

GRIVEL

SINCE

1818



WHAT WE DO

EQUIPMENT FOR:
MOUNTAINEERING
FREERIDE
ROCK CLIMBING
TRAIL RUNNING
ICE CLIMBING
SKI TOURING



ONCE UPON A TIME, A BLACKSMITH

The creation, or the evolution, have not made man suitable for the mountains. He does not have fur as protection against the cold, nor claws for climbing, nor clogs for snow or terrain. His hands are strong but small, his feet are stable but delicate, everything needs protection and multiplication of energy.

On the other hand, man has developed the ability to think, which has allowed him to become "faber", that is to be able to invent and build the tools for his survival. This is what has established his final supremacy on the other animals. This has also allowed him to face the mountains. Alpinists are then a group of humans particularly prolific in equipment and tools modified for their use. Perhaps the most original of these inventions have been the metal ones, to replace clogs, claws and beaks. Here is where blacksmiths come on stage.

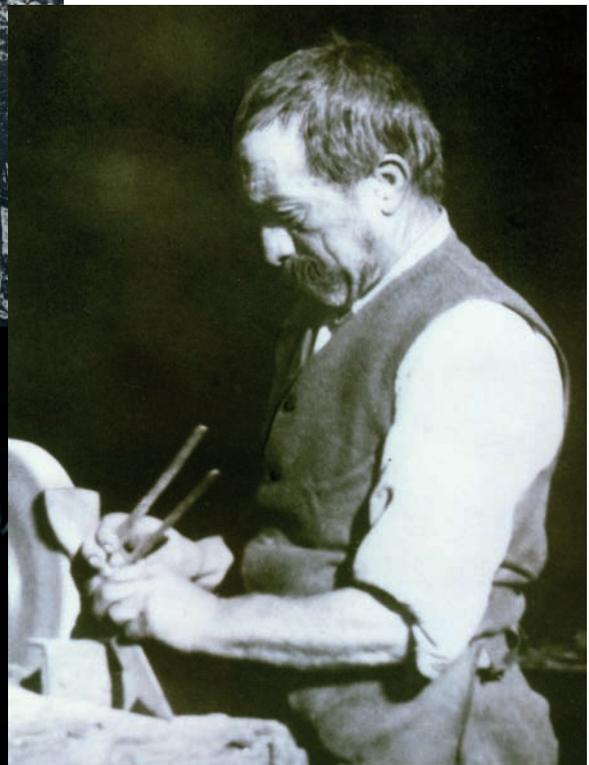
In folklore and in popular thought there is a link between magic and crafts that use fire. Blacksmiths have been considered supernatural in Europe until the XIX century. In the UK for example blacksmiths were called "enchanters of blood", that is healers, and people believed they could foresee the future and master magic. As another example, the water used to quench the metals was thought to be magic and was very sought-after; and it was believed that nailing to a tree nails forged by blacksmiths would cure some diseases by transferring them to the tree itself. Solemn vows were made on the anvils, used as altars, and in some rural areas the blacksmith had the authority to marry people. People turned to the blacksmith for protection and magic treatments.

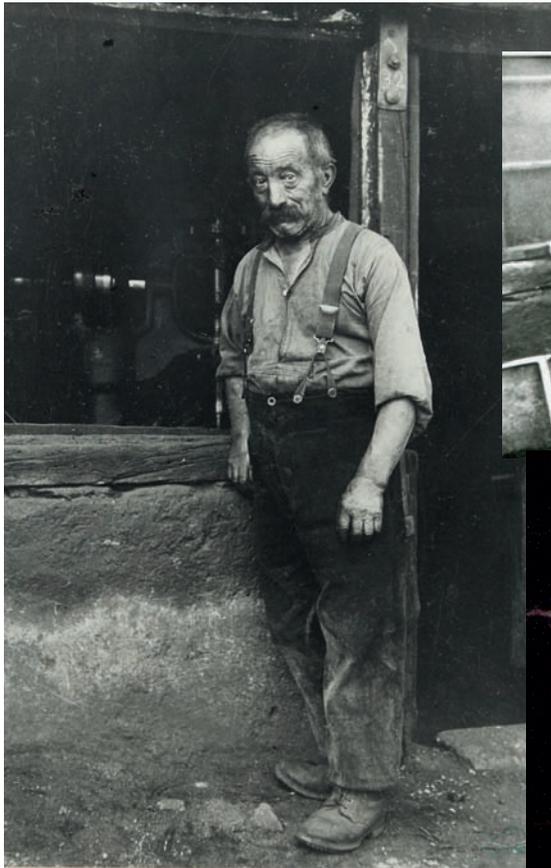
At the foot of Mont Blanc, in an area later called "les Forges", blacksmiths established themselves to produce horse-shoes, nails for boots, locks and agricultural tools, because the water coming down from Europe's highest mountains made the wheel of the first basic machinery turn, giving new strength to the men.

In the meantime, the Alps started to be looked at with a different eye, because of the great cultural movements that marked the transition from the age of Enlightenment to Romanticism. The only ones who were giving a more realistic image were naturalists and geologists and under this point of view the ascent of Mont Blanc by De Saussure represents a turning point.



1879





.This opened the way to the great transformation made between the XVIII and XIX century, that is the invention of the alpine space, according to a typically British vision of a stage for a new sport that opened the way to modern tourism and seduced also Italy.

The first British travellers came to the mountains in the first decades of the XIX century with the intention of using them as a playground for a new sport: alpinism (The Playground of Europe, sir Leslie Stephen 1871).

The meeting of the tradition and the new allowed the birth of the first ice axes, by adapting agricultural picks and making them lighter, and the first crampons coming from boot nails.

Our blacksmith was working at the foot of Mont Blanc. He was making shovels and hoes for working in the fields, locks for doors, horseshoes and nails for boots. He was heating the iron and then he was shaping the "cherry-red" piece with his hammer on the heavy anvil in his workshop. Sometimes a hunter would ask him to reinforce with iron his wooden pole. The blacksmith would then add a strong metal tip and reinforce the bottom part with a metal ferrule.

One day one of the hunters, who was guiding some weird English tourist that had hired him to take them to the top of the mountain (who knows why, there were no animals up there!), asked to the blacksmith to make a different pick, lighter and longer than usual, with a sharper flat part to cut the ice. So without a real inventor the first ice axe was born. In the following year the blacksmith made many of them, and he improved the model, that was becoming lighter and more elegant. The wonder towards these new requests and the total scepticism towards their possible effectiveness have become legendary, and the famous Henry, joker and skeptical, had often the impression that they were making fun of him. These tourists though were paying good money and this was more powerful than the scepticism for those who were used to live with the few opportunities that the mountains were offering, due to the cold and the dangers. These tourists were now coming on purpose to this small workshop during the summer, to buy the ice axes. History repeated itself with crampons, where the success was even greater than that of ice axes. The consequence was that during the winter the blacksmith continued to do his traditional job for the locals, but he soon he recycled himself into "producer of equipment for alpinists", he lost the magic of the blacksmith but his family's wealth increased.

To provide documentary evidence of this is not easy, because a small mountain blacksmith lost in the end of a valley for sure did not leave any important document to certify his life and works. Only after the unity of Italy the bureaucracy came to the highest mountains and towards the end of the XIX century we can find the first documents showing the existence of a Grivel blacksmith in the "les Forges" area. It is said that the activity was already existing, but nothing more. The only certainty comes from the cornerstone of the architrave of the workshop, which says 1818. In those times cheating on these things was not common. After that, history was not anymore linked to the people but to the products. Future historians of alpinism will have to decide the winner in the race between climbing techniques and the tools that make them possible. Perhaps this race will never end. Or perhaps it is our limit to never fully understand who leads and who follows.

TWO HUNDRED YEARS LATER

After two hundred years the mountains remain in the same place, and despite human interventions they are not significantly modified. Those who have the opportunity and the privilege to see them from above, from their summits, can realize that man and his wrongdoings are futile. Mountains are neither hostile nor friendly, neither mother nor killer.

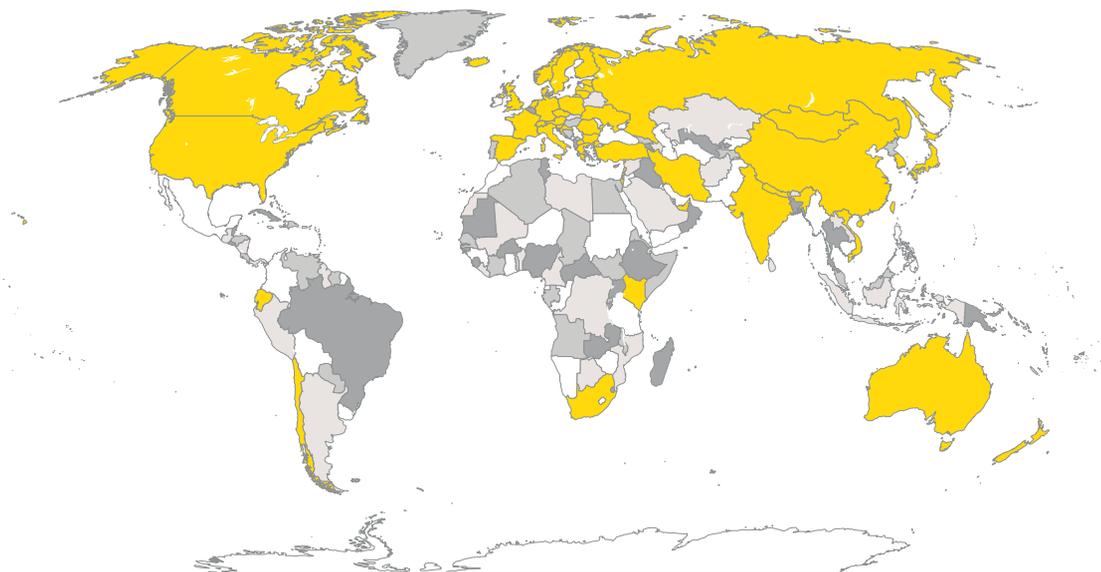
Mountains just are. In a few words: they did not even become aware of the human race. We like to think that our presence influences and modifies the world around us. We tell this story to mitigate the awareness of the uselessness of our actions. If today we stopped to go to the mountains, in a time maybe shorter than half of the story of alpinism every trace of humans would disappear and the mountains would keep going along their path of decomposition without having even accelerated or slowed down.

The race between climbing techniques and the tools that make them possible goes on, and Grivel had to evolve to remain ahead of the evolution, trying to keep up with the great appearances of the XX century: psychoanalysis, surrealism, Russian revolution, world wars, technology and electronics internet among others.

First, by focusing on research and development. Studying and adopting advanced production processes, from lasers to 3D printers, new materials, from aeronautic alloys to carbon fiber and Kevlar; we have strengthened, made lighter, automatized, simplified.

Second, by realizing how today what matters is not only the product, but also the production process which has generated it. We have focused on quality (ISO 9000 systems) and we have made ourselves autonomous on energy through our solar panels which use the sun and allow us to save every year 83000 barrels of oil. We work according to the ISO 14001 environmental management system which we have certified in 2004.

We represent a solid milestone in the socio-economic network of our valley, respecting the traditions and promoting mountain culture for future generations. We want to focus on all this and even increase it through the dedication of the whole company. The user is becoming tired of technological developments, he knows that products are adequate to his technical needs and therefore he starts to look for new "dimensions". From the promotion of man to a higher awareness of other perspectives of the mountains around him. The moral sense of what he does, the environmental compatibility of his leisure time, the cultural compatibility of his travels, the pollution of what he leaves behind, the respect of the environment and the people. The product he will choose will not be anymore only the lightest and fastest, but the one with most culture and compatibility with the world around us.



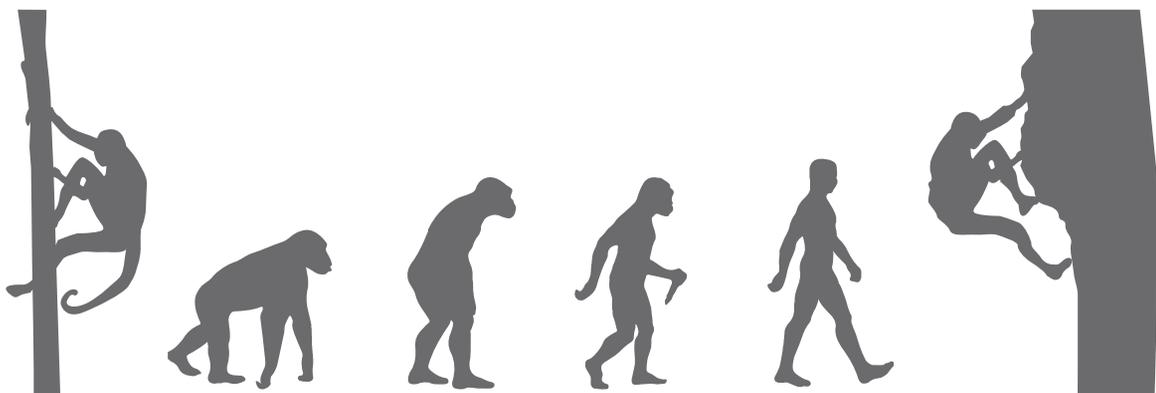


Clean climbing leaves no traces and does not damage the rock, alpine style expeditions that do not besiege the mountains, the refusal of chemical aids from oxygen to amphetamines, the interest and help to the local people through access to education, the respect of the professionalism of the guides, porters or sherpas, who are not anymore beasts of burden.

The market of climbing and alpinism is a small one, a niche one. It was born with alpinism and it has grown with it. It has been the same for Grivel.

When our world was what could be seen from the top of Mont Blanc, also the market was all there. Typically, the first alpinists were searching for their tools at the blacksmiths who lived at the foot of the mountains. They were the same tools produced for hunters and crystal seekers. Then the world got bigger to Europe, with the need of a more organized distribution network. Then the market got even bigger, because the alpinists started the "extra European expeditions", looking for new mountains around the world. This exported the knowledge and culture of alpinism to other nations and countries.

Today Grivel exports more than 90% of its products, in over 35 countries, China included. It sells products wherever there are mountains, and also in the countries where there are no mountains but there is nonetheless an interest for the culture of alpinism. We started with a reality coherent with our place of birth but we have pushed ourselves around the world to survive, looking for markets where people look up and see more than a bunch of rocks and ice. All this was possible through the contribution of many people, at all levels, technicians, alpinists, designers. And the credit of this result goes to them, who have brought us to the 7th generation, step by step. Thanks to you all!



KEYWORD: SAFETY

How will the products of the future be?

The different actors in the world of equipment give different answers to the challenges of the future.

Some focus on the highest performances, but it risks to lead to more complex products.

Some focus on the minimum weight, but it can bring more fragile products.

Some others focus on the cheapest price, but this does not help quality.

Some prefer marketing, some prefer pictures, some favour ads.

Many paths are possible. Grivel's choice is to increase safety for the user.

In our world this means more reliability of the products and their components. Choice and certified materials. Weight limited to what is "minimum functional weight" rather than absolute minimum weight. The Stealth helmet, fully ventilated and less than 200 grams can easily be worn without any inconvenience (the helmet is useful on the head!). Pieces of equipment that automatically do their job even if the climber forgets or cannot operate them: this is the case of the Twin Gate carabiner, which prevents the rope from coming out unexpectedly and does not need any manual closure. It is also the case of the antibott for crampons, that prevent the snow from balling and thus avoids dangerous slips.





We then worked on the weak point of climbers: the back and the spine, and we have created the Shield, which reduces the absorbs shocks in case of fall. Then the Roller, the carabiner reducing the efforts and helps multiply the tstrength during rope manoeuvres. Another example comes from the different binding systems for crampons, that allow to safely feet any boot. We control the life cycles of the product with the awareness that nothing is eternal. We do complete tests in our laboratory, from impact to fatigue, from salt spray to strength. We want to give precise information to the user, on the advantages (and disadvantages) of the new innovative products. We also use modern media (our first website dates back to 1996).

Mountains are neither hostile nor enemy, but they can become dangerous, very much so, when the great conditions that were there when we started out change because of the cold, the dark, the weather, the wind or the exhaustion. This has also been recognized by the "normal" world which has awarded Grivel, for the first time in outdoor equipment, the "Golden Compass" which is the global Oscar for design, with the following motivation : "Compasso d'oro for a specialty object that significantly improves safety while respecting the simplicity of its shape".

Last but not least, our work is driven by passion. Back in 1818, the Grivel blacksmith must have looked suspiciously those exotic customers who were asking for mountain tools, but he has for sure seen far.

Today, looking at the future we can say that our job and our world are not the biggest, not the richest, nor the ones most rapidly growing. They are though the ones we like, and those to whom our tradition and culture have brought us. Finally, we could ask ourselves: why do we keep going to the mountains? Because from the top of the mountain the sun always sets later and rises earlier. This is why!



GRIVEL AWARDED WITH COMPASSO D'ORO 2016

The OSCAR of Design to the historical company of Courmayeur

Grivel Mont Blanc, manufacturer of climbing equipment, has been awarded with the 2016 “Compasso d’Oro”. It’s the first time in history that a manufacturer of climbing and alpinism equipment wins this prestigious prize; and the first time also for a company from Aosta Valley.

Established in 1957, ADI Compasso d’Oro Award is the oldest and the most influential international design award in the world. In it’s 60 years of tradition it represents the only worldwide reality which underlines the complexity of a design project. It’s main goal is to contribute to the valorisation of the concept of “Made in Italy” of products already on the marker at an international level.

Three hundred and twenty products have been awarded in more than fifty years, and along with the almost two thousand products given an Honourable Mention are collected and kept in the Historical Collection of the Compasso d’Oro Award. Following Gio Ponti’s philosophy, receiving a mention or a prize is a way to honour those manufactures whose DNA is the excellence of production. Just to mention a few of the winners... Mario Bellini, Vico Magistretti, Enzo Mari, Bruno Munari, Ettore Sottsass, Michele De Lucchi. And a few of the awarded products: the famous Fiat 500 car... the “Alessi” coffeepot, the “Brion Vega” TV set, the “Grillo” phone... the Typing machine “Lettera 22”.

The Compasso d’Oro award is given every three years, This year Grivel has been awarded for the revolutionary Twin Gate carabiner.

“In 2018 Grivel will be 200 years old therefore I’m very proud to receive this prize which is not only a clear recognition of the great engagement of the entire company today but an homage to the previous generations who, while working in much harder and uncomfortable situations have been able to invent those pieces of equipment that allowed numerous “giants” such as Valter Bonatti...Riccardo Cassin...Toni Gobbi...to reach and conquer the highest summits of the world”
Says Gioachino Gobbi president and inventor/designer of Twin Gate.

“TWIN GATE” represents the real revolution in the world of carabiners: being the safest carabiner ever made, a revolution in the field of safety for it’s intuitive and totally automatic use. The innovative solution allows it to work both as a regular carabiner and as a safety carabiner but doing it’s work faster, and in a safer way. It is impossible for the rope to accidentally escape! Insensible to ice and sand that can stuck normal carabiner systems. Impossible to forget it open!

WHAT MAKES GRIVEL UNIQUE

RESPONSIBLE INNOVATION WITHIN TRADITION



QUALITY THROUGH EXPERIENCE

SUSTAINABLE MANUFACTURING



OUR VALUES

RESPONSIBLE INNOVATION WITHIN TRADITION

Innovation drives us forward but our roots are in Grivel's long history, dating back to the foundation of the company in 1818.

QUALITY THROUGH EXPERIENCE

We make products that our customers have to rely on, with quality and safety as ultimate goals, based on our experience and optimizing our "Made in Italy".

SUSTAINABLE MANUFACTURING

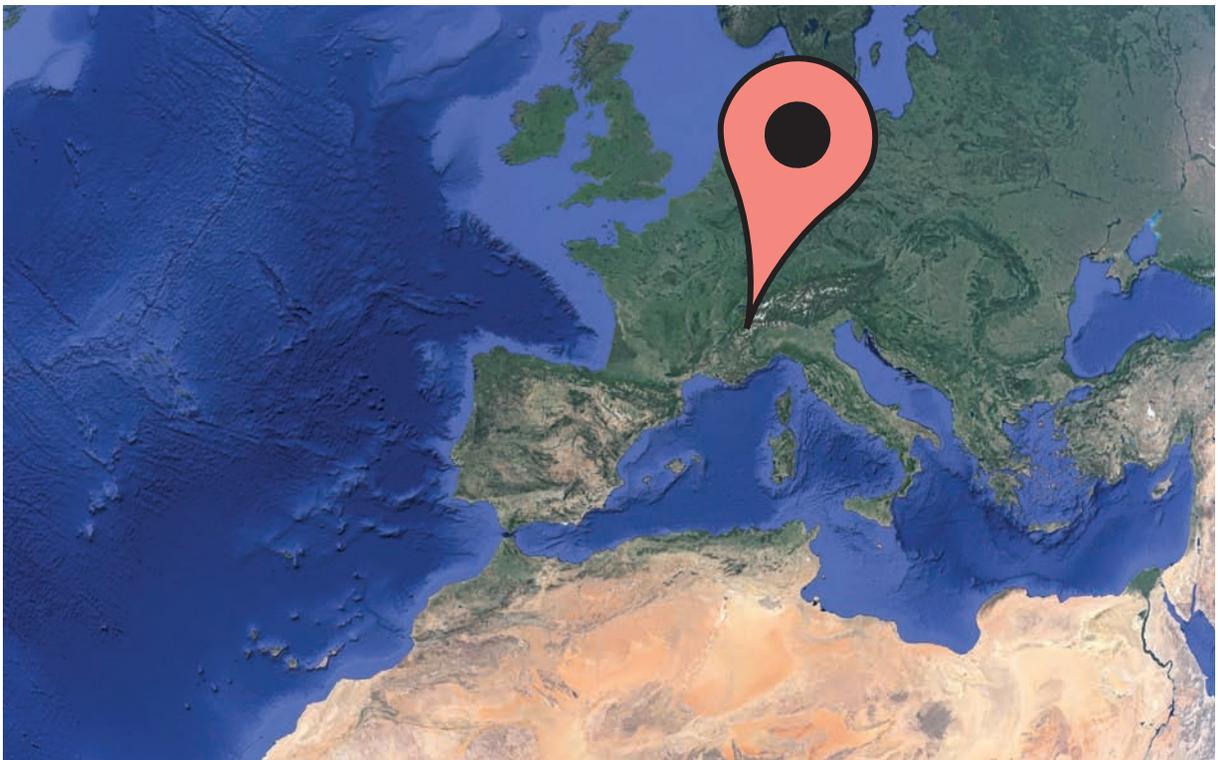
Based at the foot of Mont Blanc it is essential for us to respect the environment. This comes through the use of renewable Energy for production, and a constant search for environmental-friendly technologies and recycled materials.

WHERE WE ARE

Alpenland is the name given by the Germans to describe the part of Europe surrounding the Alps: 22.000 square kilometres with a population of 18 million. The area covers about 2% of the whole of Europe and contains territory belonging to seven different countries: Austria 28%, Italy 26%, France 25%, Switzerland 13%, Germany 3%, Slovenia 3%, and Lichtenstein 2%. There are 82 mountains higher than 4000 metres.

The first traces of Man in the Alps go back to less than one hundred thousand years ago: the plateaus of Vercours in France, Coira in Switzerland and Monfenera at the entrance of the Sesia Valley in Italy. The Pleistocene glacial era virtually cancelled out all traces of human settlement up until the fourth and last glacial expansion, the "Wurmian", 8-12 thousand years ago when Man reappeared in the Alps in the form of the hunter Homo sapiens.

Alpenland has evolved its own specific culture over the centuries, adapting to the problems of altitude, cold and snow that beset the inhabitants of mountains. For centuries, Europe, birthplace of western culture ignored its mountainous belly button, considering it an obstacle to travel between one place and another. The Enlightenment and Romanticism were to radically change this attitude as the faraway peaks and terrifying precipices became considered places of beauty and leisure. Here is where Alpinism was born, its very name comes from the Alps and it is here in the Alps that we want to stay, maintaining our traditions, keeping in touch with the mountains and the men who challenge them.



Advantageous economic conditions can't possibly justify destroying an experience that has been created slowly, nourished by snowy peaks and shaping the hands and intellect of men for generations; men whose first thoughts in the morning flew to the mountains and last thoughts before falling asleep in the evenings to the tools to challenge them. In short: we will not trade our soul for profit or lose it by transferring it to another country. We know full well that our soul can't be moved to a place where you can't see Mont Blanc, where people you meet are unable to understand the difficulties in the mountains, who consider climbing to be a waste of time. There's certainly no other place that can produce such inspirational tools and where progress can lead us to pursue new challenges.

WE ARE GLOBAL

90% OF OUR TOTAL PRODUCTION IS EXPORTED

The market of climbing and alpinism is a small one, a "niche" as it is called today. It was born with alpinism and it has grown with its evolution. For Grivel it has been the same.

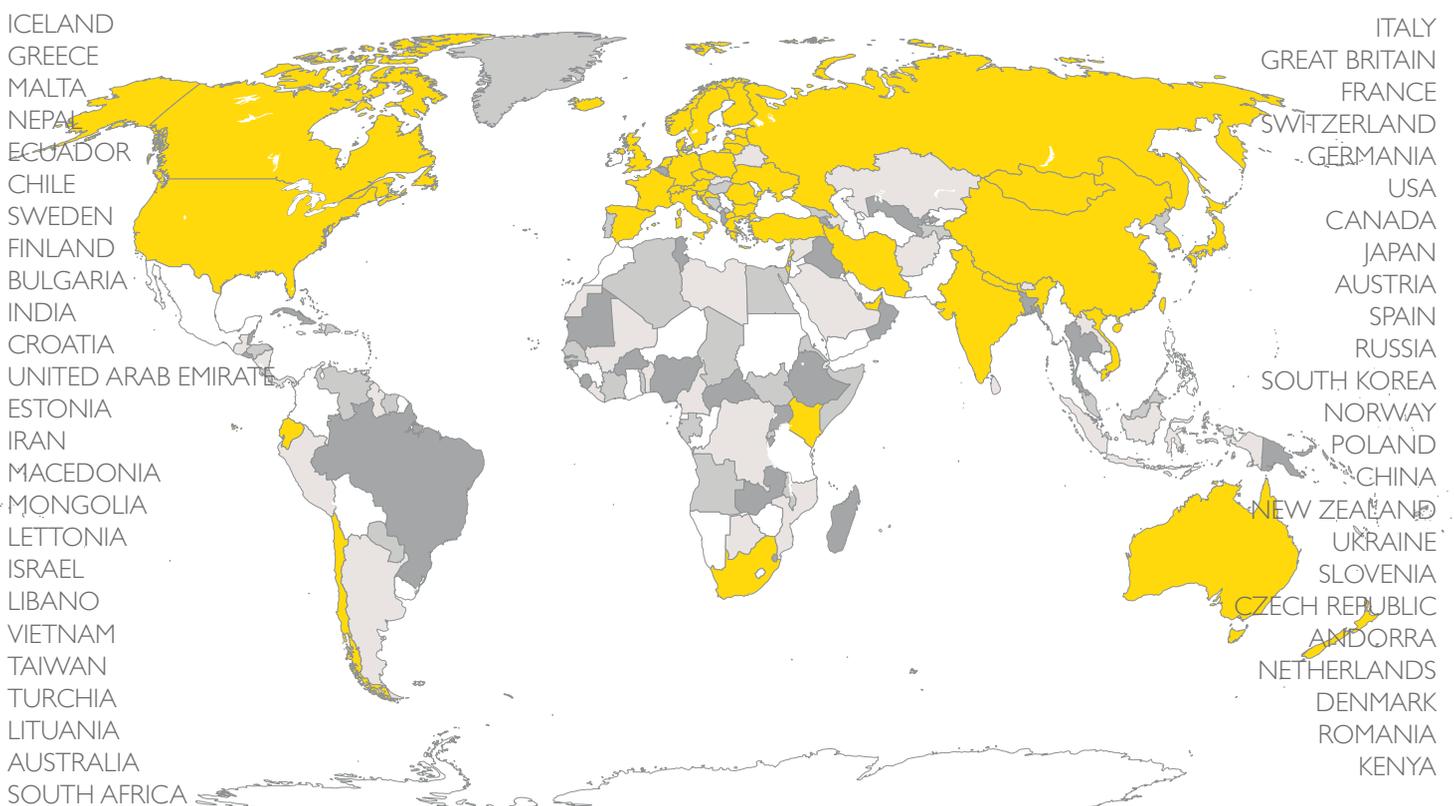
When our world is what you could see from the top of Mont Blanc, the whole market was there also. The first alpinists would normally go to the blacksmiths who were at the foot of Mont Blanc to look for the tools they needed. They were the same tools produced for hunters and crystal seekers. Then the world grew to encompass Europe and the companies started to feel the need of a more organized distribution network for their products. Most manufacturers decided though to stay local, in their country or just a little farther. But none of these has survived to the evolution of the world.

Then the market grew even bigger because the Europeans started to go on "extra European" expeditions, to look for new mountains around the world, with a strange mix of summits and poles, north and south. This trend globally exported the knowledge and culture of alpinism to other nations.

Our sales have followed the same path, to reach a global market.

Today Grivel is a "pocket multinational", whose activity is strongly linked to its native territory but which operates globally, in a niche specialised market.

We export 90% of our turnover to over 35 countries worldwide, China included. We sell our products wherever there are mountains, and even in countries without mountains but with the culture and interest for alpinism. We have started in coherence with our place of birth but we have pushed ourselves around the world to stay alive, looking for new markets where people look up and see more than just a bunch of rocks and ice.



A FAMILY STORY

Grivel was born as a family company and it has always thought that it is important to preserve the memory of the people, their actions, their successes and mistakes.

We believe it is important to tell their stories.

We all need stories, especially the ones closer to us. We need collective memories, we need to know the faces of those who came before us, at home like in the company. They don't need to be all exceptional stories, also the normal ones are important because they bring continuity.

To reach 200 years we need to know very well our place in history and in the continuity. We need to realize that all have been, and that we all are, a flow towards continuity, and not static stones.

A THANK YOU FROM THE HEART

We would like to thank all those who have allowed us to reach the 200 years birthday, alpinists, workers, customers, partners, ...



The Grivel family in 1929: Henry e sua moglie Odile, coni figli Camillo, Lidia, Amato e Laurent.



The Gobbi family in 2009: clockwise from the left Betta, Oliviero, Caterina e Gioachino.



In the mid 80's Gioachino and Betta renew the energy of Grivel towards the new millenium.



WARNING

- The practice of alpinism (progression or climbing on ice, snow or rock) requires knowledge and involves risks that can cause death or injury.
- Whoever uses Grivel products must be in possession of the technical and the precautionary know-how and personally assumes the responsibility for the risks entailed when the product is not used properly.
- Any modifications to the original product can have dangerous consequences for the safety and life span of the product itself.
- Any modifications are to the risk and danger of the user himself and automatically entail the curtailment of the guarantee.
- The materials do not last forever. Check the tool before using it every time and do not hesitate to replace it.

GRIVEL



1818



2018

200 YEARS



GRIVEL®

SINCE
1818



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