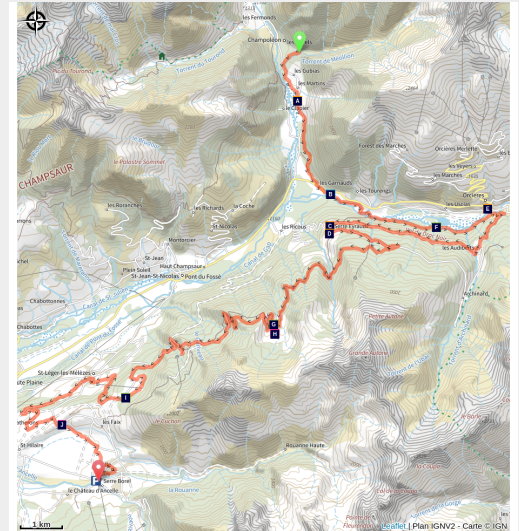


# Stage 3: Champoléon - Orcières - St Léger les Mèlèzes - Ancelle

Champsaur - Champoléon



Serre-Eyraud - Champsaur (Marc Corail - PNE)



*It all begins with a gentle descent into the Champoléon Valley, followed by an easy ascent towards Orcières, followed by a very long climb to the mountain pastures of Combeau. The long and easy descent towards Saint-Léger brings you to Ancelle across the plateau of the same name... and we've reached the end.*

A shorter stage and a chance to recover from the efforts of the day before! From Les Garnauds to Orcières, gentle ascents and descents follow one another. The slope then rises and you need to call on all your reserves to make your way up to La Croix de la Vire (a panorama rewards your efforts)!! The big climb is now behind you, and you can enjoy the end of the adventure with an easy return trip to Saint-Léger and Ancelle.

### Useful information

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Practice : Mountain bike

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Duration : 6 h

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Length : 41.3 km

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Trek ascent : 1253 m

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Difficulty : Medium

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Type : Stage

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Themes : Fauna, Flora, Pastoralism

# Trek

**Departure** : Les Borels - Champoléon

**Arrival** : Ancelle

**Markings** : 🚲 VTT

**Cities** : 1. Champoléon

2. Orcières

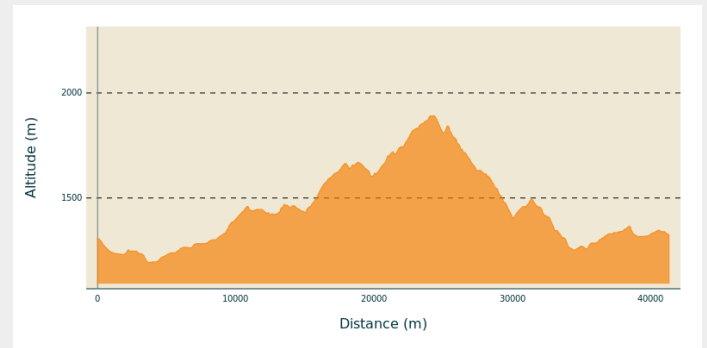
3. Saint-Jean-Saint-Nicolas

4. Saint-Léger-les-Mélèzes

5. Ancelle

6. Chabottes

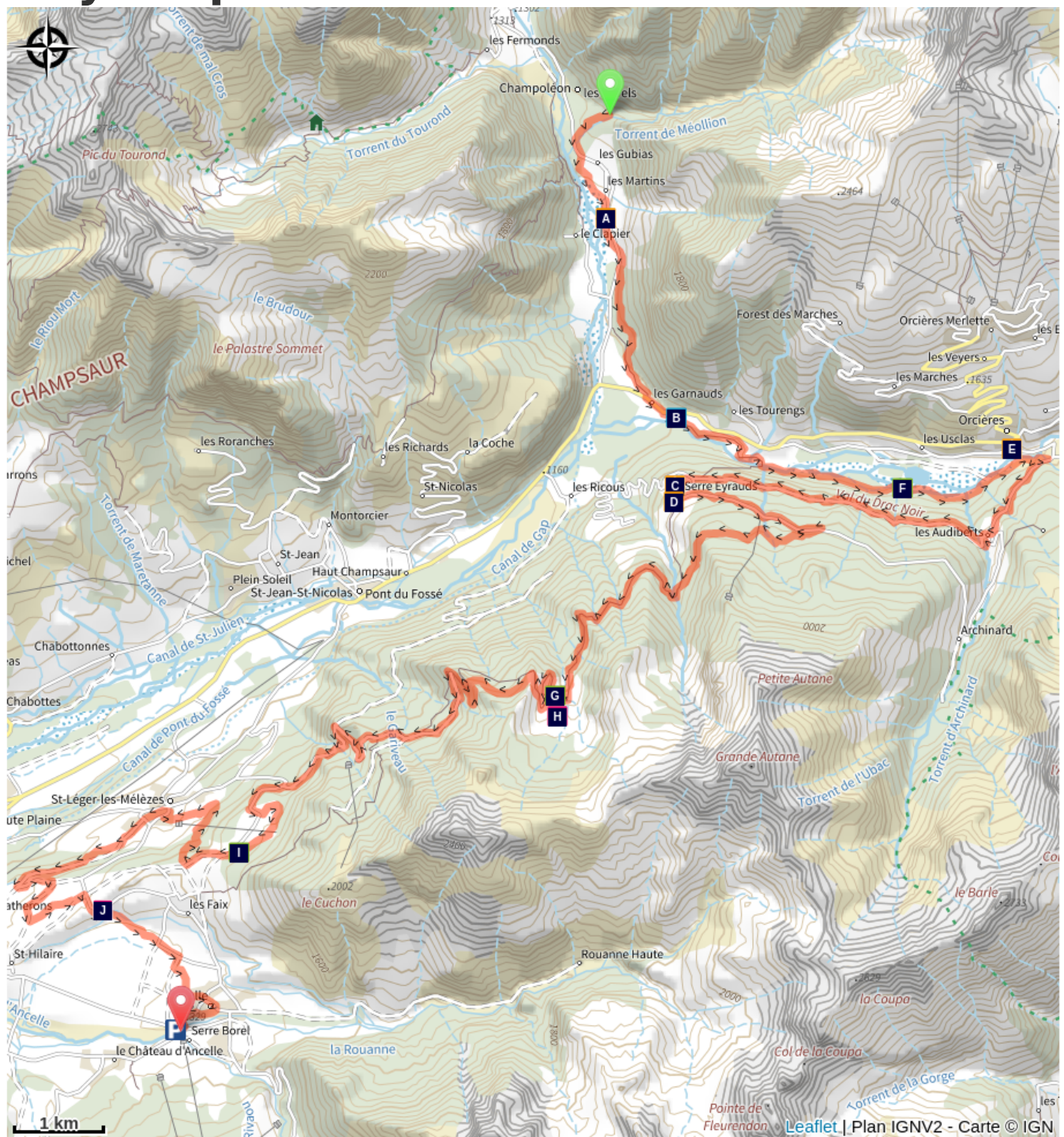
## Altimetric profile













Min elevation 1193 m Max elevation 1893 m

From Les Borels, the route rises alongside the cemetery towards the Méollion mountain stream, which it then follows downwards from Serre Borel. You arrive at the D944a and then follow the Drac Blanc along pathways in parallel with the departmental road. A forest track makes its way gently to Les Garnauds. After reaching the Drac Noir, you follow it along the right bank. The route then arrives at Saint Léger-les-Mélèzes along a small path. Cross the village near the church and, after going alongside a large beech forest (along a sports trail), you arrive at the top of the Plateau d'Ancelle. One last descent into the village and the tour is complete!

# On your path...



- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Mown meadows (A)  |  Drac Blanc and Drac Noir (B)   |
|  Serre-Eyraud (C)  |  Pastoral plants (D)            |
|  Orcières 1850 (E) |  Trout (F)                      |
|  Patou (G)         |  The Combeau alpine pasture (H) |
|  Alpine newt (I)   |  The Ancelle plateau (J)        |

# All useful information

## **Advices**

Démarrer tranquillement, la montée à Combeau est assez longue. Attention à ne pas prendre trop de vitesse sur la piste facile qui descend sur Saint Léger.

# 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 2240m.

## Golden eagle

Sensitivity period: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August

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## Source



Parc national des Ecrins

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

# On your path...

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## Mown meadows (A)

Most of the prairies are mown. They are lightly manured by the animals grazing here in spring and with additional manure. This land is rich in plant species: globeflowers, geraniums, narcissus, etc. The meadows that are only grazed are covered with large plants that are of no interest to cattle: asphodels, yellow gentians, veratrum, etc.

Attribution : Stéphane D'houwt - PNE

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## Drac Blanc and Drac Noir (B)

The Drac Noir or Drac d'Orcières takes its source at the foot of the Mourre Froid and the Roc Blanc at an altitude of about 1,900 m. The mainly sedimentary rocks in the valley soon turn the mountain stream black ("Noir") when it rains. The Drac Blanc or Drac de Champoléon arises at an altitude of 1,800 m, below the Pointe des Rougnoux. Since the valley is mainly made up of more solid granite rocks, the Drac Blanc ("White") is less clouded than the Drac Noir.

Attribution : Marc Corail - PNE

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## Serre-Eyraud (C)

Serre-Eyraud is both a mountain village and a winter sports resort which overlooks the Champsaur and the confluence of the Drac Noir and the Drac Blanc, 1,450 metres above sea level, opposite the Champoléon valley.

The resort was created in 1962 by a handful of inhabitants: eight runs lead through a larch forest which is exposed to the north, which helps to conserve the snow cover. Serre-Eyraud is the smallest ski resort in the Champsaur valley.

Attribution : Parc national des Ecrins - CDTE05



## Pastoral plants (D)

Around the shepherds' cabins can be found plants with pale colours that are useful in the kitchen : nettles, which cause rashes, but are used to make delicious soups, wild spinach, also known as Good King Henry , a plant eaten as a gratin (the famous 'oreilles d'âne' (donkeys' ears) dish), with the sour leaves of the Alpine dock. For dessert, the petioles of Monks' rhubarb leaves are served as jams and compotes.

Attribution : Marcel Chaud - PNE



## Orcières 1850 (E)

Thanks to Camille Ricou, the mayor of Orcières, and a handful of visionaries, in January 1962 the Orcières-Merlette ski resort was born. Soon, buildings, shops and ski lifts were built. Even though the 1960s architecture has not aged well and the pylons disfigure the landscape, the pioneers have achieved their aims: they were able to stay in the region, guarantee their children a future and create jobs.

Attribution : François Labande - PNE



## Trout (F)

Fishing fans have always loved the Drac. You also need some hiking skills to follow the course of the river or reach the high-altitude lakes. Whether you prefer lure fishing, spoon casting or fly fishing, here you'll find all kinds of trout: brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), Mediterranean in origin, and rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) from North America.

Attribution : Parc national des Ecrins



## Patou (G)

The patou is once again being used in the Alpine pastures by breeders and shepherds, following the reintroduction of wolves. Its role is to protect the sheep, not to herd them together like a sheep dog. The dog lives with the sheep from a very young age and considers them as members of its family. It barks and stands between the flock and whatever it sees as a threat. Since it is very protective towards the flock, hikers should make sure they keep their distance.

Attribution : Jean-Pierre Nicollet - PNE





## The Combeau alpine pasture (H)

The Combeau alpine pasture, lying 2,000 metres above sea level.

Don't miss the superb panoramic view from the Croix de Combeau belvedere.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins - Marc Corail

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## Alpine newt (I)

In the Libouze water reserve, newly restored by the town of Saint Léger les Mélèzes, you can see a pretty batrachian swimming around elegantly. This is the Alpine newt. It can be recognised by its orange belly, but unlike the females, the males have lighter-coloured sides with large dark spots and a narrow, light-blue stripe. The species is strictly protected and is becoming rarer in the plain, on the edge of its area of distribution.

Attribution : Marc Corail - PNE

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## The Ancelle plateau (J)

After the retreat of the glaciers flowing from the Durance and Roanne valleys, the frontal and lateral moraines formed a natural dam at the end of the Ancelle basin. Over time, a large glacial lake was created. Between the fifth and sixth centuries, the lake dried out. The forest then took over the fertile plateau, and it was only in the eighth century that it was deforested by man for crops.

Attribution : Marc Corail - PNE

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