

ANTARCTICA

Pilot Peak, Lerrouy Island, and Mount Jules Verne, Pourquoi Pas Island, 1991. Our expedition traveled to Grahamland in the yacht Pelagic. We were American Skip Novak, Briton Hamish Laird, Kenyan Julia Crossley, Irishwoman Tara Machey, Belgian André Mechelynck and Italians Jacopo Merizzi and I. During the three months we were there, Novak, Merizzi and I made the following climbs: Pilot Peak (815 meters, 2674 feet) by its south ridge on February 5, 1991 and probably one of the most difficult climbs yet done in Antarctica, the south face of Mount Jules Verne (1633 meters, 5358 feet) on February 22 and 23, 1991. This TD+ climb was 36 pitches long and involved ice up to 80°. We made two attempts to climb 1100-meter-high Sharp Peak but were stopped both times by a big cornice 40 meters from the summit.

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EUROPE

Les Droites, New Route, 1991. On October 3, 1991, Canadian Barry Blanchard and I climbed a new route on Les Droites. We left the Argentière Hut at 5:30 A.M. and crossed the bergschrund an hour later. The climb began in a small gully between the Couzy Spur and the rock *rognon* below the big ice slope that leads to the Col de la Verte. The 120-meter-high gully presents passages of 75° ice. We exited onto 50° ice and followed the slope's left edge close to the Couzy route for 400 meters. At 3550 meters (after climbing past the departure of the Couzy route), we exited left into a prominent ice gully, which we climbed for two pitches of 65° to 80° ice with poor protection on thin ice. We climbed two more pitches of moderate ice (55° to 60°) and entered another miniscule ice gully. Barry broke both his ice tools on the following pitch. The ice was thin, but pitons and medium-sized nuts gave protection. The next three pitches followed this system of ice and mixed ground more or less directly. The climbing was difficult and sustained (5.9 and 5.10 with "interesting" protection). At the top of the 8th pitch of new climbing, there were two options: to continue straight up in a chimney system to join the ice slope at the top of the Couzy route or to break right on an iced-up ramp for two pitches of mixed climbing. Pitch 9 was hard and Pitch 10 easier. We emerged on an arête bordering a deep couloir on the right. We climbed the rock directly for two pitches (5.7) and then turned to a small arête towards the left. We climbed a steep chimney to the summit ridge (5.9) and arrived on top at 6:30 P.M. We were at the Couvercle Hut at 11:30 P.M. The climb is difficult even by modern standards. With better ice conditions it might be easier. We were on the face for 12 hours, even though we climbed the first 500 meters unroped. It is not recommended for anyone who doesn't like long run-outs above nuts or tied-off ice screws.

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