
ADRIAN DRAGOS DEFTA

Mountaineering in Romania

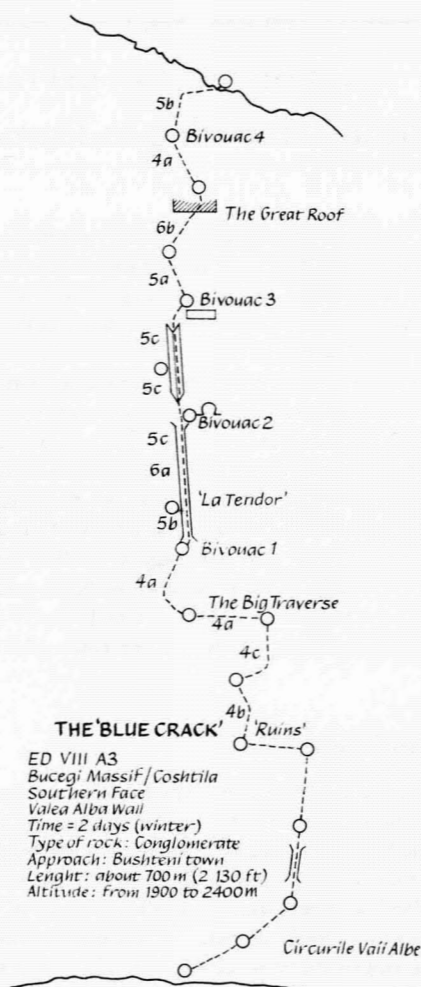
The Romanian Carpathians, though relatively recent geologically, form part of the great Alpine chain. With their moderate altitude and ease of access, they offer picturesque landscapes, and abundance of flora and forests, and there is plenty of accommodation for visitors. They also offer fine rock climbing, snow and ice climbing and all kinds of classic mountaineering.

Although the Carpathians were visited from time immemorial by shepherds, the first recorded climb was in 1839 when AI Vaillant and the prelate Angelescu reached the summit of Omu peak (2505m). From 1921 onwards, the Bucegi massif was explored by the Titeica brothers who made the first map of the area. In 1935 Niculae Baticu made the first ascent of the N face of Galbenele (UIAA grade IV). This was the start of Carpathian rock climbing, but it was not until 1955 that the biggest wall, Paretele Vaii Albe, was climbed, by Alexandru Floricioiu, Roland Welkens and Norbert Hiemesch. Their route *Blue Crack (Fisura Albastra)*, which covers the hardest section of the wall, is probably the best-known alpine route in Romania (see topo on p274).

The Romanian Alpine Club

In 1934 the Romanian Alpine Club was founded on similar lines to western alpine clubs. It built several refuges and chalets and organised climbing courses. After the Second World War the many changes in Romania adversely affected the normal development of climbing. In 1948 the Romanian Alpine Club was dissolved and replaced by the Federation of Mountaineering and Tourism. Competitions took the place of traditional climbing and few mountaineers had the opportunity to climb abroad, in the Caucasus or Altai or Pamir or in the Western Alps. Nevertheless some fine mountaineers emerged, including Emilian Cristea, Taina Dutzescu, Emil Coliban and Nicolae Cojan.

After the revolution of December 1989 the Romanian Alpine Club was restarted and its activities resumed with enthusiasm; some of its older members who had joined before the war made an essential contribution. But the Club still faces hardships of every kind, including shortage of printing technology, loss of funds, lack of accommodation, and so on. Few of its members have had the opportunity to climb in other areas and an important activity of the Club is the development of overseas contacts and co-operation with western alpine organisations. A very special relationship is developing with the Alpine Club through exchange of publications and reciprocal visits, and the National Officer of the British Mountaineering Council, Roger Payne, has given the Club generous help with making links all over the world and in helping us to acquire quality mountain equipment.



The Romanian Alpine Club is planning to build more mountain refuges and to look after the climbing areas ecologically; also to establish a Romanian Association of Mountain Guides. We would like to organise an international meeting between climbers of many countries, on the western model. These plans will be difficult to bring about owing to lack of funds and a strong sponsor, but we would very much welcome visits by British climbers to show them the lesser known and very good climbing opportunities in Romania.

The Bucegi massif

Among the Carpathian mountains the Bucegi massif is considered the most important climbing area in Romania. It has long and steep rock faces, a large

and spectacular tableland at around 2200m, and many varied routes. Of special importance is Mount Coshtila (2490m) with its four big walls: Valea Alba Wall, Eagles Wall, Coshtila Wall and Galbenele N face.

The approach to Coshtila starts from Bushteni, a town about 80 miles north of Bucharest. The main alpine refuge is the 'Coshtila', built in 1938 by the Romanian Alpine Club. Many routes can be climbed from this refuge, including:

Eagles Wall (nearest to Busteni), 300m high: *Innominata 6b*, *Stone Butterfly 6b*, *Policandru 6b*, *Mult-Dorita Crack 6b*.

Valea Alba Wall, c1000m, with some long routes: *Diedrul Pupezi 6b*, *Blue Crack 6b* (see topo diagram), *Speranza Superoute 6b*, *Red Crack 6b* which is one of the most spectacular routes. These routes provide true alpine mixed climbing in winter.

Bucegi massif is the birthplace of Romanian mountaineering because of its good geographical position between Bucharest and Brashov. There are plenty of cable cars, chalets and hotels, and opportunities for skiing and caving.



Romanian Carpathians

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|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Bucegi | 10 Retezat Massif |
| 2 Kingstone (Piatra Craiului) | 11 Cerna Valley |
| 3 Postavarul | 12 Banat Massif |
| 4 Greatstone (Piatra Mare) | 13 Western Mountains |
| 5 Tchewcash | 14 Gutyi |
| 6 Virghish Gorges | 15 Rarau Massif |
| 7 Fagarash Massif | 16 Tcheahlau Massif |
| 8 Shureanu | 17 Bicz Gorges |
| 9 Buila Vinturaritza | |