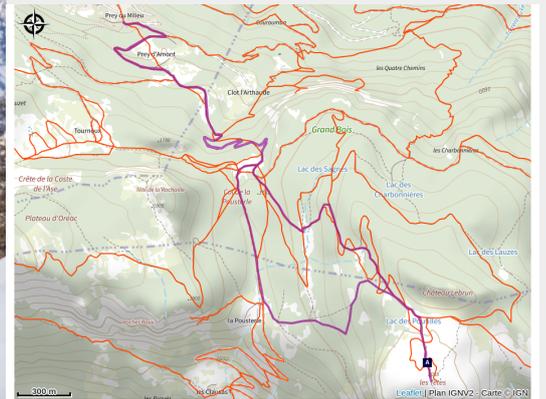


# Day 3 : Les Têtes - Col de la Pousterle

Parc national des Écrins



Boucle des têtes (Rogier Van Rijn)



Today, immerse yourself among the giants of the Écrins as you climb to the summit of Les Têtes de Puy Saint Vincent.

From the top, you'll enjoy a breathtaking 360° panorama over the Écrins and Queyras massifs.

Accessible only by cross-country skis or snowshoes, this route takes you through a beautiful larch forest.

As you gain altitude, you'll be surrounded by a Nordic-like atmosphere, with majestic mountain scenery all around you.

For today's journey, take the B shuttle to Station 1400, then the C shuttle to Pré Sabeyran —the same starting point as on your first outing.

## Useful information

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Practice : Snowshoe

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Duration : 6 h

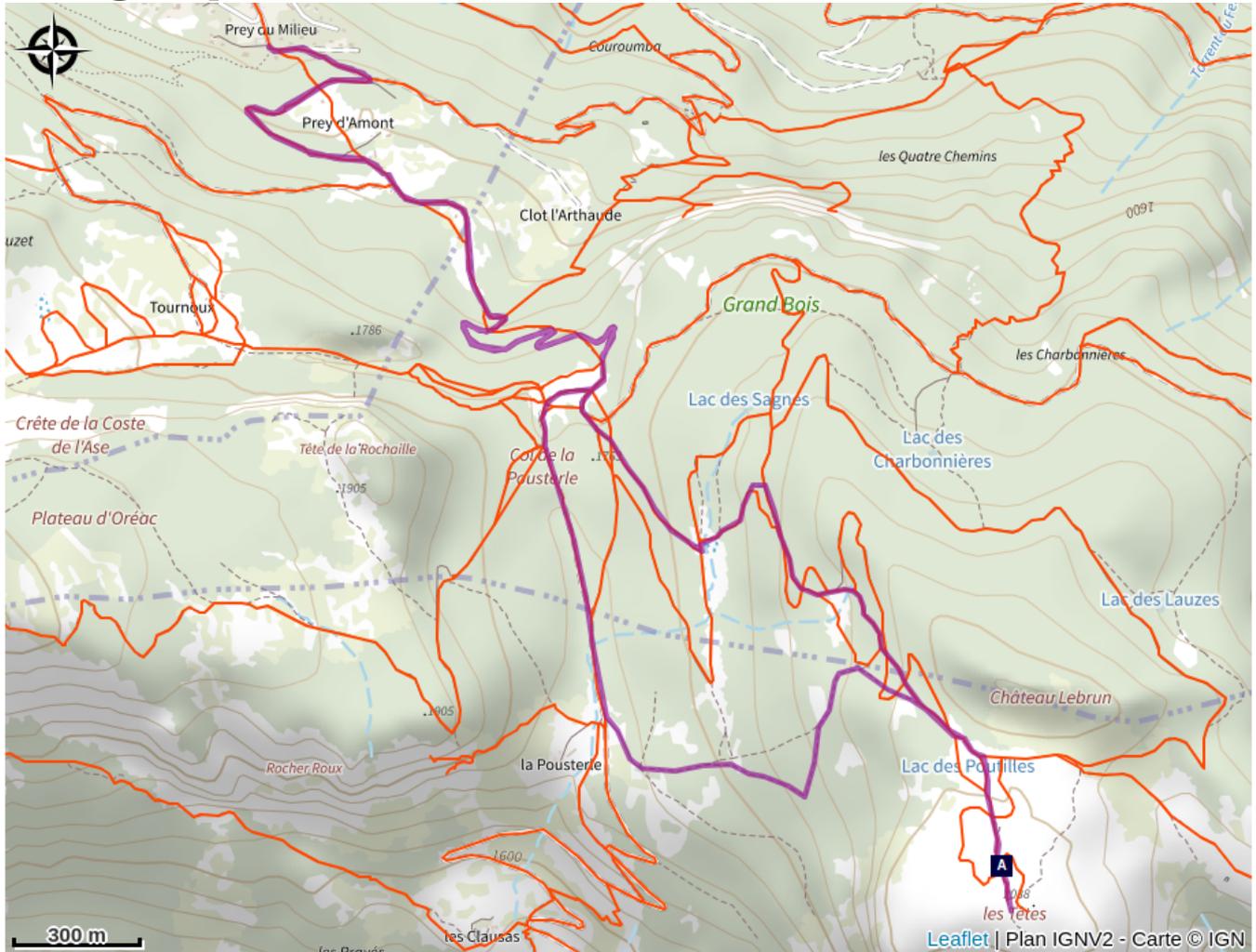
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Quoting : R3

Once there, follow the marked route towards the Belvédère des Têtes.

After your hike, take the B shuttle line back to your accommodation.

## Geographical location



-  The Eurasian pygmy owl (A)
-  The Col de la Pusterle (C)
-  Forest-dwelling bats (E)
-  The Fournel valley (G)
-  The yellow cephalaria (I)

-  Cliff-dwelling birds (B)
-  The larch (D)
-  Tournoux (F)
-  The peregrine falcon (H)
-  The Les Têtes belvedere (J)

# All useful information

## Advice

→ You follow these routes under your own responsibility.

Never go out alone, or at the very least, inform someone of your plans and route beforehand.

Leaving the marked trail is strongly discouraged—it may compromise your safety and is at your own risk.

Do not rely on existing tracks left by other hikers for navigation; use only the official directional signs and markers.

You are moving through a fragile natural environment—please help protect it by staying on marked paths and taking all your waste back with you.

Check the weather forecast and avalanche risk published by Météo France before setting out.

Be aware that weather in the mountains can change rapidly. If visibility deteriorates, turn back and postpone your outing.

Avoid approaching wildlife if you encounter any—additional stress or movement can threaten their survival through the winter.

You can also seek advice from local tourist offices or the Nordic chalet before departure.

Emergency number: 112



## Gear

→ Make sure you have the necessary equipment:

Water and snacks

Warm clothing (avoid jeans)

Sturdy high-top shoes (hiking boots or rigid snow boots)

Walking poles

Sunscreen

Sunglasses

Hat or cap

Small first-aid kit

# On your path...

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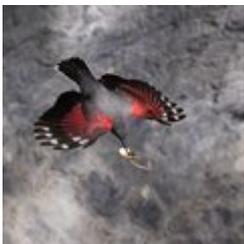


## The Eurasian pygmy owl (A)

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

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## 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

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## The Col de la Pusterle (C)

A pusterle (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

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## ❁ 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



## 📍 Tournoux (F)

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 Fournel valley (G)

This is the southern side of the Col de la Pusterle 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 (H)

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

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## The yellow cephalaria (I)

Rather like a tall scabious (up to 2 metres) but with pale yellow flower heads, this is not a common plant. Yet, at an intersection of two tracks, it has established on a small patch of ground. Who knows why! It is a mountain plant which only lives in the west of the Alpine Arc..

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - Parc national des Écrins

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## The Les Têtes belvedere (J)

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