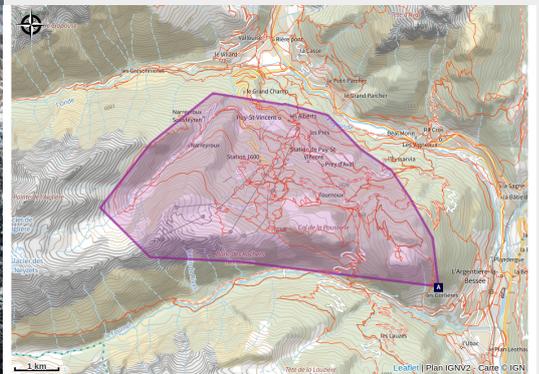


# Star-shaped stay - 3 days of self-guided snowshoeing in the Écrins region

Parc national des Écrins



Raquette en Vallouise (Rogier Van Rijn)



*In the heart of the Vallouise valley for three days, these self-guided routes will lead you through the remarkable landscapes of the Écrins region.*

Three days of escape on snowshoes in the heart of the Écrins: larch forests, wild valleys, and endless panoramas unfold before you. The white breath of the mountains leads the way—between silence, light, and a renewed sense of freedom.

## Useful information

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Practice : Snowshoe

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Period : Winter

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Rating scale :

Quoting : R3

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Themes : Panorama, Pass

# Description

**Day 1 - Tournoux Loop:** This first loop offers a magnificent panorama over the Vallouise valley, your playground for the coming days. Along the way, you might be lucky enough to see a team of sled dogs passing nearby.

Ascent: 235 m / Distance: 6.5 km / Duration: 4 hrs

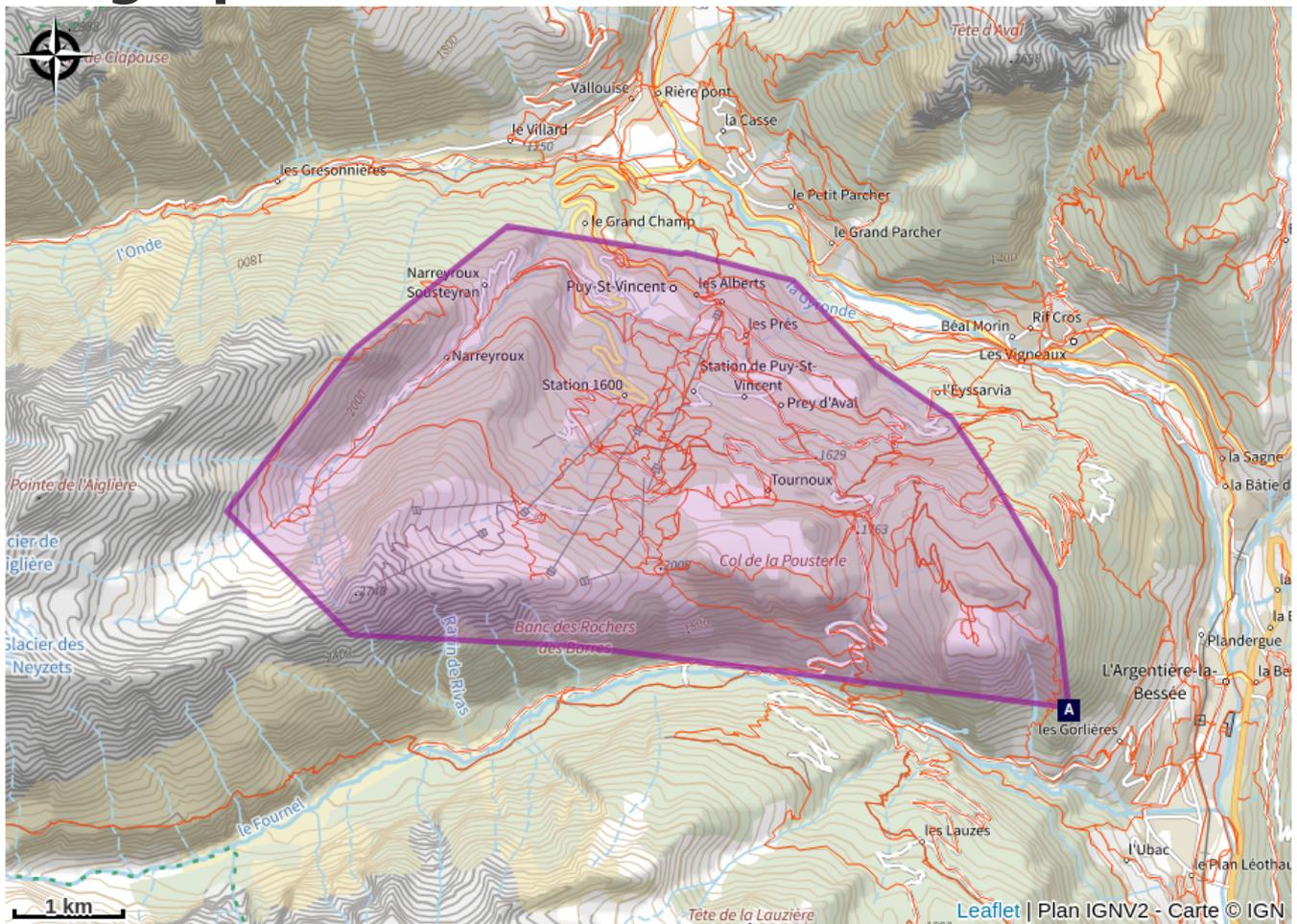
**Day 2 - Narreyroux Loop:** You'll explore the wild Narreyroux valley—a unique chance to make your own trail while spotting tracks of mountain wildlife. The route leads to a charming alpine hamlet, perfect for a picnic break. Crossing meadows and forests, this day's journey offers a wonderful variety of landscapes to enjoy throughout your hike.

Ascent: 490 m / Distance: 9.9 km / Duration: 5 hrs 30

**Day 3 - Les Têtes / Col de la Pusterle:** Immerse yourself among the giants of the Écrins range as you climb to the summit of Les Têtes de Puy Saint Vincent. From the top, a breathtaking 360° view reveals the Écrins and Queyras massifs in all their glory. Accessible only by cross-country skis or snowshoes, this itinerary takes you through a superb larch forest. As you gain elevation, you'll find yourself in a Scandinavian-like atmosphere, surrounded by majestic mountain scenery.

Ascent: 500 m / Distance: 9.7 km / Duration: 6 hrs

# Geographical location



- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  The chenevières, hemp fields (AA)                |  Hemp production (AB)                     |
|  The commons (AC)                                 |  The church of Sainte-Marthe (AD)         |
|  Solid architecture (AE)                          |  Protective shelter (AF)                  |
|  The Eurasian pygmy owl (AG)                      |  The Gyrone (AH)                          |
|  Cliff-dwelling birds (AI)                        |  The Col de la Pusterle (AJ)              |
|  The larch (AK)                                   |  Forest-dwelling bats (AL)                |
|  The pygmy owl (AM)                               |  The rosebay willowherb (AN)              |
|  The Sentier du Facteur - the postman's path (AO) |  The aspen (AP)                           |
|  Mosses (AQ)                                      |  The ptarmigan and the mountain hare (AR) |
|  The wheatear (AS)                                |  The larch forest (AT)                    |
|  The red wood ant (AU)                            |  The "megaphorb" (AV)                     |
|  The mountain habitat (AW)                        |  Thrushes (AX)                            |
|  The sycamore (AY)                                |  The laserwort (AZ)                       |
|  The Fournel (BA)                                 |  The aspen (BB)                           |
|  The Eurasian blackcap (BC)                       |  The ash tree (BD)                        |
|  The clouded Apollo (BE)                          |  The chapel of Saint-Romain (BF)          |

-  The church of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine-des-Prés and its two sundials (BG)
-  Tournoux (BI)
-  The Fournel valley (BK)
-  The peregrine falcon (BM)
-  The ski resort of Puy Saint Vincent (BO)
-  The irrigation canals (BQ)
-  The *Chilostoma zonatum flavovirens* or granite helicon (BS)
-  The Scots pine (BU)
-  The Les Têtes belvedere (BW)
-  The grey wagtail (BY)
-  The restoration of the canals (CA)
-  The history of the resort of Puy-Saint-Vincent (CC)
-  Reading the landscape (CE)
-  The martagon lily (BH)
-  The common raven (BJ)
-  Les Prés, hamlet of Puy-Saint-Vincent (BL)
-  The yellow cephalaria (BN)
-  The hamlet of Narreyroux (BP)
-  Green shield-moss (BR)
-  Le Laus (BT)
-  The deer (BV)
-  The common yew (BX)
-  The architecture of La Voile in Puy-Saint-Vincent 1600 (BZ)
-  The house with arcades (CB)
-  The clouded Apollo (CD)
-  Les Eyssarts (CF)

# All useful information

## **Advices**

→ 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

## Information desks

### **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/>



### **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/>



### **Office de tourisme de Pelvoux**

Station de Ski de Pelvoux, 05340 Vallouise-Pelvoux

contact@paysdesecrins.com

Tel : 09 63 53 61 67

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



## Source



Pays des Ecrins

<https://www.paysdesecrins.com>

# On your path...

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## The chenevières, hemp fields (AA)

There is a French saying «Avril donne le fil», meaning that April is string time. Sown in spring after the last frosts, the tall stems of hemp grow in tiny plots of ground, called chenabiers or chenevières. The hemp is cut at the end of August and the strands are immediately immersed in large holes filled with water - called the naïs - on the edge of wet meadows. They are left to steep for more than a month, in order to release all the gum that binds the plant fibres together.

Attribution : PNE

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## Hemp production (AB)

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 (AC)

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 (AD)

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 (AE)

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, «toun» (ground level arcade).

Attribution : PNE

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## Protective shelter (AF)

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.



## The Eurasian pygmy owl (AG)

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



## The Gyrone (AH)

No, we're not in south-west France where the Gironde flows! The Gyrone (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



## Cliff-dwelling birds (AI)

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



## The Col de la Pusterle (AJ)

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



## ❁ The larch (AK)

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 (AL)

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



## 🦉 The pygmy owl (AM)

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 where it builds its nest.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - Parc national des Écrins



## ❁ The rosebay willowherb (AN)

The forest tracks are edged with great swathes of a tall plant which has purple flowers arranged in loose spikes. The rosebay willowherb is a pioneer plant and favours road embankments and disturbed ground. In late summer, its very numerous seeds, each with a little plume, float away en masse glowing in the advancing twilight...

Attribution : Thierry Maillot - Parc national des Écrins



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

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

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## 🌿 The aspen (AP)

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

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## 🌿 Mosses (AQ)

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

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## The ptarmigan and the mountain hare (AR)

The rock ptarmigan, a member of the grouse family, and the mountain hare are both perfectly adapted to high-altitude life. Among other adaptations, they turn white in winter in order to escape the attention of predators, and they are grey-brown in summer. In addition, their feet are covered with feathers or fur, and act as snowshoes when moving over snow. They are particularly threatened by the increasingly early arrival of the flocks in the alpine pastures, the boom in winter tourism and climate change.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - Parc national des Écrins

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## The wheatear (AS)

This bird is common in the alpine pastures and can be recognised by its grey back, its pale underside, its white rump, its white tail the shape of an inverted black "T" and by a black stripe over its eye. During the mating season, the male's underside is pinkish. Perched on a large rock, he utters a loud «uit uit» alarm call, which gives his presence away. A migratory bird, he arrives from Africa in April and flies south again in September.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins

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## The larch forest (AT)

The symbol of the Southern Alps, this softwood tree loses its leaves in winter. Perfect adaptation to winters in the high mountains: being leafless, the branches are better able to withstand the weight of the snow. Arranged in little clusters, the leaves are a soft green in the spring and golden yellow in the autumn. It is a pioneer species which needs light in order to grow. It provides mankind with a source of pasture for the flocks and a strong and rot-proof construction material.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - Parc national des Écrins

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## The red wood ant (AU)

The nest of the red wood ant is made from conifer needles, dry grass and earth. It is home to between 200,000 and 500,000 ants! It gives off an odour of vinegar, due to the formic acid, a substance sprayed by the ants as a defensive mechanism. Inside the nest, the worker ants each have their own task. In early summer, a large number of winged ants fly from the nest: these are males who will only live for a few days, enough time to reproduce, and a few new queens.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



## The "megaphorb" (AV)

The "megaphorb" is a combination of mega-plants which establish themselves in places where the soil is permanently damp, deep and nutrient-rich. The adenostyles alliariae, the alpine sow-thistle, the masterwort or false benjoin and the tansy-leaved rocket are among them.

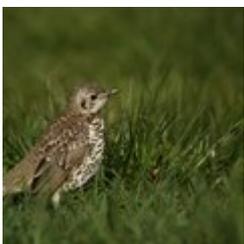
Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



## The mountain habitat (AW)

The houses here were once built with local materials: stone and larch wood. They are roofed with shingles rather than the lauze (flat stone) commonly seen in other mountain regions. The hamlet of Narreyroux was a high mountain hamlet within the municipality of Puy-Saint-Vincent. In fact, one of the chalets is still used as a shepherd's cabin, before the flock moves up the valley floor where the Grands Plans shepherd's cabin is situated.

Attribution : Thierry Maillet - Parc national des Écrins



## Thrushes (AX)

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



## ✿ The sycamore (AY)

The sycamore is a beautiful tree. Its leaves have five rather pointed lobes, similar to those of the plane tree. It cannot tolerate drought, so it grows in this region in relatively cool deciduous forests. Its twin fruits, equipped with wings, twist as they fall: the «helicopters» that children love. In autumn, its leaves turn golden yellow creating a delightful sight.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins

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## ✿ The laserwort (AZ)

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

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## 💧 The Fournel (BA)

The Fournel mountain stream gives generously. Its water makes up a large proportion of the town's drinking water, supplies the irrigation canals, is used for hydropower and offers a recreational area valuable to the local economy in the form of its canyon, located in the gorge connecting it to the Durance. Being a mountain stream, it is impetuous, but sills have been built lower down and it has been dammed to prevent natural disasters. Numerous mountain streams have received the same treatment...

Attribution : Jan Novak Photography

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## ✿ The aspen (BB)

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

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## The Eurasian blackcap (BC)

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

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## The ash tree (BD)

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

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## The clouded Apollo (BE)

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

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

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 Gyronde 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 (BG)

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 martagon lily (BH)

In cooler spots, the path is edged by large plants such as the wood cranesbill, which has purple flowers, and the martagon lily. 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



## 🏠 Tournoux (BI)

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

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## 🐼 The common raven (BJ)

A hollow "caw" makes you lift up your head (careful not to trip!). A pair of common ravens is nesting near here (they pair for life), on a cliff face. Although bigger than its cousins the carrion crow and the rook, it can be identified by its rather lozenge-shaped tail. It almost became extinct due to persecution Yet it's an omnivore and, more particularly, a scavenger which plays an important role by cleaning up disease-prone carcasses.

Attribution : Chevalier Robert - Parc national des Écrins

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## 🏠 The Fournel valley (BK)

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

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

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

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## The peregrine falcon (BM)

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 (BN)

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 ski resort of Puy Saint Vincent (BO)

The original resort was created in Les Prés in 1968. Then, 1974 saw the start of construction Grande Barre 1600, which in every respect chimes with the tourist architecture of the 1970s. The new 1800 resort, with its wood and stone chalets, dates from 2005: more modest sizes, more sympathetic materials similar to local species. It's the third generation of the resort.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins

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## The hamlet of Narreyroux (BP)

A former alpine pasture hamlet, the hamlet of Narreyroux has maintained its charm even though most of its restored houses are now second homes. Higher up, the valley of Narreyroux is still a big alpine pasture. The pastoral cabin in which the shepherd stayed at the beginning and end of the summer grazing season, is located in the hamlet.

Attribution : Hameau de Narreyroux

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## The irrigation canals (BQ)

The route follows a canal side for a short distance. Numerous canals brought water from the Torrent de la Combe mountain stream to the fields which take up a large area around the villages of Puy-Saint-Vincent. In fact, the slopes just above these fields did not provide sufficient water, making it necessary to create this large network of irrigation canals.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins



## Green shield-moss (BR)

It is only after close inspection of rotting dead wood - pine or larch in the main - that you might hope to spot the very inconspicuous and rare shield-moss. It is a moss which has no leaves and only its sporophytes (tiny spore-containing sacs) give its presence away. It reaches a height of no more than 7 or 8 mm! It is rare because it can only live in ancient forest and it is severely threatened by timber exploitation, so it is an indicator of the good health of a forest. It is a heritage species, that is to say, protected at national level.

Attribution : Combrisson Damien - Parc national des Écrins



## The *Chilostoma zonatum flavovirens* or granite helicon (BS)

No, it's a snail, not a musical instrument! This relatively rare mollusc which can reach 2 or more centimetres in diameter is seldom seen in the Pays des Écrins, but appears to enjoy living in the Fournel valley. It takes shelter among cool damp boulders which are, as its name suggests, non-calcareous... Something quite unusual for snails, whose shells are made up essentially of calcium carbonate!

Attribution : Combrisson Damien - Parc national des Écrins



## Le Laus (BT)

A number of old alpine pasture chalets or hamlets, often renovated, are dotted across the Puy-Saint-Vincent resort. These are the Chalets du Laus. Le Laus is a place name designating a lake. In fact, just after the chalets, although not a lake, there is a flat, marshy area which is no doubt a small filled-in lake. So no point in bringing your pedalo!

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - Parc national des Écrins



## The Scots pine (BU)

The path first runs up through a forest of Scots pines, a tree identifiable by its salmon-coloured bark, especially at the top, and its needles arranged in pairs. It is the typical tree of warm south-facing slopes in the montane zone of intra-alpine valleys.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins



## The deer (BV)

Deer are well-established across the Pays des Écrins. You can spot clues as to its presence: hoof prints or droppings, often in little piles. The stag loses his antlers at the end of winter (February-May) and they regrow up to the end of August. They reach full development before the rutting season (September), when you can hear the rutting call. The doe has no antlers.

Attribution : Telmon Jean-Philippe - Parc national des Écrins



## The Les Têtes belvedere (BW)

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



## The common yew (BX)

Stands of common yew have declined significantly due to felling for wood and because of its toxicity for livestock and humans: it has been dug up or cut down in numerous regions. It has also been widely collected because it contains a cancer [fighting] agent. A large population survives in the Fournel valley and it is currently being monitored.

Attribution : Nicollet Bernard - Parc national des Écrins



## The grey wagtail (BY)

This timid bird with a grey back and yellow breast, has a long tail, like its cousin the white wagtail. As its name suggests, it is highly dependent on flowing water and it finds a favourite haunt on the banks of the Fournel river. It feeds on aquatic insects and nests on the riverbanks.

Attribution : Saulay Pascal - Parc national des Écrins

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## The architecture of La Voile in Puy-Saint-Vincent 1600 (BZ)

The construction of this large building complex, the highest part of which is known as « La Voile » (the sail), was started in 1973 by a team of investors responsible for developing the 1600 ski resort. Designed by the Grenoble-based architect, Michel Ludmer of the Les 3A firm of architects, this tiered construction hugs the slopes with its silhouette, its soaring design structured around a mast, like the sail of a yacht sailing in a sea of snow. La Voile was inspired by iconic buildings in other tourist resorts, like the « Paquebot des Neiges » (the snow liner) in La Plagne and the « La Grande Pyramide » (great pyramid) in La Grande-Motte. Although still misunderstood, this architecture which presents numerous advantages (like restricting the use of space) might well merit a « Twentieth Century Heritage » label.

Attribution : Jan Novak

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## The restoration of the canals (CA)

Water is essential to farming in our territory because of the relatively dry Mediterranean climate with hot summers. To compensate for this, our ancestors created artificial water courses, the canals. These performed a dual role because they served not only to irrigate the hay meadows, kitchen gardens and grain fields, but also to prevent torrential flooding by acting as drains. Today, the canals are still used and managed by associations which work to keep them operational and to maintain them, several times a year.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins

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## The house with arcades (CB)

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 (CC)

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



## The clouded Apollo (CD)

White, almost translucent in places, with just a few black spots, this butterfly is a cousin of the better-known mountain Apollo. It lives in clearings in open woods where the plant on which the female lays her eggs grows, and on which its caterpillars feed: the corydalis. It is a mountain butterfly.

Attribution : Gourreau Jean-Marie - Parc national des Écrins



## 📖 Reading the landscape (CE)

The Vallouise valley is a tributary valley on the right-hand bank of the Durance. It is made up of three municipalities: Vallouise-Pelvoux, Les Vigneaux and, looking down from the heights, Puy-Saint-Vincent. This 25 km-long valley is dominated by numerous peaks, ranging in altitude from 980 metres, at the confluence of the Durance, to the peak of the Barre des Écrins at 4,102 metres (the highest point in the Les Écrins massif) and covers 18,541 hectares. Lying at the centre of the crystalline massif, the Vallouise valley is the gateway to the Parc National des Écrins and boasts exceptional and varied landscapes and a diverse wealth of fauna and flora.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins

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## 🕒 Les Eyssarts (CF)

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