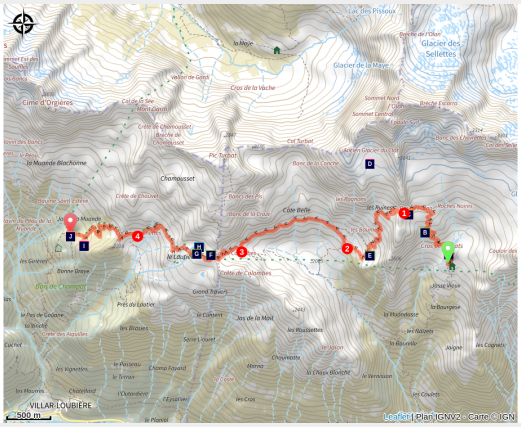
From the Refuge de l'Olan to the Refuge des Souffles (a Stage on the GR54)

Valgaudemar

La vallée du Valgaudemar depuis le Pas de l'Olan (Olivier Warluzelle)



A challenging variant right up close to the iconic peaks of the Valgaudemar and an unrivalled view over the entire valley.

Running from refuge to refuge, this entire stage offers an unforgettable view of the valley and the peaks of the Valgaudemar. The route runs through two passes and skirts the cold glaciers and a pretty glacial lake: Le Lautier. The hiker is surrounded by rocky scenery right up to the next stage.

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 5 h

Length : 8.9 km

Trek ascent : 618 m

Difficulty : Medium

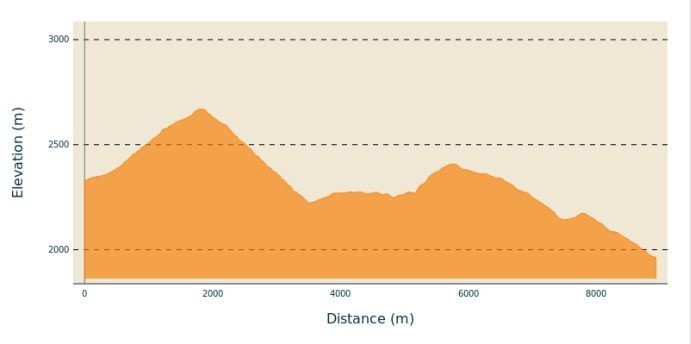
Type : Stage

Themes : Fauna, Flora, Geology

Trek

Departure : Refuge de l'Olan, La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar
Arrival : Les Souffles, Villard Loubière
Markings : GR
Cities : 1. La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar 2. Villar-Loubière

Altimetric profile

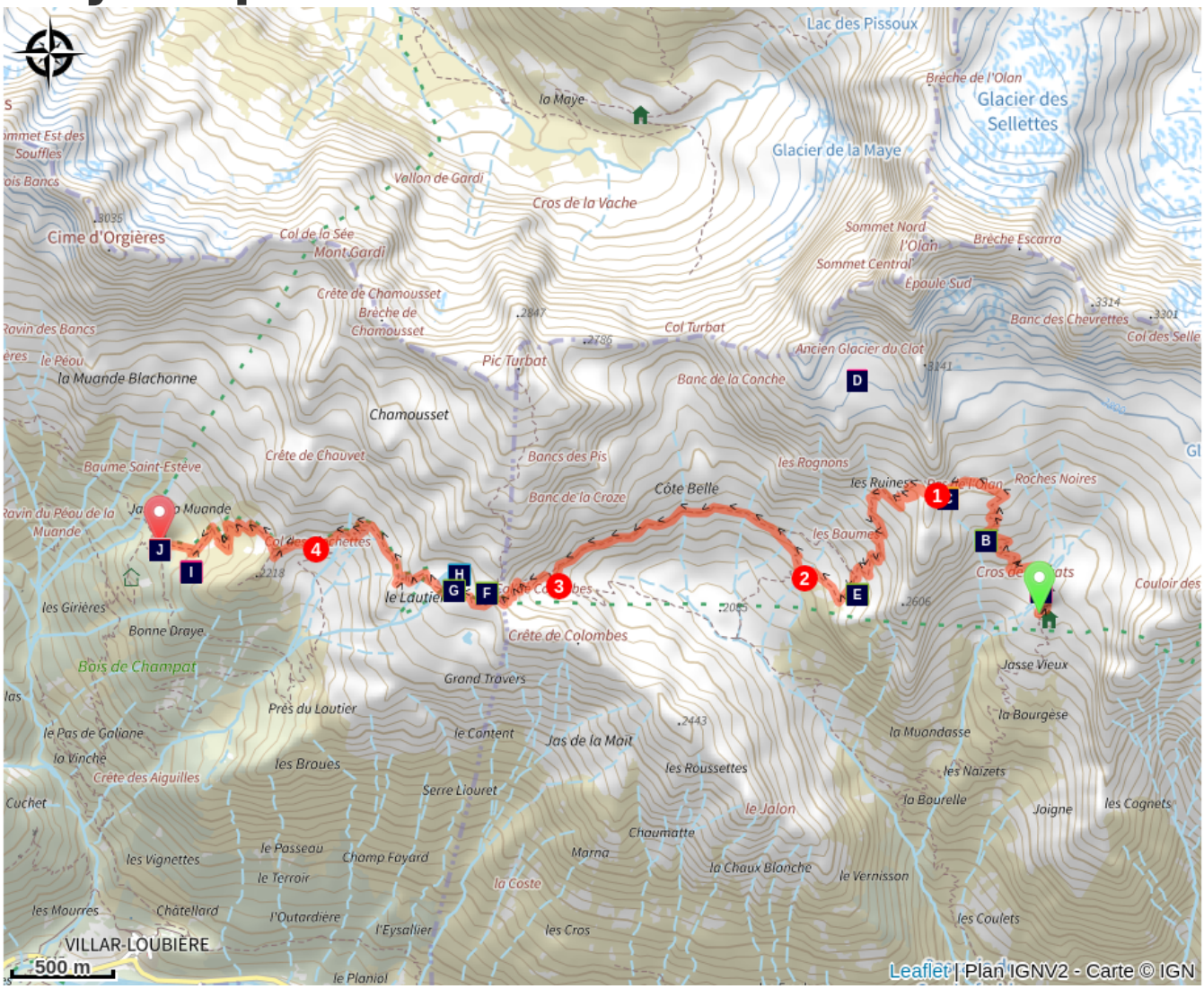


Min elevation 1963 m Max elevation 2671 m

From the refuge, climb a winding path towards the rockiest, ruggedest section on the Stage: the Pas de l'Olan mountain pass.

1. Once past this stretch, the path then winds 300 metres back downhill.
2. At the last turn, the path either leads along the mountain side opposite or drops downhill to the left. Take the left-hand option. You drop down a further 50 metres and then this path, too, climbs the side of the mountain.
3. When you reach another intersection, turn right climbing up towards the Col des Colombes. At the pass, the view over the valley and the peak of the Olan is remarkable. Cross to the other side and proceed between glacier-polished rock and grassy areas and cross the spillway of a small glacial lake: Le Lautier. Follow the mountain-side path which then drops down to an intersection.
4. Continue straight on, leaving the descending path on the left, and pass through another pass (Col les Clochettes). Once through the pass, the path snakes down to the Refuge des Souffles.

On your path...



View of La Chapelle and the surrounding mountains (A)
Chamois, Ibex, ... (B)
Ancient refuge at Pas de l'Olan (C)
The Olan « summits » (D)
Flora at altitude (E)
Rock partridge (F)
Alpine newt and ponds (G)
Lautier Lake (H)
Remarkable views (I)
Souffles mountain refuge (J)

All useful information

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

Take care after the intersection below the Col Colombe as you cross a short steep section, and at the Pas de l'Olan. Be wary of wet rocks when passing through the Pas de l'Olan.

Source

Parc national des Ecrins

https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr

On your path...

View of La Chapelle and the surrounding mountains (A)

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, ... (B)

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

Ancient refuge at Pas de l'Olan (C)

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.

The Olan « summits » (D)

L'Olan is a major summit in the Écrins massif. Il 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

Flora at altitude (E)

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

Rock partridge (F)

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

Alpine newt and ponds (G)

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 (H)

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

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE

Remarkable views (I)

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 (J)

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