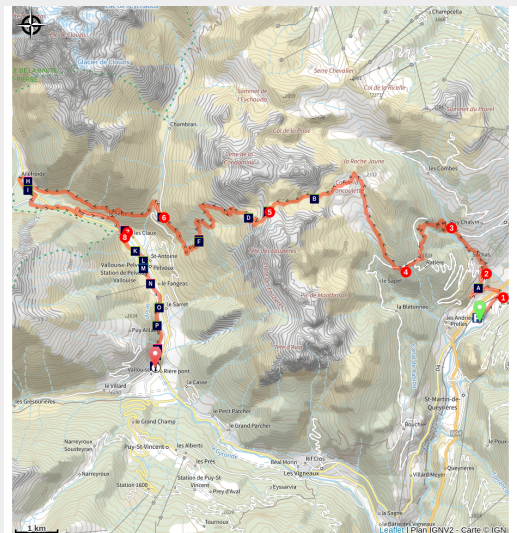


# From Saint-Martin-de-Queyrières to Vallouise (stage on the Super Noir - trail no. 15)

Parc national des Ecrins - Saint-Martin-de-Queyrières



Le super noir du Pays des Écrins (Thibaut Blais)



*A route that takes runners and walkers to the foot of the Pic de Montbrison, combining pine forests, cliffs and alpine pastures!*

Follow rippling mountain streams, get up close to the Montbrison massif, cross the Vallouise pass, discover Ailefroide: a subtle mix for this Stage of the Pays des Ecrins between Saint-Martin-de-Queyrières and Vallouise.

## Useful information

Practice : Trail

Duration : 7 h

Length : 35.1 km

Trek ascent : 1713 m

Difficulty : Hard

Type : Stage

# Trek

**Departure** : L'Isle de Prelles campsite, Saint-Martin-de-Queyrières

**Arrival** : Church of Vallouise, Vallouise

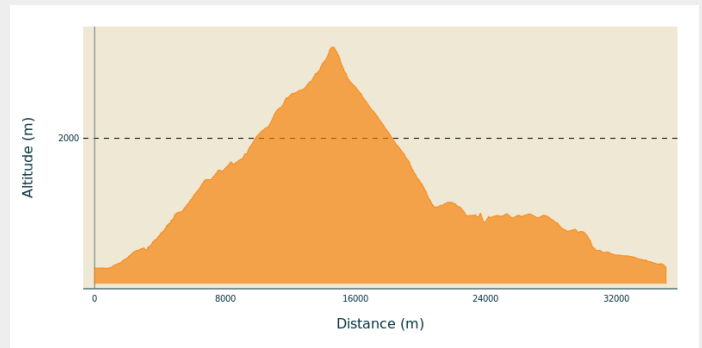
**Markings** :  Trail

**Cities** : 1. Saint-Martin-de-Queyrières

2. Puy-Saint-André

3. Vallouise-Pelvoux

## Altimetric profile



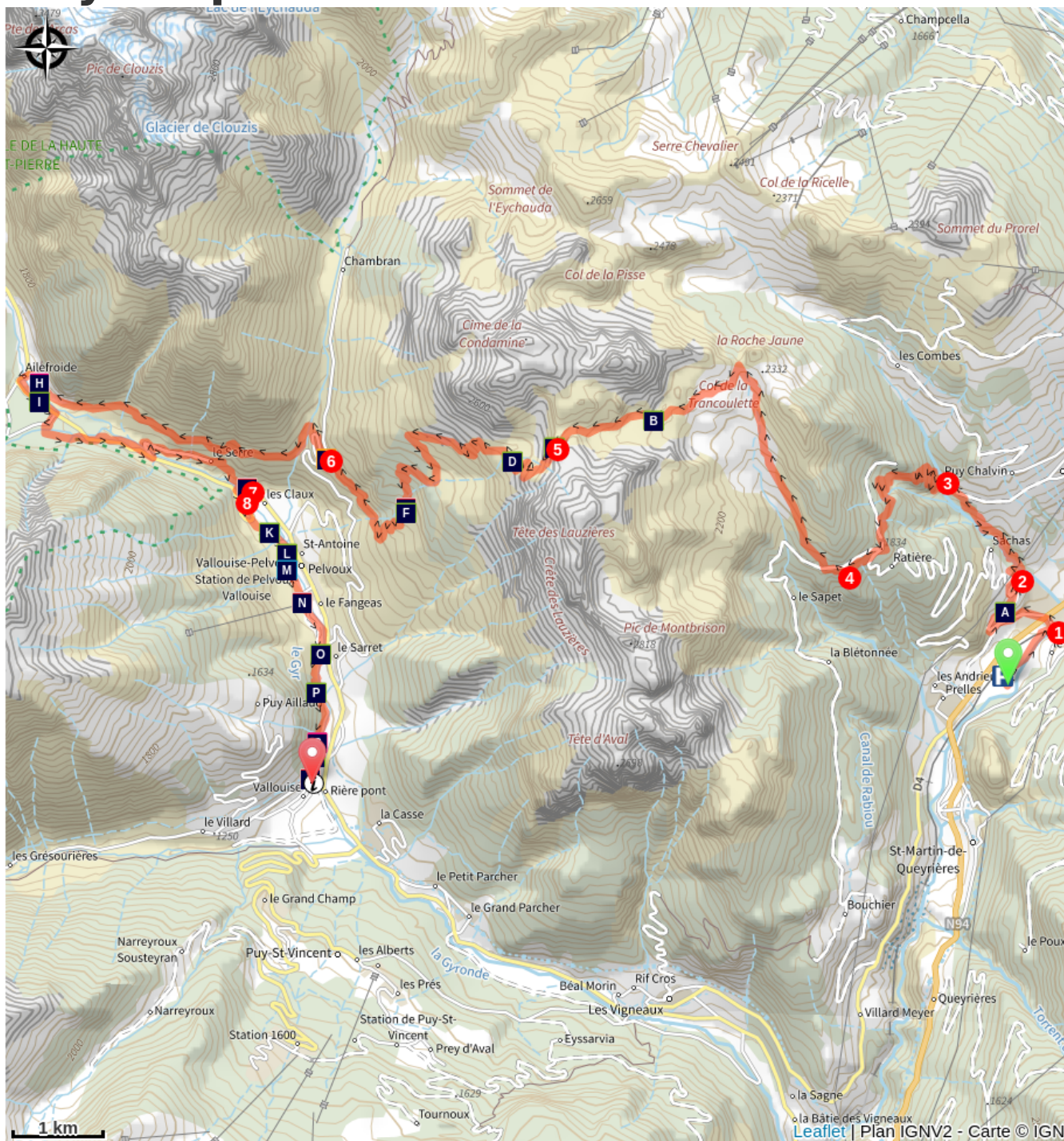
Min elevation 1158 m Max elevation 2593 m

From the campsite, head towards the village of Prelles along the road that follows the railway track.

1. Cross the railway track and the N94 to reach Prelles (Caution! This is a dangerous and busy road) and then go through the village. Head towards Sachas via the D336.
2. At the bend in the road, look out for the path on the right; join it and follow the Sachas mountain stream.
3. Cross the Sachas and bear left heading towards Ratière. The path crosses the Pra Piouzéou and Les Banchets. Skirt around Ratière.
4. Take the path on the right.
5. Take the path on the left and then, after approximately 1 km, start to descend by bearing left to reach the Vallouise pass and the Chouvet cabin beyond. After the Cabin, carry straight on until you reach Choulières.
6. At the D421T intersection, turn left and take the path on the right after the next bend in the road. Carry straight on as far as Ailefroide. Continue straight on through Ailefroide and take the D994E heading towards Vallouise. At Serre, continue straight on.
7. At Les Claux, turn right. At the D994T intersection, take a right turn and join the path on the left before the tunnel. Then carry on along the D994T.
8. Keep a lookout for the path on the left; join it and carry on towards Vallouise following the Gyr.



# On your path...



- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  The field maple (A)       |  The marmot (B)                          |
|  The woolly berardia (C)   |  The common rock thrush (D)              |
|  The Cabane de Chouvet (E) |  The Briançon plum tree (F)              |
|  Les Choulières (G)        |  Ailefroide (H)                          |
|  The golden eagle (I)      |  The penstock pipe (J)                   |
|  Cool meadow (K)           |  The grey alder (L)                      |
|  The Gyr (M)               |  The ski resort of Pelvoux-Vallouise (N) |
|  Silver spike grass (O)    |  Forest of pine and oak (P)              |

 Saint-Étienne de Vallouise Church  
(Q)

 The Montbrison massif (R)

 The narrow-leaved lavender (S)

# All useful information

## **Advices**

The N94 is a dangerous and busy road, take care when crossing it.

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>

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 N94.

### Advised parking

L'Isle de Prelles campsite car park, Saint-Martin-de-Queyrières

# 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.

## RNR Partias

Sensitivity period: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, Decembre

Contact:

LPO PACA antenne de Briançon  
0492219417  
hautes-alpes@lpo.fr

The Partias Regional Nature Reserve is managed by the LPO PACA and the commune of Puy Saint André. This is a protected and regulated area: dog leash, forbidden harvest, stay on marked trails, climbing prohibited except Meurseult pilami track, etc.

## 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 !

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

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de la zone à une distance de survol de 300m sol soit à une altitude minimale de 2380m.

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>

## **Black grouse - winter**

Sensitivity period: January, February, March, April, Decembre

Contact: LPO Paca antenne des Hautes-Alpes

0492219417

hautes-alpes@lpo.fr

<http://paca.lpo.fr/partias>

Deux secteurs de zone d'hivernage du Tétras lyre sont identifiés sur leur partie amont par des cordes et fanions dans le secteur du Jeu de Paume / sous la Croix d'Aquila. La montée se fait par le col de la Trancoulette, puis en contournant le rocher jaune, et la descente ces zones sont évitées en rejoignant les couloirs. Zones mises en place en 2013 par la LPO, gestionnaire de la Réserve Naturelle Régionale Partias, en concertation avec les skieurs locaux + CAF de Briançon, Compagnie des guides Oisan-Ecrins, etc.

## **i 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 field maple (A)

This is the smallest member of the family of forest maples, growing to a height of 8 to 15 metres. It can live for up to 150 years. Its leaves have five round lobes; they are winged with wings sticking out in opposite directions. It is not fussy as to the dampness of the soil and it can withstand cold temperatures and drought. It is also an excellent bee forage plant, which can be enhanced by the proximity of a hive.

Attribution : Nicollet Bernard - Parc national des Écrins

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## 🐹 The marmot (B)

In the alpine pastures, the iconic marmot utters a loud high-pitched whistle to warn its neighbours of approaching danger: the golden eagle is on the prowl! This medium-sized rodent prefers to live in the high-mountain grasslands in family groups. Their favourite pastimes are gnawing, digging, taking a siesta in the sunshine and performing somersaults. In the winter, the marmot takes refuge in its burrow where it hibernates. It is only seen between the months of April and October. It marks the boundary of its territory by rubbing its cheeks on the rocks or leaving droppings.

Attribution : Thibault Blais Photographie

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## ✿ The woolly berardia (C)

The woolly berardia is a plant that grows approximately 10 centimetres tall and has a short, almost non-existent stem. This perennial member of the Asteracea family grows in limestone and schist screes. It has veined oval, woolly leaves which are covered in soft hairs. Its 4 to 7 cm compact head with pale yellow flowers stands up from its centre.

Attribution : Cédric Dentan - Parc national des Écrins

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## ✿ The common rock thrush (D)

In May, a melodious song rings out from the cliff top. It's the song of the common rock thrush, appropriately named and a wonderful bird. Although the female is rather dull (an advantage when egg-sitting) the male sports an orange underside and a blue-grey head. A trans-Saharan migratory bird, every year it returns to the mountains of Southern Europe where it frequents the rocky, sunlit slopes. It is not very common and is in decline, so spotting it is even more special!

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - Parc national des Écrins

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## 🏠 The Cabane de Chouvet (E)

Discover one of the most famous forest cabins in the Vallouise valley, the Cabane de Chouvet. Surrounded by larches, Scots pines and black pines, this unmanned cabin stands at an altitude of 1,860 metres. On this slope, the mountain land has been under restoration since 1914 to prevent erosion and to combat deforestation.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - Parc national des Écrins

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## ✿ The Briançon plum tree (F)

Not far from the Cabane de Chouvet, some small trees grow which are covered in white flowers in the springtime. This is the Briançon plum tree. Later in the year, it will produce golden plums with a tart flavour, carried on a very short stalk. A species endemic to the southwestern Alps, it has been prized by man because the kernel inside its stone produced a very fine oil, called huile de marmotte (marmot oil).

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins

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## 🍷 Les Choulières (G)

The French children's song *Savez-vous planter les choux?* (Do you know how to plant cabbage?) is very appropriate here! In any event, the name Choulières is believed to be a reference to a place planted with cabbages and, by extension, a place where vegetables are grown. The phasing out of crop cultivation in the mountains has altered the landscape: the hay meadows and fields are now used as grazing meadows for increasingly large flocks of sheep.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins

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## Ailefroide (H)

Formerly an alpine pasture hamlet, Ailefroide lies at the foot of Mont Pelvoux, surrounded by larch woods and granite cliffs. It is the last hamlet in the valley, at the confluence of the valleys of Saint-Pierre and Celse Nière. The name Ailefroide is thought to originate from the term Alpe froide or “cold Alp”, a reference to the lack of sun here in the winter. It is the starting point of numerous trails and is a paradise for climbers. Ailefroide is a legendary destination for mountaineers: a stele commemorates the conquest of Mont Pelvoux in 1828.

Attribution : Jan Novak Photography



## The golden eagle (I)

A pair of eagles lives in the Ailefroide valley. Every pair has a very large hunting territory, which means there can be no more than one pair in a small valley of this size. This pair has built several eyries in the cliff walls around Ailefroide: just one is occupied every year, after a few refurbishments. The eyries are located at the lower altitudes of the hunting territory, so that the eagles can easily bring heavy prey back to the eaglet.

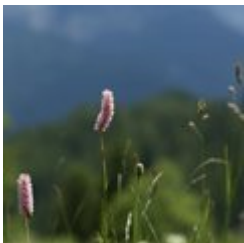
Attribution : Pascal Saulay - Parc national des Écrins



## The penstock pipe (J)

This penstock pipe carries water to the Le Claux hydroelectric power plant, located just below here, which exploits the water from the Les Écrins massif. The power plant was inaugurated in 1932. At the time, the electricity generated was primarily used to power the aluminium factory located in L'Argentière-La Bessée.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



## Cool meadow (K)

The track passes through a meadow area, which is categorised as "cool" because of the ground water content there. A botanist quickly recognises this type of meadow through its range of plant life and, in particular, the presence of bistort, a bottle brush-shaped plant bearing a dense spike of tiny pink flowers at the top of its stem. It is also called langue de boeuf ("ox tongue" in English) because of the shape of its leaves.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins



## The grey alder (L)

In the valleys of the Alps and the Jura, the grey alder often grows in place of the black alder, present in many parts of France. Like its cousin, it grows on riversides and plays an important role in stabilising the banks. If it is cut down, its wood is bright orange in colour. But why cut it down?

Attribution : Nicollet Bernard - Parc national des Écrins



## The Gyr (M)

Humans are decidedly bizarre animals: they build, knock down and start again. To protect the new infrastructures of Pelvoux, the Gyr was dammed. But, not able to flow as it did before, it deepened its bed, thus placing the foundations in danger of damage. And so works were carried out to widen its bed, allowing it to flow more naturally. This is also more favourable for biodiversity, as well as protecting the developed urban areas.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins



## The ski resort of Pelvoux-Vallouise (N)

The route first leads through the small ski resort of Pelvoux-Vallouise, built in 1982. Very family-focused, in winter it's the ideal place for young children to learn to ski, with small lifts lower down, while their big brothers and sisters can ski higher up.

Attribution : Pelvoux Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins



## Silver spike grass (O)

A grass grows in large clumps on the embankment: silver spike grass. It is adapted to stony, dry and sunny ground. Its inflorescences reflecting silvery-gold glints create a beautiful effect, but they are particularly noticeable in the late summer, when it forms large shimmering bouquets in the evening sunlight.

Attribution : Nicolas Marie-Geneviève - Parc national des Écrins



## 🌲 Forest of pine and oak (P)

The path now alternates between cleared areas and forested areas. This forest contains Scots pine (recognisable by its orangey coloured trunk, especially at the top), downy oak (its young branches and leaf undersides covered with a fine down), and larch. The Scots pine and downy oak are very drought-tolerant (it is very limey soil here) and can also withstand low temperatures, and they are typical of the montane zone in this part of the Alps.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins



## 🏠 Saint-Étienne de Vallouise Church (Q)

Listed and protected as an historic monument since 22 October 1913, the church dedicated to Saint Stephen is one of the most beautiful religious edifices in Hautes-Alpes. It is typical of the Romanesque churches in the Briançon region built in the second half of the 15th century, although its exact construction date is still uncertain.

Attribution : Thierry Maillot - PNE



## 📍 The Montbrison massif (R)

The path offers a beautiful overall view of the limestone massif of Montbrison, overlooking the hamlets of Pelvoux with the peaks of the Cime de la Condamine, the Tête des Lauzières, the Pic de Montbrison and the Tête d'Amont.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



## 🌸 The narrow-leaved lavender (S)

The path crosses some limestone screes. It is a dry environment. The narrow-leaved lavender grows in sunny areas, a reminder that the Pays de Écrins is in the Southern Alps after all! Not to be confused with the lavandin, this plant naturally grows on rocky slopes in the mountains of the Midi.

Attribution : Jean-Pierre Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins