

# Fontainebleau Climbs

THE FINEST BOULDERING  
AND CIRCUITS

Jacky Godoffe • Françoise Montchaussé and Jo Montchaussé

NEW  
EDITION



Fontainebleau Climbs

Jacky Godoffe and Jo and Françoise Montchaussé

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Climbing is an activity that carries a risk of personal injury or death. Participants must be aware of and accept that these risks are present and they should be responsible for their own actions and involvement. Nobody involved in the writing and production of this book accepts any responsibility for any errors that it contains, nor are they liable for any injuries or damage that may arise from its use. All climbing is inherently dangerous and the fact that individual descriptions in this volume do not point out such dangers does not mean that they do not exist. Take care.

Those unfamiliar with the Fontainebleau Forest will find it bewilderingly complex. Climbers are advised to buy the 1:25,000 Forêt de Fontainebleau map (IGN 2417OT) together with the adjoining sheet (IGN 2316ET) for the Beauvais area to the north-west and Buthiers and Malesherbes areas to the south. This guide contains maps of each area with approach maps as well as detailed maps of the circuits. Please note that some circuit maps are not orientated with north towards the top of the page.

Jacky Godoffe • Françoise Montchaussé and Jo Montchaussé

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AND CIRCUITS

Translated by Sue Harper and Jo Cleere



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Fontainebleau magic  
(Éléphant).

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May Montchaussé, Rocher des Potêts.

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# How to use this guide

## ACCESS TO SITES AND CIRCUITS

**Access maps:** These maps show you how to get to the climbing sites, generally starting from the main car park. They show all existing sites. The sites not described here are shown in light green while those described in this guide are marked in dark green.

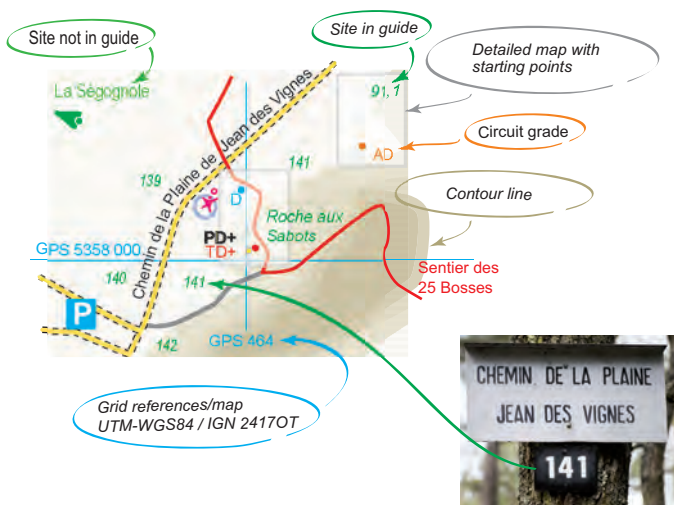
For each site you will find a choice of the best circuits at all grades, shown by the Fontainebleau colour codes. The diagram below shows the grading of the various coloured circuits:

●	Peu Difficile (not very difficult)	PD- to PD+
●	Assez Difficile (quite difficult)	AD- to AD+
●	Difficile (difficult)	D- to D+
●	Tres Difficile (very difficult)	TD- to TD+
●○	Extremement Difficile (extremely difficult)	ED- to ED+

There are a few exceptions to this colour coding scheme, such as the famous mauve circuit (AD+) at Dame Jouanne and the salmon circuit (TD-) at the Gorges d'Apremont.

We have systematically listed all the children's circuits, which are generally marked on the boulders with white arrows.

The Fontainebleau and Trois Pignons forests contain numbered 'parcelles', or plots, that allow you to locate your position on a map. These numbers are marked on the signs showing the forest paths and crossroads as well as on IGN map 24170T and as marked in green on our maps.

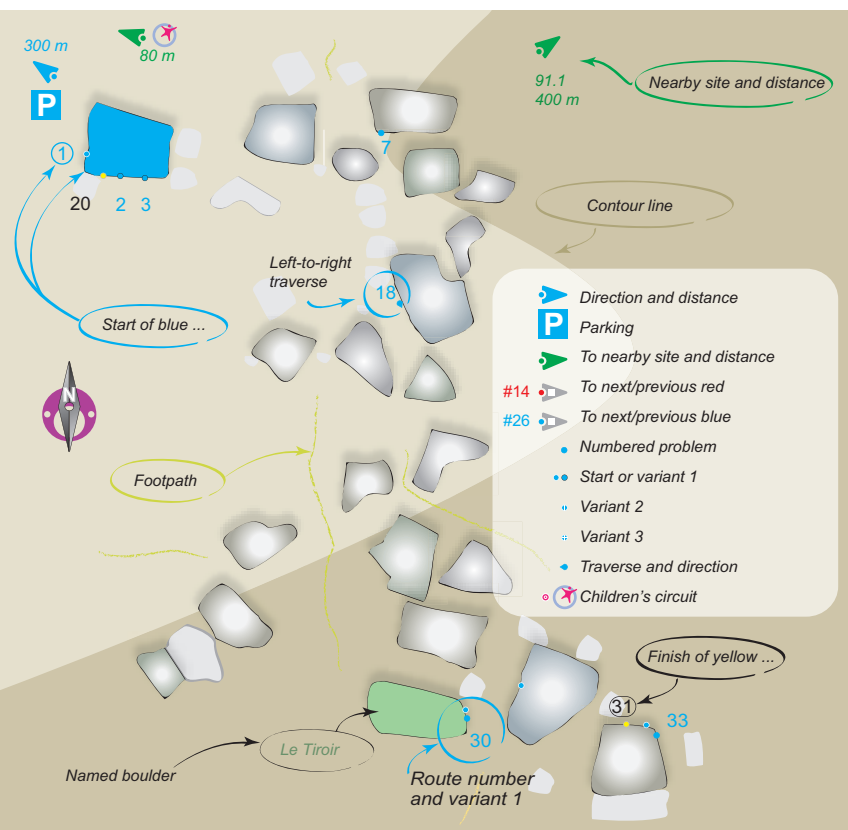


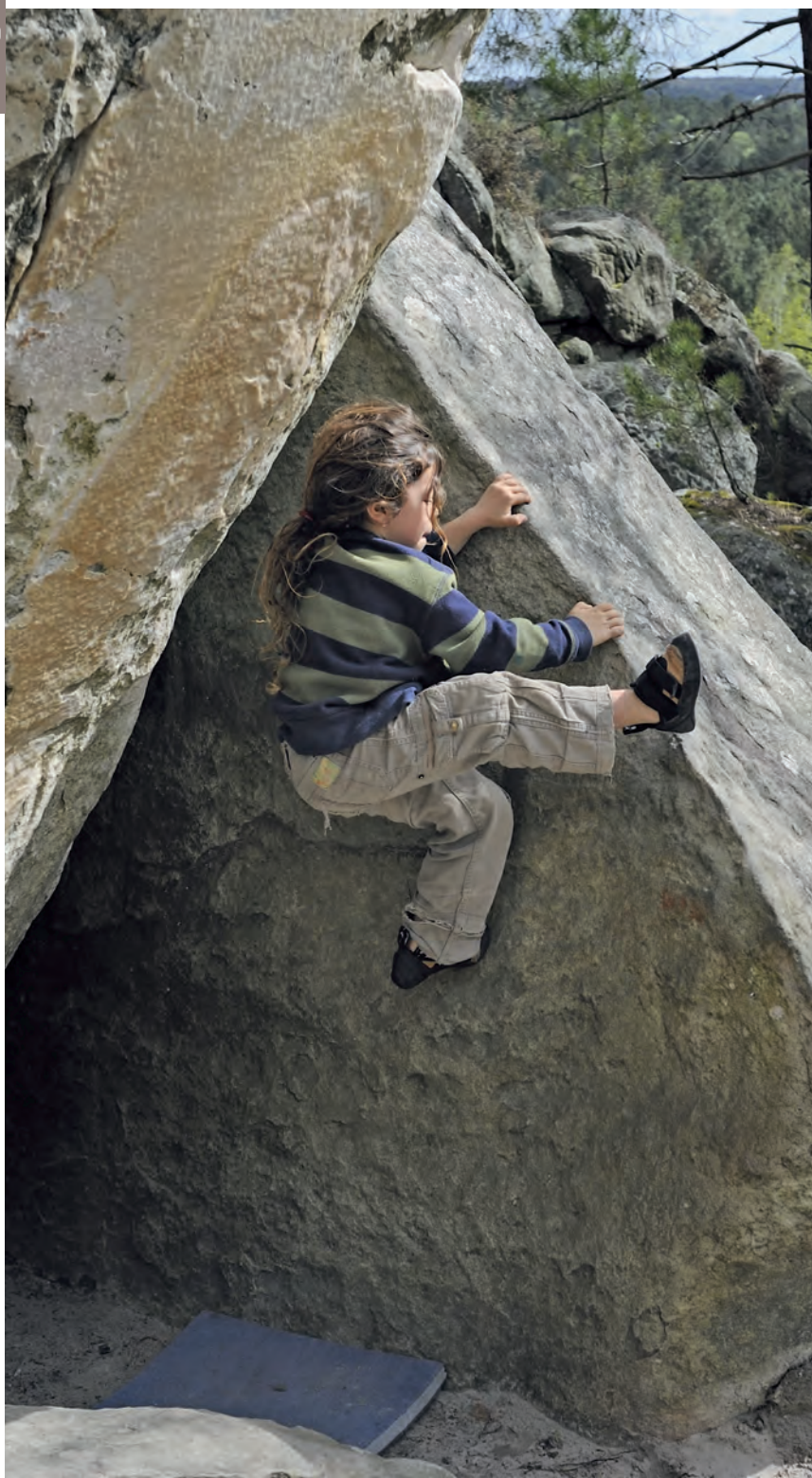


**Maps of circuits:** Each circuit corresponds to a particular grade marked by the colour coding system. Some of the PD circuits, marked with yellow arrows on the rock, are numbered in black on our maps to make them easier to read.

To avoid cluttering up the maps and tables of problems, the numerous extra ('bis') and variant routes are not necessarily always marked.

The traverses can be done left to right and right to left or in both directions. There are endless possibilities and only the standard version is listed.









## SYMBOLS

Fontainebleau has an extremely diverse range of climbing areas. The symbols used in this guide will help you choose where to climb according to the season, weather conditions, your taste for risk, desire for peace and quiet, and family requirements.

Each site and circuit is assessed according to the following criteria: sunshine, drying time, boldness of the climbing, visitor numbers and atmosphere.

### How much sun it gets

From full sun to very shady.



### Drying time of rock

Depending on exposure to wind.



### Boldness of the climbing

From low to high risk.



### How busy it gets

From very busy to quiet.



### Atmosphere

Friendly site suitable for families.



### Good practice

Huge numbers of people visit our forest, which has the potential to cause irreparable damage. The preservation of the forest requires visitors to respect certain common sense rules and we have included regular reminders of these in this guide.

*Area 95.2 is perfect for families,  
with sun, sand and boulders!*

# The Main Forest Area

Consisting of a little over 17,000 hectares of beech, oak and Scots pine, the national forest covers a vast area, and at its heart sits the town of Fontainebleau and its château.

With the arrival of the railway to Fontainebleau in 1849, Parisians were able to explore and stroll through the huge forest with ease, and woodland trails – the famous blue Denecourt paths – were created. There were also thousands of boulders in the middle of the Gorges d'Apremont, Franchard and Le Cuvier ... Who could resist the urge to climb them? 'Font' was born.

## Le Cuvier

Bas Cuvier ●●●○ ————— 26

## Apremont

Gorges d'Apremont ●●●●●●●●●●○ ——— 38

Apremont Bizons ●● ————— 60

Envers d'Apremont ● ————— 62

Désert d'Apremont ● ————— 64

## Franchard

Isatis ●●●○ ————— 68

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Cuisinière ●●●○ MEYER ——— 80

## Rocher Canon

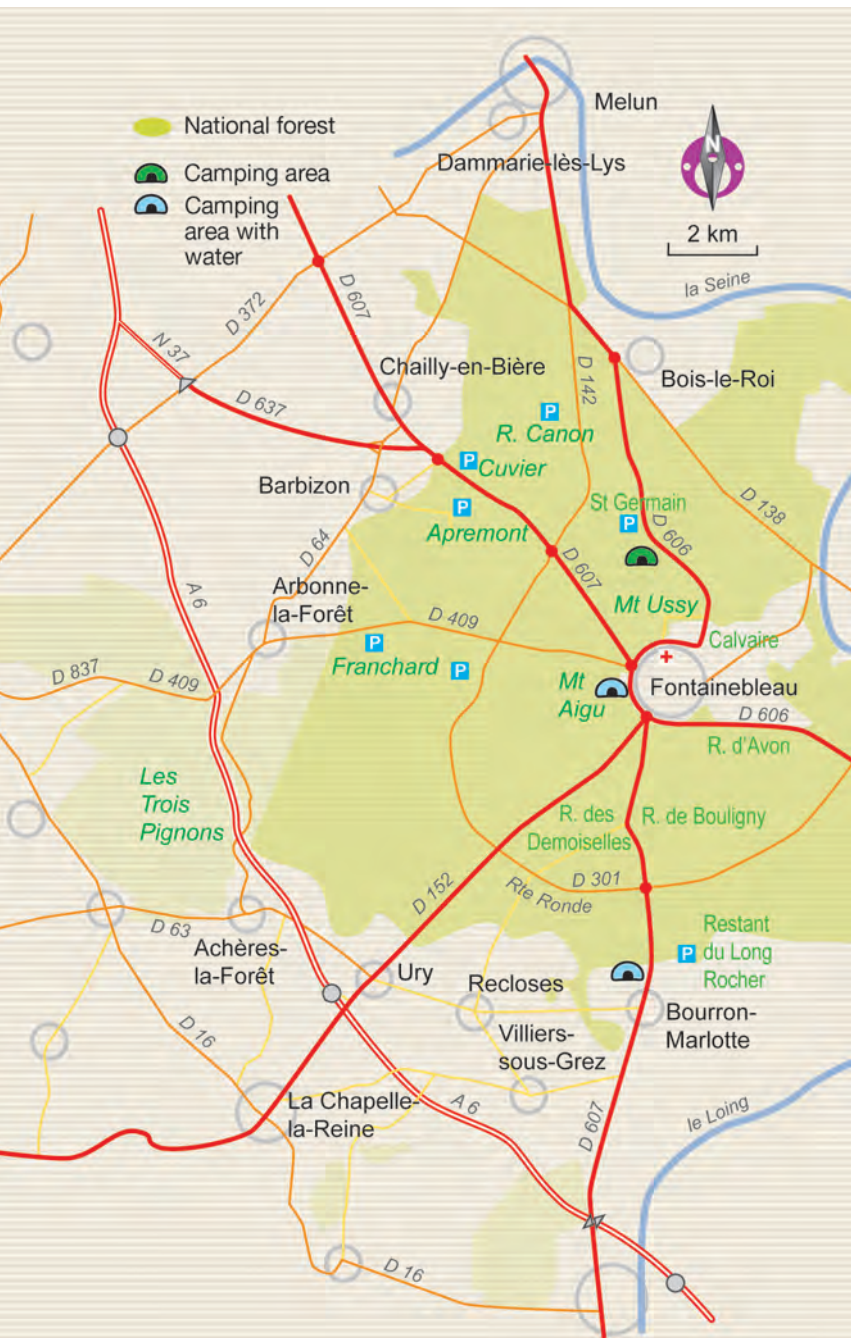
Rocher Canon ●● ————— 90

## Around Fontainebleau

Mont Aigu ●● ————— 94

Mont Ussy ●● ————— 100







Michel Libert,  
the first man to master  
the seventh grade.



### **The keys to the kingdom**

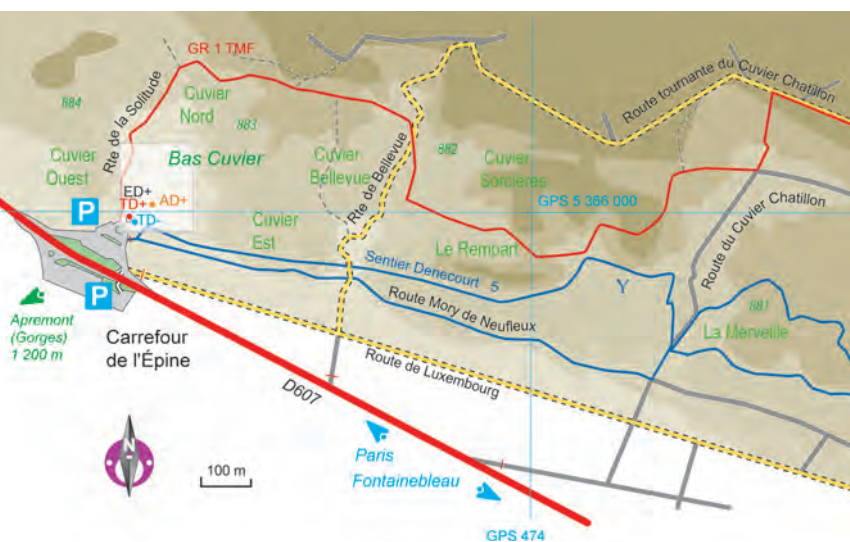
At the end of the 1950s, Robert Paragot singled out Michel Libert as the true spiritual heir of the 'Cuvieristes'. Libert was also entrusted with the secret of the master's bivouac site and, symbolically and very solemnly, with the keys to Bas Cuvier with instructions to make good use of them. Which is what he did, as he put up many new routes including the famous L'Abattoir, Fontainebleau's first 7a+ (1960).

La Joker, the first 7a in  
the forest, put up by  
Robert Paragot in 1953



# Le Cuvier

Bas Cuvier ●●●○ ————— 26



Le Cuvier-Châtillon is on the D607 road, between Barbizon and Fontainebleau. It stretches over several kilometres, from the Carrefour de l'Épine (crossroads) and the north and south car parks (linked by a tunnel) eastwards, following the Route de Mory and the blue no. 5 Denecourt path. It comprises several sectors: Bas Cuvier, Cuvier Rempart, Merveille, Reconnaissance and Mare à Piat. The first climbing circuit in Fontainebleau was created in Le Rempart in summer 1947 but most of the circuits are in Bas Cuvier. Today, Le Rempart and the other sectors are for the most part dedicated to high-level problems and not circuits.



# Bas Cuvier



2014 was the centenary of the first ascent, by Jacques de Lépiney, of the famous Prestat crack line, a feat celebrated with champagne by those who were already calling themselves 'Cuvieristes'. One hundred years later, Bas Cuvier remains a temple to climbing. It has been a Mecca for climbers for successive generations, each one leaving its mark. These include the first grade 6 climbs, Marie Rose being one of the most emblematic of them, and the first grade 7s, such as L'Abattoir and Le Carnage. A number of these individual routes have earned international reputations, increasing the popularity of the area.

The popularity of 'Bas-Cu' has never waned for a number of reasons: the concentration and density of the boulders, the proximity of the car park – less than 10 metres from the nearest problems – and finally the texture and shapes of the sandstone formations which are an invitation to climb in themselves.

The Bas Cuvier sector has been and remains a veritable laboratory of technique. The site's uncontested speciality is round and flat holds but it also contains a complete range of technical challenges, such as walls, slabs, tiny nubbins, slopers and overhangs.

Each circuit, from the easiest – orange AD+ – to the most difficult – white ED+ – is a quintessential distillation of the art of bouldering. Nevertheless, they can be slightly disconcerting as they have been climbed so often over the decades that the sandstone has been worn down and polished, making success somewhat unpredictable. Here perhaps more than anywhere, climbers should start routes with clean shoes to minimise any further erosion.

*John Sherman (known as Vermin), the inventor of American V grading, finishes the blue circuit with La Paillon directe.*

## **The sardine can challenge**

*Cuvier climbers reserved this curious test as an initiation for newcomers wishing to join the 'Cuvier Academic Club' in the 1940s. The climber wishing to become a member of this highly exclusive club found themselves pointed up the slab that is today marked as blue no. 40. Balanced on each tiny nubbin was a sardine can opener and it was essential to climb the route without knocking any of them off and, of course, to do it on the first attempt. Try it for yourself!*

### **Cuvier Academic Club**

*Le Cuvier, which in 1945 was modestly named the 'very best climbing area' by Pierre Allain, Guy Poulet and friends, was the birthplace of a classification system for climbers that would never be contested:*

*1<sup>st</sup> degree: pitiful rubble*

*2<sup>nd</sup> degree: poor mongrel*

*3<sup>rd</sup> degree: hopeful chalk enthusiast*

*4<sup>th</sup> degree: honourable climber*

*5<sup>th</sup> degree: mighty Lord of the grattons*

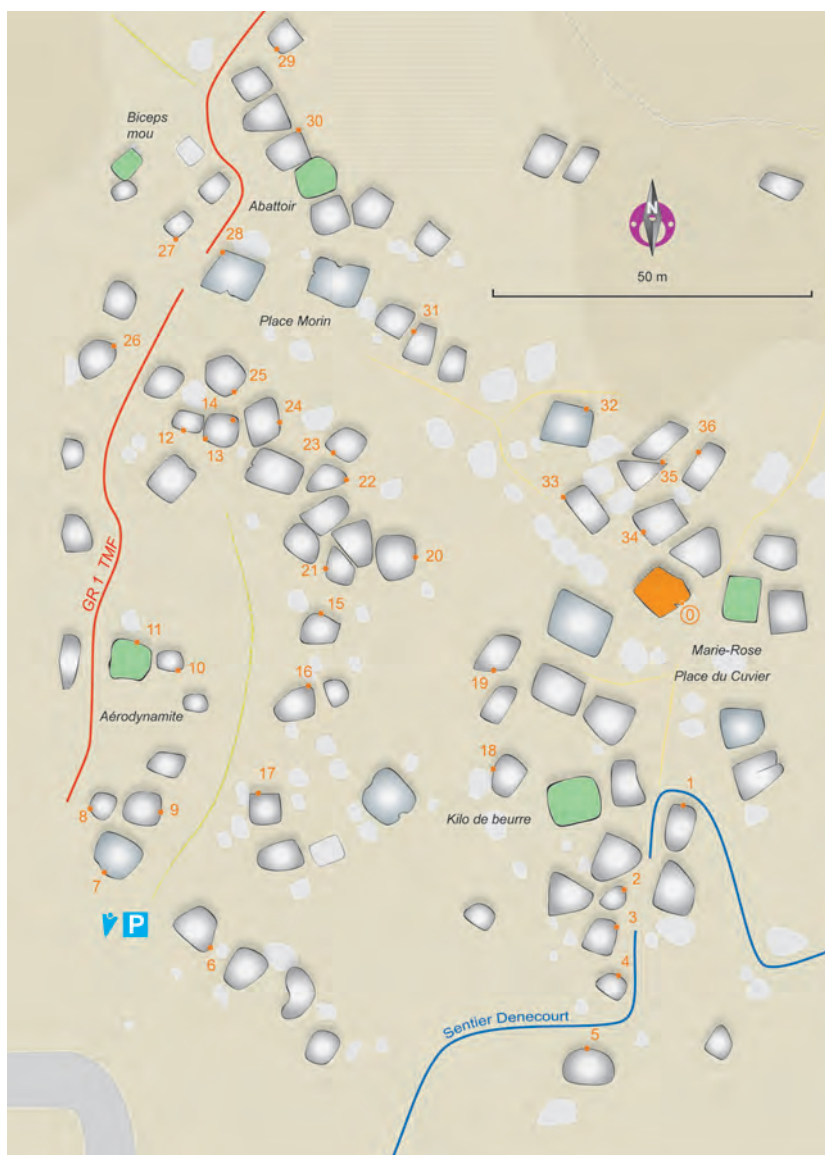
*6<sup>th</sup> degree: venerable master, pure guiding light of the rock*



# Bas Cuvier ●



This is not really an easy circuit because, as a result of its great popularity, many of the problems have become highly polished. As with all the boulders in this area, you need a really strong grip for this circuit and it is not recommended for complete beginners, who are likely to leave somewhat frustrated. The price of success, as it were.





## Take your rubbish out with you.

The forest exists  
in a fragile  
equilibrium.



N°	Grade	AD+
0	2a	La Fissure de la place du Cuvier
1	2b	Le Petit Rétab
2	2c	La Fissure de l'auto
3	3a	L'Envers des trois
4	3a	Le Second Rétab
5	2c	Le Onzième Trou
6	2b	La Sans les mains
7	3b	La Voie de l'arbre
8	2b	La Dalle du Tondou
9	3b	L'Envers du J
10	3b	L'Oreille cassée
11	2b	La Dalle de l'élan
12	2b	La Petite Côtelette
13	2a	La Fissure du coq
14	2a	La Traversée de la crête du coq
15	2c	La Proue
16	3a	La Tenaille
17	2c	La Deux Temps
18	2a	La Voie bidon
19	2b	La Dalle du Pape
20	2a	La Fissure est de la gamelle
21	2c	La Traversée du bock
22	2c	Le Petit Angle
23	2c	Le Muret
24	4a	Le Tire-Bras
25	3a	Le Mur aux fênes
26	2a	Le Trois
27	3a	Le Petit Surplomb
28	3a	La Rigole ouest de la solitude
29	2b	La Delta
30	2c	La Fissure des enfants
31	2a	La Grenouille
32	3b	La Dalle aux trous
33	3a	La Traversée de la dalle des flics
34	4a	La Jarretelle
35	2b	Le Zéro sup
36	2c	Le Boulot
37	2b	La Dalle aux demis
38	3a	Les Tripes
39	3c	La Dalle du 106
40	1c	Le Coin du 5
41	2b	Les Lunettes
42	2c	Les Pincés
43	3c	La Traversée du doigt
44	2b	Les Lichens
45	2c	La Verte
46	3b	La Déviation
47	3c	Le Petit Mur
48	2c	L'Envers du Pascal
49	2c	L'Envers du Réveil-Matin
50	3c	La Prestat