

# The Col de la Pouterle (trail route no. 5)

Vallouise - Les Vigneaux



Col de la Pouterle (Jan Novak Photography)



*A route through the forest with a beautiful panoramic view at the Col de la Pouterle.*

“It was a beautiful autumn day and I knew it was somewhere about because I had just heard its very distinctive call. I peered into the larch branches and there it was. A tiny pygmy owl. Perched on a branch amid the red needles and the grey lichens, it was looking at me.” Marie-Geneviève Nicolas, park ranger at the Parc National des Écrins.

## Useful information

Practice : Trail

Duration : 4 h

Length : 13.3 km

Trek ascent : 735 m

Difficulty : Easy

Type : Loop

Themes : Fauna, Flora

# Trek

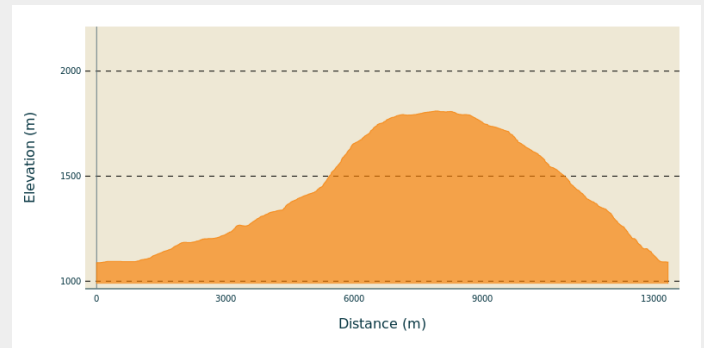
**Departure** : Camping le Courounba, Les Vigneaux

**Arrival** : Camping le Courounba, Les Vigneaux

**Markings** :  Trail

**Cities** : 1. Les Vigneaux  
2. Vallouise-Pelvoux  
3. Puy-Saint-Vincent

## Altimetric profile

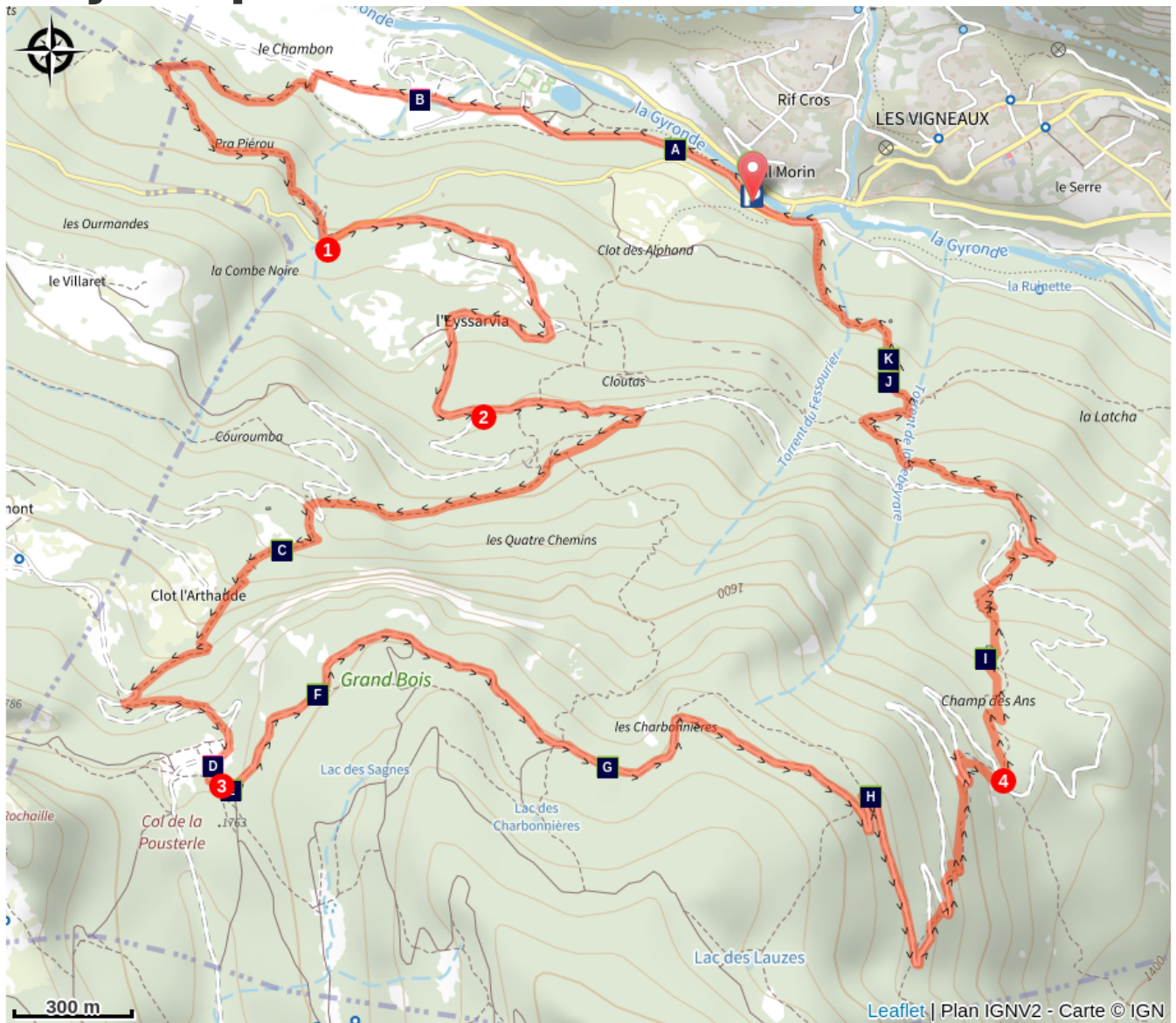


Min elevation 1089 m Max elevation 1811 m

Go through the campsite, carry on along the track and after 200 metres take a path which runs uphill to the left.

1. Fork left. Cross the road leading to Puy Saint-Vincent and carry straight on along a track leading uphill to the houses in Eyssarvia. Carry on along the track.
2. Above Eyssarvia, take the track on the left leading to La Bâtie des Vigneaux and after 400 metres, take the path on the right for the Col de la Pousterle. The path leads to the bottom of a limestone cliff and, at this point, runs across a sharp bend in a track. Carry on along this path until you reach the track leading uphill to the pass and cuts through some winding bends. You come to the pass.
3. Take the track leading directly left. This rises uphill before taking you along a long stretch across the hillside on the northern slope. On the eastern slope, it descends more directly.
4. Take care not to miss the path when crossing the track over a large flat area; to find the path. you first start to cross a small meadow. Lower down, it joins the track again, and you follow this for some distance before taking a path leading back to Les Vigneaux.

# On your path...



-  Riparian forest (A)
-  Cliff-dwelling birds (C)
-  The larch (E)
-  The pygmy owl (G)
-  The alpine laburnum (I)
-  The roe deer (K)
-  The "ubac" (B)
-  The Col de la Pusterle (D)
-  Forest-dwelling bats (F)
-  The rosebay willowherb (H)
-  The sessile-leaved cytiscus (J)

# All useful information

## **Advices**

Before setting off, it is very important to check the opening periods for this route on the website: <https://stationdetrail.com/fr/stations/le-pays-des-ecrins/parcours>

Share your photographs on social networks with #stationdetrailecrins

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

The trail routes are also suitable for walking

## **How to come ?**

### Transports

Public transport >> [www.pacamobilite.fr](http://www.pacamobilite.fr)

Consider car-sharing >> [www.blablacar.fr](http://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 D994E.

### Advised parking

Camping le Courounba car park, Les Vigneaux

# 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.

## Short-toed snake eagle

Sensitivity period: March, April, May, June, July, August, September

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

Nidification du Circaète-Jean-le-Blanc.

Les pratiques qui peuvent avoir une interaction avec le Circaète-Jean-le-Blanc en période de nidification sont principalement les pratiques aériennes comme le vol libre ou le vol motorisé.

Merci d'essayer d'éviter la zone ou de rester à une distance minimale 300m sol quand vous survolez la zone ! Soit 1650m d'altitude pour cette zone.

## 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 2140m d'altitude à une distance de 300m sol.

Au site dit de Grand Bois, le couple de faucons a retrouvé son aire de prédilection dans le secteur "flamme de pierre" ; à éviter donc.

[http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/actualite/amis-grimpeurs-attention-aux-pelerins-voies?fbclid=IwAR2Z8hX\\_38vpdW3mS499aRnY08jarhfm-5-eNV8K29k3WB3q3Ik2US\\_Alec](http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/actualite/amis-grimpeurs-attention-aux-pelerins-voies?fbclid=IwAR2Z8hX_38vpdW3mS499aRnY08jarhfm-5-eNV8K29k3WB3q3Ik2US_Alec)

## **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 Vallouise**

Place de l'Eglise, 05340 Vallouise  
contact@paysdesecrins.com  
Tel : +33(0)4 92 23 36 12  
<https://www.paysdesecrins.com/>



## **Source**



Pays des Ecrins

<https://www.paysdesecrins.com>



# On your path...

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## Riparian forest (A)

The track runs through a wood of alder, beech, aspen and oak, the remnant of the natural forest growing at the water's edge, called riparian forest. This type of forest is in decline everywhere, destroyed by urbanisation and by containment of the mountain streams. Yet it is an essential zone for the fixation of river banks and for purifying the water. Since it offers specific natural habitats, it also plays a major role in maintaining biodiversity.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins

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## The "ubac" (B)

The track rises gently up the right-hand bank of the Gyrone, on the "ubac" side. The "ubac" is the slope that is exposed to the north, so it is in shadow in winter when the sun is low in the sky.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins

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## Cliff-dwelling birds (C)

The cliff is home to a variety of birdlife. The raven, not to be confused with the crow, frequently nests here. He makes an uncomfortable housemate with the peregrine falcon, a bird in sharp decline and still a vulnerable species. It, too, favours this cliff, which offers plenty of potential nesting holes. The wallcreeper, also known as the butterfly bird, also finds this a good nesting spot. Some climbing routes are closed during this bird's breeding season.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - Parc national des Écrins

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## The Col de la Pousterle (D)

A pousterle (in the local high-alpine Occitan language) is a small gate, a postern. It comes from the Latin posterula which means back door. This place name is sometimes given to a pass, which could be described as a gateway between two valleys! The glaciers carved out this gateway through which an arm stretched between the glacier occupying the Fournel valley and the glacier flowing down the Vallouise valley.

Attribution : Bertrand Bodin - Parc national des Écrins

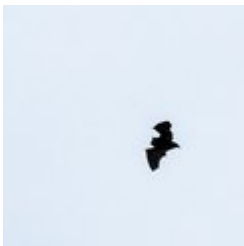
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## The larch (E)

The symbol of the Southern Alps, this softwood tree loses its leaves in winter, and is swathed with gold and lights up the mountains in autumn. The larch forests are maintained by the grazing of flocks. Without them, other trees like the fir or other pine trees could grow, creating a different kind of forest. A pioneer species, the larch establishes freely in light conditions. Its solid rot-proof wood has always been used in the construction of houses.

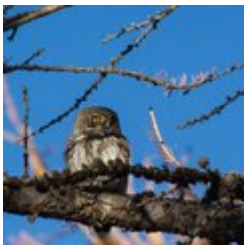
Attribution : Robert Chevalier - Parc national des Écrins



## Forest-dwelling bats (F)

Bats don't just live in caves! In summer, some forest-dwelling species shelter in old hollow trees or woodpecker holes during the day. Sometimes, the females also form little colonies here, where their young will be born (one bat pup per female). In this forest, which is still young with very few old trees, artificial roosts have been installed to help the bats and to facilitate their study.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



## The pygmy owl (G)

The call of this small, nocturnal bird of prey can be heard in the spring, and also in the autumn when it can utter some peculiar sounds. Active during daytime hours and at dusk, the pygmy owl is a predator of passerine birds and small forest rodents. But when they spot it, passerines will come together in large numbers to mob it, so as to prevent any attempted surprise attack. It is restricted to mountain forests where it seeks out trees with woodpecker cavities where it builds its nest.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - Parc national des Écrins



## The rosebay willowherb (H)

The forest tracks are edged with great swathes of a tall plant which has purple flowers arranged in loose spikes. The rosebay willowherb is a pioneer plant and favours road embankments and disturbed ground. In late summer, its very numerous seeds, each with a little plume, float away en masse glowing in the advancing twilight...

Attribution : Thierry Maillet - Parc national des Écrins





### ✿ The alpine laburnum (I)

A cousin of the common laburnum, this large shrub flowers in June-early July, producing beautiful drooping clusters of yellow flowers. Not very common and only found in the Alps and the Jura, it favours quite dry, airy woods. A beautiful surprise, and heavenly scent!

Attribution : Claude Dautrey - Parc national des Écrins

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### ✿ The sessile-leaved cytissus (J)

This small shrub which grows to 1 to 2 metres in light woods is characterised by three-lobed leaves on the flowering shoots which are sessile, that is to say without a stalk. It is easy to confuse with the scorpion senna, which has the same leaves but they are divided into 7 or 9 lobes. Both produce very beautiful yellow flowers in May to June.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins

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### 🦌 The roe deer (K)

The forest is home to roe deer, which can often be seen. This ungulate (hoofed mammal) is rather unusual because the rut does not take place in autumn, for births in May and June as is the case with other mountain-dwelling ungulates, but in summer. After fertilisation, however, egg development is suspended for 6 months (this is called embryonic diapause). Gestation then resumes so that the fawn (or twin fawns) can be born in spring, a period more favourable for its survival.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - Parc national des Écrins

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