

THEMED PATH: The precipice path

Parc national des Ecrins - Champcella



Le gouffre de Gourfouran (Thibaut Blais)



A pathway steeped in history against a backdrop full of natural riches!

“Climbing above the Durance, this itinerary gives a measure of the importance of this valley which became a key communication route in the distant past. You start to imagine all those people who have passed through it on foot over centuries and centuries;” Marie-Geneviève Nicolas, park ranger at the Parc National des Écrins

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 2 h 30

Length : 4.6 km

Trek ascent : 272 m

Difficulty : Easy


Type : Loop

Themes : Fauna, Flora, History and architecture

Trek

Departure : Chapel in Rame, Champcella

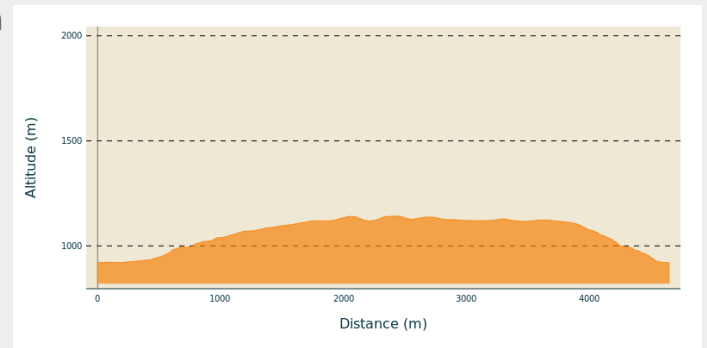
Arrival : Chapel in Rame, Champcella

Markings :  Sentier thématique

Cities : 1. Champcella

2. Freissinières

Altimetric profile












Min elevation 921 m Max elevation 1143 m

From the chapel, cross the bridge over the Biaysse and immediately fork right and then left after 100 metres.

1. Take the gently rising path which twists and turns past some fine low stone walls and comes out onto a cultivated flat area.
2. Follow the path to the belvedere, making a there-and-back detour.
3. Follow the road right for 500 metres until you reach Pallon. Go through the village and, as you are leaving it, 100 metres after the wash house, take the track on the right which runs past a house with green shutters. The path drops back down to the chapel in Rame.

On your path...



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|--|---|
|  The lost village (A) |  The high Durance valley (B) |
|  The Sentier du Gouffre - the ravine path (C) |  The Gourfouran ravine (D) |
|  The jackdaws (E) |  The Eurasian eagle-owl (F) |
|  Cricket of every colour! (G) |  A Medieval tsunami? (H) |
|  Juniperus thurifera or Spanish juniper (I) | |

All useful information

Advices

Follow the safety instructions to the letter and be sure to use safety installations, in particular near the precipice edge.

Binoculars are recommended for observing the fauna

Check weather conditions before setting off.

Rescue services contact details: Secours Montagne (Mountain Rescue): +33 (0)4 92 22 22 22 or 112

Show consideration for the work of farmers, livestock keepers and owners

Close all gates behind you

Take your litter home

Do not take shortcuts across pastureland

How to come ?

Transports

Public transport >> www.pacamobilite.fr

Consider car-sharing >> www.blablacar.fr

For more information, ask at the Tourist Information Office nearest to the trail starting point.

Access

10 km from L'Argentière-La Bessée, take the N94 and the D38.

Advised parking

Chapel in Rame car park, Champcella

Information desks

Vallouise Park house

vallouise@ecrins-parcnational.fr
Tel : 04 92 23 58 08
<http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/>



Bureau d'Information Touristique de L'Argentière-La Bessée

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Source



Pays des Ecrins

<https://www.paysdesecrins.com>

On your path...



The lost village (A)

In ancient times, the Durance valley was a key communication corridor. Rama was a kind of staging post on the Roman road. In the Middle Ages, Rama was a small town with a noble's château. But the village was devastated by the capriciousness of the Durance and the Biaysse rivers on numerous occasions and the inhabitants gradually deserted the site, moving to neighbouring villages. The attachment of the parish of Rama to that of La Roche in 1446 is indicative of this decline.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - Parc national des Écrins



The high Durance valley (B)

Protected from Atlantic influences by the Massif du Pelvoux, the high Durance valley has a very dry climate with wide seasonal temperature fluctuations. It has grasslands very similar to the steppes of Central Europe which are rare in France. It is part of the Natura 2000 "Steppique durancien et queyrassien" (Durance and Queras valley steppes) site.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



The Sentier du Gouffre - the ravine path (C)

The Sentier du Gouffre has sometimes been described as a Roman road, but we do not know the exact route the Roman road followed. One thing is certain, it used to be used by the villagers to reach their fields and vineyards, and for any other journeys they had to make.

Attribution : Thibault Blais Photographie



The Gourfouran ravine (D)

During the major glaciation periods, the enormous Durance glacier carved out its bed to a depth of more than 200 metres. The glacier in the Freissinières valley flowed onto the surface of this glacier. When they melted, they left a large "stair step", called a confluence terrace. Flowing into the Durance, the Biaysse gradually carved a path through this terrace, first as a subglacial mountain stream and then after the glacier melted.

Attribution : Thibault Blais Photographie



The jackdaws (E)

A small colony of jackdaws has taken up residence in the ravine. A member of the Corvidae family, the jackdaw can be identified by its small size and grey plumage with darker wings and a black cap on its head. It is a species not often found in the mountains, remaining in the valley bottoms and generally found no higher than 1,500 metres. It nests on cliffs or in human habitats: castles, towers and ruined buildings!

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins



The Eurasian eagle-owl (F)

Europe's biggest owl, the Eurasian eagle-owl lives in the vicinity of the ravine. It nests on ledges on the cliff faces but has a very large home range, hunting not only large insects but also snakes, voles, hares etc. Unfortunately, it is very sensitive to disturbance and has already deserted a large number of rock faces now used as climbing routes and equipped with via ferratas. It has also fallen victim to collisions with electricity lines.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - Parc national des Écrins



Cricket of every colour! (G)

A red flash on the path, then nothing... But yes, there it is! A completely grey cricket has settled on a grey rock. Another red flash: he has flown off and settled again... creating surprise and confusion. Just what is needed to confuse a predator. This is how the red-winged grasshopper protects itself, folding its colourful wings down under its wing covers when at rest, and thus exploiting its camouflage colouring. A blue flash? That's its cousin, the blue-winged grasshopper!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



A Medieval tsunami? (H)

Pallon marks the entrance to the ancient glacial valley of Freissinières, enclosed behind a bar of hard rock. As they melted, the glaciers left behind a lake, trapped by this bar. It is said that this natural dam has been breached on numerous occasions. In the Middle Ages, suddenly released into the Gourfouran gorge, the water is said to have laid ruin to the village of Rame, standing on the plain.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



Juniperus thurifera or Spanish juniper (I)

This small tree is present in North Africa, the Iberian Peninsula and in a few departments in southern France, including the Hautes-Alpes. It is regarded as a relic from a warmer period far back in history. It has found a refuge in well exposed situations, on warm sunny slopes. Its needles are in the form of scales, lying against the branches. It is a monitored species.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins