

50

FIFTY YEARS OF
ADVENTURE

CICERONE





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Cover photo:
Hikers return to Rifugio Locatelli as the Milky Way
hangs above the Tre Cime (James Rushforth)

Endpaper photo credit: Jonathan Williams

Our thanks to Duncan Unsworth for supplying
the photos of Walt and Dorothy Unsworth, and
Brian and Aileen Evans for the photos of their
younger selves.

See page 156 for photo credits and captions not
mentioned in the text.



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An appreciation

For fifty years, Cicerone have sought to help adventurers have a great and safe experience, be it walking, trekking, climbing, mountaineering, cycling, running or something even more intrepid. This book is an insight into those years, and the adventures along the way. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we have enjoyed making it.

Our thanks and a big shout-out to our contributing authors – without you it would not have been possible to make this book. You have brought together an interesting – eclectic even – group of outdoor adventures and experiences, from the challenging to the contemplative, from survival experiences to journeys of self-discovery, from the Thames valley to the summit of K2. As ever, you have done a great job.

This is a good place for us to thank all Cicerone authors for their amazing efforts over many years. Creating a great guide is undoubtedly a challenge – it requires knowledge and love of an area, a talent for choosing routes, writing, photographic, cartographic and increasingly digital skills, the ability to bring it all together, for the author's personality to shine through, to be authoritative yet friendly, to be encouraging but careful. The author is the parent of a guide; as the publisher we stand as guardians of the project and to be successful the two must work together in harmony.

Authors are the foundation of any successful publisher, but many others play their part – the office team of editors, designers, sales and marketing, finance and systems, our copyeditors, freelance designers, partners in mapping, digital work, printing, distribution, and sales. It's a team effort and it is a great team. There hasn't been space to mention everyone who has contributed, who wished to write articles, and who has made a great contribution to Cicerone over the years. For those left out, we can only apologise and promise to do better in another fifty years!

We would like to finish with a few personal words. Verity Russo and Caroline Draper have managed to fit this project in around their already busy editorial and design work. Pat Dunn edited with her usual skill. Brian and Aileen Evans as co-founders of Cicerone have been a fount of knowledge on the early days following the deaths of Walt and Dorothy Unsworth in the last 18 months.

And finally, our thanks to Kev Reynolds for helping bring it all together, for taking on the role of contacting authors, reviewing contributions and giving the project a shape. But even more, Kev, our thanks for your company on treks, and your wisdom and friendship over many years.

Jonathan and Lesley Williams

◀ Jitchu Drake (c.6800m), climbed in 1988 by its south face before a ban was imposed on all mountaineering in Bhutan (photo: Bart Jordans)

Prologue

We are sitting outside the Cabane du Mont-Fort high above Verbier, looking out at the sunset over the Combin range with Mont Blanc behind. Dinner is coming soon and the trekkers' thoughts have moved on from today's grinding 1650m climb to tomorrow's route over the wild and remote Grand Désert. The question goes out: 'What does Kev say?' and half a dozen copies of the little blue guidebook appear and are studied. Of course, most of the trekkers have read the book several times, but this is the decision point – whether to take the high path over the Col de la Chaux with the chance of late snow, or the slightly lower Sentier des Chamois with spectacular views of the Combin and the long drop to Val de Bagnes. Plans are made, dinner is served, beers are exchanged for wine, and conversation flows in several languages.

The scene is played out wherever we go: in the Dolomites, the AV2 trekkers at Rifugio Pisciadù are asking 'What does Gillian say?'; the GR20 trekkers at Ascu Stagnu in Corsica are asking 'What does Paddy say?'; the Munroists at the Killin B&B are studying Steve's book or Ronald's, while the West Highland Way walkers in Rowardennan ask what Terry says. Much the same scene happens from the Alps to the Canaries, from Cornwall to the north of Scotland, from Patagonia to the Rockies. Grades are dissected, times and distances computed and checked, the ups and downs investigated, the maps explored for critical turns, the photographs assessed for dodgy terrain. Every word, every comma, matters.

This is what it is all about, why the team works so hard on the guides. The guide truly comes alive where, to borrow from William Blake, 'men [and women] and mountains meet'. We reflect on the responsibility of helping so many adventurers achieve their hills, treks and trips, and we feel the pleasure of helping them do so. In the feedback we receive from walkers and trekkers, we see how every aspect of our craft must play its part, how the exactitude and quality of our authors' work and of our own work must come together perfectly; we see the importance

of the highest editorial standards and great design, the best maps and photographs, the constant effort to stay as up to date as possible.

Then we look deeper and see more. We see the importance of finding inspiring new places, ranges and routes; the importance of the author's love and passion and desire to communicate it, which is the foundation of all our work; the importance of how we market and present our guides; the importance of our reputation – our brand, if you like. We look deeper and see the importance of working with great people, of training the team and of their learning; the importance of how we look after customers and how we answer the phone, how we handle a sales visit, how we write a blog, conduct an interview, build a website.

We see the relationships with our partners, our distributors, printers, copy-editors, sales teams. We see the choice of paper, the perfection of the printing, we see the order turnaround times, the delivery accuracy, the quality of the packaging. Deeper still, we see the importance of technology, of managing cash, of good planning, of our daily processes and interactions, of running the business.

And especially we see how the integrity and passion of the team and of our authors, the ideas and relationships, combine with the day-to-day business and hard work to help walkers have days to remember with pleasure. And we reflect on how fortunate we have been to work with such great people for all these years.

'What does Kev say?' In those few words spoken high in the Swiss Alps, the whole of Cicerone is laid bare to us and we see how everything works together – all the moving parts we've strived to perfect and the people we've worked with for a good part of a generation.

Are we proud? Maybe just a little. Are we nervous about our responsibilities? Absolutely. Do we want to keep on doing it better? Definitely.

Jonathan and Lesley Williams



- ▲ Chilled feet were guaranteed when crossing a stream of snowmelt above Berghaus Vereina
- ▲ Restoring life to weary legs after the steep descent to Alp Sardasca (both photos above in the Silvretta by Kev Reynolds)
- On a very rugged link route from Grotelle to the Brèche de Capitellu on Corsica's GR20 (photo: Paddy Dillon)

