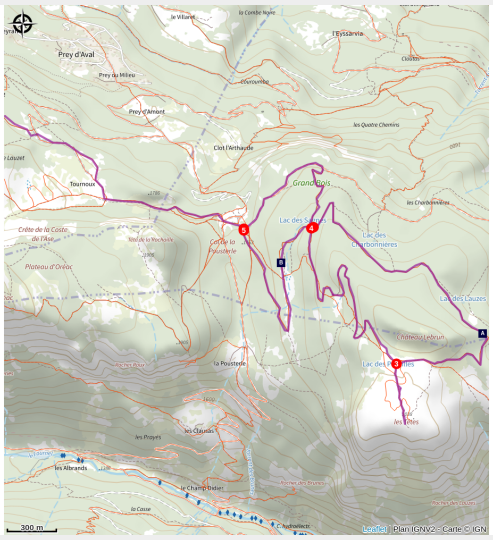
Track No. 5: Belvédère des Têtes

Parc national des Ecrins



Piste n°5 : Belvédère des Têtes (Rogier Van Rijn)

To check snow conditions, click here.

Description:

Once you've arrived at the Chalet Nordique to purchase your Pass, the route continues towards the Belvédère du Pelvoux.

1. At the Belvédère du Pelvoux, the itinerary continues slightly straight ahead until it forks to the left to reach the Petites Têtes and climb into the larch forest.
2. The route climbs steadily for around 1.4 km, reaching an intersection. Turn left towards Grandes Têtes.
3. At Grandes Têtes, the trail climbs to the left at the intersection to join the last track leading to Belvédère des Têtes.
4. The circuit descends continuously along the Grandes Têtes loop until you reach the end of the Col de la Pousterle trail

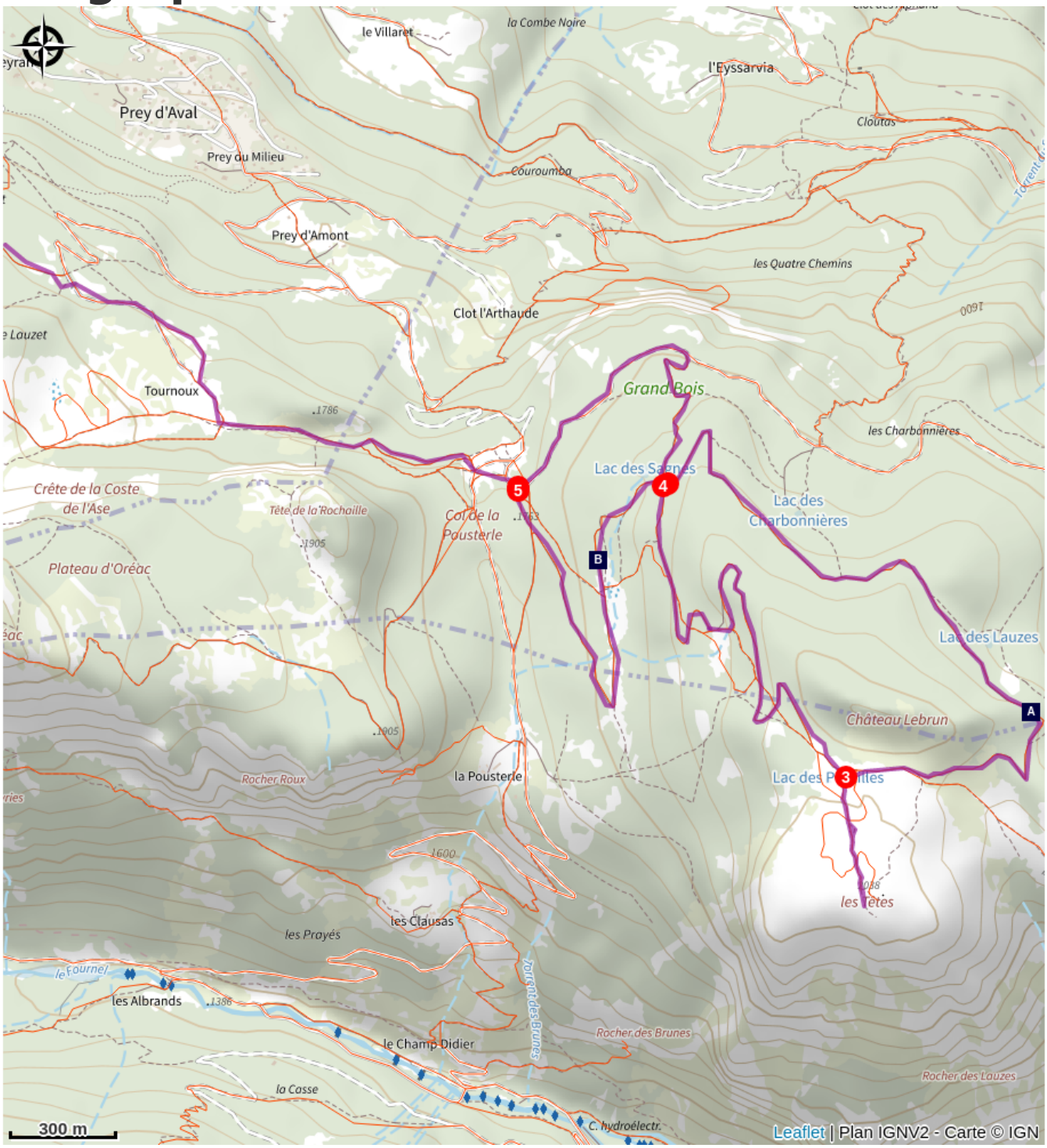
Useful information

Practice : Cross-country skiing

Level : Experienced skiers track

(itinerary no. 2), which leads to the Belvédère du Pelvoux.
5. From the Belvedere, take trail no. 1 Tournoux-La Rochaille, towards the Chalet Nordique, then back to your starting point.

Geographical location



- The Eurasian pygmy owl (A)
- Cliff-dwelling birds (B)
- The Col de la Pousterle (C)
- The larch (D)
- Forest-dwelling bats (E)
- The pygmy owl (F)
- Tournoux (G)
- The common raven (H)

The Fournel valley (I)
Le Laus (K)
The Les Têtes belvedere (M)
Reading the landscape (O)
The peregrine falcon (J)
The deer (L)
The clouded Apollo (N)

All useful information

⚠ Advice

A few rules:

→ You use these routes at your own risk. Find out about the weather conditions and avalanche risks published by Météo France. Also, don't hesitate to ask at tourist information offices or the Nordic chalet before you set off.

→ For avalanche-prone trails, we strongly advise you to take your avalanche transceiver, shovel and probe with you.

→ Night-time activities on Nordic areas are prohibited. It must be supervised by a professional and must be authorized by the ski slopes service.

→ Several itineraries are shared with cross-country skiers and ski tourers: give them priority, always walk along the edge of the piste and be vigilant when crossing these shared paths.

→ Many routes cross downhill ski slopes; be vigilant and give skiers the right of way.

→ Don't walk in the cross-country ski tracks, straddle them.

→ Respect the signposting: dangers, prohibitions, trail directions, among other things.

→ Don't overestimate your abilities!

→ Dogs are tolerated, on a leash, off the cross-country ski trails (dogs prohibited on the Lauzet itinerary of the Puy-Saint-Vincent ski area, reserved for approved sled dog teams).

→ Take your garbage with you!

Please note: This information is given for guidance only. It is your responsibility to check the weather forecast before setting off and not to overestimate your possibilities. The Tourist Office and the PNE cannot be held responsible in the event of an accident. In case of doubt, contact professionals: instructors or equipment hire companies.

Emergency contact details: Secours Montagne: 04 92 22 22 22 or 112

On your path...

The Eurasian pygmy owl (A)

The call of this small, nocturnal bird of prey can be heard in the spring, and also in the autumn when it can utter some peculiar sounds. Active during daytime hours and at dusk, the pygmy owl is a predator of passerine birds and small forest rodents. But when they spot it, passerines will come together in large numbers to mob it, so as to prevent any attempted surprise attack. It is restricted to mountain forests where it seeks out trees with woodpecker cavities in which it builds its nest.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins

Cliff-dwelling birds (B)

The cliff is home to a variety of birdlife. The raven, not to be confused with the crow, frequently nests here. He makes an uncomfortable housemate with the peregrine falcon, a bird in sharp decline and still a vulnerable species. It, too, favours this cliff, which offers plenty of potential nesting holes. The wallcreeper, also known as the butterfly bird, also finds this a good nesting spot. Some climbing routes are closed during this bird's breeding season.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - Parc national des Écrins

The Col de la Pousterle (C)

A pousterle (in the local high-alpine Occitan language) is a small gate, a postern. It comes from the Latin posterula which means back door. This place name is sometimes given to a pass, which could be described as a gateway between two valleys! The glaciers carved out this gateway through which an arm stretched between the glacier occupying the Fournel valley and the glacier flowing down the Vallouise valley.

Attribution : Bertrand Bodin - Parc national des Écrins

The larch (D)

The symbol of the Southern Alps, this softwood tree loses its leaves in winter, and is swathed with gold and lights up the mountains in autumn. The larch forests are maintained by the grazing of flocks. Without them, other trees like the fir or other pine trees could grow, creating a different kind of forest. A pioneer species, the larch establishes freely in light conditions. Its solid rot-proof wood has always been used in the construction of houses.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - Parc national des Écrins

Forest-dwelling bats (E)

Bats don't just live in caves! In summer, some forest-dwelling species shelter in old hollow trees or woodpecker holes during the day. Sometimes, the females also form little colonies here, where their young will be born (one bat pup per female). In this forest, which is still young with very few old trees, artificial roosts have been installed to help the bats and to facilitate their study.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

The pygmy owl (F)

The call of this small, nocturnal bird of prey can be heard in the spring, and also in the autumn when it can utter some peculiar sounds. Active during daytime hours and at dusk, the pygmy owl is a predator of passerine birds and small forest rodents. But when they spot it, passerines will come together in large numbers to mob it, so as to prevent any attempted surprise attack. It is restricted to mountain forests where it seeks out trees with woodpecker cavities where it builds its nest.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - Parc national des Écrins

Tournoux (G)

The Tournoux plateau is a small paradise with its cool meadows, its occasional renovated chalets made from stone and larch wood and its view over the Tête d'Aval, an imposing limestone peak forming part of the Montbrison massif. Whether on a mountain bike, on foot or on cross-country skis in the winter, this spot is always an invitation to stop for a break!

Attribution : Jan Novak

The common raven (H)

A hollow "caw" makes you lift up your head (careful not to trip!). A pair of common ravens is nesting near here (they pair for life), on a cliff face. Although bigger than its cousins the carrion crow and the rook, it can be identified by its rather lozenge-shaped tail. It almost became extinct due to persecution Yet it's an omnivore and, more particularly, a scavenger which plays an important role by cleaning up disease-prone carcasses.

Attribution : Chevalier Robert - Parc national des Écrins

The Fournel valley (I)

This is the southern side of the Col de la Pousterle and its view over the very long Fournel valley, known for its mines, ice waterfalls, blue thistles, its canyon and other treasures. Lower down is L'Argentière-la-Bessée. At the highest point, right in the distance, is the Champsaur!

Attribution : Jan Novak

The peregrine falcon (J)

Cries echo around the cliffs. A pair of peregrine falcons nests there regularly. A real "fighter plane" with tapered wings, it is a formidable predator of pigeons and other birds. It came very close to extinction because of pesticides, but it remains endangered because the eggs are still stolen for the falconry trade, even though it is a protected species. It is also sensitive to disturbance. Climbers are urged not to climb in this area in the spring.

Attribution : Fiat Denis - Parc national des Écrins

Le Laus (K)

A number of old alpine pasture chalets or hamlets, often renovated, are dotted across the Puy-Saint-Vincent resort. These are the Chalets du Laus. Le Laus is a place name designating a lake. In fact, just after the chalets, although not a lake, there is a flat, marshy area which is no doubt a small filled-in lake. So no point in bringing your pedalo!

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - Parc national des Écrins

The deer (L)

Deer are well-established across the Pays des Écrins. You can spot clues as to its presence: hoof prints or droppings, often in little piles. The stag loses his antlers at the end of winter (February-May) and they regrow up to the end of August. They reach full development before the rutting season (September), when you can hear the rutting call. The doe has no antlers.

Attribution : Telmon Jean-Philippe - Parc national des Écrins

The Les Têtes belvedere (M)

This belvedere is worth the diversion, not only for its unrestricted panorama over the Fournel and Durance valleys but also for the place itself, with its sparse mature larches and the bare limestone scored with small fissures. These were created by the erosion of the rock by cold snowmelt waters or rain.

Attribution : Thibaut Blais

The clouded Apollo (N)

White, almost translucent in places, with just a few black spots, this butterfly is a cousin of the better-known mountain Apollo. It lives in clearings in open woods where the plant on which the female lays her eggs grows, and on which its caterpillars feed: the corydalis. It is a mountain butterfly.

Attribution : Gourreau Jean-Marie - Parc national des Écrins

Reading the landscape (O)

The Vallouise valley is a tributary valley on the right-hand bank of the Durance. It is made up of three municipalities: Vallouise-Pelvoux, Les Vigneaux and, looking down from the heights, Puy-Saint-Vincent. This 25 km-long valley is dominated by numerous peaks, ranging in altitude from 980 metres, at the confluence of the Durance, to the peak of the Barre des Écrins at 4,102 metres (the highest point in the Les Écrins massif) and covers 18,541 hectares. Lying at the centre of the crystalline massif, the Vallouise valley is the gateway to the Parc National des Écrins and boasts exceptional and varied landscapes and a diverse wealth of fauna and flora.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins