

# Du Col du Lautaret à l'Alpe du Villar-d'Arène

Briançonnais - Villar-d'Arène



Le sentier des Crevasses (© Parc national des Écrins - Pascal Saulay)



*Une étape qui se situe au nord du Pic du Combeynot, à travers les alpages, sur le sentier schisteux des Crevasses sous le regard bienveillant de la Meije.*

Le chemin laisse derrière lui le col du Lautaret pour s'engager sur le sentier des Crevasses. Le paysage est ouvert et grandiose, La Meije domine fièrement les autres sommets. Au loin, les anciennes terrasses de cultures au-dessus des villages de La Grave et de Villar d'Arène et les troupeaux qui paissent sont les témoins de la tradition pastorale. La traversée du sentier des Crevasses est saisissante et l'immersion dans la haute montagne débute par une première nuit à l'Alpe du Villar-d'Arène, au cœur du Parc national des Écrins.

## Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 2 h

Length : 6.3 km

Trek ascent : 117 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Stage

Themes : Flora, Lake and glacier, Panorama, Pastoralism

# Trek

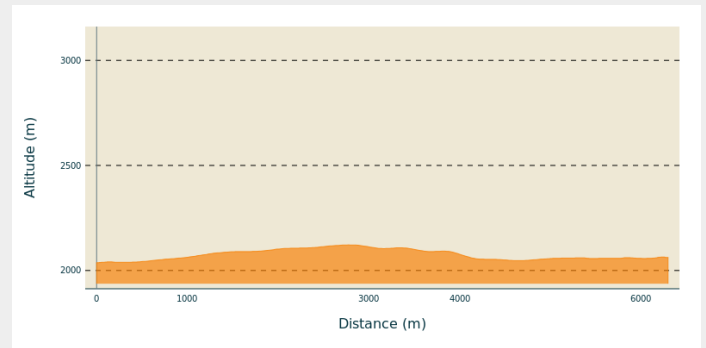
**Departure** : Le Col du Lautaret

**Arrival** : L'Alpe du Villar-d'Arène

**Markings** : — PR

**Cities** : 1. Villar-d'Arène

## Altimetric profile











Min elevation 2038 m Max elevation 2123 m

Du parking au col du Lautaret, le sentier se dirige en direction de La Meije (3 983 m). Suivre le panneau sentier d'interprétation des Crevasses. Bifurquer à droite en laissant le sentier de la combe de Laurichard (panneau). Prendre une passerelle pour monter progressivement à flanc. Le sentier traverse facilement plusieurs ruisseaux grâce à des aménagements, il s'engage dans un secteur arbustif pour mener jusqu'à une zone plus ouverte où il rejoint le belvédère de L'Homme (vue exceptionnelle sur les hauts sommets des Ecrins). Peu après, franchir et refermer un portillon pour descendre les pentes schisteuses et parfois ravinées du sentier dit des Crevasses (prudence, main courante). Gagner ensuite l'Alpe de Villar-d'Arène, le sentier rattrape le GR 54. Peu après la station météo, laisser le GR 54 afin de bifurquer sur la droite et continuer tout droit jusqu'aux deux refuges postés sur l'Alpe de Villar-d'Arène par un bon sentier.

# On your path...



-  Hierochloe odorata (A)
-  Alder forest and green alders (C)
-  Turk's cap lily (E)
-  View over La Meije (G)
-  The marmots' "bosse" (I)
-  Dismantled ski-lifts (B)
-  La mégaphorbiaie (D)
-  Black Grouse (F)
-  Belvedere de l'homme (H)

# All useful information

## **Advices**

Prudence sur le sentier des Crevasses, peu après le belvédère de l'homme, certaines portions sont vertigineuses et parfois équipées d'une main courante.

Cet itinéraire est bien balisé, les panneaux d'indications sont nombreux. Cependant vous êtes dans une zone de montagne, le passage des crevasses en période de forte pluie est déconseillé puisque la roche schisteuse est très friable et glissante.

## **Information desks**

### **Information center "Col du Lautaret" (summer only)**

Col du Lautaret, 05220 Le Monétier-les-bains

brianconnais@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Tel : 04 92 24 49 74

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



## **Source**



Parc national des Ecrins

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

# On your path...

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## ✿ Hierochloa odorata (A)

Also known as bison grass or sweet grass, this plant grows in wet grasslands and near fens. From its rootstock, it forms tufts between 60 and 70 cm high. Thanks to the coumarin inside it, it gives off a pleasant aroma, so that it is used to make distilled drinks. It is protected nationally and is also very rare in the Hautes-Alpes department.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE

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## 🍊 Dismantled ski-lifts (B)

A small ski resort was created in 1970 not far from the Lautaret mountain pass. Due to the risk of avalanches and new standards required, alpine skiing was moved near to the village of Villar d'Arène and Chazelet hamlet. The two obsolete ski-lifts situated in this very picturesque territory, rich in terms of biodiversity, ruin this place which has been classified since 1974 as the national nature reserve of Combeynot. In 2013, dismantling was carried out by the Mixed union of ski-resorts in the Haute Romanche with the support of the National Park. In the end more than 35 tons of iron and concrete blocks were evacuated.

Attribution : Eric Vannard - PNE

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## ✿ Alder forest and green alders (C)

Here is a spectacular transition from the genuine forest and pastures of the north facing slopes. There is a thick grouping of shrubs made up essentially of willows and green alders. These will never reach the size of a tree. They constitute impenetrable thickets where, over time, boars, chamois and roe deer have outlined a maze to hide in. The plants provide nitrogen through their roots and fertilise the soil, as if getting their own back on the eutrophic tall herbs.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



## ✿ La mégaphorbiaie (D)

Transition zone at the upper edge of the forest, it has large plants with big leaves that seek light in order to grow. Under cover of their leaves, some animals and plants find a safe haven, particularly alternate-leaved golden saxifrage and adenostyles alpina. On the east part of the Ecrins massif, eutrophic tall herbs can be found at the edge of streams and brooks. Just after snowmelt, it raises its golden head and constitutes a lovely carpet of flowers.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Ecrins

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## ✿ Turk's cap lily (E)

The Turk's cap lily lodges on the grassy slopes, meadows and undergrowth. It can be seen from a distance due to its long upright flowering stalk from which stem three to ten majestic flowers. They are large, purple-pink with some crimson, and have six petals that turn upwards when they reach maturity. Six orange stamens are then visible. The flowers that bend downwards lift when the fruit is formed.

Attribution : Pierrick Navizet - Parc national des Ecrins

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## 🐓 Black Grouse (F)

The black grouse lives above 1200 m, and can only be found in the Alps. It is possible to spot the male due to its black plumage and its tail in the shape of a lyre (which is why its French name is Tétrás Lyre). While it spends most of the time in winter in an igloo scooped out of the snow as protection against the cold, in the spring it performs spectacular parades to attract a female. The National park is tracking the population of the species in this zone.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - Parc national des Ecrins



## View over La Meije (G)

La Meije is the second major peak in the Massif des Ecrins. It is made up of 3 main peaks: the Doigt de Dieu (3,973 m), La Meije Orientale (3,891m), and the highest summit, the Grand Pic at 3,983 m. It is a hard summit to climb, and the first to do so, on 16 August 1877, was Emmanuel Boileau de Castelnau, together with the famous local guide, Pierre Gaspard. "Meije" comes from the Occitan word Meidjo, which means midday, because when seen from the village of La Grave, the sun passes above the summit at around noon. On the other side, before La Meije became famous, it was called the Bec des Peignes ("Comb Beak") by the inhabitants of Saint-Christophe-en-Oisans.

Attribution : © Parc national des Écrins - Pascal Saulay



## Belvedere de l'homme (H)

A wooden guardrail is set up at the ideal spot for contemplating the descending glaciers of La Meije. The Lautaret glacier to the left and the Glacier de l'Homme to the right scarcely meet today. The last-named glacier is the descending ski slope from the Pic Oriental of La Meije and from the Aigle refuge (to be seen if you continue along the path towards the Rocher Blanc). The refuge is perched at an altitude of 3,450 m on a rocky spur. A new refuge was opened in 2014, preserving an existing wooden structure that dated from 1910.

Attribution : © Parc national des Écrins - Cyril Coursier



## The marmots' "bosse" (I)

The alpine marmot is naturally present on grass at altitude. Here, it occupies a singular place which we call the marmots' "bosse». This hibernating rodent is only visible between April and October. The marmot lives in a family and respects a hierarchy. Games, grooming, fighting and biting ensure the dominance of a couple as well as the cohesion of the group. Each animal participates in the delimitation of the territory by rubbing its cheeks on rocks and also by urinating and defecating there. When there is danger, the marmot emits a high and powerful whistle in order to warn the others.

Attribution : PNE - Coursier Cyril