

From the Refuge des Souffles to the Refuge de l'Olan

Valgaudemar - Villar-Loubière



Le sentier vers le refuge de l'Olan (© Parc national des Ecrins - Olivier Warluzelle)



A mountain Stage taking you on a discovery of a glacial lake and plunging you into spectacular geological surroundings.

Passing from refuge to refuge on this route offers unforgettable views over the Valgaudemar valley. A beautiful challenging hiking Stage, its landscapes gazed upon by the hiker from dawn until dusk.

Tommy Bulle

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 5 h

Length : 9.0 km

Trek ascent : 985 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Stage

Themes : Fauna, Flora, Geology

Trek

Departure : Refuge des Souffles

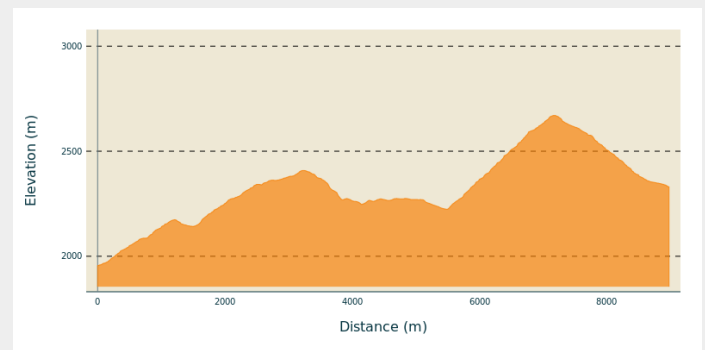
Arrival : Refuge de l'Olan

Markings :  GR

Cities : 1. Villar-Loubière

2. La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar

Altimetric profile

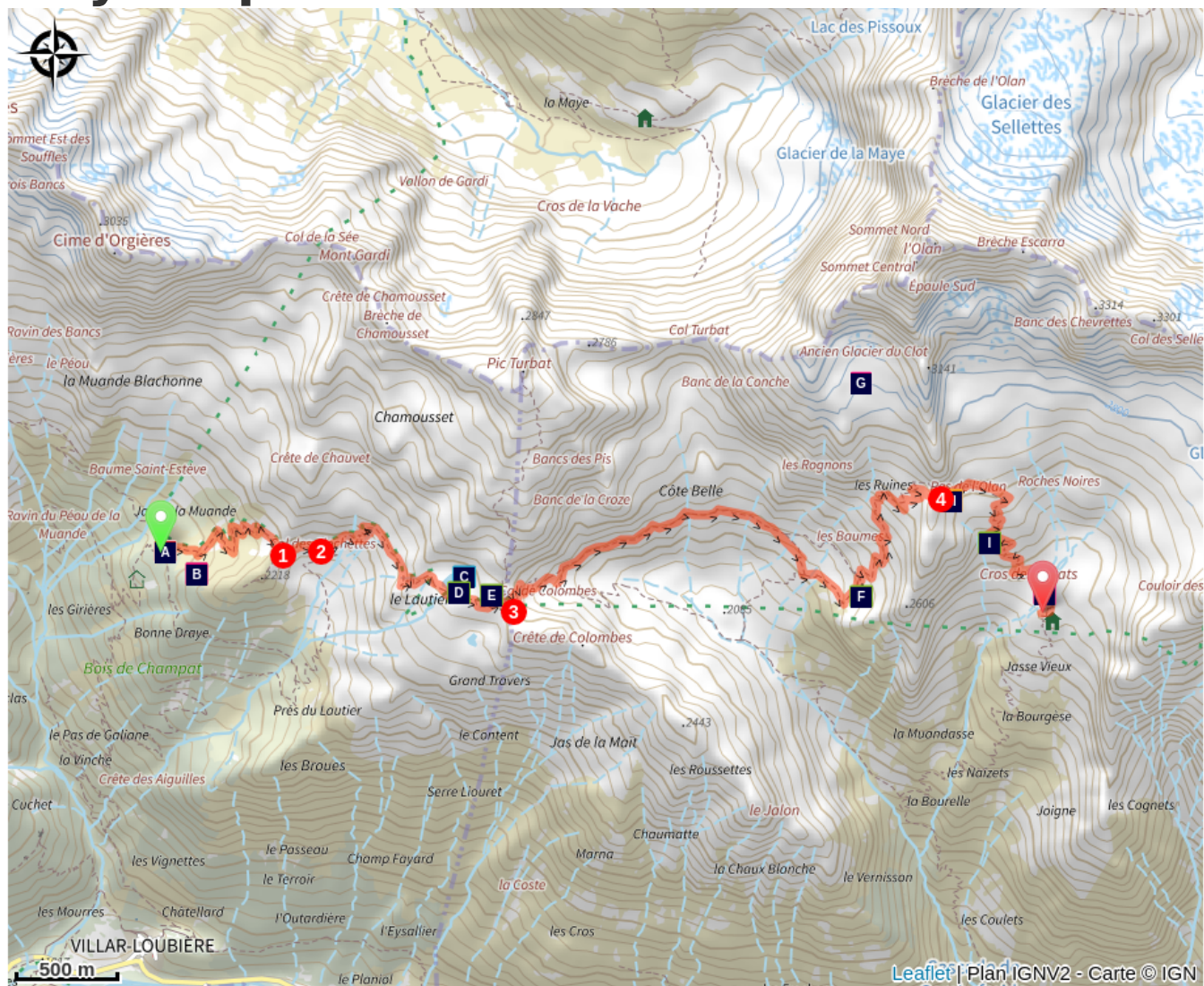







Min elevation 1956 m Max elevation 2671 m






From the refuge terrace, head towards the Col des Clochettes 200 metres above. The National Park ends just before the pass.

1. Descend from the pass until you reach an intersection.
2. Continue straight on and climb up towards Lac Lautier. This small glacial lake can be crossed at its spillway. Proceed between glacier-polished rock and grassy areas until you reach the pass, the Col Colombe. From here, the view over the valley and the peak of the Olan is remarkable. From this point, the route can be made out stretching ahead through the Pas de l'Olan and the V-shaped gap in the southern ridge of L'Olan.
3. From the Col des Colombes, you drop down a little and when you come to signage, take the path that snakes towards the Pas de l'Olan and the Refuge de l'Olan. Go 500 metres up the mountain side: this is the rockiest section of the walk. A wide, easy rocky ledge then leads to the Pas de l'Olan.
4. From the top of the pass, the refuge can be seen below. The peak of La Rouye (3,085 m) and the summit of Le Vallon (3,410 m), which closes the great Cirque de l'Olan, can be seen opposite. The walk down to the refuge is a real delight. On one side, the village of La Chapelle en Valgaudemar emerges into view and, on the other, the south-eastern slope of the Olan. The ancient glacial cirque lies between them. A magical landscape!

On your path...



-  Souffles mountain refuge (A)
-  Lautier Lake (C)
-  Rock partridge (E)
-  The Olan « summits » (G)
-  Chamois, Ibex, ... (I)

-  Remarkable views (B)
-  Alpine newt and ponds (D)
-  Flora at altitude (F)
-  Ancient refuge at Pas de l'Olan (H)
-  View of La Chapelle and the surrounding mountains (J)

All useful information



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

Take care after the intersection below the Col Colombe as you cross a short steep section, and at the Pas de l'Olan. Be wary of wet rocks when passing through the Pas de l'Olan.

i Information desks

Valgaudemar Park house

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<http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/>



Source



Parc national des Ecrins

<https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr>

On your path...



Souffles mountain refuge (A)

The Souffles mountain refuge is managed by the CAF (French Alpine Club). A keeper is present from June to September. Here you have the opportunity to get something to eat whilst chatting with a mountain professional or spend a night at high altitude if you prefer. This is a good way to split the itinerary in two.

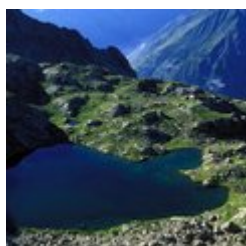
Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE



Remarkable views (B)

The view over the valley as seen from the Souffles refuge is well worth the trip. Along the crossing from the Clochettes pass to the Colombe pass, there are numerous viewpoints that give multiple variations on a single theme: that of a high mountain valley.

Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE



Lautier Lake (C)

This is a remarkable site. Brown trout are reared here for the delight of anglers.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE



Alpine newt and ponds (D)

At high altitude, it is possible to see two amphibian species. These are the common frog and the alpine newt. The latter is rarer. It is a fragile species and consequently a protected one. When adult, it resembles a small lizard. In its aquatic cycle, the male has an orange colour on its belly and throat. Most of the time when we watch it in the lake, it is motionless with its feet spread out, as though it were weightless. If it is frightened, a swift movement of the tail and it will find refuge under a stone. The lake is used for rearing which is not a good thing for newts that are food to fish. On the other hand, the ponds that are situated above the lake do not have fish and the alpine newts are at home and reproduce there.

Attribution : Michel Breuil - PNE



Rock partridge (E)

The rock partridge likes rocks and open moors where the young can feed on the insects that are necessary for their growth. It is not rare to see a group towards the Lautier lake or the Colombe pass.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



Flora at altitude (F)

With a large altitudinal range, the variety of environments and the strong Southern exposure, floral diversity is extremely rich and varied. Most notably you can see the Tiger Lily, which stands out in its environment by the striking originality of its colour and the yellow gentian whose roots are used to make a bitter “eau de vie” with many virtues.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE



The Olan « summits » (G)

L'Olan is a major summit in the Écrins massif. It culminates at 3564 m and is composed of three summits of which the highest is the Northern summit. The Olan was climbed for the first time right to the central summit on the 8th July 1875, then the Northern summit on the 29th June 1877 by the famous W.B.A Coolidge and his guide Almer. A normal route setting out from the Olan refuge can, with a guide or the right mountaineering knowledge, be the goal of an ascent in the Valgaudemar.

Attribution : Bernard Guidoni - PNE

Ancient refuge at Pas de l'Olan (H)

When you arrive at Pas de l'Olan, there are a few traces of the first refuge which was under the rocky mountain wall. Looking more like a large log cabin, it was unfortunately squashed by a rock. Due to its remoteness from the valley, the men chose to rebuild it on the current site.



Chamois, Ibex, ... (I)

All along the path, fauna is present. Watch out for the eagle and the vultures that glide on the ascending winds, as well as the chamois who spy on the world below. A few Ibex can sometimes be observed by mountaineers on the slopes of the Olan, without forgetting the marmot who punctuates the ascent with its strident cry.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - PNE



View of La Chapelle and the surrounding mountains (J)

The roof of Olan refuge makes a remarkable belvedere over La Chapelle village and the surrounding mountains which are the imposing Olan, the Cime du Vallon and the Rouye. A little higher up, the Pas de l'Olan provides a point of view of the entrance to the Valgaudemar valley and of the other face of the Olan.

Attribution : PNE