



THE classic on L'Escalès – à faire absolument

Le Grand Canyon de Verdon is not only a magic place for climbers, but also for hikers and kayakers. The scenery is spectacular and unique, the rock of L'Escalès is legendary. Already in 1981, Jean-Marc Troussier, one of the Verdon pioneers, said that there was barely no room left for new routes at L'Escalès. What a misjudgment! In the next few decades hundreds of new routes should be added, but also the other massifs were covered with routes. Especially in the last years, after a period of lower climbing activity, so many new, modern and often better

protected routes have been added, especially also on the cooler massifs of the opposite side of the canyon, that the Verdon has become a year-round climbing spot.

The route "Les Rideaux de Gwendal" dates back to the early days of Verdon climbing. The grand line, the variation between gray and red rock, and the changing steepness make this classic a very recommendable route. The typical verdoneques structures are found mainly in the upper part which was first climbed in 1983 and is now a little patinated by the many ascents. In the French forum camptocamp (<http://www.camptocamp.org/forums/viewtopic.php?id=47426&p=1>) the Gwendal is among the most frequent answers to the question about the three most beautiful "major" routes. The protection (rebolted) is good for a route of the 80's, but sparer than in most new routes of this millennium. The difficulty rating in the guidebooks is hard by today's standards, so we have adapted some pitches to today's standards. When you climb the Gwendal in the sun (shade only after 3 p.m.), it is too hot on warm days with no wind (though with the circling vultures this creates a special atmosphere).

The start of Gwendal can be reached in the typical Verdon style by abseiling. As P1 is quite a cold start, we prefer to start right away with P2 which begins at the eastern border of the garden that is reached by abseiling comfortably 4-5 times. Sharp drip holes (gouttes d'eau) dominate in P2, not very pleasurable (6b+). The crux pitch is P3 with a difficult and mandatory to climb steep crack in gray rock (7b+ stamina). In P4 (6a+) and P5 (6c) prevails red rock with uncomplicated and enjoyable climbing. A Verdon highlight as to exposure is the elegant P6 along a gray pillar (6c). For P7 (7a) one should save both some moral and strength, because the crux section (6c+) is mandatorily bolted and the rest is not easy on distantly placed bolts. P8 and P9 are typical Escalès exit-pitches in gray rock where the face climbing in P8 (6a) must not be underestimated. P9 (5) provides pure fun climbing on large buckets.

Remark: Beside the moderately priced guidebooks from competent locals where part of the proceeds is used to rebolt routes, there is plenty of free information on the Internet (e.g. for Gwendal under <http://www.camptocamp.org/routes/56085/fr/verdon-l-escalès-les-rideaux-de-gwendal> or a large selection of routes under <http://www.topo-grandesvoies-verdon.fr/index.html.html>). So you have to wonder at chargeable information on the Internet which are a questionable investment given the level of knowledge of the authors.

Approach: Parking "La Carelle" on the Route des Crêtes, 5.8 km from La Palud.

Start of the route: 5x abseiling (50m rope) down the route "Ticket Danger" (most western rappel below the balustrade of La Carelle) to the garden (P2 begins on the eastern border of the garden) + 1x rappel to the base of the cliff for P1.

Guidebook: Verdon, by S.Adlinger, O.Dobel Ober, P.Faudou, 2013 (a selection of good routes). Verdon 2010, Lei Lagramusas, a pure photo-topoguide with beautiful photos of the cliffs, but too little background information.

Les Rideaux de Gwendal		J.Perrier, J.-P. Moron
ED, 7b+(7a), S2		B.Raynaud, C.Rudolf (1983/86↑)
SE, 800 m a.s.l.		260 clm (0 vam)
		overall impression ★★★★★
		climbing ratio 85%
		variety ●●●
		scenery ●●●
		exposure ●●●
		rock quality ●●●
		steepness /
		fun factor ●



Les Rideaux de Gwendal - Verdon (F)

Multi-pitch climbing routes in the Alps



P9: 5b
Steep with buckets – just fun.

P8: 6a
Inclined face climbing with pockets and shallow water grooves that must not be underestimated – an exit pitch that is typical for the Escalès massif.

P7: 6c+/7a
After about 10m a difficult and obligatory section, then ongoing difficulties on distantly placed bolts.

P6: 6b+/6c
Spectacular and exposed along a gray pillar.

P5: 6c
Spacious climbing in predominantly red rock, uncomplicated.

P4: 6a+
At the beginning drip holes on a gray bulge, then an enjoyable crack in red rock.

P3: 7b+
Crux pitch.
A gray bulge and a thin crack, mandatory to climb.

P2: 6b+
Sharp drip holes.
A difficult move at the beginning.

P1: 6c
45m, technical and hard for a warm-up.



Climbers in the traverse of the exposed P6.



Les Rideaux de Gwendal - Verdon (F)

Multi-pitch climbing routes in the Alps



P4: Enjoyable climbing after the hard P3.



The spacious P5.



The traverse of P6 in the gray rock that is typical for L'Escalès.



Few meters before the mandatorily bolted 6c+ section of P7.