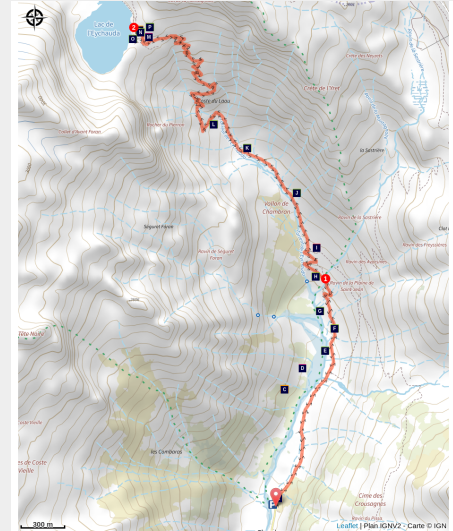


# Eychauda Lake

Vallouise - Vallouise-Pelvoux



Lac de l'Eychauda (Bertrand Bodin - Parc national des Ecrins)



*A long valley where the sheep spread out, an ascent zig-zagging across a prairie then, hidden behind a cross cliff, the reward: the lake with milky waters. A beautiful journey!*

"The winter had been long. At the beginning of July, the lake was still snowy but little by little the ice had melted, dislocated. In this beginning of August I went up saying to myself: right, there, it's finished, there's no more ice! But no! In the quietness of morning, icebergs were still floating, debonair. This lake certainly deserves its description as a glacial!"

*Marie-Geneviève Nicolas, park ranger in Vallouise*

## Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 5 h

Length : 11.7 km

Trek ascent : 823 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Return trip

Themes : Fauna, Lake and glacier, Pastoralism

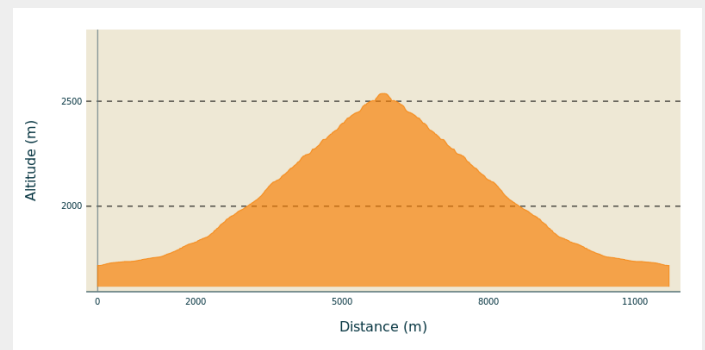
# Trek

**Departure** : Chambran Hamlet

**Arrival** : Hameau de Chambran

**Cities** : 1. Vallouise-Pelvoux

## Altimetric profile

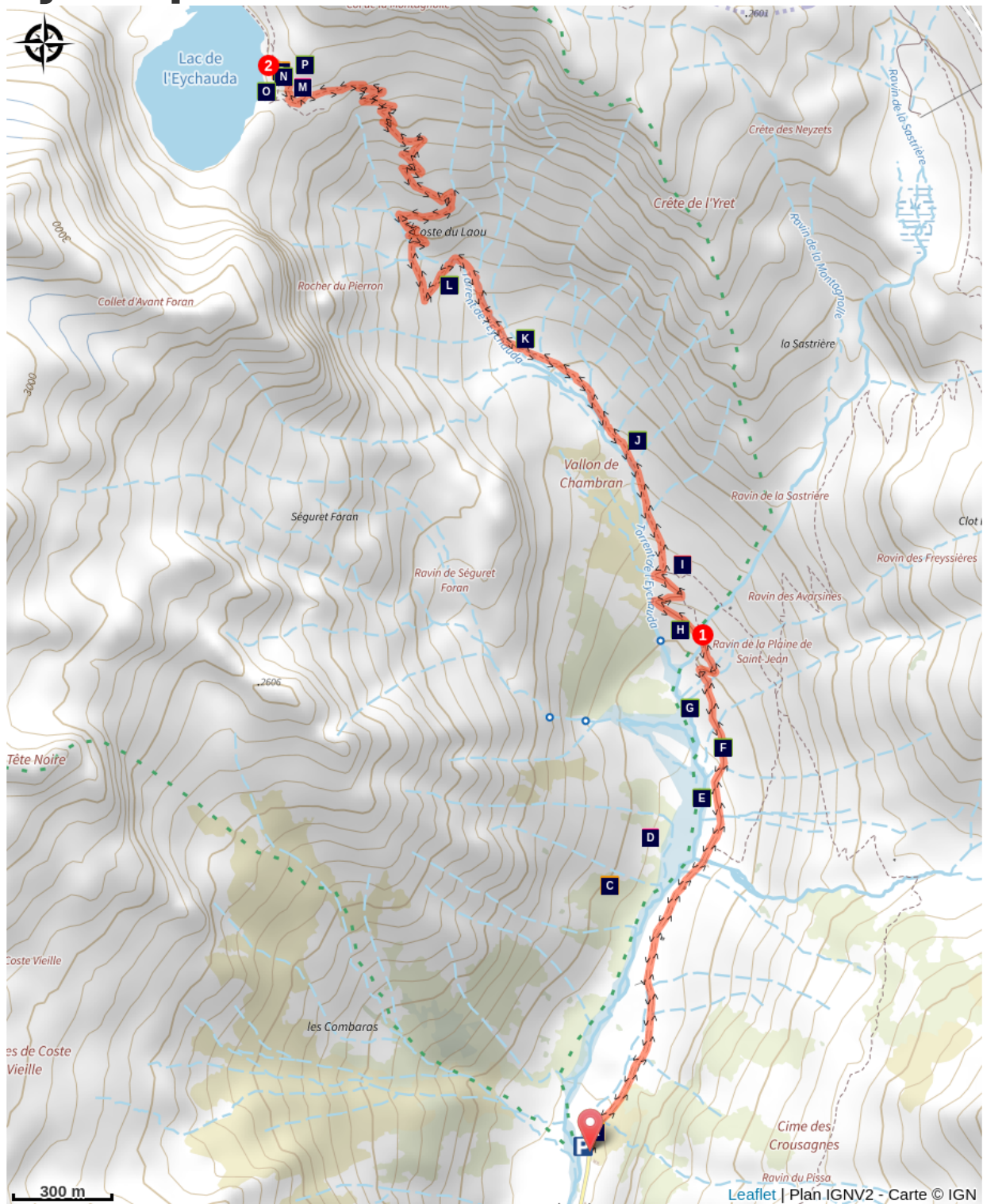







Min elevation 1718 m Max elevation 2538 m

From Chambran car park, follow the track which leads to the bottom of the valley. Further along, it leaves on the right a track to the Eychauda mountain pass.

1. After a big walkway over the torrent, follow the trail which passes not far from the pastoral cabin. The track gently rises in the bottom of the top the foot of the rocky ridge. It bends upwards, first over a large scree slope then flowered grass land. A small lower shelf and there is the lake, well hidden behind its cross cliff. It nestles at the bottom of the glacial cirque surrounded by high ridges.
2. Return using the same itinerary.

# On your path...



- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  Chambran Hamlet (A)               |  The realm of sheep (B)        |
|  Evolution of pastoralism (C)      |  The front of the nappes (D)   |
|  Spring meadow saffron (E)         |  Yellow Hammer (F)             |
|  Northern Wheatear (G)             |  East Alpine Violet Fescue (H) |
|  Eychauda Pastoral Cabin (I)       |  Marmot (J)                    |
|  Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly (K) |  Black Redstart (L)            |
|  Glacial terrain (M)               |  Yellow Billed Chough (N)      |



Red Billed Chough (O)



Le Lac de l'Eychauda, Laurent  
Guétal (Q)



Dwarf Willow (P)

# 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

The ascent to the lake is carried out on the South-East slope, it gets hot very quickly. Do not leave too late ! In contrast, a cold wind coming from Grangettes mountain pass can surprise you when you arrive. Take warm clothes!

## How to come ?

### Transports

Station SNCF at l'Argentière-la-Bessée (L'Argentière-les-Ecrins) then bus or taxi to Pelvoux. No shuttle service to Chambran.

### Access

At Vallouise, follow the direction of Pelvoux. At Sarret hamlet, turn right in the direction of Eychauda up to Chambran car park (signposts at this site). Road closed in Winter.

### Advised parking

Car Park Chambran hamlet



## **Information desks**

### **Vallouise Park house**

vallouise@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Tel : 04 92 23 58 08

<http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/>



## **Source**



Parc national des Ecrins

<https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr>

# On your path...

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## Chambran Hamlet (A)

At an altitude of 1700 meters, this hamlet is inhabited in summer, at the beginning of the summer pasture. The old dairy has been spruced up to become a snack bar. It's pretty little chapel dedicated to Saint Jean is very simple and bare.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE

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## The realm of sheep (B)

Together with its entire catchment area, the Chambran valley constitutes an enormous alpine pasture. Sheep belonging to several different owners are gathered here for the summer grazing season. Many of them come from the department of Alpes-de-Haute-Provence. The landscape (sheep paths, old hay meadows), vegetation, built structures (old dairy, pastoral cabins)... everything has been marked by centuries of animal husbandry.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins

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## Evolution of pastoralism (C)

In the valley, the ruins of numerous piles of stones resulting from the removal of stones in the hay meadows are witness to another age. Most of these old prairies are now grazed by sheep. Pastoralism has evolved: no more local flocks so less hay, the valley is now occupied by a large flock from the Haute-Provence Alps.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE

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## The front of the nappes (D)

The two slopes of the Chambran valley are very different: the right bank, minerals are very present. There are granites and gneiss making up the crystalline base of the Ecrins massif. On the left bank, the prairies are sandstone and chalky. These are part of the glacial thrust sheet: they are ancient sediments deposited mostly to the East, in the Alpine ocean, then carried here by compression at the time of the formation of the Alps.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas

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## ✿ Spring meadow saffron (E)

May in Chambran valley: the snow has only just melted, when it appears, almost hiding all the grass yellowed by the winter, a pink carpet of Spring Meadow Saffron. The Spring Meadow Saffron, is a plant close to the Colchicaceae (but flowers in Spring as its name indicates!) it can be distinguished from the crocus, with whom it grows, by its pink open flower ; the crocus flower is mauve or white and closed.. The first belongs to the lily family and the second to the iris family.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE



## 🇫🇷 Yellow Hammer (F)

In the bottom of the valley, at the beginning of the summer, you will certainly hear, coming from the summit of a bush or a tree, the song composed of several notes in the same tone followed by a final higher or lower note... With binoculars, you can distinguish a bird with yellow and white feathering, the well named Yellow Hammer. It is a male, the female is more discreet as much in song as in its feathers! Listen well: Beethoven must have been inspired by this song when composing the first notes of his 5th symphony!

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



## 🇫🇷 Northern Wheatear (G)

Perched on a rock, a bird is alarmed it cries ouit ouit or tchac tchac. You can recognize it straight away thanks to its white rump and its tail with a black backward T: a Northern Wheatear. It is a migratory bird that needs open spaces with big rocks under which the female can build its nest.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



## ✿ East Alpine Violet Fescue (H)

Right up to the cabin, you can distinguish in the surrounding prairies big tufts of tough grass, the East Alpine Violet Fescue. This poaceae (a grass) is in competition with all the other plants and takes up a lot of space. Formerly, mowing limited its development and encouraging other meadow plants for foraging. At the moment, this plant must be grazed early in the season when the leaves have not yet hardened after this the animals refuse them.

Attribution : Manuel Meester





## Eychauda Pastoral Cabin (I)

This cabin shelters the shepherd from June to September. In order to not be carried away by the avalanches, it has been built under the shelter of the big boulder and it has a pitched roof that extends along the slope of the mountain. Another cabin situated above the Chambon valley makes it possible for the flock to exploit the supply of grass over the weeks.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE



## Marmot (J)

If you do not leave too late, you are likely to be able to see the marmots. They like the grass where they can dig their burrows. Stay discreet, do not try to approach them, you will disturb them. Don't expect to see them in the hottest part of the day: it is much too hot to go out and there are too many people around!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



## Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly (K)

You will see plenty of nettles around the pastoral cabin! It is a plant living on soils full of nitrogen, which comes from the urine and the excrement of the moutons spending the night here. The small tortoiseshell caterpillars love to eat their leaves; the name in French refers to the caterpillar not the butterfly! The butterfly, also called the small tortoiseshell, can be from March onwards because it is rare for adult butterflies to hibernate.

Attribution : Jean-Pierre Nicollet - PNE



## Black Redstart (L)

Even if it is well known in an urban environment, the Black Redstart is originally a mountain bird which has been able to adapt to other environments, as long as there are walls for it to build its nest! It is very present in the Chambran valley, arriving early in Spring, leaving late in Autumn. This Black Redstart is often semi migratory and is happy to join the vallies or the South of France in winter.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



## Glacial terrain (M)

With a long flat bottomed valley, its cross cliff retaining the lake, the recent moraines behind these and at the bottom, the Séguret-Foran lake, the terrain is typically one modelled by the glacier. Large quaternary glaciations, small age for ice and for the current glacier have left, as they moved away, the characteristic marks of their passage.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE



## Yellow Billed Chough (N)

If you picnic beside a lake, you will certainly be visited by these black birds with yellow beaks and red feet: The Choughs. Wrongly called choucas (which live at a lower altitude), sociable birds that live in groups, they are great acrobats and very opportunistic. Their diet is varied, from vegetable peelings to cheese rinds!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



## Red Billed Chough (O)

Recognizable far away by its raucous cry, the Red Billed Chough (and red feet!) sometimes gets mixed up in flocks of Alpine Choughs. But they are more timid. They dominate the high mountains less than the Alpine Choughs and sometimes inhabit sea cliffs.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



## Dwarf Willow (P)

Around the lake the grass is short: it is an alpine lawn. In the hollows, the snow remains for a long time at this altitude and the plants have little time to flower and reproduce. Only certain plants that are perfectly adapted can survive the « snow patches », scientific term to describe this particular environment. In this way the Dwarf Willow, cousin to the Weeping Willows, is a woody plant covering the ground hardly lifting up except by its small leaves and catkins.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE



## 🕒 Le Lac de l'Eychauda, Laurent Guétal (Q)

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Laurent Guétal was one of the most prominent painters of Dauphiné landscapes. In 1886 he painted a picture entitled *Le Lac de l'Eychauda*, from a study he had completed in situ a few years earlier at 2,514 metres above sea level. Painted in three weeks for the Salon, the work was favourably received and earned the artist two medals. While the bottom of the painting is presented as a succession of horizontal bands, at the top the sky is set against the dark mass of the mountain. The attention paid to detail helps to reinforce the scale of this site, magnified by light.

Attribution : © Musée de Grenoble