

Sella Group

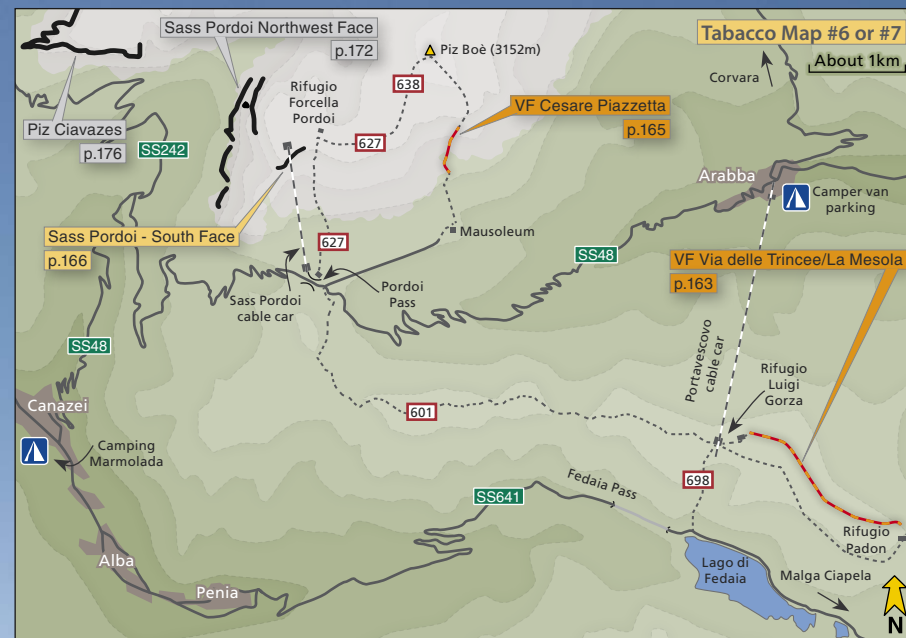
Pordoi Pass



Eddie Mills high up on the *Via delle Trincee/La Mesola* (VF4B) - page 163 - with the massive slab of Punta Serauta in the background. Photo: Daniel Wildev

The Pordoi Pass is one of the four passes that encircle the Sella Group, collectively forming the 'Sellaronda' - an exceptionally popular cycle route in the summer and ski network in the winter. The Padon Ridge separates the Fedaia and Pordoi Passes and is rich in history. The path which runs parallel to the ridge was once an ancient traders' route known as the 'Viel dal Pan', used to transport flour between the local valleys. Towards the end of the 19th century the route was rediscovered by the German Karl Bindel, thus giving rise to its second name, 'Bindelweg'. Soon after the ridge became the location of intense fighting during the First World War and, as well as being a fantastic mountain traverse, the nearby via ferrata *Via delle Trincee/La Mesola* (way of the trenches) also serves as a stark reminder of the events that unfolded in the early 20th century. North of the pass lies the huge Sella massif, often referred to as the 'heart of the Dolomites'. The elegant peak of Piz Boè (easily identified by the less elegant mobile phone relay built by Telecom Italia in the 1980s) provides the highest point at 3152m and is arguably the most accessible and frequented of the 3000m+ peaks. The busy route runs east from the top of the Sass Pordoi cable car and is easily recognised by the human ant trail snaking its way up to the summit. For those seeking a quieter way up Piz Boè, via ferrata *Cesare Piazzetta* is highly recommended, but make sure your party is up to it, especially early in the season when snow may be on the route.

Via Ferrata	Sport	Gear
-	-	1
2	-	3
-	-	-
-	-	-



Directly underneath the Sass Pordoi cable car at the top of the pass lies the popular and sunny south face of Sass Pordoi, featuring a number of excellent medium-length trad climbs. *Via Maria/Mariakante* is undoubtedly the classic of the area, though many of the other routes on the face are equally good.

Accommodation

There are numerous hotels in Canazei and Arabba at either end of the Pordoi Pass as well as several hotels located on the pass itself. Camping is available at Camping Miravalle in Campitello and Camping Marmolada in Canazei. There is a dedicated camper van only area in Arabba.

1 Via delle Trincee/La Mesola . VF4B

An interesting via ferrata which is predominantly a linear traverse (albeit with a good amount of ascent to start) as opposed to the usual up and down. The conglomerate rock also provides a welcome change to the more usual dolomite. Add in some First World War tunnels, a cannon and a rustic rifugio at the end and you have a very different and pleasant day! The via ferrata develops in three distinct sections and can be cut short if required. The Padon ridge on which it is situated does keep the snow until late in the season, and parties should prepare accordingly. It is worth checking the current condition with the Guides Office if you are planning on making an ascent early in the season. *Photo on page 160 and opposite.*

The initial section of wire provides the crux of the route; after that the difficulties ease, although there is a considerable amount of down-climbing. The views over the Fedaia Pass, Lago di Fedaia and the Marmolada (3343m) are superb.

Note - If you're planning on doing the entire route a headtorch is required for the tunnels at the end.

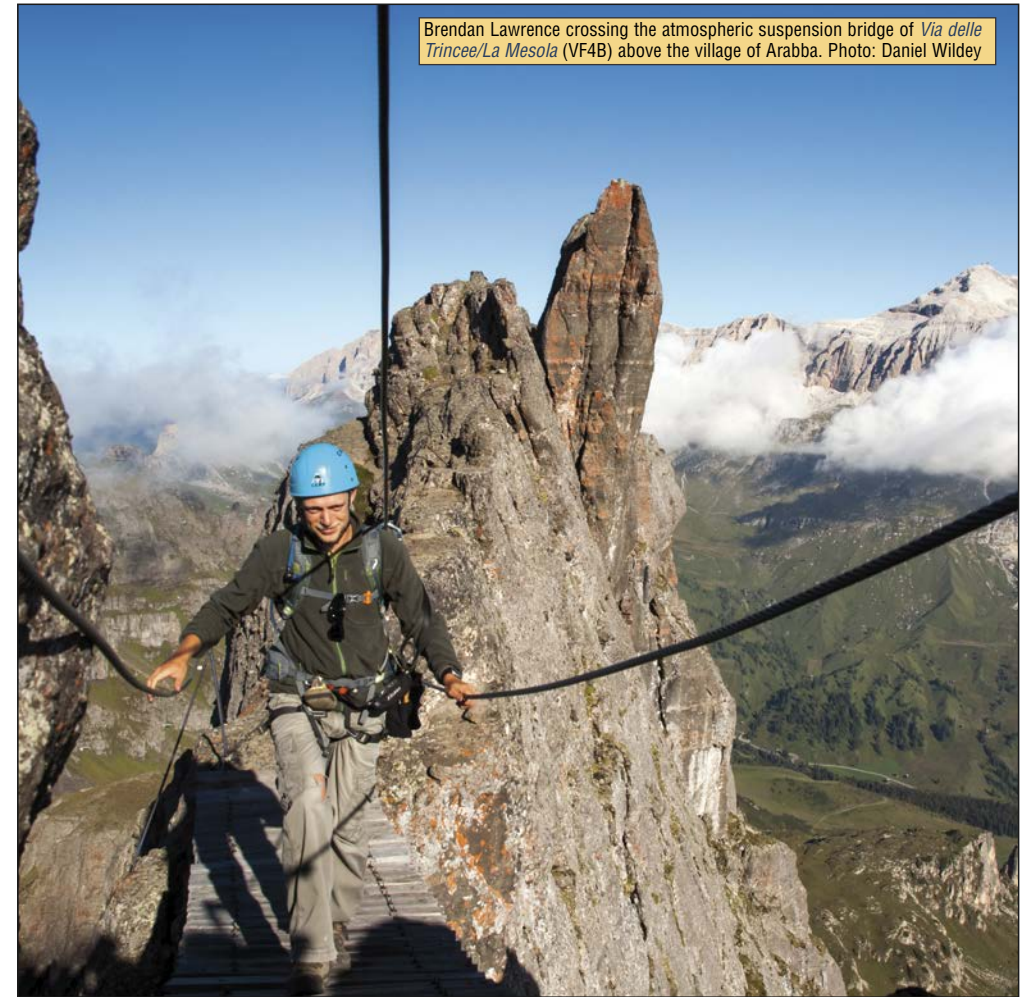
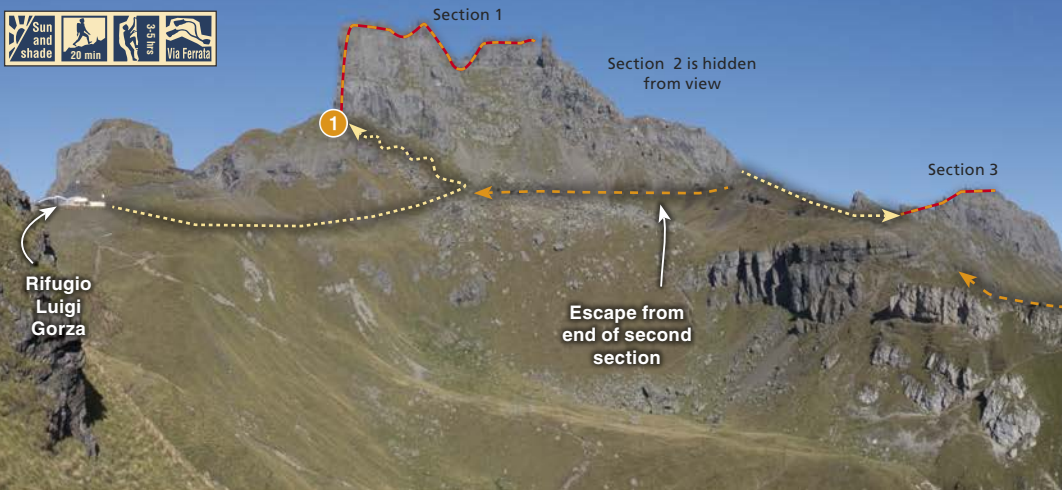
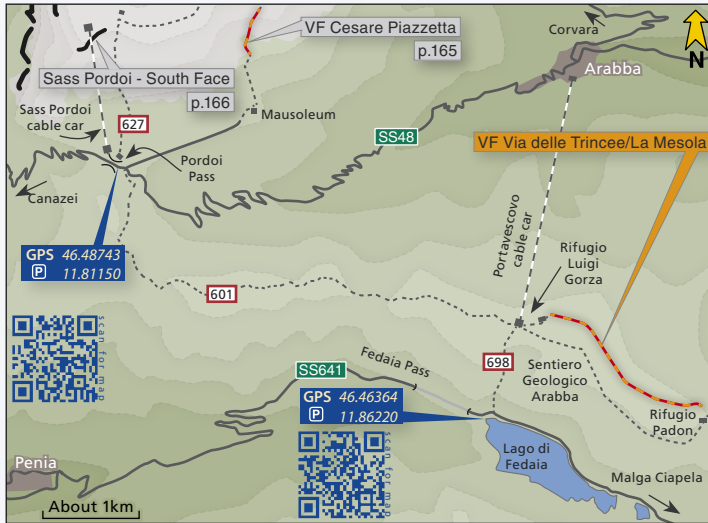
Approach - There are three possible starts to this route. Two are located on the Pordoi Pass which is easily accessible from Corvara, Canazei or any of the towns located near to the Sella group. The third gains the Padon ridge from the Fedaia Pass which can be approached from either Malga Ciapela or Canazei.

Starting from Arabba.

This is the usual, shortest and recommended approach via the Arabba Portavescovo cable car, which takes you to Rifugio Luigi Gorza. The cable car runs from early July to early September but it is always worth checking with the local tourist information offices to check because opening dates/times vary from season to season. Beware: like virtually everything in Italy, the cable car closes at lunchtime. It is worth getting a return ticket as you can do a circuit and then get the cable car back down. If the cable car isn't running, it is possible to walk up from Arabba on path 698. However it is better to drive to the top of the Pordoi Pass and walk in from there (see below).

Starting from the top of the Pordoi Pass. This is a scenically beautiful but long approach (allow two and a half hours) contouring in from the top of the pass. There isn't much height gain to be had but the approach is long. Park in the large car park at the top of the pass opposite the Sass Pordoi cable car. Follow path 601 along the Padon Ridge following signs for the 'Viel del Pan' until you reach Rifugio Luigi Gorza and the top of the Arabba cable car described above.

Starting from Rifugio Castiglioni alla Marmolada. Park at the northwest end of the Lago di Fedaia reservoir near the dam wall. Follow path 698 steeply uphill to Rifugio Luigi Gorza which you reach in just under an hour.



Brendan Lawrence crossing the atmospheric suspension bridge of Via delle Trincee/La Mesola (VF4B) above the village of Arabba. Photo: Daniel Wildey

From Rifugio Luigi Gorza head east, following the path that contours under the ridge until the via ferrata is signed off left. Follow the path uphill, zig-zagging through boulders to the start of the route.

VF - The initial section of wire is quite steep but thereafter things get easier. Continue following the wire, crossing a photogenic bridge with spectacular views back down to Arabba. The wire then begins to drop back down to a large open col. This is the end of the first section and escape is possible here (simply follow the path leading underneath the ridge back to the start of the route). To continue, follow the well-marked path up towards some old First World War ruins. The wire traverses past these on a series of ledges and goes round the back of the ridge where some exposed down-climbing is to be found. This brings you to the end of the second section of wire with a well-trodden path traversing a steep grassy slope. Again it is possible to escape here following the path that leads under the south side of the ridge back to the cable car. Many parties choose to go back here as this is the end of the climbing difficulties, however it is worth continuing if you have the time as the next section takes you through an interesting set of First World War tunnels that are well worth a look - a head torch is essential for this section.

Follow the path leading across the grassy slope heading towards the next obvious section of ridge curving around to the left. Shortly after you pick up the wire again as it traverses along the south side on the continuing ridge. Continue following it past a bricked-up tunnel until the path takes you over onto the north side of the ridge. Enter the first of a series of tunnels following the red waymarks (keep an eye out as they are often hard to spot in the dark). Continue following the path past short sections of wire and finally into a long tunnel system that again is well marked. After leaving this you will come across a large cannon from the war and Rifugio Padon where the route ends.

Descent - To return follow the 'Sentiero Geologico Arabba' path back around the south side of the Padon ridge to the cable car station and Rifugio Luigi Gorza. Alternatively, if you have walked up from Arabba, take the 699 down the winter ski piste back to the town.

Lauren Crocker on *Cesare Piazzetta* (VF5C). Photo: Geoff Hinton

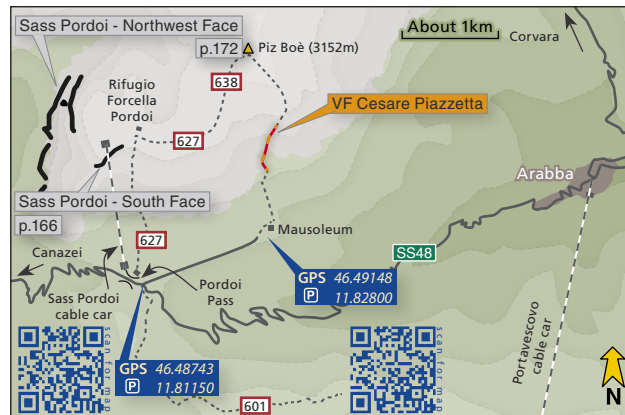


1 Cesare Piazzetta VF5C

This is one of the harder via ferrata, similar in difficulty to *Ski Club 18* (page 426). It has some excellent exposure, a memorable chimney squeeze, an exposed traverse and an interesting bridge, all of which make for a very entertaining route. The usual finish is the summit of Piz Boè (3152m) which also makes it particularly appealing to peak baggers. The option to take the Sass Pordoi cable car back down if desired makes the whole affair very civilised. **Note** - This is a high via ferrata reaching over 3000m and it is not possible to escape off the wire without down-climbing it. Make sure there is a stable weather forecast before committing yourself to this route.

Approach - This via ferrata starts just off the top of the Pordoi Pass which is easily accessible on the SS48 from Arabba or Canazei. From the top of the pass, follow a small road which runs behind some shops signed to 'Mausoleum Ossario del Pordoi'. The mausoleum should be clearly visible on the Arabba side of the pass. Park at the end of the road or along the verge if the mausoleum car park is full. From the mausoleum (which is well worth a look in) follow the path northwards steeply uphill, aiming for the rock walls directly under the summit of Piz Boè. The path finally takes you right across scree to the base of the route and the wire.

VF - The difficulty of the route quickly becomes apparent as the wire leads you up steeply with some great exposure and very photogenic sections. After the initial strenuous section you reach a good ledge and a well-deserved rest. At the end of the ledge climb a steep traditional chimney; great fun if wet and even more fun if the person behind you has a large rucksack. Continue on slightly easier ground with some excellent climbing to reach a characteristic bridge, then continue more easily to reach the final steep section. Climb this to reach the top of the wire at a path junction and a sign painted on the rock. To continue to the summit, continue straight on following the sign for 'Piz Boè' (40 minutes). Alternatively, to head straight for the descent turn left following signs for 'Forcella Pordoi' (30 minutes).



of the wire at a path junction and a sign painted on the rock. To continue to the summit, continue straight on following the sign for 'Piz Boè' (40 minutes). Alternatively, to head straight for the descent turn left following signs for 'Forcella Pordoi' (30 minutes).

Descent - For those shunning the summit experience, follow the cairned path east across and through a large scree bowl to join the 638, then proceed as below.

From the summit of Piz Boè follow the crowds southwest on the 638 in the direction of the Sass Pordoi cable car, clearly visible in good weather. There is a small section of wire to assist with the initial descent. Join the 627 and continue down to Rifugio Forcella Pordoi. There are two options from here: either descend on foot or take the lift.

To take the cable car, turn right at the rifugio and follow the path gently uphill for 10 minutes (well-marked and signed) until you reach the cable car station.

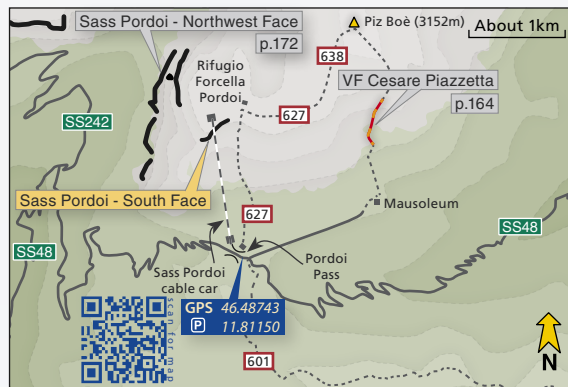
To return on foot, turn left at the rifugio staying on the 627, and descend down the large scree gully (some good scree running practice). This leads back to the top of the pass. From here the mausoleum should be clearly visible again; walk along the road back to the car park.



The south face of Sass Pordoi is home to several excellent and very popular routes. Despite the long approach the sunny face nestled under the Sass Pordoi cable car has a friendly feel in stark contrast to the brooding northwest face (page 172). The face is substantially smaller than its northwest counterpart providing moderate length climbs. The sunny aspect, excellent rock, relatively amenable grades and the opportunity of a cable car back down ensure the routes are often busy. The South Pillar is home to the classic *Via Maria/Mariakante* - one of the most popular routes in this area.

Approach

The face is best accessed from the Sass Pordoi cable car station on top of the Pordoi Pass on the SS48. From Canazei, take the SS48 east out of the town towards the Sella Pass. Turn right after 5km still heading for the Pordoi Pass. Continue to the top of the pass and the large car park of the Sass Pordoi cable car station.



Sass Pordoi South Face



James Rushforth on the crux of the *Piaz Arete* (VI) - page 168 - on the South Face of Sass Pordoi. Photo: Lynne Hempton



1 Piaz Arete VI

An excellent route that takes the exposed South Pillar arete before joining *Via Maria* at the top of the tower. The crux is very sequency and high in the grade but well protected with three pegs. *Photo on page 167.*

Start 10m left of the arete below a smaller subsidiary tower under a prominent crack.

- 1) IV, 20m. Climb a crack direct to a thread on a ledge.
- 2) V, 25m. Climb up the corner-crack then, at three quarters height below a collection of tat, make a rising traverse right to reach the top of the subsidiary tower.
- 3) VI, 10m. Climb the arete direct, with a short, stiff and polished crux which is well protected by three pegs, to a good stance above.
- 4) V+, 30m. Climb the crack above direct, or step 2m right to climb an easier crack then cut gently diagonally left past a bulge. Climb a shallow corner to a pale roof and 5m below this traverse diagonally left to a stance just right of the arete.
- 5) IV-, 40m. Climb the arete direct, with easy yet satisfying climbing, to reach a large roof. Move around this on its left then traverse a ledge to a crack. Climb this for 5m over loose ledges to a 2-peg belay above the roof.
- 6) III+, 35m. Step right from the stance for 2m to a low peg then climb direct towards a pale niche. Just below this, move diagonally left and take the most logical line to a large sling.
- 7) I, 40m. Walk around to the notch/gully between the two towers to a block at the far end of the gully, just below a yellow wall. Belay on a large thread at its base. *Via Maria* joins here.
- 8-11) As for pitches 6 to 9 of *Via Maria*.

FA. Piaz, Piaz, Springorum, Del Torso 1933



2 Via Maria/Mariakante IV+

The classic route on the south side of Sass Pordoi. An excellent route at the grade. Don't be put off by the super-polished first move off the ground! Take your time with it or, if all else fails, stand on your friend's shoulders. The climbing is easier above and the final mantelshelf over the cable car wall provides an interesting finish.

Start in a chimney-gully directly below the right corner of the roof by a leaning yellow pillar on the right.

- 1) IV, 20m. Climb the chimney-gully which has a very polished start, particularly for the feet (slightly less polished alternative on grey rock to the left). Continue to a good stance - be careful you don't dislodge stones onto climbers below.
- 2) IV+, 40m. Climb direct then follow a crack on good holds to reach the face, and climb this towards a large ledge above.
- 3) IV, 45m. Climb the orange crack above the belay direct on slightly friable rock for 5m then move left. Cut back right following some ramps and passing an intermediate stance. Continue right, following the natural ramp of the rock to a stance below the right edge of the roof.

4) IV, 10m. Move up and right around the edge of the roof then make a short traverse right. Step up to a stance in a small niche round the corner, left of the gully which separates the subsidiary and main towers.

5) III, 50m. Traverse easily rightwards following the ledge then climb the wall to the left of the gully. Cut across easily on loose rock to a block/pillar on the right of the gully, next to the main wall. Belay on a thread. The *Piaz Arete* joins here.

6) IV, 35m. Step over from the block to the right wall then traverse right past a cemented ring. Follow polished yet good rock right, making a rising traverse on good holds. Pull through a little niche to a good ledge.

7) IV, 25m. Step right and move around a short wall to a scoop. Climb the scoop on good pockets then move left to belay below a chimney on two excellent threads.

8) IV, 25m. Climb a chimney direct to reach the plateau with a large cemented peg.

9) 100m, III. Move left of the tower in front to a thread belay below a chimney. Either climb the chimney (harder at IV-), or traverse left for 5m to a black water-worn section of rock and climb this easily to a bowl on the left side of the cable car station. Follow this up right onto a choosy ridge, following wire from the cable car station, then keep right to reach the station itself. It is possible to finish either to the left or the right of the cable car station (you have to climb over the wall in either case).

FA. Dezulian, Piaz 1932

3 Via Gross V-

An excellent and slightly harder alternative to *Via Maria*. The rock is generally sound and less polished than its neighbour, and the climbing is varied and quite exposed at times. Another justifiably popular route.

Begin in a yellow corner-crack, 10m right of the gully which separates the subsidiary pillar of *Via Maria* from the main buttress.

- 1) IV, 35m. Climb the corner-crack on its right side, then continue more easily, trending right to a good stance.
- 2) IV+, 35m. Ignore a crack above and instead move right to a corner. Climb this direct, passing a niche on the left, and exit right to reach the large ledge.
- 3) V-, 30m. Move right to reach a ramp which leads back left. Climb this, overcoming a bulge, then follow a narrow chimney to reach a crack system. Climb the left-hand crack and belay below a niche.
- 4) IV, 30m. Move left along a ledge then climb a well-featured wall direct to reach a small ledge. Move left then continue back right to reach a larger ledge.
- 5) IV+, 25m. Move left on the ledge then, level with a thread, climb a crack which trends right. Belay below a niche.
- 6) IV, 20m. Climb direct through the niche on loose rock then traverse right below an overhang to a stance on the right of the arete.
- 7) III+, 35m. Climb a series of flakes direct to reach a niche on the right. Continue direct to a short corner and climb this to reach the top of a small pillar.
- 8) II, 35m. Move up then traverse left over ledges to a chimney. Climb the chimney direct to reach the plateau with a large cemented peg.
- 9) As for the final pitch of *Via Maria*.

FA. Gross, Mamoli 1963

4 Camino Pederiva IV

The route takes the logical line of the prominent chimney on Sass Pordoi's southeast face. It suffers from seepage, meaning it is rarely in condition early in the season or after periods of rain.

Start 10m right of the large gully which splits the southeast face, in a chimney immediately right of a low roof.

- 1) IV, 35m. Climb the chimney direct then, when level with a thread, move left into a smaller parallel chimney. Climb this direct then on its right wall to reach a wide ledge.
- 2) IV, 25m. Climb two parallel cracks, first the right then the left, then trend left slightly to reach a prominent yellow crack. Ignore this and instead traverse right (pegs) to enter the chimney.
- 3) IV, 40m. Follow the chimney direct to a ledge on the right.
- 4) IV, 45m. Step back left into the chimney and continue in the same line with traditional climbing. Move back behind a chockstone then trend right to a cemented belay on a small pillar.
- 5) III+, 30m. Follow the chimney to a stance by a natural rock window.
- 6) I, 40m. Trend left following a ramp, passing a small pillar on the left to reach a stance belay a narrow chimney.
- 7) IV-, 30m. Climb the chimney direct then follow moves right to a stance on the plateau. Join the main tourist path left to reach the cable car and Rifugio Maria.

FA. Pederiva, Rizzi 1922

South Face

Approach (see map on page 166) - Take path 627 to the right of the Sass Pordoi cable car station, signed for 'Piz Boè', 'Vallon' and 'Campolongo'. Walk up the steep scree slope past numerous cairns towards Forcella Pordoi, joining the upper path. Level with a sharp hairpin bend leading right, cut left on a climbers' path to join a track which runs below the base of the wall. For *Piaz Arete*, *Via Maria* and *Via Gross*, follow this left towards a subsidiary tower. For *Camino Pederiva*, turn right and ascend scree past the large gully on the southeast face. **Descent** - All of the climbs top out at, or adjacent to, the top station of the Sass Pordoi cable car. This is the usual descent. If you miss it or want to descend on foot, follow path 627 to the northeast. This descends down past Rifugio Forcella Pordoi and then takes the large scree gully and fan that runs parallel to the cable car. This rejoins the ascent route which can be retraced to the cable car station.

