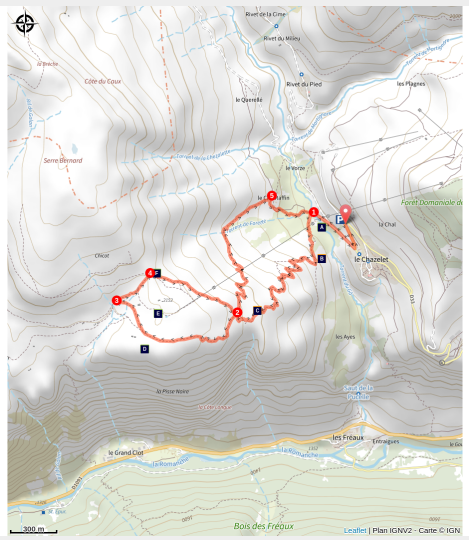
The mule path

Parc national des Ecrins - La Grave

Le Chazelet et la Meije (Jean-Pierre Nicollet - PNE)



Hiking along this path, how can you not be struck by all the terraces which surround the villages of the canton? At the beginning of the last century they were all cultivated.

This emblematic itinerary « Chemins d'Avant » (paths from the past) was used by the farmers going to mow the meadows on the Plateau d'Emparis. Mules, heavily laden with hay descended their precious loads on this path. Much used by hikers on the GR 54 trail, it has been damaged over time. If you respect the newly traced hairpin bends you will protect this beautiful itinerary.

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 3 h

Length : 6.8 km

Trek ascent : 455 m

Difficulty : Easy

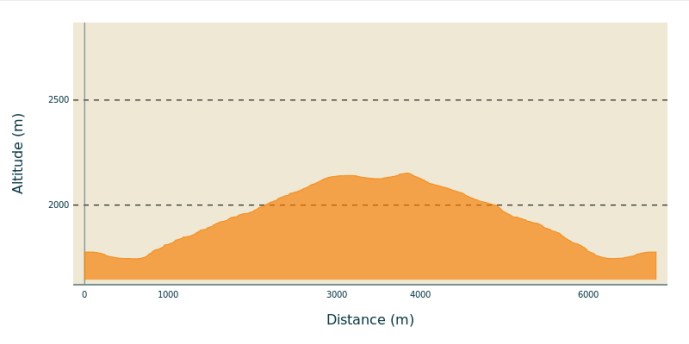
Type : Loop

Themes : History and architecture, Pastoralism

Trek

Departure : Hameau du Chazelet
Cities : 1. La Grave

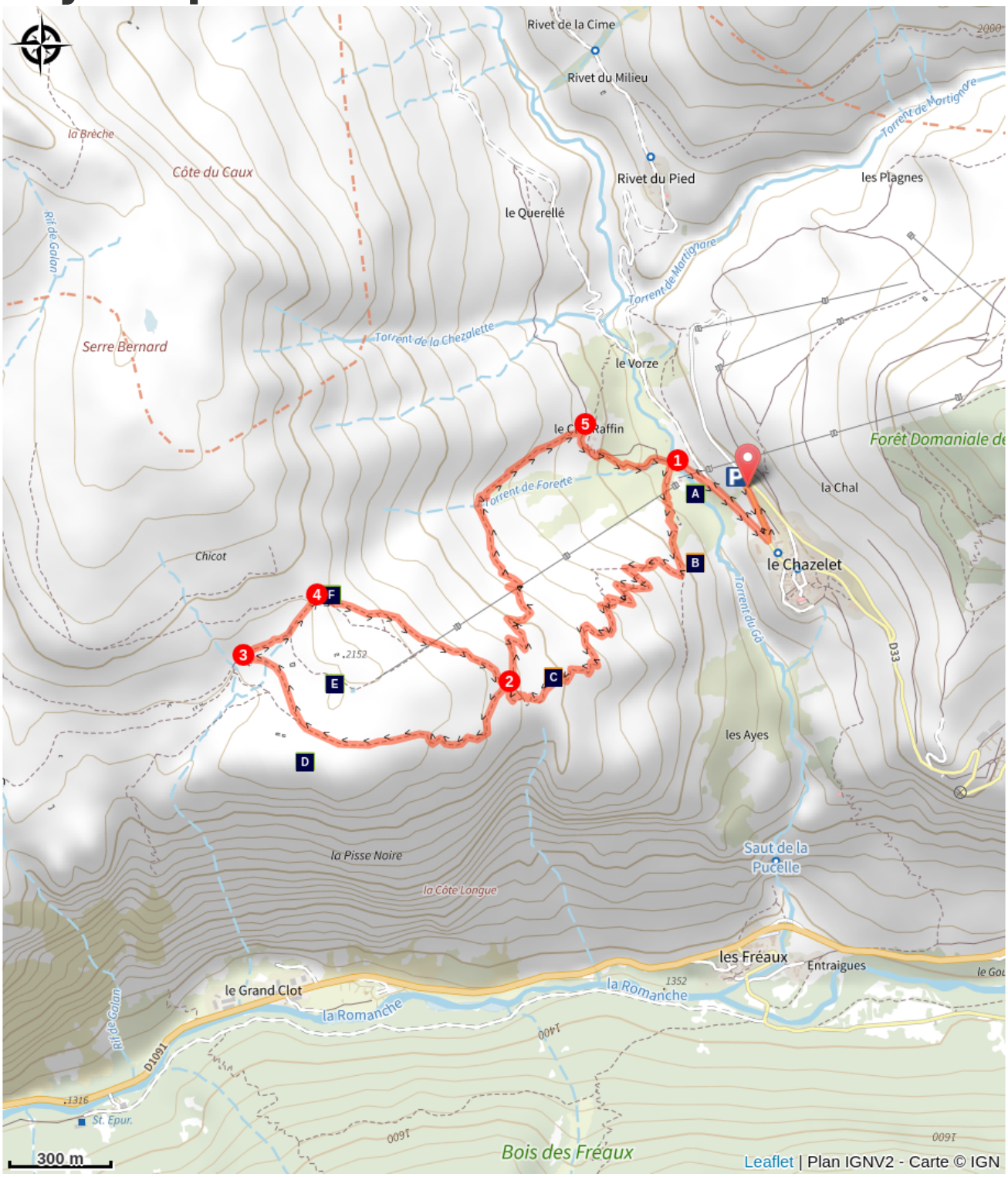
Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1746 m Max elevation 2154 m

From the starting point at Chazelet (1770 m), descend in the direction of the village along by the car park. At the first fork, do not go up in to the village but take the hairpin bend to the right in the direction of the foot of the ski-lifts. Cross the Gâ at the departure of the chairlift then follow the large hairpin bends that go up to the Eastern slope of the Plateau d'Emparis. Pass the banks (2060 m) and, at this point, fork to the left in the direction of the Southern edge of the Plateau d'Emparis. An exceptional view of Malaval valley situated at 1000 m further down. Pass close to the Maison Rouge » ruins and the « Pré Veyraud » (2132m). Fork to the right in the direction of the small mountain pass (2164 m). At this point, join the GR 54, and follow it descending to the banks. At the banks, fork to the left and take the path that crosses the Plateau d'Emparis ski lift and reach Clot Raffin hamlet. Take the path that leads to the bridge situated at the departure of the ski-lifts. Go up to Chazelet on a large track to return to the starting point for this itinerary.

On your path...



White-throated dipper (A)

Agricultural work in Spring and Summer (C)

Skylark (E)

Agricultural work in Autumn and Winter (B)

griffon vultures (D)

Small Apollo (F)

All useful information

Advices

If you respect the newly traced hairpin bends you will protect this beautiful itinerary.

How to come ?

Transports

Bus Grenoble gare routière/SNCF - La Grave / Villar d'Arène - Briançon (LER 35 - Transisère).

Access

From Bourg-d'Oisans, follow the D1091 and cross La Grave. At the tunnel exit, turn right on to the D33 and follow the direction of Chazelet.

Advised parking

Parking du Chazelet

Information desks

Tourism Office of La Grave, La Meije - Villar d'Arène
RD 1091, 05320 La Grave

ot@lagrave-lameije.com
Tel : +33 (0)4 76 79 90 05
http://www.lagrave-lameije.com/

Source

Parc national des Ecrins

https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr

On your path...

White-throated dipper (A)

Perched on a large, partly immersed pebble, the dipper sways to and fro with its tail aloft, and then dives down head first into the swirling water. This surprising passerine is unusual in moving underwater against the current in search of food. Thanks to a thin membrane protecting its eyes from the water, it can spot its prey (worms, small shellfish, water insect larva), before lifting its head out of the water and letting the current carry it gently along. It then takes up a new surveillance position and starts the process all over again.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - PNE

Agricultural work in Autumn and Winter (B)

From September, cereal crops were cut with the scythe and the sickle, dried in “bourles” (small stacks of ten sheafs) on the top of the land (fields). Once beaten, the grains of rye were dried in the sun «soleillaient », they were taken to the mill and then to the oven to be made in to black bread. From the end of November until the beginning of May, the animals had to be tended to in the stables. The manure from the cows was transported to the fields using sledges, while the sheep dung was dried and cut in to, pieces, and burnt to produce heat and energy for cooking. In the dairy, milk was made in to butter and cheese.

Attribution : Denis Clavreul

Agricultural work in Spring and Summer (C)

In Spring the soil had to be moved up the land using crates pulled by mules. Ploughing, sowing, planting followed rye (which stayed in the ground for two years), barley, oats and potatoes. Summer was not finished until the barns were full of hay. Scythes that had been beaten on an anvil, rakes, and nets were used every day. In order to ensure the overwintering of the animals, a certain number of loads (around 80 kg of hay) were necessary: 25 for each dairy cow and 5 for each sheep.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE

griffon vultures (D)

In flight, the silhouette of the griffon vultures is unique: rectangular, monolithic and contrasting. Their wingspan varies from 2.6 metres to 2.8 metres and they weigh 6 to 9 kg... before eating! When on the ground, they are characterised by their brown and cream colouring and a long neck, covered with short white fluff, which protrudes from a ruff of downy white feathers. Vultures are gregarious and live in colonies on the cliffs.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE

Skylark (E)

A herald of the summer, the skylark takes over the grasslands right up to the edge of the alpine zone, where the males sing at the top of their voices to attract females. From June to July, the females nest on the ground, hidden in the grass. It's a difficult time for them when the flocks arrive! They not only suffer from the deadly curiosity of the stoat but they also face the destructive passage of the livestock who crush the nests and their occupants.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE

Small Apollo (F)

The Small Apollo is a rare and protected butterfly. It has finely striped black and white antennae, and a tiny red ocellus (eye) on each of its forewings. With a wingspan of 60 to 80 mm, it is the lord and master of the orangey-yellow beds of mountain saxifrages where it takes care of its eggs and feeds its caterpillars.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE