

up the Chamonix ordinary routes. In complete contrast as we descended the Italian route to the Gonella hut we only passed 3 parties. We reached the Gonella hut at 10.30am and spent a pleasant hour drinking tea with an English school party. A long tedious descent down the endless Miage moraines followed and we finally reached our car 48 hours after leaving it.

That evening as we celebrated with a meal and wine in the camp site with the Peuterey Ridge towering above we could hardly believe that we had been there only a few hours before, and that Richard had achieved what he had promised himself 28 years before.

After such a route anything else would have seemed an anti-climax so we contented ourselves with an easy ascent of the Aiguille Trelatête from the small Lac Combal bivouac hut. As we sat on the summit, admiring the tremendous view of Mont Blanc it was with great sadness that we both realized that this could well be our last visit to the Alps for some time, but we felt content with our memories which were imprinted in our minds forever.

## The Calanques

Alexis Lucchesi

(Translation: Edward Pyatt *et al.*)

### 1879–1979 A centenary

We were able to celebrate in 1979 the centenary of the first ascent of the Zmutt Arête of the Matterhorn by A. F. Mummery or that of the Schreckhorn in winter by Rev W. A. B. Coolidge, or even the birth of Tita Piaz or Angelo Dibona. But for us, alpinists of Provence, it is above all that of the first recorded climb in the massif of the Calanques—of the Grande Candelle by F. Mark, the British consul.

Of the word 'Calanque' the dictionary says: 'Echancrure étroite et escarpée, aux parois rocheuses d'un littoral calcaire ennoyé'.

But for us, and for all who like to come here, it is more than that; it is a massif comprising two mountain systems, the chain of Marseillevyre in the W and the chain of Puget in the E, stretching for 20km E of Marseille and reaching back from the coastline for 3km. It is an architecture of cathedrals and obelisks of rock where the whiteness of the limestone contrasts with the blue of the sky and the sea, as well as with the meagre and dark-coloured vegetation of the shrubs peculiar to the Calanques—thyme, rock-rose, rosemary, heath and juniper. The scents of these Provençal plants are intensified by the heat of the sun. Trees are rare; in the chain of Marseillevyre we find mostly the Syrian Pine, from which there arises in summer the song of the grasshopper fastened among its branches. As for the chain of Puget, we find several clumps of green oaks or holm oaks, last remnants of what was once a great forest, the Kermes Oak and the Sumac, with the peculiar scent of the cashew-nut family.

The Calanques are a land of relaxation, of training, of play for some, or rest for others, where you can commune with nature and listen to the silence. You might call it a lungful of oxygen for the Cité Phocéenne (Marseille).

Before climbing on the cliffs of the Calanques, we must first explore the district.

Towards the end of the last century they were only frequented by hunters and fishermen, then progressively their fame spread through the region. Adept at hill walking and climbing quickly turned them into a playground. Today they are known well beyond our frontiers and it is not unusual to come across Germans, Belgians, Italians, Swiss, English and even Americans and Japanese, bivouacking at the foot of the cliffs or beside the seaside beaches.

### **Their discovery**

The best way to explore is to travel through them on foot. The network of paths, waymarked in different colours adds up to around 145km. The walker can consult the guide-book produced by the CAF giving all details, as well as a large-scale map on which all routes are marked. It is always necessary to take particular care over drinking water, since there are no springs in the Calanques, though certain shops supply drinks at Sormiou and Morgiou. We suggest that the most elegant way to traverse the Calanques is from Marseille to Cassis. Overall this journey is an easy one, even though sometimes offering sensational sections, sometimes with cables, chains, spikes etc to facilitate access.

In order to enjoy their beauty and appreciate the savage surroundings, it is necessary to allow at least 2 days for the traverse. The walker will come across many rock overhangs which permit him to bivouac for a night and which will leave him with a long-lasting memory.

Reach the neighbourhood of the Madrague by whatever means of transport seems most appropriate. A path waymarked in blue rises rapidly towards a crest which leads to the summit of B  ouveyre, from which is seen for the first time the extent of the Massif to the S and the E, as well as Marseille to the N and its harbour to the W. A well-marked way leads to the Col des Ch  vres.

Climb a steep step and, along the top of the ridge, reach the summit of Marseilleveyre (432m), the highest point of this part of the Calanques, where you will find the remains of an ancient watch-tower.

By a path southwards, marked in red, descend turning towards the W and reach a scree slope which leads to a line waymarked in green at the foot of the Pas du Pin. Follow this, turning the NE corner of the Roc Saint Michel d'Eau Douce, from which there is a view of the imposing walls of the Rocher des Goudes, of the Lames and of the W face of the Roc already mentioned. A stippled-yellow trace along the W face leads to a col between the Lames and the Roc Saint Michel. The 'Pas de la Demi-Lune' commands a grand view of the sea.

A pathway, marked in stippled green, follows the foot of the S face of the Roc Saint Michel leading to the valley of Mounine, which is traversed by a yellow trace as far as the Col de la Galinette. A stippled-yellow marked track joins another in the bottom of the 'Malvallon' valley marked in green, dominated above by the Pointe Callot and the T  te de la Mounine. By way of the wooded plain of the Plan des Cailles reach the Calanque de Marseilleveyre, where the black-marked track from the port of Callelongue is met. The path following these marks, called the 'Sentier de Douane', climbs steadily along a ledge above the Calanques of les Queyrans, Podestat, l'Escu and la Melette as far as the Pas de Cortiou; it is dominated along the whole of its length by the cliff cirques of la Bougie, la Melette and les Walkyries.

A blue-marked line leads on to the Col de Sormiou, which is traversed by a tarred road. Follow this as far as the Col de Baumettes, and a good track southwards, not waymarked, gives access to the marvellous Calanque de Sormiou, the biggest and best known of the local features.

East of the Calanque de Sormiou a red-marked track leads to the fisherman's port, whence at the end of the morning there are given off from the huts diverse smells of iodine, fish soup and garlic, mingled at times with that of absinthe.

Climb again by a stony little path towards the ridge of Morgiou and rejoin the blue track, which was left at the Col des Baumettes. Follow this as far as the headland of Cap Morgiou, from which the view is exceptionally good. There are plentiful remains here of fortifications built in 1614, a witness to the resistance offered to landings by Turkish pirates, and later in July 1813 seized by the English.

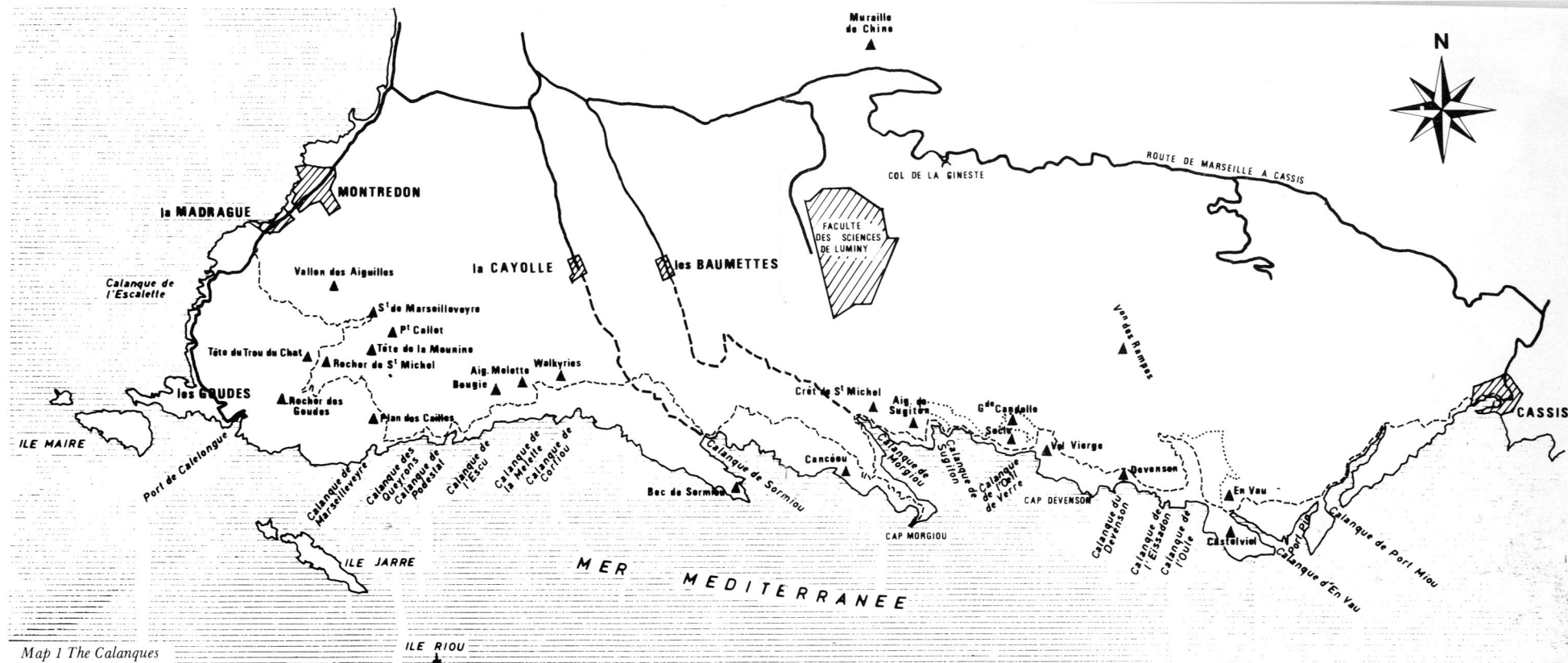
Return to a cross-track, waymarked in black, at the lowest point of the ridge and follow it as far as the Calanque de Morgiou, dominated by the big wall of the 'Crêt de Saint Michel'.

A red-marked path rising above the sea on the E side of the Calanque passes below the Aiguille de Sugiton and descends towards the Calanque of the same name. Pass round this; 2 possibilities are now presented to walkers; either, follow the well-marked path climbing and running along below the great roofs, then cross a couloir and come out above the roofs; or, what is better, descend towards the great blocks at the edge of the sea and continue towards the pebble beach of Pierres Tombées, popular with nudists. The red markings then climb a rocky path towards a broad way which is followed towards the very high cliffs of the Socle de la Candelle (plenty of bivouac sites). By a tenuous rocky path sprinkled with gravel, reach the rock wilderness of the little calanque of l'Oeil de Verre (also called Saint-Jean de Dieu) framed by the huge amphitheatre of the cliffs of the Val Vierge.

The red waymarked line climbs the Val Vierge and crosses the 'Cheminée du Diable'. Soon after emerging from the chimney the obvious route follows a path on a ledge above the Val Vierge E as far as the Col de Charbonniers, but anyone with 2 or 3 hours to spare should continue W towards the Col de la Candelle, the panorama from which is extremely beautiful, over the various calanques and particularly over the immediate surroundings, where the Arête de Marseille on the Grande Candelle attracts instant attention and gives an insight into possibilities of the airy climbing that alpinists tackle in the Calanques.

A little path marked in black leads to the Couloir du Candellon, then to the S face of the Grande Candelle. Overhangs separated by terraces and ledges lead without difficulty into the Val Vierge and to the red waymarking, which was previously being followed. Leave this soon after to find the way blocked by a high obstruction. The walker follows a chimney, the 'Cheminée du CAF', on the left of a big spur bordering a concave area to the S, then he climbs the steep slopes leading to the Col de Charbonniers (this passage is equipped with a chain, but the rope should also be used on account of the poor quality of the rock).

At the Col de Charbonniers, follow a green waymarking which runs the length of the cliffs of Devenson, from which one looks out over the sea from a height of over 300m; contour all the indentations in following the cliff edge as far as the terrace of the Calanque of l'Eissadon, distinguished by its Aiguille jutting up from the sea. The path descends to the left through featureless terrain and reaches the very wild valley of the Oule choked with luxuriant and particularly dense vegetation, whence the fragrance of honeysuckle dominates. Climb this valley to the source of the Oule; a forestry track leads to the Col de l'Oule; now there are 2 possibilities; either, continue by the forestry track marked in green as far as the valley of En Vau and proceed very easily to the beach of En Vau; or, what is very much more beautiful and more sporting, take a line waymarked in blue going



Map 1 The Calanques

towards a plateau and soon reach the viewpoint of En Vau, from which one enjoys a particularly fine view—on the left to the calanque of En Vau, its cliffs and its pinnacles, on the right to the yellow cliffs of Castelvieu and the calanque of the Oule.

By steep slopes which demand great care (roping up advised) descend the 'Petits Escalades' towards the gap of Castelvieu with its famous terrace. A large scree slope enables the valley of En Vau to be reached in the neighbourhood of the beach. This famous calanque, dominated by the Doigts de Dieu and known throughout the world, it thus at last reached.

From the beach a line waymarked in black climbs by rocky steps to the plateau of Cadeiron. A fine little path leads us to the pretty calanque of Port Pin, from which a green waymarked line leads on to the calanque of Port Miou, disfigured by a quarry. Wide roads continue to Cassis, once a fishing port, today become a lively, swinging pleasure resort.

You are now at the end of your walk. Having learned the whereabouts of the Calanques, you must come and climb on their cliffs.

### The climbing

One cannot talk about climbing in the Calanques without telling briefly a little of the story of its development and of the men responsible for its evolution.

This evolution took place in several stages. The first recorded climb, made in 1879 by F. Mark on the Grande Candelle, had repercussions among enthusiasts in Marseille, but finding the Calanques too steep and impressive they turned first to the Massif of Sainte-Baume inland. It was not until around 1900 that climbing in

the Calanques at last took off and entered on an effectively active phase. The Rocher des Goudes were climbed by a team from the Rocher Club de Provence, followed several days later by Casimir Gaspard the famous Oisans guide. Discovery and achievement progressed in step with the stages in evolution of techniques and of climbing ability; now the present generation reaches almost the limit of their conquest.

The most important stages in this development and evolution are connected with outstanding leaders: between 1905 and 1915—L. David, A. Callot; between 1924 and 1932—Ph. Bernard, M. Paillon and H. Vincent; between 1935 and 1940—H. Barrin and J. Save de Beaurecueil; between 1940 and 1945—G. Albert, G. Livanos, Ch. Magol, G. Rebuffat and R. Tanner; soon after the Second World War Rebuffat departed to make a career in high mountains and G. Livanos continued to reign until the 1970s. Then a new generation, adapting quickly to modern advanced techniques, carried the conquest of the Calanques a stage further; among them may be mentioned—J. Conqueugnoit, Cl. Cassin, B. Domenech, F. Guillot, B. Gorgeon, J. Kelle—and there are many others. No longer content with the Calanques alone, they carry their knowledge out to all the mountains of the world.

And now let us go and taste the joys of the climbing.

At his first contact with the Calanques the climber is surprised at the steepness and often at the magnitude of the cliffs. Erosion has sculpted everything necessary for the enjoyment of the climber—slabs, cracks, chimneys, arêtes, overhangs etc. However, in spite of innumerable cracks it is the face climbing which predominates. The rock, dating from the Jurassic, is Urgonian limestone in the greater



*4 Grande Candelle, Arête de Marseille (This and next 5 photos: G. Ollive)*



5 *Rocher de St Michel d'Eau Douce—Les Larmes et le Rocher des Goudes*

part of the area, but this gives way sometimes on the edge of the seaboard to 'hauterivienne' marls and to flint in the chain of Marseilleveyre. In the chain of Puget near the sea is found detrital material with a base of marl and assigned by its fossils to the Neocomian. The upshot is that the Calanques consists of an immense square block of rock cut up by cracks, sharply defined and deep.

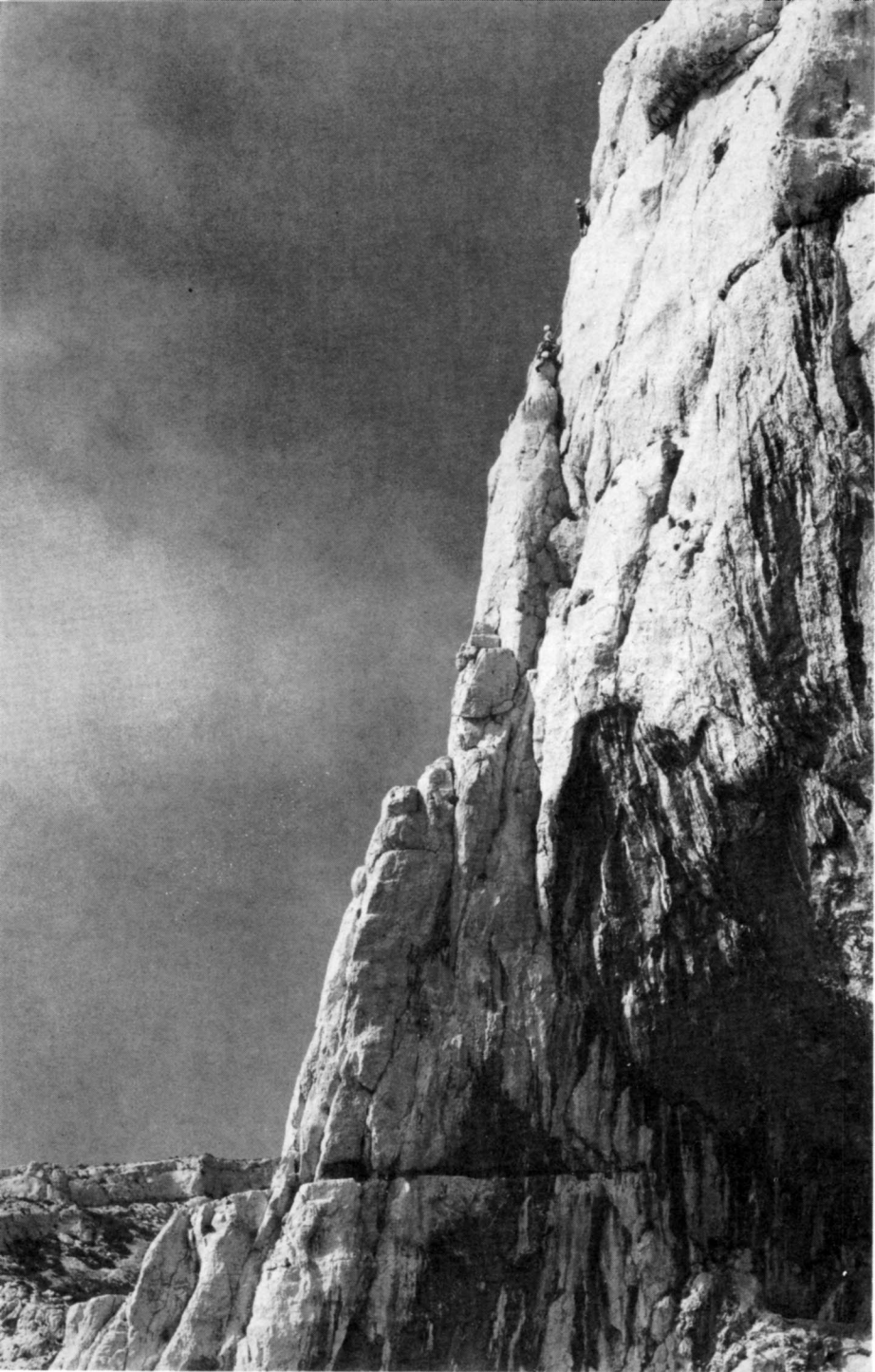
This playground, or rather training ground, so varied in nature, offers nearly 2000 climbing routes from the lowest to the very highest degree of difficulty. The heights also are very variable; from routes of 20–25m to combinations like Socle-Grande Candelle of more than 300m, where the experienced climber will feel the same sort of pleasure as on climbs in the Vercors or the Dolomites.

Because of their nearness and ease of access, the Rocher des Goudes, the Lames and the rocks of Saint-Michel d'Eau Douce are much frequented. The routes do not exceed 80m and all climbers can develop their skills in an area of pure rock climbing on a rock which is excellent in quality and often aesthetically pleasing, like the Arête de la Cordée or the Arête Victor Martin.

The continuation of the Chaîne de Marseilleveyre offers plenty of climbing sites, much less frequented, but providing just as many problems in a variety of routes, often very interesting and in extremely wild surroundings. The chief of these are: the Vallon des Aiguilles on the N side of Marseilleveyre; the Tête de la Mounine, with its beautiful 140m route—l'Ecaille; the Pointe Callot with fine routes for climbing schools; the cirque of la Bougie, where most of the climbing is severe particularly on the S face; the cirque of la Melette; and the cirque of les Walkyries, where the savage nature of the setting, with its classic Arête de Dix Heures, inspired the scene painters when Wagner's Opera was produced in Marseille.

Then comes the less rugged and more wooded section of Sormiou with its Bec on the W side which presents a cliff of around 120m. Standing out in the middle of the wall is a large pillar, 'La Momie', which combined with the Arête de l'Extrême Bec and the Eperon NE offers a classical and very aesthetically pleasing route.





*6 Arête Victor Martin*

Facing the Bec de Sormiou and further S, the 100m cliff of Canceou rises in glory between sea and sky. There are 20 routes of which none is easy and the climber who dares to tackle them must be a complete connoisseur of limestone climbing. Here is situated one of the most beautiful, if not the most beautiful, routes of the Calanques—the Voie du Levant.

Above the Calanque de Morgiou, the Crêt de Saint-Michel emerges as a rampart above the village providing 40 hard routes, of which the most worthy are the Voie du Grand Dièdre, the Bavaroise and the Voie de l'Espoir.

The extension of the Crêt de Saint-Michel leads to the Aiguille de Sugiton. Here also, most climbers of Marseille have spent days of initiation. It is the perfect climbing school, with a real atmosphere of its own; there are 50 routes of height up to 60m, of which the most popular is the Arête du Vallon. The traverse of the Aiguille in both directions is also classical.

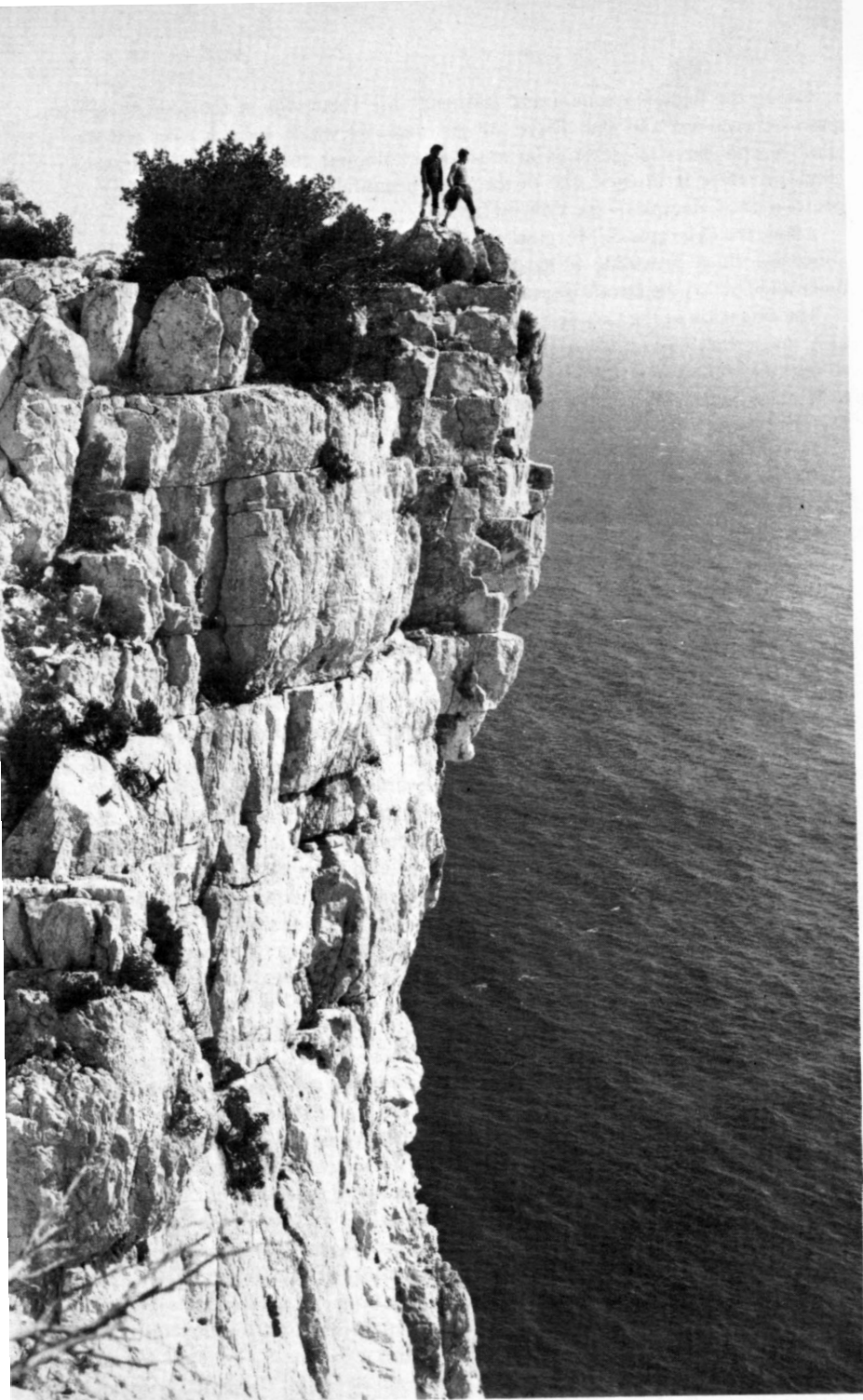
Facing the Aiguille de Sugiton is the wall of les Toits, 60m high. Few climbers care to pit themselves against this wall; the climbing is often beyond the vertical. The two great routes to mention are the Toit Machard (on the right) and the Toit de Garrigou (on the left).

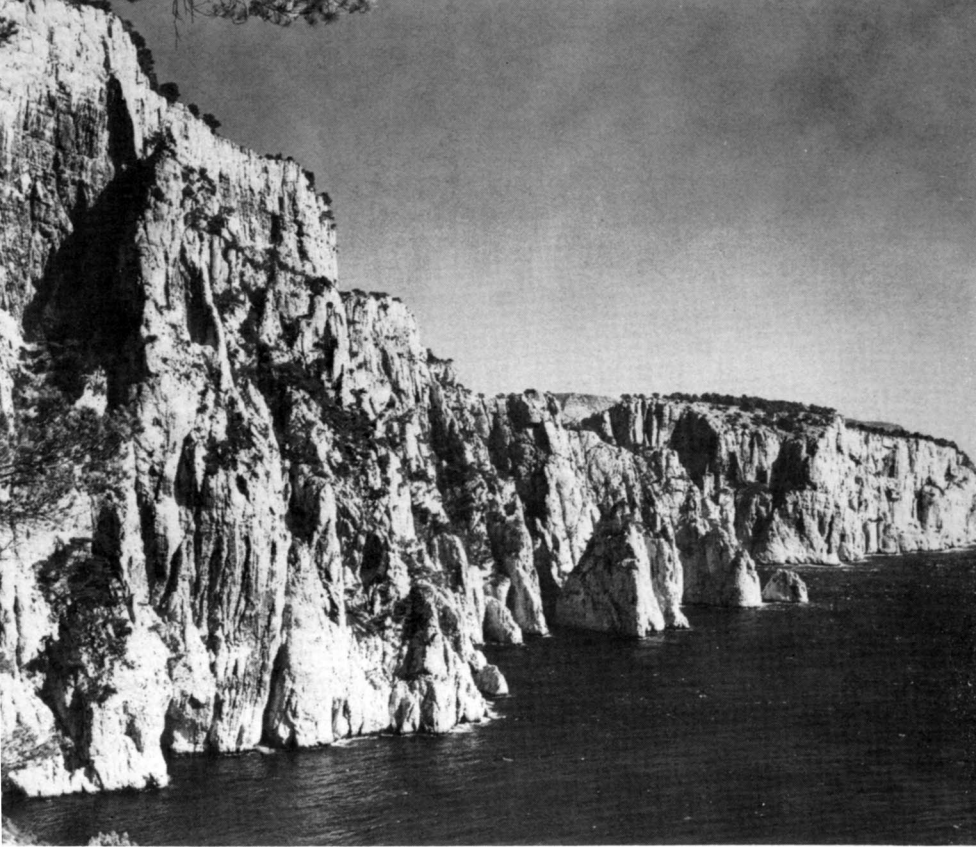
Sugiton is dominated in the E by the Grande Candelle, standing out in relief against the sky. There are around 200 routes. Because of its size and route potential it is the climbing site which approaches nearest to mountain character. The standards TD and ED predominate; however there are D routes also, for example the celebrated Arête de Marseille, one of the most beautiful, the most aesthetically pleasing and certainly most frequented routes in the Calanques. As for the S face, we recommend to the most daring the combinations Socle-Candelle, very interesting on account of their beauty and their difficulty, using routes like the Temple, the Civa, the Voie des Tours, the Hommes Volant or the Grande Tour de la Lecque for the Socle and for the Candelle—the Béquillons, the Centrale, the Couloir Suspendu, the Voie des Dieux. Not only was the Candelle the objective of the first climb in the Calanques, it is also here that the longest route has been done: the Arête intégrale de Cassis, 324m high; it is however of only intermittent difficulty, badly defined and too often broken by little terraces.

Facing this arête the Val Vierge is dominated by a big overhanging wall—the Concave, which leans out about 35m. The climb took the first ascensionists nearly 70 hours. This was the outcome of typical great efforts on the part of George Livanos.

We continue now towards the cliffs of Devenson. These are some very savage walls which dominate the sea from nearly 300m, in complete isolation. The difficulties of access limit the level of the participators, the scale of the routes does the rest. Little visited by the pioneers, these cliffs have now seized the interest of climbers, so that during the last decade 100 routes have been worked out. To mention none but the most classical and most beautiful: the Arête du Devenson, the Cheminée du Cirque (long established routes) in the cirque of Devenson; on the Tour Save—the Coryphène. This last is certainly the longest route of sustained ED in the Calanques; it climbs the 200m cliff by all manner of cunning and ruses. The Éperon Ouest de l'Eissadon is also aesthetically pleasing and is extended seawards to the outstanding Aiguille de l'Eissadon. In the cirque of l'Oule the Voie des Futurs Croulants, very airy in its exit under the great roofs, is noted for its excellence. To the right of the Brèche de Castelvieuil, the cliff of Castelvieuil is one of the most recent developments by the climbers of Provence, which offers some







*8 Devenson and Castelvieuil*

magnificent lines.

From the Cirque du Devenson as far as the Pointe Sud d'En Vau the problem of access should often have been posed. In fact, no; before opening up vertical routes our predecessors made horizontal routes, linking up one after another, so that from the Cirque du Devenson we can reach all the way to the Pointe Sud d'En Vau. Certainly this traverse cannot be done in its entirety inside one day, but in 2 or 3 days the most experienced have succeeded in completing the whole 5000m of it. Many pauses have to be made at breaks in the route to decide whether it goes up or down, whether to make a rappel or to force an airy traverse. . . . However, this traverse is not solely available to an elite, there are easier ways of reaching some portions of it.

Hidden behind the cliff of Castelvieuil, the calanque of En Vau with numerous arêtes and spurs, couloirs and aiguilles is the perfect centre not only for schools of climbing, but also climbing of the highest class. Among more than 150 routes the greater part are very fine and it is therefore very difficult to make a selection. Worthy of mention are: the Super-Calanque, the pillars of la Passerelle, the Pouce, the Sirènes, the Doigt de Dieu etc. The season recommended for climbing at En Vau is the summer, which gives the pleasure of a bathe to freshen up between two climbs, but this is also the time when it is most frequented by tourists.

We should add a mention of some other climbing centres less visited, such as the Gardiole to the N of En Vau, where there is climbing in the valleys of les Rampes and la Fenêtre. We can also include the Muraille de Chine to the NW of the route to



9 Calanque d'En Vau

Cassis, at Vaufrège, and finally the Ile Riou out at sea off the Marseillevyre, where the climbs unfold on the S face of some towers on excellent rock, in an extremely wild landscape among hundreds of gulls, who encompass the climbers with their cries.

Now you know the principal cliffs of the Calanques, it only remains for you to pick up your rucksack and come and climb them, just as many famous climbers of international reputation have already done: the Americans—G. Hemming, J. Harlin, R. Robbins, Y. Chouinard; the Swiss—M. Vaucher, A. Roch; the Italians—W. Bonatti, R. Cassin, J. P. Motti; the Germans—L. Brandler, T. Kinshofer; the Austrian—K. Diemberger; the English—M. Burke, D. Haston; not forgetting the French—L. Terray, J. Couzy, G. Rebuffat, R. Desmaison and many more. . . . In spite of everyone, you will not find that the climbing is overrun; you will be able to taste the joys of modern climbing, where many of the early artificial routes are done nowadays by free climbing. As you see the Calanques have not escaped the evolution of techniques, so that you may profit by them.

After a stay in the Calanques, we are certain that they will have charmed you to the extent that, whenever the occasion offers, you will not hesitate to come again to enjoy yourself in this marvellous natural stadium, bathed in the sunlight of southern France, and that you will try to help us to protect this beautiful site, so often menaced.

## References

Map to a scale of 1:15000 of the Calanques (IGN), with all waymarked paths and climbing centres.

Guide de Randonnée dans le Massif des Calanques (CAF)

Guides des Escalades dans le Massif des Calanques, Alexis Lucchesi, in 9 volumes—

- |                                |                            |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| (1) Les Goudes—St. Michel      | (6) Morgiou—Sugiton—St Cyr |
| (2) Versant N de Marseillevyre | (7) Grande Candelle—Puget  |
| (3) Mounine—Callot—Les Iles    | (8) Devenson—Gardirole     |
| (4) Bougie—Melette—Walkyries   | (9) En Vau                 |
| (5) Sormiou                    |                            |





*Falaise du Renard (Photo: B. Domenech)*