

# Col des Terres Blanches from Prapic

Parc national des Ecrins - Orcières



Le col des Terres Blanches (Thierry Maillet - Parc national des Ecrins)



*The name of this site keeps its promise!  
The final surprise is greater because  
the suspense is kept right until the end.*

*Magic and enchantment in a lunar landscape  
"Oh! What dirty pigs!" They have left their  
empty bottle in this supernatural setting! I get  
closer to pick it up, but a few metres away I  
realise my mistake. It is not a bottle but a  
mountain hare! It relies on its motionlessness to  
blend into the background. I saw you! Fold your  
ears back next time!"*

*Michel Francou, warden in the Champsaur area*

## Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 7 h

Length : 22.1 km

Trek ascent : 1307 m

Difficulty : Hard

Type : Return trip

Themes : Flora, Geology,  
Pastoralism

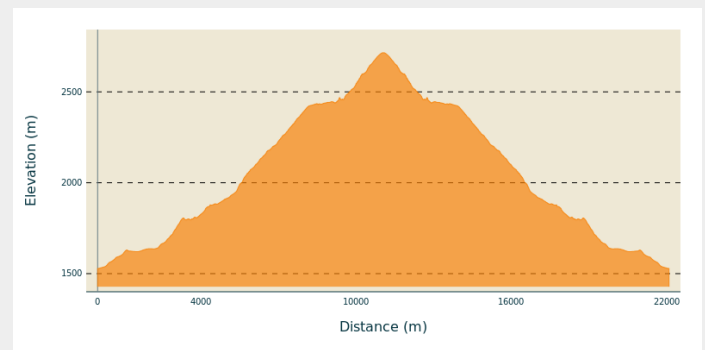
# Trek

**Departure** : Prapic

**Arrival** : Prapic

**Cities** : 1. Orcières

## Altimetric profile

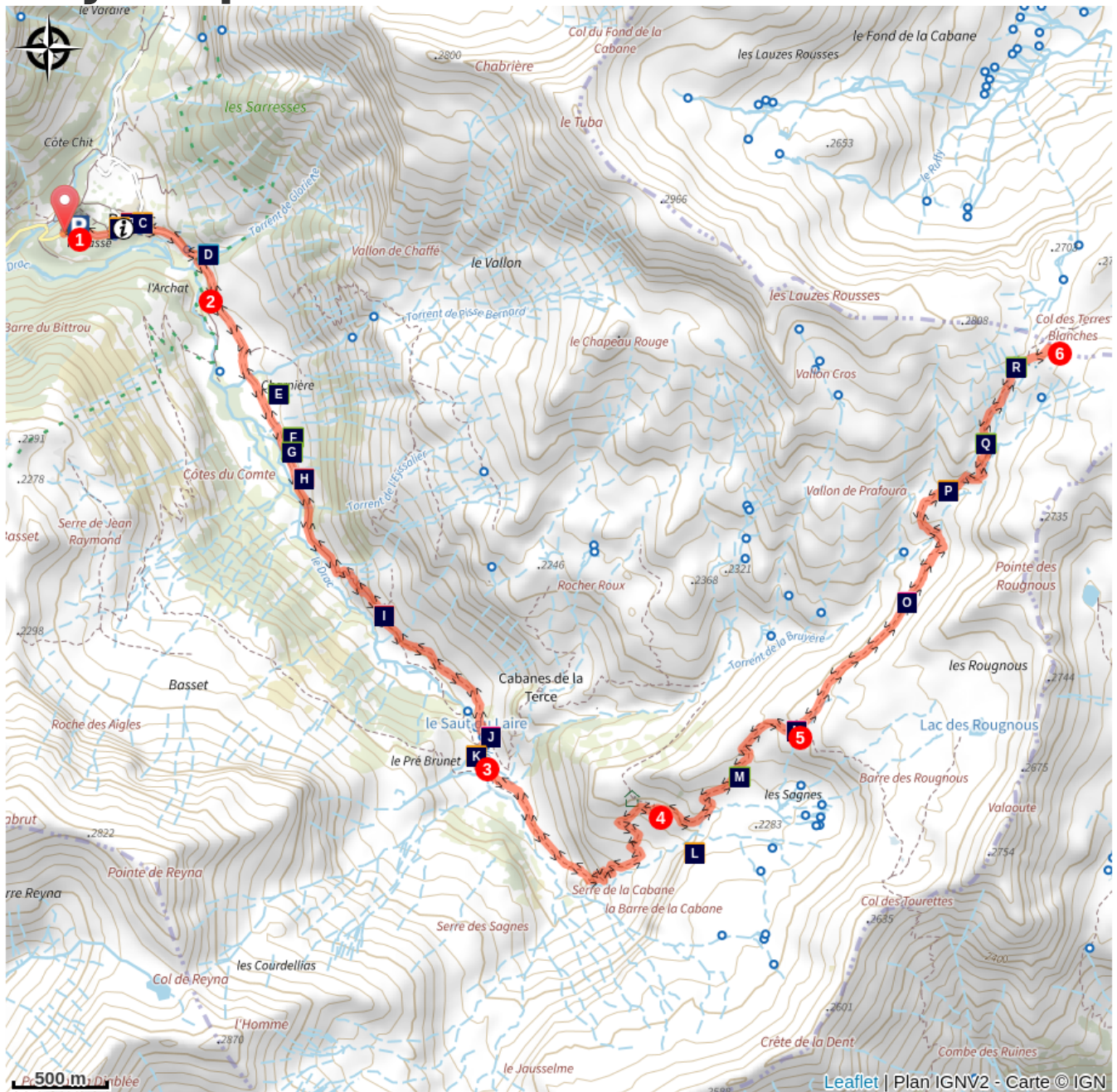


Min elevation 1529 m    Max elevation 2716 m

From the Prapic car park head up towards the hostels. At the fork in the road (sign) go right. The track runs up along the right bank of the Drac to reach the Charnières plateau. At the oratory, go left to cross the plateau. Walk up the bends that lead to the Saulce chapel. Stay on the right bank until you reach the Saut du Lait footbridge that leads to the valley of the same name. From there, cross the first bridge of the gorges, then the second one 100 m upstream. The path continues to the right towards the Barre de la Cabane. Then the valley skirts up to the left avoiding the Barre de la Cabane. The Barre mountain hut is visible from the bottom of the pasture, leave it on the left hand side and continue until you reach an intermediary plateau. The path continues its way through the pastures until it splits in two: do not follow the right-hand route but follow a long pathway across the slope. Cross the stream and continue to climb until you reach the pass and keep your eyes peeled! No, this is not a hallucination due to lack of oxygen, welcome to the Terres Blanches pass. The return trip is made using the same itinerary in the opposite direction.



# On your path...



- |  |                                     |  |  |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|--|
|  | Prapic Church (A)                   |  | Prapic Hamlet (B)                                |
|  | Running water (C)                   |  | The Drac Noir (D)                                |
|  | Marmot (E)                          |  | Hay Fields (F)                                   |
|  | Asphodel (G)                        |  | Small stone walls and stone piles (H)            |
|  | Saulce Chapel (I)                   |  | Glacial Relief (J)                               |
|  | Pastoral Cabin at Saut du Laire (K) |  | Pastoralism on the Barre plateau (L)             |
|  | Androsace vitaliana (M)             |  | Tourettes mountain pass (N)                      |
|  | Casse Blanche (O)                   |  | Signposting and maintenance of the footpaths (P) |
|  | Altitude flora (Q)                  |  | Mountain hare (R)                                |

# 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

Flocks of sheep may be guarded by dogs. Some may be good-natured but others less so. Keep calm and keep your distance.

## **How to come ?**

### **Transports**

Consider car sharing.

### **Access**

From the village of Orcières, drive 4.5 km on the CD474 towards Prapic.

### **Advised parking**

Car park at the entrance to Prapic

# 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 2400m.

## Information desks

### House of Champsaur

[champsaur@ecrins-parcnational.fr](mailto:champsaur@ecrins-parcnational.fr)  
Tel : 04 92 55 95 44  
<http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/>



### Information centre of Prapic (summer only)

[champsaur@ecrins-parcnational.fr](mailto:champsaur@ecrins-parcnational.fr)  
Tel : 04 92 55 61 92  
<http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/>



## Source



Parc national des Ecrins

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



# On your path...

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## Prapic Church (A)

Dedicated to Saint-Anne, Prapic Church dates back to the 1860s. It was built following the request of the inhabitants for a place of worship, who were faced with the hazards of winter and the distance from the parish church in Orcières. On the stained glass choir window, you can admire the portrait of Prapicois: Jean Sarrazin (1833-1914), nicknamed the «the poet of the olives», a different poet from that in the tomb ... Can you find it?

Attribution : Michel Francou - PNE

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## Prapic Hamlet (B)

Surrounded by vegetable gardens, piles of stones and mown terraces the village nestles on the banks of the Drac and gives the best land over to agriculture. The typical house is most often perpendicular to the slope, based on an architecture created from materials collected locally and showing great intelligence in its elaboration. From course plasterwork to the delicacy of walnut wooden doors, shale roofing with gables made from plaited alder, this is the architectural vocabulary that punctuates your visit.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE

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## Running water (C)

Running water came to Prapic in 1924. The first pipes were made from metre long sections, hollowed out trunks of larch. Their fitments probably did not enable all the water collected from the six village fountains to be transported!

Attribution : Michel Francou



## The Drac Noir (D)

This denomination is due to the nature of the terrains that it crosses: the limestone is very sensitive to erosion and the metamorphic rocks in Champoléon valley (Drac Blanc) darken the waters of the river Drac in this way. Bouncing from waterfalls to pools, opening up a passage through the riverside alders, the Drac expresses its nature as a mountain torrent. Brown Trout, White Throated Dipper and delicate ephemerals reveal themselves to the attentive observer.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - PNE



## Marmot (E)

If you are patient, you will probably be lucky enough to discover it on the Charnière plateau whose prairies it particularly appreciates, which sometimes poses a problem to the farmer mowing there. Even so, they do represent an undeniable attraction in the valley. Do not be fooled by their easy going appearance, they are wild animals who fight for survival and battles between males can be fierce.

Attribution : Marc Corail - PNE



## Hay Fields (F)

These natural prairies have never been cultivated. You can find a cavalcade of flowers growing freely. From this botanical diversity flourishes a multitude of insect species especially butterflies, who find an environment favourable to their development. Also, the hay they produce has a very high nutritional value. Maintaining the equilibrium of these environments is essential.

Attribution : Michel Francou - PNE



## Asphodel (G)

Asphodels blossom on the old hayfields. They open out from the bottom to the top over the course of July. It is for this reason that flowers at the base of the flowering stem may go to seed while the flowers at the top are still in bud. The long narrow leaves that grow up from the bottom of the stem early in the spring have given it the nickname "Dogs' leek".

Attribution : Michel Francou - PNE





## Small stone walls and stone piles (H)

Creating land from the mountain rocks, this is the combat that the mountain-dwellers have carried out since Antiquity. These piles of stones are the witnesses to the time when numerous children piled up stones so that their families could grow food on the conquered land. The family plot, bordered by walls, was ready to be mowed. The Park participates in the maintenance of this inheritance.

Attribution : Marc Corail - PNE



## Saulce Chapel (I)

You will be able to see it from the first bends up to the Charnières plateau. It is characterized by its apse forming a stem post whose bulk protects the unique roomed vaulted edifice from avalanches. Built from stones from the site, its lime mortar is filled with earthy grit taken from the immediate environment.. It resists the ravages of time and natural phenomena.

Attribution : Hervé Cortot - PNE



## Glacial Relief (J)

The polished rocks that you find just after the walkway are traces of the passage of quaternary glaciers. These are striped; stones once set in the ice, carried by glacial movement have strongly marked them. The flat bottomed valley with a glacial cross cliff is another characteristic of this landscape modelled by glaciers.

Attribution : Marc Corail - PNE



## Pastoral Cabin at Saut du Laire (K)

Protected from avalanches by a big rock, this small cabin shelters the shepherd from June to the end of July. In order to exploit the supply of grass as it grows, another cabin is situated above the bar which closes the valley completing the equipment of the pasture. For the tranquility of the shepherd, it is best to observe the cabin from a distance.

Attribution : Jean-Pierre Nicolle - PNE



## Pastoralism on the Barre plateau (L)

The National Park has an agreement with sheep breeders concerning the management of pastures in ways that respects the wild fauna, and are likely to improve the quality of the pastures. The Barre plateau is where the flock from Saut du Laire spend August. Barre of hut (cabane)? Which gave its name to the other? The hut to the barre? Or the barre to the hut?

Attribution : Michel Francou - PNE



## Androsace vitaliana (M)

A bright patch that blossoms at the same time as snowmelt, Androsace vitaliana is a primulaceae (in other words part of the primrose family). This spring plant, brightens up the recently snow-cleared rockeries with its sulphur-yellow jewels. Strongly rooted in the bare soil, its more or less dense leaf base is made up of stacked up rosettes.

Attribution : Michel Francou - PNE



## Tourettes mountain pass (N)

The well-named Tourettes pass, is the way to get to Château-Roux, in the Durance valley. Up until the nineteen sixties, it was a route used by flocks of sheep who were heading to the Guillestre fair.

Attribution : Michel Francou - PNE



## Casse Blanche (O)

Casse Blanche is scree made up of dolomite. This rock gets its name from the geologist Dolomieu who was the person who described it at the beginning of the 18th century. A surprising phenomenon is associated with it: from afar, the rock seems to be very pale, but a fragment of it in your hand reveals a darker shade...

Attribution : Michel Francou - PNE



## Signposting and maintenance of the footpaths (P)

For over twenty years, the Ecrins National Park has developed clear signposting that helps you along the trails. Equally, the upkeep of the tracks is a continual concern, but it must be said that nothing is permanent in the mountains. As you walk across at an altitude of 2500 m, your legs are tired. Imagine what it would be like if you had to carry a pickaxe as well, in order to maintain the trail.

Attribution : Michel Francou - PNE



## Altitude flora (Q)

Eight-petal mountain avens, moss campion, alpine toadflax, saussurea or berardia are all flowers that have adapted to the extreme conditions and have less competition from other species here.

Attribution : Michel Francou - PNE



## Mountain hare (R)

"Lepus Timidus" the latin name for the mountain hare, says it all! He certainly is timid! You are more likely to spot it by chance than because you were looking for it. In winter, it is white, which is its way of coping with its predators which are foxes and golden eagles.

Attribution : Michel Francou - PNE