

## Les Eyssuches (no. 18)

Vallouise - L'Argentière-la-Bessée



(Rogier Van Rijn)



*A circuit rated as difficult running on both sides of the Durance, starting from L'Argentière-la-Bessée.*

This circuit runs above the town of L'Argentière-la-Bessée. Stunning views of its industrial past (Pechiney factory), its exploitation of water (the hydroelectric power station) and the iconic ridge, the Crête de la Rortie. Then, a stretch running close to the Canyon de l'Ascension via La Roche-de-Rame and back along the right-hand bank of the Durance.

### Useful information

Practice : Mountain bike

Duration : 2 h

Length : 12.4 km

Trek ascent : 286 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Loop

Themes : Fauna, Flora, History and architecture

# Trek

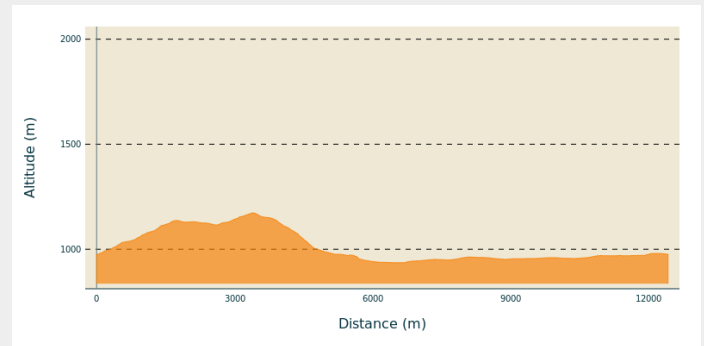
**Departure** : Place du kiosque,  
L'Argentière-la-Bessée

**Arrival** : Place du kiosque, L'Argentière-  
la-Bessée

**Markings** : 🚲 VTT

**Cities** : 1. L'Argentière-la-Bessée  
2. La Roche-de-Rame  
3. Freissinières  
4. Champcella

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 937 m Max elevation 1174 m




The circuit starts right in the centre of town, not far from the bridge spanning the Durance. In fact, you need to cross this bridge to get to the main road




1. When you reach the main road, go straight across and up to the cemetery. Skirt around the cemetery on the north side, following a forest track
2. Where the tracks intersect, continue due south on the forest track
3. At the next intersection, go past the tank on your left and continue downhill on the track, heading due south
4. Leave the track, turning left onto a narrow path which runs through the forest and drops down to La Roche-de-Rame
5. After the chapel of Saint Roch de Géro, cross the mountain stream and take the narrow road on your right
6. Upstream from the main road, turn left into the bridge underpass
7. Carry on due south past the old waste collection site
8. At the bridge (Pont de Traverses), rejoin the road on the right-hand bank of the Durance and this brings you back to Plan Léothaud
9. Go right under the railway line and then left towards the leisure centre ("Base de loisirs")
10. You then rejoin the green route ("Voie Verte") and this brings you back to the starting point of the circuit



# On your path...



-  The penstock pipe (A)
-  La Roche-de-Rame (C)
-  The white water stadium (E)

-  The southern swallowtail (B)
-  The black kite (D)
-  Former industrial area of L'Argentière-la-Bessée (F)

# All useful information

## **Advices**

>Rescue services contact details: Secours Montagne (Mountain Rescue): +33 (0)4 92 22 22 22 or 112

Take your litter home

Do not take shortcuts across pastureland

## **How to come ?**

### Transports

Public transports >> [www.pacamobilite.fr](http://www.pacamobilite.fr)

Consider car-sharing >> [www.blablacar.fr](http://www.blablacar.fr)

For more information, ask at the Tourist Information Office nearest to the trail starting point >> [www.paysdesecrins.com](http://www.paysdesecrins.com)

### Access

16 km from Briançon, take the N94.

### Advised parking

Car park of the Place du kiosque, L'Argentière-la-Bessée

# Environmental sensitive areas

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

## Short-toed snake eagle

Sensitivity period: March, April, May, June, July, August, September

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

Nidification du Circaète-Jean-le-Blanc

Les pratiques qui peuvent avoir une interaction avec le Circaète-Jean-le-Blanc en période de nidification sont principalement les pratiques aériennes comme le vol libre ou le vol motorisé.

Merci d'essayer d'éviter la zone ou de rester à une distance minimale de 300m sol quand vous la survolez soit 1650m d'altitude pour cette zone.

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## Information desks

### Vallouise Park house

vallouise@ecrins-parcnational.fr  
Tel : 04 92 23 58 08  
<http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/>



### Bureau d'Information Touristique de L'Argentière-La Bessée

23 Avenue de la République, 05120  
L'Argentière-La Bessée  
contact@paysdesecrins.com  
Tel : +33(0)4 92 23 03 11  
<https://www.paysdesecrins.com/>



## Source



Pays des Ecrins

<https://www.paysdesecrins.com>

# On your path...

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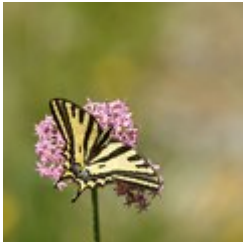


## The penstock pipe (A)

It was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that hydropower really came into its own in L'Argentière-la-Bessée. There was plenty of water flowing from the mountains here to generate electricity, at a time when electricity transmission - let alone diversion - technology had not yet been developed. This was achieved by digging out a number of tunnels and laying penstock pipes. Aluminium production became possible and so, too, did a fused quartz activity, making specialised glass for the chemicals industry.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins (collection)

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## The southern swallowtail (B)

This very beautiful but rare butterfly is similar to - and can easily be mistaken for - other more common butterflies, the scarce swallowtail (common despite its name) and the common yellow swallowtail. It lives on hot, limestone hillsides. Although protected, it is threatened by the disappearance of its habitat, due in particular to urbanisation and its capture and trade (both illegal) for collectors.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

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## La Roche-de-Rame (C)

The municipality of La Roche-de-Rame lies entirely on the left-hand bank of the Durance. Like L'Argentière-la-Bessée, its recent history has been profoundly marked by industry which saw rapid expansion in the early twentieth century. Well known for its natural stretch of water, a glacial lake, the hamlets of the municipality are dotted across the slopes.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins





## The black kite (D)

A bird of prey circles slowly above the valley. It is dark coloured with a slightly forked tail. A black kite, which returned from Africa in spring. It feeds on carrion or scraps as well as fish. It is easy to confuse with the red kite which is brown, red and white and its tail has a much more pronounced fork. The red kite does not nest here in the massif. It is only seen during the migration period, in the Durance valley.

Attribution : Combrisson Damien - Parc national des Écrins

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## The white water stadium (E)

As part of its restructuring after the closure of the industrial site, the town of L'Argentière-la-Bessée opted for sports tourism, exploiting the natural elements present on the site, that is to say, water. Standing at the beginning of the longest navigable section of the Durance river, in 1993 the municipality decided to establish itself as a major white water centre by creating this stadium which covers a 400-metre stretch. So thanks to its reputation and its ideal situation, every year this stadium hosts several elite competitions at national and international level.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins

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## Former industrial area of L'Argentière-la-Bessée (F)

On the two walls of these now-disused industrial structures, you can read the history of L'Argentière-la-Bessée. The town is marked by its industrial past, in particular by the presence of a hydroelectric power station built between 1907 and 1909 to harness the power of the mountain waterfalls. At the time, it was the most powerful power station in Europe. Other industries were also established here, like the Société du Quartz Fondu fused quartz works and the aluminium factory which provided livelihoods for a large number of workers.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins

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