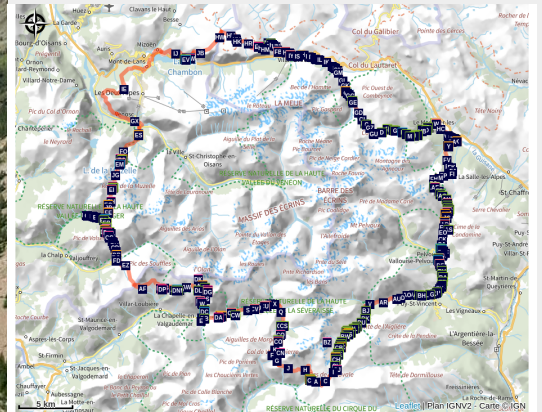


# GR®54 - Tour of L'Oisans and les Écrins starting from La Grave

Briançonnais - Champoléon



Sur le chemin du col de l'Eychauda (GR54) (Thierry Maillet)



*Setting off from a mountaineering Mecca, hikers take their place amidst iconic peaks for a remarkable two-week trek in Les Écrins.*

The GR®54 - Tour of L'Oisans and Les Écrins is a legendary route taking you on a circuit through the heart of the National Park, the protected area of the Massif des Écrins. On the route: iconic peaks, difficult-to-reach passes, welcoming refuges and exceptional flora and fauna await you as you start out from La Grave. An added bonus on this route? A detour via the L'Olan alpine variant leading to the heights overlooking the Valgaudemar valley, to enjoy a spectacular view.

## Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 14 days

Length : 183.9 km

Difficulty : Hard

Type : Multi-day trekking

Themes : Hut, Lake and glacier, Pass, Top

# Trek

**Departure** : La Grave

**Arrival** : La Grave

**Markings** :  GR

**Cities** : 1. Champoléon

2. La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar

3. La Grave

4. L'Argentière-la-Bessée

5. Le Monêtier-les-Bains

6. Les Deux Alpes

7. Mizoën

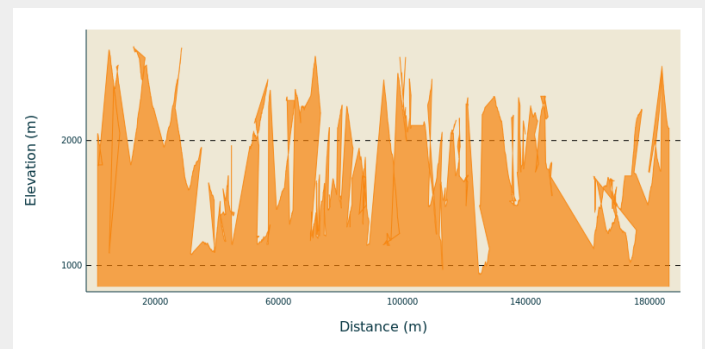
8. Valjouffrey

9. Vallouise-Pelvoux

10. Villar-d'Arêne

11. Villar-Loubière

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 0 m    Max elevation 0 m

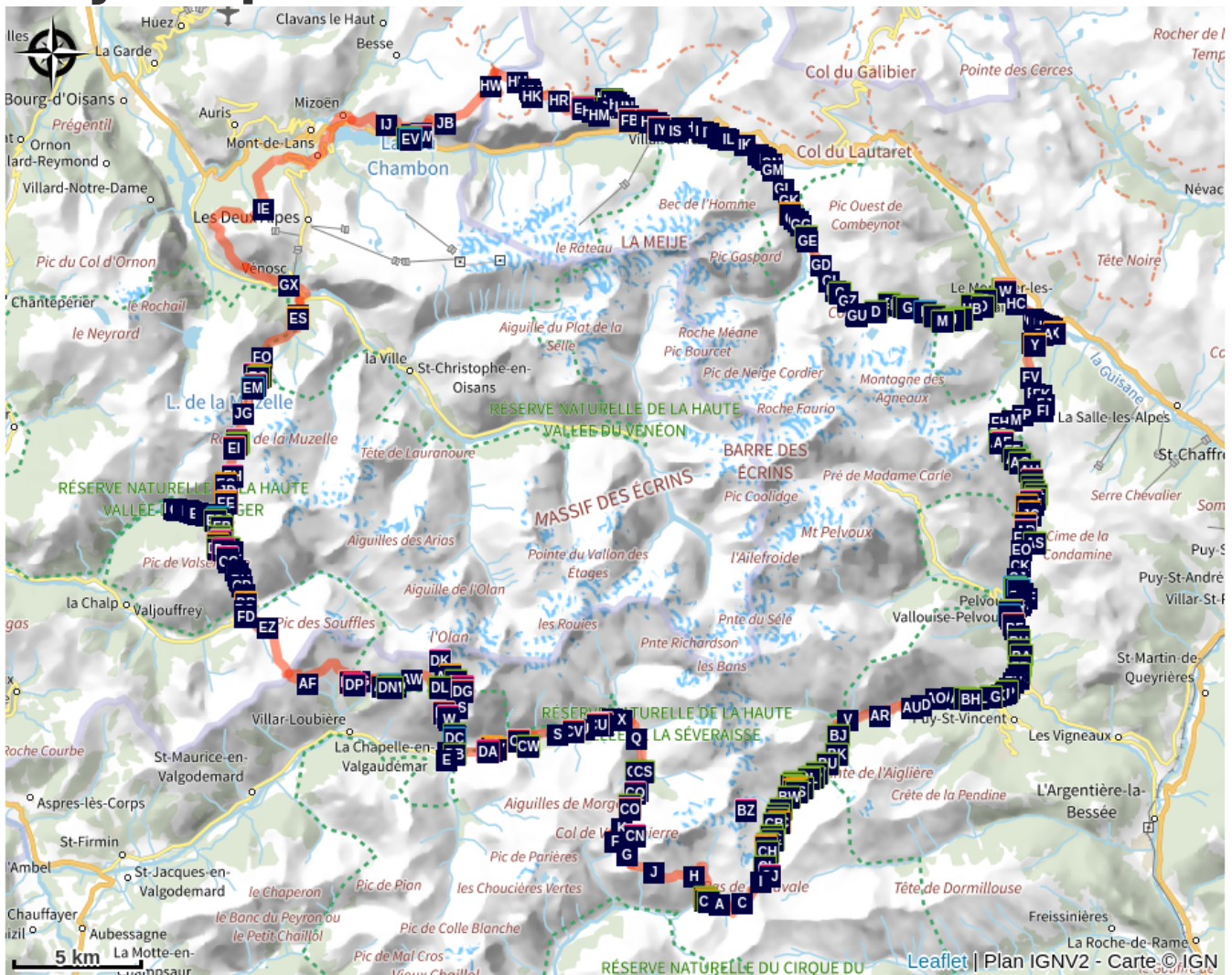
The Tour of L'Oisans and les Écrins sets off on its grand tour from La Grave, at the foot of the majestic peak of La Meije, tracing the Romanche river back up to its source among the alpine pastures of Villar d'Arène. When you reach the Col d'Arsine, the scene is stunning. The surrounding realm of high peaks invites a visit to the glacial Lac d'Arsine before embarking on a long descent following the mountain stream Le Petit Tabuc, down to the valley of La Guisane and Monêtier-les-Bains. Objective: La Vallouise via the Col de l'Eychauda and the tranquil chalets of Chambran. Eight kilometres of motor road following the mountain stream L'Onde brings you to the alpine pastures of Jas Lacroix. Crossing the Col de l'Aup Martin, the highest pass on the route, is always a high point of the adventure, and the descent to the Pré de la Chaumette is equally exhilarating. To reach Lac de Vallonpierre, no fewer than three passes cut through the shale have to be negotiated with care. Following the Séveraisse river, the path comes to La Chapelle en Valgaudemar where you leave the main path to take to the heights above the valley via a variant of the GR®54. From the Refuge de l'Olan, there is an unrivalled view over the peaks of Valgaudemar and their glaciers. You rejoin the route at the Refuge des Souffles and then come to the impressive Col de la Caurze. Equally impressive is the descent down into the wild Valjouffrey. The verdant Col de Côte Belle contrasts with the shale landscapes encountered previously. In the Béranger valley, Valsenestre makes a restorative stopping point before setting off again for the final meandering stretches. You reach the vertical Col de la Muzelle, the gateway to the Vénéon valley. A long descent down towards Vénosc constitutes the second variant of the GR®, where the route runs close to the famous Les Deux-Alpes resort on the two slopes (Vénosc and Mont-de-Lans) and leads to the pretty village of Mizoën. The path continues, rising in altitude up the mountain side and shadowing the shore of the large Lac du Chambon below, before it reaches the refuges at the foot of the Emparis plateau. Above, the Col de Souchet offers a five-star view over La Meije. A descent of almost 1,000 metres brings you to La Grave, the culmination of this remarkable looped circuit.





























## Stages :










- 1.** From La Grave to L'Alpe de Villar d'Arène (start of the GR54)  
11.1 km / 758 m D+ / 4 h 30
- 2.** From Alpe de Villar d'Arène to Monêtier-les-Bains (stage of the GR 54)  
12.9 km / 294 m D+ / 4 h 30
- 3.** Du Monêtier-les-Bains à Vallouise par le col des Grangettes  
24.0 km / 1347 m D+ / 8 h
- 4.** 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
- 5.** From Pré de la Chaumette to Lake Vallonpierre (stage of the GR 54)  
10.9 km / 1162 m D+ / 6 h
- 6.** From Lake Vallonpierre to La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar (stage of the GR 54)  
13.9 km / 72 m D+ / 3 h 30
- 7.** From La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar to the Refuge de l'Olan (Stage on the GR54 walking path)  
6.5 km / 1253 m D+ / 4 h
- 8.** From the Refuge de l'Olan to the Refuge des Souffles (a Stage on the GR54)  
8.9 km / 618 m D+ / 5 h
- 9.** From Les Souffles to Le Désert-en-Valjouffrey (stage of the GR 54)  
11.0 km / 639 m D+ / 5 h 30
- 10.** 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
- 11.** From Valsenestre to Lake Muzelle (stage of the GR 54)  
9.0 km / 1293 m D+ / 5 h 30
- 12.** From the Refuge de la Muzelle to Mizoen  
22.2 km / 1021 m D+ / 9 h 30
- 13.** From Mizoen to the refuges of Les Mouterres and Le Fay  
8.7 km / 1105 m D+ / 5 h
- 14.** From the refuges of Les Mouterres and Le Fay to La Grave  
12.1 km / 299 m D+ / 4 h



# On your path...



-  Romanche valley, Charles Bertier (AA)
-  Felwort (AC)
-  Grey wagtail (AE)
-  Moorland clouded yellow (AG)
-  Alpine citril finch (AI)
-  A flying predator (AK)
-  Ring ouzel (AM)
-  White-throated dipper (AO)
-  Lover of old stones (AQ)
-  Doors and courtyards (AS)
-  Le Casset (AU)
-  Saint Claude's church in Le Casset (AW)
-  Charvet Chapel (AY)
-  Le Lac de l'Eychauda, Laurent Guétal (BA)
-  The marmots' "bosse" (AB)
-  Skylark (AD)
-  Butterflies and moths (AF)
-  Water colour in the meanders (AH)
-  Larch (AJ)
-  Golden eagle, the Ecrins' mascot (AL)
-  Chamois (AN)
-  European badger (AP)
-  Whiskered bat (AR)
-  Rock sparrow (AT)
-  Sundials (AV)
-  The Serre Chevalier resort (AX)
-  Eychauda Lake (AZ)
-  Dwarf Willow (BB)

-  Red Billed Chough (BC)
-  Glacial terrain (BE)
-  Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly (BG)
-  Eychauda Pastoral Cabin (BI)
-  Northern Wheatear (BK)
-  Spring meadow saffron (BM)
-  Evolution of pastoralism (BO)
-  Chambran Hamlet (BQ)
-  Choughs and red-billed choughs (BS)
-  The aspen (BU)
-  The minor heritage of Pelvoux (BW)
-  The Gyr (BY)
-  Silver spike grass (CA)
-  The white-throated dipper (CC)
-  The trout (CE)
-  The great goldenrod (CG)
-  The rosebay willowherb (CI)
-  Southerly burnet (CK)
-  Pastoral activity in the Selle valley, dale (CM)
-  Chamois (CO)
-  The alpine ibex (CQ)
-  Monk's Rhubarb (CS)
-  Chamois ragwort (CU)
-  White throated dipper (CW)
-  Common frog (CY)
-  Yellow (mountain) saxifrage (DA)
-  Cattle (DC)
-  Red ants (DE)
-  Walls (DG)
-  Chickweed (DI)
-  Bearded vulture (DK)
-  Red-billed chough (DM)
-  The Vallonpierre refuge (DO)
-  Impressive geology (DQ)
-  High altitude birds (DS)
-  Walled paths (DU)
-  Golden eagle (DW)
-  Toponymy in the Valgaudemar area (DY)
-  Yellow Billed Chough (BD)
-  Black Redstart (BF)
-  Marmot (BH)
-  East Alpine Violet Fescue (BJ)
-  Yellow Hammer (BL)
-  The front of the nappes (BN)
-  The realm of sheep (BP)
-  Chambran chalets (BR)
-  ASA of Béal Neuf (BT)
-  Water in the mountains (BV)
-  The grey alder (BX)
-  The ski resort of Pelvoux-Vallouise (BZ)
-  The aspen (CB)
-  Forest on the water's edge (CD)
-  The northern wryneck (CF)
-  The morio (CH)
-  Silver birch (CJ)
-  Green alder (CL)
-  The pastoral hut and the walkers' shelter (CN)
-  "Popeye" grasshopper (CP)
-  The ibex, a survivor (CR)
-  Black redstart (CT)
-  Cypress spurge (CV)
-  Astrantia minor (CX)
-  Verdonne Point (CZ)
-  Blueberry (DB)
-  Alpine lady's-mantle (DD)
-  Rampion (DF)
-  Marmot (DH)
-  Schist sheets (DJ)
-  Chaumette Meadow (DL)
-  The Sirac (DN)
-  Alpine ibex (DP)
-  Marmot (DR)
-  Clot Xavier Blanc mountain refuge (DT)
-  "Toune" (DV)
-  Traditional dwellings (DX)
-  An itinerary packed with history (DZ)

-  Waterfalls and view points over the valley (EA)
-  Combefroide Waterfall (EC)
-  Bourelle Gorge (EE)
-  Olan Refuge (EG)
-  Chamois, Ibex, ... (EI)
-  The Olan « summits » (EK)
-  Rock partridge (EM)
-  Lautier Lake (EO)
-  Souffles mountain refuge (EQ)
-  New path (ES)
-  Edelweiss (EU)
-  European violet willow (EW)
-  Côte Belle organs (EY)
-  *Pleurospermum austriacum* (FA)
-  Timber dams (FC)
-  Cantine cabin (FE)
-  Pastoral management (FG)
-  Maintenance of the footpath (FI)
-  Altitude flora (FK)
-  Lac de la Muzelle (FM)
-  Fauna and Flora in the Bog (FO)
-  Muzelle bog (FQ)
-  A bit of history concerning the valley of Muzelle (FS)
-  Purple Loosestrife (FU)
-  Petrifying Fountain (FW)
-  Small Apollo (FY)
-  Chazelet perch (GA)
-  La Grave terraces (GC)
-  Hayfields (EB)
-  Heather fields (ED)
-  Jas crossing of the Bourelle (EF)
-  View of La Chapelle and the surrounding mountains (EH)
-  Ancient refuge at Pas de l'Olan (EJ)
-  Flora at altitude (EL)
-  Alpine newt and ponds (EN)
-  Remarkable views (EP)
-  Paravalanche (ER)
-  Viviparous Lizard (ET)
-  Landscape of the cirque de Valsenestre (EV)
-  Flock of sheep (EX)
-  Alpine columbine (EZ)
-  Monkshood (FB)
-  Tall herb fringe communities (FD)
-  Cipollino Marble quarry (FF)
-  Glacier polished rocks (FH)
-  Wallcreeper (FJ)
-  Geological impact (FL)
-  Muzelle refuge (FN)
-  Ser Barbier Fault (FP)
-  The pastoral valley (FR)
-  Common Midwife Toad (FT)
-  Lovitel Lake (FV)
-  The Emparis Plateau (FX)
-  White-throated dipper (FZ)
-  Sainte-Anne du Chazelet oratory (GB)
-  Notre-Dame de l'Assomption Church (GD)

# 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

The best period for undertaking this tour is from late June to mid-September. Find out about weather and snow conditions on the passes in early summer. Some stretches, in the upper reaches of the mountains, pass through tricky terrain.

It is possible to bivouac along the route of the Tour (see the regulations for the heart of the National Park) or to overnight at campsites, hotels, gîtes or refuges. The Stages require that you carry your own food.

## How to come ?

### Transports

By train : [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com)

By bus :

Bus lines in Région Sud : <https://zou.mareregionsud.fr/>

Bus lines in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes : <https://carsisere.auvergnerhonealpes.fr/>

Bus lines in Isère : <https://www.itinisere.fr/>

### Access

From Grenoble:

80 km along the RD1091, following signs for the resorts of L'Oisans / La Grave / Briançon

From Gap:

120 Km along the RN94, following signs for Briançon; then the RD1091 following signs for Grenoble via the Col du Lauteret

### Advised parking

Car park close to the cablecars



# Environmental sensitive areas

Along your trek, you will go through sensitive areas related to the presence of a specific species or environment. In these areas, an appropriate behaviour allows to contribute to their preservation. For detailed information, specific forms are accessible for each area.

## Golden eagle

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

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

Nidification de l'Aigle royal

Les pratiques qui peuvent avoir une interaction avec l'Aigle royal en période de nidification sont principalement le vol libre et les pratiques verticales ou en falaise, comme l'escalade ou l'alpinisme. Merci d'éviter cette zone !

Attention en zone cœur du Parc National des Écrins une réglementation spécifique aux sports de nature s'applique : <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/thematique/sports-de-nature>

## 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

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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  
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

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Julien Charron  
julien.charron@ecrins-parcnational.fr

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### **Golden eagle**

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Julien Charron  
julien.charron@ecrins-parcnational.fr

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julien.charron@ecrins-parcnational.fr

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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

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### **Golden eagle**

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julien.charron@ecrins-parcnational.fr

## Nidification de l'Aigle royal

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### **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

### **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-survol-non-motorises>

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

## Alpine ibex

Sensitivity period: June, July, August, September

Contact: Parc National des Écrins  
Julien Charron  
[julien.charron@ecrins-parcnational.fr](mailto: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>

## Source



Parc national des Écrins

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

# On your path...

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## Romanche valley, Charles Bertier (AA)

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

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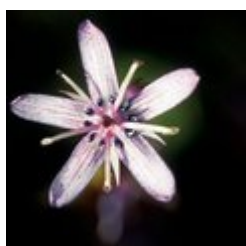


## The marmots' "bosse" (AB)

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

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## Felwort (AC)

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

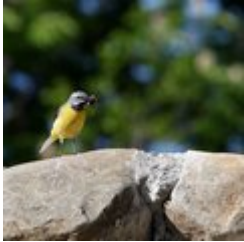
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### Skylark (AD)

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



### Grey wagtail (AE)

The grey wagtail elegantly hops along the rocks at the riverside. They are found in mountain streams, but also near all waterways in the mountains, in the countryside or in towns, and even small high-altitude lakes. Like other wagtails, they continually wag their long black tails edged with white. They have yellow breasts like the western yellow wagtail, but their backs are ash grey. In the mating season, males proudly show off their black throats, making it easier to tell them apart from females, whose throats and breasts are partly white. Their pinkish claws are specific to the breed, since other wagtails' claws are black.

Attribution : PNE - Saulay Pascal



### Butterflies and moths (AF)

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



### Moorland clouded yellow (AG)

The heath surrounded by heather and willows is the home of a population of unusual and protected butterflies: the moorland cloud yellow. Elsewhere, it lives in different environments, such as blueberry heaths and peatland, where the moorland clouded yellow is rare and hard to spot. It can be recognised by its yellow display delicately sprinkled with grey under the rear wings of the male, while the female of the species has adopted almost purely white wings. They both wear a simple pink border highlighting the edge of their wings, with a tiny white ocellus (eye) encircled with brown and a discrete grey crescent.

Attribution : PNE - Delenatte Blandine

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### Water colour in the meanders (AH)

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

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### Alpine citril finch (AI)

A small green-yellow-grey bird sways on a tall branch. Chet! The Alpine citril finch flies off to land on a scrap of threadbare grass. It looks like a small greenfinch, but the strident cry it makes during its short flight clearly sets it apart. Its head and breast flanks are a pretty blue-grey colour. Its yellow wing stripes can be easily seen. When flying over longer distances, its undulating flight is reminiscent of a goldfinch's. And just like its cousin, the finch is sociable and moves about in small groups when exploring some sparse group of nettles or grass.

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien

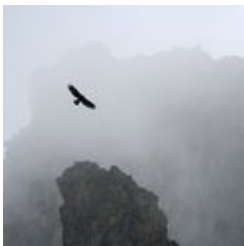
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## ❁ Larch (AJ)

The larch is the only European resinous tree to lose its needles in winter. Its wood is red-brown. It stands out in the landscape with its leaves ranging from a soft green colour in spring to gold in autumn. Its pink flowers attract naturalists and photographers in the spring. The larch tree is a coloniser of mountain slopes. Although it is at home in the harsh conditions of the mountainside, it cannot bear competition from other trees. The Petit Tabuc site is a fine example of its colonising capacity, even though it is regularly hit by avalanches.

Attribution : PNE - Chevalier Robert



## 🦅 A flying predator (AK)

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

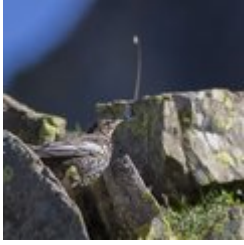


## 🦅 Golden eagle, the Ecrins' mascot (AL)

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





### Ring ouzel (AM)

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



### Chamois (AN)

*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 (AO)

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



### European badger (AP)

You will often see a badger at nighttime on the edge of a path, a road or an embankment. The gentle pace and portly gait of this member of the mustelid family are reminiscent of a small bear you may get a glimpse of his black and the white stripes on his head before he hurries away. Worms, reptiles, frogs, fruit and plants are his staple diet. Families of badgers live in sometimes very extensive and very old burrows, with numerous chambers and galleries. They are tolerant animals, since they will sometimes share their home with rabbits and foxes. Badgers are among the unobtrusive neighbours whose presence goes undetected, except for their footprints made up of five nearly parallel toes and the tracks of their long claws.

Attribution : PNE - Fiat Denis



### Lover of old stones (AQ)

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 (AR)

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



## Doors and courtyards (AS)

As you stroll through the streets of Le Casset, some house doors will attract your notice, as they bring together most of the decorative elements of the facades. Made of larch wood, they have been moulded or sculpted with geometric or floral patterns and have a tympanum above them, often with a grating. Behind the door is the courtyard, the shared entrance for people and animals. The way people lived and organised their homes resulted in this single entrance, an area giving access both to the stable and to the living quarters. Between the world inside and outside, the courtyard provided a passageway, insulation, but also storage space.

Attribution : Claire Broquet - PNE



## Rock sparrow (AT)

The rock sparrow is here at the north-western limit and highest altitude of its home territory and regularly nests in the area. The species is in decline nationally and is on the endangered 'red' list in Rhône-Alpes and is being studied in the PACA region. People sometimes pay little attention to house sparrows since they are so familiar, which is a pity. The rock sparrow is bigger and although its plumage is similar to a female house sparrow's, its call sets it apart at once: pi-yip or pi-yui or even a chay sound that is similar to a brambling's!

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien



## Le Casset (AU)

At the entrance to the valley, Le Casset is a stone shell village surrounded by farming landscapes. Its name comes from the verb 'cassare' ('to break, to shatter' in late Latin), describing a place covered with stones. In fact there are many such villages in this mountain valley carved out by a vast glacier. Le Casset, on the left bank of the Guisane, is sheltered from avalanches beneath the watchful eye of the prestigious summits and glaciers that "move" in a different time scale from our own.

Attribution : PNE - Masclaux Pierre



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## Sundials (AV)

As you walk through the village of Lauzet, you will see recently made sundials made in traditional style. Easy to see from the main village streets, they adorn the beautifully restored facades of the old houses.

Attribution : Claire Broquet - PNE

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## Saint Claude's church in Le Casset (AW)

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.



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## The Serre Chevalier resort (AX)

At the edge of the Ecrins National Park, the Serre Chevalier ski resort extends over several towns and villages on the right bank of the Guisane, from Monêtier-les-Bains to Briançon. Founded in 1941 with the Chantemerle cable car, it has the biggest ski area in the southern Alps with 61 ski lifts on all levels from an altitude of 1,200 m to 2,830 m to Pic de l'Yret (Le Monêtier-les-Bains). The resort's logo is an eagle, in reference to Baron Borel du Bez, Briançon's representative in 1792 at the Legislative Assembly, which ruled France between 1792 and 1795, during the French Revolution. Le Bez is a hamlet in Villeneuve that was united with the Chantemerle ski resort in the 1970s.

Attribution : © Parc national des Écrins - Jean-Pierre Nicollet



## Charvet Chapel (AY)

Near the arrival of the old Charvet button lift, dating from 1948 (still present, but disused since the end of the 2003/2004 season), is the Charvet chapel, which was built in 1755. Easy to access both in summer and winter from Le Monêtier, it provides hikers with a wonderful panorama over the southern Guisane valley.

It is quite unusual for a chapel in the region to be dedicated to Saint Anthony of Padua rather than to Saint Anthony the Great. Was there a shift in patronage over time? The fact the saints had the same name led to the particular qualities of each one being mixed up.

Attribution : © Florence Chalandon



## Eychauda Lake (AZ)

Principally supplied with water by the Séguret-Foran glacial torrent, Eychauda lake is glacial: cold with water full of ground rock particles, lacking oxygen in winter, it is not conducive of life even if a few trout, originally from trout farms set up in the 1950s and 1960s survive there... Nestling in the deep basin in the shade of the high mountain walls, de, it stays frozen for a long time. Icebergs sometimes remain until August. Its principal torrent does not stay on the surface but gets lost in a system of holes and scree.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE



## Le Lac de l'Eychauda, Laurent Guétal (BA)

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Laurent Guétal was one of the most prominent painters of Dauphiné landscapes. In 1886 he painted a picture entitled *Le Lac de l'Eychauda*, from a study he had completed in situ a few years earlier at 2,514 metres above sea level. Painted in three weeks for the Salon, the work was favourably received and earned the artist two medals. While the bottom of the painting is presented as a succession of horizontal bands, at the top the sky is set against the dark mass of the mountain. The attention paid to detail helps to reinforce the scale of this site, magnified by light.

Attribution : © Musée de Grenoble





### ❁ Dwarf Willow (BB)

Around the lake the grass is short: it is an alpine lawn. In the hollows, the snow remains for a long time at this altitude and the plants have little time to flower and reproduce. Only certain plants that are perfectly adapted can survive the « snow patches », scientific term to describe this particular environment. In this way the Dwarf Willow, cousin to the Weeping Willows, is a woody plant covering the ground hardly lifting up except by its small leaves and catkins.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE



### 🇫🇷 Red Billed Chough (BC)

Recognizable far away by its raucous cry, the Red Billed Chough (and red feet!) sometimes gets mixed up in flocks of Alpine Choughs. But they are more timid. They dominate the high mountains less than the Alpine Choughs and sometimes inhabit sea cliffs.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



### 🇫🇷 Yellow Billed Chough (BD)

If you picnic beside a lake, you will certainly be visited by these black birds with yellow beaks and red feet: The Choughs. Wrongly called choucas (which live at a lower altitude), sociable birds that live in groups, they are great acrobats and very opportunistic. Their diet is varied, from vegetable peelings to cheese rinds!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



### 🇫🇷 Glacial terrain (BE)

With a long flat bottomed valley, its cross cliff retaining the lake, the recent moraines behind these and at the bottom, the Séguret-Foran lake, the terrain is typically one modelled by the glacier. Large quaternary glaciations, small age for ice and for the current glacier have left, as they moved away, the characteristic marks of their passage.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE



### Black Redstart (BF)

Even if it is well known in an urban environment, the Black Redstart is originally a mountain bird which has been able to adapt to other environments, as long as there are walls for it to build its nest! It is very present in the Chambran valley, arriving early in Spring, leaving late in Autumn. This Black Redstart is often semi migratory and is happy to join the vallies or the South of France in winter.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



### Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly (BG)

You will see plenty of nettles around the pastoral cabin! It is a plant living on soils full of nitrogen, which comes from the urine and the excrement of the moutons spending the night here. The small tortoiseshell caterpillars love to eat their leaves; the name in French refers to the caterpillar not the butterfly! The butterfly, also called the small tortoiseshell, can be from March onwards because it is rare for adult butterflies to hibernate.

Attribution : Jean-Pierre Nicolle - PNE



### Marmot (BH)

If you do not leave too late, you are likely to be able to see the marmots. They like the grass where they can dig their burrows. Stay discreet, do not try to approach them, you will disturb them. Don't expect to see them in the hottest part of the day: it is much too hot to go out and there are too many people around!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



### Eychauda Pastoral Cabin (BI)

This cabin shelters the shepherd from June to September. In order to not be carried away by the avalanches, it has been built under the shelter of the big boulder and it has a pitched roof that extends along the slope of the mountain. Another cabin situated above the Chambron valley makes it possible for the flock to exploit the supply of grass over the weeks.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE



### ✿ East Alpine Violet Fescue (BJ)

Right up to the cabin, you can distinguish in the surrounding prairies big tufts of tough grass, the East Alpine Violet Fescue. This poaceae (a grass) is in competition with all the other plants and takes up a lot of space. Formerly, mowing limited its development and encouraging other meadow plants for foraging. At the moment, this plant must be grazed early in the season when the leaves have not yet hardened after this the animals refuse them.

Attribution : Manuel Meester



### 🇫🇷 Northern Wheatear (BK)

Perched on a rock, a bird is alarmed it cries ouit ouit or tchac tchac. You can recognize it straight away thanks to its white rump and its tail with a black backward T: a Northern Wheatear. It is a migratory bird that needs open spaces with big rocks under which the female can build its nest.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



### 🇫🇷 Yellow Hammer (BL)

In the bottom of the valley, at the beginning of the summer, you will certainly hear, coming from the summit of a bush or a tree, the song composed of several notes in the same tone followed by a final higher or lower note... With binoculars, you can distinguish a bird with yellow and white feathering, the well named Yellow Hammer. It is a male, the female is more discreet as much in song as in its feathers! Listen well: Beethoven must have been inspired by this song when composing the first notes of his 5th symphony!

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



### ✿ Spring meadow saffron (BM)

May in Chambran valley: the snow has only just melted, when it appears, almost hiding all the grass yellowed by the winter, a pink carpet of Spring Meadow Saffron. The Spring Meadow Saffron, is a plant close to the Colchicaceae (but flowers in Spring as its name indicates!) it can be distinguished from the crocus, with whom it grows, by its pink open flower ; the crocus flower is mauve or white and closed.. The first belongs to the lily family and the second to the iris family.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE



## The front of the nappes (BN)

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 (BO)

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



## The realm of sheep (BP)

Together with its entire catchment area, the Chambran valley constitutes an enormous alpine pasture. Sheep belonging to several different owners are gathered here for the summer grazing season. Many of them come from the department of Alpes-de-Haute-Provence. The landscape (sheep paths, old hay meadows), vegetation, built structures (old dairy, pastoral cabins)... everything has been marked by centuries of animal husbandry.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



## Chambran Hamlet (BQ)

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 (BR)

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-Genevève Nicolas - PNE



## Choughs and red-billed choughs (BS)

A flight of black birds twists and turns before descending on the alpine meadows. The choughs are seeking out meagre takings, preferably small invertebrates. Great acrobats and sociable birds, they stand out with their yellow beaks and red legs. Sometimes a few red-billed choughs mingle with them. These are more timid and have a red beak and red legs. Both species nest on cliffs.

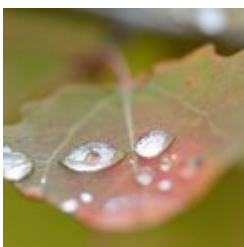
Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



## ASA of Béal Neuf (BT)

The ASA (authorised water user association) of Béal Neuf is the owner of the canal. The association manages, maintains and develops the Béal Neuf canal which carries water to the entire network of irrigation canals.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



## The aspen (BU)

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

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins





## 💧 Water in the mountains (BV)

Since the Middle Ages, canals have been dug to carry water to the crops. The water is diverted by the canals: through the action of gravity, the water flows down the mountain sides. Use of the water is regulated and for any draw-off, the volume is measured.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



## 🏠 The minor heritage of Pelvoux (BW)

Every hamlet has its own chapel. In the territory of Pelvoux, Les Claux has the chapel of Sainte-Barbe with a restored sun dial dating from 1792. The seventeenth-century chapel of Saint-Pancrace is in Le Poët. In Le Sarret, you can admire the chapel of Saint-Joseph and the chapel of Notre-Dame des Sept Douleurs stands in Le Fangeas. Every hamlet has its own communal oven and water fountains as well. Finally, the church of Saint-Antoine is located in the hamlet of Saint-Antoine. It has a sun dial dating from 1810.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



## 🌿 The grey alder (BX)

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

Attribution : Nicollet Bernard - Parc national des Écrins



## 💧 The Gyr (BY)

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

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins



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

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

Attribution : Pelvoux Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins



## Silver spike grass (CA)

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

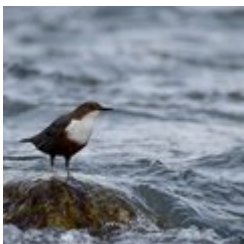
Attribution : Nicolas Marie-Geneviève - Parc national des Écrins



## The aspen (CB)

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 (CC)

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 Écrins



### ✿ Forest on the water's edge (CD)

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 (CE)

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 northern wryneck (CF)

The old trees in the orchard are home to the northern wryneck. It has a loud song, rather like that of the green woodpecker, only slower. This bird owes its name to the extreme way it extends and twists its neck when it feels threatened. Its French name torcol fourmilier is a reference to the fact that it feeds on ants (fourmils in French). Difficult to spot because its plumage merges into the colour of the tree trunks, it gives its presence away by its song when it returns from its migration.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins



### ✿ The great goldenrod (CG)

In damp spots on the edge of the track, swathes of tall plants grow. It forms great plumes of tiny yellow plants. The great goldenrod, still known as the tête d'or or "head of gold" is a plant native to North America and introduced into Europe in the eighteenth century as an ornamental. Since then, it has colonised a large are of Europe and in some places it even competes with the local flora.

Attribution : Cédric Dentan - Parc national des Écrins



### The morio (CH)

With wings edged with creamy white and sporting a string of little blue dots, a large butterfly takes flight from the path as the walker approaches. This is the morio. Its common French name is manteau royal, or royal cloak (although her cloak is not edged with ermine!) It lives near willow and beech trees because it loves the sap that flows from wounds in these trees. It is one of the few butterflies to hibernate as an adult.

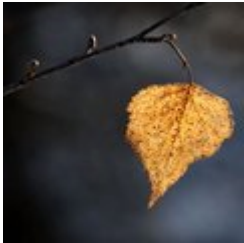
Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



### The rosebay willowherb (CI)

The rosebay willowherb is a tall, upright plant with elongated leaves. Its numerous purple-pink flowers are arranged in loose spikes at the top of the stem. It forms large clumps, which produce a beautiful display when in bloom. It is a pioneer plant and favours road embankments and disturbed ground. In late summer, its very numerous seeds, each with a little plume, float away en masse glowing in the advancing twilight...

Attribution : Thierry Maillet - Parc national des Écrins



### Silver birch (CJ)

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 (CK)

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



## ✿ Green alder (CL)

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



## 🐎 Pastoral activity in the Selle valley, dale (CM)

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 Maillet - PNE



## 🐎 The pastoral hut and the walkers' shelter (CN)

The Jas Lacroix pastoral hut is where the shepherd lives during the mountain pasture period. This 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 Maillet - PNE





## Chamois (CO)

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



## "Popeye" grasshopper (CP)

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



## The alpine ibex (CQ)

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 ibex, a survivor (CR)

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.

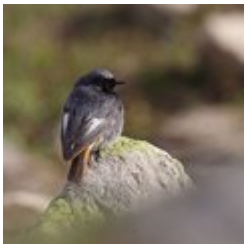
Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



## Monk's Rhubarb (CS)

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



## Black redstart (CT)

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 ragwort (CU)

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 Nicolet - PNE



### ✿ Cypress spurge (CV)

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 Bouteau



### 🐦 White throated dipper (CW)

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 (CX)

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 (CY)

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

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### Verdonne Point (CZ)

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 is 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

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### Yellow (mountain) saxifrage (DA)

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

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### Blueberry (DB)

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

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## Cattle (DC)

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 (DD)

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 Maillet - PNE



## Red ants (DE)

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 (DF)

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

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## 🕒 Walls (DG)

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.

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## 🐿 Marmot (DH)

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

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## 🌸 Chickweed (DI)

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

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## Schist sheets (DJ)

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 Maillet - PNE



## Bearded vulture (DK)

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 (DL)

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 (DM)

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 (DN)

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 (DO)

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 (DP)

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 (DQ)

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 (DR)

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 (DS)

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 (DT)

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 (DU)

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" (DV)

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 (DW)

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 (DX)

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 (DY)

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 (DZ)

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 (EA)

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 (EB)

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



## 💧 Combefroide Waterfall (EC)

At the beginning of the path, is a big waterfall that you can approach on a narrow footpath just before climbing the coast. Situated on Combefroide torrent at a rocky escarpment, this waterfall has several projections and presents a total drop of several dozen metres.

Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE



## ✿ Heather fields (ED)

Over a change in altitude of a hundred metres there is a covering of heather which provides pollen for the bees and purple colour in Autumn. A small persistent shrub with tiny leaves and little pink flowers, it is called Common Heather or False Heather.

Attribution : Daniel Roche - PNE



## 👤 Bourelle Gorge (EE)

Since the end of the ice age, water has carved the rock and the passage of materials has created a small gorge polishing the base rock (gneiss, micaschists). The National Park has taken on the challenge of building a wooden walkway for walkers to cross this gorge.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE



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## Jas crossing of the Bourelle (EF)

Just above the signpost, there are the ruins of a pasture shelter commonly called the, « jas ». Often built using dry stones, this kind of shelter was used to protect the flocks during the summer season.



## Olan Refuge (EG)

Situated at an altitude of 2350 m, this large building constructed in 1957 was carried away by an avalanche two years later. A witness to this is a concrete slab below the refuge. Rebuilt in 1966, it was definitively extended in 1978 with a capacity of 54 places. A stage of the Tour de l'Oisans (GR 54), it welcomes hikers in the summer season and provides a shelter in the winter; it belongs to the Club Alpin Français.

Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE



## View of La Chapelle and the surrounding mountains (EH)

The roof of Olan refuge makes a remarkable belvedere over La Chapelle village and the surrounding mountains which are the imposing Olan, the Cime du Vallon and the Rouye. A little higher up, the Pas de l'Olan provides a point of view of the entrance to the Valgaudemar valley and of the other face of the Olan.

Attribution : PNE



## Chamois, Ibex, ... (EI)

All along the path, fauna is present. Watch out for the eagle and the vultures that glide on the ascending winds, as well as the chamois who spy on the world below. A few Ibex can sometimes be observed by mountaineers on the slopes of the Olan, without forgetting the marmot who punctuates the ascent with its strident cry.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - PNE



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## Ancient refuge at Pas de l'Olan (EJ)

When you arrive at Pas de l'Olan, there are a few traces of the first refuge which was under the rocky mountain wall. Looking more like a large log cabin, it was unfortunately squashed by a rock. Due to its remoteness from the valley, the men chose to rebuild it on the current site.

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## The Olan « summits » (EK)

L'Olan is a major summit in the Écrins massif. It culminates at 3564 m and is composed of three summits of which the highest is the Northern summit. The Olan was climbed for the first time right to the central summit on the 8th July 1875, then the Northern summit on the 29th June 1877 by the famous W.B.A Coolidge and his guide Almer. A normal route setting out from the Olan refuge can, with a guide or the right mountaineering knowledge, be the goal of an ascent in the Valgaudemar.

Attribution : Bernard Guidoni - PNE

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## Flora at altitude (EL)

With a large altitudinal range, the variety of environments and the strong Southern exposure, floral diversity is extremely rich and varied. Most notably you can see the Tiger Lily, which stands out in its environment by the striking originality of its colour and the yellow gentian whose roots are used to make a bitter “eau de vie” with many virtues.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE

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## Rock partridge (EM)

The rock partridge likes rocks and open moors where the young can feed on the insects that are necessary for their growth. It is not rare to see a group towards the Lautier lake or the Colombe pass.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE

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## Alpine newt and ponds (EN)

At high altitude, it is possible to see two amphibian species. These are the common frog and the alpine newt. The latter is rarer. It is a fragile species and consequently a protected one. When adult, it resembles a small lizard. In its aquatic cycle, the male has an orange colour on its belly and throat. Most of the time when we watch it in the lake, it is motionless with its feet spread out, as though it were weightless. If it is frightened, a swift movement of the tail and it will find refuge under a stone. The lake is used for rearing which is not a good thing for newts that are food to fish. On the other hand, the ponds that are situated above the lake do not have fish and the alpine newts are at home and reproduce there.

Attribution : Michel Breuil - PNE



## Lautier Lake (EO)

This is a remarkable site. Brown trout are reared here for the delight of anglers.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE



## Remarkable views (EP)

The view over the valley as seen from the Souffles refuge is well worth the trip. Along the crossing from the Clochettes pass to the Colombe pass, there are numerous viewpoints that give multiple variations on a single theme: that of a high mountain valley.

Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE



## Souffles mountain refuge (EQ)

The Souffles mountain refuge is managed by the CAF (French Alpine Club). A keeper is present from June to September. Here you have the opportunity to get something to eat whilst chatting with a mountain professional or spend a night at high altitude if you prefer. This is a good way to split the itinerary in two.

Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE

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## Paravalanche (ER)

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.

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## New path (ES)

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.

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## Viviparous Lizard (ET)

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.

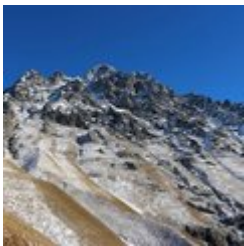
Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



## ✿ Edelweiss (EU)

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 (EV)

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 (EW)

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 (EX)

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



## Côte Belle organs (EY)

A striking geological phenomenon, the big organs , also known as the big library, were formed when the Alps were born. They were formed by thin grey-blue limestone sheets and by more highly eroded soft schistose marl. A series of perpendicular cracks in the layers divide the slabs into remarkable columns.

Attribution : Jonathan Le Roi - PNE



## Alpine columbine (EZ)

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 afive 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 (FA)

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 (FB)

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 (FC)

In the Combe des Echarennnes, 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 (FD)

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



## Cantine cabin (FE)

The dry stone (mortar) huts are an example of architecture without an architect they are the work, not of architects (unlike the religious, military and civilian buildings of the past), but of farmers and workers or masons whose names are now forgotten. These huts have many and varied names, which are mainly derived from regional languages, and which have been adapted into French. The Cantine (“Canteen” in English) huts were used as shelters for shepherds during the summer months, and probably owe their name to the meals eaten in the mountains.

Attribution : Manuel Meester - PNE



## Cipollino Marble quarry (FF)

From the 19th century, a cipollino marble quarry operated here. This marble had a white-green base colour with wavy green veins and a thick layer of mica. Les Cantines (canteen) hut is so-called because it was where the workers would have their meals. It was recently renovated and is used by the shepherd at the beginning and the end of the season.

Attribution : Maurice Séchier



## Pastoral management (FG)

From July to September, a flock of sheep occupy this steep valley. A shepherd watches over them and tends to them if necessary. Pastures are divided into sectors that are grazed upon according to a timeframe that takes the exposition and grass resources into consideration. For example, specific agro-environmental measures are in place to preserve the areas where black grouse nest. When the chicks are able to fly, usually after the 15th August, the sheep can head back to the area.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - PNE



## Glacier polished rocks (FH)

Around 15 000 years ago, the last glaciation ended. As it receded, the glacier left traces of its passage. Indeed, the withdrawal of such huge masses of ice polished the rocks and gave them a rounded shape, which is very apparent from the left bank of the valley. These rocks are known as 'moutonnées'.

Attribution : Maurice Séchier



## Maintenance of the footpath (FI)

After many complaints from hikers, the decision was made in 2010 to employ the necessary means to improve security on the route. It took a mechanical 'spider' digger a day and a half to climb all the way up to the pass. It then dug out the footpath as it went down the black shale on a 40° degree slope. Each year, serious manual work is undertaken to ensure that hikers have safe access.

Attribution : Pierre Masclaux



## Wallcreeper (FJ)

As you get to the last leg before the pass, you may well hear high-pitched whistles. If you are lucky, you will catch sight of the composer of this melody: the wallcreeper, which is a beautiful red, black and white bird. Defying verticality, the wallcreeper uses its long-clawed feet to latch onto the rock faces in search of insects and spiders. Its long beak then enables it to draw them out of the cracks in the rock.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



### Altitude flora (FK)

Near to the pass, you will admire small grey-green cushions scattered with white flowers: this is the *androsace helvetica*, a rare protected species. This altitude plant is perfectly acclimatised to the hostile environment. This is also the case for the mountain saixifrage. Both like limestone, which is not the case of moss campion, small green cushion with pink flowers, or the Arctic alpine forget me not, a small blue-flowered plant that prefer the crystalline rocks here and there across the pass.

Attribution : Olivier Warluzelle - PNE

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### Geological impact (FL)

During this walk, the path takes you past brittle, black sedimentary rocks. At the pass, they come into contact with light-coloured crystalline gneiss: the contrast is surprising! There is a geological fault here where monumental forces have been pushing against each other for millions of years.

Attribution : Maurice Séchier

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### Lac de la Muzelle (FM)

The Lac de la Muzelle is a glacier lake with cold waters, poor in life. The fish population is limited to salmonids (Arctic char, brook trout, etc.). Their active period is limited to summer. Since their food sources are low, they suffer from dwarfism. Each year, scientific monitoring is carried out by various universities and the National Park: samples of fish, phytoplankton, zooplankton and physical measurements.

Attribution : PNE - Telmon Jean-Philippe



## Muzelle refuge (FN)

The bottom of the valley comes up to the rock wall at Muzelle, the pic du Clapier du Peyron and the head of the Muraillette. The modern history of this place is marked by mountaineering. It was on the 2nd July 1875 that Coolidge guided by Almer father and son opened the normal way to Roche de la Muzelle by the East North East face and the North-East ridge.. At this time, even if a pastoral cabin was used by the mountaineers the bivouac was still often used in the Muzelle valley. In 1967, it was in the rocky cirque that the community built the refuge on the shore of Muzelle lake.

Attribution : PNE - Albert Christophe



## Fauna and Flora in the Bog (FO)

The bog is a very special environment which, by definition produces peat. Its appearance is that of a carpet of spongy sphagnum, plants full of water similar to mosses that accumulate over time. Their scientific study has enabled us to trace the evolution of the climate as well as that of the vegetation. The bogs can be seen at a distance when the Cotton Grass is in flower. Etymologically its name in French describes the 'portelaine' (wool carrier): its fluffy tufts and its cottony appearance make it an easily identifiable plant... You can also see around here and animal that is very active in this area: the common frog. Resistant to the cold, it is a batracien which is very well adapted to the alpine environment. The yellow abdomen and the large dark mark at the back of the eye incorporating the ear drum are two characteristics observable with this species...

Attribution : PNE - Coulon Mireille



## Ser Barbier Fault (FP)

The fault at Ser Barbier brings into contact the crystalline bas (the needle of Venosc) and a marly deposit (Vallon mountain pass). It was formed during the Jurassic period when the Téthys sea opened out, by breaking and crumbling the crystalline massif. The rubbing together of the two parts created a beautiful striated mirror clearly visible due to erosion.

Attribution : PNE - Albert Christophe



## ✿ Muzelle bog (FQ)

The humid zone, which you cross just before Muzelle lake, is bursting with astonishing biodiversity. The remains of a big lake created during the retreat of the glacier, this marsh has become filled little by little with plants forming the biggest bog in Vénéon valley. For several generations, the shepherds have used the peat as a fuel. Today it is forbidden to extract it. The place is protected by fences as part of agri-environmental measures.

Attribution : PNE - Nicollet Jean-Pierre



## 🐄 The pastoral valley (FR)

The configuration of the site made it very favourable to pastoralism for several centuries. This area of pastures was rented during the 19th and 20th centuries to seasonal grazers from the South of France. The local flocks from Venosc and particularly the flock from the hamlet of Laffreyte also went there. At that time, the first animals up in the mountain each year were the cows then the sheep. Since the 1980s, a flock of sheep of round 1200 animals from the Hautes-Alpes summer graze from June onwards and spend the summer in this prairie.

Attribution : PNE - Brun André



## 🕒 A bit of history concerning the valley of Muzelle (FS)

At the end of the 19th century the forest was practically nonexistent, it had been reduced in favour of pastoral activity (on the higher planes) and for the culture of cereals, principally barley, above the inhabited areas. Towards 1945, the highest hamlets, like the one at Laffreyte above Bourg-d'Arud, were emptied of their inhabitant. Today the forest has gained ground covering the memory of a few ruins at the bottom of the track... Before the arrival of the motor car and the creation of roads, this itinerary around the lake and the Muzelle mountain pass was often used by the inhabitants of Venosc in order to cross the valley to the neighbouring valley of Valbonnais.

Attribution : Collection PNE





## Common Midwife Toad (FT)

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



## Purple Loosestrife (FU)

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



## Lovitel Lake (FV)

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



### Petrifying Fountain (FW)

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

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### The Emparis Plateau (FX)

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

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### Small Apollo (FY)

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



## White-throated dipper (FZ)

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

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## Chazelet perch (GA)

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 (GB)

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 (GC)

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 (GD)

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