

**SKILLS**  
HOW TO... Build a snow  
hole; Use fixed lines; Stay  
safe overseas **p40**

**WINTER GEAR  
GUIDE!**

All the essential kit rounded  
up + the six items that could  
save your life **p74**

# Trek & Mountain

The leading magazine for **trekkers** and **mountaineers**

WINTER SPECIAL

## CMD ARETE

AND 9 OTHER AMAZING **WINTER RIDGES** TO TRY **P26**

**PLUS**

MAKALU BASE CAMP TREK  
WILL COPESTAKE INTERVIEW  
ACONCAGUA PROFILE  
AND MUCH MORE

ISSUE 96  
JAN/FEB 2020  
£4.95



9 772042 249075

01>





# We are the strivers for perfection.

 **Rab**<sup>®</sup>  
THE MOUNTAIN  
PEOPLE

---

Everything we make is designed by  
climbers, for climbers. Each piece  
is crafted by peak and crag to give  
you absolute protection, comfort and  
mobility when you really need it.

[WWW.RAB.EQUIPMENT](http://WWW.RAB.EQUIPMENT)



**Address:** Trek & Mountain Ltd,  
Rangeview Court, Farnham Trading  
Estate, Farnham, Surrey GU9 9NP  
**Tel:** 0117 230 6085 (Editorial and  
Advertising), 01202 586 848  
(Subscriptions)  
**Email:** info@trekandmountain.com  
**Web:** www.trekandmountain.com

## THE TEAM

### Editor/Publisher

Chris Kempster  
(chris@trekandmountain.com)

### Art Editor

Kevin Lowery  
(kev@trekandmountain.com)

### Sub Editor

Amanda Travis  
(amanda@trekandmountain.com)

### Mountaineering Editor

Will Harris  
(will@trekandmountain.com)

### Gearhead Editor

Jon Doran  
(jon@trekandmountain.com)

### Technical Editor

Alun Richardson  
(alun@trekandmountain.com)

## CONTRIBUTORS

### Editorial

James Cruikshank, Kathi Habermann,  
Will Harris, Pete Hill, Will Legon,  
W.H. Murray, Alun Richardson, Paul  
Smith

### Photography

Will Copestake, James Cruikshank,  
Kathi Habermann,  
Alun Richardson

### Cover image

Alun Richardson

### Printing

Stephens & George

### Distribution

Warners

### Licensing enquiries

licensing@trekandmountain.com

### Thanks to...

Vertebrate Publishing, Will Copestake,  
Will Legon at will4adventure.com

## VISIT US ONLINE

Website:

[www.trekandmountain.com](http://www.trekandmountain.com)

Twitter:

@trekandmountain

Facebook:

trekandmountain

Youtube:

[www.youtube.com/trekandmountain](http://www.youtube.com/trekandmountain)

Instagram:

trekandmountainmagazine

### ©Copyright 2020 Trek & Mountain

While every effort is made to ensure the advice  
and information printed in this publication is  
accurate, the publishers cannot be held liable  
for any damage of any nature arising from the  
information printed or by the activities  
undertaken by readers of the magazine.

# Welcome



➔ Welcome to our winter special – and the first issue of the new decade! This winter has been pretty patchy so far – both at home in the UK and in the Alps – but this only makes it even more special on days when it all comes together. There's nothing better than when the sky is blue, the snow is crisp, and your route affords you stunning views of the surrounding mountains, and because you've battled the elements on so many other days, you appreciate these days

even more! And what better way to spend days like these than on one of Scotland's many magnificent ridges, such as the CMD Arete (p26) or one of the nine other ridges we've chosen in this month's cover feature?

The flipside of winter, of course, is that the risk factor increases significantly, so we've included some skills that could prove vital in our Skills section (p40) and a run-down of all the essential kit you need in the winter mountains on page 74 – hopefully this will help make

you that bit safer when heading out into the cold. Elsewhere in the issue we have an interview with former Scottish Adventurer of the Year, Will Copestake (p52), an excerpt from W.H. Murray's autobiography on page 18, and an account of a trek to Makalu Base Camp on page 60.

Enjoy the issue and stay safe!



**Chris Kempster**  
Editor/Publisher

## THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS

Our expert contributors this month include...



**W.H. MURRAY**  
W.H. Murray (1913-1996) was a mountaineer and writer who was most active before the Second World War and took part in several Himalayan expeditions in the 50s. He later campaigned for protecting Scotland's wilderness areas.



**ALUN RICHARDSON**  
A British Mountain Guide for over 30 years, Alun has led treks and expeditions all around the world. He was part of the successful Gurkha Everest Expedition in 2017, and he is also in demand as an outdoors photographer.



**WILL LEGON**  
A hugely experienced outdoor instructor, Will runs a range of outdoor courses including rock climbing, navigation and first aid, as well as leading overseas treks from Europe to South America. Find out more at [www.will4adventure.com](http://www.will4adventure.com)

## NEVER MISS AN ISSUE

**Subscribe online at:**

[www.trekandmountain.com/subs](http://www.trekandmountain.com/subs)

**PHONE:** 01202 586 848

**EMAIL:** subs@

[trekandmountain.com](http://trekandmountain.com)

**POST:** Trek & Mountain  
Subscriptions, Select  
Publisher Services Ltd,  
PO Box 6337,  
Bournemouth BH1 9EH



NO PLACE TOO FAR™



Hervé Barmasse | Domo Blanco summit | Patagonia  
Ph: Paolo Sartori

FAST,  
LIGHT,

# RIBELLE LITE.



RIBELLE LITE OD



RIBELLE LITE OD WMN

Lightweight boot for fast and light technical mountaineering and via ferrata. Innovative upper and sole construction system to obtain an ergonomic fit and maximum performance synergy.



## Features

### 18 The Evidence of Things Not Seen

In an extract from his autobiography, *W.H. Murray* describes crossing the Khumbu Icefall for the first time in 1951

### 26 Cover Feature: Carn Mor Dearg Arete

*Alun Richardson* describes a winter traverse of one of the very finest ridges in Britain

### 52 The Interview: Will Copestake

We speak to the Scottish adventurer about trekking and kayaking in Patagonia, Iceland, New Zealand and the Highlands

### 60 Makalu Base Camp

With teahouses now available on the route, a trek to Makalu Base Camp is a great option for independent trekkers, according to *Kathi Habermann* and *James Cruikshank*



## Gear

### 70 Gear News

The latest stories from the world of outdoor clothing and equipment

### 72 First Look: Rab Ladakh GTX Jacket

*Jon Doran* tries out a versatile new Gore-Tex mountain shell from Rab

### 74 Gear Guide: Winter Mountaineering

*Will Harris* gives a run down on all the kit you need for the British

winter, including recommendations for specific makes/models of kit

### 84 Tested: Petzl Nomic

*Will Harris* tries out the latest version of Petzl's popular ice and mixed climbing axes

### 84 Tested: Mountain Hardwear Alpine Light 35

*Amanda Travis* shoulders a highly-spec'd mountain pack

### 85 Tested: Montane Prism Jacket

*Chris Kempster* does an update of the classic insulation piece

72



### 85 Tested: Alpkit Jeanius Jeans

*Chris Kempster* kicks back with some comfy trousers for bouldering and casual use

### 86 Six of the Best: Winter Survival Gear

We choose six essential items for staying warm and safe in winter conditions





## Regulars

### 10 Trailhead

Our action-packed front section, including: Fjällräven Classic UK, Exped News, and Talks & Events

### 16 Summit

Send in your best mountain pix for a chance to win a great prize

### 24 Subscribe

Subscribe to *Trek & Mountain* and receive a free Leatherman multi-tool

### 38 Trek Directory

Trekking and expedition companies to consider for your next trip

### 88 Back Issues

Missed an issue? Complete your *Trek & Mountain* collection here

### 89 Next Month

A sneak peak inside the next edition of *Trek & Mountain*

### 90 Peak Profile: Aconcagua

Profile of the highest peak in the Southern and Western Hemispheres



## Skills & Advice



**40 Knowledge:** Climbing on fixed ropes  
On some expeditions you'll be required to ascend and descend fixed ropes – here's our guide to doing it safely...



**42 Trek Basics:** Part 3 – Staying safe  
*Will Legon* continues his series with a look at what you can do to avoid trouble, and what to do in the case where you can't



**46 Masterclass:** Snow Holes & Shelters  
The ability to make a snow hole or snow shelter could literally save your life in winter – here we show you some options



# THE PERFORMANCE EDGE

"There is nothing ahead, beside,  
or behind me. Only the ground  
underneath my feet and the sound of  
my laboured breath as I pump my legs  
up the mountain, now with no way of  
knowing how far it is to the top."

**JON GUPTA** | *Alpine Athlete*

Follow us



 **MONTANE**<sup>®</sup>  
FURTHER. FASTER.<sup>®</sup>  
[montane.co.uk](http://montane.co.uk)





ellis**brigham**  
**MOUNTAIN**  
**SPORTS**

**LIVE.  
BREATHE.  
OUTDOORS.**

ELLIS-BRIGHAM.COM | SHOPS NATIONWIDE





**OUR MISSION: TO INSPIRE & EQUIP YOUR OUTDOOR ADVENTURES**





# FJÄLLRÄVEN CLASSIC COMES TO UK

Swedish outdoor brand's trekking event will  
be held on 9-11th July in the Cairngorms

2020 will be an exciting year for Fjällräven as the Swedish brand hosts the first ever Classic UK in Scotland's wild and awe-inspiring, Cairngorms National Park. Taking place this summer from the 9th–11th of July, the new route is part of an initiative by the brand to extend its legendary Classic trekking events across the globe and enable outdoor enthusiasts all over the world to discover the joys of being out in nature.

Fjällräven's passion for trekking is real. What essentially started with Fjällräven founder Åke Nordin inviting groups of people to experience the outdoors with his new functional, durable clothes and equipment in the 1970s, stayed with the brand, developed and grew to become the first Fjällräven Classic event in Sweden 2005. Since then, the event has expanded and now eight Classic events across the world will see thousands of nature-lovers strapping on their backpack and experiencing the joy of a self-supported, multi-day trekking adventure.

Held in one of the UK's most remote and dramatic landscapes, the Classic UK aims to demonstrate that you don't need to travel far and wide to spend time outdoors. The event's 60km route is one of contrasts. Stretching from the manicured parklands of Blair Castle in Perthshire, through dense woodlands and into steep valleys surrounded by some of Scotland's most iconic mountains. Finishing at Glenmore, the

journey won't always be easy, but the sense of achievement participants will enjoy when reaching the end will make it well worth the effort. With everything you need on your back, it's a chance to live simply, walk at your own pace and reconnect with nature. As with all Classic events, Fjällräven will support participants to make the most of their trip. There will be experts at various checkpoints along the route where walkers can get advice, restock with food and gas and even enjoy the odd treat. With the logistics taken care of, participants are able to enjoy and make the most of this incredibly memorable trek of a lifetime.

Tickets for Classic UK will go on sale on 23rd January at 9am. As places are limited, people will have 12 hours on the 23rd to register their interest after which tickets will be randomly assigned and those selected will receive an email with a link to buy tickets. Tickets not purchased within 12 hours of the email being sent will then be offered to the next person on the list.

Trek & Mountain was lucky to attend the Classic in Sweden in 2015, and if the UK event is anything like as friendly, well-organised and well-supported as the Swedish event, it will be a huge success. Good luck everyone! 

**More info on the Fjällräven Classic UK at**  
**<https://classic.fjallraven.com/uk/>**











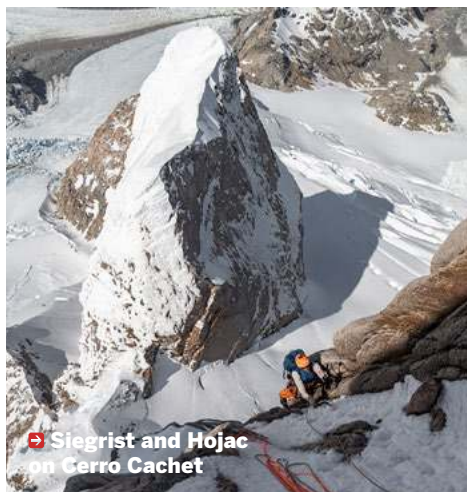
## EXPEDITION NEWS

# SUCCESS IN PATAGONIA AND HIMALAYAN WINTER UPDATES

➔ Mammot Pro Team athletes Stephan Siegrist and Nicolas Hojac have completed the first ascent of the northeast face of **Cerro Cachet** in Patagonia. The peak has only been climbed twice before, and never by the northeast face. Siegrist and Hojac rated the most difficult part of the mixed route M7+.

Alex Txikon, together with a large team, reached base camp at the foot of **Ama Dablam** (6848m) and are now preparing to start the climb, weather permitting. The climbers and a trekking group reached base camp at 4600m, safe and healthy, after enjoying six days of trekking in great weather. Contrary to Alex's previous winter expeditions up the Khumbu valley, they have found the trail covered in snow from Namche Bazaar, at about 3400m. The snow-covered terrain has allowed Alex and the team to put into practice one of the lessons learnt last winter on K2. "In just four hours, we've built an igloo for the night," Alex announced. "They are not so easy to build, but I'd say we're kind of experts by now." He said, "While some of our climbing mates shivered as the night fell, we enjoyed a constant -2 degrees C inside the igloo."

Txikon is planning on climbing Ama Dablam, then heading to **Everest** for his third attempt of a winter summit. Also attempting Everest



is Jost Kobusch who is attempting to solo the West Ridge without supplementary oxygen and no Sherpa support. He is back at base camp after reaching the Lho La Pass at 6146m.

Mingma Gyalje Sherpa's Imagine Nepal team are attempting **K2** with no Os. In the last update from Mingma, they had arrived at Broad Peak base camp, taking longer than expected due to deep snow. The team were heading to K2 base camp the following day. Denis Urubko

is looking to complete what he considers to be the first true winter ascent of **Broad Peak**. The first winter climb took place in March 5, 2012, but Urubko believes that a climb must be completed by 28th February – the meteorological end of the winter season – in order to count as a winter climb. So far, the team have reached 6650m. There is a possibility that he may head to K2 after Broad Peak.

Simone Moro and Tamara Lungar have officially ended their expedition to **Gasherbrum I** in the Karakoram. The team had planned to climb Gasherbrum I, descend to the Gasherbrum La, and possibly head to Gasherbrum II if conditions permitted. However, after Lungar successfully crossed a crevasse in the icefields at the base of the mountain, the snow bridge collapsed under Moro's feet causing him to fall 20 feet into the crevasse. Lungar was pulled to the edge of the crevasse, and with the rope wrapped around her hand – causing excruciating pain – she was able to hold him while he secured an ice screw, preventing them both from falling deep into the crevasse. Moro was able to free himself after two hours, after which they returned to base camp where they were both evacuated by a Pakistani military helicopter to Skardu for medical checks.

## GADGET OF THE MONTH

### PowerTraveller Kestrel 40 £99

A solar panel/battery combo for the outdoors

#### WHAT IS IT?

The PowerTraveller Kestrel 40 combines a 12-watt foldable solar panel with a 10,000mAh battery in a compact package that weighs a bit over half a kilo and has a footprint of 260mm x 155mm (folded). It offers two 5V USB outputs and can charge devices such as smartphones, tablets,



GPS units, headtorches, action cameras and more.

#### HOW DOES IT WORK?

There are two ways to charge up the Kestrel's battery: either via the solar panel, which has a handy stand for finding the best angle to harvest the sun's rays; or via a mini-USB to USB lead which plugs into your computer or USB wall plug. There are four LEDs which show you how much charge is in the battery, and charging up your devices is as easy as plugging them into one of the Kestrel's two USB ports.

#### WHAT WE LIKE?

No-one likes carrying more devices than they need to when on a trek or expedition (or even a weekend away) so having a combined battery and solar panel is a definite boon. The Kestrel 40 is also impressively compact, with its slim depth in particular – even when folded – making it easier to pack than a chunky battery. The four eyelets and two supplied karabiners enable you to attach it to your pack for charging on the move, and the dual USB outputs mean you can charge two devices at once.

#### WHAT WE DON'T LIKE?

Although the Kestrel 40 feels well-made and capable of standing up to a fair bit of abuse, you must be a bit aware of dust and water ingress, as the unit has an IPX6 rating rather than the IPX7 rating of stalemates such as the Extreme solar panel and battery. It can deal with splashes of water but don't submerge it or else you risk permanent damage to the unit.

#### WHERE TO GET IT?

The Kestrel 40 is available to purchase online at the manufacturer's website: [www.powertraveller.com](http://www.powertraveller.com)



# MOUNTAIN BOOTS HANDCRAFTED WITH PASSION

BORN IN BAVARIA – WORN AROUND THE WORLD



[WWW.HANWAG.COM](http://WWW.HANWAG.COM)



## HANWAG TATRA WIDE II GTX

A wide-fit version of our most popular trekking boot, the lightweight and stable Tatra II Wide has a little extra space around the toebox for optimum comfort. Ideal for multi-day treks through varied terrain. Fully resoleable and made in Europe.



## TALKS &amp; EVENTS

## Edinburgh Mountain Film Festival

February 15-16

➔ After a two-year break, the Edinburgh Mountain Film Festival (EMFF) is returning to the Gordon Aikman Lecture Theatre in Edinburgh. Sure to catch the eye are films featuring very young and very old athletes: a posse of young mountain bikers from Whistler; a 4-year-old skier on the slopes of Aonach Mor at Nevis Range; and 97-year-old runner George Etzweiler, among others. Of course, there are also athletes in the 'expected age bracket' doing incredible things: a female climber scales apparently blank rock faces using holds the size of a pinhead, without ropes; the parkour athletes, on a stomach-lurching rooftop race in Paris; a blind man attempts to lead-climb the Old Man of Hoy sea stack on Orkney. The festival also welcomes three speakers to the stage: Jenny Graham recounts her world-record breaking unsupported cycle around the world; Anna McNuff after her 2,620 mile barefoot run through Britain; and Leon McCarron shares his 1,000 mile walk through the heart of the Holy Land.

**More info:** [www.emff.co.uk](http://www.emff.co.uk)



## Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour

18 January – 26 May

➔ The Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour is back for 2020, bringing a brand-new selection of gripping action and adventure films to venues in the UK and Ireland. Film highlights include: 'Spectre Expedition – Mission Antarctica', an epic tale of Leo Houlding and his teammates' attempt to reach the summit of one of the most remote mountains on earth; and 'The Ladakh Project' that follows French athlete Nouria Newman as she tackles a 375km solo kayaking expedition down the most remote and daunting rivers in the Indian Himalaya. The film 'Up to Speed' puts a spotlight on the extraordinary discipline of speed climbing, featuring in the Olympic Games for the first time ever at Tokyo 2020. As well as thrilling films, each event features a free prize draw for exciting outdoorsy goodies from the tour partners.

**More info:** [www.banff-uk.com](http://www.banff-uk.com)

## Kendal Mountain Festival Film & Speaker Tour February 6 – June 19

➔ To celebrate its 40th anniversary, Kendal Mountain Festival is expanding its popular UK Tour to 40 dates, including – for the first time – several venues in Ireland. Alongside a selection of the world's best adventure films, each tour date features top speakers with headliners including Jenny Graham, the fastest women to cycle round the world; Jason Mallinson, a member of the famous diving team who rescued 12 Thai schoolboys from a flooded cave; endurance athlete Anna McNuff, who ran 4,000km across Britain completely barefoot; and top British alpinist (and *Trek & Mountain* contributor) Tom Livingstone. Each event is hosted by a member of the Festival presenting team, providing exclusive behind-the-scenes insights into the world of adventure filmmaking. Tour sponsors Fjällräven will welcome audiences to each event, and there will be plenty of chances to win prizes from Fjällräven and support sponsors Mountain Equipment and Pala Eyewear.

**More info:** [www.mountainfest.co.uk](http://www.mountainfest.co.uk)



# COLIN PRIOR RECEIVES AWARD

Leading Scottish landscape photographer wins the Scottish Award for Excellence in Mountain Culture

➔ Organisers of The Fort William Mountain Festival have announced that world-renowned photographer, Colin Prior, is the twelfth recipient of the Scottish Award for Excellence in Mountain Culture. Nominated by the public and his peers as a mountain hero who celebrates achievement, accomplishment and the spirit of adventure, Colin joins previous esteemed winners including Andy Nisbet, Dr Adam Watson, Jimmy Marshall, Myrtle Simpson, Ian Sykes, Dr Hamish MacInnes and Cameron



McNeish in the Excellence in Mountain Culture Hall of Fame. As a visionary of landscape

photography in Scotland whose work has been showcased all over the world, Colin Prior (who graced the cover of issue 61 of *Trek & Mountain*, left) is an artist and technician who expertly creates the illusion of three dimensional images. His majestic photographs of the hugely iconic Scottish mountains capture sublime moments of light, colour and land. They are also the result of meticulous research, planning, preparation and skill, often involving repeated trips to the

most inaccessible locations for the precise moment when weather and light conditions perfectly combine at the 'golden hour' of dawn or dusk.

Colin Prior once said of his photography: "To know a mountain is to understand its rhythms and then become part of them. To photograph mountains successfully demands what the Arctic Inuit refer to as 'quinuituq' which translated means 'deep patience' – literally waiting hours for one second, or in my case, years for one second."





**ALPKIT**

Online at [alpkit.com](http://alpkit.com) or available in-store

Main Rd,	100 Lake Rd,	48 Main Street,	Metrocentre,
<b>HATHERSAGE,</b>	<b>AMBLESIDE,</b>	<b>KESWICK,</b>	<b>GATESHEAD,</b>
S32 1BB.	LA22 0DB.	CA12 5JJ.	NE11 9YS.
01433 730 930	01539 454 954	01768 721 287	0191 603 0939

Get ready to win winter with the right layering, whether out to run, hike, bike or climb. Down and synthetic insulated jackets, technical waterproofs, right through to pure merino base layers for that full winter coverage as you continue to...

**#goniceplacesdogoodthings**



# Summit

Send your mountain pix to [summit@trekandmountain.com](mailto:summit@trekandmountain.com) for a chance to win a great prize!



## ← Manaslu trek

**Matt Jones**

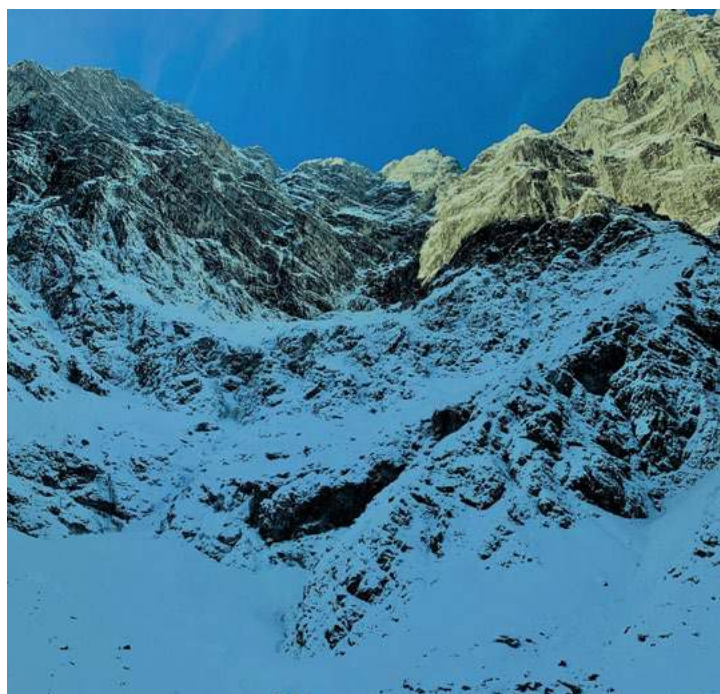
This photo is from my recent Manaslu circuit trek which I found out about from your magazine's 'Where to Trek 2019' article. This night shot was taken in Samagaun on a rest day while trekking around Manaslu, the eighth highest peak in the world (8156m). In the morning, I had walked to a nearby glacial lake with stunning mountain scenery. I spent the afternoon drinking tea and chatting with a local scarf saleswoman. She told me about how she had crossed the Larkya La (5106m), the high point on the circuit, many times and that I would be very cold unless I wore a scarf! I did end up buying a scarf from her and wore it that evening while taking pictures of Manaslu and the Milky Way.

## ↓ Rjukan, Norway

**Chris Blundred**

Here is a photo from my recent ice climbing trip to Rjukan in southern Norway. Climbers travel to Rjukan from all over to climb during the winter months. On this day, it was a particularly

cold morning as we headed out to Krokan. Despite the cold, we began climbing, and it immediately started warming up as soon as we got on the ice, making for a great day!



## ↑ Bavaria

**Rolf Rosenstock**

This photo was taken at the Watzmann East Wall in Bavaria, Germany, also called the Batholomä Wall. It was taken on

the 30th December in the morning during a hike to the Eiskapelle, otherwise known as the 'Ice Chapel'. We travelled there by boat via the Königsee, a stunning natural lake.





## ← Scottish Highlands

Gareth Reilly

"Do you have crampons?" "No." "Winter Gloves?" "No. Whatever you pack, just do it x2." This was the response from my mate on assessing him for our annual winter foray. Nevertheless, it's a good job I have an addiction to eBay and was able to provide the aforementioned items. Our shifts rarely match so whatever the weather, something was getting done. I'd watched the weather report earnestly and my initial plan of doing the Northern Pinnacles was out the window, so I suggested a high camp, followed by the Liathach ridge in the morning. We started at 5am in Glasgow. After driving 230 miles, a hard slog to the bealach, some frantic searching for some level ground before it got dark, boiling some snow, a boil in the bag between two, -9°C weather, and a frozen bum from an inadequate roll mat, needing a pee first thing led me to getting out of the tent. I'm glad I got up and caught this amazing sunrise, an awe inspiring sight that left me genuinely speechless for a good 10 minutes. It was a once-in-a-lifetime moment aided by serendipity and circumstance. It has certainly whet the appetite for future adventures.



## ↓ Snowdon Horseshoe

Nathan Taylor

We had perfect hiking conditions for our Snowdon Horseshoe trip during the last few days of summer. There were light winds and sunshine as we crossed the infamous Crib

Goch ridge which is definitely not one for the faint-hearted. We summited Crib Goch then Snowdon before finishing with Y Lliwedd and headed back to the car park. It took us 6.5 hours, and we ended up with a lovely tan!



## The Prize!

WIN A YEAR'S  
PREMIUM  
SUBSCRIPTION TO



The komoot planning and navigation app for your smartphone promises to 'make your adventures better'. Plan your outings using recommendations from the app and other users, then follow detailed instructions when out on your walk or bike ride.



More info: [www.komoot.com](http://www.komoot.com)



# WHAT IS AVAXHOME?



# AVAXHOME-

the biggest Internet portal,  
providing you various content:  
brand new books, trending movies,  
fresh magazines, hot games,  
recent software, latest music releases.

Unlimited satisfaction one low price

Cheap constant access to piping hot media

Protect your downloadings from Big brother

Safer, than torrent-trackers

18 years of seamless operation and our users' satisfaction

All languages

Brand new content

One site



# AVXLIVE ICU

AvaxHome - Your End Place

We have everything for all of your needs. Just open <https://avxlive.icu>



# THE EVIDENCE OF THINGS NOT SEEN

W.H.MURRAY



→ Muztagh Tower (right),  
first climbed in 1956



## In an extract from his autobiography, W.H.Murray recalls the first crossing of the Khumbu Icefall in 1951 and muses on the first ascent of Muztagh Tower in 1956

When long ago I first thought to write of my life on mountains, I had hopes to regale readers with the more vivid memories, which would naturally include moments of danger, hairbreadth escapes, the suspense of exploration, and their direct opposites when relaxation brings new insights. Always I had tried to keep in mind the principle at the back of Tom Longstaff's words: 'Number your red letter days by camps, not summits.'

Enjoyable as the recall was, I had begun to think near its close that much of it could seem to be a beating about the bush, an evasion of the real issue, which was: what had mountains taught me in the course of a long life? What if anything had I learned of real value – real not just for me but hopefully for others too? I had learned a multitude of things, and have been trying already to set some of them down, both in this book and its predecessors. Two remain outstanding. They are important: enough for a short conclusion to the Himalayan chapters.

The first of these is the value of commitment, and the second, its corollary, that all obstacles are impostors, and none impossible. I will explain these two, but first, let me say that I do know the aphorism, 'Nothing is impossible for the man who doesn't have to do it himself.' The words have a glib ring, spoken perhaps by one who has not yet discovered commitment's secret.

When I began climbing as a young man, one of the first things I had to learn, if only by slow degrees, was a proper irreverence for the pundits of my own country, that is, when they told me, as they did from time to time, that a rock route was impossible, or else 'unjustifiable under snow and ice'. In my early years on Scottish mountains, I began to appreciate the truth of Fridtjof Nansen's words, spoken out of his Arctic travels: 'The difficult is that which can be done at once, the impossible that which takes a little longer.' But I still had to learn their truth more thoroughly.

In 1939 I had found a friend in John Hartog, then a schoolboy of seventeen at Westminster. He told me that ever since he was fourteen his ambition had been to climb one particular peak in the Karakoram – the Muztagh Tower. When he spoke of its

awesome obstacles, his eyes shone. Sella's famous photograph – a telephoto at eighteen miles range from the foot of the Golden Throne – hung on his bedroom wall. I took one look at that monolith, nearly 10,000 feet of unbroken rock – impossible! The thought came to me involuntarily, despite the lessons I thought I knew by heart. Mercifully, I held my tongue and swallowed my laughter. I did not want to embarrass the boy. The North Wall of the Eiger, which had just been climbed, looked by comparison stumpy and practicable. Yet John was no wild-eyed youth. He had common sense and an orderly mind. Behind his glasses were quiet eyes and a quality of stillness. I liked him. He knew already that he had a first-class brain, and seemed able to relax in that awareness. When he grew up, he would act with authority without seeming aggressive – and also, I felt sure, grow out of his Muztagh folly.

Even Tom Longstaff whose opinion I respected before all others had written, 'The Muztagh Tower will remain inviolate.'

The war with Germany carried us off. When we were demobbed, John went to Oxford and soon became president of the Oxford University Mountaineering Club. His boyhood dream was still with him. Sella's photograph still hung on his wall at college, and still I discounted all thought of his acting, for he could not climb to my standard on rock and ice, and I reckoned my standard not equal to his Muztagh. I had not seen his collection of photographs,

taken at other angles.

Two years later, I was climbing with friends in Garhwal and Kumaon. Within a month of our return, China invaded Tibet. That event sharply reminded Michael Ward and me, and Tom Bourdillon, that the old approach to Everest through Tibet being now closed, a new one might be opening: because Tilman, that same autumn of 1950, had been allowed to go up the Khumbu Glacier from Nepal with Houston's American party. A new reconnaissance of Everest from Nepal seemed to us an urgent need. Tilman had photographed its west side from 18,000 feet on Kala Patar, at six miles' range. I asked him what he thought. His reply was unequivocal, characteristically terse: 'Impossible. No route.' Confounded as I felt, I was not unduly dismayed. I knew that no one could say such a thing of any obstacle without rubbing his nose against it, and Tilman's nose was not six miles long.

I am unable to criticise his opinion. Had I not been saying the same thing, inwardly, of the Muztagh Tower? Meantime, the Himalayan Committee of the Royal Geographical Society and Alpine Club backed Tilman. That was hardly surprising. They had read Mallory's report of the Khumbu side (seen from the col east of Pumori):

*'I do not much fancy it would be possible, even if one could get up the glacier ... the western glacier and the slopes above revealed one of the most awful and utterly forbidding scenes ever observed by man.'*

Tilman's emphatic words therefore came as a clincher. The RGS would grant us no money for Everest. So we each agreed to put up £300 of our own, and on that basis I went ahead and organised. The News Chronicle heard of our plan and offered £40,000 on condition that we took along a staff photographer, and a reporter with freedom to write as he chose. We turned that down as likely to generate ballyhoo of a kind we were unwilling to suffer. At the last moment The Times gave £5,000 with no strings attached, but too late to be of practical use – it went not to us to buy

“The News Chronicle heard of our plan and offered £40,000 on condition that we took along a photographer, and a reporter with freedom to write as he chose.”



➔ gear, but to the Himalayan Committee, who later refunded our expenses. Throughout we had good moral support from the RGS.

One month before we set off, Eric Shipton had arrived back from China, where he'd held a consulate. We asked him to lead. No one knew Everest better than he; so it seemed appropriate to give him the position which I happily resigned. He told me that he too had seen Everest's west side from the Pumori Col, and agreed with Mallory and Tilman – no route from the Khumbu – but he would come because he'd love to visit the Sherpas' homeland and here was an expedition already organised and ready to go. I could not help reflecting that if he'd come home from China just a few months earlier, there would have been no British expedition to Sola Khumbu in 1951.

The upshot was, of course, that as soon as we climbed on to Pumori's flank in late September, and looked on to Everest's western flank from 20,000 feet, the route to the south col lay plain before our eyes. Despite the expert's opinions, we had been right.

No less plain rose that major obstacle, the Khumbu Icefall; it looked to us all like a death-trap. Hanging glaciers draped the flanks of both its containing ridges. Judged by alpine standards, the avalanches falling from these must surely rake the icefall from side to side. I could already see that debris scarring the Nuptse wall had shot out to near the icefall's centre. Could we justly ask Sherpas to go there? Doubts filled our minds. But long as we watched and waited, no other ice blocks fell. I then remembered the advice given me by Tom Longstaff when he had first heard of our reconnaissance: 'My guess is that you'll find the ice on the mountain's south-west side much more viscous than that on the north, therefore, less prone to avalanche.'

I mentioned this to Eric. He was naturally uncertain.

We made three probing climbs to search that icy chaos for a safe route through, and in late October began our final ascent of the whole icefall. Nearly a month of dry weather had reduced its snow-cover. It was now in extremely open, rickety condition. The glacier seemed to have been moving down in uncoordinated jerks. Less than two hours up, we came on a badly shattered area, which had greatly changed in the last five days. It looked as if up-heaved and shaken by earthquake. The upper glacier overhung the lower, and between them a great chasm had opened, jammed tight with ice blocks the size of houses. A glassy bridge spanned the nearer part of this chasm. As we roped carefully across, we could feel it trembling beneath our feet. I felt terrified, Shipton too. He muttered to me, 'We shouldn't be here: I agreed. Quite apart from the blue depth

## “As soon as we climbed on to Pumori's flank in late September, and looked on to Everest's western flank from 20,000 feet, the route to the south col lay plain before our eyes.”

waiting below, we feared still more the threat of the Nuptse flanks above.

The farther we went the more tortuous grew the route. The glacier became badly riven with dark cracks running in every direction. When an ice axe was thrust hard through, it was apt to meet empty space. We were not wearing crampons, and glad of it. At one passage through séracs, a giant pillar, as tall as the Tower of Pisa, leaned so far out that we expected to see it topple at any moment. We crept past, holding our breath. At the last, we faced a final wall of ice. After two abortive attempts, a route to the top was cut by Tom Bourdillon. We had made it – the way ahead looked clear to the south col. But not quite: a vast crevasse, 100 feet broad at its narrowest, barred the full breadth of the glacier. We could go no further.

We had won – but hadn't won. It was hard to have come past the difficulties, to be so near the summit ridges and to see the upper mountain clear and beckoning. It looked eminently climbable. We knew now that the mountain would not be ours – not today. But its day would come. I had believed in this way to the summit and we had dispelled the psychological barrier of the inaccessible and the negative attitudes it had engendered. We had climbed up and we had climbed down the impossible!

Gainsaying the pundits we had found the route up Everest. This route would 'go'. We could pass it to our successors. To gain the upper glacier and to make a tolerably safe route for porters up the icefall would need long aluminium ladders and much fixed rope. We could not have foreseen the need for these ladders – hardly a usual piece of mountaineering equipment. But it wasn't a usual route and their absence had stopped us. We were disappointed. At the same time we were triumphant at having found the way and the key to the world's highest mountain – I felt vindicated. In the future a party would come this way bringing with it the necessary equipment to bridge these huge crevasses and they would succeed.

In one long day of nervous tension, we had climbed up and down that icefall without incident. Nothing had fallen from

Nuptse. No sérac had toppled. Longstaff had been right as usual. Subsequent history has shown the whole obstacle – so intimidating on our first ascent – to be like every other, an imposter, not impossible. Nonetheless, it has been one of the mountain's principal killers – not to be underestimated.

In 1953 a large British party duly arrived and, using assault tactics, climbed Mount Everest for the first time. No previous expedition had ever been so well equipped – a gun for lobbing bombs on to unsafe snow slopes to clear the route, walkie-talkies, extendable metal bridges for crossing crevasses, rope ladders. Oxygen apparatus and clothing were of a calibre hitherto unavailable. Stores for the expedition weighed 71–2 tons and 350 porters were required to carry it. Colonel Hunt had planned his expedition with thoroughness, learning from the accumulation of knowledge and experience won in adversity by the climbers of ten previous expeditions – but the judgement and efficiency with which he drew on that knowledge were his own.

At last, a man had stood on the world's summit.

## MUZTAGH TOWER

After that, I ought to have learned my lesson – but my grasp of it still fell short: We live and learn but not the wiser grow. Pomfret's one-line shaft might have been aimed straight at me. Thus, when John Hartog told me that he soon hoped to have time and money to make his attempt on the Muztagh Tower, I gave no positive encouragement. In 1956 Hartog was aged thirty-four and working as a nuclear physicist. He invited Tom Patey, Ian McNaught-Davis and Joe Brown to join his team. That they were able to climb the mountain at short notice that summer, with minimum reconnaissance and no hitches, was due entirely to John's twenty-year research. He had in his possession every known photograph of the mountain from ground and air at every angle. Every written report had been collected, filed and analysed. Never before had an unclimbed peak of the Karakoram been so thoroughly studied by a man trained to research from his youth. His was the first attempt from any nation, yet he knew already that his best approach was by the Muztagh and Chagaran Glaciers, and his most hopeful route the north-west ridge.

At his first try, the twin summits were climbed. There has since been a wrong tendency to give all credit to his companions by reason of their great skills and known names. The truth is, while they all had need of each other, the Muztagh Tower had been Hartog's peak, his the chosen route, his the long-term commitment, and so principally his the first ascent. He was the vital initiator,

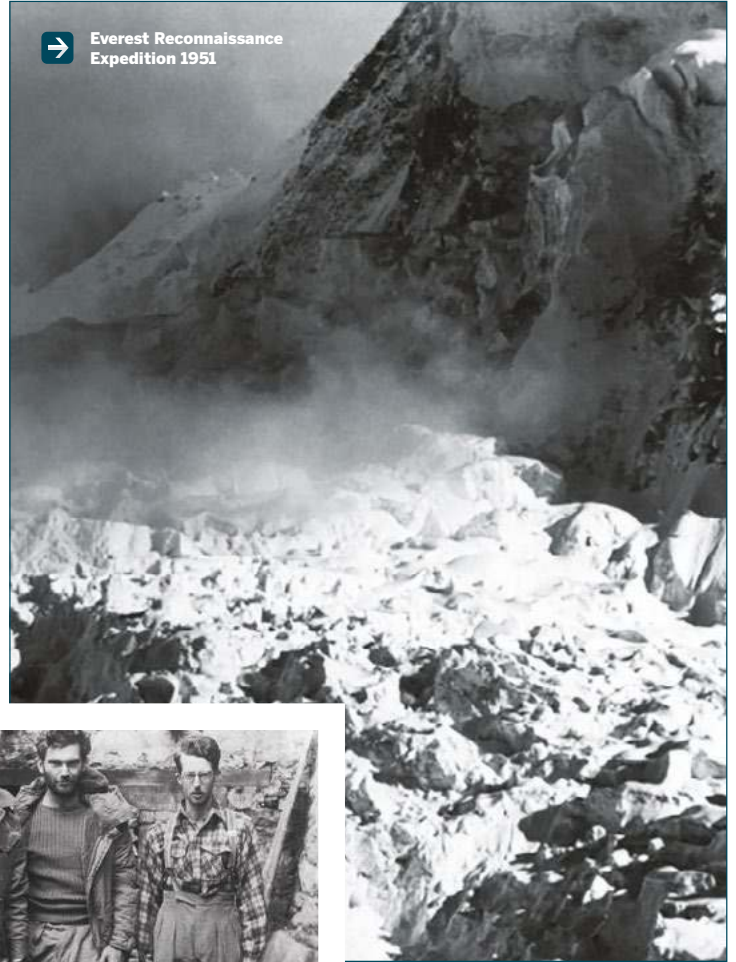




→ Crossing the  
Changri La



→ Everest Reconnaissance  
Expedition 1951



→ Eric Shipton, Bill Murray, Tom Bourdillon,  
Earle Riddiford, Michael Ward and Ed Hillary

→ Everest and Lhotse  
from Pumori



→ W.H. Murray in  
his boathouse







➔ The Khumbu Icefall, first crossed in 1951

➔ the linchpin and energy source in conception. The route as climbed was thought to be technically the hardest done at that time in Asia. It made history for another and better reason: following the ascent of Everest and eight other 8,000-metre peaks by ponderous expeditions, mounted at high cost and manageable only by use of army-type logistics, the Muztagh came as a pointer to the future. It seemed to clear the air. It directed the climbing world's attention to the new goal – not height for its own sake as before, but to high standard climbing on lower peaks done alpine-style by small, swift parties and with costs cut from £100,000 or more to £4,000 or less.

The Muztagh story had begun with a schoolboy's dream. John Hartog was so unassuming that I forbore to scoff, but confess I had thought his dream impractical. This is an old, old story, which we all have to keep in mind – that dreams are more potent than reason: that if you can dream a thing

you can attain it too, as often as not. The pages of mountain literature through the years give endless testimony. Dreams are for action.

That truth has a universal application, without limit other than needful time for penetration. When I was young, we dreamed that Everest might be climbed one day without oxygen, and were derided by the physiologists. We dreamed of space travel to the moon and planets, and were derided by the physicists. And so it is on every plane. This year, in a debate broadcast from Oxford University, I heard those who dreamed of man's union with Deity derided by the biologist-philosophers. We may all be slow to learn, but slowest of all are the men of science when they lack vision. I do not seek to abrogate reason, but to raise it. A camel cannot pass through the eye of a needle. Vision can. There are many doors closed in this world to a handicapped man or woman. But for mankind, of which we all are part,

no doors are closed. Ways through will always be found.

That brings me to commitment. When three friends and I thought to make our very first expedition to the Himalaya, we were dreaming in particular of Garhwal and Kumaon, but were not yet committed. Dearly we wanted to go, yet we wondered: Could we raise the money? Dared we jeopardise our jobs? Did we know enough about Himalayan conditions? We dithered and delayed, but not too long. The great change came when with sudden resolve we put down our money and booked a passage to India. A simple but vital act. We were committed. Our change in fortune was then so rapid, much of it through prompt help from members of the Himalayan Club, that I felt moved at the time to set down this record:

'Until one is committed there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of





initiative and creation, there is one elementary truth, ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All kinds of things occur to help one that would not otherwise have occurred. A whole series of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favour all manner of unforeseen incidents, and meetings, and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way. I have a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets:

*"Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it, Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it."*

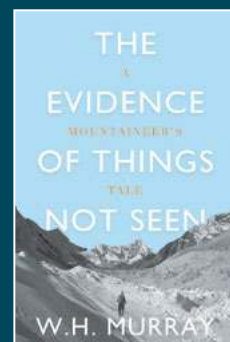
The Himalaya has finally taught me that man, given single-minded commitment, is in the long run not subject to impossible obstacles. **T&M**

## GET THE BOOK...

'The Evidence of Things Not Seen' is the autobiography of remarkable mountaineer, writer and environmentalist W.H. Murray. After being introduced to climbing in his early twenties, Murray's early Scottish climbs were brought to a halt by the Second World War, which saw him spend three years as a Nazi prisoner of war. After the war, Murray complete three Himalayan expeditions,

during which he explored Himalayan peaks never before attempted by Westerners, and established the crucial Khumbu Icefall route up Everest. Written just before his death in 1996, and with a foreword by renowned Scottish mountaineer Hamish MacInnes, this is a must-read for anyone for which the mountains are still a source of wonder.

**'The Evidence of Things Not Seen' is published**



**in paperback and ebook format on 6th February, both priced at £12.99. More info at: [www.v-publishing.com](http://www.v-publishing.com)**





# FREE! LEATHERMAN STYLE CS MULTI TOOL WORTH £38

**...WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE TO TREK & MOUNTAIN\***

RECEIVE **12 ISSUES OF TREK & MOUNTAIN** PLUS A BRILLIANT **LEATHERMAN MULTI-TOOL** FOR AS LITTLE AS £53.46!

➔ *Trek & Mountain* magazine is for anyone who has a passion for playing in the mountains, whether you consider yourself a hillwalker, trekker, scrambler, mountaineer, alpinist, climber or ski tourer – in fact, you may be all of these!

In every issue of *Trek & Mountain* we aim to give you an inspiring and informative mix of editorial, including expedition reports and

destination guides from around the world, in-depth reviews of the latest outdoor gear, and expert advice on all aspects of trekking and mountaineering. Whether you are planning your first trek to Kilimanjaro, or attempting an 8,000m peak in the Himalayas, ticking off the alpine 4,000ers or enjoying classic mountain routes in the UK, there is something for you in every issue of *Trek & Mountain*.

During January and February, when you subscribe to *Trek & Mountain* for 12 issues (two years) you will receive a Leatherman Style CS multi-tool, a brilliant device that is small enough to fit on a keyring yet features six useful tools including a knife, scissors, flat/Phillips screwdriver, tweezers, nail file and the all-important bottle opener! The Style CS weighs just 41g and can be slipped

into your pocket, or clipped to your pack or belt using its built-in karabiner.

So if you want to get the best possible price on *Trek & Mountain*, plus get a nifty outdoor tool into the bargain, sign up today! **T&M**

Go to **[www.whitbyandco.co.uk](http://www.whitbyandco.co.uk)** for more info on the Style CS and Leatherman range.

\*Offer only available to UK subscribers.





## HOW TO ORDER

# 3 EASY WAYS TO ORDER!

**1. CALL US ON 01202 586 848**

**2. COMPLETE AND RETURN THE ORDER FORM (RIGHT)**

**3. ORDER ONLINE AT [WWW.TREKANDMOUNTAIN.COM/SUBS](http://WWW.TREKANDMOUNTAIN.COM/SUBS)**

## BACK ISSUES

# MISSED AN ISSUE?

**COMPLETE YOUR COLLECTION – PRINT & DIGITAL BACK ISSUES PAGE 88**



## SUBS ORDER FORM

CODE: TREK96

**YES!** I'd like to subscribe to *Trek & Mountain* (tick one option below)

- ☐ **12 ISSUES + GIFT** – BY DIRECT DEBIT **£53.46 BEST DEAL!**  
☐ **12 ISSUES + GIFT** – BY CARD OR CHEQUE **£59.40**  
☐ **6 ISSUES (NO GIFT)** – BY CARD OR CHEQUE **£26.73**

### YOUR DETAILS ☐ Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Ms

Name

Address

Postcode

Tel

Email

### GIFT SUB – RECIPIENT'S DETAILS ☐ Mr ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Ms

Name

Address

Postcode

### PAYMENT OPTIONS (Choose one of the three options below)

#### 1. DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENT £53.46

**Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit**

**Please fill in the form and send to:** Select Publisher

Services Ltd, PO Box 6337, Bournemouth BH1 9EH

Service user number **838773**



Name and full postal address of your bank or building society:

To: The Manager, Bank/building society:

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Branch Sort Code

Account number

Reference (Official use only)

#### Instruction to your bank or building society

Please pay Select Publisher Services Ltd Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instructions subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Select Publisher Services Ltd and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society.

Signature

Date

**PLEASE NOTE:** Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account.

#### 2. CHEQUE I enclose a cheque for £59.40 ☐ or £26.73 ☐

(made payable to Select Publisher Services Ltd)

#### 3. CREDIT/DEBIT CARD £59.40 ☐ or £26.73 ☐

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Maestro ☐ Switch

Card number

Expiry date

Valid from

Issue Number

Security Number

Signature

Date

#### RETURN THIS FORM TO:

Trek & Mountain Subscriptions, Select Publisher Services Ltd, PO Box 6337, Bournemouth BH1 9EH.



→ Nearing the top of Carn Mor Dearg, with the CMD Arete leading away to the summit of Ben Nevis





WINTER SPECIAL

# Picture Perfect

Traversing the Carn Mor Dearg Arete on a perfect winter day is one of the greatest experiences the British mountains have to offer, says Alun Richardson...

WORDS & PICTURES: ALUN RICHARDSON





→ The Ben's north face  
from Carn Mor Dearg



**W**ith peaks dressed in their stunning winter coats, interesting and challenging terrain, perfect air quality and the sense of satisfaction as you finally make your way down to the valley at the end of a day – a clear and crisp winter day in the Scottish mountains is hard to beat. Of course, given its changeable

weather, Scotland will often make you wait for days like this, but when all the stars align most would agree that one of these peachy days will make up for all the more challenging ones you are sure to experience.

The day out described in this article is the sort of route that begs the question 'when does winter walking become winter mountaineering?' For many people

winter mountaineering creates images of ropes, helmets, crampons, ice axes, steep slopes and avalanches. Hillwalking, on the other hand, is probably perceived as a less serious activity undertaken in gentler terrain. Therein lies the problem; there may be times when winter walkers think they are only hillwalking when in reality they have stepped into the terrain of the mountaineer. The important distinction is



whether the conditions underfoot and the terrain require ice axe and crampons and the skills to use them.

This long route definitely straddles the fine line between rambling and scrambling, is definitely winter mountaineering, but never enters 'climbing' terrain. It requires steady crampon skills, the ability to move confidently over winter terrain and, for some nervous walkers, a 30m rope would be comforting on exposed sections. It first ascends the stunning East Ridge of Carn Mor Dearg and then continues along what is possibly the grandest ridge walk in the UK – the Carn Mor Dearg arete (CMD arete) – to finally reach the summit of Ben Nevis.

The East Ridge approach is hidden away amongst the wild and desolate scenery of the Allt Daim valley and the blocky crest of the CMD arete offers airy positions and the finest views of Ben Nevis' north face, something the 'pony' or 'tourist' route misses out on completely.

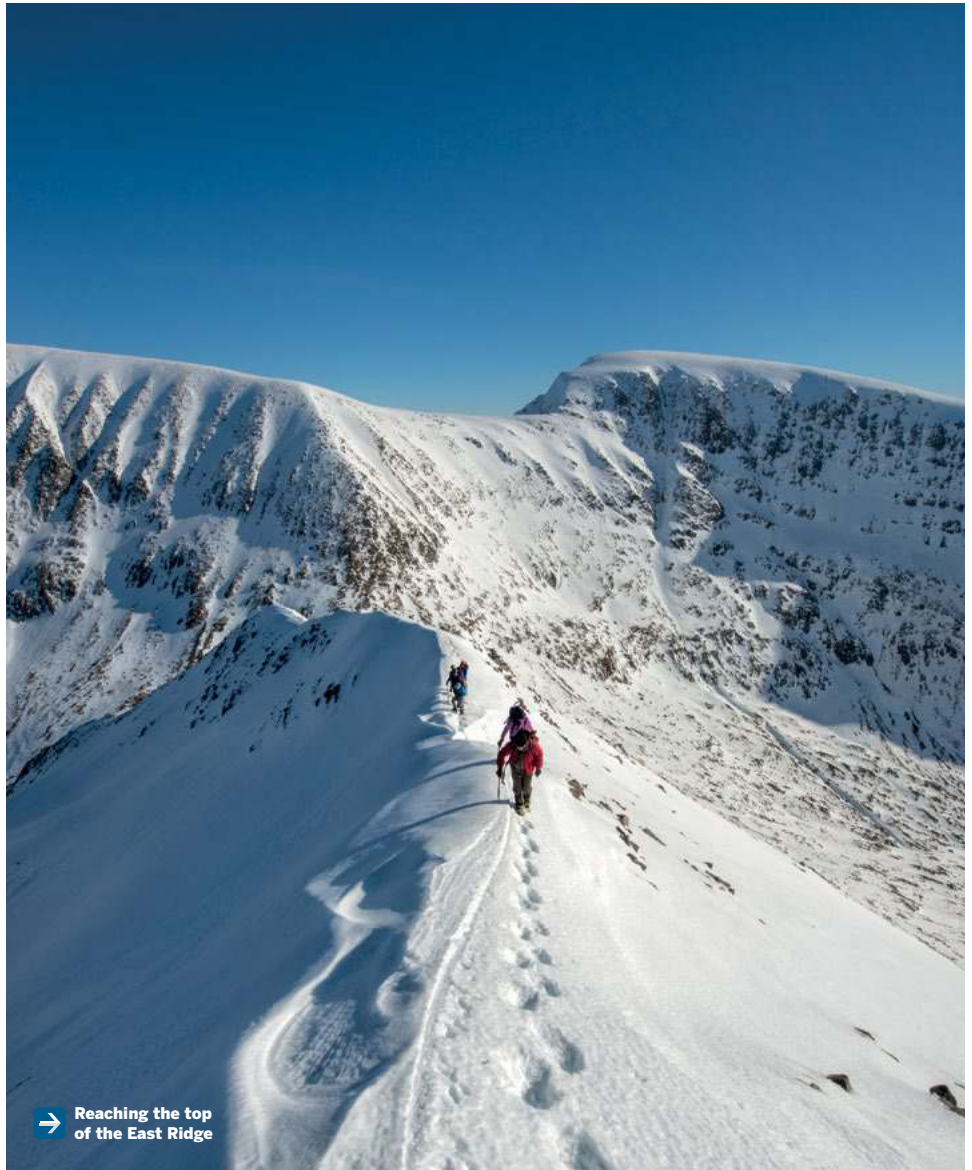
I have extolled the magnificence of this route so there must surely be a downside – and there is, I'm afraid – it is a *big* day out, taking somewhere between 9 and 12 hours! You will of course reach the top of Ben Nevis (1334m), the highest point in the UK. The Ben has an interesting name which is an Anglicisation of the Gaelic name 'Beinn Nibheis'. 'Beinn' is Gaelic for mountain, but 'Nibheis' has a variety of possible derivations ranging from 'malicious' or 'venomous' to 'heaven's clouds' and even 'top of a man's head'. My favourite translation is 'the mountain with its head in the clouds', but those that love it refer to it as simply 'the Ben'. It was not until 1847 that Ben Nevis was confirmed by the Ordnance Survey as the highest mountain in Great Britain ahead of its Cairngorm rival Ben Macdui.

Carn Mor Dearg (1220m) is also no slouch in the height stakes, being the ninth highest mountain in the UK and one of only nine that exceed 4000 feet. Its name roughly translates as 'Giant Red Peak', which is an apt title even if it is dwarfed somewhat by the massive bulk of Ben Nevis across Coire Leis to the west. The red in its name comes from the colour of the sandstone, which is very apparent on the summit ridge – when it is clear of snow, that is.

## WALK-IN OPTIONS

The day before our ascent we did our usual preparations for a day out in the winter hills: checked the weather and avalanche forecasts, coloured in the avalanche prone slopes on the map, recorded important compass bearings, packed our rucksacks and set our alarms for early o'clock.

There are a number of options for 



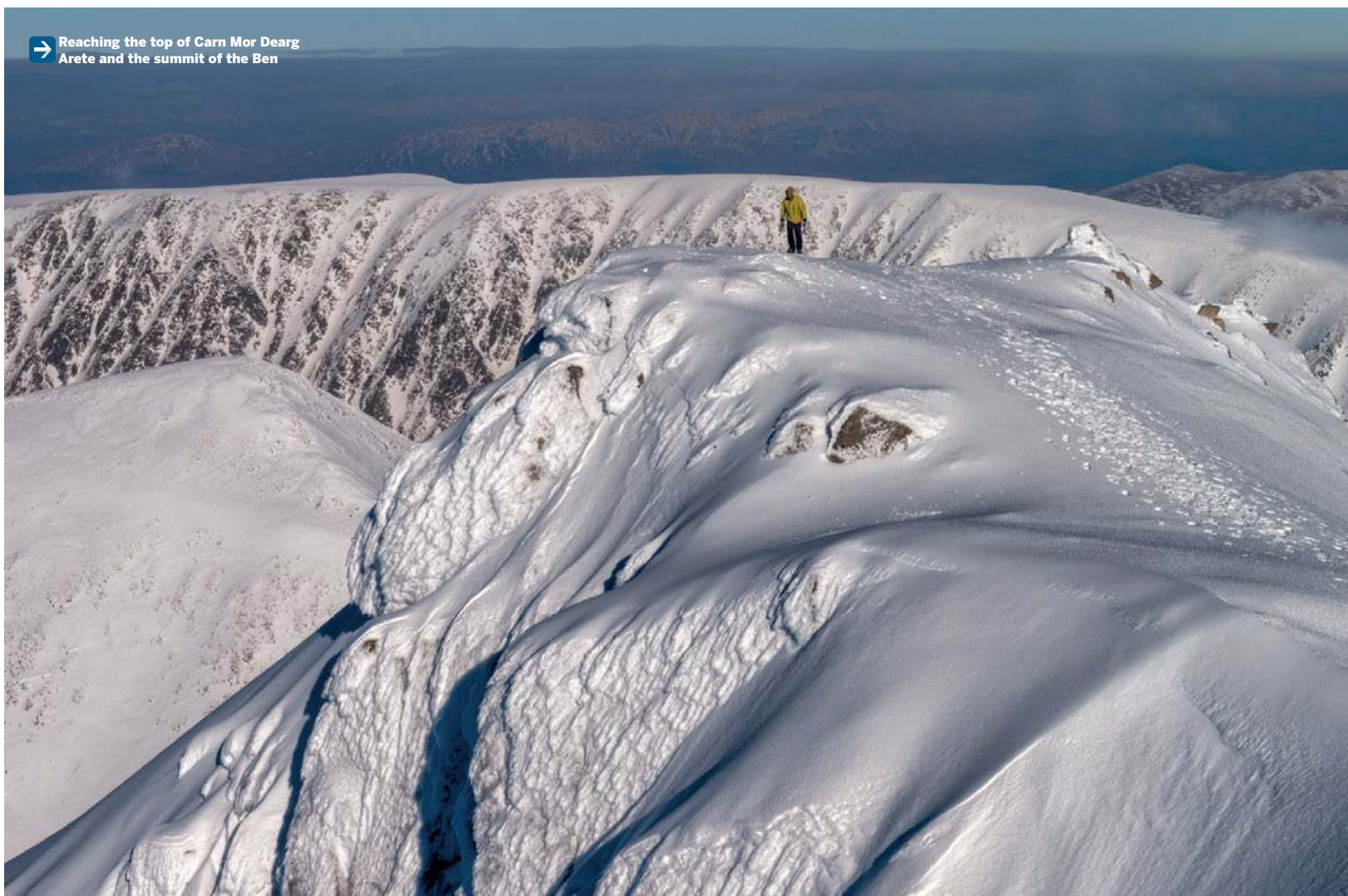
→ Reaching the top of the East Ridge



→ At the top of the East Ridge



➔ Reaching the top of Carn Mor Dearg  
Arête and the summit of the Ben



➔ accessing the East Ridge (we chose the easiest!): there is the traditional long walk from the Nevis Gorge car park at the head of the road up Glen Nevis. Alternatively you can start from the Nevis Ski Range car park 10km from Fort William along the A82 to Inverness. Follow forestry tracks to emerge at a dam (NN 162759) on the west bank of the Allt Coire Guibhsachan, then head to the watershed (NN 187722).

We opted for the one-off (8am prompt), climbers' gondola ride from the Nevis Ski Range (do check it is running by calling 01397 705825/6). If the gondola is unable to operate due to high winds (or for those who prefer to walk!) the same point can be reached within 90 minutes by following a path under the gondola line. I can't deny that ski lifts are ugly, but they are convenient and they are soon lost from sight as soon as you enter the Allt Daim valley. The gondola ride also makes the route a reasonable proposition for mere mortals, especially when daylight is shortened in winter.

The gondola reaches 650m (NN 186756), and from here you traverse southwest for 1km to reach the descent into the Allt Daim valley. Start descending

and as soon as you feel comfortable start contouring the slopes on the left side (true right side) of the river. This can sometimes be time consuming when the snow is deep and soft. As you walk up the valley you will pass three east-facing ridges that drop into Allt Daim, the East Ridge of Carn Mor Dearg being the furthest. For those with a more adventurous bent, the east ridge from Carn Dearg Meadhonach is a grade 2 winter climb and highly recommended.

Either way, you are rewarded by a walk that winds its way up a beautifully-shaped valley to a wild and remote-feeling col. The East Ridge we are interested in rises above the col and there are a number of ways to start it depending on the snow conditions. In itself it is nowhere difficult, but some of the slopes are steep and toward the top it narrows to a fine 'alpine' ridge and steady footwork is needed before reaching the summit of Carn Mor Dearg. Reaching the summit is 'crunch time', the moment when you have to decide to descend the north ridge over Carn Dearg Meadhonach and back to the gondola or to continue along the CMD arête. Your decision will depend on your fitness, the weather and

the conditions underfoot – deep soft snow or icy conditions can make progress slower.

## CMD ARETE

The 1.5km CMD arete is a fine curving line with low technical difficulties (grade 1), making it a fine choice for all fit adventurous walkers. The crest of the arête soon narrows after descending from the summit of Carn Mor Dearg, but if the crest proves too airy for you the difficulties are easily turned. When you reach the head of Coire Leis, steep crags appear which are best avoided by moving to the left of the crest. The views across Coire Leis to the north face of Ben Nevis are breathtaking, with the full extent of the magnificent cliffs laid out before you. We spotted 30+ climbers on the face the day we did the route.

There is no easy escape from the CMD, but if the conditions are good it is possible to descend north into Coire Leis at the lowest point on the traverse. This emergency descent passes to the left of some old broken abseil posts (they may have been removed). In anything but perfect conditions this is a serious way down, steep with avalanche risk, and





when it is icy climbing facing-in may be required. The CMD ridge soon rises quickly to the shoulder of Ben Nevis and the summit plateau of the UK's highest peak. When the weather is good expect to be amongst lots of people who have come up the 'pony track'.

If time allows and the weather is favourable, it is worth taking a few moments on the summit to take in the views and think about its history. The Edinburgh botanist James Robertson made the first recorded ascent on the 17th August, 1771. The summit observatory was built in the summer of 1883 and was in operation until 1904. The meteorological data collected during this period are still important for understanding Scottish mountain weather. C.T.R. Wilson's stint in the observatory was the inspiration for the invention of the 'cloud chamber', so important in discovering quantum particles. The first path to the summit was built at the same time as the observatory and was designed to allow ponies to carry up supplies. The opening of the path and the observatory made the ascent of the Ben



→ On top of the Ben's summit shelter





→ Iconic view of the CMD Arête

→ increasingly popular, all the more so after the arrival of the West Highland Railway in Fort William in 1894.

## DESCENT ROUTES

There are a number of ways down, depending on whether you have left a car, or are catching a bus or hitching a lift back to the Nevis Range car park. They all initially follow the main tourist route. The summit of Ben Nevis is a notoriously treacherous place to be when visibility is poor and your navigation skills need to be

good. To descend safely in low visibility, follow these instructions: from the summit cairn follow a bearing of 231 degrees for 150m; stop here and set your compass to a bearing of 282 degrees and walk in that direction following the odd cairn for just under 1km to reach the top of the zigzag path (if it is visible).

The path eventually crosses the Red Burn before reaching a path junction. From here you can either turn left and follow the main tourist path down to Glen

Nevis, or alternatively turn north-northeast to enter the Allt a Mhuilinn – but bear in mind this can become impossible to cross if swollen. Ford the burn and pick up the outward path on the far side; at the deer fence and car park, descend the road to Torlundy, or for the ski centre follow the forest track which soon cuts right into the woods.

If all has gone to plan, you should have enjoyed a fantastic day in the Scottish mountains, and have a memory to cherish for years to come. [T&M](#)



## THE KNOWLEDGE

CMD ARETE: What you need to know before you go

### PARKING

Park at the ski centre 7 miles north of Fort William - [www.nevisrange.co.uk](http://www.nevisrange.co.uk). If you are leaving a car, park in Glen Nevis, near Cafe Beag and the SYHA hostel or the Ben Nevis Inn.

### CONDITIONS

The ridge is climbable in all winter conditions, but care should be taken in very strong winds.

### EXPERIENCE AND FITNESS

The route is at least 18km, with over 1km of vertical ascent. Expect it to take 9 hours, but it could be a lot more! On top of the usual skills of winter walking such as navigation and avalanche assessment you will need experience of walking on

steep terrain in crampons. Climbing experience is not required, but the ground is blocky and a good sense of balance is needed.

### WHAT TO PACK

50L rucksack, winter boots, warm trousers, three layers, small duvet jacket or extra fleece, balaclava or fleece hat, waterproof jacket and trousers, ski goggles, warm gloves, lightweight survival shelter, food and drink, crampons, one ice axe and an optional 30m walking rope.

### WHERE TO STAY

Inchree Chalets and bunkhouse [www.inchree.com](http://www.inchree.com). Tourist info Fort William (0845 22 55 121); Spean Bridge (0845 22 55 121); Ballachulish (08452 255 121)

Ben Nevis Inn bunkhouse tel 01397 701227. Glen Nevis Youth Hostel tel 0870 004 1120

### GETTING THERE

Fly to Edinburgh, Glasgow, or Inverness, where you can rent a car. Fort William is a 3-hour drive from Edinburgh 2.5-hour from Glasgow or 1.5-hour from Inverness. Fort William also lies on the West Highland line from Glasgow, one of the most picturesque mainline railway lines in the UK.

Numerous bus services are also available from Glasgow, Inverness and Edinburgh, whilst those who live south of the Scottish border can even take a sleeper bus from London. There is a bus service from Fort William to the Nevis Range Ski centre:

[www.travelinescotland.com/welcome.do](http://www.travelinescotland.com/welcome.do)

### GUIDEBOOKS AND MAPS

Maps OS Explorer 392 (1:25,000)  
OS Explorer 399 (1:25,000)  
Harvey/BMC Ben Nevis (1:40,000)  
OS Landranger 41 (1:50,000)  
'Scotland's Mountain Ridges' by Dan Bailey (Cicerone)

### USEFUL WEBSITES

[www.sais.gov.uk](http://www.sais.gov.uk)  
[www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/mountain-forecast](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/mountain-forecast)  
[www.mwis.org.uk/](http://www.mwis.org.uk/)

### FLORA AND FAUNA

In the winter flora and fauna are not so visible, but you may see ravens, snow bunting and mountain hare.





Fiacaill Ridge in the Cairngorms  
(image by Ibex Mountain Guides)

# 9 OTHER GREAT WINTER RIDGES

WINTER SPECIAL

Paul Lewis of Peak Mountaineering picks out nine other classic Scottish ridges to climb in winter, and explains just why they are so good..

## AONACH EAGACH RIDGE, GLENCOE (GRADE II)

One of the most famous (and certainly narrowest) of the mainland ridges and a route with everything. My preference is to head east to west which means, after the initial straightforward scramble up to Am Bodach, a tricky downclimb to access the ridge proper. From there a series of narrow ridges, scrubby ground and stunning views lead, via the Munro top of Meall Dearg, to the end of any difficulties beyond Stob Coire Leith. Finding the safe descent is key, but once down at the road you'll reflect on what a fantastic adventure it's been. Bear in mind that the ridge is inescapable for much of its length, it has a descent that can be tricky to find and follow, the

consequences of slipping off the ridge will be very serious, there are difficulties that can only be overcome with good technical skills and it is a long route that's needs fitness and speed to get it completed in a short winter day. Beyond that, the stunning location in the Glencoe valley, the continually interesting route and its place in Scottish history put it right at the top of every winter mountaineer's 'to do' list.

## NORTH EAST RIDGE OF ANGEL'S PEAK, CAIRNGORMS (GRADE I)

I have only done this once and, although it is really one to be savoured on a clear day, my ascent was in unexpectedly high

winds and with heavy snow falling – it's definitely on the list for a revisit! The NE ridge is a great outing in a remote location and without significant technical difficulty, although it has more challenging ground near the top and parties need to be competent at route finding. My group approached from the main Lairig Ghru path until the fords across the Allt a' Choire Mhòir. From there we crossed the Allt na Lairig Ghru and made our way over rough ground into Garbh Choire. We were on a snow-holing adventure but there is the option to use the Garbh Choire Bothy, although I understand it is in poor condition and you may, of course, find it full anyway. Overall, a great mountaineering outing for those in search of more isolated adventures.







# SUMMER ALPINE COURSES

## TWENTY20



### JAGGED GLOBE – LEADING IN THE MOUNTAINS.

Enjoy an action-packed mountaineering experience with us in the Alps. Our programme of Alpine Courses offers something for everyone, from those wishing to experience the Alps for the first time, through to experienced Alpinists looking to climb Mont Blanc, the Matterhorn or the Eiger.

Our Alpine Courses are also ideal training if you are considering joining one of our expeditions to the *Greater Ranges*.



[www.jagged-globe.co.uk](http://www.jagged-globe.co.uk)



## FIACAILL RIDGE, CAIRNGORMS (GRADE II)

Fiacail Ridge is reached from the Cairngorm ski area and makes a pleasant option for a short day. The walk-in is pleasant and the technical difficulties – although fairly short-lived – are fun and satisfactorily challenging. The ridge is reached by walking below the ski lifts in a westerly direction along the well used path towards Coire an t-Sneachda (watch out for the point where the path splits after about 500m). As the path turns northwards, the broad hump of the Fiacail Ridge, which separates Coire an t-Sneachda and Coire an Lochain, comes into view. Head across open ground and follow the blunt rib towards the more technical ground. Once the ridge is completed a nice loop can be made either towards Cairngorm or around the Coire an Lochain.

## SOUTH EAST RIDGE AND ARETE OF THE COBBLER (GRADE III)

The Cobbler, at 884m, is relatively low compared to some of the peaks in this list. However, it is a majestic mountain with three shapely peaks framing the skyline. It also makes a good stopping off option for those heading up to the north or, indeed, back down to the south. The South East Ridge and Arete is an exciting traverse of the south and central peaks which offers interesting technical ground and, on a clear day, stunning vistas. The route starts at an obvious skyline ridge and what follows is a brilliant line up to the col splitting the peaks. A tricky down climb or abseil accesses the arete that then leads to the summit block. Summit selfies obligatory!



→ T&M Editor Chris on the Forcan Ridge

## LIATHACH, TORRIDON (GRADE II)

Along with the Aonach Eagach and maybe An Teallach, the traverse of Liathach ranks right up there with the most committing of lower grade mainland ridges and, particularly in winter, it is a major undertaking. Liathach lies in Torridon which, although staggeringly beautiful, is an imposing and dramatic landscape which all adds to the drama of the route. The traverse is long, technically intricate and with few escape options – attempters should ensure they have the skills required. Having said that, although sections like the traverse of the Am Fasarin pinnacles can provide brilliant technical scrambling, there are some difficulties that can be avoided by flanking paths. I guarantee that, although the traverse will live in the memory for ever, it will also make you work for those memories!

## PINNACLE RIDGE ON SGURR NAN GILLEAN, SKYE (GRADE IV)

If you have been to Skye and looked at Sgurr Nan Gillean then you will have looked up at Pinnacle Ridge. It's a big route on a big mountain feature on a big mountain – and technically it's the hardest route on this list (although some guidebooks give this grade IV, I would personally say the ridge settles at around grade III in most conditions), but it really does offer an absolutely brilliant mountain day out. Technically interesting ground is interspersed with stunning vistas, ground that parties can move together on and a route finding challenge to find the descent line. It will certainly draw on a broad range of mountain skills as well as the ability to ascend rocky ground in winter conditions and descending from the Third Pinnacle also requires a 20m abseil. Yes, this route really has it all!

## FORCAN RIDGE OF THE SADDLE, GLEN SHIEL (GRADE II)


A traverse of the Forcan Ridge always feels like a classic Alpine day out. Maybe it is the feeling that it is right in the heart of big mountains or maybe it's the terrain – whatever it is, this is a great adventure for those with the required skills. Just driving up the A87 Glen Shiel road sets the scene and, after parking and then following the obvious stalkers' path

around and up on to the summit of Meallan Odhar, a broad ridge leads to the obvious crest of the Forcan Ridge. There is technically interesting ground and a notorious 'bad step' that either needs a confident down climb or abseil, but it won't feel long enough by the time you are reaching the Saddle summit. The Scottish Avalanche Information Service forecasts don't cover this area so care needs to be taken with the snowpack, but this is sure to be a route that long lives in memory.

## CASTLE RIDGE, BEN NEVIS (GRADE III)

Compared to the more sought-after ridges of Ben Nevis, Castle Ridge is prone to being overlooked. However, although it is a steeper winter route with challenging terrain and – in some conditions – potential avalanche danger on the approach, for those with the required skills it offers a fine mountain day out. Approach by following the Allt a' Mhuillinn path towards the Charles Inglis Clark (CIC) Hut and the ridge, which is the first of the great ridges on the North Face, starts from the gully below the large buttress called 'The Castle'. The climbing increases in difficulty as height is gained so don't be fooled into thinking it is an easy option.

## EAST RIDGE OF THE NORTH BUTTRESS OF STOB BAN, FROM GLEN NEVIS (GRADE II/III)

For something a little less well known the East Ridge of the North Buttress, whilst being quite a mouthful, makes a pleasant and fun day out. From the Glen Nevis Youth Hostel the summit cone of Stob Ban is a spectacular feature drawing the eye of the winter mountaineer, and this shapely mountain – at a metre below the one thousander mark – offers a great winter day out. The East Ridge of the North Buttress varies slightly in grade depending on the line taken, but whichever line is taken it still requires good technical and route finding ability. After a rambling but still enjoyable lower section the upper part gets more defined, and what follows is a pleasant corner followed by some lovely knife-edge aretes. The descent back into Glen Nevis, while obviously needing care, is straight forward enough. 







BOOK NOW!



## LEADING IN THE MOUNTAINS

- Mountaineering Expeditions • Guided Climbs
- High-altitude Trekking • Ski Touring • Off Piste Skiing
- Climbing & Mountaineering Courses



+44 (0)114 276 3322 • jagged-globe.co.uk



## Adventure Consultants, the Seven Summits and high altitude expedition company

Join us for superbly run trekking and climbing trips in the Himalaya, European Alps, New Zealand, South America, Africa and polar regions. Guided ascents, Courses, Ski Touring, Ice Climbing in the Alps - Europe and New Zealand.



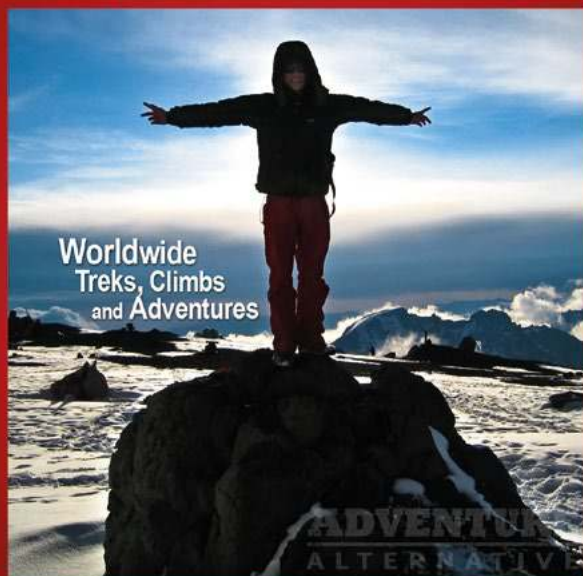
[www.adventureconsultants.com](http://www.adventureconsultants.com)

Ph +64 3 443 8711  
New Zealand



## ADVENTURE ALTERNATIVE

The Responsible Adventure Travel Company



Worldwide  
Trek, Climbs  
and Adventures

ADVENTURE  
ALTERNATIVE

Regional Offices in  
UK, Kenya, Nepal, Tanzania, Russia & Borneo  
[AdventureAlternative.com](http://AdventureAlternative.com)  
Tel: +44 (0)28 7083 1258 (UK)



**climb** Mont Blanc, Eiger, Matterhorn,  
Ice Climb, Scottish Winter, Intro

**trek** Tour Mont Blanc, Snowshoeing,  
Kilimanjaro, Chamonix Trekking

**ski** Haute Route Tour, Off Piste Ski,  
Silvretta, Elbrus, Intro Ski Touring

**run** Alpine Trail Running, Skyrunning,  
Fell Running, 1st Ultra, BGR recce

[info@icicle.co.uk](mailto:info@icicle.co.uk)  
01539 44 22 17  
[@icicleLakesHQ](https://www.instagram.com/icicleLakesHQ)



*'inspirational  
mountain  
adventure  
holidays'*



Climb Mont Blanc, the highest  
mountain in the Alps at 4810m





**WORLDWIDE**  
**MOUNTAINEERING**  
**& TREKKING SPECIALISTS**

**£50 OFF for**  
**Trek & Mountain readers**

**HIMALAYAS • PEAK LENIN • ACONCAGUA • K2**  
**TORRES DEL PAINE • MT BLANC • BOLIVIA**



**WORLD**  
**expeditions**

**0800 0744 135**  
[worldexpeditions.com/50pound-off](http://worldexpeditions.com/50pound-off)



**Trekking Experts Since 1975**



**THE MOUNTAIN COMPANY**



**AITO TOUR OPERATOR**  
**OF THE YEAR 2018**

## INSPIRATIONAL HIMALAYAN MOUNTAIN HOLIDAYS

The Mountain Company is an award-winning adventure travel company that specialises in treks, tours and expeditions to the Himalaya and Karakoram.

Find out why we were voted the AITO (Association of Independent Tour Operators) Tour Operator of the Year 2018 at:



**[WWW.THEMOUNTAINCOMPANY.CO.UK](http://WWW.THEMOUNTAINCOMPANY.CO.UK)**



**ENCANTO ANDALUZ**  
ALOJAMIENTO RURAL



**Enjoy walking in the mountains?** Want to combine walking with time with family and friends? Then why not stay at Encanto Andaluz – **only two hours drive from Alicante!**






**Encanto Andaluz** is a restored 17th century rural house with 7 fully-equipped luxury apartments each with its own theme. All bedrooms are en-suite, living rooms with a log fire, bar with stage for private events, pool table, jacuzzi, steam room and gym. We cater for people who enjoy mountain walking but also enjoy the Spanish fiestas in the evening. We can organise private flamenco shows, karaoke, fancy dress and live music, mini-bus transport and a free mountain guide for larger groups. If you are on your own or a group please come and experience the beauty of rural Spain.

For more information contact Josefina or Elwyn on  
 (+34) 609 189 356 or (+34) 633 803 044  
[info@encantoandaluz.es](mailto:info@encantoandaluz.es) [www.encantoandaluz.es](http://www.encantoandaluz.es)



**30€ off for**  
**Trek & Mountain**  
**readers**

## Camino Trips in Spain and Portugal



Request our free Camino eBook!

Tel: +353 (0)1 442 8921 (Ire), +44 (0)7805 662416 (UK)

**[www.magicchillholidays.com](http://www.magicchillholidays.com)**





Expert advice  
from T&M's  
mountain  
professionals...

#### 40 Knowledge: Using fixed ropes

Pete Hill explores the use of fixed lines (or ropes) in an expedition setting

#### 44 Trek Basics, Part 3: Staying Safe

Will Legon takes a look at the planning and practices that'll help you avoid trouble while abroad on an expedition

#### 48 Masterclass: Snow Holes and Shelters

Being able to build a shelter in an emergency could save you and your group's lives in the winter mountains – we show you how

### OUR EXPERTS

This month's Mountain Skills team

#### GLENMORE LODGE

Scotland's national outdoor training centre offers a wide range of courses and instruction. [www.glenmorelodge.org.uk](http://www.glenmorelodge.org.uk)

#### WILL LEGON

Will is an experienced outdoor instructor who runs courses on first aid, rock climbing, nav and more. [www.will4adventure.com](http://www.will4adventure.com)



Many Himalayan peaks  
require the use of fixed ropes

## HOW TO... CLIMB ON FIXED ROPES

On some expeditions you'll be required to ascend and descend fixed ropes – **Pete Hill** gives some pointers for doing it safely...

➔ The use of fixed ropes (or 'lines') is a feature of many expeditions, and could be just a short distance over an awkward section of ground, or for a large distance up the flank of a huge snow face.

The seriousness of using a fixed rope for an ascent or descent should never be underestimated, and it's vital to always make sure that the rope is safe and secure, checking any knots and rub points for signs of wear and tear.

The most common type of rope will be the low-stretch variety, where the weight of a climber will not cause much elongation. Dynamic ropes

could be used, but they will stretch when loaded, and there will also be the problem of the sawing action caused by frequent loading and unloading of body weight across a section of rock; this can damage or even cut right through the rope over time. A fixed rope that crosses a section of snowy ground may be relatively easy to negotiate. It will be anchored at each end, and probably by a variety of points along its length. This can be done by using snow stakes, deadmen or even buried oxygen cylinders in the highest areas. A snow bollard as the top anchor would also be suitable, but would only last

a short time due to the cutting effect of people pulling on it constantly as they made their way up and down the rope.

Ropes that cross steep rocky ground tend to be put under a lot more pressure, as the weight of the climber is usually committed to the rope as footing can be hard to gain. The techniques for negotiating them will often rely on using just the rope for ascent, with two jamming devices being used, one each for a hand and a foot.

### ASCENDING FIXED ROPES ON SNOW

This is the way in which fixed ropes are most commonly





climber's harness is a cowstail with a karabiner. When they reach an intermediate anchor point, the cowstail is clipped above it on to the new section of rope, before the clamp is taken off the rope just ascended, then placed on the next section. This ensures that the climber is at no time unprotected, as if they took the clamp off the rope without the cowstail back-up, and slipped, they would have the possibility of falling a large distance.

Resting is important, especially at altitude, and in hard snow conditions having a few ledges cut out of the snow along the length of the fixed line will allow the climbers to

get their feet flat and have a breather.

The top of the fixed rope needs to have been set up at a place that is safe enough for the climbers to unclip and move away from their security, so care should be taken when doing so that there is no chance of a slip causing a long slide back down the hill.

## DESCENDING FIXED ROPES ON SNOW

The top of any fixed rope section needs to be clearly marked and easy to find, even in bad weather. Tall marker wands, purchased locally for the purpose, serve the purpose well, with the rope being tied to

a secure anchor immediately adjacent to them. A large pyramid of snow may also help, or the use of oxygen bottles. If the rope is anchored low to the snow surface, such as with a deadman, it can easily become drifted over and impossible to find, even in relatively good visibility.

A figure-of-eight abseil device will commonly be used for descent, as this will be easy to handle with large gloves on, and will not jam up on snowy ropes. It is important that this, too, is backed up with a cowstail and screwgate, to provide security at changeover points. Once the first section of rope has been



used, and is often deployed by commercial companies to facilitate their clients making it to the top of their chosen mountain. It is also used where loads are being ferried up from camp to camp, or just as a general back-up. The line is there as a safeguard, with the climber making progress by walking up. They will be attached to the fixed rope with a mechanical rope clamp (ascender) with the version incorporating a handle being the best and easiest to operate, especially when wearing gloves. This clamp will be attached to the climber with a short length of rope or sling, which allows for freedom of movement. To ascend, the clamp is simply slid up the rope as the climber moves forwards, and it locks when pulled backwards, such as in the event of a slip. In their other hand, the climber may well be carrying an ice axe which is used as a walking aid, and is obviously there as an extra safeguard in an emergency.

Also attached to the



↑ A snow stake being used as a fixed-rope anchor



↑ Connecting an ascender to a cowstail



↑ A figure-of-eight device and a cowstail set up for an abseil



→ descended, the figure-of-eight device is taken off the top rope and placed on to the next section, with the cowstail remaining on the upper rope. Once the device is secure, the cowstail is transferred to the rope just above it, and the descent can continue.

## ASCENDING FIXED ROPES ON ROCK

This style of ascent usually means that the rope will be loaded with the climber's weight for at least part, if not all, of the ascent. For that reason, not only must the rigging of the rope be done in a very safe manner, but care should be taken to avoid any chance of the rope fraying on sharp sections of rock when in use. If there is the possibility of a problem occurring, the rope should be routed in such a way

as to miss out the suspect area altogether (see diagram, below left). Remember that the action of the wind, rubbing the rope on to any sharp areas of rock, can also cause a lot of damage even when the system is not being used.

The prudent use of intermediate anchors can go a long way to preventing this problem. For instance, even if the main anchor point is close to the area that is to be avoided, placing a wire or chock a short way to one side will have the effect of redirecting the rope away from the problem. In some cases, and to give absolute security, it may be necessary to double up areas of concern by using a sling or spare length of rope. For instance, if the main rope is going to unavoidably be running past a sharp area of

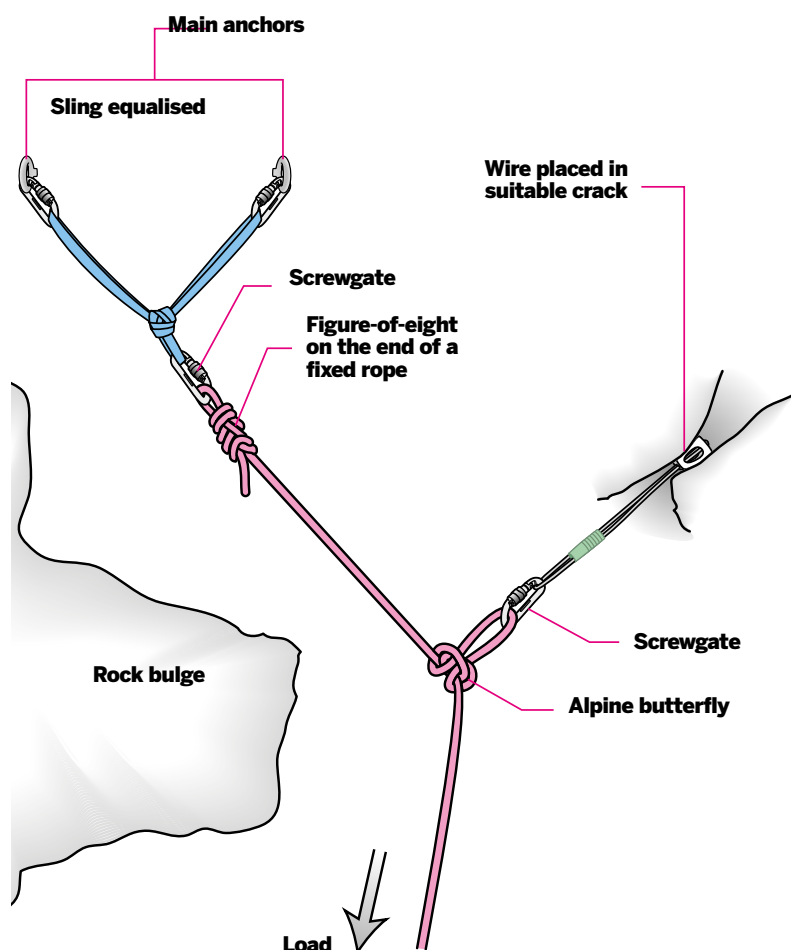
rock, that section can be bypassed quite simply. A sling or length of spare rope is attached to the anchor, along with the end of the fixed rope (see diagram, below right). At a point beyond the obstruction, an alpine butterfly or similar knot can be tied in the main rope, and the sling attached here. This means that any wear will be on the sling section, and should it wear through, the whole rig will still be supported by the main rope. Obviously, this is not a remedy that should be used for a long period of time, but it will certainly allow the use of a fixed line to be considered in problem areas.

The actual ascent of the rope very much depends upon the nature of the terrain. On the simplest ground it may be very similar to ascending a rope on

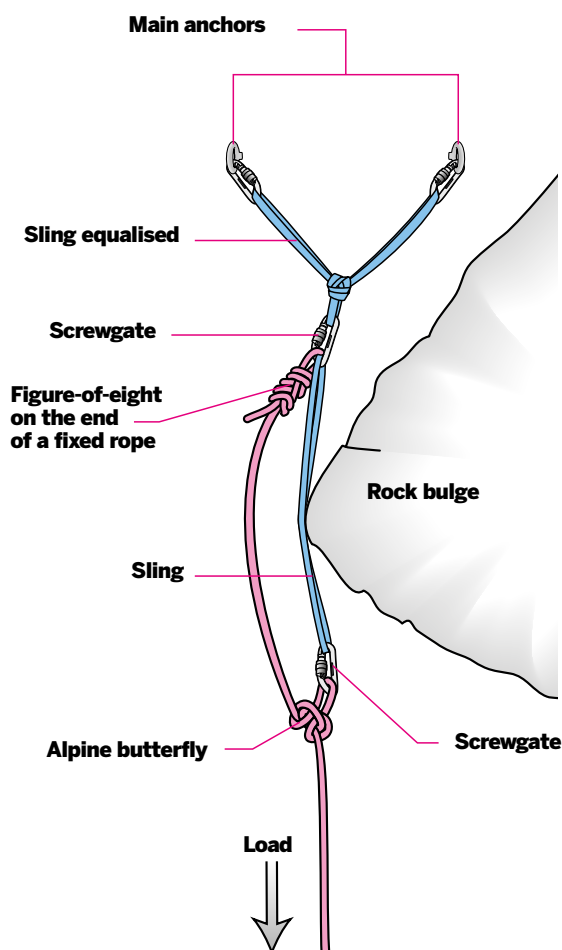
snow, where a single ascender or rope clamp is used as a back-up, and the climber is easily able to make their own way ahead. On any other type of ground though, the use of two ascenders or a hybrid system will be found to be most appropriate. If using these techniques, a cowstail should once again be used, for extra security when swapping from one rope length to another.

If you are heading out on an expedition or trek where the use of fixed ropes is required, you will usually be able to practise using them on the lower slopes of peaks before you begin the climb proper – but some prior knowledge of fixed rope techniques, as discussed here, will certainly give you a head start. **T&M**

### ↓ A wire keeping a fixed rope away from a rock bulge



### ↓ A sling backing up the top of a fixed rope







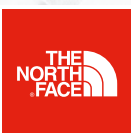
sportscotland  
**glenmorelodge**  
national outdoor training centre



# DISCOVER WINTER

**Discover, learn and experience the winter mountains  
with Scotland's National Outdoor Training Centre.**

We run a wide range of winter courses and qualifications, including  
Winter Skills, winter navigation, winter mountaineering, winter climbing



Glenmore Lodge instructors  
are kept warm and dry  
thanks to The North Face  
Summit Series Range



Ellis Brigham is the  
official retail partner  
of Glenmore Lodge

[www.glenmorelodge.org.uk](http://www.glenmorelodge.org.uk)



# TREK BASICS, PART 3: STAYING SAFE

**Will Legon** continues his series with a look at what you can do to avoid trouble, and what to do in the case where you can't...



Are you covered if something goes badly wrong?



➔ Risk is a wonderful exciting ingredient to any adventure. Without it we'd end up with holidays that are about as exciting as a trip to the local fish and chip shop and then only to be told there's no curry sauce on the menu. An essential part on any adventure is not just the acceptance of risks but actively embracing them. But, if we're to keep clear of the local hospital which will come complete with as much infection control as my dad's underpants then some steps should be taken to manage those risks. Here are some top tips on how to return home intact from that trip of a lifetime: after all, the best epics are the ones that we survive from!

### KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Spend some time doing some research. Do you know if your destination for your next trekking holiday is at risk from a tsunami or earthquake? What's the political situation like, can you get by wearing a pink bikini in the streets (with or without a hairy chest) or will this offend the locals? What's the crime rate like: which districts do you need to steer clear of? These are all questions that for our home country we know the answers to already, but they're not issues to be taken for granted once we set out on our travels.

There are several sources for information. My first port of call, even for destinations that I frequent on an annual basis, is the Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) website. Here you will find loads of general advice for your destination from cultural sensitivities to regions that are safe or dangerous. And it is with this knowledge that you can make decisions. Decisions that will impact on what kit you carry and where you can safely travel.

Also online there are many great travel forums from which you will find someone who has recent experience and who will be only too willing to offer you first hand advice on the present situation. Three sites I like the look of are UK Climbing Forums, Lonely Planet's forums and thirdly Boots'n'All. Finally once I'm in country I like to glean information from the locals and from fellow travellers too.

### PRIOR PREPARATION PREVENTS...

Time playing soldiers with the Territorial Army many moons ago taught me a few lessons in life. Thankfully I seem to remember less about the mass destruction of people who might be waving guns at me with menace and more about everything from ironing my shirts, to being well prepared for various eventualities. A set of patrol orders would always include an 'actions on' paragraph – i.e. what to do if x or y happens. This

same principle is now incorporated into any trip planning for an overseas trek with a group of clients.

The sorts of questions to consider are what will you do in the event that you lose your passport, flight tickets, wallet etc? Who will you call if your partner is suffering from an extreme case of altitude sickness whilst on day 10 of a remote trek and how will you physically make that call? Who will coordinate a rescue? I find these are all questions best answered before there's a need to. Hence while I'm safely at home, armed with my information I make preparations from my forthcoming trip.

We lose stuff all the time (well I do). So consider what's important and what you will do in the event of its loss. My first consideration is always my kit getting lost by the baggage handlers. For a trek, most of this can be replaced with some hasty shopping at my destination but not my boots – so I wear these on the flight. And in my hand luggage you won't find a wash kit but you will find my expensive down jacket that's going to be keeping me toasty warm up at the base camp somewhere. So start by safe guarding that which is precious and/or hard to replace.

Losing my passport could delay my return. And as much as you may love life in Delhi, Lima, Kathmandu, Ulan Bator, or wherever you're headed, you can bet an enforced stay at your cost won't seem so rosy after about day three. So first of all take hard copies of the important pages and also have scanned copies saved online somewhere. Additionally have some passport pictures to hand which always help with a reissue of a temporary passport. Personally I leave these hard copies with my in-country agent. In the event that I lose my passport on trek there is someone back in civilisation that can expedite the process with the local consulate to get me a new passport for my return to base. The same applies for flight tickets (if they're not electronic) – scan them, copy them and leave them with someone you trust.

### ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

The next question to ask is what if someone has an accident whilst on trek or more likely, on the road headed to the trek? Preparation at home might mean undertaking a wilderness or outdoor first aid course. Allied to this is to pack a substantial first aid kit and what you would pack for a day walking in the Lakes won't cut the mustard on trek in a developing country when it could easily be three or four days before your casualty sees a properly equipped and qualified medic. A great reference to look at







➔ Be extra vigilant in busy city centres

➔ before you go and to pack with you is Cicerone Press Pocket First Aid and Wilderness Medicine – I take it everywhere. At the back of this it will advise you what kit, and medications, you should carry according to your group size and time out.

In the event that you need to organise a casualty evacuation you need to have considered beforehand what means of communication are available. Almost disappointingly mobile phones have more coverage than ever before – and this paired with a GPS, could easily be the only resort you need. In many places however signal is limited or non-existent and depending on how risky/technical your trip is you may also want to consider a satellite phone as a backup. An in-between measure which could also be a great backup is a SPOT Satellite Messenger which you can use to call out the cavalry but with the downside that the ability to communicate effectively is limited to fixed text messages (on the basic models, but 2-way comms is now available in the latest SPOT X devices). More options to contact help by satellite can be found at [www.myspot.eu](http://www.myspot.eu).

Once you have the means to make that emergency call the next question is who will you call? There's no 999 in Nepal or come to that even a local mountain

rescue team who will drop everything to come to your assistance. So take the time to think who can support you in the event of an emergency. The one thing you can do is to carry with you a copy of the international emergency assistance number that comes with your travel insurance and with that a copy of your policy number. Additionally I have as a back up my in-country agent and someone I can rely on back home in the UK who knows how to contact the in-country embassy where I'm trekking.

Finally, it sounds obvious, but be properly insured. That policy that comes free with your bank account won't save your smoked bacon whilst you're trekking in the wilderness at altitude. Many people trek under-insured not realising that there's literally a ceiling on their insurance – often at around 2000m above sea level. One great back up, is to join the Austrian Alpine Club (don't worry they speak English!) which for £43.50 comes with insurance for mountain rescue included. The policy won't cover your lost wallet but it will help you get back to base in one piece. And of course, in Europe make sure you carry your EHIC card – could save you a lot of time and money!

## WHEN YOU LAND

Before you land know where it is you will

be staying that first night, or at least have an idea of where you want to be heading and how you will be getting there. Walking out of an airport looking like the archetypal tourist fresh off the plane, the startled rabbit caught in the headlights, is like the 1st year student at school walking about with a sign attached to his back saying "kick me" – it's just simply asking for trouble. Exit the airport looking poor and a bit grubby, well travelled, and knowing exactly where you're going, and how you're getting there. Knowing the right fare to pay the taxi driver is all the better! Don't do what I did when I first landed in Miami aged 19 with a £1000 stashed about my body in cash and try hitch hiking out. Neither should you travel in anything but a licensed taxi or with a pre-arranged hotel transfer.

The first day or two in-country on your trekking holiday could well be in the city where you landed. You should definitely go and explore but do so armed with an idea of which districts are safe to do so and where it isn't so safe. I find this holds more true for developed countries: think New York City for example. If you're in a city where taxi drivers are unlikely to speak English and quite probably don't write with our alphabet how will you get back to your hotel or hostel? With this in mind it's worth carrying a business card from the hotel with their address written on it in the local language.

And when you pay your driver or the street seller for your hot dog equivalent, don't pull out a wad of holiday cash. Always carry small change, and keep the big notes somewhere safe like the hotel safe or your underpants. Additionally only wear a cheap watch and try to keep that all singing and all dancing DSLR camera under wraps when it's not in use. Essentially don't make yourself look like a worthwhile target for crime.

Now I don't know about you – but I don't know many places where recreational drugs are legal. In many cities they are readily available but then the local police are also on standby and waiting for this choice opportunity for you to make that purchase and it won't be the dealer they'll be arresting: he's no good for a hefty bribe.

Finally... You'll never love the NHS as much as when you end up in a local hospital overseas. In fact, you'll never love the British police as much as when you're dealing with a foreign copper speculatively looking at you whilst holding your passport firmly in his hand. So do have an adventure, but go forearmed with some knowledge, skills and a healthy dose of common sense. Happy travels!



ULTRA  
LIGHT  OUTDOOR  
GEAR

# THE LIGHTEST GEAR ON THE PLANET

NEW  
Stock for  
Winter!



ORDER & ADVICE LINE: 01740 644 024 | [ULTRALIGHTOUTDOORGear.CO.UK](http://ULTRALIGHTOUTDOORGear.CO.UK)

At Ultralight Outdoor Gear we excel at finding the lightest outdoor clothing and equipment in the world so that whether you're into backpacking, trekking, adventure racing or adventure travel you'll find lightweight gear to lighten your load and make your journey easier.

# ANTARCTICA

The experience of a lifetime

Field Guides

Zoological Field Assistant

Marine Biologist

Mobile Plant Operator

Boating Officers

Carpenter/Builder

Electrical Maintenance Technician

Mechanical Maintenance Technician

Steel Erector

Chefs

...and many more



British  
Antarctic Survey

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH COUNCIL

Apply on our website at:

[www.bas.ac.uk/jobs/vacancies](http://www.bas.ac.uk/jobs/vacancies)





Starting to dig out  
a snowhole





# MASTERCLASS: SNOW HOLES & SHELTERS

In the winter mountains, the ability to make a snow hole or snow shelter could literally save your life – in this month's Masterclass, **Pete Hill** shows you where and how to build them...

➔ There is a difference between snow holes and snow shelters. A snow hole is a base that has been constructed for a planned stay of one or more nights, and suitable equipment, such as shovels, sleeping bags, stoves and so forth, have been carried for the purpose. They can range in size from the most basic, which will sleep two people, up to those sleeping twelve or more. A snow shelter, on the other hand, will be constructed in an emergency, in order to shelter from the effect of the elements, and may be little more than a glorified scoop in the ground. To spend more than a couple of hours in a snow shelter means that things must really have gone bad.

## SNOW HOLES

A snow hole is best constructed in a steep bank of snow, as this means that you will have to dig in for less distance before being able to dig upwards to form the living area. However, the slopes that make good sites are also those that will be holding a large weight of snow, thus they may be avalanche-prone. More than one person has been carried off by an avalanche while looking for a suitable place to stay, so be aware of your surroundings, the nature of the terrain and the state of the snowpack, testing for avalanche danger if necessary. In some situations, particularly when on expedition to the higher mountains, a suitable snow hole site could be found in the gap of a bergschrund or even a suitable crevasse, although it may be

time-consuming to enlarge.

Digging in snow is hard work, and it is worth wearing a full set of waterproofs with only light clothing underneath to save sweating too much. Your gloves will get sodden, so having an old pair to use for the digging process is a good idea, saving a decent pair for when the work stops. The use of shovels is important, otherwise the task will take a very long time. You may also want to have tested the area with an probe, to make sure that the snow is of sufficient depth and that rocks won't be struck after a short time. In hard snow conditions, a snow saw will help you to cut through any difficult layers, and to construct blocks to help seal up the entrance.

There are a variety of ways of digging a snow hole, and here we will look at one that assumes that two of you will be digging at the same time. You will be starting with two doorways, so mark out the shape on the slope in front of you, approximately shoulder width and 120cm high. These will initially be your entrance passageways, although one will be blocked off at a later stage. Tunnel directly inwards and slightly up, throwing the debris away behind you. How far in you go before starting to enlarge the hole depends on the angle of the slope into which you are digging and the quality of the snow.

Once you have dug in for an appropriate distance, the hole can then be enlarged by digging upwards and sideways, to create an area that is big

enough for you and your companions to lie down, and at least sit up, if not stand up, in. The floor of the sleeping area needs to be higher than the access tunnel, as this will serve to keep warm air trapped in the living space, allowing cold air to roll out of the door. It also allows for easy removal of the snow whilst digging, and this can be made easier by letting the debris fall on to a plastic bivi bag beneath where you are working. This can then be dragged out and emptied at regular intervals.

At some point, your section will join up with the one being dug by your partner, and this increase in space will allow for even more efficient digging and debris removal. Towards the end of the digging process, debris can be packed into one of the access tunnels, sealing it off completely. This will now make for a handy storage area. The living area, once finished, can be dome-shaped. Make sure that you provide plenty of headroom and don't end up with an area that's too cramped. Ensure that the floor has a smooth and level surface, otherwise you will be sliding about during the night. The ceiling and the walls should be smoothed over with a gloved hand or the back of the shovel; this helps to reduce the drips as the temperature within the hole rises during cooking and with body heat.

As a final touch, you may want to roof over some of the entrance tunnel, particularly if the slope that you have dug into is at an angle, or the wind is transporting a lot of snow. Doing this will help to prevent any ingress of wind-blown snow, and it can be accomplished by cutting blocks that may then be used as handy building material. You might also wish to reduce the size of the entrance, in order to keep as much wind out as possible.

Being organised means that you will end up having a comfy stay, so spend a bit of time getting things just right. A couple of long shelves for storing kit can be made by digging into the walls. Don't leave items such as spare

clothing loose on the shelf, as they will attract moisture from the atmosphere. Gear placed into plastic bags or boxes will stay dry.

Keep the stove in the centre of the hole and quite near the door. This is useful in case of any spillage, and also allows the poisonous vapours created by the cooking process to sink down the entrance tunnel to the outside and not be trapped in the hole itself. Cooking will be quite a long process, so make sure that all of the necessary food items and utensils are to hand. Most likely, you will be operating from inside your sleeping bag, which will be inside a waterproof breathable bivi bag to keep warm, so get yourself comfortable from the outset. Have a pile of snow chunks ready to melt in the pot. Only put in a little at a time and wait for it to melt before adding more. The base of the stove may well get hot during the cooking process, so don't have it on any sleeping mat or touching any kit. If possible, place it on a flat piece of stone. Alternatively, you may have a light piece of plywood or similar carried for the purpose. This will prevent the stove from melting itself into the floor of the snow hole and causing the pot to tilt over. Take care with boiling liquids for this very reason.

Light can be provided with a candle, and a shelf or two with candles on them will light up the living area very effectively. Scoop out the back of the shelf to make a snow reflector, and plenty of light will bounce off its surface.

It is important that the entrance to the snow hole does not drift over. If this is a possibility, perhaps due to high winds during the night, it may be necessary to get up frequently to dig out the front of the hole to ensure that adequate ventilation is maintained. If this is cut off, cooking becomes extremely hazardous as poisonous fumes are given off, and it should not be undertaken if there is no fresh air available.

If you need to go outside during the night, ensure that you can relocate the





➔ snow hole. This is surprisingly difficult to do, even in good visibility, let alone when the mist is down or spindrift blowing about. On a clear night, the glow of a candle from inside the hole can be seen from some distance and act as a marker, but in poor weather a climbing rope may have to be tied around anyone venturing outside, so that they can find their way back.

## EMERGENCY SHELTERS

An emergency shelter is exactly that, designed to be used only when dire straits dictate that safety from the elements has to be sought, perhaps when your partner is injured or extremes of weather make movement impossible. Prior to making the decision to dig in, every effort should be made to get down off the hill or into some other area of safety, such as a local hut or other habitation.

Digging an emergency shelter is tiring work, using up a lot of effort and calories. Often it will have to be constructed with the minimum of equipment, and most likely you will end up spending time in it with only the clothes that you are wearing, as it would be unlikely that you would have a sleeping bag with you on a single-day mountain trip. Anything that can be done to make the digging and construction easier should be seized on, and gear to hand such as ice axe, deadman, a plate or lunch box can be put to use for digging into the snow. A lightweight shovel will greatly simplify the digging process, and it is recommended that at least one is carried between group members during winter trips.

There are many types of emergency shelter that can be constructed. Large boulders will often have drifts of snow behind them, and these can be scooped out to create a shelter. Below the tree line, the lower branches of fir trees in particular, will often support snow but leave a sheltered area underneath by the lower section of the trunk. This can also be dug into and end up being quite spacious. However,

➔ The floor of your snow hole should be higher than the entrance tunnel to allow cold air to 'roll' out



in a mountain environment digging into the snow may be the only realistic option. We will look at three methods here, each relevant for different situations.

## SITTING SHELTER

The sitting shelter is the most thermally efficient of the three, and may be the most comfortable to spend any time in. It requires a steep bank of snow to be dug into, and these will often be found on stream banks or re-entrant features. The idea is to end up in a sitting position, with minimal contact with the snow. This position, with the entrance low down, allows warm air to be retained around the head and torso. Digging straight into the snow and then tunnelling upwards is one way of building the shelter, but this means that you are lying on the snow all of the time and will get very wet, not a good idea if you are to spend the night in the same clothes. However, in soft snow conditions it may be the only choice.

A much better option requires you to do a little more work, but it keeps you off the snow throughout, making it a more pleasant experience. A wedge-shaped slot of around shoulder-width is cut into the snow bank,

high enough to ensure that your head ends up below surface level. You will need a seat to sit on, and this can be made at the back of the slot from debris as you near the end of digging. Once the slot is dug, it will need to be roofed over in order to keep snow out and warmth in.

One way of doing this is by weighing down a bivi bag or group shelter, using snow blocks around their edges, perhaps supported across the slot by walking poles. In hard or slabby snow conditions, it is much better to cut a series of snow blocks, slightly longer than the width of the slot, which can be placed over the shelter to provide a roof. These can be placed one above the other until the slot is covered, leaving only a small entry gap at the bottom. Cut them from a section of ground above the shelter, as this will make them easy to slide down into place. The seat should be insulated with anything to hand, such as a rucksack back insert, and your feet can go into the sack itself once you are in place. Marking the top of the bivi is a good idea, best done with walking poles or an ice axe.

Snow is a very good insulator, but you need a few centimetres (2–4in) of air gap around you.

Don't be tempted to make the bivi too big, otherwise the heat retention of the system will not be as efficient as it otherwise might be.

## A SHOVEL-UP

On flat terrain, or where a suitably steep slope for a sitting bivi cannot be found, two other methods are possible. The first is called a shovel-up or mouse-hole bivi, and is very suitable if shovels or other methods of moving snow are available. To make one place everyone's rucksacks on the ground and, if possible, cover them with a bivi bag or shelter. Now heap as much snow as you can on top of them to create a large molehill. Gently firm the snow down with shovels and hands every now and then. You can now dig a small entrance on the side out of the wind and remove the bivi bag and packs. The inside can be cut out to shape to give more headroom (be careful not to dig up too far!), and then smooth the roof over to prevent it dripping.

## THE SNOW GRAVE

Another method, suitable for use on the flat in solid ground such as wind slab, is the snow grave. This name stems from the position that you take when using it, laying on the ground under the surface of the snow. Using the pick of your axe, cut out an outline on the ground. This should be around shoulder-width and a metre or so long. Divide this into slabs widthways and lift them out. Now scoop out the snow underneath, hollowing out an undercut section for your feet. If possible, try to leave a lip around the hole for the slabs to rest on when they are replaced. If this is not possible, other longer slabs from a position away from the hole will have to be cut.

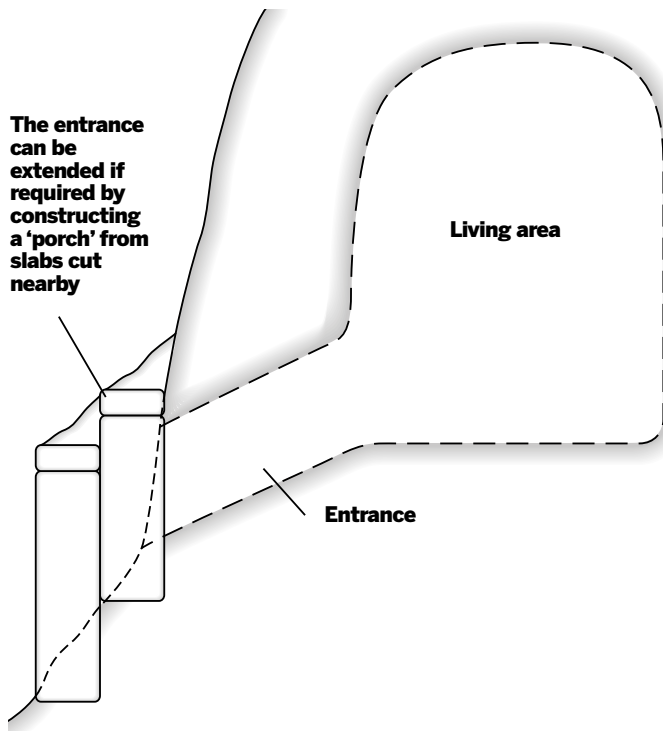
Once the hollowing out is done, place a couple of slabs back in place, climb inside and lower the others down on top. Make sure you use any spare gear to help minimise your body contact with the snow which, as you are lying flat, will be considerable. **T&M**



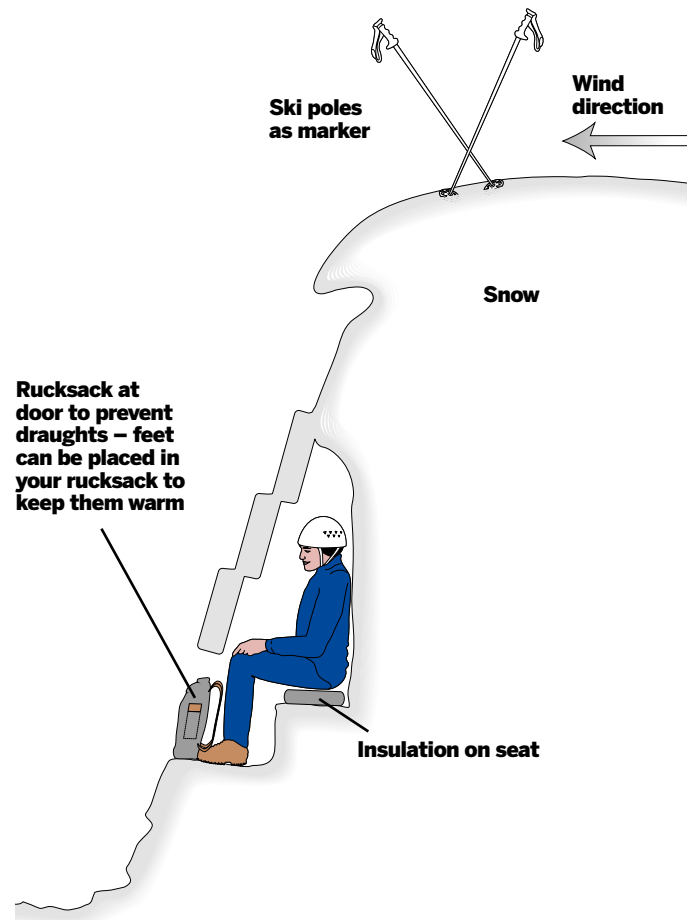
# How To: Make Snow Holes & Emergency Shelters

Four options for anyone staying overnight in the winter mountains

## ↓ A cross-section of a snow hole



## ↓ A cross-section of a sitting shelter



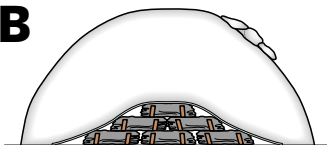
## ↓ The stages of building a shovel-up

**A**



Lay rucksacks on the ground and cover with a bivi bag

**B**



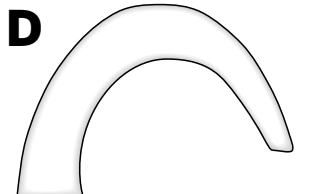
Heap snow over the rucksacks into a mound

**C**



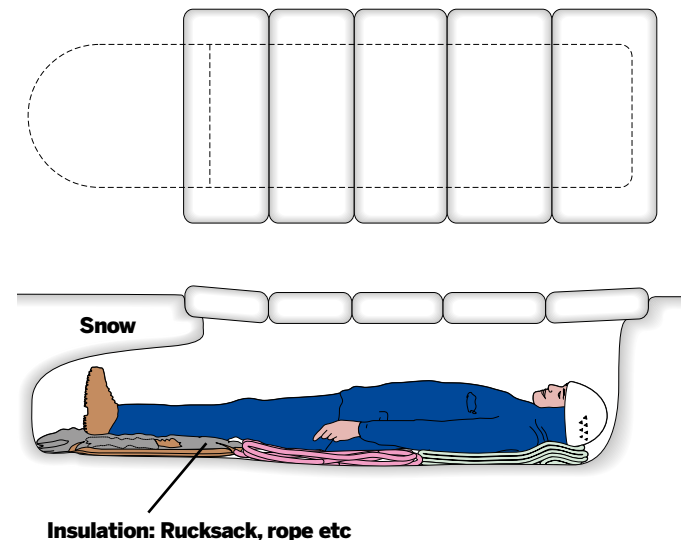
Tunnel in on the leeward side and remove the rucksacks and bivi bag

**D**



Enlarge the centre and smooth off the ceiling to prevent drips

## ↓ Top and side view of a snow grave





# BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY

## WILL COPESTAKE

WORDS: CHRIS KEMPSTER PICTURES: WILL COPESTAKE

We speak to the Scottish adventurer about peak-bagging in winter, kayaking in Patagonia, and how he makes a full-time living from the outdoors...

**G**rowing up in the Highlands, it is no surprise that Will Copestake acquired a taste for outdoor adventure at an early age. From wildlife spotting to messing around in boats on the water, he enjoyed the full range of activities locally before heading overseas for more far-flung adventures, including New Zealand, Iceland and Patagonia.

With a desire to get to know his homeland better, Copestake kayaked around the coastline of Scotland in 2013, before climbing all the Munros in one, continuous push, all through a particularly harsh

winter. This helped earn him the UK and Scottish Adventurer of the Year Award in 2015, and inspired him to follow up with a round of the Corbetts in winter in 2016/17. This time part of the aim was to meet new people along the way, to rediscover the joy of sharing adventures in the mountains with others.

More recently, Copestake has been busy with his kayak guiding business, splitting his time between Patagonia and Scotland, with several sidelines including writing, photography and public speaking. We catch up with him during a rare break in his kayak guiding schedule...









”

“I often describe Patagonia as ‘Scotland on steroids’ – the weather is more violent, there are glaciers and mountains that are seldom if ever climbed or visited.”



→ A remote camp in front of  
Glacier Galeria in Patagonia



**You grew up in Ullapool in north west Scotland; tell us a bit about your early outdoor experiences?**

Growing up in Ullapool, enjoying the outdoors was always a part of my life. As a young child, it started with a fascination with birds, moths, insects and coastal shore life. My parents were exceptionally encouraging in this, and we took regular walks with the local field club, bird walks with my father and hours exploring under rocks wherever we could lift them. As I got older I, as most local kids, became involved in dingy sailing with Loch Broom Sailing Club, more often than not swimming around upturned boats as much as sailing them. As a teenager, I first discovered river kayaking with friends. It started a lifelong passion that I still pursue to this day.

**You travelled to New Zealand before going to Uni; how did the Great Walks you did there compare to your experiences in Scotland?**

This was the first time I travelled alone around the world. For me, trekking the Great Walks was a way to find routine in a rather ad-hoc lifestyle between hitchhiking, camping and hostels. Some of the walks felt just like home – wet and mountainous with tremendous views. Others had volcanoes, glaciers and parrots to keep me company which were incredible to see. New Zealand was the first push for me into solo travel, and largely set me on my path to working in the outdoors.

**In 2013 you kayaked around Scotland then climbed all the Munros – how did that idea come about?**

The idea to spend a year exploring Scotland under my own power came through a desire to discover my own back yard. I'd discovered through expeditions in New Zealand and Iceland that often when asked about home I couldn't answer much about my own country. I figured if I paddled around the coast and climbed through the mountains I'd get to experience every variety of Scotland's landscape, culture and people.

**It was a particularly harsh winter that year; what did you learn about looking after yourself in such challenging conditions?**

I learned that given enough exposure to cold and wet that my body would adjust, but to a certain breaking point. I learned that there is a big difference between a few days of 'roughing it' and a few months. To look after myself, I had to budget occasional nights in cheap hostels, which was as much for a brief chance at company as it was to physically thaw out and recover. In big trips your mental health is just as important as physical. Blisters and cold burns are easy to patch; a bad mood takes big motivation to heal.

**Other than staying warm and dry, was navigation the next biggest challenge and how did you deal with that?**

Navigation was definitely the biggest challenge with the Munros; I'm not sure I was ever really warm and dry. Thankfully my degree in Environmental Science and Outdoor Education had taught me sufficient navigational skills on the mountain along with my summer Mountain Leader. This is of course quite different in extreme winter, however the skills progress quickly. Of my summits, 49% of them had no view what-so-ever, many in total whiteout. Compass bearings, counting paces and timing were essential to safe navigation. I found GPS and phones to die almost immediately in the severe wind chill. You still can't

beat paper maps.

**There must have been many highlights, but tell us about one of your stand-out days or summits during the challenge?**

It is always hard to choose between the many great moments that came through the challenge. As the years pass beyond that trip however I find I am most drawn to the ones that came briefly between long stretches of hard weather. The moments between whiteouts, when it cleared and offered a view for just a few minutes, were perhaps the most treasured. Of course standing on the ring of steel looking at Ben Nevis in a cloud inversion at sunset was pretty spectacular too.

**You enjoyed this challenge so much, you went back to climb all the Corbetts in winter in 2016/17. What was the idea behind this?**

Returning to the Corbetts was a return to a routine I missed from the Munros. I wanted to come back to the simple pace of life of chasing an arbitrary list of peaks. The big change this time was swapping a bike and tent for a van. This allowed me to 'crowd source' company, offering the chance for friends and strangers to join me and share the adventure together.

**How did sharing walks with strangers (or 'new friends') enhance the experience, compared to walking solo?**

I find walking alone you have higher highs and lower lows. Sharing a trip with friends enhances the entire day with a generally great mood. Great days are remembered more fondly with friends and hard days make a good stories to reminisce about together once back down in the pub. Overall, friends make fun.

**How did the weather compare to when you did the Munros?**

The Corbetts were actually quite a blessed winter. We had relatively little wind and a 'warm' year without much snow. There were snowy days, but nothing like I had seen on the Munros. Of course it is Scotland so there was a little bit of everything.

**Did you have a favourite winter Corbett?**

It would be almost certainly one of the peaks in the Ardgour peninsula. It was one of the few areas that I've never really been and I expected it to be fairly tedious. What I found were a range of spectacular and challenging mountains that could challenge any Munro, but they were far less trodden. As a stand alone peak, it would be Beinn Arich Charr north of Torridon, solely for the incredible view into the Fisherfield mountains. It is tremendous.

**When and where did you start kayaking?**

I started kayaking in the local swimming pool, taught by my father and local paddling legend Brian Wilson (read Blazing Paddles/Dances with Waves). From here I focused largely on river kayaking around north west Scotland as a teenager with a couple of short overnight trips in sea kayaks in between. I didn't really take sea kayaking seriously until I started my round Scotland expedition.

**What sort of experiences does combining kayaking and hiking open up to the adventurous porter?**

It opens up the gates to some routes and areas that are otherwise extremely difficult to access. There is a





“In big trips your mental health is just as important as physical. Blisters and cold burns are easy to patch, a bad mood takes big motivation to heal.”

➔ growing movement in ‘packrafting’, which offers this at an easier extent, however I prefer the sheer brutality of hauling a heavy boat over a long distance. It is true type two fun, hard and difficult at the time, but extremely satisfying to complete. I grew a love of this in Patagonia where it allowed me to access seldom if ever before paddled glacier lakes.

**Tell us a bit about your traverse of Iceland – how did the terrain and conditions compare to other places you’ve visited?**

Crossing Iceland was my first proper expedition. I did it with my friend Remi who, like I, was studying at Stirling on the same course. We were relatively inexperienced, but skilled enough to try. Iceland was a completely different environment to what I had seen before. It was open, empty and volcanic. I will certainly go back to Iceland for more adventures at a later date.

**Patagonia is one of your favourite places – what is it about the region that attracts you, and do you see any similarities with Scotland?**

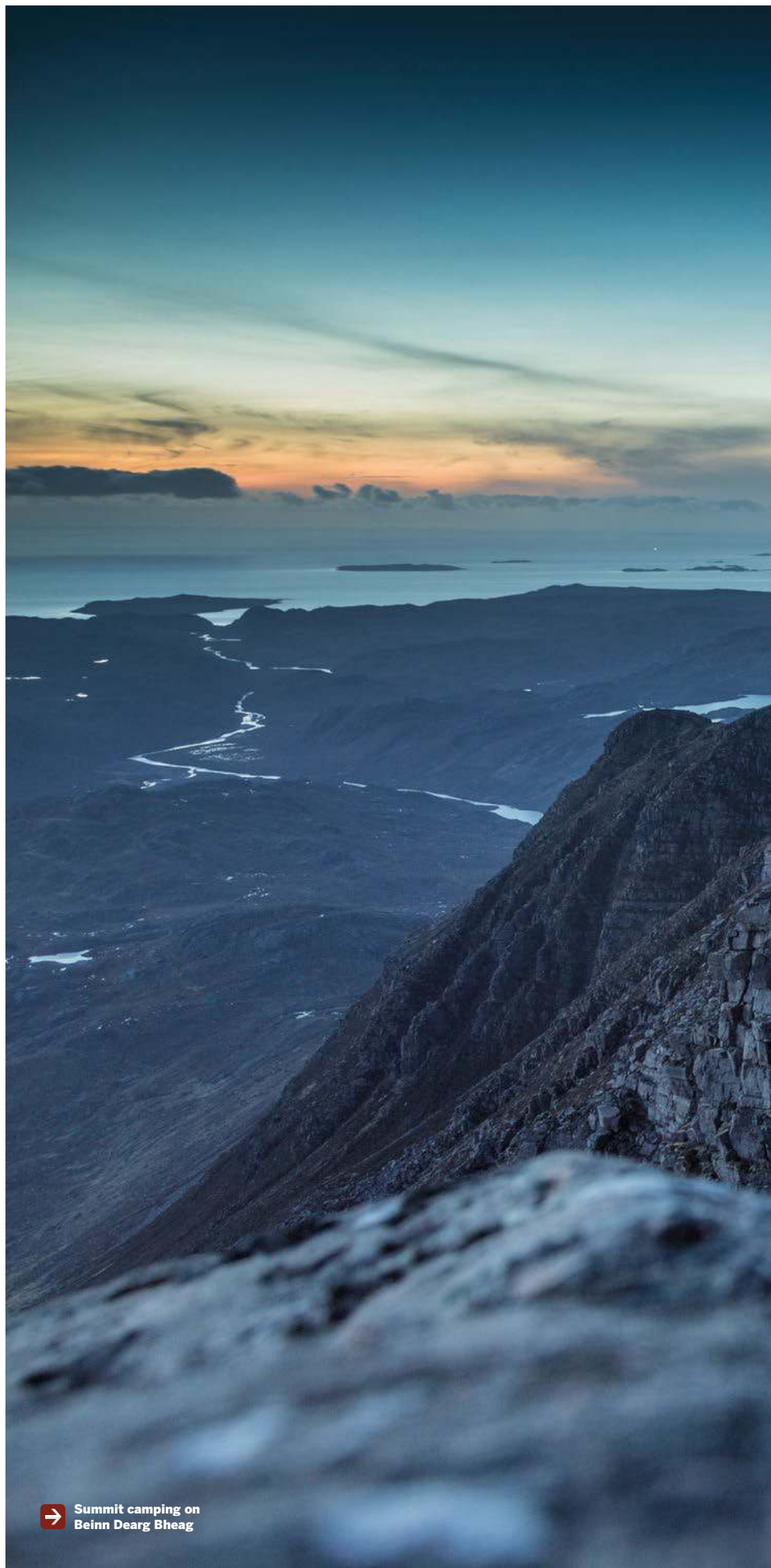
Like Iceland, I am attracted to Patagonia for the same reasons. It is extremely easy to get very remote quite quickly. I often describe it as ‘Scotland on Steroids’ – the weather is more violent – there are glaciers and mountains that are seldom if ever climbed or visited. You have the rare chance to imagine what it felt like to be an early explorer, even though we are in modern kit and forecasts. It is seriously addictive.

**How do you make a full-time living from the outdoors?**

For a long time I made my living in the outdoors as a freelance hillwalking and kayak guide. I lived very cheaply and saved my pennies to do more budget adventures, perpetuating a reputation that ultimately delivered more work. The outdoor industry speaks to itself a lot and is a self cycle really; if you work hard and act professionally then work will find you. Nowadays, I run my own kayak company ([www.kayaksummerisles.com](http://www.kayaksummerisles.com)) which is a more regular outdoor career based out of the north of Scotland. In between these, I also do freelance professional photography, public speaking and writing whenever there are quiet periods. Some winters, I chase seasons around the world to work in the southern hemisphere, allowing year round kayaking work.

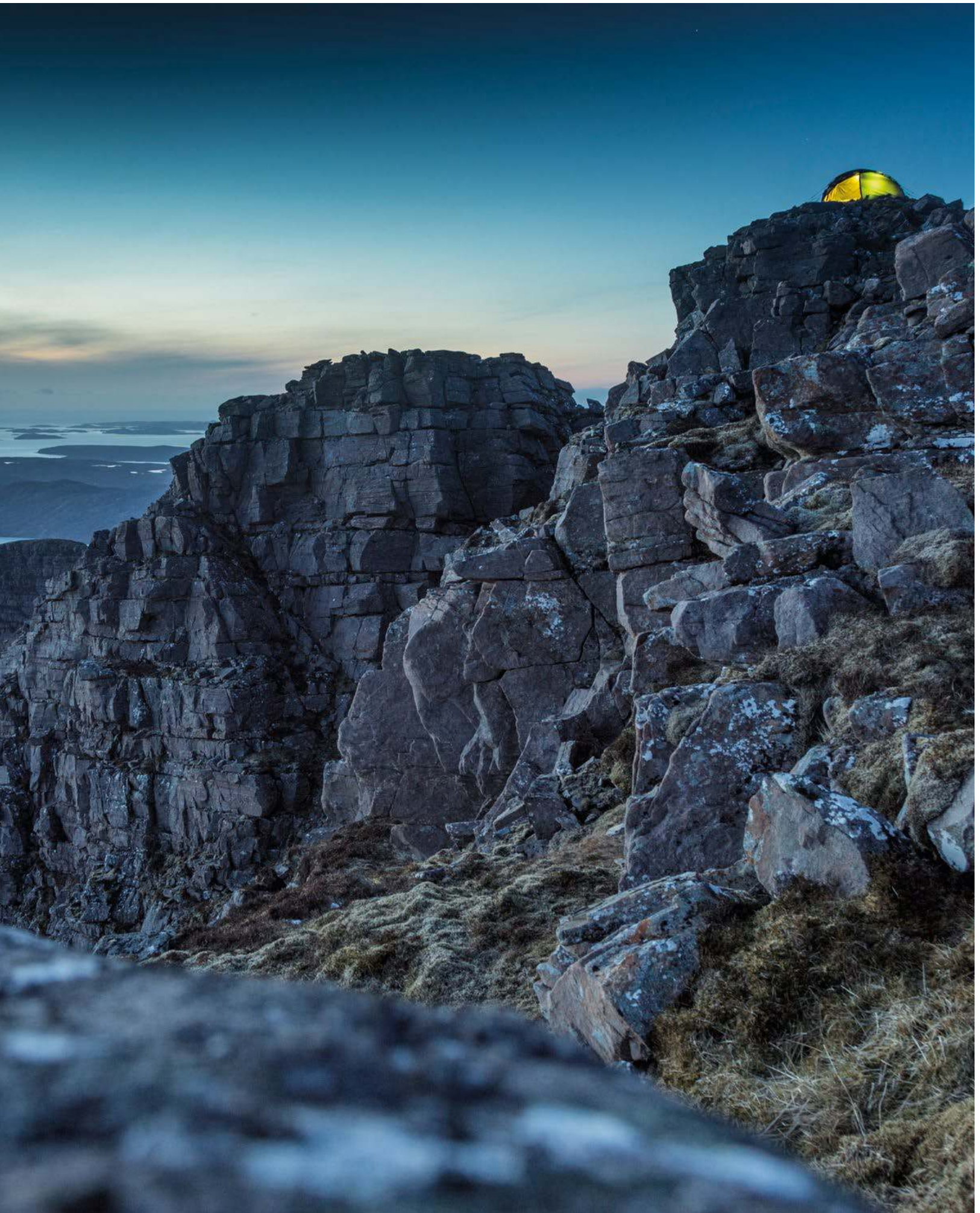
**You’re an accomplished photographer; how did you learn your trade, from experience or through help from other photographers or courses?**

I first learn photography to show my friends back home the wonders I saw in New Zealand while travelling alone. I always tried to take a photo that captured the essence of the moment rather than just a well composed landscape. Like any art, photography is not about the technicalities but the story and feeling it creates. I’ve never really aimed ➔



➔ Summit camping on Beinn Dearg Bheag









➔ Will summiting An Teallach at sunrise, winter 2018

➔ to have my own style, but I learned some great tips from my godfather Ben Osborne (2007 Wildlife Photographer of the Year). Mostly, it is small hints and advice that people have given through a career of travel that have developed my photography – that and a LOT of bad photos deleted in the process.

**You won the Scottish and UK Adventurer of the Year award in 2015; did this open any doors for you?**

It was a surprise to win the award and certainly a nice recognition of a challenging year. I would say it certainly opened up a lot of interesting guiding jobs in areas I would be unlikely to have gone otherwise. It allowed a stepping stone to get my name above a sea of freelance guides in a competitive industry. I hope to keep building on this as my path continues forward.

**What's your take on social media, and how important (or not) is it to you?**

Social media is an odd phenomenon isn't it? On one hand, I'll freely admit I'm a little addicted to it and get a buzz from a successful post. To a degree I make a good portion of my living from it – it generates speaking and writing opportunities and 30% of our kayak summer isles sales last year came via Instagram and approximately the same from Facebook. On the other hand, I completely detest it. Part of what I like on my big expeditions is the complete detachment from any online media for a few weeks or a month – it's incredibly healthy for the mind. Perhaps society needs to consider social media like alcohol or fatty foods, healthy in small portions but dangerous to binge on.

**You've been using Hilleberg tents for a long time – what is it about the brand and the particular models you use that makes them suitable for your trips/activities?**


I have long loved Hilleberg tents for my adventures. What I find special about Hilleberg tents is the little details that make a big difference. External first pitching is essential in wet climates as it allows the inner tent to always remain

dry. I like the ability to easily pitch them in extreme winds with big gloves on. Mostly it is their customer service that I rave about, they are always willing to go above and beyond to help out their clients when something wears out. On average however I'd expect to get over 500 nights use before giving them a call on one of their tents – they'll last a lifetime. I like the Soulo for solo travel in the mountains. It is small to pack but spacious inside. Having lived in one for a year, and even shared one with a friend for seven weeks (after his Terra Nova tent ripped in half) – I can say they are great bits of kit. For sea kayaking, I like the Allak which offers a little more space. In kayaking, I find a free standing tent offers the most options, especially when camping on rocky promontories or loose shingle beaches where pitching a tunnel tent is harder.

**What other essential gear could you not live without?**

Excluding the essentials, such as tent, sleeping bag, mat, stove and so on, I'd thoroughly recommend anyone pursuing an extended outdoor adventure to invest in a tarp. It is the biggest change I'd make to my Scotland trip, which I didn't have one for. The Hilleberg 10UL tarp is my go to which gives the chance to stay outside in the dry when camping, far better than cramming into a tent. I'm also partial to a fresh coffee brew and love the Aeropress.

**What does the future hold for you? Any big challenges in the pipeline?**

The future is full of exciting opportunities ahead. In the Northern summer, I'll be continuing to build Kayak Summer Isles, offering the chance to adventure in northern Scotland. In winter, I have a few expeditions in the pipeline. The next one, naval permission pending, will be an attempt to sea kayak 800km from Punta Arenas to Cape Horn. Keep an eye out for more adventure plans coming soon too! 

**Will Copestake uses Hilleberg tents – for more info, go to [www.hilleberg.com](http://www.hilleberg.com)**



➔ Room with a view...







A full-page photograph of a person standing on a rocky, brownish ridge in the foreground. The person is wearing a dark jacket, dark pants, and a yellow helmet. In the background, a massive, jagged mountain peak covered in snow and ice rises steeply against a clear blue sky. The mountain's surface is a mix of white snow and dark rock. The overall scene is high-altitude and rugged.

# A WALK ON THE QUIET SIDE

With teahouses now available on the route, a trek to Makalu Base Camp is a good option for independent trekkers – **Kathi Habermann** and **James Cruikshank** describe their recent visit there...

WORDS & PICTURES: KATHI HABERMANN, JAMES CRUIKSHANK





➔ Hiking behind Makalu Base Camp Lodge at 5400m, with the mountain itself behind





➔ Kathi cooking her one-Euro eggs in the teahouse



➔ Everest, Lhotse and Lhotse Shar, taken from above Makalu Base Camp

The Makalu Base Camp Trek is one of the quieter and less developed trails in Nepal. Before a couple of years ago, difficult regulations and special permits were needed to trek in the Barun Valley, with the result that only organised camping treks or expeditions with the goal of climbing 7000m and 8000m peaks in the area accessed it. After the 2015 earthquake, however, the local community created infrastructure for an independent teahouse trek to Makalu Base Camp, so now the intrepid nature lover could enjoy a remote multi-day adventure through diverse and pristine wilderness, with forests of 25 species of rhododendron, 47 types of orchids, juniper and fir, snowy passes above 4100m, high alpine meadows and incredible mountain vistas. This unique landscape shelters some of the last pristine mountain ecosystems on earth, but for all its grandeur planning a trek in this part of Nepal is not difficult, and the trekking is accessible, affordable, and absolutely unforgettable.

After an easy flight from Europe, we spent two days in Kathmandu to enjoy Nepali culture and feel the Buddhist vibes. Landing in the capital was great with the new immigration policy that was created after the big 2015 earthquake – it has made things much smoother for tourists. We simply filled out forms on the touchscreens, proceeded to a payment counter for our tourist visa and walked over to the immigration desk and were stamped into Nepal.

With some time to explore Kathmandu, we walked through Durbar square which is still under reconstruction, ate momos in Freak Street, drank milk tea, wandered the alleyways, visited Vaisha Dev (the tooth ache tree), exchanged money, left an offering for Ganesh (god of wisdom and prosperity) and shopped for snacks for our upcoming self-supported teahouse trek. There was no need to organize a TIMS permit since the Makalu Base Camp Trek only requires foreigners to pay the Makalu Barun National Park fee, which can

only be purchased at the Park Office on the trek in Seduwa. Once back at the serene Boudhanath stupa we enjoyed a beautiful sunset and watched the Tibetan refugees' light butter lamps. The upper central tower of the stupa is painted with the all-seeing eyes of Buddha, and legend has it that the stupa contains a bone of his finger. That was a perfect place to adjust to this different culture before heading into the mountains.

## GETTING TO THE START

There are two options to get to the starting point of the Makalu Base Camp: either plane and jeep, or bus and jeep, the fastest way being the flight from Kathmandu to Tumlingtar. It is best to go in the morning, as the weather is more stable than later in the day. For people with time or who don't enjoy flying, the two-day-long bus trip is a long but rewarding option. There is so much to see and experience on the road. The bus passes the countryside and various villages of the hot lowlands that



“The Barun Valley provides stunning contrasts, where high waterfalls cascade into deep gorges, craggy rocks rise from lush green forests, and colourful flowers bloom beneath white snowy peaks.”



border India, constantly stopping for new passengers and to let on vendors selling cold snacks and warm drinks. Eventually the bus arrived in the big town of Dharam where we spent the evening exploring the cool hillside town and shopping for the various extras for the trek, such as anti-inflammatories, headache pills, chlorine dioxide (for water purification), antibiotics for amoebic and parasitic infections (Tinidazole), high altitude medication (Diamox), chocolate bars, snacks, nuts, dried fruit, instant coffee, tea and soap.

At 7am we had a breakfast of *jeri puri* (small, puffy, fried flat breads with a sweet mild-spicy, chick pea curry), and began the day's journey towards the Tumlingtar airport and the town of Khadbari. During the long 160km journey, we came across green rice terraces, banana trees, mud houses, smiling faces, and medieval fairy tale images.

From Tumlingtar you have to travel six hours by jeep to the village of Num. As with all land travel, it is a cramped and shaky ride

on dirt roads. No matter if it is a bus, mini van or jeep, the Nepali way is to jam as many people into one vehicle as possible. We once ended up with 30 people sitting and standing inside and hanging outside of a mini van. Another time, we were 11 in a normal-sized jeep plus a couple of passengers on the roof. The locals are an average height of 160cm and they seem to feel comfortable in those packed boxes. Thus, the days on the road in Nepal are both adventurous and agony, especially for those of us with long legs.

The trek's start point is Num, a pretty town on the back of a little mountain with some teahouses, shops and lots of kids on the street. It was already 2pm when we arrived and the afternoon clouds were swirling around, so we opted to rest for the afternoon and drank sugary masala milk tea and ate samosa snacks. We chatted to a Swiss man who had just returned from Makalu Base Camp and he was radiating a huge smile, and sunburnt nose. He told us to make mental notes about shops, tea

houses, cross roads, and to be friendly along the trail because the return journey would be the same track; this was some good info and served us well.

After the long travel days, it was a perfect place to stay for one night, and start early the next morning. The walking began with a 700m steep descent through thick humid jungle to the roaring Arun river, followed by the first steep climb, 700m up to Seduwa. This part of the trek is still very populated, with the blue roofs of houses and farms spread on the hills. We met Sherpas, Gurung and Rai people who were walking up and down between the villages to do their chores. One man had just come from the market in Num with an oinking 'chola' around his shoulders. He had just purchased the little black pig in the weaved basket (the local way to carry live animals).

The next bigger town, Seduwa (1500m), sits exactly opposite of Num. That is where the brightly-painted Makalu Barun





➔ National Park office is based. We paid our entry fee and read the information on the walls. The name 'Makalu' is derived from the Sanskrit Maha Kala, a name for the Hindu god Shiva that translates 'Big Black'. One of the 14 eight-thousanders, Makalu (8468m) is an isolated peak whose shape is a four-sided pyramid. The park has 2330 square kilometres and is bordered by the Arun River in the east and the Sagarmatha National Park in the west. The Barun Valley is a sanctuary for wild animals such as red panda, musk deer, wild boar, lynx, fox and the elusive snow leopard. It provides stunning contrasts, where high waterfalls cascade into deep gorges, craggy rocks rise from lush green forests, and colourful flowers bloom beneath white snowy peaks. Rare species of animals and plants flourish in diverse climates and habitats, relatively undisturbed by human kind. The grand vistas include views of Makalu, Chamlang (7319m), Baruntse (7129m), Mera Peak (6654m) and Hongkuchuli (6833m).

After picking one of the four lodges spread around Seduwa, we sat down with the three curious kids of the hosting lady for a huge dal bhat with tasty jungle fern vegetables (fiddleheads) and, for us, a jug of chang (home-made 3% millet beer).

## SHIPTON LA

The second hiking day began early with the aim of finding a shop with a chai and the last sil roti (a fried rice flour donut), before walking through local villages, past small farms with rice, millet, carrots, potatoes, bananas, mustard, onions and chickens. The trail up to Tashigoan is still lively, with the locals travelling between the towns, and donkey caravans bringing goods up the trail. Tashigoan (2100m) is the last town, with a school and 30 houses surrounded by lush gardens, green farmlands and water buffalos. Once we'd passing the last buildings, we arrived at a lonely tea shop or lodge every two to four hours depending on our pace.

Many years ago the trail existed mainly for the yak herders to keep the animals on the other side of the Shipton La Pass in the summers. Today, two families are running the businesses along the trek, and after a couple of days hiking, you will get to know the whole family including the grandfathers, cousins, uncles, aunts, brother, sisters and grandchildren that are spread along the trek. Some of them are alpinists who have climbed Everest, some are yak herders, trekking guides, teachers and – most importantly for the trekkers – some are really excellent cooks.

In Khongma (3500m), we chose to stay at the Shiva View Hut which is one of the three options and run by Pasang Sherpa. This charming lady is a great host. She loves to sit around the fireplace with her guests singing and talking. We liked it there and decided to stay for an extra acclimatisation day to rest before tackling the hardest part of the trek – the crossing of Shipton La. Pasang ➔



showed us the Nepali way of eating dal bhat with the left hand, shared her passion for local birds, mimicked their sounds, cooked us yak meat and gave us home-made raksi. Raksi is a strong alcoholic drink made from barley or rice; the distillation process is rudimentary and the alcohol percentage is higher than western spirits – singing Nepalese songs helps it go down easier!

We started early the next morning as the weather was set to deteriorate later in the day. Snow was falling and we hiked through the white clouds. Our lungs and legs had to work hard to gain the metres. Fortunately, one of the guides from an expedition group overtook us and stomped a track up to Shipton La. It took us three hours to climb over the Tutu La pass (4055m) and reach a small teahouse on top of the Shipton La pass (4220m). After a hot noodle soup we descended through snow to some lakes and a few abandoned stone buildings (good for an emergency shelter) before climbing up comfortable stone stairs to Keke La pass (4152m) and back down 300m of a snow-filled gully, past beautiful red rhododendron blossoms, to the next stop.

The Hotel Dobato and Guest House is the only building in Dobato (3800m). Two friendly eyes and a big smile welcomed us into the lodge where a warm fire was sizzling in the little Nepali stove. Pemba Sherpa was already waiting for us. His wife Pasang had informed him that we left her house in the morning. We dried our gear at the fireplace, sharing the warmth and stories of the day with two French trekkers who were the only other guests.

The next morning, Pemba had his kitchen ready for our obligatory power breakfast – sunny side-up eggs with hot Tibetan bread and milk tea. The sun came up from the peaks behind the house. The weather looked promising for the next leg, which passed through a massive rhododendron forest down into the Barun Valley and then up the Barun River. Dry and rocky, the single track trail traversed the steep hillside which is prone to landslides. The fresh scars were evident and this part took a lot of energy and concentration to get passed. After the stressful trail navigation, we needed a rest and stopped at a teahouse (3500m) in a wide open grassy



# Camino de Santiago – Camino Francés

new guidebook and map book pack  
with route, town maps and facilities



Explore the world with Cicerone – new guides



- comprehensive information
- all facilities shown clearly
- compact mapping guide
- NEW App available soon

[www.cicerone.co.uk](http://www.cicerone.co.uk)



**THE MOUNTAIN COMPANY**

AITO TOUR OPERATOR  
OF THE YEAR 2018

## INSPIRATIONAL HIMALAYAN MOUNTAIN HOLIDAYS

The Mountain Company is an award-winning adventure travel company that specialises in treks, tours and expeditions to the Himalaya and Karakoram.

Find out why we were voted the AITO (Association of Independent Tour Operators) Tour Operator of the Year 2018 at:

[WWW.THEMOUNTAINCOMPANY.CO.UK](http://WWW.THEMOUNTAINCOMPANY.CO.UK)



### Small Group Trekking Holidays & Expeditions

Join us on an unforgettable adventure

- Remote treks & challenging trekking peaks
- Base camp treks - including Makalu, K2, Everest, Annapurna, South Inylchek and more
- Alpine mountaineering skills adventure
- Specialist guides & excellent acclimatisation

[Request our 2020 brochure](#)



**mountain  
kingdoms**

[www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com) • 01453 844400





➔ The tea house at Kharka where over 100 yaks had been moved for the summer season

area (Kharka) to watch the hairy and gentle yaks play, eat and grunt. The way continued along the river via a newly-constructed trail. We arrived quickly at the stunning Yangle Kharka (3800m) which consists of The Makalu Barun Hotel and Guest House, a gompa and a small house for yak herders and porters. This wide valley was surrounded by windswept forests and high, snow-covered mountains above the granite cliffs that drop to the valley floor. The newly-built hut was comfortable with a nice dining room and the best pasta we ate during the trek. Here we caught up on the trail gossip and learned that a Nepali cook who had slipped on an icy bridge a couple of days before had to bus back to Kathmandu with his still unfixed broken leg.

After a fantastic night's sleep, we set off to trek over 4000m again to reach Khongmale Kharka. This was even more stunning as the valley widened, the granite walls grew higher and more enormous peaks became visible. The track followed the river and climbed through vibrant, magical forests. Snow began falling lightly but once we exited into the open area it got thicker and the winds stronger, so we decided to stop for a tea and biscuit break under the shelter of a huge crystalline granite boulder for an hour. The storm calmed down and we marched up to the Khongmale Kharka Lodge (4100m).

The base camp was close, only seven kilometres away and the promise of better weather once we passed Shersong (a small yak herders' hut) was alluring. Awaking at 6am to eat, pack and start trekking, we were able to walk slowly in the sun along the deserted single track, enjoying long pauses laying in the grass beside the trail. At 10am we began trekking again and the pyramid-shaped

Hongku Chuli (6833m) which hovered above the Barun River. At the open scrubland of Shersong (4600m), we took a break to eat cheap, sugary Nepalese biscuits and turned north towards Makalu as the micro-environment of high alpine desert emerged. These dramatic, icy mountain vistas are so impressive and make you forget all the tortures from the preceding days.

### REACHING BASE CAMP


Makalu Base Camp is in a dry desert bowl with hardly any other people to be seen, and only the abandoned base camps of expeditions on Makalu and a few buildings to be seen. Leaving our bags in the stark room at the Yak Guest House, we ordered some boiled potatoes and black tea. We sat on chairs outside, looked up at Mount Makalu and the huge mountains that surrounded us. By 8pm we retired to bed for some strange, altitude-induced dreams and experienced awaking at night gasping for breath.

Rising at 5am to see the sunrise, we hiked a steep slope up a faint winding trail behind the lodge to a ridge (5100m). This took just over an hour. The skies were clear and we were able to study all the small cliffs, ice formations, snowy sharp ridge lines, and rocky peaks. Across from us towered the impressive solo peak of Mount Makalu (8468m) with its icy rocks faces and hanging blue glaciers.

Then looking towards the Swiss Col to see Lhotse (8516m), Lhotse Shar (8382m), the large, flat triangle peak of Everest (8848m) behind them, and Nuptse (7861m) far away in the bottom of the mountain valley. The round alpine chickens ran around on the high ridge squeaking. We marvelled at the enormity of the peaks, and once the frost had melted off

the moss and tundra we lay down. The mountains shimmered in the warming air and seemed to kiss our cheeks they were so close. We spent the morning wandering around the barren ridge, eating some cold chapatis in the warm sun. For those who want to, there's the opportunity to walk along the glacier and hike up to the Swiss Col at 5400m to get another great perspective of the mountains.

It was much easier to hike down the trail as we were stronger and more used to the altitude now after having spent 10 days at over 3000m. The second crossing of the Shipton La Pass was done in ankle-deep snow, and we made a mental note that gaiters could have made things more comfortable. It is possible to skip some stops and go back to Num faster than ascending to the base camp. Once in Num, we were able to catch the 2pm jeep to Khadbari and by 7pm we were showered, unpacked and sitting in the Barun Valley Hotel eating momos, chips, cake and ice cream. From Khadbari, it is only a 20-minute taxi ride to the airport and a 45-minute flight to get back to Kathmandu.

It had been almost three weeks since we'd left Kathmandu, and we were fitter, healthier, stronger, and felt happy and a bit enlightened by the experience of walking amongst earth's highest mountains. There never was a problem finding water, but purification tablets were necessary. Once back in Kathmandu, it was calming to watch the Nepalese pray, meditate, burn incense, leave offerings, and act kindly to animals and other human beings. The trek to Makalu Base Camp was challenging but not too difficult, and the people we met along the way really made this a special experience. They were excellent hosts, genuinely tolerant, and very smiley humans – it is truly infectious. 



# THE KNOWLEDGE

MAKALU BASE CAMP TREK: What you need to know before you go

## HOW TO GET THERE

Flights from KTM to Tumlingtar, 30 minutes  
 Bus to Dharan 14 hours.  
 Dharan to Tumlingtar by 4x4, 8 hours.  
[www.yetiairlines.com](http://www.yetiairlines.com)  
[www.buddhaair.com](http://www.buddhaair.com)  
 Bus company:  
[www.facebook.com/primedeluxeAC/](http://www.facebook.com/primedeluxeAC/)  
 Prime Bus – Kathmandu to Dharan, 1200rs.  
 Jeep Dharan to Khandbari, 1000rs.  
 Jeep Khandbari to Num, 600rs.

Once in Tumlingtar it is a short taxi ride to Khabari. Overnight here. It will take another four-hour shared 4x4 taxi ride. Num is the start point of the Makalu Base Camp Trek and no vehicles past this town.

## VISAS & PERMITS

Nepal visas are easy to get at KTM Tribhuvan International Airport. Just fill out a form then go to a counter to get it stamped; then go to another counter to pay and get it stamped again. 15 day visas cost 25 USD, 30 days cost 40 USD and 90 days cost 100 USD. Go to [www.nepalimmigration.gov.np/page/tourist-visa](http://www.nepalimmigration.gov.np/page/tourist-visa) for more info.



[nepalimmigration.gov.np/page/tourist-visa](http://nepalimmigration.gov.np/page/tourist-visa) for more info.

Permits for the Makalu Barun National Park can only be bought in Seduwa and cost 3000rs plus 13% VAT= 3390rs. No TIMS permit is needed. The official park entrance is in Seduwa and there are no other check points once inside the park boundaries.

## WHERE TO STAY

Makalu has easy trails and the teahouses bring an entirely new level of comfort

to the trek. You will sleep in one of these lodges every night and you eat most of your meals in them too. The teahouses usually have a small store that sell crisps, Snickers bars, expedition leftovers, beer and Cokes. Most tea houses cost around 500rs. per night and can be booked upon arrival, or even from the lodge below as everyone is related and always talking on their mobile phones. The usual set-up is a small room with two twin beds and a shared bathroom that is outside. Blankets may be provided but it is better to bring a sleeping bag or, at a minimum, a sleeping bag liner. In Kathmandu, the authors stayed at the Dragon Guest House Mahankal, Budha-6 ([nfragon@ntc.net.np](mailto:nfragon@ntc.net.np)). It costs 1000rs. for a double room with inside bathroom, in a quiet area with nice big grass garden, and near the Shechen Monastery.

## MAPS & GUIDEBOOKS

Be aware that the maps that are produced in Nepal have some slightly wrong information, such as elevation measurements,

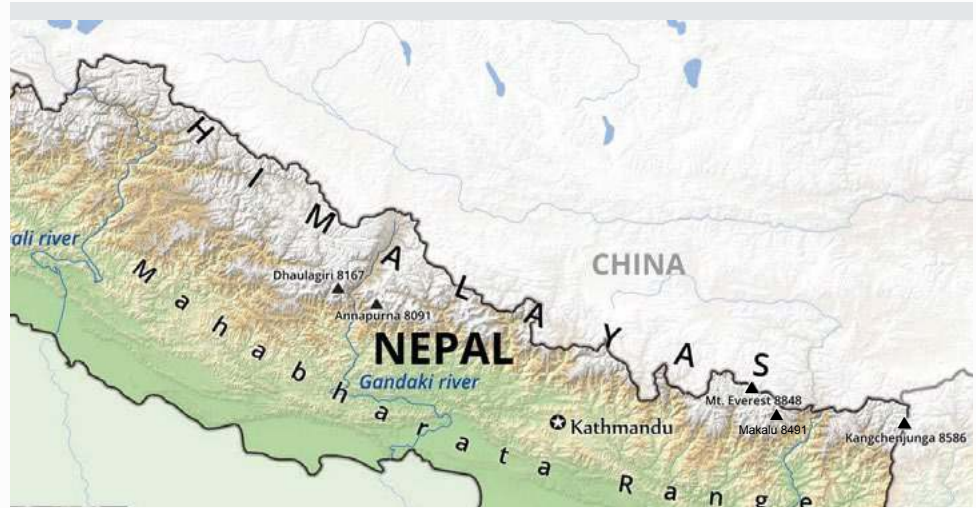
lodge locations, trails, and names. These are minor mistakes, but the maps themselves are okay. The Makalu Base Camp Trek is described in Cicerone's 'Trekking in the Himalayas' guidebook, along with 19 other classic treks ([www.cicerone.co.uk](http://www.cicerone.co.uk))

## WHAT TO TAKE

The lodges have blankets, but they are not washed very often, so take your own sleeping bag (-5°C). Merino socks and baselayers, down jacket, waterproof jacket, quick dry pants, high altitude meds (if required), first aid kit, sunscreen, sunglasses, trekking poles, hat with brim.

## WHO TO GO WITH

This trek is eminently possible for experienced hillwalkers and backpackers, however, if you wish to go with an organised group then there are several UK-based companies that offer a Makalu itinerary, including **Mountain Kingdoms** ([www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com)), **Jagged Globe** ([www.jagged-globe.co.uk](http://www.jagged-globe.co.uk)) and **The Mountain Company** ([www.themountaincompany.co.uk](http://www.themountaincompany.co.uk))





LAND ROVER EXPLORE  
EXCLUSIVELY AVAILABLE FROM C247.COM



EXPLORE  
OUTDOOR PHONE



BUILT TO SURVIVE  
THE ELEMENTS



BATTERY BUILT  
TO LAST



ADVANCED  
MAPPING & GPS



ACCESS TO ORDNANCE  
SURVEY MAPS THROUGH APP



**C247.COM**

The Best Tech at the Best Prices



For more information visit [c247.com/landroverexplore](http://c247.com/landroverexplore)



ONLY £249

## Get **Trek & Mountain** on your desktop (or smartphone, tablet or laptop) from just £2.99 per issue

Choose between an annual  
subscription (best price) or single  
issue purchases at:

**[www.pocketmags.com/  
trek-and-mountain-magazine](http://www.pocketmags.com/trek-and-mountain-magazine)**



Go to **[www.pocketmags.com/trek-and-mountain-magazine](http://www.pocketmags.com/trek-and-mountain-magazine)**



IN-DEPTH REVIEWS AND ADVICE FROM THE T&amp;M TEST TEAM



## Our promise

➔ At Trek & Mountain, we believe that buying gear that is both high quality and appropriate for the activities it is to be used for is vital to our readers' enjoyment and safety in the mountains. For this reason, we test clothing and equipment to the best of our ability, in the right conditions and environments, for long enough periods to make realistic assessments, and highlighting both good and bad points irrespective of whether a brand advertises with us or not. That is our promise to you.



Chris



86



85



85



84

## OUR TEST TEAM

Meet this month's T&amp;M gear testers



**JON DORAN**  
Jon is one of the most experienced gear testers in the business, and can usually be found wandering the Peak District hills.



**WILL HARRIS**  
Will is a Chamonix-based aspirant Mountain Guide who has been on numerous expeditions around the world.



**CHRIS KEMPSTER**  
T&M's editor and founder enjoys a wide variety of mountain sports, from climbing to ski touring.



**Rab Ladakh GTX P71**



84



# Gear News

We round up the latest stories from the world of outdoor clothing and equipment

## Hilleberg launch pole-less tent



Swedish tentmakers *par excellence* Hilleberg are launching a lightweight, ridge-style tent that is erected using your walking poles. The new 2-person Anaris, which

will be available in the spring of 2020, is built to pitch with trekking poles or by suspending the ridge ends from trees or other supports. The Anaris is a Yellow Label tent, so is

suitable for 3-season (snow free) use, and its combination of light weight, simplicity and comfort make it ideal for backpacking and similar warmer weather backcountry

adventures, say Hilleberg. The Anaris weighs 1.4 kg and has a generous 2.6m<sup>2</sup> of inner tent area and over 110 cm of headroom. It also offers flexibility; both inner tent entrance walls, including the doors, are 'no-see-um' mesh, which, along with the catenary patterning on the outer tent walls, ensure excellent airflow. Both doors on both vestibules can be partially or fully rolled away, allowing even more venting options, and either or both of

the Anaris's sides can be fully rolled up. Like all of Hilleberg's tents, the Anaris has linked inner and outer tents, allowing either simultaneous pitching or separate use. Used on its own, the outer tent is a supercharged tarp, thanks to its multiple options for rolling the ends or the sides. And the inner tents full mesh ends make it a great choice for bug protection in hot weather.

More info: [www.hilleberg.com](http://www.hilleberg.com)

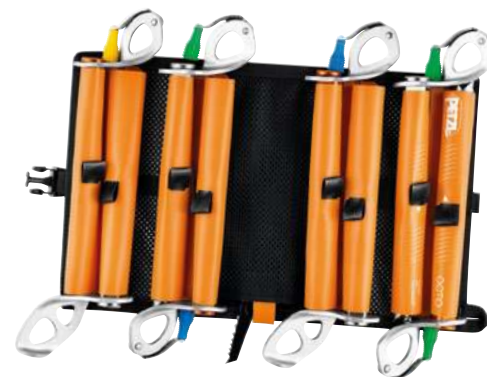
## NEW PETZL WINTER GEAR

Petzl have updated their range of winter equipment with several new models, the first of which is an updated DART crampon. The DART and DARTWIN crampons have been popular choices for pure ice climbing for many years, and now the benefits of both have been brought together in the new DART crampon (£205). The new model allows

either mono or dual points to be selected due to its modular design and, in fact, comes with four front point options: mono-point short or mono-point long, for ice climbing and dry tooling; asymmetrical dual-point for pure ice; or dual-point for snow couloirs and gullies. The DART is compatible with Petzl's universal rear crampon

sections, allowing you to transform glacier travel or mountaineering models into crampons for ice/mixed/dry tooling. The DART is supplied with LEVERLOCK FIL bindings for fully-rigid boots and is compatible with the FIL SMALL toe bail for narrow boots.

What do you use for threading Abalakov anchors? A length of bent coat-hanger



➔ DART (below), MULTIHOOK (right) and OCTO (above)

wire? Well now there's another option from Petzl called the MULTIHOOK, a multi-function, foldable threading tool (£28.00). It'll thread an ice anchor up to 25cm in depth, and its serrated blade easily cuts ropes and cords for those 'Touching The Void' moments. It can be used to clear the tube of an ice screw, and carried folded in a pocket or clipped to your harness.

The OCTO (£23.50) is a large-capacity protective

carrying pouch for storing up to 12 ice screws, compatible with screws 9cm to 21cm in length and 18mm in diameter. Its wallet-fold design gives easy access, there's a retention tab to hold the screws in place, and a mesh pocket for accessories (file, spare picks etc). The mesh construction allows screws to dry and the pouch can be suspended without removing the contents, for a practical drying solution.

More info: [www.petzl.com](http://www.petzl.com)



## FRICTION FREE MOVEMENT



A new cream intended to help those who suffer from chafing has been developed by German company PureTrail. Tobias Krumm, the founder of Pure Trail and developer of the Skinprotec cream, is an ultra marathon runner himself and says: "Nothing is more frustrating than having to give up a race due to sore skin or blisters rather than having reached the limit of your physical endurance." And because he himself had suffered this fate, he started a search for a solution to the age old problem of shoes and clothing rubbing against skin, and skin-on-skin contact.

Anti-friction creams, lotions and balms were already available of course, but having tried them all Tobias found them all lacking in some way. He decided that what was required was a high performance product that fulfilled the needs of the runner in all types of conditions; a product that is resistant to sweat, water, dirt and sand with wide ranging functionality and excellent skin compatibility. The simple idea was to create a new cream composition that fulfilled these needs, and after three years of development and testing, during which Skinprotec has been used for over 20,000km, his product is now available to buy. We have been sent a sample to test out, so we'll let you know how we get on!

More info: [www.skinprotec.com](http://www.skinprotec.com)

# SPOT X ADDS BLUETOOTH

➔ You can pair the SPOT X Bluetooth with your phone



As the newest member of the SPOT family of devices, SPOT X with Bluetooth wireless technology offers two-way SMS and email messaging as well as GPS tracking and a one-touch SOS button that instantly sends the user's GPS location to the GEOS International Emergency Response Coordination Centre (IERCC) over the Globalstar satellite network. The IERCC then transmits details to local first responders to dispatch help to the user's precise location. SPOT has played a role in more than 6,900 rescues around the globe, many of which were life-saving, the company says.

Users can message directly from the SPOT X device or use the new SPOT X app that also features unlimited use of 14 pre-programmed messages and access to the contacts on a user's smartphone, making it easy to communicate with family, friends, colleagues or

directly with first responders in an emergency. Globalstar claim that SPOT X is the only satellite messenger on the market to give users a permanent phone number, free incoming messages, easy check-in function and a full, backlit QWERTY keypad for intuitive typing. They also say it offers the industry's longest battery life in both tracking and SOS modes.

"The vast majority of our current customers already take their mobile phones on their adventures," said David Kagan, CEO at Globalstar. "Adding Bluetooth capability to SPOT X allows users to seamlessly connect their smartphone and use an intuitive interface to send and receive messages over the Globalstar satellite network. SPOT X operates for up to 10 days on a single charge, with or without a paired phone."

More info: [www.findmyspot.eu](http://www.findmyspot.eu)

## Firmware update for Mammut's Barryvox

Mammut is updating its popular Barryvox avalanche transceiver with the new BarryHeart 3.2 device-to-device firmware upgrade which will optimise the battery life and allow even more accurate measurements with a simplified visual user interface. The updated version now provides rescuers with even faster and more precise guidance with signal analysis and the fine search – in particular when searching for older avalanche transceivers. The update also improves the battery power display and optimises battery life, in particular in very cold temperatures. The new firmware focuses on the intuitive operation and functionality of the device.

"We are constantly developing the



➔ Barryvox gets new heart

avalanche transceiver's technical capabilities and looking for innovative solutions that make it significantly easier for users to learn new functions, which in turn makes it easier to use the device safely and quickly in an emergency," explains Ilari Dammert, the Senior Product Manager of Avalanche Safety at Mammut Sports Group.

Barryvox devices can be updated with the firmware upgrade (R3.2 for Barryvox and Barryvox S and R4.2 for Pulse Barryvox) independently of network or service point access. BarryHeart 3.2 is available now and can be installed free of charge at a MAMMUT Service Centre or specialist retailer.

More info: [www.mammut.ch](http://www.mammut.ch)





# Rab Ladakh GTX Jacket

## £350

As Rab launch their first range of Gore-Tex jackets this winter, **Jon Doran** checks out a fully-featured mountain shell that'll suit many hillwalkers and mountaineers

➔ New for this winter, Rab has a range of four men's and three women's waterproof shells made using Gore-Tex fabrics. It's a bit of a departure for the brand, which has previously used non-Gore fabrics for its top-end waterproofs (note: you can still buy Rab jackets made from Pertex Shield fabrics). Some of the jackets, the Latok for example, carry over their names and function from last year, but the Ladakh GTX is an all-new design which uses tough Gore-Tex Pro fabrics in high-wear areas, but softer, quieter Gore-Tex C-KNIT for the main body of the jacket. It's a mountain all-rounder with a full helmet hood that's aimed to work anywhere from UK hills through to full-on alpine mountaineering.

To put it in perspective, the Latok is Rab's full-on, professional use, super serious

mountain shell made entirely from 70D Gore-Tex Pro, the Muztag uses a mix of Gore-Tex Pro and Gore-Tex Active for more breathability and has a slimmer 'active' cut, while the workhorse Kangri GTX is a no-nonsense mountain-walking shell made from straight 3-layer standard Gore-Tex and isn't helmet compatible. There are women's versions of all of these apart from the Latok GTX.

All of which makes the Ladakh a potentially ideal choice if you're someone who does a bit of everything, home and/or abroad. It has most of the Latok's features and design touches, but in a more affordable, slightly lighter – about 50g less – and quieter package. Or that's the theory.

### FABRICS

The Ladakh uses two Gore-Tex fabrics. The main body, the

lighter panels, is made from Gore-Tex with the C-KNIT backer. It's a lighter 40D weight material that feels pleasantly soft and doesn't have the distinctive crackle of the tougher Pro version. The darker areas, however, use tough 70D Pro, effectively the shoulders and yoke, outer sleeves and top-panel and peak of the hood. It all makes the jacket feel nicer, but it's also significantly quieter in use than a full Pro jacket. It won't be as tough, but for most users that's arguably not a major factor. As a combination, I'd say it works pretty well.

Breathability is fine until you really put the hammer down, at which point you can still implement 'operation pit-zip'. The C-KNIT fabric is really quiet in use, even with the hood up, which may sound like a minor thing, but Pro really can be distractingly loud on a windy day. And finally you still get the

### Spec sheet

#### Rab Ladakh GTX Jacket

**Weight:** 530g (men's medium)

**Fabrics:** Gore-Tex Pro 70D and C-KNIT 40D

**Hood:** 3-way adjustable helmet hood with wired and laminated peak

**Zips:** YKK AquaGuard on pockets and pitzips

**Pockets:** 2 x handwarmers, 1 x chest, 1 internal

**Fit:** Regular

**More info:** [www.rab.equipment](http://www.rab.equipment)

reassurance of having the tougher fabric in areas that rub against rocks and pack straps. In the long term it won't be as durable as a Latok, but for most of us, that won't be a major issue. You save a handy 50g too, and the jacket's a not unreasonable 530g in a medium, about the same as similar shells from rival brands.

### FIT AND FEATURES

Rab has used the new Gore-Tex range as an opportunity to refine its cut, it says. The Ladakh is a relatively roomy fit; not loose, exactly, but not as fitted as some, and with plenty of room to layer it over a medium warm insulated jacket like its own micro-baffled Cirrus. One neat touch is an internal, adjustable half waist-cord, which lets you cinch the jacket in around the lower back when you don't need that extra volume. My only misgiving





with that is that the fabric rucks up along the cord and could potentially in the long term suffer abrasion from a pack. The jacket's a good, medium length for protection without restriction and it gets Rab's characteristically long sleeves for unrestricted climbing use. Those with shorter arms might want to try before buying. As you'd expect, hem and cuffs are all fully adjustable with neat one-handed tensioners and hook-and-loop fittings respectively. The back of the cuff is extended for extra glove protection and there's enough opening for them to fit over full winter gauntlet-style gloves.

Arguably the Ladakh's trump card is a superb, helmet-compatible hood. It's big enough to swallow a climbing lid, while still giving plenty of facial coverage and allowing easy head movement. Normally the pay-off for that is compromised performance with a bare head, but in this case, a new third adjustment at the base of the neck does double duty of reducing effective volume and also pulling in the front cords, so there's no slack ends to smack you in the face – neat. It's all topped up with a serious stiffened and wired peak for extra rain protection. Just an excellent, no-nonsense hood design with or without a helmet.

Finally you get as many pockets as most folk will ever want: two huge hand ones neatly protected by slanted laminated storm-flaps plus a big, Napoleon-style lefthand chest-pocket that'll happily take a pair of gloves or a map without signs of indigestion.

Those hand-pockets also get internal shaping so they can handle 3D objects as well as flat ones. Nice touch. Last but not least, there's a smaller, internal zipped chest pocket on the right, ideal for a phone or wallet, though you have to open the main zip to access it.

Finally on the feature front, you get decently long, easy-to-use, two-way pit-zips for those overheating moments. The zip-pulls are different on each zip, so you can differentiate between them by feel, which can save fumbling. It's a nice idea that makes life a little easier and works even when wearing thick winter gloves.

## IN USE

Rab has always made really well-engineered mountain shells, but adding Gore-Tex dependability opens up the brand to people who wouldn't otherwise have considered it. I've been using the Ladakh through some truly gruesome late autumn/early winter deluge conditions and it's kept me reliably dry and comfortable. The hood is brilliant, and gives you the option of wearing a helmet too. The features all work. Build quality seems spot on and the trade-off of the circular knit C-KNIT backer used for most of the jacket is that it's soft, quiet and very wearable.

If you've ever winced at the snap, crackle and pop soundtrack that goes with Pro, you'll be pleasantly surprised. Of course you don't get the same ultimate durability as you would with, say, the tank-like 100% Pro Latok GTX, but if you don't need it, it makes the jacket a much more pleasant experience. Particularly if it's



↑ Hood is excellent, with or without a helmet

windy. As someone who runs hot, I generally prefer a snuggler cut, but the waist-cord adds some leeway there, and if you do habitually use thicker insulation under a shell in colder conditions, there's plenty of space to allow that. Finally it's not the lightest or most packable jacket out there, but it's not absurdly heavy either.

Overall I'd say the Ladakh is

an excellent all-round, all-weather shell that you can happily use for UK hill and mountain walking, but thanks to that excellent helmet-compatible hood, will also take on higher, more technical stuff if needed. And all without added snap, crackle and pop. **T&M**

**More info:** [www.rab.equipment](http://www.rab.equipment)

## Verdict

Thoroughly designed, dependably waterproof mountain shell with an excellent hood with or without a helmet, and plenty of space for additional insulation layers



**PROS:** ✓ Lots of pocket capacity ✓ Decent balance between comfort and durability ✓ Relatively quiet jacket ✓ A simply excellent hood  
**CONS:** ✗ Half waist-cord bunches fabric which could wear  
✗ Generous fit won't suit everyone ✗ Not as durable as full Gore-Tex Pro, though the Latok GTX is available for those who want it



↑ Internal pocket is ideal for your phone or wallet



↑ Two types of zip pull on the pit-zips aid operation



↑ Ladakh uses YKK Aqua-Guard water-resistant zips



↑ Over-sized zip pull makes zipping with gloves easy







## TREK & MOUNTAIN GEAR GUIDE

# WINTER CLIMBING AND MOUNTAINEERING

**Will Harris** gives a run down on all the kit you need to go winter mountaineering, from clothing and footwear to climbing hardware...

➔ **Climbing and mountaineering in the British winter can be a harsh and demanding experience. Unlike our continental cousins, the scale of our mountains and the frequency of bad weather mean that we go out in the hills in wild conditions, often combining cold, wind and moisture.**

Anyone who has walked through the rain to reach the snowline will know exactly what we're dealing with. The gear we use needs to be correspondingly tough, and we need to be completely self sufficient, meaning that extra safety kit needs to be carried.

We all do different things in the mountains in winter, and whilst much of the core gear used is the same, when we specialise we need different tools, so in our discussion below we use mountaineering to mean winter hillwalking and easy pitched climbing, and climbing to refer to steeper pitches from Scottish grade III upwards.

Winter climbing requires a lot of gear, the weight of which can add up fast. Keeping everything light makes the walk in more pleasant, but it's vital that important safety gear isn't left behind when heading out into a tough environment where conditions change fast. ➔



## WINTER GEAR GUIDE

# CLOTHING & PERSONAL KIT

A versatile layering system is needed to keep you dry and comfortable during the different intensities of activity that a winter day will involve, from fast uphill walking to long sedentary belay sessions.

**Belay Jacket:** An extra warm, big insulated jacket, such as the **Rab Photon Pro Jacket** (below) goes over the top of every thing whilst stood still. In damp conditions synthetic insulation is much better than even the latest hydrophobic down.



**Warm Stuff:** A warm hat – such as the **Alpkit Mountain Beanie** (right) – and a buff is essential. In very poor weather a second buff can be used as a face mask for extra protection, or a balaclava can be worn.



**Midlayer/Insulation:** Worn as an outer layer when walking in on nice days, or carried in and then added under the shell in poorer weather, two lightly insulated layers are needed. Combining an R1-style fleece and a lightweight synthetic insulation layer such as the **Patagonia Nano Puff** (right) works well. Hoods on these layers increases warmth and weather protection.



**Baselayer:** A breathable wicking layer for both upper body and legs, made from either synthetic or merino wool (or a mix), such as the **Montane Primino** range. Long sleeved baselayers are more comfortable in bad

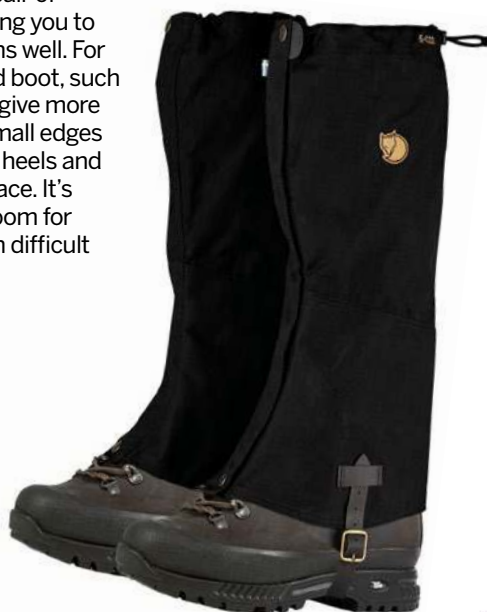


**Shell:** A quality water-proof jacket that allows good freedom of movement and has a hood that fits over your helmet, such as **The North Face Summit L5 Futurelight Jacket** (left) is needed. Make sure that it stays tucked into your harness when raising arms overhead, and that sleeves keep your wrists covered when reaching up. Waterproof salopettes offer great protection, meaning that you won't get a cold gap between trousers and jackets. Softshell outer layers are great to climb in on nicer winter days, but the UK climate means that waterproof outer layer are often needed.





**Boots** For winter mountaineering a warm pair of semi-stiff B2 rated boots are perfect, allowing you to kick steps in hard snow and fitting crampons well. For steeper technical climbing a stiffer B3 rated boot, such as the **Scarpa Phantom Tech** (below) will give more support to your calves when standing on small edges or kicking into hard ice. Plastic welts on the heels and toes allow crampons to be firmly fixed in place. It's important that boots fit well, as if there is room for heels to lift it makes climbing steep ice both difficult and uncomfortable.



#### Gaiters

Whether to go for boots with a built-in gaiter or use a separate pair, such as the **Fjällräven Singi Gaiters**, above, will be down to personal choice. A modern boot with built-in gaiters probably makes more sense if you're going to spend lots of time in the damp Scottish west-coast climate, with the gaiterless design more appropriate for the drier alpine summer. Gaiters should be worn underneath the ankles of waterproof trousers, not over the top.



#### Rucksack

Everything that you need for a day winter climbing should fit into a 40L (or thereabouts) rucksack, like the **Arc'teryx Alpha FL45** (above). It's worth having a big enough bag to have everything, including the rope, packed inside so that in bad weather you arrive at the base of the route without soaked gear. Your rucksack needs a way to attach ice axes, and a big enough lid to take a head torch, goggles, etc.



**Hands:** There is no such thing as a warm, dextrous, waterproof, long-lasting glove, meaning that trade-offs must be made to see what works for you. A typically wet UK winter climbing day will require several pairs of gloves: a light pair for the walk in, at least a couple of technical pairs for climbing in and a warm pair for belaying in should be carried as a minimum. In drier conditions the hard-wearing Simond leather mountaineering gloves sold by Decathlon are great, and at £20 a pair a bargain. A pair of warm mitts, such as the **Rab Alliance GTX Mitt** (above) are an essential piece of gear, living in the bottom of your rucksack until things get out of hand and you need to warm up fast. Climbing while wearing mitts is a total faff, but they are great for long, cold belays and walking out in poor conditions.





## WINTER GEAR GUIDE



### Walking poles

Walking poles take care of your knees on the downhill and make it much easier to cover snow-covered terrain and to travel in windy conditions. They also make it much easier to self-evacuate with an injured lower leg. Make sure that they fold down or break apart small enough to fit entirely inside your rucksack when climbing, like the **Leki Micro Vario Carbon** (left) – trying to climb a chimney with poles strapped to the outside of your sack will inevitably end in disaster.



### Guidebooks

Winter climbing often involves turning up at the crag and choosing the route that's in best condition on that day, so having a guidebook with lots of options is essential.



### Waterproof bags

Roll-top waterproof bags, such as the **Exped Fold Drybag** (above) are useful to keep essentials dry inside your rucksack. One larger waterproof bag should be used to keep dry things like spare layers of clothing and the guidebook separate from wet things like the rack, ropes, crampons etc. Resist the temptation to keep each individual item in its own dry bag – this is a faff and wastes lots of time.



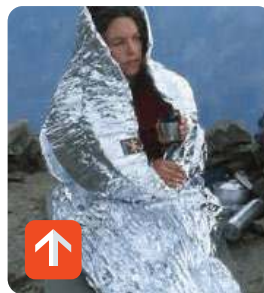
### Head torch x2

Winter days are short, so never leave the car without a headtorch. Modern models, such as the **Petzl Swift RL** (above), are light, bright, and inexpensive so instead of taking spare batteries carrying two torches in case one dies makes more sense. Rechargeable units create less waste and mean you can always head out with two full sets of batteries.



### Blizzard Bag

Blizzard bags are vacuum-packed silver foil sleeping bags with a clever double-wall system which means they pack down small but are very warm even in cold, wet conditions. Throw away your old orange plastic survival bag, they don't do anywhere near as good a job of keeping an injured person alive.



### Flask

In poor weather a flask of hot sugary cordial or fruit tea will do wonders for morale. 1 litre max.

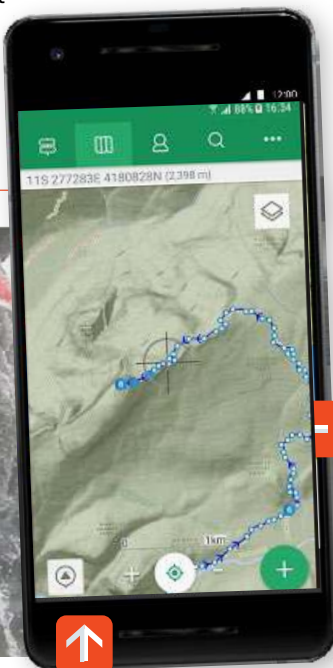


**First aid** A basic first aid kit with tape, bandages, blister plasters, and pain killers as a minimum. Keep in a small waterproof bag, along with your spare head torch.



### Mobile Phone

A fully-charged mobile phone, turned off and kept warm next to your body in fleece pocket to protect battery, for emergency use.



### Navigation

The Harvey's 1:25,000 maps are great for navigating in winter conditions, with the 1:12,500 detailed maps of Ben Nevis and other summits are extremely useful in poor visibility. A good quality A5-sized map case will make navigating with your pre-folded map much easier- the more flexible ones from Ortleib are much easier to use than cheap plastic ones. A good quality compass is essential, with the Silva Expedition being the industry standard. In difficult conditions having a GPS device can make challenging navigation much easier. There is no good reason not to carry one. The Viewranger app downloaded to your mobile phone is another excellent navigational resource, but it's important that the same device that you are going to use to call for help in an emergency doesn't have it's battery worn down whilst navigating.





Photo: Norbert Blank

Expedition mats

Fast + Lite

Megamat

Trekking

### A better night's sleep

- Lightweight, compact,
- Insulation of up to 9.5 R-value,
- 5cm to 12cm of comfort,
- Up to 5 years warranty



**EXPED**  
EXPEDITION EQUIPMENT

Exped products are distributed in the UK and Ireland  
by Lyon Equipment - [www.lyon.co.uk](http://www.lyon.co.uk)

**SPOT X™**  
NOW WITH **BLUETOOTH®**

*Transform*  
**YOUR SMARTPHONE INTO A**  
**SATELLITE MESSANGER**

 **SAVED BY SPOT™**

[FindMeSPOT.eu/TM](http://FindMeSPOT.eu/TM)



## WINTER GEAR GUIDE

# HARDWARE

The tools we use today in the winter mountains are very sophisticated, having been honed over literally hundreds of years – but matching the right model of axe and crampons to your activity is absolutely essential...

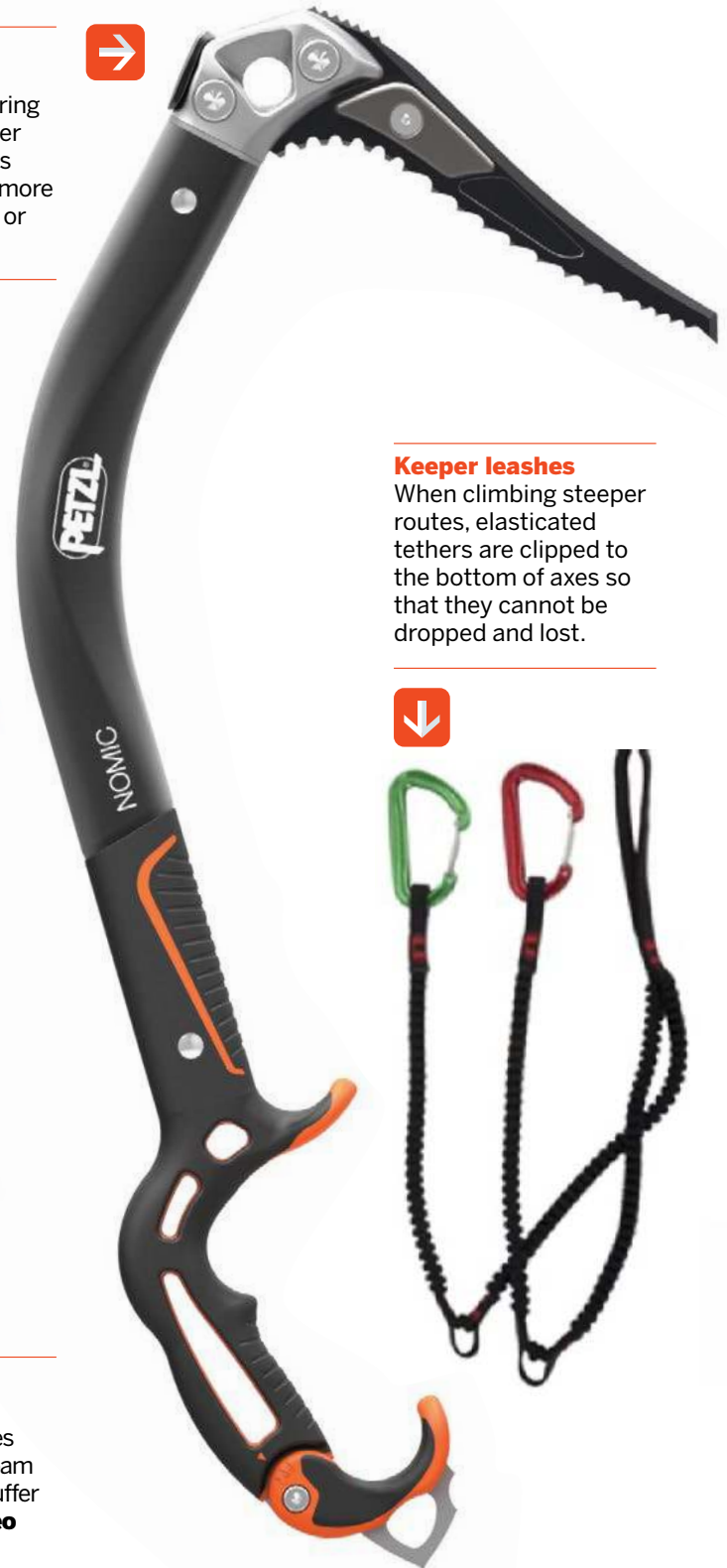
## Axes

There are a wide range of axes on the market, and the important thing when choosing one is to match the tool to the intended job. For classic mountaineering a single straight-shafted axe with a curved pick is perfect. As things get steeper and two axes are used on easier climbing ground a pair of semi-technical tools such as the Petzl Sum'tec or DMM Fly's are perfect. For harder winter routes more technical tools will make life much easier, with handles either set on the shaft or dropped back from the shaft to give even better grip on steep ground.



## Helmet

Some people choose not to wear a helmet when rock climbing, but when winter climbing there is no argument about wearing one: with falling ice and pointed axes swinging around above your head, wearing one is essential. Modern expanded-foam helmets are super light and offer great protection in a fall but are more likely to suffer damage in the rough and tumble world of winter. A good choice is the **Petzl Boreo** which combines a protective hardened plastic shell with a complete foam liner.



## Keeper leashes

When climbing steeper routes, elasticated tethers are clipped to the bottom of axes so that they cannot be dropped and lost.





## Harness

A simple, light-weight harness – such as the **Arc'teryx AR-395A** below – with a minimum of four gear loops for more technical climbs. Make sure it's easy to put on when wearing mountaineering boots. Always put your harness on before crampons when approaching a climb.



## Ropes

A lightweight single rope for easier mountaineering routes, and double ropes for more technical routes. If climbing as a team of three, using a pair of skinny triple-rated ropes is safe and light. Whether single or double ropes are used, the important factor is that they have a good quality dry treatment. Dry-treated ropes have a specifically designed water-repellent coating added to their fibres, which prevents them from soaking up water. Winter climbing takes place in a wet environment and without this dry treatment ropes will soak up water, becoming heavy before freezing into unusable cables.



## Crampons

The most versatile crampon for general winter mountaineering and climbing is a 12-pointed semi-flexible model such as the **Grivel G12** (above) or the Petzl Vasak. These work well on easy to mid grade winter routes, but on steeper ice and mixed climbs harder wearing and more precise crampons such as the **Petzl Dart** (right) allow for more effective footwork.



## Emergency shelter

In the event of an incident, being able to stay warm and sheltered until help can reach you can make the difference between a good and bad outcome. Every team should carry a simple group shelter – such as the **Vango Storm Shelter 800** above – that can be sat inside. These are light and pack down to an impressively small size.



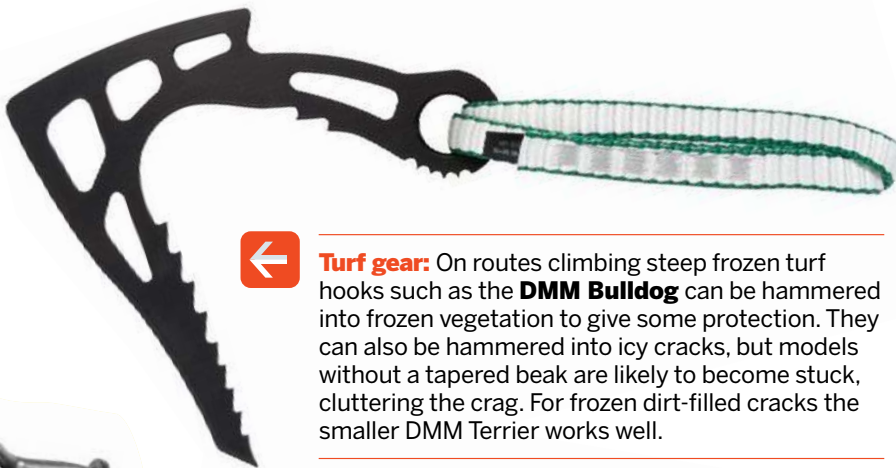


## WINTER GEAR GUIDE

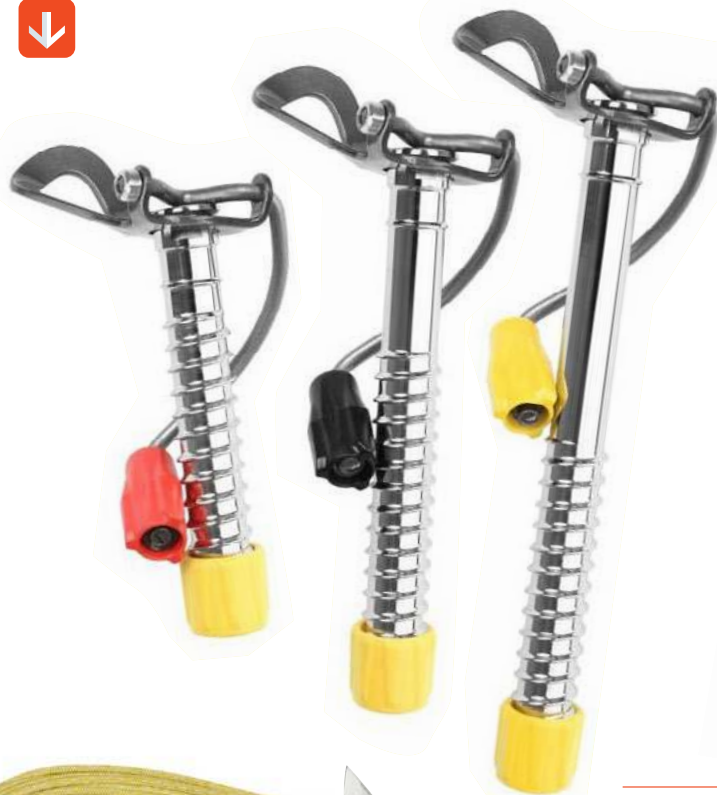
# RACK

Protecting mixed routes can require a large and diverse rack, with options to place gear in rock, ice and frozen turf. As in all types of climbing choosing the right rack for the conditions and the route is a skill that takes time and effort to master.

**Ice screws:** Like all ice climbing gear, screws work best when kept sharp. To prevent teeth from being damaged in transport it's a good idea to always refit the rubber caps after use, and this will also stop you from putting holes in other gear too. Modern ice screws with free-turning handles, such as the **Grivel 360** (below) are much easier to place than older designs. The easiest way to rack screws onto your harness is via a dedicated clipper, an outward facing accessory carabiner which allow screws to be removed single-handed whilst climbing.



**Turf gear:** On routes climbing steep frozen turf hooks such as the **DMM Bulldog** can be hammered into frozen vegetation to give some protection. They can also be hammered into icy cracks, but models without a tapered beak are likely to become stuck, cluttering the crag. For frozen dirt-filled cracks the smaller DMM Terrier works well.



**Slings:** Several 120cm slings should be carried, including at least one stiffer Aramid sling for threading chockstones.



**Abseil cord:** 5 metres of 6mm abseil cord and a small knife should be carried on every route to make abseil retreat easier if necessary.



**Pegs:** Some people argue that for ethical reasons pegs shouldn't be used as they can damage the rock, but on icy mixed routes they can offer protection when nothing else will. Knife Blades and Bird Beaks can be a get-out-of-jail-free card, making otherwise unprotected sections of climbing much safer.



**Metal file:** Winter climbing involves using lots of pointed gear, all of which works best if it is sharp. A metal file should be taken on trips to be used to regularly sharpen crampons, axes and screws. Petzl make the Lim'ice, a tool designed to accurately sharpen their screws, which works very well at giving back the fresh from the factory ease of placement.

**V threader:** A 30cm long thin metal wire or bar with a hook at one end, these are used to pull abseil cord through a tunnel created in the ice to make an Abalakov or V thread anchor.

**Cams:** In icy conditions cams should be treated with extreme scepticism as they tend to rip out of even good placements. They can be very useful in winter but must be carefully placed in snow and ice-free rock to be secure.



**Nuts:** Nuts are the most used and most useful piece of the winter rack and carrying two full sets and an extra set of off-set's will be necessary on harder mixed routes. They can be gently hammered into icy cracks to give more secure placements, but if wires become damaged then they should be replaced.

**Hexes:** Relegated to history in summer, hexes are perfect in winter where they can be tapped into wide, iced-up cracks.



**Quickdraws:** Extendible quickdraws using 60cm slings are useful for preventing rope drag on wandering pitches, alongside longer light-weight fixed length 'draws.



# Trek & Mountain

## CUT OUT AND KEEP CHECKLIST: SCOTTISH WINTER CLIMBING

### PERSONAL

- ☐ Harness, belay device, prussic loops
- ☐ Helmet
- ☐ Ice axes and tethers
- ☐ Crampons
- ☐ Boots
- ☐ Hat, buff, walk-in gloves
- ☐ Walking Poles
- ☐ Map and compass, GPS
- ☐ Headtorch, spare
- ☐ Goggles and sunglasses
- ☐ Belay jacket, extra warm layers,
- ☐ Climbing gloves and spares, warm mitts
- ☐ Food & flask

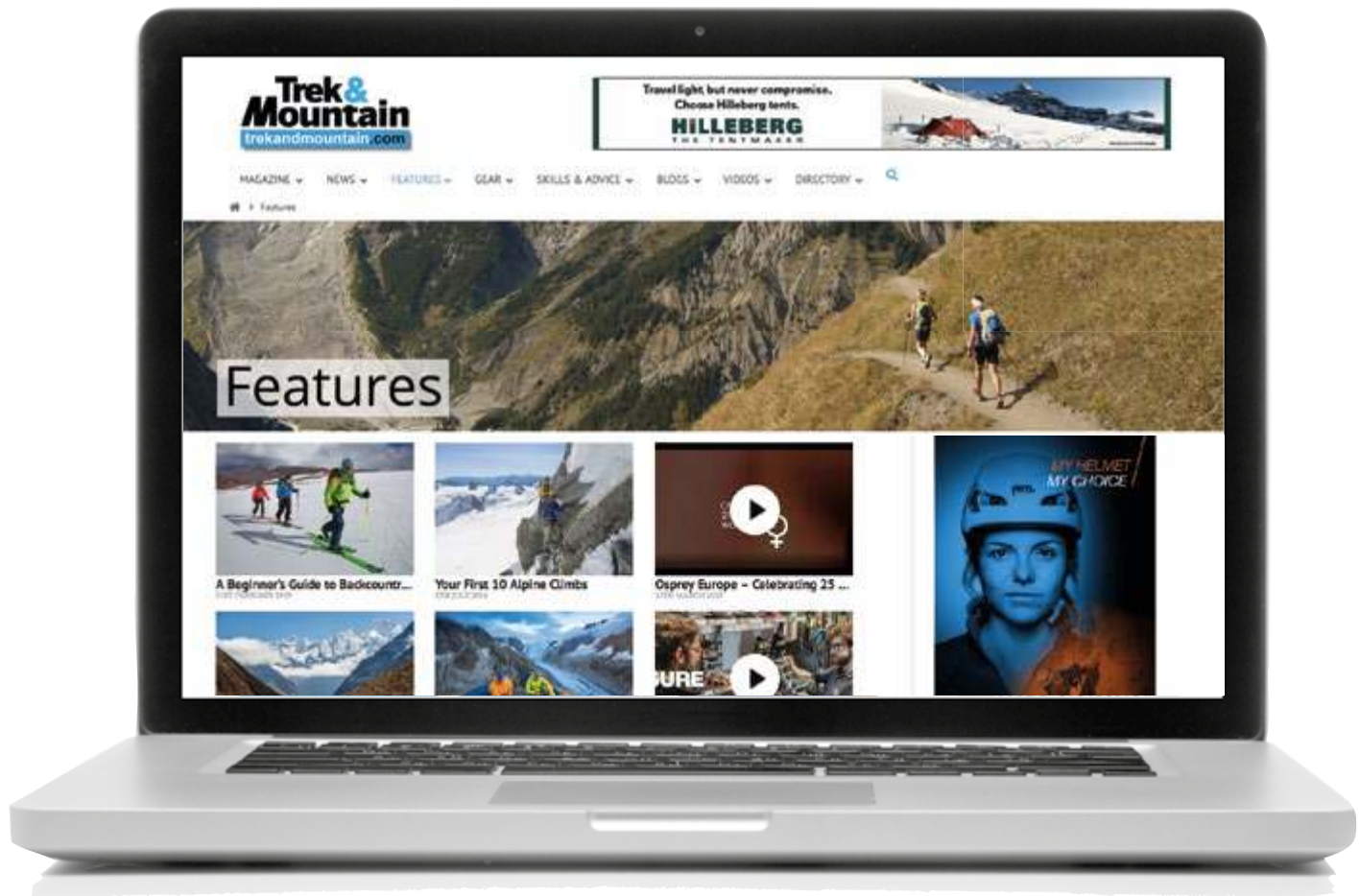
### TEAM

- ☐ First aid kit & group shelter/blizzard bag
- ☐ Guidebook
- ☐ Ropes & rack
- ☐ Abseil tat & threader



# Get your mountain fix

...even when you're not  
in the mountains



**Daily updated** news, features,  
routes, gear reviews, blogs, videos,  
competitions and more at:

**[www.trekandmountain.com](http://www.trekandmountain.com)**



## Montane Prism Jacket **£125**

**Chris Kempster** dons Montane's updated classic insulated jacket

➔ The Prism Jacket has been a regular in the Montane range for many years now and during that time it's seen several revisions, but has still retained the basic idea of an everyday synthetic mid/outer layer that'll adapt to a range of activities and situations. One reason it has been so popular is its robustness; it'll take a beating day in day out, and you just don't have to worry too much about it kicking around the bottom of your pack or getting wet etc. The 2019 Prism is about evolution not revolution, and there have been subtle tweaks to the fit as well as more obvious changes in the design, such as the stitching running diagonally on the front rather than vertically as on the previous version. The outer is a

sturdy 30-denier Pertex Quantum with DWR which gives surprisingly good water-resistance as well as complete windproofness, while the 20-denier nylon lining is silky smooth and slips effortlessly over layers as well as being nice next to the skin. The helmet-compatible hood can be worn over or under the hood, and works just as well with or without a helmet on, due to its adjustability. There's a volume adjuster at the back and two toggles for adjusting the fit of the hood around the face. A wired peak completes a hood that is ideal for the full range of British weather conditions! Elsewhere on the jacket, drafts are kept out by the elasticated cuffs and dual hem adjusters. In terms of pockets, the Prism gives you a

chest pocket that'll fit a smartphone or wallet, and two handwarmer pockets. The PrimaLoft Silver 40g/m2 insulation is quite lightweight but is enough to give you some extra warmth when stopping for lunch or starting off at the beginning of a chilly day. Our only niggle is that the hem is slightly high for our liking, however this is a personal preference and others may like it.

**More info:** [www.montane.co.uk](http://www.montane.co.uk)



### Verdict

A go-to insulation piece for everyday use, giving some decent warmth and weather protection in a durable package



**PROS:** ✓ Decent warmth ✓ Surprisingly water-resistant ✓ Great hood  
**CONS:** ✗ Hem sits a little high for our liking

## Alpkit Men's Jeanius **£65**

**Chris Kempster** tries denim made for the outdoors

➔ Alpkit's original Jeanius jeans from a decade ago were an attempt to make the world's best-loved trouser material suitable for outdoor use. It promised water-resistant performance, as well as windproofness and breathability, through the use of EPIC fabric which was made by encapsulating the denim fibres in silicon to achieve its magic properties. Due to production issues with their supplier, however, Alpkit eventually discontinued their waterproof jeans, but now the Jeanius name has been reborn... but in a somewhat different guise. The new Jeanius jeans are not waterproof, however they are very stretchy, and *seriously* comfortable. These slim fit jeans (not quite 'skinny') look like normal denim, however

under the bonnet there's lots of techiness going on. As well as the BCI-certified cotton, the fabric blend also includes Cordura for durability (making them four times as tough as regular denim jeans), Coolmax for wicking and Thermolite hollow fibres for keeping you warm when temperatures plummet. The cut, as mentioned, is slim, and the Jeanius Jeans also have articulated knees and diamond-shaped gusseted

crotch. For those who want a more regular, straighter cut, Alpkit also do the Sequence Jeans, however in practice we found the lack of any excess material around the lower legs and ankles great when bouldering or climbing. You can see exactly where your feet and holds are when looking down, and there's little chance of the jeans snagging or otherwise getting in the way. The material is super-tough and the Jeanius Jeans also look smart enough to wear out after spending time at the crag. All in all, the Jeanius Jeans really are genius...

**More info:** [www.alpkit.com](http://www.alpkit.com)

### Verdict

Tough, stretchy and extraordinarily comfortable – the Jeanius Jeans' cut also makes them great for climbing in



**PROS:** ✓ Very stretchy and comfortable ✓ Resistant to abrasion  
✓ Slim legs ideal for bouldering or climbing **CONS:** ✗ None







# Six of the best Winter Survival Gear

We choose six useful items for staying warm and safe in winter conditions

## Blizzard 3 Layer Survival Bag £33.25

➔ While you're unlikely to carry a full winter sleeping bag on a day trip, having at least a survival bag (along with extra warm layers of course) could make all the difference in the case of unexpected weather or an injury. The Blizzard 3 Layer Survival Bag is a full-sized sleeping bag that has been vacuum-packed to keep the volume down. It weighs just 385g and is made from their own Reflexcell material, which blocks heat, and is stretchy allowing it to hug the body. The top of the bag can be cinched in to form a hood, further preventing vital heat from escaping. Blizzard claim that the bag is 7.5 togs and equal to a medium-weight regular sleeping bag. The bag is fully waterproof and windproof – essential for protection from the elements. Whether faced with an



⬆ A vital item to keep in your pack

emergency bivi, an injury causing immobility, or the onset of hypothermia, having a survival bag could make all the difference.

More info: [www.blizzardsurvival.com](http://www.blizzardsurvival.com)

## Rab Group Shelter 4-6 £55

➔ When travelling in groups in winter, a group shelter provides a place to hunker down in the case of adverse weather, and can also provide warmth in case of injury. Furthermore, the bright orange colour will aid in visibility if a rescue is required. The Rab Group Shelter 4-6 (as you'd guess) is designed to fit 4-6 people. They also do versions designed for 1-2 people and for 8-10 people. At just 620g, it can easily be added to group kit. Inside is snug, as it uses body heat to warm the space, so selecting the right shelter for the size of your group is important. Integrated waterproof seats keep you off the ground and secure the shelter in place when sat inside. There are ventilation windows and recesses in the roof that let



⬆ Choose a shelter for the size of your group

you use poles to act as braces and give a little more head room. The main support for the shelter comes from the users inside, so there are no poles or any type of set up required, making it super quick to retreat into. Having used these types of shelters, we feel a practice try before venturing out can be beneficial.

More info: [rab.equipment](http://rab.equipment)



## Lifesystems Reusable Hand Warmers

### £4.99

➡ Reusable Hand Warmers are equally useful to warm your hands after a chilly stroll, or to pop into your pack for emergency use in the mountains. Unlike single use hand warmers, you don't have to be choosy about whether or not it's the right time to activate them, as they can be 'reset' simply by putting them in boiling water (of course there's less waste too). Activating them simply involves snapping the

metal disc inside – the gel begins to crystallise and they instantly begin to give out heat up to 54 degrees C. Tucked inside your gloves or coat pockets, they can give off up to 90 minutes of heat, and as long as you are carrying a stove, can be reset in the field for multiple uses. They weigh 118g each and come in a pack of two – whether you choose to carry one or both is entirely up to you. **More info:** [www.lifesystems.co.uk](http://www.lifesystems.co.uk)

↓ Warmth for hands and feet



## Primus Lite+

### £115

➡ Whether or not you plan to cook a hot meal, having a stove on hand means that you can melt snow or ice, if there is no other water source, to keep hydrated. It can also be used to heat water to fill a Nalgene which you can tuck inside your sleeping bag or emergency bag to help keep warm. Or perhaps you just want a warm beverage on a chilly day! Either way, it's certainly a good bit of kit to have in winter. We've chosen the Primus Lite+ as it's compact, sturdy, and reliable even when windy. The Lite+ comes with everything you need: stove, pot, and Piezo ignitor (though we'd still recommend bringing an additional fire source as these are notoriously the first thing to go on any stove). Pair it with a Primus 'Winter Gas' canister (or other suitable gas canister) and you're ready to go. The gas and stove tuck neatly into the pot



↑ A stove is a huge asset in the cold

eliminating the faff of searching for all the bits and pieces in your pack.

**More info:** [www.primus.eu](http://www.primus.eu)

## SPOT X Bluetooth

### £320

➡ For more remote winter adventures where you may not have a mobile signal, a satellite device such as the SPOT X Bluetooth can provide vital comms to the outside world. Providing 2-way satellite messaging so you can stay connected to family, friends and colleagues whenever you're outside of mobile range, including direct communication with Search & Rescue services in case of life-threatening emergency, the SPOT X Bluetooth connects to your smartphone via its app and seamlessly turns your mobile phone into a satellite device or use SPOT X by itself. You even get your own personal mobile number so others can message you directly from their mobile phone or other SMS devices at any time. In addition to the purchase price, you'll need to sign up to an annual plan (from around £12 per month,



↑ Stay in touch, wherever you are

depending on the service), however this allows you to message from almost anywhere in the world, send out SOS signals, and also let friends track your position via GoogleMaps.

**More info:** [www.findmespot.eu](http://www.findmespot.eu)

## Powertraveller Sport 25 Power Pack

### £45

➡ It's a good idea to have extra 'juice' any time of year, but with cold weather draining batteries quicker, having a power pack can be particularly useful in winter to ensure that headtorches, hand held GPS units, and phones are charged up when needed. The Sport 25 Power Pack strikes a good balance between weight and the amount of power it stores; with 6700mAh, it will charge a smartphone one to three times, a GPS one to two times, or a headtorch three to four times. It also features an integrated 150 lumen torch as a back-up should your headtorch stop working, while four LED lights show you how much charge it has left. It weighs 187g which we think is quite reasonable. It has a rugged design and is dustproof and waterproof, making it a reliable bit of kit to take out on any mountain adventure.



↑ Back-up power for your devices

**More info:** [www.powertraveller.com](http://www.powertraveller.com)



# Back issues

MISSED AN ISSUE? COMPLETE YOUR COLLECTION AT  
**WWW.TREKANDMOUNTAIN.COM/BACKISSUES**



**GET THE APP!**  
 Downloading T&M to your mobile device is easy...



**ISSUE 68: FEB 2016  
 SCOTTISH WINTER RIDGES**

**INSIDE:** 10 of the best Scottish winter ridges; Tanzania's Eastern Arc mountains; Trekking in Armenia; Skiing the Alpine 4000'ers **Tested:** Expedition sleeping bags, Rab Cirrus jackets and more

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 69: MARCH 2016  
 SOUTHEAST GREENLAND**

**INSIDE:** Mountaineering in Southeast Greenland; Triglav North Face; Rab Carrington interview; CMD Arete in winter **Tested:** Belay jackets Group Test, Lowe Alpine Manaslu packs and more

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 70: APRIL 2016  
 SKI TOURING SPECIAL**

**INSIDE:** The what, why and where of backcountry ski touring; Conrad Anker and Jimmy Chin interview; Giant's Crawl and Dow Crag scrambles **Tested:** Climbing approach shoes Group Test, Ueli Steck Collection and more

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 71: MAY 2016  
 ULTIMATE TOUR DU MONT BLANC**

**INSIDE:** Our ultimate Tour du Mont Blanc itinerary; Simone Moro interview; Nepal one year after the earthquake; Snowdonia's Llechog Buttress **Tested:** Navigation apps and more

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 72: JUNE 2016  
 VIA FERRATA SPECIAL**

**INSIDE:** Guide to the gear, techniques and destinations for via ferrata; trekking Mexico's volcanoes; climbing in the Hindu Kush, Afghanistan; Napes' Needles **Tested:** Lightweight technical shells and more

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 73: JUL/AUG 2016  
 YOUR FIRST 10 ALPINE CLIMBS**

**INSIDE:** A guide to your first 10 alpine routes; Needle Ridge; Hiking in Liechtenstein; ethics on expeditions; get into mountain running **Tested:** 2-person mountain tents Group Test, La Sportiva G2 SM and more

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 77: DEC 2016  
 WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL MOUNTAINS**

**INSIDE:** World's most beautiful mountains; Eric Jones interview; Ultra-Trai du Mont Blanc; Aonach Mor winter routes; How to... expose photos correctly **Tested:** Gear of the Year, Rab Xero G Jacket and more

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 78: JAN/FEB 2017  
 50 SCOTTISH WINTER CLASSICS**

**INSIDE:** 50 of the best Scottish winter classic routes; guide to alpine winter climbing; trekking the Sierra High Route; Pasang Lhamu Sherpa interview **Tested:** Midweight down jackets and more

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 79: MAR/APR 2017  
 100 GREATEST WEIGHT-SAVING TIPS**

**INSIDE:** 100 Greatest Weight-saving Tips, A Brief History of Light and Fast Alpinism, Ultralight Gear Guide, Jeff Mercier interview **Tested:** Lightweight Backpacking Tents, Patagonia 850 Down Sleeping bag & more

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 80: MAY/JUNE 2017  
 UELI STECK TRIBUTE**

**INSIDE:** Life and climbs of Ueli Steck, trekking the Falklands, Yukon Arctic Ultra, Jeff Lowe interview, alpine skills **Tested:** 3-season sleeping bags, outdoor lifestyle gear and more

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 81: JUL/AUG 2017  
 MONT BLANC ITALIAN ROUTE**

**INSIDE:** Guide to the Italian Route on Mont Blanc, trekking in Ladakh, Tommy Caldwell interview, the Black Mountain, Eiger peak profile **Tested:** 6000m boots, Lowe Alpine Superlight 30 and more

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 82: SEP/OCT 2017  
 VOLCANIC 7 SUMMITS**

**INSIDE:** Guide to the Volcanic 7 Summits, Everest Marathon, Voytek Kurtyka, Alpine Pass Route, Cerro Torre profile **Tested:** Mountaineering gloves, Scarpa Ribelle Pro Mountain OD

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 86: MAY/JUNE 2018  
 EIGER MITTERLEGGI RIDGE**

**INSIDE:** Guide to the Eiger's Mitterlegger Ridge; Jamie Andrew interview; Nick Bullock book extract; Toubkal and Ouanakrim trek **Tested:** Lightweight technical shells, Rab Mythic sleeping bags

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 87: JULY/AUG 2018  
 7TH HEAVEN**

**INSIDE:** 7 Summits World Record; Exploring beyond Petra; Early climbs on Kinder Scout; Adam Campbell interview; Gran Paradiso peak profile; **Tested:** Light mountaineering boots, crampons, Berghaus Fast Hike 45

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 88: SEPT/OCT 2018  
 MICK FOWLER**

**INSIDE:** Mick Fowler book extract and interview; Nick Livesy's Snowdonia; Tenerife Bluetrail Ultra; Scrambling Skills; How to Choose a Stove; Caring for your Footwear **Tested:** Insulated vests, Parrot Anafi

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 89: NOV/DEC 2018  
 WHERE TO TREK 2019**

**INSIDE:** 14 treks and climbs to consider for 2019; Extreme Scotland photo feature; Trekking the Fann Mountains; Tom Livingstone on Latok 1 **Tested:** Helmets group test, Osprey Mutant 22, headtorches

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 90: JAN/FEB 2019  
 CAIRNGORM CLASSICS**

**INSIDE:** 20 Classic Cairngorm winter routes; trekking Spain's Sierra Nevada; Simon Yates interview; backpacking in Iceland; essential winter skills **Tested:** Waterproof salopettes, 6 of the best gloves and more

PRINT DIGITAL



**ISSUE 92: MAY/JUN 2019  
 ALPINE NORTH FACES**

**INSIDE:** First Alpine North Faces; Outside Edge and Nantle Ridge; Tony Howard book extract; British Alpinism - The Next Generation; How to become a Lowland Leader **Tested:** Backpacking sacks, Rab Kinetic Alpine Jacket

PRINT DIGITAL



## 5 EASY STEPS...

### ➔ 1. Log on

to [www.pocketmags.com](http://www.pocketmags.com)

### ➔ 2. Browse back issues

Past issues are being added all the time

### ➔ 3. Choose an edition/s

then go to the Check Out

### ➔ 4. Choose a format

You can download onto your iPad, Android device or to the desktop of your PC/Mac

### ➔ 5. Pay and start reading

Repeat the process to subscribe



#### ISSUE 74: SEP 2016 NEPAL 6000ers

**INSIDE:** Climbing Mera Peak, Island Peak and Lobuche East; Langdale Pikes scrambles; Hiking in the Silvretta Alps, Austria; emergency first aid  
**Tested:** Trekking boots Group Test, Arc'teryx Acrux AR and more

PRINT DIGITAL



#### ISSUE 75: SEP 2016 SVALBARD

**INSIDE:** Ski touring and mountaineering in Svalbard; Matt Helliker interview; Infinite Spur, Alaska expedition report; Commando Ridge  
**Tested:** Mountain packs Group Test and more

PRINT DIGITAL



#### ISSUE 76: DEC 2016 NEW ENGLAND TRILOGY

**INSIDE:** Hiking Mt Katahdin, Mt Washington and Camel's Hump; Divine Providence and Dru American Direct; how to... build a snow shelter, perform self-arrest  
**Tested:** Ice axes Group Test and more

PRINT DIGITAL



#### ISSUE 83: NOV/DEC 2017 THE PEAK BAGGER ISSUE

**INSIDE:** The joy of peak bagging, Doug Scott 'The Ogre' book extract, Cortina d'Ampezzo, David Hamilton interview  
**Tested:** Winter Mountain Shells, Montane Icarus and Phoenix and more

DIGITAL



#### ISSUE 84: JAN/FEB 2018 ICE CLIMBING SPECIAL

**INSIDE:** Guide to starting ice climbing; the gear, the skills, the venues, Adele Pennington interview, Papua New Guinea's Kokoda Track  
**Tested:** Mountaineering rucksacks, ice axes and more

PRINT DIGITAL



#### ISSUE 85: MAR/APR 2018 THE SKYE TRAIL

**INSIDE:** Guide to the Skye Trail, ski touring in the Pyrenees, Andy Kirkpatrick book extract, Huayhuash Circuit trek  
**Tested:** Trekking tents, sleeping mats, Mountain Equipment Tupilak 37+ and more

PRINT DIGITAL



#### ISSUE 93: JUL/AUG 2019 CULLIN RIDGE TRAVERSE

**INSIDE:** Cullin Ridge Traverse; The Uncrowned King of Mont Blanc; Camino de Santiago; Manaslu exped; How to become a Mountain Leader  
**Tested:** Technical softshell jackets, Satmap Active 20

PRINT DIGITAL



#### ISSUE 94: SEP/OCT 2019 NIRMAL NIMS PURJA

**INSIDE:** Nims Purja exclusive interview; Kurt Diemberger book extract; Kili and Mt Kenya double header; Triglav North Face; How to become an IML  
**Tested:** Trekking boots, climbing harnesses, Osprey Aether Pro 70

PRINT DIGITAL



#### ISSUE 95: NOV/DEC 2019 SUMMIT SECRETS

**INSIDE:** 10th Anniversary Issue! Maximise your summit chances; Elbrus North Side; Yukon's Grizzly Trail; Bonington and Knox-Johnston book extract; Become a Winter ML  
**Tested:** Winter Shells, Ice Axes

PRINT DIGITAL

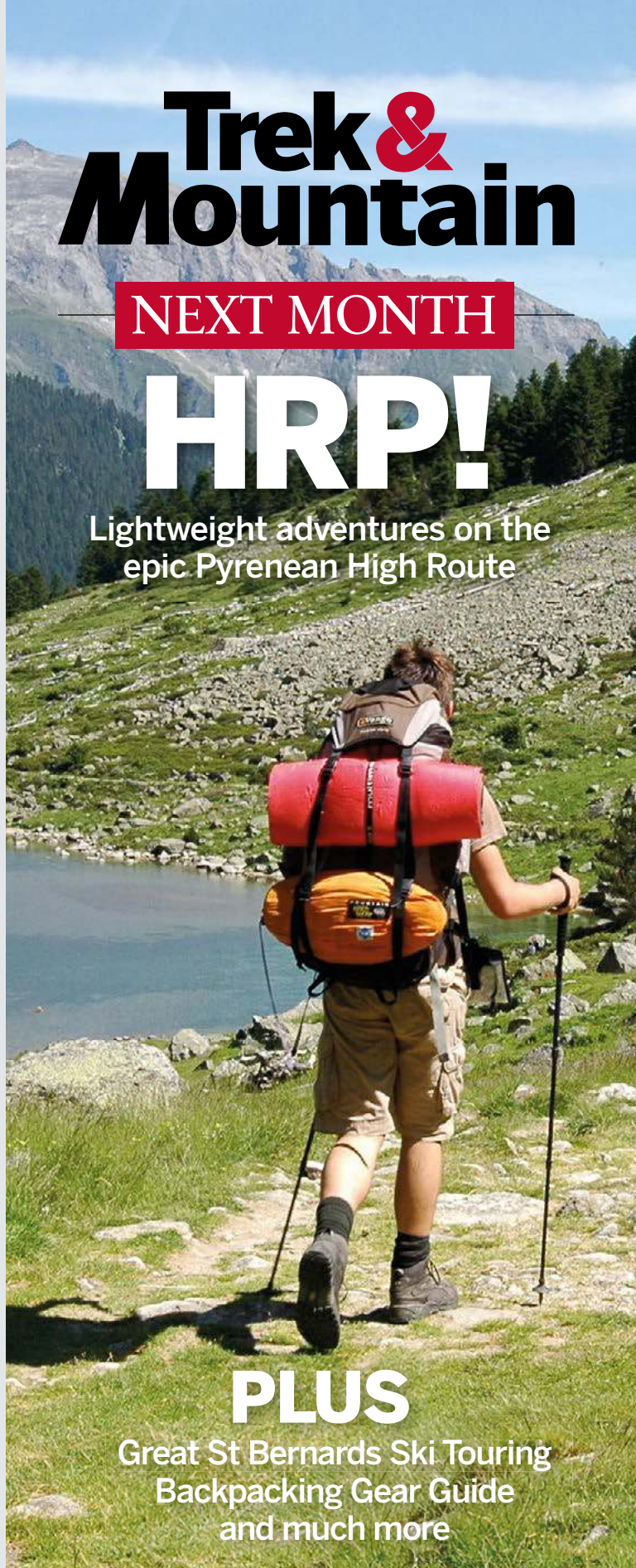
Trek & Mountain JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2020

# Trek & Mountain

NEXT MONTH

# HRP!

Lightweight adventures on the epic Pyrenean High Route



## PLUS

Great St Bernards Ski Touring  
Backpacking Gear Guide  
and much more

ON SALE 12TH MARCH

Available at WHSmith, Tesco,  
Cotswold Outdoor and online at  
[www.trekandmountain.com](http://www.trekandmountain.com)





## → Overview

A popular peak with trekkers and climbers wanting to test themselves at high altitude, Aconcagua is a great choice for those looking to push their boundaries towards the 7000m ceiling. The easiest routes to the summit are technically straightforward, but when the infamously fickle weather and strain of summiting at 6962m are taken into account, an ascent is far from easy. As the highest peak in South America it is a fixture on the Seven Summits circuit, considered to be harder than Kilimanjaro and Elbrus and easier than Denali and Everest. Despite enjoying an often-dry climate the weather on Aconcagua can be wild, with very strong winds combining with snow to give white-out conditions. It can be very cold on the mountain, requiring the use of double boots and thick insulated clothing, as would be expected at nearly 7000m. If you have trekked to the summit of Kilimanjaro and are searching for the next step up without getting too far into full-on climbing, then Aconcagua could be for you.

## → Routes

### North-West Ridge

Technically straightforward with either steep scree or, if you are lucky, firm snow giving easier walking in

# ACONCAGUA

Will Harris profiles a mountain that's the highest of both the Southern and Western Hemispheres, the highest peak outside of the Himalayas, and one of the coveted Seven Summits...

crampons towards the summit, expect a long and tiring trek where the altitude is guaranteed to make itself felt. One of the highest routes in the world that can be ascended without significant mountaineering difficulty, it shouldn't be underestimated. When the mountain was first climbed via its North-West slopes in 1897 it was the highest mountain to have been summited anywhere, although the discovery of the skeleton of an alpaca-like animal on the summit ridge suggests that it may have been summited before the Spanish colonisation of South America.

### Polish Traverse

The second-most frequently climbed route on the mountain, the Polish Traverse crosses the Polish Glacier before meeting the North-West Ridge high on the mountain, which is then followed to the summit and back to base camp. A more aesthetically-pleasing variation to this, the direct Polish

Glacier route, features steeper glacial ice demanding mountaineering skills, but allows the summit to be traversed to give a grand high-altitude outing.

### The South Face Routes

The south face of Aconcagua presents a huge and complex wall, with numerous serac bands threatening each of the routes that have been forged up its 2000m of steep snow chutes and loose rock. With such significant objective danger, it is unsurprising that the wall has never been hugely popular, but to date nine different routes and variations have been climbed. The first of which, completed by a strong team of French alpinists in 1954, takes a direct line through the serac barriers that dominate the centre of the face, a bold undertaking. It is telling that a route to its right climbed by the renowned Slovenian mountaineer Slavco Svetic was named La Ruta de la Ruleta, or the Roulette Route!

## → Outfitters

Numerous companies offer guided ascents, either employing a Western leader alongside a local team or an entirely local team – we would recommend **Jagged Globe** ([www.jagged-globe.co.uk](http://www.jagged-globe.co.uk)) as a highly-respected UK-based provider. As always, consider the level of support that you require before deciding whether to choose a fully guided trip or to cut costs and go with inexpensive local operators offering stripped-down services. It's possible to hire logistical support, including mules to carry your bags to base camp, without hiring a guide. You can rent or buy all of the equipment needed for the climb from stores in Mendoza, but it is preferable to select and test all equipment that will be used at home before heading away. To get there, fly to the regional capital Mendoza, from where a three-and-a-half-hour bus journey will take you to the trailhead. If employing a guiding or logistics service alternative private transport will often be arranged.

## → Permits

Permits must be purchased in Mendoza before travelling to the mountain, and range in price between \$730-\$1140 depending on season and nationality. **T&M**





BLAIR AITKEN IN A TIGHT SPOT ON NO. 2 GULLY, BEN NEVIS. PHOTO: NADIR KHAN.

# In a tight spot?

Get 15% off\* BMC Alpine & Ski Insurance from 1 January.

**BMC Travel Insurance**  
[www.thebmc.co.uk/insurance](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/insurance)

(\*15% off annual multi-trip European Alpine & Ski cover. Offer applies 1 Jan – 1 Mar 2020).



ECO-SHELL  
**SUSTAINABLE AND  
WATERPROOF**

Fjällräven's own hardshell. Made from recycled polyester with fluorocarbon-free impregnation. Waterproof, windproof, breathable.



# KEB ECO-SHELL JACKET

*Welcome any weather*

STAY WARM, KEEP DRY. It sounds simple but behind every *Fjällräven* jacket there is over 50 years of outdoor experience, a constant drive to develop sustainable materials and fabrics and uncompromising tests in the field. As a result, you can always expect state-of-the-art garments that make any outdoor experience great – anything less just

isn't *Fjällräven*. *Keb Eco-Shell Jacket* is a highly functional three-layer shell jacket that's wind and waterproof for year round use in changeable weather conditions. Made from durable yet lightweight *Eco-Shell* (recycled polyester) fabric with fluorocarbon-free impregnation. Stay warm. Keep dry. Nature is waiting.



[www.fjallraven.co.uk/storelocator](http://www.fjallraven.co.uk/storelocator)