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Mountain bikers on the Monte Rosa circuit



Mountain marathon on the Eiger Ultra Trail 2015

technical challenges. They are more apprehensive about unknown factors and physical exertion than before," she believes. Most mountain climbers today want "moderate terrain in terms of safety but also perfect weather conditions and ideally a comfortable mountain hut which provides information about local conditions online", says the Frenchwoman. She also points to a certain amount of male chauvinism in the mountains. "I've lost count of the number of times when leading a rope team, I've received unpleasant remarks or have been confronted by men wanting to explain techniques to me that I'm already familiar with."

Old-style mountaineering has apparently had its day. "My uncles embarked on some incredible challenges in the 1950s with a rope tied around their stomach and a bottle of red wine in their backpack and they didn't even consider themselves mountaineers or hikers, they just enjoyed walking in the mountains," re-

counts one "C2C" user. The perception or acceptance of danger has changed. "Even if practised carefully and correctly, this sport entails the acceptance of a certain element of risk," says another. As a result there has been a decline in mountaineering as well as the time dedicated to it. "Visiting a climbing rock with in situ protection 15 minutes away from the car park where 4G internet access is also available is much more in keeping with the current age," says the same website user, who ironically refers to himself as an "old fogey".

### The appeal of "a light load" and gliding and sliding

Proclaiming his love of ski-touring and ice climbing, another participant points out that "these pursuits can be enjoyed in a day or a half-day in splendid scenery with slightly less risk than mountaineering". The adventurous version of this sport combines technical and psychological challenges. "The

### Huts and figures

#### The use of mountain huts remains steady

Most mountaineering ascents go via a hut. However, by no means all those staying overnight at huts are on their way to climb a summit. In Switzerland, the number of nights spent in huts, which can vary significantly depending upon the season, has remained above 300,000 a year since 2003. The Swiss Alpine Club has never had so many members (over 143,000 at present), but the growth rate fell below 2% in 2014 for the first time in 10 years. Furthermore, there has been a slight fall in the number of young people in the club and 46% of its members are aged over 50.

Another figure: the number of deaths in the mountains has fallen in line with "the improvement in equipment, weather forecasting and rescue operations", according to Ueli Mosimann, who is responsible for the statistics on distress situations at the Swiss Alpine Club. "More people are visiting the mountains but they are not necessarily mountaineering," adds Mosimann. In 2013, this sport saw 21 fatalities in Switzerland compared with 71 in 1985 and 40 in 1994. By comparison, 39 people died while hiking in 2014, a figure close to the average number of deaths in this activity over the past 30 years, which stands at 44.

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