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Classic Climbs in the Caucasus

Friedrich Bender

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The Caucasus Range, east of the Black Sea on the boundary between Europe and Asia, contains fourteen of the highest mountains in Europe - all higher than Mont Blanc. With over one hundred peaks and tops above 400m, there is unlimited interest for alpinists with principal peaks including Elbrus, Shkhara, Dych-Tau, Koshtan-Tau, Kazbek and the lower but charismatic Ushba. British climbers with their Swiss guides conducted the initial exploration during the second half of the nineteenth century. In the years before and after the First World War continental mountaineers were the driving force but from the late thirties onwards Soviet climbers contributed the bulk of activity

In this new selected guide Friedrich Bender has chosen eighty of the finest routes from his five definitive guides. The climbing is much like the Alps but generally pitched at a higher altitude with longer itineraries. The mountains offer a full range of difficulty and type with high-altitude excursions on snow up peaks Elbrus and Kazbek, classic ridge traverses, and grandes courses on rock and ice on challenging peaks like Ushba, Pik Shchurovsky, Shkhelda and those of the Bezingi Wall. The Caucasus is now ripe for rediscovery by western climbers seeking an alternative to the overcrowded Alps. The range still offers the pioneering quality of the Alps before the development of huts and cable-ways. The guide, illustrated with many maps, topos and photographs, gives information on the best approaches, bivouac sites, character of peaks and difficulty of ascents. It is the first source of detailed mountaineering information to be published in English for many years.

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