

Les Têtes via La Pignée (trail route no. 23)

Vallouise - L'Argentière-la-Bessée



lac des poutilles aux Têtes (Thibaut Blais)



This itinerary offers a massive breath of fresh air and an incredible panoramic view.

On this vertiginous route, which offers exciting gradients, you will encounter lots of fellow outdoor sports enthusiasts. In fact, you will see kayakers at the white water stadium, climbers at the climbing site and on the Horloge via ferrata and also walkers, mountain bikers and other trailers as you ascend through the woods of La Pignée on your way to the highest point of the route: Les Têtes (2,044 m). From here, you will enjoy a breathtaking 360° panorama. You will then drop down to the Col de la Pusterle and on to the Fournel, and will end with a long downhill traverse back to your starting point.

Useful information

Practice : Trail

Duration : 5 h

Length : 20.2 km

Trek ascent : 1119 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Loop

Themes : Fauna, Flora, Panorama

Trek

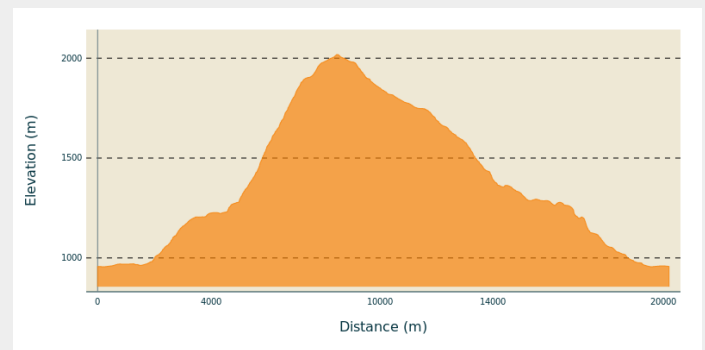
Departure : Camping Les Écrins,
L'Argentière-la-Bessée

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

Markings :  Trail

Cities : 1. L'Argentière-la-Bessée
2. Les Vigneaux

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 957 m Max elevation 2019 m

The circuit starts at the Les Écrins campsite in L'Argentière-la-Bessée. You will go past the white water stadium along the green route ("Voie Verte") and on to the industrial zone and the roundabout in the Avenue Charles de Gaulle

1. At the roundabout, turn left, go through the railway line underpass and then turn right at the second roundabout, heading towards the Horloge des Hermes clock tower and Les Combettes
2. Head left to La Blachière and then take a path running above the silver mines ("Mines d'Argent")
3. After crossing the mountain stream L'Eychaillon, start a long ascent to the right along a magnificent single-track through the woods of La Pignée, heading towards Les Têtes
4. When you reach Les Poutilles, head left to the highest point of the trail - Les Têtes (2,044 m) - and then retrace your steps, following the route in reverse. In Les Poustilles, head left to drop back down to the Lac des Sagnes and on to the Col de la Pousterle as far as the Champ Didier
5. Cross the Fournel and then turn left to start a long traverse downhill towards Le Sapey and the Bois du Champ Pelbaud, in a pine forest
6. Go right onto the north-facing slope ("Ubac") and then follow signs for Plan Léothaud
7. Turn left, cross the local road and then the railway line. Then turn left again to follow the railway line to the Les Écrins campsite and your starting point

On your path...



- | | |
|---|---|
|  The white water stadium (A) |  The Fournel (B) |
|  The Durance (C) |  The Francis turbine (D) |
|  The Apollo (E) |  The Scots pine (F) |
|  The deer (G) |  The Les Têtes belvedere (H) |
|  The wild angelica (I) |  The silver fir (J) |
|  The sea-buckthorn (K) |  The common chiffchaff (L) |

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

Consider car-sharing >> www.blablacar.fr

For more information, ask at the Tourist Information Office nearest to the trail starting point >> 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 300m sol quand vous la survolez soit 1650m d'altitude pour cette zone.

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 2140m d'altitude à une distance de 300m sol.

Au site dit de Grand Bois, le couple de faucons a retrouvé son aire de prédilection dans le secteur "flamme de pierre" ; à éviter donc.

http://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/actualite/amis-grimpeurs-attention-aux-pelerins-voies?fbclid=IwAR2Z8hX_38vpdW3mS499aRnY08jarhfm-5-eNV8K29k3WB3q3Ik2US_Alec

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



The white water stadium (A)

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



The Fournel (B)

The source of the Fournel rises in the Fournel valley, in the heart of the Parc National des Écrins, and flows into the Durance near the white water stadium. It is known as a high alpine canyon offering lots of sport and leisure possibilities, and is the most popular in the Haut Val Durance. It is ideal for an introduction to vertical activities, in particular thanks to the presence of several jumps, toboggan runs and rappel sites. Access is authorised from April to October and is regulated because it is located upstream from an EDF water intake, which presents a real hazard.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins



The Durance (C)

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



The Francis turbine (D)

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



The Apollo (E)

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



The Scots pine (F)

The path first runs up through a forest of Scots pines, a tree identifiable by its salmon-coloured bark, especially at the top, and its needles arranged in pairs. It is the typical tree of warm south-facing slopes in the montane zone of intra-alpine valleys.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins



The deer (G)

Deer are well-established across the Pays des Écrins. You can spot clues as to its presence: hoof prints or droppings, often in little piles. The stag loses his antlers at the end of winter (February-May) and they regrow up to the end of August. They reach full development before the rutting season (September), when you can hear the rutting call. The doe has no antlers.

Attribution : Telmon Jean-Philippe - Parc national des Écrins



The Les Têtes belvedere (H)

This belvedere is worth the diversion, not only for its unrestricted panorama over the Fournel and Durance valleys but also for the place itself, with its sparse mature larches and the bare limestone scored with small fissures. These were created by the erosion of the rock by cold snowmelt waters or rain.

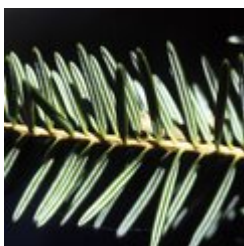
Attribution : Thibaut Blais



The wild angelica (I)

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 silver fir (J)

A few coniferous trees, including the fir, are mixed in among the deciduous trees. The fir thrives on this north-exposed slope, called the ubac, because it cannot tolerate drought. Its flat needles are arranged on either side of the boughs rather than all the way around them, which distinguishes it from the spruce. They have two white stripes on their undersides. Its elongated cones stand upright, rather than hanging downwards.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins



The sea-buckthorn (K)

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



The common chiffchaff (L)

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