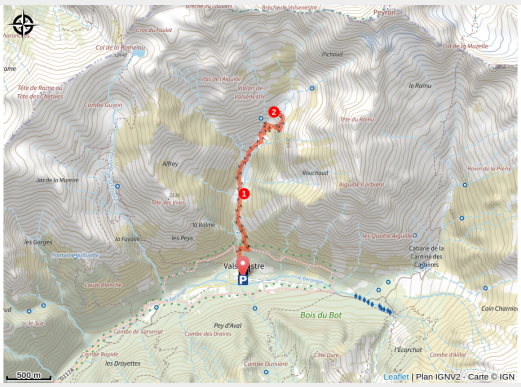
The Valsenestre valley

Parc national des Ecrins

Le clapier du Peyron, Vallon de Valsenestre (Guidetti Georgette - PNE)



Between mountain cliffs and grassy plateaux, the Valsenestre valley is a favourite spot for rock-climbers.

This trail winds its way through a large valley, inhabited by large number of chamois in the Alpine zone and by Alpine ibex in the mountain cliffs. The valley ends with a pleasant sloping ledge featuring a recently restored and authentic shepherd's cabin.
Vincent Nobili; Valbonnais Park Keeper

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 5 h

Length : 5.9 km

Trek ascent : 760 m

Difficulty : Medium

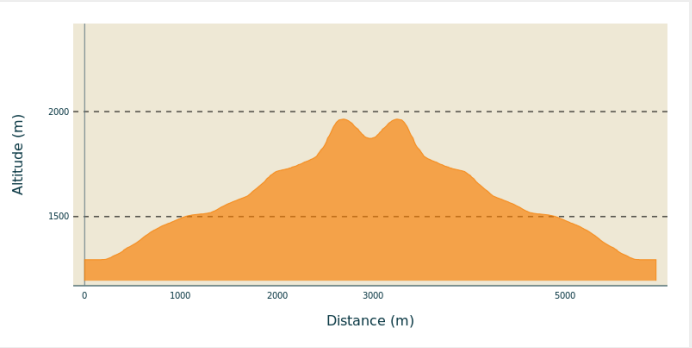
Type : Return trip

Themes : Fauna, Flora, Panorama, Pastoralism

Trek

Departure : Valsenestre
Arrival : Valsenestre
Markings : PR
Cities : 1. Valjouffrey

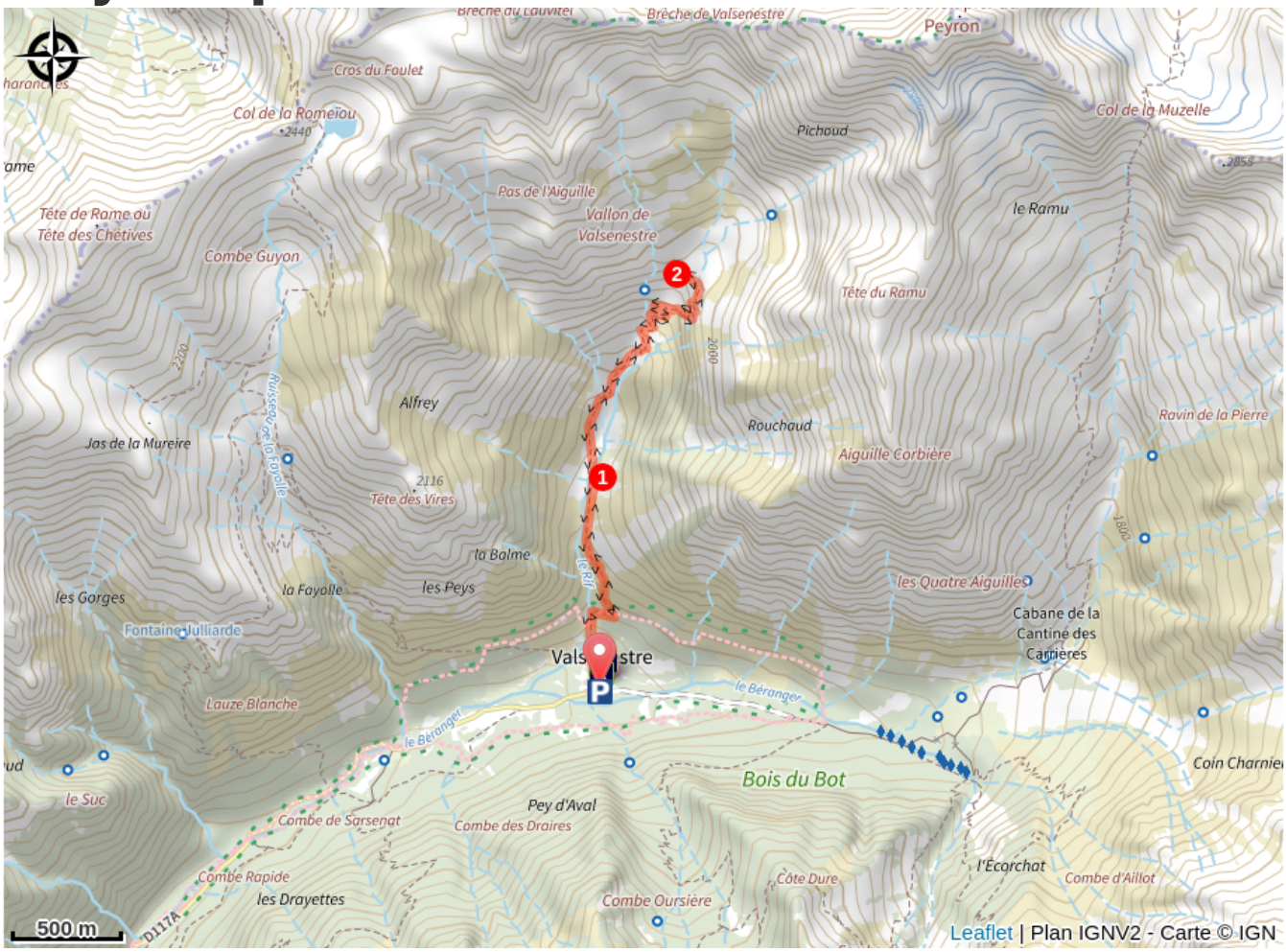
Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1296 m Max elevation 1965 m

From the village of Valsenestre, after the stopover gîte, follow the path to the left. It heads due north through a few bends over fairly low-lying vegetation. From here, you can see the Béranger valley, before you arrive at a large plateau (Le Clos), where you cross the torrent over a small footbridge. From here on, in summer, you can see sheep grazing in the mountain pastures. Follow the valley along a winding path around a large rocky bar to arrive at the Valsenestre valley. Here there is a shepherd’s cabin where you can watch the chamois and Alpine ibex that are attracted by the salt lick put out for the sheep. Behind the cabin, you can see a waterfall that is the source for the stream.
The peaks surrounding this valley reach the high point of 3126 m at the Pic du Clapier du Peyron. To its left are the Brèche de Valsenestre 2,598 m, the Brèche du Lauvitel 2,855 m and lastly the Pas de l'Aiguille 2,354 m. To its right, the Col and the Tête de Ramu (2,760 m).
Take the same route on the way back.

On your path...



Alpine garden (A)

Restored village (C)

The chamois (E)

The alpine ibex (G)

The great fescue or paniculated fescue (I)

The Cabane du Vallon (K)

Viewpoint over the hamlet of Vasenestre (B)

Territory-specific and climate-related agri-environment measures (D)

Le Clos (F)

The spring pasque flower (H)

Low walls and reposoirs (J)

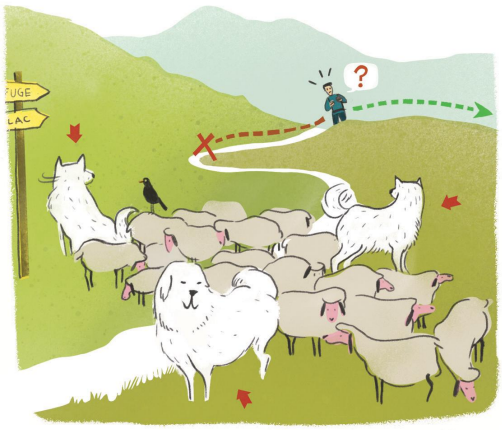
All useful information

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

In winter, the access road to the car park is closed.

When you arrive at the cabin, you will see the flocks guarded by Pyrenean Mountain dogs, whose role is to defend the sheep. Don’t go too near them - although the dogs seem friendly, they might see you as a threat and become aggressive.

How to come ?

Transports

Bus from La Mure to Entraigues (Transisere - line 4120). Change at "Entraigues Place" for the local Valjouffrey service (local bus for 8 passengers) to Le Désert-en-Valjouffrey.

Access

D 26 from La Mure
D 526 from Pont du Prêtre
D 117 from Entraigues to La Chapelle and Valsenestre

Advised parking

Haute Vallée du Béranger Nature Reserve car park in Valsenestre

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...

Alpine garden (A)

More than fifty years ago, a botany lover, who is now elderly, created a small alpine garden in the centre of the village. Although it is less well kept nowadays, it still presents a stunning array of colour and a collection of spectacular plants belonging to alpine flora.

Viewpoint over the hamlet of Vasenestre (B)

In the 19th century, the hamlet of Valsenestre had roughly one hundred inhabitants. The main activity was breeding. In 1851, a marble quarry opened in the bottom of the valley on the way up to the Muzelle pass. This was an opportunity for the village. It welcomed the quarry workers and benefitted from an improved road. Marble production stopped in 1905. Up until 1926, children laughing and shouting could still be heard in the village. The school had about thirty pupils. It was closed a few years later and the last permanent inhabitant of the village left in 1948.

Attribution : Marion Digier - PNE

Restored village (C)

Valsenestre is a flower-filled village that has been superbly restored and is now made up of holiday homes The road is not cleared of snow in the winter. When the village had one hundred or so inhabitants it had a school (that has since been changed into a gîte d'étape (bed and breakfast halt), that closed in 1936. It was entirely buried by an avalanche in the 19th century. The main activity was still breeding but the opening of a marble quarry from 1840 brought complimentary resources to workers in the village. The last permanent inhabitant left Valsenestre in 1959.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE

Territory-specific and climate-related agri-environment measures (D)

Under the French abbreviations MAET and MAEC, today there are European initiatives to support the most effective and ecologically sound management of agricultural and pastoral mountain areas. These agri-environmental measures are designed to encourage and remunerate volunteer users of mountain spaces in their actions to protect natural environments. These principles consist primarily in:
-avoiding over-grazing of alpine meadows,
-limiting the invasion of alpine meadows by shrubs and bushes,
-protecting the ground nesting sites of galliformes (white-tailed ptarmigan and black grouse),
-enriching the pastures by limiting the proliferation of non-palatable and invasive plants.

The chamois (E)

The chamois is the iconic animal of the Alps. In fact, it is at home everywhere, in forest as well as rocky terrain. When the chamois feels disturbed, it emits a high-pitched whistle through its nostrils, a real alarm whistle. A population of chamois lives in this small valley and you can see herds of them in November during the rutting season. As the French poet and writer Samivel urged: *« Declare peace on shy animals, do nothing to disturb their doings, so that your children still find delight in the springtimes »*.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - PNE

Le Clos (F)

Half-way along the trail route, you come to the locality called « Le Clos ». With a small mountain stream called Le Rif running though the middle of it, this intermediate valley makes this trail ideally suited to family walks. In fact, this stream is formed by the convergence of several other water courses flowing down from the surrounding heights. This abundance of water in the valley explains the abundance of plant life. Here, greens dominate... but maybe at dusk the eye of the experienced hiker will make out a beige smudge against this expanse of green: a chamois coming down to the water to drink.

Attribution : Guidetti Georgette - PNE

The alpine ibex (G)

A ghost of the rocks, the ibex, also known as the steinbock, is stocky, plump and its coat is beige to chocolate depending on the season and its sex. The male's horns can read up to one metre in length, and curve backwards. In the summer, it can be spotted on the high slopes. It is also the torchbearer for nature protection. And so, having been reintroduced to the Valbonnais in 1989 and 1990, today the ibex visits this small valley in spring and summer.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - PNE

The spring pasque flower (H)

Bearing a single, golden-brown flower which opens in the spring, the magnificent spring pasque flower inhabits short grasslands and high-mountain heathlands. It therefore flowers early after the last snowmelt. Also nicknamed the « mouse anemone »due to the soft, silky hair on its white flower head, inside which there is a yellow gold-coloured centre. Standing just 6 centimetres tall, this little flower nevertheless knows how to make an impact with its tousled "hairdo", which it acquires when its seed head ripens.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE

The great fescue or paniculated fescue (I)

This is not a classic colourful flowering plant, but rather a grass that is conspicuous due to its size and density in some alpine pastures. A species that is so common it needs no description. Called the queyrel by the mountain sheep farmers, this is a grass with hard leaves making it unappetising to herbivores. A property which makes it highly invasive: strong roots and shoots developing in clumps from one rootstock (a growth habit known as "cespitose") it takes over where the meadows are no longer mown or grazed by the flocks.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE

Low walls and reposoirs (J)

In the valley, close to the cabin, old low walls can be seen. These structures are called jas and were used by the shepherd to gather, separate and tend the sheep. There are few remaining signs of the age-old presence of these sheepfolds, other than the occasional marks and inscriptions etched into the rock walls, bearing testimony to their past existence. Enthusiasts are fascinated by them.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE

The Cabane du Vallon (K)

Recently renovated, the Cabane du Vallon de Valsenestre is a high-mountain shelter used by shepherds in the summer months. It is built completely from stone and has a shower, a comfort appreciated by its occupant during the summer grazing period. A flock of sheep grazes this pasture from late June through to September. The shepherd staying in the cabin is accompanied by guard dogs, the famous Patou sheepdogs. In addition, there is another refuge further uphill. The Cabane du Valsenestre is also used as a temporary shelter when the shepherd wants to move higher up.

Attribution : Bertini Christian - PNE