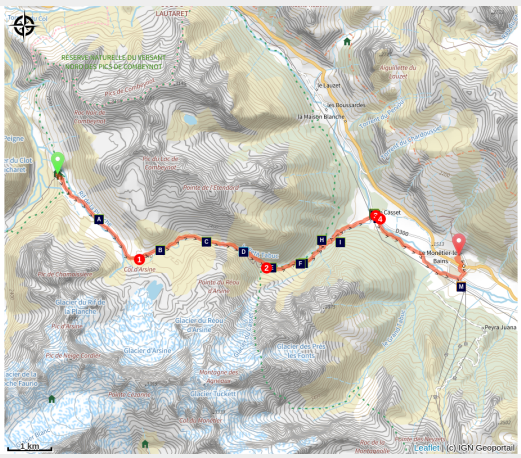
From Alpe de Villar d’Arène to Monêtier-les-Bains (stage of the GR 54)

Briançonnais - Villar-d'Arêne

Le GR 54 entre le lac de la Douche et la cabane pastorale d'Arsine (Cyril Coursier - PNE)



From the Romanche to the Guisane via Col d'Arsine, this short stage takes us along the foot of Les Agneaux and the Neige Cordier.

A short day, but one rich in emotions, beginning under the summits of the Agneaux. From Col d'Arsine, it would be a pity not to visit the glacier lake, hidden only a few feet away. In La Guisane valley, all the stages of vegetation can be seen on almost 1000 metres of descent. The mountain stream unveils all its dream-like colours. An Icelandic blue lagoon atmosphere! And the arrival at the village of Casset and a drink on the terrace at Chez Finette are awaiting the hikers!

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 4 h 30

Length : 14.0 km

Trek ascent : 306 m

Difficulty : Medium

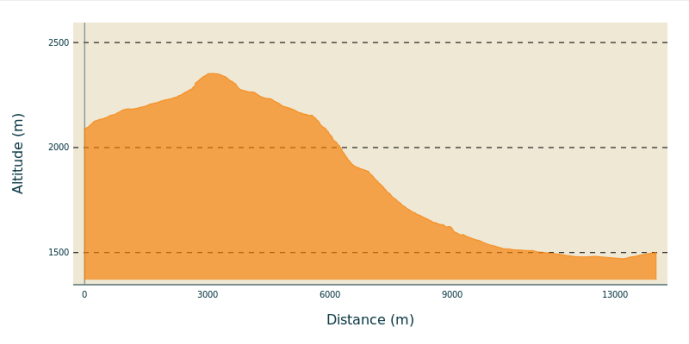
Type : Stage

Themes : Fauna, History and architecture

Trek

Departure : Alpe de Villar d’Arène, Villar d’Arène
Arrival : Le Monêtier-les-Bains
Markings : GR
Cities : 1. Villar-d'Arêne
2. Le Monêtier-les-Bains

Altimetric profile

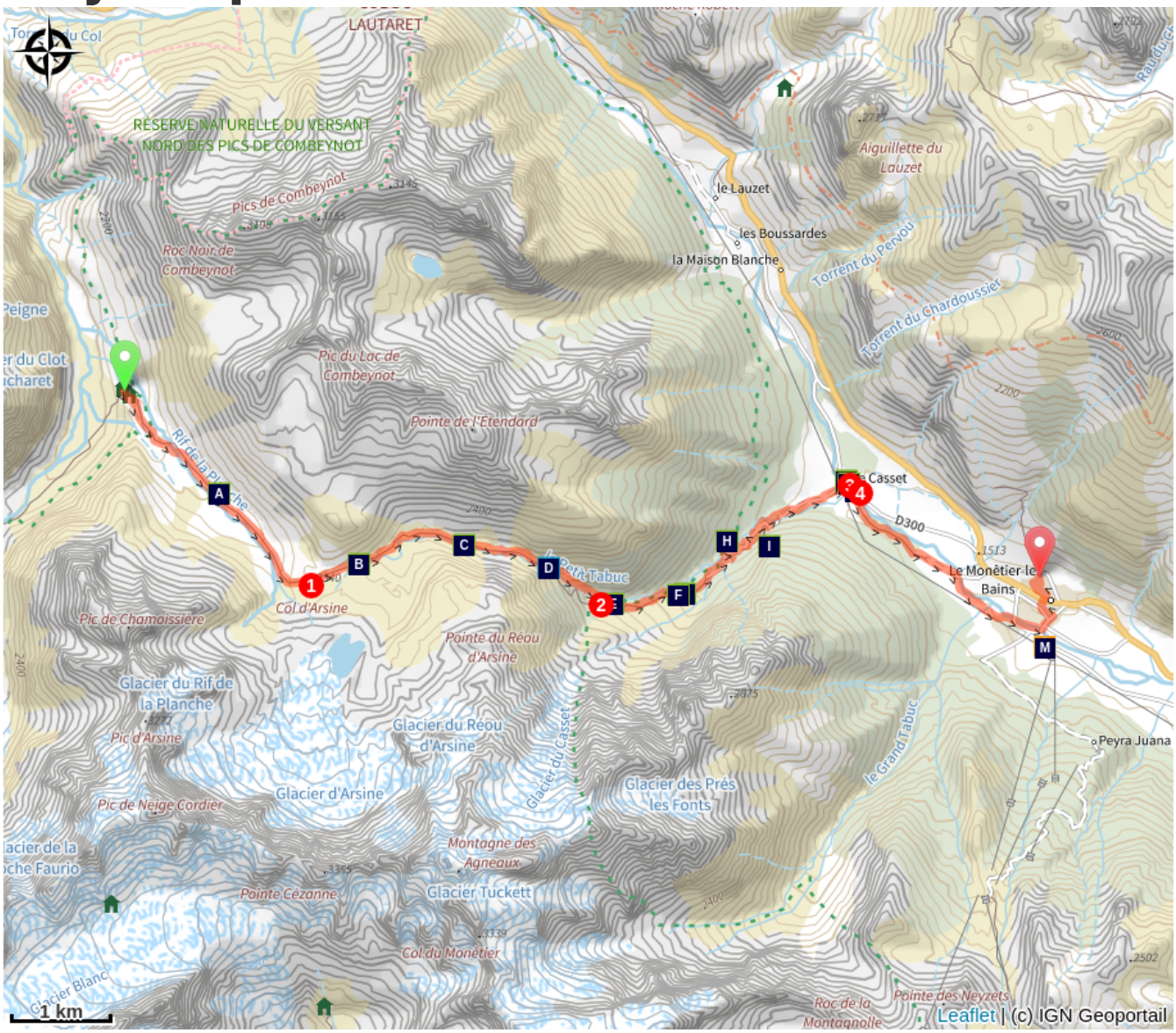


Min elevation 1472 m Max elevation 2354 m

Leave the refuge (S/SE) and walk up the Rif de la Planche valley across several small mountain streams descending from the Tête de Pradieu. After a few bends, the path reaches Col d'Arsine (2 348 m).

1. Here you leave the GR 54 footpath by the right and walk across the large frontal moraine of the Arsine glacier. From this projection formed by the movement of glaciers, two large lakes at the base of a cirque mark the end of the climb (2 455 m). Retrace your steps as far as the GR 54. The path winds through large blocks of rock as far as a series of small lakes and the pastoral cabin (2 240 m). Walk along the left bank of the Petit Tabuc mountain stream. After a steep scree, you will arrive at Lake La Douche (1 901 m).
2. The pathway enters the larch forest. A forest road soon takes over, following the right bank of the stream. From Clot du Gué Bridge (1 558 m) (Parc des Ecrins sign), the road runs along the left bank of the stream as far as the confluence with the River Guisane at the entrance to the village of Casset (1 512 m).
3. Walk through the village towards the south along the left bank of the Guisane. Before Saint-Claude's church, cross the Guisane again and walk along the right bank. The road descends gently along the river as far as the village of Monêtier-les-Bains (1 490 m).

On your path...



Felwort (A)
Butterflies and moths (C)
Ring ouzel (E)
Golden eagle, the Ecrins' mascot (G)
White-throated dipper (I)
Whiskered bat (K)

The Serre Chevalier resort (M)

Skylark (B)
Water colour in the meanders (D)
A flying predator (F)
Chamois (H)

Lover of old stones (J)
Saint Claude’s church in Le Casset (L)

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.

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 et de privilégier un survol de la zone à une distance de survol de 300m sol soit à une altitude minimale de 2610m.

Source

Parc national des Ecrins

https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr

On your path...

Felwort (A)

In early August, the felwort’s violet stars open in the sunshine. At the base of each of its five petals, two shiny pits full of nectar attract insects. A member of the gentian family, this beautiful flower is a perennial that survives the cold season with its persistent winter bud close to the ground, surrounded by a rosette of protecting leaves.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE

Skylark (B)

This bird is like a tightrope walker suspended in the sky, sounding out a long chorus of notes. Then, triangular wings back, and in a perfect spiral, the bird lands in the middle of the prairie. On the ground, it is difficult to see: its varying shades of brown means it is very well camouflaged. In its search for food, its movements, which are a succession of small sprints and sudden halts, enable it to spot possible predators.

Attribution : PNE - Saulay Pascal

Butterflies and moths (C)

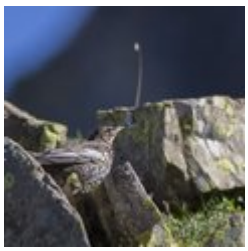
Butterflies can be distinguished from moths by the shape of their antennae. You will also notice that when resting, the butterflies wings are vertically folded over the body for necessary discretion while the moth's cover them. The moorland clouded yellow butterfly has another unusual habit: as soon as it becomes too cold to fly, it settles and bends its side to the sun to absorb energy. It can even lean slightly, whereas others tend to fully, and dangerously spread themselves out.

Attribution : PNE - Warluzelle Olivier

Water colour in the meanders (D)

The turquoise colour of the water that meanders from the Petit Tabuc stream gives a special character to this remarkable site. The valley is popular among photographers and artists for its photographic and pictorial quality.

Attribution : PNE - Coursier Cyril



Ring ouzel (E)

In the pastures covered with larch or 'bush", a cry of alarm followed the start of a song resounds. A blackbird? Yes, but more specifically a ring ouzel. This shy, swift mountain blackbird lives on the fringe of the larch, scots pine, spruce or Swiss pine forests between 1000 and 2500 m in altitude. The ring ouzel is a migratory bird that spends winter in Spain or North Africa before coming back to the mountains around March.

Attribution : PNE - Saulay Pascal

A flying predator (F)

The eagle is the archetypal predator. Everything about it suggests strength and daring. Its appearance, of course, with its impressive expression highlighted by the prominent brow ridge, but above all its fearsome weapons: rapid flight, which can be adapted to even the most acrobatic situations, and sharp, powerful talons. Its keen eyesight helps it detect its prey, from the marmot to the young chamois, ptarmigans and hares. In winter, it often takes its food from the dead bodies of animals, helping towards the natural cleansing of nature.

Attribution : PNE - Telmon Jean-Philippe

Golden eagle, the Ecrins' mascot (G)

The Petit Tabuc site is ideal for the golden eagle to nest. The golden eagle is amongst the protected species that are considered rare in Europe. The size of the populations that have been registered in the Ecrins massif, bestow a strong responsibility on the Park for conservation of the species. Counting takes place regularly since 1985 along with monitoring of reproduction, causes of disturbance and mortality.

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien

Chamois (H)

Rupicapra rupicapra, the mountain goat was not at first solely a creature of the mountains. The species is more attached to rocky escarpments and steep slopes than high altitude. But strong human pressure on chamois made them withdraw ever higher. Coveted as a hunting target, they have found refuge here in the Ecrins National Park.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE

White-throated dipper (I)

The mountain streams relinquish their secrets to an attentive hiker. The master of this little world is a small brown, red and grey bird with a short tail and a pure white breast, separated from the darker abdomen by a light brown stripe. We can often see it in the air, flying close to the water to snap up insects. The dipper owes its name to its eating habits to find water larva, it dips its head into the water and grips the riverbed to walk against the current.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE

Lover of old stones (J)

The rock sparrow is a sedentary bird. It generally settles in well-exposed, agricultural areas where there are lots of stones, stone terraces, ruins, piles of stones, old buildings. This southern sparrow can be found up to an altitude of 2000 m provided there is an open landscape and many mineral elements. It nests in the hole of a rock, in a wall and sometimes under the roof of a house. It will then mingle with the house sparrow. A sociable bird, it lives in small, dispersed colonies.

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien

Whiskered bat (K)

The whiskered bat is a dark-faced bat. It is quite common in certain mountain regions and is one of the most frequent species after it cousin the common pipistrelle. It likes trees, be they on the banks of a river or in the high altitude forests, but it is also possible to catch sight of them in gardens and villages such as the hamlet of Casset. This small mammal lives on flying insects and thus helps in controlling their numbers. Like all mammals, the female feeds her sole offspring with her milk.

Attribution : PNE - Corail Marc

Saint Claude’s church in Le Casset (L)

With its disproportionately high spire, the Casset church never goes unnoticed. Its four-sided Comtois steeple was modelled on the collegiate church in Briançon. The church is listed as a Historic Monument and is placed under the protection of Saint Claude. In its present condition, it dates from the 18th century. The previous building was constructed prior to the 16th century. Inside, the eye is immediately attracted by the choir ogives, creating an intimate atmosphere, particularly since the unusually large spire does not suggest an interior of such a small size. The choir was rebuilt in 1716-1717, probably after the previous chapel burnt down. Traces from this period can be seen on the keystone. The wrought-iron choir gate has the inscription "HM 1717", a date that can also be seen in the apse, on the wrought iron railing of the impost of the axial window, and on the baptismal font.

The Serre Chevalier resort (M)

At the edge of the Ecrins National Park, the Serre Chevalier ski resort extends over several towns and villages on the right bank of the Guisane, from Monêtier-les-Bains to Briançon. Founded in 1941 with the Chantemerle cable car, it has the biggest ski area in the southern Alps with 61 ski lifts on all levels from an altitude of 1,200 m to 2,830 m to Pic de l'Yret (Le Monêtier-les-Bains). The resort’s logo is an eagle, in reference to Baron Borel du Bez, Briançon’s representative in 1792 at the Legislative Assembly, which ruled France between 1792 and 1795, during the French Revolution. Le Bez is a hamlet in Villeneuve that was united with the Chantemerle ski resort in the 1970s.

Attribution : © Parc national des Écrins - Jean-Pierre Nicollet