

Route No. 4: La Plaine

Parc national des Ecrins



Vallouise (Rogier van Rijn)



SECURED ITINERARY

Small initiation loop of 2 km around the plains.

This initiation itinerary allows to smoothly discover snowshoeing on the Vallouise sunny plains.

Signs : white "snowshoe" signs on purple background.

Description :

Start and finish : Vallouise nordic chalet

1. From the nordic chalet, go up the Onde river staying on its right bank up to the Gérendoine bridge.
2. Cross the bridge and follow the track in the field on the left of the road which then crosses the road.
3. Follow the track on the plains for about 500 meters, until arriving at the Chambonnettes camping. Take a right to walk along the Gyrone river.
4. Finally, cross the Onde river to go back to the nordic chalet.

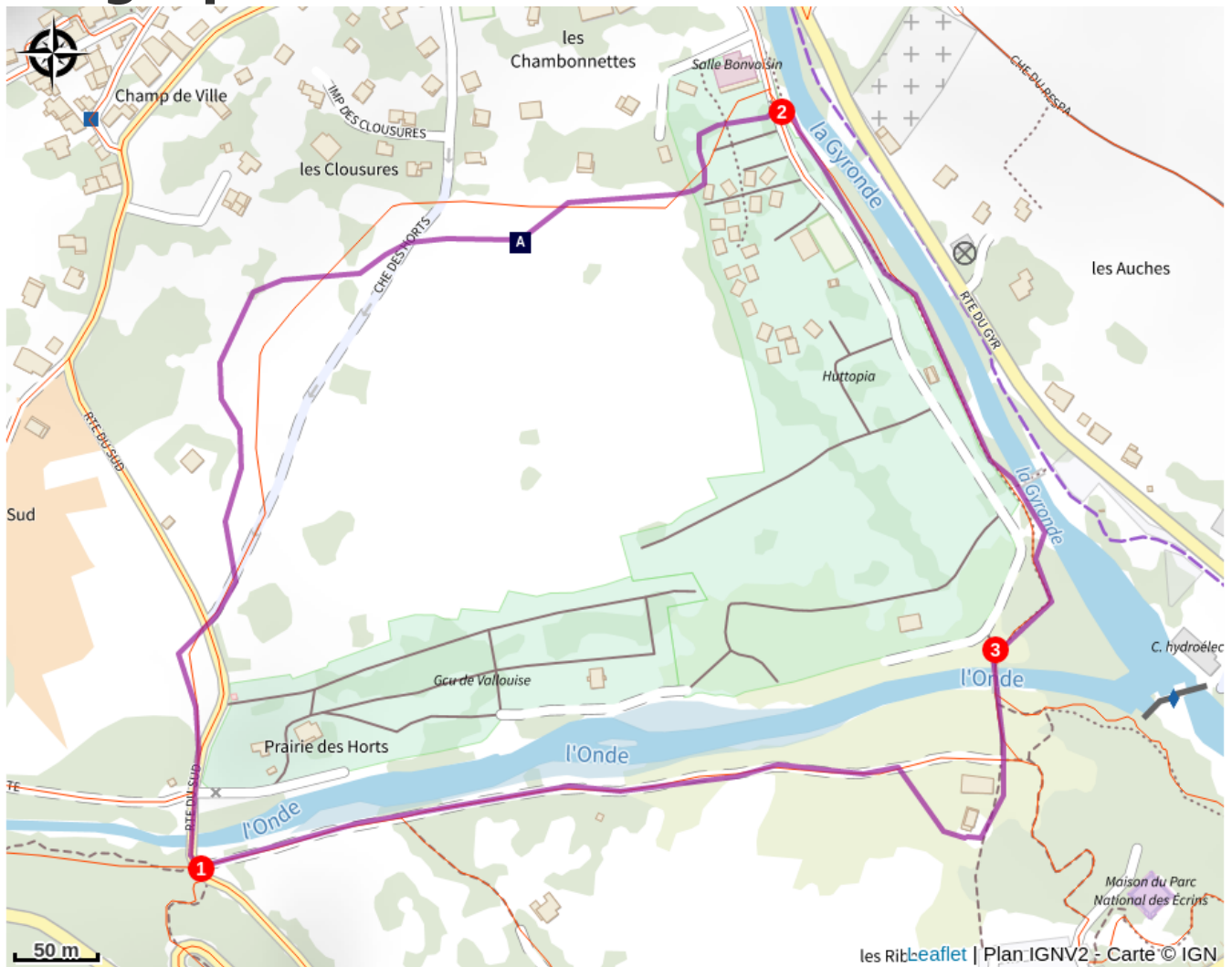
Useful information








Practice : Snowshoe








Duration : 45 min

Quoting : R1

Geographical location



-  Saint-Étienne de Vallouise Church (A)
-  The northern wryneck (C)
-  The church in Vallouise (E)
-  The Vallouise Park Centre (G)
-  The sun bird (I)
-  The gerris (K)
-  Vallouise (M)

-  Wood cranesbill (B)
-  The trout (D)
-  The lesser horseshoe bat (F)
-  The Alpine copse snail (H)
-  The ash tree (J)
-  The wood nuthatch (L)
-  The long-tailed tit (N)

All useful information

Advice

Please consult the itinerary status :

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

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.

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...



Saint-Étienne de Vallouise Church (A)

Listed and protected as an historic monument since 22 October 1913, the church dedicated to Saint Stephen is one of the most beautiful religious edifices in Hautes-Alpes. It is typical of the Romanesque churches in the Briançon region built in the second half of the 15th century, although its exact construction date is still uncertain.

Attribution : Thierry Maillet - PNE



Wood cranesbill (B)

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



The northern wryneck (C)

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



The trout (D)

But what's the angler angling for? The brown trout of course! This is the mountain fish par excellence, with a streamlined body to withstand the current more efficiently and light brown skin speckled with black and red. It lives in cold, oxygen-rich waters.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins



The church in Vallouise (E)

The church of Saint-Étienne dates from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Inside is an altarpiece and a tabernacle in gilded wood dating from the eighteenth century, together with some mural paintings. Not far from the church stands the late sixteenth-century Chapel of the Penitents with a nineteenth-century painted facade.

Attribution : Thibaut Blais



The lesser horseshoe bat (F)

In summer, bats take up residence in the church roof. The species living here is the lesser horseshoe bat, which has been in serious decline over recent decades. Every year, the mothers return after hibernating in caves and each one gives birth to one bat pup. Bats are insectivore mammals threatened by the insecticides used on farmland and on wooden structures and the loss of their hunting habitats and roosts, among other things. They are all protected.

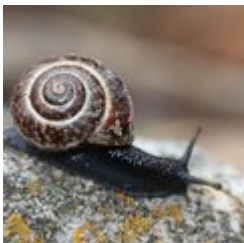
Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



The Vallouise Park Centre (G)

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



The Alpine copse snail (H)

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



The sun bird (I)

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.

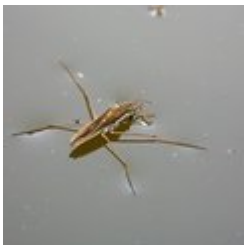
Attribution : Cyril Coursier - Parc national des Écrins



The ash tree (J)

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



The gerris (K)

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 (L)

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



Vallouise (M)

Multi-storey houses - typical of the architecture in the valley in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - stand on the old village street. The ground floor was reserved for animals, the first floor for habitation and the upper floors for grain storage. People moved from one floor to another by means of balconies interconnected by a staircase. Many of these balconies are arcaded with stone columns. This type of arcaded balcony is found throughout the valley.

Attribution : Pierre Nossereau



The long-tailed tit (N)

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
