

The 6 mountain huts

Parc national des Ecrins - Saint-Maurice-en-Valgodemard



Site des 6 cabanes (Frédéric Sabatier - Parc national des Ecrins)



This walk will guide you on the trails of transhumance. From one mountain hut to another, you will finally arrive at the hamlet of 6 Mountain Huts, at the foot of the Grun de Saint Maurice.

The smells, colours and atmosphere change constantly during the change in altitude. You will be taken back in time and your imagination will roam thinking of the traces left by ancestors of the area, their history and their way of life. You will be overcome by a sense of respect for these mountain artisans.

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 4 h 45

Length : 8.2 km

Trek ascent : 973 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Return trip

Themes : Flora, History and architecture, Pastoralism

Trek

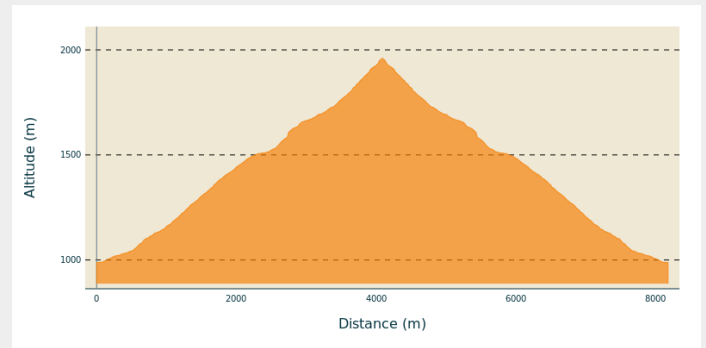
Departure : Saint-Maurice en Valgaudemar

Arrival : Saint Maurice-en-Valgaudemar

Markings : ■ PR

Cities : 1. Saint-Maurice-en-Valgodemard

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 988 m Max elevation 1961 m

From the car park in Saint Maurice en Valgaudemar, return to the surfaced road towards the church and take the road to the right until you reach the sign indicating the way to 6 Mountain Huts. From here, follow the path marked with a red dot towards the Salette mountain hut. Cross the bridge over the Saint-Maurice stream and follow the path. At the next junction, follow the footpath that goes up to the right (do not take the path to the left that leads to the Rochimont mountain hut). Further on, the trail comes close to the stone ruins of a small mountain pasture hamlet and soon after leads to the Salette pastoral hut, which is situated at an altitude of 1650 m. After walking for 2 hours, the small fountain will be more than welcome.

To reach the "6 mountain huts", continue the climb for about an hour on an open but rocky and narrow pathway with many bends, until you get to the surprising yet incredible hamlet that is situated at an altitude of 1980 m.

After a welcome break in the superb cirque at the foot of the Grun de Saint-Maurice, which is filled with the history of the place, you can return by the same route.

On your path...



-  What are you, lavender? (A)
-  Flora (C)
-  Transhumance (E)
-  6 Mountain Huts hamlet (G)
-  Saint Maurice en Valgodémard church (I)
-  Lavandin (B)
-  The beech forest (D)
-  Pasture hamlets (F)
-  Saint Maurice parish church (H)
-  "Sully" the lime tree (J)

All useful information

How to come ?

Transports

Navetta del conseil général (Voyageurs 05) da Saint-Firmin. Collegamento con i bus provenienti da Gap e da Grenoble.
Informazioni al 0033(0)4 92 502 505

Access

7 km from Saint-Firmin, take the D985a until you reach the Saint-Maurice en Valgaudemar car park.

Advised parking

Saint-Maurice en Valgaudemar car park (at the village exit)

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.

Short-toed snake eagle

Sensitivity period: March, April, May, June, July, August, September

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

Nidification du Circaète-Jean-le-Blanc

Les pratiques qui peuvent avoir une interaction avec le Circaète-Jean-le-Blanc en période de nidification sont principalement les pratiques aériennes comme le vol libre ou le vol motorisé.

Merci d'essayer d'éviter la zone ou de rester à une distance minimale de 300m sol quand vous la survolez soit 1780m d'altitude !

Information desks

Valgaudemar Park house
Ancien Asile Saint-Paul, 05800 La
Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar
valgaudemar@ecrins-parcnational.fr
Tel : 04 92 55 25 19
<http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/>



Source



Parc national des Ecrins
<https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr>

On your path...



✿ What are you, lavender? (A)

Fine, or Alpine lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) grows exclusively in the mountains, only at an altitude above 500 m. Its essential oil is exceptional and the greatest perfumers use it despite its low yield (130 kilos are necessary to produce 1 litre of essential oil). Etymologically, the word lavender comes from the Latin verb *laver*, meaning to wash. This origin leads us to think that very early on, lavender was used to perfume freshly washed laundry.

Attribution : Bernard Nicolet - PNE



✿ Lavandin (B)

In the 1930s, lavandin (*Lavandula x intermedia*) saw the day. It is a hybrid and therefore sterile, but it is easy to produce and is the most grown species nowadays as its yield is three times that of fine lavender. Its oil is used in industrially produced perfumes. Unlike fine lavender, this variety does not thrive at high altitude.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE

✿ Flora (C)

You will be witness to a surprising change in plant life between 1000 m and 2000 m in altitude. Indeed, your first steps will take you through an almost Mediterranean vegetation with juniper and lavender...What lovely fragrances! All that is missing is the sea.



🌲 The beech forest (D)

Rapidly you will enter a superb beech forest whose tormented trees will offer gentle shade. Beech is particularly well adapted to the level of the mountains where it finds the humid atmosphere necessary for its growth.

Its fruit, beechnuts, are edible like chestnuts. They are more difficult to shell, and were used as food for pigs for some length of time.

Attribution : Bernard Nicolet - PNE



Transhumance (E)

The steep slopes of the Valgaudemar area, where cows are not at ease, means cattle breeding is not possible. Sheep however, are quite at home.

As grass is rare at high altitude, transhumance is necessary. The idea is to follow the growth of grass, which is staggered according to altitude. The flock is therefore taken to the top, then makes its way down progressively.

Nowadays keeping methods have changed. Breeders, who often have more than one activity, make regular trips to check on the health of the flock in particular. The sheep are otherwise free to roam as the Grun cirque rockfaces act as a natural barrier. This type of keeping is known as "garde à l'arrage".

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE



Pasture hamlets (F)

For the sake of comfort, breeders and shepherds established pastoral hamlets where they lived for several weeks. A ruined hamlet at an altitude of 1350 m, La Salette at about 1650 m and the highest mountain pasture, 6 Mountain Huts at 2000 m are all reminders of the past.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE



6 Mountain Huts hamlet (G)

There were originally 10 mountain huts built on the high plateau. Today only 6 are still visible. Some are buried, whereas others have corbelled arches covered by tussocks of grass. This technique was also used in the Pyrenees (Les Orrys) and Corsica. Although it looks Neolithic, the site of 6 Mountain Huts was recently dated to the 17th century. It reminds us of how difficult living conditions must have been.

The remnants of these pastoral dwellings could no doubt tell the story of their forgotten lodgers.

Attribution : Marie-Paule Hachon - PNE



Saint Maurice parish church (H)

This church that was built by Cluniac monks, is the oldest in the Champsaur and Valgaudemar valleys. There is proof of its existence at the end of the 11th century. Its square bell tower is of typical Lombard tradition. The simple interior is composed of three naves with ridged vaults and a flat apse. Spared by the religious wars of the 16th century, its first restoration dates back to 1668.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE



Saint Maurice en Valgodémard church (I)

As you cross the main town, which is the start of the walk, you will no doubt have noticed to the right, the church protected by an impressive lime tree. Saint Maurice's church was built in the 11th century by Cluny monks that were the largest monastic order in the Middle Ages, and spread throughout Europe. It was possible to date it using painted walls that were discovered beneath paintings that were more recent. It is the oldest church in the Valgaudemar area.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE



"Sully" the lime tree (J)

"Sully" is the 300-year old lime tree that takes centre stage and generously offers shade. It is said that this tree was planted during the reign of Henry IV by decision of the Duke of Sully who was his minister of finances, economy and agriculture. He had lime trees planted in every district in France. The Duke of Sully is also the author of this famous quote: "Ploughing and grazing are the two breasts by which France is fed..." Its circumference is estimated to be 7.40 m.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE