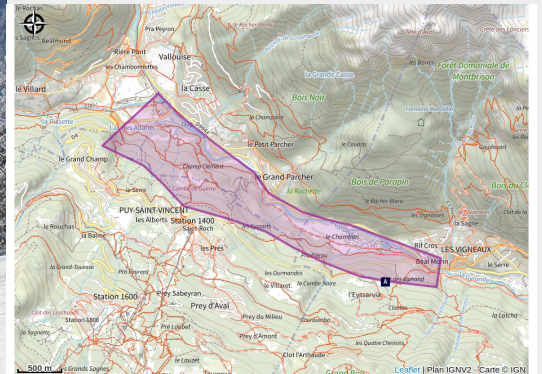


# Les Vigneaux

Parc national des Ecrins



(Nordic en Vallouise)



*Les Vigneaux area gives you the feeling of being alone in the world!*

*There are two possible trails from this area: trail no. 20 Le Chambon and trail no. 22 La Gyronde.*

## Useful information

Practice : Cross-country skiing

Rating scale :

Level : Beginners track, Experienced skiers track

# Description

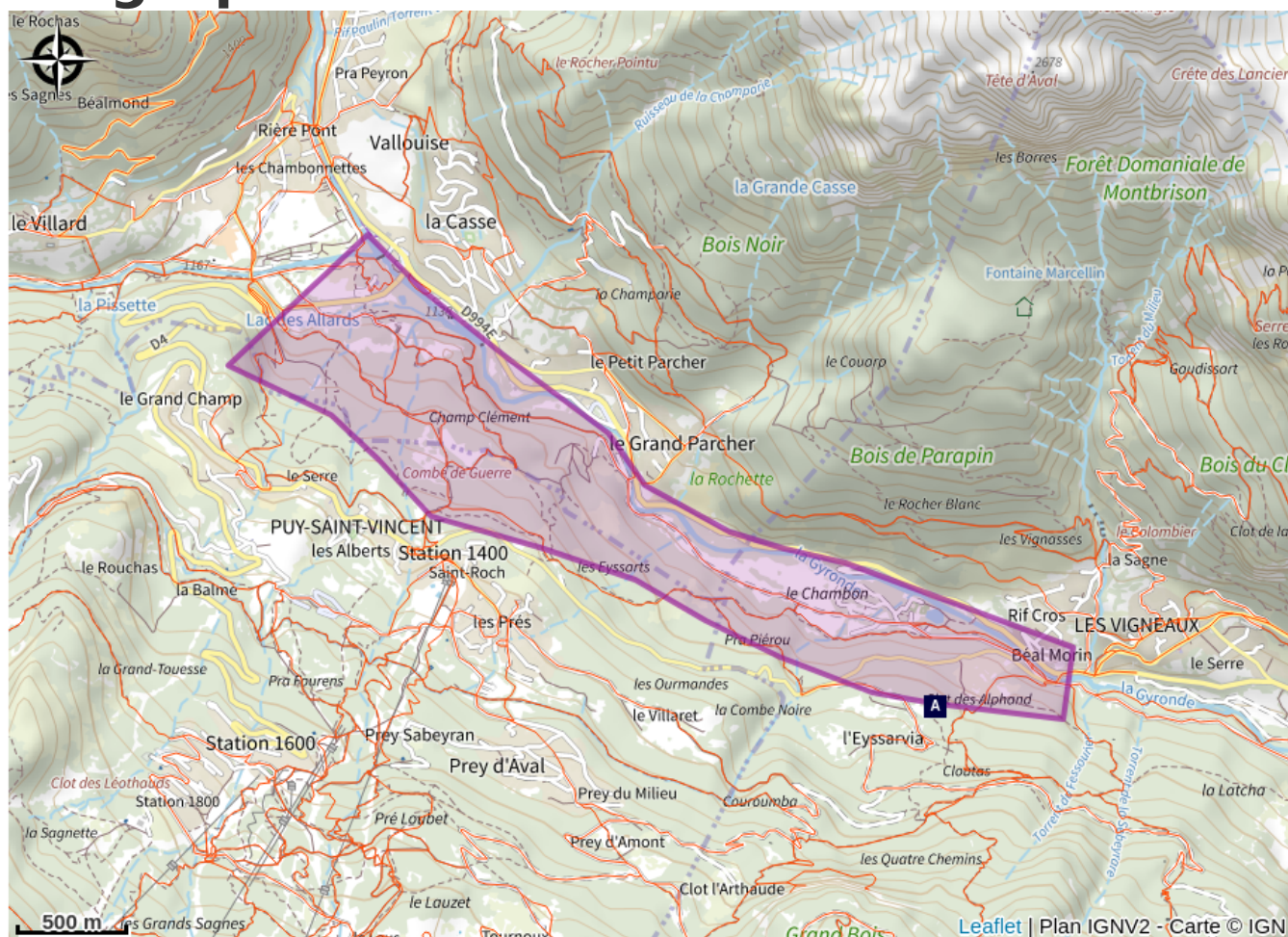
**Access:** From the N94 Gap-Briançon, turn off at l'Argentière-la-Bessée towards Puy-Saint-Vincent - Vallouise (D994E).


Once you've reached Les Vigneaux, still on the D994E, just before leaving the village, take the Rif bridge towards Puy-Saint-Vincent. The trailhead is located at the bridge.

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

**Parking:** We recommend parking at the Pont du Rif (bridge), on the other side of the Gyrone, just outside the village of Les Vigneaux.

# Geographical location



- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Hemp production (AA)             |  The commons (AB)                                 |
|  The church of Sainte-Marthe (AC) |  Solid architecture (AD)                          |
|  Protective shelter (AE)          |  The village of Les Vigneaux (AF)                 |
|  Wood cranesbill (AG)             |  Thne Gyrone (AH)                                 |
|  The northern wryneck (AI)        |  On the south-facing slope, pine forest (AJ)      |
|  The hamlet of Pacher (AK)        |  Etruscan honeysuckle (AL)                        |
|  The Vallouise Park Centre (AM)   |  The Alpine copse snail (AN)                      |
|  The roe deer (AO)                |  The Sentier du Facteur - the postman's path (AP) |
|  The sun bird (AQ)                |  The ash tree (AR)                                |
|  The gerris (AS)                  |  The wood nuthatch (AT)                           |
|  The sessile-leaved cytiscus (AU) |  Minute snails (AV)                               |
|  The aspen (AW)                   |  Mosses (AX)                                      |
|  The martagon lily (AY)           |  Thrushes (AZ)                                    |
|  Riparian forest (BA)             |  The laserwort (BB)                               |
|  The long-tailed tit (BC)         |  The great globe thistle (BD)                     |
|  The smooth snake (BE)            |  The aspen (BF)                                   |
|  The Eurasian blackcap (BG)       |  The ash tree (BH)                                |

-  The clouded Apollo (BI)
-  The church of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine-des-Prés and its two sun dials (BK)
-  The "ubac" (BM)
-  The house with arcades (BO)
-  Les Eyssarts (BQ)
-  The chapel of Saint-Romain (BJ)
-  The communal oven (BL)
-  Les Prés, hamlet of Puy-Saint-Vincent (BN)
-  The history of the resort of Puy-Saint-Vincent (BP)

# 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...

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## 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

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## 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

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## 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



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## 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, «toune» (ground level arcade).

Attribution : PNE

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## 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.

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## The village of Les Vigneaux (AF)

In spite of the altitude, the region's dry climate and the local growing conditions of limestone and sediments facing due south made the planting of grapevines possible as far back as the tenth century. The municipality owes its name to the presence of these vineyard operations, which were very significant in the late nineteenth century. The almost simultaneous appearance of the phylloxera aphid and the Briançon train, bringing wine from Provence, spelled the end of this activity here.

Attribution : Blandine Reynaud - PDE





### ✿ 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.

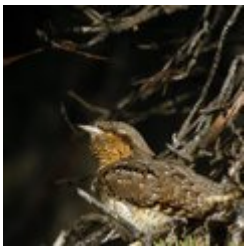
Attribution : Marc Corail - Parc national des Écrins



### 💧 Thne Gyronde (AH)

No, we're not in south-west France where the Gironde flows! The Gyronde (spelt with a «y»!) is the river that flows between Vallouise and L'Argentière-La Bessée, where it flows into the Durance. It originates from the Gyr and Onde mountain streams which merge in Vallouise.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



### 🦉 The northern wryneck (AI)

In the spring, an odd song can be heard among the old trees in the orchard, a loud song similar to that of the green woodpecker, only slower. It is that of the northern wryneck. 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



### ✿ On the south-facing slope, pine forest (AJ)

The track passes through a forest of Scots pines, mixed with some downy oak trees. It is a forest typical of those found in the lower south-facing slopes (those exposed to the sun) in the intra-alpine valleys.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins



## The hamlet of Parcher (AK)

The hamlet of Grand Parcher stands on the alluvial cone formed by the Grand Parcher mountain stream, and on either side of it. It is made up of several old houses and the seventeenth-century chapel of Saint-André. It has two sun dials painted onto its walls. One of them bears the saying HORA INCERTA CUNTIS, ULTIMA MULTIS (This hour is uncertain for all, it is the last hour for many). Food for thought!

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



## Etruscan honeysuckle (AL)

Etruria was the territory of the Etruscans, in the area of present-day Tuscany. Although this honeysuckle does not grow only in Tuscany, it is Mediterranean, however, and only grows naturally in the wild in the southern half of France. Being a plant that needs warmth, it does not grow at altitude, except here where the south-facing slopes are particularly dry and warm. Its large pink and yellow flowers are highly perfumed.

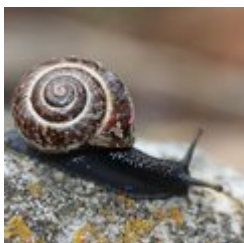
Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



## The Vallouise Park Centre (AM)

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 (AN)

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 roe deer (AO)

The forest is home to roe deer, which can often be seen. This ungulate (hoofed mammal) is rather unusual because the rut does not take place in autumn, for births in May and June as is the case with other mountain-dwelling ungulates, but in summer. After fertilisation, however, egg development is suspended for 6 months (this is called embryonic diapause). Gestation then resumes so that the fawn (or twin fawns) can be born in spring, a period more favourable for its survival.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - Parc national des Écrins



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

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 (AQ)

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.

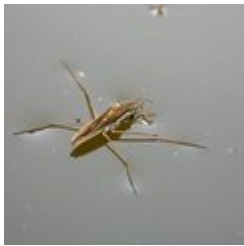
Attribution : Cyril Coursier - Parc national des Écrins



## ✿ The ash tree (AR)

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 (AS)

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 (AT)

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 sessile-leaved cytisus (AU)

This small shrub which grows to 1 to 2 metres in light woods is characterised by three-lobed leaves on the flowering shoots which are sessile, that is to say without a stalk. It is easy to confuse with the scorpion senna, which has the same leaves but they are divided into 7 or 9 lobes. Both produce very beautiful yellow flowers in May to June.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



### Minute snails (AV)

If you take the trouble to examine the large boulder, you might discover minute snails just a few millimetres in diameter, clinging to the stone walls. The elongated snails are *Chondrina avenacea* and the others, which are round and conical, are *Pyramidula pusilla*. They are common but too seldom observed. Nature is rich; you just have to take the time to observe it with curiosity!

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins



### The aspen (AW)

Near the ruined mill, you can see a stand of tall trees with smooth, greenish trunks 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 needs dampish soils and plenty of light and so it grows in clearings.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



### Mosses (AX)

There are mosses growing on the old wall. Mosses are plants which appeared long before flowering plants, 440 million years ago. They live in damp environments but can withstand long periods of drought. They have very few requirements and can colonise virgin areas. They then contribute to the slow formation of humus, thus allowing more demanding plants to establish in their turn. There are 800 species of moss in France, all of them beautiful!

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - Parc national des Écrins

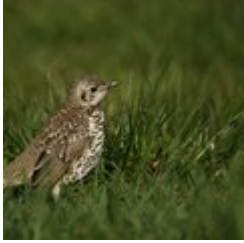


### The martagon lily (AY)

Many martagon lilies grow at the side of the path. This superb plant has large hanging flowers with curved-back petals, which are pink speckled with purple and exposed orangey stamens. Its leaves are elongated and whorled. It grows in meadows and cool woods. Although common here, it is rare in many French regions. In fact, picking it is prohibited or regulated.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - Parc national des Écrins





## Thrushes (AZ)

In the springtime, the woods echo with the song of birds seeking a mate and defending their territory. Among them is the song of the mistle thrush, similar to that of the blackbird, melodious and piping. As for the song thrush, it has a wide and varied repertoire: its song is a succession of powerful varied notes, each repeated numerous times. In summer, the birds are more inconspicuous: when raising young, there's no point in singing for a mate, better not to attract attention!

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins



## Riparian forest (BA)

The track runs through a wood of alder, beech, aspen and oak, the remnant of the natural forest growing at the water's edge, called riparian forest. This type of forest is in decline everywhere, destroyed by urbanisation and by containment of the mountain streams. Yet it is an essential zone for the fixation of river banks and for purifying the water. Since it offers specific natural habitats, it also plays a major role in maintaining biodiversity.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



## The laserwort (BB)

After the bridge, a large plant with flowers arranged in umbels (in other words, an umbellifer) clings to a small rock bar to the right of the track, the laserwort. This plant belongs to the family Apiaceae, which used to be called umbellifers, and grows in dry areas. It has a distinctive feature: in autumn, the basal part of the stem breaks of its own accord and the entire plant, now dry, sets off rolling down the hillside like a large ball, or is blown by the wind.

Attribution : Cédric Dentan - Parc national des Écrins



### The long-tailed tit (BC)

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 (BD)

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 smooth snake (BE)

The smooth snake is a non-venomous colubrid snake, which adopted the bad idea of resembling the venomous vipera aspis, which has led to it being killed indiscriminately. We must remember, however, that both the vipera aspis and the smooth snake are protected species. It can be recognised in particular by the black stripe over its eye and on its round pupil (which helps to distinguish colubrids from vipers, which have a slit pupil).

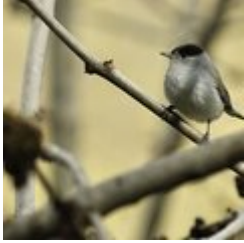
Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins



### The aspen (BF)

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 (BG)

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.

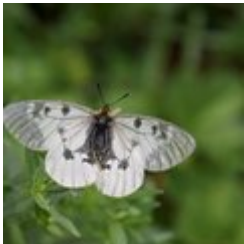
Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



## The ash tree (BH)

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 (BI)

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 (BJ)

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



### The church of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine-des-Prés and its two sun dials (BK)

The charming little church of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine-des-Prés, which dates from the sixteenth century, stands in the hamlet of Les Prés. It is surrounded by a wall and a cemetery. On the walls of the church, two sun dials can be seen, both engraved and painted on plaster in 1718. The first is above the door, telling the time in the afternoon, bearing the saying « *for a moment of delights, an eternity of torments* » which alludes to the life of Saint Mary Magdalene, the well-known sinner who is venerated as a model of penitence. The second, telling the time in the morning, bears the Latin phrase *Ars longa, vita brevis* which translates as « learning is long, life is short ».

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



### The communal oven (BL)

Legend has it that the Lord caused a communal oven to be built and kept it maintained. The local people could use this oven in exchange for the payment of a levy. Families would prepare and knead their own dough at home and then bring it to the oven for baking. Names were drawn by lot to establish their turns.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



## The "ubac" (BM)

The track rises gently up the right-hand bank of the Gyronde, on the "ubac" side. The "ubac" is the slope that is exposed to the north, so it is in shadow in winter when the sun is low in the sky.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins



## Les Prés, hamlet of Puy-Saint-Vincent (BN)

Le Prés is one of the main hamlets of Puy-Saint-Vincent. Like Le Puy and Les Alberts, it stands on a flat plateau which is a glacial escarpment left by the now-retreated Gyronde glacier. Like Prey d'Aval, Prey du Milieu and Prey d'Amant, its name is a reminder that prior to the development of the ski resort, the land here used to be shared by meadows and crops.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - Parc national des Écrins



## The house with arcades (BO)

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



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

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





## Les Eyssarts (BQ)

The track runs through a place called Les Eyssarts, which gave this circuit its name. This name comes from the word *essart* which refers to «a place that has been cleared, most often to create agricultural land». A few meadows, but above all former canals and low walls hidden under the advancing forest, bear witness to this past use of the land.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - Parc national des Écrins