

# The Ailefroide loop

Vallouise - Vallouise-Pelvoux



Torrent de Celse Nière (CCPE)



## *A pleasant circuit leading back to Ailefroide*

Of course, it is possible to reach Ailefroide directly by car, but making your way there on foot makes your discovery of the area more interesting. Surrounded by high walls of granite, a paradise for climbers, this former alpine pasture hamlet has lost none of its charm, even without the houses that once stood here. Very lively in the summer, the village quieters down again at the end of August.

### Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 3 h 30

Length : 7.2 km

Trek ascent : 271 m

Difficulty : Easy

Type : Loop

Themes : Fauna, Flora

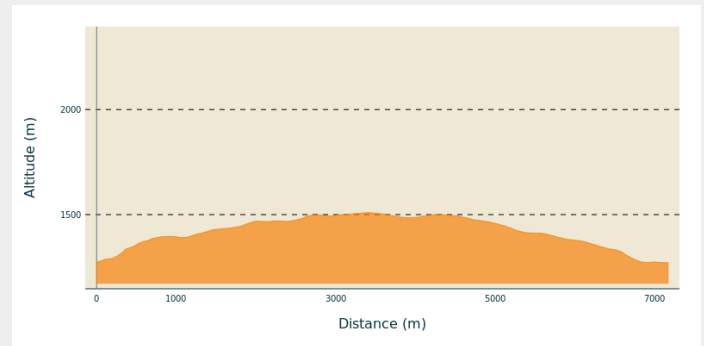
# Trek

**Departure** : Car park in Les Claux

**Arrival** : Car park in Les Claux

**Cities** : 1. Vallouise-Pelvoux

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1272 m Max elevation 1511 m




*Waysigning: one green dot and one white dot*




From the car park in Les Claux, follow the path to Ailefroide via Pra Chapel, which runs uphill just to the right of the penstock pipe. A short distance further up, the route crosses the pipe and continues along a lovely paved path edged by walls and stones. It passes close to the chalets of Le Serre and then Pra chapel, crosses an avalanche path (see recommendations) and comes to the chalets uphill from Ailefroide.

1. Take the road on the left to cross the bridge and start to descend again on this road, which runs right through the hamlet.
2. Follow a narrow road which leads into the campsite and continues along a path which crosses the Celse-Nière mountain stream.
3. After the footbridge, take the path on the left which joins the Ailefroide road further on. The path leads back down to the car park in Les Claux, cutting across the road several times.

# On your path...



-  The penstock pipe (A)
-  Ailefroide (C)
-  The larch (E)

-  The aspen (B)
-  The golden eagle (D)
-  The willow tit (F)

# All useful information

## **Advices**

In the avalanche path, you have to cross a mountain stream (no footbridge) This mountain stream is relatively easy to cross, but it can swell in early summer due to snow melt, on days of heavy rain or after a storm.

Exercise caution when crossing the road, in particular on the downward path.

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](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

13.5 km from L'Argentière-La Bessée, take the D994E.

### Advised parking

Car park in Les Claux, just before the tunnel

# 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 !

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>

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## Black grouse - winter

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

Contact: Parc national des Ecrins - 0492402010

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

## 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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## The penstock pipe (A)

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

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## The aspen (B)

The track runs close to an aspen wood. This tree has a smooth, greenish trunk and rounded, crenelated leaves which take on magnificent colours in autumn. The stem, or petiole, of aspen leaves is flat and twisted, so it can be caught by the slightest breeze making the foliage «quake» hence its common name, the quaking aspen. It grows in places where the soil is quite damp.

Attribution : Marc Corail - Parc national des Écrins

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## Ailefroide (C)

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 (D)

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

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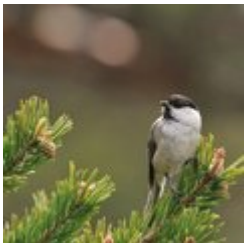


## The larch (E)

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 : Christophe Albert - Parc national des Écrins

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## The willow tit (F)

A soft call, a series of short repetitive notes, is heard in the forest. It's the call of the willow tit, also known as the alpine tit. As for its plumage, it has a greyish brown back, beige underparts, a white head with a black cap and a little black bib. It lives in mountain forests. It is the double of the marsh tit, which tends to live below 1,400 metres.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

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