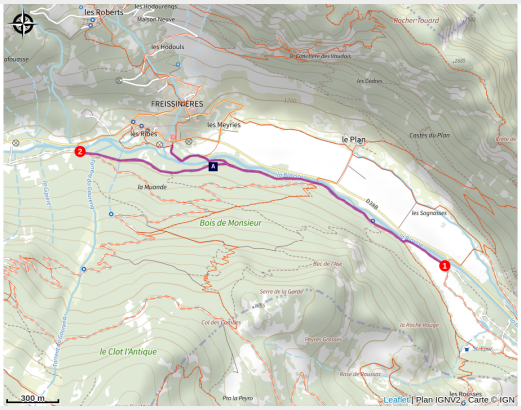
Track No. 5: La Biaysse

Parc national des Ecrins

Itinéraire sous les sapins du Bois de Monsieur (Pierre Nossereau)



To check snow conditions, click here.

5.7 km round trip from the Nordic chalet, 100 m D+.

Please note that the circuit is available in skating or alternative.

Description:

From the Nordic chalet, with your pass in your pocket, head down towards La Biaysse, cross the bridge on the right and take the undergrowth route down to the valley floor.

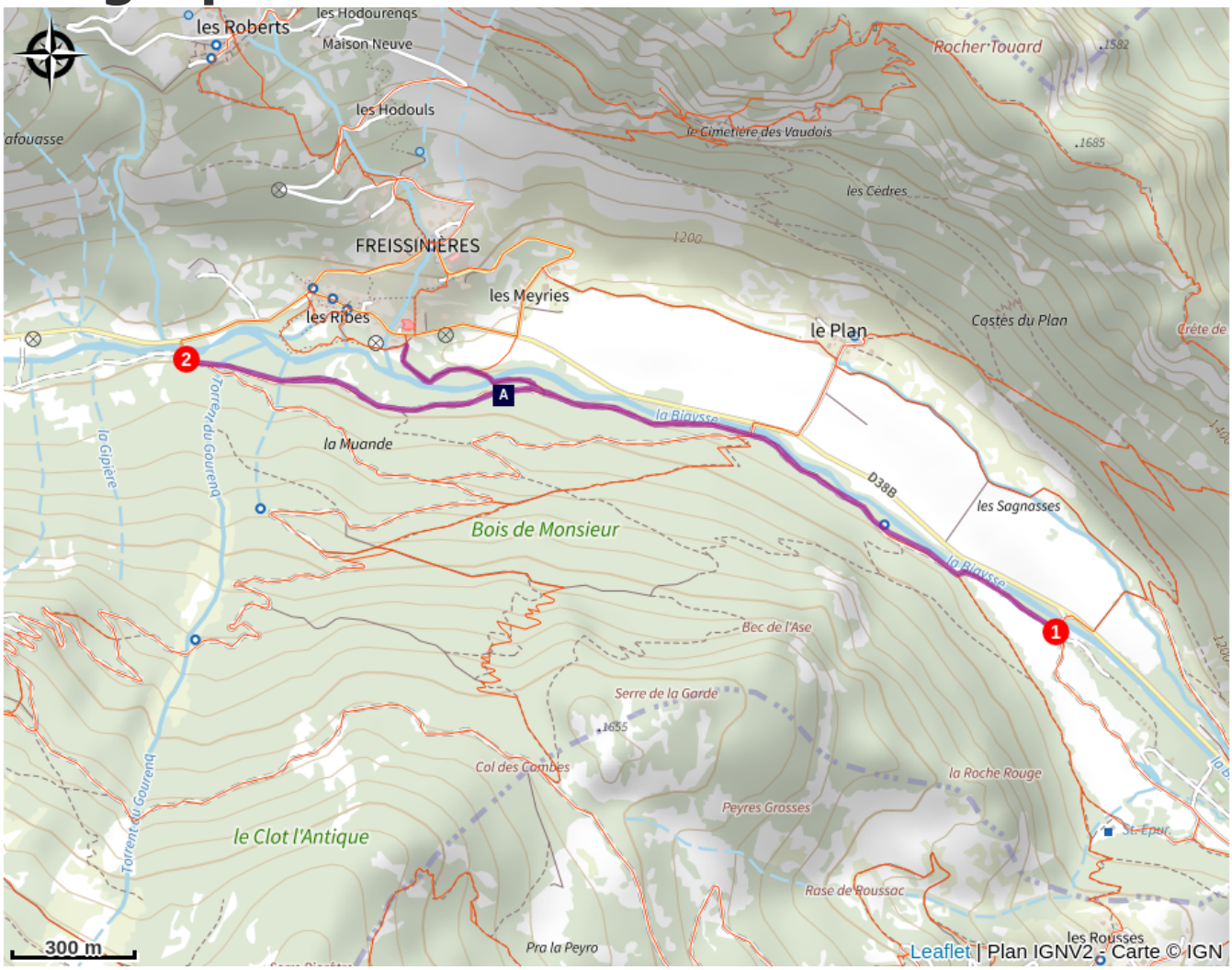
1. Take the same route in the opposite direction, passing the bridge you used on the outward journey and continuing for around 900 meters to the Pont de l'Église.
2. Once at the bridge, turn around and return to the Nordic chalet by the same route.

Useful information

Practice : Cross-country skiing

Level : Good level skiers track

Geographical location



The Freissinières valley (A)
The black pine (B)
The southern water vole (C)
The creeping lady’s-tress (D)
The red squirrel (E)
The European silver fir (F)
The petasites hybridus or butterbur (G)
Cool forest (H)
Freissinières (I)
The common barberry (J)
The fir (K)
The horsetail (L)
The barbastelle (M)
The petasites hybridus or butterbur (N)
Félix Neff (P)
The church of Sainte Marie-Madeleine (O)
Huile de marmotte - marmot oil (Q)

All useful information

⚠ Advice

A few rules:

→ Cross-country ski trails are groomed, marked and secured. Access is subject to a fee and reserved for Nordic skiers.

→ You use these trails under your own responsibility: find out about weather conditions, trail closures, don't overestimate your possibilities.

→ Respect the signs: trail directions, dangers, prohibitions, closures.

→ Dogs are forbidden on cross-country ski trails.

→ It is dangerous and forbidden to use the pistes outside opening hours (presence of grooming equipment).

→ Take your garbage with you

Please note that routes are possible in skating or classic technique (alternative).

Conditions are very pleasant all day long in winter. However, from March onwards, it's best to practice in the mornings, as some of the pistes can be quickly exposed to the sun.

Cross-country ski passes can be purchased at the Chalet nordique. Don't forget to bring your trail map!

Please note: this information is for guidance only. It is your responsibility to check the weather report and conditions before you set off. The Tourist Office and the Parc national des Écrins cannot be held responsible in the event of an accident. If you have any doubts, please contact the professionals: instructors or equipment hire companies.

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

On your path...

The Freissinières valley (A)

The valley was created as the result of glacial overdeepening, that is to say, when the glacier came to a halt against the Pallon hard rock bar, it created a depression. When the glaciers retreated, a lake was left behind this rock bar and was gradually filled up by alluvial deposits. From a historical point of view, the Protestant pastor Félix Neff fundamentally altered life in the valley in 1826 by founding a training college for primary school teachers, developing irrigation processes and teaching new crop growing methods, among other things...

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins

The black pine (B)

The black pine did not arrive here of its own accord. It was introduced by the National Forestry Agency and was planted to stabilise eroded mountain areas. It can be identified by its long needles which are grouped in pairs and by its large cones.

Attribution : Christian Baïsset - Parc national des Écrins

The southern water vole (C)

Flattened paths through the reeds, and holes 6 to 7 cm in diameter... the southern water vole has been here! This large rodent with dark brown fur on its back digs its burrow in the banks of the stream. This species, which lives close to water, causes no damage to crops. Not a prolific breeder, its numbers are low and it is threatened with extinction.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins

The creeping lady’s-tress (D)

This inconspicuous little orchid grows on moss, in the undergrowth of the pine forest. Growing at the base of the stem, its leaves are oval and pointed, with a network of veins. The upright stem only bears a few scales. Covered in a fine down, the white flowers are arranged in the form of a spiral spike, facing the same way. A little gem that is worth keeping an eye out for!

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - Parc national des Écrins

The red squirrel (E)

Elegant and alert, a squirrel crosses the track, followed by its long feathery tail. Red? This one is dark brown. In the mountains this rodent has adopted a “solar panel” strategy, on the principle that dark colours absorb the heat more efficiently. It is active during the day and does not hibernate, although it does minimise its activity on days when the weather is bad. It is a protected species.

Attribution : Marc Corail - Parc national des Écrins

The European silver fir (F)

The fir thrives on this north-exposed slope, called the ubac. Its needles have two white stripes on their undersides. They are arranged on either side of the boughs, and not all the way around them, which distinguishes it from the spruce. The elongated cones stand upright, rather than hanging downwards. They grow in large number, often mingling with larch trees under whose shade they can grow. By contrast, the larch - the "tree of light" - cannot grow under the cover of fir trees.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

The petasites hybridus or butterbur (G)

The ditches on the Freissinières plain are edged by a plant with very broad leaves: the petasites hybridus or butterbur, also called the devil's hat in French. In Ancient Greek, the petasos was a round felt hat. Nobody knows whether the devil wears this hat, but the plant is certainly used as a herbal remedy. Very common in the lowlands, it is quite rare in the Pays des Écrins although other species of petasites do grow at higher altitude.

Attribution : Ludovic Imberdis - Parc national des Écrins

Cool forest (H)

Here, the drought-sensitive fir has established itself among the larches. This forest harbours treasures such as the very rare ghost orchid and the shield-moss, a unique little moss - also rare - which grows on wood in an advanced state of decomposition and thus signals that the natural cycle of the forest is unimpaired.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

Freissinières (I)

The name Freissinières comes from the old word freissinière meaning "black ash". This municipality, which extends as far as the Col des Terres Blanches and the Col de Freissinières, both of which overlook the Champsaur valley, is made up of thirteen hamlets, although none of them are called Freissinières! Archaeological excavations carried out twenty years ago show that sites at high altitude (such as Faravel) were occupied on a seasonal basis from the retreat of the glaciers 12,000 years ago (Upper Palaeolithic period) and that this occupation continued after that.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins

The common barberry (J)

The common barberry is a bush with long thorns arranged in threes, and with oval serrated leaves. In spring, it produces clusters of yellow flowers, which later develop into red, oval and elongated berries. These tart fruits are edible and can be made into jellies... if you have the patience to gather them! This shrub grows almost everywhere.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

The fir (K)

The fir thrives on this north-exposed slope, called the ubac. Its needles have two white stripes on their undersides. They are arranged on either side of the boughs, and not all the way around them, which distinguishes it from the spruce. The elongated cones stand upright, rather than hanging downwards. They grow in large number, often mingling with larch trees under whose shade they can grow. By contrast, the larch - the "tree of light" - cannot grow under the cover of fir trees.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins

The horsetail (L)

On the banks of a stream, on the edge of a ditch a plant grows which resembles a large bottle brush... or a horse's tail, depending on your imagination. It's the field horsetail, a plant related to ferns. It is known for its medicinal properties because it is rich in silica, a powerful remineraliser for the bones, cartilage and skin. There are several species of horsetail.

Attribution : Cédric Dentan - Parc national des Écrins

The barbastelle (M)

In the village, birds build their nests in the old walls and bats live in the attics. Some hide behind shutters that are secured open against the walls. The barbastelle is a rare species of bat. Like all other bat species, it is protected. The hamlet of Le Ribes is privileged to be its home in the summer. This small mammal feeds on a large number of insects every night. It «moves house» frequently if it is disturbed or simply as a precaution.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

The petasites hybridus or butterbur (N)

On the banks of the stream there is a plant with very broad leaves: the petasites hybridus or butterbur. In Ancient Greek, the petasos was a round felt hat. Nobody knows whether the devil wears this hat, but the plant is certainly used as a herbal remedy. Common in the lowlands, it is generally quite scarce in the mountains, although other species of petasites do grow at higher altitude. In any event, it makes a great hat!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

The church of Sainte Marie-Madeleine (O)

The church of Sainte Marie-Madeleine was built in the seventeenth century. It is thought to be a former Protestant church which escaped destruction in 1684 when Louis XIV was leading an anti-Protestant drive. The Protestant church is then thought to have undergone works to convert it into a Catholic church.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins

Félix Neff (P)

Félix Neff was a Swiss Protestant pastor. He was responsible for the Protestant Revival in the Freissinières valley in the seventeenth century. He also set up the first education college for primary school teachers in France, in Dormillouse in 1826. He was also behind new irrigation and house-building techniques, developments which improved the everyday lives of the local people.

Attribution : Manuel Meester - Parc national des Écrins

Huile de marmotte - marmot oil (Q)

In times past, the inhabitants of Freissinières used oil for cooking and lighting. Walnut or almond oil was difficult to produce at this high altitude. The Briançon plum tree or marmottier, however, can withstand the mountain conditions, and the yellow fruits of this tree contain kernels. These kernels were pressed in mills to produce an oil with medicinal virtues: marmot oil. .

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins