

7-day Tour du Taillefer

Parc national des Ecrins



Plateau du Taillefer - Lac noir (© Parc national des Ecrins - Thibaut Blais)



The Tour du Taillefer is a large-scale, accessible Alpine trail. A trip outside time, winding through rural valleys and mountain villages, from waterfalls to lakes, from cols to high plateaux.

A very unusual summit in the Massif des Ecrins, the Taillefer provides whoever comes close to it with the memory of a very special atmosphere. To get there, you follow ancestral paths, moving between charming villages and exceptional panoramas. And we arrive at last: right in the middle of the lakes and peat bogs, the high Taillefer plateau is unveiled and stands out as the high point of the trip.

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 7 days

Length : 76.9 km

Trek ascent : 3854 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Multi-day trekking

Themes : Geology, History and architecture, Panorama

Trek

Departure : Alpe du Grand Serre

Arrival : Alpe du Grand Serre

Markings :  PR  GR

Cities : 1. La Morte

2. Lavaldens

3. Oris-en-Rattier

4. Valbonnais

5. Entraigues

6. Le Pérrier

7. Chantelouve

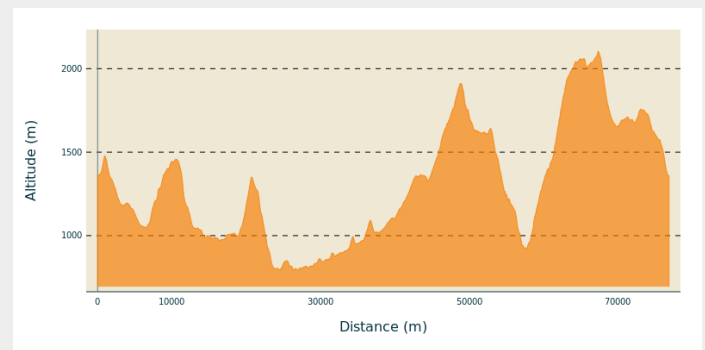
8. Ornon

9. Villard-Reymond

10. Oulles

11. Livet-et-Gavet

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 795 m Max elevation 2105 m

The tour du Taillefer has 7 stages (with the option of just 6).

It starts from Alpe du Grand Serre (a departure from the village of Valbonnais is also possible).

You start off by following the Roizonne valley to the charming little Alpine village of Rif Bruyant.

On the second day, you explore the Roizonne valley and its villages, but also cross the first col of the trip, the Col de Plan Collet (1,356 m), which opens up a view over the Dévoluy and Les Ecrins, and takes you to the Valbonnais valley.

On the 3rd and 4th days, you walk along the Bonne and Malsanne valleys, through villages, hamlets, fields and woods, and rise slowly up to Col d'Ornon (1,360 m).

From stage 5, you leave the bottom of the valley for the high mountains, via the Col de Corbières (1,926 m), and the small mountain village of Villard-Reymond (second highest village in France).

The next day, you go down towards the Lignarre torrent, which you cross at the village of La Palud, before going up towards the hamlet of Ornon and tackling the ascent leading to the Taillefer refuge (2,056 m). You begin to explore these magnificent landscapes and the special atmosphere of the lake plateau, which you will fully experience the next day for your last stage, which takes you back to the resort of Alpe du Grand Serre.


Stages :

- 1.** From Alpe du Grand Serre to Rif Bruyant
12.1 km / 553 m D+ / 4 h
- 2.** From Rif-Bruyant to Valbonnais
17.1 km / 543 m D+ / 6 h
- 3.** From Valbonnais to Les Daurens
16.4 km / 776 m D+ / 6 h 30
- 4.** From Col d'Ornon to Villard-Reymond
9.5 km / 631 m D+ / 4 h
- 5.** From Villard-Reymond to Taillefer Plateau
11.4 km / 1138 m D+ / 5 h 30
- 6.** From Taillefer Plateau to Alpe du Grand Serre
12.9 km / 269 m D+ / 3 h 30

On your path...



-  A hydraulic adventure in Laval dens (A)
-  Cinereous vulture (C)
-  Village in Valbonnais (E)
-  White-throated dipper (G)
-  White alder forest (I)
-  The Col d'Ornon ski resort (K)
-  Pansies (M)
-  Yellow bellflower (O)
-  Villard-Reymond (Q)
-  The black grouse (S)
-  The Taillefer Plateau peat bogs (U)
-  The Taillefer Plateau - Natura 2000 site (W)

-  Tulipa Sylvestris (B)
-  The Mouflon (D)
-  The short-toed snake eagle (F)
-  The Chantelouve fault (H)
-  The Col d'Ornon hay meadows (J)
-  Griffon vulture (L)
-  European larch (N)
-  Common pipistrelle (P)
-  The Ornon slate mines (R)
-  Chamois and rock ptarmigan (T)
-  Common cottongrass (V)
-  The northern emerald (X)

All useful information

Herd protection dogs

In mountain pastures, protection dogs are there to protect the herds from predators (wolves, etc.).

When I hike I adapt my behavior by going around the herd and pausing for the dog to identify me.

Find out more about the actions to adopt with the article ["Protection dogs: a context and actions to adopt"](#).

Tell us about your meeting by answering this [survey](#).



Advices

ATTENTION: Bivouacs between 7pm and 9am is allowed, but in dedicated areas on the Taillefer plateau.

Camping, fires and water sports (including swimming) are prohibited on the Taillefer plateau. Dogs must be kept on a leash.

Some sections of the route, especially on the Taillefer Plateau, may be snowed under early in the season - ask for information before setting off.

Some parts of the route are on the road, so be careful.

Consult the specific recommendations for each stage.

How to come ?

Transports

By train, Grenoble SNCF station 40 kilometres away
www.voyages-sncf.com

By bus :

- Bus lines in Région Sud : <https://zou.mareregionsud.fr/>
- Bus lines in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes : <https://carsisere.auvergnerhonealpes.fr/>
- Bus lines in Isère : <https://www.itinisere.fr/>

Access

From Grenoble, head for Gap-Sisteron along the A480 motorway. Take exit n°8 "Stations de l'Oisans" and follow the D1091 to Bourg d'Oisans. Take the Alpe du Grand Serre exit and follow the D114.

From Bourg d'Oisans, follow the D1091 towards Grenoble. In Séchilienne, take the D113, then the D114 to the station.

Traffic news: 08 92 69 19 77

Advised parking

Lake car park

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 1720m d'altitude à une distance de 300m sol.

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 300m sol soit 1750m d'altitude pour cette zone.

Short-toed snake eagle

Sensitivity period: March, April, May, June, July, August, September

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

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période de nidification sont principalement les pratiques aériennes comme le vol libre ou le vol motorisé.

Attention le survol motorisé dans la zone cœur Parc National des Écrins est interdit en-dessous de 1000m sol et une réglementation spécifique s'applique au survol non-motorisé.

Voir la réglementation pour les survols non-motorisés : <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/les-survol-non-motorises>

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Short-toed snake eagle

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Merci d'essayer d'éviter la zone ou de rester à une distance minimale 300m sol quand vous survolez la zone soit 1700m d'altitude !

Information desks

Maison du Parc du Valbonnais
Place du Docteur Eyraud, 38740
Entraigues
valbonnais@ecrins-parcnational.fr
Tel : 04 76 30 20 61
<http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/>



Source



Parc national des Ecrins

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

On your path...



A hydraulic adventure in Lavaldens (A)

At the end of the 19th century, industry began to overtake village windmills, which then disappeared one after the other. Paul Freynet, who lived in Lavaldens, decided to optimise his windmill by using hydraulic force in all its forms. The penstock drives several millstones, as well as a bolter and a sorter, and a saw for cutting wood lengthways, plus a circular saw for short logs. A major development was the introduction of a generator to produce electricity. Paul Freynet provided power to all the village long before the electricity network arrived in the valley, on the eve of the Great War.



Tulipa Sylvestris (B)

This magnificent plant has flowers that are often tilted at the side, which helps it stand out from its horticultural cousins. Its pointed petals are a fine gold colour. The leaves are very light green, straight and long. The species is protected throughout France, and cannot be found at the florist's, but only in or around fields. The bulbs have suffered from the increasing use of tractors and the deeper ploughing that results. The flower has greatly fallen in numbers and only grows in land where farming practices are still gentle, without pesticides or deep ploughing.

Attribution : © Parc national des Écrins - Mireille Coulon



Cinereous vulture (C)

The *Aegypius monachus*, an immense bird of prey, all dressed in black, glides through the air in search of a cold meal. Very often to be found in the company of griffon vultures, it draws closer to the ground with a wide and heavy beat of its wings, turning its greyish head with its huge beak right and left, its eye seeking out every detail in the landscape. The subject of many myths and legends, its ash-grey plumage gave it its name... The four species of vulture in France never compete with one another. While the griffon vulture, with the help of its weak and large beak, prefers to eat the softer parts of carrion (viscera and muscles), the cinereous vulture likes the hard parts (skin, tendons and cartilage), which it rips using its strong, sharp beak. The fine beak of the Egyptian vulture means it can be a perfectionist... it picks the skeleton perfectly clean.

Attribution : © Parc national des Écrins - Cyril Coursier



The Mouflon (D)

Introduced in 1949 into the Alps from breeds from Corsica and central Europe, this is an ancestor of the sheep with ammonite horns. Even though the European Union recommends strict protection of the mouflon, it can be hunted in certain conditions. It is ill-equipped for extreme Alpine conditions, and its population levels may fluctuate with the severity of winter.

Attribution : © Parc national des Ecrins - Jean-Philippe Telmon



Village in Valbonnais (E)

Since the Middle Ages, Entraigues and Valbonnais have been the two major towns in the valley.

The towns produce an impression of coherence, despite a wide variety of architecture.

In Valbonnais, we can see, in particular, the castles and fortified manor houses with their impressive dimensions and well-ordered façades, with sculpted wooden doors made for the local notables.

Another witness to the town's history is the train station: from 1926 to 1950, Valbonnais had a meter-gauge railway with electric engines (La Mure – Corps line), with a line running to the cement works downstream, near Le Pont-du-Prêtre.

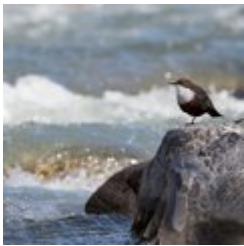
Attribution : © Parc national des Ecrins - Bernard Nicollet



The short-toed snake eagle (F)

Spring has hardly begun when high up in the spire a piercing cry is heard. You must raise your head to admire two large birds flying together, alternating acrobatics and motionlessness in the sky, like two silver kites playing with the wind. Their light-coloured, squat silhouette and their darker head help to identify the short-toed snake eagle. They mainly feed on reptiles (lizards and snakes), which they capture by the head and regurgitate to feed their chicks.

Attribution : © Parc national des Écrins - Robert Chevalier



White-throated dipper (G)

The white-throated dipper is easy to spot, as long as you are discreet. It lives along rivers and mountain streams. A small reddish and grey bird, with a short tail, its beak is slender, and it has a white mark from the chin to the breast. This surprising passerine bird is unusual in walking on the river bed in search of food against the current. It lies flat and grips the river bed with its claws, and with its eyes open, protected from the water by a fine membrane, it can spot worms, larva, small shellfish and fish.

Attribution : © Parc national des Écrins - Thierry Maillet



The Chantelouve fault (H)

In the regions of Chantelouve and Ornon, and continuing further north and south, the Col d'Ornon Fault is a major geological rift that was discovered and interpreted, leading to the completion of the theory of the Alpine chain formation. The geological interpretation of the remarkable site at "La Chalpe de Chantelouve" made dating possible and increased understanding of the formation of certain phases of the Alps. In particular, from observations made on the Col d'Ornon Fault, geologists developed the theory of "tumbled blocks" and understood how fundamental geological Alpine accidents took place and their role. Today, many geology students and geologists from France and all over the world come to study this key site.

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



✿ White alder forest (I)

The forest is mainly made up of white alder trees. Their name comes from the fact that the underside of their leaves is covered with a whitish and silvery down. The alder forests grow alongside mountain streams, and to develop need land that is regularly subject to flooding. Due to damming and the removal of materials from the river beds, the white alder is now rare in Europe. The white alder forest in the Col d'Ornon is listed as a site of national interest and is part of the Nature 2000 network. It is the biggest in France, covering some 250 hectares. It can be seen along the Malsanne, the Merdaret and the Lignarre.

Attribution : © Parc national des Ecrins - Justine Coulombier



✿ The Col d'Ornon hay meadows (J)

Agricultural specialists consider that a meadow is natural when it has neither been manured nor ploughed for ten years. These meadows are very rich in flower species, and consequently they are the home of a whole host of pollinating insects, including bees, of course.

Attribution : © Parc national des Ecrins - Bernard Nicollet



🏠 The Col d'Ornon ski resort (K)

The small ski resort of Col d'Ornon has two separate districts. First, the Plan du Col (lower down) with its magnificent green slope. Here the resort's first button lift was opened in 1965, in the early days of popular skiing holidays!

The Bois Barbet button lift (above), was opened in 1973. With a 450 m descent and an average slope at 36%, this button lift is a real technical feat. Although it no longer really meets the requirements of modern-day comfort, it continues its life as a tricky button lift running to the exceptional red and black slopes.

In winter, the resort hires four extra employees and works with a network of volunteers, who mobilise in support of the resort, making it a real centre of activity for locals and tourists.

Attribution : © Parc national des Ecrins - Emmanuelle Boithiot



Griffon vulture (L)

In summer, the griffon vultures leave their nesting areas, attracted by the many sheep grazing in the Alpine pastures. They soar up above the mountain crests. Expert scavengers, they have a fundamental role in the food chain, quickly eliminating corpses and so limiting the risk of disease spreading. This task as nature's undertakers has long made them an object of horror and fear for mankind. They are in decline in the Alps, but once again present in the Massif des Ecrins, following programmes to reintroduce them since 1980 in Les Causses and more recently in the Prealps.

Attribution : Coulon Mireille - PNE



Pansies (M)

In a carpet of violet flowers, but sometimes yellow, white or multi-coloured, the Alpine pansy brings colour to the grass. It is also known as the mountain violet. Its spur, which can be seen on the back of the flower, is long, and only insects with long sucking pumps, such as butterflies, can gather pollen from them. Violets and pansies are members of the same family. To tell them apart, you need to look at the two side petals: they are turned downwards in violets, and upwards in pansies. Pansies are optimistic violets!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



European larch (N)

With a rich range of colours varying with the seasons, the fine and soft needles of the larch turn from light green in spring to emerald green in summer and gold in autumn. In winter, they fall, and the majestic larch seems to be dried out. Only the small round cones persist, which birds take to pieces to peck at the seeds. The flowers bloom at the same time as the first supple needles in spring: the female flowers have small raspberry-coloured cones and the male flowers are pale yellow catkins.

Attribution : Thierry Maillet - PNE



✿ Yellow bellflower (O)

This campanula is easy to recognise, with its tufts of highly compact yellow flowers. It is one of the few Alpine biannual plants. The seeds scattered in autumn produce large, slender leaves the first year, growing in a rosette shape. The flower only blooms the second year, when it ensures its posterity, then dies. The plant can be found on Alpine grassland (from altitudes of 1,000 to 2,600 m) and on rocky ground and soil that is rich in limestone. Standing on a thick, hollow stalk with a great many leaves, it is 10 to 40 cm tall.

Attribution : Bernard Nicolet - PNE



🦇 Common pipistrelle (P)

Brown in colour with relatively short ears, the common pipistrelle and the kuhl's pipistrelle are rivals for the title of Europe's smallest bat. The common pipistrelle can be found in a wide range of ecological environments, even above an altitude of 2,000 m. In late 19th century France, school books celebrated the virtues of the bat. They are insectivores, eating a quarter or a third of their weight each day in mosquitoes and other insects. They emit ultrasounds that cannot be heard by the human ear. This technique helps them to find their way in the dark and capture their prey. They are often to be seen around lampposts, hunting insects that are attracted to the light.

Attribution : Jean-Pierre Nicolet - PNE



🏠 Villard-Reymond (Q)

Perched at an altitude à 1640 m, this is the highest village in Isère, and the second highest in France. 40 people live here today (but just six permanent residents), while there were almost 300 inhabitants 150 years ago. The fairly gentle slopes and favourable orientation gave rise to pastoral farming, despite the high altitude. The farmers used to work at the Ornon slate works, the women worked at home for glove-makers in Grenoble. Access to the valleys has always been difficult, and in 1960 a cable car was used to take cattle down into the Bourg d'Oisans plain. Today, people live in and visit Villard-Reymond for the quality of its environment.

Attribution : © Parc national des Ecrins - Pascal Saulay

The Ornon slate mines (R)

Near Ornon, the route regularly unveils slate deposits. These black rock sheets are commonplace here. Slate was for a long time mined, providing a certain amount of prosperity to the village. A century ago, 9 quarries employed 250 people. The slate was used for roofs, but their quality was much in demand, and sometimes was exported. The quarries were worked in the winter, since the workers were farmers the rest of the year. Industrial materials began to compete with natural slate, and mining came to a halt in about 1950.



The black grouse (S)

To observe black grouse in summer, you need to get up early. In France, black grouse (or blackcocks) can only be found in the Alps. In spring, the male with its black plumage and lyre-shaped tail with white under-tails parades to attract females. In winter, they spend most of their time in igloos dug out of the snow to protect themselves from the cold. This is a particularly sensitive period because they cannot replenish the energy used up when they must leave their igloos suddenly if an off-piste skier or show-shoe hiker passes by.

Attribution : © Parc national des Ecrins - Rodolphe Papet



Chamois and rock ptarmigan (T)

While hundreds of sheep graze on the edges of the plateau, higher up, on the nearby crests and summits, chamois and rock ptarmigan may be seen. These animals are the emblems of high altitudes, with the first nicknamed the "goat of the rocks", and the rock ptarmigan sometimes known as the "snow partridge". If you want to get a good look at either of them, you must leave them undisturbed: binoculars or a telescope are essential.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



The Taillefer Plateau peat bogs (U)

The extreme conditions of humidity, acidity and cold holding sway on the lake plateaux mean that organic matter is not fully broken down, so it builds up in hollows to form peat. Peat bogs are extremely useful. They are remarkable, rare, fragile and extremely precious habitats that are characterised by exceptional biodiversity. Here you can find rare species that are adapted to these difficult living conditions (high humidity, low temperatures, poor soils). The most common plant is peat moss (sphagnum) - real sponges that can stock up to 30 times their own weight in water! Peat bogs also play the role of a filter by purifying the air and water. They reduce erosion, help renew the phreatic zones, naturally store carbon and protect from flooding and drought. Under threat from human activity and climate change, this natural heritage is monitored closely.

Attribution : © Parc national des Ecrins - Justine Coulombier



Common cottongrass (V)

Nicknamed “bog cotton”, common cottongrass grows in wet and acidic soils, such as the peat bogs of the Taillefer. Common cottongrass, like the rock ptarmigan or the mountain hare, are fragile species, the remnants of a glacial climate and still living in the mountain range. It is a cotton-like plant with white plumes, and fruit gathered into a single, quite thick ball. The smooth stalk is round, unlike the other species of cottongrass, which are triangular.

Attribution : © Parc national des Ecrins - Cédric Dentant



The Taillefer Plateau - Natura 2000 site (W)

Recognised by the European Union for its great ecological interest, the Taillefer Plateau is listed in the Natura 2000 network. The network is made up of a series of European natural sites that are identified for the rarity or fragility of the wild, animal or plant species, and their habitats.

12,000 years ago, the withdrawal of the glacier from the Taillefer mountains shaped the landscape that can be seen today: a high plateau between 2,000 and 2,500 metres high, with a constellation of lakes mainly produced by old glacier abrasion; a plateau that presses down to the south on the abrupt and bare slopes of the summit of the Taillefer.

On the plateaux today there are over a thousand wetland and peat bog areas, a remarkable concentration, and one that is rare in the French Alps.

Attribution : © Parc national des Ecrins - Justine Coulombier



The northern emerald (X)

The northern emerald is a dark-coloured dragonfly with a metallic green or shiny black body, contrasting with its lighter-coloured eyes. It is hard to tell it apart from other species in the genus. In the Ecrins, the species can only be found in the peat bogs of the Taillefer Plateau at an altitude of over 2000m, where it lives with its close cousin, *Somatochlora alpestris*.

Attribution : © Parc national des Ecrins - Christophe Albert