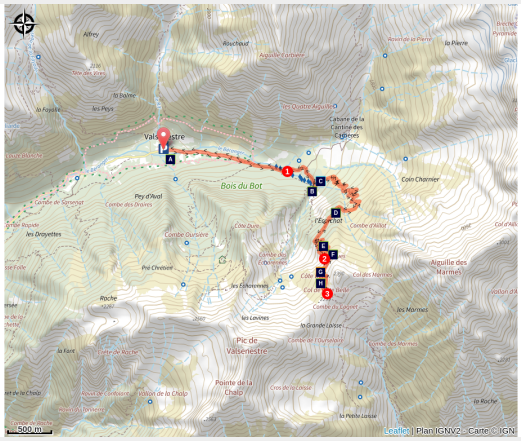
# Col de Côte Belle from Valsenestre

Parc national des Ecrins - Valjouffrey

Village de Valsenestre (Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Ecrins)




*The Valsenestre Organs are a geological curiosity, the high point of trails that also offer a remarkable panorama from the col over the Valsenestre corrie and, on the other side, the Font Turbat valley.*

The trail makes for a very pleasant walk. At first, it is shaded, filled with flowers for much of the summer and rises in well-marked loops to the mountains pass. The trail is a chance to immerse yourself in several natural environments, showing you how the vegetation adapts to the terrain, as you go upwards through forest, tall grassland and Alpine grasses. A big surprise, when you get to the Organs - you feel like you have arrived on another planet, the result of a natural evolution of the limestone rock and limestone schist.

*Georgette Guidetti, Secretary-receptionist in Valbonnais*

## Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 5 h

Length : 12.4 km

Trek ascent : 1000 m

Difficulty : Medium

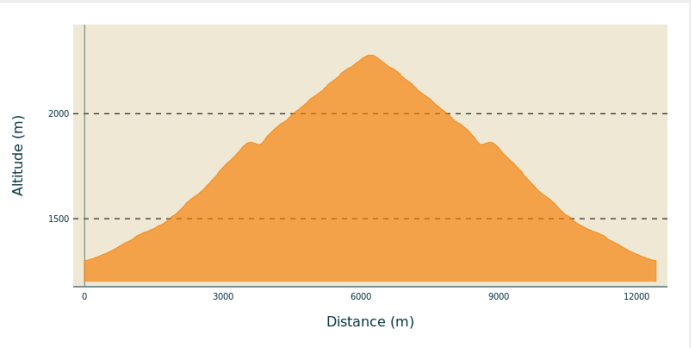
Type : Return trip

Themes : Flora, Geology, Panorama

# Trek

**Departure** : Valsenestre
**Arrival** : Valsenestre
**Cities** : 1. Valjouffrey

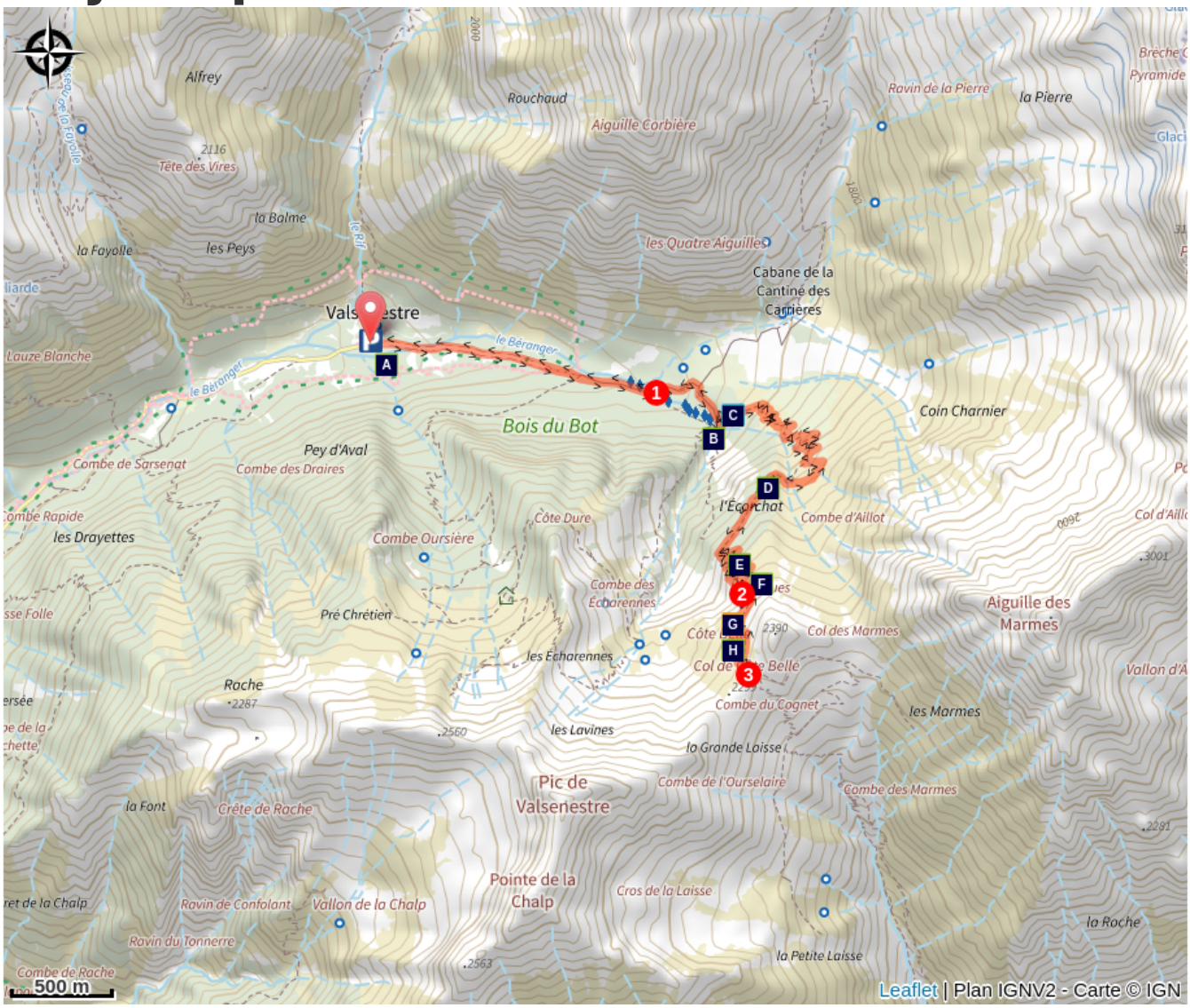
## Altimetric profile




Min elevation 1301 m  Max elevation 2279 m

From the village of Valsenestre, go up the track alongside the Béranger torrent, past the limits of the National Park and you arrive at the Les Touches bridge. Continue as far as a fork and follow the path to the right. The path enters a small wood of resinous trees, then runs alongside the stream at the bottom of the gorge before finally moving away to the left as it rises in altitude. Here, you can see the torrential corrective work (wooden dams) conducted by the RTM restoration services. Continue upwards along a winding path through the forest. On the way, you will come across a fairly rare plant, the pleurospermum austriacum. Cross the high grassland, with a whole host of plants, including the aconitum variegatum and the achillea macrophylla. A little higher, you will see the Alpine columbine, after which the low-lying Alpine grass gradually replaces the forest. Continue up to the Valsenestre Organs. Through wide loops, you arrive at the mountain pass to see a very fine panorama. Follow the same route on the way back. The descent is also possible towards Le Désert en Valjouffrey.

# On your path...




- Natural Hayfields (A)
- Timber dams (C)
- Pleurospermum austriacum (E)
- Flock of sheep (G)
- Tall herb fringe communities (B)
- Monkshood (D)
- Alpine columbine (F)
- European violet willow (H)

# 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.

## How to come ?

### Access

D26 from La Mure. D526 from Pont du Prêtre. D117 from Entraigues to La Chapelle et Valsenestre.

### Advised parking

Village of Valsenestre car park.

# 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

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

## Information desks

**Maison du Parc du Valbonnais**
Place du Docteur Eyraud, 38740 Entraigues

valbonnais@ecrins-parcnational.fr
Tel : 04 76 30 20 61
http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/

## Source

Parc national des Ecrins

https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr

# On your path...

## Natural Hayfields (A)

Agricultural specialists consider a meadow as natural if it has not been ploughed or fertilised over the last ten years. This is the case for those that you will see, surrounded by hedges, at the start of the hike. The meadows have an important variety of plant life and consequently attract multitudes of pollinating insects, including domesticated bees of course.

Attribution : Marc Corail - PNE

## Tall herb fringe communities (B)

Tall herb fringe communities form a landscape linked to very precise conditions in terms of climate (wet summers and snowy winters), topography (long ubac slopes where névé sometimes remains on the ground deep into the summer), altitude (subalpine tier from 1600 to 2100 metres) and soil (unsaturated soils with large water reserves).

Attribution : Pierre-Emmanuel Dequest -PNE

## Timber dams (C)

In the Combe des Echarennes, as you take the path to the left, you can see, in the gorges of the Béranger mountain stream, wooden dams made by the RTM (mountain terrain restoration department of the National Forests Office) to hold back the flow of debris carried down from the mountains during heavy rain and floods.

Attribution : Samy Jendoubi - PNE

## Monkshood (D)

This is a typical plant in tall herb fringe communities, measuring 50 to 100 cm. It has royal blue flowers shaped like helmets and grouped together in loose bunches. Their particularity is that they are highly toxic! Herbivores are aware of this and don’t eat them.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE

## Pleurospermum austriacum (E)

This robust hardy perennial with a thick, hollow and grooved stalk belongs to the parsley and carrot family, and can grow from 60 to 150 cm high. Its large umbels of white flowers bloom from July to September. Very little known, in France it only grows in the Alpine areas and for this reason is worthy of attention.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet

## Alpine columbine (F)

This is an uncommon and protected species, measuring 30 to 60 cm. The flowers are quite large and have a magnificent blue colour, blossoming at the head of the stem, and are the only ones with afive petals in the corolla. They are not to be confused with the common columbine, which has smaller flowers and is more widespread.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE

## Flock of sheep (G)

A flock of sheep belonging to local farmers graze at the summit of the mountain pass near the Pic de Valsenestre. In summer these animals with their thick woolly coats can enjoy the shade of the willows that you can see just before arriving at the col (alt. 2220 m).

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE

## European violet willow (H)

This is a shrub in the subalpine tier. It is less than one metre tall and grows in small groups on the ubac. At lower altitude, it may grow taller. You can recognise it from a distance through its characteristic shiny, silvery colour and its growth in circular beds. Adult leaves feel very silky on both sides.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE