



▼ Abseil approaches are committing. Take your time to ensure you're at the right place and have the right rack and clothing etc. Stakes are commonly all that are available but check them thoroughly

▼ If you're abseiling to a belay above the sea the first climber to abseil in should have some gear to set up the belay. The second climber down must take special care not to knock off any loose rocks.

rung on the ladder!

E1 is also the UK rock grade that British Mountain Guides are expected to operate at because it allows access to a vast spectrum of climbs and adventures. For more information about guiding, see the info box.

### Technical talk: mental strength.

If you're thinking about trying an E1 and you've been climbing for a while on VS and HVS the chances are your technique and strength are up to the job of making all the moves. The one part of your body that might need some training is your brain.

You'll need some mechanisms for keeping a steady head and strategies to help you relax before and whilst on the route. Everyone is different and in time you'll find your own way to cope with the stress of a big lead but you might find these ideas helpful;

- Avoid queuing for your prize route – watching someone else on it first, especially if they struggle, isn't always helpful.
- Practise slow, deep and regular breathing. It's common to inadvertently hold your breath on hard sections.
- Focus on one section of the pitch at a time rather than getting overwhelmed by the task ahead of you.
- Take advantage of natural rests to stop, shake out and take stock.
- Place the best possible runners to eliminate the fear of runner failure. If you place a poor one place another as soon as you can.
- Focus on making the move successfully rather than falling off.
- Look down at your belayer before setting off on a hard sequence to ensure they're watching and



hopefully to get a smile or few words of encouragement.

- Don't be afraid to climb up and down a few times as you suss a tricky move out and psyche up to go for it.

### Profile of an E1

**Name:** *Snozwanger*

**Length:** 140ft

**No. of pitches:** 2

**Rock Type:** Limestone

**Crag:** Mowing Ward, South Pembroke.

**Guidebooks:** *Pembroke Rockfax, Pembroke (Part 2)* CC.

# Go For It!

## Libby Peter's grade tour 6: The world of extremes - E1

Go on, be honest, how long have you been putting it off? Months? Years? Forever? Well you're not alone. Breaking into the elusive world of Extreme is the greatest psychological hurdle you'll face. The challenge has, no doubt, been dangling there in your sub-conscious embodied in the form of an all-time must-do climb like *Cenotaph Corner* or simply as the next but most alluring of all the grades.

E1 to non-climbers is just a meaningless code but as soon as you know anything about the climbing grades it captures your attention. EXTREME, – how could you possibly climb something EXTREME, that's for super-heroes not mortals!

Well that's where you're wrong. Of all the steps

up through the grades you'll make, the one from HVS to E1 is probably the smallest technically or physically. That's not to underestimate the mental leap you'll need to make which will be the biggest. But if you regularly and comfortably lead HVS you could in all likelihood already climb E1 you just don't believe it yet.

### The essence of E1

There is something magical, mythical and unbelievably daunting about moving up to Extreme but try and think of it as just another grade, otherwise you'll easily get psyched-out. A good way to picture E1 is as elegant and elongated HVS with slightly fewer runners and just a few more moves. Last month we

▲ A semi-hanging stance above the sea needs careful organisation to avoid dropping the ropes in the water. All photography: Mike Robertson

acknowledged HVS as a notorious sandbag grade whilst in contrast E1's tend to be more honest and up-front.

A top tip is to choose well protected lines which will get you used to the level of difficulty found on Extremes in a 'safer' environment. Save the necky 5a's for later! It's also a good way to experience the trade-off between placing too much protection and running out of strength which is common on harder routes.

On a slightly less positive note it's worth noting that E1 is the entry point and on the cusp of the arena of Extreme routes so it's a window through which you glimpse another lifetime of routes to climb. In other words you realise E1 is not the end point you'd hoped for but just yet another





- ◀ The top wall has good protection and elegant climbing in a sensational position.
- ▼ The belay at the end of the first pitch has a good but small ledge which gives the belayer a good view of their partner.

▼ Setting off on the second pitch look for an early runner to protect the belay.



There are several rock climbing qualifications in the UK according to where you want to go. The appropriate award for leaders responsible for groups on single pitch crags is the Single Pitch Award (SPA) whilst the Mountain Instructor Award (MIA) encompasses multi-pitch rock climbing and scrambling as well. British Mountain Guides can operate summer and winter on any crag in the UK and are affiliated with the International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations (IFMGA) and can also work worldwide on rock, ice or snow.

For more information about how to become a guide or instructor or how to hire one contact MLTUK at [mltuk.org](http://mltuk.org) or BMG at [bmg.org.uk](http://bmg.org.uk)

**Character:** Although the guidebooks disagree on the grading of this and its companion *Blowin' In The Wind*, both undeniably deserve E1. *Snozwanger* is elegant, well protected and if you find it easy you'll think it's 5a otherwise you'll agree it's 5b but that's often the case. The climb is easy to find as it takes the left wall of the classic Hard Severe *Diedre Sud*. The abseil at the top of this corner is straightforward to locate but make sure there aren't climbers below and take particular care with the loose cliff top. The position of the belay will depend on the tide and sea state but it's easy to find an appropriate spot even at high tide by taking a semi-hanging stance.

The first pitch can be easily confused with *Blowin' In The Wind* but the top pitches are much

more independent. The climbing is beautiful and it's best experienced in the late afternoon sun when any greasiness has long gone. Although the difficulties are not excessive, there is an additional seriousness due to its position above the sea.

### E1 hit list

The classic E1 list is simply enormous. As always remember that any graded list is subjective. Have fun!

### Soft touch

*Whit's End Direct*, Gimmer Crag, Langdale.

Puzzling roof move, but you're going for good holds.

*Gethsemane*, High Crag Buttermere, Lakes. Fine crackline, well protected, superb setting.

*Emulator*, Gogarth Main cliff. Classic, sustained corner crack.

*Plum*, Tremadog. Tests all your climbing techniques.

### Benchmark

*Cemetery Gates*, Dinas cromlech, Llanberis Pass, North Wales. Sensational position. Especially the semi-hanging belay on the *Girdle* ledge.

*Rock Idol*, Mother Carey's Kitchen, Pembroke. Striking line, powerful climbing.

*Hombre*, Easter Island Gully, Gogarth. Catch it at low tide in the afternoon sun and you're in for a treat.

*Big Top*, Aonach Dubh, Glen Coe. Big setting,

big feel, big enjoyment.

*The Arrow*, St Govan's, Pembroke. Popular and polished but still compelling.

*Red Edge*, Esk Buttress, Lake District. The climbing is 5a but there's lots of it.

*Thirlmere Eliminate*, Castle Rock, Lake District. Thoroughly enjoyable.

Bishop's Rib, Chairladder, Cornwall. Low tide, sunshine and small wires for the first pitch – glorious atmosphere!

### Meaty

*Left Unconquerable*, Stange, Peak District. Short but meaty.

*Cenotaph Corner*, Dinas Cromlech, Llanberis Pass, North Wales. The mostest climb in the country – the most famous, most coveted but interestingly not the most frequently climbed. It's reputation; tendency to remain wet and legendary tricky/slippiness at the crux holds the hordes at bay. You decide for yourself!

*The Needle*, Shelterstone, Cairngorms. Meaty for the remote setting and seriousness. □

**Libby Peter** has been climbing for over 20 years, is a qualified Mountaineering Instructor and IFMGA Guide and author of the best-selling *Rock Climbing – Essential Skills and Techniques* published by MLTUK. Her base is North Wales from where she runs the guiding outfit Llanberis Guides [info@llanberisguides.com](mailto:info@llanberisguides.com)