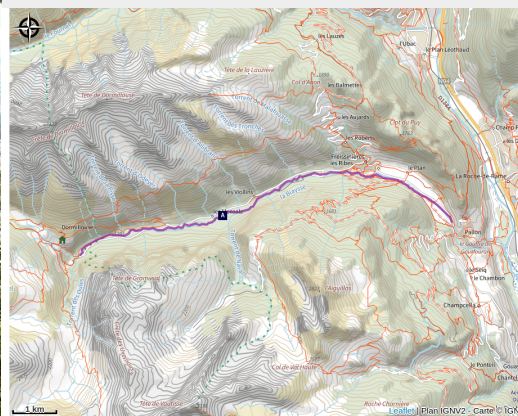


Biaysse (IV+ / II-III)

Parc national des Ecrins



Biaysse (PDE)



The Biaysse is a technical and exceptional river in all respects.

Under the dense vegetation and the steep hillsides of the Freissinières valley runs a magnificent torrent, whose first section will surprise you with its technical rapids, while the second section is softer and more easily accessible to all.

Useful information

Practice : Canoe-kayak

Type : Torrent

Period : juin à juillet

Wind : → W

Orientation : ← W

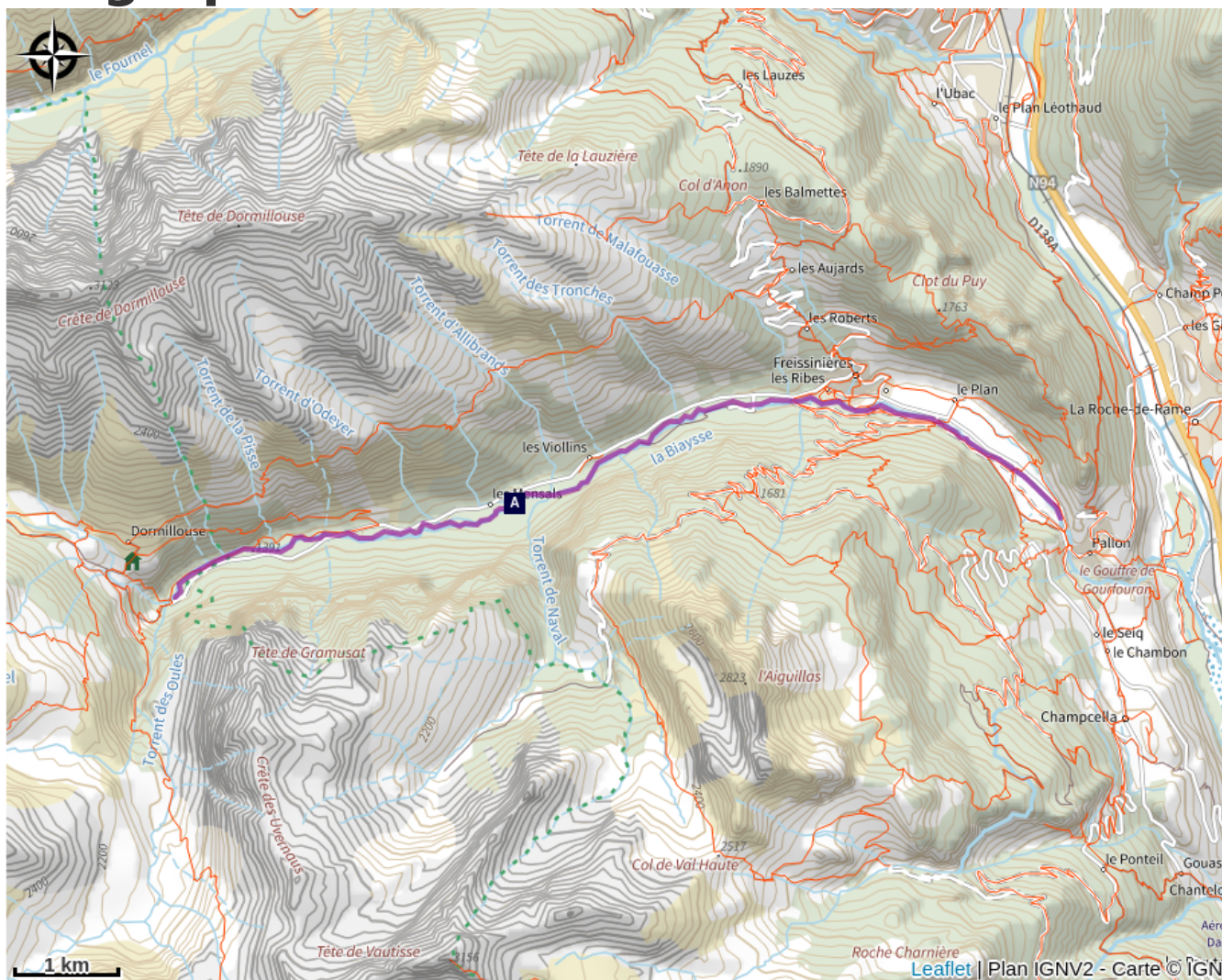
Description
























The Biaysse runs through the long valley of Freissinières and springs at the Dormillouse hamlet, at the confluence between the Chichin and the Oules torrents. It is also alimented by numerous cascades which embellish the runs down the river. The narrowness and the dense vegetation of the Freissinière valley maintain the Biaysse torrent hidden and wild, making its descent very pleasant.

The Biaysse river hast two notable sections. The first one (P1, from the Oules bridge to Freissinières hamlet) is very technical and athletic and contains numerous IV+ rapids. The second section (P2, from Freissinières to Pallon) is softer and much more peaceful, making it accessible to all and offering outstanding views over the Queyras mountain range.

At Pallon, there is an hydroelectric dam right after the bridge. It is therefore mandatory to disembark upstream from the bridge.

Geographical location



- | | |
|---|---|
|  Dormillouse waterfall (A) |  The Oules stream (B) |
|  Mines (C) |  The Freissinières valley (D) |
|  The black pine (E) |  The southern water vole (F) |
|  The creeping lady's-tress (G) |  A Medieval tsunami? (H) |
|  The red squirrel (I) |  The European silver fir (J) |
|  The petasites hybridus or butterbur (K) |  The savin juniper (L) |
|  Cool forest (M) |  Freissinières (N) |
|  The Aristolochia pistolochia (O) |  The common barberry (P) |
|  The fir (Q) |  The horsetail (R) |
|  The barbastelle (S) |  The petasites hybridus or butterbur (T) |
|  The church of Sainte Marie-Madeleine (U) |  Félix Neff (V) |
|  Huile de marmotte - marmot oil (W) | |

All useful information



Is in the midst of the park

The national park is an unrestricted natural area but subjected to regulations which must be known by all visitors.



⚠️ 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 :

- If the Pallon dam isn't full, the water flow can be very strong when approaching the dam
- Careful with floods after a storm
- Careful with logjams, especially at the beginning of the season
- Canyoning is authorized between 8:30 and 17:00 only, by municipal by-law
- 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 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/>



On your path...



Dormillouse waterfall (A)

The Biaysse valley from Fressinières to the Chichin valley has around 30 waterfalls. It is moreover a prime venue for ice climbing on falls in the winter. The impressive Dormillouse waterfall is part of this local heritage.

Attribution : Thierry Maillet - PNE

The Oules stream (B)

It has a series of waterfalls and natural basins that make it one of the most difficult streams to descend for those who like canyoning. The footpath that leads to the Fangeas lake follows it for most of the route and the sound of rushing water in the spring and the beginning of the summer, accompany the hiker.

Mines (C)

A few remains of the exploitation of the ancient mine are disseminated around the sector of Fangeas. These mines go back to the Middle Ages, a period during which we exploited silver-lead and copper. It was a small exploitation, no doubt associated with the mines at Fournel. The metal mined was used to mint feudal currency. The mine works are now filled in and flooded, which has enabled us to find well preserved remains: scaffolding, turned wooden bowls, the sole of a shoe. Archeologists have been excavating the mine for the last ten years they started by siphoning off the flood water from the tunnels. The mines are not accessible to the public and we have deliberately not communicated their exact location. For more information about this heritage, contact the mining museum at l'Argentière la Bessée.



The Freissinières valley (D)

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 (E)

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 (F)

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 (G)

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? (H)

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 (I)

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 (J)

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 petasites hybridus or butterbur (K)

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 (L)

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 (M)

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 (N)

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 pistilochia* (O)

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 pistilochia* 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 (P)

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.

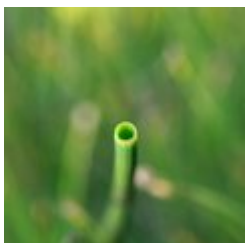
Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



✿ The fir (Q)

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 (R)

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 (S)

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 (T)

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 (U)

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 (V)

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 (W)

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