requirement is the general guide-book *Les Calanques*, published by the Club Alpin Français, Section de Provence, 1 Rue des Feuillants, Marseilles. This details the locations of crags and access routes and includes a splendid contoured map, 1/20,000 scale.

Six C.A.F. climbing guide-books cover the Calanques (some may be out of print):

Vallon des Aiguilles, et Marseilleveyre
 Les Goudes, St Michel
 Morgiou, Sormiou, Sugiton
 La Grande Chandelle
 Le Devenson
 En Vau, Vallon des Rampes.

Climbs are graded in the usual French system of words, from Facile (F) to Extrêmement Difficile + (ED+), and individual pitches are graded in the numerical system (I to VI+) on the sketches. Pitons are shown on the sketches, but some are now missing.

To sum up: thoroughly recommended for quality of climbing, scenery and climate.

5 Häggsta

E. A. Bo Söderberg

Häggsta is situated about thirteen miles south-west of Stockholm. It is an outcrop 1200 ft long with walls about 140 ft high. The rock gives good friction in dry weather and is mostly firm and pleasant to climb.

The first known climb on Häggsta was made in 1924. Of course, at that time there were not so many routes as nowadays, and the difficulties of the routes were not so great. Now about sixty different routes are known. After World War II the climbing on Häggsta was developed rapidly. During the period 1950–60 many artificial routes were made for the first time, while at the same time the difficulties of the new free-climbing routes became more severe.

In Häggsta you can find routes from easy up to very severe. You also have artificial routes of nearly a rope length. Most of the routes are wall climbs, but there are also two small chimneys, and a few passages of layback. As you see, you have the opportunity to practise many different sorts of climbing.

All the routes have names of their own, for example *Number Three*, *The Four Pitons*, *The Wine Route*, *the Half Moon*, *Helmut's Traverse*, and so on.



73 *The Häggsta walls.* Photo: E. A. Bo Söderberg

Recently the Alpine section of Svenska Fjällklubben (Swedish Mountain-club) has published a climber's guide-book to Häggsta. This describes all the routes and classifies them, so that you can be well aware of the difficulties you will meet on the mountain.

When you go to Häggsta for the week-ends, you don't go just for the climbing. Häggsta has become a 'Mecca' for Swedish climbers living near Stockholm. You live in your tent, meet other climbers and talk about climbing trips you have made or wish to make. Here you can find a partner for the next climb and have information about the routes you want to do. Häggsta is really a green oasis next to the capital of Sweden.

6 Outcrop climbing from Rome

A. Heppenstall

Considering that Rome is the goal of tens of thousands of sun-worshipping tourists and culture-hunters every year, it may come as a surprise to know that it is also a climbing centre of some potential. It contains an active branch of the C.A.I. and lies only three hours' drive from mountain areas of considerable interest to mountaineers of all levels and all specialities, from the ski-tourer to the rock technician.

The hills come down practically to the city suburbs, so the outcrop climber has not far to look to satisfy his interests. There are two major outcrops, with a third (a sea cliff) having some potential but only two routes to date. All of these however, suffer from a major disadvantage—it is virtually impossible to climb on them during the summer due to the intense heat, which drives most climbers to the higher mountains. Even during December and January, on cloudless and windless days one is often glad to dive for shelter after sweating it out on a sun-baked expanse of white limestone.

The nearest and most accessible outcrop to Rome is on Monte Morra, due east of the city and slightly to the north of the hill town of Tivoli. This is the only climbing ground which can be visited in less than a full day. The cliff faces south over the plain of Rome 2000 ft below: it is pleasant to spend the afternoon here when the climbs are at last in the shade. There are two tiers, each of which at its highest point rises to about 300 ft. The rock is a good limestone, pock-marked in places, and provided with superb jugs, as well as good cracks and holes for inserting pegs. Trees often provide good belays. Climbing here is accompanied by a pleasant feeling of security—an excellent practice ground for experts and beginners alike.

This is slightly less so at the second outcrop, Monte Leano, which overlooks the coastal town of Terracina, about forty miles from Rome. The rock is looser here. This is a good place on a hot day: the bulk of the routes are on the walls of a detached tower, separated from the main face by an easy gully, and it is possible to work round the tower climbing in the shade all day. The downhill side has climbs of up to 600 ft, while the upper side is about 200; the easiest way to the summit is a well-trodden Grade II. Days at Leano tend to start early with a tiresome slog up a dusty, cactus-covered hillside (watch out for vipers!) to gain the welcome shade of the cliff. Then two or three routes, run down to the cars and drive two miles down to the sea for a welcome refreshing bathe.

A little way south of Leano a 500 ft sea cliff rears out of the water. This is the most sensational of the Rome climbing grounds and the least visited. Approach is by boat or by three free abseils. The way out is back up to the top. The two existing routes (Grades IV and V respectively) do not by any means exhaust the possibilities of the place.

These brief notes may persuade the odd climber visiting Rome to pack his rope and P.As alongside the more usual guide-books, lists of museums and beachcombing gear, and to get out and explore places rarely seen by the tourists.