

From L'Argentière - La Bessée to Bouchier

Vallouise - L'Argentière-la-Bessée



Hameau de Bouchier (© OT Pays des Ecrins - Rogier van Rijn)



Head out from a small town with a varied and distinctly industrial complexion to climb up to a small mountain hamlet nestling between alpine pastures and cliffs, a hike full of contrasts.

Above L'Argentière, the landscapes tell the story of the town's industrial past. Further on, as the path rises towards Bouchier, the view opens up over Briançon, the foothills of the Queyras valley, the heights of Serre-Chevalier and the Durance valley.

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 4 h

Length : 10.9 km

Trek ascent : 733 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Stage

Themes : History and architecture, Panorama

Trek

Departure : Train station of l'Argentière-La Bessée

Arrival : Bouchier

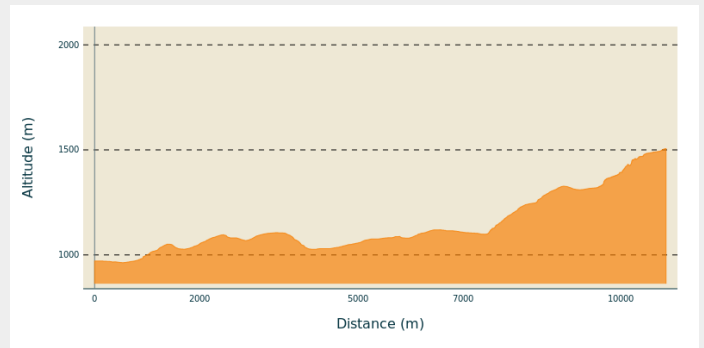
Markings :  Trail  PR  GR

Cities : 1. L'Argentière-la-Bessée

2. Les Vigneaux

3. Saint-Martin-de-Queyrières

Altimetric profile



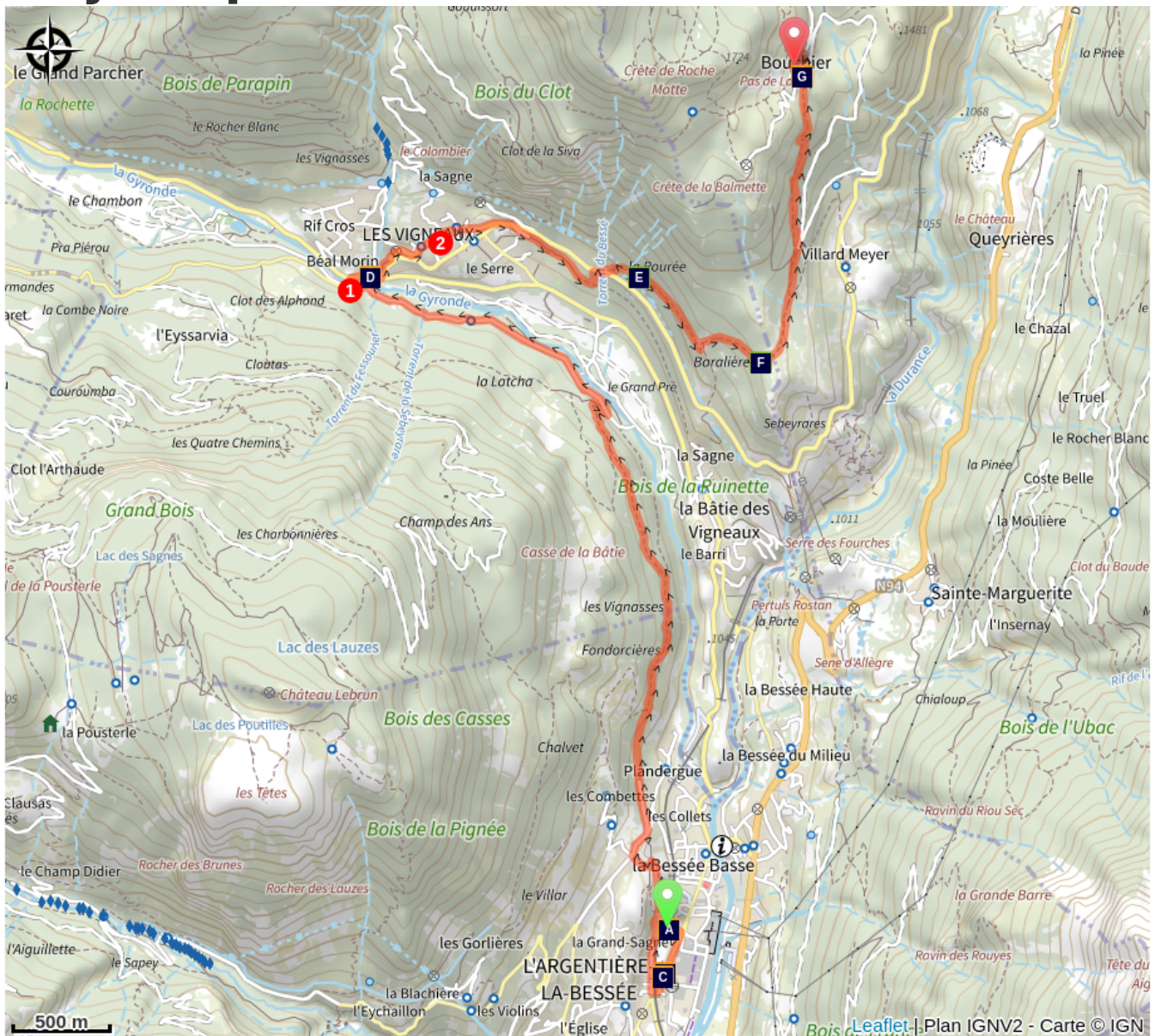
Min elevation 964 m Max elevation 1507 m

As you leave the train station, turn right onto the D994. Go straight over the roundabout (wheel) and then take the pedestrian underpass under the railway line and enter the cul-de-sac on the right. At the end of the cul-de-sac, take a small path running up under the clock (trail no. 23). When you come to a meadow, follow a small ridge on the right. The path turns into a track which you follow until it reaches the paved road towards Les Collets. Follow this down for 5 metres and then take the track signposted "Chemin de Girauds" on the left (GR waymark). After the last houses ("Plandergue 1,040 m"), take the path leading straight ahead (Les Vigneaux). After 2.5 km, the path approaches the Gyronde and you join the paved road that runs through a campsite, the Camping des Vaudois. Follow this road as far as the D4, where the bridge crosses the Gyronde.

1. Bridge over the Gyronde; from here, you leave the right-hand bank of the river behind, to climb up towards Bouchier. Cross the bridge and turn right onto the D994E. Cross the bridge over the Torrent de Rif Gros and join a path on the left between the D4 and the mountain stream.

2. When you reach Les Vigneaux, go straight through the village past the church. Cross the D4 and continue past the cemetery. Continue straight ahead, on a balcony path. 20 metres before the hamlet of Les Sagnes, take a narrow path on the left which leads to the D4 again. Cross the D4 and join a path opposite, which is not very clearly marked (trail no. 10). Continue straight on, rising approximately 100 metres to join the Bouchier path (cairns). Turn right onto the path and follow it until you reach the hamlet.

On your path...



-  The light rail tractor (A)
-  The Francis turbine (C)
-  The western green lizard (E)
-  The hamlet of Bouchier (G)
-  The mobile compressor (B)
-  The village of Les Vigneaux (D)
-  The short-toed snake eagle (F)

All useful information

Advices

The stretch of path on the approach to Bouchier is narrow, steep and sharply sloping.

How to come ?

Advised parking

Parking de la gare

Information desks

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



Parc national des Ecrins

<https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr>

On your path...



The light rail tractor (A)

A locomotive? No, its little cousin, the light rail tractor. This replaced manually pushed carts and horse-drawn vehicles. Less powerful than a locomotive, it travelled along narrow-gauge tracks which could be laid on different types of terrain. An information panel also described the role of this vehicle during the Great War.

Attribution : Jan Novak Photography



The mobile compressor (B)

In the mines, compressed air is used to remove dust and to create power for the drills. The mobile compressor holds compressed air in a resistant tank. This is brought to a high pressure via a pump (the compressor). The compressed air is then distributed to the mine machinery through a conduit system.

Attribution : Jan Novak Photography



The Francis turbine (C)

The American James Francis developed the Francis turbine between 1849 and 1855. It is a “àreaction” 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 village of Les Vigneaux (D)

In spite of the altitude, the region's dry climate and the local growing conditions of limestone and sediments facing due south made the planting of grapevines possible as far back as the tenth century. The municipality owes its name to the presence of these vineyard operations, which were very significant in the late nineteenth century. The almost simultaneous appearance of the phylloxera aphid and the Briançon train, bringing wine from Provence, spelled the end of this activity here.

Attribution : Blandine Reynaud - PDE



The western green lizard (E)

Very shy, this large lizard quickly takes refuge beneath a bush or stone, or among the tangled branches of a hedge when it senses danger. It is on average 30 cm in length and it is bright green slightly speckled with black. During the mating season, the male presents a bright blue colouring on his throat and on the sides of his head. It lives on sunny south-facing slopes, in uncultivated areas and forest edges, where it feeds primarily on insects.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins



The short-toed snake eagle (F)

In March, this large brown bird of prey, brown on its upperside, white speckled with black on its underside and a dark head, returns from Sub-Saharan Africa where it has spent the winter. It feeds primarily on reptiles which it hunts in steppe or barren areas, derelict sites or stony terrain. It builds its nest in a pine tree where it will rear a single chick. It can often be seen hovering in the air, thirty or so metres above the ground, and then swooping down on its prey.

Attribution : Marc Corail - Parc national des Écrins



The hamlet of Bouchier (G)

Bouchier is a small hamlet in the municipality of Saint-Martin-de-Queyrières, which has a few permanent inhabitants in spite of its relatively inaccessible location. Standing a little apart from the hamlet, on a promontory overlooking the Durance valley, the chapel of Saint-Hippolyte dates from the early sixteenth century. It was built against what used to be a hermit's cell, and contains frescoes some of which relate the miraculous cures performed by the saint. It drew ailing people who flocked here to seek his intercession.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins