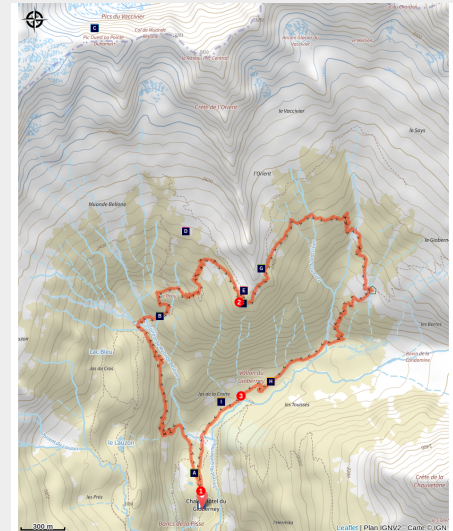


Pigeon loft loop in the cirque de Gioberney

Valgaudemar



Le refuge du Pigeonnier (Jean Pierre Nicollet - PNE)



At the deepest point of the Valgaudemar valley, this itinerary offers exceptional points of view of the mythical summits and their glaciers. They are condensed mountains!

« The French Himalayas ». It is in these words that the great mountaineer Gaston Rébuffat described the Valgaudemar valley. What more can one say ? Here, the verticality of the slopes can be oppressive. The summits touch the sky and can give you vertigo. Towards them, you gaze upwards slowly in order to see where they end. Oppressive, vertical, austere... but so strong, wild and fragile at the same time. Simply beautiful !

Régis Jordana, park ranger at Valgaudemar

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 5 h 15

Length : 9.6 km

Trek ascent : 831 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Loop

Themes : Hut, Lake and glacier, Pastoralism

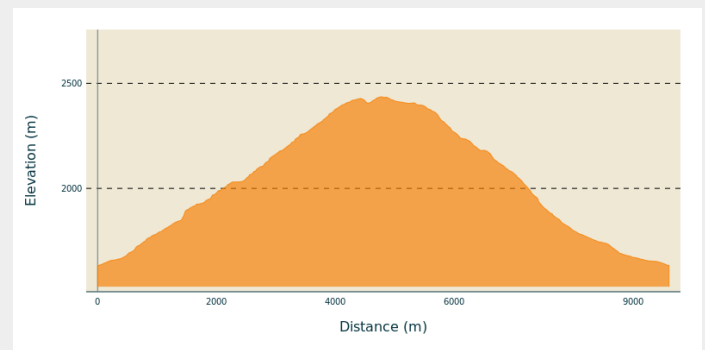
Trek

Departure : Gioberney Carpark

Arrival : Gioberney Carpark

Cities : 1. La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar

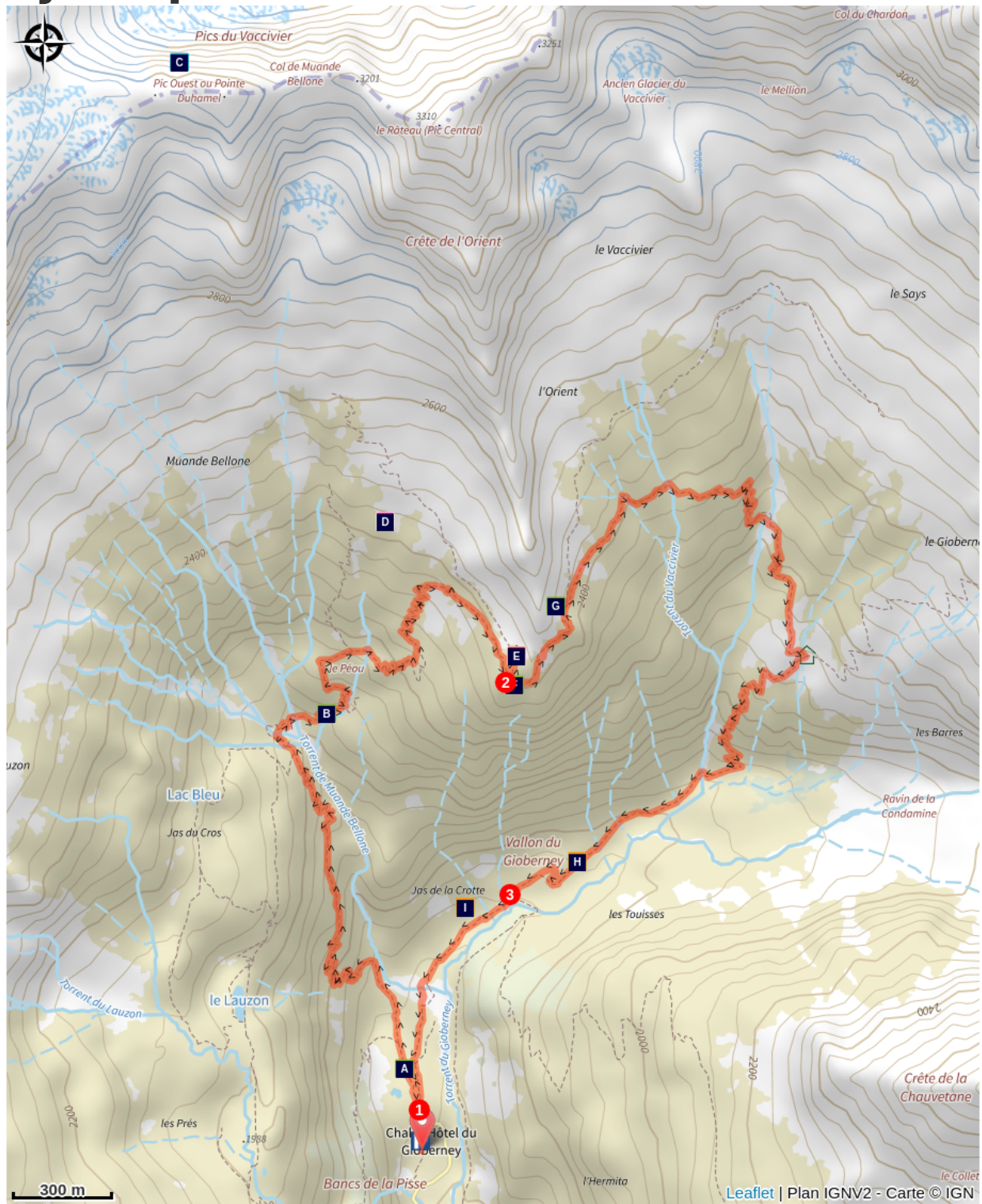
Altimetric profile








Min elevation 1633 m Max elevation 2437 m

From Gioberney carpark, this loop enables you to reach the Pigeon Loft refuge by going up in the cirque de la Muande de Bellone. The descent is made via the cirque du Vaccivier. With your back to the chalet-refuge, take the path facing you. After 200 m, leave the path which leads to the Lac du Lauzon and continue ahead (the variant lac du Lauzon extension of 45 mn). From then on, the ascent up to the Pigeon loft refuge is intense but take the time to lift your head up to discover, with each step, the high summits and their surrounding glaciers. Follow the sign « Refuge du Pigeonnier ». After 2h30 of a climb twisting steeply, the refuge stands up at 2423 m like an eagle's nest. From here, the view of The Rouies is striking. After a possible well deserved pause, follow the path which switches towards Vaccivier. Follow this for 20 mn during which time the path evolves overhanging the Gioberney valley. After this short aerial passage, the descent is without difficulty by following the sign « Refuge du Gioberney ». The bends of the glacial cross cliff at Vaccivier enable you to reach Gioberney valley and to discover there, the beginning of a surprising larch forest, the Gioberney cabin known as the « Crotte ». Arrival is imminent.

On your path...



-  The different environments (A)
-  The glaciers (C)
-  Pigeon Loft Refuge (E)
-  The Alpine Ibex (G)
-  The Le Gioberney alpine pasture (I)
-  Common frog (B)
-  The summits (D)
-  The Common Hawker or Sedge Darner (F)
-  Live at the rhythm of the sheep (H)

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

The ascent to the refuge du Pigeon loft refuge is intense. Note that there is a short aerial passage, 20 minutes after the refuge.

How to come ?

Transports

Shuttle from Saint-Firmin in the summer and a link with bus which comes from Gap and Grenoble.

Access

At 26 km from Saint Firmin, on the D58, the D958a until La Chapelle en Valgaudemar then the D480t until the terminus, Gioberney carpark.

Advised parking

Gioberney Carpark

Information desks

Valgaudemar Park house

Ancien Asile Saint-Paul, 05800 La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar

valgaudemar@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Tel : 04 92 55 25 19

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



Source



Parc national des Ecrins

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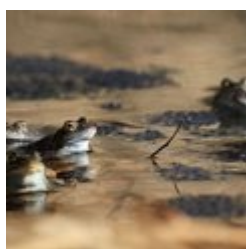
On your path...



The different environments (A)

From an altitude of between 1600 m to 2450 m, this itinerary invites you to cross different kinds of environment. Blueberry bushes and rhododendrons on the minerals of the scree slope, the green larch pastures, and this trip will be punctuated by different environments with their specific flora and fauna.

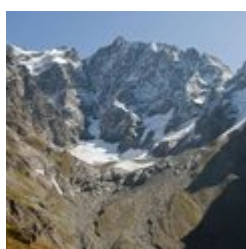
Attribution : Stéphane D'hout - PNE



Common frog (B)

Sometimes in the water, sometimes out of it, this is the amphibian of the summits. With the Alpine Newt, it occupies the smallest puddle of water up to the most impressive altitudes. (2800 m). In a state of lethargy during more than 8 months of the year due to the bitter winter it is a symbol of adaptability to altitude. In the winter it burrows into the mud or slides out of the water under leaves, a tree stump or a rock to shelter from the frost.. It lays up to 4000 eggs on average, since it is confronted with climatic conditions and predators (newts, fish...), only a few individuals will reach adulthood in order to ensure the sustainability of the population. A real example of adaptability at altitude !

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE



The glaciers (C)

Gioberney glacial cirque offers a 180° panorama of the magnificent Rouies glaciers, the Condamine at the foot of the Bans... Today, in retreat, (the polished glaciers remain as slabs smoothed by the erosive action of these 'ice monsters') a witness to their past.

Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE



The summits (D)

At the bottom of Valgaudemar, this loop enables you to fully appreciate « Himalayas of the Alps ». This cirque du Gioberney is topped with superb summits easily more than 3000 m altitude. From the west to the east, The Rouies and their 3589 m, the Pic du Says (3420 m), the Mont Gioberney (3352 m), the Pointe Richardson (3312 m), the famous Bans (3505 m) and the Aupillous at 3458 m. With three glacial cirques which blend in to one and its high summits, one really touches the domain of mountaineering here.

Attribution : Bernard Guidoni - PNE



Pigeon Loft Refuge (E)

Perched at 2423 m, at the foot of the Rouies, this real eagle's nest was restored at the beginning of the year 2000. It uses solar energy and offers dry toilets which are signs of the edifice's environmental integration. Situated almost at the highest point of this hike, it is often the place for a short, beneficial rest, beside the nearby pond.

Attribution : Jean-Pierre Nicollet - PNE



The Common Hawker or Sedge Darner (F)

Beside the small pond at the Pigeon Loft refuge, you could have the surprise of seeing this big dragon fly, the Common Hawker, hunting. One of the only kind that lives at these altitudes. Most of its existence is spent as a sub-aquatic larva. Several years under the water are necessary for this great predator to finish its growth and to reach its sexual maturity. From then on, it needs to leave the aquatic environment in order to transform itself into a flying imago (adult). This adult stage only lasts for a few weeks with only one purpose which is reproduction. Mating in flight and the laying of eggs on the surface of the water are carried out in order to finish the life cyclewith death.

Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE



The Alpine Ibex (G)

The Alpine Ibex almost disappeared in the 19th century. It owes its survival to the protection put in place in Italy and in La Vanoise National Park which sheltered the last population. Since the beginning of the reintroduction programme of the species initiated successfully in 1989, the 'lord of the summits' has recovered his place in the Massif des Ecrins. The cirque du Gioberney is a favourite location for the birth of young, at the beginning of the summer, and it provides the calm atmosphere required by this species. Maybe you will be surprised by the massive and majestic silhouette of a male or a very young kid demonstrating its innate mountaineering qualities.

Attribution : PNE



Live at the rhythm of the sheep (H)

Despite the austere terrain, Valgaudemar valley has been the home, for centuries to intense pastoral activity which gives a rhythm to the lives of the inhabitants from spring to the first snows. Here and there, you will discover a shepherd's hut always under the astonished gaze of the sheep belonging to the sheep farms in the valley. The flocks contain different races including « Métisses », « Thônes et Marthod », « Lacaune » and « Mérinos », which are particularly well adapted to the demands of this terrain.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE



The Le Gioberney alpine pasture (I)

In summer, the Le Gioberney alpine pasture is home to approximately 1,000 sheep. It is divided into areas in which the shepherd grazes his or her flocks through the summer grazing season according to the weather conditions and available food resources. While Tirière is grazed in July (the shepherd keeps the animals in the lower part in order to optimise the alpine pastureland and keep back invasive bushes), the animals are then moved to feed on the plateau and up to the top of La Chauvetane.

Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE