

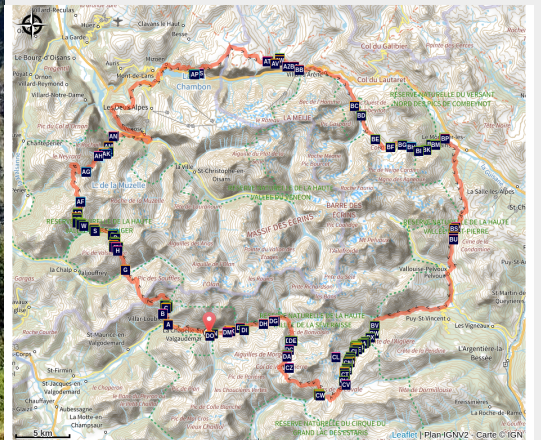
GR®54 - Tour de l'Oisans et des Écrins depuis La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar, par le GR®54B et le GR®54C



Valgaudemar - La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar



randonneurs au lac du Lauvitel (Denis Fiat - PNE)



Les variantes du GR®54 sont ici valorisées avec le Tour de l'Oisans et des Écrins au départ de la Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar, pour explorer davantage de paysages emblématiques des Écrins.

S'engager sur l'un des GR® les plus difficiles de France, voilà le défi que doivent relever les randonneurs avertis. Au programme, 14 cols, près de 12 000 mètres de dénivelé et 190 kilomètres à parcourir sur 12 jours dans le majestueux massif des Écrins. Quittez le chemin traditionnel et profitez de nombreux paysages à couper le souffle en empruntant les variantes du GR®54 sur 3 étapes du circuit.

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 12 days

Length : 187.7 km

Trek ascent : 11702 m

Difficulty : Hard

Type : Multi-day trekking

Themes : Fauna, Flora, Hut, Lake and glacier

Trek

Departure : La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar

Arrival : La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar

Markings :  GR

Cities : 1. La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar

2. Villar-Loubière

3. Valjouffrey

4. Le Périer

5. Le Bourg-d'Oisans

6. Les Deux Alpes

7. Mizoën

8. La Grave

9. Villar-d'Arêne

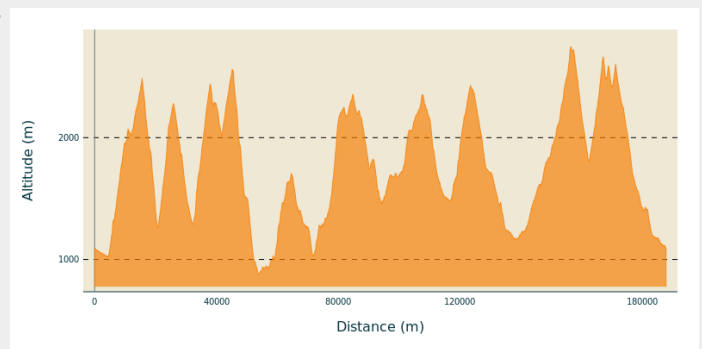
10. Le Monétier-les-Bains

11. Vallouise-Pelvoux

12. L'Argentière-la-Bessée

13. Champoléon

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 877 m Max elevation 2747 m

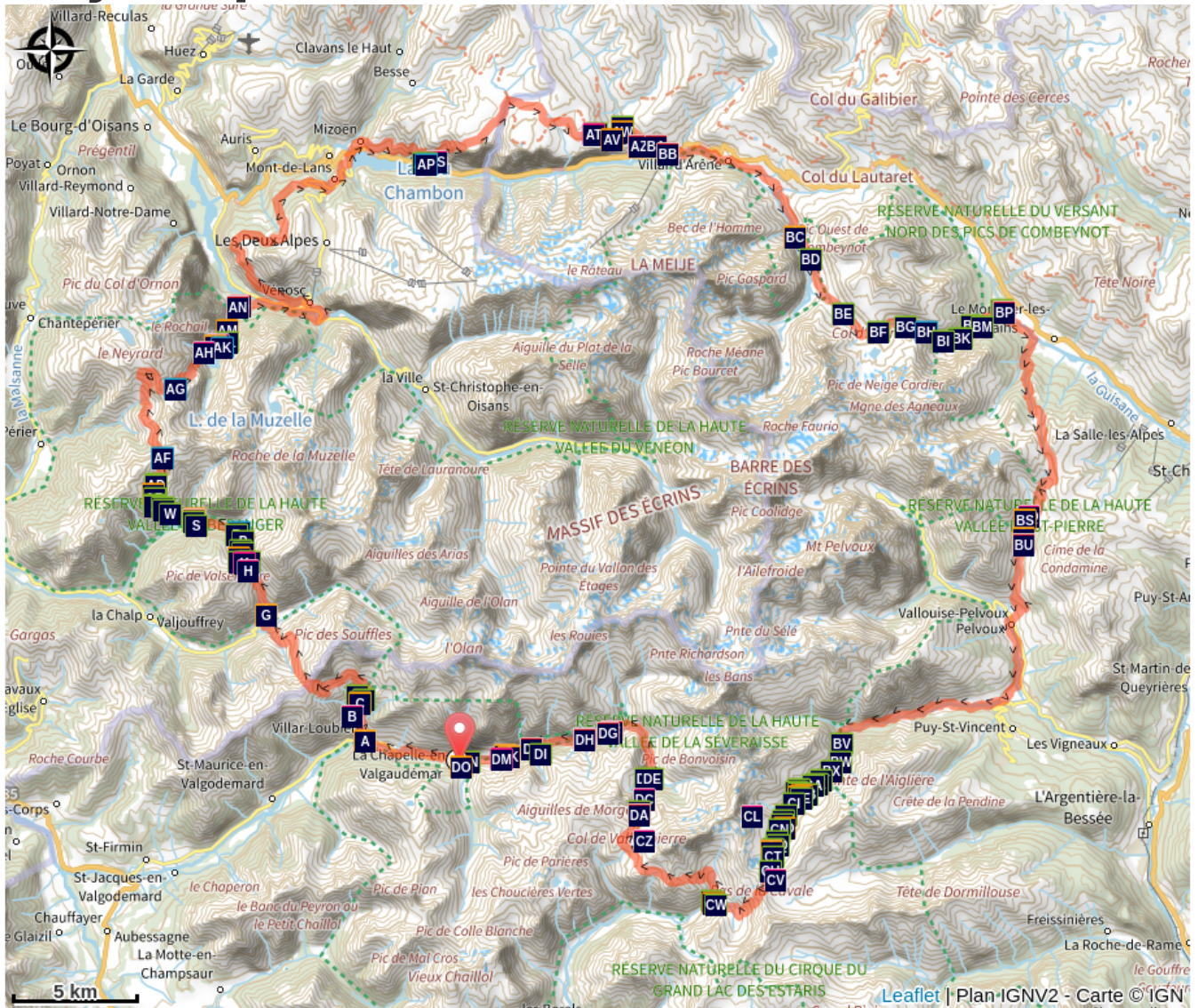
Au départ de La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar, le Tour de l'Oisans et des Écrins débute en douceur le long de la rivière de la Séveraisse avant d'arpenter le versant sud du Pic des Souffles offrant une vue imprenable sur la vallée du Valgaudemar. L'étape du lendemain consiste à franchir l'impressionnant col de la Vaurze. Tout aussi impressionnante est la descente sur le Valjouffrey sauvage. Le col de Côte Belle, bien vert, rejoint le village de Valsenestre, dans le vallon du Béranger. Cette fin d'étape est une halte salvatrice avant de repartir sur la variante B du GR®54 constituant la plus longue étape du parcours en terme de durée et l'une des plus difficiles de part les importants dénivelés. La variante, par le col de la Romeïou, permet de longer plusieurs lacs dont l'un des lieux les plus emblématiques du côté Oisans des Écrins : le lac du Lauvitel (1530 m d'altitude). L'étape suivante se rapproche alors de la célèbre station des Deux Alpes sur les deux versants (Vénosc et Mont-de-Lans) reliée par la variante C du GR®54, et rejoint le joli village de Mizoën. La suite s'élève en altitude à flanc de montagne, longeant le grand lac du Chambon situé en contrebas, pour rejoindre les refuges au pied du plateau d'Emparis. Au-dessus, le col de Souchet offre une vue cinq étoiles sur la Meije. Près de 1000 mètres de dénivelé négatif permettent de rejoindre La Grave. Il faut ici continuer le long de La Romanche jusqu'à ses sources sur l'alpage de Villar d'Arêne. Arrivé au col d'Arsine, le spectacle est saisissant. L'univers de haute montagne invite à rendre visite aux lacs glacières d'Arsine avant d'entamer une longue descente le long du torrent du Petit Tabuc jusqu'à la vallée de la Guisane et Monétier-les-Bains. Objectif: La Vallouise par le col de l'Eychauda et les paisibles chalets de Chambran. Huit kilomètres de route carrossable le long du torrent de l'Onde et voici l'alpage de Jas Lacroix. Le passage du Col de l'Aup Martin, le plus haut de tout l'itinéraire, est toujours un moment fort de l'aventure, et la descente sur le Pré de la Chaumette est tout aussi sportive. Pour atteindre le lac de Vallonpierre pas moins de trois cols taillés dans le schiste sont à négocier avec prudence. La dernière étape consiste en une longue descente dans la

vallée du Valgaudemar où le sentier rejoint La Chapelle en Valgaudemar pour cloturer le GR®.

Stages :

- 1.** De La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar au refuge des Souffles (Départ GR)
9.8 km / 967 m D+ / 4 h 30
- 2.** From Les Souffles to Le Désert-en-Valjouffrey (stage of the GR 54)
11.0 km / 639 m D+ / 5 h 30
- 3.** From Le Désert-en-Valjouffrey to Valsenestre via Col de Côte Belle (stage of the GR 54)
11.5 km / 1025 m D+ / 5 h
- 4.** De Valsenestre à la Danchère par le col de la Roumeïou
20.6 km / 1742 m D+ / 10 h 30
- 5.** De la Danchère à Mizoen en passant par Vénosc
20.6 km / 1088 m D+ / 8 h 30
- 6.** De Mizoen aux refuges des Mouterres et du Fay
8.7 km / 1101 m D+ / 5 h
- 7.** From Mouterres to L'Alpe de Villar d'Arène (stage of the GR 54)
23.1 km / 1062 m D+ / 8 h 30
- 8.** From Alpe de Villar d'Arène to Monêtier-les-Bains (stage of the GR 54)
14.0 km / 306 m D+ / 4 h 30
- 9.** From Monêtier-les-Bains to Vallouise via Col de l'Eychauda (stage of the GR 54)
21.7 km / 995 m D+ / 7 h
- 10.** From Vallouise to Le Pré de la Chaumette via Col de l'Aup Martin (stage of the GR 54)
24.3 km / 1621 m D+ / 9 h
- 11.** From Pré de la Chaumette to Lake Vallonpierre (stage of the GR 54)
10.9 km / 1162 m D+ / 6 h
- 12.** Du lac de Vallonpierre à la Chapelle en Valgaudemar (arrivée du GR)
14.4 km / 72 m D+ / 3 h 30

On your path...



- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Villar-Loubière windmill (AA) |  Arraches (AB) |
|  Sheep on the mountain pasture (AC) |  Black Grouse (AD) |
|  Variety of the natural environment (AE) |  Variety of plant life (AF) |
|  Paravalanche (AG) |  New path (AH) |
|  Viviparous Lizard (AI) |  Edelweiss (AJ) |
|  Landscape of the cirque de Valsenestre (AK) |  European violet willow (AL) |
|  Flock of sheep (AM) |  Alpine columbine (AN) |
|  Pleurospermum austriacum (AO) |  Monkshood (AP) |
|  Timber dams (AQ) |  Tall herb fringe communities (AR) |
|  Natural Hayfields (AS) |  Alpine garden (AT) |
|  Viewpoint over the hamlet of Vassenestre (AU) |  Restored village (AV) |
|  Alpine ibex and golden eagle (AW) |  Giant scabiosa (AX) |

-  The aspic viper (AY)
-  Mountain Apollo (BA)
-  Combe Guyon pastures (BC)
-  Common rock thrush (BE)
-  Lac de plan Vianney (BG)
-  Chalets at altitude (BI)
-  Lauvitel Lake (BK)
-  Traditional Paving (BM)
-  Danchère Chapel (BO)
-  Purple Loosestrife (BQ)
-  Petrifying Fountain (BS)
-  Small Apollo (BU)

-  Agricultural work in Autumn and Winter (BW)
-  Chazelet perch (BY)

-  La Grave terraces (CA)

-  Romanche valley, Charles Bertier (CC)
-  Felwort (CE)
-  Butterflies and moths (CG)
-  Ring ouzel (CI)
-  Golden eagle, the Ecrins' mascot (CK)
-  White-throated dipper (CM)
-  Whiskered bat (CO)

-  The front of the nappes (CQ)
-  Evolution of pastoralism (CS)
-  Chambran chalets (CU)
-  Southerly burnet (CW)
-  Cypress spurge (CY)
-  Green alder (DA)
-  Chamois (DC)

-  Monk's Rhubarb (DE)
-  The alpine ibex (DG)

-  White throated dipper (DI)
-  Common frog (DK)
-  Yellow (mountain) saxifrage (DM)
-  Cattle (DO)

-  Orange Lis (AZ)
-  White asphodel (BB)
-  Griffon vulture (BD)
-  Labarre Lake (BF)
-  Vaugnerites (BH)
-  Natural Dam (BJ)
-  Marmots (BL)
-  Danchère Hamlet (BN)
-  Lovitel Lake (BP)
-  Common Midwife Toad (BR)
-  The Emparis Plateau (BT)
-  Agricultural work in Spring and Summer (BV)
-  White-throated dipper (BX)

-  Sainte-Anne du Chazelet oratory (BZ)
-  Notre-Dame de l'Assomption Church (CB)
-  The marmots' "bosse" (CD)

-  Skylark (CF)
-  Water colour in the meanders (CH)
-  A flying predator (CJ)
-  Chamois (CL)

-  Lover of old stones (CN)
-  Saint Claude's church in Le Casset (CP)
-  Evolution of pastoralism (CR)
-  Chambran Hamlet (CT)
-  Silver birch (CV)
-  Chamois ragwort (CX)
-  "Popeye" grasshopper (CZ)
-  Black redstart (DB)
-  Pastoral activity in the Selle valley, dale (DD)
-  The ibex, a survivor (DF)
-  The pastoral hut and the walkers' shelter (DH)
-  Astrantia minor (DJ)
-  Verdonne Point (DL)
-  Blueberry (DN)
-  Alpine lady's-mantle (DP)

-  Red ants (DQ)
-  Walls (DS)
-  Chickweed (DU)
-  Bearded vulture (DW)
-  Red-billed chough (DY)
-  The Vallonpierre refuge (EA)
-  Impressive geology (EC)
-  High altitude birds (EE)

-  Walled paths (EG)
-  Golden eagle (EI)
-  Toponymy in the Valgaudemar area (EK)
-  Waterfalls and view points over the valley (EM)
-  Sundial by Rémy Potey (EO)

-  Rampion (DR)
-  Marmot (DT)
-  Schist sheets (DV)
-  Chaumette Meadow (DX)
-  The Sirac (DZ)
-  Alpine ibex (EB)
-  Marmot (ED)
-  Clot Xavier Blanc mountain refuge (EF)
-  "Toune" (EH)
-  Traditional dwellings (EJ)
-  An itinerary packed with history (EL)
-  Hayfields (EN)

All useful information

Herd protection dogs

In mountain pastures, protection dogs are there to protect the herds from predators (wolves, etc.).

When I hike I adapt my behavior by going around the herd and pausing for the dog to identify me.

Find out more about the actions to adopt with the article "[Protection dogs: a context and actions to adopt](#)".

Tell us about your meeting by answering this [survey](#).



Is in the midst of the park

The national park is an unrestricted natural area but subjected to regulations which must be known by all visitors.



Advices

La meilleure période pour réaliser ce tour s'étend de la fin juin à la mi-septembre.

Se renseigner sur les conditions météo et d'enneigement des cols en début d'été.

Certains passages, à la limite de la haute montagne, évoluent en terrain délicat.

Il est possible de bivouaquer le long du GR (voir réglementation du coeur du Parc national) ou de dormir dans des campings, hôtels, gîtes ou refuges.

Des étapes nécessitent d'être autonome en nourriture.

How to come ?

Transports

Depuis Gap et Grenoble:

Ligne de bus 4101 (<https://www.itinisere.fr/> ou <https://carsisere.auvergnerhonealpes.fr/>) Gap-Grenoble. Descendre à l'arrêt Saint-Firmin. De là, possibilité de prendre une navette estivale jusqu'à La Chapelle. Navette à réserver sur la billetterie du site de l'office de tourisme du Champsaur Valgaudemar : <https://www.champsaur-valgaudemar.com/> (billetterie qui ouvre début juillet).

Access

Sur la N85, après le pont des Richards, prendre à droite la D985a (vers Saint Firmin). La Chapelle est à environ 18 km après ce croisement.

Advised parking

A la sortie de village de La Chapelle

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.

Réserve intégrale du Lauvitel

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

Contact: Parc national des Écrins.

Réserve intégrale, accès interdit.

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>

Black grouse - winter

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

Contact: PN Ecrins BERGEON Jean-Pierre jean-pierre.bergeon@ecrins-parcnational.fr
QUELLIER Hélène helene.quellier@ecrins-parcnational.fr Membre de l OGM
ogm.vds@gmail.com ogm.amblard@gmail.com

Alpine ibex

Sensitivity period: June, July, August, September

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

Zone de présence du Bouquetin des Alpes

En période de mise bas et d'élevage des jeunes (juin à septembre) les bouquetins peuvent être très sensible au dérangement notamment en cas de survol à basse

altitude. Dans leur fuite les risques d'accidents sont multipliés. Merci de rester à bonne distance et d'éviter le survol de la 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

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

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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 et de privilégier un survol de la zone à une distance de survol de 300m sol soit à une altitude minimale de 2600m.

Bearded vulture

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

Contact: Parc National des Ecrins - Yoann Bunz- 06 99 77 37 65 yoann.bunz@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Le Rompeau

Le Gypaète barbu est une espèce très sensible au dérangement tout au long du cycle de reproduction. Dans les Alpes, la population est en installation suite aux réintroductions débutées en 1987. Le nombre de couples présent est encore faible.

Les Zones de Sensibilité Majeure (ZSM) Gypaète barbu sont désignées avec les acteurs locaux.

Vous visualisez les Zones cœur, toutes les activités sont à proscrire pendant la période sensible (du 1/11 au 31/08).

Attention aux réglementations (Parcs nationaux, Réserves naturelles...) qui s'imposent aux zones Gypaètes.

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 et de privilégier un survol de la zone à une distance de survol de 300m sol soit à une altitude minimale de 2500m.

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

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Golden eagle

Sensitivity period: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August

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julien.charron@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Nidification de l'Aigle royal

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Golden eagle

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Nidification de l'Aigle royal

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Golden eagle

Sensitivity period: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August

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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 !

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Golden eagle

Sensitivity period: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August

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Nidification de l'Aigle royal

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Golden eagle

Sensitivity period: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August

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

Nidification de l'Aigle royal

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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

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 et de privilégier un survol de la zone à une distance de survol de 300m sol soit à une altitude minimale de 2320m.

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 1910m d'altitude à une distance de 300m sol.

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 de 300m sol quand vous la survolez soit 1840m d'altitude !

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.

Attention le survol motorisé dans la zone cœur Parc National des Écrins est interdit en-dessous de 1000m sol et une réglementation spécifique s'applique au survol non-motorisé.

Voir la réglementation pour les survols non-motorisés : <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/les-survols-non-motorises>

Voir la réglementation pour les survol motorisés: <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/les-survols-non-motorises>

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.

Attention le survol motorisé dans la zone cœur Parc National des Écrins est interdit en-dessous de 1000m sol et une réglementation spécifique s'applique au survol non-motorisé.

Voir la réglementation pour les survols non-motorisés : <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/les-survols-non-motorises>

Voir la réglementation pour les survol motorisés : <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/les-survols-non-motorises>

Alpine ibex

Sensitivity period: June, July, August, September

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

Zone de présence du Bouquetin des Alpes

En période de mise bas et d'élevage des jeunes (juin à septembre) les bouquetins peuvent être très sensible au dérangement notamment en cas de survol à basse altitude. Dans leur fuite les risques d'accidents sont multipliés. Merci de rester à bonne distance et d'éviter le survol de la 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

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>

Information desks

Valgaudemar Park house

Ancien Asile Saint-Paul, 05800 La
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Tel : 04 92 55 25 19

<http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/>



Source



Parc national des Ecrins

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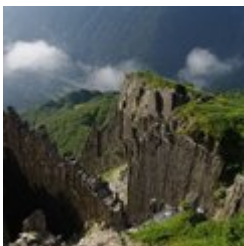
On your path...



Villar-Loubière windmill (AA)

As you begin the steep climb towards the Col de la Vaurze, don't miss the unusual Villar windmill, covered in vegetation. Built in 1838, this legacy from past times has been perfectly preserved with its curious horizontal wheel. It was still in use 50 years ago, milling wheat, but also nuts and rapeseed. It was restored in 1979 and is the last working windmill in the Valgaudemar valley.

Attribution : Florence Chalandon ©



Arraches (AB)

From the refuge, or during the climb, a peculiar geological formation may catch your eye on the opposite bank, above the old hamlet of Peines. Sedimentary rocks are trapped in the middle of crystalline formations where erosion has created a specific pattern of erosion that looks like a giant tiger has clawed at the rock. This morphology is what gave it the name Arraches.

Attribution : Olivier Wartuzelle - PNE



Sheep on the mountain pasture (AC)

During your walk, you might come across sheep on the mountain pastures. This is an old form of pastoralism, as proven by the dry stone enclosures that you will see. These are known as 'jas'. You will also notice a rock shelter near to the Clot. The sheep that are in these pastures belong to breeders from the valley or from the Bas Champsaur area.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE



Black Grouse (AD)

The upper limit of the forest is where you are likely to see the black grouse. The female has faint in her bland-coloured feathering that camouflages her in the vegetation, making her difficult to spot. On the other hand, the male, which is black and white with red "eyebrows", is not so private, particularly during the reproduction season when their cooing and hissing sounds echo in the mountain in the early morning.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - PNE



✿ Variety of the natural environment (AE)

This walk is a summary of south facing slopes in the Valgaudemar area. It starts in the warm scree that is more or less vegetated. It then progresses over lawns and moors of juniper, blueberries or bearberries... They give way to mountain ash, whitebeam and amelanchiers indicating that the forest will soon take over. Higher up, the beech forest casts shade on the walkers, next a beautiful larch forest is a sign that the forest environment will give way to the high altitude moors and lawns. The Lautier lake and the surrounding ponds are a haven for aquatic species. Still higher, is the realm of rocks and chamois.

Attribution : Bernard Guidoni - PNE



✿ Variety of plant life (AF)

There is a large variety of plant life along the itinerary, particularly on the slopes above the refuge, due to the exposure, the soil types and the altitude. Marjoram, lis, laserwort, houseleek, stinacrop, gentian, columbine, aconite and many others are present.

Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE

🍊 Paravalanche (AG)

In 1961 and 1962 big avalanches descended as far as the riverbed of the Bonne, threatening the houses in the hamlet at Désert en Vajouffrey. In 1982 major works enabled the construction of a paravalanche in order to increase the safety of the hamlet and the prairies, by diverting possible threats coming from the Côte-belle valley.

New path (AH)

The last section of the path allows access to the mountain pass has required numerous days of maintenance since its creation. In fact the unstable character of the soil associated with the steepness of the slope have made it necessary for the rangers to create wooden benches to contain the weight of the earth.. In Autumn 2012, it was decided to create a new section of the path by using part of a sheep track further East in the direction of the Marmes mountain pass. The work was carried out by a team creating 50 m per day during 26 days with pick-axes and courage. In total, it is a section measuring 1300 m which has been created, which makes the path less steep and much more stable.



Viviparous Lizard (AI)

The viviparous lizard can be distinguished from the wall lizard by its rounded muzzle. It is capable of living at an altitude of 2500m and you will most often see them in the meadows. It likes to warm itself in the sun, resting on the grass or the dry moss to hunt grasshoppers, crickets or spiders. During the winter, it buries under the ground where in a lethargic state it can survive negative temperatures. The viviparous lizard is named like this because the females keep their eggs in their abdomen up until they hatch. So the young are completely formed when they are born, it is an adaptation to the cold environment.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



Edelweiss (AJ)

In Latin léontopodium signifies the foot of the lion which is the general shape of the edelweiss. By looking at it closely, you realize that it is not one flower but a group of 5 to 10 flowers grouped in a flower head. The edelweiss is in the astéracées family like dandelions. It is a white plant, milky and perennial growing in rocky alpine meadows at subalpine level up to 2900 m. It often mixes with the Alpine Aster. The emblem of numerous guides, it symbolizes the high mountains and represents strength in the language of flowers...

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE



🏔 Landscape of the cirque de Valsenestre (AK)

From the mountain pass, climb the little summit above to better see the landscape which shows the cirque de Valsenestre : on the left is the Signal du Lauvitel (2901m) and the Clapier du Perron (3169m), the mountain pass at Muzelle (2613m) where the GR54 is. At this level you can really see a geological fault separating the Grandes Rousses which are granite from the Muzelle block in gneiss. On the right, the principal summits are the Roche de la Muzelle (3465 m), and the pointe Swan (3294m). Le col de Côte-Belle separates the Pic de Valsenestre (2752m) on the left from the l'Aiguille des Marmes (3046 m) on the right.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - PNE



🌸 European violet willow (AL)

This is a shrub in the subalpine tier. It is less than one metre tall and grows in small groups on the ubac. At lower altitude, it may grow taller. You can recognise it from a distance through its characteristic shiny, silvery colour and its growth in circular beds. Adult leaves feel very silky on both sides.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



🐏 Flock of sheep (AM)

A flock of sheep belonging to local farmers graze at the summit of the mountain pass near the Pic de Valsenestre. In summer these animals with their thick woolly coats can enjoy the shade of the willows that you can see just before arriving at the col (alt. 2220 m).

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



🌸 Alpine columbine (AN)

This is an uncommon and protected species, measuring 30 to 60 cm. The flowers are quite large and have a magnificent blue colour, blossoming at the head of the stem, and are the only ones with five petals in the corolla. They are not to be confused with the common columbine, which has smaller flowers and is more widespread.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



✿ Pleurospermum austriacum (AO)

This robust hardy perennial with a thick, hollow and grooved stalk belongs to the parsley and carrot family, and can grow from 60 to 150 cm high. Its large umbels of white flowers bloom from July to September. Very little known, in France it only grows in the Alpine areas and for this reason is worthy of attention.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet



✿ Monkshood (AP)

This is a typical plant in tall herb fringe communities, measuring 50 to 100 cm. It has royal blue flowers shaped like helmets and grouped together in loose bunches. Their particularity is that they are highly toxic! Herbivores are aware of this and don't eat them.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



💧 Timber dams (AQ)

In the Combe des Echareennes, as you take the path to the left, you can see, in the gorges of the Béranger mountain stream, wooden dams made by the RTM (mountain terrain restoration department of the National Forests Office) to hold back the flow of debris carried down from the mountains during heavy rain and floods.

Attribution : Samy Jendoubi - PNE



✿ Tall herb fringe communities (AR)

Tall herb fringe communities form a landscape linked to very precise conditions in terms of climate (wet summers and snowy winters), topography (long ubac slopes where névé sometimes remains on the ground deep into the summer), altitude (subalpine tier from 1600 to 2100 metres) and soil (unsaturated soils with large water reserves).

Attribution : Pierre-Emmanuel Dequest -PNE



✿ Natural Hayfields (AS)

Agricultural specialists consider a meadow as natural if it has not been ploughed or fertilised over the last ten years. This is the case for those that you will see, surrounded by hedges, at the start of the hike. The meadows have an important variety of plant life and consequently attract multitudes of pollinating insects, including domesticated bees of course.

Attribution : Marc Corail - PNE

✿ Alpine garden (AT)

More than fifty years ago, a botany lover, who is now elderly, created a small alpine garden in the centre of the village. Although it is less well kept nowadays, it still presents a stunning array of colour and a collection of spectacular plants belonging to alpine flora.



🕒 Viewpoint over the hamlet of Valsenestre (AU)

In the 19th century, the hamlet of Valsenestre had roughly one hundred inhabitants. The main activity was breeding. In 1851, a marble quarry opened in the bottom of the valley on the way up to the Muzelle pass. This was an opportunity for the village. It welcomed the quarry workers and benefitted from an improved road. Marble production stopped in 1905. Up until 1926, children laughing and shouting could still be heard in the village. The school had about thirty pupils. It was closed a few years later and the last permanent inhabitant of the village left in 1948.

Attribution : Marion Digier - PNE



🏠 Restored village (AV)

Valsenestre is a flower-filled village that has been superbly restored and is now made up of holiday homes. The road is not cleared of snow in the winter. When the village had one hundred or so inhabitants it had a school (that has since been changed into a gîte d'étape (bed and breakfast halt), that closed in 1936. It was entirely buried by an avalanche in the 19th century. The main activity was still breeding but the opening of a marble quarry from 1840 brought complimentary resources to workers in the village. The last permanent inhabitant left Valsenestre in 1959.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



Alpine ibex and golden eagle (AW)

Reintroduced into the Valbonnais area in 1989 and 1990, the number of ibex is slowly increasing on the high summits of Valouffrey. A population of about fifty spend the winter on the well-exposed slopes of the Valsenestre valley. Some of them spend weeks on the rocky ledges of Peys above the village, waiting for brighter days. Some years, the golden eagle also comes to build its nest and raise its young. It is not rare to see it or hear it yapping above the footpath.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - PNE



Giant scabiosa (AX)

This giant of the subalpine lawn looks like and is the size of an artichoke? In addition, it has a large round deep pink flower head with a pearly rim. Its huge leaves, that are white and velvet-like on the underside, are impressive and make it easy to identify. Sound nutrition for several species of beetle, its flower head is also a treat for butterflies. This plant species is not common and is protected on a national level even outside the Park.

Attribution : Cédric Dentant - PNE



The aspic viper (AY)

It has been a victim of legends and a bad reputation for centuries, but walkers that have been bitten are rare. This reptile that is, on average, fifty centimetres long, has a snubbed nose and a black, thin, vertical pupil, likes the well-exposed slopes. It seeks refuge in piles of stones and thorny thickets where it has no trouble catching small rodents and insects.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE



Orange Lis (AZ)

Due to its original and bright colour, it is easy to recognise on the steep terraces and rocky ledges. The orange lily is a rock lover that needs light and warmth, but not too much. This is why it blossoms at the beginning of summer to avoid strong heat. It is forbidden to pick it within the mountain National Parks, but also in several counties including the Hautes Alpes. Elsewhere picking is limited by decree.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



Mountain Apollo (BA)

One of the most beautiful butterflies you will come across in the mountains, its generally calm behaviour means it is easy to observe. It is linked to "camel" plants such as houseleeks that grow in dry conditions. They lay their eggs on this host plant, so that the larvae will be able to eat them.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



White asphodel (BB)

They grow in groups, often accompanied by the yellow gentian, on the old hayfields, which have deep soil. Its tall candle-like appearance is easy to recognise and its flowers that are grouped together in a flower spike, blossom one after the other over several weeks at the beginning of summer. Its fleshy tuber attracts underground rodents. It was previously used in the form of flour, to feed the mountain people in times of food shortage.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE



Combe Guyon pastures (BC)

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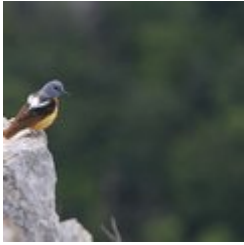
Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



Griffon vulture (BD)

This enormous bird of prey, that has a span of almost three metres, is new to the mountains, thanks to a programme to reintroduce them dating from the end of the 20th century. In the summer, they swirl in the sky incessantly as a group looking for sheep corpses or other large wild mammals that they can tear apart for food. This impressive scavenger plays a welcome role in the healthy condition of the pastures.

Attribution : Marion Molina



Common rock thrush (BE)

Generally known as the rock blackbird, the male thrush stands out due to its bright contrasting colours and its melodic song. African in winter and alpine in summer, this magnificent migratory bird chooses open areas above the forests where it settles on rocky perches to sing and nests in the scree or other rocky nooks and crannies.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE



Labarre Lake (BF)

This medium sized lake, like many in the Alps, formed in the natural hollow or a cirque at the time of the great glacier retreat at the end of the 18th century. It was due to their force that, over time, they were able to sink into the soft rock and pass over the harder ones. Melt waters from the surrounding névé form runoffs filled with fine rock debris that flow into the one and a half hectare, 8 metre deep Labarre Lake. This is what gives it its distinct colour.

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Attribution : Jean-Pierre Nicollet - PNE



Lac de plan Vianney (BG)

The Plan Vianney lake is home to a good population of brook trout, also known as brook charr or speckled trout. Demanding concerning water quality, this species requires clear, cool well-oxygenated water. Here its reproduction is not through rearing. Fishing is not authorised by decree made the Ecrins National Park's director. Exceptions are made for fishing as part of scientific studies only.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE

Vaugnerites (BH)

On the footpath leading to the Plan Vianney lake, essentially in the coomb of l'Héritière, outcrops of vaugnerites can be seen. These are dark rocks containing many mica flakes. Chemically similar to lamproite (magmatic rocks with high potassium content), they form enclaves of different sizes from 10 cm to several tens of metres, in the Rochail granite.



Chalets at altitude (BI)

On the Lauvitel dam are ancient prairie chalets as well as chalets that were built between the two World Wars to welcome hunters and anglers. Formally a private property, this valley was rented out to the 'Bourgeoisie Dauphinoise' for hunting. Angling, on the other hand, is still practised: it is managed by the Lauvitel Society for private angling. One of the chalets is still used to today to house agents from the Ecrins National Park and scientists from the nature reserve.

Attribution : Denis Fiat - PNE



Natural Dam (BJ)

Around 4000 years ago, a rocky landslide added to an existing glacial moraine to form a natural dam capable of retaining this large volume of water. The seasonal variation of the level of the lake of 20 to 25 m is due to the permeability of the materials making the dam. In fact the lake does not have a spillway and the water infiltrates the boulders of the dam. It offers a beautiful view of the lake which infact inspired the painters at l'Abbé Guétal.

Attribution : Denis Fiat - PNE



Lauvitel Lake (BK)

Lauvitel Lake is the biggest (around 25-35 ha) and the deepest (40-65 m) in the Ecrins National Park. A rocky landslide around 4000 years ago, added to an existing glacial moraine to form a natural dam capable of retaining such a volume of water. The waters of the lake are cold and well oxygenated. They suit several species of fish including the Arctic Char or the Brown Trout which were introduced for anglers. Today the Lake Lauvitel is the subject of numerous scientific studies: physical parameters, sediment, phyto et zooplankton are collected and analyzed.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE



Marmots (BL)

The marmots are some of the permanent inhabitants of the grassland at the alpine level. . The view is very open, the herbaceous food is abundant and the soil sufficiently soft for them to be able to dig their burrows which are necessary for their survival. Although this animal is wild animal, it can become accustomed to the presence of humans and some marmots have started the bad habit of begging for pieces of biscuit from hikers, crisps and apples. Please do not feed them ! These foods, which are unsuitable to their needs, damage their health and survival. Would you think of eating grass in order to survive?

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE



Traditional Paving (BM)

The Lauvitel path is often used especially during the summer. To limit the occurrence of erosion linked to the impact of human use but also to water flowing from melting ice or rain water it is covered with traditional paving, maintained thanks to annual restoration.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



Danchère Hamlet (BN)

With its paved lanes, its fountains and its stone wash-house, the Danchère offers an ideal starting point for going to Lauvitel which attracts 30 000 visitors every year. It is one of the numerous hamlets that make up the commune of Vénosc.

Attribution : PNE



Danchère Chapel (BO)

Dedicated to Saint Louis and to Saint Claude, Danchère Chapel displays its agreeable proportions to visitors. The stones forming the arc of a circle above the entrance and the window do not only have aesthetic value. They are rightly called "a relieving structure" because they help to redistribute the weight of the facade on both sides of the openings. In the recess hidden behind wire netting is a ceramic statue of Saint Louis created in the Tarn region.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



Lovitel Lake (BP)

In addition to being one of the rare wetlands at altitude on the highest part of the Romanche, Lovitel Lake unusually partially dries out during the summer and turns in to a marsh. In this way it becomes ideal for the development of amphibians who benefit from the absence of fish, their predators. Furthermore, the ecological quality of the environment is remarkable... Several species of great natural value are present at this site, notably the Adder's Tongue Fern and the Small Meadow Rue, both protected regionally.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



Purple Loosestrife (BQ)

During the whole summer, the Purple Loosestrife, with its beautiful purple spikes, sprinkles the small Lovitel lake with colour. Considered to be a weed to be destroyed, it does however hold a position among the most useful plants (plants with medicinal properties). Its astringent properties, among others, deem it to be a good remedy against colic in infants when teething. In the kitchen, its young shoots and the flesh of its stalks used to be consumed as a vegetable. The leaves could also be infused like tea.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



Common Midwife Toad (BR)

In Spring, a short note emitted at regular intervals resonates around the lake. It is the mating season for this small terrestrial grey toad, mottled with black and brown; it is the male toad's song to attract the females. A peculiarity of this anuran is that the male uses his back legs to surround the string of ova laid by the female to fertilize them with a jet of semen mixed with urine. In this way he watches over the eggs for several weeks. When they are on the point of hatching, he goes to the water and frees the young frogspawn.

Attribution : Marc Corail - PNE



Petrifying Fountain (BS)

The water that crosses the Emparis plateau which is composed of permeable sedimentary rock, fills up with Calcium bicarbonate. When, lower down, it comes in to contact with the impermeable crystalline rock layer of the Hercynien granitic base, the water follows a fault plane established between two layers and finishes in an aerial waterfall. The dissolved carbonates are transformed into a soft rock called Tuff by their contact with the air which has accumulated there for millennium. This resurgence, or petrifying fountain, is one of the most beautiful in France.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



The Emparis Plateau (BT)

The mule path follows the edge of the Southern border of the plateau which is completely dedicated to pastoralism and tourism. It offers an exceptional view of the Meije whose marked relief contrasts with this gentle landscape. It welcomes 7 refuges and pastoral cabins as well as remarkable fauna, like the Mountain Hare and the Mountain Apollo butterfly. The challenge for this site is to preserve its pastoral character.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



Small Apollo (BU)

The Small Apollo is a rare and protected butterfly. It has finely striped black and white antennae, and a tiny red ocellus (eye) on each of its forewings. With a wingspan of 60 to 80 mm, it is the lord and master of the orangey-yellow beds of mountain saxifrages where it takes care of its eggs and feeds its caterpillars.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



Agricultural work in Spring and Summer (BV)

In Spring the soil had to be moved up the land using crates pulled by mules. Ploughing, sowing, planting followed rye (which stayed in the ground for two years), barley, oats and potatoes. Summer was not finished until the barns were full of hay. Scythes that had been beaten on an anvil, rakes, and nets were used every day. In order to ensure the overwintering of the animals, a certain number of loads (around 80 kg of hay) were necessary: 25 for each dairy cow and 5 for each sheep.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



Agricultural work in Autumn and Winter (BW)

From September, cereal crops were cut with the scythe and the sickle, dried in “bourles” (small stacks of ten sheafs) on the top of the land (fields). Once beaten, the grains of rye were dried in the sun «soleillaient », they were taken to the mill and then to the oven to be made in to black bread. From the end of November until the beginning of May, the animals had to be tended to in the stables. The manure from the cows was transported to the fields using sledges, while the sheep dung was dried and cut in to, pieces, and burnt to produce heat and energy for cooking. In the dairy, milk was made in to butter and cheese.

Attribution : Denis Clavreul



White-throated dipper (BX)

Perched on a large, partly immersed pebble, the dipper sways to and fro with its tail aloft, and then dives down head first into the swirling water. This surprising passerine is unusual in moving underwater against the current in search of food. Thanks to a thin membrane protecting its eyes from the water, it can spot its prey (worms, small shellfish, water insect larva), before lifting its head out of the water and letting the current carry it gently along. It then takes up a new surveillance position and starts the process all over again.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - PNE

Chazelet perch (BY)

To test your head for heights, there is nothing like this new, life-size game played facing the Meije a steel walkway suspended over empty space. The first few steps are daunting, but reaching the end of the walkway - or rather, empty space - calls for even more courage! Beneath your feet, all the way down below is the village of Les Fréaux, nestling against the Romanche, and above you, the giants of ice. If you add in the element of air, with gusts of wind blowing all around you, then strong sensations are guaranteed!



Sainte-Anne du Chazelet oratory (BZ)

Although it stands beside an ordinary road, the Chazelet oratory is famous for one of the most beautiful panoramas of the Alps and the Meije mountains. Built in dry stone, the edifice is at 1 834 m and overlooks the valley and the Ecrins and Meije mountains. It has been sketched, photographed and painted many times, including in the famous Meije by the Japanese painter Foujita.

Recently a new orientation table was placed a few metres above the oratory. In two parts, it shows the northern slope of the Meije and the southern slope in the direction of Chazelet and Savoie.

Attribution : PNE



La Grave terraces (CA)

On the south-facing slope of La Grave, terraced farmland and villages are inseparable. This is a European-wide landscape uniting many architectural, archaeological and natural elements. This mountain farming system was shaped mainly by past and present agricultural activity. The steep terrain at the time required terracing for it to be farmed. These former planted terraces are today natural meadowland, which is mowed or used for grazing. It is highly sensitive to this new pastoral usage, and is little by little showing signs of soil erosion.

Attribution : Eric Vannard - PNE



Notre-Dame de l'Assomption Church (CB)

Listed as an historic monument, Notre Dame de l'Assomption church towers over La Grave. In First Romanesque style, this remarkable building is thought to date from the 11th century, making it the oldest building in the town. All around the church is a cemetery with graves marked by wooden crosses and decorated with brass hearts, facing the giants of ice.

Attribution : Jenny Selberg - OT Hautes Vallées



Romanche valley, Charles Bertier (CC)

The Romanche was a source of inspiration for many mountain artists and it have been painted repeatedly. Charles Bertier (1860-1924) was inspired to paint Vallée de la Romanche au Pied-du-Col and Les Fréaux près de la Grave, two oil paintings that were painted in 1894. The artist from Grenoble learnt to paint landscapes with Jean Achard, and mountains with the abbot Guétal and did not hesitate to set up his easel on the high summits of the Dauphiné Alps. More to the point, his mission was to make his contemporaries 'understand the mountains'!

Attribution : © Musée de Grenoble



The marmots' "bosse" (CD)

The alpine marmot is naturally present on grass at altitude. Here, it occupies a singular place which we call the marmots' "bosse». This hibernating rodent is only visible between April and October. The marmot lives in a family and respects a hierarchy. Games, grooming, fighting and biting ensure the dominance of a couple as well as the cohesion of the group. Each animal participates in the delimitation of the territory by rubbing its cheeks on rocks and also by urinating and defecating there. When there is danger, the marmot emits a high and powerful whistle in order to warn the others.

Attribution : PNE - Coursier Cyril



Felwort (CE)

In early August, the felwort's violet stars open in the sunshine. At the base of each of its five petals, two shiny pits full of nectar attract insects. A member of the gentian family, this beautiful flower is a perennial that survives the cold season with its persistent winter bud close to the ground, surrounded by a rosette of protecting leaves.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



Skylark (CF)

This bird is like a tightrope walker suspended in the sky, sounding out a long chorus of notes. Then, triangular wings back, and in a perfect spiral, the bird lands in the middle of the prairie. On the ground, it is difficult to see: its varying shades of brown means it is very well camouflaged. In its search for food, its movements, which are a succession of small sprints and sudden halts, enable it to spot possible predators.

Attribution : PNE - Saulay Pascal



Butterflies and moths (CG)

Butterflies can be distinguished from moths by the shape of their antennae. You will also notice that when resting, the butterflies wings are vertically folded over the body for necessary discretion while the moth's cover them. The moorland clouded yellow butterfly has another unusual habit: as soon as it becomes too cold to fly, it settles and bends its side to the sun to absorb energy. It can even lean slightly, whereas others tend to fully, and dangerously spread themselves out.

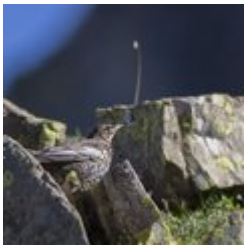
Attribution : PNE - Warluzelle Olivier



Water colour in the meanders (CH)

The turquoise colour of the water that meanders from the Petit Tabuc stream gives a special character to this remarkable site. The valley is popular among photographers and artists for its photographic and pictorial quality.

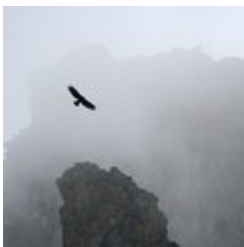
Attribution : PNE - Coursier Cyril



Ring ouzel (CI)

In the pastures covered with larch or "bush", a cry of alarm followed the start of a song resounds. A blackbird? Yes, but more specifically a ring ouzel. This shy, swift mountain blackbird lives on the fringe of the larch, scots pine, spruce or Swiss pine forests between 1000 and 2500 m in altitude. The ring ouzel is a migratory bird that spends winter in Spain or North Africa before coming back to the mountains around March.

Attribution : PNE - Saulay Pascal



A flying predator (CJ)

The eagle is the archetypal predator. Everything about it suggests strength and daring. Its appearance, of course, with its impressive expression highlighted by the prominent brow ridge, but above all its fearsome weapons: rapid flight, which can be adapted to even the most acrobatic situations, and sharp, powerful talons. Its keen eyesight helps it detect its prey, from the marmot to the young chamois, ptarmigans and hares. In winter, it often takes its food from the dead bodies of animals, helping towards the natural cleansing of nature.

Attribution : PNE - Telmon Jean-Philippe



Golden eagle, the Ecrins' mascot (CK)

The Petit Tabuc site is ideal for the golden eagle to nest. The golden eagle is amongst the protected species that are considered rare in Europe. The size of the populations that have been registered in the Ecrins massif, bestow a strong responsibility on the Park for conservation of the species. Counting takes place regularly since 1985 along with monitoring of reproduction, causes of disturbance and mortality.

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien



Chamois (CL)

Rupicapra rupicapra, the mountain goat was not at first solely a creature of the mountains. The species is more attached to rocky escarpments and steep slopes than high altitude. But strong human pressure on chamois made them withdraw ever higher. Coveted as a hunting target, they have found refuge here in the Ecrins National Park.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



White-throated dipper (CM)

The mountain streams relinquish their secrets to an attentive hiker. The master of this little world is a small brown, red and grey bird with a short tail and a pure white breast, separated from the darker abdomen by a light brown stripe. We can often see it in the air, flying close to the water to snap up insects. The dipper owes its name to its eating habits to find water larva, it dips its head into the water and grips the riverbed to walk against the current.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



Lover of old stones (CN)

The rock sparrow is a sedentary bird. It generally settles in well-exposed, agricultural areas where there are lots of stones, stone terraces, ruins, piles of stones, old buildings. This southern sparrow can be found up to an altitude of 2000 m provided there is an open landscape and many mineral elements. It nests in the hole of a rock, in a wall and sometimes under the roof of a house. It will then mingle with the house sparrow. A sociable bird, it lives in small, dispersed colonies.

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien



Whiskered bat (CO)

The whiskered bat is a dark-faced bat. It is quite common in certain mountain regions and is one of the most frequent species after its cousin the common pipistrelle. It likes trees, be they on the banks of a river or in the high altitude forests, but it is also possible to catch sight of them in gardens and villages such as the hamlet of Casset. This small mammal lives on flying insects and thus helps in controlling their numbers. Like all mammals, the female feeds her sole offspring with her milk.

Attribution : PNE - Corail Marc

Saint Claude's church in Le Casset (CP)

With its disproportionately high spire, the Casset church never goes unnoticed. Its four-sided Comtois steeple was modelled on the collegiate church in Briançon. The church is listed as a Historic Monument and is placed under the protection of Saint Claude. In its present condition, it dates from the 18th century. The previous building was constructed prior to the 16th century. Inside, the eye is immediately attracted by the choir ogives, creating an intimate atmosphere, particularly since the unusually large spire does not suggest an interior of such a small size. The choir was rebuilt in 1716-1717, probably after the previous chapel burnt down. Traces from this period can be seen on the keystone. The wrought-iron choir gate has the inscription "HM 1717", a date that can also be seen in the apse, on the wrought iron railing of the impost of the axial window, and on the baptismal font.



The front of the nappes (CQ)

The two slopes of the Chambran valley are very different: the right bank, minerals are very present. There are granites and gneiss making up the crystalline base of the Ecrins massif. On the left bank, the prairies are sandstone and chalky. These are part of the glacial thrust sheet: they are ancient sediments deposited mostly to the East, in the Alpine ocean, then carried here by compression at the time of the formation of the Alps.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas



Evolution of pastoralism (CR)

In the valley, the ruins of numerous piles of stones resulting from the removal of stones in the hay meadows are witness to another age. Most of these old prairies are now grazed by sheep. Pastoralism has evolved: no more local flocks so less hay, the valley is now occupied by a large flock from the Haute-Provence Alps.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



Evolution of pastoralism (CS)

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Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



Chambran Hamlet (CT)

At an altitude of 1700 meters, this hamlet is inhabited in summer, at the beginning of the summer pasture. The old dairy has been spruced up to become a snack bar. It's pretty little chapel dedicated to Saint Jean is very simple and bare.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE



Chambran chalets (CU)

Remnants of a way of life that has disappeared, the Chambran chalets were once a high-altitude village where flocks stayed during the summer months. Today this is a welcome stop along the GR54 and the starting point for hikes towards Lake Eychauda.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE



Silver birch (CV)

On the edge of the Onde, once you have crossed the footbridge, the stone footpath weaves its way between the birch trees. This tree is easy to recognize amongst all the others due to its thin white bark. Due to the tar that it contains, birch bark stays intact even after the wood has rotted inside. It was used as parchment and as tannin in boreal regions. In this area, the birch's young twigs were mostly used to make brooms.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



Southerly burnet (CW)

These small moths that come out during the day, are part of thirty species of burnet in France. Their long wings are black or sometimes bluish and have red spots. Such bright colours are a warning of toxicity to their predators. Burnets are capable of extracting chemical components similar to cyanide from plants. They then secrete this poison through their mouth and joints when faced with danger.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



Chamois ragwort (CX)

In June it is impossible not to see these large yellow sun-like flowers on the edge of the path. Their greyish, fleshy leaves look like they have grown through a spider's web. At the end of July they are unrecognisable: the leaves turn green and no longer have the grey fluff. Once the flowers have wilted, they give way to a fluffy white seed head that is easily scattered by the wind. Our elders used to compare them to an old man's hair (senex in Latin) which led to the French name "sénéçon".

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



Cypress spurge (CY)

This is also referred to as "milk herb" in relation to the sticky white liquid that flows when it is cut. This is a toxic, irritating latex. It is identifiable due to its thin soft leaves and its original flowers that change colour and group together in inflorescence. By looking closer, in the middle of a 'cup' made from two bracts, it is possible to distinguish a female flower which is reduced to a ball (ovary) on a long stem, and male flowers with a sole stamen and four crescent-shaped nectar glands.

Attribution : Catherine Boutteau



"Popeye" grasshopper (CZ)

In the pastures, in August, tens of grasshoppers jump and then disappear into the grass with each of our footsteps. Amongst them, the most original is perhaps the *Gomphocerus sibiricus* nicknamed Siberian grasshopper, due to its resistance to the cold. The male is also known as the "Popeye grasshopper" because of its 'muscled' front legs. Its green-brown colour might mean it would go unnoticed were it not for this anatomical detail and its long, consistent "cre-cre-cre-cre" ending with a couple of separate "cre" that it repeats in order to attract a female.

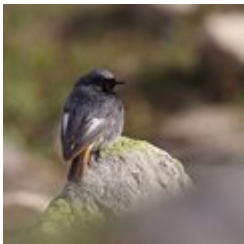
Attribution : Blandine Delenatte - PNE



Green alder (DA)

This bushy shrub grows in entangled thickets, which are a refuge to birds and chamois that are in search of coolness and quiet. It is a pioneer and not afraid of settling in poor, steep terrains. Its strong roots mean it can latch on where everything else slides. Its flexibility means avalanches slide over it as it bends under the weight of the snow. The male catkins dangle when they are mature showing the pale yellow of their flowers. The female flowers will bear characteristic fruit like small pinecones that are first green, and then brown that persist all year round.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



Black redstart (DB)

The black redstart has a grey crown, a white patch on its wings and a tan tail and rump. A lively and active common bird, it likes the rocky environments and constantly hunts insects in flight or on the ground. Perched on a rock or a stone wall, it gives out brief cries of warning whilst folding its feet. Its chatty song interrupted by "paper rustling" is characteristic. This partly migratory bird can be seen at high altitude during the summer but heads to the lower valleys for the winter.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE



Chamois (DC)

In the summer, it is at the coolest times of the day that you are likely to see a chamois busy grazing. When the sun heats the valley, they prefer to lie in the shade of the green alders, or otherwise stay on the névés. Their hearing and their sense of smell are highly developed and makes it difficult to approach them. You will need binoculars to see them. If the end of their horns are curved, it's a male, a buck. Open horns, it's a female, a doe. If the horns are shorter than the ears, it's an 'éterlou', a young male chamois in its second year. Barely visible horns, it's a kid.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



Pastoral activity in the Selle valley, dale (DD)

Between l'Aup Martin pass and Entre les Aygues, the Selle valley is the communal pasture for Vallouise. During the summer, the pasture is grazed by a flock of sheep, a herd of cows, a few horses and the donkeys that accompany the shepherds. The shepherd's role is to not only keep and guide the sheep on the pasture with the help of dogs. She also nurses them, in particular to avoid foot-rot, a bacterial infection of the hooves that could spread to wild animals.

Attribution : Thierry Maillot - PNE



Monk's Rhubarb (DE)

Around the pastoral hut, monk's rhubarb forms an ocean of bright green. This species along with Good King Henry and stinging nettles have a love for ample manure. They therefore create vast fluffy carpets on the animals' resting places and around the pastoral huts where they stifle out most of the other vegetation due to its vigorous germination and the damp shade of its large leaves. On its stem, the flower heads that look like candles are made up of uncountable greenish flowers that, when mature, will become winged, three-sided brown fruit. The leaf petioles of this wild rhubarb, which are fleshy, juicy and tangy, can be used in cooking.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - PNE



The ibex, a survivor (DF)

In the face of danger, the ibex does not run away but takes refuge on a rock face where it thinks it will be safe. This strategy has enabled it to escape from land predators for thousands of years. However, it has proved to be inefficient against man since the invention of the crossbow or the rifle. As a result, the ibex was almost wiped out in the 19th century. The species owes its survival to Italy's protection in the creation of a royal reserve, that later became the Gran Paradiso National Park.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



The alpine ibex (DG)

In 1995 several ibex were introduced into the Champsaur. Since then, their population has steadily progressed to the valleys of the massif. A small group of ibex spend the summer season on the cliffs of the Chanteloube valley that overlooks the Jas Lacroix hut, on the left bank. They are more often than not perched on the rock faces and are difficult to see but from the hilltop above the hut, you might be lucky enough to see one on the rocks with the help of a telescope.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



The pastoral hut and the walkers' shelter (DH)

The Jas Lacroix pastoral hut is where the shepherd lives during the mountain pasture period. This is where she herds the flock to count or nurse the animals. To the right of the hut there is a shelter for walkers on the GR54 route. It is maintained by a volunteer from the valley. Please leave it in the state of cleanliness you would like to find it.



Attribution : Thierry Maillot - PNE



White throated dipper (DI)

Stocky, short-tailed with a slender beak, it has a white patch from chin to chest and the rest of its plumage is ginger to slate grey. This is the portrait of this fantastic stream-loving bird. Standing on a large, half-immersed stone, it rocks with its tail out. Then suddenly it dives head first into the turbulent water. One of its features is walking upstream in the water in search of food such as small invertebrates that it uncovers by moving pebbles with its beak.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



Astrantia minor (DJ)

At the top of a thin and fragile, divided stem, four or five small, delicate white stars move in the slightest breeze. The astrantia minor's umbels brighten up the shady areas that it likes under the shrubs on the moors. Its fanned, finely serrated leaves at the end of a long petiole, do their best to emerge from the vegetation.

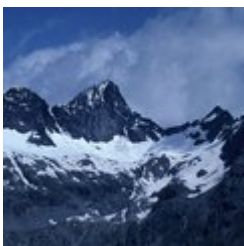
Attribution : Bernard Nicolet - PNE



Common frog (DK)

After the glacial cross-cliff above the Jas Lacroix mountain hut, not far from the footpath leading to the pass, there is a small lake that is home to the common frog. This is the most common frog in the Alps. It can live up to 2800 m in altitude, a record! It has a chocolate coloured mask around its golden eyes.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE



Verdonne Point (DL)

Above the Jas Lacroix hut, the Chanteloube valley opens up to the right in the form of a cirque. The highest peak in the cirque is the Verdonne point, which rises to 3328m. Sometimes a glittering object can be seen at its summit. This a Grand Réseau Radio des Alpes (GRA) radio relay station, serving the mountain rescue network. It is used to make radio contact with police and emergency services in Briançon.

Attribution : François Labande - PNE



✿ Yellow (mountain) saxifrage (DM)

At the edge of the clear waters of the brook, a flowerbed of yellow stars catches the eye. When young, the flowers are male and only have 10 stamen and a large shiny disc full of nectar. Later, when the stamen have fallen off, they become female and two small nipples appear on the nectar disc, ready to welcome pollen from a younger neighbour. The small rare and protected apollo butterfly has chosen this plant to protect its eggs and feed its caterpillars.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



✿ Blueberry (DN)

This shrub does not venture much higher than the last trees where it constitutes the moors that cover the ground along with other shrubs. Its finely serrated, light green leaves, ever green branches and juicy, sweet, black fruit that turn your tongue purple, make it possible to distinguish it from its cousins. The berries are a true treasure of the mountains and are used for many culinary and medicinal purposes.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - PNE



🐄 Cattle (DO)

The Selle valley is the Vallouise communal pasture where breeders take their animals in the summer. The pasture is divided into sectors where sheep, cattle and horses graze. Each group moves according to the growth of the grass and they rarely mingle, if at all.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - PNE



✿ Alpine lady's-mantle (DP)

Lush foliage, five to seven elegant leaflets, simple inflorescence, this plant is also known as "satin lion's foot", and is common along the footpath. This nickname comes from the underside of the leaves. Its flowers are not very attractive to insects. It does not need them for pollination. Its seeds develop spontaneously, without being fertilised: this is called apogamy. Is this why it is used as an infusion by the women of the high areas in all fields of gynaecology?

Attribution : Thierry Maillot - PNE



Red ants (DQ)

A mound of twigs abounds with life at the edge of the footpath. An anthill in full action. On average it will house 300 000 red ants. This sociable insect is the epitome of perfection. It has strong jaws for digging, cutting and transporting; antennae for communicating and orientating; three pairs of non-slip feet for getting about; compound eyes to see as with a kaleidoscope; a chitin armour and a reserve of formic acid with which to attack. A simple experiment: put your hand close to the anthill, without touching it. Let the ants react then put your tongue to your hand...formic acid!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



Rampion (DR)

Rampion is a pretty, blue flower. On the way up to the Aup Martin pass, it is possible to admire rampion in the prairies and rocky areas at high altitude. A small ball of shiny purple-blue petals and scruffy stamen, it is perched on the top of a short stem surrounded by short narrow leaves.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE

Walls (DS)

Above the Saume ravine, the footpath's tight loops are supported by stone walls, the remains of the mule-driver's path that the army once kept maintained, just in case, between Vallouise and Champoléon...

Champoléon farmers once took their livestock along the path to the Vallouise sheep fair on 4 October.



Marmot (DT)

Along the footpath, the marmot makes the rambler jump with its high-pitched whistle. They live in families made up of a couple of dominant adults and subordinates from successive litters. Grooming, games and fights ensure the cohesion of the group and the respect for the hierarchy. All participate in the delimitation of the territory by urinated or defecating at the boundaries or by rubbing their cheeks against the rocks in order to leave their scent.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE



Chickweed (DU)

It illuminates the scree that the névé take their time to free. Nestled and sticking in the rock, it amazes walkers who admire its delicate foliage and pure white flowers in such a grey environment. How does it manage to produce such exuberant flowers in such a hostile environment though? Beneath the stones, it develops a network of roots that enable it to get vital nutriments from the waterlogged soil when the snow melts. It also produces pliable shoots that always find a place to latch on in the scree.

Attribution : Cédric Dentant - PNE



Schist sheets (DV)

The Col de l'Aup Martin is a surprising desert of dark grey, shiny schist forming fine parallel sheets. The rock was formed under tectonic influence that laid down the minerals making up the rock in parallel layers. Highly friable, the rock makes access to the col slippery or even dangerous, according to the weather conditions, and has given the col its poor reputation: a monstrous col according to Simon. Exactly like the Mordor region described by Tolkien in The Lord of the Rings, says François!

Attribution : Thierry Maillot - PNE



Bearded vulture (DW)

During a worldwide count organised in October each year, an observation post is set up in Le Pré de la Chaumette. The bearded vulture has already been spotted, but alas not each time! Falsely accused of carrying off lambs and children, this large bird with a wingspan of 2.80 m has been persecuted by man. Shooting, capture, poison, together with the scarcity of its food sources led to the bird's extinction in the Alps in 1930. A European programme to reintroduce it was launched in 1986. Since then, the bearded vulture has been regaining ground.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE



Chaumette Meadow (DX)

The refuge is situated in a vast meadow formed by alpine grasslands that benefit from deep soil, on gentle slopes that are covered with snow on an average of eight months a year.

Attribution : Marc Corail - PNE



Red-billed chough (DY)

The red-billed chough is in many ways a surprising bird. It lives near cliffs and plays among the clouds, breaking the silence with a brief, strident, almost metallic cry. Hearing the echo from the cliff walls, its companions reply. With its confident gait and regular step, the red-billed chough patrols the Alpine pastures in small groups, meticulously searching for small worms and meadow grasshoppers. Apart from a few brief seasonal excursions in search of available food, the chough is a sedentary bird.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



The Sirac (DZ)

To the south of the Ecrins mountains, the Sirac is the last major summit at 3441 m. It stands proudly at the end of the Séveraisse valley. Often during the hike, you will lift your head in wonder and greet this noble lord with its crown. You will walk at its foot and see its hanging glaciers above you. It's magic!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



The Vallonpierre refuge (EA)

A small lake, pretty meadows and the benevolent Sirac... This magical setting would lead to the construction of a refuge at an altitude of 2270 m in 1942. However, it was a victim of its own success and in 2000 the decision was made to build a second, bigger one. It can accommodate 37 instead of 22. This new building was the first modern mountain refuge to be built using stones on site rather than imported materials. It copies the simplicity and the crow-stepped gable from the "small refuge" which has been kept as lodgings for a warden's helper.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE

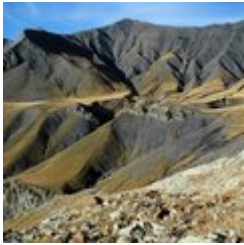


Alpine ibex (EB)

The species had almost completely disappeared from the French Alpine regions, and they survived thanks to our Italian neighbours, the kings of Savoy. Until the mid-15th century, they were still to be seen, but they were not wary of mankind and were hunted for their meat. Superstitious medical practice at the period also hastened their decline: their horns were ground into powder and used as a remedy for impotence, while the cross-shaped bone over their hearts was thought to ward off sudden death.

Successfully reintroduced into the Vanoise area in 1960, they were also brought back into the Champoléon valley over 20 years ago.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - PNE



Impressive geology (EC)

From chabournéite, the native mineral of Valgaudemar, to the crystalline rock from the Sirac's gneiss, from the hollow of Vallonpierre made in sedimentary rock to the show that is given by the shale and tuffs on the Chevrettes pass, this circuit will take you back in time. The folds and the colours appear before you like an impressionist's work of art.

Attribution : Bernard Guidoni - PNE



Marmot (ED)

A high-pitched whistle sounds in the mountain pastures it is the cry of the marmot on guard, warning its companions of the arrival of imminent danger from the sky. Any inattentive creature failing to take note should beware a golden eagle will carry them away in its talons to feed its young.

Native to the Alpine grassland, colonies of marmots live with their young until their third year. Gnawing and digging are their favourite pastimes, along with rolling down the slopes. And not forgetting an afternoon nap on a nice, warm rock and their long hibernation between October and March.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



High altitude birds (EE)

Autumn is migration season. The mountains, which are too harsh in winter, loses their inhabitants. Some opt for a change in altitude and go lower down the valley or to the coast. This is the case for the alpine accentor, the redstart, the redpoll, or the Eurasian linette. Others head off on a long journey to warmer countries. The Sahara offers a milder winter to the common rock thrush, whinchat and wheatear. The lesser whitethroat will head to the east. In the summer, this fine bunch will meet up again in the mountains. It finds a sanctuary where the diversity of plants and invertebrates is preserved. The alpine pastures seem to be favourable for the reproduction of all of these species that are diminishing and need to be protected.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



Clot Xavier Blanc mountain refuge (EF)

What a strange idea to build this mountain refuge below the road leading to Gioberney, at an altitude of "only" 1397 m. In fact, it was already there more than a century ago, long before the road was built. This simple, sturdy building belonged to the Valgodemar Mining Company that operated in the area extracting copper and lead. When the business closed, the Club Alpin Français bought the building and named it after Xavier Blanc, in recognition of one of the founder members of the CAF, senator of the Hautes Alpes.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE



Walled paths (EG)

On certain stretches of the route, you will walk between two stone walls. Such "via clause" were built to stop the domestic animals, on their way up to the pastures, from walking on or eating the grass in the prairies that was intended for them in the winter. The most remarkable "via clause" is on the way out of the hamlet of Le Clot. It has been restored by the Ecrins National Park.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE



"Toune" (EH)

This is an architectural feature of the Champsaur-Valgaudemar area and is the barrel-vaulted porch on the main facade of the house. It sheltered the entrance to the dwelling and stable and was sometimes used to stock items, such as wood, to keep it dry. The "toune" was often painted white to reflect the sunlight. They inhabitants would sit in them to do embroidery or darning, etc.

Attribution : Yves Baret - PNE



Golden eagle (EI)

Between La Chapelle and Le Clot, it is not rare to see the golden eagle flying over the sunlit slopes. In the summer, this majestic bird of prey with its dark plumage (some have lovely white rosettes on the underside of their wings) mingles with the short-toed eagle, which is smaller and lighter-coloured, and the griffon vulture, which is larger, with a short tail and often flies in groups. There is nothing surprising about this as the south facing slopes provides thermal lift that enables them to fly high and far.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - PNE



Traditional dwellings (EJ)

A few typical, old Valgaudemar houses can be seen in the hamlets of Casse, Le Bourg and Le Rif du Sap. A few thatched roofs, vaulted entrances to dwellings ("tounes"), and stone paving, are some fine examples of architecture that are worth saving. Cheaper and requiring less maintenance, sheet metal gradually replaced the thatch on the rooftops.

Attribution : Stephan D'houwte - PNE



Toponymy in the Valgaudemar area (EK)

Valgaudemar! The sound of this name resonates in our ears. Some claim that it is in reference to the valley of Mary "Gaude Marie" or "Rejoice Mary!" It is more reasonable to think that it is in reference to Gaudemar, the last king of the Burgundians (524) a Germanic tribe that invaded this area in 406...Vallis Gaudemarii can be read in texts as early as 1284. Poetic licence, legends and imagination are often red herrings when it comes to researching the origins of names.

Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE



🕒 An itinerary packed with history (EL)

The Casset bridge is the oldest remaining bridge over the Sèveraisse that has not been washed away by floods. On the right bank of this magnificent "Roman" structure, the hamlet of Casset gets its name from the "casse" (large steep scree deposits at the foot of slopes) that surround it. This village, like that of Le Bourg, was partly covered by a landslide. As for Le Rif du Sap, an avalanche swept away the houses from the top of the hamlet in 1944. The hamlet of Le Clot, was flooded in 1928, and was totally abandoned in 1934 when a fire destroyed most of the dwellings.

Attribution : Jean-Claude Catelan (collection)



🏞️ Waterfalls and view points over the valley (EM)

Along the itinerary, you will see the Combefroide and Casset waterfalls that are situated on the south facing slopes of the valley. The route also gives a good view to the east and the west of the Sèveraisse valley from the hamlet of Casset. Downstream, from the hamlet of Rif du Sap, a good example of a U-shaped valley is proof of shaping by the quaternary glaciers.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE



🌿 Hayfields (EN)

Hayfields surround the village of La Chapelle. Unfortunately, such natural hayfields, and their flowers and insects, are more and more frequently replaced by temporary hayfields, in other words, certain years they are sowed. These prairies are still watered by the irrigation canals that are well maintained by the users with the help of the National Park. You will see the floodway of the Grande Levée canal not far from the stream as it nears the Sèveraisse. The canals are of great importance for preserving wetland flora, such as alternate-leaved golden saxifrage or yellow star-of-Bethlehem, both of which are protected species.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE

Sundial by Rémy Potey (EO)

A real open-air museum piece in the rural landscape, the pictorial art of the sundial aims to foster silence and to be accessible to all. For walkers today and for travellers yesterday. A sundial is a call to reflection and meditation, visible in all its magnificence on religious buildings or carefully hidden, in the little streets of a mountain village. The the Hautes-Alpes department, with its sun-rich climate, has the highest concentration of this example of the people's art. Today, through the work of the sundial maker Rémy Potey, chamois and golden eagles can be beside the imaginary birds of the mysterious and famous Zarbula, the 19th century Piedmont artist.