

Annabelle Breaks Free. A Women's Historic First in Solo Climbing

Setting off on Tuesday, June 23 at 4:00 AM from the base of the wall, Annabelle Bouchardon achieved her goal: the summit of the Directe Américaine on the Drus, one of the major routes on the west face of the Drus (1,100 m, ED-, 6c)—marking a women's historic first rope-solo ascent. She reached the summit of Petit Dru on Thursday, June 25 at 8:10 AM, after 3 days and 2 bivouacs on the face.



First in Solo Climbing

◆ Directe Américaine on the Drus

Taking advantage of a favorable weather window, despite a few late-afternoon thunderstorms, Annabelle successfully completed her challenge. She was not just chasing an alpine objective; this ascent was above all a personal adventure, a vertical and internal alpine journey.

"Alpine performance isn't the sole purpose of this adventure. I wanted to add an extra layer of difficulty by managing my decisions and all my efforts completely alone. I wanted to test my self-confidence, better understand my limits, and face a physical, technical, and mental challenge, all while having fun." she shared before her departure.

— ANNABELLE BOUCHARDON

After a first bivouac at the foot of the wall the night before, she started on Tuesday, June 23, by the light of her headlamp. Two more nights on the face were necessary to successfully complete the ascent. The first bivouac was spent at the jammed block (bloc coincé) at an altitude of 600m, and the second in the Trou du Canon («Cannon Hole»)—a small natural alcove carved into the rock. It provided a providential refuge when a storm broke out late Wednesday evening. She reached the summit of Petit Dru (3,733m) at 8:10 AM.

Annabelle then continued with the traverse to Grand Dru before beginning the descent down the south face. A dozen rappels were still required to reach the glacier, then the Charpoua refuge, where she could finally enjoy a long-awaited and well-deserved night's rest. She began the rappels for the descent at 12:00 PM, stepped onto the Charpoua glacier on Thursday at 3:30 PM, and arrived at the refuge at 4:30 PM.



A landmark achievement

Program requirement

In rope soloing, progression is uniquely demanding. Each pitch must be climbed, then rappelled down, and then climbed a second time to retrieve the gear and haul a pack weighing around 17 kg. It is a slow, meticulous, technical, and particularly exhausting ascent, where every meter gained requires considerable energy. In total, about thirty pitches were linked together on the immense wall of the Drus.

This challenge was achieved alone on the wall, thirty-five years after the historic feat of Catherine Destivelle, who in June 1991 opened a new route on this same face after eleven days of effort—a route that has now vanished following the major rockfalls of the 2000s.

Annabelle Bouchardon is a well-known figure in the mountaineering world. A former member of the GEAN (National Excellence Alpine Group), she excels in both big wall climbing and ice climbing. Among her recent standout achievements is the repetition of the Fowler-Watts route on Taulliraju at 5,830m (Peru) with the GEAN team.



**ANNABELLE HAS BEEN COLLABORATING
WITH SIMOND SINCE 2021**

HER GEAR FOR THE ASCENT

Prototype Sprint Alpi 33 backpack

AVAILABLE IN 2027

Woma ice axes

AVAILABLE IN FALL 2026

Sprint Evo helmet

AVAILABLE >

Wilder Simond Avant-Garde jacket

AVAILABLE IN FALL 2026

Bivouac tent: Makalu Assault

AVAILABLE >



Focus on Annabelle

◆

Gifted mountaineer



@AnnabelleBouchardon

ANNABELLE BOUCHARDON

Born in 2001
Originally from Grenoble
Currently living in Grenoble
Education: Multi-qualification Mountain curriculum in Moûtiers

2021 - National Climbing Instructor
Diploma in Vallon-Pont-d'Arc.

2022 - Joined the GEAN

2024 - Began mountain guide training at the ENSA (National Ski and Mountaineering School)

[SEE ATHLETE PROFILE >](#)

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

2022 - «Chauve qui peut» route on the north face of Olan with the GEAN team (Damien Tomasi, Pierre-Idris Mehdi)

2023 - Winter ascent of the Lesueur route on the north face of the Drus with Salomé Candela and Martin de Truchis

2024 - Expedition to Peru with the GEAN and repetition of the Fowler-Watts route on Taulliraju 5,830m (Matthieu Detrie, Amaury Fouillade, Clovis Paulin)

2025 (Summer) - Walker Spur on the Grandes Jorasses, completed in a single day from Chamonix with Jean Rouaux

2026 (Winter) - 3 major north faces of the Écrins in a single day (Pic Sans Nom, Meije, Râteau) with Olivier Laurandau

Interview

◆ Arrival at the Charpoua refuge

How do you feel?

"I am happy... and exhausted. I feel like I've been run over by a truck! When I look at this face from the refuge, I also feel a real sense of pride. There is a feeling of accomplishment that I've experienced before after sending a hard climbing route, but this time, it's even stronger. Here, the summit is Petit Dru... and that's no small feat. I'm glad to spend the night at Charpoua and not head back down straight away. I want to take the time to rest, to look at this face, and to contemplate the mountains around me. Ultimately, during the climb, I didn't have time to look at them. I was completely absorbed by the route, by every movement, every decision. Now, I can finally look up and enjoy the view."

_ ANNABELLE BOUCHARDON

Can you tell us about that night spent in the Trou du Canon while the storm was raging?

"I was expecting it a bit. The forecast had called for a risk of thunderstorms, and before leaving, I had taken the time to gather all the necessary information to easily find this famous Trou du Canon. I felt genuinely safe. The place is quite austere, almost gloomy, but it offers real protection!"



Interview



Part 2

Did you stick to your timeline?
Were there any surprises?

"Overall, yes. It went the way I had imagined... but with a schedule that was a bit too optimistic. I thought I would reach the first and second bivouacs about two hours earlier each time. In the end, the nights were much shorter than expected, and I didn't really get to enjoy the sunsets. The big surprise, however, was dropping my helmet at the first bivouac. Honestly, I can't conceive of mountaineering without a helmet. It was a real rookie mistake. For the end of the climb, it wasn't too worrying because I knew the rock was very compact and the risk of rockfall was limited, especially since there were no other parties. On the other hand, for the entire rappel descent, I took much longer than planned. You have to be so much more careful. I performed every maneuver methodically, staying highly focused despite the fatigue and the little mental clarity I had left."

Any final words?

"Everyone has their own adventure. There are so many different ways to experience the mountains. For me, this time, it was the Drus, alone. I have always admired this mountain. It has made me dream for a long time. Today, I was lucky enough to live my own story on it."

What did you learn about yourself during these three days alone on the face?

"I thought I would feel more apprehension. Ultimately, once I got started, I felt good right away. The sensations were good, everything flowed naturally. This solo ascent made me grow. I relied solely on my own feelings, experience, and decisions. It's both very satisfying and very rewarding. In a team, there are always moments where you rest at the belay while the other person climbs. Alone, there is never really a break. You never completely stop. You have to manage your energy, your time, and your concentration from start to finish. It's a different way of climbing. A different way of experiencing the mountains. And this experience has given me a lot."



[DOWNLOAD CONTENT >](#)

About Decathlon

A global multi-specialist sports brand catering to everyone from beginners to elite athletes, DECATHLON is an innovative designer of sporting goods for all levels of practice. With 101,100 teammates and 1,817 stores worldwide, DECATHLON and its teams have been working since 1976 toward a continuous ambition: making the benefits of sport truly accessible to all.

About Simond

Based in Chamonix since 1860, Simond is an iconic brand in the field of mountain equipment. Specializing in mountaineering, climbing, trekking, and ski touring, Simond has a long-standing expertise in metalwork. In 2008, Simond joined the Decathlon group. The brand continues to design and manufacture all of its metal products (ice axes, crampons, carabiners) in its Chamonix factory. Its design teams apply their expertise to enhance equipment durability, ensuring technical and reliable products for demanding users.



PRESS CONTACTS

For press enquiries, interviews
or product testing:

SIMOND

PRESS RELATIONS MANAGER
PAULINE PONTE
PRESS@SIMOND.COM
+33 (0)6 60 28 35 48

PRESS RELATIONS
ANNE GERY
ANNEGERY@ORANGE.FR
+33 (0)6 12 03 68 95

DECATHLON

INTERNATIONAL.MEDIA@DECATHLON.COM