

0. ICE CAVES AND CREVASSES - Story Preface

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Climbing any mountain—especially a mountain like K2—can be really dangerous. There are hidden formations which climbers may not see (and visible formations which they can see but cause lots of trouble). In this image, we see a moulin (also called a glacier mill) at the Athabasca Glacier (in the Canadian Rockies). Photo by Wikimedia user “China Crisis.” License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Turning north from Baltoro, climbers trek the Godwin-Austen Glacier toward K2. Named for an early explorer of the region, Henry Haversham Godwin-Austen, the glacier leads to K2's base camp (at 5,135 meters altitude). Broad Peak, just east of the Godwin-Austen glacier, overlooks the route to K2.

Although the base of the mountain (from the Godwin-Austen glacier) is a sight to behold, (as it is from the Gasherbrum Glacier), getting to that point is comparatively hazard-free. Ascending to the summit—only attempted by the most fit and experienced climbers—is marked by both obvious and hidden dangers.

Constant snow cover completely masks openings to ice caves and crevasses. Even the most seasoned climbers can fall into a crevasse or cave without warning. (The links take you to a snow picture—from the stunning perspective of a scanning electron microscope.) The USGS tells us that a really deep crevasse could measure 100 feet!

Vittorio Sella, the renowned Italian mountain photographer, took the first pictures of K2 and its pitfalls. It was 1909. Sella had previously ordered a special camera weighing 40 pounds to record what he found. Such scenes as 1888's Crevasse on the Glacier Blanc, although not taken on K2 itself, demonstrate the perils of a crevasse.

Ice caves can be even worse because of their size. Caverns, they can be unmanageable for climbers to exit without rescue. And rescue, on K2, may not always be possible.

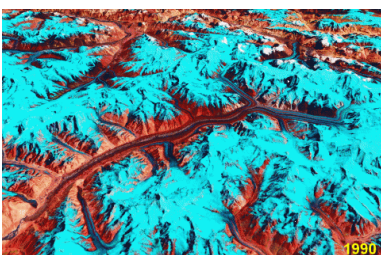
See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ICE-CAVES-AND-CREVASSES-Vertical-Limit-K2-The-Savage-Mountain>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ICE-CAVES-AND-CREVASSES-Vertical-Limit-K2-The-Savage-Mountain>

Media Stream



Baltoro Glacier - Map Depicting Changes

Image online, courtesy NASA. License: CC BY-SA 3.0.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Baltoro-Glacier-Map-Depicting-Changes>



Base Camp at K2

Image online, courtesy Cranfield University and Umeå University via "[Against All Odds: K2.](#)"

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Base of K2

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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K2 - From the Gasherbrum Glacier

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Snow - Detail of Snowflake

Image online, courtesy USDA.

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Vittorio Sella

Image online, courtesy the [Asia Society](#) website.

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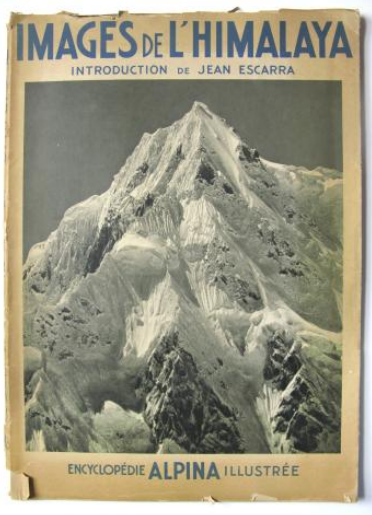


Crevasse on the Glacier Blanc - Vittorio Sella

Photo by Vittorio Sella, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Mountain Scenes by Vittorio Sella

Cover-image of 19th-century alpine encyclopedia, featuring Vittorio Sella's photos.

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