

(A NOT EXHAUSTIVE)

AN OVERVIEW OF BOULDERING AREAS AROUND THE WORLD

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INTRODUCTION

A boulder is an inseparable part of its surroundings. The geological diversity of rocks is an important part of people's fascination with this sport. Like many other climbers, I started bouldering in order to train for rock climbing. That was back in 1983, and I wasn't training on boulders in the true sense of the word, but at the bottom of the rock faces we were climbing at the time. I was trying out this activity together with my brother François. My first natural training ground was Eclépens, a few gentle slopes below a steep limestone climbing area. The outer walls of my school in Estavayer-le-Lac were my main training ground!

I had trained my gaze and my sights so that I could spot all kinds of holds in a very small space. I still use these techniques today to find and tackle new problems. Since my first attempts at climbing, I have been looking for new ways to develop myself in this discipline that I love so much. I was more interested in discovering new difficulties and opening new lines than in climbing the routes that existed in my home region at the time. This was not because they were too easy, but because they often seemed too open for my taste.

BOULDER REGIONS

Bouldering is undoubtedly one of the oldest forms of climbing, but of course we can only comment on the period we know about. For us, the history of bouldering begins toward the end of the 19th century in Fontainebleau, France, and in England, because it is only from this time that we have information.

FRANCE

The oldest known bouldering region is in the forest of Fontainebleau, also called Bleu or Font. This area, just outside Paris is simply incredible and probably one of the biggest areas of its kind. People have been climbing here for over a century, in fact for about 150 years. There are thousands of boulders here, and there is still a lot of potential for new problems. The rock is unique, and the climbing is demanding and also technically challenging.

The area is situated on a sandstone plateau that has subsided over time, in the middle of a magnificent forest. On the fine sandy soil covered with pine trees, you feel like you are by the sea, even though the coast is very far away. Erosion has created round boulders that make climbing very special and difficult.

There is an enormous variety of routes of all levels of difficulty here; even the easier problems are interesting to climb. Fontainebleau is a paradise of

After the Atlantic Ocean retreated from the Paris Basin more than 30 million years ago, it left behind the largest playground there is for today's boulderers. Courtney Sanders in the bouldering paradise of Fontainebleau.

