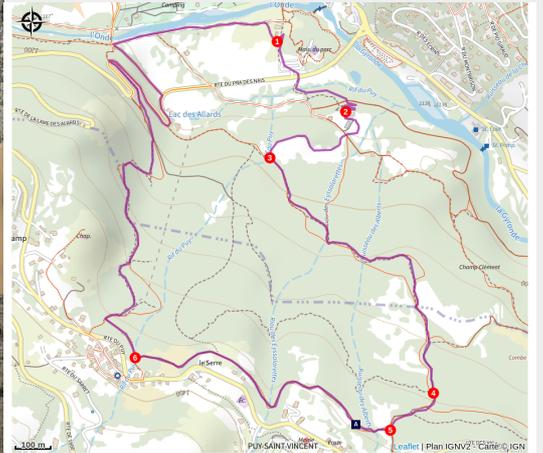


# Route No. 3: Chemin des Lutins

Parc national des Ecrins



Les lutins du sentier



## ITINERARY NOT SECURED NOR GROOMED

**A 5,5 km loop from Vallouise nordic chalet. About 350 D+ et 220 D-**

Also called the "postman trail" since he was the one taking it to deliver the mail between Vallouise and Puy Saint Vincent. Nowadays, this itinerary is occupied by funny leprechauns. It will take you through the forest and offer beautiful views over the Blanche and the Montbrison mountain ranges.

*Signs : white snowshoe signs on purple background*

## Description :

Start and finish : Vallouise nordic chalet

1. From the nordic chalet, go towards the nordic ski itineraries of "La Gyronde" and "Le Chambon".
2. Follow the white snowshoe signs on purple background in the direction of the Eyssarts.

## Useful information

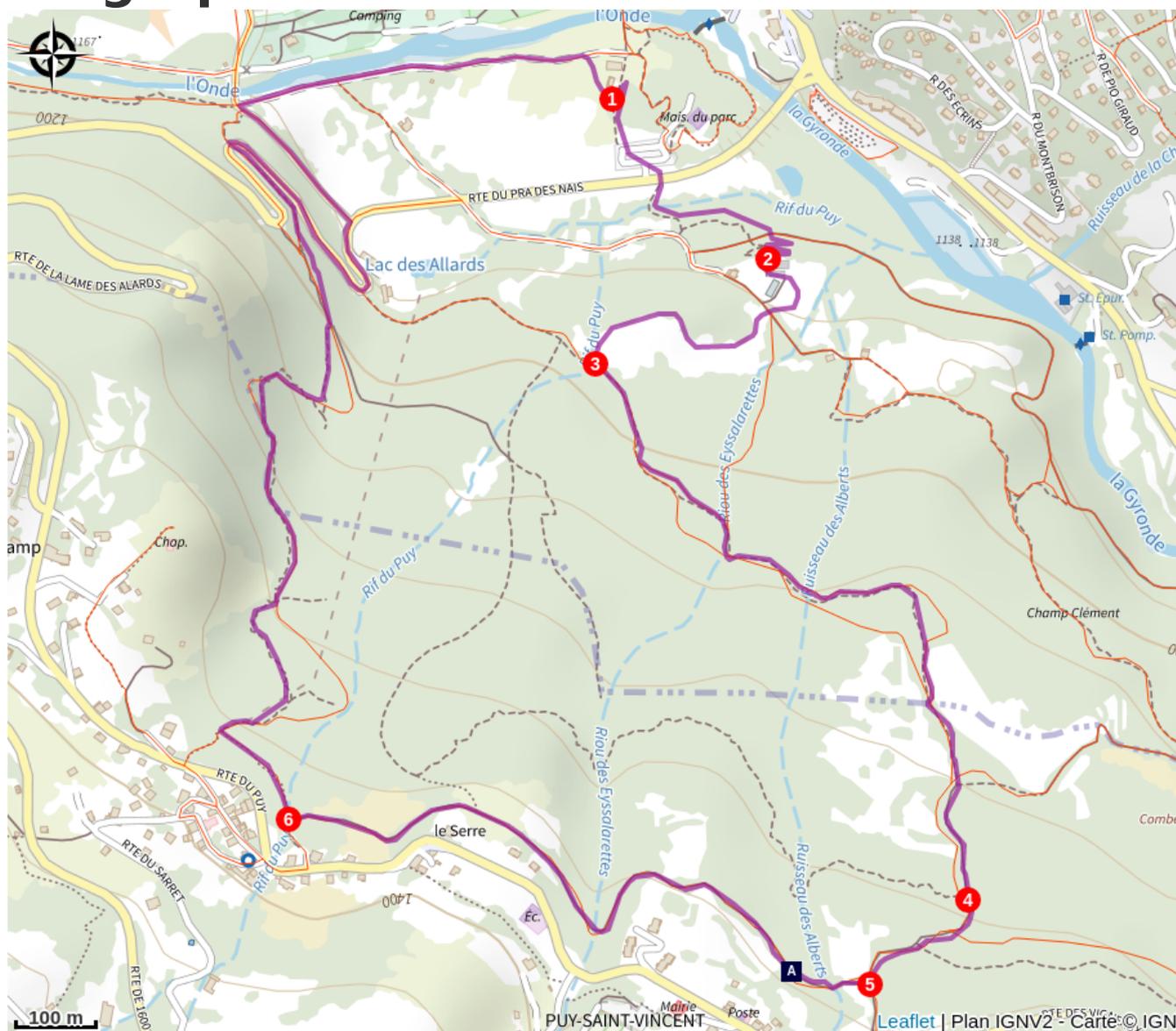
Practice : Snowshoe

Height : 2117 m

Duration : 3 h

Quoting : R2

# Geographical location



-  The chenevières, hemp fields (A)
-  The commons (C)
-  Solid architecture (E)
-  Wood cranesbill (G)
-  The Vallouise Park Centre (I)
-  The Sentier du Facteur - the postman's path (K)
-  The ash tree (M)
-  The wood nuthatch (O)
-  The aspen (Q)
-  The ash tree (S)
-  The chapel of Saint-Romain (U)
-  The history of the resort of Puy-Saint-Vincent (W)

-  Hemp production (B)
-  The church of Sainte-Marthe (D)
-  Protective shelter (F)
-  The northern wryneck (H)
-  The Alpine copse snail (J)
-  The sun bird (L)
-  The gerris (N)
-  The long-tailed tit (P)
-  The Eurasian blackcap (R)
-  The clouded Apollo (T)
-  The house with arcades (V)

# All useful information

## **Advice**

Please consult the itinerary status :

<https://www.nordicalpesdusud.com/domaines/vallouise-pelvoux-les-vigneaux>

### **A few rules :**

→ You use these itineraries 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.

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

→ Respect the furnishings: signage, prohibitions, trail directions, picnic tables, footbridges, banners, milestones, road signs.

→ Several itineraries are shared with other users: cross-country skiers, touring skiers, mountain bikers, sled dogs, rando-luge, trail runners. Give them the right of way, always walk along the edge of the trail and be vigilant when using these shared trails.

→ Many routes cross downhill ski slopes; be vigilant and give priority to skiers.

→ Don't walk in the cross-country ski rails, step over them.

→ Don't hesitate to take along a topo-guide so that you have all the information on snowshoeing itineraries to hand.

→ Don't overestimate your possibilities!

→ Dogs are tolerated, on a leash, off the cross-country ski trails (dogs are forbidden on the Lauzet itinerary of the Puy-Saint-Vincent ski area, reserved for approved sled dog teams). Don't forget to pick up after your dog.

→ Take your garbage with you!

→ Don't hesitate to take public transport rather than the car to get to the Nordic area.

**Please note :** This information is given for guidance only. It is your responsibility to check the weather report before you leave 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.

**Mountain Rescue :** dial 112

 **Gear**

Make sure you have the necessary equipment:

Water and snacks

Warm clothing (avoid jeans)

High boots (hiking, rigid snow boots)

Walking poles

Sun screen

Sunglasses

Hat/cap

Small first-aid kit

# On your path...

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## The chenevières, hemp fields (A)

There is a French saying «Avril donne le fil», meaning that April is string time. Sown in spring after the last frosts, the tall stems of hemp grow in tiny plots of ground, called chenabiers or chenevières. The hemp is cut at the end of August and the strands are immediately immersed in large holes filled with water - called the naïs - on the edge of wet meadows. They are left to steep for more than a month, in order to release all the gum that binds the plant fibres together.

Attribution : PNE

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## Hemp production (B)

At one time, almost every winter evening would be taken up by stripping the fibre from the hemp straw. The strands had to be broken one by one, to remove the long, flexible filaments. Once washed and combed, these «balls» of hemp were taken to the rope and yarn spinners to be turned into rope, blankets and cloth for garments. When a family ordered cloth from the weaver, the entire family would go to the loom to attach the threads onto the warper.

Attribution : PNE

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## The commons (C)

As «crosswise» as it might be, from end to end the main street of Puy-Saint-Vincent has every building the community needs. The mill is still here, complete with its intake and outlet mill races. The communal oven is lit on 14 July every year. It has just been restored and shares the little paved square with a lovely water fountain, made from wood and ringed with iron.

Attribution : PNE



## The church of Sainte-Marthe (D)

The church of Sainte-Marthe was built in the nineteenth century, in 1817 to be precise, as indicated at the top of the pediment. Only the main facade has a painted decoration. On two superimposed levels and on the gables, pilasters or false pillars frame either bay windows illuminating the nave, or panels painted with a false marble decoration. A few steles remind us of the present of the former cemetery. Included on the Supplementary Inventory of Historical Monuments, this church also contains a commemorative plaque honouring those who fell in the First World War.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE

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## Solid architecture (E)

Originally, the environment of the high valleys of the Pays des Écrins offered little space, in which men and animals cohabited. Unlike in Vallouise, where the architecture is a harmonious blend of arcades and decorative elements, the houses in Le Puy retain the rusticity of completely stone-built single block construction with half-hipped roofs protruding over a drying balcony. This roof extension protects the main facade from bad weather, snow in particular. People can move about under shelter and the firewood store stays dry all winter. This barrel vaulted porch, which shelters the entrance to the main building and the stable, mirrors the Champsaur-Valguademar, «toun» (ground level arcade).

Attribution : PNE

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## Protective shelter (F)

Separate from the main building and at a distance from the barn, some property owners also have a small building providing safety from the much feared home fires. Here, in the coolness of this outside cellar, they stored ham, cheeses, flour, salt and other foodstuffs, but also whatever the family owned by way of valuables.



## 🌸 Wood cranesbill (G)

The path is edged with large clumps of a plant with purple flowers, the wood cranesbill. The leaves are palmate and divided into 5 to 7 incised and indented lobes. This common plant grows in meadows and cool woods. The «geraniums» we see on balconies are in fact pelargoniums, distant cousins originally from South Africa and cultivated for ornamental purposes.

Attribution : Marc Corail - Parc national des Écrins

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## 🐦 The northern wryneck (H)

The old trees in the orchard are home to the northern wryneck. It has a loud song, rather like that of the green woodpecker, only slower. This bird owes its name to the extreme way it extends and twists its neck when it feels threatened. Its French name torcol fourmilier is a reference to the fact that it feeds on ants (fourmils in French). Difficult to spot because its plumage merges into the colour of the tree trunks, it gives its presence away by its song when it returns from its migration.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins

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## 🍊 The Vallouise Park Centre (I)

Vallouise Pelvoux is a municipality within the Parc National des Écrins. Renovated in 2014, the Park Centre ("Maison du Parc") houses the offices of the local Park staff and has a spacious visitor reception area. It offers a permanent interactive exhibition inviting discovery of the territory and its heritage features, a temporary exhibition space on the upper floor and an audiovisual room (screenings and talks). It is currently in the process of applying for the "Tourisme et Handicap" tourism and disability label. Admission is free and so, too, are most of the activities in offer.

Attribution : Thierry Maillet - Parc national des Écrins

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## The Alpine copse snail (J)

On the damp banks of the stream, hidden in the grass, is a snail with a beautiful golden brown shell speckled with brown, decorated with a dark spiral stripe. It has a black body. The alpine copse snail is relatively rare and, as its name suggests, it is found in the Alps. It is a sub-species of the ordinary copse snail, which is present across Europe.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins

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## The Sentier du Facteur - the postman's path (K)

In former times, the postman would take this path every day: He would set out from Vallouise, deliver letters in Puy-Saint-Vincent and drop back down to Vallouise, stopping at the hamlets of Parcher on the way. In the winter, when the snow was too deep, the Traversouires (the inhabitants of Puy-Saint-Vincent) donned their snowshoes and wielded their shovels to clear the postman's path down to Vallouise.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - Parc national des Écrins

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## The sun bird (L)

So what is the identity of this sun bird? It's the royal, or golden, eagle of course. Although it is telling the time here, in the surrounding natural landscape it hunts marmots. But what becomes of it in winter when the marmots hibernate deep in their burrows? It's a lean time. It has to make do with a hare or ptarmigan, and in particular the carcasses of chamois which have not survived the winter or have been killed in an avalanche.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - Parc national des Écrins

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## The ash tree (M)

Even in winter, the ash can be recognised from its large black leaf buds. The leaves are compound. A pioneer species that grows easily, the ash has long been used by man for everyday needs: its foliage was used to feed cattle and its hard, flexible wood was used to make a variety of objects such as tool handles. Its French name frêne often appears in local place names too: Freissinières (frêne noir - black ash), Le Freney etc. Evidence of its historical importance to human communities..

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - Parc national des Écrins

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## The gerris (N)

Some strange creatures are moving jerkily over the surface of the water: Gerrises, insects related to bedbugs. Like a true insect, they have six legs and they «skate» across the water using their intermediate and hind legs which are covered in hairs to make them water-resistant. They are carnivorous and anything on the water surface, dead or alive, is good to eat! They catch their prey with the forelegs, sucking up the juices with their strong proboscis!

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



## The wood nuthatch (O)

With its strident calls, this little acrobat gets itself noticed. With a blue-grey back and a black stripe over its eyes, it works its way down the tree trunks upside down in search of insects. It nests in old woodpecker nests but if the diameter of the entrance is too large it reduces it with mud, to protect its young from predators. Hence its French name torchepot (a reference to edging the rim of a vessel).

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins



## The long-tailed tit (P)

Some birds are causing a stir in a tree, constantly coming and going and uttering little calls. They are round and black and pinkish beige in colour with a long tails, hence their name, the long-tailed tit. They are resident birds and always live in small groups. They inhabit forests, undergrowth and even gardens. They weave a ball-shaped nest out of lichen, moss and dry grass.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - Parc national des Écrins



## The aspen (Q)

A sizeable aspen grows on the roadside, on the edge of a small wood of fellow-aspens. This tree has a smooth, greenish trunk and rounded, crenelated leaves which take on magnificent colours in autumn. The stem, or petiole, of aspen leaves is flat and twisted, so it can be caught by the slightest breeze making the foliage «quake» hence its common name, the quaking aspen. It grows in places where the soil is quite damp.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



## The Eurasian blackcap (R)

Hidden in the tree foliage, the Eurasian blackcap announces its presence with its loud and piping song. Its head is adorned with a cap which is black in the male and russet in the female. The rest of its plumage is greyish, its underside lighter than its back. It is a migratory bird which travels to the Maghreb to overwinter. However, increasing numbers of birds make only a partial migration, flying to the south of France to spend the winter.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

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## The ash tree (S)

This is one of the most common trees, provided the ground is relatively cool. It is characterised by its pinnate leaves, that is to say, made up of several segments, and in winter it can be recognised by its large black leaf buds. The ash was extremely important in times past: its foliage was used to feed cattle and its hard, flexible wood was used to make a variety of objects such as tool handles.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - Parc national des Écrins

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## The clouded Apollo (T)

This butterfly with hyaline (glass-like) translucent white wings, marked with two black spots, flutters around the clearing or the edges of the forest, where the host plants of its caterpillars grow: the corydalis. Although abundant locally, it is nevertheless a species in sharp decline and is protected.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

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### The chapel of Saint-Romain (U)

Included on the Supplementary Inventory of Historical Monuments in 1931, the chapel of Saint-Romain has been converted into an eco museum. It was the first chapel to be built in Puy-Saint-Vincent and is thought to date from the twelfth century. Up to the mid-fifteenth century, the village bore the name of its patron saint: Puy-Saint-Romain. Then, in honour of the arrival of the Dominican monk Vincent Ferrier, the village took the name Puy-Saint-Vincent. It stands on a rocky promontory outside the village, and offers a panoramic view over the Les Écrins massif and the Gyronde Valley, over Vallouise in particular.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins

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### The house with arcades (V)

In the municipality of Puy-Saint-Vincent, there are a number of houses typical of the rural architecture of Vallouise, in particular houses with arcades, in the hamlets of Les Alberts and Les Prés. This type of construction can be recognised by the presence of large arches made from stone from the Montbrison massif and supporting walking galleries. Introduced in the eighteenth century by Piedmontese master masons who settled in the valley, this style with arcaded galleries has become characteristic of the architecture of the Vallouise valley. Elegant and monumental, they replaced modest wooden balconies. They facilitated mobility from one level of the house to the other (the houses did not have interior stairs), and at the same time signalled the wealth of the owner.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins

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### The history of the resort of Puy-Saint-Vincent (W)

Puy-Saint-Vincent is the benchmark resort in the Vallouise. Located on the north-facing side of the valley, it is constructed on three levels, each corresponding to a different period of construction: 1400, developed in the late 1970s, 1600, developed from 1973 onwards and 1800, developed from 2005 onwards. Each level is served by a chairlift to reach the skiing area. It now has 35 pistes covering 75.4 kilometres.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins

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