December 2002, First Patagonian expedition. Last flight of the season, Vivian Laperriere is in control on the downwind leg. I just have time to capture this magic moment (Jean-Marie Clément)

DANCING WITH THE WIND

OPENING this book is like discovering a buried hoard of precious jewels.
It is printed in full colour and Jean-Marie Clément has made good use of this to illustrate the text with beautiful photos and clear diagrams on almost every one of its 300 pages; but the real value is in the wisdom and experience that it contains.

Although Jean-Marie has been soaring at top level for 50 years, few UK pilots are familiar with him, because his soaring experience has been mainly in France and Italy and latterly in Argentina as well.
Holding 27 French records and six World records allows him to write with great authority.

As befits an author whose playground has been in the hilly and mountainous parts of the world, this book covers almost every type of soaring, except for the classic flatland thermal soaring that we typically enjoy in southern England. There are chapters on slope soaring, mountain thermals, various types of wave lift, and wave flying techniques. Further chapters tackle aspects of long-distance flying at high altitude, including human factors and using electronic oxygen breathing systems.

This is a book for experienced pilots who are ready to stretch themselves by flying for longer and going further and faster using some of the most exciting and challenging soaring opportunities on the globe. Jean-Marie is careful to stress what you must do to mitigate the inevitable risks of flying close to the hills and mountains and over such inhospitable terrain. He emphasises this with details of accidents where even skilled and experienced pilots have broken their gliders, or worse.

For me this is a “must-have” book; however, for some reason I didn’t find it an easy read. Occasionally the content is very technical. In some places the translation from French makes the meaning difficult to discern. Balanced against any shortcomings is the wealth of knowledge and experience, not only from the author, but also from other world class pilots, including our own John Williams, all assembled into a single volume. How did we manage without it?

Phil King, Herefordshire GC

Dancing with the wind, by Jean-Marie Clément
Hardback; 304 pages
Published by www.topfly.aero
Available for £37.50 from www.bgashop.co.uk

“Excellent diagrams and annotated photographs, rarely found in other gliding books, provide a strong visual aid to understanding the complex air flows around mountains. This book is ideal for anyone wishing to venture into the mountains for the first time and equally helpful for the experienced.”

Kevin Atkinson, Aim Higher