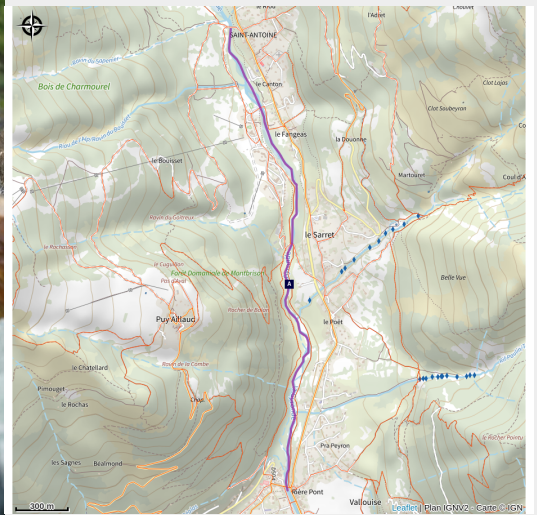


Gyr (IV / V)

Parc national des Ecrins



Kayak - Gyr (Rogier Van Rijn)



From the emblematic Pelvoux mountain to Vallouise, this impetuous torrent rushes through majestic mountains.

This strenuous river is reserved to experienced kayakers, offering a wide range of sensations : a sporty and varied descent in glacier waters.

Useful information

Practice : Canoe-kayak

Type : Torrent

Period : June to AUGust

Orientation : ↓ S

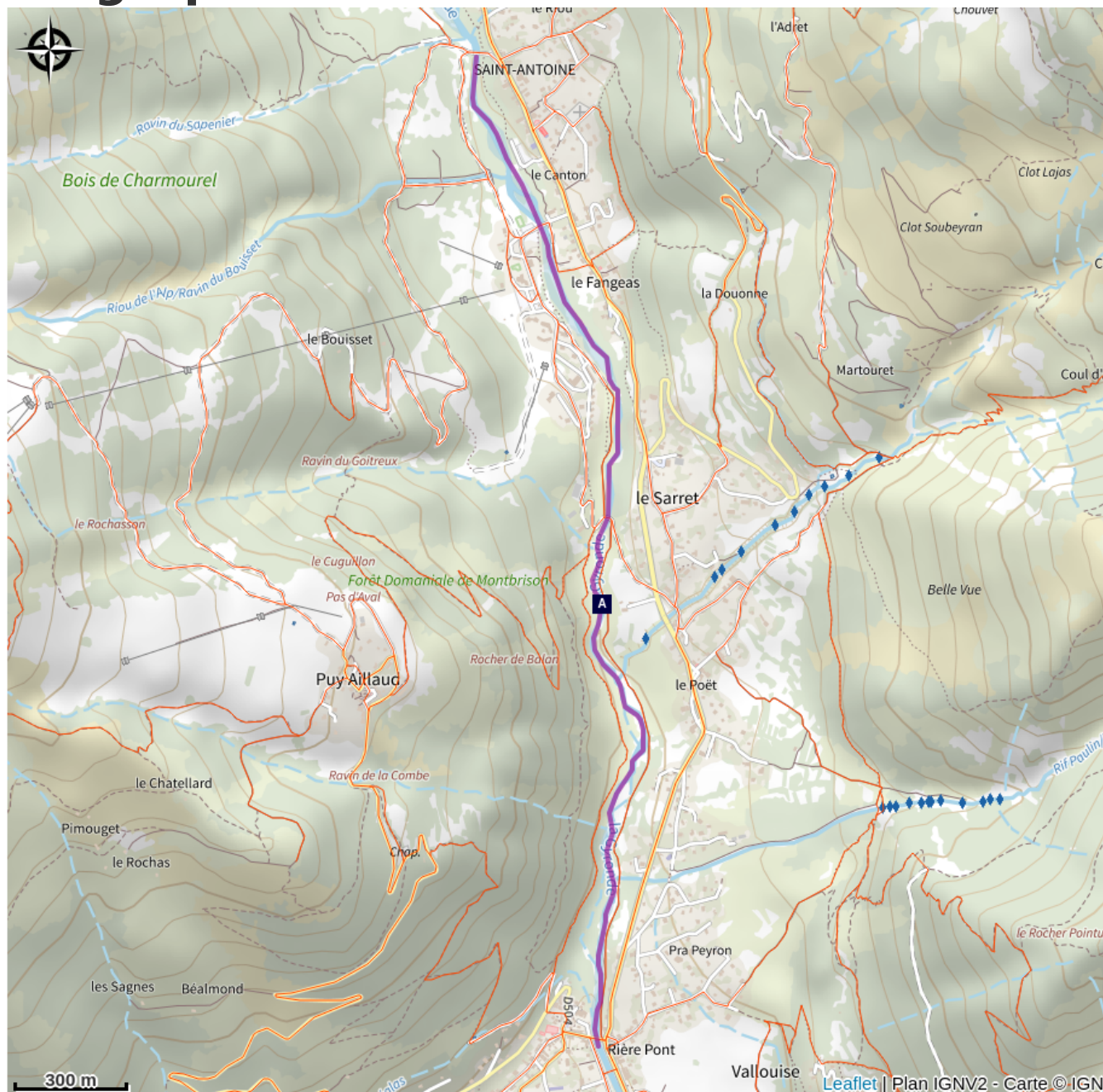
Description






















From the Pelvoux hamlets until the town of Vallouise, the Gyr river flows through a superb valley, between the Blanche and Montbrison mountains. its waters flow from the White Glacier, the Pelvoux mountain range and the Chambran valley. Though its bed has been contained around the towns, the differences in water levels vary throughout the year creating beautiful sinuosity and rythm changes.

A hydroelectric dam upstream and downstream demonstrate the importance of this river for the valley.


This river is strenuous (IV-V) and can be navigated from june to august. The water levels can be checked thanks to the pedestrian track all along it.

Geographical location





- | | |
|---|--|
|  The "bua" (AA) |  The "coulage" laundry day (AB) |
|  Bread oven (AC) |  Le Poët chapel (AD) |
|  The White Penitents (AE) |  Le Sarret chapel (AF) |
|  Saint-Étienne de Vallouise Church (AG) |  The trout (AH) |
|  Forest on the water's edge (AI) |  The white-throated dipper (AJ) |
|  The aspen (AK) |  Forest of pine and oak (AL) |
|  The Montbrison massif (AM) |  The narrow-leaved lavender (AN) |
|  The shrubby milkwort (AO) |  The downy oak (AP) |
|  The church in Vallouise (AQ) |  The lesser horseshoe bat (AR) |
|  Vallouise (AS) |  The wild mint (AT) |
|  Pelvoux (AU) |  The minor heritage of Pelvoux (AV) |

 The *Zygaena transalpina* (AW)

 The ski resort of Pelvoux-Vallouise (AY)

 The Gyr (BA)

 Cool meadow (BC)

 The ski resort of Pelvoux-Vallouise (AX)

 Silver spike grass (AZ)

 The grey alder (BB)

All useful information

Advices

Equipment :

- Wet suits are strongly recommended (glacier waters can reach under 4°C)
- Helmet and life jacket are mandatory
- Inflatable kayaks are not suitable and strongly advised against

Important information :

- Careful with floods after a storm
- Careful with logjams, especially at the beginning of the season
- Please take your trash with you

Attention : Experience is required in order to navigate these rivers without professional supervision. This information is provided for general guidance. Checking weather reports, water levels, flow rates and conditions before embarking is under your responsibility. The tourism office and the national park will not be held responsible in case of an accident.

If you have doubts, please ask a [professional](#). Kayak schools, instructors and renting shops of the valley are here to help you.

Mountain Rescue : dial 112

[Weather report](#)

Water levels at l'Argentière : <https://www.rdbrmc.com/hydroreel2/station.php?codestation=1125>

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 Vallouise

Place de l'Eglise, 05340 Vallouise

contact@paysdesecrins.com

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

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



Source



Pays des Ecrins

<https://www.paysdesecrins.com>

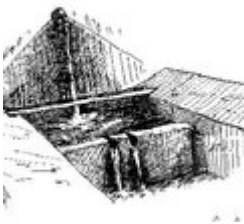
On your path...



The "bua" (AA)

Before the year's work began in the fields, the women would spend a special day washing the winter's linen. This was called the "bua". A second was organised in the autumn. The bed linen brought outside to be washed with soap, in cold water. A brief rinse and second wash in soap completed this pre-wash step, called «essangeage». The laundry was then «poured» into a wooden vat, lined with a coarse canvas.

Attribution : PNE



The "coulage" laundry day (AB)

The dirtiest linen at the bottom and a large sheet last, which collected the wood ash. The «used» water was collected and reheated several times until the «washing powder» (potash from the ash) had achieved the required standard of cleanliness. Often, a few stems and roots of soapwort were added to give the water a soapy quality. The «coulage» sometimes took up the entire day and the house was filled with a pleasant smell! Finally, the laundry was wheeled on a barrow to the pond for rinsing. Small items were spread out on the blanched grass in the meadow.

Attribution : PNE



Bread oven (AC)

It is already there on the Napoleonic land register, and was renovated by the town less than 10 years ago with original stone and fire-resistant brick for the vault. Each village had a communal oven saving wood and social ties explain the importance of shared bread baking. Almost a whole month, day and night, between November and December, was devoted to baking bread. The ritual is now carried on in summer baking during religious feast days or other local events.

Attribution : PNE



🕒 Le Poët chapel (AD)

A portrait of St-Pancras, the patron saint of the Poët chapel, was once painted on the façade, dressed as a crusader. On his feast day, 12 May, *there was a morning mass and we made rice pudding* to share with inhabitants from other towns who had journeyed there. Almost two months earlier, the feast of Saint-Joseph was celebrated with a mass in Le Sarret, with families from neighbouring villages invited to eat stew and the traditional rice pudding.

Attribution : PNE



🕒 The White Penitents (AE)

In the 19th century, the White Penitents took part in the religious life of the villages of Le Poët and Le Sarret. All the male villagers were members, and they played a special role during funerals. They first sang the *misere* in front of the deceased's house and then accompanied the funeral procession, dressed in hooded habits, with a banner, bell, staves and lanterns. A macabre confraternity whose symbol was a skull and crossbones...

Attribution : Robert Balestra (collection) ©



🕒 Le Sarret chapel (AF)

Before 1930, the main road passed in front of Le Sarret chapel. Burials took place in Le Poët until the 1940s, when the cemetery was moved to make way for the new road to Pelvoux.

Attribution : PNE



🏠 Saint-Étienne de Vallouise Church (AG)

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 Mailliet - PNE



The trout (AH)

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 (AI)

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 white-throated dipper (AJ)

Perched on a rock in the middle of the river, a squat bird with a short tail, brown with a large white bib, bobs up and down with his tail in the air. He then dives and only reappears a few moments later. This is how this bird hunts, diving into the water and then walking against the current along the river bed searching for aquatic insect larvae, small crustaceans or small fish, lifting pebbles with its beak to dislodge them.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



The aspen (AK)

On the right, a stand of aspens with smooth, greenish trunks and rounded, crenelated leaves 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.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



🌲 Forest of pine and oak (AL)

The path now alternates between cleared areas and forested areas. This forest contains Scots pine (recognisable by its orangey coloured trunk, especially at the top), downy oak (its young branches and leaf undersides covered with a fine down), and larch. The Scots pine and downy oak are very drought-tolerant (it is very limey soil here) and can also withstand low temperatures, and they are typical of the montane zone in this part of the Alps.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins



📍 The Montbrison massif (AM)

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.

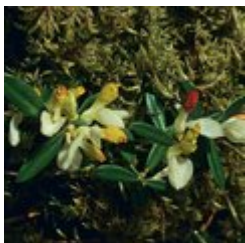
Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



🌲 The narrow-leaved lavender (AN)

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 Nicolle - Parc national des Écrins



🌲 The shrubby milkwort (AO)

The shrubby milkwort grows in the undergrowth. This creeping sub-shrub has glossy oval leaves, similar to box leaves. The flowers are white and orangey yellow. Common in the Alps, it grows in open woods and dry forests.

Attribution : Jean-Pierre Nicolle - Parc national des Écrins



🌿 The downy oak (AP)

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.

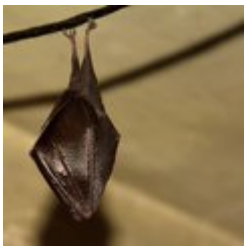
Attribution : Parc national des Écrins



🕒 The church in Vallouise (AQ)

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 (AR)

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



🏠 Vallouise (AS)

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 wild mint (AT)

Mints (there are several species) often live on the water's edge. The wild mint found here is very common. If you rub its leaves gently they give off a pleasant and recognisable scent. The small purple flowers gathered into a dense spike are very attractive to insects.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



🕒 Pelvoux (AU)

Pelvoux is made up of a succession of small hamlets: Le Poët, Le Sarret, Le Fangéas, Saint-Antoine, Les Claux, Chambran and Ailefroide. Until 1893, Pelvoux was actually called La Pisse, after the name of the L'Eychauda waterfall. Since this name attracted wide mockery, it was changed to Pelvoux. "Peuvo" and "pelva" mean very high mountain, a nod to Mont Pelvoux, one of the highest peaks within the municipality's territory.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



🏛️ The minor heritage of Pelvoux (AV)

Every hamlet has its own chapel. In the territory of Pelvoux, Les Claux has the chapel of Sainte-Barbe with a restored sun dial dating from 1792. The seventeenth-century chapel of Saint-Pancrace is in Le Poët. In Le Sarret, you can admire the chapel of Saint-Joseph and the chapel of Notre-Dame des Sept Douleurs stands in Le Fangéas. Every hamlet has its own communal oven and water fountains as well. Finally, the church of Saint-Antoine is located in the hamlet of Saint-Antoine. It has a sun dial dating from 1810.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



✿ The Zygaena transalpina (AW)

A nocturnal moth but also active during the day, the Zygaena transalpina, the transalpine burnet, has thick antennae and red spots on its black to bluish wings. They extract chemical compounds similar to cyanide (a potent poison) from the plants, which they can secrete from their mouthparts and joints when they feel threatened.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



The ski resort of Pelvoux-Vallouise (AX)

In the winter, Pelvoux-Vallouise is a ski resort that is close to nature, with very good sun exposure and high quality snow. With 35 kilometres of marked pistes, off-piste skiing, cross-country skiing, a toboggan run, a children's snow club, snowshoe hiking, paragliding and more, Pelvoux is a family-oriented resort suitable for all levels of ability.

In the summer, a number of trails start from the various hamlets. You can also take part in mountain biking, enjoy a very fine via ferrata, go swimming...

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



The ski resort of Pelvoux-Vallouise (AY)

The route first leads through the small ski resort of Pelvoux-Vallouise, built in 1982. Very family-focused, in winter it's the ideal place for young children to learn to ski, with small lifts lower down, while their big brothers and sisters can ski higher up.

Attribution : Pelvoux Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins



Silver spike grass (AZ)

A grass grows in large clumps on the embankment: silver spike grass. It is adapted to stony, dry and sunny ground. Its inflorescences reflecting silvery-gold glints create a beautiful effect, but they are particularly noticeable in the late summer, when it forms large shimmering bouquets in the evening sunlight.

Attribution : Nicolas Marie-Geneviève - Parc national des Écrins



The Gyr (BA)

Humans are decidedly bizarre animals: they build, knock down and start again. To protect the new infrastructures of Pelvoux, the Gyr was dammed. But, not able to flow as it did before, it deepened its bed, thus placing the foundations in danger of damage. And so works were carried out to widen its bed, allowing it to flow more naturally. This is also more favourable for biodiversity, as well as protecting the developed urban areas.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins



✿ The grey alder (BB)

In the valleys of the Alps and the Jura, the grey alder often grows in place of the black alder, present in many parts of France. Like its cousin, it grows on riversides and plays an important role in stabilising the banks. If it is cut down, its wood is bright orange in colour. But why cut it down?

Attribution : Nicollet Bernard - Parc national des Écrins



✿ Cool meadow (BC)

The track passes through a meadow area, which is categorised as "cool" because of the ground water content there. A botanist quickly recognises this type of meadow through its range of plant life and, in particular, the presence of bistort, a bottle brush-shaped plant bearing a dense spike of tiny pink flowers at the top of its stem. It is also called langue de boeuf ("ox tongue" in English) because of the shape of its leaves.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins