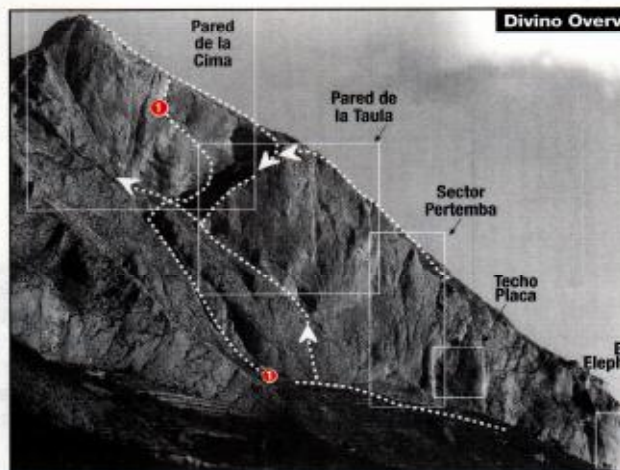


Anyone travelling down the Sella valley cannot fail to be impressed by the curtain of rock which forms the Penon Divino; the mountain gives such an impressive back drop to the valley. I first saw these walls some 15 years ago and since then have come to know and appreciate the wealth of beautiful rock climbing to be had on these faces.

Most of the original routes on these walls, and there were few, had been climbed using a great deal of aid; sections of OA, A1 and A2 predominating in the



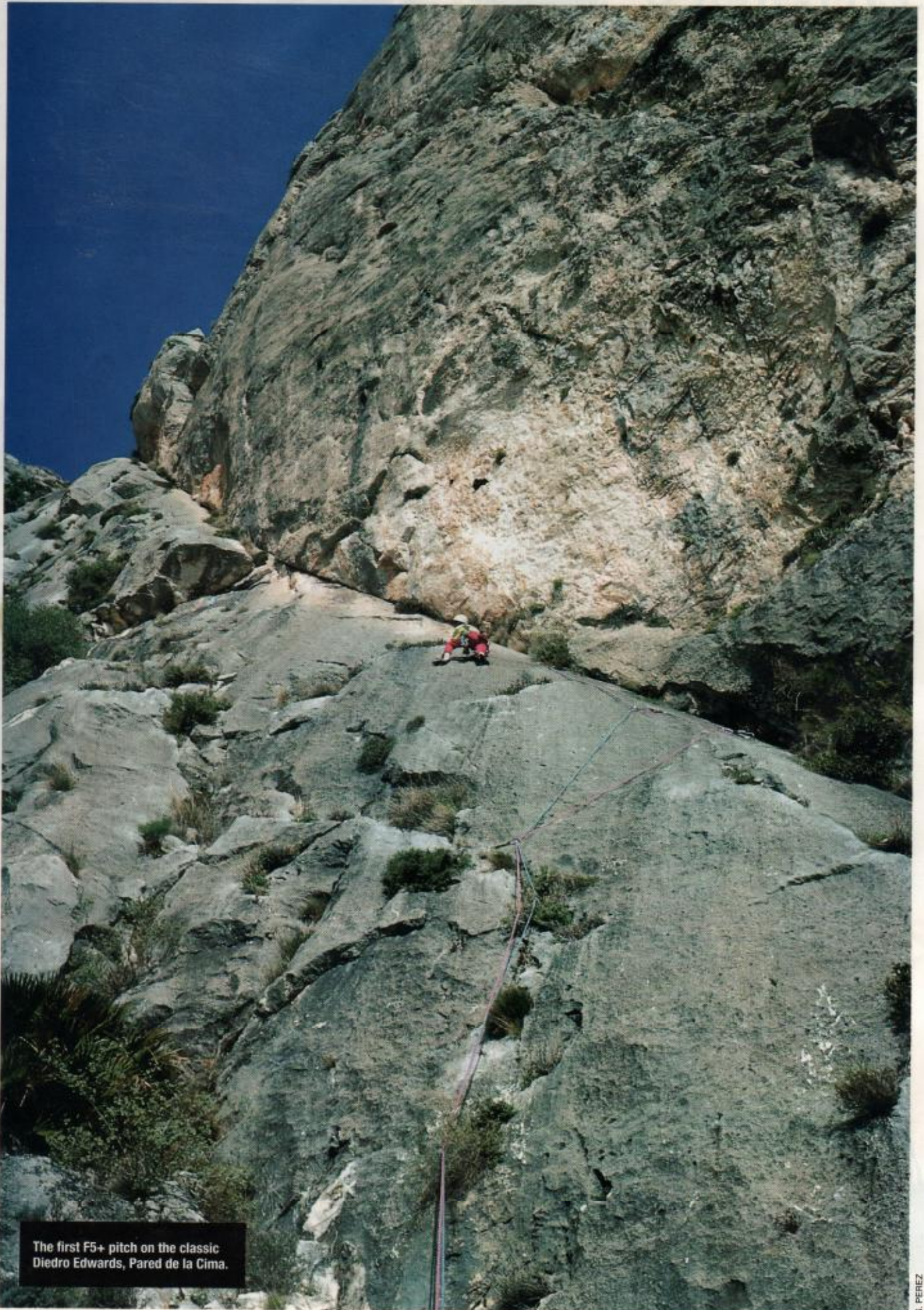
1. Inglasi-Hernandez/Amor de Odio, F6a

Absolutely Divino

by Rowland Edwards
topos by Vertical Brain publications

route descriptions. This observation is not intended as criticism of those first ascensionists, they were following the rock climbing styles of the day.

When Mark and I started to free these routes many of the aided sections were far too loose, or just too hard and we found alternative pitches or variations; as good a justification as any for the style in which they were originally climbed

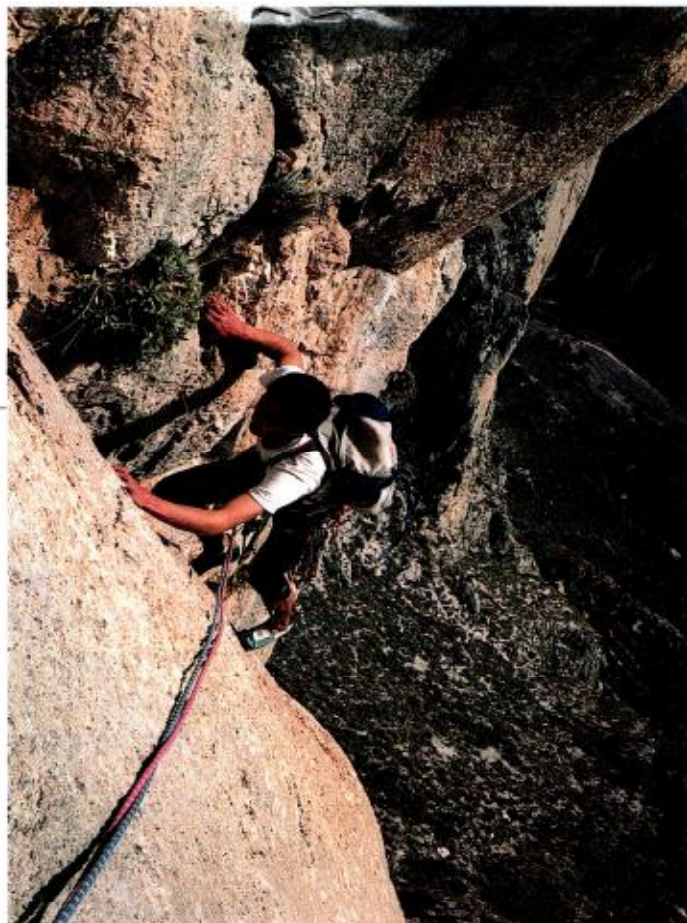


The first F5+ pitch on the classic
Diedro Edwards, Pared de la Cima.

S. PEREZ

La Taula on the Pared de la Taula was the first route we freed and was to point the way for many of the others. The original description stated that the route 'was a play with Friends' with many sections of A1 and A2. Our first thoughts were, if it's possible to use Friends, then there must be cracks - a train of thought which had paid off in the past.

Using only traditional gear and on-sighting, the first two pitches of La Taula went at F7a+ and F7c. The original final pitch went directly up the wall and it was obvious that it would need many bolts and pre-inspection. However, Mark found a superb alternative which maintained the style and grade of the pitches below. By traversing right across open walls, he reached an excellent crack system which continued to the top. This last pitch we called Regalo del Diaz, F7b, (A gift from God). This success opened our eyes to the opportunities



R. EDWARDS

and we started to look at the other routes on the walls.

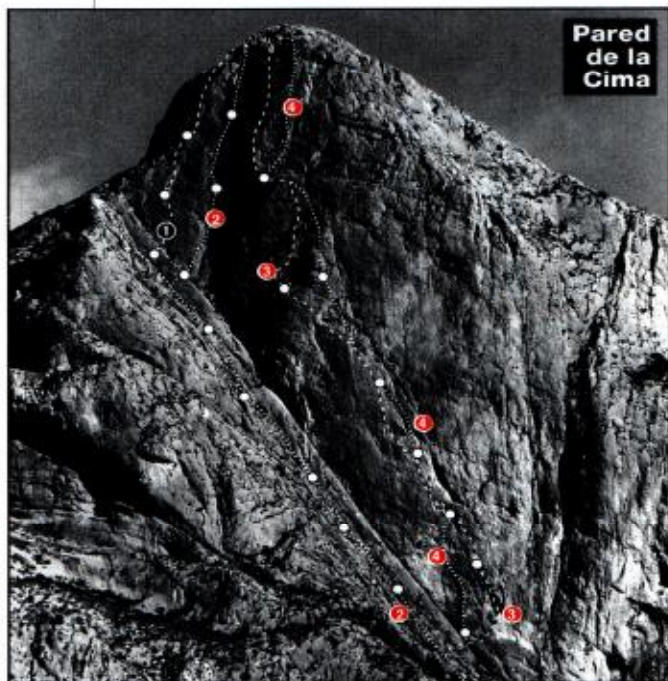
Over the past ten years development has continued on the Penon de Divino, to make it a location for those wishing to climb long, multi-pitch rock climbs using traditional gear.

Pared de la Cima

The Divino can be divided into four main areas (see topo, note Sector CP10M is not covered in this article). The highest on the mountain, lying just below the summit is the wall of Pared de la Cima. This wall is the most difficult to reach requiring a 40 minute trek from the dirt track in the valley, an easier approach can be made from the top (see fact file).

The obvious slanting ramp of clean rock at the base of the face is taken by Diedro Edwards – a superb nine pitch F6b route with very contrasting styles of climbing; delicate slabs and classic cracks. Although on the upper limit of what can be called an 'easy' climb it has many superb 6a pitches. One of the hardest and most sustained routes on this section of the mountain, Eye Of The Wind, F7c, (E7) takes a parallel line up the wall to the right.

Divino has some superb cracks and pockets, offering excellent natural lines protectable by nuts and cramming devices, but like most limestone faces there are vast



Pared de la Cima

Photo: Rowland Edwards © VERTICAL BRAIN 1996

1. Mamtastic, F6b 6b+ 6c+***
2. Diedro Edwards, 245m, F5+ 6a+ 6a 6a+ 6b 5 5 6b 5+ (E3)***
FA: R. Edwards, S. Perez, Mar 1993
3. Notario/Angel's Highway, 268m, F6a+ 6b 6a+ 6b 6b+ 6c 7a (E6/7)*** FA: Notario, Maldonasa, Jan 1983.
FFA/FA: R. Edwards, M. Edwards
4. Eye of the Wind, 268m, F6a 6c+ 6a+ 6b 7c 6b 6c (E7)***
FA: R. Edwards, M. Edwards

Left: Pitch five of the Diedro Edwards – the end of the slabby section.

Right: The penultimate, eighth pitch (F6b), of the Diedro Edwards.

S. PEREZ

areas of completely blank, unprotectable rock and these break the natural protected lines. The only way to climb these sections is to use bolts.

When I started climbing routes on the Divino my philosophy was to strike a balance between protecting the blank sections, while maintaining the adventure of using leader placed gear wherever possible. If cracks were filled with flowers or trees a bolted variation would be found.

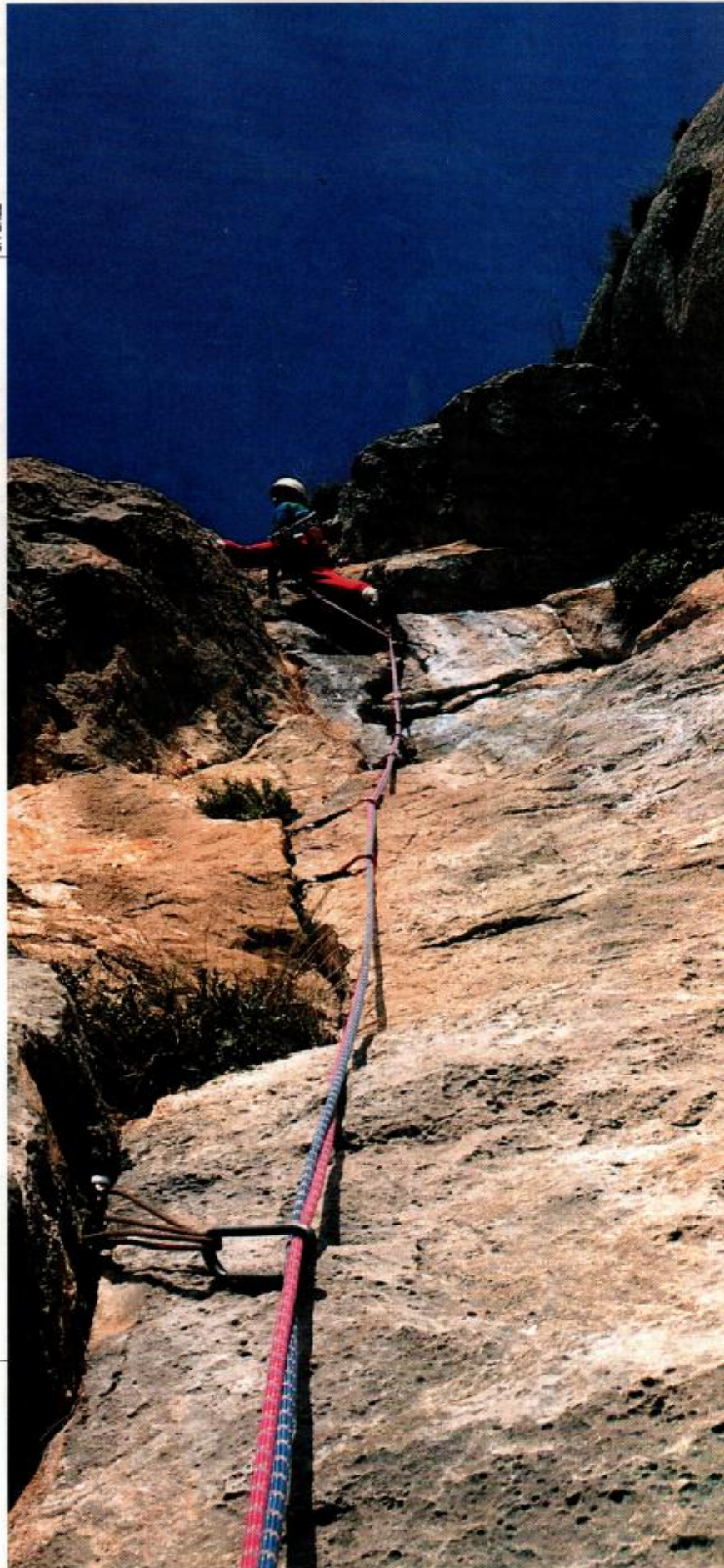
This has happened on a number of routes on El Elephante, Techo Placa and on the nearby Puig Campana (see *Climber* November). On one route on El Elephante, The Tongue of the Snake, F7c, 8a, 7a+, Mark took a hanging belay well above one of the ledges which was covered in small trees – the trees have survived.

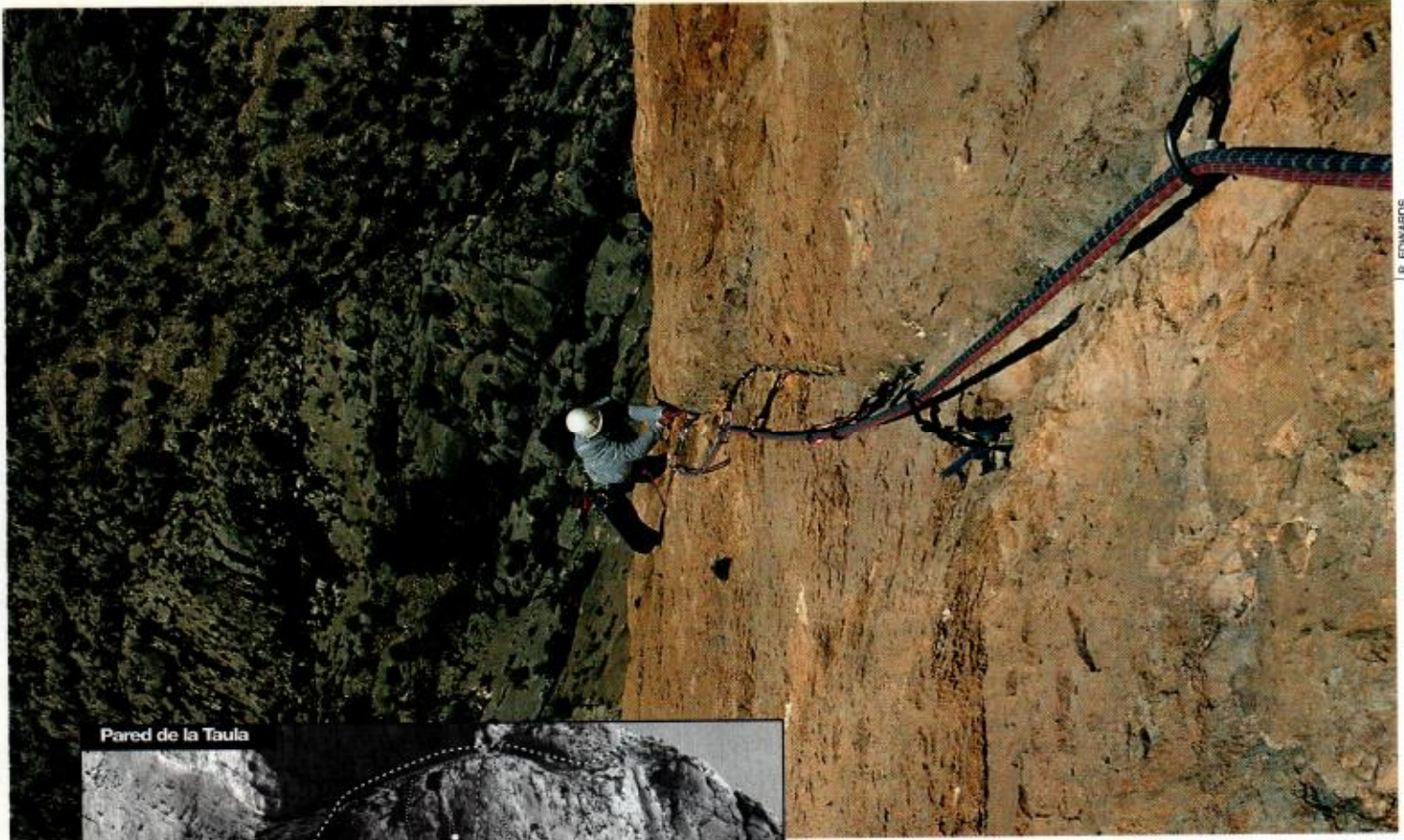
On Scorpion, also on El Elephante, a bolt was placed so that climbers would not use one of the trees on the route. This is conservation with a small 'c' but we hoped it would protect some of the fragile plants which exist on these faces. Likewise, at the main Sella crags nearby, the extensive use of bolt lower-offs has avoided the destruction of the tops of the crags.

Back on the Pared de la Cima the old route Notario was also freed of all its aid sections, but to do this we had to add four new alternative pitches and a number of variations. As on La Taula we had climbed so much new rock that the question of renaming the route arose. I have never liked the fashion for renaming routes when they are freed, but on Notario for example, more than a third of the route was new. We settled on a compromise by giving the route a double name; Notario/Angel's Highway.

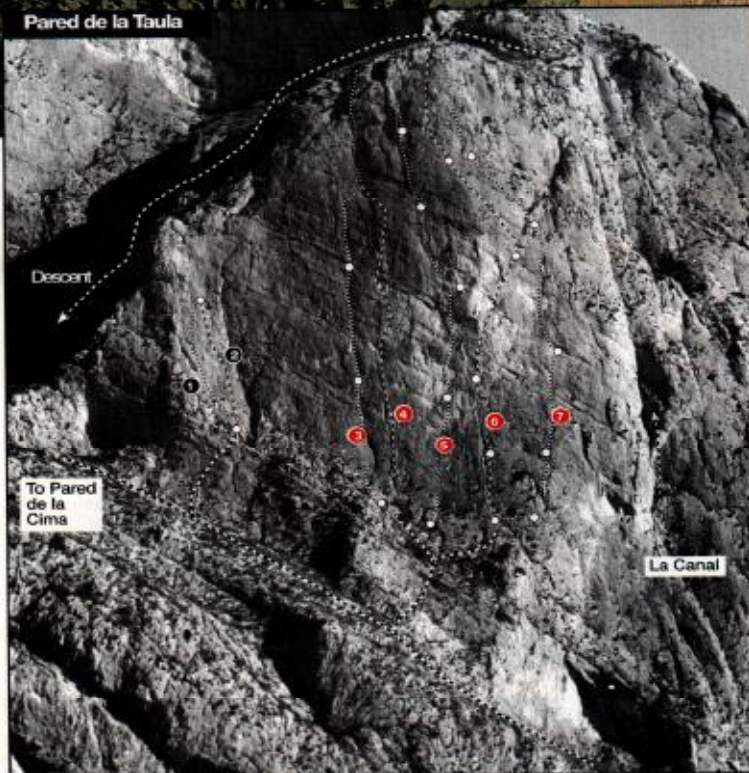
The right side of this wall has some attractive looking vertical grooves and cracks, but they are actually very loose and a number of climbers have been repulsed. Once cleaned they would produce superb climbs, but what a job.

Well worth mentioning here is the Inglasi-Hernandez/ Amor de Odio, F6a (V+), which follows the obvious slanting fault line below and parallel to the approach terrace that gives access to Pared de la Cima and Pared de la Taula. The route then climbs the wall left of the descent route between the Cima and Taula to the top (route 1 on the Divino Overview topo).





R. EDWARDS



Pitch four (F7a) of the fine crack and wall climb Excitation/Waiting for the Sun, on Pared de la Taula.

Pared de la Taula

Further down from the Cima is Pared de la Taula. This forms an obvious clean, triangular sweep of pinkish, vertical rock. Here the routes are steeper and the climbing seems even more impressive – pick anyone and you are guaranteed superb climbing.

Just to the right of La Taula/Regalo is the very impressive line of Wish You Were Here. This route is one of the most recent Mark and I have done on this wall and the hardest of its seven pitches weighs in at a hefty F8a (E8). This is a superb route and possibly the hardest route in Spain protected with leader placed gear. Six pitches of thin crack and wall climbing which will delight anyone able to climb at this standard.

Just to the right of Wish is another superb crackline; Fisura de Edwards, F7a, (E7), (sorry about the name,

1. Class for Today, F6a (E1)*
FA: R.Edwards & students, Mar 1994
2. Toda, F7a (E4)*
FFA: R.Edwards, Mar 1994
3. La Taula/Regalo del Diaz, 165m, F7a+ 7c 7b (E6)***
FFA/FA: M.Edwards, R.Edwards, Dec 1992
4. Wish You Were Here, 158m, F3 6a+ 7b 8a 7b 7a 6a (E8)***
FA: M.Edwards, R.Edwards, May 1995
5. Fisura de Edwards, 165m, F7a 7a 7a 5+ (E7)***
FA: R.Edwards, S.Perez, 1994
6. Excitation/Waiting for the Sun, 200m, F5 6b 6b+ 7a 6b+ 6a+ (E6)***
FFA/FA: R.Edwards, S.Perez, Mar 1993
7. Edwards-Lloret-Perez, 210m, F4 5 6b 6c 6a 5 5 (E4)**
FA: R.Edwards, A.Lloret, S.Perez, Mar 1993



M. EDWARDS

Left: Near the start of Excitation/Waiting for the Sun, on Pared de la Taula.

Right: Mark Edwards on the crux F8a pitch of Wish You Were Here, Pared de la Taula, during the second ascent.

fantastic crack and wall climb. Like Notario/Angel's Highway this is an older route which has been freed with pitches added. The top pitches are particularly good with open wall climbing in the most improbable positions. Like all the climbs on these walls this is deceptively long, so it is essential to allow enough time.

To the right again is the Edwards-Lloret-Perez, F6c, (E5), one of the easier wall climbs with only one move of 7a. Right again is an obvious deep depression which splits the face, the line of La Canal, (IV). This is one of the older traditional routes and although a superb line, it is very vegetated and loose. Right of this is El Chino, a nine pitch IV that gives a good flavour of the traditional routes on the mountain. One pitch is graded F6b, if climbed free, but this is usually done as an aid section at A1, IV. Take care on the upper sections as the rock is rather blocky and can be loose.

Sector Pertemba, Techo Placa

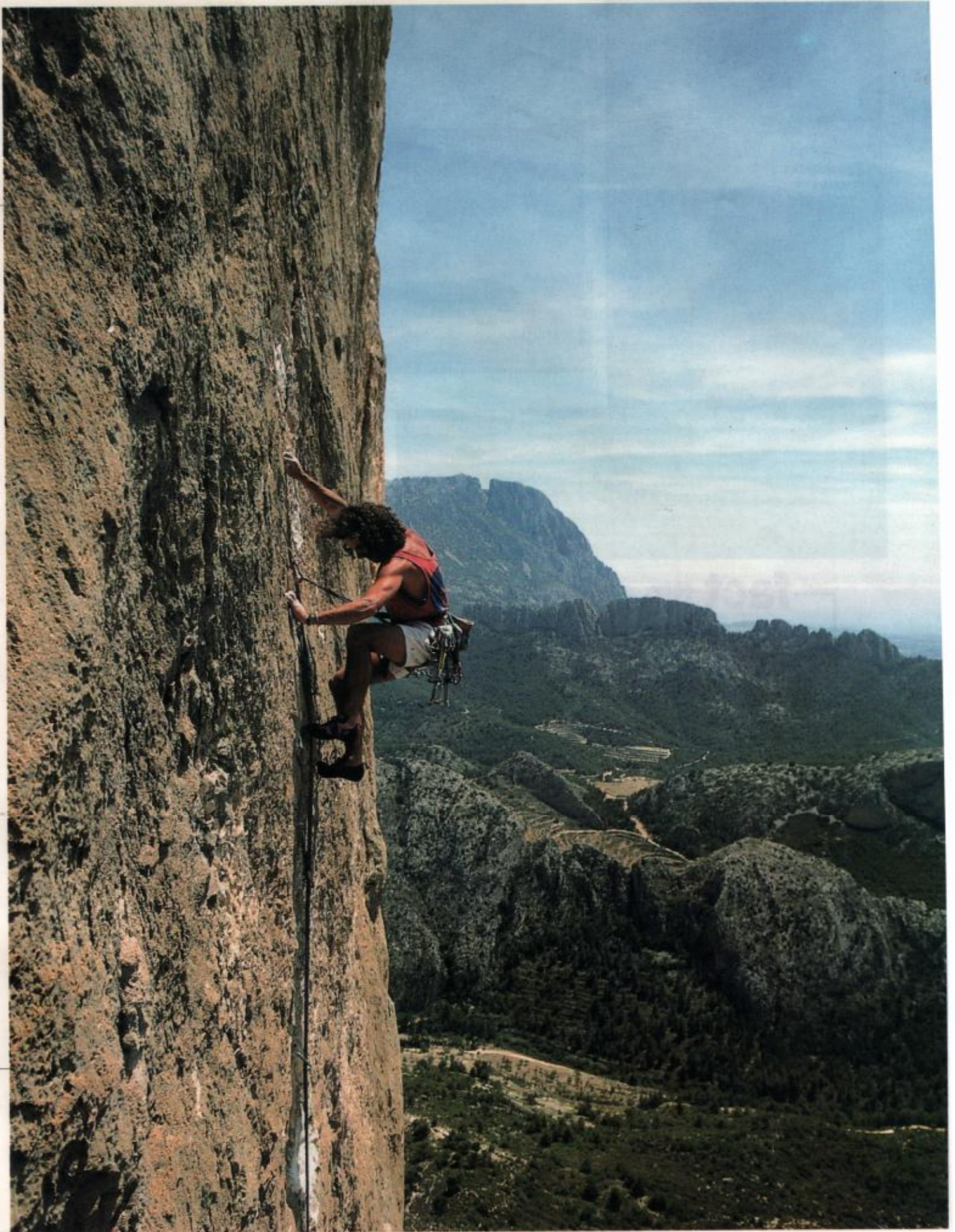
Below this and to the right of La Canal is a vast area of walls, grooves and ridges. These ridges and grooves are taken by some of the easier climbs, although one route Blood on the Rocks, F7c, (E6), is an exception. This route is easily recognised by a large red, vertical stain on the rock which gave the route its name. An eight pitch classic, it has one pitch of sport climbing at F7c, and the rest is 7b and below and requires leader placed gear. Climbing this route on a sunny day (as is usual) in February, with a warm breeze blowing up from the valley, it's hard to imagine freezing your balls off on a British crag, but that's what Spain is all about, sun, rock, and the space to enjoy yourself.

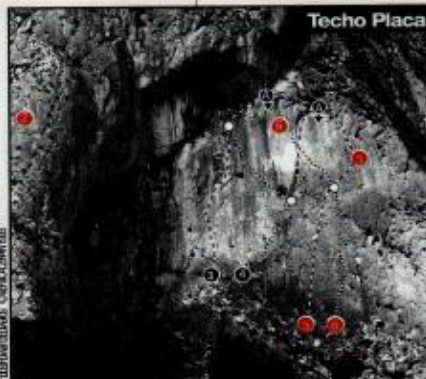
The last rib (or first as you approach the face) is taken by one of the classic grade IV routes. Espolon Pertemba, F5, is a six pitch Very Severe, which meanders its way up the well defined blunt arete at the base of the wall. The original finish ends very disappointingly, my wife Ester and I added a three pitch variation up the superb slabs direct to the top, which pushes it up to HVS 5a (UK).

but there are reasons for it). This four pitch route is one of the most satisfying I have climbed on the wall.

When I first visited this wall I thought that this line had been climbed. It later turned out it hadn't, so climbing it gave me a real buzz. Every pitch is sustained at its grade and on perfect rock, a must for the accomplished leader.

Excitacion/Waiting For The Sun, F7a, (E6) is another





1. Blood on the Rocks, 298m, F3 5 4 7b 7c 6c 6b (E6)***
FA: R.Edwards, M.Edwards, Mar 1993
2. Espolon Pertemba, 215m, F4+ 5 4 4+ 4 4 (VS)**
FA: Pomanes, Ramirez, Jan 1984.
Direct Finish 5 5+ (HVS): R. Edwards, E.Edwards, Mar 1987
3. Voyages, 40m, F6c 4*** FA: R.Edwards, S.Perez
4. Hidden Glory, 75m, F5 5+ 4* FA: R.Edwards, S.Perez, A.Lloret
5. Techo Placa, 78m, F6c 7a*** FA: R.Edwards, M.Edwards, J.Miguel
6. Duel in the Sun, 80m, F6a 6a* FA: R.Edwards, S.Perez

Just to the right of Sector Pertemba is a very impressive overhang below which lies Techo Placa. This area gives shorter routes mostly using leader placed protection, although one climb Techo Placa, F7a, is a superb sport route. The top groove of Duel in the Sun, F6a, (UK 6a), is also well worth doing.

El Elephante

The lowest buttress of the mountain, and nearest to the road is the very impressive wall of El Elephante – thought to be unclimbable, until Mark's Divine Inspirations, F7c. This wall has some of the hardest sport routes in the valley.

One route Gran Fisura, F6b+, is a classic traditional route and was the first route on the crag. All the routes here are very powerful, requiring strong arms and stamina.

fact file

Access from below: Approach from Benidorm as for Sella. The Divino is obvious from the village and dominates the valley. Make for the head of the valley and the refugio. Take the left hand fork and park by the second track on the left, just after an entrance to a house on the right.

A well marked track leads past El Elephante, Techo Placa and the rounded arete of Pertemba, to a broken ramp below the steep wall of Blood On The Rocks. This provides an easy grade III scramble to the traverse terrace below Pared de la Taula and Pared de la Cima. To reach the summit from here scramble up a short pillar (grade III) on the right and from its

see a strange tower on the col to the side of the summit of Divino.

Make for this and park by some large trees. Walk to the col, easterly, then down the edge of the mountain until you can see the grassy ramp descending to the base of the Pared de la Cima. A short grade III scramble reaches the base of the ramp.

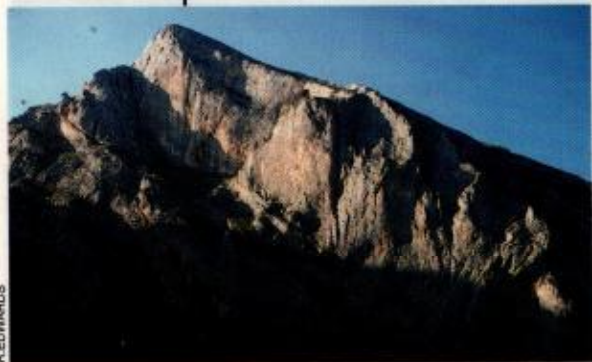
Descent: For descending from the routes on Pared de la Cima, Pared de la Taula and Sector Pertemba it is advisable to descend to or climb up to the col separating Pared de la Cima and Pared de la Taula. Take the scrambly footpath down to the ramp that descends below the Pared de la Taula. Do not be tempted to walk directly down to the valley – you'll be in for a very long and difficult scramble.

Rock and equipment: Most of the routes mentioned here are on superb rock, although some of the easier lines and the tops of some of the harder routes, can have loose blocks.

The more traditional style routes need a full rack and camming devices work well in the cracks. On Wish You Were Here, a good selection of micro nuts are essential. Double ropes are an advantage if you need to retreat and don't wish to leave gear behind.

Sport routes only need quickdraws, although loose lengths of cord are always useful as threads or in case of retreat off one of the longer sport climbs on El Elephante.

Weather and time to go: These are big climbs and enough time should be allowed to complete them. The weather is usually good throughout the year, but summer is far too hot unless you're a dawn starter.




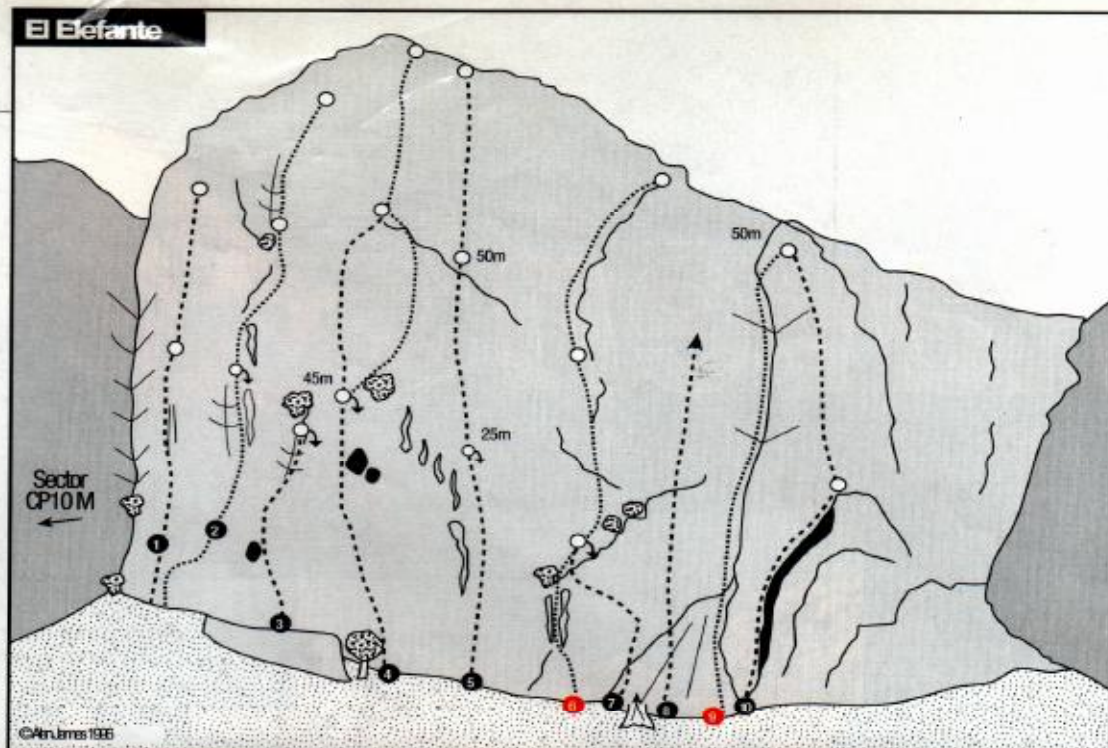
top a steep walk leads up the right-hand side of the mountain.

Access from above (4x4 or hired Panda useful!):

An approach can also be made from the top of the mountain and although longer it saves some leg power. From Sella drive towards the Safari park, well marked with road signs. After 4/5 kms, a turning right off the main road indicates to Ramonta Aleman. Follow this dirt track for about 12 kms, until you can

Ellefante

One last route worth mentioning is Zig Zag, a three pitch IV climb. Although not marked on the topos it is quite easy to find and is a very good climb for first time visitors and those looking for a short day. When approaching the main faces, by the normal track, you will reach a large boulder, behind which is a smooth wall seamed with cracks. The route starts up cracks on the right, crosses the face left, at mid-height, and then climbs up right again. All belays are bolted. Abseil back down the route. 



- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Candyman, F6b 6a+* | 6. Divine Inspiration, F7b+ 7c 7a+*** |
| 2. Scorpion, F7a 7a+*** | 7. Alternative Start, F7b+** |
| 3. Lupu, F6c** | 9. Gran Fisura, F6b+*** |
| 4. The Tongue of the Snake, F7c 8a 7a+*** | 10. The Naked Edge, F5+ 6c*** |
| 5. Edward's Wall, F8a 7a+*** | |

Any time between late September and late May, early June are good. December to February can throw in the odd bit of cold weather, particularly cold winds and the odd snow storm. I was caught out on Pared de la Cima once and the whole face turned to a wall of ice within 30 minutes, but this is the exception.

Sunny weather has the usual problems of carrying water, but it is worth it. Early mornings in hot weather will give you until 12 o'clock to be in shadow.

Accommodation: The refugio in Sella offers cheap, alpine style accommodation. Camping is also available near by and wild camping is allowed throughout the area, so long as you're well away from any camp site and village. However water and sanitation are problems, the product of the latter decaying very slowly. Please take your rubbish home. Villa accommodation is available both in Sella and Finestrat.

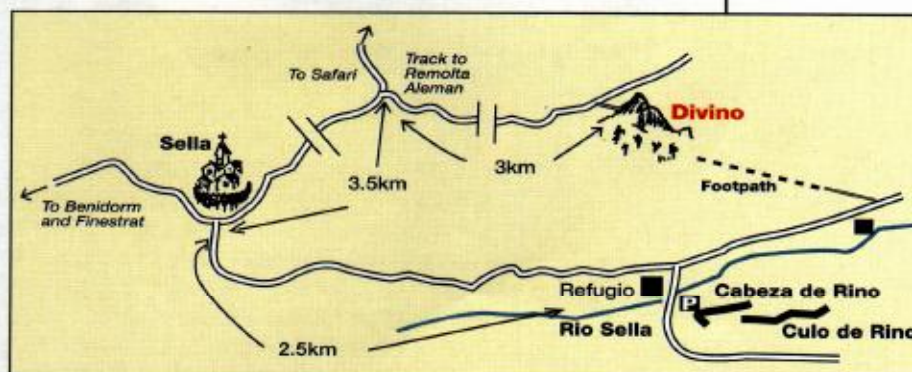
Convenient, economical accommodation is easy to arrange in Benidorm, only 30 mins drive away, with full board in many cases. You can hire any type of vehicle at the airport or in the main towns. Mountain rescue is very basic and any rescues present considerable difficulties – don't expect the service you'd get in the UK or the Alps.

Guidebooks: Full descriptions of most of the routes and all the modern routes in this article will be found in the Divino section of the new *Costa Blanca, Mallorca, El Chorro, Rock Fax*, 1996.

Route history: To me the history of a climb is as important as the route itself. Follow a Brown, Whillans,

Dawes, Moffatt or Pritchard route and it will relate something of the character of those climbers. Not recording the first ascents of routes will inevitably lead to the loss of the history of rock climbing in these areas. This loss of the history of climbing will no doubt lead to climbing losing its very soul.

The older Chris Craggs guide and the new Costa



Blanca etc, Rock Fax, do not record any of the first ascents or any of the history of the routes. The Spanish guide book to the Puig Campana and the original guides to Sella and Divino recorded all first ascent details and were better for it.

Hopefully this article will help to record some of this missing history for the future. I hope that in the future the lack of concern for the history of this great area will be corrected and we can all enjoy that little bit of extra which is added to our sport.