



Switzerland's Rhone Valley

Part One
Lake Geneva to Martigny

An English Companion for Climbers

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Climbers Companions

Disclaimer

Although this is not a guide or instructional book, it is a book about going climbing so it seems worth placing a little disclaimer. I assume by the fact that you are reading this book you are already a climber and therefore you take on the responsibility and dangers that come with the sport. However life is such that I feel better by including an official disclaimer written by the British Mountain Council regarding climbing.

“The author recognises that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions.”

[BMC website](#)

The information in this book does not offer instruction or technique needed for climbing. The reader must accept full responsibility for their actions and not take information in this book as a guide for climbing or as a substitute for instruction.

Please also note that all information contained within, was true and accurate to the best of my knowledge at the time of writing. If you find any inaccuracies or new information to add please let me know. All costings and prices are based on information researched during May and June 2010.

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Introduction

Switzerland's Rhone Valley contains a well developed climbing area that runs roughly north to south from Lake Geneva to Martigny. Strictly speaking, the Rhone valley continues round from Martigny to Brig, but in climbing terms, that opens up a whole other area and will be the focus of a second eBook. Although often seen as a 'rest day' option for Alpinists, or a pleasant retreat by those plagued by bad weather in the mountains, the Rhone Valley in Switzerland is easily justifiable as a climbing destination in it's own right. The well bolted routes surrounded by spectacular snow capped alpine peaks make for a superb setting.

Many of the crags are frequented only by those living in the area because the area is relatively unexplored by others. The absence of a comprehensive guide in English may have put many people off, and this is where this eBook fits in. There are in fact, some excellent guidebooks written in French and German that contain well written topos and easy to follow sketch maps that require little in the way of foreign language skills. This eBook is designed to work alongside those resources and help you to organise your own Swiss Rhone Valley climbing trip. I have spent a great deal of time living and climbing in this beautiful region of the Alps, so I will try to give useful advice about climbing and travelling here, so that none of your time is wasted working out where would be best to climb.

The routes range in both sizes and styles. While there are many single pitch crags scattered along the valley sides, there are also plenty of longer routes to suit the more adventurous climber. As you would expect with such an abundance of rock, there are levels of difficulty to suit everybody! The majority of the climbing is on bolted limestone crags although there are some outcrops of gneiss nearer Martigny.

With all this rock climbing less than two hours drive from Geneva airport, it's surprising that cragging in the Swiss Rhone valley is relatively unheard of – especially amongst British climbers. The visits that it does get, often co-inside with climbers experiencing poor weather over the border in nearby Chamonix, which despite being 'over the border' is relatively close. With it's comparatively low altitude and abundance of south facing cliffs, it is possible to climb here when the higher alpine peaks are shrouded in cloud. In fact it is possible to climb here virtually all year round, although shaded crags would be well advised in the height of summer!

Enjoy the read and even more so the climbing!

Getting there

By Air

Geneva airport is one of the most accessible (and often cheapest!) places to fly to from the UK and unlike other alpine airports, flights continue all year round. Flights to Geneva, depart from almost all major UK airports, as well as most major European airports. If you are flying from the UK, [Easyjet](#) fly from airports all over and [BMI Baby](#) fly from the Midlands and Cardiff. [Swiss Air](#) and [British Airways](#) can also be worth a look. They tend to be less restrictive with baggage. A full list of airlines that fly to Geneva from all over the world can be viewed on the [Geneva Airport](#) website.

If you want to do a more general search I always use [Travel Supermarket](#) and [Kayak](#) search engines. They seem to cover a large number of budget and non budget airlines to help you find the best flights at the best price.

By Train

The Swiss are famed for the efficiency of their rail network and there is a station conveniently located inside Geneva Airport. The [SBB](#) website is excellent for finding out times, connections and fares; it is almost as efficient as the trains themselves. Buses are usually scheduled to arrive and depart in conjunction with the train timings, to help keep your journey running smoothly.

If you are planning on making multiple journeys or even visiting Switzerland later in the same year, consider purchasing a 'half card' which for a fee of CHF 150, entitles the holder to a 50% reduction in train fares for one year. You can work out if the fee makes the savings worth while and purchase them online from the above web site (but be aware – you'll need to order it ten days in advance).

By Bus

As with the trains, the buses are rarely off schedule, but getting to your planned crag may take a little time. Some of the crags can be reached via public transport, but others will involve a little more walking. For example, once in Leysin, it is possible to hike to many of the higher cliffs, but as with most climbing areas around the world, sometimes having a car can save you that bit of extra hassle and reduce the approach time! The bus timetables are linked in to the major stations to co-inside with the arrival of trains. The yellow 'Post Buses' will get you to the smaller village destinations. Timetables and even 'scenic itineraries' can be found at [Post Bus](#).

By Car

Having your own set of wheels, is going to give you the greatest freedom and options when choosing where to climb. Many of the areas involve parking some distance away from the closest bus stop. Having access to a car also means that you can move on to different areas to suit your own agenda (and the weather!), rather than having the pressure of getting up and off a route in time to catch the bus.

For those driving from the UK, it takes about 10 hours to drive from the ferry ports in Northern France to Geneva. At the time of writing, [LD Lines](#) (Ramsgate – Ostend) and [Norfolk Line](#) (Dover - Dunkirk) were both offering great deals. A return ticket for a car can range from £20 - £80

depending on what time of the day you want to go.

In most European countries, it is obligatory to have a breakdown kit, that includes a reflective warning triangle, Hi-Vis vests as well as a full set of spare bulbs for your car. Also, if you are travelling in Switzerland during the winter months, it may be necessary to carry snow chains for your tyres. On some roads, for example, the higher mountain passes, a green sign indicating snow chains, means that it may be a legal requirement to carry them – failure to do so may carry a fine. The AA have a really useful section on their website called [European Driving](#). You can select a country to get specific rules and regulations and they give general top tips.

In Switzerland, the speed limit's are 50 km/h in towns, 80 km/h on Cantonal roads (those with BLUE road signs) and 120km/h on the motorways (roads with GREEN road signs)

TOP TIP:

There is a Motorway tax/toll in Switzerland. You must pay CHF 40.00 before driving on the Motorway. The small sticker (known as a Vignette) must be displayed in your windscreen and can be bought as you cross the border. They are valid by the year – so if you buy one in January, it is valid for 12 months, but if you buy one in November then it is only valid for 2 months, until the new year starts!

If you wish to hire a car, then Geneva airport is well serviced by all the major car rental companies, and it is probably cheapest to hire from there. If you hire a car from within Switzerland it should already have a vignette, but check!

As with flights, it is possible to spend hours searching for the best deals but a couple of good search engines is all you need. I would recommend trying [Auto Europe](#), it seems to bring up some bargain prices and [Avis](#) who are renowned for reliability but perhaps not the cheapest.

TOP TIP:

Car Parking – If you are required to pay to park, a blue sign indicating a meter to pay at will be shown. If there is just a time limit on how long you can stay for, you will need to set and leave a parking clock card on your dash board to indicate what time you arrived at the parking lot. Most hire cars will have one of these in the glove box. If you are driving your own car, you can pick one up for free from any Swiss Post Office.

Maps and Guides

Guidebooks

- **Escalades – Claude & Yves Remy (2010) Privately Published**

This is the most detailed and up to date guide book for the area and it covers sport and traditional climbing through the entire Rhone Valley as well a bit of bouldering. From Geneva to Martigny, most crags of significance are mentioned. With over 5000 routes described, there is more than enough to keep you going for many, many weeks. It was originally published in 2004 and this new addition has over a thousand new routes in it, which gives you an idea of the scope for rock climbing in this area. The problem for climbers, is getting hold of a copy outside of Switzerland! Once in the area, it is possible to purchase the guide at huts, gites, the climbing shops in Monthey or Leysin, tourist offices etc, but even with the wonders of the internet, I have not found a way to purchase it online! At CHF55.00 (about £32.00), it's not cheap, but it is THE definitive guide.

- **Plasir West – Jürg von Känel (2004) Edition Filidor**

Written in German, French and Italian, it is a superb introduction to the rock climbing delights of Western Switzerland. It is aimed at the low to mid grade climber and only contains routes around the 4a – 6c (French) grade. It does however, include the most popular climbing areas actually in the Rhone valley, as well as further a field into the Berne Oberland, Vallis and even over the border into eastern France. A great book if you are planning to explore further into Switzerland. There are small sketch maps to each area as well as symbols to indicate equipment needed, walk in times and descent options. There really is a great deal of information packed into such a relatively small book.

You can buy this from [Filidor](#) online for 32 Euros. Just fill in the form and then they invoice you with cost and payment options. Otherwise this can also be picked up easily in country.

- **Bernese Oberland – Les Swindon (2003) Alpine Club Guidebooks**

Not really relevant to the Rhone Valley, but it does touch on some of the areas nearby (Leysin, Sanetsch & Miroir de l'Argentine). Worth taking with you if you already have it or intend to be doing alpine routes in the Oberland, but don't bother getting it if you are only going to the Rhone Valley.

Maps

As you would expect, the Swiss have got excellent maps of their country. Available in 1:100,000, 1:50,000 and 1:25,000, they are superbly detailed. Each sheet has a specific number for different areas. The 1:50,000 map mentioned should be fine for finding most of the climbing area in the Rhone Valley, but obviously, the 1:25,000 will have increased detail.

- **Carte Nationale de la Suisse – St-Maurice (272). 1:50,000.** The Office Fédéral de Topographie
- **Carte Nationale de la Suisse – Monthey (1284), Les Diablerets (1285), Dent de Morcles (1305), Val-d'Illiez (1304).** 1:25,000. The Office Fédéral de Topographie

TOP TIP: Don't forget that Swiss maps have contours marked at 20m intervals, as opposed to the 10m intervals used by the Ordnance Survey in the UK.

Maps can be purchased in the UK, online from [The Map Shop](#)

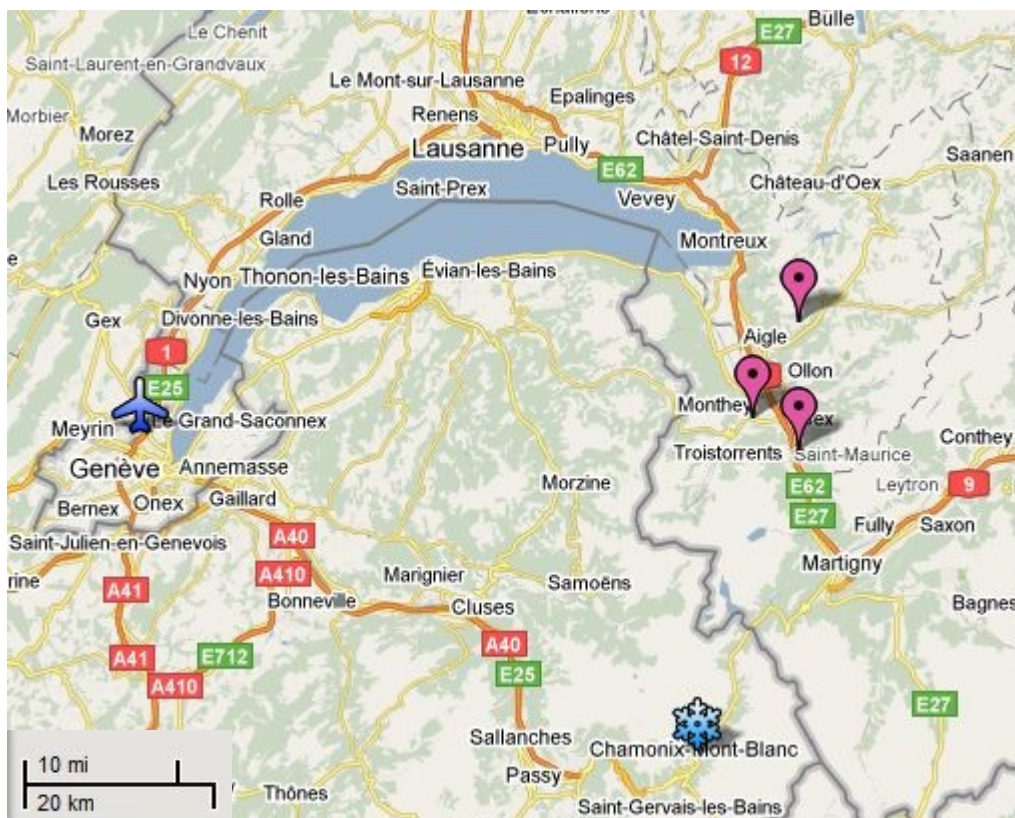
Climbing Areas & Valley Bases

Although the area guidebooks provide good topos of the routes and well drawn sketch maps of how to actually get there, if you can't read French or German, then it's difficult to get a feel for what each crag is going to be like. Most of the crags are good quality limestone, set at a variety of aspects and are generally well endowed with pockets and crimps. Further down the valley towards Martigny, the rock type becomes gneiss – a solid, coarse grained metamorphic rock with angular hand holds. Many of the longer routes have a lower grade in brackets next to the route grade, with the letters 'obg' next to it. This means that it is obligatory to be climbing at the marked grade in brackets – (you should be able to aid past the hard moves if this is the case).

This eBook is designed to be used in conjunction with the current guidebooks. These guidebooks should contain enough information to get you to the right sectors, but to make planning your trip a little easier, I've put in a few notes and handy hints about some of the crags.

The decision of where you decide to climb, will obviously affect your decisions on where to stay in the Rhone valley. It may be that you wish to base yourself in one area, or travel through the valley. For ease of reading and to help you plan your trip, I've grouped together clusters of crags that are close to certain towns and put them under the heading of 'Valley Bases'. The three main areas I have chosen are around Monthey, Leysin and Saint-Maurice. This should help you work out where things are and give you a bit of an insight into what facilities are available in each area. If you have access to a car, then the whole of the Rhone valley is easily accessible from any of the valley bases if you are prepared to drive about an hour.

Map to Show Valley Bases in relation to Geneva Airport and Chamonix



Click on the map to go straight to google maps and explore this area in more detail.

Valley Bases

Around Monthey

Monthey is a largish town situated just off the main motorway that travels through the Rhone Valley. There are many climbing venues all within easy reach and details of each area, are specified below.

Areas to climb here: (more information about each area later)

- Aigle
- Drapel
- Yvorne
- St-Triphon
- Vercheiz
- Vionnaz
- Collombey

Tourist Information

Depending on which direction you are travelling from, the Grand St Bernard Service Station on the E62/E27 (9) has an excellent tourist information desk. They are very knowledgeable about the area and you can purchase maps and guidebooks from there. From Geneva, both Aigle and Ollon have a tourist information bureau, but the main tourist office is situated in Monthey town centre. For information and opening times check out [Monthey's](#) official website.

Accommodation

As far as I know, there is no campsite actually in Monthey, but there are plenty of hotel and Gite style B&B's. The website [Bed and Breakfast Switzerland](#) is an excellent search and booking site. It recommends [Au Gîte Canadien](#) in Monthey and [Le Pontet](#) nearby Collombey.

Eating out

Monthey has a nice little town square that retains some of the towns original character, before the arrival of the out of town shopping zones. There are of course the usual fast-food restaurants that are associated with such out of town developments, but there is a decent choice of cafés, bars and restaurants in the town centre itself.

Local Amenities

Water! Every village in Switzerland is legally obliged to maintain a drinking water fountain. They are usually located in the village square and are drinkable unless signed otherwise. A great resource for the thirsty climber!

Shopping

There is a large out of town retail park on the northern edge of Monthey with fast food outlets and big supermarkets that should provide everything you need. Don't forget that this is Switzerland and shops are shut at lunch time (usually 12.00-1400) and Sundays. Even the big name shops will be closed on Sundays and tend not to stay open as late as you would expect shops in the UK to.

Climbing Shops

There is a well stocked Climbing shop in the centre of Monthey called [Passé Montagne](#).

Other Activities

- Local Swiss Wine – you can't miss the Vineyards above Aigle and Ollon. The Swiss don't generally export their wines, so you are unlikely to find much of it outside of Switzerland. Check out [Les Vin du Valais](#) which is dedicated to the wines of the region.
- [Thermal Baths](#) – The valley behind Monthey that takes you up to the Ski resort of Champéry has an amazing outdoor thermal bath in the village of Val-d'lliez. It is very reasonably priced and anyone can go, there is no membership fee so you can just head there for a few hours to relax.
- [Parc Adventure](#) – is a tree-top high ropes course in Aigle. It's pretty good fun, and it is at least a rainy day option!

Climbing areas around Monthey:

Aigle

Overview

This is a handy little crag to stop off at on your way through the valley, but doesn't offer much in the way of ambiance like those in the vineyards above do. Still, there are some good routes to be had and with a walk-in of under 5 minutes, there's not much to complain about! It seems to be a popular 'after work' crag for the locals as it faces west and catches the afternoon/evening sun.

Getting there

Driving from Aigle, head in the direction of Bex, just before joining the road signposted to Ollon and Bex, turn left into what seems to be an industrial unit by a skate and snowboarding outlet called 'Sidecut'. Follow this road and park in the small lay-by on the right. From here, follow the path into the woods and round to the crag. Coming from Ollon, it is the first right as you drive into Aigle.

Route length and quality

There are two tiers. The lower (Falaise du bas) has pitches of up to 30m and some of them are two pitches long. The upper tier (Falaise du haut) can be accessed by foot, or by climbing up from the lower tier. The routes here are just over 20m long. As with many easily accessible areas, the lower grade routes are becoming a bit polished.

Grades

4a to 8b. There are a wide range of grades here.

Aspect

West facing so good for afternoon and evening sun.

Drapel

Overview

Drapel is south facing and with over 150 routes to go at, you could easily spend a lot of time here! Nestled up in the vineyards above the valley floor, the views from the lower-offs are spectacular. The base of the crag is mostly shaded by the trees. The only thing that counts against this great crag is that it can get muddy on the path to the cliff and at the base of routes. For this reason, it's worth investing in a rope bag or tarp.

Getting there

From Aigle, head uphill to the small village of Yvorre. Go past the fountain before going steeply up hill towards an unmissable large 'Walt Disney style' white Château. At the Château, take a right hand turn over a small bridge and then a very sharp right, signposted to 'Vers-Monthey'. It feels a bit like you are about to drive into some private houses, but the word 'Drapel' is signposted and the parking can be found at the end of the road that takes you into the vineyards! There is enough parking for quite a few cars at the end of the road, but please make sure that access to the house is

not blocked. From here, follow the trail below the house into the woods (further parking is available by driving along this gravel track to a wide parking area). It can take nearly 30 minutes to reach some of the sectors, but the path takes you through some beautiful woodland and the views across the valley are outstanding. Just before you reach a bench, turn left and scramble up to the base of the cliffs. Most routes here can be identified by their name which is painted at the base of the routes.

Route length and quality

The routes here are generally of great quality, well equipped and there are plenty of them. In fact, Drapel is one of the biggest sectors in this area. One of the sectors (Pierre aux druides droite) has some very short routes, between 8 and 12 meters, but most of the routes are around 20 – 25 meters and in places a little higher.

Grades

From 3 to 8a

Aspect

South facing sun trap, although some shade can usually be found under the trees at the base of the climbs. In the event of poorer weather, these crags often stay dry the longest.

Yvorne

Overview

A similar style to Drapel, this crag offers plenty to do for the mid grade climber as well as some great views down the valley.

Getting there

As for Drapel, head uphill through the village of Yvorne from Aigle. This time, turn left at the White Château and park shortly afterwards at a right hand turning. Follow the track on foot through the vineyards until an obvious path takes you up to the crags. Approach time is approximately 20 minutes.

Route length and quality

I have currently only climbed at the Marco Polo sector, so can't comment first hand about all the climbing here, but there are certainly an abundance of starred routes in the Remy brother's guide book and they were well justified on the routes that I did! Routes are anywhere between 10 and 30 meters, with the vast majority being 20-25 meters.

Grades

4b to 8a+ - with a good selection of starred routes in the 6a – 7a region.

Aspect

As with its neighbour, Drapel, the crags are south facing, with shaded bases and stunning views.

St-Triphon

Overview

This quarried crag has a reputation for being a bit polished, but has the advantage of having a variety of aspects to climb on, allowing you to select sun or shade at most times of the day. Some of the easier areas see a lot of group use, but there are plenty of routes so it is not usually a problem. There is also plenty of space to park (up to 10 hours at a time) in the long lay-by just outside the village of St-Triphon. Due to its relatively low altitude, this really is virtually an all year round venue. It is possible to climb on the cool shady north and west walls in mid summer or be basking in winter sun on the south faces, having been skiing in nearby resorts in the morning!

Getting there

The small village of St-Triphon is well sign posted from all directions, including from the motorway that runs from Montreux to Martigny. The crag is located just north of the village of St-Triphon. The easiest way to find the parking area is to take the road to Ollon from Aigle. Just before the turn off to Ollon, there is a right hand turning over the railway line towards St-Triphon. After a few hundred meters, turn left at the crossroads, then right down a one-way road. There is a long lay-by for parking here. At the end of the parking lane, cross over the road and enter the quarry. There are several paths leading up into the quarry, all of which will get you to the climbing. The quarry is dis-used where the climbing is located, but beware of heavy machinery moving about across the road at the end of the parking lay-by. Once in the quarry, it is fairly easy to locate the various sectors.

Route length and quality

The routes on the south facing walls (located by the large cross on top) are the tallest at 30m. As I mentioned above, due to the ease of access, many of the routes are becoming quite polished, but there are still some great routes here, despite the less aesthetic quarried surroundings.

Grades

Plenty for everyone here – 3c to 8c+ and everything in between.

Aspect

There are a variety of aspects allowing you to follow the sun or shade around the cliffs during the day.

Verchiez

Overview

Another classic single pitch venue in amongst the vineyards. The best sector is probably La Dalle à Besson. A good little technical slab that is a total sun trap and therefore dries very quickly indeed. You work hard for your grade here but it is a nice position with splendid views.

Getting there

Begin by heading up the valley side from Ollon. The road up to the crag feels like you are driving into someone's front yard as you weave your way through the small village of Verchiez, but press on

confidently to park in the indistinct lay-by under the trees on the right hand side of the road just before the road goes under the railway line. From here you can see the crag up above you, and it's just a short walk along the track, before cutting up the steep and sometimes a little muddy (in-situ rope to pull on!) path in the woods, then over the very rickety stile.

Route length and quality

Up to 25 meters on the right hand sector (looking in – La Dalle a Monnet) and around 15 -18 meters on the other sectors. The slab of La Dalle à Besson is a compact sheet of limestone, with nice crimps and knobbls to balance on.

Grades

Mostly 5a – 6b+

Aspect

South facing. Plenty of sunshine here!

Vionnaz

Overview

Vionnaz is the collective name used to describe a number of crags that are scattered on the hillside opposite Aigle, above Monthey. The lowest crag, 'La Pierre à Perret' has the most accessible range of grades and a great shady spot in the summer. The rest of the crags (e.g 'spiderman' and 'pokemon' sectors) deal only in steep routes, with nothing much below 6c/7a.

Getting there

Leave Monthey and head roughly north in the direction of Evian and you will soon come to the town of Vionnaz. The harder crags are accessed by following the switchbacks uphill towards Torgon. There are several parking spots that are well mapped in the Remy brothers guidebook. To get to the 'easier' sector of 'La Pierre à Perret', stay on the main road for a short while longer before taking the turning left by a lorry park after passing a garage on your left. There is only a short, one minute walk-in here.

Route length and quality

Most of the routes in the harder sectors are of a decent length, being between 20 and 30 meters. 'La Pierre à Perret' has the shorter, easier selection at around 12 meters. The rock is of good quality and there are plenty of starred routes.

Grades

A real range is available here. 'La Pierre à Perret' offers a nice range from 3c to 6b, but to get much done at the other areas you will need to be climbing between 6c – 8b.

Aspect

The harder sectors face east to south east so catch the morning sun, although L'Eperon does have a few routes on the shaded north end. La Pierre à Perret, is a good choice on a hot day because it's northerly aspect means there is always some shade.

Collombey

Overview

I have included this small crag out of completeness really. It is right on the edge of Monthey town, in a bit of an industrial area, so it is hardly the most aesthetic place you could climb at having travelled to the beautiful Alps! Still, it is north facing and is usually nice and cool on a hot day and you can park right by it. The crag does get a lot of use by groups so the lower grade areas can be quite polished. However there are a few climbs on the upper tier that all get star ratings by the Remy brothers.

Getting there

Very easy this one! Head north out of Monthey on the road to Collombey. At the roundabout, go straight over, then about 700 meters later, turn left at the crossroads by the football pitch. The crag is now right in front of you. Easily identified by the cartoon characters that are painted at the top of the routes in the centre of the wall. Plenty of parking space here. The walk-in takes less than 60 seconds!

Route length and quality

Due to the ease of access and abundance of low grade routes, the left and central areas are fairly polished, but well bolted. Route lengths are generally between 20 and 25 meters. As mentioned earlier, the upper tier (accessed from the path on the right) has a few harder, but better quality routes.

Grades

Being a popular beginners crag, there are plenty of grade 4 – 5 routes here. On the right hand side and upper tier, the routes are a little harder, with some 5a to 7b graded routes.

Aspect

The crag faces north so is always shady.

Around Leysin

Although not strictly in the Rhone valley, the limestone towers of Leysin form part of the dramatic skyline on the left of the Rhone valley as you enter it from Lake Geneva. The area is steeped in mountaineering history and contains a huge amount of rock, both multi and single pitch and at a variety of grades. There are lots of smaller crags described in the guidebooks, but the main multi pitch crags (Tour d'Aï, Sphinx, and Tour de Mayen, Diamant) are accessible by foot or cable car from the village of Leysin, whereas the other areas described here are in quieter areas a short distance north east of the village.

Due to it's relatively high altitude (the village is nearly 1300m above sea level), it is cooler up here in the summer than down in the Rhone valley where it can become very hot. The village is a bustling ski resort in the winter months so has a good tourist information office where guidebooks and maps can be purchased. This eBook includes specific information about the following popular rock climbing areas:

- Tour d'Aï
- Sphinx
- Tour de Mayen
- Le Diamant
- Les Plans
- Pierre du Moëllé

Tourist Information

Because of it's popular winter sports and ski interests, Leysin has a large and well informed [Tourist Information](#) service. It is located just down the hill from the main cable car station, next to the swimming pool. The weather forecast is posted daily and there are all the usual services. The staff speak good English and the climbing guidebooks can be purchased there or from Hefti Sports, 200m further up the hill.

Accommodation

Leysin has the full range of accommodation options, from hotels to hostels and camping. The tourist information centre is the best port of call for B&B and Hotel bookings. The “[Hiking Sheep](#)” is a Hostel that is popular with climbers and is reasonably priced at CHF 30/27 (high/low season) for a dormitory. This includes bedding and use of the kitchen. The owner, Paul-Henri, is a friendly guy who speaks a variety of languages, including English.

For those wishing to camp, there is a good campsite, [Camping du Soleil](#) that is easily found on the left hand side just before you enter the village from Le Sépey. No booking is required and it is open 11 months of the year, (closed in November). It costs approximately CHF31.50 for two adults, tent and car per night (including taxes).

Local Amenities

Leysin has most the necessities like banks, pharmacies and food shops as well as a few tourist and ski shops to cater for the vast amount of tourists that pass through. It also has a great leisure centre, swimming pool and sporting facilities.

Shopping & Eating Out

Although it is a popular winter destination, there is not as much hussle and bussle in the summer months. In terms of cafés and restaurants, there are still a few that are open year round, so you'll be able to find something. For buying food, there is a largish Co-op supermarket in the village, (which is slightly more expensive than the one in the Rhone valley at Monthey) as well as another supermarket slightly downhill and across the road from the tourist office. Don't forget they all shut for lunch at midday!

Climbing Shops

There plenty of ski hire shops, some of which do stock a bit of climbing equipment. 'Hefti-Sport' (200m uphill from the tourist office) sells some climbing and Via Ferrata kit as well as the Remy brother's guidebook.

Other Activities

The [Leysin Tourist Website](#) gives tons of details about the activities and events that happen in both summer and winter. For example:

- Nice Walks – there is a well developed network of signposted trails that take good advantage of Leysin's elevated position. The views are usually spectacular and I can recommended heading out for a stroll in the evenings to catch the sunset after a days climbing.
- Via ferrata – there are some amazing routes on the Tours above the village. Ask at the tourist office for more information and equipment hire.
- Mountain Biking – as with many Ski resorts, Mountain biking has been embraced to help the local economy in the summer months. Making use of the lifts can give you a very long ride without even having to peddle!!

Climbing areas around Leysin:

Tour d'Aï & Sphinx

Overview

The Tour d'Aï and its neighbouring twin, Tour de Mayen are the two main peaks that dominate the skyline above the village of Leysin. Tour d'Aï is the left hand of the two, with great multi pitch routes on its south west face as well as the lower south face, which is known as the Sphinx. There is also a good Via ferrata on this face.

Getting there

Most people access these cliffs by taking the cable car from Leysin to La Berneuse, where the main south west face of Tour d'Aï and the south facing Sphinx can be reached on foot in about half an hour. It is of course possible to walk up from the village, in about 1hr30.

Route length and quality

A real range here, from short single pitch sectors at the bottom of the cliffs, to big 150m adventures. The guidebooks describe these in detail.

Grades

Not much in the way of easier stuff here, with most of the routes being in the 6s and 7s.

Aspect

South through to west.

Diamant (Tour de Mayen)

Overview

Situated on the south side of the Tour de Mayen, are the huge triangular cliffs of 'Le Diamant'. The sloping ramp line of 'La Diagonale' is easy to spot and gives a good reference point when locating your route. Good quality rock, with lots of multi pitch routes.

Getting there

Le Diamant is located above Lac de Mayen and can be accessed from the village of Leysin in approximately an hour and twenty minutes. The easier, although more expensive approach involves a chair lift to Mayen, then a 20 minute walk across to Lac de Mayen.

Route length and quality

This is a big and imposing multi pitch venue, although it is possible for teams to lower back down after one pitch. The rock is generally very good, and the positions are stunning.

Grades

As with the Tour d'Aï and the south facing Sphinx, this is a serious multi pitch venue. There is a via

ferrata route to the top, but generally the routes are grade 6 and 7s.

Aspect

A south facing sun trap!

Les Plans

Overview

A great little venue that's home to some smaller and lower grade routes compared to the cliffs of the main peaks above Leysin. It is a compact slab of water runnelled limestone, with great pockets and it is only a short walk-in! As with all the climbing around Leysin, due to its relatively high altitude, it is cooler up here in the summer than down in the valley.

Getting there

Head out of Leysin towards the Chalet of Le Fer. There is a lay-by to park in on the left hand side and the cliff can be seen above you. The walk-in takes 5-10 minutes up the grassy slope.

Route length and quality

There are about 13 routes. They are all bolted and are about 25 meters in length.

Grades

4c to 6b, but mostly around grade 5

Aspect

South east, so good for late morning routes in the sun.

Pierre du Moëllé

Overview

One of the best mid to low grade climbing venues in the area. Short single pitch routes on all aspects set in an alpine meadow, with views across to Mont Blanc. Worth walking up there just for the views.

Getting there

Heading up from Aigle towards Leysin, take the turning to Les Mosses, rather than up to Leysin itself. After a short distance, take the small road (look carefully for a small sign to Pierre du Moëllé) on the apex of a tight right-hand hair pin bend, by a chalet with green shutters. Follow this single track (asphalt) road as it twists and turns its way up the hillside to the col of Pierre du Moëllé (1661m). Park on the right hand side opposite a chalet café.

NB: The land on the far side of the col is often used by the Swiss military as a training area. You are still allowed to access the climbing at Pierre du Moëllé, but at certain times you may not be allowed to drive down the other side from the col.

It takes about 35 minutes on foot from the col to follow the small path that leads up behind the chalet/café, over a rise then continue on to the climbing areas.

Route length and quality

There are various sectors that have routes between 13 and 22 meters in length. The rock is immaculate limestone that has been sculpted with water runnels and pockets. It is all well bolted, and many routes can be accessed from the top of the crags for those wishing to put a rope on something a little harder. There are also a handful of low grade multi pitch routes that have good belay ledges and give a good introduction to multi pitch climbing.

Grades

3c – 6b+, with the majority being in the mid 5 range.

Aspect

Mostly south facing, but it is possible to move sectors as the sun leaves one sector and moves onto another.

Around Saint-Maurice

Situated between Monthey and Martigny, Saint Maurice makes a convenient base for those wishing to climb closer to the borders of France and Italy. The crags are ideal if you are heading over the border from Chamonix in search of lower altitude rock but still want an adventurous place to climb. The main climbing areas described here are:

- Dent de Morcles
- Pilier de la Pissechèvre
- Dorénaz
- Miéville
- Eole
- Pissevache

Tourist Information

Grand Saint Bernard Services on the main 62/E27 (9) dual carriage-way. Located north east of Martigny, this is surely the finest motorway service station you will ever visit! Fresh food, cold drinks, cafés and even a lake to relax by are just some of the facilities here! Most important for the visiting rock climber however, is the Tourist Information area. Just about every map you could ever want seems to be in stock, as well as climbing guidebooks and information pamphlets.

Accommodation

[Camping du Bois-Noir](#) - This is a well placed campsite for climbing near Dorénaz and Miéville. It costs about CHF28 for two people and a tent for one night. Current prices can be found on their website. If you are with a group of people, renting a 'mobile home' can be a cost effective alternative. A four person one costs in the region of CHF 90 per night.

Local Amenities

Saint-Maurice has the usual selection of shops, cafés, restaurants and bars. The [Saint-Maurice tourism website](#) provides useful details and town maps.

Climbing Shops

Monthey is still the best bet for a climbing shop - [Passé Montagne](#) or over the border in France in Argentière and Chamonix.

Other Activities

Local Swiss Wine – as with Monthey, you can't miss the Vineyards and there are wine tasting opportunities in the region. [Cave du Courset](#) is one vineyard in the area that offers tours.

Thermal Baths – [Lavey les Bains](#) is a very reasonably priced spa. Part indoors, part outdoors, with saunas, steam room and an ice room, it's a good activity after climbing or on a rest day.

Climbing areas around Saint-Maurice:

Dent de Morcles

Overview

The towering 'tooth' of the Dent de Morcles is clearly visible high above the Rhone valley as you drive south towards Martigny. This is a big undertaking! 14 pitches with a walk-in time of over 2 hours! Due to its height above the valley, it gives some of the best views of Lake Geneva. You can also do a walk/scramble to the summit.

Getting there

From Saint-Maurice, cross the River Rhone and drive through the village of Lavey les Bains (stop off here on your way down for a well earned soak in the thermal baths). The village of Morcles, is signposted from here, and it seems to take an age as you follow switchback after switchback. Park at the barrier at 1670m and having checked that the military are not practising in the area, continue on foot past the scary military area and onto the footpath that leads up to the rock. Early starts are well advised.

Route length and quality

One of the longest routes in the valley and not to be underestimated.

Grades

Up to 6b (5c+ obligatory) – means you can aid up the hardest parts if needs be!

Aspect

South west

Pilier de la Pissechèvre

Overview

A splendid pillar of good quality gneiss, that provides a good adventure while only being 15 minutes from the road!

Getting there

From Saint-Maurice, cross the River Rhone and follow signs to the village of Lavey les Bains. Park on the left just before a small stream crosses under the road.

Route length and quality

There are two main routes, both 8 pitches long. The rock is generally sound - watch out for the loose looking flake that has been bolted to the pillar!

Grades

One route (Farinet) has some 6b pitches the rest are between 5c+ and 6a+

Aspect

South facing, so plenty of sunshine.

Dorénaz

Overview

This is a major climbing area in the Rhone valley. Sectors range from serious 5 pitch routes, to family friendly single pitch areas by the road side. The rock type is Gneiss.

NB: Take a jacket! It is often windy here due to the narrowing of the valley; the winds accelerate as they get sucked through the gap! This means that depending on temperatures, it can give your day a cooling breeze or an icy chill!

Getting there

The village of Dorénaz is on the other side of the River Rhone to Saint-Maurice. Turn off the main motorway before Evionnaz and take the secondary road, which crosses back under the motorway, through Miéville before crossing under the motorway again (signposted to Collonges) and across the River Rhone. Having crossed the river, turn right at the roundabout and follow the very straight road towards the wind turbine. The first sector 'Dalles des vaudios' is situated just by a mini roundabout. There is plenty of parking and a flat grassy area to base yourself. Other sectors are further down the road, but it's probably best to leave your car in the main car park, as there is an active gravel works at the base of 'Graviève' and there are sometimes machines moving the gravel about at the bottom of this sector. The workers never seem too bothered by climbers, but it's best to keep your vehicle out of the way.

Route length and quality

There are a range of multi and single pitch routes here. All of the rock is of fairly good quality. 'Dalles des vaudios' has the greatest concentration of single pitch routes, the rest are mostly multi pitch. The bottom half of the first pitches in 'Graviève' are sometimes covered by the piles of gravel, which can make finding the base of your route a little challenging!

Grades

Generally from 5b upwards, with lots of routes in the 5c – 6c range.

Aspect

Most of the crags face west so are good for afternoon and evening sunshine, except for the 'Secteur Ticadrome' which faces south.

Miéville

Overview

Easily spotted next to the impressive water fall of Pissevache, Miéville is a region of cliffs in it's own right. The Remy brothers guidebook has the most comprehensive selection of routes and a good map of how to locate them. The most popular area, described below, is called Miéville and is home to a number of classic multi pitch routes.

Getting there

Miéville is a small village, situated on the road between Saint-Maurice and Martigny. Make sure you take the minor road rather than the motorway as there is no turn off until you reach Martigny!

Coming from Saint-Maurice, shortly after passing through 'La Balmaz', take a small right hand track just before an old garage on the right hand side about 300m before arriving into Miéville. Follow this gravel track slowly to avoid the pot holes, then take a right hand turn at an old quarry area. You can park on the side of the road at the end of this track. A path continues up into an avalanche couloir. Cross this to reach the crags in about 10 -15 minutes from the car.

Route length and quality

There are four sectors on this main crag all with routes of about 5 pitches. Some of the rock is a little suspect in places, but it isn't a big problem as long as you are careful.

Grades

5b to 7c, but with lots of routes in the 6b to 7b range

Aspect

South to South east.

Eole

Overview

Technically, this is part of the Miéville region of cliffs. As mentioned earlier, the Remy brothers guidebook has the most comprehensive selection of routes and a good map of how to locate them. This crag is east facing so can provide some shade when it's really hot, or some morning sun for those who like to get up early!

Getting there

Approach as for Miéville on the road between Saint-Maurice and Martigny. This time, continue through Miéville and park up on the left hand side of the road opposite a hotel and campsite. A small footpath next to the hotel follows a small stream before heading up to the base of the cliffs. Follow this to reach the crags in about 10 -15 minutes from the car.

Route length and quality

There are about sixteen 3 to 4 pitch routes and a short scramble up a rather scary grassy slope gives access to an upper tier where there are a few more routes to go at. The quality of the rock is pretty good, but take a few extra wires and cams to supplement protection between the, at times, spaced bolts! If you are intending to just climb the bottom pitches, be aware that they are about 35meters long.

Grades

5a to 7c, but with the majority of routes in the 5a to 6b range

Aspect

East facing, thus getting the morning sun only.

Pissevache

Overview

These big slabs are situated above the cliff of Miéville and provide an adventurous day out on some amenably graded rock. It is not described in the Remy brothers guidebook and getting to the routes is fairly complex, so it's worth getting Plasir West (page 76) for more detail.

Getting there

Getting to the car park is easy, finding the base of the route is a little more challenging! Continue past Miéville and just before arriving in Martigny, take a right hand turn up to the village of Salvan. (There is a small single pitch crag above the tennis courts here). Take the main right hand turn in the village which passes under the railway line to Les Granges. Park at the northern end of the village. From here, continue on foot along a well marked footpath, before breaking off to the base of the climbs.

Route length and quality

Up to 10 pitches (approximately 300meters high). Mostly great climbing, but might be worth taking a few wires/cams to supplement the bolts.

Grades

Four routes are described in Plasir West, multi pitch with maximum grades of 5b, 6a, 6a+ and 6b respectively.

Aspect

South East facing.

Nearby Highlights

Technically, these places are not in the Rhone valley, but you are so close and they are so good, it would be criminal for you to go all that way and miss them!

- Miroir de l'Argentine
- Les Diablrets
- Barne
- Sanetsch

Miroir de l'Argentine

Overview

The mother of all slab climbs! At nearly 500m in height, this vast smooth looking slab of rock is hidden up above the Rhone valley, behind the village of Villars. It's low angle means that there are a number of lower graded routes, but the exposure is considerable and route finding often a little challenging. Best avoided until mid summer, (usually late June to October) once all the snow has gone from the top of the ridge. Most routes have equipped belays, but require nuts and cams to supplement the bolts on each pitch (which are sometimes 20 meters plus apart!) Overall, a fantastic place to climb. If it all looks a bit overwhelming to you when you get there, there is some great bouldering in the meadows, just across the river from the car park. There is no formal bouldering guide at present, but it's great fun to just wander between the trees and explore! Some of the better problems have arrows marked on the rock with white paint.

Getting there

The up-market ski village of Villars, is well signposted from the Rhone valley (turn off at Ollon, just south of Aigle). Heading uphill from Ollon, follow the switchbacks up through the meadows and through the village of Villars. From here, take the road sign posted to Barboleusaz and take the left hand turn at the tram stop. This turning eventually winds it's way up to the end of the road in the beautiful alpine meadow of Solalex. There are a couple of restaurants here, a gite/hotel to stay in and lots of cows with bells, but apart from that it has a wild, tranquil feel about it. The slab visible from here and can be reached on foot in about an hour.

Route length and quality

You can expect to climb about 14 pitches on most of the routes, up to around 500m in total length. The rock is limestone and generally sound. The 'Normale ou Voie de l'Y' route is the classic and easiest route on the slab. There are bolts on it, but its sometimes a long way between them! However the belays were all well equipped with huge metal rings. There are now so many routes up the slabs that it's easy to loose your way as it can be difficult to be sure if the bolt you are heading towards is part of your chosen route! Once at the top, a scramble is required along the ridge to gain the safety of the meadows. You can scramble down the steep gully, but it is more pleasant to walk along the ridge to the Hut called Anzeindaz at 1867m. Here you can get a celebratory drink and even a Jeep Taxi ride back down to Solalex if you are willing to pay!

Grades

The easiest route has a few pitches of 5c, but is mostly grade 4 and 3 (although the exposure may make it seem harder!) Most of the routes are generally between 5c and 7a.

Aspect

The slab faces North west, and has a summit altitude of 2325m, so it can be fairly chilly to climb on (especially if you are starting early – recommended, especially on weekends). Afternoon sunshine makes the top of the slab glow with warmth though!

Les Diablerets

Overview

Famed for its winter ski runs, the area around the village of Les Diablerets is also home to some great rock climbing in summer. The majority of the climbing is centred around the Col du Pillon (1546m), where the “Glacier 3000” cable car station is located. Some of the areas require the use of the cable car, but the majority can be accessed on foot. It is even possible to climb all the way up to the top station and ride the cable car back down! Due to the relatively high altitude, it can be a good place to go in mid summer if the Rhone valley is too hot.

Up at the halfway station of the cable car, there is a long, well bolted single pitch crag behind the CAS Hut. The main multi pitch sectors are easily located next to the high water fall (which becomes a very impressive ice climb in the winter!) that can be seen on your right as you drive up to the Col du Pillon from Les Diablerets. The sectors 'Festival' and 'Mérite Alpin' are either side of the waterfall and give mostly multi pitch routes.

Getting there

From the Rhone valley, the village of Les Diablerets is reached by heading up from the town of Aigle as if you were going to Leysin. At Le Sépey, instead of turning left to Leysin, continue onwards to Les Diablerets. Continue through the village onto more switchbacks to eventually reach the Col du Pillon at 1546m. There is loads of space to park here, or there is a lay-by on the right just before the col that will shave a minute or two off the walk-in time. Most of the climbing is on the east side of the col, and can be reached on foot in about an hour or via the cable car.

Route length and quality

By the CAS Hut (half way cable car station) the routes are on average 20m high. Whereas at 'Festival' and 'Mérite Alpin' the routes are generally longer, up to about 6 pitches. It is possible to link these with higher crags and climb all the way to the cable car station if you want a really big day out!

Grades

By the CAS Hut (half way cable car station) grades are around 4a to 6b. By the big waterfall, 'Festival' and 'Mérite Alpin' areas are generally a bit harder at around 5c to 7a.

Aspect

Most of the crags are north or west facing, so don't get loads of sun, but in the heat of summer, it could provide the welcome shade that you are after!

Barme

Overview

Hidden away at the end of the road in a classic alpine setting of Swiss chalets, flower filled meadows, cows with bells and glaciated peaks, it is hard to get anywhere more typically Swiss. If you want a bit of time away from the crowds with some nice single pitch routes and no walk-ins, then this is the place for you! It is worth going up there just for a chilled out easier day!

Getting there

Accessed from Monthey, follow the switch backs up the side of the Rhone valley and into the Val-d'lliez, which is signposted to Champéry. Continue through Champéry, past the Grand Paradise campsite to the chalets that mark the end of the road at Barme. It is about a 40minute drive up from the Rhone valley. The crag 'Rocher de Barme' is obvious behind the chalets.

Route length and quality

Most of the routes are about 20-30 meters high, although there are some slightly longer two pitch routes on the right hand sector. The rock is good, although a little polished on the left hand 'introductory' area. It basically consists of slabs on the left hand side, through to overhanging on the right, with everything else in between. If you have not already bought the Remy bothers guidebook, you can purchase it from the Chalets at Barme, or the tourist information office in Champéry (opposite the cable car station). There is also a local guidebook on sale here covering some other small crags in this valley and includes some winter/mixed climbing venues.

Grades

They start at the lower end of the scale on the left hand side of the crag at 3c, then they get progressively harder as you move rightwards, up to 7b.

Aspect

North East – so again, another good place when it's too hot to climb in the valley.

Sanetsch

Overview

Apart from a nice single pitch sector by the Dam, Sanetsch is all about multi pitch adventures. The quality of the rock is very good, although it is worth bearing in mind that this is a mountain setting.

Getting there

Sanetsch can be arrived at via a cable car from Gsteig (over the Col du Pillon, from Les Diablerets) or by heading up over the Col du Sanetsch from Sion. It's not exactly 'Rhone valley', but it's geographically close, even if it takes a bit of time to get up there.

Route length and quality

There are some small, single pitch routes, but the longer routes are more in the region of 150meters to 250 meters. The rock is generally very good.

Grades

The single pitch area near the Dam has the easiest selection with plenty in the 3 to 5 range. The main cliffs are generally harder at 6a to 8a.

Aspect

Most of the cliffs face south or south east. Even though they are high up, they can become very hot, so don't forget to take some water on the longer routes.

Other important information

Weather

Since the region has so many aspects and altitudes, it is possible to climb at almost any time of the year. That said, at times during the middle of winter the valley floor can be covered in snow, so really March through to November are the most reliable times. However, you should pick your venue according to the weather and conditions. Don't forget that the temperature range between the higher cliffs and down in the valley base is considerable and it is possible to be immersed in thick mist in the valley or even Leysin and drive to higher crags and find you are above the cloud and can climb on dry rock in the sun! As mentioned previously, due to the Rhone Valley's distance from the main Alpine massif, it tends to attract more clement weather and a good deal of the climbers that visit this area, do so as a 'Plan B' when the weather is poor in the high mountains.

December through to March may see snow right down to the Rhone valley floor, but by Easter, there is usually enough warmth in the sun for people to be out climbing for the day, on the warmer, lower altitude crags while ski tourers still make use of the snow up high. May is a notoriously fickle month in the Alpine regions, with the possibility of snow storms as well as blistering sunshine - with cheap flights available, check the forecast and head out if it looks good!

June and into the summer months are usually when the more settled weather arrives, although it can be very hot in August in the valley. It is best to head up to the higher crags in the summer as the temperatures will be cooler – but keep a watch out for afternoon thunderstorms that are typical of such alpine regions.

September into October usually has fairly stable, nice weather. However snow can arrive high up towards the end of October, but temperatures usually stay warmer in the valley base for much longer.

TOP TIP: On a misty or cloudy day in the Valley, it is sometimes worth heading up to higher venues, such as Pierre du Moëllé, which if it is only a thin band of cloud, the crags and mountains above the cloud will be bathed in sunshine and blue skies.

Environmental Issues

As climbers we all respect the need to leave as little impact as possible so that we can return and others can visit such beautiful unspoilt areas. The concept of 'Leave No Trace' needs to be a strong principle in this and any such area, in order to maintain it's pristine condition. Please help keep this 'typically Swiss' area a beautiful place to visit, whether to climb, walk or just sightsee. Take your rubbish home, and if you have 'to go', go away from the crags, burn your toilet paper and bury your waste. An informative book to read on this topic is [How to Shit in the Woods: An Environmentally Sound Approach to a Lost Art](#) by Kathleen Meyer.

Grades

Swiss rock climbing grades today are pretty much in line with the French sport grading system, which is widely used across Europe. The table below gives a rough comparison:

British		French	USA
Tech/Adj			
3	VD	4a	5.4
4a	S	4b	5.5
4b	HS	4c	5.6
4c	VS	5a	5.7
	HVS	5b	5.8
5a	E1	5c	5.9
		6a	5.10a
5b	E2	6a+	5.10b
		6b	5.10c
5c	E3	6b+	5.10d
		6c	5.11a
		6c/c+	5.11b
6a	E4	6c+	5.11c
		7a	5.11d
	E5	7a+	5.12a
		7b	5.12b
6b	E6	7b+	5.12c
		7c	5.12d
	E7	7c+	5.13a
6c		8a	5.13b
	E8	8a+	5.13c
	E9	8b	5.13d
7a	E10	8b+	5.14a
	E11	8c	5.14b

Millie's Un-Official Tick List

Just a quick scan through any of the guidebooks for the Rhone valley area should be enough to get your palms sweating and I'm sure you'll soon be compiling your own hit list but here are a few of my favourites:

- ✓ **5b** – *Terry* – **Miéville** - Multi-pitch – a classic journey up the seemingly in-passable cliff
- ✓ **5b** - *Bravo Lapp* – **Pissevache** - Multi-pitch – amazing views

- ✓ **5c** – *Sympa* – **Drapel** - Single Pitch
- ✓ **5c** – *La route des Indes* – **Yvorne** - Single Pitch

- ✓ **5c+** - *Magic* – **Pierre du Moëllé** - Single pitch – a magical place to climb
- ✓ **5c+** - *Fissure* – **St-Triphon** - Single pitch – great traverse pump!
- ✓ **5c+** - *Normale ou Voie de l'Y* - **Miroir de l'Argentine** – Multi-pitch – feel like a fly on the wall, following the line of least resistance.

- ✓ **6a** – *Hirondelle* – **St-Triphon** - Single pitch – the easiest way up the impressive wall
- ✓ **6a** – *La Fissure* – **Dorénaz** - Single pitch – hand jam or crimp up the crack
- ✓ **6a** – *King-Küing* – **Aigle** - Single Pitch

- ✓ **6a+** - *Pilier de la Pissechèvre* - **Pilier de la Pissechèvre** - Multi-Pitch – amazing positions
- ✓ **6a+** - *Extasy* – **Drapel** - Single Pitch
- ✓ **6a+** - *Eole* – **Eole** – Multi-pitch

- ✓ **6b** – *Tichodrome* – **Dorénaz** - Multi-pitch - weaves it's way up a wild cliff!

- ✓ **6c** – *Rock and Roll* – **Sanetsch** – Multi-pitch
- ✓ **6c** – *Cenotaph* – **Aigle** - Single Pitch

Quick reference links

Since there are invaluable web links throughout this eBook, here is a list of them so you can refer to them quickly and easily. Simply click and go!

Travel Links

[Avis](#) – good car hire company operating in Geneva

[Easyjet](#) – some of the cheapest flights to Geneva

[BMI Baby](#) - another budget airline option

[Swiss Air](#) – lots of flights to Geneva. Great service

[British Airways](#) – fly to Geneva

[Travel Supermarket](#) – general flight comparison site

[Kayak](#) – another good comparison site

[Geneva Airport](#) – check which airlines fly here

[SBB](#) – Swiss transport company. Search for trains and buses

[LD Lines](#) – cheap ferries to France

[Norfolk Line](#) – cheap ferries to France

[The AA - European Driving](#) – great driving abroad tips

Tourist Information

[Filidor](#) – publishers of Plasir West guidebook

[Monthey's official website](#) – tourist information

[Passé Montagne](#) – climbing shop in Monthey

[Les Vin du Valais](#) – Information about vineyards in Valais

[Thermal Baths](#) – spa in Champéry

[Parc Adventure](#) – high ropes course

[Leysin Tourist Information](#) – Tourist information

[Cave du Courset](#) – local vineyard in Saint-Maurice

[Lavey les Bains](#) – thermal baths

Accommodation Links

[Camping du Soleil](#) – campsite in Leysin

[Hiking Sheep](#) – popular hostel in Leysin

[Camping du Bois-Noir](#) – campsite in Saint-Maurice

[Bed and Breakfast Switzerland](#) – great B&B search

Other Useful Links

[Formula One hotels](#) – cheap roadside hotels throughout France & Switzerland

[Currency Converter](#) – useful online converter when planning your budget

[Via Michelin](#) - an excellent route planner site which estimates timings and fuel costs

[My Photobook](#) – an excellent digital photobook service. £5 off first order!