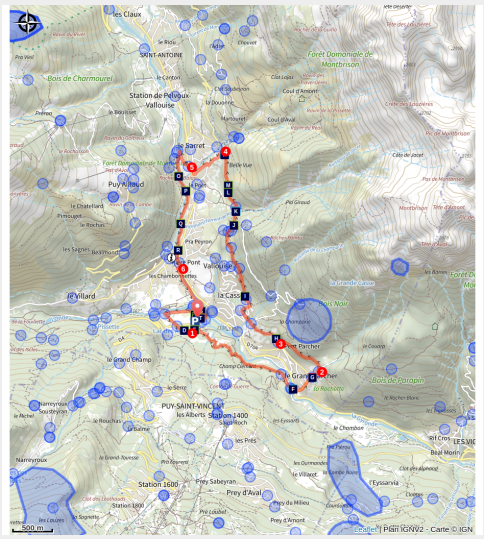
Exploring the hamlets of Vallouise and Pelvoux

Parc national des Ecrins

Église de Vallouise (Thibaut Blais)



A trail to discover the secret charm of the hamlets of the Pays des Écrins.

“You think you know the hamlets of Vallouise and Pelvoux when you go there by road. But approaching them via the footpaths is another experience altogether. Not to mention the pleasure of walking on these little-trod paths.” Marie-Geneviève Nicolas, park ranger at the Parc National des Écrins

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 5 h 30

Length : 11.0 km

Trek ascent : 351 m

Difficulty : Easy

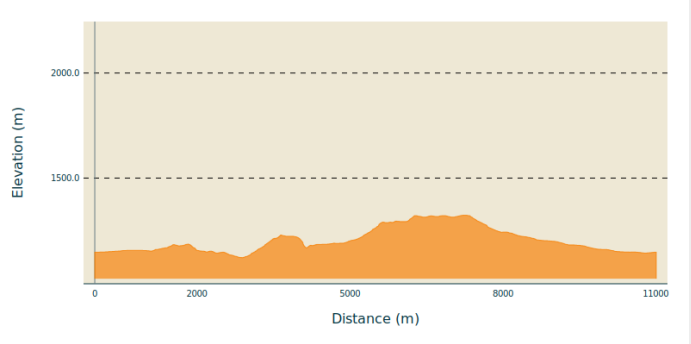
Type : Loop

Themes : Fauna, Flora

Trek

Departure : Park Centre ("Maison du Parc"), Vallouise
Arrival : Park Centre ("Maison du Parc"), Vallouise
Cities : 1. Vallouise-Pelvoux

Altimetric profile



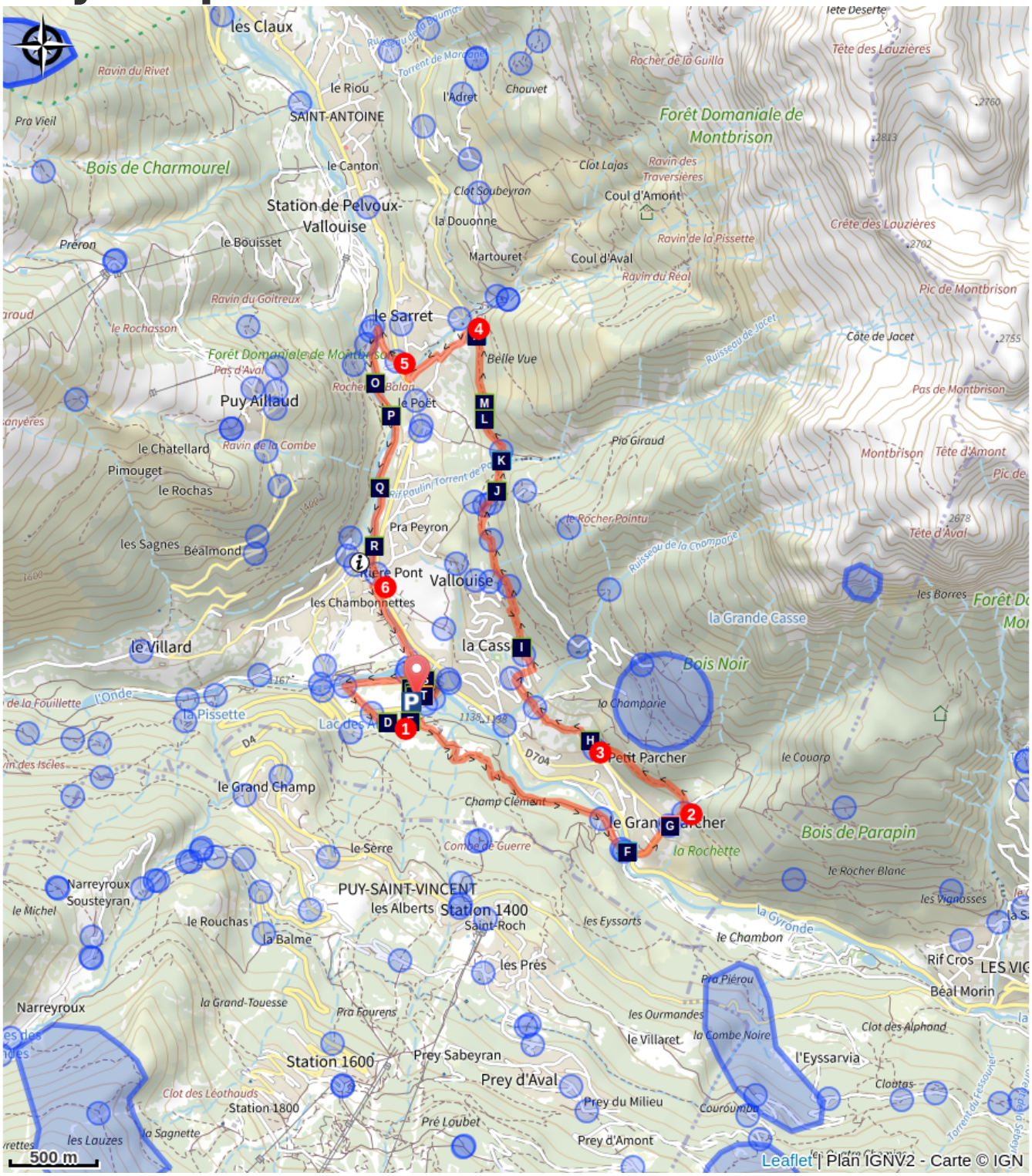
Min elevation 1121 m Max elevation 1323 m

Waysigning: one green dot and once white dot

From the Park Centre ("Maison du Parc"), follow the road to Puy Saint-Vincent.

1. Take the path on the left towards Les Parchers and continue heading in this direction. The track runs above the Gyronde and then comes to a bridge below the hamlet of Le Grand Parcher. Cross this bridge and then cross the D994E (take care) and follow the narrow road leading up to this hamlet.
2. A short distance beyond the chapel, take a path on the left to Petit Parcher. Join the road right and follow this for a short distance.
3. Take the path for La Casse. Carry on up through La Casse and, at the top where the houses come to an end, take the path leading to the Rocher Pointu. Further on, continue straight ahead towards the Rif Paulin and Pelvoux-Le Sarret. Cross the Rif Paulin mountain stream over a sill and then continue along the canal.
4. Head down towards Pelvoux - Le Poët. At the lower end of the hamlet, cross the mountain stream La Juliane via a narrow road and then drop down to the D994E.
5. Cross the D994E (take care) to take the track opposite which leads to the Gyr mountain stream. Stay on the left-hand bank and follow the track leading to Vallouise.
6. Cross the Gyr to carry on along its right-hand bank, passing close to the campsite, to return to the Park Centre.

On your path...



- The sun bird (A)
- The wood nuthatch (B)
- The ash tree (C)
- The Alpine copse snail (D)
- Wood cranesbill (E)
- Thne Gyronde (F)
- The hamlet of Parcher (G)
- The great globe thistle (H)
- The smooth snake (I)
- The owly sulphur (J)
- Mountain land rehabilitation projects (K)
- The Montpellier thistle (L)

- The acanthus-leaved thistle (M)
- The aspen (O)
- Forest on the water's edge (Q)
- The gerris (S)
- The role of the canals (N)
- The white-throated dipper (P)
- The trout (R)
- The Vallouise Park Centre (T)

All useful information

⚠ Advices

It is possible to complete only some sections of this loop. In particular, at the Rif Paulin you can drop back down to Vallouise via Pra Peyron or, instead, park at the Vallouise cemetery car park, set off from Rivière Pont, climb up via Pra Peyron to reach the Rif Paulin and, from there, carry on towards Le Poët and return to Vallouise following the described route.

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

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

Advised parking

Park Centre car park, Vallouise

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 un distance minimale de 300m sol quand vous la survolez soit 1790m d'altitude !

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...

The sun bird (A)

So what is the identity of this sun bird? It's the royal, or golden, eagle of course. Although it is telling the time here, in the surrounding natural landscape it hunts marmots. But what becomes of it in winter when the marmots hibernate deep in their burrows? It's a lean time. It has to make do with a hare or ptarmigan, and in particular the carcasses of chamois which have not survived the winter or have been killed in an avalanche.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - Parc national des Écrins

The wood nuthatch (B)

With its strident calls, this little acrobat gets itself noticed. With a blue-grey back and a black stripe over its eyes, it works its way down the tree trunks upside down in search of insects. It nests in old woodpecker nests but if the diameter of the entrance is too large it reduces it with mud, to protect its young from predators. Hence its French name torchepot (a reference to edging the rim of a vessel).

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins

The ash tree (C)

Even in winter, the ash can be recognised from its large black leaf buds. The leaves are compound. A pioneer species that grows easily, the ash has long been used by man for everyday needs: its foliage was used to feed cattle and its hard, flexible wood was used to make a variety of objects such as tool handles. Its French name frêne often appears in local place names too: Freissinières (frêne noir - black ash), Le Freney etc. Evidence of its historical importance to human communities..

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - Parc national des Écrins

The Alpine copse snail (D)

On the damp banks of the stream, hidden in the grass, is a snail with a beautiful golden brown shell speckled with brown, decorated with a dark spiral stripe. It has a black body. The alpine copse snail is relatively rare and, as its name suggests, it is found in the Alps. It is a sub-species of the ordinary copse snail, which is present across Europe.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins

Wood cranesbill (E)

The path is edged with large clumps of a plant with purple flowers, the wood cranesbill. The leaves are palmate and divided into 5 to 7 incised and indented lobes, This common plant grows in meadows and cool woods. The «geraniums» we see on balconies are in fact pelargoniums, distant cousins originally from South Africa and cultivated for ornamental purposes.

Attribution : Marc Corail - Parc national des Écrins

Thne Gyronde (F)

No, we're not in south-west France where the Gironde flows! The Gyronde (spelt with a «y»!) is the river that flows between Vallouise and L'Argentière-La Bessée, where it flows into the Durance. It originates from the Gyr and Onde mountain streams which merge in Vallouise.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins

The hamlet of Parcher (G)

The hamlet of Grand Parcher stands on the alluvial cone formed by the Grand Parcher mountain stream, and on either side of it. It is made up of several old houses and the seventeenth-century chapel of Saint-André. It has two sun dials painted onto its walls. One of them bears the saying HORA INCERTA CUNTIS, ULTIMA MULTIS (This hour is uncertain for all, it is the last hour for many). Food for thought!

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins

The great globe thistle (H)

On the edge of the path grows a tall plant with quite wide and smooth leaves, and completely round whitish or very pale blue flower clusters. This is the great globe thistle, a relatively rare plant. It is a cousin of the southern globe thistle which can be seen everywhere in dry places. This one is smaller and has clusters of bluish flowers and spiny leaves.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins

The smooth snake (I)

The smooth snake is a non-venomous colubrid snake, which adopted the bad idea of resembling the venomous vipera aspis, which has led to it being killed indiscriminately. We must remember, however, that both the vipera aspis and the smooth snake are protected species. It can be recognised in particular by the black stripe over its eye and on its round pupil (which helps to distinguish colubrids from vipers, which have a slit pupil).

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins

The owly sulphur (J)

A strange insect, part butterfly, part dragonfly, with large black antennae, transparent wings tinted with yellow or white and with well-defined veining, flies over the meadow during the hottest part of the day. It is the owly sulphur. Owlflies are members of the Neuroptera (net-winged) order and are cousins of ants and lacewings. They are predators of small insects, flies in particular.

Attribution : Blandine Delenatte - Parc national des Écrins

Mountain land rehabilitation projects (K)

Stream correction dams have been built by RTM (Mountain Land Rehabilitation), a branch of the National Forestry Agency. The purpose of these structures is to limit erosion and mountain stream flooding. The RTM has been in existence for a long time, set up in the late nineteenth century. At that time, the slopes where much more sparsely wooded than they are today, and erosion was a very significant problem.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins

The Montpellier thistle (L)

A large plant grows along the canal side; a sort of thistle although it is not spiky: the Montpellier thistle. Its oval, pointed leaves are edged with large, stiff but non-spiky cilia. Its flowers are pink. In France, it is only found in the Alps and the Pyrenees and a few departments in the south. Associated with wet areas, this species has become rare in many regions because of damage to its habitat.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

The acanthus-leaved thistle (M)

This is a hot, west-exposed slope with rocky ground. The plant life reflects this situation: the narrow-leaved lavender and acanthus-leaved thistle grow here. The latter looks like a large sun with its very big flower head which quickly turns golden and its leaves radiating out around it. It often used to be hung on house doors... but much better to leave it lighting up the stony meadows!

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins

The role of the canals (N)

Irrigation of meadows and private gardens; preservation of traditions; the promotion of social contact through collective canal maintenance operations carried out by local people; development of canals to create trails for tourists and locals... The canals have fulfilled a variety of roles, hence the benefit of conserving and maintaining them.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins

The aspen (O)

On the right, a stand of aspens with smooth, greenish trunks and rounded, crenelated leaves 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.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins

The white-throated dipper (P)

Perched on a rock in the middle of the river, a squat bird with a short tail, brown with a large white bib, bobs up and down with his tail in the air. He then dives and only reappears a few moments later. This is how this bird hunts, diving into the water and then walking against the current along the river bed searching for aquatic insect larvae, small crustaceans or small fish, lifting pebbles with its beak to dislodge them.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Ecrins

Forest on the water's edge (Q)

This small wood is a fragment of the riparian forest: natural forest growing adjacent to a body of water. Reduced everywhere due to urbanisation, this type of forest is made up of alder, willow and oak, and also poplar, birch and aspen, among others

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins

The trout (R)

But what's the angler angling for? The brown trout of course! This is the mountain fish par excellence, with a streamlined body to withstand the current more efficiently and light brown skin speckled with black and red. It lives in cold, oxygen-rich waters.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins

The gerris (S)

Some strange creatures are moving jerkily over the surface of the water: Gerrises, insects related to bedbugs. Like a true insect, they have six legs and they «skate» across the water using their intermediate and hind legs which are covered in hairs to make them water-resistant. They are carnivorous and anything on the water surface, dead or alive, is good to eat! They catch their prey with the forelegs, sucking up the juices with their strong proboscis!

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins

The Vallouise Park Centre (T)

Vallouise Pelvoux is a municipality within the Parc National des Écrins. Renovated in 2014, the Park Centre ("Maison du Parc") houses the offices of the local Park staff and has a spacious visitor reception area. It offers a permanent interactive exhibition inviting discovery of the territory and its heritage features, a temporary exhibition space on the upper floor and an audiovisual room (screenings and talks). It is currently in the process of applying for the "Tourisme et Handicap" tourism and disability label. Admission is free and so, too, are most of the activities in offer.

Attribution : Thierry Maillet - Parc national des Écrins