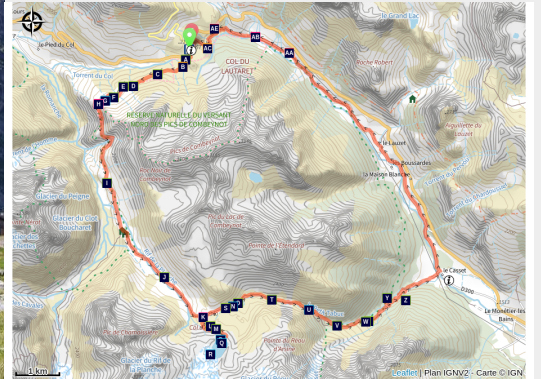


# Tour du Combeynot en 3 jours

Briançonnais - Villar-d'Arêne



Arrivée au refuge de l'Alpe de Villar d'Arêne (© Parc national des Ecrins - Thibaut Blais)



*Ce Tour du Combeynot est une itinérance de 3 jours, idéale pour les familles qui souhaitent associer la diversité naturelle des milieux avec l'aspect culturel du territoire durant leur séjour.*

Rien de mieux que d'observer un tel contraste entre les paysages briançonnais sur une courte durée ! L'eau, omniprésente, contribue à cette diversité paysagère et se contemple sous la forme la plus cristallisée avec le glacier de la Roche Faurio, à la plus mouvante avec les cours d'eau de la Romanche et de la Guisane. En outre, les éléments architecturaux ponctuent la randonnée de manière à plonger le marcheur dans l'histoire des hameaux du Monetier.

## Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 3 days

Length : 29.4 km

Trek ascent : 1072 m

Difficulty : Medium



Type : Multi-day trekking

Themes : Flora, History and architecture, Lake and glacier

# Trek

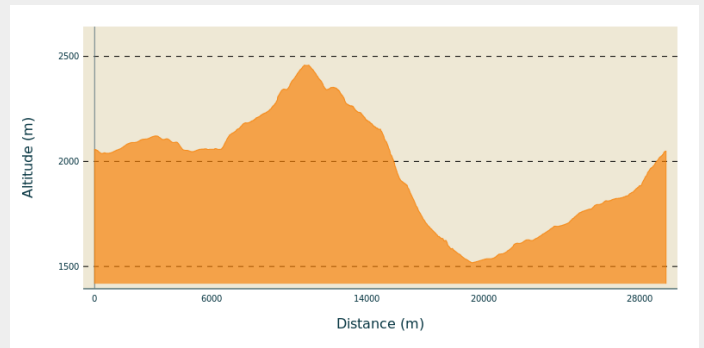
**Departure** : Col du Lautaret

**Arrival** : Col du Lautaret

**Markings** :  PR  GR

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

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1519 m Max elevation 2459 m

Depuis le col du Lautaret, il faut emprunter le sentier des Crevasses, profiter au passage de l'impressionnant Belvédère de l'Homme, pour s'élever jusqu'à l'Alpe du Villar d'Arène.

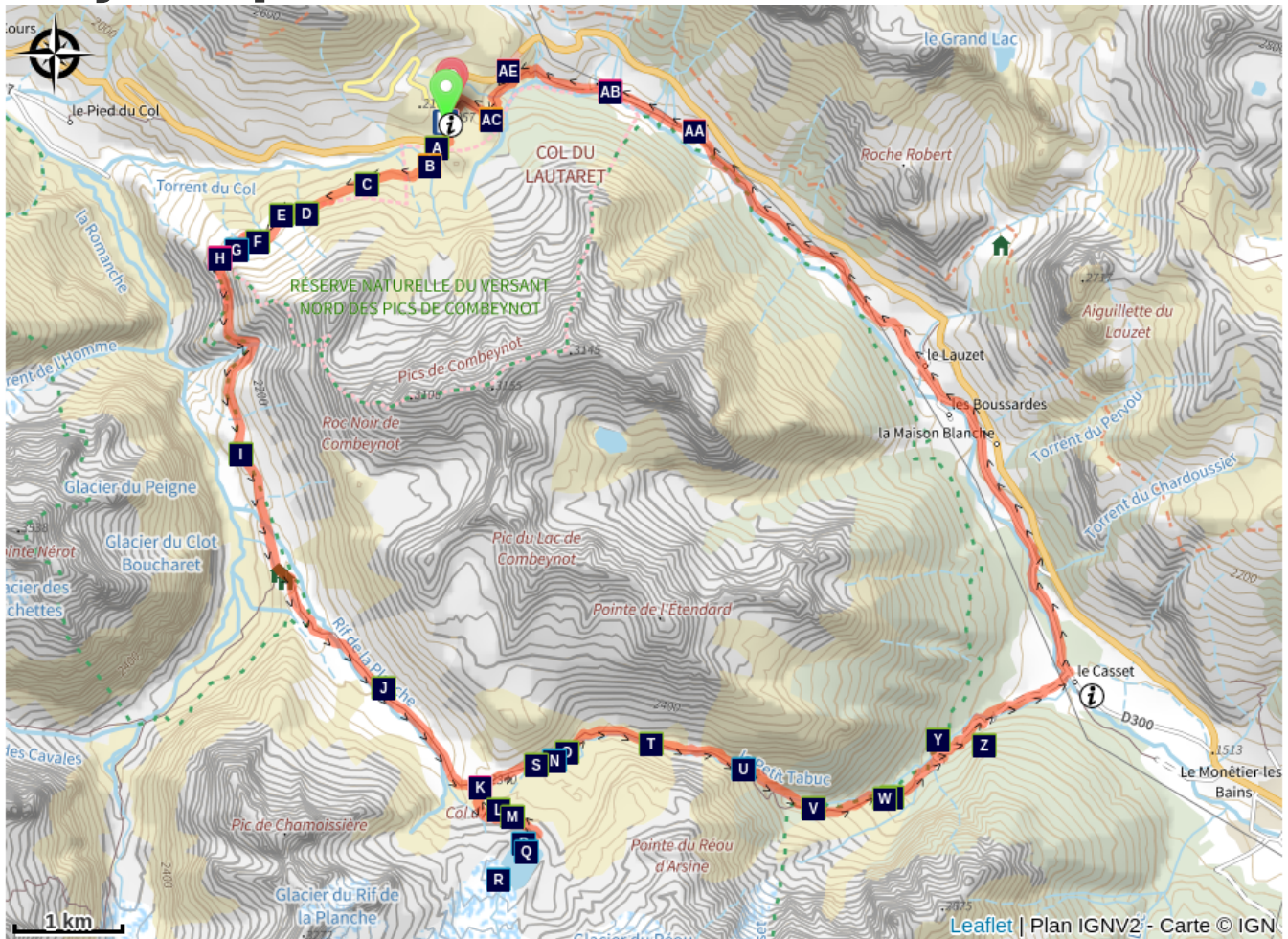
La deuxième étape, au départ des refuges du Plan de l'Alpe, remonte et traverse plusieurs cours d'eau avant d'arriver au col d'Arsine où il est possible d'accéder aux lacs des glaciers du même nom. Le décor est alors à la haute montagne. Le parcours bascule par la suite dans la vallée de la Guisane en une longue descente jusqu'au village du Casset qui cloture l'étape.



















Le dernier jour, le chemin ancestral longe la Guisane en passant par divers hameaux notamment le Lauzet à partir duquel l'itinéraire emprunte le GR®50 jusqu'au col du Lautaret.

## Stages :

1. Du Col du Lautaret à l'Alpe du Villar-d'Arène  
6.3 km / 117 m D+ / 2 h
2. De l'Alpe du Villar-d'Arène au Casset  
12.9 km / 416 m D+ / 4 h 30
3. Du Casset au col du Lautaret  
10.8 km / 560 m D+ / 4 h

# 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)           |  Arsine Glacier (AR)                   |
|  Skylark (AS)                              |  Butterflies and moths (AT)            |
|  Water colour in the meanders (AU)         |  Ring ouzel (AV)                       |
|  A flying predator (AW)                    |  Golden eagle, the Ecrins' mascot (AX) |
|  Chamois (AY)                              |  White-throated dipper (AZ)            |
|  Madeleine Hospice (BA)                    |  View over the Pic de Rochebrune (BB)  |
|  Le Massif de Combeynot, W. Brockedon (BC) |  The Col du Lautaret climate (BD)      |
|  Marionnaise snow fence (BE)               |   |

# All useful information

## **i** 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

### How to come ?

#### Transports

Ligne Express Régionale PACA - Ligne 35: Serre-Chevalier - Briançon - Grenoble  
<https://zou.maregionsud.fr/>  
<https://www.itinisiere.fr/>

#### Access

Depuis Briançon, emprunter la D1091 en direction de Grenoble, passer le Monêtier-les-Bains et continuer jusqu'au col du Lautaret.

Depuis Grenoble, emprunter le D1091 en direction de Bourg d'Oisans, puis continuer vers la Grave et monter jusqu'au col du Lautaret. Attention si le tunnel du Chambon est fermé, il faudra emprunter la route de secours.

#### 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.

## 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...

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## 🌿 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

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## 🍊 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

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## 🌿 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

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## ✿ 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

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## 🐓 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

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### 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

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### 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



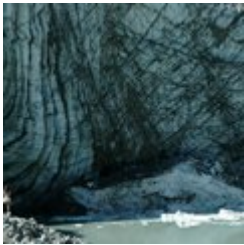
## ❄️ Ice calving (AP)

When the lake is frozen and the air temperature rises, the ice expands, provoking what is called the “song of the lake”. The Lac Ouest 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 m<sup>3</sup> 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.



## 🌊 Arsine Glacier (AR)

The Arsine glacier is contained in the hollow of a vast corrie facing north, encircled by high walls reaching an altitude of between 3,200 and 3,600 metres. This is a glacier that is mostly hidden, with the front, currently at an altitude of about 2,470 m, behind lakes. The lakes are held back by an impressive series of old moraines, formed during the Little Ice Age (between about 1550 and 1850). Due to its size and preserved state, the old moraines of Arsine are an exception in the western Alps. Usually such morainic fronts are found in small, high-altitude glaciers, resulting water running too weakly to sweep away the accumulation of pre-glacier deposits (for example, the Réou d’Arsine glacier). The melting and shrinking of the Arsine glacier posed problems in the 1980s concerning water retention and therefore safety. RTM teams carried out work to lower the level of the lakes, the size of which raised fears of a break in the moraine with the risk of flooding the village of Le Casset.

Attribution : PNE - Masclaux Pierre



## Skylark (AS)

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



## 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.

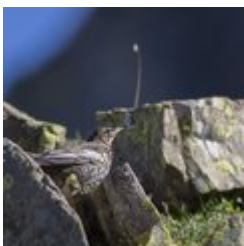
Attribution : PNE - Warluzelle Olivier



## Water colour in the meanders (AU)

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.

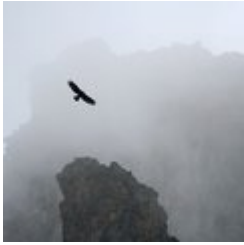
Attribution : PNE - Coursier Cyril



## Ring ouzel (AV)

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



### A flying predator (AW)

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

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### 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

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### Chamois (AY)

*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

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## White-throated dipper (AZ)

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

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## Madeleine Hospice (BA)

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.

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## View over the Pic de Rochebrune (BB)

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.



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## 🕒 Le Massif de Combeynot, W. Brockedon (BC)

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 (BD)

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

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## Marionnaise snow fence (BE)

In the Guisane valley, the Col du Lautaret road is in places highly exposed to the risk of avalanches. From when it was first built, a number of measures were taken. The first was a long, semi-open snow fence that lets snowslides flow above the road and arrive lower down the slope. A little further downstream is another, quite original solution: since the layout of the land was not adapted to a traditional snow fence, two diversion tunnels were dug at the sides (the Rif Blanc and the Vallois). If there is a major avalanche risk, the road is closed and the traffic temporarily diverted through the tunnels. Once the risk is over, the road is cleared and reopened to traffic.