

Cliffhanger Tour with Old Ferratas

by Graham Willoughby



View south from Kesselkogel 2002m - Graham Willoughby

“ There’s no way we can get to the hut in **that** time. Do they think we were born on Planet Krypton!” And so a conversion factor for route times on alpine signposts was born.

A somewhat smaller senior team than previous years set off from the Hotel Mondshein, Innsbruck, for the Dolomites. Allan’s plan was a circular tour of the Rosengarten Group, ascent of ogel, a few via ferratas and a good look at the Vajolet Towers where opening scenes of Stallone’s Cliffhanger movie were filmed.

The first day’s climbing took us from the Paolina Hut to the small, but amazingly located Santner Pass Hut (2734m) via a long and, at times taxing VF. Fortunately the snow couloir wire rope was not buried or damaged so our short rope stayed in the rucksack. A wonderful reception from our young hosts helped temper their vegetarian menu: beetroot burger is not a goulash equivalent!



The Vajolet Towers & Gartl Hut - Allan Hartley



Santner Pass VF at the Couloir - Allan Hartley

Cecil Davies' translated guide book quotes *"Whoever gets over the Santner Pass into the 'Gartle' (Little Garden) penetrates the very heart of the Rosengarten. During the ascent you experience everything that is always so inspiring in every climb in the Dolomites: the well marked path often leads along close to the edge of the abyss, squeezes its way through wildly torn, shadowy defiles, surmounts narrow indentations and a steep snow couloir. A rapid scene-change and, as a startling finale, you are admitted into the broad, welcoming circle of the 'Gartle'. Suddenly you are standing in front of the classically beautiful picture of the Three Vajolet Towers, one of the most singular and beautiful show-pieces of the Dolomites"*

After staying at the Gartl and Passo Principe huts, it was time for our own Cliffhanger: Kesselkogel at 3003m the Group's highest top, with a VF graded 2 ('you can't be seriousness'). It took a nervy eight hours to bag it and reach the Antermoi Hut. There was more to come.

The next day was supposed to be a short cut to the Vajolet Hut but, imbued with yesterday's achievement, we foolishly opted for something a little longer. The route looked good on what turned out to be a 20 year old map. Nine hours later however, after some tedious terrain and VF, we finally arrived at Vajolet under those magnificent Towers.

The next two days of our tour were less eventful but very rewarding as we completed the full Rosengarten circle via the Rotwand Hut and finally back to the Paolina Hut.

Full credit to Allan Hartley who devised, organised and once again led another thoroughly enjoyable Senior Tour for Tom Littlefield, Gottfried Polhammer, 'Chicago Mike' Macken, Jonathan Whitcombe and myself.

And the signpost conversion factor (for the over 70s'): ascent times multiply by 1.4, descents by 1.25 with minor adjustments recommended for members who are keen photographers: have a replacement body part or wear heart monitors.



Members at the Antermoia hut - Allan Hartley