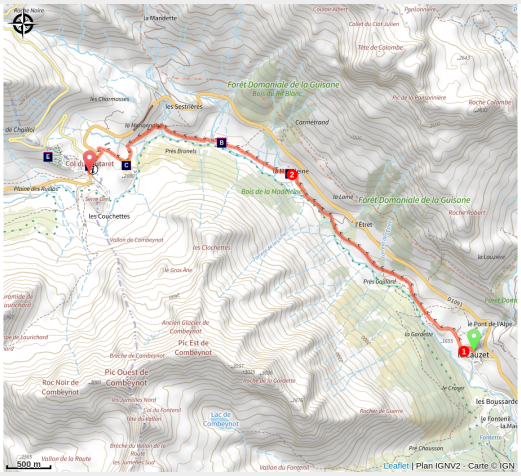
From Le Lauzet to Col du Lautaret

Briançonnais

Pelouses alpines en aval du Col du Lautaret (© Parc national des Écrins - Pascal Saulay)



Along the River Guisane, combining undergrowth and mountain pastures, an age-old path makes its way from villages to chapels.

This fairly easy stage continues on its way, leaving you the time to enjoy the rich architectural and religious heritage of the valley. In the background, you hear the gentle purring of the Guisane, which also brings freshness and serenity to warm summer days. The path rises gently into the mountain pastures, in the footsteps of travellers from yesteryear, who found refuge in the hospices and walked through the pass in all conditions.

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 2 h 30

Length : 6.5 km

Trek ascent : 402 m

Difficulty : Medium

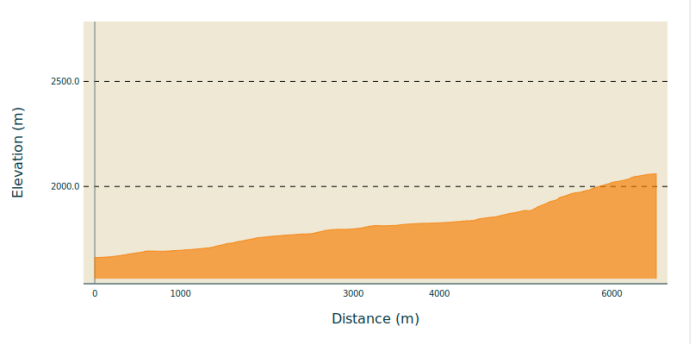
Type : Stage

Themes : Flora, History and architecture, Pass

Trek

Departure : Le Lauzet
Arrival : Col du Lautaret
Markings : GR
Cities : 1. Le Monêtier-les-Bains
2. Villar-d'Arêne

Altimetric profile

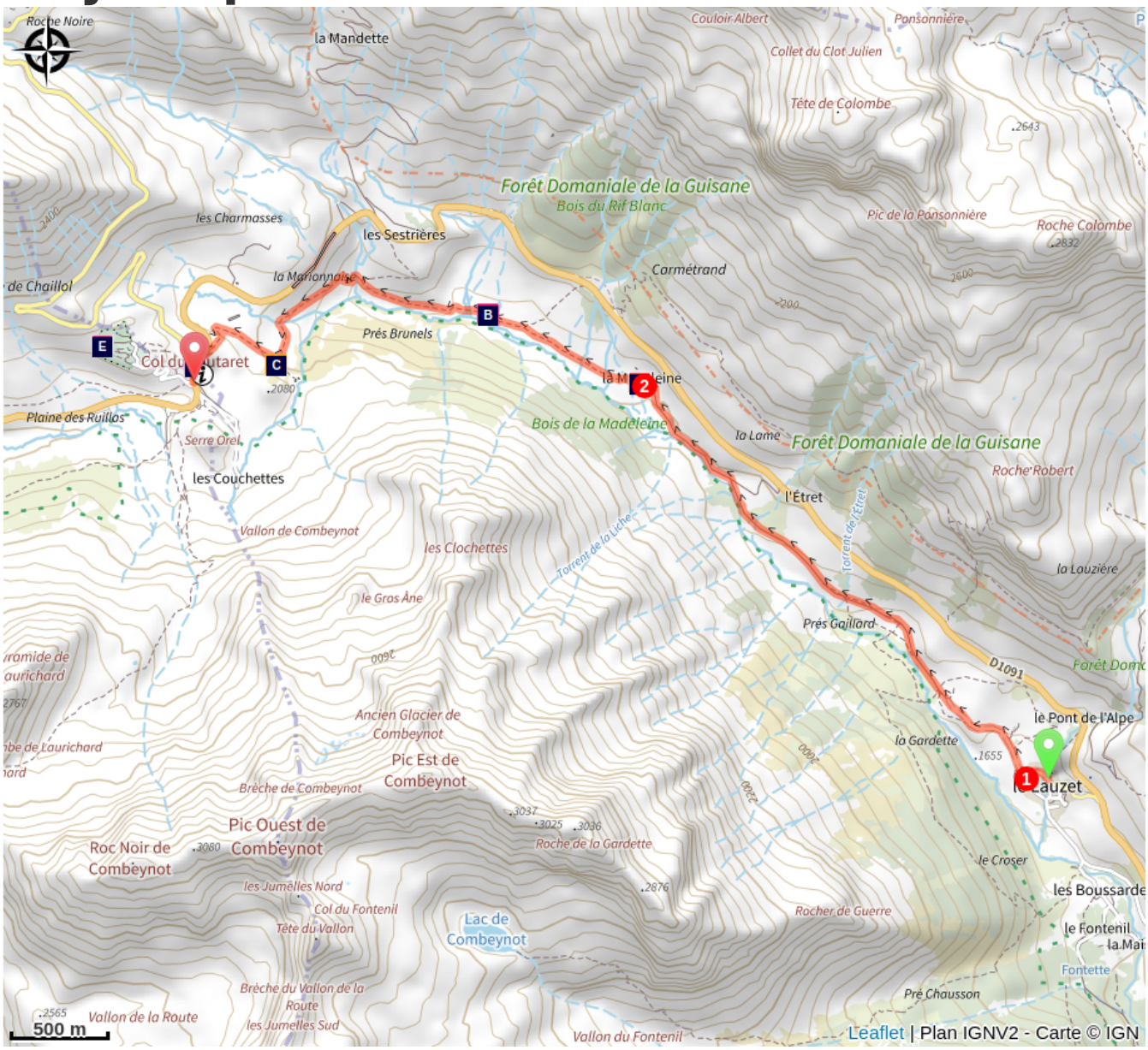


Min elevation 1661 m Max elevation 2060 m

In the village of Le Lauzet, continue as far as the church and then turn left onto the GR 50.

1. The GR runs along a passable track that gradually rises through the valley, on the left bank of the Guisane.
2. At the former Madeleine hospice and chapel, the track turns into an easily recognisable footpath. You draw closer to the col little by little through the Alpine pastures, below the road to Le Lautaret. After a few wide, fairly steep turns, you finally arrive at the Col du Lautaret !

On your path...



Madeleine Hospice (A)

Le Massif de Combeynot, W. Brockedon (C)

The tuffaceous ground of the Col du Lautaret (E)

View over the Pic de Rochebrune (B)

The Col du Lautaret climate (D)

All useful information

⚠ Advices

Prendre le temps d'observer le patrimoine architectural et religieux de cette haute vallée.

Le col du Lautaret est souvent venteux.

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 2500m d’altitude à une distance de 300m sol.

Information desks

Information center "Col du Lautaret" (summer only)
Col du Lautaret, 05220 Le Monêtier-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...

Madeleine Hospice (A)

At an altitude of 1,810 m, below the present-day Col du Lautaret road, the Madeleine hospice helped travellers cross the pass in all weathers and provided pilgrims with a chance to rest on their way to Rome or the Holy Land. The foundation of the order of the Holy Penance in these buildings dates from 1228. There is a chapel on the site, and it is located on a former road from Briançon to Grenoble. An avalanche destroyed the Madeleine hospice in 1740, and the building was rebuilt, then abandoned, when the road to Lautaret was modernised.

View over the Pic de Rochebrune (B)

The Guisane valley descends towards Briançon to the south-east. The view opens up in the distance towards the Massif du Queyras, with one of the summits clearly visible. The Pic de Rochebrune, at an altitude of 3,320 m, stands proudly above the Cervières valley, 10 km from Briançon and from the Guil valley in the Queyras region, linked by the Col de l'Izoard (2,361m). This enormous dolomite rock bastion is accessible to experienced hikers, since the last part is somewhat steep and you need to use your hands to climb up in places.

Le Massif de Combeynot, W. Brockedon (C)

In the work by W. Brockedon, *Illustrations of the Passes of the Alps*, published in 1828, one of the engravings illustrating the Col du Mont-Genèvre shows, according to the title: *Mont d'Arcines and the Val de Guisane from the Col du Lautaret* (p. 25). The view is described as follows: "Across a deep ravine, the River Guisane is seen tumbling down the mountains from its source in the distant glacier of Mont d'Arcines, and thence flowing on to the Durance, through the narrow valley which is bounded by rugged and pinnacled mountains ". On the previous page, it says that "Le Casset is near the foot of the Glacier de Lasciale, which descends from the Mont d'Arcines". So it is clear that Mont d'Arcines is the present-day Les Agneaux mountain, and the Lasciale glacier is the Casset glacier, which must have reached much lower down. However, Paul Guillemin thinks that this is the first printed depiction of La Meije, and he marks it as n° 2 in his inventory (PG: 2). This was an error of interpretation on his part. In fact, it is the view over the Massif du Combeynot from the old Lautaret road. From this viewpoint, Les Agneaux (or Mont d'Arcines) cannot be seen.

The Col du Lautaret climate (D)

The Col du Lautaret is a climatic limit between the northern and southern Alps. It works like a barrier for rough weather, and it is not unusual that the Romanche valley to the west is filled with snow, while the Guisane valley to the east is dry, and vice versa. The Romanche valley runs down directly to the region of Grenoble, where the climate at the same altitude has twice as much precipitation, and so works as a corridor for rough weather coming from the area. This explains why the Col du Lautaret and the neighbouring Col du Galibier mark the limit for many plants with Mediterranean affinities. This transitional position is characterised by a climate with a strong Mediterranean influence in the direction of Briançon.

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The tuffaceous ground of the Col du Lautaret (E)

Tufa is a sedimentary rock produced by the precipitation of limestone dissolved in water, which comes to the surface from a water course or spring. In the course of this mineral solidification of carbonates, a great deal of plant or animal debris is trapped and becomes fossilised. This is how an excavation operation carried out between 2008 and 2010 was able to reconstruct the flora on the pass when the rock was deposited long ago. Tufa is also a soft rock which can be sculpted easily and was highly valued for the construction of public buildings or the houses of local dignitaries. The church of Villar d'Arène is built from tufa from the Le Lautaret quarry, a resource it almost exhausted. The tufa zone of Le Lautaret is listed as a habitat of community interest within the Natura 2000 site «Combeynot Lautaret Ecrins».