

# Pavé lake and mountain refuge

Parc national des Ecrins - Villar-d'Arène



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



*A hike for immersion in incredible alpine landscapes, where the goal is to discover the Pavé lake. Life, zooplankton and phytoplankton, already exists in this recent lake, at an altitude of 2800 m.*

"Recent studies indicate that the Pavé lake is the deepest of the massif with a depth of 58 m. The mountain refuge is exceptional by its history. At first, it was a "site hut" during construction of the mountain refuge that was destroyed in an avalanche in its first winter. The sheet metal shelter, untouched, was enlarged and became THE mountain huté.

Eric Vannard, warden Parc national des Ecrins

## Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 7 h

Length : 21.5 km

Trek ascent : 1282 m

Difficulty : Hard

Type : Return trip

Themes : Geology, Lake and glacier, Panorama

# Trek

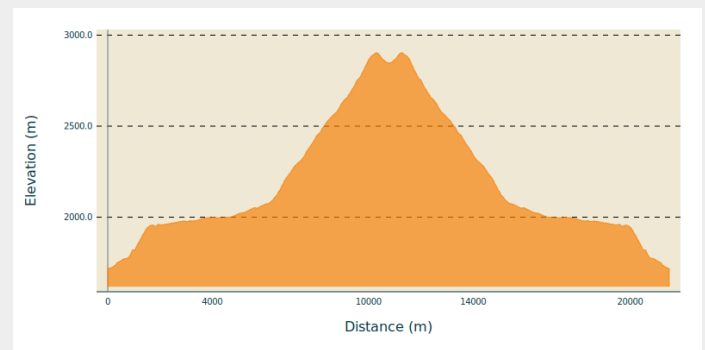
**Departure** : Villar-d'Arêne

**Arrival** : Col du Lautaret

**Markings** :  PR  GR

**Cities** : 1. Villar-d'Arêne

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1718 m Max elevation 2903 m

From the start, at the car park at the bottom of the La Gravière, beyond the Arsine bridge, the footpath to the Pavé mountain refuge first follows the very popular footpath to the Alpe de Villar d'Arène refuge (GR54). It leaves this path at the summit of the glacial cross-cliff that the locals call "Les voûtes". It then goes alongside the Romanche on the right bank for 2 km of the Plan de l'Alpe, which was previously of interest for the construction of a hydroelectric dam. At the Valfourche bridge that marks the entrance to the heart of the Parc National des Ecrins, the route then crosses to the left bank. It leaves the Romanche valley to go up to the Cavales valley, along the edge of the stream of the same name, until it reaches Les Pichettes, where the alpine meadows end. The valley is then purely mineral. The footpath follows the ridge of the remarkable moraine, up to just below the Clot des Cavales pass in order to circumvent a series of rocky ledges and leads to the Pavé lake and refuge.

# On your path...



- Romanche valley, Charles Bertier (A)
- Alpe Valley (C)
- Small Apollo Butterfly (E)

- Alpine Columbines (B)
- Exploitation of the mines (D)
- Pavé Lake (F)



# 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

Make sure you have everything in your bag for this hike, as weather conditions can change quickly at this altitude.

## How to come ?

### Transports

Bus route Grenoble - Briançon, via le col du Lautaret (ligne express régionale : LER 35).

### Access

From La Grave, take the D1091 towards Villar d'Arène. Turn right onto the D207. At the crossing, turn right towards the Alpe mountain refuge. Cross the bridge and take the track to the right that leads to the car park 1 km away.

### Advised parking

Car park at the bottom of La Gravière, Arsine

# 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.

## Golden eagle

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

Contact: Parc National des Écrins  
Julien Charron  
[julien.charron@ecrins-parcnational.fr](mailto: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 et de privilégier un survol de la zone à une distance de survol de 300m sol soit à une altitude minimale de 2500m.

## Information desks

**Maison du Parc du Briançonnais**  
Place Médecin-Général Blanchard, 05100  
Briançon  
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Tel : 04 92 21 08 49  
<http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/>



## Source



Parc national des Ecrins

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

# On your path...

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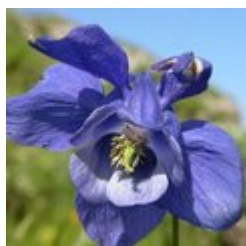


## Romanche valley, Charles Bertier (A)

The Romanche was a source of inspiration for many mountain artists and it have been painted repeatedly. Charles Bertier (1860-1924) was inspired to paint Vallée de la Romanche au Pied-du-Col and Les Fréaux près de la Grave, two oil paintings that were painted in 1894. The artist from Grenoble learnt to paint landscapes with Jean Achard, and mountains with the abbot Guétal and did not hesitate to set up his easel on the high summits of the Dauphiné Alps. More to the point, his mission was to make his contemporaries 'understand the mountains'!

Attribution : © Musée de Grenoble

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## Alpine Columbines (B)

Hidden at the foot of a rhododendron bush, caught between the scree and the edge of the, is a rare species, it is as bright as it is rare. Do not rub against the Columbine, or it will lose its petals. The leaflets are split with deep incisions, in a double layer to form simple leaves, lifting up young milky buds at the end of the stalk and magnificent widely spread out flowers, azur fragments lost in the vegetation. Columbine flowers are the only ones that possess five spurs, five petals at their extremities in a cornet, protected by five sepals in the form of a lance.

Attribution : Thierry Maillet - PNE

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## Alpe Valley (C)

Mountaineers have always particularly liked the Alpe valley. It has long been a place for a base camp, for several big classic climbs in the Massif des Ecrins. It is over the ice cap that the famous roped party Coolidge-Almer succeeded in making the first ascension into the mountain of the Agneaux. Le 17 July 1873 following this they carried out the first crossing of the Casse Déserte mountain pass and the ascent of the Pointe Brevoort at the Grande Ruine.

Attribution : PNE - Roche Daniel



## Exploitation of the mines (D)

The valley has not only been a centre of interest for botanists and mountaineers. It still carries traces today of mining activity. Between 1835 until the beginning of the First World War, thirty to forty people worked in the extraction of minerals, mainly copper, on the slopes of the Chamoissière. A stamp mill enabled minerals to be ground. It remains at the site but is completely broken...

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



## Small Apollo Butterfly (E)

A hardly perceptible rustling in the frozen morning grass betrays the presence of a butterfly disturbed by our steps and unable to use its damp wings... A few delicate jerks and there it is clinging onto some dry grass, then with successive spasms, it opens its pearly wings which are almost translucent in the sunshine, and finally exposes the totality of its anatomy. The Small Apollo, rare and protected – catching or transporting it are forbidden – and there, before our eyes, with its miniscule red ocellus on the edge of each of its upper wings and its finely black and white striped antennae.

Attribution : PNE - Albert Christophe



## Pavé Lake (F)

In the current context of global warming, the retreat of the highest glacier of Les Cavales a few decades ago, made way for a lake at an altitude of 2820 m. The water in the recently formed lake is very cold: 4°C on the surface. Despite this, measures taken in 2010 as part of the monitoring of high altitude lakes surprised everyone by revealing the presence of plankton.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE