



## Press release # 2 - June 2018

***The 2018 Piolets d'Or event is opening new routes: moving east; celebrating the very rich year of 2017; and highlighting the career of an alpinist from a small country - also to the east - with a huge mountain culture. The 2018 Piolets d'Or will move out of France for the first time to be hosted by the Ladek Mountain Festival, now Poland's biggest mountain festival. Together we are actively preparing a great celebration of modern alpinism from September 20-23.***

The year 2017 has been very rich in alpine ascents, with many big achievements. On the Piolets d'Or website ([www.pioletsdor.net](http://www.pioletsdor.net)) you will find the « big list » of notable ascents throughout the year. Our jury is currently analysing this list and later in June will announce the awards for the most significant ascents of 2017. We hope to bring all the protagonists of those ascents to Ladek, not only to take part in a big international celebration but also to meet fully with the audience.

Today we have great pleasure in announcing our 10th Lifetime Achievement / Piolets d'Or 2018 Career award. He is a living legend amongst Himalayan climbers, and also an immensely experienced, professional IFMGA mountain guide. He comes from a country with the highest density of alpinists on earth. Below you can read a summary portrait of Andrej Stremfelj from Slovenia.

Do come to Ladek in September to meet Andrej, and other Slovenian alpinists with unpronounceable names but incredible curriculums. You will be very welcome! Ladek has become renowned for its massive post event parties, all with good humour and a wonderful shared spirit. Over the four days of the festival 10,000 people are expected to attend.



**23<sup>RD</sup>  
LADEK  
MOUNTAIN  
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LADEK-ZDRÓJ POLAND



**PIOLETS D'OR 2018 AWARDS CEREMONY  
WILL TAKE PLACE IN LADEK-ZDRÓJ, POLAND  
20-23/09/2018**



Please find detailed information on 23rd Ladek Mountain Festival at :

[www.festiwalgorski.pl/en/](http://www.festiwalgorski.pl/en/)

[www.pioletsdor.net](http://www.pioletsdor.net)



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## THE MASTER

*An introduction by Marko Prezelj*

His name is Andrej. Andrej Štremfelj.

Only special people can successfully maintain a genuine enthusiasm for life into their later years. In this regard, Andrej Štremfelj may be unique. His attitude to alpinism, including life, preserves both a freshness and maturity. In spite of huge social changes, the values he transmits to our whimsical tribe have not changed. His role as a pedagogue completely fits his character.

Andrej conveys his experiences and views primarily by direct example, although he will sometimes produce writing that displays an appropriate emphasis and compassion. He is still able to connect playfulness and responsibility, one of the essential "tricks" that has ensured he has reached a mature age both satisfied and happy.

*Marko Prezelj's full profile of Andrej Štremfelj will appear shortly on the website.*



## ANDREJ STREMFELJ - CLIMBING CAREER

Andrej Štremfelj was born in December 1956 in Kranj, the city in which he still lives today. He began his climbing career in 1972 with the Kranj Alpine Club, and after graduating from Ljubljana University went on to teach physical education at Skofja Loka High School. He became a mountain guide in 1982 and a fully qualified IFMGA guide in 1997. Although he climbed new routes in his home mountains, arguably Andrej's most significant achievements took place in 1989, when he made first and second winter ascents of three steep and difficult routes on the north face of Mangart [at around 2,680m the third highest peak in Slovenia], and in summer 2002, when he celebrated 30 years as an alpinist by climbing, within the space of 40 days, 30 different routes on 27 different peaks throughout Slovenia. The most notable of these was Zajeda on Široka Peč in the Julian Alps. However, it was the creation of bold, technically difficult routes in the Greater Ranges, particularly at the highest altitudes, where he really made his mark.

By 1977 his reputation as an alpinist ensured he was chosen to join Janusz Loncar's Yugoslav expedition to attempt the fourth ascent of Gasherbrum I (8,068m) via a new route, the southwest ridge. In poor weather and climbing alpine style above 7,200m, Andrej and another Slovenian icon from the era, Nejc Zaplotnik, completed the first ascent of the ridge in difficult conditions. In 1979 he upped the game, making the first ascent of the West Ridge Direct on Everest (8,848m; he would return to Everest in 1990, making an ascent of the Normal Route with his wife Marija, the first married couple to stand together on the summit). In 1983 he made an unusual alpine style ascent of the Bezzubkin Pillar on Pik Communism (7,495m), in 1985 a new line on the east face of Dhaulagiri - though his party was unable to summit after reaching the east ridge at 7,500m, and in 1986 a 32-hour round trip ascent of

Gasherbrum II (8,035m) from base camp. In 1989 he climbed a new route in alpine style up the central pillar of the southwest face of Xixabangma (8,027m). Two years later, in 1991, came perhaps his masterpiece, a bold alpine style ascent of the south ridge of Kangchenjunga to the south summit (8,476m), an climb awarded the first ever Piolet d'Or. In 1999 he made the first ascent of the north face of rarely climbed Gyachung Kang (7,952m). Inevitably, climbing at high altitudes isn't always successful. An attempt to make an alpine style ascent of the British Route on the south face of Annapurna was thwarted low down by dangerous conditions. However, there were two notable "failures". In 1981 he reached 8,250m on the unclimbed south face of Lhotse (8,516m), and in 1988, in an attempt to make its second ascent, reached 8,100m on the south-southwest pillar - the Magic Line - of K2 (8,611m).

At slightly lower altitudes Andrej made first ascents of a number of Himalayan peaks such as Nyanang Ri (7,071m, 1989), Boktah (6,114m, in 1991), Palung Ri (7,012m, in 1995), Siguang Ri Shar (6,998m, and a new route on 7,309m Siguang Ri, both in 1999), Lashar I (6,842m in 2005), and more significantly the two highly-coveted summits of Menlungtse (7,181m, via the east face in 1992), and Janak (7,041m, via the southwest pillar in 2006). Outside Asia he travelled to Patagonia in 1996 to put up Born under a Wandering Star on the east face of the North Tower of Paine.

Always willing to share his enthusiasm, Andrej has continued climb at a high level for a remarkably long period - more than 45 years. This was recognized in 2017 when the Alpine Association of Slovenia presented him with the fourth Lifetime Achievement Award in the field of alpinism.

*Lindsay Griffin*