

# The Muzelle et Le Lauvitel lakes

Oisans - Les Deux Alpes



Lac du Lauvitel (Thierry Maillet - Parc national des Ecrins)



*This fine Alpine crossing follows the GR54 and the Col du Vallon, providing hikers with a view over the Muzelle and Lauvitel lakes.*

The Col du Vallon is the meeting point of two valleys that both contain a high-altitude lake, but otherwise have their own characteristics. A “total” reserve and a paved path are the charming features of the Lauvitel valley, while the Muzelle valley is enriched by pastoral farming, a refuge and peat bogs.

## Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 7 h 30

Length : 18.4 km

Trek ascent : 1708 m

Difficulty : Hard

Type : Loop

Themes : Fauna, Lake and glacier

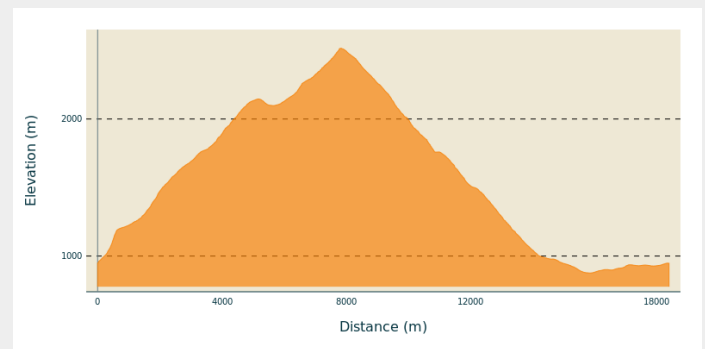
# Trek

**Departure** : L'Alleau

**Arrival** : La Danchère

**Cities** : 1. Les Deux Alpes  
2. Le Bourg-d'Oisans

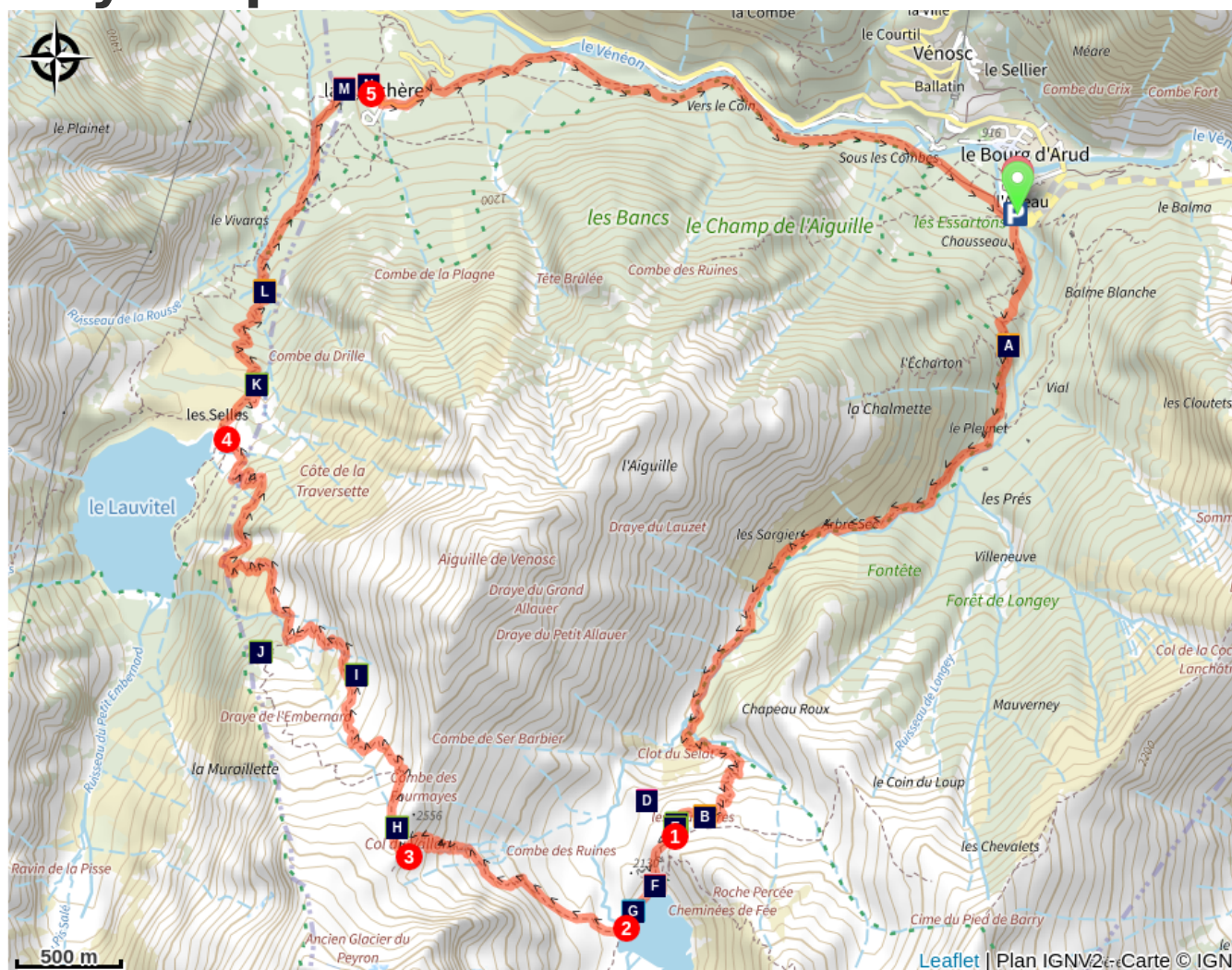
## Altimetric profile










Min elevation 877 m    Max elevation 2517 m

When you leave the village of L'Alleau, cross the little bridge and take the paved path rising steeply into the forest. Continue along the path alongside the left bank of the Muzelle torrent. Once you arrive at the foot of a large schist slope, the path crosses the torrent and zigzags its way up through several loops to reach fine grassland, then a hollow filled with a peat bog. You finally arrive at a small "hump", from where you can see the Muzelle lake and refuge. Go down to the lake, walk round it to the right as far as the spillway and cross the bridge. At the fork, turn right into the meadows. You cross an area of rocks, following the cairns. The way continues as far as the Col up a steep grassy slope. The descent to the Lauvitel is via the right bank of the Embernard stream, through a large number of bends, and across a few rocky slabs and a combe. You arrive at Lake Lauvitel and its chalets via Pré des Selles. From there, go to the Danchère by turning right at the fork. The descent follows an old paved path with small walls on either side. You will see the St Croix Oratory just before arriving at the first houses in La Danchère. To get to Le Bourg d'Arud on foot, cross La Danchère and take the path along the left bank of the Vénéon as you leave the village.

# On your path...



-  A bit of history concerning the valley of Muzelle (A)
-  Muzelle bog (C)
-  Fauna and Flora in the Bog (E)
-  Lac de la Muzelle (G)
-  Golden eagles (I)
-  Marmots (K)
-  Danchère Hamlet (M)

-  The pastoral valley (B)
-  Ser Barbier Fault (D)
-  Muzelle refuge (F)
-  Griffon vultures (H)
-  Réserve intégrale du Lauvitel (J)
-  Traditional Paving (L)
-  Danchère Chapel (N)



# All useful information

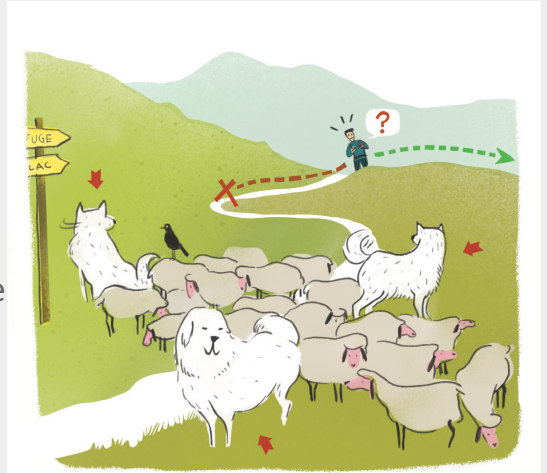
## Herd protection dogs

In mountain pastures, protection dogs are there to protect the herds from predators (wolves, etc.).

When I hike I adapt my behavior by going around the herd and pausing for the dog to identify me.

Find out more about the actions to adopt with the article ["Protection dogs: a context and actions to adopt"](#).

Tell us about your meeting by answering this [survey](#).



## 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

Circuit not accessible in winter due to risk of avalanches.

## How to come ?

## Transports

Arrêt de bus à l'Alleau sur la ligne Les Deux Alpes-Bourg d'Oisans-Grenoble.

## Access

Take the D530 towards La Bérarde. In Bourg d'Arud, turn right towards L'Alleau and park in the village.

## Advised parking

In the village of L'Alleau

# Environmental sensitive areas

Along your trek, you will go through sensitive areas related to the presence of a specific species or environment. In these areas, an appropriate behaviour allows to contribute to their preservation. For detailed information, specific forms are accessible for each area.

## Réserve intégrale du Lauvitel

Sensitivity period: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, Decembre

Contact: Parc national des Écrins.

Réserve intégrale, accès interdit.

## Golden eagle

Sensitivity period: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August

Contact: Parc National des Écrins  
Julien Charron  
julien.charron@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Nidification de l'Aigle royal

Les pratiques qui peuvent avoir une interaction avec l'Aigle royal en période de nidification sont principalement le vol libre et les pratiques verticales ou en falaise, comme l'escalade ou l'alpinisme. Merci d'éviter cette zone !

Attention en zone cœur du Parc National des Écrins une réglementation spécifique aux sports de nature s'applique : <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/thematique/sports-de-nature>

## Golden eagle

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## Short-toed snake eagle

Sensitivity period: March, April, May, June, July, August, September

Contact: Parc National des Écrins  
Julien Charron  
julien.charron@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Nidification du Circaète-Jean-le-Blanc

Les pratiques qui peuvent avoir une interaction avec le Circaète-Jean-le-Blanc en période de nidification sont principalement les pratiques aériennes comme le vol libre ou le vol motorisé.

Attention le survol motorisé dans la zone cœur Parc National des Écrins est interdit en-dessous de 1000m sol et une réglementation spécifique s'applique au survol non-motorisé.

Voir la réglementation pour les survols non-motorisés : <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/les-survol-non-motorises>

Voir la réglementation pour les survol motorisés: <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/les-survol-non-motorises>

### Information desks

#### Oisans Park house

Rue Gambetta, 38520 Le Bourg d'Oisans  
oisans@ecrins-parcnational.fr  
Tel : 04 76 80 00 51  
<http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/>



### Source



Parc national des Ecrins

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

# On your path...

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## A bit of history concerning the valley of Muzelle (A)

At the end of the 19th century the forest was practically nonexistent, it had been reduced in favour of pastoral activity (on the higher planes) and for the culture of cereals, principally barley, above the inhabited areas. Towards 1945, the highest hamlets, like the one at Laffreyte above Bourg-d'Arud, were emptied of their inhabitant. Today the forest has gained ground covering the memory of a few ruins at the bottom of the track... Before the arrival of the motor car and the creation of roads, this itinerary around the lake and the Muzelle mountain pass was often used by the inhabitants of Venosc in order to cross the valley to the neighbouring valley of Valbonnais.

Attribution : Collection PNE

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## The pastoral valley (B)

The configuration of the site made it very favourable to pastoralism for several centuries. This area of pastures was rented during the 19th and 20th centuries to seasonal grazers from the South of France. The local flocks from Venosc and particularly the flock from the hamlet of Laffreyte also went there. At that time, the first animals up in the mountain each year were the cows then the sheep. Since the 1980s, a flock of sheep of round 1200 animals from the Hautes-Alpes summer graze from June onwards and spend the summer in this prairie.

Attribution : PNE - Brun André

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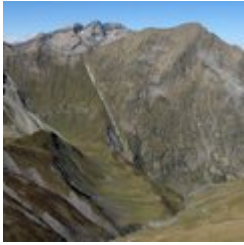
## Muzelle bog (C)

The humid zone, which you cross just before Muzelle lake, is bursting with astonishing biodiversity. The remains of a big lake created during the retreat of the glacier, this marsh has become filled little by little with plants forming the biggest bog in Vénéon valley. For several generations, the shepherds have used the peat as a fuel. Today it is forbidden to extract it. The place is protected by fences as part of agri-environmental measures.

Attribution : PNE - Nicollet Jean-Pierre

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## Ser Barbier Fault (D)

The fault at Ser Barbier brings into contact the crystalline bas (the needle of Venosc) and a marly deposit (Vallon mountain pass). It was formed during the Jurassic period when the Téthys sea opened out, by breaking and crumbling the crystalline massif. The rubbing together of the two parts created a beautiful striated mirror clearly visible due to erosion.

Attribution : PNE - Albert Christophe



## Fauna and Flora in the Bog (E)

The bog is a very special environment which, by definition produces peat. Its appearance is that of a carpet of spongy sphagnum, plants full of water similar to mosses that accumulate over time. Their scientific study has enabled us to trace the evolution of the climate as well as that of the vegetation. The bogs can be seen at a distance when the Cotton Grass is in flower. Etymologically its name in French describes the 'portelaine' (wool carrier): its fluffy tufts and its cottony appearance make it an easily identifiable plant... You can also see around here and animal that is very active in this area: the common frog. Resistant to the cold, it is a batrachian which is very well adapted to the alpine environment. The yellow abdomen and the large dark mark at the back of the eye incorporating the ear drum are two characteristics observable with this species...

Attribution : PNE - Coulon Mireille



## Muzelle refuge (F)

The bottom of the valley comes up to the rock wall at Muzelle, the pic du Clapier du Peyron and the head of the Muraillette. The modern history of this place is marked by mountaineering. It was on the 2nd July 1875 that Coolidge guided by Almer father and son opened the normal way to Roche de la Muzelle by the East North East face and the North-East ridge.. At this time, even if a pastoral cabin was used by the mountaineers the bivouac was still often used in the Muzelle valley. In 1967, it was in the rocky cirque that the community built the refuge on the shore of Muzelle lake.

Attribution : PNE - Albert Christophe



## Lac de la Muzelle (G)

The Lac de la Muzelle is a glacier lake with cold waters, poor in life. The fish population is limited to salmonids (Arctic char, brook trout, etc.). Their active period is limited to summer. Since their food sources are low, they suffer from dwarfism. Each year, scientific monitoring is carried out by various universities and the National Park: samples of fish, phytoplankton, zooplankton and physical measurements.

Attribution : PNE - Telmon Jean-Philippe



## Griffon vultures (H)

From the Col du Vallon, you can sometimes see griffon vultures. The bird returned to the mountains a few years ago. Bigger than an eagle, with beige and brown plumage, it generally glides in flight, and its movements are broad and slow. But what characterises the species above all is its gregariousness: griffon vultures like to be together, whether on the ground or in the air. This behavioural adaptation makes it easier for them to find the animal carcasses they feed on.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



## Golden eagles (I)

Several birds of prey cross the skies above L'Oisans. Among them are two couples of golden eagles that share the Muzelle and Lauvitel valleys. They have an impressive wingspan (2.30 m on average), are mostly brown colour, and often hunt marmots at low altitude.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



## Réserve intégrale du Lauvitel (J)

The Lauvitel full reserve area was created on 9 May 1995, and is a first in France in a National Park. It lies at the end of the valley and has been owned by the state since 1980. This area, where all human activity is forbidden, is a site for scientific observation of an environment over the long term. Vegetation, animals, water and climate are studied and compared with the data from other sites. Access to the reserve is strictly forbidden except for scientific purposes.

Attribution : Denis Fiat - PNE



## Marmots (K)

The marmots are some of the permanent inhabitants of the grassland at the alpine level. . The view is very open, the herbaceous food is abundant and the soil sufficiently soft for them to be able to dig their burrows which are necessary for their survival. Although this animal is wild animal, it can become accustomed to the presence of humans and some marmots have started the bad habit of begging for pieces of biscuit from hikers, crisps and apples. Please do not feed them ! These foods, which are unsuitable to their needs, damage their health and survival. Would you think of eating grass in order to survive?

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE



## Traditional Paving (L)

The Lauvitel path is often used especially during the summer. To limit the occurrence of erosion linked to the impact of human use but also to water flowing from melting ice or rain water it is covered with traditional paving, maintained thanks to annual restoration.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



## Danchère Hamlet (M)

With its paved lanes, its fountains and its stone wash-house, the Danchère offers an ideal starting point for going to Lauvitel which attracts 30 000 visitors every year. It is one of the numerous hamlets that make up the commune of Vénosc.

Attribution : PNE



## Danchère Chapel (N)

Dedicated to Saint Louis and to Saint Claude, Danchère Chapel displays its agreeable proportions to visitors. The stones forming the arc of a circle above the entrance and the window do not only have aesthetic value. They are rightly called "a relieving structure" because they help to redistribute the weight of the facade on both sides of the openings. In the recess hidden behind wire netting is a ceramic statue of Saint Louis created in the Tarn region.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE