



Switzerland's Rhone Valley

Part One
Lake Geneva to Martigny

An English Companion for Climbers

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Climbers Companions

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Introduction

Switzerland's Rhone Valley contains a well developed climbing area that runs roughly north to south from Lake Geneva to Martigny. Strictly speaking, the Rhone valley continues round from Martigny to Brig, but in climbing terms, that opens up a whole other area and will be the focus of a second eBook. Although often seen as a 'rest day' option for Alpinists, or a pleasant retreat by those plagued by bad weather in the mountains, the Rhone Valley in Switzerland is easily justifiable as a climbing destination in it's own right. The well bolted routes surrounded by spectacular snow capped alpine peaks make for a superb setting.

Many of the crags are frequented only by those living in the area because the area is relatively unexplored by others. The absence of a comprehensive guide in English may have put many people off, and this is where this eBook fits in. There are in fact, some excellent guidebooks written in French and German that contain well written topos and easy to follow sketch maps that require little in the way of foreign language skills. This eBook is designed to work alongside those resources and help you to organise your own Swiss Rhone Valley climbing trip. I have spent a great deal of time living and climbing in this beautiful region of the Alps, so I will try to give useful advice about climbing and travelling here, so that none of your time is wasted working out where would be best to climb.

The routes range in both sizes and styles. While there are many single pitch crags scattered along the valley sides, there are also plenty of longer routes to suit the more adventurous climber. As you would expect with such an abundance of rock, there are levels of difficulty to suit everybody! The majority of the climbing is on bolted limestone crags although there are some outcrops of gneiss nearer Martigny.

With all this rock climbing less than two hours drive from Geneva airport, it's surprising that cragging in the Swiss Rhone valley is relatively unheard of – especially amongst British climbers. The visits that it does get, often co-inside with climbers experiencing poor weather over the border in nearby Chamonix, which despite being 'over the border' is relatively close. With it's comparatively low altitude and abundance of south facing cliffs, it is possible to climb here when the higher alpine peaks are shrouded in cloud. In fact it is possible to climb here virtually all year round, although shaded crags would be well advised in the height of summer!

Enjoy the read and even more so the climbing!

Valley Bases

Around Monthey

Monthey is a largish town situated just off the main motorway that travels through the Rhone Valley. There are many climbing venues all within easy reach and details of each area, are specified below.

Areas to climb here: (more information about each area later)

- Aigle
- Drapel
- Yvorne
- St-Triphon
- Vercheiz
- Vionnaz
- Collombey

Tourist Information

Depending on which direction you are travelling from, the Grand St Bernard Service Station on the E62/E27 (9) has an excellent tourist information desk. They are very knowledgeable about the area and you can purchase maps and guidebooks from there. From Geneva, both Aigle and Ollon have a tourist information bureau, but the main tourist office is situated in Monthey town centre. For information and opening times check out [Monthey's](#) official website.

Accommodation

As far as I know, there is no campsite actually in Monthey, but there are plenty of hotel and Gite style B&B's. The website [Bed and Breakfast Switzerland](#) is an excellent search and booking site. It recommends [Au Gîte Canadien](#) in Monthey and [Le Pontet](#) nearby Collombey.

Eating out

Monthey has a nice little town square that retains some of the towns original character, before the arrival of the out of town shopping zones. There are of course the usual fast-food restaurants that are associated with such out of town developments, but there is a decent choice of cafés, bars and restaurants in the town centre itself.

Local Amenities

Water! Every village in Switzerland is legally obliged to maintain a drinking water fountain. They are usually located in the village square and are drinkable unless signed otherwise. A great resource for the thirsty climber!