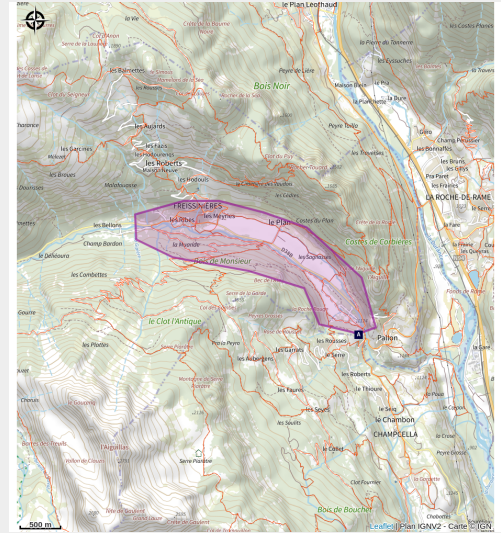


Freissinières

Parc national des Ecrins



Panorama sur la plaine de Freissinières depuis l'itinéraire vers la Tête des Raisins (Thibaut Blais)



With 16 kilometers of trails from the hamlet of Les Ribes to Le Pallon at the bottom of the valley, the Freissinières Nordic ski area is open from mid-December to mid-March, depending on snow conditions.

Freissinières and its hamlets create a singular atmosphere between wide, sunny valleys and low vegetation, giving a pleasant sense of isolation.

Useful information

Practice : Snowshoe

Description

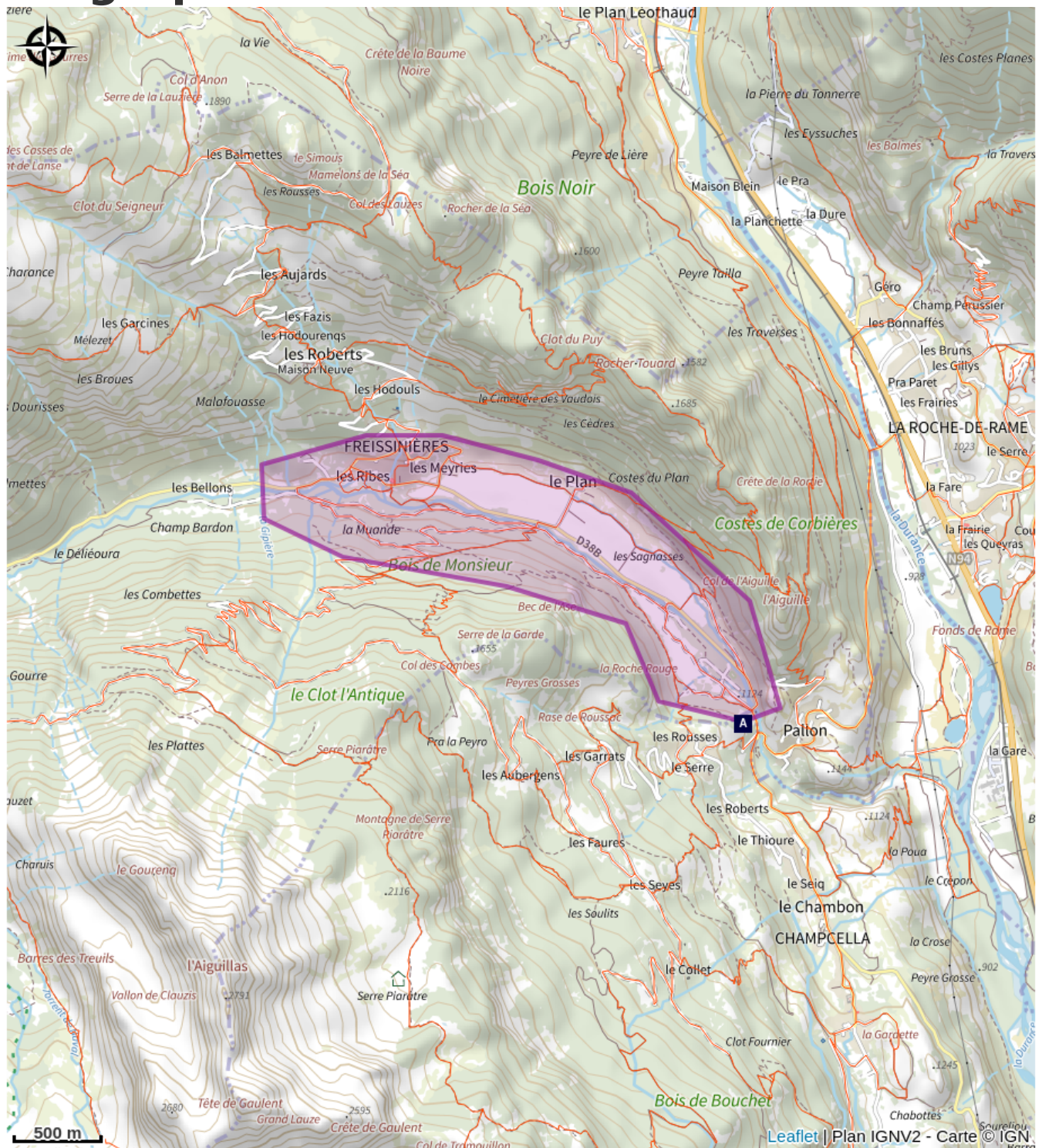
Access : From the N94 Gap-Briançon, turn off at la Roche de Rame towards Fressinières (D38B).







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







Parking : It is advisable to park on La Biaysse or Les Ribes parking lot, or at the Maison de la Vallée depending on the start of the itinerary.

The site presents no particular difficulties. The routes are mainly flat, sometimes with gentle slopes.

Geographical location



-  The Freissinières valley (A)
-  The southern water vole (C)
-  A Medieval tsunami? (E)
-  The European silver fir (G)
-  The fire lily (I)
-  The common redstart (K)

-  The black pine (B)
-  The creeping lady's-tress (D)
-  The red squirrel (F)
-  The crag martin (H)
-  The Grotte des Vaudois - The Waldensians' Cave (J)
-  The petasites hybridus or butterbur (L)

-  The savin juniper (M)
-  Freissinières (O)
-  The common barberry (Q)
-  The horsetail (S)
-  The petasites hybridus or butterbur (U)
-  Félix Neff (W)
-  Cool forest (N)
-  The Aristolochia pistolochia (P)
-  The fir (R)
-  The barbastelle (T)
-  The church of Sainte Marie-Madeleine (V)
-  Huile de marmotte - marmot oil (X)

All useful information

Advices

Please consult the itinerary status :

<https://www.nordicalpesdusud.com/domaines/freissinieres>

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.

→ For avalanche-prone itineraries, 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 piste service.

→ Some routes are shared with cross-country skiers: give them priority, always walk along the edge of the piste and be vigilant when crossing these shared routes.

→ Don't walk in cross-country ski tracks, straddle them.

→ Respect signage: dangers, prohibitions, trail directions, among other things.

→ Don't overestimate your possibilities!

→ Take your garbage with you!

Please note: This information is given for guidance only. It is your responsibility to check the weather forecast 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

Information desks

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Source



Pays des Ecrins

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On your path...



The Freissinières valley (A)

The valley was created as the result of glacial overdeepening, that is to say, when the glacier came to a halt against the Pallon hard rock bar, it created a depression. When the glaciers retreated, a lake was left behind this rock bar and was gradually filled up by alluvial deposits. From a historical point of view, the Protestant pastor Félix Neff fundamentally altered life in the valley in 1826 by founding a training college for primary school teachers, developing irrigation processes and teaching new crop growing methods, among other things...

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



The black pine (B)

The black pine did not arrive here of its own accord. It was introduced by the National Forestry Agency and was planted to stabilise eroded mountain areas. It can be identified by its long needles which are grouped in pairs and by its large cones.

Attribution : Christian Bâisset - Parc national des Écrins



The southern water vole (C)

Flattened paths through the reeds, and holes 6 to 7 cm in diameter... the southern water vole has been here! This large rodent with dark brown fur on its back digs its burrow in the banks of the stream. This species, which lives close to water, causes no damage to crops. Not a prolific breeder, its numbers are low and it is threatened with extinction.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins



The creeping lady's-tress (D)

This inconspicuous little orchid grows on moss, in the undergrowth of the pine forest. Growing at the base of the stem, its leaves are oval and pointed, with a network of veins. The upright stem only bears a few scales. Covered in a fine down, the white flowers are arranged in the form of a spiral spike, facing the same way. A little gem that is worth keeping an eye out for!

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - Parc national des Écrins



A Medieval tsunami? (E)

Pallon marks the entrance to the ancient glacial valley of Freissinières, enclosed behind a bar of hard rock. As they melted, the glaciers left behind a lake, trapped by this bar. It is said that this natural dam has been breached on numerous occasions. In the Middle Ages, suddenly released into the Gourfouran gorge, the water is said to have laid ruin to the village of Rame, standing on the plain.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



The red squirrel (F)

Elegant and alert, a squirrel crosses the track, followed by its long feathery tail. Red? This one is dark brown. In the mountains this rodent has adopted a “solar panel” strategy, on the principle that dark colours absorb the heat more efficiently. It is active during the day and does not hibernate, although it does minimise its activity on days when the weather is bad. It is a protected species.

Attribution : Marc Corail - Parc national des Écrins



The European silver fir (G)

The fir thrives on this north-exposed slope, called the ubac. Its needles have two white stripes on their undersides. They are arranged on either side of the boughs, and not all the way around them, which distinguishes it from the spruce. The elongated cones stand upright, rather than hanging downwards. They grow in large number, often mingling with larch trees under whose shade they can grow. By contrast, the larch - the "tree of light" - cannot grow under the cover of fir trees.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



The crag martin (H)

The birds that are constantly swooping around the cliff are crag martins. They are brown with a beige underside. They have built their nests under small overhangs. This species is very common in the Alps. Partially migratory, crag martins return to the Mediterranean coast in winter, where they join resident populations. So it is the first bird to reappear in the valleys of the Pays des Écrins in late February and the last to leave in October!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



The fire lily (I)

In June and early July, the rocks are brightened up here and there by large orange flowers: the fire lily is a splendid plant which grows in the mountains of Europe. It grows in rocky or bush-covered terrain and even - why not? - right on the cliff faces, in dry areas. It is a protected species.

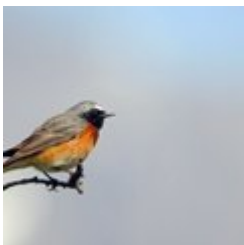
Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - Parc national des Écrins



The Grotte des Vaudois - The Waldensians' Cave (J)

The history of Freissinières is linked to that of the Waldensians, who found refuge in this valley and in other Alpine valleys in the thirteenth century. The followers of this religious movement - which later embraced the reformation - were deemed to be heretics and therefore persecuted. This cave, in which Waldensians sought refuge after being taken by surprise, witnessed massacres perpetrated by the Inquisition.

Attribution : Thierry Maillet - Parc national des Écrins



The common redstart (K)

The common redstart can be told apart from its cousin, the black redstart by its white eyebrow (hence its French name which is translated as "white-browed redstart") and its orange breast. At least for the male, since the female of both birds is duller and brownish, but the female common redstart also has an orangey tail. It returns from Africa in early April and searches the areas to find a hollow in a tree or in an old wall where it builds its nest.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins



✿ The petasites hybridus or butterbur (L)

The ditches on the Freissinières plain are edged by a plant with very broad leaves: the petasites hybridus or butterbur, also called the devil's hat in French. In Ancient Greek, the petasos was a round felt hat. Nobody knows whether the devil wears this hat, but the plant is certainly used as a herbal remedy. Very common in the lowlands, it is quite rare in the Pays des Écrins although other species of petasites do grow at higher altitude.

Attribution : Ludovic Imberdis - Parc national des Écrins



✿ The savin juniper (M)

A low spreading shrub, the savin juniper is very common in stony meadows and uncultivated land on warm slopes. Its dark, matte green leaves in the form of small scales, overlap along the branches. So it isn't spiky... but you still need to be cautious as it is very toxic. For seasoning dishes, better to gather the fruits of the common juniper!

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



✿ Cool forest (N)

Here, the drought-sensitive fir has established itself among the larches. This forest harbours treasures such as the very rare ghost orchid and the shield-moss, a unique little moss - also rare - which grows on wood in an advanced state of decomposition and thus signals that the natural cycle of the forest is unimpaired.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



🕒 Freissinières (O)

The name Freissinières comes from the old word freissinière meaning "black ash". This municipality, which extends as far as the Col des Terres Blanches and the Col de Freissinières, both of which overlook the Champsaur valley, is made up of thirteen hamlets, although none of them are called Freissinières! Archaeological excavations carried out twenty years ago show that sites at high altitude (such as Faravel) were occupied on a seasonal basis from the retreat of the glaciers 12,000 years ago (Upper Palaeolithic period) and that this occupation continued after that.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



✿ The *Aristolochia pistolochia* (P)

The hamlet of Pallon is in a sunny location. Around the village, a curious plant with long brown trumpet-like flowers grows on the edges of the stone piles in the fields and meadows: the *aristolochia pistolochia* or birthwort. Of Mediterranean affinity, this plant benefits from the hot dry climate here and is virtually at its northern boundary. It is the host plant of the caterpillars of a rare and protected butterfly: the Spanish festoon.

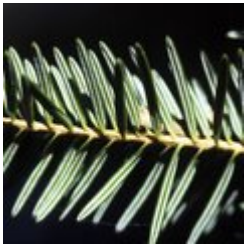
Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins



✿ The common barberry (Q)

The common barberry is a bush with long thorns arranged in threes, and with oval serrated leaves. In spring, it produces clusters of yellow flowers, which later develop into red, oval and elongated berries. These tart fruits are edible and can be made into jellies... if you have the patience to gather them! This shrub grows almost everywhere.

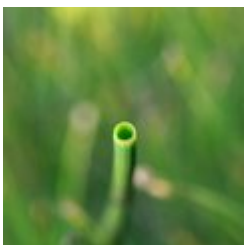
Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



✿ The fir (R)

The fir thrives on this north-exposed slope, called the ubac. Its needles have two white stripes on their undersides. They are arranged on either side of the boughs, and not all the way around them, which distinguishes it from the spruce. The elongated cones stand upright, rather than hanging downwards. They grow in large number, often mingling with larch trees under whose shade they can grow. By contrast, the larch - the "tree of light" - cannot grow under the cover of fir trees.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins



✿ The horsetail (S)

On the banks of a stream, on the edge of a ditch a plant grows which resembles a large bottle brush... or a horse's tail, depending on your imagination. It's the field horsetail, a plant related to ferns. It is known for its medicinal properties because it is rich in silica, a powerful remineraliser for the bones, cartilage and skin. There are several species of horsetail.

Attribution : Cédric Dentan - Parc national des Écrins



The barbastelle (T)

In the village, birds build their nests in the old walls and bats live in the attics. Some hide behind shutters that are secured open against the walls. The barbastelle is a rare species of bat. Like all other bat species, it is protected. The hamlet of Le Ribes is privileged to be its home in the summer. This small mammal feeds on a large number of insects every night. It «moves house» frequently if it is disturbed or simply as a precaution.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



The petasites hybridus or butterbur (U)

On the banks of the stream there is a plant with very broad leaves: the petasites hybridus or butterbur. In Ancient Greek, the petasos was a round felt hat. Nobody knows whether the devil wears this hat, but the plant is certainly used as a herbal remedy. Common in the lowlands, it is generally quite scarce in the mountains, although other species of petasites do grow at higher altitude. In any event, it makes a great hat!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



The church of Sainte Marie-Madeleine (V)

The church of Sainte Marie-Madeleine was built in the seventeenth century. It is thought to be a former Protestant church which escaped destruction in 1684 when Louis XIV was leading an anti-Protestant drive. The Protestant church is then thought to have undergone works to convert it into a Catholic church.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



Félix Neff (W)

Félix Neff was a Swiss Protestant pastor. He was responsible for the Protestant Revival in the Freissinières valley in the seventeenth century. He also set up the first education college for primary school teachers in France, in Dormillouse in 1826. He was also behind new irrigation and house-building techniques, developments which improved the everyday lives of the local people.

Attribution : Manuel Meester - Parc national des Écrins



✿ Huile de marmotte - marmot oil (X)

In times past, the inhabitants of Freissinières used oil for cooking and lighting. Walnut or almond oil was difficult to produce at this high altitude. The Briançon plum tree or marmottier, however, can withstand the mountain conditions, and the yellow fruits of this tree contain kernels. These kernels were pressed in mills to produce an oil with medicinal virtues: marmot oil. .

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins