

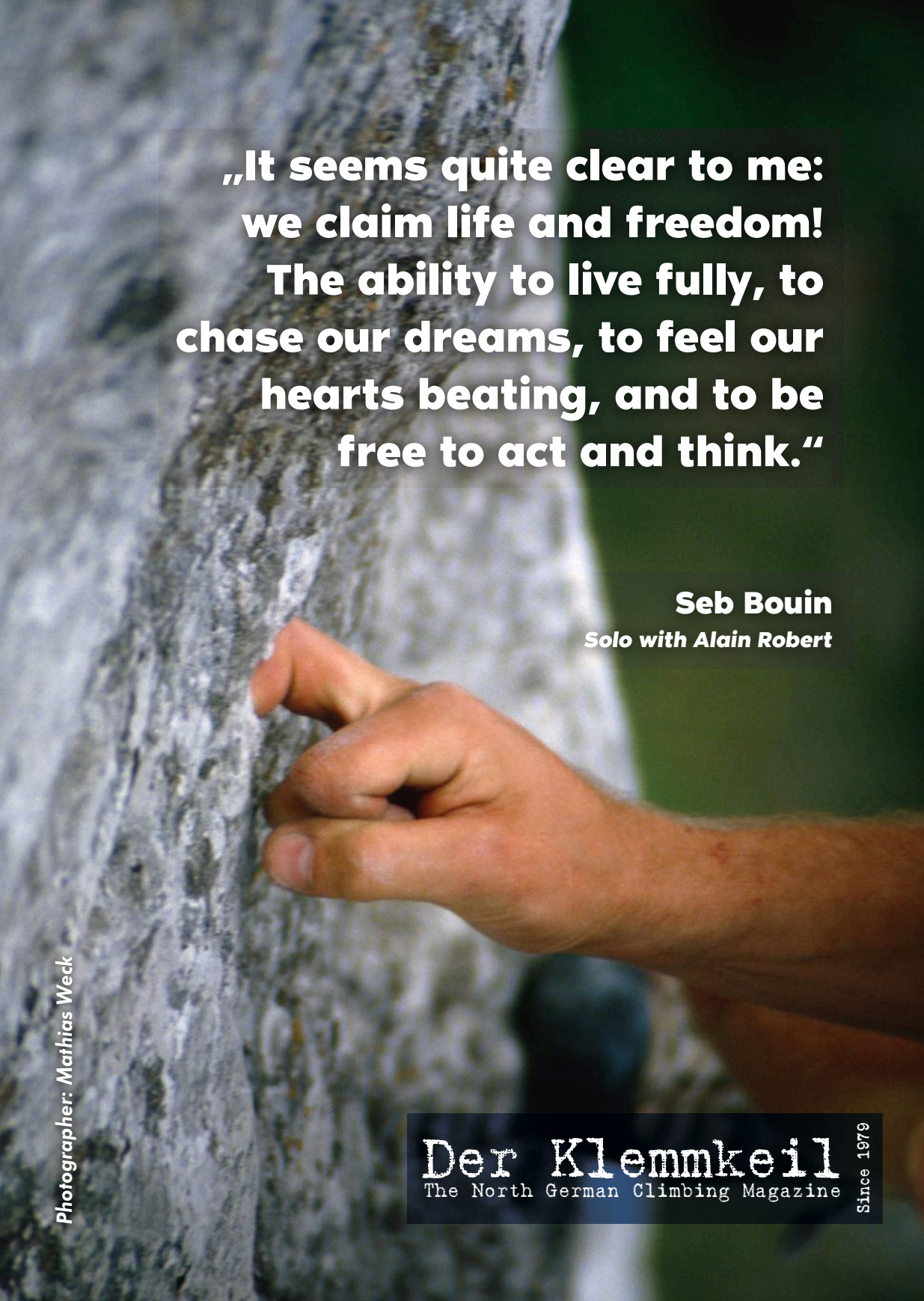
# Der Klemmkeil

The North German Climbing Magazine



COMPLIMENTARY  
2024

tweet



**„It seems quite clear to me:  
we claim life and freedom!  
The ability to live fully, to  
chase our dreams, to feel our  
hearts beating, and to be  
free to act and think.“**

**Seb Bouin**  
*Solo with Alain Robert*

**Der Klemmkeil**  
The North German Climbing Magazine

Since 1979

Photographer: Mathias Weck

# IMPRINT

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*Alain Robert, French Spiderman, hunted by Han Solo or the police being his least of worries...*

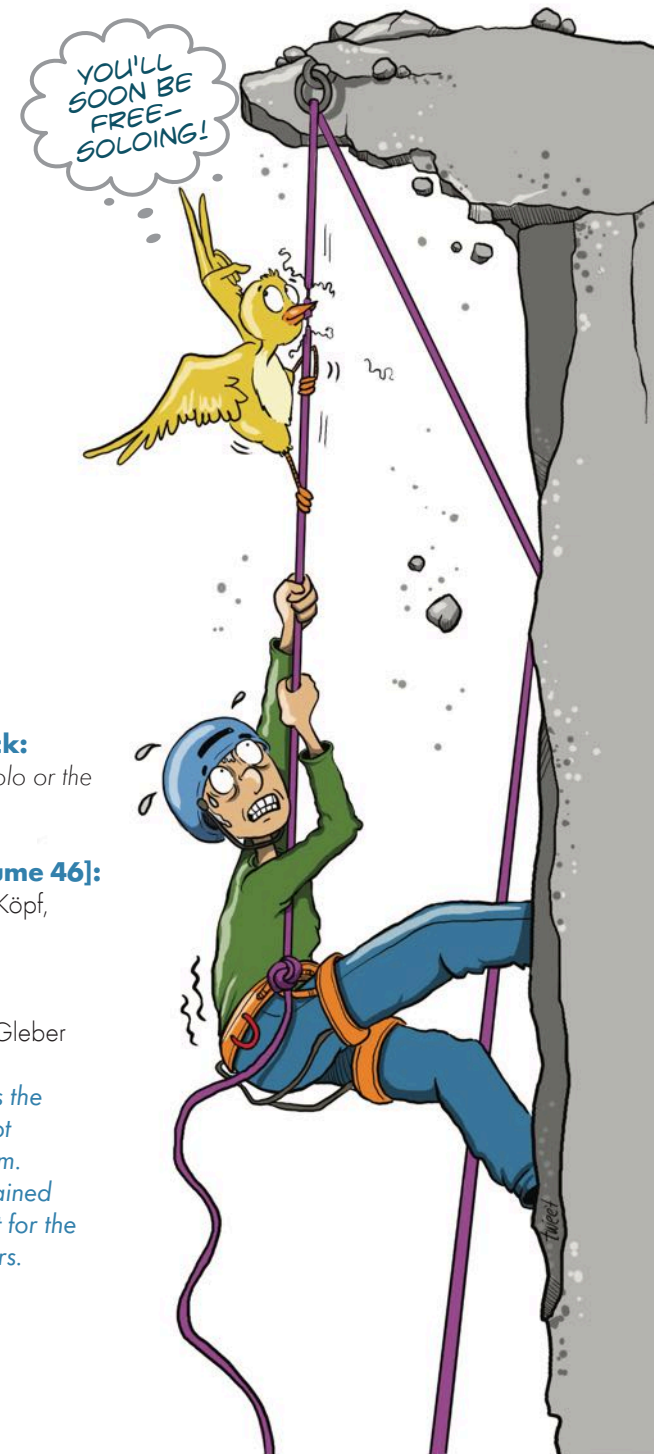
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# EDITORIAL

## Free Solo



### Please read the package insert and ask your doctor or pharmacist.

No, this issue is not intended as a guide, suggestion or motivation for solo climbing. But the topic was on our minds, especially since one of our loyal authors tragically died while solo climbing. You will therefore find an obituary for Martin Feistl in this issue. And so we were glad when Axel suggested "Solo" as the topic for this issue.

We have tried to put together a colorful portfolio of solo stories for you. And we are particularly proud that Alain Robert gave us an interview. Tanja Rivi re (formerly Weck) conducted it, she lives in Chamonix, speaks fluent French and also translated the interview for us.

We also have some exciting stories from protagonists in northern Germany. Perhaps this will motivate others from northern Germany to send us articles again. Luckily the two veterans, Richard and Hans wrote down a few things from their past, (thanks for that!) which also makes it clear that solo climbing, or the way it is viewed, has changed dramatically over time. And so you will also find many essential words on the subject of soloing in the colorful portfolio of articles that we were able to find for you.

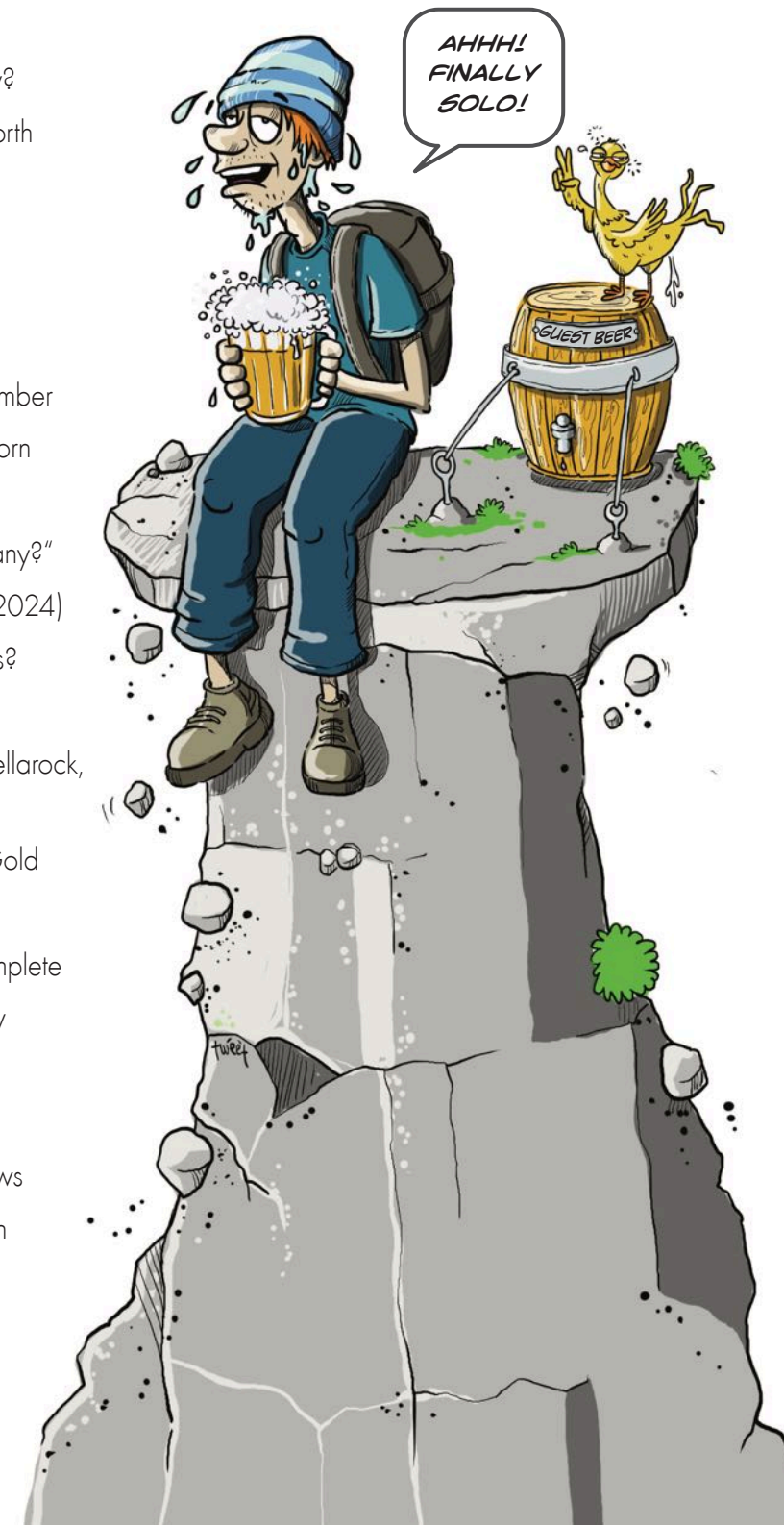
Unfortunately, the position of head of our marketing department and account manager for our advertisers is vacant again, as Gianluca unfortunately no longer has time. A big thank you, Gianluca, for all your hard work! If anyone feels called to take on this role, we would be very happy to hear from you.

And now we hope you enjoy browsing through and reading the new issue of Der Klemmkeil.

**Mathias, Tweet, Axel, und Patrick**

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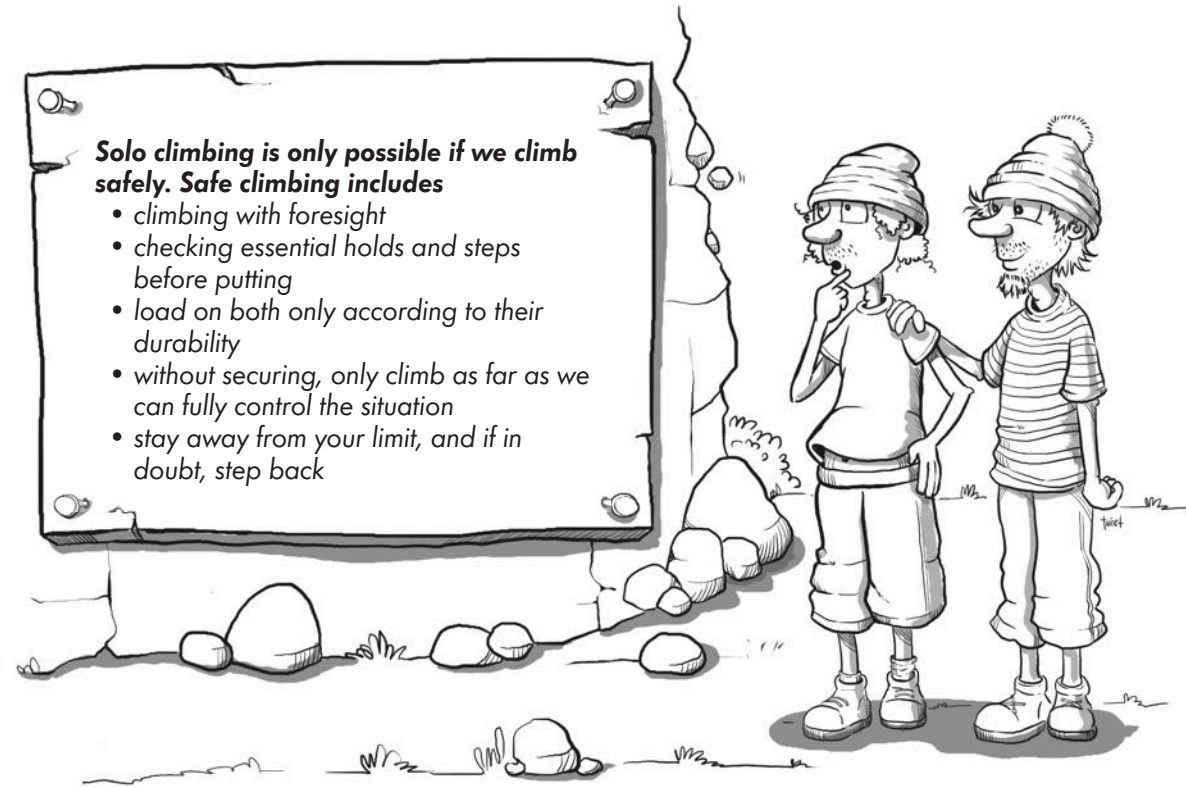
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### Solo Climbing



Photographer: Mathias Weck



**Solo climbing is only possible if we climb safely. Safe climbing includes**

- climbing with foresight
- checking essential holds and steps before putting
- load on both only according to their durability
- without securing, only climb as far as we can fully control the situation
- stay away from your limit, and if in doubt, step back



This usually means climbing according to the three-point rule. Of the four options - left hand, right hand, left foot, right foot - we should be able to safely rest on each three of them when we select a new hold or foothold. In doing so, we should always assess the potential holds in advance to see if they are strong enough. These could be part of a large, solid rock structure, or they could be separated from it by cracks or completely loose. Important hand and foot holds should be tested by tapping them to see if they sound hollow. Those who have learned to test the hold with their hand or fist will gain additional security. The same applies to using other parts of the body to lean on for additional stabilization. When climbing in

exposed positions, the question of whether we can really climb this difficulty safely is always on our minds. Whether our strength and stress resistance are sufficient. If we answer that positively, it also makes us calm and relaxed and saves energy.

If we move in this way, then it is perfectly justifiable to climb in terrain well below our performance limit even without rope protection. After all, healthy people in normal life also walk up ladders or stairs without additional protection. With some alpine experience, it is common in the mountains in general for people with mountain experience to climb terrain up to II and III without ropes. Those who have practiced and done this often can usually do so on the descent as well.

# SAFETY GUIDELINES

## Instructions for Solo Climbing

Leading in natural strewn rock terrain is also only possible in this way. However, there is a significant difference between knowing a route and not knowing it. And another between frequently climbed cleaned terrain and terrain in its natural state. Mastering all of this is a prerequisite for all major alpine tours. On these tours, climbing usually follows the three-point rule. This is because the body weight is still mainly on the feet or on jams. This makes it easier to compensate for the unexpected yielding or breaking of a grip.

The same applies, with great caution, to frequently climbed alpine routes up to three- and four-grade terrain. After all, this is also required for longer routes when leading. And it tends to be done quickly. Because only in this way can we arrive at the top before nightfall or the next bad weather and then still come back down safely.

It becomes problematic in steep or overhanging terrain. There, a larger proportion of our weight hangs on our hands. This is where the limits of our

holding power come into play for the „walking animals“ that we are. The countdown starts faster when searching and checking for the next hold. And there is much more to compensate for when breaking out a hold. It helps a lot if we already know the sequence of holds and steps. And that makes unknown terrain much more difficult.

For me, this meant that I often climbed well-known routes up to grade IV and V in sport climbing terrain, even solo, and enjoyed it. Like in the Oker Valley

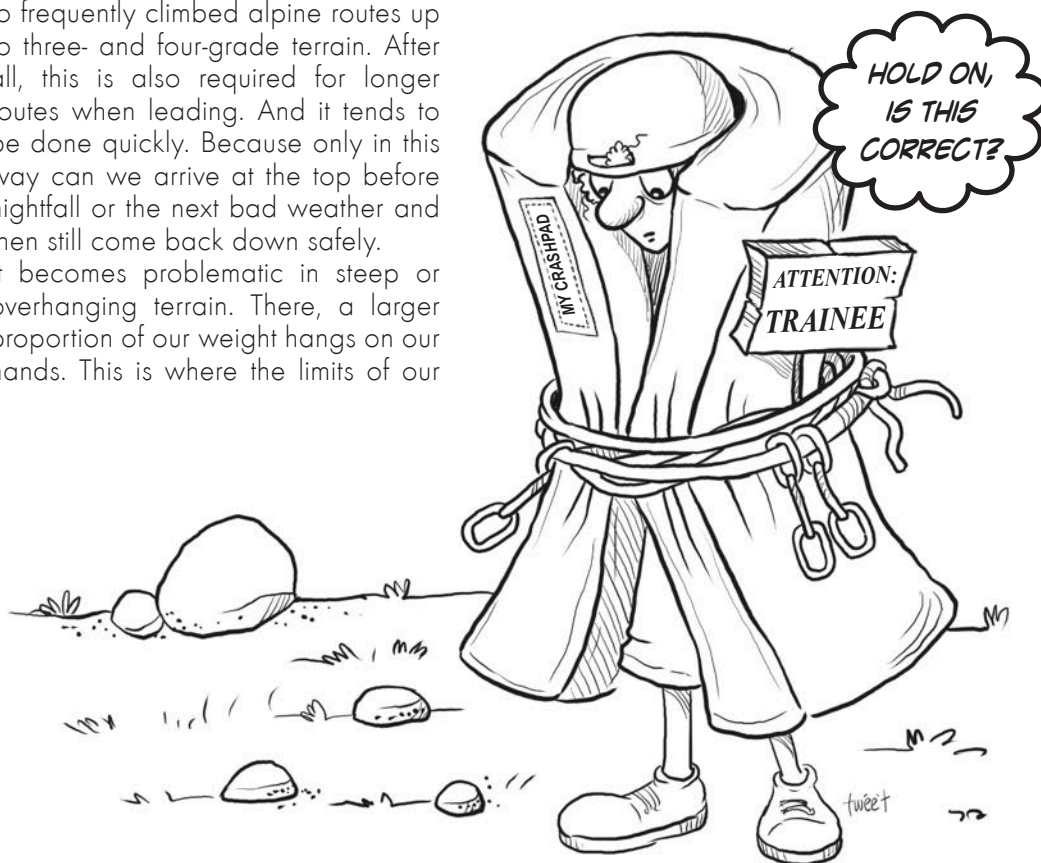
„all long ridges“ or lth combos in the various variations. Likewise, easier terrain up to III and IV, also unknown. Especially when climbing up and down. Especially when jaming and stemming was involved. That must also be fully mastered when climbing with a rope.

In the mountains, I often climbed normal routes up to grade III. I also climbed down. In rarely climbed terrain, this can be very exciting. I rarely went solo on exposed climbs in unknown terrain. I only did so a few times in completely untouched terrain at the „demolition site Alps“ with first ascents, with all its surprises, such as at

the Innerkofler Tower in „Lonely Odyssey“.

Even the celebrity solo climbers usually only tackle really extreme terrain solo after having thoroughly familiarized themselves with it, checking out the holds and practicing. I preferred to keep my hands off that. But even Alex Huber and Ueli Steck only did that for a while. On natural rock, with all its hidden residual risks, it remains extremely dangerous even for the best climbers, even with full mastery of the movement sequences.

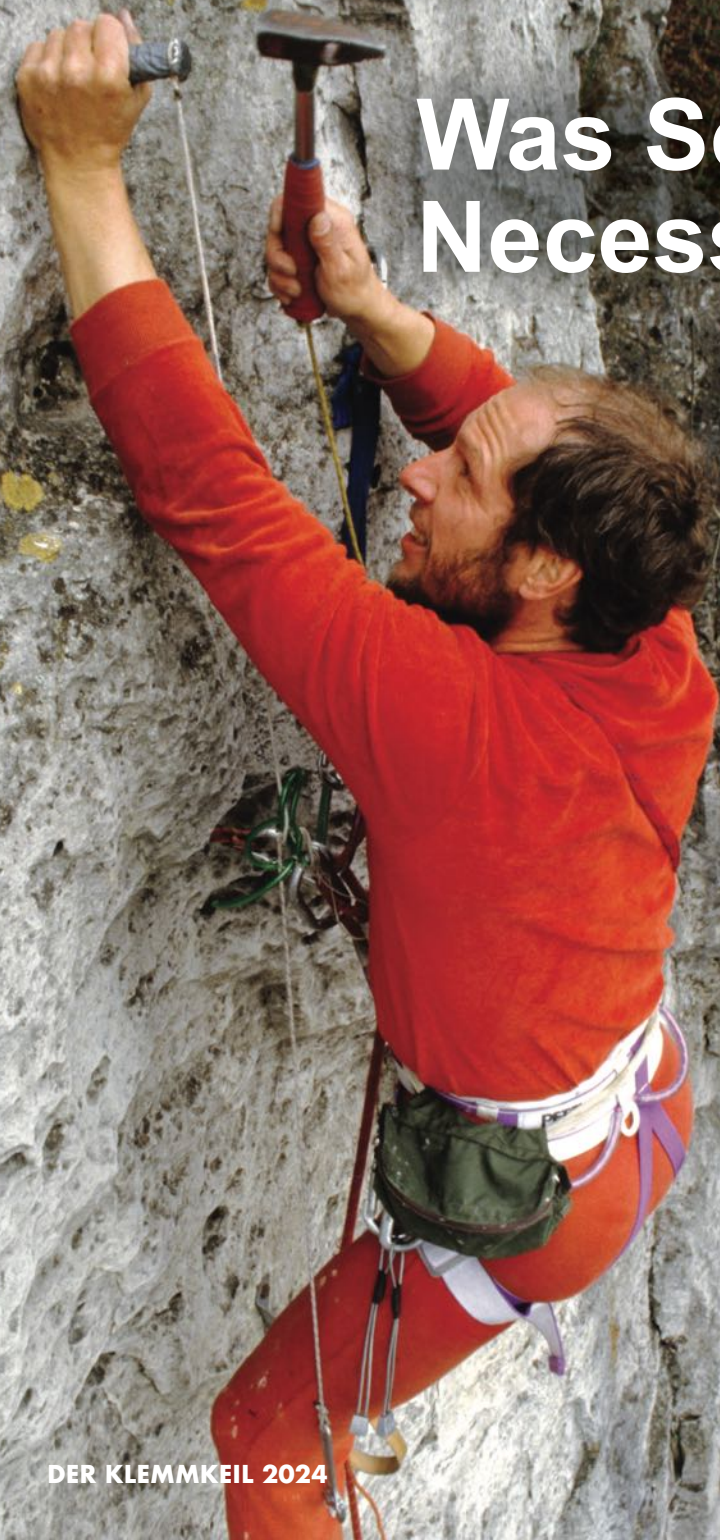
**Text: Richard Goedeke, Braunschweig**



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## Was Solo Necessary?



Route: „Weiße Taube“, Kanstein, first ascent 1985

Yes it was, I had to, at least there was nothing against it.

I had an amazing experience at the „Baumschulenwand“ (tree nursery wall) in Holzen:

There was nothing to do at the moment, so I looked at the wall when suddenly an edge smiled enticingly at me. So I climbed it and after 90 seconds it was all over. That was in 1964 (60 years ago!!) I thought the route was too insignificant with all the possibilities that existed back then, so I didn't report it as a new route. It was just something I did. Nothing of any importance.

So I was all the more astonished when I discovered this route in a later guide book. Someone must have noticed my ascent and reported it. That's why the name is not mine, of course: „Hansis Kante“. In Götz's guide, it was classified as 4. Today it is listed in the guide as 5+. Of course there was no bolt in the original. Today the route has three bolts. Not too much. By the way, the route is marked incorrectly in the current guide. The start is further left through the crack. But that had nothing to do with „survival“. That's yet to come.

I never worked towards climbing the „Direttissima“ on the Himmelsleiterwand in Holzen solo, for example. It was just that one day I was standing under it and suddenly knew that I could do it solo. And so it happened, without dither, without hesitation. And so it was with the „Segelflieger“ (without the 2nd pitch) on the Drachenwand.

A particular solo ascent made me think: at the Mauerhakenturm, the „NW-Kante“, 6-, so not that hard. But

in the middle of it, I suddenly didn't know what to do and I felt very uneasy. I was able to get through it and it went well. Nevertheless, it led to thoughts that should perhaps have occurred to me earlier; wasn't that too reckless, you have a family, what if... Another striking experience went like this: I was a teacher in Hameln, my family at the time still lived in Hannover, we were building a house in Hameln and all sorts of things went wrong. My head was a bit out of sync. That's why I had to go climbing on the rock and solo climbing every now and then in the evening. After that, I felt much better. Climbing as therapy?

But now to the striking experience: wonderful weather, in the evening, absolute silence, Hohenstein, „Spiralriss“, me in the niche. And suddenly a thought winds its way from the back to the front of my consciousness: what if you don't dare to go on now? Again, a slight panic. But then the knowledge of my own abilities helped. And that did the trick. Well, not quite: since I had the feeling in the mid-70s that I had done almost all the routes I could, I needed new challenges. Richard and - I think - Wolle had shown me the way: cross all the Oker Valley cliffs, 3070 meters of climbing.

I had something else in mind: the Lüerdissen Marathon! At least one route on each cliff, all solo. And so it happened on June 25, 1977: 136 routes, 1910 meters of climbing in 6 hours.

I just saw on the corresponding route list that I entered the „Kamel Westkante“ as 5, the „Kakteenweg“ at the crocodile as 5- and the „NW-

# ITH MARATHON

Just like that...



Route: „Fräse“, Kanstein

Wand“ at the Grüner Turm as 5. Interesting.

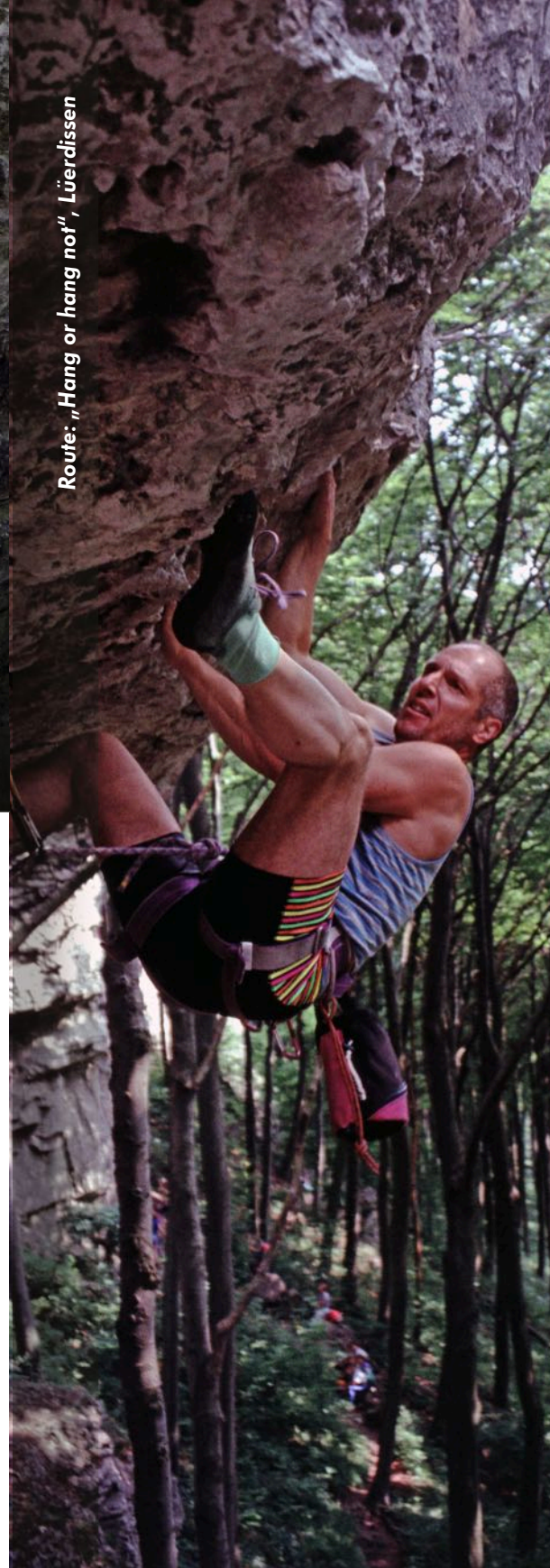
It was a bit strange that I set off without food or drink. I had arranged with my then-wife that she would bring me something to eat and, above all, something to drink at a certain rock at a certain time. For some reason, it didn't work out. So I moved on. I could do that, too.

Perhaps also interesting from today's perspective: the marathon was completed in mountaineering boots. I only bought my first "modern" climbing shoes the following year in Yosemite. There were no anchors yet. I didn't have a rope with me anyway, so I had to walk down to the next route or climb down an easier route and then over to the new one. Of course, with

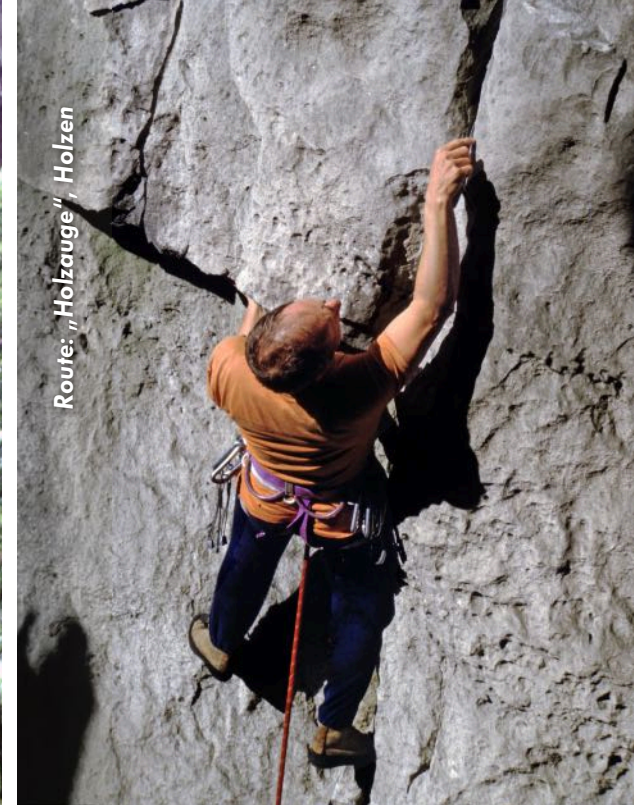
every change of route, the sole profile of the boot became clogged and had to be cleaned again at the next start. Who still remembers the best technique for doing that?

The solo ventures I have described were not particularly important to me. They were snap decisions or, like the marathon, far below my abilities at the time.

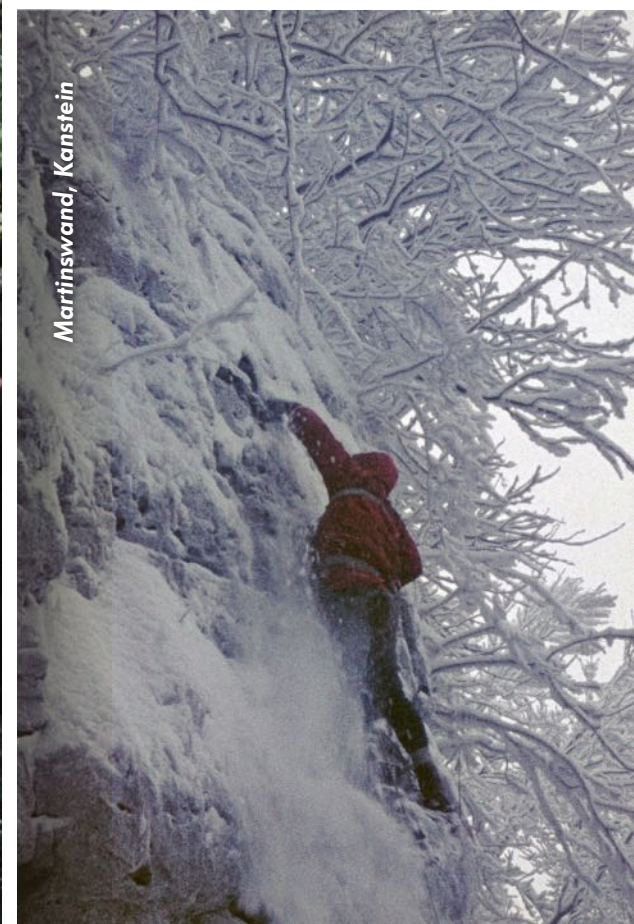
On the other hand, I started going to Lüerdissen every Wednesday, when the weather allowed it, and doing my bouldering program - as I would call it from today's perspective: „Crocodile valley side“ (Krokodil Talseite) from the far right to the large block on the left and back again. „Zick-Zack-Wand!“ at the Pilzstein with four different starts. The roof crack of the



Route: „Hang or hang not“, Lüerdissen



Route: „Holzauge“, Holzen



Marfinswand, Kanstein

ÜBERSCHREITUNG SÄMTLICHER OKERTAL-FELSEN			
GRANIT:	m	Ges. Kl. m.	m
ADLERKL. A.T. S-Wd. IV/A1	20	20	2000
ADLERKL. Grat IV u III	140	160	
RASTRATZ - Grat IV+	40	200	
ÜBERHANG-FELS O-Seit IV- PASSO DI BALL ↑ ↓ DR. TURM OBERH. IV-	160	360	
TOFANA O-Wand III	50	410	
" S-Kante ↓ III	20	430	
KUNZ: PLATTE S-WD IV	30	460	
WARZENW. (ob. Kante) IV	20	480	
SCHL. LÖWE O-Wd. IV-	80	560	
u. Überschr. ob. Fels II			
LIHU-KL. - Gratweg III+	120	680	
ZIPF Talseite IV/A0 oder III	40	720	
WASSERFELS O-Riß IV	40	760	
KL. DÜLFERKL. unterer Grat u. O-Versch. III	60	820	
DÜLFERKL. SOCKEL O-Wd. Vol IV/A1	20	840	
Gratrippen und GR. DÜLFERKL. - Talseite III	120	960	
MARIENWAND SW-Kante IV	70	1030	
TEUFELSKANDEL Kandelweg u. Wand zum Restpost IV, III	60	1090	
TREPPENSTEGGRAT Savoye Mittel- u. Süd-Grat - Handhauersack - Draht - u. u. Tal - Talwand - Teil Turm - Kl. Juppel - u. u. - Gr. Te. u. Westpost - SO-Wd	IV u III	340	1430
HUTBERGKLIPPE Teil am Holzweg u. Hauptf. Kamin IV-	40	1470	
KÄSTEL. W-Seite II	20	1490	
HEXENKANDEL O-Wd. u. Normal ↓ I	20	1510	
FEIGENB. KL. W-Seite IV+	30	1540	
FB-SPITZE S-Seite u. N ↓ IV u III+	20	1560	
SÜDL. KLOTZ W ↑ II	10	1570	
NÖRDL. KLOTZ Kamin ↓ II	20	1590	
MAUSEFALLE O-Kamin II ↑	30	1620	
ROMKER TURM evtl. 2. u. 3. Kante V/A1 od. Normal	20	1640	
ROMKER KANDEL Wackelweg ↑ III	20	1660	
KURFÜRST W-Grat IV+ SO-Grat ↓ III-	100	1760	
SCHWARZE WAND Tal. III-	30	1790	
ZIETEN Talseite, Mo. III+	30	1820	
ZIETEN MASSIV (G. 2.) S-Wd. III	20	1840	
MOOSWAND N-Wd. V oder Talseite ?	30	1870	
ESCHWEGEFELSEN Talh. II+	40	1910	
UNT. STU. KL. Schleisweg II+	20	1930	
OB. STU. KL. Bartha III- u. Kaminblockkamin III+	30	1960	
WILDALPKIRCHL. Normal III-	20	1980	
SCHLACKENWAND O-Wd IV-	20	2000	
UNT. BERGMANN'S KL S-Kamin III+ OB. " W-Kamin II	30	2030	
DACHSKLIPPE Überschr. II	20	2050	
KAMELKLIPPE SW-Grat II+	20	2070	
ZIEGENRÜCKENTURM W/OB. II+	20	2090	
HAMMER Normal I (od. Tab. Az)	10	2100	
am Alten Handhauere			
OPFERSTOCK - Talseite III	20	2120	
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KL. UNT. SCHECKENKÖPFE Kurzer Scheckengrat II	40	2580	
Langer Scheckengrat III	120	2700	
GR. UNT. SCH. KPF. W-Kante II+	20	2720	
OB. SCHECKENKPF. W-Versch. II			
WASSERFALLFELS keine Beschriftung, wenn Beschrift!			
RABOWKLIPPE Gratweg III-	200	2920	
Zinngrat III	40	2960	
ob. Fyfel I	10	2970	
BIRKENTALSCHIFF Tal. II	30	3000	
MULTALSCHIFFL. Gemüsepflanze III-	40	3040	
SCHUCHTSPITZE SW-Versch. III-	30	3070	
evtl. weiter aufsteigen bis Ahrensberg			
STEFFENSTAL KL.			

Richard Goedeke - Traversed all Okertal Rocks

ITH - MARATHON 1977			
Cam 25.6. erledigt			
Teufelsküche	S.F. SO-Kante z.G. ↑	11	30
	Taubenkante ↑	11+	18
	M.F. SO-Kante ↑	11-	22
	Mittelriß ↑	11	22
	SW-Kante ↑	11+	20
	Höhlenweg ↑	11+	25
	3x Höhle ↓	1+	15
	S-Wand ↑	V-	15
	Riß-Versch. ↑	11-	15
	Wandweg ↑	11-	15
	Blockkamin ↑	11	12
	Blockwand ↑	V-	12
	Spreizkamin ↑	11+	10
	2x Rinne ↓	1	15
			216 30
Märzwand	Talseite ↑	11+	20
			236 30
Biwaldach	rechte Versch. ↑	11	10
			246 30
Steinbruch Riffe	T. 10-Riß ↑	11-	12
	SO-Wand ↑	11-	10
	Re SO-Riß ↑	11-	10
	Re NW-Riß ↑	11	12
	Li NW-Riß ↑	11	12
	5x Normal W ↓	11+	25
	Nebenkante ↑	11-	15
	Brückenkante ↑	11-	15
	Kaminante ↑	11-	10
	Grabbelriß ↑	11-	10
	Block Bergseite ↓	11-	5
	Block Rampe ↓	11	8
			357 63
Fels ohne Namen	Talseite ↑	11-	10
			367 63
Liederleiser Kandel	Verschneidung ↑	IV	15
	Spalt ↑	11-	10
			392 63
Schuppenkopf	Talseite ↑	11	12
			404 63
Trägerstein	Jo-Kante ↑	11	20
	SO-Versch. ↑	11+	25
	NW-Kamin z.G. ↑	11-	15
			464 63
Krokodil	Kakteenweg ↑	V-	25
			489 63
Hexenkandel	Nachlese I ↑	11-	10
	Re. Riß ↑	11	20
	Linker Riß ↑	11+	20
			539 63
Kandel	SO-Wand ↑	V-	25
	Kamin z.G. ↑	11+	30
	W-Kante ↑	V	20
	W-Riß ↑	11+	12
	NW-Weg ↑	11	15
	5x Alter Weg ↓		50
			648 113
Teufelsfrichter	SO-Wand ↑	11+	20
	S-Wand ↑	11	20
	Drit. S-Wand ↑	11+	25
	Mittelweg ↑	V	20
	Nasenweg ↑	V	20
	NW-Wand ↑	11+	20
	NW-Weg ↑	V	20
	2x Alter Weg ↓	1+	22
			808 140
Pilzstein	Vorbau Tal. ↑	11+	20
	SW-Wand ↑	11+	12
	NW-Kamin ↑	11	10
	2x Bergseite ↓		15
			850 153
Kleiner Pilz	S-Wand ↑	11	10
	Normalweg ↑	11	10
			860 165
Wilhelm	spat mit Riß z. G. ↑	11	25
	Li. Tal. Seite ↑	11+	20
			955 165
	Versch. u. Wand ↑	11+	25
	Schmale Wand ↑	11	15
			980 165
Mickrige Wand	Tal. Seite z.G. ↑	V	25
			995 165
Braite Wand	Apfelkante ↑	11+	15
			1015 165
Wechselverschneidung	W-Kante z.G. ↑	V+	20
			1030 170
Kullerkepp	S-Verschneid. ↑	11+	15
	Bergseite ↓	11+	5
			1045 170
Haderfurva	W-Kante ↑	11+	25
	NW-Versch. ↑	11	20
	SO-Riß ↑	11	15
	NO-Versch. ↑	11	15
	Vorderkamin ↓	11+	12
	NW-Riß ↓	11+	15
	2x Dammenweg ↓	11	50
			1105 242
Stoffenleu	NW-Seite ↑	11+	15
	W-Wand ↑	11+	20
	Tal. Seite ↑	11+	20
			1140 242
Kästchen	Tal. Seite ↑	V	10
	Bergseite ↓	1	3
			1170 250
Mauerhakenfurm	M. Gelbe Versch. ↑	11-	10
	Dünnpfeiler ↑	11-	10
	Höhle Versch. ↑	11	12
	Linke Wand ↑	11	13
	2x Rinne ↓	11	20
	Schneckenriß ↓	11+	10
			1225 270
Mauselochfurm	M. 1-Weg ↑	11+	17
	T. W-Riß ↑	11	17
			1260 270
Mittagsfels	T. Überfallweg ↑	11	18
	Kurz Kante z. G. ↑	11+	20
	W-Kante z. G. ↑	11+	22
	Normalweg b. Bad ↓	11+	20
	Kesselweg ↑	11+	20
	2x Abstieg ↓	11+	15
			1340 305
SO-Buchenschluchtfels	Re. Wand ↑	11+	12
	Verschneidung ↑	11+	15
	Trille 12 ↑	V	10
	Blockriß direkt ↑	11	20
			1397 305
NW-Buchenschluchtfels	Gnade ↑	11	10
	Verschneidung ↑	V-	20
	NW-Wand ↑	11	13
	NW-Kante ↑	11	10
	NW-Verschneid. ↑	11	20
			1470 305
Zwillingsfels	NW-Wand, Platte V-	20	
	S-Wand ↑	11+	20
	SO-Kante ↑	V-	15
	SO-Wand ↑	11+	15
	O-Kante ↑	11	10
	5x Normalweg ↓	11	35
			1550 340
Grüner Turm	NW-Wand ↑	V-	20
			1570 340
93 verschiedene Touren im Aufsteig mit 1530 Kl. m.			
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110 verschiedene Wege			
136 Wege insgesamt			
1910 Klettermeter insgesamt			

Hans Weninger - Ith-Marathon

# ITH MARATHON

Just like that...



Route: „Reason of lie“, Klein Holzen

‘Orang Utan’ at the Kullerkopf from the very inside until it becomes vertical. And the complete Haderturm tour, left and right. But that is a bit more demanding because you sometimes cross quite high above the ground.

All this was still solo, but no longer so dangerous.

Now a small digression: the idea of the Lüerdissen Marathon was taken up again much later by one of the young stars – unfortunately I no longer know his name – much more sharply: Lüerdissen, 1000 meters, all routes at least 7th grade and of course in a rope team. It actually worked on the second attempt.

And again much later, I wanted to try a poor imitation of climbing with Christian Hainer: everything was the same, only up to grade 6. And what can I say: after 15 routes, we preferred to go to Brigitte's for a wheat beer.

Much more important and much more demanding for me than solo climbing, however, was developing new routes from below. A crucial difference, of course, is that it is not life-threatening. Well, mostly. But sometimes it is. For example, the first ascent of “Smooth Madness” (Glatten Wahnsinn) on the Mittagsfels massif in 1977.

A difficult start without a belay, then a good nut for protection. But significantly higher, no nut could be

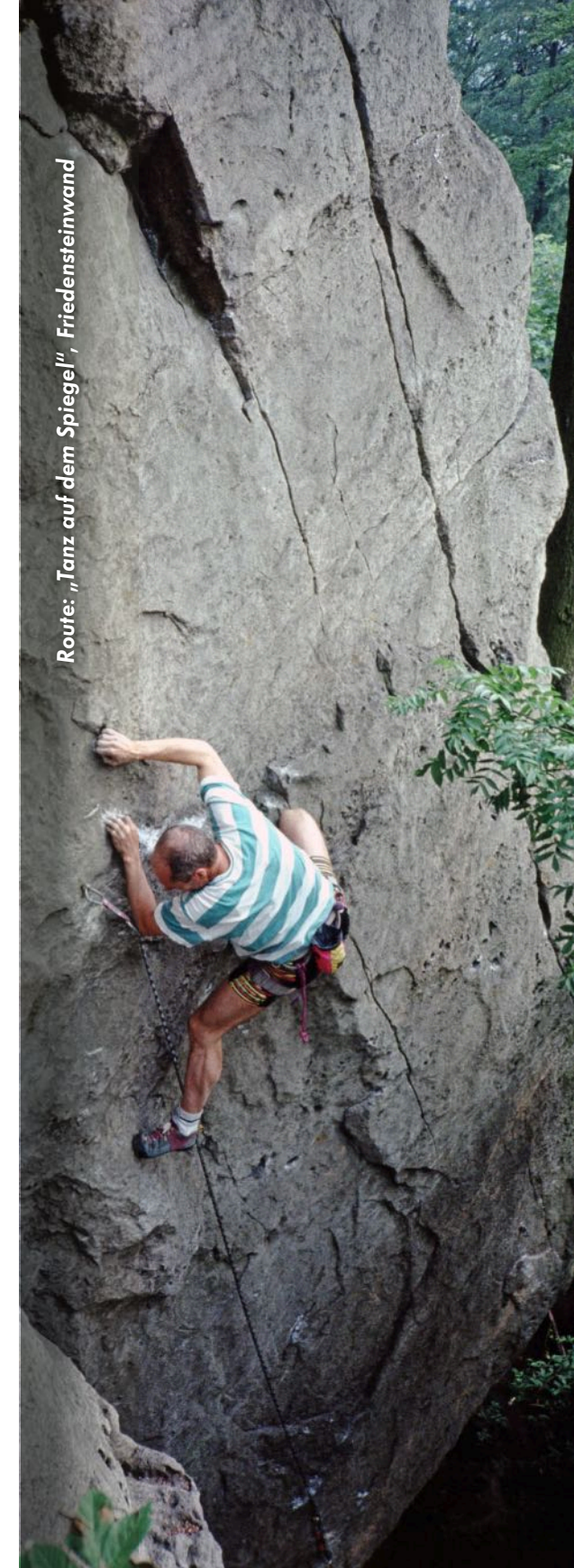
placed for the upcoming hardest part. The solution should be two nuts laid as a sandwich, I thought. But when I moved higher, the two nuts fell off and I could just about grab them with one hand. So back down and fumble again. Hopefully better, but the same result. Back to the top again, my arms were already quite tired. I tried a new laying method and wanted to get started. Well, you can probably guess what happened: the nuts slipped back into the rope. I was so exhausted that I didn't have the strength for a fourth attempt. I decided to just pull through without securing it. A fall would most likely have been fatal.

Does this have anything to do with solo climbing?

No matter, the fact remains: with all the gear: rope, hammer, pitons, drill, backpack for the drill, hose to blow out the dust of the drill hole, wrench, quickdraw slings, screwdriver, lots of nuts and whatelse? To go into an unknown wall from below, one that has not been scouted by rappelling, and to have no idea what to expect is an experience in a class of its own. It can lead to sleepless nights of brooding and doubting, and the insecurity that grows out of that, but it can also be tremendously exciting. And we did manage to get to the 9th grade.

But that's another story.

**Text and Images: Hans Weninger, Hameln**



Route: „Tanz auf dem Spiegel“, Friedensteinwand

# Great Solos in the North

*Route: "Hang or hang not", 8-,  
Pilzstein, Weserbergland, Ith  
Climber: Desirée Keller  
Photographer: Mathias Weck*



Autumn 1982. "Excuse me, young man, could you please move aside?" I, then 13, am standing under the roof of the "Potente 6-" at the Grüner Turm in Lüerdissen and I am placing a „thread“ (German „Sanduhr“) on the roof edge. The roof is about 10 meters above the ground, and you reach it via a somewhat unpleasant crack with one bolt. There is not much space up there, but the request comes as a surprise. I move aside, the bearded man climbs past me on the right up to the roof edge and disappears over the top of the rock. Without a rope, he is solo. Someone tells me that it is Robert Niklas from Hannover.

I remember the following story about Robert: In 1979, he was invited by a Polish expedition to Lhotse. The 8516-meter-high Lhotse stands next to Everest, and the mountaineering friends from the Eastern Bloc needed a source of foreign currency to finance their ascent. So Robert was taken along more because of his bank account than because of his mountaineering skills, especially since he had little experience on big mountains. Robert's tenacity got him into the second summit team. In the last camp at almost 8,000 meters, he sips artificial oxygen to combat altitude headaches, and in the early morning, they set off towards the summit. Unfortunately, the now frozen oxygen device cannot be brought to work. Robert decides to start with the device, which weighs quite a bit, and hopes it will thaw and get back to work when the first sun comes out. There is an icy, steep gully to climb,

# ROPE FREE

## Solo Phases

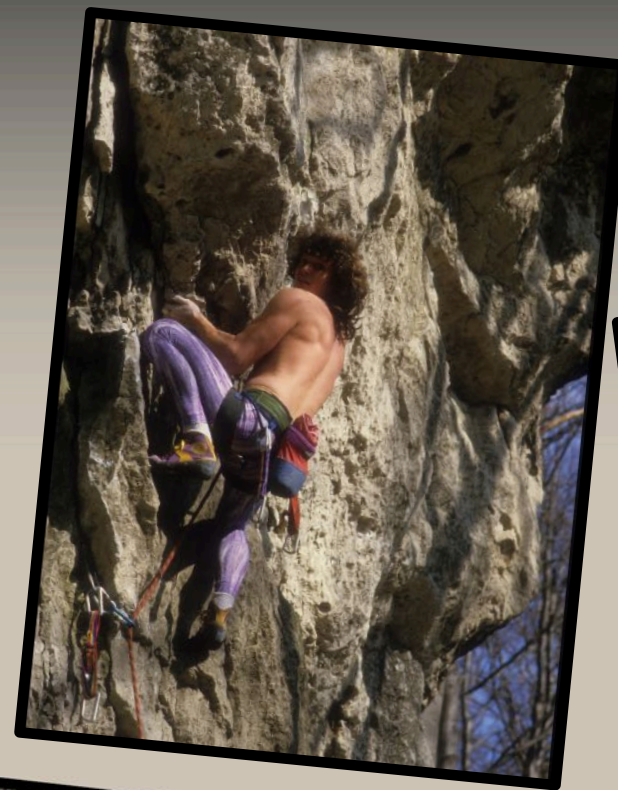
and the sun does not come out at all. Robert is so absorbed by the climb that he completely forgets the device. In the end, Robert stands on the summit of Lhotse with a cold nose and has only breathed in the thin oxygen of the ice-cold ambient air. He carries the broken device up and back down unused. Unfortunately, the ascent is not recognized as "without artificial oxygen" because of the oxygen shower in the last camp. From the big icebergs back to our rocks. A few years earlier, in 1973, Robert worked on free climbing the „Mittagsfelsturm“ valley side. Hans Weninger heard about it, went there and snatched the first free ascent right before Robert. The two meet on the ridge path, Hans comes from the successful ascent, Robert is just about to go there. Since the first free is now gone, he does the first free solo - he has never managed the route with a rope before!

Let's jump back 15 years. We are standing under the pillar of the "Freiburger Weg 6-/6" in Hohenstein in 1959. The rock is steep and 50 meters high. At the top, 19-year-old Richard Goedeke climbs straight out of the entrance chimney to the left around the corner into the steep part. He doesn't have a rope - but he does have corduroy trousers and a rope ladder. After the belay, he climbs straight up, on the left he holds a small hold at a crack, the next bar for the foot is almost too high, he wobbles briefly and almost falls - he just about

makes it. He uses the rope ladder at the most difficult point, where it goes up to the right towards the edge - otherwise he climbs everything free without a rope.

Twenty years earlier, at the end of the 1970s: the southeast face of the Krokodil in Lüerdissen. At the top of the slightly overhanging wall is a lonely piton for practicing long falls. A few car tires are rolled from the summit, and the tense belayer stands below. Both are connected by a rope that is hooked into the bolt. The tires shoot down, slam into the bolt, and the belayer shoots up from the ground. An instructive fun.

In 1979, 18-year-old Milan Sykora, a native of Bielefeld who came from Bohemia and had his first contact with rock in Adrspach and Teplice, came and climbed the wall from below. From the climbing position, protected only with mini-thread slings, nuts and hammered pitons, he drilled two more bolts. Not a lot for a 20-meter wall at a solid seventh grade. A classic style first ascent. "You see, even from below you can make a first ascent on difficult walls, drilling from above is unsportsmanlike," say the traditionalists, and remove the bolts set from rappelling in the "Central South Wall 6+" (Zentrale Südwand) of the Haderturm. Milan drilled the new route to the right of the previously admired valley side at the „Mittagsfelsturm“ in 1981 and called it "Wehret den Anfängen" (Resist the beginnings), today 7+/8-. This was

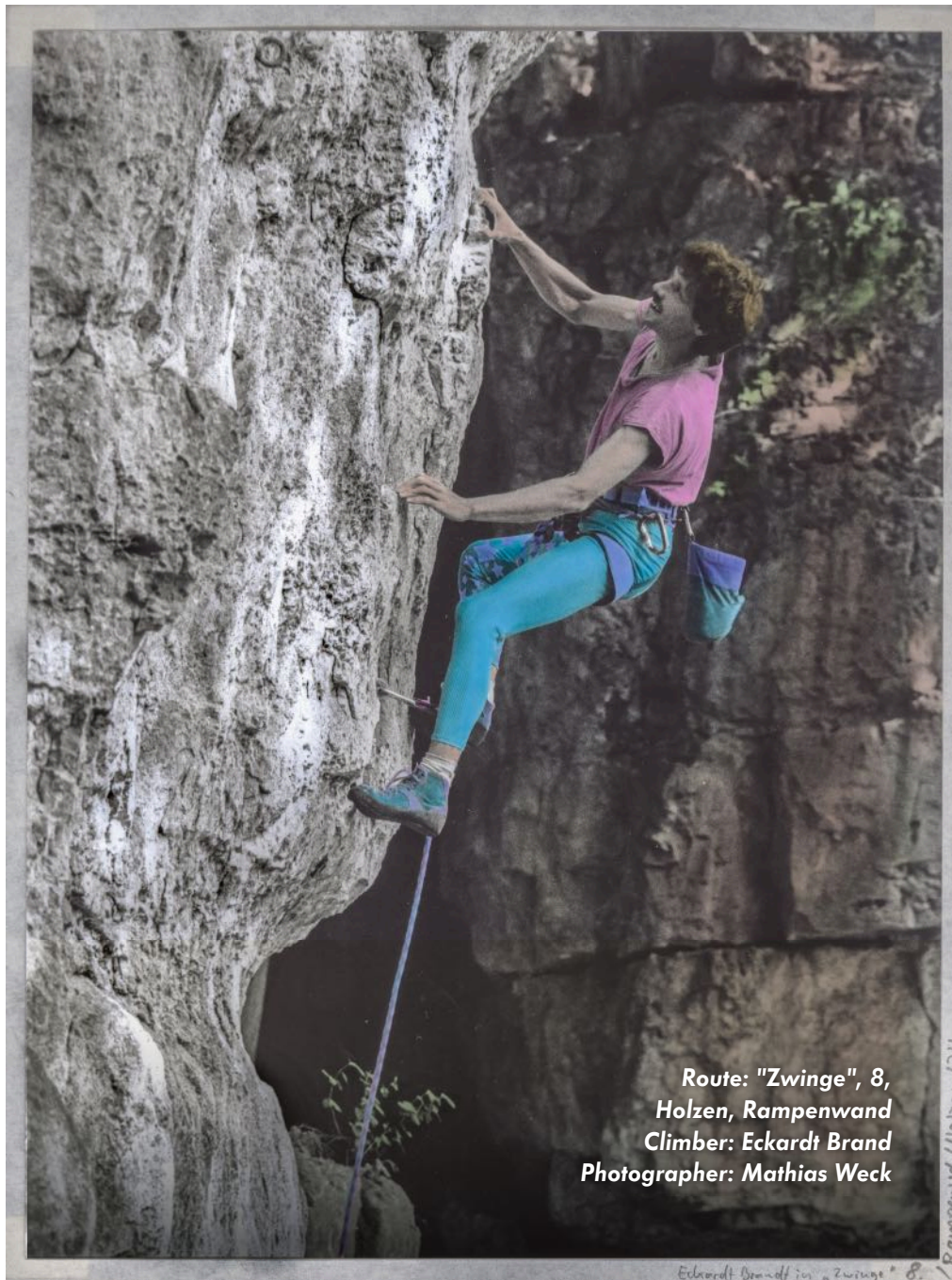


Carsten Seidel 1985 in „Hang oder hang not“, 8-  
Photographer: Richard Goedeke



# ROPE FREE

## Solo Phases



Route: "Zwinge", 8,  
Holzen, Rampenwand  
Climber: Eckardt Brand  
Photographer: Mathias Weck

Eckardt Brand in "Zwinge" 8.

Rampenwand, Holzen 1981

his statement on the hotly debated ethics of first ascents.

The 1980s are the decade of the performance explosion in sport climbing. Within a few years, the bar in the north rises from a solid 7 (1979 Anakonda, Milan) to 8 (1980 Talseite, Krokodil, Milan), 8/8+ (1980 Kamel-Dachverschneidung, Milan), 9- (1981 Schulterweg, Drachenwand, Milan), 9 (1984 Perpendikel, Ultradächer, Milan), 9/9+ (1984 Rotation, Drachenwand, Gewalt der Gewaltlosen, Krokodil, Götz Wiechmann), 10- (1987 Magnus der Magier, Guido Köstermeyer), 10-/10 (1988 Charlie's Messer, ultra-roofs, Guido Köstermeyer) to 10+ (1990 Enfant terrible, gallery wall, Ralf Kowalski). Three grades in ten years!

The difficulty of solos is also increasing, although luckily the life-saving distance to maximum performance is maintained, because none of those who are soloing at the 8th grade fell off. Götz Wiechmann documents the solo routes in the standard guide for the north "Leben in den Felsen" (Life in the Rock) in 1991: In 1986, Milan and Horst Walter (Hoddell) climbed the Anakonda solo - the next time you're fighting your way up the smooth wall, try to imagine what they felt like.

Milan also climbed the "Saftkante 7+/8-", "Hotspur 8-", the "Zwinge 8" with small holds and "Münchhausen 8-" in Holzen solo. In 1987 he moved to Franconia and, in addition to many

other routes up to 10, drilled the "Action directe", which Wolfgang Güllich was the first in the world to climb at 11 in 1991.

Other difficult solos are the "Buchenschluchtdach 8-" by Martin Galda in 1984, "Teamwork 8-" on the crocodile by Andreas Rappmund in 1986, the "Zentrale Südwand 7-" on the Haderturm by Milan and Klaus Fengler, "Amselweg 7-/7" by Carsten Seidel, "Fingerbeißer 7/7+" by Hoddell, the "Drachentöter 7-/7" by H. Hoss 1989.

A thought-provoking story happened to Carsten Seidel in "Hang or hang not 7+/8-" at the Pilstein in 1986. Carsten knows every hold on the route, he has climbed it at least 50 times. On a cozy Friday evening, he does it without a rope. Everything goes smoothly, no hesitation, he feels like he's on a high.

The next Sunday, he passes the 'Mushroom' rock again and climbs it again with a rope just for fun. Only one thing is different: a large undercut that he had used without hesitation two days earlier during his solo ascent is now missing. Mathias Weck had just torn it out during his onsight attempt. Carsten then stopped his solo ascents.

Fortunately, the others mentioned here have also survived their solo phase. Being alive is much better than having the whole life dead.

**Text: Axel Hake, Braunschweig**

# PURPOSE OF LIFE

## Fear of the Void



## A Life for the Vertical

Alain Robert, born August 7, 1962, is known to everyone from the media as the "French Spiderman". He performs solos on high-rise buildings worldwide, usually followed by a police escort. What many people don't know is that he also has an eventful rock climbing history behind him. And it started traumatically and with accidents before he even started solo climbing properly.



### The accidents

His first accident occurred on January 18, 1982 while lowering. The rope was threaded through a sling and it burnt through, a fatal rookie mistake. And just a few months later, on September 29, 1982, he had just fought his way back to life and climbing, he fell twenty meters to the ground. Head and hands first, after he had set up ropes for a group of young people to top rope, because a knot came loose. The slings that were given to him to divert the ropes so that the rope did not run over the edge when top roping, had been incorrectly tied. This was his worst accident, the doctors diagnosed that he would never be able to climb again, six operations, partially stiffened joints. If you see the x-rays or photos of his hands, you wonder how he was even able to climb again. From a medical point of view, he is 60% disabled. During the examination after his first accident, he was even diagnosed with epilepsy, which he has to take medication for permanently. Not a good prerequisite for solo climbing. And two more absurd accidents are worth mentioning: with his hands held behind his back, Alain solo climbed a slab in the fourth french grade to demonstrate that it is possible to climb without hands if you have good technique. And he crashed to the ground from a height of ten meters because he lost his balance. Another time, he fell from a traffic light while posing for photos for some passers-by who wanted to take pictures of the "Spiderman". You might think that when it comes to small stuff, the guardian angel sometimes takes a break.

### Character and willpower

Alain remained loyal to climbing, despite permanent, massive disability from the stiffening of joints after he had been patched back together. Perhaps one reason why he could no longer push the difficulty limit of the time further up and instead did solos at the limit of what was physically possible for him. Solos on routes that not even Alex Honnold could imagine climbing solo. Milestones in the history of solo climbing that have never been repeated. I can only recommend watching the video of an ascent of "La nuit du Léopard", 8a+, on YouTube to understand how Alain's solos differ from those of other soloists. While others practiced their solos over and over again, Alain usually needed only two or three fall-free passes in the top rope to then climb them solo.

### Buildering

In his childhood, with both parents at work, he would forget the key in the apartment. And climb in through the facade. Of course, he had no idea that this would become his profession. And how did he get into "buildering" in the truest sense of the word? Actually involuntarily, because in 1994, in order to swap his job in a sports mail order company for climbing, he suggested a world tour with free solo ascents of well-known sport climbing routes to his sponsors. But they would rather see him climbing on high-rise facades for advertising purposes, and that's how it stayed. Who knows, maybe that's what saved him from a really bad accident, because the monotonous structures of a high-rise are much more predictable than rock. And certainly more lucrative when it comes to sponsors. Life as a professional climber is hard. Whereby most climbers underestimate the difficulty of climbing buildings. Alain has since created his own scale, from 1 to 10, with no upper limit. And he has also come close to the limit there in some solos. Because if you layback (piaze) against glass friction, that may still be possible for a distance of ten to twenty meters, but for 200 meters or more without proper resting points, I personally can hardly imagine doing that. The grade AR10 then requires, among other things, a secure command of the eighth French grade. Within 30 years, Alain has now climbed about

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170 different buildings, some of them several times. There should be around 250 in total by now. If you consider that the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, the tallest building in the world, is 828 meters high, almost as high as El Cap, then you get quite a few meters of climbing.

### Soloists in advertising

Mammut once advertised one of its ropes with Alain and the slogan: "The hardest Frenchman to convince". Twenty years later, Alex Honnold lost one of his sponsors, a manufacturer of energy bars, after they realized that solo climbing is dangerous...

### Present-Day

When Seb Bouin and Alain Robert climbed the Total Energie Tower in Paris, La Défense, on September 28, 2024, everyone thought it was a publicity stunt for Total. And they received some pretty bad reviews for it, since Total is an oil company. Especially Seb, for whom this solo was the first solo of his life. But he had something completely different in mind and wanted to honor Alain with it in an episode of his "Vintage Rock Tour". In this show, Seb Bouin repeats many old classics from the 80s, such as "La rose et le vampire", 8b, by Antoine le Menestrel, to bring them back to mind. And the Total Tower just seemed to be the best object to get closer to Alain's personality. Chit-chat while building. You can think what you want about free soloing, I thought it was a brave move to honor Alain's personality. Especially since Seb reserved the right to abort the action until the last minute if his gut feeling told him otherwise. It's different with Alain. After hundreds of urban solos, he's pretty hardened in that regard. And he found the conversation during the climb to be pleasant, while it stressed Seb.

### Outstanding solo ascents

„Bloc ou Falaise“, 8a+, Dunière sur Eyrieux, 1987

„Boukouni“, 7c, Chateaubourg, 1987

„L'Ange en Décomposition“, 7a, Verdon, 1990

„Rêve de Papillon“, 8a, Buoux, 1990

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-wlukXKWC8>

„Lou Pape“, 8a+, Ombleze, 1991

„L'Abomina Freux“, 8a, Chateaubourg, 1991

„Au Théâtre ce Soir“, 8a, Chateaubourg, 1991

„Crac Bourn hue“, 7c+/8a, Verdon, 1991

„Compilation“, 8b, Ombleze, 1991

„La nuit du Lézard“, 8a+, Buoux, 1992

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSJxOCR-vVO>

„Cauchemar de l'Éléphant“, 8a, Buoux, 1992

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=likl4m9WDrM>

„La Nuit du Cauchemar“, 8a+, Buoux, 1992

„Œuvre Posthume“, 8a, Entrechaux, 1993

„Pour une Poignée de Chamalows“, 8a+, Chateaubourg, 1994



### The Interview

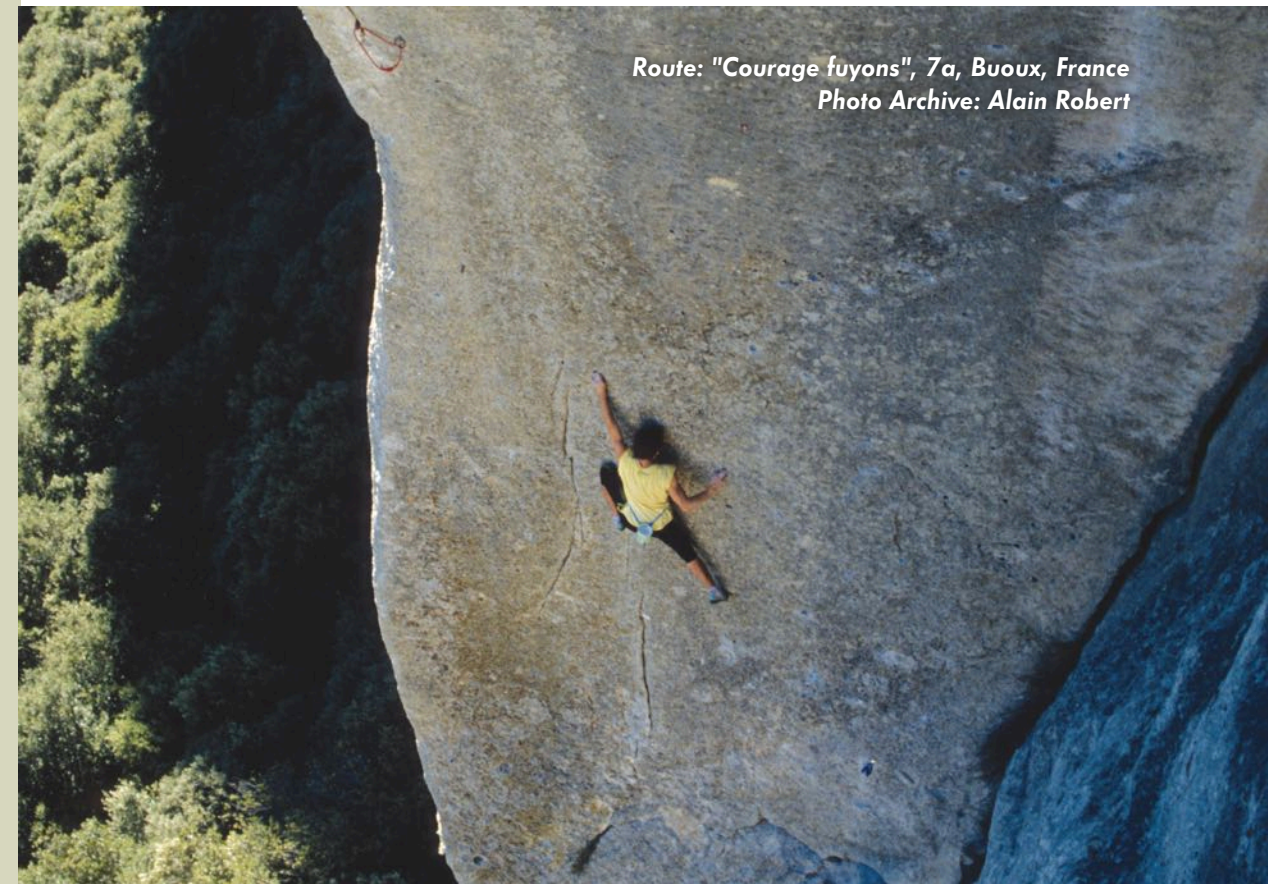
**Tanja:** Alain, why did you start climbing solo?

**Alain:** Actually, you have to start from the beginning. I had a childhood trauma, I wanted to be brave. I was a kid who was afraid of everything, who didn't feel comfortable in his own skin and dreamed of becoming Zorro, Robin Hood or d'Artagnan. But I wasn't born in the right time to be Zorro, Robin or d'Artagnan. Then one day, by pure chance, I came across a movie based on a novel by Henri Troyat: "La neige en deuil" (English: "The Mountain"). It's about a plane that crashes near the summit of Mont Blanc, and two brothers who are mountain guides and go in search of

survivors. This film was made in 1956 with Spencer Tracy. And to see how these mountaineers scale this vertical mountain of ice and snow fascinated me, and it actually changed my life forever.

**Tanja:** Why did you start climbing solo again after your accident?

**Alain:** You have to imagine that I was a boy who was afraid of everything and wanted to be brave and finally managed to be brave, that it, I had managed to overcome what was my greatest fear. I was afraid of death, I was afraid of the void, I was afraid of falling, I was afraid of everything. And so I finally managed to become the climber I wanted to be. In 1982, I had two crashes. On September 29, I had



Route: "Courage fuyons", 7a, Buoux, France  
Photo Archive: Alain Robert

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a serious accident. The medical verdict was that I was doomed to never be able to climb again because my hands were so badly damaged. The nerves in my right hand, my elbows, my head, the left inner ear that caused me to feel dizzy... And I decided not to listen to the doctors. I had found the meaning of my life when I saw this movie. I had fought to confront my fears and overcome them. And so I decided to continue climbing despite the medical verdict.

**Tanja:** A question that is often asked: what do you think about when you are climbing solo?

**Alain:** That's easy: when I was climbing with Seb (Editor's note: Seb Bouin, last solo 28.09.2024, Total Tower Paris), I talked to him, and afterwards I realized that he says in the video that it bothered him. That is, he had never climbed solo, he had never climbed up buildings, and then we talked as if we were sitting on the terrace of a café. And the moral of the story is that if it's not very difficult solo climbing, you can chat in a relaxed manner. Of course, you have to think a little about climbing at the same time, because you don't want to crash, but you can also think about other things when climbing solo.

**Tanja:** Yes, actually you were concentrated and everything went well until your shoes slipped, that drastically changed the situation...

**Alain:** Yes, that was disastrous because I was standing on a horizontal aluminum frame and there was some kind of "mud" there, I thought it was a slippery leaf. A leaf wouldn't have been a problem. But when I tried to pull myself up, I had a horizontal bar, so I took a vertical with my right hand, and now I had to find a hold with my right foot on a vertical aluminum frame and put my left foot very high, and then suddenly my foot slipped in an extremely violent way. And I almost fell, it all happened very quickly. I was surprised, and then I rested for a few seconds and continued climbing. I checked again, slipped again and then I realized: "Shit, that wasn't just a leaf." I went



„Garden Court de  
Johannesburg“ 1998  
Photo Archive: Alain Robert



Route: „l'Arabe dément“, 6a+,  
Gorges du Verdon, France 2022  
Photographer: Philippe Poulet

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through the situation again in my mind. I remember clearly that I saw something lying on the building that was brown. I suspected that it might have been a dead bird or mud. And it was actually slippery earth! So I tried to clean my climbing shoes, which I didn't really manage. It took me almost four minutes to climb over the window. Because the climbing shoes weren't really clean and there were still 40 meters to go to the exit, I said to myself at every window: "Okay, now you have to climb window by window," that's it, your life depends on overcoming the next window.

**Tanja:** A question that is somewhat related to this ascent of the "Total Tower" at La Défense in Paris: Does it motivate you or put you off when you

climb solo in front of the media (reporters/photographers)?

**Alain:** It doesn't really bother me, because I don't personally notice the cameras. If it's an easy climb, it doesn't bother me, I have enough leeway ("air") and can even enjoy it. However, if I'm doing something very complicated, whether it's on a rock or on a building, then it requires 100% concentration.

**Tanja:** Did you use the GoPro on the last few ascents because they were secret actions?

**Alain:** No, the GoPro is interesting for me because I have decided to capture my story in pictures and film again. That means that there are hardly any recordings of all the solos I did in the 90s, including the first 8B solos in the history of climbing, but also very unpredictable routes like "La nuit du lézard". And nowadays, sponsors expect you to be present on social media with all this media coverage. Even though I'm 62 years old, I still make my money from sponsors. My photo archive contains either old or not-so-nice pictures. And in addition, I was not always filmed. Often there are only a few photos of me and for social networks you need high-quality pictures, you need a GoPro or drone shots.

The world has become extremely visual. A GoPro or an iPhone takes better pictures today than a \$100,000 camera did back then.

**Tanja:** In terms of "solo and family", does it slow you down when



Route: "L'Ange en décomposition", 7a,  
Gorges du Verdon, France 1998  
Photographer: Sam Bié  
@sambie\_photography

someone very close is present, do you think about family when climbing?

**Alain:** When I was young, it was so much a part of my lifestyle that it wasn't really a problem for me. My ex-wife often came to watch me climb; she saw me do "Pol Pot" solo. My children were also present at "La nuit du lézard" (I only had two at the time ;). It was perfectly normal for them.

**Tanja:** Now we come to a technical question regarding climbing: how do you deal with "dynamos" when climbing solo (La nuit du lézard). When climbing solo, these moves take on a special dimension...

**Alain:** This is perhaps the most complicated part of my brain. But I am able to see the glass of water half full and not half empty. And that has allowed me then and now to do things where I have a 50 percent chance of reaching the summit and a 50 percent chance of falling. But I am able to block out the possibility of falling. This recently led Alex Honnold to say: "Alain did 'Pol Pot'. He says that if you've been to 'Pol Pot' 100 times with a rope, the day you do it without a rope is like rolling the dice (a game of chance...) - There's an element of luck involved, we agree. - Like Russian roulette, he calls it: 'rolling the dice', yup, just like in Las Vegas... It is true that Alex also has difficulty understanding my mental attitude. He said: "When I climb solo, I have a much greater safety margin than you did back then. That is, I try to climb 4-5 grades below my max level in solo,

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while you climbed the same grade in solo as you did with a rope."

**Tanja:** And that's where the question arises as to why you didn't climb harder, either with a rope or solo.

Back then, the highest difficulty was 8B / 8B+ and now it's 9C. Didn't you ever feel tempted to climb difficult projects?

**Alain:** There are two possible answers to that: My hands are severely disabled. That slowed me down on many routes with strong moves. The other reason is: today you climb differently than back then. Adam Ondra or Seb Bouin sometimes told me it takes them five years to climb a route. I never said to myself, okay, there's this project, and I want to work on it every day for five years. For example, Chris Sharma is currently working on a route called "Le Blond" and would like to climb it before he retires. He has set himself a goal, and that is his motivation.

**Tanja:** How do you maintain your motivation for climbing? There are videos in which you can be seen training. What is your "drive" now?

**Alain:** You have to think of it this way: I still function the same way. That is, my body was a Ferrari in the 80s (late 80s, early 90s) and I loved to push my Ferrari to the red line. Today, at 62, I'm a diesel Clio, but I still like to push my diesel Clio to the red line. It's like a motor for life, I can't express it better. I mean, that thrill when I climbed the Total Tower, that was really incredible. I felt more dead than

alive, but it was amazing. And that reminds me of something Reinhold Messner said a long time ago: "The greater the fear, the greater the pleasure".

**Tanja:** In view of this quote, it is not out of the question that we might see you again on one of the buildings in the future...?

**Alain:** Exactly, we agree that you can't rule it out 100%...

**Tanja:** Right, I see...

**Alain:** Ultimately, you have to have faith for that. You have to believe in yourself first. You have to have a certain faith in something invisible, in something you could call God.

**Tanja:** The question arises: "Are you a believer?"

**Alain:** I am a believer, but that doesn't mean I want to die. I would say that after my solos I became more of a believer than I was before my solos.

**Tanja:** Let's talk about today's climbing. Do you agree with today's values and the development of climbing?

**Alain:** Oh yes. Or actually yes and no. It depends on the type of climbing. When climbing à la Adam Ondra and Seb Bouin, it reminds me of my time with Edlinger, with the climbers of that time: Wolfgang Güllich and all those guys, like Stefan Glowacz, for example. It was a bit similar, except that you didn't commit to one route for five years. So it's likely that we could have pushed the difficulty level much further.



Photographer: Jan Virt, 2024

But that wasn't the point back then. Today it's different.

I was just discussing it with Seb and I said to him: "How do you explain that we were so bad back then and it took us 30 years to go from 8C to 9C?" And he replied: "But climbing styles have changed a lot". He said that the routes he climbs in Flatanger, for example, or the ones he did in La Dienne and in Verdon, are extremely overhanging and extremely long. He told me: "These are 60m or 80m long overhangs". He also said that they work a lot with "compression" (pressing). That doesn't have much to do with our climbing style back then.

**Tanja:** In addition, today's training opportunities complement rock climbing and bouldering quite well, don't they?

**Alain:** Yes, that's right, in the 80s and 90s we were in the early stages of high-performance climbing and didn't know how to train. We tried out a few things, developed them further, and maybe paved the way for new generations. The pioneers of the time were guys like Jean-Claude Droyer, Pete Livesey. Or John Baker, climbers older than I was at the time.

**Tanja:** Yes, for example, climbing legends immortalized by Heinz Zak in his photographs.

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**Alain:** Yes, like Ron Fawcett from Great Britain, whom I met a few times in Buoux, Ueli Steck, the Swiss who had his accident in the mountains. And many others. But many of them have died. I also remember Michael Reardon, who also died (I don't remember how) (editor's note: he was swept into the sea by a huge wave after a solo on a sea cliff in Ireland). I also think of Kurt Albert, who had a fatal accident, or Wolfgang Güllich, who had a fatal car accident...  
**Tanja:** Yes, we are glad that you are still alive at 62 and we hope it stays that way!

**Alain:** Yes, it surprises everyone! In some big interviews for magazines like *Grimper* or in the special edition of *Vertical* in 2023, they said every time that they didn't think I would live very long. In his preface to my book, Alexander Huber says that I'm not crazy. He says that a guy who climbs solo for so long can't be crazy!

**Tanja:** Why don't you live in France anymore?

**Alain:** Because I fell in love with an Indonesian woman, whom I married in Jakarta. Then we moved to Bali, Jakarta wasn't really my thing... I didn't like the city at all, even though I like climbing tall buildings. Now I'm living a new phase of life. Ideally, I should now make a big movie about my life. A Hollywood production on a grand scale. And if I make good money from it, I wouldn't rule out buying a house in the Verdon and commuting between Le Verdon and

Bali. But at the same time, I know that I would increase my potential for dying again, because I would certainly climb every day in Verdon...

**Tanja:** Then you'd better stay in Bali!

**Alain:** Yes, that's exactly where the problem lies. My son knows a pastor who wrote me a little message saying, "maybe this is a sign from God that you slipped on the tower 'Total'". I answered him: "Listen, the slipping is a detail that happens to me regularly, that there is a small problem during an ascent. God is more likely to say to me: 'Go ahead, I appreciate you for each new day.'"

**Tanja:** We can end with this beautiful sentence and hope that God will keep you alive for a long, long time!

**Alain:** That would be cool, that would be good for me, because it's true, I have the feeling that I will remain this "Diesel Clio" that likes to get into the red, and then one day I will just be an old "Renault 5" that also likes to go into the red zone, and so on and so forth. There is a logical consequence of aging: you can no longer do things you used to do. Sometimes people say to me, "But you can't climb 'Framatome' at La Défense again on your own." And I tell them, "Yes, of course, it's like asking Usain Bolt 15 years after Atlanta to run the 100 meters in less than 10 seconds, that's over." You can't fool yourself, you can't escape it, you can do a lot, but when it comes to aging, none of it matters. From the age of 30, you're on the decline, it's true...

Photographer: Jan Virt, 2024





Photographer: Jan Virt, 2024



Photographer: Jan Virt, 2024

**Tanja:** The interview ends here. I officially say a big thank you and end the recording.

After that, another hour of talking on the phone... (it was already 4 a.m. in Bali.) But two statements from this hour must be mentioned, with Alain's okay. First: whenever he wants to do a solo again, it is his wife who urges him to train a little harder (life-sustaining measure, clever wife). And since there are few opportunities for climbing in Bali, a few climbing holds mounted on the ceiling in the hallway have to suffice (can be seen in a video on his Instagram account). A mini home climbing gym, so to speak. Secondly, many people ask him why he doesn't

use a parachute when climbing solo. It's nonsense, of course, since the jump height is rarely sufficient. But he says that even if he were a bird, he would clip his wings because he loves climbing so much and it wouldn't be the same with wings. Now that's a statement! Chapeau, Alain!

**Text and Translation: Tanja Rivière (Formerly Weck), Chamonix**

Many thanks to **Alain Robert (Bali)** who, despite his busy schedule, took time out to give us this fascinating interview. Special thanks also go to **Jan Virt (Paris)** for providing his wonderful photos.

# PURPOSE OF LIFE

## Fear of the Void

Translated in German for Der Klemmkeil.

### Foreword from Alex Honnold

I've always felt a certain connection to Alain Robert, despite having only met him in passing at various events over the years. He was already a world renowned climber when I started climbing as a child so I grew up knowing about his feats and appreciating his skill.

As it would happen, I also became very well known for free soloing, largely due to the mainstream success of the film *Free Solo*. But Alain did most of his rock climbing in the pre-internet era. There are relatively few written accounts and even fewer photos of his hardest ascents on rock. Nowadays, he's best known in the mainstream media as the French Spiderman - an eccentric character who climbs the biggest buildings in the world, generally without a rope and often without permission.

His climbs of the world's tallest sky scrapers are impressive. Some of them are physically very hard (up to an estimated climbing grade of 7c/5.12d) and he has sometimes tackled them in adverse conditions or inclement weather. And there is always the threat of arrest on the summit!

I'm one of the few people on earth who has also had the opportunity to climb on some of these buildings and I can attest to both their difficulty and their allure. I always had the permission of the building owners; most of my climbing was done with a rope to scout for a potential TV project. So although I haven't gotten to free solo many buildings like Alain, I have gotten a small taste of the experience and I've always been impressed. I can certainly see the appeal.

Alain's urban climbs are sometimes derided as a mere stunt - a gimmick done for publicity. And in some ways, that's a fair critique - Alain is a showman and doesn't shy away from the spectacle. But behind the seeming "stunts" lies an unmatched skill as a climber.

In the 1990s, Alain free soloed routes up to 8b(5.13d) when 8c(5.14b) was the hardest grade in the world. That means he was willing to test himself ropeless, with his life on the line, against routes that were among the hardest in the world. No one else has ever pushed it so close to the edge as a soloist. For comparison: my free solo of El Cap was 6 grades below my physical limit, and 10 grades below the world standard - a marked difference from Alain's razor thin 1 or 2 grade margin.

The style and difficulty of the routes that he has free soloed on rock is truly unmatched. For example, in 1991 he free soloed *La Nuit du Léopard*, an 8a+ (5.13c) that's climbed almost entirely with single-finger-sized pockets up an overhanging wall. It's an incredibly insecure style, since so little of your body is even touching the rock, which is probably why no one has repeated any of his solos more than 30 years later. It's a shame that there isn't a better public record of those climbs, though this book is his opportunity to change that.

But the years of cutting edge soloing came with a price: Alain has been grievously injured several times and had more than one "career ending" accident. But he recovered each time, despite the predictions of his doctors, and went on to ever more challenging climbs.

He's climbed something like 200 skyscrapers around the world. But a mere tally of routes doesn't do justice to the drama behind each climb. Each building represents a travel story wrapped around an action caper. He's lived like the plot of some action movies, which is probably why there have been so many films and media projects surrounding his urban exploits.

But through it all he's maintained a true love for climbing, as demonstrated by his constant search for his next project. He loves the exposure, the air around him, the thrill, the challenge. But he has always played the game by his own set of rules - guided by his own passion and aesthetic.

I have nothing but respect for all that Alain has accomplished in his nearly 50 years of climbing, and I know that he's experienced incredible things along the way. I'm glad that he's taken the time to compile his entire climbing life into one book. Enjoy!



*Alex Honnold*

# PURPOSE OF LIFE

## Fear of the Void

The original text in German was provided by Alexander Huber.

### Foreword from Alexander Huber

Free Solo is climbing at its purest form. There is no need to explain the challenge as everybody can see the radical nature of free soloing. There is no space for even just one single mistake. In the history of climbing there are not many protagonists who were ready to take the challenge.

Alain Robert is known as the human spider. Climbing the highest skyscrapers made him famous throughout the world, way beyond the climbing community. But Alain Robert is far more than just a crazy climber who stood atop of most of the most spectacular buildings. Beyond that he is a pioneer who opened a new level in the art of free soloing.

In terms of numbers he became the first to free solo F8b but it is not all about numbers. He climbed random routes free solo like La Nuit de Lezard or Pol Pot. It was the constant search for the new horizon which made him crossing the invisible line from the already known into the unknown again and again.

As a true pioneer Alain Robert was and is an inspiration to the whole climbing community as well as for myself.

Chapeau bas, free solo brother!

*Alexander Huber*



Posted on Instagram

**alainrobertofficial** • 6 months ago **@sebbouin**, contacted me as he wanted to climb freesolo for his 1st time on an easy / medium building and I told him that I was planning to climb back The 190m Totalenergies building to somehow celebrating my 62 years old . We have had fun although on the last 50 meters and as far as I am concerned I have been very close to a catastrophe as on one of the horizontal frame there was some mud which I didn't realize it and all of the sudden on the next move which is a friction on a vertical aluminum frame I slipped violently . I managed not to fall. I still didn't understand what was wrong and I tried again with the same result and realizing that the sole rubber of my shoes was really muddy. I did manage to clean it up only partially and I have had to struggle hard to complete an ascent that has started easily chit-chatting with my friend Seb.

#climbing #freesolo #challenge #adventure #pushingthelimit #resilience #mindset #climbinginspiration

**sebbouin** • Soloing a tower with **@alainrobertofficial**

Soloing a tower with @alainrobertofficial Recently, we've been asked a lot about what we are claiming with this solo.

It seems quite clear to me: we claim life and freedom! The ability to live fully, to chase our dreams, to feel our hearts beating, and to be free to act and think.

We're trying to awaken minds with a bold gesture: "What if he falls? Is that death?" "But why do this?" Because it makes us dream, because we feel alive, and because LIFE IS PRECIOUS.

shake up your habits and listen to your heart: "what's the most important for me ?"

Living our dreams or dreaming our life - it's a choice we make. Fear can dictate our actions just as much as desire can. For sure, it will always be harder to follow our dreams and we have to find the right balance.

We advocate for the freedom to exist for ALL living beings. We must act accordingly and help those in need to preserve this life. We invite everyone to take care of those and what surrounds us. There are many ways to act. But I believe we must first be convinced ourselves that life is precious.

A quick note for those wondering: we have no connection to Total. We chose this tower for its structure, not its owner. There's no advertising here; on the contrary, we promote life in all its aspects. The "Total" logos are on the tower and, inevitably, in the images.



## Solo ...

"...the chance to free yourself from some imagined dependencies, to redefine your own strength"

"...the perfect harmony between body and mind..."

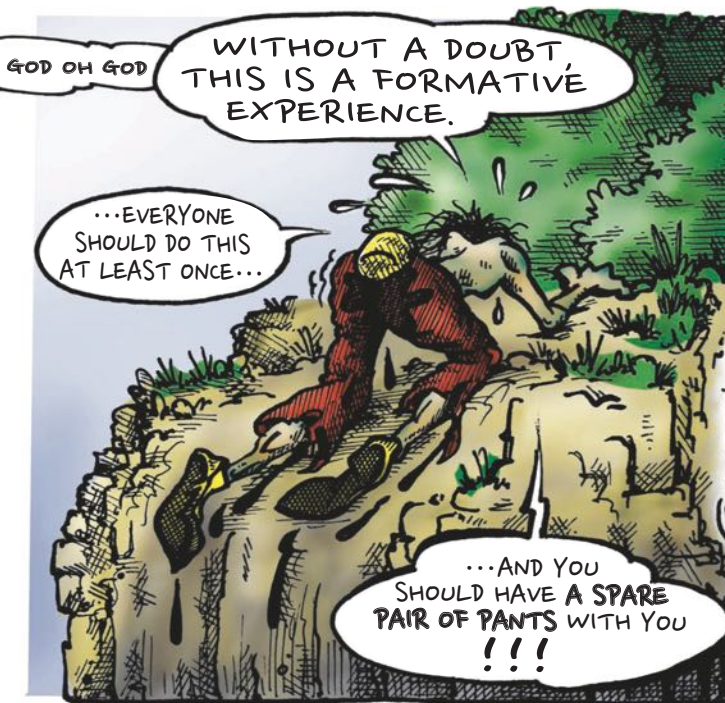
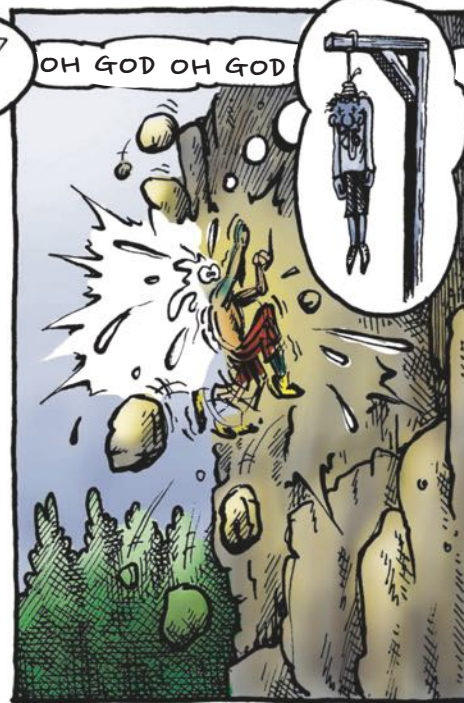
"You are completely absorbed in concentration and enjoy total activation, you experience yourself and everything else as active as never before."

"...the ability to move subjectively safely in objectively dangerous situations."

AS A SERIOUS CLIMBER, YOU SIMPLY CANNOT AVOID THIS TOPIC...

Quotes: Wolfgang Güllich

...AND THAT'S WHY I HAVE ALSO EXPLOITED THE DEPTHS OF MY SOUL!



# INNERKOFLERTURM

Solo First Ascent

Innerkoflerturm from Plattkofel (12. August 1994)

## Lonely Odyssey

First ascent of the Innerkoflerturm  
northwest ridge, solo, 1994



From the low mountain range, I am quite familiar with how wonderfully carefree free solo climbing can be, provided that I have full command of the difficulties. But in the high mountains, soloing is not my world. The larger dimensions require much greater uncertainty in the prior assessment of all the difficulties and risks that actually arise. The security provided by a solid belaying team weighs heavily here, as does the service of collecting the gear placements and sharing carrying the needed equipment. On top of that, the feedback from a rope partner is important to me when experiencing a route, as is encouragement in a critical situation and - if I find or climb a particularly good spot - of course a dash of admiration. So far I have only rarely attempted solo ventures in the mountains and usually limited them to manageable objects.

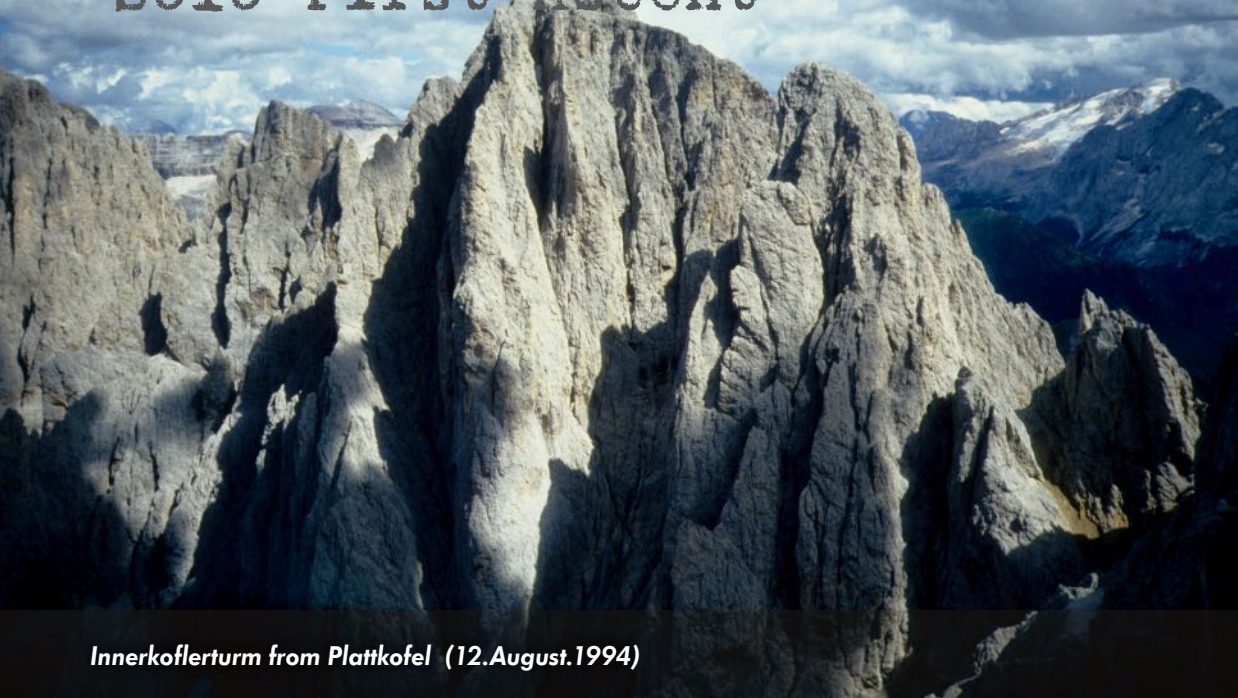
But in the summer of 1994, the partner I had arranged for this time did not show up. However, the chosen new tour project was still tempting. It was a highly interesting first line on a large rock structure made of good material, which is gradually becoming rare in the Alps. I saw my time available for sharp climbing slipping away and knew about the good weather forecast and almost became gloomy. And then it suddenly came to me, the idea of simply tackling this ridge of the Innerkoflerturm alone. After all, you have to climb solid on lead as well on a climb like this just like in a solo ...

The decision releases the pent-up

tension. It is a liberation. The rucksack contains only the bare essentials - a lightning protection bag, first-aid kit, a few nuts, hammer and pitons, but two fifty-meter ropes as back-up insurance. No drilling equipment, no water, no running shoes. The rucksack still weighs 18 kilos... At 9 o'clock I'm at the Langkofelscharte. Clouds have clung to the summit. I descend into the cirque, past the Rifugio Vicenza. There is no conceivable companion there either. So I continue alone towards the ridge. It rises sky-high into the gray clouds with pillar-like towers. The chimney on the lower pillar is probably the crux pitch, and it now looks intimidatingly dark. My imagination paints mossy, slippery wedged rocks, the size of Micheluzzi pillars into the wall. And at the back of my mind, someone asks what I'm doing up there alone. It's half past ten when I get in. The stem is not too difficult, but it's already airy, a prelude with a suction effect. As the depth increases, so does my awareness of the seriousness of a possible retreat. After the stem, a difficult wall rises above the saddle. The direct ascent would require me to perform complicated belay maneuvers and rope up my pack. But to the right I find a large loop that offers a good alternative. I soon climb up the open wall to the left towards the gray cracks. They are a natural line of least resistance. They must be somewhere behind a blunt edge. The terrain becomes steeper and more difficult and is very exposed. I'm aware that I can't afford the slightest slip-up.

# INNERKOFLERTURM

## Solo First Ascent



Innerkoflerturm from Plattkofel (12.August.1994)

I get stuck just before the cracks. The rock is vertical and only offers very small holds. I try, feel the weight of my rucksack and know that I should hurry, look at the footholds and quickly look up again - and suddenly the horizon sways and I feel sick. I clutch the handholds and press myself against the wall. The world gradually comes to rest again.

That wasn't an earthquake, it was a dizzy spell. Is that fear? I observe myself coolly. No. If I remain completely still, the world comes to a standstill. And the fear, as far as it is always present in the back of my mind, is under control. I remember that the day before, when I got up, I had a brief bout of dizziness. And that

something similar happened to me a few years ago. Back then, I had thickened blood after climbing Mont Blanc due to acclimatization to high altitudes and not drinking enough, and that had caused exactly this kind of dizziness. Three days ago, I also climbed the fantastic Ago di Sciara rock needle solo in Bergell. A whole long day well over 3000 meters high. And I was stupid enough to take the water bottle out of my rucksack this morning ...

Turn back? But that also means climbing. And if I keep calm, then everything will be fine. Maybe I can finish the tour after all. I have to make an effort to climb carefully and not provoke new swell by moving quickly.

Look at everything again very calmly. Once again, very calmly feel behind the blunt edge. There is a handhold. Another one. Pull through, it works. A few meters further on are the grey cracks. They feel good, have a good grip and are firm, just as I had hoped. I climb steadily higher and reach the gray intersection. It starts with an overhang, but has a crack to jam and good-natured holds. The subsequent right-hand traverse is also benign. The following steep cracks can be avoided surprisingly nicely via an inclined slab. This is a wonderful passage. Climbing higher in yellow rock, on firm, rough holds. If I do this calmly enough, it actually works without any new bouts of vertigo. And there's the chimney. What my imagination had feared down there on the slag heaps - and how peacefully it now towers above me. Just a clamping block at the top. And it can be passed inside. And even dry. I undo the ropes, take them both through to make sure they don't become a macramé. Then I carefully place them next to each other from the other ends in a niche and tie myself into both. I keep the now flat rucksack on my back. Then into the chimney. It proves to be a comfortable, safe affair, barely in the fourth grade. At the top, it leads into a small chimney. Bright yellow poppies smile in the sun.

During the binocular inspections from the Plattkofel, the section up to here seemed to me to be the crux. I have the feeling that I have made it. The return to the world of the horizontal, the meadows, the warmth will be just

around the corner. But fifty meters higher up, I look perplexedly from the top of the pillar over a vertical drop-off into a deep notch. The opposite wall of the next pillar also looks damned repellent. I didn't really want to appear so heroic here. It seems wiser to me to return to the offer of a ramp leading to the right, which I suggested earlier. Even if it feels like I've just been thrown out of a game of Ludo. The descent goes quite well at first. But on the overhang with the sloping holds, I realize once again that Paul Preuß' much-quoted saying that a place that you have climbed freely is also free to climb down is easier said than done. It took some fiddling around until I found the right edges as straddle steps to compensate for the sloping holds. At least the dizzy spells leave me in peace, and I feel in great shape and probably I am.

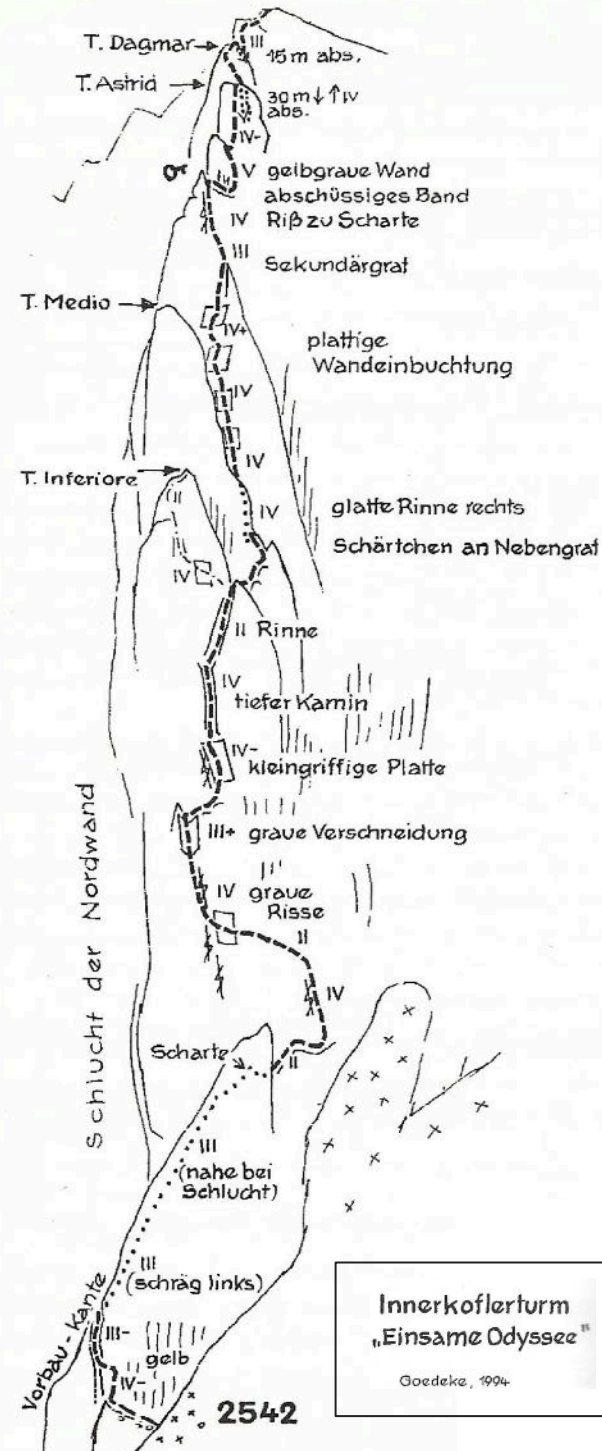
The ramp leads easily to a pillar head. However, behind it, the rock breaks off vertically into unexpectedly deep depths. A few meters higher up, I feel a traverse into the adjacent steep gully. It is made of white, smooth gorge rock. And at its bottom runs a tiny rivulet. Water! I plunge into it, drink greedily, suck this vital liquid into me, further and further, feeling how it deeply soothes my guts. Then the steep gully leads up as a large, flat wall indentation. It is more difficult than expected and unstructured. But with its wide straddles, it offers climbing that suits me. I climb with concentration and speed. The slabs stretch out and lead upwards. I briefly catch myself

# INNERKOFLERTURM

## Solo First Ascent

thinking that it's good not to have to set up a belay here today. Occasionally, steeper sections require careful calculation. At some point I see that I have already passed the head of the next ridge tower and am already higher than the Zahnkofel. I follow a grippy secondary ridge to the right, then head left again into a vertical crack. When climbing with a belay, the ropes would hang freely in the air here. Paul Preuß would be delighted if he could see me here ... Above a hellishly airy ridge saddle, the rock is yellow. To the left on the north side, a deep, desolate view yawns. So I try to get to a suspected crack by traversing to the right. However, the ledge is trickier than it looks at first, steep, with a small hold full of red lichen. Then it loses itself to an overhanging notch. This is how Ulysses must have felt when he and his companions were constantly encountering new dangers and obstacles on the way back home ... I am impressed by the gray-yellow wall above the ledge. It's not too high but slightly overhanging overall. At least there are finger cracks and the rock seems good. So straight up. But here I wish I had a belay. Years ago, I worked out and tried out a self-belaying method for this in my local forest at the top of a thick oak tree. In this method, a screwgate carabiner fixed to the chest harness with a half-mast knot catches the tug, and another screwgate carabiner fixed to the seat harness below with a second

half-mast knot then acts as a braking hand. Very gently dynamic. I tie myself into the middle of one of the nine ropes, but keep the rucksack on my back. Secured by nuts, I climb the first few moves, place new nuts, attach the double rope, take out the lower nuts again, climb further, airy, bold, gain, place a very good nut, extend the ropes in between by pushing on the HMS carabiners, finally up to a ten-metre ring. The rock pushes out, but my hand gets stuck in a crack, pull, spread, pull further, finger jams in a dihedral, run through, support - and I'm crouching on the edge of a ledge. And can't get any more rope. I unhook the half-mast knot, drop the loops and pull. It only goes two meters. The loose ends have got caught somewhere at the bottom. Tugging is futile. The difficult passage is below me. I unrope myself. I'm a little ashamed at how chaotically I've left the rope and three familiar nuts hanging. But without further ado, I climb on. I still have the second rope. Fifty meters higher, on the next ridge tower, I can see that it's still a long way to the summit. And I look into a new abyss. Abseiling down into this notch requires more than twenty-five meters of rope. And the opposite wall of the notch is brittle. I feel like I've been hit in the stomach with a sandbag. Stranded on this ridge tower. What now? Despair? What was it like when - already in sight of Ithaca - Odysseus' foolish companions opened the sack with the



### Innerkofler Tower Northwest Ridge "Lonely Odyssee"

First ascent: Richard Goedeke solo, on August 13, 1994 in 6 hours. Difficulty V (in 1 Sl), otherwise IV+, IV and III.

Generous, very airy, classic climbing in terms of character and line in wild surroundings. The rock is partly brittle and chossy at the start, but then almost everywhere excellent. Nuts and ropes for abseiling 30 m are highly recommended. The 2 abseiling loops have been left.

Difference in altitude 600 mH, climbing distance well over 1000 m. First ascent 6 hours.

**Overview:** The ridge to the right of the large, gorge-like ramp of the north face, which is steep at the bottom and formed by rugged towers at the top.

**Access:** From the Rif Vicenza hut, take the path towards the August-Schuster-Steig to just below the gully below the Zahnscharte. Continue over the scree or firn to the foot of the start and then quickly to the right to the beginning of the climb. 30 minutes from the hut.

**Route:** E. from right to left, ascending over debris to Schärtchen. To the right of it, via Wandl (SU) to sloping terrain and left to the chimney. This to Scharzl. Now traverse diagonally up to the left until you reach the vicinity of the gully separating the porch and then up to the wind gap. On the other side, first descend on the debris band and then traverse until you reach an inclined wall zone over grippy rock. There, traverse up to the left to the gray cracks (a shorter route here is directly from the wind gap, but probably more difficult). Then follow the gray crack dihedral up to the large jagged rocks, then turn right to the steep, gray crack. Turn right to follow the compact, small-grip wall to the prominent chimney, which is already visible from the entrance. Climb up the chimney and into the adjoining gully to a small notch. Turn right onto a ramp onto an edge, climb a few meters and then traverse right into the bottom of a smooth gully. In this and the following wide wall indentation, climb up in beautiful climbing, at the top a little to the right to a secondary ridge and then left to a crack overhanging to a ridge notch. Turn right on a sloping band around the corner to a ledge and up over a yellow-gray wall (crux, V). On the ridge edge to the next, quite independent tower (Torre Astrid, approx. 3020 m). From a large peak, abseil 30 meters down the mountain side into the narrow notch and up the Scharzenwand on the other side. Continue along the ridge to the next tower (Torre Dagmar, approx. 3025 m) and descend a few meters to the southeast to a peak. Descend 15 meters into the next notch. Go around a peak and now always along the ridge with decreasing difficulty to the summit roof.

# INNERKOFLERTURM

## Solo First Ascent

trapped winds and drove his ship back out onto the raging sea? This wild ridge tests stamina.

The advantage of life experience is that we have already seen ways out of seemingly hopeless situations. And that panic and complaining don't help, only calm reflection. What options do I have?

Call for help? To simply get out of this adventure in a helicopter in the reasonable weather, even though I'm healthy and capable? That's too miserable for me. Quite apart from the fact that there are no people in sight and no helicopters either. No. Abseiling with one rope and trying to set up another abseil point in the Scharfenwand? But whether a reliable abseil point can be found there, the gods or someone else know that, not me. And it's not much fun to prusik back up on the rope, especially not at the end of the world and back up this ridge tower. No.

Abseiling down on a simple rope and leaving it hanging too? That might leave me helpless in the face of any rugged notches later on. On top of that, the normal descent also has abseils. So: No.

Climb back and retrieve the rope I left hanging? That would open up all my options again. The only thing that speaks against it is laziness. That doesn't apply. I climb back, the whole long way over the gully and the overhang and the steep ledge and the notch to the yellow wall, abseil down, push myself to the left on rope

pull. There, both ends of the rope are hung near the ends. Firmly into a rough crack and behind a sharp jag. They've probably snagged themselves by being pulled up too quickly and have seized up like barbs. Even an elephant wouldn't have been able to pull them loose.

Climbing back up via the now familiar passage is still difficult with Prusik knots and the abseil eighth as a belay, but not stressful. And when I get back up to the anchorage, I feel great. Again with all the equipment, what's going to stop me? Up to the saddle, over the steep edge, the grippy gully, onto the big ridge tower. It now feels really familiar. There's a big spike at the top. My longest sling fits around it. I abseil down from this one hundred percent anchorage. Right into the neighboring gorge, from where I climb directly to the summit. I manage to get within a few meters of the bottom of the gorge with the last end of the rope. I can also stand there, pull on the rope, pull harder, pull with all my strength. Only rope stretching, not a millimeter of movement. Damn! I climb back along the rope, up to the notch and hang onto the rope with all my weight. Nothing.

Again that fatal feeling of having fallen into a trap. That feeling of helplessness again. Silence! Before I try to prusik up the rope, why not climb on the rock? The abseiled wall is overhanging, the opposite wall towards the summit is vertical. I didn't

like walking up it because it looked so brittle. But if I managed to get up there secured, it would have to be strange if I didn't get my ropes.

Well, where I have to go up there, the wall even has handholds and footholds. And the rock isn't as brittle as it looked. Every few meters I push the abseil eight higher, know I'm halfway secured, climb calmly and am soon sitting in a niche on the summit wall, opposite my abseil sling. There, only the rope friction over the edge of the ledge had prevented the ropes from being pulled off. From here they can be pulled off effortlessly. Relieved, I pick up the ropes once again. The next ridge tower requires only peaceful, enjoyable climbing. After that, another overhanging drop to the next notch awaits. But this time one rope is enough to abseil down. And the subsequent climb, over the last ridge crest and the ridge to the summit plateau, is just the finale. I have made it. That's how Odysseus must have felt when he finally set foot on his home beach in Ithaca.

The cassette with the book is still in the summit cairn. I wrote in it a few years ago. That was the first time I had consciously seen this ridge on the descent. And also realized that it is one of the great rock structures of the Sassolungo massif. But that I would climb it solo one day? As a new tour? I write a few of the colorful mixture of thoughts and feelings in the book: "Alone - hurray" (Hans Dülfer) and "55 and a little wise"

I still know the descent. I scramble down, happy and yet deliberately cautious. Only when I pick up the ropes for the last time in the Zahnscharte do I know I'm safe. On the first meadow, I throw myself into the grass and look up.

This ridge is my ridge. Nonsense. The cult of conquest. The ridge still belongs to the municipality of Campitello or Vigo di Fassa.

This ridge was gracious enough to let me up. Nonsense.

Anthropomorphism. The ridge doesn't think, it just stands around.

This ridge was a dragon that I could fight and defeat. Garbage! I projected a counterpart onto it. This mass of stone didn't want to hurt me and it wasn't suffering defeat. But this great ridge of indifferent stone was the reason and the place for me to measure my ingenuity, my perseverance and my strength against its dimensions and difficulties, to seek and finally find a way through this labyrinth of possibilities and impossibilities in trial and error and new attempts. And to go through a rollercoaster of emotions in the process. This ridge enabled me to live a day wide awake.

**Text and Images: Richard Goedeke, Braunschweig**

# SOLO CLIMBING

## Various Forms of Climbing



# Was It Worth It?

*Buttermilk Boulders, California, USA*  
*Climber: Henrik Bolander*



### The Forms of Play

Free solo climbing has changed over time. I only really became aware of this when we decided to make it the topic of the Klemmkeil magazine. Solo climbing has existed as long as climbing and mountaineering itself. Sometimes it was practiced out of necessity because there was no climbing partner, sometimes because it is considered the purest form of climbing. You can do solo climbing with a rope, or without a rope, as a free solo. Solo climbing can be done on big mountains as well as on small rocks, although there is now a certain overlap with bouldering. A boulder that can no longer be jumped off at some point without serious injuries is called a highball. I don't want to try to examine or compare the history and the different disciplines here, but I would like to briefly touch on how solo climbing has changed over time. Once considered the purest form of climbing and therefore not only practiced by professionals but also by Joe Bloggs, it is now seen as a very selfish form of our sport. Why? Of course, if something goes wrong, who is going to clean up the mess? My few solo climbing experiences should be viewed from this perspective; they are all due to a rather carefree youth and the spirit of the times at the time. Nothing of which I am particularly proud or that I could recommend to others.



*Cul du Chien, Fontainebleau, France*

# SOLO CLIMBING

## Various Forms of Climbing



Donau Valley accident to hospital; Archive: Mathias Weck

### Solo with Grounder

The first solo I can remember must have happened around 1982 and went completely wrong. Actually, it wasn't a solo at all, because there were four of us on a school vacation in the Donau Valley. Four classmates: Anja, Sybille, Wolfgang and me. I had the most experience, and so it was I who went to look for Wolfgang's floppy hat after it blew off his head at the cliff (Stuhlfels) behind the Ebinger house in Hausen near Beuron in the Donau Valley. Light, grassy, but also brittle terrain. I suspected the hat on a ledge. It wasn't there, but at that moment my friends found it in the forest. Whereupon I began to climb down. And fell from a height of about ten meters to the ground. As I fell, I thought "that's it, this can't end well". It didn't, but it was much more mild than could have been expected from that height. Pneumothorax, three

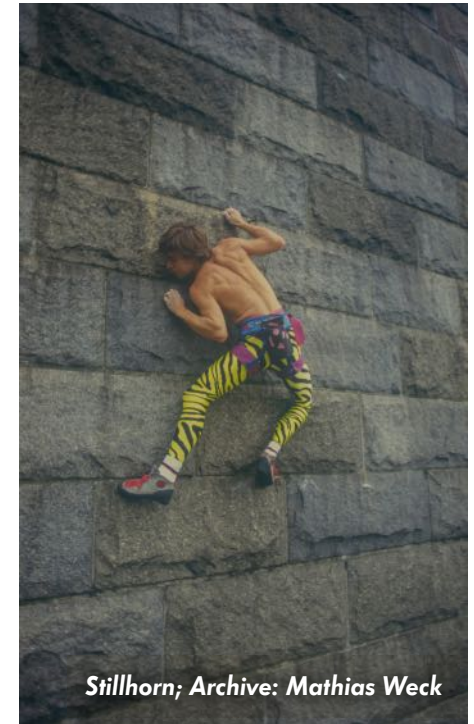


broken ribs had caused the low pressure of the lung to collapse and I gasped for air. The first emergency doctor who arrived only felt my pulse and said "everything is fine". Fortunately, my friends insisted on an ambulance to take me to the hospital in Sigmaringen. I spent ten days in the

intensive care unit, during which time the negative pressure in my lung was artificially restored so that the tear could heal. It was especially hard for my parents when they received the call: "Your son had an accident and is in intensive care". All the more credit to them for letting me continue climbing and even providing me with climbing literature (the beloved bouldering magazines) in hospital. Even if it wasn't really a "solo", I'd had enough of climbing without a rope for the time being and learned my lesson.

### Solo with Rope

Ok, if I clip a rope from above and then use the Jümar to secure it, it's not really a solo. I may be alone, but I'm actually perfectly secured. Unless you don't clip a carabiner at the top of the Jümar to prevent unhooking in the event of side loads. And that's exactly what happened to me when I was practising on a motorway bridge and its stone-built base in Hamburg. I landed on the ground from a height of about eight meters and rolled more or less gently down the embankment. The fact that I was still bleeding profusely from my forehead was also due to the Jümar, which had snapped against my forehead like a catapult. The two little girls who were just passing the bridge wanted to leave as quickly as possible when they saw me. Fortunately, my moaning convinced them to get the bandages out of the car and to apply a makeshift bandage to me, with which I could then go to the hospital to get stitches.



Stillhorn; Archive: Mathias Weck

### Solo for the Audience

When there was an audience around, especially when I was young and my testosterone levels were too high, this sometimes led me to nonsensical actions. From today's perspective, the "Suicide", 6+, on the Pfaffenstein in the lth was fortunately more of a highball and I knew it inside out. And I was happy to demonstrate it when "needed". Fortunately, nothing ever went wrong here. And not at the Hamburg Autobahn bridge either, when I spontaneously decided during a film shoot to do a 7-meter edge solo. However, I was a coward and had a harness on and a buddy with an "emergency rope" at the top.

# SOLO CLIMBING

## Various Forms of Climbing

### The Involuntary Solo

What do you call it when your buddy leaves you on the mountain because you're too slow? Involuntary solo? That's what happened on the Eiger, on the descent after the north face. I had driven from Hamburg to Switzerland the night before the climb and had led all the crux pitches. Accordingly, I was completely exhausted at almost 4000m above sea level. In other words, I crawled the last few meters of the summit ice field like a snail towards the summit. Which made my partner really angry, he didn't want to spend another night on the wall. And at some point during the descent, he got fed up with my snail's pace and left. How and where I came down alone, I only asked myself this question again in 2015, on the descent from the Geneva Pillar ("Deep Blue Sea", 7b+). The terrain is anything but trivial. That went well and on the Scheidegg I caught up with the runaway and he had to spend a

bivouac with me there, right in front of the hotel on a woodpile.

On the Eiger, too, on the "Death Bivouac", I also took the belt off because of an urgent need to use the bathroom. That would have been fine if the topo hadn't been in the dungarees. While trying to grab it, I almost followed the topo down the wall. Fortunately, my buddy had another copy with him.

The next time I soloed a route was a week later on the Matterhorn, with the same buddy from the Eiger. To be precise, it was in the North Face, at the start of the ice field. In 1986, it was about 300 meters long. We went solo to get ahead faster. The conditions were good, solid, grippy ice. However, our route-finding skills were not so good. We thought the Hörnligrat was the prominent rock triangle that you leave to the left. When we realized our mistake, we

had to traverse a good 200 meters to the right. The ice was not as grippy, or rather, it was already heavily interspersed with boulders. And the buddy who crossed a few meters above me had a sheet of ice slide out from under his feet/crampons, leaving him hanging only on his two ice axes. Phew, from then on I insisted on belaying, which of course took time, but I didn't fancy sliding 300m down the ice field. But we reached the summit reasonably safely with a bivouac.

When rappelling in the Pfalz, I completely misjudged the height of the wall. The rope ended more than ten meters above the ground, suspended in the air. Using a sling extension and then swinging freely at the end of it, I reached a ledge, from which I somehow managed to climb down solo, and then reached my buddy again solo via the normal route to rescue him.

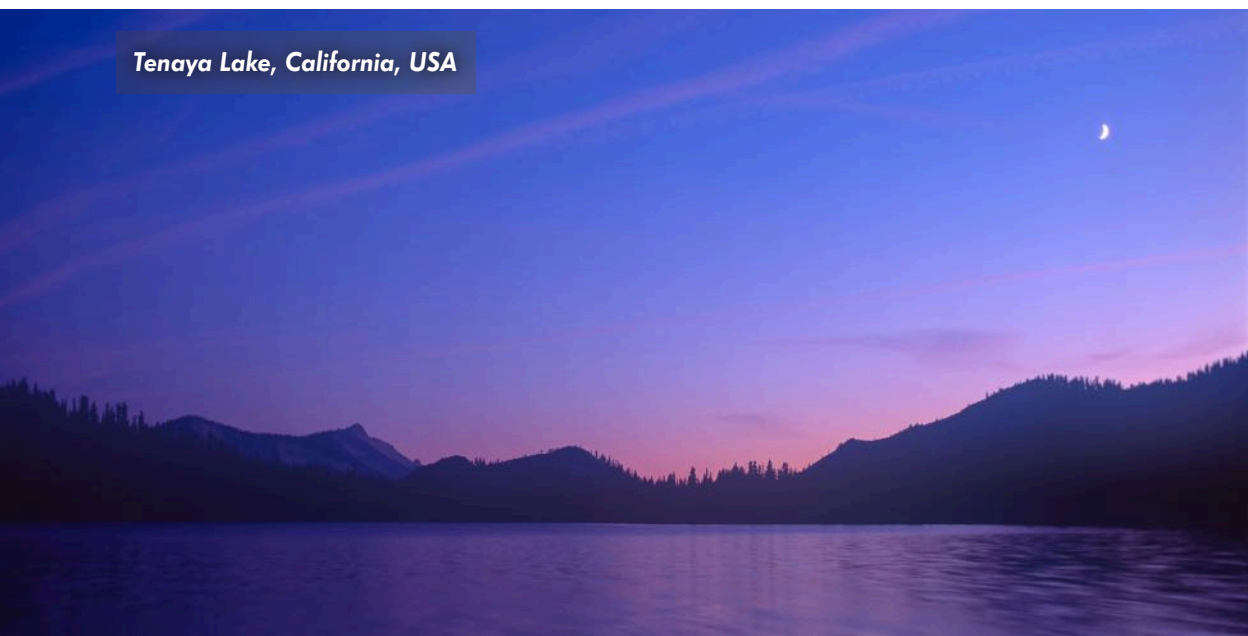
### The Unwitting Soloist

In the early eighties, we trained on bridges; climbing walls didn't yet exist. Twelve meters high, with a few pitons that we placed, at the top we lowered off the railing. After climbing a 7-route, I was lowered down and wanted to untie myself at the start of the route. However, the figure-eight knot had only been thread through once and not threaded to the end. It would never have held me in case of a fall.

In the Verdon, I climbed the last pitch belayed by my buddy, who had lead



Buttermilk Boulders, California, USA  
Climber: Henrik Bolander



Tenaya Lake, California, USA

# SOLO CLIMBING

## Various Forms of Climbing

ist, from the top. It had been a great climb and the last few meters were easy and a real pleasure. Because it was so nice, I filled in a few difficult passages, trying out some hard moves just for the joy of climbing. Sometimes I was close to falling off. But I felt secure, because I was on toprope. Once there, however, I almost tipped over backwards down the wall. My buddy had untied himself and belayed me with a sling that he had attached to a tree root about one centimeter in diameter.

### Deep Water Solo

Not really a solo, because the fall is not fatal. In the eighties, we didn't even know the term deep water solo, and we just climbed around over the water for fun at the Spiaggia del Lucertole near Arco. We climbed higher and higher just to jump off for

fun. At some point, someone came up with the idea of jumping from the very top. It must have been fifteen to twenty meters. Everyone else had jumped, I was still standing at the top and hesitated. Peer pressure forced me to jump too. And what do you do when you're afraid? You assume an embryonic crouch position. And land a cannonball onto the water from a height of fifteen meters. I thought my legs and my backside would burst open, it hurt so much. That's why I never tried deep water soloing again.

### Highballs

Next stop: Fontainebleau, a bouldering area. I had a girlfriend in Paris for two years, and while she was still at school, I enjoyed the beautiful blocks of this world-class bouldering area. At that time, there were no crash pads. A doormat from the car served

as a starting platform to take off with clean feet. Many a time I had already landed or crashed on the ground from an amazing height. I can still remember one time, it was a particularly high boulder with little hand and footholds. After landing, my brain had to first sort out the top and bottom, everything was mixed up. But it always went without injury. Another day it was even closer. I was doing really well and I flashed one difficult problem after another in one of the courses. At some point, only a highball was left, the start of which was already on a blocky plateau. Estimated height: twelve meters. I just thought, "Oh, they're just as bad as the rest of them here, somehow it will work out." At a height of five to six meters, the first really difficult move came. I tried several times until I found a solution. After that, there was a

good rest hold where I could catch my breath. Now it couldn't be too hard anymore, I thought, because jumping off was no longer possible and would have ended very, very badly. But from here on, it was only getting really hard. I decided to retreat. The first attempt failed immediately. So I quickly went back up to the jug where I rested. And in my mind's eye, I went through all the moves again, exactly how I had gotten up here. And then it actually worked. With shaky knees, I reached the start of the climb and had enough of climbing for that day.

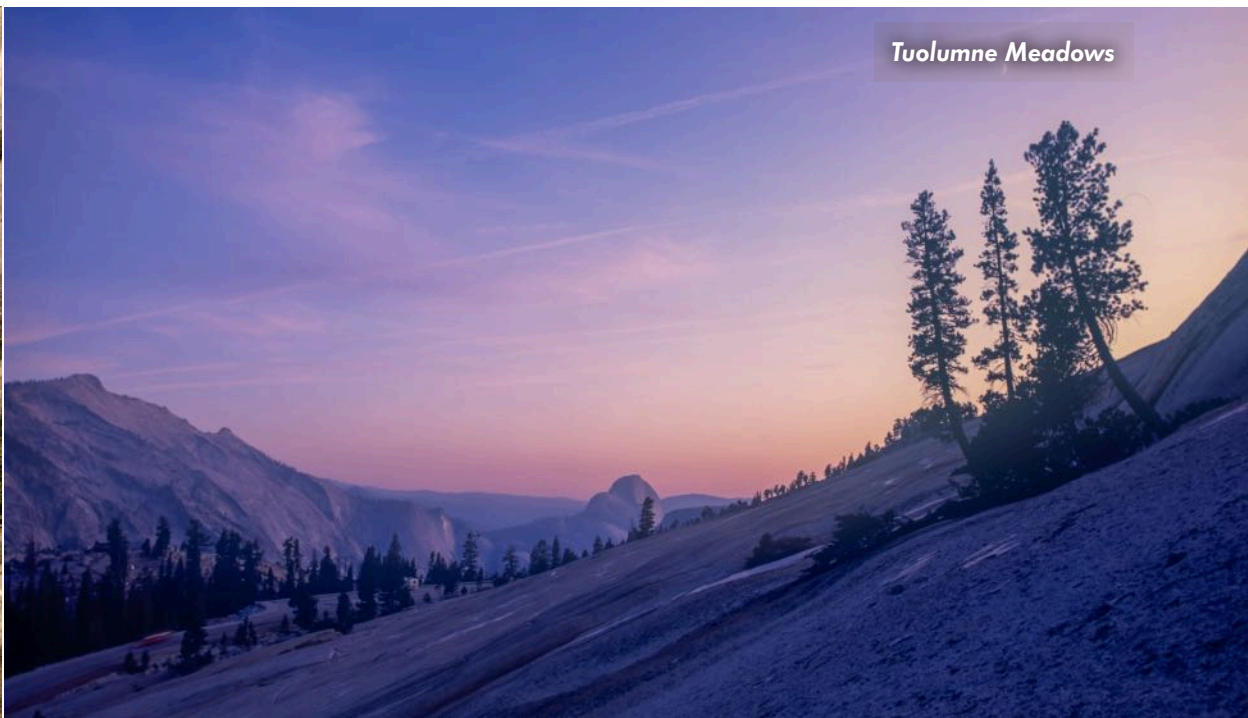
### The "Real" Solo

Then, in the early nineties, I went to the USA. At that time, only a few people knew the Buttermilk Boulders. But we had a picture in our heads of Kurt Albert climbing up an arete, solo, on one of these huge granite eggs.

*Spiaggia delle Lucertole*



*Tuolumne Meadows*



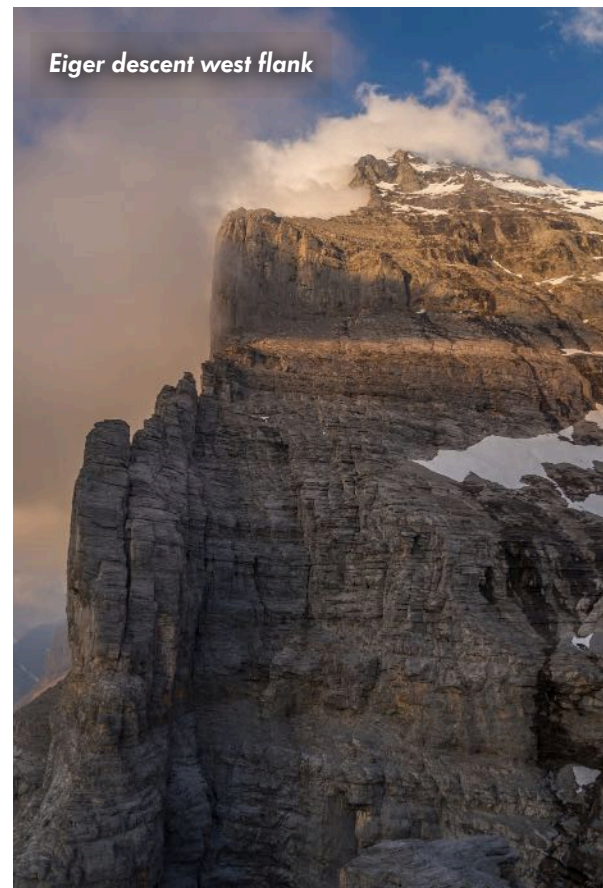
# SOLO CLIMBING

## Various Forms of Climbing

The rock is fifteen meters high, and can be seen in the illustrated book "High Life" by Heinz Zak. Fortunately, it is not that difficult, but I was still glad when I had done it. Enjoyment of achievement? No. Sometimes it is pictures that persuade me to do something, sometimes texts. As in the next case.

Reinhard Karl's books have fascinated and influenced me from the beginning. Not only because of the pictures, which encouraged me to do some routes, but also his stories. One of them was that after a difficult big wall he climbed solo with friends in Tuolumne Meadows, he ran up and down the friction slabs, laughing. Well, my friends had already left after climbing the "Shield" together, but my route led me via Tuolumne Meadows. And when I saw a few rope teams at each dome in the best California summer weather, I thought to myself: "Hey, just be as cool as Reinhard Karl, you only did the Shield because of him, and you survived it." The decision had been made, hippie bus parked, shorts, T-shirt, chalk bag and climbing shoes thrown on, and off I went. First, there was friction that slowly became steeper and steeper and was interspersed with gorges as big as bathtubs. You could stand in them, rest and reflect. However, it was always difficult to climb out of them, because then it suddenly became vertical, without many holds. In any case, I was pretty much blown away and lost my

smile, just as Reinhard Karl described. But I didn't want to ask for help from the climbers who were on the rope and whom I overtook. And somehow I made it to the top in one piece. It must have been about 200-300 meters of climbing. In any case, my nerves were shot, no euphoria, as other climbers supposedly felt. After that, I left solo climbing alone once and for all. Although, there is one more little anecdote.



### The "Naked" Solo

A friend wanted to make a nude photo calendar and asked me to be a model. I thought of the „Rüttler“ in Löbejün, a abandoned concrete block that is also used for climbing. You can get to the top from the inside and I hung on to the protruding concrete arm that juts out so beautifully into the landscape. Naked, of course. I only realized that it was visible from afar when I was already hanging. I only now noticed the thorny undergrowth below me, and it didn't look like I wanted to fall naked into it. But it only got really unpleasant when I tried to haul myself back up onto the concrete beam. I hadn't considered that the sharp edge of the concrete could pose a danger to my manhood

between my legs when I pulled back up over the edge. Fortunately, I only had a few light scratches and everything went ok.

Personally, solo climbing never gave me any satisfaction; for me it is more of a relic from a bygone era. Something I had observed in role models, but it was not for me. Anyway, I'm glad that the thought of one or two really hard solos never found its way from the back of my mind to the area responsible for executing them. Solo climbing? For me, it was not worth it the few times it was described.

**Text and Images: Mathias Weck, Hamburg**

# DEXTRO

## Sugar for the Descent

# The Maximum Egonumber

In Bielefeld Halleluja-quarry - „Dextro“ 7-  
Climber: Richard Dorosz; Photographer: Mathias Weck



“How the heck are you going to get down from here in one piece?” I asked myself, chocking once again and trying not to panic. No, dear friends, I was neither free solo on the lip of Separate Reality, nor was I about to do a Ninja Kick à la Honnold in the freerider. This epochal story of worldwide rope-free solo attempts took place - hallelujah! - in 1998 in the Bielefeld hallelujah quarry. And that was on the route Dextro, a 7- popular warm-up for young and old, usually with a rope, of course. But who lets themselves be stopped by such little things as a missing rope? Not me, olé! After all, I had done it a few times before and anyone who knows the quarry knows that you could throw a PowerBar to a climber even at the top height if they get a little hungry. It's just not El Cap. Still, no one wants to jump off voluntarily, and I had probably just enjoyed the beautiful view from the solid top hold for a moment too long and started thinking about how to make a slightly dynamic move a little safer on the descent. After several minutes, this train of thought gradually formed into something bigger that could no longer be ignored. I had a problem that was holding me back. For a moment I even thought about digging my way to safety over the earthy summit edge. Thankfully, however, I was still able to think so clearly that this idea quickly disappeared. That would certainly have gone badly. And thank God that even after further minutes of calculating and thinking, I didn't have a meltdown and I was able to leave Freeze Mode and climb back to the ground. After that, I never entered somewhere without a rope again, because no thrill in the world is worth slapping on the ground. Who would have been allowed to clean up the mess if my plan had gone wrong? In his book “Medizin Survival” (chapter suicide), survival guru Rüdiger Nehberg emphasized that “you should never burden an innocent person with your suicide.” Wow, that's tricky! Because, of course, the soloist doesn't climb the wall to end his life. If that's what you want, there are easier, more pleasant and, above all, more accurate ways to do it. But no one will deny that solo climbing has a not insignificant fatal component. Because no matter how well you know the route, something can always go wrong. Even though free solo superstar John Bachar always managed to escape with his life for decades, his solo career came to an end on July 5, 2009. He was 52 when he fell on the Dike Wall, leaving behind his wife Paola and his child Tyrus. There are simply no old solo climbers.

If I take Rüdiger Nehberg's maxim as a yardstick, then John Bachar has completely screwed up. If I were his son, I would at least thank him for the fact that my dad absolutely had to climb somewhere without a rope just to live his “bold, honest and joyful life.”

Ultimately, Nehberg's words in this context mean that you should only go solo climbing if, firstly, you have no one who has an interest in your well-being and, secondly, you should only do it where your potential corpse can decompose in peace. Because even if paramedics are perhaps more accustomed to blood, it is

# DEXTRO

## Sugar for the Descent

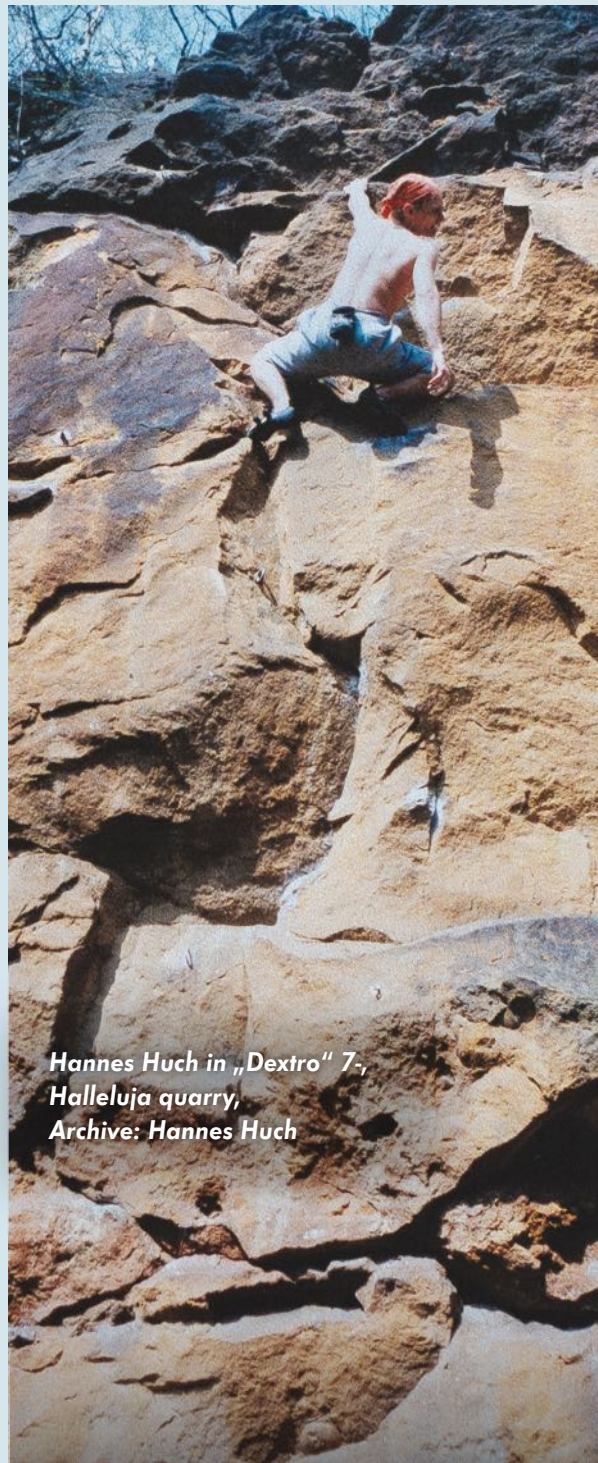
still not business as usual for them. Other climbers can also be traumatized by it. I know some who have witnessed a live fall and can't easily forget it. And even if everything goes well, it's pure stress for everyone involved. A long time ago, I filmed Kurt Albert doing a free solo of "Devil Crack" and I was no use for anything afterwards. Even though Kurt assured me that "his hands were like a friend" and that he could therefore jam them in the crack with absolute certainty. And even though it was his idea anyway.

No question: when it comes to climbing, there is no bigger ego trip than free soloing. But hey, you are the architect of your own fortune (in German „the smith of your fortune“)\* and if the only thing separating you from luck is a rope-free solo, then you should consider climbing with just a chalk bag and shoes. Freedom is there and should be there.

But if there is any other way to release endorphins, I would forget the attributes "bold" and "honest" and just live a "joyful life".

\* "But not everyone has a neat weenie," says the Playboy party quotations, volume 2.

**Text: Hannes Huch, Nürnberg**



*Hannes Huch in „Dextro“ 7,  
Halleluja quarry,  
Archive: Hannes Huch*

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# Solo Climb at the Nadelhorn

*I spent part of my vacation with my parents in a holiday apartment in Switzerland. For this accommodation, I "only" needed to lead them to four-thousand-meter peaks. However, part of the ascent was shortened by taking the cable car, leaving about 500 meters of altitude to be climbed at the end. This also tired me out, but I was not really challenged. So I planned another solo tour...*

Photos from Frank Nimsch



...It's 5:00 a.m. With my mom's admonishing words in my ear, I start stumbling. I know the first hour of the way in the sunshine, and not, as now, in the middle of the night. Fortunately, there is moonlight, making it easier to find the path. I look up at the sky with concern: are those clouds or just morning fog? "If the weather gets worse, please turn back!" was one of the instructions before saying goodbye. 'But don't take any risks with crevasses!' Besides a watch to help me find my way, she wanted to foist a fleece jacket on me - even now, after ten minutes, I'm only wearing a T-shirt. It seems to be morning already, otherwise I wouldn't be so warm. How much time did the guide estimate in total to the summit? Without breaks, about 7.5 hours. Maybe I should turn before and just go to the Ullrichshorn. But this is not even 4000 meters high...

# NADELHORN

## Solo Mountaineering



The timber line is reached and almost at the same time the first sunrays hit Weissmies and Lagginhorn in the east. Rike, Dirk, Frank and I had been on these last year. At that time I was so fascinated by the view of the Mischabel group that I wanted to go there. Now, only one year later, I am on my way up there and look back at the mountain group from a year ago full of memories. But enough of sentimentality. After all, I'm still young and when I look at Gisel and Carli and all the other older ones, I still have many years of climbing ahead of me. Suddenly I'm torn from my thoughts: I feel observed! In America, I would have been scared now - it could have been a bear. What is there in the Alps? Are there still wolves? The culprit of my uneasiness is standing five meters from the path and is - a chamois! She only briefly interrupts her grazing and looks

after me compassionately. How can I spurn these gloriously lush meadows and rush towards the eternal ice. Over the ridge, the sun is now peeking out in full and urging me to hurry. After a certain time, it is definitely no longer advisable to go solo on the glacier. What time should I actually be at the hut according to my plan? 9:00 a.m.! What do I do when it's already later? Judging by the warmth, it's definitely already ten. The marked hiking trail is already secured with a few bends, so the huts should be coming soon. Then I have 1500 meters of altitude difference down and only 1100 to go. Saas Fee already looks like a toy village on a model train set. A little later I see the first hut on a rocky outcrop and soon I am at the Mischabel huts, which are close together. They look deserted, except

for someone in the kitchen trying to accompany folk music on the radio with his singing. It is the hut keeper, preparing breakfast for the few guests. He looks a little irritated at my sweat-soaked face and shakes his head: "Where do you want to go? To the Nadelhorn? And are you coming straight up from Fee? Don't have much fun - the glacier is very icy!" "Because of the crevasses, I should sign myself in

the hut book, so that someone knows if I don't come back..." "That's unusual, but please!" For my mother's promise, I sign up, drink a cup of tea and 'breakfast' a Corny bar. Oh, what time is it? 7:45 a.m. - I've saved a third of the time. Ten minutes later, you have to leave the moraine (which, if you continue using it, will take you to the slightly lower Lenzspitze) and walk across the



# NADELHORN

## Solo Mountaineering

Hohbalm glacier in an arc to the Windjoch. Like an Indian on the warpath, I use the snow bridges over particularly wide crevasses: the ice axe in striking position above my head, to be able to catch myself if the bridges collapse. However, when faced with a 3-meter-wide crevasse, I hesitate for more than a moment... At Windjoch, the saddle between Ullrichs- and Nadelhorn, I put on the crampons. A rope team with a mountain guide comes from the summit. I still have the guide's reproachfully skeptical look in my mind for quite a while. He was probably thinking of a sonny boy from the lowlands who was out of his depth and at risk of falling. He can't know that he has just met an "overcautious,

experienced mountaineer" training for the mountains. From the saddle, you still have about 400 meters of altitude to conquer. The northeast ridge leads steadily uphill to the summit. A good track shows me the best way forward, and steps have already been carved into the ice at tricky points. By now, the altitude is also starting to take its toll, as I have to stop at regular intervals to catch my breath. The three rope teams coming towards me don't look so fresh either, so I shouldn't count on an easy walk to the summit. Looking along the ridge path, it looks as if it would end in the blue sky. Since this is not possible, the end of the uphill walk must be there. What time does it seem to be then, because after all, I have to go down



the whole way again, and that's more difficult for me than going uphill anyway.

The last meters to the summit demand once again the highest concentration, because the mixture of rock and ice requires clean footwork and a good sense of balance. I can see from the Swabian rope team, which I catch up to almost at the summit cross, what difficulties this can cause. They left the huts at 5:00 a.m., so they have lost almost 3 hours to me. It is clear that my information that I came up from Saas Fee causes some head shaking. Unfortunately, it is quite cold, so I can only briefly enjoy the magnificent view of the nearby Dom, Mt. Blanc, Weißhorn, Monte Rosa and Matterhorn. So the planned summit picnic is canceled for now and I descend again.



Archive: Heiko Lehnert



# NADELHORN

## Solo Mountaineering



Now I have to hurry. The glacier continues to melt and I just want to get off it. So I also decline the friendly offer of an unsafe Rosenheim rope team to be connected to them in the rope. From now on, I storm down the trail; in the snow, I don't feel my knee, which was operated on eight weeks ago, at all. But what was that? On the last 200 meters of the counter-climb to the saving stone moraine, my legs get heavier and heavier, and I drag myself from one leg to the other. As an endurance athlete, I have made a mistake that should not have happened: I've simply got a hunger attack! After 2600 meters of altitude up and already about 1000 meters down again, the two muesli bars have already been used up.

But since I have enough food and drink in my backpack, I can rest for a short while and refill my energy reserves before continuing on the well-known descent. Even though the last hour with its countless switchbacks seems like an eternity and I am already counting bends ('9 bends to go, 8...'), I still make some progress and get closer and closer to Saas Fee. The only question left is what time it is and whether I should have a coffee or a beer. Although it is only 2:30 p.m. when I arrive at my accommodation, I opt for the latter. After 2,600 meters of climbing and descending in 9.5 hours, I think I've earned it...

**Text: Heiko Lehnert, Dresden**  
**Photos: Frank Nimsch, Dresden**

# MUSIC AND SOUL

## by Andi Dick

### Der „Ich zieh das jetzt durch“-Zug

Melodie: Chattanooga Choo Choo – Glenn Miller

(G) Hörst du den Ton (tuut, tuut) das ist der „Ich zieh das jetzt durch“-Zug  
 D7 G  
 Gleis dreiviertel zehn – sending time, sending train  
 Du wirst gleich sehn, ich nehm den „Ich zieh das jetzt durch“-Zug  
 D G G7  
 für mein Projekt | hab ich alles ausgecheckt

C G7 C G7  
 Das ist der Einstiegsboulder | durch die Shoulder | rauf auf den Huf  
 C G7 C G7  
 Aufstehn und den crimp anspringen | was für ein Move  
 F C  
 Und dann kommt's noch linker | am Loch mit einem Finger  
 D7 G7  
 mach ich jetzt ganz überstreckt den nächsten Klinker

C G7 C G7  
 Sloper pressen, Leisten krallen, dann kommt die Crux  
 C G7 C G7  
 Die mach ich mit nem Längenzug, ja ich bin ein Fux  
 F C

Dann noch etwas Ausdauer | für die letzte Mauer  
 D7 G7 C  
 Schon ist das Projekt geschafft, na das ging ja flugs

(G) Hast du gesehn, das war der „Ich zieh das jetzt durch“-Zug  
 D7 G  
 Mit Willen und Plan | da kommst du leicht oben an  
 Komm steig mit ein | und nimm den „Ich zieh das jetzt durch“-Zug  
 D G G7  
 Das härteste Ziel | wird damit fast wie ein Spiel

Hast du die Beta drauf, dann kommst du drauf, fast wie programmiert  
 Über alle Schlüsselstellen läuft's wie geschmiert  
 Den Umlenker klinken, stolz nach unten winken  
 Komm mach mit, das ist der Hit, das gehört probiert

(G) Auf geht's, steig ein, enter den „Ich zieh das jetzt durch“-Zug  
 D7 G  
 Das ist dein Ding | und damit wirst du zum King

Stell dich aufs Gleis | und dann wird nur ein bisschen angeschobn B7  
 E A7 D7 G  
 Der „Ich zieh das jetzt durch“-Zug | der bringt dich nach obn  
 E A7 D7 G  
 Der „Ich zieh das jetzt durch“-Zug | der bringt dich nach obn



# ACONCAGUA

## Solo High-Altitude Mountaineering



## „What is Your Company?“

Photos: Jens Wottke

“Solo” in the sense of (unsecured) individual ascents is certainly a topic that every climber or alpinist has thought about at some point. For me, it is my very individual way of dealing with the mountain.

In the past, in the storm and stress period, I climbed solo in the low mountain ranges “just because” because it was fun and I thought I could do it. Quite clearly: quite naive, often also clouded or encouraged by a few beers. All went well, just youthful exuberance. Nowadays, I see it as a reduction: “me and the mountain”. Nothing else. No safety net, no rope, no team, no porters, no cable car, no camp, no hut - it's just me on my way to the summit. The most important goal: to arrive back down safe and sound.

My last adventure in this direction was climbing Aconcagua in Argentina. The idea was to fly there and climb the mountain. Full stop. But it turned out to be more difficult than I thought, because the key question when I picked up the permit in Mendoza was: “What is your company?” It took a while for me to understand the question properly, but solo ascents are not planned there at all. Practically the only way to get to the top of Aconcagua is on a guided and organized tour - as one of the seven summits, it is quite popular with trophy hunters. There are also supposed to be mountaineers there from time to time - about as common as Yeti sightings in the Himalayas. What do the agencies do? Everything! I can't get the slogan of one agency out of

# ACONCAGUA

## Solo High-Altitude Mountaineering



my head: "The only thing you have to think about on the way to the next camp is whether you want a cappuccino or a tea when you arrive. We do the rest." I had read this or something similar from various providers in Mendoza (the starting point for Aconcagua tours), without attaching any particular importance to this empty phrase - but I was later able to experience what was specifically meant by it 'live': organized summit tourism. I started in Mendoza with my perfectly organized backpack. 22 kg of luggage. In it: a cool 700-gram alpine lightweight jacket, boots, food for 14 days, crampons, an ice axe, a sleeping bag and a minimalist outfit of clothing for the expected cold and storms (the infamous "white winds"). No further alpine equipment, because Aconcagua is basically a "hiking

summit". The first little surprise came on day 1: registration at the park entrance with the local rangers. Show your permit and get a stamp. You get two plastic bags: for garbage and feces. But that was only for me - the passing summit tourist group cheerfully and optimistically went on by. No stamp, no bags to pick up. I thought that was a bit strange, but of course: "We'll do the rest." - there was something there. They were probably already pondering "cappuccino or tea"? Real life questions. Like "poppy seed or sesame seed roll", "left or right", "King or Kong", "Pauli or HSV", (...). Eight hours to Camp 1. I had expected a wildly scattered tent camp. What came was a tent city with districts for the four main providers of summit tours. Each with its own cooking and recreation tent, the sleeping domes with bunk beds for 16

guests each, a chill tent with cappuccino bar, armchairs and Wi-Fi, and the sanitary tent with hot showers and a toilet (which explains the missing fecal sack). The rangers then assigned me my campsite at the edge of the camp and I prepared my planned carbohydrate meal. In the evening, there was an obligatory health check to see if you were fit for the next stage to the base camp. I thought that was a good idea (as a self-check, but especially for the tourists). The next morning, we set off on the long 14-hour stage to the base camp. I was overtaken a few times by mule teams carrying the heavy luggage of the summit tourists. And of course the cheerfully whistling tourists themselves, who passed me with their small daypacks (and local porters with the day's provisions). The base camp on Aconcagua was frighteningly large. Certainly four times the size of Camp 1. A real tent

city. The actual ascent starts from here. I was again assigned my small campsite "on the fringes of society" and stayed there at 4,300 meters for two days of acclimatization. Before the ascent to Camp 3, of course, the obligatory medical check-up again. But then off we go: 1,200 meters of ascent for the next day. The ascent itself is relatively simple. Good paths on gravelly ground. The only thing that was extremely frustrating were the happy day-trip tourists, each accompanied by a local porter who was allowed to heave the tourist's 90-liter backpack up to the intermediate camp so that the tourists could change clothes on arrival and have their photo equipment handed over - after all, they want to take a few souvenirs with them. This time, I could no longer bear the discrepancy between mountaineering demands and obvious summit tourism, so I looked for my own (private) spot at 5,500



# ACONCAGUA

## Solo High-Altitude Mountaineering



Der Aconcagua (vollständig: Cerro Aconcagua) in den argentinischen Anden ist mit 6961 Meter der höchste Berg Amerikas und der höchste außerhalb Asiens. Zugleich ist er nach dem Mount Everest der Berg mit der weitesten Dominanz (16.536 Kilometer) und



meters, about 300 meters away from the main camp. Another day of relaxed acclimatization with persistent boiling of water and drinking tea. The nights up there are really hard, because there is a permanent strong wind, temperatures at night around -25 degrees. It's no fun to crawl out of the warm sleeping bag every three hours to deliver the tea water outside. The following morning it should start. I had decided not to continue with the tourist trek to Camp 4, but instead to make a small forced march to the summit and leave my tent as a high-altitude camp at Camp 3. So I set off early in the morning at 3:00 a.m. It was a brisk -25 degrees and stormy, but clear, which meant good visibility. As far as I could see, it should be possible to make it up the alternative route that I had identified. I put on all the clothes I had with me, layered in

the onion principle, with Gore-Tex against the wind at the end. The idea was that movement would increase the operating temperature. But that was not the case, after 500 meters of altitude my fingers were still freezing and I had practically lost all feeling in my toes. It couldn't go on like this. So I decided to turn back and instead try again later after sunrise, when the temperatures and daylight would be better. Back at the tent, I took off my layers and went into the sleeping bag. Then I spent the day in the tent, slept a lot, made tea and brought my core temperature back to normal. The next morning, it was the same game, only later: departure at sunrise, also aiming for "my" route again. At about 6,300m there was a 150m long gully, 2-3 terrain - and no idea how exactly it should continue after that. Time for a good break, to think and evaluate the

situation. The channel didn't look impossible, but it was free climbing in unknown terrain at 6,300 meters. Plus, it was still -10 degrees and accordingly, I felt like a Michelin man doing the solo. In the worst case, I could climb back down if something went wrong. Continue to think and evaluate. And my gut feeling said "nooooo - doesn't feel good." So I enjoyed the view again and abandoned the attempt, back to my mini-base-camp tent. There I peeled the onion again, made tea and normalized my core temperature. Suddenly I got a visit from the nearby tourist camp. The mountain guides had observed my attempt and wanted to see how I was doing. They confirmed that it had been a good decision not to enter the channel. They had brought me a roll of wine gum coins from their ample food store - I really

cried because I had of course denied myself such luxury for weight reasons. I was as happy as Frodo Baggins about my little treasure and sucked away a wine gum coin every two hours. I didn't want to start another attempt, so after a really hard night (due to a strong storm) the next morning I packed my things and started the descent into the valley. Again, the same experience: the happy tourists with their daypacks passed me, followed by the local porters with the fat backpacks. The rest is easy: another night at the base camp with chill music wafting by from the cappuccino lounge, then the forced march back down to the valley via camp 1 (with two flybys of helicopters that flew the tourists who wanted to save themselves the march down into the valley) and then on by intercity bus back to civilization.

# ACONCAGUA

## Solo High-Altitude Mountaineering

Conclusion: a great self-discovery, no summit joy, three frozen toenails, lost five kilos and celebrated "my" success on Aconcagua - sometimes the summit is just where you can't go any further. I felt a little sorry for the bus passengers, because ten days without a shower with the same clothes somehow leaves its (smelly) traces - I could hardly stand myself anymore. And: I am totally disillusioned when it comes to this organized summit tourism. Later at the airport, I met four of these cheerfully celebrating heroes (who, of course, had all reached the summit) - but I didn't reveal my identity and didn't take a selfie with the guys. Instead, I smiled blissfully to myself and enjoyed the following ten days of relaxation in Santiago de

Chile, with my loved one by my side and, at what felt like 4,000 calories a day, enjoying all the delicacies that I had missed on the mountain. And now my thoughts are turning to what will be the next project, the next solo?

**Text and Images: Jens Wotke, Taunusstein**

*Aconcagua (fully: Cerro Aconcagua) in the Argentine Andes is with 6961 meters the highest mountain in the Americas and the highest outside Asia. At the same time, after Mount Everest, it is the mountain with the greatest dominance (16,536 kilometers) and the greatest notch height. Source: Wikipedia*

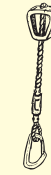


# MEMORY

## Obituary Martin Feistl

### Martin Feistl (1996 - 2024)

Photo by Stefan Feistl (father): This was taken "during a solo tour for two on the "Kofel/ Linke Achsel"... on Christmas Eve, freezing in the sleet at the wall book".



On May 18, 2024, Martin Feistl, free solo climbing in the "Spitzenstätter" (VII) on the Scharnitzspitze in the Wetterstein, suffered a fatal fall. With him, an enthusiastic mountaineering family loses a son and brother, the Bayerland section loses one of its most active and strongest members, and alpinism loses a personality who, despite his young age, was already an inspiration to many. Martin had been going to the mountains with his parents Stefan and Christine, together with his sister Steffi, from childhood on. At the age of ten, he stood on top of his first five-thousand-meter peak, at fourteen on a six-thousand-meter peak, and as was to be expected, he soon outdid his parents, but remained close to them as their lead rope partner. From 2016 to 2018, Martin was a member of the DAV expedition squad; on the final expedition, he and his teammates stood on the summit of Shivling (6,543 meters). Even after that, one repeatedly heard or read about his mountaineering exploits, which he carried out with great skill and expertise and described in clear, direct language. A pure repetition of "Pandora" (600 meters, WI 6, M5, V) on Piz Pordoi and first ascents on the Sagwand or the Langkofel scratched the high end of winter mountaineering, and for the first ascent of "Stalingrad" (1000 meters, M8, WI 7) in the Karwendel, he and David Bruder were even mentioned in the list of Piolets d'or. The basis for this was an excellent level of skill on ice and rock and skillful use of classic means of securing - in the southern Franconian Jura, he managed the first ascent of the route "Massive Attack" (X-/X) using only mobile securing devices, without the existing bolts.

Pushing the limits, exhausting possibilities, putting one's own abilities to the test is part of the essence of alpinism. Martin was inspired by the pursuit of high performance with as few aids as possible. For him, this meant not only doing



**Martin Feistl in "Stromlinie", 9, Frankenjura  
Photographer: Mathias Weck**

without bolts, but he was also an advocate of the "greenpoint" idea: from his home in Innsbruck, he reached many of his alpine destinations by bus or train. But also the Greenland expedition in 2023, together with Felix Bub, which was supported by Bayerland, took the two of them by public transport and sailing boat to the northern island, where they achieved remarkable first ascents and repetitions up to the ninth grade.

Those who push the edge live dangerously. In conversations with companions, the refrain was "if only this goes well". But only recently, in an interview, he had emphasized that "the goal of becoming an old mountaineer is playing an increasingly important role". He had made a free solo first ascent of an ice pillar above the Pinnistal last winter - when his father Stefan and I asked him for advice on the idea of a repeat ascent, he was very cautious and defensive: after several warm days, he said, caution was advised; we refrained.

Martin was no daredevil. He was one of those who felt the lure of the limit, certainly - like so many of us. Who of us could say that he was still alive without luck? Martin did not tempt fate; a seven in the solo was out of the question for him. But in the Alps, especially after the winter frost season in the Wettersteinkalk, you can also just have bad luck. The Bayerland Section mourns the loss of a young member, a great talent - and wishes the parents Stefan and Christine and the sister Steffi much strength for the difficult time of mourning.

**Text: Andreas Dick, Planegg**




**Weihersmühler Wand, Frankenjura  
Climber: Martin Feistl  
Photographer: Mathias Weck**

## King of the Mountains?

*Free solo promises intense experiences. These experiences can be inspiring and positive, but they can also be frightening and negative. That's why Andi Dick believes that humility is an*

*Andi on the „Viererspitze-Südgrat“, Karwendel, with a view down into the valley*



The decision is due: one step leads out into the death zone. Below the edge, the rock breaks off into the cirque, mistakes are not allowed. The rock is vertical, but the holds look ok, it should get easier at the top. Take a deep breath, pull yourself together – and go for it. After five steep meters, I stand in more inclined terrain. And where, pray tell, is it supposed to get easier now? The crack above looks dubious, maybe to the left to the edge after all? Sure enough, there is a glued ring further up. But in a compact belly. This spot is even harder than the start, which was already close to the limit for me. With two fingers in the ring and full of tension, the spot can be cheated. Bullshit! Idiot! You didn't need to take that much risk! A typical case of "shouldn't have done it": at the point of no return, burnt the bridge and ran out of options, but survived thanks to my skills and nerves of steel. This is not how free soloing should be, like on the Totenkirchl south ridge. The decision is made with the first blow into the vertical bergschrund's grippy ice. The conditions are right. A hundred meters of crunching firm ice gives me confidence, then I'm under the crux length: thirty meters, not quite vertical. A quick breath, then the first device engages perfectly and the energy flows from the mountain into the body. The rest is climbing; the large flank to the summit is a little tedious, and I need to concentrate again on the not much flatter descent through the northeast face, rappelling at the

# SOLO

## Humility as a Foundation

Andi on the „Ostlerführe“ (IV),  
Scheffauer north face, Kaiser

bergschrand – free soloing should be as confident and flowing as it was on the Courtes north face.

Free soloing is the ultimate test of skill: one mistake and that's it. Paul Preuss once glorified it as the ideal form of climbing: "The thought that if you fall you'll be hanging three meters on the rope has less ethical value than the feeling that one fall and you're dead." I never wanted to understand this point of view, and exposure to real danger never appealed to me, not even in my youth, when young men are supposed to be more daring. When naivety, misjudgment, and too much excitement made things as tight as they were at the Totenkirchl and I had to give everything to climb off the Grim Reaper's shovel again, there was no sense of triumph afterwards, but rather a guilty conscience. Nevertheless, I still enjoy free soloing time and again.

But what does free solo mean? Unsecured climbing, even in a rockfall area, is a natural part of mountaineering. Because you can still crash on a "red" or "black" hiking trail if you're not paying attention and stumble in the steep meadow or scree terrain. On many high routes, it makes more sense (and is more honest) to go ropeless instead of multiplying the number of victims by "simultaneously walking on a short rope" (without securing points) in the Swiss manner. On long alpine routes (e.g. Eiger), you only have a chance of completing the route in an acceptable time if you climb easier sections without a rope –



Andi on the „Fleischbank Nordgrat“ (III), Kaiser.  
A helmet won't do much good either.

provided they cannot be secured with Tibloc or Microtrax on a running rope. And in some Alpine classics, the rope itself is only a "moral" safeguard when the pitons are placed ten meters apart in stepped terrain; a fall would then perhaps not necessarily be fatal, but it would certainly result in life-changing injuries.

"Make sure the rope runs smoothly" was a typical sentence from the lead climber in the 1970s, my early years on the Battert near Baden-Baden; at least on easier tours, some did without being secured. The pitons were spaced so far apart that you only led what you were sure of – after you had climbed it often enough as the second on the rope. And since I liked to cycle to the area alone, I regularly did solo laps when no rope partner could be found at the mountain rescue hut. Of course, "easy", in the third to fourth grade – but when I climb these routes

with a rope today, I shudder when I touch the notoriously smooth, slippery rock.

Thus socialized, we then went on to free solo our first real ice wall: because twenty competitors for the Doldenhorn north face were staying at the hut and Ralf had forgotten his helmet, the rope-free escape was the better option than being hit by chunks of ice. We used this model in many other ice walls: The rope was only used on steeper or very smooth sections; to this day, I still consider this to be a sensible tactic. And where there was no crevassed glacier to climb, I was occasionally alone on the ice; technically it is not difficult or critical in terms of holding power endurance, only physical condition and concentration must be right.

Difficulties well below my personal limit are a basic condition for me if I want to engage in a free solo. Just a

little more than what you do roped-free in alpinism, so to speak. That's a maximum of grade four on rock and ice; not a big step for humanity, but a big enough step for me. Depending on the conditions, I use more or less safety equipment and backups.

For the Courtes North Face, I put on a harness and had a rope and ice screws with me so that I could rappel in an emergency. A rappelling cord also made the descent easier on the Wazespitze. For the Sprauzagrat at Morteratsch, I had spikes in my backpack for the glacier descent, which I had asked the hut keeper about based on the conditions. On the other hand, I also like to leave my harness and even my helmet at home completely, to expose myself naked and vulnerable to the natural experience - especially on ridges and when there is no one above. However, at the Watzmann east face, I had to agree with the people I met on the route that a helmet would be appropriate there.

And because free solo onsight always means an additional uncertainty, a few standards also emerged that I did again and again: The Kopftörlgrat, an ideal round for the free morning in my Munich editorial period. The "Linke Achsel" at Kofel near Oberammergau, a pretty short climb where you can do several rounds as long as your concentration lasts. I also did two or three laps in the ice gullies on the Jochberg when they still existed. And for many years I have enjoyed winter in the frozen turf (grass) of a pre-Alpine summit - there the challenge often lies in scouting out a new line that looks easy enough for a solo and then dealing with the fact that it sometimes gets a bit more difficult.

When this balance between challenge and

ability is achieved, I find experiences in free soloing that are otherwise hard to come by in mountaineering. I can choose my own pace without feeling slowed down or rushed, I'm fast and in the flow, with light luggage and without the hassle of belaying. The less I carry with me and on me, the more aware I am of the exposure in which I make all decisions about my life only with myself - without a warning, motivating or possibly driving partner. In this assessment and then in the implementation in motion, I am wide awake, concentrated and precise and enjoy the functioning of body and mind. "King of the mountains", so to speak. "Take care of yourself," says my wife, and I reply, 'that's why I'm going out' - to take care of myself, to stay alive, to sharpen my respect for this very life.

But there were also (fortunately rare) these "shouldn't have" moments and feelings. Especially when I spontaneously got involved in something unclear. Like once during a round in the Miemingers, where I wanted to climb from the north to the Grünstein and suddenly found myself standing in sneakers in a not-quite-fixed steep step in what felt like at least the fourth grade. Or on Monte Baone near Arco, where I had spotted a gray stripe, the trace of a new route, and let myself be driven up by curiosity: easy slabs with short steps below; suddenly I realized that I didn't want to do the get-up movement from just now downwards. Then the headwall steepened. "It can't be that hard, it will surely lie down after the vertical crack." The crack had a flange, but it didn't continue after that, but remained almost vertical with drip finger holes. With laser-sharp focus, I traversed to

*Irmgard crosses the Mediterranean in Calanque de Sormiou*

*Irmgard on "Via del 92. congresso" (III), Arco*



*Roggspitze-south face: supposedly only grade III, but refused due to bad feeling*



*Roggspitze-south face: Allegedly only grade III*

the right on small footholds, but the supposedly saving dihedral looked smooth and compact - a thin tree allowed me to escape into easier terrain. I took a longer break at the summit Madonna.

Climbing over points of no return without having a retreat backup is one of the biggest risks in free soloing. At my Voralpen-Turfgipfel, I managed to get down from such a place once after it had become too wild above. On the Karlspitze-Südostgrat, the retreat from thirty meters above the start was annoying because on that day the body feeling was not right at all for the compact Kaiserkalk. I decided against the much-vaunted pleasure tour on the Roggspitze south face without much regret when I looked from afar; after a long ridge

traverse beforehand, my nerves were too thin for an encore. And I train myself to have a mental attitude of not mourning the missed opportunity, but to be happy about the "when in doubt, go for life" decision that is made by not doing it.

In general, I have noticed in recent years how precision, control and strength in the body are decreasing - at 60, you don't have the same agility in rough terrain as you did at 40, and the processor in your brain also ticks more slowly. And as much as I enjoy lonely forays through wild terrain, the question is gradually becoming louder: "Do I still need to do this?" Do I have "it", do I still have enough control over myself to take responsibility for the risk? And is the joy worth it?

The king in "The Little Prince" is happy because he only commands things that his subjects want to do anyway. The "King of the mountains" is better off not coming across as a proud conqueror, but as humble. And in gratitude for what is still possible. When things aren't going so well, you just have to choose smaller goals. An easy two grade climb can also be fun - and exciting enough. And maybe one day I'll only ever go to dangerous sites when I am belayed. At the very last, nothing will work anyway. This "very last" should, please, take place as late as possible - and not arrive unnecessarily early.

**Text and Images: Andreas Dick, Planegg**



*On the east face of the Watzmann, „Berchtesgadener Weg“ (III)*

# EMANCIPATION

## The Proud Amazon



## Female Solo

Route: "Gehversuche", 7  
Geißleinwand, Frankenjura  
Climber: Irmgard Braun



In the early 80s, emancipation was still in its infancy; the hippie movement had brought women much less than they had hoped for. Men were still in charge, in politics, at work and in most relationships. And "pretty" women were pigeonholed as "booty".

"You're not a feminist, are you?" I often heard from hopeful young men because I had big boobs and long blonde hair. I didn't want to give up either of these things, but at the same time I wanted to live up to an inner image that one might well see as feminist: I wanted to be an Amazon, proud, bold, independent of men. And not just when climbing.

I was a good climber "for a woman". At that time, the typical picture was the second-climber bunny, who idolized her guy, didn't train, couldn't do a pull-up (or didn't want to) and showed no ambition whatsoever.

For me, solo climbing was a demonstration: I'm brave, I do my thing. I prove that women can be different.

At the Stuhlfels in the Donau Valley, climbing up and down the "Opakante" in front of a large and amazed audience was standard. But that was only 3+. Once there, I had to watch how the mountain rescue team took care of an injured person who had fallen during a free solo and later died.

Actually, that should have made me think. Nevertheless, I often climbed the Schaufelsseil free normal route (5+) and the Geraden Riss (5+) with my buddy Martin. What we thought was a suitable preparation for the Alpine - and I was able to continue to follow my ideal of a strong Amazon. I was not afraid; there was only a slight tension, which was good for full

# EMANCIPATION

## The Proud Amazon



Route: "Martinsweg", 7-  
Neuhauser Wand, Frankenjura  
Climber: Irmgard Braun

concentration. The difficulty was well below my maximum level, and I knew the routes well.

It was clear that a missed hold could mean my death, but I thought that was very unlikely - a typical fallacy of the brain when something like this has never happened before.

During the solo, I felt wonderfully light and free, climbing in flow. And if my

nerves should fail me after all - I had a harness on and a quickdraw with me. Absurdly enough, I was quite anxious when leading with a rope and liked to reach for the bolt when things got tight.

The most difficult route I did back then in solo was the first pitch of "Discopapa (7-) in great rock with small holes. Whereby 7- was

considered quite difficult in the early 80s.

When I told about it in the climbing pub "Traube" in Kreenhainstetten, the scene reacted with astonishment, doubts and admiration. What was missing was a simple: "You're stupid" or "why do you do that?", which would be quite normal today.

In the 80s, heroism was still valued in climbing, even bolted routes were often dangerously secured, and difficult solos were the order of the day for the great role models Güllich or Albert. A real climber was not a coward; the monuments of this spirit can be found in the Frankenjura, in the Swabian Jura and probably also in the former scary area of lth, not to mention the Elbsandstein.

Today, free soloing is no longer as important as it used to be; what matters in the sport climbing scene is the difficulty of a route or success in competition. However, soloing is still appreciated by special alpine in-groups and attracts media attention because thrills and mortal danger sell well.

Most of those who are soloing today are doing it just for themselves: It's just fun to climb up the rock quickly and confidently. And it's an exciting game that requires your full attention on the wall.

I still felt this attraction many years after my time in the Donau Valley, when I was not allowed to climb hard for a year because of an irritation of the biceps tendon. I missed the excitement of on-sight or red point climbing on difficult routes. So I climbed solo in the mountains (between 3 and 5-), which gave me a more intense experience

than hiking or climbing via ferratas. I never had a wobbly grip in my hand or the feeling that I was in over my head. But appearances can be deceiving, I am fully aware of that today. Too many good climbers have died doing it. And I don't know how often I've just been lucky.

At 72, I don't have much of a lifespan ahead of me - I don't want to shorten it unnecessarily or be affected by injuries, but enjoy it and be happy to be here.

I no longer need to prove how brave I am, and a difficult on-sight or a project is enough adventure for me. Climbing solo out of boredom? Out of the question. When I'm dead, it's bound to be a lot more boring.

**Text: Irmgard Braun, Planegg**  
**Images: Mathias Weck**

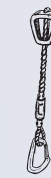


# KASNAPOFF

Solo on the Sella Tower

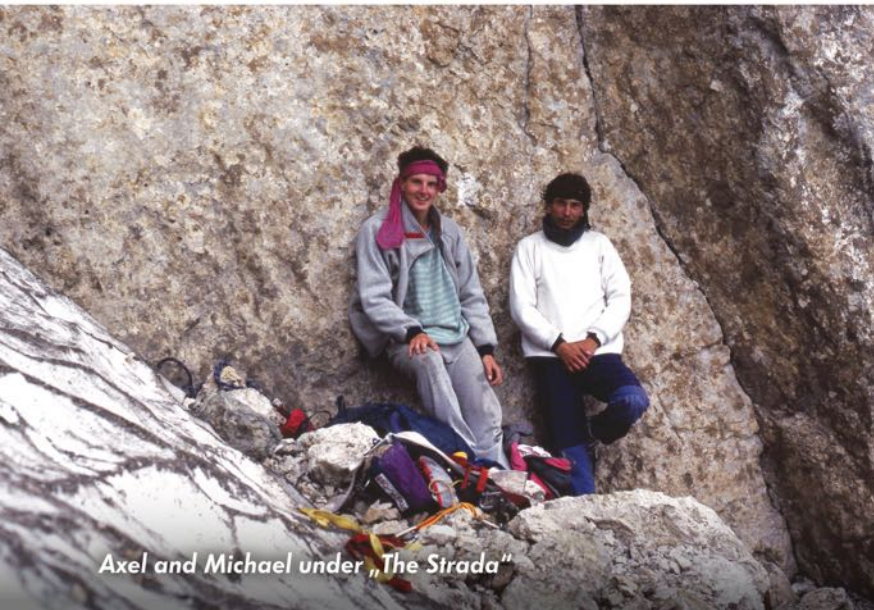
## Dolomites, Second Sellatum, Kasnapoff 5, solo

*Sella Towers 1986. The ridge on the second tower is the Kasnapoff.*



Summer 1986. Boris Becker has just won Wimbledon, at 17. I am also 17. We are in the Sella Group again and have already climbed a few beautiful routes, and Michael and I were working on the new route "Strada del Sole 7-" on the eastern Meisule Tower. Since the terrain looks quite difficult for us, we cheat our way over the main difficulties from the side on a ledge and set up the route from above. Before that, we tried another possibility from below, but after I pulled the first refrigerator-sized block out of the wall, we gave up on that as a way of life. Anyway, from the attempt, we noticed the narrow ledge above the steep edge. Setting it up means a lot of work, but it's fun. We are there with a larger group from Braunschweig, which at some point falls apart in the dispute, I don't remember the exact reason, I only remember an evening in a pizzeria in Canazei with a bad mood and then silence. Michael and I stay behind camping on the Sellajoch, the weather is great and we want to finish our project. The wide meadow, where cows walk around among the tents, is something like the Ithzeltplatz in the middle of some of the most beautiful climbing mountains in the Dolomites, with the Sella Towers in front of the massif, Piz Ciavazes and Pordoi Peak around the corner, Fünffingerspitze on the right, the huge Langkofel, and the

## Solo on the Sella Tower



Axel and Michael under „The Strada“



Arco



Michael on „The Strada“



Kasnapoff

block piles of the “Steinernen Meer” in front of it with short routes and many bouldering opportunities. Fresh milk is available within walking distance at the hut, beer in the hut. Maybe the meadow is more like Camp 4 in Yosemite, with climbers from all over Europe. English, Italian, German. And Poles, who sell titanium ice screws to their Russian DIY friends to finance their climbing vacation. We look at the things from the world behind the iron curtain with fascination and buy some too. Titanium from the space industry! The Russians build the rockets out of that! Every morning, everyone swarms out, hanging with climbing gear, jingling, and comes together again in the evening. This summer, climbing feels incredibly easy and safe. Like flying. Like floating. In the Messner on the second Sella tower, I

have a spiritual experience high up at the belay station after the main difficulties. For a short while, the whole world condenses in clarity, I have no more questions and feel completely soft and secure in this world cocoon.

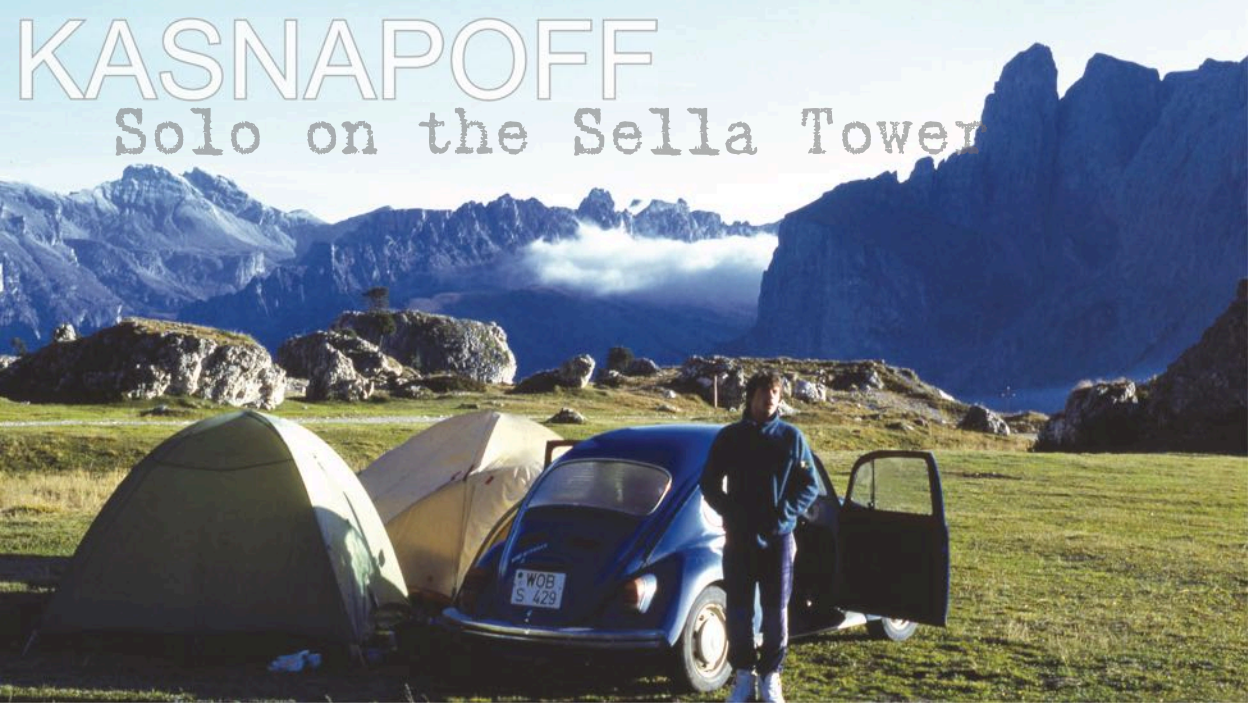
Sometimes we just hang around the tent or hitchhike to St. Christina to the supermarket, time seems endless. In the afternoon, after a wet morning, the sun comes out. Michael is tired and doesn't feel like doing anything. I still want to experience something, the energy rises and seeks an outlet. Over there the Kasnapoff on the edge of the second Sella tower would be something. The sun is shining on it right now. I had done that before with Zappler and Michael, it could be good solo. I take the harness, shoes and a few quickdraws

to tie myself to something in an emergency. The pressure of the harness on the hips gives a bit of a magical sense of security. But maybe I didn't have anything with me. Anyway, at 4:30 p.m. I'm standing at the start of the route with the small memorial plaque of a person who died here, the steep wall and me. It's cool and shady and feels serious. Take a deep breath and go. It starts steeply, fourth grade terrain, concentration on the feet and the center of gravity, first becoming one with myself. Further up, there are grippy chimneys to follow. Last year we bypassed the first five-grade section at the edge here. It was a coincidence, we just took the easiest route. For a moment I think, now out to the right to the edge? I continue climbing as far as the chimneys reach, the terrain no longer looks climbable. Did it go this

way? I continue climbing, the chimney steepens and becomes a crack. After a 5-grade section, the crack ends and I sit on a pulpit. Two square meters of sloping rock and pebbles in the vertical. I sit with my back to the wall, 100 meters down at my feet. Above me, the whole north face, next to me the north face, above that the north dihedral, there the Messner, we climbed up there yesterday. Now it's getting denser. Wrong. I'm in the wrong place. The security is gone. What to do. Wait? Scream for help? I have to get the security back. A mantra: I got myself into this situation, I'll get myself out of it too. But that takes a while. Finally, the determination comes, the energy, and off I go. I turn and climb over the edge with my feet. It's only a few meters down the crack, a few moves, then it gets easier again.

# KASNAPOFF

## Solo on the Sella Tower



Further down, there it goes over to the edge, back on the route. Climb safely. High above, I am standing on the ledge below the overhang. To the right, it goes straight down into the cirque. Below, the blocks and the sunny meadow. The holds are reasonably large, but polished and slippery. It starts overhanging. This has to work, there is no going back. Let's go. I want to climb this. A few airy moves, then more grippy terrain. The rest is a party, I overtake a rope team, the stepped crack on the edge is in the sun. Climbing is like hiking, the body does it alone and I enjoy the warmth. After an hour and 15 minutes I am at the top, everything is easy, different people, a square atmosphere, in the sun on the south side, I climb down the channel to Ciavazes.

The next day we climb the "Strada del Sole" through, find a piton at the top, where it is easier.

Down at the road we meet Ivo Rabanser, he is also just coming from climbing. Ivo says that Heini Holzer was up there once, the legendary steep face skier. He talks about the climbing scene in Val Gardena. At 16, Ivo made the first winter ascent of the "Messner 6" in the north face of the Langkofel and the "Via Niagara 5+" from the Mariacher on the Pordoispitze. Messner had drawn the line on a postcard photo for him, there is no topo yet. He shows it to us at his home, "Haus Cir" in St. Christina. A postcard from Messner! Another guy from Val Gardena gives us a lift while hitchhiking at the Sella parking lot. We want to go down to St. Christina, but no one stops. So we unwashed climbers are standing around on the gravel in the sun, when a red Autobianchi 112 comes racing by. It brakes, raising a dust cloud. A young guy jumps out and starts running towards Langkofel. We wait and wait,

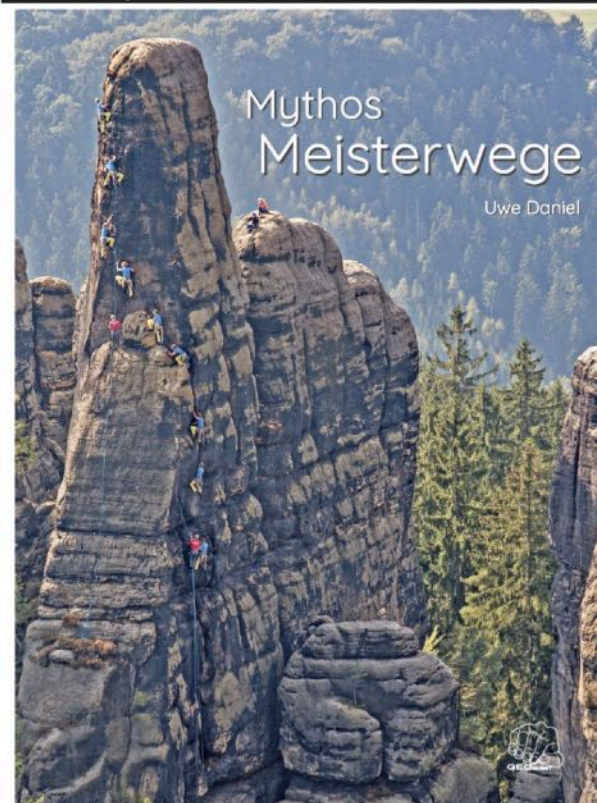
but no one takes us with them. Three hours later, the guy comes running back and jumps into the car. Our chance. "Hey, are you going down?" "Yeah, sure, jump in!" The steering wheel is a welded metal chain, pretty cool, that's how he drives. Ivo says that's Adam Holznecht, who, for training purposes, repeatedly climbs up and down the Langkofel north face solo. 1000 meters of grade 4. In three hours or so. That's a completely different league.

Richard describes beautifully in his text what it takes to climb solo. What it does to me: It condenses the

experience. So little time, so many experiences in it. That's what solo climbing is great for. All by myself, focused on the essentials, time expands. The experiences are big and stay big. I don't remember many lengths on the rope, but I do remember the solo tours with their key points. The feelings they triggered. Mostly the serious ones. The joy, the experience of competence when it works. And that's what it's supposed to do. Natural safety comes from within.

**Text and Images: Axel Hake, Braunschweig**

## Geoquest-Bücher zu Weihnachten verschenken



**Mythos  
Meisterwege**  
Uwe Daniel

Die großen Linien im  
Elbsandsteingebirge

mit Insidertipps

Neuerscheinung  
Weihnachten 2024

# Spin Straw into Gold

Photo archive: Ralf Gentsch



The Kreuztal quarry led a shadowy existence for a long time. Although there were already routes on the side of the road and in the rear right section when there were no bolts on the Krockstein, the crag was rarely visited. While there was an enormous density of routes on Olympus and the like, which attracted sport climbers from outside the region, the routes in the basin of the quarry below became overgrown and were practically impossible to climb. Every now and then, a few people would stray to the side of the road to climb the easier routes, which were quite well protected. Some, who had already exhausted their potential on the other crags, asked for new ground and also looked around down there. The left inner side of the Kreuztalbruch was particularly tempting with its 25-meter high, evenly overhanging wall (3.50 meters). It was practically not overgrown like the rest, but the rock suggested some cleaning work - to put it very mildly.

As the efforts to get a limestone quarry on the Felswerke site for climbing did not bear fruit, I took up the issue as a nature conservation officer and contacted the nature conservation authority. I knew from previous conversations that they were reluctant to tolerate climbing there. In this respect, a site visit was almost unavoidable so that all questions

could be addressed and clarified. It turned out that one of the UNB's concerns was to ensure the peace and quiet of the bats in the barred and disused mine above. That was far enough away. More problematic was the consideration of the overgrown walls in the quarry, which were assessed as an extreme location with a special microclimate. In order not to increase the burden on these areas, we agreed that four routes would be dismantled. Too bad, but in return we got the OK for the overhanging wall on the Wächter. Not a bad deal, and hardly anyone would have missed the old routes in that condition. Especially as we were allowed to keep the four short routes behind the crooked shed, which you also have to climb first. Oh well, the foreign visitor Markus Mayer from the Odenwald had something to show us. In the tour on the left, you can divert after the overhang or enjoy the interesting rest, easier, but somewhat green-padded.

In the cold of winter, Patrick Schein and Christoph Nave were the first to get to work and drilled four lines. The cleaning work and the sometimes quite brittle rock gave rise to the morbid names "You Have to Die Anyway" and "A Penny for the Ferryman". This was also climbed by some and showed what is possible on the wall. Patrick then moved away and released his project. As I was climbing Fährmann I looked to the right of this project and decided to

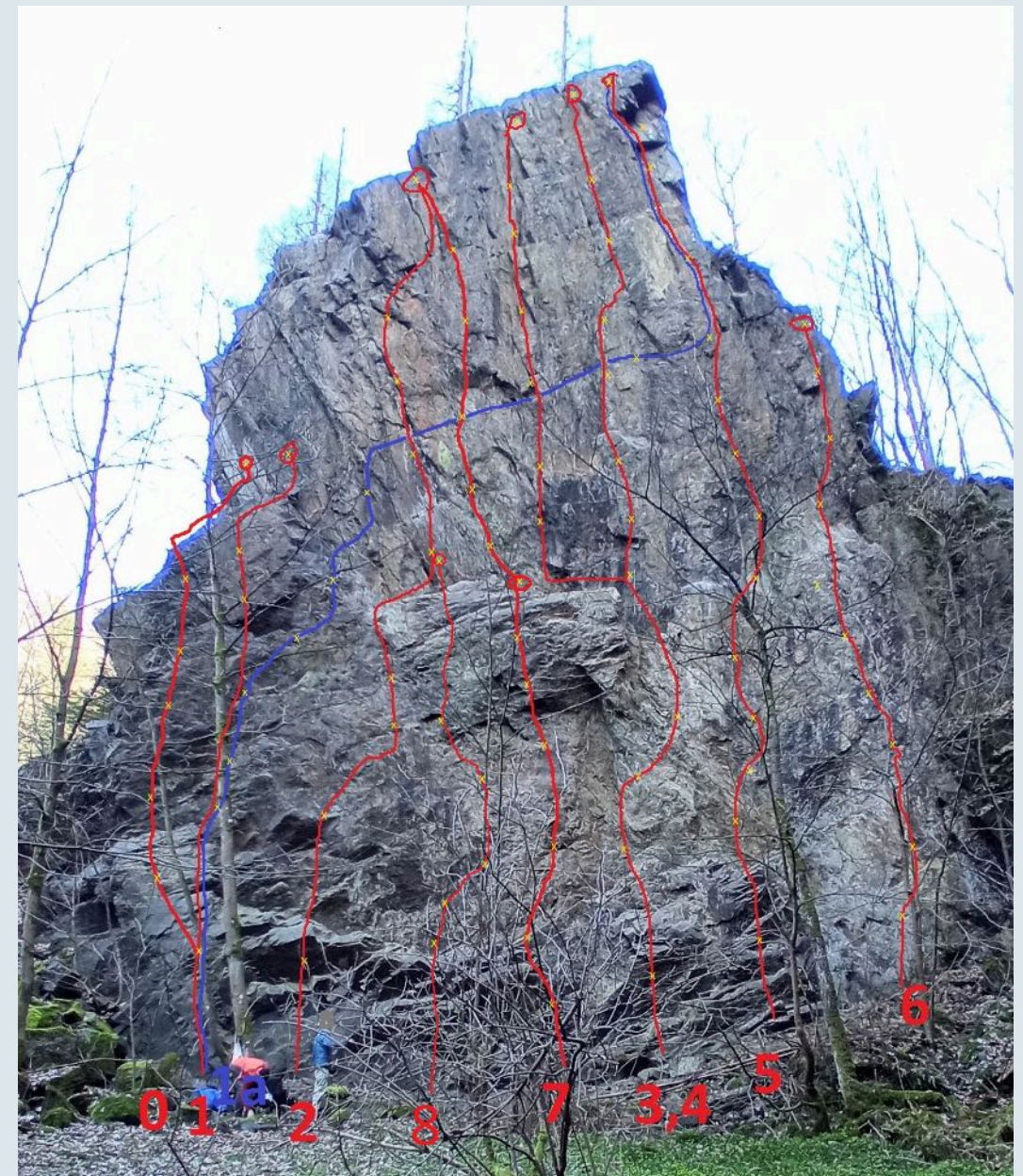
# KREUZTALWÄCHTER

## New Climbing Routes



Right from Wicked: **Delirium Demenz 7** R.Gentsch (goes to the 6. H from Wicked, is now UH)

Next to it: **Steinbombenhagel 6** R.Gentsch (use the 3.H together with Delirium Demenz, UH over the Abs, right)



- 0 Kreuzfahrt auf dem Styx 8- (R. Gentsch)
- 1 Sterben musst du sowieso 8 (P. Schein)
- 1a Der lange Marsch 9-/9 (S. Bernert)
- 2 Pertinax 9 (R. Gentsch)
- 3 Einen Groschen für den Fährmann 9- (C. Nave)
- 4 Scheinliebe 9+ (R.Gentsch)
- 5 Projekt (Christoph Nave)

- 6 Polygames Zölibat 9- (R. Gentsch)
- 7 Prolog 9 (bis auf Absatz) (H. Apel)
- 7 Bergwertung 9- (vom Absatz) (H.Apel)
- 8 Projekt (H.Apel)

The route to the right of Fluchtweg is 7, something must have collapsed there.

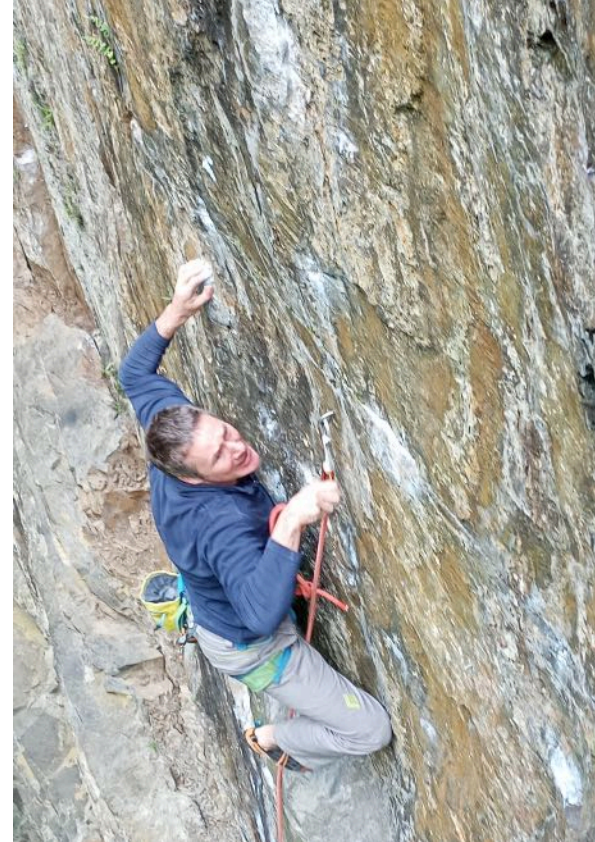
# KREUZTALWÄCHTER

## New Climbing Routes



just go for it. Great, what an awesome piece that was! With some more cleaning, a few fixed holds and two offset bolts, the numerous attempts began, which ended several times (um, often...) on the last heavy move just before the anker. At least always with a great flight into the open. . After the "Scheinliebe" was finally in the bag and some successors were struggling with the same problem, the route motivated me to do more new routes, and Heiko and Stefan also found lines that all offered fantastic climbing. The "Long March" is a real perennial favorite in the arms with 35 meters without a rest point. And you get to know the whole width of the wall. Two more moderate routes were even added on the outside. The whole thing comes at the price of a lot of cleaning work, many fixed holds and the interesting microclimate. After heavy rain, water seeps through a few cracks, in summer it is cool and sometimes the humidity condenses on the rock. But there are no similar routes with real endurance in constantly overhanging rock anywhere else in the Harz - so there is no alternative to a visit.

The hut at the front of the quarry belongs to Bergfreunde e.V. Güsten. Please do not park behind the hut, but on the meadow in front of it on the road side. The old rope, which is intended to deter visitors who are not aware of the dangers, is a good hygrometer. If it's hanging at waist



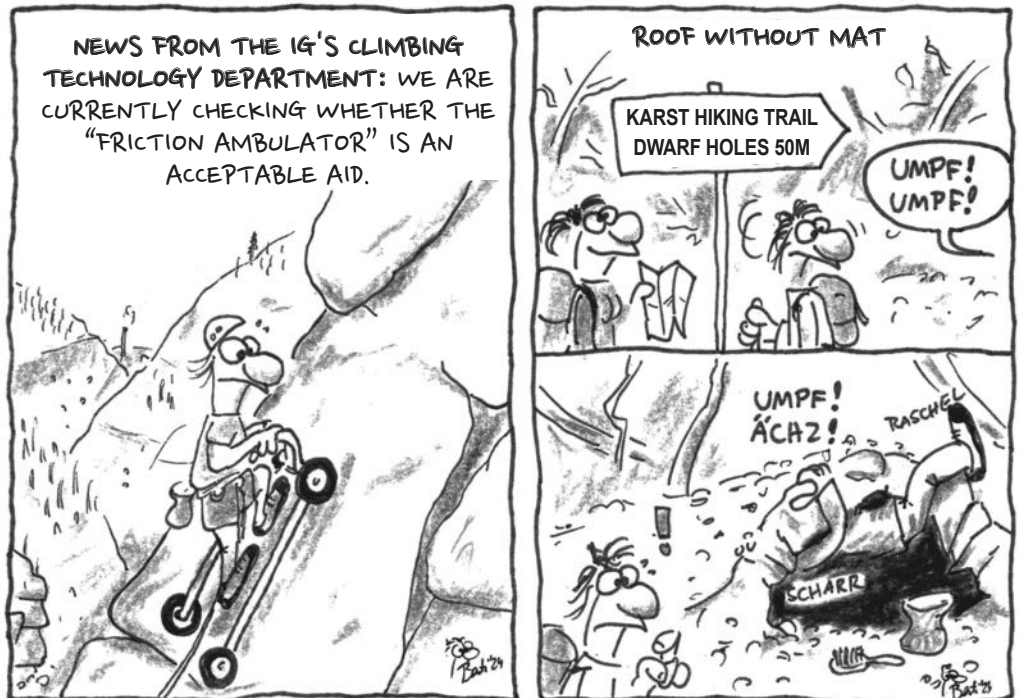
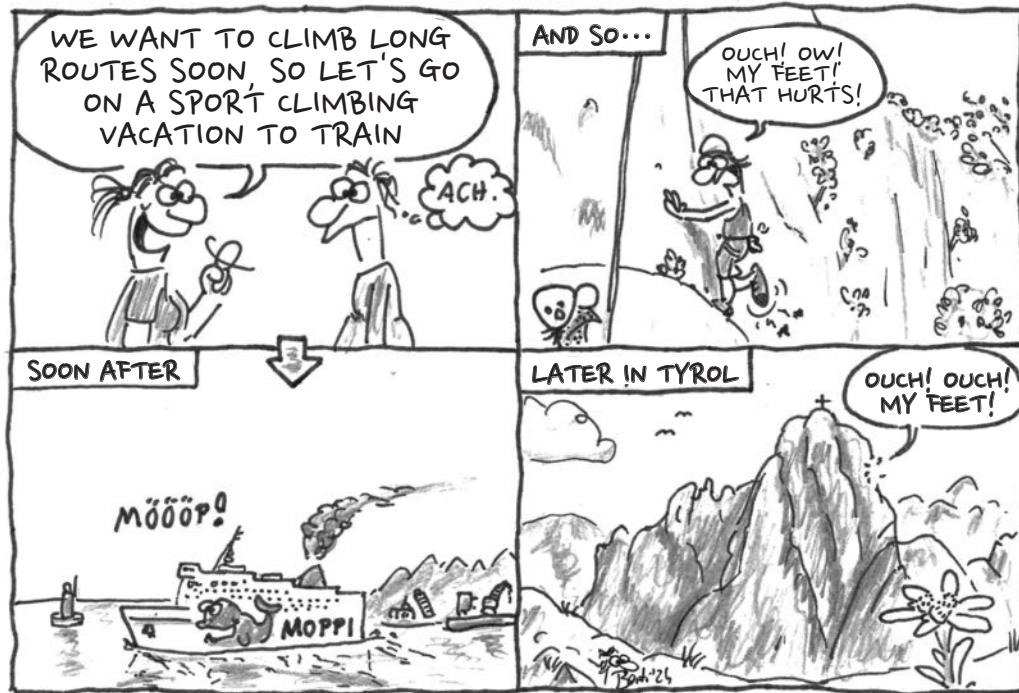
height, you can turn around right away, if it's at head height, it's dry. Here, the nine-grade climber can also belay with a helmet. Despite all efforts, it can always crumble (bigger) and you should not stay unnecessarily among climbers. On the street side, the redirectors for the "Wicked" and "Delirium Demenz" routes have been moved downwards, saving you an excursion into the species-rich botany of the upper wall. Then nothing stands in the way of endurance fun - let's go!

**Text and Images: Ralf Gentsch, Wernigerode**



## Patrick's World

Comics: Patrick Bertram



# DOODLE-SCRIBBLE

## Patrick's World



Comics: Patrick Bertram, Hildesheim

OH. COOL IDEA!  
A GREAT CLIMBING  
SHIRT THAT NOT  
EVERYONE HAS.



OH FOR ME!

NOT YOU, IDIOT!

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## North Germany Complete



*At the bottom: Deepest point of land, -3.5 meters*



I already had a luxury problem: a week's vacation was coming up and I had neither an idea of what to do nor any real desire to think of something. But then we went to a wedding in Dithmarschen for a few days and I got a few hours off and was allowed to go for a bike ride. I passed the lowest point of land in Germany near the Kiel Canal, three and a half meters below zero. Cool. It doesn't feel that deep, just flat land. But suddenly the vacation destination was obvious. After the lowest point in Germany, what can logically follow? Of course, the highest. I have to climb the Zugspitze one day, so when, if not now. From the lowest to the highest point, that's a nice motto. Of course, I'm not so tough that I can climb the Zugspitze in one day, my form is far from that. So start slowly, the nice leisurely hike with two overnight stays, that would be something. But I had imagined it would be too easy. Because of course you have to book and pay for the Alpine Club huts in advance, as is proper for mountaineering accommodation on an alpine undertaking. And the huts in question were fully booked for two or three months. The Zugspitze was fully booked. But after a longer period of observation, individual places became available, suddenly even two consecutive ones at the two huts in my week! Reluctantly, I wanted to book quickly, but one of the places was booked out from under me. Never mind, I'll book the other one first and see what happens later. I have to do the tour the way I get huts, not the way I think it makes sense, not to mention the weather. Deposit by credit card is obligatory, great. But that didn't work for

# NORTH GERMANY

## Solo through Highs and Lows



*At the top: Brocken, 1142 meters*



*in the land of two-digit summits Waseberg, 87 meters*

some reason, ask your bank. So I called the night-time hotline there. "Yes, you have to enter your six-digit PIN." I don't have one. I only have a four-digit one. "Yeah then I don't know, we're only here for emergencies." Yes! Exactly! Emergency. Why do you think I'm calling! Fucking technology, then leave it. Fuck Zugspitze. But what will happen to my great project then? What other suitable destination is there that I can reach without organizational chicanery and non-functioning digitalization nonsense? Well - the Brocken. It should still be possible without such nonsense, you can just walk up there

and you should be able to get there without a reservation. The lowest point in Germany is also the lowest point in northern Germany, so it will be a crossing of the north. But again, I don't feel like doing the whole route in one go, and going back up to Schleswig-Holstein would be nonsense anyway. So what to do? Quite simple: I'll cover all the altitude meters from the very bottom to the very top under my own steam, all within a month, and I already have the lowest ones. Perfect. Yes, of course, it's not really that extreme, but considering that I'm unmotivated and still working on the side, it's a nice and doable task. And I also have to do a bit of tinkering, and

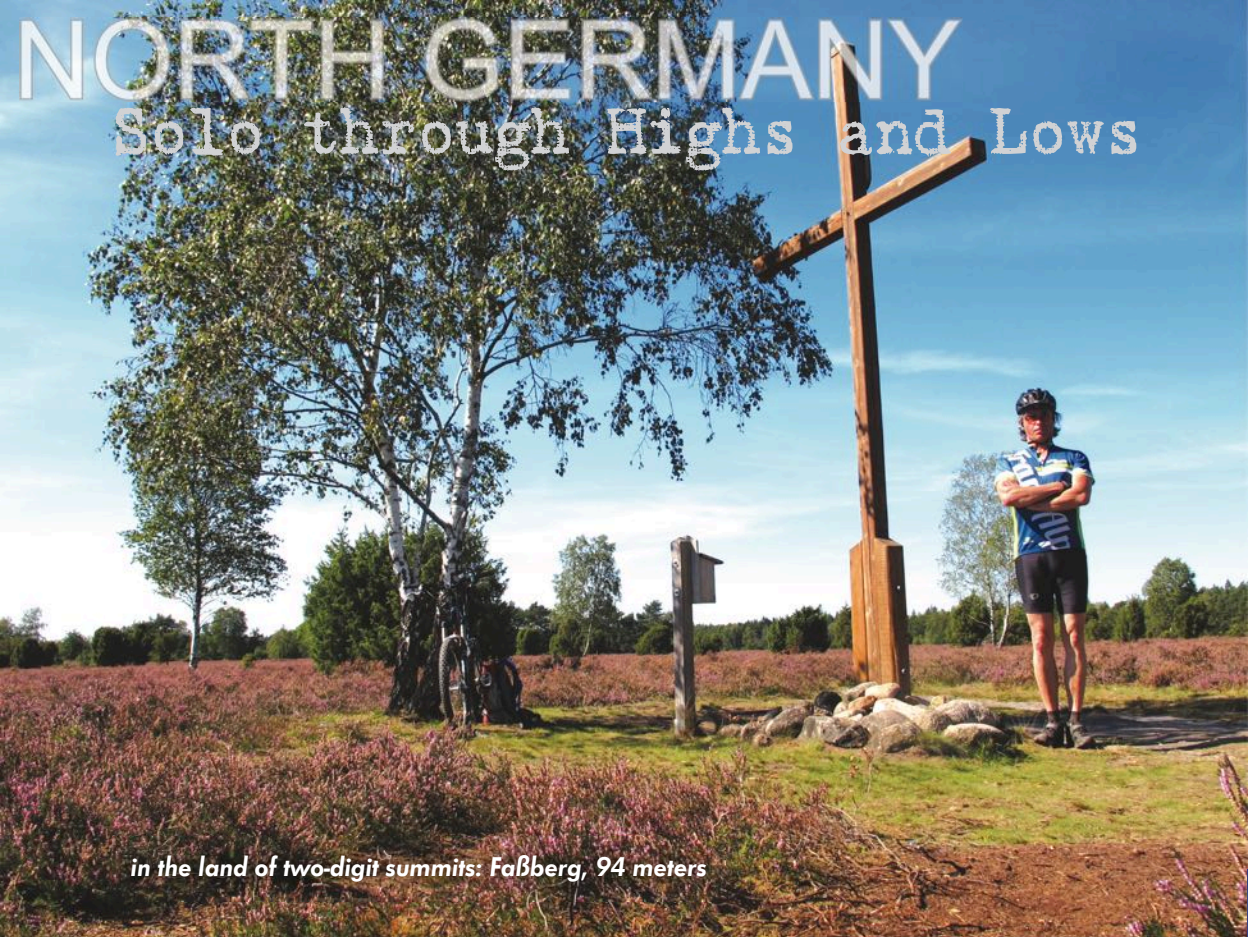
do everything in an exemplary way with a Germany ticket and document it nicely with photos.

The vacation week arrived, and so I took a packed regional express train to the Harz mountains at the weekend. I managed to get a seat next to a couple, freshly dressed in outdoor gear, also on their way to adventure. The train stopped, she looked out of the window at the platform sign: "We're in Baddeckenstedt now." He looks at his cell phone: "Yes, that's right." Aha, city dweller. And so it went on. Another taster: just before Ringelheim, he muses: "Surely an ICE can pass through here if it has to." Man! Look

out of the window! Can you see an overhead line? No. So can an ICE run here if it has to? Oooh! City dwellers! Really. It's hard to keep my composure. In Ilsenburg, I stock up on food at the bakery. "Where do you want to go?" asks the friendly bakery sales clerk. To the Brocken. "What, in this weather!" Of course she's right, it's the best summer weather, it's pouring with rain and windy, but what the hell, I have a plan and I have to get up there. After two hours the rain stops, it's gray and humid, there are berries, and dark shower clouds move through the foothills, wonderful. At the summit, the wind blows my rain jacket into a Michelin man. I have to wait for

# NORTH GERMANY

## Solo through Highs and Lows



in the land of two-digit summits: Faßberg, 94 meters

a free spot to take a photo at the summit, but eventually I manage that too.

So, now I've managed 290 to 1142 meters. I started with -3.5 to 35 meters on the Geest. In between I cycled through the Hildesheim forest, so 75 meters on the Innerste to 328 on the Tosmar. I still have 35 to 75 meters missing, but there aren't any in our area, we're too high up. What to do? It was a good idea that I had been given a big harbor cruise as a present, a real one, with a barge, in Hamburg. I remembered my racing bike days, when the Cycclassics went over the famous Waseberg, which is so steep that quite a few participants got off

and pushed. How high is it? 87 meters, perfect. And if you come from the bottom of the Elbe, then you should start at almost zero meters. That's exactly what I'm looking for.

So off we went again on local transport, with four changes, an adventure in itself. And I noticed that there was one or more people called Digga-Alda on every train, without exception, within earshot. Rail travel is a joy. Unfortunately, the tight schedule didn't allow for a visit to my editorial colleagues, the project came first. I arrived at the Landungsbrücken just in time for a refreshing fish sandwich and then my barge departed. Of course, I took the big tour, which I can only

recommend. What you can see there! Container giants, the wreck Uwe, the Speicherstadt, great. I was thrilled to have the wind blowing around my nose, and the weather held just as we had hoped until we docked again. We took the subway out to Blankenese, and even without a satnav, just following the posted directions and network maps, I managed to avoid the part of the route that was closed due to roadworks. In the pouring rain, I steamed from the banks of the Elbe up to the Waseberg and had thus completely crossed northern Germany from bottom to top! Hooray! Amazed, I trotted up and down the stairs through the Treppenviertel and celebrated my success with a

delicious Labskaus in a dignified Blankenes beach restaurant. To be on the safe side, in case anyone should doubt any meters, I cycled up the Wilseder Berg in the purple heath two days later (60 to 169 meters). Better safe than sorry. Here the summer weather caught me one kilometer before the train station. By using the right definition, I turned what were actually banal tours into a nice project, full of variety and fun experiences. And there was even a story for this Klemmkeil, because, apart from the train rides, the tours themselves were all solo.

**Text and Images: Patrick Bertram, Hildesheim**

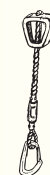


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### Solo - But Not Lonely



Why do you climb solo? Or do you go climbing alone? Are you tired of life?

We all view solo climbing differently: absolute mastery on the one hand, madness and idiocy on the other. The consequences are clear, either you die or you end up somewhere, sometimes even with yourself... Three episodes:

#### Lovesickness

She left me. Fact! Not debatable! End, over, done.

The relationship started out really promising. I earned my money in an outdoor store during my studies and sold her new climbing shoes. She looked great, climbed and was also totally open and we had a good chat straight away. So it was only natural that I tried to chat her up, which to my surprise worked, and we arranged to meet a few days later to go climbing - in the gym.

It was an interesting evening for us and turned into an exciting time with lots of climbing and all the other things that go with a relationship. But it gradually became more and more complicated and at some point we could no longer reconcile our different ideas.

When I talked about the Ith and what the campsite, the forest and the rocks meant to me, I didn't take her with me because it was my place and I didn't want to let anyone into it. I raved that you could just climb there solo when no one was around, which didn't go

# NOT LONELY

## Ith as Therapy



down half as well with her as I thought. Only later did I realize that she was worried. I wanted to impress people, whatever the cost. To burnish my ego wherever I could. Why didn't I have my ego under control? Why did I still want to impress her even though we had already experienced so much together?

And now? It was the end and it was very late fall and I was heartbroken and didn't know what to do with myself. After the initial shock and getting drunk, a solution had to be

found: after all, life goes on, doesn't it?

One of my coping strategies had always been to run away, which I glorified and justified as therapeutic travel. So even now the destination was clear. I'll just drive to the Ith, set up at the campsite, have a ball and just climb something or other. I don't have to answer any questions, the Ith understands me without asking. I didn't have a car back then, but I got to Lüerdissen with my semester ticket and a school bus, and I had to walk the rest for better or worse. I had

done it many times and I knew the route by heart. I had cursed the heavy rucksack with tent, climbing gear, food and alcohol for a weekend so often, but it was necessary to get back into the world. It's completely absurd to describe the Ith as the portal to the world. But for me it was, and once I got to the top, I settled in, went for a walk through the forest, climbed the easiest route up the Zwilling, but thought it was stupid, went back to the Haderturm and climbed up the Damenweg with the rope on my back, looked at the landscape for a moment before abseiling off, as I didn't feel like climbing down again. Paul Preuss would have laughed at me. In the end, I go to the camel, climb back up to the big boulder, jump over and sit on the small summit structure at the top, look around stupidly and drink the beer I've been carrying around all day. Then I descend again and go back to the tent, as it's already dusk before 5pm. After a small snack, I realize that I have felt absolutely nothing all day. It's still too early to sleep, so I drink a few more bottles and start reading the book I had packed. I was alone at the campsite and hadn't seen anyone all day. That was the plan, but I suddenly feel lonely. The weather got worse and worse and eventually it even started to snow. It's absolutely disgusting outside and the sleeping bag gives me the comfort I need. I fall asleep and wake up about 14 hours later.

It feels like I've never been so awake in my life, and after breakfast I go to the Hexenkanzel and climb all the easy routes solo on the ascent and

descent. It's Saturday and it's getting colder and wetter, which I ignore. I feel safe because I've climbed everything many times before. It gets more and more slippery as the sleet gets heavier and heavier, and I slip off at the start and land on my feet after about three meters. That was close, but it doesn't matter, I can't go like this, I still have to complete the route despite the conditions. I shoulder my rucksack and climb the middle route to the top. I head back to the tent and it gradually dawns on me that I'm pretty stupid. Why did I do all the routes solo? What was I trying to prove and, above all, to whom? The only thing that could have happened is that I would have flown down somewhere and nobody would have found or heard me. It wasn't an alpine masterpiece, but pure selfishness. My motivation was just nonsense, climbing solo doesn't change anything, or maybe it does?

As I'm sitting on the train home on Sunday, I notice that I'm feeling better. The lovesickness is no longer there. Was it the solo climbing or just the fact that I had a good night's sleep? Or was it the magic of the Ith? No matter, I go through the portal back to life.

### The Soloist

The phone rings. "There's a Soloist in the store and it's at a special price, do you want it?" That was my roommate calling from a store in Finale. "Sure, bring it along, I don't have any money but I'll find it..." When he returns a few days later, I've



# NOT LONELY

lth as Therapy

got the money together, I'm 120 DM poorer, but I have a new, very cool and above all dangerous item in my possession. GAS - Gear Acquisition Syndrome, definitely a serious psychiatric problem.

Secured solo climbing is a logistical problem, they say. The instruction manual reads almost worse than "Sicherheit am Berg Band 1-3" by Pit Schubert. I get the impression that you'll definitely die if you climb with it. I wanted this thing so that I could climb safely solo and not so that I could do the nonsense I used to do. Why is the manufacturer trying to talk me out of using his device?

Well, before I use it to climb really big walls, I have to go training. What better place to do that than the lth? I

know every hold there and there's no stress to speak of when it comes to belaying. In the meantime, I drive up the lth in my rusty little Opel Corsa A with a turquoise-green sports steering wheel and, as so often on a weekend with questionable weather, I find myself alone at the top of the campsite with everything to myself.

**Lesson 1:** secured top rope I climb around the back of the Teufelstrichter and attach the rope to a bolt on the summit on an easy route and abseil down with the soloist. What a stupid piece of crap. The rope runs so poorly. It's like the tube, but not as comfortable because you have to wear the Soloist with a chest harness, otherwise it won't work... Once I reach the bottom, I climb back up the top rope and immediately encounter all the devilish details of

the Soloist: for example, the rope only pulls through automatically from a certain height, so if you don't guide it manually and fall, you inevitably end up on the hard ground. The instruction manual already hinted at this, but it's far too abstract to imagine at the desk. Now, live and in color, it's amazingly scary and you expend an astonishing amount of energy for nothing. The instructions also say that you should tie a knot in the rope from a safe height so that you don't fall to the ground in the event of an overhead fall, because then the braking mechanism won't work. I tie the knot, but I don't jump off head first to prepare myself for this eventuality. I'm too tired for that...

Once at the top, I see massive chafe marks on the rope, where it has been badly damaged by the rock edge and my movements. Fortunately, there is a second end...

**Lesson 2:** secured lead climbing solo What route would be better than the roof route on the Teufelstrichter? Long, small overhang, good anchor on the ground, easy to belay. I prepare my belayed solo lead climb: Harness on including soloist and chest harness, I tie knots in the rope, organize the quickdraws, helmet on...It looks like an overflowing Christmas tree wants to do a climbing route.

As I tie my climbing shoes, the realization slowly drills into my head that a fall before the first intermediate belay could end fatally without someone who can get help if necessary. With a bit of kicking

myself in the ass along the lines of "You chose it yourself, so don't be like that!" I get a grip on my head cinema, start climbing and put a thread sling at the start of the route and clear my head a bit.

Nevertheless, the start with all the gear on the harness is more difficult than in normal lead climbing, and the rest of the route is a logistical nightmare. I've clipped the knots with the quickdraws to the harness in the wrong order, the rope gets caught on every spike it can find and by the time I reach the crux on the roof, I'm three-quarters done because I've wasted a lot more energy than I would have if I'd been leading with a partner. Somehow I get over the edge and first have to organize the rope again, which gets caught behind the last quickdraw in the roof. In the event of a fall, it is guaranteed to unhook itself or the rope will saw itself in half, in both cases: at least a hospital. However, the anger is only about three meters away, the terrain is easy and why am I making such a fuss now? Escape forwards, I pull through. The rope pull is gigantic, nothing happens, but I'll never climb big walls with it, that's already clear to me. I thread the rope and abseil down, when I get to the bottom I'm exhausted. Luckily I had chosen an easy route for my training.

**Lesson 3:** Conclusion After that, I put the Soloist in the cupboard and looked at it a lot, but didn't use it again. You have to be pretty desperate to work with it, if only

# NOT LONELY

## Ith as Therapy



because you have to climb each pitch three times: first in the lead, then back down to take off the intermediate protection and the anchor, and then back up to tackle the next length. One pitch is OK. Several degenerate into hard work. What have I learned? Secured soloing is a huge logistical problem, much more time-consuming than expected and it wasn't really fun either. I wasn't lonely, but the soloist doesn't talk to you. It's a silent rope partner and there are no cheers or vibes from your rope partner. You

have no corrective, you have to work in a tidy and structured way, because the soloist doesn't allow you to make mistakes and the consequences are just as serious as when climbing solo without a rope. You have to motivate yourself. A lesson in humility.

### Northern Lights

"What are you actually doing on Ascension Day?" my wife asks me two days beforehand. I had no idea, I had even forgotten that the long weekend was just around the corner. The job is really

eating me up at the moment and I'm frustrated. My wife was planning to spend a weekend in the Rhön with her sister, and me? Maybe I should just escape again. Therapeutic travel would do me good, just run away again, like I did back then, see something different. I need to visit a good old friend: beech forest, wild garlic, rocks. There is only one place that meets these criteria and I haven't visited it for far too long. The freedom of my student days is long gone and the van is quickly loaded up with the essentials, climbing gear, coffee, beer, barbecue and whatnot. After my studies in Münster, life took me, or rather us, to Wiesbaden. But I know the way to the Ith from various directions inside out. I take every traffic jam in my stride on the way north and the 300 km route is now quite long.

When I arrive at the good old parking lot in front of the campsite, I'm amazed that I can still find a spot. It's almost empty. Will I meet people from back then?

I've packed my Soloist in case there's no one there or I can't plug in anywhere. Still, I hope I won't need it, but climbing has changed and people have changed too. Doubts arise: Has the Ith also changed so much that I'll be alone this time?

As so often, I'm solo to the Ith and for a moment I even feel lonely, it's the uncertainty that shouldn't clear until the next morning. I can simply rely on my good old friend Ith. Thank you my good old friend!

I meet up with some old friends and after breakfast we go climbing together. It's just like back then and in no time at all I gain so much distance from everything: the conflicts at work, the dissatisfaction I feel when I think about work and and and I'm glad I don't have to climb solo, it would have been the same madness as back then with the heartbreak, the wrong motivation.

The next day I have sore muscles, but I find another rope partner. I haven't climbed this hard for a long time, it's also pretty much fallen asleep due to work.

We sit together in the evening and barbecue and drink and chat. I've come here alone, but I'm anything but lonely.

The sky is turning a strange shade of pink. We go to the large meadow behind the hut and look up at the sky. It's the aurora borealis, which the strongest solar storm for around 20 years is carrying as far as the German low mountain ranges. I was on the Ith for the first time 33 years ago and I have already experienced a lot of magic in this place. But the auroras are yet another new and special quality.

On Sunday, I'm at peace with myself again, I'm going home again: solo, but not lonely.

**Text and Images: Volker Gleber, Wiesbaden**

# WINTER MOUNTAINEERING

...in vertical Grass



## Turf is the New Ice

*The Explanation of an Amour Fou*

Andi on „Alternaturfe“  
- real vertical grass climbing



“Don't climb turf if not frozen” was the warning given to us by our Scottish hosts at the 1998 international ice climbing meeting - and then we got stuck in. They presented climbing in frozen turf as one of the disciplines of Scottish winter climbing, which in addition to normal ice climbing also included “snowed-up rock”, i.e. scrambling up over snow-covered or encrusted rock, so that a black stripe on a homogeneous white flank marked the ascent line afterwards (the reverse of Arco, where Heinz Grill's cleaning crews clean the slabs covered in dark algae so that lighter lines are visible from afar). Snowed-up rock, digging in snow-covered rock for hook placements for ice axes, crampons and nuts, was something we tried out back in Scotland. Frozen grass, on the other hand, practically never crossed our path; we tended to choose destinations with pure ice climbing, which we were more used to in the Alps. A pity, really. Because today I'm a real fan of turf climbing, which I want to rave about in this text. Nevertheless, I think the risk of ploughing up large areas of steep alpine meadows is relatively manageable. However, this form of winter mountaineering - which is the ultimate for those who like it - may have the potential to be a fallback option if my previous favorite discipline, climbing frozen waterfalls, is no longer possible due to a lack of ice or water. Take Jochberg, for example: this well-known pre-Alpine mountain has several large north-facing

# WINTER MOUNTAINEERING

## ... the Magical Grass



*Without humour, half the fun – a lot of walking in the upper part of the wall*



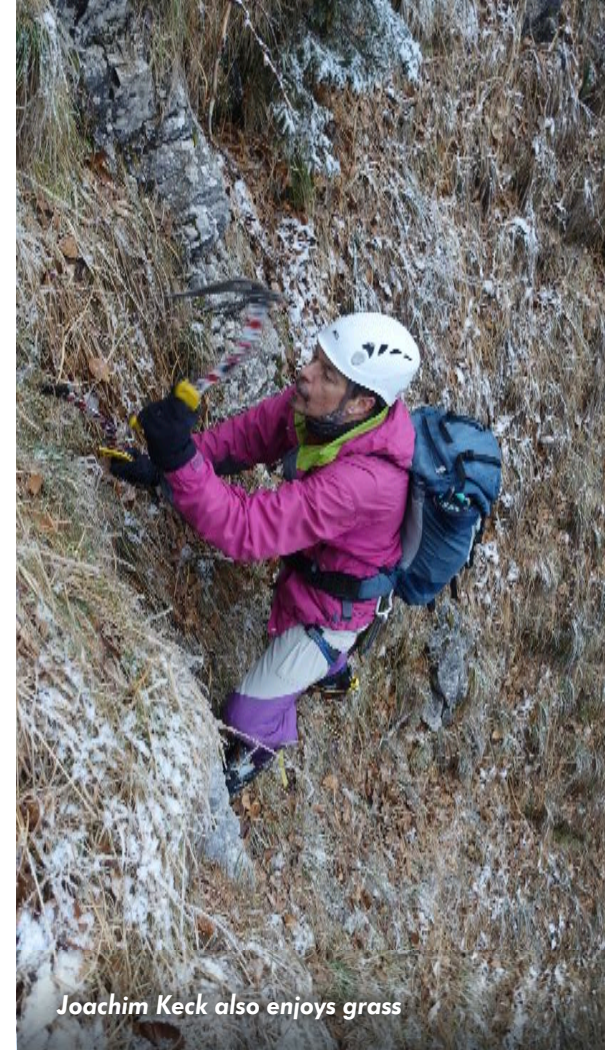
*How beautifully the devices bite into the frozen grass!*

gullies in which, as recently as in the 1990s, climbable ice upswings formed quite reliably every winter between the beginning of January and the end of February. 200 to 300 meters of steep ice climbing, depending on the gully between WI 3 and WI 5, M6, then some steep firn stacks, that was a really nice alpinism simulation not far from the front door, as morning fun, for doing laps or sometimes seriously. In recent winters, the cold spells were only occasionally sufficient for climbable ice to form in the easier, flatter upswings. Or the late autumns were so dry that not enough water flowed during the cold phases to build up sufficiently thick ice. The search for climbable steep ice, especially if the routes were to be more challenging, became more and more laborious and increasingly required

telephone and internet time or a good network of informants. But from the 2000s onwards, word got around that people were also climbing on frozen grass in the Bavarian Alps. There were supposed to be wild routes on the Aggenstein near Pfronten, vertical through the grass, halfway secured only by old spiral bolts hammered into frozen grass. With the spread of mixed climbing, new lines were also created on the Rubihorn above the Oberstdorf valley, with bolts securing the most difficult sections. There was usually ice on these lines, as well as hooks and torques (twists) of the ice axes in the rock, but increasingly people were hacking their way up in the frozen grass. Unlike me, Bernd Kullmann hadn't sold his spiral pitons at the Alpine flea market, so we

dug them into the grassy meadows on the Aggenstein and free-roped down on them on the descent - three days later, another climber pulled the piton placed on the sunny side out of the thawed meadow ground with one finger.

This lack of resistance and at the same time the durability of grass is its USP (unique selling proposition), which distinguishes it from frozen water. Waterfall ice can be so hard as iron that you have to hit it five times to get a grip, while the chunks fly around your ears and sometimes leave you with fat lips. Or it's a "porcelain store" made of thin, only halfway overgrown icicles, which you first have to clear generously until you hopefully find something more solid. Often, however, all that remains is airy foam that you don't want to tear at too trustingly. It's also no secret that ice pillars are unreliable bastards and occasionally break away completely, along with overly optimistic climbers. And if you have placed the pick well, it sometimes takes a lot of effort to lever it free again for the next shot. (Yes, I still like it, alpinists are not always logical...) How different, how enjoyable and almost close to nature climbing on frozen grass is. Around the same time as on Rubihorn and Aggenstein, I had my first experiences on a mountain that was to become my private Bullerbü, but whose incognito I would like to preserve here - I like to give information personally to trustworthy people who don't scatter it indiscriminately, because too many visitors are often misinterpreted by hunters as irritating



*Joachim Keck also enjoys grass*

the chamois population, and then the fun has a hole in it. We had been looking at this flank for many years, even noticing streaks of ice in it, but thought it was only for spring firn conditions. Then such a situation developed in December 2008, and I dug my way through the snow-covered forest under the far right edge of the flank, where it seemed most accessible, and picked my way up on doormat-sized grassy bumps, loosened up by the odd pull-up on (until I got there)

# WINTER MOUNTAINEERING

## ...in vertical Grass



*Not always the last word in sport, but always entertaining*



*Balancing is also allowed in the giant playground.*

powder-covered mountain pine branches. Fun, promising, something different.

There were a few other destinations in between - something similar on Aggenstein and Hoher Kiste, an ice and mixed climbing vacation in the Durancetal - then I was back in mid-January: the large strips of ice that I had often seen from the ski ascent had grown thick; I picked my way up solo, vertically jagged upwards over magnificent hard fir, bypassed a somewhat too wild steep ascent - and suddenly found myself climbing in a 70° steep gully like in Chamonix. Except that my ice axe and front teeth were not stuck in ice or firn, but in reliably frozen grass. Awesome! A "Gamsl Highway"! Down and immediately up another line, just to the left of it, again with a grass gully as an exit highlight. The next day I was right back there and discovered an ingenious length of ice hidden in a gorge; at the top, after firn climbing, there was another grassy steep gully that felt almost vertical, but so brilliantly solid thanks to massive grass boulders. Licked blood? Bitten the dust? Hopped? In any case, despite growing up in a nursery, I had become a fan of weeds.

Another two days later, Nicho Mailänder wanted to try out the area too, and we found the "Latscherei", whose name relates the vegetation to the demands of the crux, which required very uncompromising hooking due to the lack of a drill. A week later, I was back at the base of the wall with

my newly acquired Makita and had a "Happy Turfday" in the secured solo on grass patches that were distributed just right in the rock face. The next day, Bernd Eberle helped to complete the last two pitches - twelve years later, Toni Gutsch was another "alternate" who really wasn't missing anything for the vertical. During this time, I was able to experience almost a hundred climbing days on my home mountain and draw almost fifty lines in the face: up to seven hundred meters long, sometimes only a few pitches at the base of the wall; sometimes garnished with steep icicles, sometimes with short climbing or mixed pitches, often rummaging through (at best not snow-covered) mountain pines - and always with frozen turf. I was able to inspire a few friends to do this, especially when it came to using bolts (the rock is either brittle or very compact) to open up somewhat more difficult lines - this often requires a healthy sense of humor (when digging and in the mountain pine fight), as the route name "Don't turf if not Frohsinn" reveals. Most of the time, however, I set off alone, with only ice tools, crampons and a helmet, looking for a task that seems feasible and appealing in the given conditions - and then still experience my (what you might call today) micro adventures: When the rock is more compact or exposed than expected, the grass is thinner, less frozen or not well grown, when the pick slips through the stalks or the bobble moves. Great alpinism on a small scale, suitable for a free morning (when I was still in permanent employment), and



*Even the edge of the stream can demand attention*



# WINTER MOUNTAINEERING

## ...in vertical Grass



Rope-free fits the tension dose

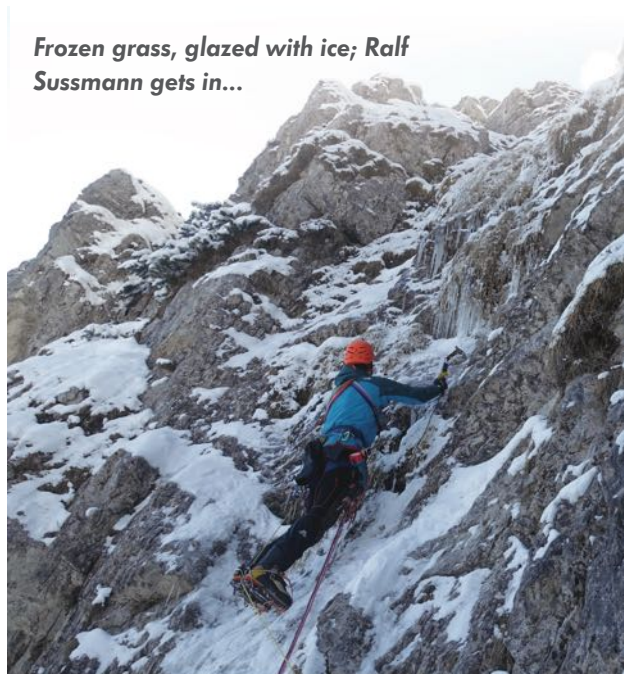


And this is the view from above; Toni Gutsch in 'Winter-F.U.N. in the Turferparadies' At the Königstand

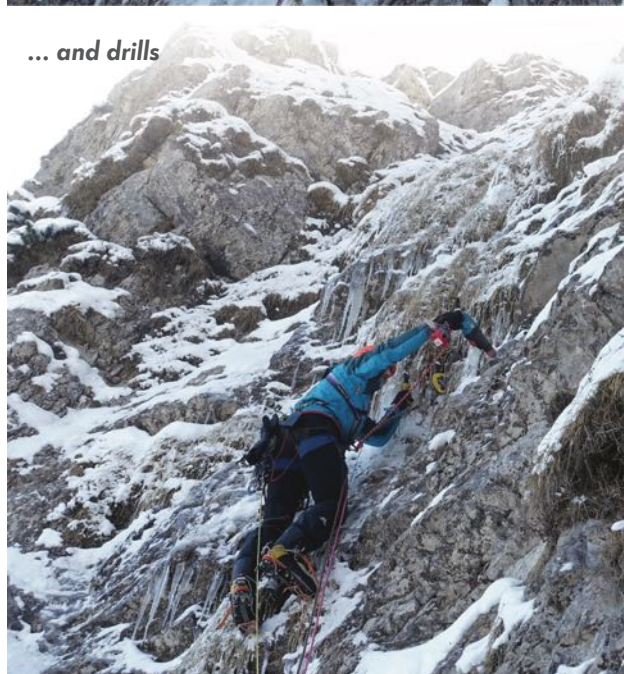
possible more often than I would ever have thought.

Whether these are first ascents or not is relatively unimportant to me; it's not difficult, but there were still practically no traces of ascents anywhere. So I happily assign route names; a doubly creative game, first in the grass, then at my desk. "Home Turf Run", 'Turfelschwein', 'Soft Turfer', 'Hurra die Gams' or philosophical names such as 'Zum Gipfel ist ein Weg' and 'Ich bin dann mal am Ziel'. And yet: in the last few years, I've actually come across strangers in my hunting ground on two days - apparently this quirky Scottish sport is gradually coming into vogue.

Because there is actually a growing fan base for this type of winter sport. And there are more and more opportunities to practise it more or less safely. One of the most diligent developers is Ralf Sussmann, who triggered a real hype in 2014 with the opening and publication of several routes on the Geierköpfe in the Graswang Valley: on a beautiful Sunday, there were almost 20 rope teams on the wall. Ralf appreciates the rustic and often integrates poachers, chamois and hunters into his route names in the Ammergau Alps, at the Königstand above Farchant (where we once swung the Hilti together) or on the north face of the Plankenstein - and he sets proper bolts, albeit at quite decent intervals. The Plankenstein - which suddenly became a hype in the winter of 2022/23 - has the "hottest grass on the planet", writes David Bruder, who looks for and finds his own



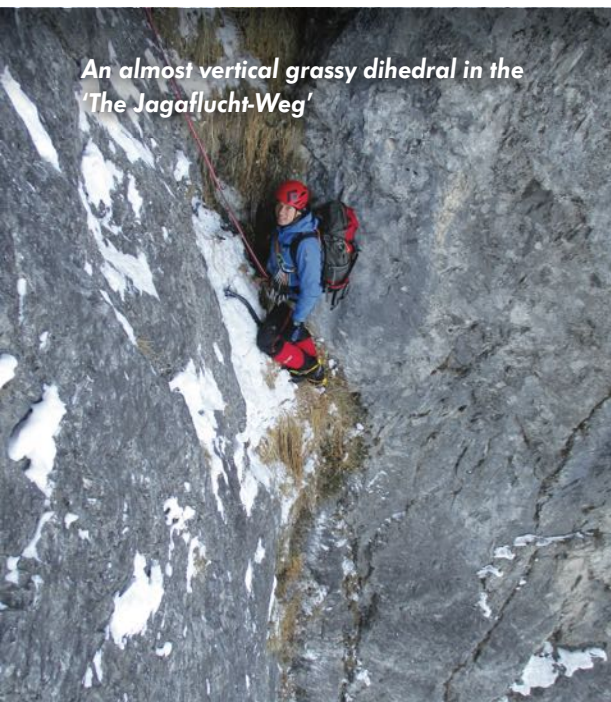
Frozen grass, glazed with ice; Ralf Sussmann gets in...



... and drills

# WINTER MOUNTAINEERING

## ...in vertical Grass

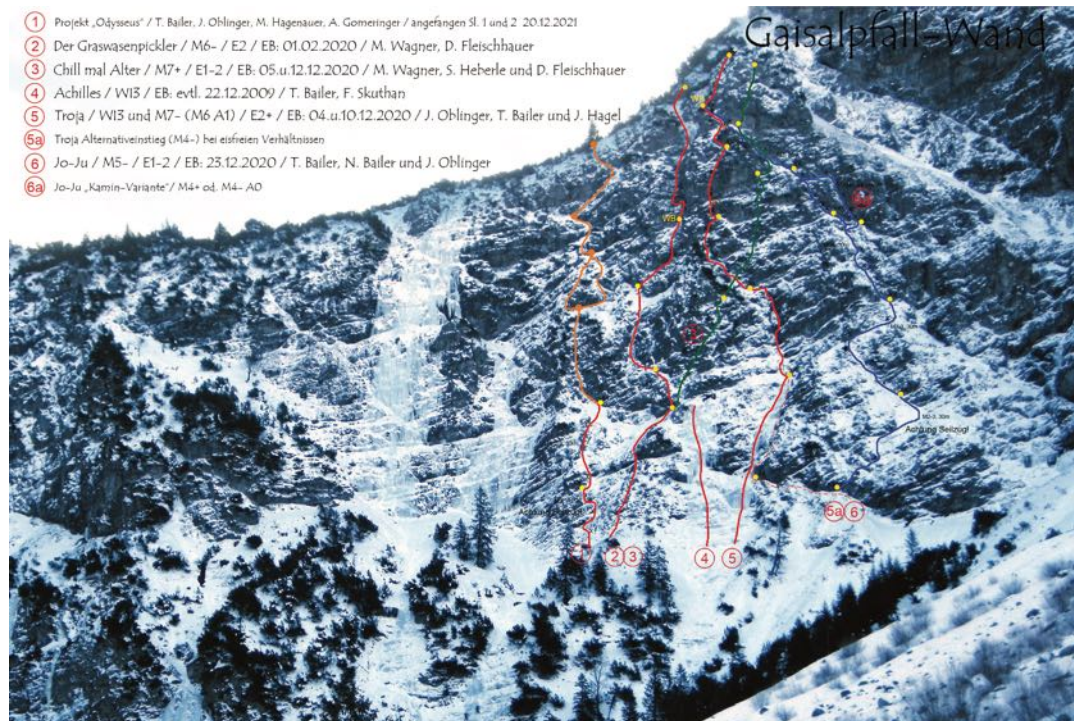


An almost vertical grassy dihedral in the 'The Jagalucht-Weg'

routes between Ralf's bolt lines without the lying silver pieces (bolts); then the game gets a bit more serious. Grass cannot be secured with conventional equipment, and normal bolts, nuts or friends must first be placed in the rock on which the grass grows. That's why bolts are often the key to fun on turf. Unfortunately, production of both the Siemens grass piton and the Graf Zeppelin air anchor has been discontinued, and not everyone may trust the verdict of Tatra legend Igor Koller: "Piton in grass is better than bolt." So, those who prefer bolts have plenty of choice: On the Heimgarten, local mountain guide Ludwig Karrasch has opened up almost ten routes with ice and turf, Martin Oswald has drilled



Despite the sun, the turf remains frozen; Ralf Sussmann is pleased above Farchant



- 1 Projekt „Odysseus“ / T. Bailer, J. Ohlinger, M. Hagenauer, A. Gomeringer / angefangen Sl. 1 und 2 20.12.2021
- 2 Der Graswäsepickler / M6- / E2 / EB: 01.02.2020 / M. Wagner, D. Fleischhauer
- 3 Chill mal Alter / M7+ / E1-2 / EB: 05.u.12.12.2020 / M. Wagner, S. Heberle und D. Fleischhauer
- 4 Achilles / W13 / EB: evtl. 22.12.2009 / T. Bailer, F. Skuthan
- 5 Troja / W13 und M7- (M6 A1) / E2+ / EB: 04.u.10.12.2020 / J. Ohlinger, T. Bailer und J. Hagel
- 5a Troja Alternativbesteigung (M4-) bei eisfreien Verhältnissen
- 6 Jo-Ju / M5- / E1-2 / EB: 25.12.2020 / T. Bailer, N. Bailer und J. Ohlinger
- 6a Jo-Ju „Kamin-Variante“ / M4+ od. M4- AD

Gaisalpfall-Wand

Tobias Bailer's collected works as an alternative if the Gaisalp Falls are not running

his lines on the Pilgerschrofen next to the Säuling, Tobias Bailer next to the classic Gaisalpfall in the Oberstdorf valley. And what else could be found in the Kitzbühel Grasberge can only be dreamed of if you walk under the walls in summer.

It just has to be frozen, the turf. This takes one or two weeks at temperatures well below zero, i.e. at least five to ten degrees below zero. Too much snow is not healthy at all, because "snowflakes cover our little flowers", so that the frostiness leaves something to be desired. But when it rains high up in the first winter snow and freezes again immediately afterwards, the game can begin. And once the

bolts are frozen, they often remain hard and grippy well into the spring; I still had good experiences in April. So waterfalls climbing - athletic sneaking through the glassy magic castle - and mixed climbing - artistic scraping on the edge of the believable - have been given a sister that generates a chamois-like joy of movement from the scenic beauty of the mountains and opens the window of opportunity for crazy winter sports a little wider. Turf may not quite be the new ice - but it's certainly hot s h i t .

**Text and Images: Andreas Dick, Planegg**

# OVERHEARD

## Misheard



On a brighter note, your video has gone viral.



Benny to Horst about the belay station: what about your redundancy? Horst: **"I've got my foot on the rope."**

Tweet, after a week on the Amalfi Coast, where she couldn't climb Mount Vesuvius because it was always shrouded in clouds: **"I think it is ashamed of what he did in the past."**

Sabine on the way to the rock: **"Men develop until the age of seven, after that they just grow."**

Max, after he realizes that he has far too many exes on his harness for the short route: **"I think I'm completely overex'd."**

Tweet about her disfigured fingers from climbing: **"My fingers look like ginger. I have fin-ger."**

Mathias after another route that narrowly failed again: **"In soccer, you'd say the player put in a good performance. Unfortunately, he doesn't finish."**

Climber, whose name must not be mentioned here for obvious reasons, after he fell off his project: **"I probably shouldn't have had sex twice today."**

Volker Schöffel to Hannes Huch when he came to the clinic for a defective ring ligament diagnosis: **"Well, do your fingers hurt from counting money?"**

Jörg to a really hard 7: **"I'd say, it's not just a smooth 7, but a full 7."**

Klaus: **"I'm doing 'ropesolo' now too, just on toprope."**

**"Pushing, supporting, being scared, that's what you need here in Pfalz. We can't push and support, but we're scared enough."** Three climbers from Lower Saxony have at least one of the necessary techniques for the Pfalz.

Climber on the rock: **"I have a golfer's elbow."** Mathias spontaneously: **"Golf is a shitty sport, that's why."**



Mathias, after an exchange of words with Hannes. Mathias recalled a quote from Hoddel, who had a PEC machine next to the training bar and, when asked what it was for, said: **"For posing at the swimming pool."** Conclusion: **"The settlement is done at the swimming pool."**

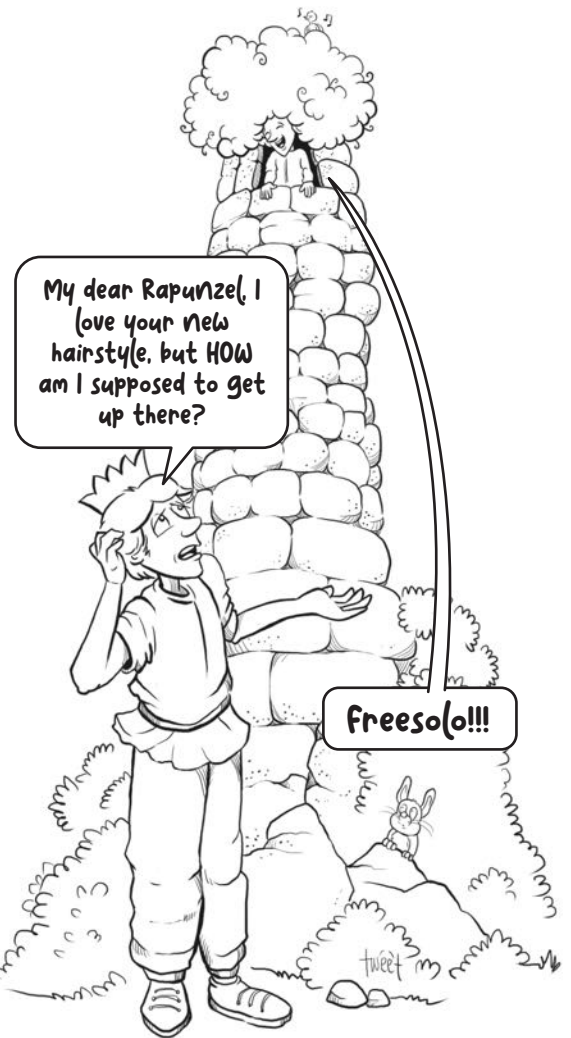
Newcomer to the Harz Mountains on first contact with the „Schwindelplatte“ 6- (slab) on the Drachenturm in the Okertal: **"I can only roll my eyes now. If I move anything else, I'll fall off."**

Sardinia, fresh rock with drip holes. Two climbers inspect the neighboring route: **"Sharp holds, ouch! And, phew, it's hot here! - I am hot enough for this!"**

Heiko, about 40 years old, asks Wendelin how he looked on the 7-: Wendelin, 13 years old: **"Like grandpa on grandma."**

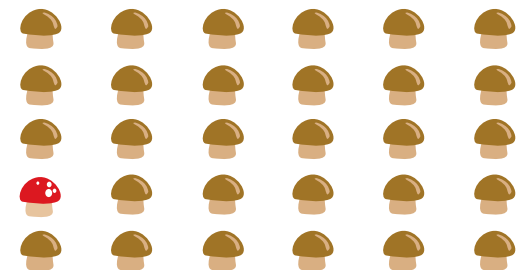
Mathias, after Jörg had poured a full cup of coffee over the climbing guide: **"Coffee is an integral part of climbing."**

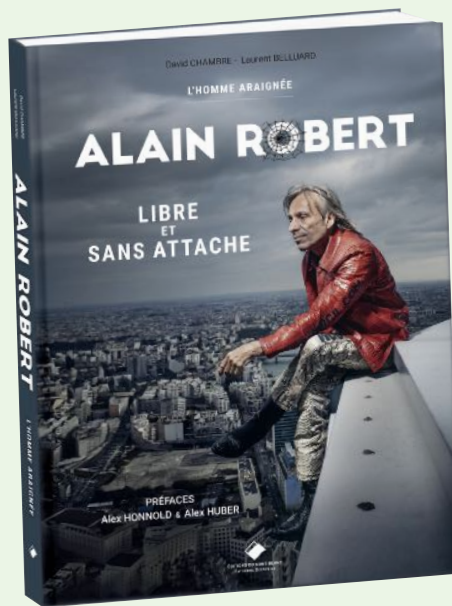
Mathias on Tweets 6cm positive Ape Index: **"Maybe that's why I found you so attractive right away."**



### Forage Mushrooms

Without lifting the pin, collect the porcini mushroom, one by one, in a horizontal and vertical direction. Avoid touching the red poisonous mushroom.





### Dreaming in Color and Living in Black and White is Hopeless

When I wanted to order the recently published biography of Alain Robert online, I thought the price of 28.50 Euros for a paperback book was pretty steep. Ok, I thought to myself, you can't do without it, you can't put the cover article in the Klemmkeil without at least having seen the book. And then there's the problem with the French language. I can just order two croissants at the bakery, but that's about it. Fortunately, you can quickly take a paperback book apart, scan it and run it through the DeepL translator, that was my plan. But what arrived a few days later by Amazon courier was a fat hardcover illustrated book. With a modern layout,

barcodes to scan for various YouTube links and lots of exciting extras. I hadn't expected it to be that good of a deal. I've already paid considerably more for other illustrated books. And just leafing through it was fun. Despite my poor French, I was able to make sense of most of the captions. And, well, I actually took the trouble to scan the whole book and run it through the translator. I'm sure you know that climbing-specific translations aren't that great. Well, "onsight" in French is "escalade à vue". I still had fun reading it, as I kept finding details that I hadn't discovered during my internet research or that Tanja didn't get to hear in her interview. A climbing life, especially when it is as special as Alain's, cannot be described in a short interview. And it was the paragraphs where it gets human and philosophical that I liked best. I quote: "Events in themselves are neither good nor bad. It is we who make them so, depending on the meaning we attach to them." And so, over the course of his climbing career, Alain has become a bit of what fascinated and inspired him in his youth, a Robin Hood of modern times: "All over the world, my climbing annoys those in power and touches others like a modern Robin Hood. But I didn't do anything for it." One day he is in prison with criminals, the next day he is invited to a banquet by the King of Malaysia. "I like people who have a chip on their shoulder because they let the light through." The psychiatric assessment of a therapist in the book is also interesting to read. In this part you will also find a section about Alex Honnold, where scientists did a brain scan of him. Alain says: "I don't climb without a rope to learn to fall like a cat, but because of

the feeling of self-control that comes from being able to control your emotions." Alain's dazzling personality may seem like something from another world to many people, but he has remained true to himself. And that comes across in the book. So there is a very clear recommendation from me for this book, it is worth every penny. And perhaps the book will soon be published in a German or English translation. But if you're a climber and have a reasonable command of French, you should definitely buy it now or give it to your loved one as a gift, maybe she speaks French...

Mathias Weck, Hamburg

### L'Homme Araignée, Alain Robert, Libre et Sans Attache The Spider Man, Alain Robert, Free and Unbound David Chambre - Laurent Belluard

(With forewords by Alex Honnold and Alex Huber)

Hardcover 22 x 29,5 cm; 192 pages

28,50 EUR

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### The Climbing Course by Christiane Hupe

First things first: a great book! If I can only take one climbing course book with me to a desert island, I'll take this one!

Why? "Christiane Hupe's 464-page book covers the essential elements of a climbing course, from the pedagogical basics and course planning to knots and all the usual safety techniques. In a logical sequence, it goes from top rope climbing to lead climbing and belaying and finally to fall and belay training. Setting up practice stations is explained and there is also a separate chapter on threading rope at the anchor and abseiling. The sections on risk and crisis management, law and insurance as well as equipment and its inspection conclude Christiane Hupe's work."

This is how Geoquest Verlag describes the book that Chris, a qualified sports educator, has been working on throughout her time teaching climbing skills.



# REVIEW

## Book Review

That sounds great. And it is. What makes the book a must-read for every climbing instructor and actually every climber is - in addition to the visually and linguistically superbly presented content - the contextual integration of the why, when, how and where of each teaching content in the various climbing teaching settings. Learning psychology and group dynamics, the trainer's understanding of their role, a wide range of practical tips from mnemonic devices and learning games to exercise structures, anecdotes and error analyses are given the space they need to develop as climbers and trainers. With our help, our climbing learners can also develop step by step into independent climbers who think and act independently. The discussion of teaching opinions, the constructive handling of "mistakes", alias "learning opportunities", and the resulting further development of teaching methods is exemplary.

Thinking for yourself makes you smart! Even when climbing!

Christiane's refreshing style and graphic design are a joy to read and encourage you to try things out for yourself and pass them on. Gerald Krug has now completed Chris' book and is putting it under the Christmas tree just in time for Christmas.

I'm already booking the desert island :D

*Axel Hake, Braunschweig*

### **Kletterlehrbuch - Der Kletterkurs Pedagogy – Course Planning – Rope and Safety Equipment**

**Christiane Hupe** (Geoquest Verlag 2024)

14,5 x 21,0 cm / A5 crosswise; 464 pages

Softcover (ISBN 978-3-948 622-11-4)

**38,00 EUR**

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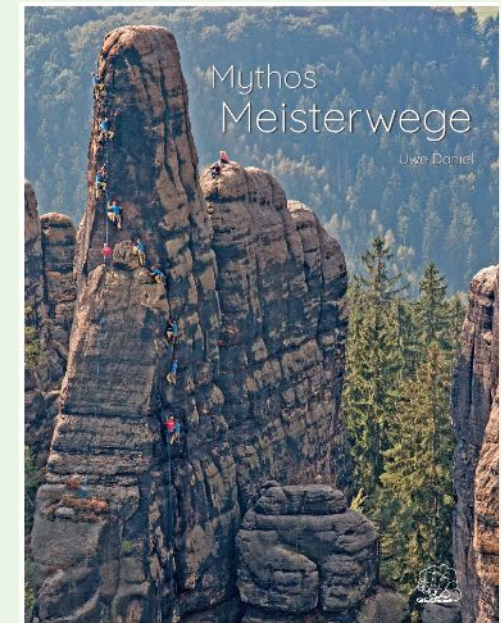
### **Mythos Meisterwege**

A Walter Pause "Im extremen Fels" for the Elbe Sandstone Mountains? Another book for people with list syndrome? Fortunately not. Mythos Meisterwege is rather an exciting book about a climbing epoch in GDR history with fantastic pictures from today, enriched with historical evidence.

How did the term "Meisterwege" come about? In the GDR, attempts were made to standardize and classify many things, including climbing. Not everyone liked

that. But it opened doors for many a climber to be allowed to travel to the mountains of the world. And anyone who thinks that the list syndrome has only existed since the 8a.nu website was launched is mistaken. While 8a.nu is working on a lifelong list, in GDR times you had to prove yourself anew every year and complete at least twelve masterly routes in order not to lose your master's title. What was repugnant to some, encouraged sporting ambition in others. However, the last complete list of master routes was published in 1974. However, as it contains a broad portfolio of the most diverse and always challenging routes, it is still interesting and remarkable.

And the book goes into great depth here. Not only with historical background information on the various routes and their first ascent, but also with short portraits of older and newer protagonists who have made climbing in Saxony the focus of their lives. And the stories are as adventurous as climbing in Saxony itself. Here we also learn how the Saxon climbing rules came about, i.e. distances between pitons and so on. But the book is not only a pleasure for the harder climbers, especially the pictures are something special. Many of the shots are multiple exposures that show the climber in different positions on the route. A technique that demonstrates well the sometimes complex lines of the routes. In any case, the book is much more versatile than "Im extremen Fels". And if you want to give yourself or other climbers a present for Christmas, this is the book for you.



*Mathias Weck, Hamburg*

### **Illustrated book, Mythos Meisterwege**

**Uwe Daniel** (Geoquest Verlag 2024)

304 pages, colored; Dimension 27,5 x 21 cm

**49,00 EUR**

## Attention Construction Site!



### Climbing and Nature Conservation in the North - as of November 2024

#### Area topics

- **Bodensteiner Klippen / Ostlutter: Development**

The area is being further developed. Climbing is rated positively on site. There are currently around 150 new routes and projects. Stephen and Arne Grage are happy to pass on a topo pdf.

- **Bad Bentheim / Steinbrüche: Development**

In July, 14 routes were set up on the quarry walls at the parking lot of the open-air stage near the Dutch border on private land. The regional association of the DAV has assumed liability. The city's tourism association welcomes the initiative. Information and topo on the DAV-Nord website.

- **District of Holzminden / Ecological Station**

The Ecological Station Oberes Wesertal (ÖNSOW) is responsible for collecting breeding data on eagle owls in southern Lower Saxony. The climbers' bird protection group plays an important role in fencing off and monitoring.

- **Ith NSG: Amendment of NSG Ordinance**

The 2009 ordinance is expected to be amended in 2025 with public participation. In the district of Holzminden, the climbing regulations will remain in place, including the "unclear" ones on the central Ith.

- **Ith / Northern Ith NSG / Bisperode**

The UNB Hameln-Pyrmont has initiated an area swap for a block solution. As a result of joint inspections, insignificant climbing crags will be closed at the end of 2024 and three restricted zones will be designated, including the eagle owl breeding ground. In return, areas of Zone 2 and 1 on climbed crags will be reclassified as Zone 3. All in all, this is a win-win solution, which is also welcomed by the landowner, the Bisperode manor. Information signs will be put up by the district. The new zones will be published on the IG and DAV website as soon as they are in force.

- **Ith / Central Ith NSG / Dohnsen**

On our initiative, the district has asked the landowner whether he is willing to lease or sell the elephant bellies. Unfortunately, there was no interest. The current "unclear" regulation is to remain in place as part of the new Ith regulation.

- **Ith / Southern Ith NSG / Lüerdissen**

As the eagle owl has not bred for several years, the closure period will be extended for five years to the fall mating season from 1.11. at the request of the nature conservation authority.

A path construction campaign took place at the DAV-Nord 2024 Whitsun youth camp, and the IG Klettern / EPZI summer festival with a climbing program and four bands took place in August.

The JDAV is sounding out the costs, funding etc. for the renovation of the DAV road to the campsite. At the end of October, the fire department entrance to the Kammweg was enlarged.

- **Harz / Okertal LSG: Forest Dieback, Rockslide, Trail Construction**

In some parts, the state forestry has cleared the deadwood. In others, the forest has been taken out of use and left to natural dynamics; some paths are no longer permanently accessible. Mountain bikers have created four trails between the rocks that can be used as alternative access points. We have cleared the access to some of the rocks. The updated guide will reflect the changed trail situation.

A rockfall at the summit of the Treppenstein destroyed the railing on the hiking trail. We have cleared the area and the Harzklub Oker has built a new railing. Another safety fence will be erected over the main road at Rabowklippe, which has already been blocked for road safety reasons.

- **Harz / Römerstein NSG: Signage**

At the request of the UNB Göttingen, we have designed climbing regulation signs for the main access points.

- **Göttinger Wald / Helletal LSG**

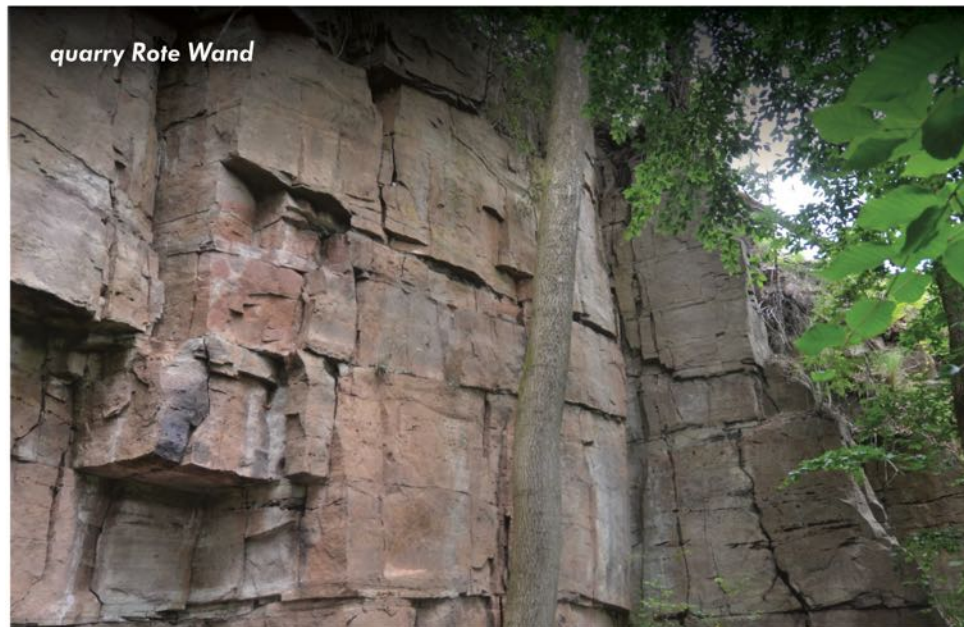
Following a site inspection, the UNB granted permission to hold an event at the DAV hut on the Pfeilerwand in 2025 during the bird protection closure period, provided there is no breeding. This is a first step towards a flexible approach to closures, which has not previously existed in the Göttingen district.



The DAV hut on the Pfeilerwand

# IG-NEWS AND UPDATES

## Attention Construction Site!



### • Selter NSG / Amendment of NSG Ordinance

The ordinance for the Selterklippen NSG is being amended with public participation. According to the LK, it is not yet clear when. The management plan for the FFH area drawn up at the end of 2022 recommends that climbing should continue to be banned. The district of Northeim decided in April 24 not to allow climbing again. It was agreed with vegetation expert Hjalmar Thiel to revise the 2008 report in order to have a basis for negotiations or legal disputes in terms of nature conservation, provided the district agrees. This was recently rejected after several requests.

### • Northern Selter / Imsener Klippen LSG

The area was closed by the UNB Hildesheim in 2021 at the request of the landowner. The UNB does not wish to have a vegetation survey of the cliffs carried out at the expense of the climbing associations.

### • Solling / Rote Wand quarry near Boffzen

15 old routes have been renovated and six more have been set up. Climbing is currently prohibited at the request of the Landesforsten due to an eagle owl breeding site nearby. Our aim is to find a flexible closure solution; further talks are to take place.

### • Solling / Town of Dassel / Further quarry

The terms of use for a previously unclimbed quarry have been clarified with the town of Dassel and the state forestry authorities. Development is to begin once the contract has been signed.

### License Agreements with Landowners

In contracts with the state forestry authorities and private forest owners, IG Klettern and DAV assume the duty to ensure public safety for the access routes to the crags, and in individual cases also for crags and pitons. The contracts guarantee us the right to climb and release the landowners from liability. Contracts exist for these areas:

- Southern Ith (Landesforsten 2013, 2022, supervision IGK / JDAV / DAV Hameln)
- Göttinger Wald / LSG Leinebergland (Landesforsten 2019, supervision DAV Göttingen)
- Göttinger Wald / Hauwand, Schaukelwand, Faulenseewand (private land 2022, DAV Göttingen)
- Thüster Berg / Levedagser Klippen (Landesforsten 2020, care of IGK and DAV Hannover)
- Südharz / Sösesteinbruch (Landesforsten 2020, care of DAV Landesverband)

An agreement with the landowner of the Bisperoder Klippen is in preparation.

### Commission for Restoration and Safety

Auch 2024 wurde Bohrhakenmaterial in erheblicher Anzahl zur Sanierung und Erschließung im heimischen Fels platziert.

### Bird Conservation

In Lower Saxony, around 50 pairs of peregrine falcons breed on buildings, masts, cliffs and quarries. Around two thirds of the broods are successful, with an average of 60 to 70 breeding birds fledging. Unfortunately, the cold snap in April led to the abortion of half of the peregrine falcon broods.

# IG-NEWS AND UPDATES

## Attention Construction Site!

300 pairs of eagle owls breed in Lower Saxony, around 95 in the Weserbergland, twice as many as in 2005. 110 young birds fledge on average. Only a few young birds reach adulthood. Nine climbers are currently looking after the breeding sites of the protected rock breeders in cooperation with volunteer bird conservationists.

Eagle owls and peregrine falcons breed on climbing cliffs in the following areas: **Süntel/Hohenstein, Ith/Marienau, Ith/Bisperode, Ith/Lüerdissen, Ith/Holzen, Thüster Berg/Kanstein, Thüster Berg/Marienhagen, Selter/Fredener Klippen, Selter/Imseiner Klippen, Harz/Okertal, Harz/Eckertal, Westharz/Sösesteinbruch, Göttinger Wald/Mariaspringwand, Göttinger Wald/Helletal.**

### Rocks outside Lower Saxony

- **Saxony-Anhalt / National Park Harz: Paternosterklippen**

The redrafting of the trail plan in the national park has been delayed due to overstaffing. Our wish to open up Paternosterklippen, the group at Novemberturm in Ilsetal and Ritter von der Ahlsburg in Eckertal is being discussed internally.

- **Saxony-Anhalt / Harz: Rübeler Zahn**

The 35-metre high crag with 15 routes between 6 and 10 on a fenced-in private property including an old wooden house on the main road outside Rübeland is still for sale (10,000 euros). The climbers have a verbally agreed right of access to the crag. The demolition of the dilapidated part of the building would cost approx. 16,000 euros. The purchase could be made from IG Klettern's own funds and those of other climbers. Unfortunately, the DAV federal association does not provide funding. The nearest section, Wernigerode, does not want to buy the crag because of the unclear financial consequences. The project is on hold.

Unknown persons have removed the plastic windows from the house and stolen them. As a measure against the weather, we want to cover the windows with wooden panels.

### Kooperation

- **Ith / Bisperode Quarry: Deponie Citizens' Initiative / Backfilling as Class 1 Landfill**

Efforts to prevent the storage of building rubble in the Bisperode quarry, including so-called "freely measured" rubble from the Grohnde nuclear power plant, which will be decommissioned in spring 2022, continue. The citizens' initiative is making every effort to prevent the quarry from being backfilled. Britta Kellermann, one of the initiators of the BI, has been a member of the Lower Saxony state parliament as a member of the Green Party since the end of 2022.

### Communication

- **Internet**

The main communication channels are the website of the DAV regional association, IG Klettern and, in the Göttingen area, the DAV Göttingen website. The most important messages are linked to the Facebook groups Klettern in Norddeutschland with 3822 people and Harzer Klippenstürmer with 555 people.

- **North German bouldering site**

Committed boulderers from the Göttingen area have come up with the project idea of a bouldering site for all legal boulders. The technical requirements and resources are being examined.

### Other Topics

- **Membership Development**

As at 11/2024: 590 Memberships incl. families = 814 people.  
Annual fee is 30 Euros.

- **Training 2024: 63 people**

Course formats: From the gym to the rock (mobile belay devices) / multi-pitch / rock habitat

- **Klemmkeil**

1500 print copies, approx. 10,000 downloads.  
Contributions are very welcome!



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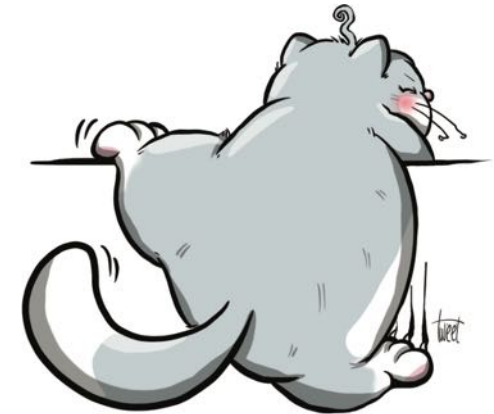
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## DIE BEITRITTSERKLÄRUNG

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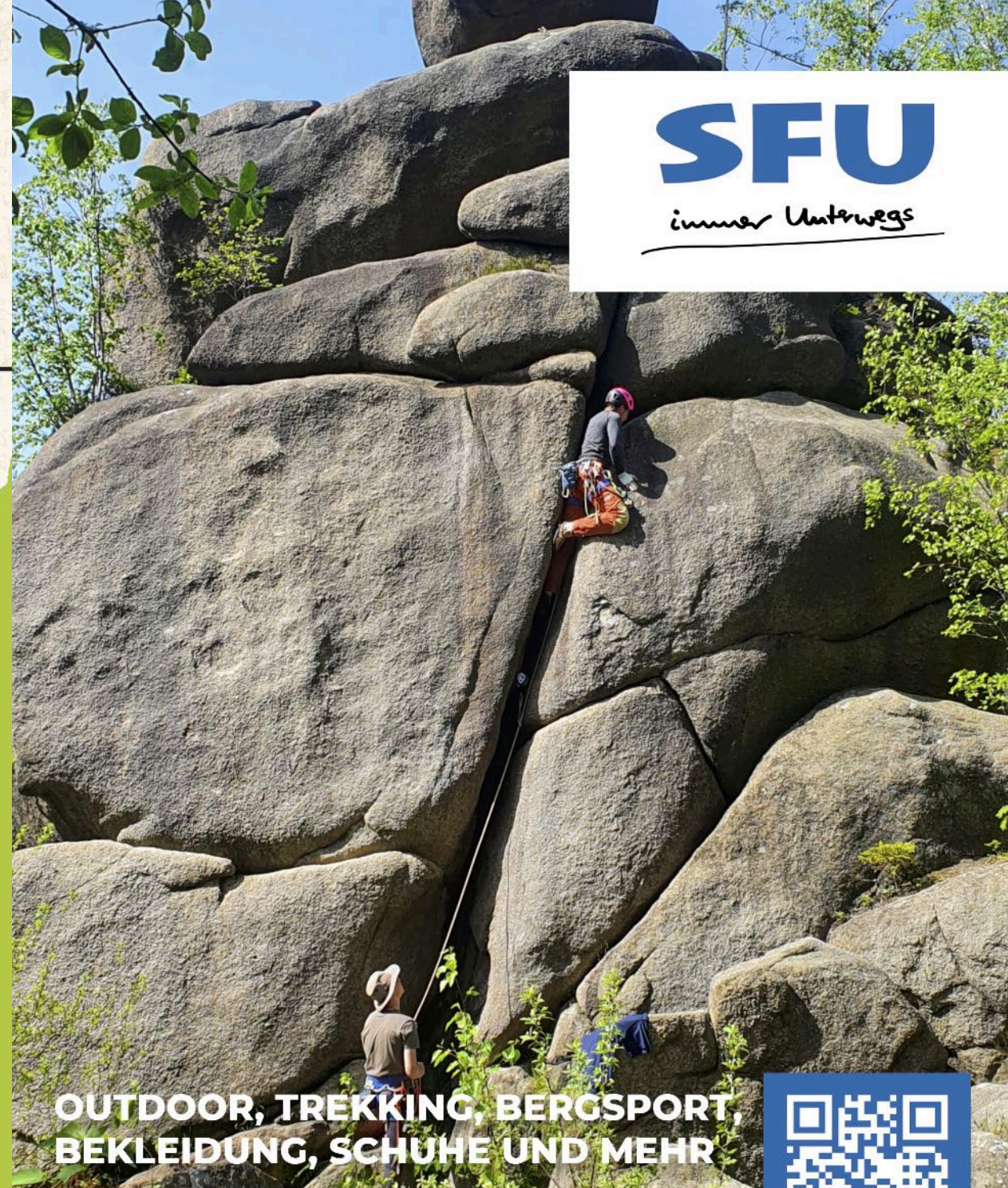


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