

Sport Climbing Banned in France?

Slightly hysterical headline but not far off the way things are going. The Easter Meet to La Clape has been cancelled because the local mayor has banned all climbing in the La Clape Massif until further notice. This ban is part of a wider trend of bans on sport climbing spreading through France.

The article below is the situation as I see it based on reading two articles in Grimper Magazine and by reading a statement by the FFME (the French National Climbing Organisation).

The FRCC Easter Meet has been cancelled because of bans on sport climbing spreading through France. It appears that the French national climbing body FFME used to agree to maintain crags that were equipped and used as practice grounds, therefore taking on the legal responsibility for any accidents. In so doing they shielded the landowners and local authorities from any responsibility. Following an accident and a claim that cost their insurers 1.6 million euros they have withdrawn from this role and wish for the responsibility to be passed to local authorities. In consequence landowners and local authorities all over France are banning climbing.

The situation is more complicated than this of course. The FFME states that it had already been planning to make this change because it does not make sense for the national body to be responsible for crags all over France. They explain that the national cycling association is not responsible for the mountain bike trails and the national swimming association does not maintain swimming pools. The situation has, they claim been made worse by hysteria on social media and by some mayors and owners making bans for political purposes.

The FFME states that it is committed to maintaining access to climbing sites and is working to that aim. The President in an interview with Grimper magazine stated that he was confident that all the bans could be resolved if there was willingness to talk on both sides. He states that the current hysteria is misplaced and with time the situation will get sorted out.

The current situation has reached its height with the banning of all climbing at Presles in the Vercors (including adventure climbing) by the owners and managers. It would appear that there is a general fear that the case at Vingrau (where the FFME's insurers had to pay out) will be seen as a precedent and could lead to similar cases. There is a thread on UKC about this, I have only read the first few posts in this very long thread and in my opinion they are just speculation and discussion and do not throw any true light on the situation. It is better to read the French articles below. If viewed in Google Chrome you can get them translated as follows by right clicking and choosing 'translate to English'

References:

- 1) President of the FFME is interviewed by Grimper magazine about the background to climbing being banned on all the cliffs at Presles in the Vercors, including adventure climbing cliffs. [Interview with President of FFME.](#)
- 2) Article about the climbing ban at Presles: [Grimper article](#)
- 3) FFME answers your questions about the management of natural climbing sites: [FFME Q&A](#)
- 4) A little bit of background: [Savoie branch of FFME provide historical background.](#)