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Middle East 1993

Oman

Amongst the best routes to be done in the Middle East in 1993 was what is known as the *French Route* on the 1500m S pillar of Jebel Misht. Originally sieged over four weeks and with considerable aid by French guides under the leadership of Raymond Renaud in 1979, a free ascent has since been attempted on at least two occasions. In January 1993 Jerry Hadwin, Sean Nelson and Garth Bradshaw finally succeeded in a two-day push and comment that the route should be climbable in a day. There is some E3 5c, but much of the route is Severe or below.

The end of the year was marked by the publication of Alec McDonald's guide *Rock Climbing in Oman* (Apex Publishing, distributed by Cordee), listing around 170 routes of all grades in all areas of the country and identifying areas for potential new climbs. The book is in traditional British style, easy to follow and essential for anyone considering climbing there, though a map of Oman identifying crag locations at a glance would have been useful.

Jordan

1993 seems to have been the year of the guidebook in the Middle East, for it also saw the publication of *Walks and Scrambles in Wadi Rumm* (Al Kutba), and the completion of the second edition of *Treks and Climbs in Wadi Rumm* (Cicerone), both by the author of this report.

The latter guide includes details of around 270 routes. The climbs in the early nineties by Austrian guides Haupolter and Precht are particularly notable and at the top end of difficulty, being serious undertakings on intricate big walls. Equally noteworthy was the ascent in 1993 of a new route on the 500m SW pillar of **Nassrani** by Bedouin climber Sabbah Eid with E Ratouis and a French team, at TD Sup, with a lot of 5b (English) and a 5c crux. (Plate 90)

With the assistance of the Ministry of Tourism, **Wadi Rumm** now has greatly improved amenities for visitors and climbers. The Rest House and surrounds have been extended to include a restaurant and bar, a climbers' self-catering kitchen, a campsite, showers and toilets, all within one hour's walk of most of the routes in the guide.

Elsewhere in Jordan, the author and Di Taylor are continuing trekking, climbing and canyoning explorations in the surrounds of Petra and the Dead Sea Hills where **Wadi Mujib** is situated – a magnificent 40km gorge descending from 1500m above sea level to 390m below!

A guide to this area is expected in the future, whilst the new Cicerone *Guide to the Wadi Rumm* should be in the shops for the spring '94 season.

Turkey

This country has also seen publication of a new Cicerone guide to Ala Dag by Ö B Tüzel entitled *The Ala Dag, Climbs and Treks in Turkey's Crimson Mountains*. It describes around 130 routes with both summer and winter ascents and indicates possible areas for exploration. (*The guide is reviewed by Sir Edward Peck on page 314.*)

This area and the S Med coast have also had a couple of recent visits by French guides Colonna and Domenech who report great potential for sport climbs and canyoning.