# From Villar Loubière to the Refuge des Souffles

Valgaudemar

Refuge des Souffles (© Parc national des Ecrins - Carlos Ayesta)

## *A beautiful ascent overlooking the geological chaos of the Arraches.*

*In summer, the trail up to the Refuge des Souffles is like a walk in a botanical garden, with its attendant host of insects! Overlooked on the whole ascent by the Cime d'Orgière, you really feel that you are entering the world of the high peaks.*

*Tommy Bulle*

### Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 3 h

Length : 5.3 km

Trek ascent : 958 m

Difficulty : Medium

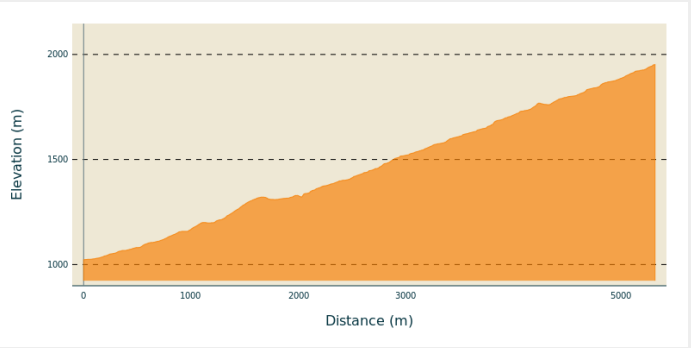
Type : Stage

Themes : Fauna, Geology, History and architecture

# Trek

**Departure** : Villar Loubière
**Arrival** : Refuge des Souffles
**Markings** : GR
**Cities** : 1. Villar-Loubière

## Altimetric profile

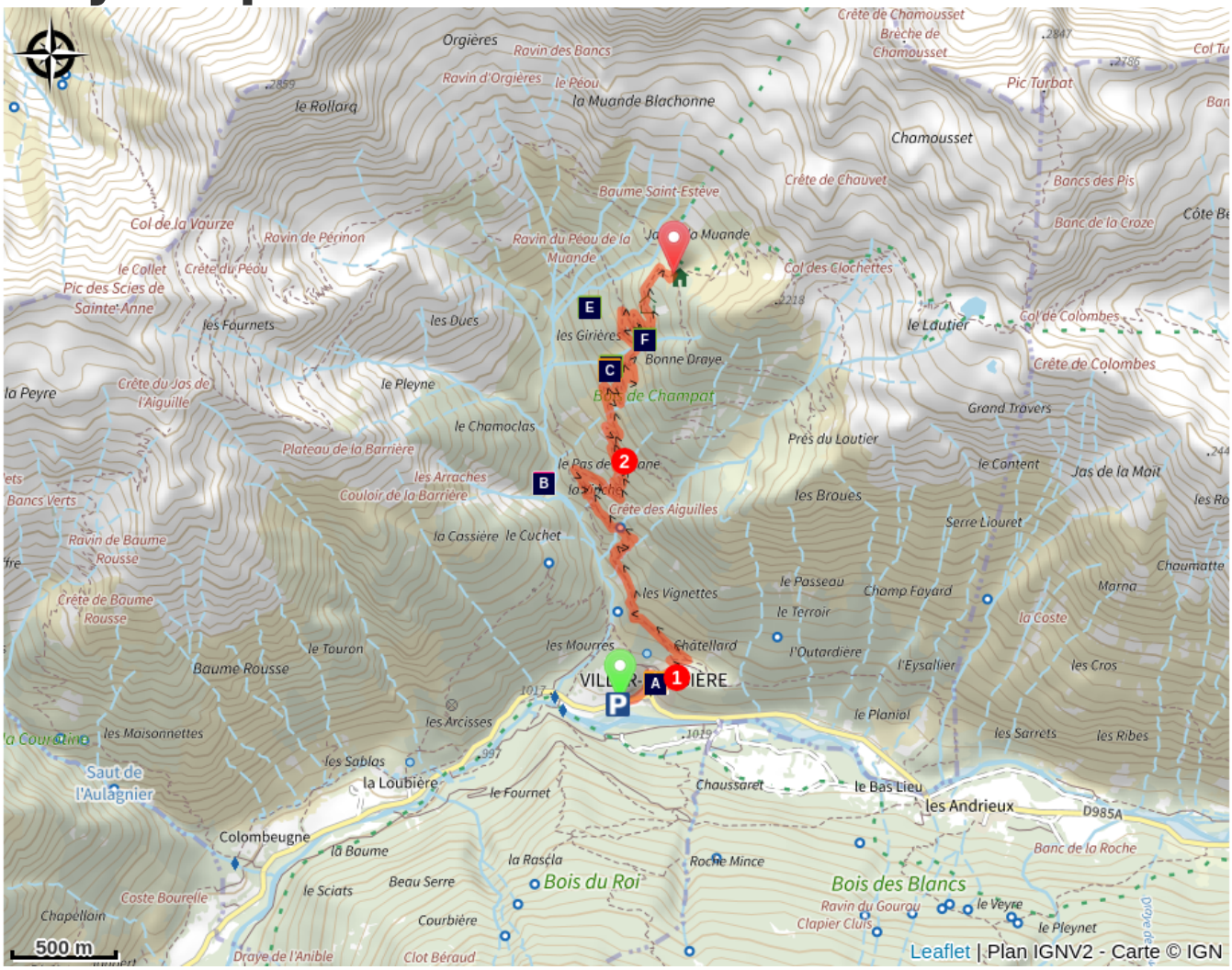



Min elevation 1024 m  Max elevation 1953 m

From the car park, follow the road up through the village as far as the fountain. Turn left, joining an earth track.

1. The start of the trail is marked by National Park signposts. Follow the track marked by a GR pictogram and cross a small footbridge. On the opposite slope, the Arraches gradually emerge into view. The path runs uphill until it reaches a signed junction.
2. Turn left, cross some screes followed by a small stand of deciduous trees. After a final steep section where a small spring flows, the refuge comes into sight. From here, reaching the refuge is a walk in the park!

# On your path...




- Villar-Loubière windmill (A)
- Sheep on the mountain pasture (C)
- Variety of the natural environment (E)
- Arraches (B)
- Black Grouse (D)
- Variety of plant life (F)

# All useful information

## Advices

Take care at the start of the path when crossing some sheer sections, and in heavy rain beware of rock falls.

## How to come ?

Access

From the N85 main road, take the fork towards Saint Firmin, follow signs for La Chapelle en Valgaudemar and stop and park in VillarLoubière.

Advised parking

There is car parking on the side of the D985A. If there are no spaces, there is a car park in the village centre.

## 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...

## Villar-Loubière windmill (A)

As you begin the steep climb towards the Col de la Vaurze, don’t miss the unusual Villar windmill, covered in vegetation. Built in 1838, this legacy from past times has been perfectly preserved with its curious horizontal wheel. It was still in use 50 years ago, milling wheat, but also nuts and rapeseed. It was restored in 1979 and is the last working windmill in the Valgaudemar valley.

Attribution : Florence Chalandon ©

## Arraches (B)

From the refuge, or during the climb, a peculiar geological formation may catch your eye on the opposite bank, above the old hamlet of Peines. Sedimentary rocks are trapped in the middle of crystalline formations where erosion has created a specific pattern of erosion that looks like a giant tiger has clawed at the rock. This morphology is what gave it the name Arraches.

Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE

## Sheep on the mountain pasture (C)

During your walk, you might come across sheep on the mountain pastures. This is an old form of pastoralism, as proven by the dry stone enclosures that you will see. These are known as 'jas'. You will also notice a rock shelter near to the Clot. The sheep that are in these pastures belong to breeders from the valley or from the Bas Champsaur area.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE

## Black Grouse (D)

The upper limit of the forest is where you are likely to see the black grouse. The female has faith in her bland-coloured feathering that camouflages her in the vegetation, making her difficult to spot. On the other hand, the male, which is black and white with red "eyebrows”, is not so private, particularly during the reproduction season when their cooing and hissing sounds echo in the mountain in the early morning.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - PNE

## Variety of the natural environment (E)

This walk is a summary of south facing slopes in the Valgaudemar area. It starts in the warm scree that it more or less vegetated. It then progresses over lawns and moors of juniper, blueberries or bearberries... They give way to mountain ash, whitebeam and amelanchiers indicating that the forest will soon take over. Higher up, the beech forest casts shade on the walkers, next a beautiful larch forest is a sign that the forest environment will give way to the high altitude moors and lawns. The Lautier lake and the surrounding ponds are a haven for aquatic species. Still higher, is the realm of rocks and chamois.

Attribution : Bernard Guidoni - PNE

## Variety of plant life (F)

There is a large variety of plant life along the itinerary, particularly on the slopes above the refuge, due to the exposure, the soil types and the altitude. Marjoram, lis, laserwort, houseleek, stinecrop, gentian, columbine, aconite and many others are present.

Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE