

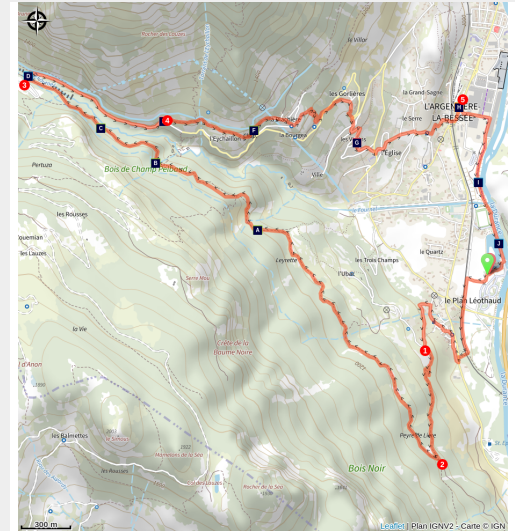
# Around the mines (trail route no. 22)



Vallouise - L'Argentière-la-Bessée



Le Sapey (Thibaut Blais)



*Alternating between meadow and forest, this circuit takes you into the Fournel valley, a place steeped in history, marked by the presence of silver mines*

Running through the municipality of L'Argentière-la-Bessée, this trail takes you up to the north-facing slopes ("Ubac") and on to the Bois de Champ Pelbaud through a pine forest before dropping back down into the eponymous valley, a popular ice climbing centre in the winter. You will overlook the gorges of the Fournel where silver mining was at its peak in the nineteenth century, before passing through the fields and buildings of the municipality.

## Useful information

Practice : Trail

Duration : 3 h

Length : 11.7 km

Trek ascent : 434 m

Difficulty : Easy

Type : Loop

Themes : Fauna, Flora, History and architecture

# Trek

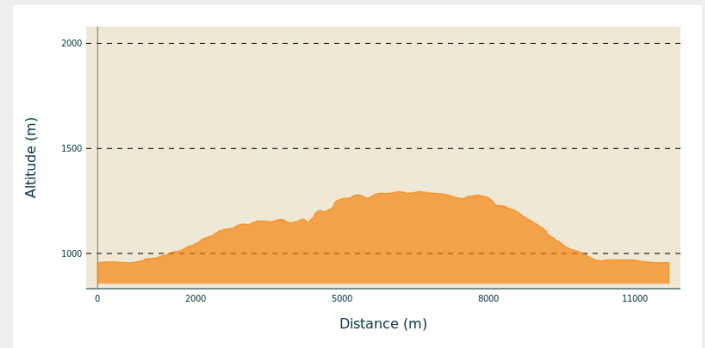
**Departure** : Camping Les Écrins,  
L'Argentière-la-Bessée

**Arrival** : Camping Les Écrins,  
L'Argentière-la-Bessée

**Markings** :  Trail

**Cities** : 1. L'Argentière-la-Bessée

## Altimetric profile

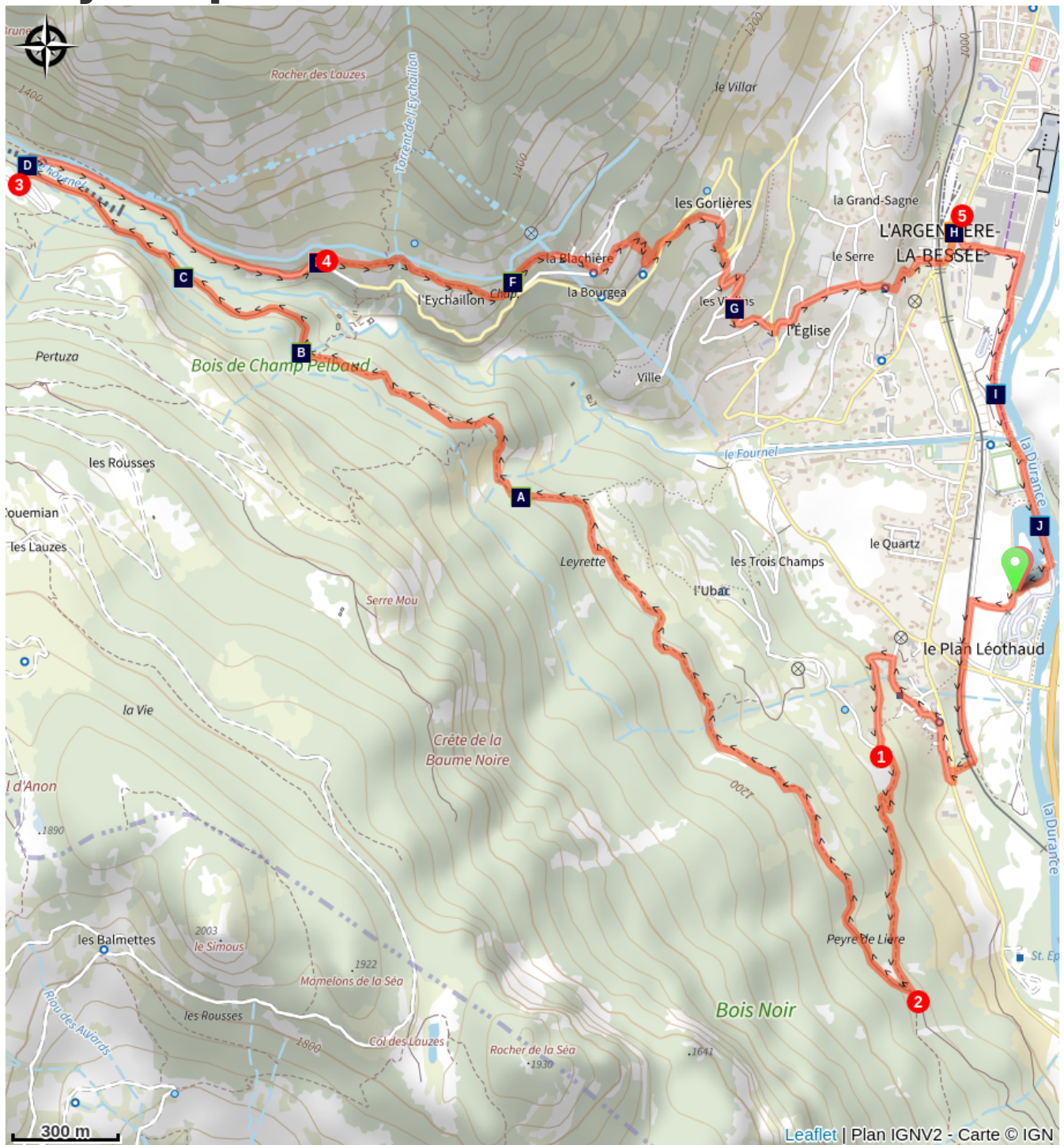












Min elevation 957 m Max elevation 1296 m

The circuit starts at the Les Écrins campsite in L'Argentière-la-Bessée, follows the railway line for 500 metres, before crossing it to take the local road towards Le Plan Léothaud

1. At the centre of the hairpin bend, go right onto a path leading to Peyre de Lière
2. Go to the extreme right towards the "Ubac" (north-facing slope) and Leyrette and then climb up to the Bois de Champ Pelbaud, going through a pine forest until you come to Le Sapey
3. Cross the Fournel via the bridge at Le Sapey and then head to the right towards the silver mines ("Mines d'Argent")
4. Before the silver mines, head left to reach the Les Blachières road which takes you on a more open descent through fields and houses to the church and then past the industrial zone of L'Argentière-la-Bessée
5. At the roundabout, turn right, then left and then right again to join the green route ("Voie Verte") to L'Argentière-la-Bessée along the banks of the Durance. Then, go back across the Fournel to the white water stadium and the starting point

# On your path...



- |   |                                 |   |                             |
|---|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
|  | The common chiffchaff (A)       |  | The sea-buckthorn (B)       |
|  | The wild angelica (C)           |  | The Fournel (D)             |
|  | The silver mines (E)            |  | The Apollo (F)              |
|  | The hamlets of L'Argentière (G) |  | The Francis turbine (H)     |
|  | The Durance (I)                 |  | The white water stadium (J) |



# All useful information

## **Advices**

Before setting off, it is very important to check the opening periods for this route on the website: <https://stationdetrail.com/fr/stations/le-pays-des-ecrins/parcours>

Share your photographs on social networks with #stationdetrailecrins

Check weather conditions before setting off.

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

Show consideration for the work of farmers, livestock keepers and owners

Close all gates behind you

Take your litter home

Do not take shortcuts across pastureland

The trail routes are also suitable for walking

## **How to come ?**

### Transports

Public transport >> [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 at the Camping Les Écrins, 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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Merci d'essayer d'éviter la zone ou de rester à un distance minimale de 300m sol quand vous la survolez soit 1850m d'altitude !

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Merci d'essayer d'éviter la zone ou de rester à un distance minimale de 300m sol quand vous la survolez soit 1900m d'altitude !

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Merci d'essayer d'éviter la zone ou de rester à un distance minimale de 300m sol quand vous la survolez soit 1525m d'altitude !

## Information desks

### Vallouise Park house

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



### Bureau d'Information Touristique de 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 common chiffchaff (A)

When spring arrives, a relentless «cheep, cheep» echoes around the forest. The singer is a small bird with a greenish grey and yellowish-white back, the common chiffchaff. Like other inconspicuous birds, the male has every incentive to make himself heard if he wants to attract the attention of a female! They are migratory and live almost anywhere where there are trees and bushes.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

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## The sea-buckthorn (B)

Here and there, you come across a bush with narrow leaves which are green on their upper sides and silvery-grey underneath. Take care, the branches are spiky! In autumn, it produces acidic bright orange berries. They are very rich in vitamin C and are best as a syrup or marmalade. It is a pioneer species which colonises alluvial soils in sunny situations. It has also been used by the Mountain Terrain Restoration service to stabilise slopes prone to water runoff.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

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## The wild angelica (C)

On the edges of seepage areas, the wild angelica grows. This is a tall umbellifer (the Apiaceae family) with blush white flowers and a hollow purplish stem. It is a cousin of garden angelica which grows in Northern Europe and is cultivated for its medicinal and culinary properties. The stem, the petiole (the «tail») and the leaf sheath can be candied.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins





## The Fournel (D)

The Fournel mountain stream gives generously. Its water makes up a large proportion of the town's drinking water, supplies the irrigation canals, is used for hydropower and offers a recreational area valuable to the local economy in the form of its canyon, located in the gorge connecting it to the Durance. Being a mountain stream, it is impetuous, but sills have been built lower down and it has been dammed to prevent natural disasters. Numerous mountain streams have received the same treatment...

Attribution : Jan Novak Photography

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## The silver mines (E)

The path passes close to the silver mines which gave L'Argentière its name (argent meaning "silver"). They were first worked in the early Medieval period and later abandoned before exploitation resumed again in the nineteenth century. They were finally closed in 1908. Since 1992, the site has been the subject of archaeological excavations, with major work to clear materials carried by the Fournel when in flood. They can be visited with a guide (by appointment), leaving the visitor in awe: how much ingenuity has been involved in extracting the silver-bearing galena!

Attribution : Thibault Blais Photographie

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## The Apollo (F)

This large white butterfly decorated with black marks and red dots, is common in warm areas where stonecrops and houseleeks grow, as these are host plants for its caterpillars. It remains common in the Alps, but is much rarer elsewhere. In fact, it is a protected species. Its movement to higher altitudes has been observed, in line with climate warming, because its eggs, which it lays on plants in summer, need a certain number of days of freezing temperatures in winter in order to hatch.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins

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## The hamlets of L'Argentière (G)

Before it was attached to the municipality of La-Bessée during the revolutionary period, L'Argentière covered this well-exposed slope, with all its hamlets from the church to Eychaillon. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the Durance was dammed and industries sprang up here, that the modern town of L'Argentière developed in the plain between the two old localities. The path takes you on a discovery of the old hamlets and their very attractive houses.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - Parc national des Écrins

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## The Francis turbine (H)

The American James Francis developed the Francis turbine between 1849 and 1855. It is a “à reaction” turbine suitable for medium-sized waterfalls (with a water head of between 15 and 500 metres). The water enters the turbine and then circulates between the turbine blades, which are fixed, while the inner wheel is mobile. The pressure at the wheel intake is greater than the pressure at the outlet.

Attribution : Jan Novak Photography

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## The Durance (I)

The Durance is the biggest river in Provence. Its source rises in the municipality of Montgenèvre at an altitude of 2,390 metres, and it flows down to meet the Rhône to the south of Avignon. This is a "pluvio-nival" river, that is to say, its flow depends on the natural addition of water due to snowmelt and rainfall. It thus constitutes a real playground for kayakers from across Europe.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins

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## The white water stadium (J)

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