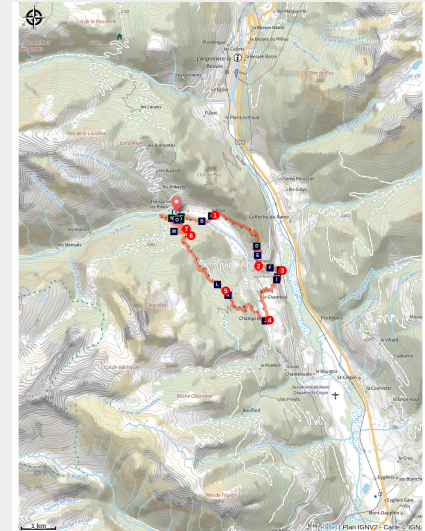


# Our ancestors, those trail runners (trail route no. 6)

Parc national des Ecrins - Freissinières



Trail Nos aïeux ces traileurs (Thibaut Blais)



*Long trail through extremely varied environments such as pine woods, limestone needles, meadows, hamlets and cool forest!*

“How keenly we feel the presence of our forebears, whether in historical sites like Rama or simply the evidence of their everyday lives: old tracks, low walls, pens and their lovely houses in the hamlets we have passed through.”  
Marie-Geneviève Nicolas, park ranger at the Parc National des Écrins

## Useful information

Practice : Trail

Duration : 4 h

Length : 17.7 km

Trek ascent : 1054 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Loop

Themes : Fauna, Flora, History and architecture

# Trek

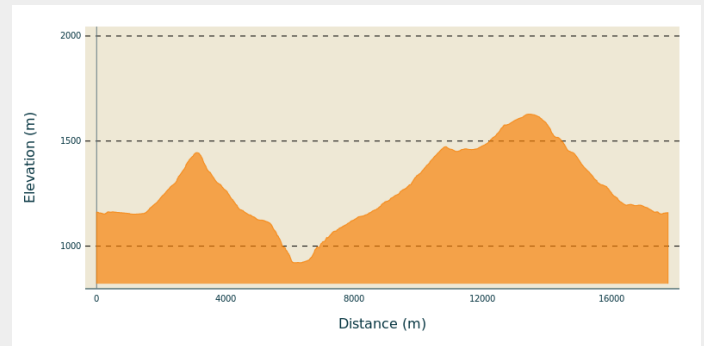
**Departure** : Valley Centre ("Maison de la Vallée"), Freissinières

**Arrival** : Valley Centre ("Maison de la Vallée"), Freissinières

**Markings** :  Trail

**Cities** : 1. Freissinières  
2. Champcella

## Altimetric profile



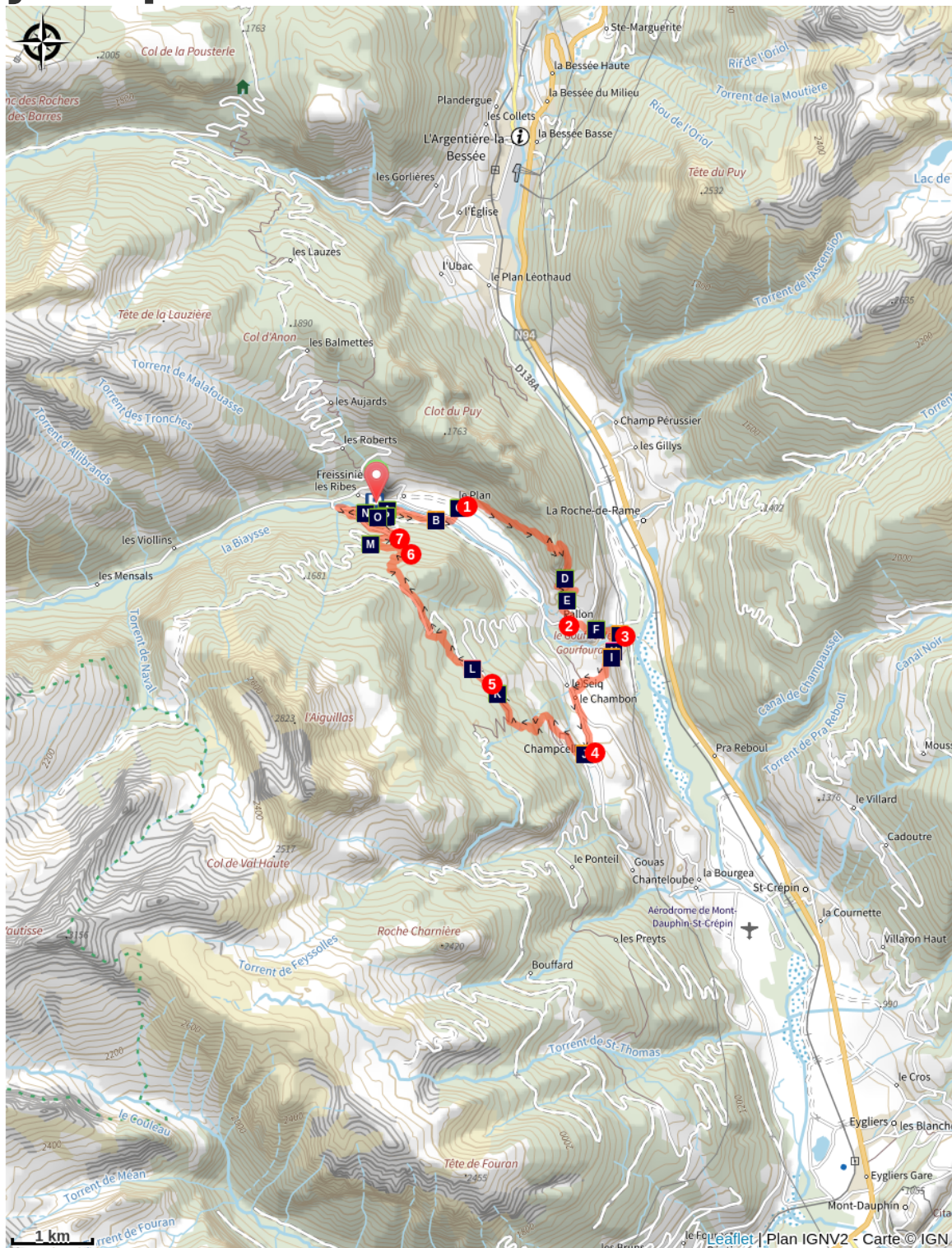
Min elevation 922 m Max elevation 1629 m










From the Valley Centre ("Maison de la Vallée") go down into the meadow and cross the Biaysse. Follow the track along the right-hand bank of the river. Cross over the Biaysse again at the next bridge and head towards the hamlet of Le Plan.




1. Take the uphill track on the right and then join the path leading to the Col de l'Aiguille. After the pass, head downhill again towards Pallon.
2. Just outside the hamlet of Pallon, take the path leading down to Rama.
3. Below the chapel, cross the bridge spanning the Biaysse. After the bridge, turn right and right again onto the track leading to the hamlet of Le Chambon. Then follow the road to Champcella.
4. In the village of Champcella, turn right to join a track leading towards the houses of Les Seyes. When you come to a cross, take the path on the left and, further up, the track on the right.
5. In Les Seyes, follow the road to Les Faures, where you continue on a path on the left, which leads to the track further uphill. Follow the track until you reach the Col des Combes, where you have to take the downhill path on the left leading down to Freissinières.
6. Follow the path on the left to join a track which brings you back to your starting point.






# On your path...



-  The common barberry (A)
-  The petasites hybridus or butterbur (C)
-  The Aristolochia pistolochia (E)
-  The lost village (G)
-  The Sentier du Gouffre - the ravine path (I)
-  The Freissinières valley (B)
-  The savin juniper (D)
-  Juniperus thurifera or Spanish juniper (F)
-  The high Durance valley (H)
-  The fields of Champcella (J)

-  The marbled white (K)
-  Cool forest (M)
-  The red squirrel (O)

-  Les Faures (L)
-  The horsetail (N)
-  The fir (P)

# 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

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

### Advised parking

Valley Centre ("Maison de la Vallée") car park, Freissinières

## 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

23 Avenue de la République, 05120

L'Argentière-La Bessée

contact@paysdesecrins.com

Tel : +33(0)4 92 23 03 11

<https://www.paysdesecrins.com/>



## Source



Pays des Ecrins

<https://www.paysdesecrins.com>



# On your path...

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## ✿ The common barberry (A)

The common barberry is a bush with long thorns arranged in threes, and with oval serrated leaves. In spring, it produces clusters of yellow flowers, which later develop into red, oval and elongated berries. These tart fruits are edible and can be made into jellies... if you have the patience to gather them! This shrub grows almost everywhere.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

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## 🍊 The Freissinières valley (B)

The valley was created as the result of glacial overdeepening, that is to say, when the glacier came to a halt against the Pallon hard rock bar, it created a depression. When the glaciers retreated, a lake was left behind this rock bar and was gradually filled up by alluvial deposits. From a historical point of view, the Protestant pastor Félix Neff fundamentally altered life in the valley in 1826 by founding a training college for primary school teachers, developing irrigation processes and teaching new crop growing methods, among other things...

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins

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## ✿ The petasites hybridus or butterbur (C)

The ditches on the Freissinières plain are edged by a plant with very broad leaves: the petasites hybridus or butterbur, also called the devil's hat in French. In Ancient Greek, the petasos was a round felt hat. Nobody knows whether the devil wears this hat, but the plant is certainly used as a herbal remedy. Very common in the lowlands, it is quite rare in the Pays des Écrins although other species of petasites do grow at higher altitude.

Attribution : Ludovic Imberdis - Parc national des Écrins

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### ✿ The savin juniper (D)

A low spreading shrub, the savin juniper is very common in stony meadows and uncultivated land on warm slopes. Its dark, matte green leaves in the form of small scales, overlap along the branches. So it isn't spiky... but you still need to be cautious as it is very toxic. For seasoning dishes, better to gather the fruits of the common juniper!

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



### ✿ The Aristolochia pistilochia (E)

The hamlet of Pallon is in a sunny location. Around the village, a curious plant with long brown trumpet-like flowers grows on the edges of the stone piles in the fields and meadows: the aristolochia pistilochia or birthwort. Of Mediterranean affinity, this plant benefits from the hot dry climate here and is virtually at its northern boundary. It is the host plant of the caterpillars of a rare and protected butterfly: the Spanish festoon.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins



### ✿ Juniperus thurifera or Spanish juniper (F)

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



### 🕒 The lost village (G)

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 (H)

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

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## The Sentier du Gouffre - the ravine path (I)

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

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## The fields of Champcella (J)

The name Champcella came from champ caché, or hidden field. And it's true that, nestling on a flat ledge, the village cannot be seen from the Durance valley. As you gain height above the village, a number of clues as to its past agricultural tradition are still in evidence. The crops have disappeared, replaced by meadows, but the old walls, canals and stone piles - formed by the patient clearing of stones from the fields - are a reminder of bygone times.

Attribution : Jan Novak Photography

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## The marbled white (K)

Numerous butterflies can be seen enjoying the sunshine along the way. One is very easy to recognise. Completely black and white, maybe the person who gave it its French name demideuil («half in mourning») was a pessimist! In England, however, its name "marbled white" puts the emphasis on its white colour. It is a common butterfly and its caterpillars feed on grasses.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

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## Les Faures (L)

This hamlet of just a few houses is in the municipality of Champcella. The name Faure is common in the south-east of France and originates from the Occitan language. It means blacksmith. It is also frequent in place names, and there are many places called «les Faures», where the blacksmith lived.

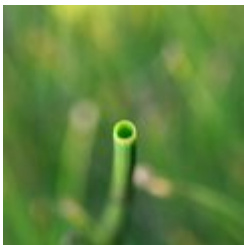
Attribution : Telmon Jean-Philippe - Parc national des Écrins



## Cool forest (M)

Here, the drought-sensitive fir has established itself among the larches. This forest harbours treasures such as the very rare ghost orchid and the shield-moss, a unique little moss - also rare - which grows on wood in an advanced state of decomposition and thus signals that the natural cycle of the forest is unimpaired.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



## The horsetail (N)

On the banks of a stream, on the edge of a ditch a plant grows which resembles a large bottle brush... or a horse's tail, depending on your imagination. It's the field horsetail, a plant related to ferns. It is known for its medicinal properties because it is rich in silica, a powerful remineraliser for the bones, cartilage and skin. There are several species of horsetail.

Attribution : Cédric Dentan - Parc national des Écrins



## The red squirrel (O)

Elegant and alert, a squirrel crosses the track, followed by its long feathery tail. Red? This one is dark brown. In the mountains this rodent has adopted a “solar panel” strategy, on the principle that dark colours absorb the heat more efficiently. It is active during the day and does not hibernate, although it does minimise its activity on days when the weather is bad. It is a protected species.

Attribution : Marc Corail - Parc national des Écrins



## ❁ The fir (P)

The fir thrives on this north-exposed slope, called the ubac. Its needles have two white stripes on their undersides. They are arranged on either side of the boughs, and not all the way around them, which distinguishes it from the spruce. The elongated cones stand upright, rather than hanging downwards. They grow in large number, often mingling with larch trees under whose shade they can grow. By contrast, the larch - the "tree of light" - cannot grow under the cover of fir trees.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins