

# Vallouise Plain

Parc national des Ecrins



*Vallouise plain is ideal for children and family outings, or for cross-country skiing beginners.*

*From here, three trails are available: The Campsite (no. 2), The Plain (no. 3) and The Ranch (no. 21).*

## Useful information

Practice : Cross-country skiing

Rating scale :

Level : Beginners track

# Description

**Access:** From the N94 Gap-Briançon, turn off at l'Argentière-la-Bessée towards Puy-Saint-Vincent - Vallouise (D994E).

Just before the village of Vallouise, turn left towards Puy-Saint-Vincent Station (opposite the pharmacy). Just after crossing the bridge, park in the parking lot in front of the Maison du Parc and the Chalet Nordique.

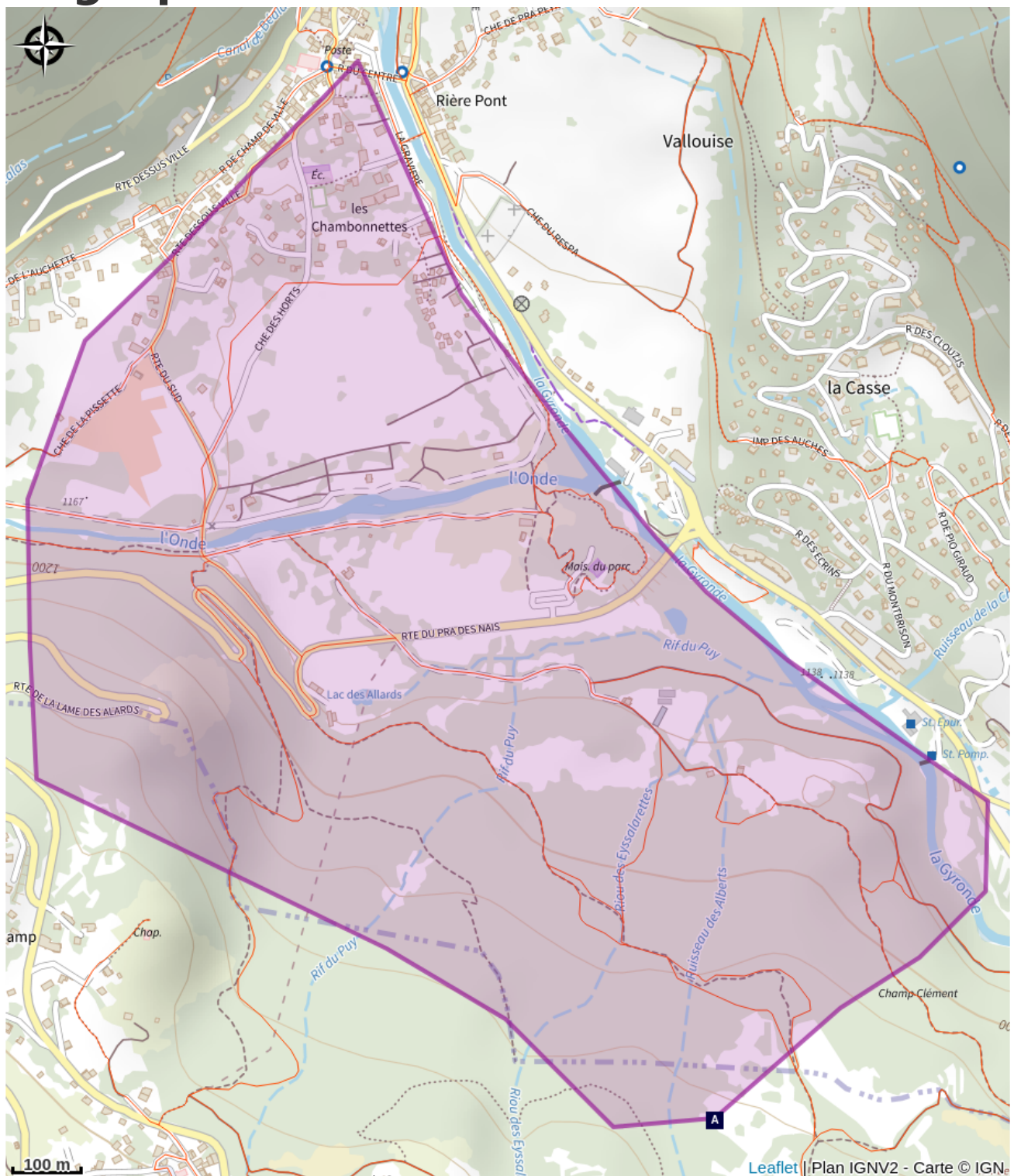
Information on access and transport is available in the practical info section of our website: <https://www.paysdesecrins.com>

**Parking:** We advise you to park at the Maison du Parc and Chalet Nordique when purchasing your Pass at the chalet. Vallouise's cross-country ski trails all start from here.



















If you already have your Pass, you can also leave from the parking lot at Pont Gérendoine. From here, a large number of loops are also possible.

A departure is also possible from the Pelvoux resort. From here, four circuits are available. And you can also start from Les Vigneaux, for two circuits.

# Geographical location



- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  Hemp production (AA)             |  The commons (AB)                       |
|  The church of Sainte-Marthe (AC) |  Solid architecture (AD)                |
|  Protective shelter (AE)          |  Saint-Étienne de Vallouise Church (AF) |
|  Wood cranesbill (AG)             |  The northern wryneck (AH)              |
|  The trout (AI)                   |  Forest on the water's edge (AJ)        |
|  The Montbrison massif (AK)       |  The narrow-leaved lavender (AL)        |

-  The downy oak (AM)
-  The lesser horseshoe bat (AO)
-  The Alpine copse snail (AQ)
-  The sun bird (AS)
-  The gerris (AU)
-  Vallouise (AW)
-  The great globe thistle (AY)
-  The Eurasian blackcap (BA)
-  The clouded Apollo (BC)
-  The church in Vallouise (AN)
-  The Vallouise Park Centre (AP)
-  The Sentier du Facteur - the postman's path (AR)
-  The ash tree (AT)
-  The wood nuthatch (AV)
-  The long-tailed tit (AX)
-  The aspen (AZ)
-  The ash tree (BB)
-  The chapel of Saint-Romain (BD)

# All useful information

## **Advices**

### **A few rules:**

- Cross-country ski trails are groomed, marked and safe. Access is subject to a charge and reserved for Nordic skiers.
- You use these trails under your own responsibility: find out about weather conditions and trail closures, and don't overestimate your possibilities.
- Respect the signs: trail directions, dangers, prohibitions, avalanche closures, etc.
- Dogs are forbidden on cross-country ski trails.
- Night-time activities and biathlon shooting in the Nordic area must be supervised by a professional.
- Skiing outside opening hours is dangerous and prohibited (presence of grooming equipment).
- Take your garbage with you

### ***Tours are available in skating or classic technique.***

Winter conditions are very pleasant all day long. However, from March onwards, it's best to practice in the morning, as some of the trails are quickly exposed to the sun.

Don't hesitate to ask for a piste map at the Chalet Nordique in Vallouise or at the Pelvoux lift information point!

**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 Écrins National Park 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



## **Information desks**

### **Vallouise Park house**

vallouise@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Tel : 04 92 23 58 08

<http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/>



### **Bureau d'Information Touristique de Puy Saint Vincent 1400**

Les Alberts, 05290 Puy Saint Vincent  
1400 m

contact@paysdesecrins.com

Tel : +33(0)4 92 23 35 80

<https://www.paysdesecrins.com/>



### **Bureau d'Information Touristique de Vallouise**

Place de l'Eglise, 05340 Vallouise

contact@paysdesecrins.com

Tel : +33(0)4 92 23 36 12

<https://www.paysdesecrins.com/>



### **Bureau d'Information Touristique de L'Argentière-La Bessée**

23 Avenue de la République, 05120  
L'Argentière-La Bessée

contact@paysdesecrins.com

Tel : +33(0)4 92 23 03 11

<https://www.paysdesecrins.com/>



## **Source**



Pays des Ecrins

<https://www.paysdesecrins.com>

# On your path...

---



## Hemp production (AA)

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

---



## The commons (AB)

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 (AC)

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



---

### Solid architecture (AD)

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, «toute» (ground level arcade).

Attribution : PNE

---

### Protective shelter (AE)

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.

---



### Saint-Étienne de Vallouise Church (AF)

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 Maillat - PNE





## ✿ Wood cranesbill (AG)

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 (AH)

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 (AI)

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



## ✿ Forest on the water's edge (AJ)

This small wood is a fragment of the riparian forest: natural forest growing adjacent to a body of water. Reduced everywhere due to urbanisation, this type of forest is made up of alder, willow and oak, and also poplar, birch and aspen, among others

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



## The Montbrison massif (AK)

The path offers a beautiful overall view of the limestone massif of Montbrison, overlooking the hamlets of Pelvoux with the peaks of the Cime de la Condamine, the Tête des Lauzières, the Pic de Montbrison and the Tête d'Amont.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



## The narrow-leaved lavender (AL)

The path crosses some limestone screes. It is a dry environment. The narrow-leaved lavender grows in sunny areas, a reminder that the Pays de Écrins is in the Southern Alps after all! Not to be confused with the lavandin, this plant naturally grows on rocky slopes in the mountains of the Midi.

Attribution : Jean-Pierre Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



## The downy oak (AM)

The route leads down a warm slope, where the downy oak reigns supreme. It is a small oak tree with a twisted growth habit and with marescent leaves, that is to say, they dry out in the autumn but remain on the tree all winter. It is called "downy" because the young branches, buds and sometimes the undersides of its leaves are covered in a fine down. It is a tree that grows happily on the warm dry slopes.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins



## The church in Vallouise (AN)

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 (AO)

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.

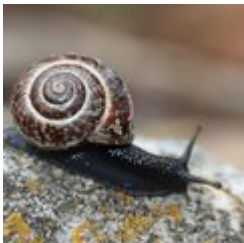
Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



## The Vallouise Park Centre (AP)

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 (AQ)

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 Sentier du Facteur - the postman's path (AR)

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



## The sun bird (AS)

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 (AT)

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 (AU)

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 (AV)

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 (AW)

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

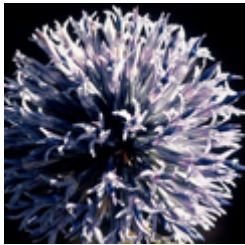


## The long-tailed tit (AX)

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 great globe thistle (AY)

On the edge of the path grows a tall plant with quite wide and smooth leaves, and completely round whitish or very pale blue flower clusters. This is the great globe thistle, a relatively rare plant. It is a cousin of the southern globe thistle which can be seen everywhere in dry places. This one is smaller and has clusters of bluish flowers and spiny leaves.

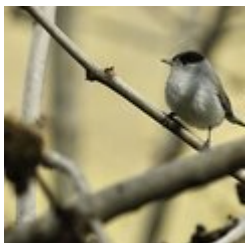
Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



### ✿ The aspen (AZ)

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 (BA)

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



### ✿ The ash tree (BB)

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





### The clouded Apollo (BC)

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

---



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

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 Gyrone Valley, over Vallouise in particular.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins