

Bimano, bouldering guide for Switzerland

Written by YDE

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App Name: Bimano

Available: [iTunes](#) or [Andriod](#)

Price: Free, in-app purchases available and required for most areas

Languages: English, German

Website: bimano.ch

Having just recently moved to Switzerland I've been looking to explore what the country has to offer from a bouldering perspective. One of the struggles here is the lack of official bouldering guides, many of which are out of print. Partly this seems to be related to the fact that bouldering areas can be fairly small and are geographically dispersed across the country, but also for a small country like Switzerland the demand is presumably low for dedicated guide books. Further, with three official languages it can be a challenge to find information on the web as well.

Enter bimano, an app developed in Switzerland that tries to capture the country's bouldering heritage in one easy to use format, as well as that of some other sites sprinkled across Europe. All this right on your phone and in your pocket. Read on for more details!

In principle, the app acts as a shop front for downloading multiple different “bouldering packages”, which correspond to varying bouldering areas /sites /sectors across the country. Each package requires you to pay a small fee, after which you will unlock a download that opens that specific area's bouldering routes and pictures.

For example if you are interested in bouldering in the Basler Jura, a fee of 3.99 GBP will unlock 13 different bouldering locations in that region. If you wanted to directly buy all areas in Switzerland, this would set you back 54.99 GBP. Locations can be browsed by name or, neatly, through a google map view that drops markers corresponding to each bouldering area. This is a great way to get your bearing and also locate the approaches to each site.

Each location has an information page that gives you general details, directions and other tips and pointers that are relevant to know. Usually a small drawing of the location, access points and boulders is also given which is very useful when first trying to find them. A selection of colour photos of actions shots from prominent boulders are displayed, giving you a good feel for the type of area you are looking at.

All the boulders in that location are then listed by sector, and by tapping a boulder you will then move to a picture of said boulder overlaid with route markings, showing you the problems that exist. The grades for each marking are then listed below the picture. Some additional details like whether the route is recommended, or whether it is a sit start are conveniently displayed through icons. Some routes also have descriptions, which can be great to understand and crack a specific problem, but this is the exception rather than the norm unfortunately.

As a neat feature each route can be further tapped on to open up an option to grade the boulder and save it as completed. The grading fluctuates from the stated grade to + and - one degree. Your completion options are Redpoint, Onsight or Flash. This is a neat feature to save your own personal tick list as you work through each area. Additionally based on user feedback you can also see how others graded the problem. You can take heart from user feedback up-voting a particularly nasty problems grade that you are stuck on!

If you have taken a liking to certain boulders you can also save these as favourites, which can then be easily retrieved from the Favourites on the bottom options bar.

Overall in terms of usability this is a fantastic app. Good quality pictures and descriptions help you find the areas and boulders while the markings easily identify the problems you want to work on. It's easy to browse through the areas in your vicinity and find something to do. And while I do like a good guide book, having access to all this on your phone is very convenient.

A few gripes: You can take issue with the pricing as some packages might not be great value for money depending on what they contain. Additionally downloading the packages can be a little tricky, ensure your screen doesn't lock while doing so or you may run into problems. Furthermore, I am not sure how often the areas and the app are curated and updated. I visited a number of sites which have not been climbed for a while (moss, shrubbery making boulders unrecognisable) or have been appropriated by private individuals and the boulders removed or destroyed.

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All that being said this really is a great little app and has opened up a wealth of new opportunities for the months to come which I otherwise might not have found. Any questions drop me a note, and happy bouldering!