

# From L'Argentière to La Pusterle (stage of the GR 54)

Vallouise - L'Argentière-la-Bessée



Le vallon du Fournel (Thierry Maillet - PNE)



*We set off on the first stage of this great adventure towards Col de la Pousterle with its panoramic view over the Fournel valley.*

It's the big day. A backpack is a hiker's best friend, as long as you haven't forgotten anything! L'Argentière-la-Bessée is really worth exploring on foot, with its rich heritage of treasures. And in fact this first stage is a short one, so you can make the most of it. The GR54 trail will reveal all its secrets later. A gentle climb into the forest gives you a chance to take in the panorama over the Fournel valley and the south of the Durance valley. The first stop on this grand tour of the Ecrins is a haven of peace that is hidden from view. A little piece of paradise with a glimpse of the next day's long stage: Le Pas de la Cavale. But for now, the living is easy and it is time to welcome you to this adventure that leaves no one who experiences it totally unchanged...

### Useful information

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Practice : By walk

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Duration : 6 h

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Length : 15.3 km

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Trek ascent : 850 m

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Difficulty : Medium

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Type : Stage

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Themes : Flora, Hut, Pass

# Trek

**Departure** : L'Argentière-la-Bessée

**Arrival** : Col de La Pusterle, Les Vigneaux

**Markings** : — PR

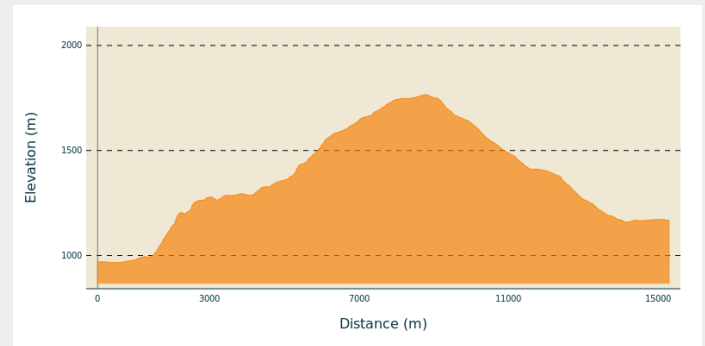
**Cities** : 1. L'Argentière-la-Bessée

2. Les Vigneaux

3. Puy-Saint-Vincent

4. Vallouise-Pelvoux

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 967 m    Max elevation 1767 m







From L'Argentière station (990 m), take Avenue C. de Gaulle (south) towards Saint-Jean's chapel (to your right when the station is behind you). Carry on along Rue du Château and pass the Silver Mine Museum. Follow the road as far as the Magdeleine bridge (998 m).







1. Cross the Fournel mountain stream and head for Col d'Anon and Col des Lauzes. Walk along the Fournel for 100 m and at the fork take the road to the left. A small footpath crosses the canal and goes up to the Bois de Champ Pelbaud under the crest of the Rortie. At the next intersection (1 132 m), take the path to the right. Do the same at the following intersection. The path is panoramic, looking down on the road opposite and joining it at a bridge over the Fournel (1 301 m).
2. Cut across the loop in the road, go over a footbridge (EDF), leave the road behind you and stay on the right bank until you reach the bridge (1 350 m), where there is a car park. Cross the Fournel and follow the road to Champ Didier. There a footpath replaces the road and, after a few hairpin bends, you rejoin the road that goes around Les Clausas. Follow the road for a few bends and soon you will leave the road and take a footpath as far as La Pusterle gîte (1 750 m).



# On your path...




-  The light rail tractor (A)
-  The Francis turbine (C)
-  The chapel of Saint-Jean (E)
-  The common chiffchaff (G)
-  The silver fir (I)
-  The Eurasian pygmy owl (K)

-  The mobile compressor (B)
-  The Mines de Fournel rail-cars (D)
-  The lavender (F)
-  The sea-buckthorn (H)
-  The wild angelica (J)
-  The Fournel valley (L)

 Les Prés, hamlet of Puy-Saint-Vincent (M)

 The clouded Apollo (O)

 The Sentier du Facteur - the postman's path (N)

# All useful information

## **Advices**

The first day is very short, so feel free to take the time to explore L'Argentière.

# 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.

## Peregrine falcon

Sensitivity period: February, March, April, May, June

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

Nidification du Faucon pèlerin.

Les pratiques qui peuvent avoir une interaction avec le Faucon pèlerin 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 !

En cas de survol merci de rester au-dessus de 2140m d'altitude à une distance de 300m sol.

Au site dit de Grand Bois, le couple de faucons a retrouvé son aire de prédilection dans le secteur "flamme de pierre" ; à éviter donc.

[http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/actualite/amis-grimpeurs-attention-aux-pelerins-voies?fbclid=IwAR2Z8hX\\_38vpdW3mS499aRnY08jarhfm-5-eNV8K29k3WB3q3Ik2US\\_Alec](http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/actualite/amis-grimpeurs-attention-aux-pelerins-voies?fbclid=IwAR2Z8hX_38vpdW3mS499aRnY08jarhfm-5-eNV8K29k3WB3q3Ik2US_Alec)

## 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 1850m d'altitude !

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Merci d'essayer d'éviter la zone ou de rester à une distance minimale de 300m sol quand vous la survolez soit 1900m d'altitude !

### Source



Parc national des Ecrins

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



# On your path...

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## The light rail tractor (A)

A locomotive? No, its little cousin, the light rail tractor. This replaced manually pushed carts and horse-drawn vehicles. Less powerful than a locomotive, it travelled along narrow-gauge tracks which could be laid on different types of terrain. An information panel also described the role of this vehicle during the Great War.

Attribution : Jan Novak Photography

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## The mobile compressor (B)

In the mines, compressed air is used to remove dust and to create power for the drills. The mobile compressor holds compressed air in a resistant tank. This is brought to a high pressure via a pump (the compressor). The compressed air is then distributed to the mine machinery through a conduit system.

Attribution : Jan Novak Photography

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## The Francis turbine (C)

The American James Francis developed the Francis turbine between 1849 and 1855. It is a “àreaction” turbine suitable for medium-sized waterfalls (with a water head of between 15 and 500 metres). The water enters the turbine and then circulates between the turbine blades, which are fixed, while the inner wheel is mobile. The pressure at the wheel intake is greater than the pressure at the outlet.

Attribution : Jan Novak Photography

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## The Mines de Fournel rail-cars (D)

Filled with materials excavated from the mine face, the rail-cars were pushed along the rails by the miners.

They were called “mine dogs”. They were originally made from wood and over time iron pieces were added. They were made entirely from metal by the end of the nineteenth century.

Attribution : Jan Novak Photography



### The chapel of Saint-Jean (E)

Built in the twelfth century and listed as a Historical Monument, the chapel of Saint-Jean is of Romanesque style. Tombs cut into the rock were discovered in recent archaeological excavations.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



### The lavender (F)

As you drop back downhill, you are once again in dry, hot meadows. The narrow-leaved lavender is established here, a reminder that the Pays de Écrins is in the Southern Alps after all! Not to be confused with the lavandin, this plant naturally grows on the rocky slopes of the mountains of the Midi.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



### The common chiffchaff (G)

When spring arrives, a relentless «cheep, cheep» echoes around the forest. The singer is a small bird with a greenish grey and yellowish-white back, the common chiffchaff. Like other inconspicuous birds, the male has every incentive to make himself heard if he wants to attract the attention of a female! They are migratory and live almost anywhere where there are trees and bushes.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



### The sea-buckthorn (H)

Here and there, you come across a bush with narrow leaves which are green on their upper sides and silvery-grey underneath. Take care, the branches are spiky! In autumn, it produces acidic bright orange berries. They are very rich in vitamin C and are best as a syrup or marmalade. It is a pioneer species which colonises alluvial soils in sunny situations. It has also been used by the Mountain Terrain Restoration service to stabilise slopes prone to water runoff.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



### ❁ The silver fir (I)

A few coniferous trees, including the fir, are mixed in among the deciduous trees. The fir thrives on this north-exposed slope, called the ubac, because it cannot tolerate drought. Its flat needles are arranged on either side of the boughs rather than all the way around them, which distinguishes it from the spruce. They have two white stripes on their undersides. Its elongated cones stand upright, rather than hanging downwards.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins



### ❁ The wild angelica (J)

On the edges of seepage areas, the wild angelica grows. This is a tall umbellifer (the Apiaceae family) with blush white flowers and a hollow purplish stem. It is a cousin of garden angelica which grows in Northern Europe and is cultivated for its medicinal and culinary properties. The stem, the petiole (the «tail») and the leaf sheath can be candied.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



### 🦉 The Eurasian pygmy owl (K)

The call of this small, nocturnal bird of prey can be heard in the spring, and also in the autumn when it can utter some peculiar sounds. Active during daytime hours and at dusk, the pygmy owl is a predator of passerine birds and small forest rodents. But when they spot it, passerines will come together in large numbers to mob it, so as to prevent any attempted surprise attack. It is restricted to mountain forests where it seeks out trees with woodpecker cavities in which it builds its nest.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins



### 📖 The Fournel valley (L)

This is the southern side of the Col de la Pusterle and its view over the very long Fournel valley, known for its mines, ice waterfalls, blue thistles, its canyon and other treasures. Lower down is L'Argentière-la-Bessée. At the highest point, right in the distance, is the Champsaur!

Attribution : Jan Novak



## Les Prés, hamlet of Puy-Saint-Vincent (M)

Le Prés is one of the main hamlets of Puy-Saint-Vincent. Like Le Puy and Les Alberts, it stands on a flat plateau which is a glacial escarpment left by the now-retreated Gyronde glacier. Like Prey d'Aval, Prey du Milieu and Prey d'Amant, its name is a reminder that prior to the development of the ski resort, the land here used to be shared by meadows and crops.

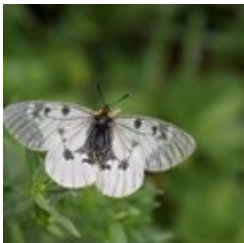
Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - Parc national des Écrins



## The Sentier du Facteur - the postman's path (N)

In former times, the postman would take this path every day: He would set out from Vallouise, deliver letters in Puy-Saint-Vincent and drop back down to Vallouise, stopping at the hamlets of Parcher on the way. In the winter, when the snow was too deep, the Traversouires (the inhabitants of Puy-Saint-Vincent) donned their snowshoes and wielded their shovels to clear the postman's path down to Vallouise.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - Parc national des Écrins



## The clouded Apollo (O)

This butterfly with hyaline (glass-like) translucent white wings, marked with two black spots, flutters around the clearing or the edges of the forest, where the host plants of its caterpillars grow: the corydalis. Although abundant locally, it is nevertheless a species in sharp decline and is protected.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins