

Trip Report: The Dolomites Pedraces

Date: 19th-26th July 2008

Group: Mike & Lesley, Colin, Jim G, Richard, Gill, Jim & Jean W, Mike & Selina, Tony & Lynn, Hugh & Marie

Route: See below

Total Distance: See below

Total Ascent: See below

Weather: Generally dry and cool (see daily reports)

Saturday 19th July

Rendezvous at the Walkers at 09.30 for journey to Liverpool Airport. Gillian was very kindly chauffeuring Jim, Hugh, Marie, Les and I. Hugh & Marie had been in the locality overnight enjoying the Grants hospitality. Obviously there must have been excessive hospitality because we had driven as far as Frodsham when Hugh realised his bum bag was missing, containing passport, money, etc,etc. Jim phoned his daughter (who was still in bed and probably not best pleased at the disturbance) to confirm that the missing bag was indeed in the kitchen where Hugh had left it. A plan was hastily concocted, and a swift U turn found us heading back to meet the missing bag at the Fox & Barrel, Cotebrook. Only 40 mins lost! Already we had a leading contender for the Golden Marmot award. The rest of the journey was uneventful except for the usual problem of VF equipment and fluids being refused as hand luggage (Richard & Marie). We arrived at Treviso on schedule where we had an interminable delay at Budget car rentals (who were supplying two of the three cars) and we (me) then left the airport in totally the wrong direction thanks to Colletts outdated instructions. Eventually we got back on track and arrived at Haus Valentine, our accommodation in Pedraces, at 2000. Immediately we were served a 4 course meal followed by wine and beer and there was later an informal fitting of hired Via Ferata equipment. A satisfactory end to a long day.

Sunday 20th July

Piz da Cir V - Grade 2A

Length of VF: 100m

Total Ascent / Descent 450m

Breakfast at 0800 for prompt getaway due to threat of deteriorating weather conditions and also because Jim loves getting away to an early start! Mike W., Richard and Marie went off to do a 3B VF. The rest of us drove to Passo Gardena for the walk in. The weather was dry and sunny but our summit kept disappearing in the mist. Conditions were actually

good with dry rock and good visibility and the route provided an excellent reminder for those of us with some previous experience and provided a good taster for our 2 virgins, Lynn and Jill.

The VF took only the morning so we returned to base and convened in a Pedraces bar for some rehydration, from where 8 of us went on a 2 hour forest walk to visit a lake and then returned to Haus Valentin (HV) for further liquid refreshment prior to our evening meal etc.

Monday 21st July

Piz da Lech - Grade 3B

Length of VF: 200m

Total Ascent / Descent: 350m

Up bright and early for 0830 getaway for testing VF, however the packed lunches were 10 minutes late causing much gnashing of teeth by JG. A short drive to the Vallon chairlift at Corvara and 2 cable cars later we assembled at the start. The route commenced with a steep slab, which proved too much for Lynn, Les, Jean and Marie. Selina had already made "other arrangements". The VF was excellent and interesting at times especially 2 ladders, which involved a tricky manoeuvre at the top of the 2nd one. All survived despite a few knee trembles (Colin and Richard owned up to it!). Worthy of note being an excellent effort by Jill who became a new "honorary bloke".

At the summit we had a quiet moment for Claudia whose funeral service was taking place at that time. We were joined for lunch by Les and Marie, who had flogged up the tourist route. The other girls stayed put below the summit. We were treated to an interesting view of Jean's pit stop, who believed she was well concealed. She certainly was, to those in close proximity but not to the scores of people on the summit. This blatant show of exhibitionism was to earn Jean the Golden Marmot Award.

The descent involved a short easy stretch of VF and then back on the chair lifts just in time for beer o'clock in Corvara. The girls were unhappy at missing out so an easier VF was promised for the following day. The planned route was the VF Ivano Dibona from Tre Croci Pass. A 7-8 hour one way route involving pre parking at the end. Monday night weather forecast not great however! See Tuesday report.

Tuesday 22nd July

Following the standard prompt start, we drove to the Rio Gere ski station. We discharged the bulk of the party and left them to make their way up to the VF at Rif. Lorenzi. Meanwhile Jim, Les and myself took 2 cars to Rif. Ospitale to leave one car at the end of the route. During the return

it started to rain and by the time we arrived at the Rio Gere, it had turned to sleet and snow. A phone call to the advance party confirmed that there was a blizzard up the mountain and the mission had been aborted. We waited for them with the help of warming coffee and strudel.

Eventually they returned with 2 serious problems - a) failure to do the Via Ferrata and b) having to pay for two single ski lifts. Tony was extremely distressed at having to pay for Lynne as well, making 4 singles! Some counselling (piss taking) was required and he was over the worst of it by Friday.

We required a plan B to get something out of the day, so someone (Selina?) had the bright idea of the waterfall walk which we had done in 2005. We drove over to a car park close to Ospitale where we started the walk which involved a pleasant route through woodland and an easy VF around the gorge.

There was a new section since last which added to the interest. By this time the weather had improved (at least at low altitude) and it had proved to have been the ideal solution for a half day. The aggravation of the morning was soon forgotten by everyone except Tony.

Wednesday 23rd July

Sass de Putia - Grade 1A

Length of VF: 80m

Total ascent & descent 900m

Weather forecast for Wednesday had promised further deterioration in temperature therefore a serious VF was not considered. Sure enough it was absolutely freezing at the HV (5C at 08.00) so a mountain walk with an easy VF option was planned.

We drove to Passo delle Erbe which is NW of Pedraces, with views of the Austrian Alps. Despite chilly conditions, there was plenty of sunshine. We all ascended at different speeds and Les and I found ourselves with Jim G. and Colin. It was a hard flog up to the col below the summit and from there we used the wire as a hand rail up to the summit. We enjoyed superb views from there however we exited quickly as the weather was becoming colder with frequent snow showers.

We met up with the rest of the gang on the subsidiary peak and then we had lunch before starting the trek down to Forcela de Putia and return by the anti clockwise option. The four of us enjoyed beer and strudel (yes! more strudel) at Rif.Munt De Fornela then on to the car park where we fell asleep in the sunshine waiting for the rest of the party. It had been a superb day in the mountains - just like a sunny Welsh winter day.

It was the day off for Colletts staff at HV and we had booked a table at a restaurant in Pedraces. There was fun and games in the restaurant as they were clearly unable to cope with 14 people + 3 (Colins old mate John plus his 2 lads) at the same time. The courses arrived totally at random! Finally, Colin, John and I stayed to finish the free red wine - unfortunately I had our room key. One was not amused!

Thursday 24th July

Tridentina - Grade 3B

Length of VF: 400m

Total ascent & descent: 750m

There was a significant improvement in the weather forecast so a VF was planned - the classic Tridentina. The girls (except Marie) declined and Tony & Lynn went sightseeing in Balzano! Remainder of the party assembled in the car park below Passo Gardena for the start. We were straight into action with a stempled wall but already it was obvious that there was a lot of traffic and progress would be slow.

Unfortunately we were stuck behind some serious horaces and although it was a superb VF, progress was desperate so we baled out before the final ladder section and walked up to Rif.F.Cavazza for beers followed by picnic lunch. There was a long steep scree flog back to the car park including some simple wire protection where our party became badly split by hordes of different (presumably) horaces.

It must have been the good weather that had lured so much humanity into our midst. Despite the difficulties it had been a rewarding day out and we returned to HV to take beer on the terrace.

Just at that point Jim W. took a call from the girl party pleading for vehicular assistance. Had they bitten off more than they could chew on Monte Cavallo? They had taken the ski lift up to the rock line and followed a 1B VF (without tooling up!). Then there were paths and scree down to the next town, La Villa where they took beer plus Jim's generosity with car lift - so many brownie points for Jim! We were regaled all night with tales of derring do including visual aids of Monte Cavallo where the late sun was setting.

Friday 25th July

Averau - Grade 2A

Length of VF: 75m up and down

The weather forecast promised continued improvement and so it proved as breakfast was taken al fresco for the first time. Planning for the day was shambolic with umpteen options being mooted. Finally we all opted for

the VF on Averau (above Falzarego) with variations of ski lift up and/or down and walking up and/or down. Somehow we all managed to assemble at Rif. Averau for coffee, in the most fantastic setting, and then set off on the VF. All accomplished the climb without too much difficulty then walked up to the summit for photos etc including an outrageous display of girl power!

The descent was trickier but everyone was OK and we had lunch at the same rifugio.

It was an excellent meal, following which we returned by various routes and modes of transport. By a miracle nobody was left without a lift.

The VF kit was returned to the shop - a clear sign that the holiday was nearing the end. We enjoyed our final meal and Colin made a short speech with a few thankyou's and awarded the Golden Marmot to..... Jean for her bum baring episode.

Saturday 26th July

The final breakfast where it emerged that the occupants of the "gay suite" had inveigled "Rocky" Quinn into a crazy bet during the final drunken evening. Basically a mountain foot race against Richard! Seemed to be a serious commitment with early bets already placed however time will tell. Following the farewells and general agreement of what a great holiday it was, we departed at about 10.00 and headed for Treviso Airport.

And finally - A few words about our accommodation at Haus Valentin

It was an excellent location for the mountains and Via Ferratas with perfect catering for a group of 14. Every night 4 courses were served up in an hour. Superb food with as much wine as we could drink (within reason). An honesty bar meant that "beer o'clock" could be any time of the day.

Rooms were adequate with good shower and en suite facilities. Some rooms had balconies (for the chosen few) plus great views of the valley and mountains. Would definitely consider returning. Overall score 8/10 (my opinion only)

Mike A