



Winter Edition

MOUNTAINS

ON STAGE

WINTER EDITION 2025

THE MAG



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Editorial

MOUNTAINS ON STAGE
WINTER 2025

Welcome to this Winter Edition 2025 of Mountains on Stage!

More than ever, this year's program focuses on human adventures. And when we talk about human adventures, it always comes with complex stories that mix psychology and emotions! This Winter Edition is one of the most intense from the last couple of years. Get ready to discover four stories about doubt, identity quest, grief and self transcendence. Four epic and touching tales, that we hope will help you in your future challenges, whether in the mountains or in life.

Enjoy the show!

MONTAGNE EN SCÈNE MAGAZINE

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MONT BLANC
EXPERIENCE



FILM N°1

Just a climber

DIRECTOR
JÉRÔME TANON

LENGTH : 26 MIN
ORIGINAL VERSION,
WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

Watching Solenne Piret climb is almost like witnessing magic. You wonder how she will get through, and then, with a fluid, effortless motion, she progresses up the wall. Born without a right hand, Solenne has always found her own path on the wall. A four-time world champion, she now takes on a new challenge: leading the legendary Grand Capucin—one of Mont Blanc's most iconic spires—while placing her own traditional protections. But despite intense training, doubts linger: this time, did she aim too high?



INTERVIEW

Athlete

Solenne Piret

“
Sometimes, you just
don't have a choice.
**You have to move
forward and
push yourself**
”



How do you manage the use of your arms? Do you always use both?

Not really. I have agenesis in my right arm with muscle atrophy. So I have much less strength there and I can't develop that side as much as the left. I discovered Maureen Beck's climbing, who has a similar agenesis pretty similar to mine. She has her own technique, and it was by watching her videos that I realised I too could try something different, using my right arm more. Since I have less strength on that side, I'm more hesitant. The strap helps a lot and allows me to tell myself, "Okay, I can go for it, I can reach a bit with the right arm." There are still plenty of moments of uncertainty: you never know if it's going to zip, if there's enough friction. And sometimes, you just don't have a choice. If there's no good grip on the right, you still have to move forward and push yourself.

Do you climb indoors as much as outdoors?

I live in Fontainebleau, so the forest and its boulders are kind of like my backyard! But it's not the same at all. In Fontainebleau, it's cold and the weather is harsh in the winter, so you don't climb outside much. And above all, indoor climbing and outdoor climbing are two different but complementary worlds. Climbing outside helps me mostly mentally. If I only climbed indoor, I'd lose motivation quickly. Being outside, in nature, is what really is what really thrills me. Fontainebleau is the perfect place to keep the flame alive, keep enjoying it, and avoid falling into endless "training" sessions.

Did you feel pressure during the Grand Capucin shoot? Was it similar to what you feel in competition?

Yes, of course, but not in the same way. In competition, you're in a microcosm: there's noise, (speakers), music, people watching you, and that creates huge pressure. On a project like the Grand Capucin, the difficulty is there, but the stress is different. You don't have that overwhelming atmosphere around you. You manage your fatigue, your effort, your nutrition, which allows you to focus mainly on yourself and the route. In competitions, I put enormous pressure on myself. It's paradoxical because it works out pretty well for me. But after a big event, I'm completely drained. For a month, I don't feel like climbing at all, no pleasure. Then I go back to Fontainebleau, redo circuits, and I regain that mojo back. I think competitions push me so far to my limits that it becomes exhausting. In the moment, you wonder why you do it, but there's such intensity, such a rush of adrenaline, that your dopamine spikes and you feel incredibly happy.

How did you experience the "after" of your Grand Capucin ascent?

It took me a while to realize it. At the time, I didn't really process what had just happened. It was only two months later that I understood how tired, how drained I was. It was a very intense project, between the route, the filming, and the pressure to succeed... Sometimes it's others who make you notice what you've accomplished. I just needed to catch my breath and take a step back.

How do you handle height when bouldering?

Height scares me, even if it doesn't always show. Sometimes I get terrified. In bouldering, if I'm not feeling it one day, I might give myself the task of downclimbing just to avoid taking a fall. Even if you know you have a great fall protection and nothing can really happen, if your mind isn't in it, you can't move forward. Especially since height completely changes your perception of the boulder, and this factor can put you in tricky situations. It's survival instinct: the mind controls a lot in this sport, and when it's fully present, it changes everything.

Are grades important to you?

Personally, I can climb a 7A all day and struggle on a 4C. I'm both free from grades and at the same time I still pay attention to them because they're inclusive. When you succeed on high grades, it speaks to everyone because you're placing yourself on a universal scale. If we tried grading based on feeling alone, I think we'd be surprised. Also, the higher the grade, the fewer holds there are and the more the beta becomes essential, which forces me to be very precise in selecting the boulders; otherwise, it's just impossible without a right hand.



FILM N°2

K2 Chasing Shadows

DIRECTORS
DAVID ARNAUD
AND HUGO CLOUZEAU

LENGTH : 66 MIN
ORIGINAL VERSION,
WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

Benjamin Védérines, one of the world's best alpinists, dreams of taking on the "savage mountain" (8611m, the second-highest peak in the world). But what does K2 truly represent for this accomplished climber : the pursuit of a new record, the shadow of past failures, or a deeply personal trial ? After a first attempt that ended in a serious accident, Benjamin returns with even greater determination to take on an audacious challenge: a one-day ascent of K2, without supplemental oxygen, followed by a descent with his paraglider. A gripping and thought-provoking film that explores the meaning of success and commitment in the realm of extreme altitude.



INTERVIEW

Athlete

Benjamin Védérines

What's your story with K2?

In 2022, I set off on my first expedition to the Himalayas. I had always dreamed of climbing a peak over 8,000 meters. I chose Broad Peak, which seemed like the right choice for that. The first attempt was really tough, but ten days later I managed to break the speed record and make the first-ever paraglider takeoff from the summit. When I landed on the glacier, I looked up and saw K2 standing right behind it. That's when I felt the urge to try a fast ascent on that neighboring mountain. It was a rushed climb that ended in a big scare, severe hypoxia, and ultimately, failure at 8,400 meters. That's why I wanted to go back, better prepared this time.

How did you prepare for this second ascent?

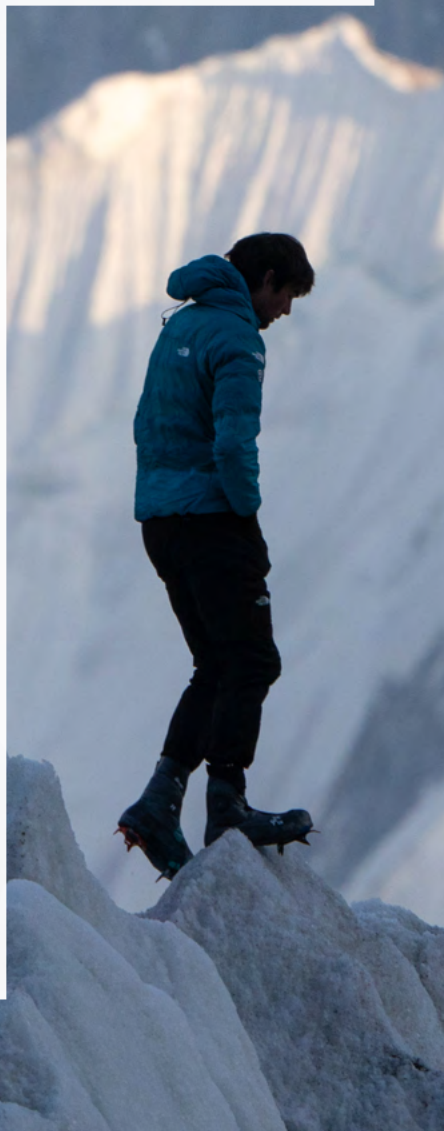
Any coach striving for excellence will tell you the same thing: you can't prepare physically without preparing mentally. They're two pillars. I started working on the mental side before the physical side because it takes longer to train your mind than your muscles. You need time to understand what's going on in your head, to find clear answers to what's holding you back. Everything was built around that. Without this preparation, I wouldn't have been able to set that record.

How did you plan your paraglider descent?

Two weeks before my attempt, I had climbed up to Camp 3 to drop off some gear: my paraglider wing, a down jacket, and gloves. The day before the departure, Seb went up to Camp 3 and called me on the radio to tell me my bag was gone. At first, I thought he was joking, but he kept insisting. My bag had been ripped open, and my wing had disappeared. We still don't know exactly what happened maybe birds, the wind, or more likely a team who thought the equipment had been left behind. My wing was a custom-made prototype, and we eventually found it torn and stuck in the ice. In that moment, I was crushed. I had taken risks to leave it there, and it all felt like it was for nothing.

And faced with that setback, how did you bounce back?

Something incredible happened. I had lent a backup wing, a bigger and heavier one, to an Italian friend, Tommy. By coincidence, he happened to be at Camp 3 with Seb right when I heard the bad news. When Tommy heard what just happened, he immediately said, "I'll give you back your wing." And Seb offered to take his jackets so I could travel light. I didn't want to accept at first, but my team in France told me, "Take their generosity and go for it." Thanks to them, I was able to make the climb and above all, the paraglider flight. Without their help, this dream would never have come true. Everything somehow fell into place for me to make it happen.



Looking back, how do you see this ascent today?

With time, I've really come to realize what I experienced. I feel grateful, to K2, to Pakistan, to the Karakoram, and to all the people who supported me. This expedition gave me a lot of strength and determination. It confirmed certain things within me and gave me confidence for what's next. Today, I no longer feel the same frustration I did back then. I've accepted what I accomplished, and I'm proud of it. I see this ascent as an important step that helped me move forward toward something new.

“
Without their help,
this dream
would never have
come true
”

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Better Up There

DIRECTOR
MATHIS DUMAS

LENGTH : 45 MIN
ORIGINAL VERSION,
WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

The mountains give us so much, yet they can take it all away in an instant. It's this duality that Leo Slemett's intimate and moving portrait, directed by Mathis Dumas, explores. From his childhood to the podiums of the Freeride World Tour, Leo's life as a freeride skiing star might seem perfectly mapped out. But no matter how motivated and determined he is to chase his dreams, it is ultimately the challenges he faces that shape his life. A powerful lesson in resilience and perseverance, shared by this exceptional skiing talent.



INTERVIEW

Athlete

Leo
Slemett

You joined the Freeride World Tour with your coach. Was it common in the scene to have a coach?

When I first joined the circuit, it wasn't common at all to have a coach. Nowadays, it's become commonplace, there are programs in almost every resort and valley. But ten years ago, it wasn't done. With Greg, my coach, we introduced something new. This approach allowed me to progress quickly while maintaining real human connection. I wasn't necessarily better than others, I was just doing things my own way.

How did you approach the legendary descent of Bec des Rosses in Verbier during the Freeride World Tour?

That race really sparked my passion. For me, Verbier is kind of the essence of freeride. I've never felt any particular stress there, unlike many other riders who see it as a somewhat mythical or intimidating mountain. I quickly "desacralised" it. I built my skiing around that face, adapted it to my style, and always tried to offer something different from one year to the next. The idea was to challenge myself, to become one with the mountain, almost to tame it.

How did this film project come about, and especially how did you decide to do something so personal?

I had wanted for a long time to tell a part of my story, not to talk about myself, but to pay tribute to certain people and to a somewhat unusual journey. It all started with a conversation with my friend, Mathis Dumas. He offered to give me the means to tell this story. At first, I hesitated, because I've always expressed myself through skiing, with my face covered, without really showing my emotions. Being in front of the camera was a big step. There was a first phase of production where the team took a bit of a step back. They had about ten hours of interviews and needed time to digest everything before presenting me with a first draft. When I saw it, the main thread worked for me, but not the structure or the pieces of the puzzle they had chosen to illustrate the story. That's when the project really took on another dimension, because it was originally supposed to be released in fall 2024, but in the end it's only coming out now. I wasn't ready to approve a version that I didn't fully recognize myself.

“ This film is a bit like a book :
a chapter
of my life ”

Did you have any particular expectations for this film?

Honestly, no. This film is a bit like a book : a chapter of my life, put into images. It has its own strength because it shows things we don't always talk about. It simply helped me put words, to give images to things that can sometimes be heavy to carry. It's not a way of turning the page, but rather a way of dealing what's part of me. And it's true that through this story, I realized it could also speak to others, resonate with their own experiences.

In the film, you mention a new goal : becoming a guide. Is that still the plan?

Yes, absolutely. It wasn't a childhood dream, it came over time, from spending so many days in the mountains. Friends who are guides made me realize that I had already ticked off much of the necessary requirements without even noticing. So I decided to go for it, almost like a new challenge, especially as competition was starting to lose its meaning for me. What I love about this job is that you never repeat the same run, you never take the same lift. Every day is different, every summit, every snow condition. And above all, you share it with others. It's a new way to pass on knowledge, to guide, and in a way, to continue living my passion differently.



Zahir

DIRECTOR
JULIEN NADIRAS

LENGTH : 30 MIN
ORIGINAL VERSION,
WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

Join the powerhouse duo of Katherine Choong and Eline Le Menestrel as they take on one of the toughest big wall routes in the Swiss Alps : Zahir. The challenge is already sky-high (the route features several pitches graded 8a and 8b), they raise the bar even higher by committing to travel only with bikes. An ambitious project that these two climbers tackle with music in their ears and smiles on their faces. Inspiration for the upcoming generations !



INTERVIEW

Athlete

Katherine
Choong

You competed in a lot of competitions before fully focusing on climbing outdoors. What did you enjoy about them?

I think what I really enjoyed was being able to measure myself against others. There was something thrilling about having to perform at a specific moment on a given route. It's a huge pressure, of course, but also an incredible motivator: giving everything, right there, right then. I've always had this thing where pressure pushes me to go beyond myself. And competitions were also a chance to travel, see the world, and meet other climbers who shared the same ambitions and dreams. Later, I naturally turned to outdoor climbing with specific goals in mind, including the 9a grade, which few women had achieved, and none from Switzerland. After completing two 9a's, I started looking for challenges on big walls.

The film Zahir shows your interest in big walls. In that case, how important is the choice of your climbing partner?

It's crucial. On a big wall, you're really isolated, and everything feels more intense: the approach hike, the exposure, the fear... You have to be able to completely rely on your partner, both technically and personally. The person has to be there to support you, not not to drag you down. It's a true relationship of trust. You share everything, intense emotions, moments of doubt, and above all, you have to reach the summit together. It's not like solo climbing, where everyone climbs their own line. On a big wall, you move with a rope between you, pitch by pitch, so communication has to be direct, honest, but also caring.

What does it bring to have a female duo?

I mostly encountered this all-female context in competitions. But even when we helped each other, there was always a bit of rivalry since the goal was to go further than the other. In my two big wall experiences with only women, it was completely different, there was nothing but kindness and support. I particularly felt this support with Eline in Zahir, which was a very difficult route where the pressure stayed until the very end. Even though she didn't complete the climb herself, she was fully there for me, always positive, motivating me when I was exhausted, never showing any frustration. Seeing her smile at each belay gave me a boost of energy. And sharing the summit together after all that was an incredibly powerful moment.

You used sustainable mobility to reach Zahir. What did that bring to the experience?

It was Eline's condition for attempting Zahir. It's a route I really wanted to climb, and she was the ideal partner, so I knew she would be up for it. She told me, "Okay, but we go by bike." I agreed, and in the end, it completely changed the experience. You become aware of every kilometer you travel, much more than if you went by car. Every movement feels concrete, physical, and adds a different dimension to the adventure. On top of that, people are much more attentive and kind. They ask questions, want to help, and it creates more contact and interaction. Whether it's compassion or just curiosity, it really enriches the journey.

“ You fall 99 % of the time, and it's precisely that doubt and uncertainty that make the challenge exciting ”



What is the biggest challenge of this route?

The first real challenge is the approach hike. It's a good two hours, very steep and exposed. You can't afford to fall, but it's slippery, often wet, with falling rocks. That alone sets the tone. Then the key pitch, the 8B+, is really something. It's not a gift at all, it's a series of tiny razor-sharp holds, one after the other, with no "easy" moves. It took us four or five days just to get to the belay on that pitch. We really doubted ourselves and even wondered if we should change plans. Plus, you can only do one or two attempts per day at most, after that you have no skin left on your fingers. So you have to rest a lot, which makes progress slow. And even after the 8B+, the top section remains intense. On paper it's "just" 7A or 7B, but in reality, you're already exhausted, so making it all the way to the summit is extreme.

Climbing involves a lot of failure, how do you deal with that feeling?

Honestly, it's never easy. I'd say that time and patience are what help you step back. For example, there's a big wall in Switzerland called Fly that I tried in 2023, and I fell right at the top, just a few meters from the summit, which was really frustrating. At the time, all I saw was failure. But over time, and when reviewing footage of that attempt for a film, I realized it was also a valuable learning experience. Failure is part of climbing; you fail 99 % of the time, and it's precisely that doubt and uncertainty that make the challenge exciting.

INTERVIEW AT THE JANNU BASE CAMP WITH BENJAMIN VÉDRINES AND NICOLAS JEAN

What is your goal for this expedition?

Our goal is to climb the Northeast face of Jannu, a huge summit at 7,468 meters. The face is about 2,300 meters of vertical gain, with very steep sections, sometimes over 90 degrees, and a crux at 7,000 meters that doesn't look easy at all. We want to attempt it in alpine style, meaning no fixed ropes, no external assistance, and no oxygen. We're planning only two bivouacs: probably the first around 6,300 meters and the second between 6,800 and 7,100, depending on our pace. The idea would be to make the round trip in three days: the first day for the lower section, the second for the heart of the face, and the third to finish the ascent and descend completely. It's a very ambitious project, but exactly the kind of challenge we're looking for: technical, pure, fast, in true alpine style.

How do you experience this expedition compared to K2?

I see this expedition as more uncertain and mentally demanding than K2. Technically, it's also more difficult, especially because we're climbing a face that is still very little explored, with far less data on weather and snow and ice conditions. The spirit of this project is truly that of pure exploration, (mountaineering) in its rawest form: low-profile, very authentic, close to what made us dream when we were young. Opening a new route on a summit like this requires a lot of experience, boldness, and patience, and involves more uncertainties than standard climbs. It's this intensity, this element of the unknown, and this pursuit of purity that make the expedition so meaningful for us as mountaineers.




Ice cold alpine starts

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 Ben Tibbets: Mont Blanc du Tacul

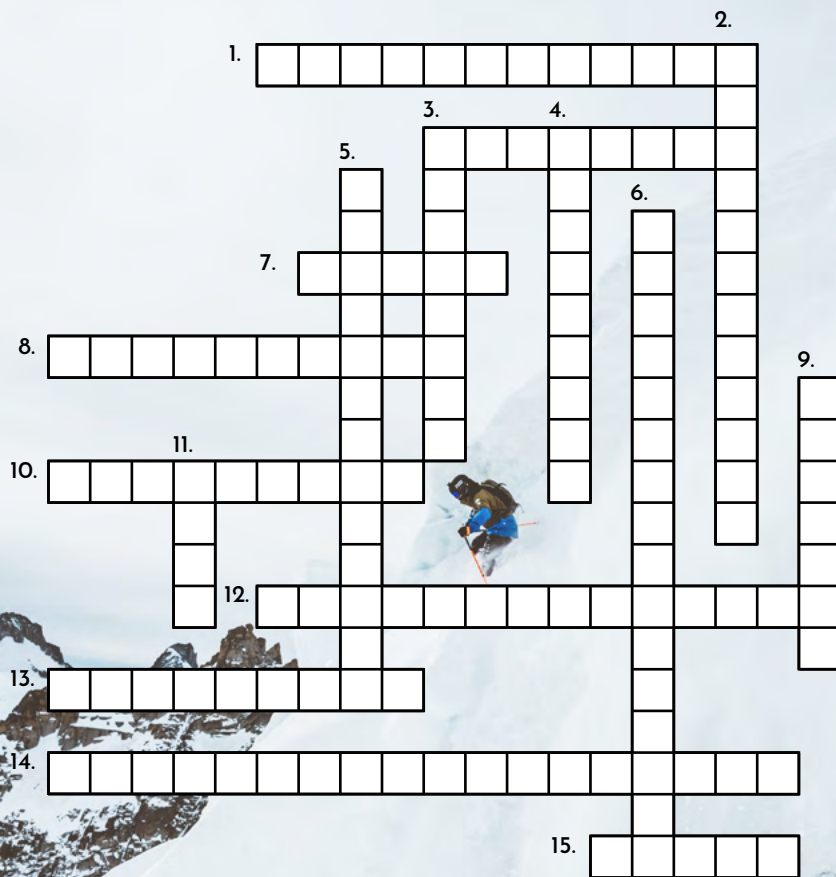
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CROSSWORD



HORIZONTAL

1. British climber and Olympic gold medalist in sport climbing at the Paris 2024 Games
3. Discipline that emerged in the 1980s, consisting of walking on a tensioned strap high above the ground
7. 7,468 m peak where Benjamin Védérines and Nicolas Jean are attempting to open a new route
8. Suspended platform fixed to a wall, allowing climbers to spend the night there
10. Personal protective equipment used to prevent a climber from falling while moving on a rope
12. Swiss mountain known for hosting an iconic Freeride World Tour event
13. Athlete who crossed the finish line in 19h 18min 58s at the 2025 UTMB
14. Triple UTMB champion trail runner
15. Narrow ridge formed by the intersection of two steep slopes or by rock erosion

VERTICAL

2. Mix of skiing and paragliding used to descend steep slopes quickly
3. Couloir on the north face of Everest skied on October 15, 2025, by Jim Morrison
4. Iconic peak that inspired The North Face brand logo
5. Red granite cathedral of the Mont-Blanc massif, prized by climbers for its pure rock routes
6. Athlete who set the record for the Mont-Blanc ski round trip in 4h 43min 24s
9. 6,638 m Tibetan peak considered sacred by several religions for millennia
11. Most difficult section of a climbing route

Horizontal : 1. Toby Roberts / 3. Highline
7. Janu / 8. Portledge / 10. Quickdraw
12. Bec des Rosses / 13. Tom Evans
14. Courtney Dauwalter / 15. Ridge Vertical :
2. Speedriding / 3. Hornbein / 4. Half Dome
5. Grand Capucin / 6. William Boffelli
9. Kailash / 11. Crux

FUN FACTS

FIRST

On September 23, 2025, Polish mountaineer Andrzej Bargiel became the first person to ski down Mount Everest from the summit all the way to the valley, without oxygen.

6h 54min 47s

The new women's speed record for climbing Mont Blanc, set by Elise Poncet in May 2025. She broke Hillary Gerardi's previous record of 7h 25min 28s.

72

The number of U.S. summits over 4,000 meters climbed by Kilian Jornet in just 31 days, totaling 5,145 km and 123,000 m of elevation gain.



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