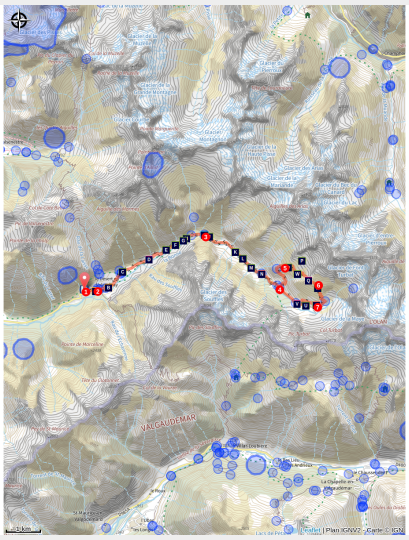
Ascent to the Font Turbat refuge via the Petit Vallon

Parc national des Ecrins

Refuge de Font Turbat (Xavier_and_Caroline - Parc national des Ecrins)



An original and untamed trail to or from the Font Turbat refuge.

All around you, the post-glacier landscape is unveiled with very little earth, no trees and smooth, seeping glacier rocks. The only vegetation is made up of moss, lichens and a few woody plants: you are walking through the tundra.

Abdelbaki Benyoub - Valbonnais forest keeper

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 6 h

Length : 20.6 km

Trek ascent : 1223 m

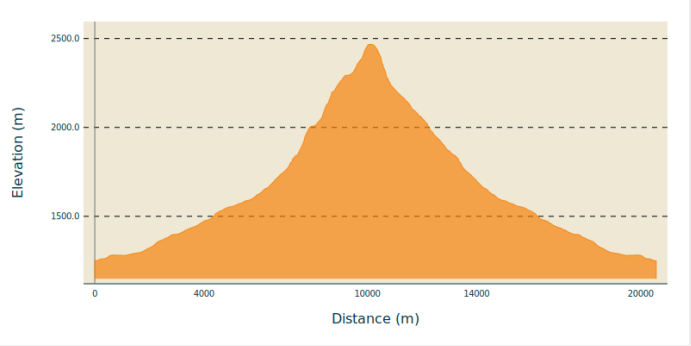
Difficulty : Hard

Type : Loop

Trek

Departure : Le Désert en Valjoufrey
Arrival : Font Turbat refuge
Markings : PR
Cities : 1. Valjouffrey

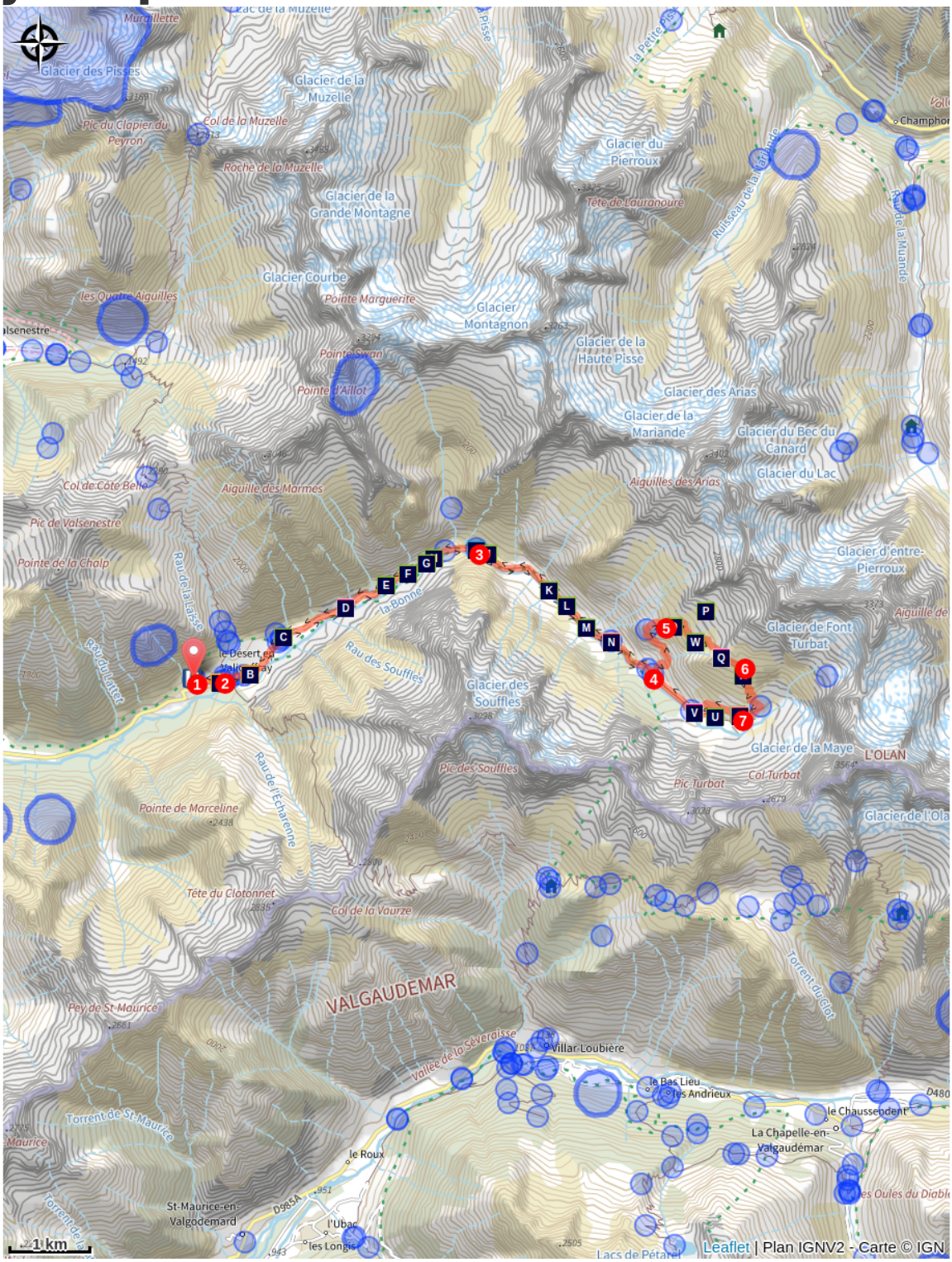
Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1249 m Max elevation 2467 m

From the car park at the entrance of Le Désert-en-Valjouffrey, cross the village, heading east. Cut across the GR 54, by crossing the stream of La Laisse. Follow the wide path along the meadow and alongside the right bank of La Bonne, leading to the edge of the Ecrins National Park (information panel). After the Pisse waterfall, continue along the rising path, still following the bottom of the valley through fairly low-lying vegetation that is typical of rocky ground. 15 minutes from the Chatellerat cabin, turn left at an intersection with a sign to "Le Petit Vallon". The route begins with a series of short hairpin bends through the alder trees, and crosses several small streams running down from Le Vallonet. Higher up, at the ruins of Le Petit Vallon, you will see an Alpine pasture, which explains the existence of this disused cabin. Continue towards Col des Lauvets, where the pasture is replaced by scree. From the Col, you look down on the Font Turbat valley and can see the Pisse waterfall and a wide-open view over the Olan: this is a perfect place for lunch or a snack. You then begin the 30-minute descent towards the Font Turbat refuge, passing in front of the old refuge, which is the only one accessible in winter.

On your path...



- The Désert-en-Valjouffrey (A)
- Common Chiffchaff (C)
- Cob web House Leek (E)
- Apollo (G)
- Cascade de la Pisse (I)
- Eurasian Siskin (K)
- Red Fox (M)
- Hay Fields (B)
- Glacial valley (D)
- Rhododendron (F)
- White-throated Dipper (H)
- Mountain Hare (J)
- Ring Ouzel (L)
- Châtellerat Cabin (N)

- The ring ouzel (O)
- View of L'Olan (Q)
- Font Turbat Refuge (S)
- Savi Pipistrelle Bat (U)
- Dark green fritillary (W)
- The griffon vulture (P)
- The alpine accentor (R)
- Common Pipistrelle (T)
- Pic de l'Olan (V)

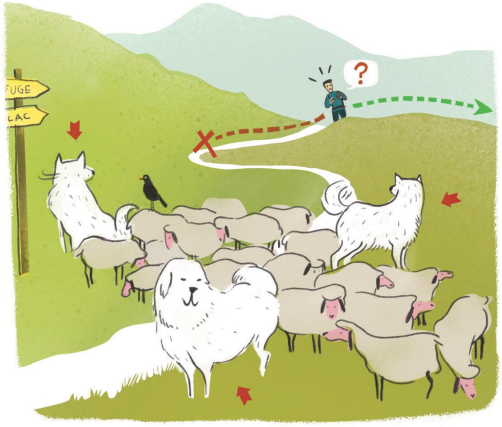
All useful information

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.

How to come ?

Access

From Entraigues take the D117 to Le Désert-en-Valjouffrey

Advised parking

Car park at the entrance to the village of Le Désert-en-Valjouffrey

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.

Alpine ibex

Sensitivity period: June, July, August, September

Contact: Parc National des Écrins
Julien Charron
julien.charron@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Zone de présence du Bouquetin des Alpes

En période de mise bas et d'élevage des jeunes (juin à septembre) les bouquetins peuvent être très sensibles au dérangement notamment en cas de survol à basse altitude. Dans leur fuite les risques d'accidents sont multipliés. Merci de rester à bonne distance et d'éviter le survol de la 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...

The Désert-en-Valjouffrey (A)

No sand or barren lands, the name of Desert comes from the word "essarter" which means to clear the land of forest in order to produce a clearing. Forest clearing was necessary for the implementation and the development of agriculture in the mountains... Nowadays, the Desert is one of the only hamlets at altitude which is inhabited all year round in spite of the harsh mountain climate.

Attribution : PNE - Collection Tron Lucien

Hay Fields (B)

The hayfields where the grass is mown have been improved over the generations by the extraction of stones which have then been stacked in piles which are known locally as “clapiers”. These piles of stones mark the boundaries between the crops and the flocks.

Common Chiffchaff (C)

A bird that you hear but do not see, the Common Chiffchaff nicknamed the "écu counter”. Its song, which is very easy to identify, evokes the sound of gold coins falling one by one in to the cash register as they are counted. Green-brown and greyish on top, its feathers are off white underneath, beige on the chest with a barely visible pale brow.

Attribution : PNE - Saulay Pascal

Glacial valley (D)

The high valley of Bonne, or Font Turbat, is a typical glacial valley in the form of a trough with morainic bars marking the stages of the retreat of the glacier. The lower shelves or glacial shoulders are suspended above the trough 500 to 600 m in size of which the steep sides dominate the layers of scree and the alluvial fans (mass of debris transported by the water It finishes upstream by a vast cirque at the imposing foot of the rocky wall of theOlan (3 564 m), hemmed in at its foot by the Maye black glacier. At the time of the last glaciation of Würm, 10 000 years ago , the two glaciers of Font Turbat and Maye joined together and fed into a powerful glacial tongue in the Bonne valley. It formed the valley in to the shape of a basin by scraping and polishing rocky walls in the granite. The lowest moraines, masses of rocky debris transported by the glaciers are situated around Châtellerat cabin.

Attribution : PNE - Nicollet Bernard

Cob web House Leek (E)

Thick leaves organized in tight rosettes shoot up towards the sky twists of white hairs which are quite similar to the traps woven by certain spiders. Not less competitive than the rhododendrons, The Cobweb House Leek is adapted to resist drought. The main rosette and the smaller shoots well grouped together; make a real water reserve which is then marvelously stocked by the fleshy leaves... It also develops many kinds of hairs that collect the dew.

Attribution : PNE - Warluzelle Olivier

Rhododendron (F)

Nicknamed the rose of the devil, the rhododendron ferrugineum has the capacity of placing itself between the rocks and boulders where the soil is rare. It keeps its stiff leaves which are dark green and shiny and rust coloured underneath right through the winter. It gets its name from this rust colour. Every year, between the end of July and the beginning of August its branches are crowned with bouquets of flowers coloured rose and purple.

Attribution : PNE - Vincent Dominique

Apollo (G)

A big white butterfly with black and red markings is not shy; the Apollo is easy to see between the middle of June until the end of July... It lays its eggs on the White Stonecrop, a perennial plant with white flowers living on scree and gravel... The male Apollo is born before the female and waits patiently to procreate. It is to be noted that it benefits from national protection; its transport and destruction are forbidden.

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien

White-throated Dipper (H)

Easier to observe than the Common Chiffchaff, the White-throated Dipper lives beside rivers and mountain torrents... A little red and grey bird, with a short tail, it has a fine beak, a white mark on the chin and on the chest. This astonishing sparrow has the particularity of being able to walk under the water against the current in search of food. It flattens itself down and grips on to the bottom with its claws, opens its eyes, which are protected from the flow by a fine membrane and spots worms, larvae, little crustaceans and fish.

Attribution : PNE - Chevalier Robert

Cascade de la Pisse (I)

With its origin in the high crystalline ground, the torrent bounces down waterfalls and cascades until it meets the Pisse at a height of 40 m.

Attribution : PNE - Nicollet Jean-Pierre

Mountain Hare (J)

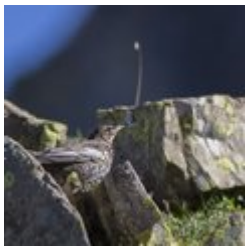
There are many Mountain Hares or Blue Hares that observe you; the opposite is rarely true... Brown in summer, white in winter, the Mountain Hare is present across the Alps. Like the European Hare from which it differs being smaller, with a white tail and shorter ears, It leaves Y shaped tracks in the snow due to the way it moves in little jumps (it brings its back legs in front of the front legs.). However, it is often its tracks and its little dry, round droppings that indicate its passage. Its large fluffy feet are like snowshoes enabling it to stay on the surface of the snow even when it is powdery.

Attribution : PNE - Couloumy Christian

Eurasian Siskin (K)

Feeding principally on the seeds of the Alder, the Birch and conifers, the Eurasian Siskin only nests in conifer forests in the mountains of the Northern Alps during the reproduction period... The male, more colourful than the female, can be recognized from its bright green-yellow feathers its black forehead and its little white bib under the beak. It is in winter, that you can observe them, sometimes in big groups, descended from the mountains in search of food...

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien



Ring Ouzel (L)

The Ring Ouzel is easy to identify: it endorses the black feathering of the blackbird, but is distinguished from it by the big white bib on the chest, the light borders of its wings and abdomen. Insects, grasshoppers, worms and berries make up its menu. This shy mountain blackbird, that flies fast, lives at the edge of forests of larch, Scots pines, Spruce and Swiss Pines pins at an altitude of between 1 000 to 2 500 m. Present in the mountainous massifs it nests in the lower branches or in the hollow trunk of a tree, a crack in the rock or building. Essentially a migrator, the Ring Ouzel hibernates in Spain or in Northern Africa. It comes back to the Alps from the month of March.

Attribution : PNE - Saulay Pascal

Red Fox (M)

The Fox was originally called the goupil in French and this animal was the central character of the hugely famous “novel” written in the 12th century about a goupil called "Renart" (later “Renard”), who was, a clever knight tricking and making fun of the clergy and the powerful who were unable to deal with the people. Renart made fun of them and was sometimes cruel. He was so popular that his name became that of the animal species he portrayed. Another literary reference to this animal is by Jean de la Fontaine whose character « Maître Renard » features in twenty of his fables...

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien

Châtellerat Cabin (N)

In 1908, Châtellerat pastoral cabin was hastily built by the community of Valjouffrey. Destroyed several times in avalanches, is still sheltered numerous mountaineers. It was rebuilt in 1921 in a less exposed place and already ideas about a « real » refuge were growing.

Attribution : PNE - Nicollet Jean-Pierre

The ring ouzel (O)

The ring ouzel is easily identifiable: it sports the same plumage as the black ouzel but is distinguished from it by a large white bib on its breast and light edges on the feathers of its wings and underside. Its diet is largely made up of insects, grasshoppers, worms and berries. This shy, swift-flying mountain-dwelling ouzel lives on the edges of forests of larch, Scots pine, spruce and Swiss pine, at altitudes of between 1,000 and 2,500 metres. It nests in low branches or hollow tree trunks or crevices in rocks or buildings. Essentially a migratory bird, the ring ouzel overwinters in Spain or North Africa and returns to the Alps in March.

Attribution : Pierre Dumas - PNE

The griffon vulture (P)

This enormous bird of prey with a wingspan of almost three metres is a relatively recent sight here in the mountains, after a reintroduction programme in the late 1990s. In summer, they constantly circle the skies in groups, on the lookout for the corpses of sheep or large wild mammal to take apart and devour. This impressive carrion bird plays a valuable cleaning-up role in the alpine pastures.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE

View of L'Olan (Q)

L'Olan stands at 3,564 metres above sea level and it consists of three peaks, the highest of which is the most northerly. For the first time L'Olan was climbed up to the top of the central peak on 8 July 1875, and then up to the top of the north peak on 29 June 1877, by the famous William August Brevoort Coolidge and his guide Almer. L'Olan is the iconic peak not only of the valley but also of the western part of the Les Écrins massif. From here, you can see the north slope which is one of the highest and wildest mountain faces in the Alps, like Les Drus (in the Mont-Blanc massif). Its name is a distortion of the word l'auran which used to mean «windy mountain».

Attribution : Parc national des Ecrins

The alpine accentor (R)

The alpine accentor is a bird just slightly bigger than a sparrow, very hardy, grey in colour but speckled with russet on a grey belly. It lives in open alpine meadows and feeds on the ground on the many invertebrates, often close to the snow line. You might also spy it near the refuge because comes for the crumbs dropped by hikers.
When winter comes, the cold and the snow force it to drop down into the valley and it often comes to the villages, seeking the protection offered by houses.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE

Font Turbat Refuge (S)

During the summer of 1923, the guide Célestin Bernard took charge of the construction of the refuge at Font Turbat. Several great mountaineering names are associated with it like Guery, Ripert, Frendo, Fourastier, Boell, who came to explore the mountains at Valjouffrey. In 1934, Devies and Gervasutti traced a historic itinerary in the North-West face of the Pic de l'Olan. 22 years later, the direct Couzy-Desmaison (ED) was opened to the left of the previous one, surmounting the steepest part of the face. The construction of the refuge As it stands now dates from 1962. It was extended and renovated in 1996-1997.

Attribution : PNE - Albert Christophe

Common Pipistrelle (T)

Brown with relatively short ears, the Common Pipistrelle and the Soprano Pipistrelle fight over the title of the smallest bat in Europe... The Common Pipistrelle can be seen in very diverse environments even above an altitude of 2 000 m At the time of Jules Ferry, school books boasted about the merits of bats .In fact, insectivores, they consume every day a quarter to a third of their own body weight in mosquitoes and other insects.. They emit ultra-sounds which are inaudible to the human ear but detectable thanks to a captor. This technique enables them to orient themselves when moving about at night to capture their prey. They can often be seen around street lighting hunting the insects that have been attracted by the light.

Attribution : PNE - Nicollet Jean-Pierre

Savi Pipistrelle Bat (U)

With a small size, and a contrasted coat, an off white abdomen and a golden brown back, Savi’s Pipistrelle can be recognized by the black membranes, it’s rather pointed muzzle and at the end of its tail from which several vertebrae are visible by the uropatagium, a skin membrane situated between the two hind legs... With a calm nature, this bat is a rock species mainly from the South, but it can also reach the high mountains at an altitude of more than 3 000 m.

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien

Pic de l'Olan (V)

It was on the 29th June 1877 that Coolidge, with Christian Almer father and son, carried out the first ascent of the pic de l'Olan. On the 5th August 1980, Arthur Cust with Pierre Gaspard and Roderon opened the Northern ridge. At that time the bivouac was still obligatory at the bottom of the Bonne valley.

Attribution : PNE - Nicollet Jean-Pierre

Dark green fritillary (W)

Thanks to its impressive wingspan, the dark green fritillary makes its presence noticed! The top side of its wings is a beautiful orangey colour embellished with black spots. Underneath, they are marked with bands of mother-of-pearl against a background of greenish scales. This is a large butterfly with a wingspan of 50 to 60 cm. It is relatively common but is becoming less so due to loss of habitat, caused by changes in farming practices. In fact, its caterpillar which is black dotted with orange spots along its sides, essentially feeds on violet leaves which are only found in extensively grazed meadows.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE