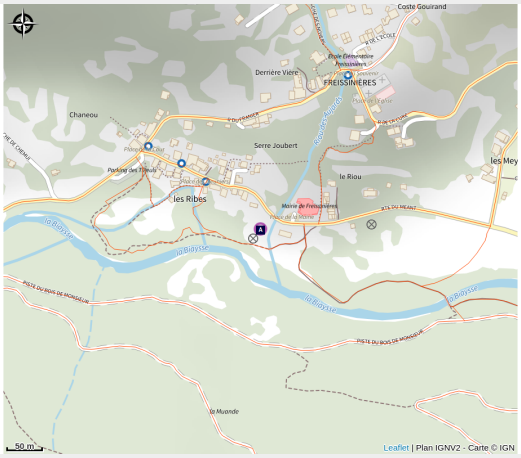
Freissinières Icefall : The Ice Tower

Parc national des Ecrins

(Marie Lachaud)



The Freissinières Ice Tower is an artificial structure fed by a natural spring, inaugurated in 2022. With its seven ice walls and its dry tooling section, it caters to both beginners and experts.

What better way to start than with a safe and accessible waterfall? The Freissinières Ice Tower allows you to get initiated into this wonderful and impressive sport that is ice climbing.

Useful information

Practice : Ice Climbing

Period : Winter

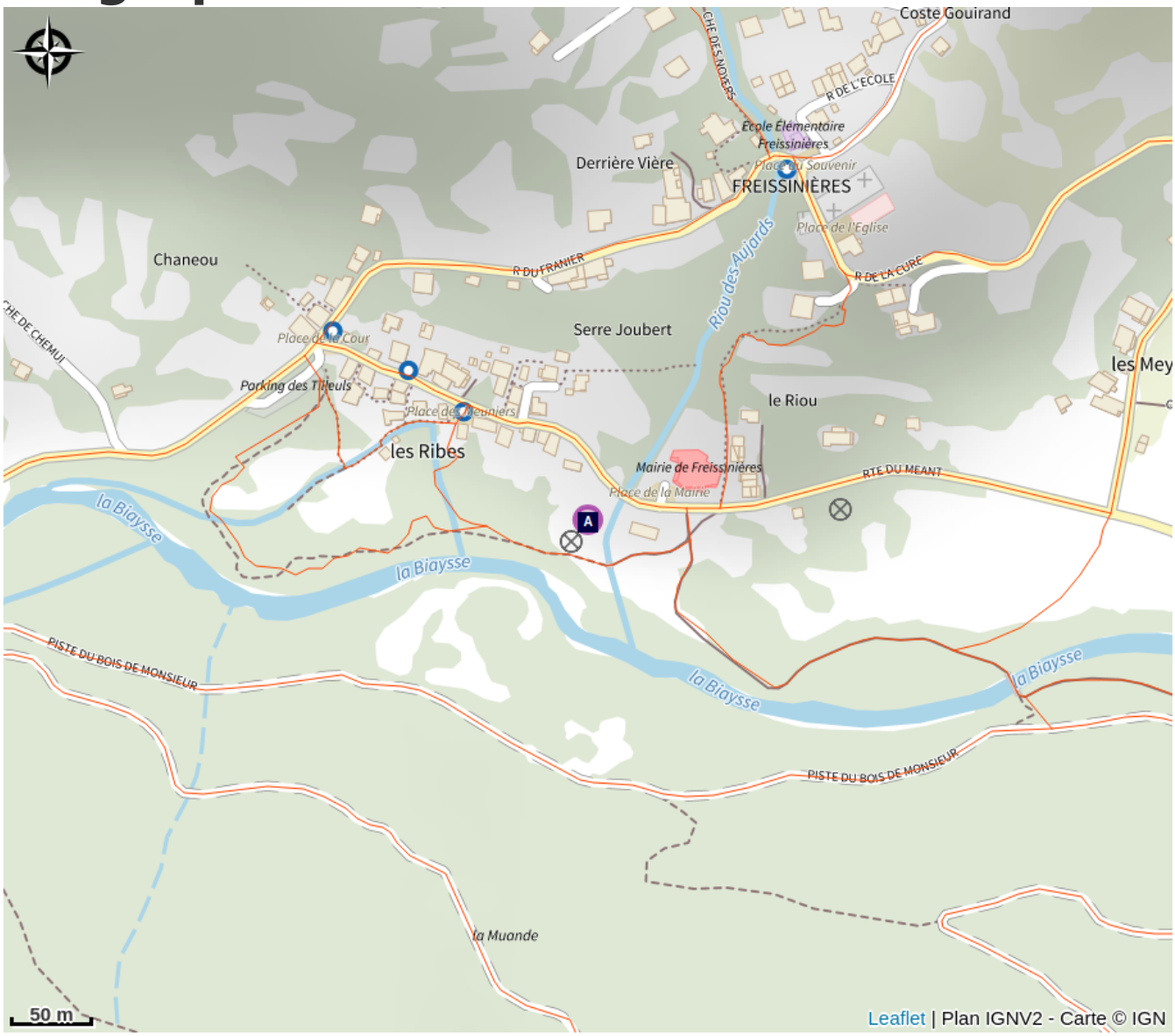
Rating scale :

Degré : 2
Grade : 1
Degré : 3

Description

The Ice Tower is made up of two metal structures connected by a footbridge. The first one, about ten meters high, is perfect for beginners who wish to discover the activity, while the second, eighteen meters high, is steeper and aimed at more experienced climbers.
The Freissinières ice waterfall is accessible to all levels and from the age of 8, supervised by a guide. For beginners and children, it is strongly recommended to hire a guide/instructor.

Geographical location



- The red squirrel (A)
- Freissinières (B)
- The common barberry (C)
- The fir (D)
- The horsetail (E)
- The barbastelle (F)
- The petasites hybridus or butterbur (G)
- The church of Sainte Marie-Madeleine (H)
- Félix Neff (I)
- Huile de marmotte - marmot oil (J)

All useful information

Advices

Accessible from December to March depending on freezing conditions.
Please note, ice climbing is a high-risk sport that requires a perfect mastery of the activity. To get started, it is strongly recommended to be supervised by a guide or a professional instructor.
Road access: From Briançon, take the N94 national road towards L'Argentière-la-Bessée / La Roche-de-Rame, turn right before reaching the village of La Roche-de-Rame.
From Gap, take the national road towards La Roche-de-Rame / Briançon, turn left after leaving the village of La Roche-de-Rame.
Recommended parking: car park next to the town hall: 2 Place de la Mairie - Les Ribes - Freissinières.
No approach walk required.

Information desks

Bureau des Guides des Écrins
La Casse Vallouise, 05340 Vallouise-Pelvoux

contact@guides-ecrins.com
Tel : 04 92 23 32 29
http://www.guides-ecrins.com

Bureau d'Information Touristique de L'Argentière-La Bessée
23 Avenue de la République, 05120 L'Argentière-La Bessée

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Source

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https://www.paysdesecrins.com

On your path...

The red squirrel (A)

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

Freissinières (B)

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 common barberry (C)

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 (D)

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 (E)

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 (F)

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 (G)

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 (H)

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 (I)

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 (J)

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