



Costa Blanca Climbing

by Dave Watson

For years now many climbers have been drawn to sunnier and warmer climates of southern Europe. So tempting is the variety of routes together with readily available guidebooks and access to cheap accommodation, that occasionally even the odd gritstone luddite is tempted off their natural wet and windy Peak District outcrops. And so it was in the Spring of 2009 that four plucky HMC'ers packed their climbing gear and suntan lotion and headed off to Costa Blanca.



Flights from Stanstead to Alicante were £80.00 (approx) return and despite the drop in the exchange rate car hire and villa accommodation was also still pretty reasonable. A quick brain shift to driving on the 'wrong side of the road' and you're off. We knew roughly where we were headed and were anxious to find the villa. Location 10/10. We didn't know it at the time but we're 20 metres from a German bar - curried sausage and chips all round! A couple of bottles of wine to takeaway and we're in our new home for the week.

Not wanting to waste any time, but failing to appreciate the one hour time difference and the clocks going forward as well, the next day we're up at the crack of midday. "To the nearest crag" we cry; and so it's off to Toix, a 10 minute drive from Calpe. Just in time for few routes before it started to rain. Yes. Rain. And in Spain it falls mainly where



(Home Sweet Home)

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you are climbing. A quick retreat to the car and back to the villa. An inauspicious beginning. Tomorrow will be better.

Lack of alarm clocks together with a plentiful supply of bourbon the night before means it's another late start. Phil & I manage a couple of routes before the rain came in and fall back to the car before getting too wet. Barry & Olivia aren't so lucky and appear like drowned rats about an hour or so later. They head back to the villa for a change of clothes whilst Phil and I attempt another route. We shouldn't have bothered. We then get caught in the rain and this time there's no car to retreat to. We start walking back and are picked up on the roadside by the newly dried couple. It's a sombre mood back in the villa as we all hope that our luck with the weather improves. We make plan to set our alarms and drive to Guadalest tomorrow.

Guadalest is a relatively new area in the guide is available as new download from the Rockfax website. As we wind our way through 1000's of acres of orange groves in the glorious morning sunshine things are looking up. The town itself is lovely; small cafes, a castle, fantastic views our eyes eagerly scanning for the routes we've seen in the topos. Instinct leads us to a rubbish dump at the base of the castle; Chris Craggs should be a photographer for an estate agent. Well, at least the sun is shining so off we start. Phil had an early fall which seemed to help him find his rock legs and he carried on leading some of his best climbs well into the early evening. As for me, I wouldn't go back. I may be being unkind but I'd happily drive for a while longer to not climb in a dump.

Dear Member

The last few weeks we've had some beautiful sunny weather and I hope you've found time to enjoy the hills. The Club made the most of the May Bank Holidays walking and climbing in Cadair Idris in the early Bank Holiday and climbing the fine cliffs of Pembroke in the late Bank Holiday. Meets to look forward to are the family weekend at Phasels Wood and the Swiss Alps trip in July.

Happy Mountaineering

Pete

Chairman@thehmc.co.uk



However the worst of the weather is behind us and the next day sees us climbing at Marin; a double 'cocks combed' outcrop in the middle of nowhere. We have the place to ourselves and spread out over the luscious rock. Phil excelled himself on a tough 6a and managed to go 'off route' over the course of the 10m climb (not knowingly of course!). I wanted to retry a route I'd rested on nearly every bolt the year before

-Descoco Tension (6b). As I started the route I tried as much as possible to focus on using technique rather than thuggery as I knew I had to preserve my strength for the steep and overhanging final sections. It was one of those routes that sucker you in as each progressive move gets more difficult. The first easy half fell away underneath me but the first really steep section leads you up rightwards to much more overhanging and strenuous positions with no rests. My previous cool ("who are you kidding"-Phil) quickly fell apart and all my desperate drop-kneeing and flagging were out of desperation rather than use of good technique; it was no use, I was off. Damn, I only had about 3metres to go, albeit the hardest part of the climb. After about 3 or 4 failed attempts to make the last move I was resolved to thread some tatt and 'ab off'.

"I'll give it one last go", I shouted down to Phil, aware of his patience in my present obsession but not wanting to come off until finished. Deep breath- left foot up on a high smear, take weight on arms, match feet, left foot higher, right foot moves under me, launch upwards, catch a wet one finger smeary pocket, wide reach for right hand side-pull. Oh no, I'm off again. A desperate lunge with my left arm again for the chain. Got it; just. Grab again for a better grip of the chain and haul myself up to the lower off, relieved I clip in and lower off. Maybe I'll do it clean next year. For now I'm resigned to shuffling back to Barry & Olivia and driving back to the villa. In the evening we make one of the best decisions of the trip- 'let's go to Montesa'.

Maybe it was the weather, the location, the routes or the company; but this place on this day was great. We were spoilt for choice as Montesa has lots of different outcrops of rock with different aspects and styles, all of them deserted and begging to be climbed. Phil was still going like a little train at the end of the day and managed a great 6b lead as his last climb of the day. I was so tired I could barely get off the ground! When we all regrouped we agreed that we'd all had the best day of the trip and this place was

definitely going to be revisited by us. We left, tired, elated sun-burnt and wanting more; exactly what climbing in Spain is all about.

Spain is also about 'wee beasties' and the next day Barry and I were suffering from some nasty bites. My hand ballooned up like in a Tom & Jerry cartoon.

Nurse Olivia administered the Piriton. We drove to another new area for us; Echo Valley, Spain's answer to Yosemite. It was in these beautiful surroundings that nurse Olivia administered some more Piriton and I went a little 'off my head'. Fortunately I recognised that it was too dangerous for me to climb, I'd just have to stick with belaying Phil. He didn't seem to mind! In fact he and Barry tried two ridiculously hard routes next to each other. Several times hanging next to each other on their respective routes comparing how outrageous their climbs were. At one point Phil missed a clip after drawing up so much rope that when he shouted "take" I just ran off into the road nearly taking him with me! I can't remember much else- I was spaced.

And so the final day came and the owner was as surprised as we were to be reminding us that we had to be out of the villa by 10 o'clock. 30 minutes later we're all in the car and wandering what to do with our last morning.

A quick walk up the Penon and back, a coffee and a cake and that was it, we're headed back to the airport. Over all too soon.



Neal Jobling's 40th

On the 3rd of April this year myself, Tim Gledhill, Adrian Jones and a few climbers from the Castle flew out to Portugal to celebrate Neal Jobling's 40th Birthday. We climbed in an area called Rocha De Pena.

Neal's aim for the weekend was to redpoint a climb called Carpe Diem (F6c). We did plenty of climbs in the area in glorious sunshine. On Neal's actual Birthday, on the Monday, his friends John and Ellie dressed him up in a blue spandex suit and wig, similar to the guys in the 118 advert, and made him climb Elixr Afrodisiaco (F6b) as per the picture below. This was great fun to watch. We also made Neal do ten things that he had never experienced in his life before, such as climbing in the blue suit, putting his head in an owl's nest, setting fire to himself and running naked into the sea. He was also locked in the fridge for a while and drank a cup of tea made from underpants (that was the boys' idea).

The villa we hired was fantastic sleeping ten people and had a pool, lemon tree and almond tree.

A fantastic five day trip with great weather, great company and fantastic climbs. The crags were empty as we only saw three other people climbing over the whole weekend.

From all your friends Neal, thanks, and let's hope you have many more celebrations. Linda



Alpine starts are the worst...

Practical advice for the Alps? from Phil Whitehurst

I stumbled into consciousness. The beeps of my watch told me it was 12.30am. Struggling to turn the alarm off. Fumbling for the headtorch. Trying to fold the blankets. Almost falling off the top bunk in my attempts to locate the foot posts. A thud as I found the floor. Too much noise. Contact lenses, gritty in bleary half-open eyes. I am not a morning person. Alpine starts are the worst.

Four of us crept from the room. Downstairs we found our breakfast. Bread, jams, and cheeses, to be washed down with flasks of hot sugary tea. The whole scene was lit by flickering candlelight. The hut guardian wisely slept on. After all too brief a time it was time to get going. We headed into the outer sanctum of the hut. Boots, gaiters were put on. Layers adjusted. Ice axes lashed to rucksacks, walking poles extended, head torches to blind each other with, rucksacks shouldered.

At 3.20am we left the hut into the cool night air. Initially we descended the moraine, following the red paint dashes, to reach the glacier below. Here it was possible to continue along the moraine or join the glacier. We elected for the moraine as leaping across crevasses in the dark is not a sport with many winners. After 40 minutes we reached a snow

slope leading up to a waterfall. Energy supply hadn't matched demand yet. I was lagging behind the others. The slope had frozen solid during the night. We cut small steps with our axes and used poles for stability to avoid the delay in putting crampons on. There were red arrows painted directly up the waterfall. On our 2 previous visits we'd climbed the rock ledges over to the right and then worked back left.

The wet rock seem-

ingly too slippery to risk tumbling onto the slope below. Our two friends led on and found a thin cord, topped with a chain, anchored in the rock. This enabled us to ascend the waterfall directly.

We followed a faint path amongst the rocks, still guided by the red paint dashes. After the ruins of an old hut we traversed a few steep

snow slopes that fell away to the glacier below. Frozen footsteps from the previous day greatly increased security. After ascending a few more rock ledges we rejoined the glacier at 2840m. It was now 5.10am, light enough to turn our torches off. Rope, prussic loops, harnesses, helmets, crampons, and ice axes. A couple of ice screws each for crevasse rescue. I rapidly cooled whilst we were stationary and waved my arms about in a pathetic attempt to warm up. We roped up, taking coils, and left 30m of rope between us.

We started up the glacier, traversing beneath a large rock island. The slopes grew steeper beyond. Seracs tumbled from the col - a few hundred metres above. The first of the sunrays struck the south faces of the peaks behind us. It was a beautiful sight.

We weaved our way through the crevasses. Still in the shade, the snow bridges were firm and solid. A wide crevasse, with an awkward upward step, marked the start of the final steep slopes leading to the col. I leant across and embedded my axe firmly on the other side, before kicking my crampons in and pulling over. I moved higher and got a firm stance before my partner negotiated the crevasse. We zigzagged up through fresh snow; grateful that the trail had been broken by others. The slope required a mix of front pointing and side-stepping. The latter provided relief to the calf muscles.

We reached the col, 3200m at 7.49am. The sun now hit us. Stopping we removed jackets. I also added a couple more ice screws, hexes, and a few runners to my harness. We decided to continue using just 1 rope. There was a crevasse / bergschrund running the length of a snow / ice slope where it met the glacier. In the middle was a narrow snow bridge. We aimed for that. My axe planted cleanly and easily into the slope above whilst the firm snow provided a solid platform for front pointing. Swing, kick, kick, swing. A steady hypnotic rhythm developed. A short steeper section. First ice screws placed, runner added, rope clipped,

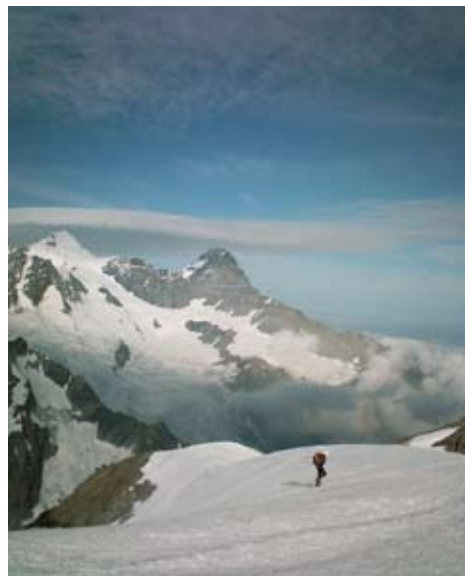
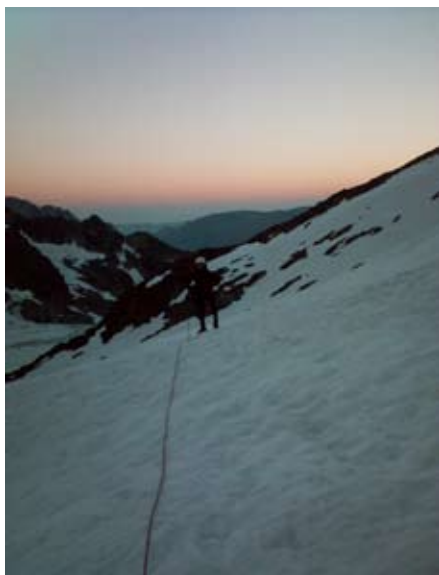
moving on, moving together, making progress..

Looking down as my rope partner followed up, the glacier far below. Looking up, working out our line of ascent. Looking at my altimeter to determine our progress and work out where we needed to leave the snow slope and join the rocks. Gazing at the surrounding 4000m peaks in the early morning light; whilst my partner removed an ice screw. My heart beat fast in my chest, my lungs breathed deep the

crisp and rarefied alpine air. My entire focus was upon this arena. The mountains were silent and beautiful. Where they ended and I began I cannot recall. Happy seemed unworthy in describing how I felt. I was in another state of consciousness.

Alpine starts may be the worst but my God the Alpine experience is the best.

Phil



New member perspective

Hugo Ledo

Maybe most of club members won't know who I am as I have only joined the club in January and been to a couple of meets. And how did it all start? Having arrived to the UK in the end of September 2007 I started looking for ways to pursue my hobbies.

At the University I met other people also interested in walking and climbing. That led to a trip to the Lake District and some climbing at the de Havilland wall. Not much but time isn't much either.

When the one in the group who used to come climbing more often left the UK I was left without a partner. The University's climbing club could be an option but they are limited to climbing and nothing else. I had seen the HMC flyer at the de Havilland wall and browsed through the website a couple of times and I attracted to the idea of joining what appeared to be a large active group with diversified interests. So I decided to wait for the beginning of the new year and then, after exchanging a couple of

e-mails with Leigh, I was on my way to the pub on a Tuesday evening where I met a bunch of members. Some time later I went on my first meet to Borrowdale. This allowed me to meet other members and to get to know them better which hadn't been easy to do at the pub (because they were too drunk, obviously). I enjoyed that weekend very much and everything went smoothly, the car trip, the stay at the hut, the activities...

So far I have also been to the climbing wall with other club members, to Phasels Wood and, recently, to the Cadir Idris meet.

From what I have seen the club has very knowledgeable and active members, offers several and varied meets throughout the year and also enables members to easily arrange for their own activities. As a new member I have felt welcome and support-

ed so thank you to those who contributed to that and if you are thinking of joining, think no more and go for it!



Pictures from February 2009, Borrowdale

Members Photo Gallery

An HMC Wedding! Geoff Sharpe and Sophia Mavrommatis



Dave Hall, Member of the Year no less!, ascending Clach Glas, Skye, also in picture, Warwick Dobson.

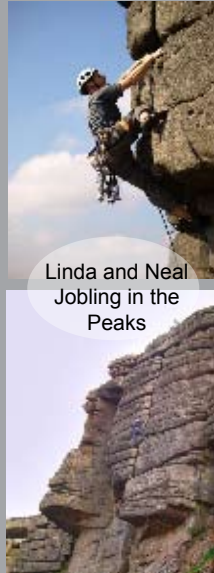


Gary Bebb, Jenny Ritchie, Sarah Dormer, on the way to Stanage End for climbing lessons!





Jenny, Nick and Kate Elizabeth
born 5:32pm 22nd May
- 3.5kg looking very proud,
congratulations!



Linda and Neal
Jobling in the
Peaks



Chairman enjoys Annual Dinner a bit too much



Eddie 'pantsman' Cornell



Phil R

Jacqui Deakin on top of Mount Olympus, Greece.



Send pics to
crux@thehmc.
co.uk



If Carling did Campsites, Crux think they'd be like this one
(at the back of the Pub) Can you guess which Pub?



Gary shows how to drink beer, and
avoid midges at the same time.



Paul D and Daughter Hannah nr Tryffan



HMC at Geoff Sharpes Wedding, Why has Geoff got a number on him, was he a raffle prize?

I've been interested in climbing for some time, joining this club has given me the opportunity to go outdoors. And what a start!

The place was Crag y Clipiau (Crag (of) the Cliffs) and I had paired up with Mark Roberts.

As I'm not a very good climber I wanted something easy for my first time but Mark insisted in a 3 pitch Hard Severe 37 m climb (Usher's Dilemma) assuring me it would be fine. And in fact it was. After an initial briefing on the use of half ropes and other procedures which were all new to me Mark started to lead while I feared for his life for having only me as his safety. But all went well and I enjoyed every aspect of the climb very much (not that much the scary descent in climbing shoes over steep terrain and slippery grass).

As first climb had gone smoothly Mark wanted something harder. We went for a 2 pitch Very Severe 33 m climb (Double Crisis) which had its second pitch described as "brutal" in the guide book.



I struggled, at first fighting with a stuck nut and then with a move in a place with few holds. I was still only 5 m from the ground and I was tired and with numb fingertips which wouldn't even let me feel what I was holding on to. Mark helped by holding the rope tight so that I could rest while thinking of how to get enough grip to pull myself up. The rest of that first pitch was uneventful, sometimes easier, other times harder, some gear not wanting to come loose and me almost running out of gear loop space to clip everything Mark was leaving along the way but I kept going until I reached the first ledge at twice the height of the Hatfield wall.

After securing myself Mark started the last pitch. It was only about 6m but it was smooth walls practically no holds, and slightly overhanging. The only feature that we could use was a vertical crack. Again Mark started but he wasn't going anywhere. It was hard to climb and place gear, I started thinking how the hell we would get out of there! But slowly Mark was going up and eventually he got to the top. A relief, but I was next!

The crack was too wide to jam my hands or feet properly and we were most of the time off-balance. Slowly I was going up, getting closer to the top. Near the end I had to jam my whole body into the crack and then pull up to get out of the crack without using my feet, then higher, jamming my foot as high in the narrowing crack and finally use it to get to the top. That last squeeze described by Mark as "being born again"....When are we climbing again?!

Mount Toubkal In Winter

Last December I booked myself on a 9 days trek with KE Adventures on a climb up Mount Toubkal in Morocco. I had a really great time and here is a rundown of my days:-

Day one – Flew to Marrakech where I met the rest of the group and had a traditional Moroccan meal. Booked into local hotel.

Day two – Morning sightseeing in Marrakech at the Djemaa-el-Fna and souks. After lunch we drive to Imlil and make the short walk to the start point of our trek at Aremd (1900 m).

Day Three – Acclimatisation day around the Imlil valley. We climb up to Tizi Mzik (2500m) and then up to the summit of Jebel Tasghimount (2664m)

Day four – We ascend to the shrine at Sidi Chamharouch. The snow has fallen over night and we have to wear our crampon. We climb our ascent to reaching the Neltner Refuge staying at 3027m for three nights.

Day five – We stay go out and climb Tizi n Ouuanoumss (3800m)

Day six – We attempt to summit Mt Toubkal but our local guide Rushid says it's too dangerous re heavy winds and poor visibility, so we turn back to have a lazy day reading at the refuge.

Day seven – We rise at 5.00am to check the weather, it's clear, we head out at 6.00am and reach the summit of 4067m in fantastic conditions, it's really sunny and clear. A fantastic sense of achievement. In the afternoon we go back to the refuge for lunch and then decent down to Imlil reaching there at 6.30pm. Very tired.

Day eight - Back to Marrakech and Hotel for a decent shower and then off for lunch followed by a Moroccan Haman and massage.

Day nine - A quick look round Marrakech and then fly home.



by Linda Powell

Club News



From the Forum, <http://www.thehmc.co.uk/forum>

In Climbing > **Pembroke Fall**
Wavey Davey, Lead Climber, 394 Posts

Posted - Jun 2009. In case some of you didn't know I thought I'd give you an update to the Pembroke incident.

I was indeed lucky to walk away

from the incident and be back in the pub that

evening, even more so when you consider that I had actually broken my neck.

Further medical checks have disclosed that I broke the base of my skull and fractured my 1st vertebrae (impact from initial fall), as well as having a slipped/swollen 5th vertebrae (causing numbness and pain in my arm). I will be back, but not for a while.

My thanks to my friends (you know who you are, even if you daren't admit it in public!) who have visited me or sent well wishes since. Davey Wavey



Fancy a Climbing Course

The Club is currently applying for funding from the BMC for instruction, it's hoped this would be in the form of outdoor climbing for beginners and would be provided at a meet. If you have ideas or preferences about this contact Pete.



Environmental Policy?

At regional BMC meetings talk has been about environmental policies, We're considering whether to have one, if you have any ideas contact Pete, for starters we've got;

- Car share as much as possible when going on meets
- Set up a recycling scheme for old gear with local stores
- Recycle old committee members?
- Patagonia have a recycling scheme for old fleeces / clothes so send them to patagonia via Countryside as they are a Patagonia retailer.

Annual Dinner 2009

In March the club celebrated it's Annual Dinner at the Dalesbridge Centre, North Yorks. 16 members attended enjoying walking and mountain biking.

A number of walking parties submitted 1 to 2 'Three Peaks', Pen-y-ghent (694m), Whernside (736m) and Ingleborough (723m).

Gary, Phil, Paul, Jenny, Kevin and Pete went mountain biking on the Saturday. After watching Phil and Paul bike through a river, Pete and Gary tried racing each other. Unfortunately Pete hit a large rock and went over the handlebars into the water and was soaked through! Go to http://www.thehmc.co.uk/Forum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=279 for video evidence.

In the evening the club members donned DJs and party frocks for an enjoyable three course meal. The Chairman gave his speech and awarded the Member of the Year award to Dave Hall. Dave has been a member for years and has a massive enthusiasm for walking and climbing. He is always willing to take new members climbing and show them the ropes. Dave organises an annual trip to Skye and organised the Paddy Buckley challenge in June. A well deserved winner. Below are a few of the comments from our club members taken from the Forum: http://www.thehmc.co.uk/Forum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=280

"Congratulations Dave" – Wavey Davey

"Congratulations tae Dave, well deserved for all his contributions, and efforts oer the past few years, apart fae some o his jokes" – fatbuoy [not typos it's Scottish]

"Indeed – well done to Dave Hall – utterly deserved!" = liv_the_div

"He's a top fella, can't think of anyone more deserving of it" – Phil R

"Just as well we don't have "Beard of the Year – he'd win that too!" - slackline

The evening was rounded off with a disco. Everyone hit the floor and enjoyed some classics including "Kung Fu Fighting". Jenny danced on table with six inch stilettos. Paul later donned the stilettos and danced the last slow dance with the Chairman.

A very enjoyable weekend!

Pete Durkin

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Alps 2009 Saas Fee / Saas Grund, Switzerland

Dates: Sat 18 Jul 2009 to Sat 1 Aug 2009

Contact: Gary Bebb

Cost: tbc

Details: Camping in the Sastall valley with many easily accessible 4000m peaks. Great walking, climbing, Alpine climbing and mountain biking.



HMC Events

Wye Valley, August Bank Holiday

Dates: Sat 29 Aug 2009 to Mon 31 Aug 2009

Contact: Gary Bebb

Cost: £28 based on 15 people

Details: Home of Symonds Yat and great for climbing, biking, walking, and canoeing. Camping at Bracelands - 10 Pitches 10-20 people.

Moreside Farm, Peak District

Dates: Sat 26 Sep 2009 to Sun 27 Sep 2009

Contact: Gary Bebb

Cost: £43

Link: <http://www.moorsidefarm.com/>

Details: 20 places. Walking, mountain biking, climbing and karaoke! Includes Breakfast sat and sun and sat evening meal

Torver, Coniston, Lake District

Dates: Sat 17 Oct 2009 to Sun 18 Oct 2009

Contact: Leigh Hulse

Details: Lakes meet staying at the Lancashire Caving Club Hut in Torver, near Coniston, SD 281957. Good kitchen and common room. Sleeps 32. Showers, drying room. Hut is 1km walk from car park. From the hut, a short walk along the Walnar Scar Road, gives access to Dow Crag, Coniston Old Man. Great access for any climbers wanting to do routes on Dow Crag above Goats Water. 32 places available - £6 per person per night.

Bangers and Mash, Snowdonia, North Wales

Dates: Sat 14 Nov 2009 to Sun 15 Nov 2009

Contact: Paul Dormer

Cost: £28 for weekend

Details: Bangers & Mash, Herts Snowdonia Centre, Nant Gwynant, Nth. Wales, 34 places. Fireworks and bangers and mash, cooked and served up to you by the committee! Possible extra places in Bryn Dinas bunkhouse, but make your own arrangements. Campsite at nearby Williams Farm (1/2 mile past the centre) or local YHA (if open).

Christmas Meet - Hathersage YHA, Peak District

Dates: Sat 5 Dec 2009 to Sun 6 Dec 2009

Contact: Jenny Gould

Details: Walking, climbing and mountain biking.

Lakes Meet - Langdale

Dates: Fri 1 Oct 2010 to Sun 3 Oct 2010

Contact: Leigh Hulse

Phone: 07766 524219

Cost: £16

Details: Robertson Lamb Hut in Great Langdale Valley. Owned by the Wayfarers club. Sleeps 24, showers, hot water, flush toilets, gas and electric cooking, cutlery, crockery, fridge, drying room. Open Fire. Fantastic location for access to all the Langdale round peaks. choice of old or new Dungeon Ghyll Hotels for local pub.

Hardhurst Farm Campsite, near Hope, Peak District

Dates: Sat 18 Jul 2009 to Sun 19 Jul 2009

Contact: Barry McRobb

Cost: £4 per person per night

Mapref: Hardhurst Farm

Details: Awaken to a wonderfully cooked breakfast in the onsite cafe (I believe they do a vegetarian one also, ask Tim for details), all reasonably priced. The new shower block is also open, which is a luxury in its own right. For evening meals and beverages, there are public houses in the nearby village of Hope, 15 minute walk, or the Travellers Rest pub, a 5 minute slow walk down the lane. There's so much climbing, cycling and walking around these areas (and caving), that it'd be daft to list anything, so if you're new to the Peak District, why not ask a climber, biker or walker.

Lake District

Dates: Sat 1 Aug 2009 to Sun 2 Aug 2009

Contact: Carolyn Dent

Details: Lake District Meet. Option of an overnight wild camp for those interested.



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