

## Norway

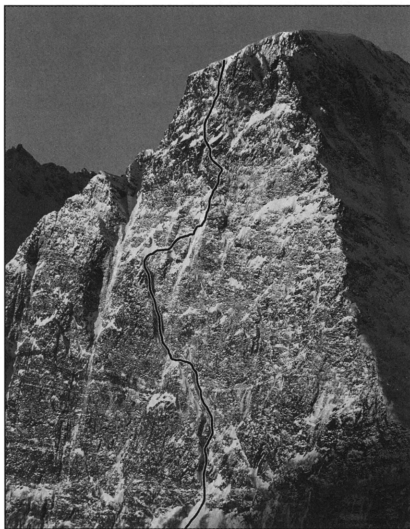
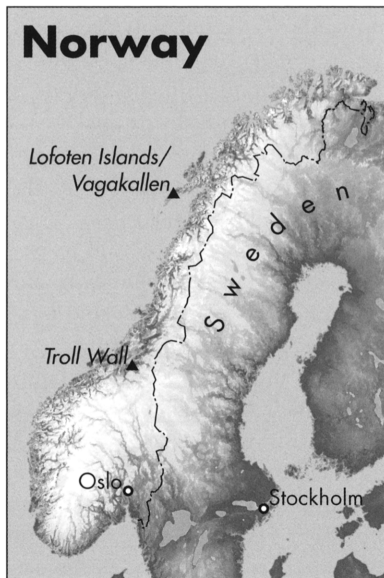
### LYNGEN PENINSULA

*Stovelen, Northern Lights; various icefalls.* April 2008: I'm eating dinner with Benoît Robert, who has just returned from a skiing and sailing trip to the Lyngen Alps. He shows me his pictures of Stovelen, a steep 850m face rising straight out of the sea and laced with thin lines. I'm immediately intrigued and must go there. There are so many first ascents to be made on that face, so the project is born. I log on to Google Earth. The region seems perfectly designed for the formation of ice climbs—cliffs topped by snow slopes.

The first obstacle is the cost. For a Frenchman, Norwegian prices are exorbitant. The price of renting a boat is equivalent to about six months' salary. But, despite the cost, eventually greatly reduced by our partners Millet and Petzl, there was no problem finding people who wanted to come along. I put together a team primarily of guides and aspirants, though I was the only person who knew all other members: Gérald Durant, Thierry Franc, Dorian Labeye, Benoît Robert, and Ludovic Seiffert. I also asked a friend, Bruno Peyronnet, a filmmaker. By making a film we hoped to finance the trip.

In early March we landed at Tromsø after an exceptional winter season in France, where I'd climbed 50 days on ice. The captain of the boat, Ivar Bertelsen of Boreal Yachting, brought us to the base of Stovelen (N 69°43'32.04", E 20°16'54.07"). The face appeared drier than in the photos, and only one of the lines we'd envisaged seemed feasible. We climbed the couloir right of this coveted face to scope out the descent, which we would almost certainly have to do in the dark. The couloir was a delight to ski, as were the steep slopes directly beneath the summit of Stovelen.

At sunrise the following day, March 5, we headed for the face. The 25m approach from boat to shore was made in a Zodiac. We donned crampons and roped up on the beach. Above, ice and mixed sections were linked by snow slopes. These slopes concerned us, as it had been snowing recently, with much wind, making the stability of these slopes questionable. The first crux was a vertical dihedral plastered with snow. It ended with a snow mushroom, through which I had to tunnel. The route then climbed beautiful gullies, alternat-



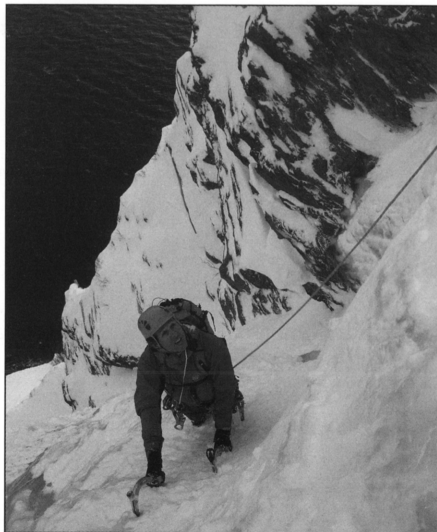
Northern Lights on Stovelen rises straight from the sea. *Philippe Batoux*

ing mixed sections and snow slopes. The second crux was a chimney of unconsolidated snow, which we climbed with our backs on the rock and our crampons in the snow. It was the most runout section of the route, the only protection on the 60m pitch being a blue Camelot. But at least the belay was solid.

Eventually, we popped out into the exit couloir, directly beneath the summit. The couloir presented the easiest way to the top, but we were concerned about enormous overhanging cornices at the exit. We decided to branch left through mixed terrain threatened by avalanches and cornices. It was beginning to get dark. The last remaining obstacle was the summit cornice. I found a crack a few meters below it and placed a solid Alien. Now, well protected, I could commit to the final section. Fortunately, I found a small chimney that allowed me to climb easily without having to dig too much. We reached the top at nightfall. We named our route Northern Lights (V+/5+ M5+, 850m). Next day we climbed a sunny waterfall just above the sea, 500m of WI5/5+ and pure fun.

Most of the team had to head home to France for work, but Ludo and I stayed. We rented a car and headed out to explore the ice of the Lyngen Alps, making our approaches on ski. We had an amazing week, visiting a different location every day, never knowing whether the waterfalls we climbed had previously been ascended. It thrilled us to be ice climbing directly above the sea. The quality of ice was exceptional, often perfect plastic. Once, we climbed an entire pitch without swinging more than once to stick a pick. I have never seen such high-quality ice before; perhaps it is a result of being so close to the sea? For good quality ice to form, there needs to be a consistent temperature for a long period, and it seems likely that the Gulf Stream helps by tempering variations in weather and temperature.

The most difficult line we climbed is located just above Massachusetts Institute of Technology Lynkspollen facility. It is a 350m waterfall with a final pitch of WI6—thin ice with a slightly overhanging section. The valley of Kafjordis is also appealing, with ice on both sides. Just above the south-side parking lot we met the only other climbers we saw during the entire trip: two Finns visiting for the weekend. We climbed a classic 300m waterfall of WI3/3+ and



First pitch of Northern Lights, Stovelen. *Benoit Robert*



First crux section of Northern Lights, Stovelen. *Benoit Robert*

the beautiful wall just to its left, which gave 60m of 5+. We also went to the Ornersdal Gorge farther up valley, where we discovered many magnificent lines, including a 60m WI6, hidden at the end of a narrow corridor. A little farther into the gorge we climbed beautiful vertical walls, as wide as they were tall. We also climbed wonderful waterfalls above Furuflassen in the valley that leads to Jiehkkevarri. A one-hour approach reaches the classic climb of the valley, a wide, 100m flow of plastic ice. Just a few hundred meters to the left, we climbed another beautiful, slightly-steeper wall. During our stay in Lyngen we also crossed the sea with dolphins, made excellent ski descents, and were in awe of the aurora borealis. I have to come back; there are entire valleys filled with hundreds of waterfalls still waiting to be discovered.

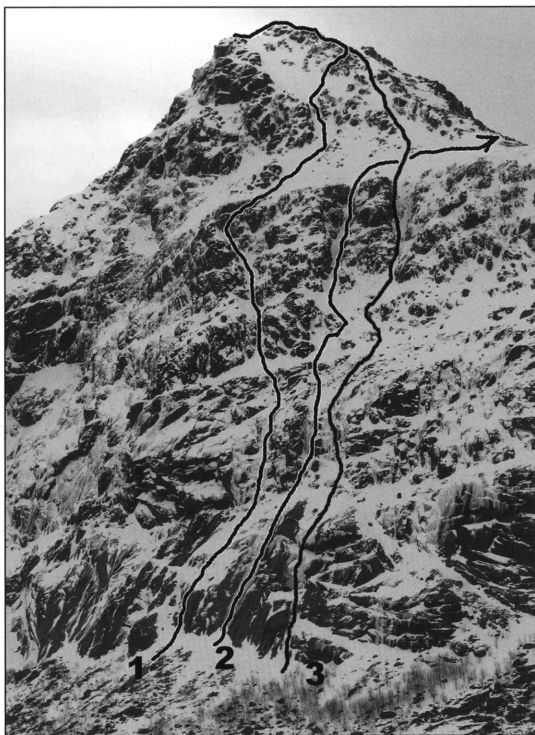
In September, while descending the Matterhorn with a client, Gerald fell. Our trip and the film that we made (*Stovelen et les garçons de Bruno Peyronnet* ; [www.realpiniste.com](http://www.realpiniste.com)) are dedicated to his memory.

PHILIPPE BATOUX, *France (translated by Todd Miller).*

## LOFOTEN

*International Winter Meet.* From March 8 to 15, 2009, the Norwegian Alpine Club (Norsk Tindeklub, NTK) invited nearly 40 climbers from all over the world to Lofoten, for a “come-as-you-are” climbing meet. The event was organized by Marius Morstad, and the philosophy was simple: put climbing and adventure in focus, without add-ons like sponsors, logos, DJ’s, slideshows, and competitions—no public, no clinics, no organizers with yellow T-shirts. The ingredients of the meet were also simple: a wealth of mountains and a group of hungry climbers.

Most participants were very pleased with the meet. The climbing was adventurous, and everyone found his or her own personal challenges in the mountains. Wintertime in Lofoten is special. There are few route descriptions, no bolts, no directions. You have to rely on your own climbing and navigational skills, and are under constant threat of being overwhelmed by the scenery. Yet civilization is just around the corner. Many



Three new routes climbed on Andopshesten during meet (1) Den Norske Sor-Afrika Linja (WI5 M4, 700m, Thomas Mann-Sjur Nesheim). (2) Slovenian-Norwegian (Marko Prezelj-Trym Atle Saeland, not to summit). (3) American (Dave Turner, solo). Andy Cave and Dave Hesleden later started up Slovenian-Norwegian route and finished on American. *Dave Turner*