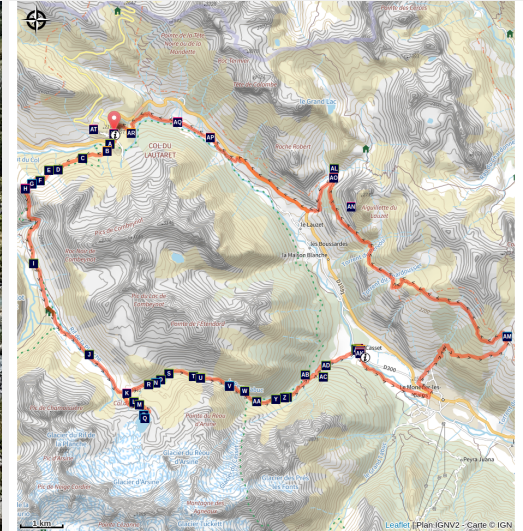


4-day Tour du Combeynot

Briançonnais



Randonneurs au lac de la Douche (© Parc national des Ecrins - Carlos Ayesta)



The Tour du Combeynot is an easily accessible trail through the mountain valleys of the Romanche and the Guisane, and takes you from one to the other via the Col d'Arsine and the Col du Lautaret to admire the finest peaks of the Ecrins.

The Tour du Combeynot leaves from Col du Lautaret and then heads into the mountain valleys of Les Ecrins. In a decor of rock and glaciers, below the impressive Agneaux mountain, the Pic Gaspard or La Meije (3,983 m), the route makes its way through mountain pastures, larch forests and mountain hamlets. Along the Romanche or on the banks of the Guisane, the fauna and flora appear at each step, as well as the rich local heritage. Between the points of interest and breathtaking views,

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 4 days

Length : 42.3 km

Trek ascent : 2032 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Multi-day trekking

Themes : Flora, History and architecture, Lake and glacier

you make your way between tradition and high mountains.

Trek

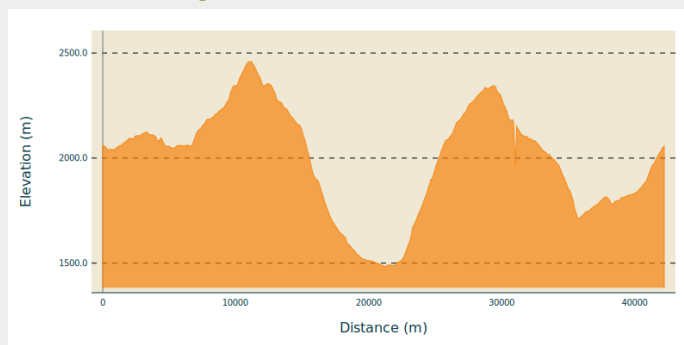
Departure : Col du Lautaret

Arrival : Col du Lautaret

Markings :  PR  GR

Cities : 1. Le Monétier-les-Bains
2. Villar-d'Arêne

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1483 m Max elevation 2459 m

From Col du Lautaret there are two ways to go to the Alpe de Villar d'Arêne refuge. First, along the Crevasses path, which runs around the mountainside above the Romanche valley, or second, by continuing along the GR 50 as far as the village of Le Pied du Col (accommodation available) and going up alongside the water via Le Pas d'Anna Falque.

From the Alpe de Villar d'Arêne refuge, the path enters the heart of the park and rises gradually to the Arsine glacier lakes, the highest point of the trip. The decor also matches the altitude and there is a high-mountain atmosphere. The trail is transformed in the Guisane valley, with a good path as far as the village of Le Casset, passing in front of the small lake of La Douche at the entrance to the larch forest.

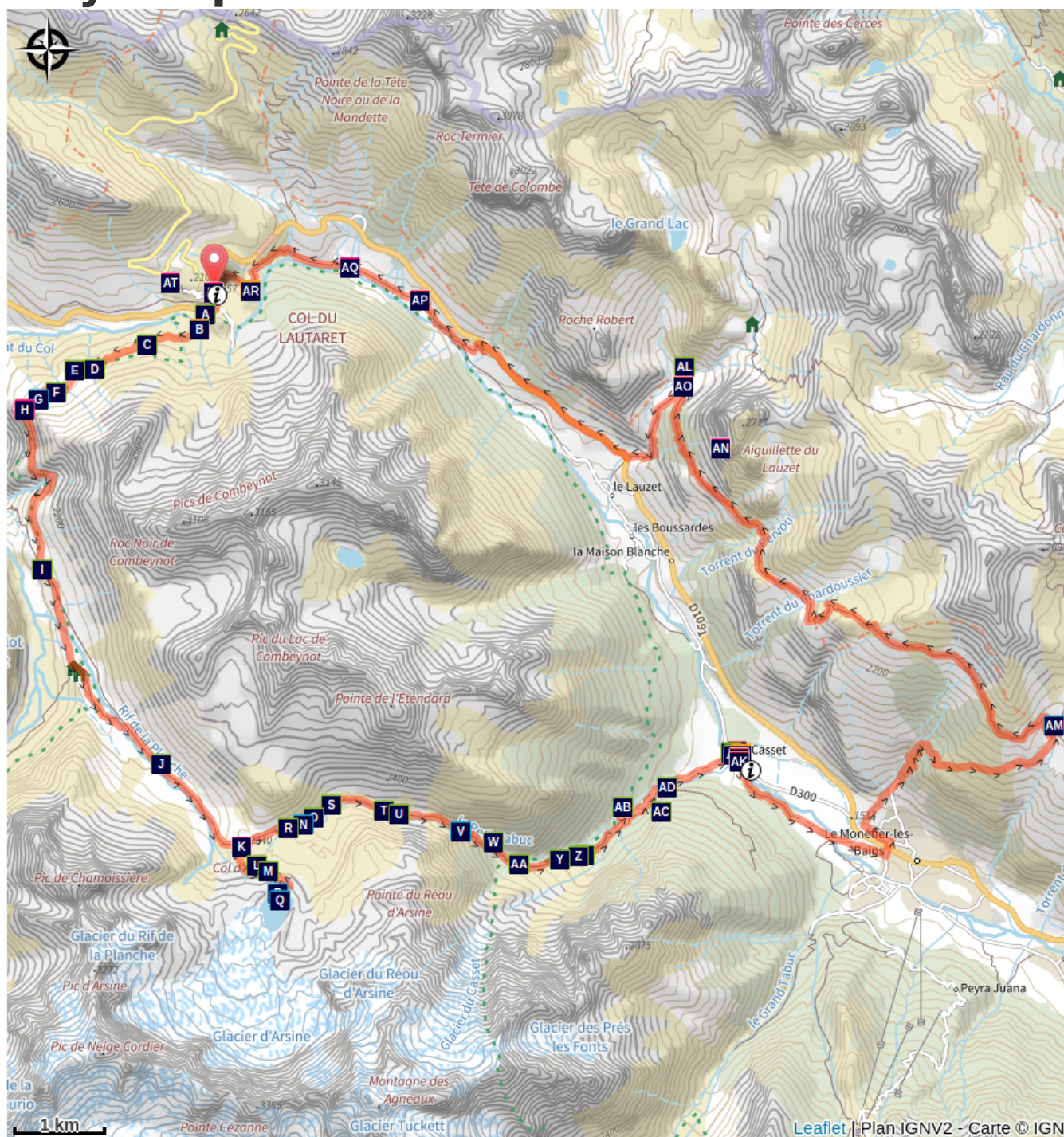
The third stage begins deep in the valley and is a chance to explore the architecture of the valley villages, then follows the slope opposite (on the Cerces side), along the Chemin du Roy, to arrive below L'Aiguillette du Lauzet, where you may spot some Alpine ibex, and the hamlet of Le Lauzet.

The last, short stage heads back up towards the north-west of the Col du Lautaret, along the Guisane torrent, rich in the villages and chapels that are typical of mountain valleys.





























Stages :

- 1.** From Col du Lautaret to Alpe du Villar-d'Arène
6.4 km / 151 m D+ / 2 h
- 2.** From Alpe du Villar-d'Arène to Le Casset
12.8 km / 410 m D+ / 4 h 30
- 3.** From Le Casset to Le Lauzet along the Chemin du Roy
17.6 km / 1091 m D+ / 6 h
- 4.** From Le Lauzet to Col du Lautaret
6.5 km / 402 m D+ / 2 h 30

On your path...



- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Hierochloa odorata (AA) | Dismantled ski-lifts (AB) |
| Alder forest and green alders (AC) | La mégaphorbiaie (AD) |
| Turk's cap lily (AE) | Black Grouse (AF) |
| View over La Meije (AG) | Belvedere de l'homme (AH) |
| The marmots' "bosse" (AI) | Felwort (AJ) |
| Arsine pass (AK) | Arctic rush (AL) |
| Rock ptarmigan (AM) | Moraines (AN) |
| Aquatic diet (AO) | Ice calving (AP) |
| The melting Arsine glacier (AQ) | Skylark (AR) |

-  Grey wagtail (AS)
-  Moorland clouded yellow (AU)
-  Alpine citril finch (AW)
-  Larch (AY)
-  Ring ouzel (BA)
-  White-throated dipper (BC)
-  Lover of old stones (BE)
-  Doors and courtyards (BG)
-  Le Casset (BI)
-  Saint Claude's church in Le Casset (BK)
-  La Moulette catchment (BM)
-  L'Alpe du Lauzet (BO)
-  View over the Pic de Rochebrune (BQ)
-  The Col du Lautaret climate (BS)
-  Butterflies and moths (AT)
-  Water colour in the meanders (AV)
-  Golden eagle, the Ecrins' mascot (AX)
-  A flying predator (AZ)
-  Chamois (BB)
-  European badger (BD)
-  Whiskered bat (BF)
-  Rock sparrow (BH)
-  Sundials (BJ)
-  The Alpine ibex of L'Alpe du Lauzet (BL)
-  Climbing on the left bank of the Guisane (BN)
-  Madeleine Hospice (BP)
-  Le Massif de Combeynot, W. Brockedon (BR)
-  The tuffaceous ground of the Col du Lautaret (BT)

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](#).



Is in the midst of the park

The national park is an unrestricted natural area but subjected to regulations which must be known by all visitors.



How to come ?

Transports

Région Sud bus lines : <https://zou.maregionsud.fr/>

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes bus lines : <https://carsisere.auvergnerhonealpes.fr/>

Isère bus lines : <https://www.itinisere.fr/>

Access

From Briançon, follow the D1091 towards Grenoble, passing Le Monétier-les-Bains and continuing on to Col du Lautaret.

From Grenoble, take the D1091 towards Bourg d'Oisans, then continue towards La Grave and up to the Col du Lautaret. The Chambon tunnel is closed - you need to take the relief road.

Advised parking

Col du Lautaret

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.

Alpine ibex

Sensitivity period: June, July, August, September

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

Zone de présence du Bouquetin des Alpes

En période de mise bas et d'élevage des jeunes (juin à septembre) les bouquetins peuvent être très sensibles au dérangement notamment en cas de survol à basse altitude. Dans leur fuite les risques d'accidents sont multipliés. Merci de rester à bonne distance et d'éviter le survol de la zone à moins de 300m sol soit moins de 2830m d'altitude.

Attention en zone cœur du Parc National des Écrins une réglementation spécifique aux sports de nature s'applique : <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/thematique/sports-de-nature>

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 2350m.

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 2610m.

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.

Alpine ibex

Sensitivity period: June, July, August, September

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

Zone de présence du Bouquetin des Alpes

En période de mise bas et d'élevage des jeunes (juin à septembre) les bouquetins peuvent être très sensibles au dérangement notamment en cas de survol à basse altitude. Dans leur fuite les risques d'accidents sont multipliés. Merci de rester à bonne distance et d'éviter le survol de la zone à moins de 300m sol soit moins de 2430m d'altitude.

Attention en zone cœur du Parc National des Écrins une réglementation spécifique aux sports de nature s'applique : <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/thematique/sports-de-nature>

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/>



Information center "le Casset" (summer only)

Le Casset, 05220 Le Monêtier-les-bains

brianconnais@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Tel : 04 92 24 53 27

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



Maison du Parc du Briançonnais

Place Médecin-Général Blanchard, 05100 Briançon

brianconnais@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Tel : 04 92 21 08 49

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



Source



Parc national des Ecrins

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

On your path...



✿ Hierochloa odorata (AA)

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



🕒 Dismantled ski-lifts (AB)

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



✿ Alder forest and green alders (AC)

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 (AD)

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



✿ Turk's cap lily (AE)

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



🐓 Black Grouse (AF)

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 (AG)

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 (AH)

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.

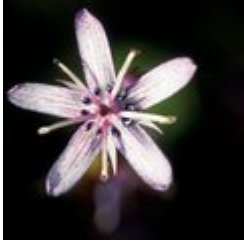
Attribution : © Parc national des Écrins - Cyril Coursier



The marmots' "bosse" (AI)

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



✿ Felwort (Aj)

In early August, the felwort's violet stars open in the sunshine. At the base of each of its five petals, two shiny pits full of nectar attract insects. A member of the gentian family, this beautiful flower is a perennial that survives the cold season with its persistent winter bud close to the ground, surrounded by a rosette of protecting leaves.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



🏔 Arsine pass (AK)

The Arsine pass, is an important crossing point to visit on the GR54 Tour des Ecrins et de l'Oisans. It gives a remarkable viewpoint over the Angeaux massif. The pass is part of an old itinerary that was used instead of the crossing point by the Lautaret pass. It is also a crossing point between the Guisane and the Romanche area. This is an area that was mentioned as early as the Middle Ages as a place of conflict between the districts of Villar d'Arène and Monétier-les-Bains.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



✿ Arctic rush (AL)

Even though it is relatively common in some acidic marshland, the Arctic rush is nonetheless protected throughout the Rhône-Alpes and Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur regions. It can be recognised because of its total absence of leaves and by the few blackish flowers in the upper third of the stalk. The flower tepals open at an obtuse angle and are a little shorter than the capsule.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - PNE



Rock ptarmigan (AM)

At five in the morning in the month of May, at an altitude of over 2,000 m, the sun rises over the fields of blueberry, which appear above the patches of snow. All of a sudden, a hoarse, almost metallic cry cuts through the peaceful dawn atmosphere: the rock ptarmigan is in the midst of its nuptial parade. Originating from the Arctic tundra, the rock ptarmigan, sometimes called the snow partridge, was to be found all over Europe during the ice ages, before its living space was limited to the mountains. Even today, it finds the conditions it needs to survive. The national Alpine parks have a great responsibility in conserving this species. The inventory carried out by the Haute-Romanche nature unit in 2005 showed there was a large core group of birds on the site.

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien



Moraines (AN)

The site of Arsine offers a complex moraine environment with a parade of ice margin flowers. The frontal moraine of the Arsine glacier is on a glacial vegetated rock complex that occupies about forty hectares at the bottom of the cirque. This complex is likely to have come about through a shifting of abandoned glacial deposits after permafrost was established. This means that the ground maintains a temperature of 0°C or less over several years. This phenomenon is likely to have taken place during the recent Dryas climatic cooling, that is to say 11 000 – 10 000 years BC.

Attribution : PNE - Nicollet Bernard



Aquatic diet (AO)

The grey wagtail is "hyperactive" and has a diet of flies, mosquitoes, dragonflies and all sorts of aquatic insect larvae. It hunts at the edge of the water, by jumping from stone to stone or hovers to catch its prey. It sometimes fishes for shellfish, molluscs, or even small fish to complete its meals. It does not leave the damp banks to build its nest either, and even looks for somewhere close to a waterfall or to flowing river.

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien



❄️ Ice calving (AP)

When the lake is frozen and the air temperature rises, the ice expands, provoking what is called the “song of the lake”. The Lac Oust is the last lake in the mountain range where it is still possible to see the fall of seracs (the front of the glacier) into the water, giving rise to this muffled noise.

Attribution : PNE - Masclaux Pierre

❄️ The melting Arsine glacier (AQ)

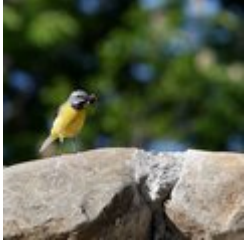
Lake Arsine came to life in the 1950s after the Arsine glacier melted. Due to its rapid development, it was measured more accurately in 1969 and 1985, showing 800,000 m³ of water contained in a moraine that had been weakened by the ice inside it. Since it threatened to break, emergency work was undertaken the following spring to stop the rise in the level of the lake using a regulation channel dug across the frontal moraine. Almost 30 years later, the glacier site is still carefully monitored by Park employees. And the risk is now completely ruled out.



🐦 Skylark (AR)

This bird is like a tightrope walker suspended in the sky, sounding out a long chorus of notes. Then, triangular wings back, and in a perfect spiral, the bird lands in the middle of the prairie. On the ground, it is difficult to see: its varying shades of brown means it is very well camouflaged. In its search for food, its movements, which are a succession of small sprints and sudden halts, enable it to spot possible predators.

Attribution : PNE - Saulay Pascal



Grey wagtail (AS)

The grey wagtail elegantly hops along the rocks at the riverside. They are found in mountain streams, but also near all waterways in the mountains, in the countryside or in towns, and even small high-altitude lakes. Like other wagtails, they continually wag their long black tails edged with white. They have yellow breasts like the western yellow wagtail, but their backs are ash grey. In the mating season, males proudly show off their black throats, making it easier to tell them apart from females, whose throats and breasts are partly white. Their pinkish claws are specific to the breed, since other wagtails' claws are black.

Attribution : PNE - Saulay Pascal



Butterflies and moths (AT)

Butterflies can be distinguished from moths by the shape of their antennae. You will also notice that when resting, the butterfly's wings are vertically folded over the body for necessary discretion while the moth's cover them. The moorland clouded yellow butterfly has another unusual habit: as soon as it becomes too cold to fly, it settles and bends its side to the sun to absorb energy. It can even lean slightly, whereas others tend to fully, and dangerously spread themselves out.

Attribution : PNE - Warluzelle Olivier



Moorland clouded yellow (AU)

The heath surrounded by heather and willows is the home of a population of unusual and protected butterflies: the moorland cloud yellow. Elsewhere, it lives in different environments, such as blueberry heaths and peatland, where the moorland clouded yellow is rare and hard to spot. It can be recognised by its yellow display delicately sprinkled with grey under the rear wings of the male, while the female of the species has adopted almost purely white wings. They both wear a simple pink border highlighting the edge of their wings, with a tiny white ocellus (eye) encircled with brown and a discrete grey crescent.

Attribution : PNE - Delenatte Blandine



Water colour in the meanders (AV)

The turquoise colour of the water that meanders from the Petit Tabuc stream gives a special character to this remarkable site. The valley is popular among photographers and artists for its photographic and pictorial quality.

Attribution : PNE - Coursier Cyril



Alpine citril finch (AW)

A small green-yellow-grey bird sways on a tall branch. Chet! The Alpine citril finch flies off to land on a scrap of threadbare grass. It looks like a small greenfinch, but the strident cry it makes during its short flight clearly sets it apart. Its head and breast flanks are a pretty blue-grey colour. Its yellow wing stripes can be easily seen. When flying over longer distances, its undulating flight is reminiscent of a goldfinch's. And just like its cousin, the finch is sociable and moves about in small groups when exploring some sparse group of nettles or grass.

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien



Golden eagle, the Ecrins' mascot (AX)

The Petit Tabuc site is ideal for the golden eagle to nest. The golden eagle is amongst the protected species that are considered rare in Europe. The size of the populations that have been registered in the Ecrins massif, bestow a strong responsibility on the Park for conservation of the species. Counting takes place regularly since 1985 along with monitoring of reproduction, causes of disturbance and mortality.

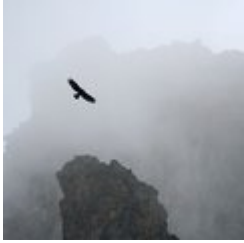
Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien



Larch (AY)

The larch is the only European resinous tree to lose its needles in winter. Its wood is red-brown. It stands out in the landscape with its leaves ranging from a soft green colour in spring to gold in autumn. Its pink flowers attract naturalists and photographers in the spring. The larch tree is a coloniser of mountain slopes. Although it is at home in the harsh conditions of the mountainside, it cannot bear competition from other trees. The Petit Tabuc site is a fine example of its colonising capacity, even though it is regularly hit by avalanches.

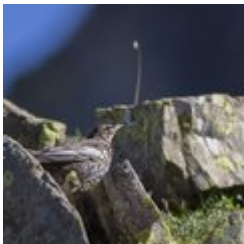
Attribution : PNE - Chevalier Robert



A flying predator (AZ)

The eagle is the archetypal predator. Everything about it suggests strength and daring. Its appearance, of course, with its impressive expression highlighted by the prominent brow ridge, but above all its fearsome weapons: rapid flight, which can be adapted to even the most acrobatic situations, and sharp, powerful talons. Its keen eyesight helps it detect its prey, from the marmot to the young chamois, ptarmigans and hares. In winter, it often takes its food from the dead bodies of animals, helping towards the natural cleansing of nature.

Attribution : PNE - Telmon Jean-Philippe



Ring ouzel (BA)

In the pastures covered with larch or 'bush', a cry of alarm followed the start of a song resounds. A blackbird? Yes, but more specifically a ring ouzel. This shy, swift mountain blackbird lives on the fringe of the larch, scots pine, spruce or Swiss pine forests between 1000 and 2500 m in altitude. The ring ouzel is a migratory bird that spends winter in Spain or North Africa before coming back to the mountains around March.

Attribution : PNE - Saulay Pascal



Chamois (BB)

Rupicapra rupicapra, the mountain goat was not at first solely a creature of the mountains. The species is more attached to rocky escarpments and steep slopes than high altitude. But strong human pressure on chamois made them withdraw ever higher. Coveted as a hunting target, they have found refuge here in the Ecrins National Park.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



White-throated dipper (BC)

The mountain streams relinquish their secrets to an attentive hiker. The master of this little world is a small brown, red and grey bird with a short tail and a pure white breast, separated from the darker abdomen by a light brown stripe. We can often see it in the air, flying close to the water to snap up insects. The dipper owes its name to its eating habits to find water larva, it dips its head into the water and grips the riverbed to walk against the current.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



European badger (BD)

You will often see a badger at nighttime on the edge of a path, a road or an embankment. The gentle pace and portly gait of this member of the mustelid family are reminiscent of a small bear you may get a glimpse of his black and the white stripes on his head before he hurries away. Worms, reptiles, frogs, fruit and plants are his staple diet. Families of badgers live in sometimes very extensive and very old burrows, with numerous chambers and galleries. They are tolerant animals, since they will sometimes share their home with rabbits and foxes. Badgers are among the unobtrusive neighbours whose presence goes undetected, except for their footprints made up of five nearly parallel toes and the tracks of their long claws.

Attribution : PNE - Fiat Denis



Lover of old stones (BE)

The rock sparrow is a sedentary bird. It generally settles in well-exposed, agricultural areas where there are lots of stones, stone terraces, ruins, piles of stones, old buildings. This southern sparrow can be found up to an altitude of 2000 m provided there is an open landscape and many mineral elements. It nests in the hole of a rock, in a wall and sometimes under the roof of a house. It will then mingle with the house sparrow. A sociable bird, it lives in small, dispersed colonies.

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien



Whiskered bat (BF)

The whiskered bat is a dark-faced bat. It is quite common in certain mountain regions and is one of the most frequent species after its cousin the common pipistrelle. It likes trees, be they on the banks of a river or in the high altitude forests, but it is also possible to catch sight of them in gardens and villages such as the hamlet of Casset. This small mammal lives on flying insects and thus helps in controlling their numbers. Like all mammals, the female feeds her sole offspring with her milk.

Attribution : PNE - Corail Marc



Doors and courtyards (BG)

As you stroll through the streets of Le Casset, some house doors will attract your notice, as they bring together most of the decorative elements of the facades. Made of larch wood, they have been moulded or sculpted with geometric or floral patterns and have a tympanum above them, often with a grating. Behind the door is the courtyard, the shared entrance for people and animals. The way people lived and organised their homes resulted in this single entrance, an area giving access both to the stable and to the living quarters. Between the world inside and outside, the courtyard provided a passageway, insulation, but also storage space.

Attribution : Claire Broquet - PNE



Rock sparrow (BH)

The rock sparrow is here at the north-western limit and highest altitude of its home territory and regularly nests in the area. The species is in decline nationally and is on the endangered 'red' list in Rhône-Alpes and is being studied in the PACA region. People sometimes pay little attention to house sparrows since they are so familiar, which is a pity. The rock sparrow is bigger and although its plumage is similar to a female house sparrow's, its call sets it apart at once: pi-yip or pi-yui or even a chay sound that is similar to a brambling's!

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien



Le Casset (BI)

At the entrance to the valley, Le Casset is a stone shell village surrounded by farming landscapes. Its name comes from the verb 'cassare' ('to break, to shatter' in late Latin), describing a place covered with stones. In fact there are many such villages in this mountain valley carved out by a vast glacier. Le Casset, on the left bank of the Guisane, is sheltered from avalanches beneath the watchful eye of the prestigious summits and glaciers that “move” in a different time scale from our own.

Attribution : PNE - Masclaux Pierre



Sundials (BJ)

As you walk through the village of Lauzet, you will see recently made sundials made in traditional style. Easy to see from the main village streets, they adorn the beautifully restored facades of the old houses.

Attribution : Claire Broquet - PNE

Saint Claude's church in Le Casset (BK)

With its disproportionately high spire, the Casset church never goes unnoticed. Its four-sided Comtois steeple was modelled on the collegiate church in Briançon. The church is listed as a Historic Monument and is placed under the protection of Saint Claude. In its present condition, it dates from the 18th century. The previous building was constructed prior to the 16th century. Inside, the eye is immediately attracted by the choir ogives, creating an intimate atmosphere, particularly since the unusually large spire does not suggest an interior of such a small size. The choir was rebuilt in 1716-1717, probably after the previous chapel burnt down. Traces from this period can be seen on the keystone. The wrought-iron choir gate has the inscription "HM 1717", a date that can also be seen in the apse, on the wrought iron railing of the impost of the axial window, and on the baptismal font.



The Alpine ibex of L'Alpe du Lauzet (BL)

L'Alpe du Lauzet on the edge of the Massif des Cerces is the favourite wintering place for a colony of Alpine ibex. In 1959, when there were only ten animals left in France (in Vanoise), six Alpine ibex, four males and two females, were reintroduced from Switzerland, first to Le Combeynot on the right bank of the Guisane, then to Les Cerces. These six individuals multiplied and the total population has now reached around 300. While their territory is restricted in winter to save as much energy as possible and make the most of the sunny slopes, they are scattered in summer over all the mountain range and as far as neighbouring groups that they have gradually blended in with.

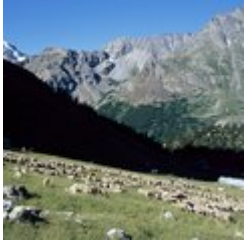
Attribution : © Parc national des Écrins - Mireille Coulon

La Moulette catchment (BM)

From the snow on the high peaks to the tap, there's just one step: catchment of the water sources. Located over 2,150 metres above sea level at the entrance to the valley of La Moulette, the upper catchment of La Moulette supplies the municipality of Le Monétier-les-Bains with a proportion of its drinking water. With 164 thousand cubic metres of underground water abstracted every year, this is an important water source for the village. The water is naturally drinkable and meets the quality requirements in force for every parameter measured by health controls.

Climbing on the left bank of the Guisane (BN)

While the right bank of the Guisane Valley and the high summits of Les Ecrins are a dream for mountain climbers, the Massif des Cerces, with its tall limestone rocks on the left bank, is a paradise for rock climbers. A large number of sites for all levels have been opened here since the 1930s. The Tour Termier opened the way, soon followed by Roche Robert, Roche Colombe and the famous Aiguillette du Lauzet. Multi-pitch climbs, beginners' sites or via ferrata (the site in Le Lauzet was one of the first in France) - there is something for everyone. In summer, some car parks are packed and you can continually hear the clicking sound of snap hooks!



L'Alpe du Lauzet (BO)

L'Alpe du Lauzet is a mountain village at an altitude of 1,940 m, below the Aiguillette du Lauzet, which reaches 2,717 m, in the region of Monêtier-les-Bains. The village is aligned at mid-slope to avoid the avalanches that regularly fall into the bottom of the valley. The handful of houses were once used as summer pasture homes for the inhabitants of Le Lauzet in the Guisane valley. On the chapel door, a plaque recounts that five people were buried alive by an avalanche during the winter of 1892.

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

Madeleine Hospice (BP)

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 (BQ)

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 (BR)

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 (BS)

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.

Attribution : © Parc national des Ecrins - Cyril Couriser

The tuffaceous ground of the Col du Lautaret (BT)

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».