

Les Chardons Bleus nature reserve (no. 17)

Parc national des Ecrins - L'Argentière-la-Bessée



(rogiervanrijn)



Intermediate circuit which culminates at the Les Chardons Bleus nature reserve

This circuit runs above the canyon of the Fournel and takes you to the Deslioures nature reserve, a Natura 2000 site established in 1993 by the French Forestry Commission. This area is home to one of Europe's biggest populations of blue sea holly (*Eryngium alpinum*) which is protected at national and European level. It is also called the Queen-of-the-Alps.

Useful information

Practice : Mountain bike

Duration : 3 h

Length : 25.0 km

Trek ascent : 686 m

Difficulty : Easy

Type : Loop

Themes : Fauna, Flora, History and architecture

Trek

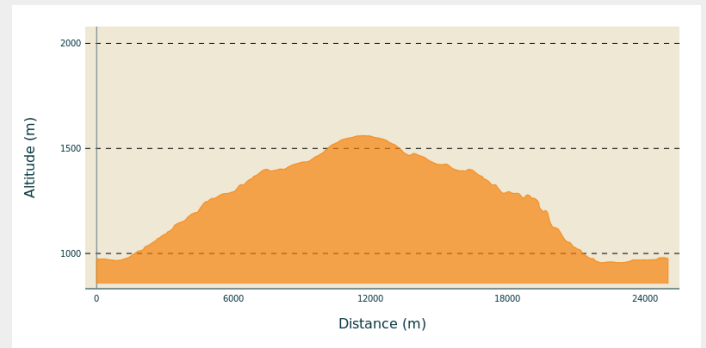
Departure : Place du kiosque,
L'Argentière-la-Bessée

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

Markings : ▶ VTT

Cities : 1. L'Argentière-la-Bessée

Altimetric profile

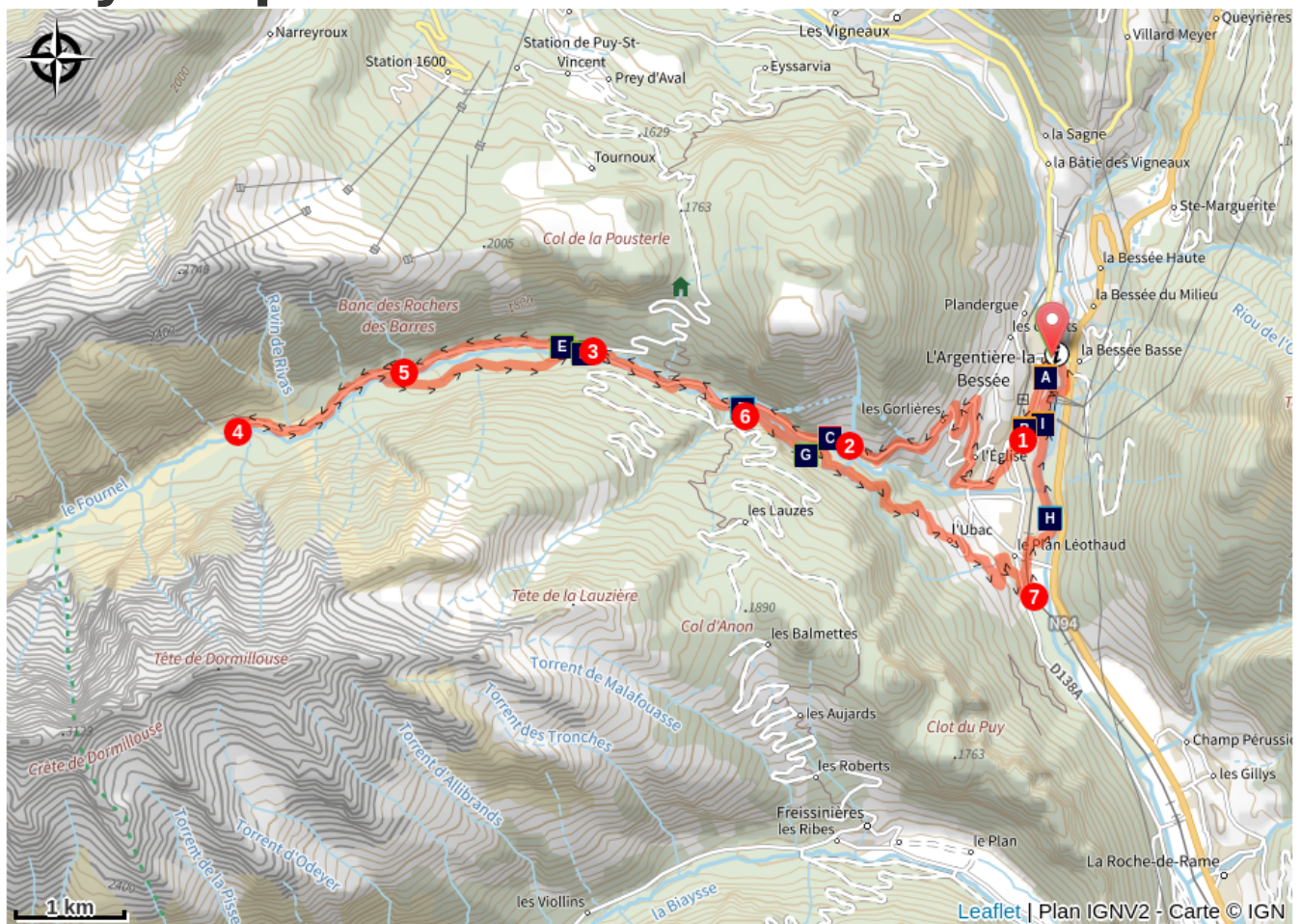











Min elevation 957 m Max elevation 1562 m

The circuit starts right in the centre of town, not far from the bridge spanning the Durance. Head due south towards the train station.

1. After passing the train station on your right and going under the railway bridge, follow the D423 towards the Fournel mines ("Mines du Fournel")
2. At the mine car park, carry on along the narrow road leading into the little valley
3. At a bridge, the Pont des Albrands, carry on along the forest track on the left-hand bank of the river
4. When you come to the terminal point of the forest track, turn back on yourself and go back along the path
5. Head right to cross the Fournel and reach Boujurian. Head towards the Pont d'Albrands and the Pont du Sapey
6. At the Pont du Sapey, stay on the right-hand bank of the Fournel and start the descent to the district of Plan Léothaud
7. At Plan Léothaud, go under the railway line. This brings you to the leisure centre and on to the end of the trail via the green route ("Voie Verte")

On your path...



-  The old workers' housing districts (A)
-  The silver mines (C)
-  The common yew (E)
-  The silver fir (G)
-  Former industrial area of L'Argentière-la-Bessée (I)
-  The Francis turbine (B)
-  The Fournel (D)
-  The grey wagtail (F)
-  The white water stadium (H)

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 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 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.

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 2230m.

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 2380m.

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 un distance minimale 300m sol quand vous la survolez soit 1650m d'altitude pour cette zone.

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 un distance minimale de 300m sol quand vous la survolez soit 1650m 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.

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 !

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 un 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 old workers' housing districts (A)

Workers' housing districts were built to house the many workers who were employed at the P echiney factory. These districts have now been demolished. The architecture of the houses varied according to the status of the employee. A town hall, a cinema, a bandstand and churches were also constructed.

Attribution : Jan Novak Photography



The Francis turbine (B)

The American James Francis developed the Francis turbine between 1849 and 1855. It is a " 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 silver mines (C)

The path passes close to the silver mines which gave L'Argent ere 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



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



The common yew (E)

Stands of common yew have declined significantly due to felling for wood and because of its toxicity for livestock and humans: it has been dug up or cut down in numerous regions. It has also been widely collected because it contains a cancer [fighting] agent. A large population survives in the Fournel valley and it is currently being monitored.

Attribution : Nicollet Bernard - Parc national des Écrins



The grey wagtail (F)

This timid bird with a grey back and yellow breast, has a long tail, like its cousin the white wagtail. As its name suggests, it is highly dependent on flowing water and it finds a favourite haunt on the banks of the Fournel river. It feeds on aquatic insects and nests on the riverbanks.

Attribution : Saulay Pascal - Parc national des Écrins



The silver fir (G)

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 white water stadium (H)

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



🍊 Former industrial area of L'Argentière-la-Bessée (I)

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