

# From Ailefroide to Puy-Saint-Vincent 1400

Parc national des Ecrins - Vallouise-Pelvoux



Village de Puy-Saint-Vincent (© Parc national des Ecrins - Thierry Maillet)



*Ailefroide, Pelvoux, Puy-Aillaud, Puy-Saint-Vincent ...! Mountain hamlets and villages, each having seen its own distinct touristic development. A stage that climbs and descends.*

On this stage, you start from a hamlet dedicated to summer mountain pursuits, go on to a village whose history is closely associated with winter sports, taking in along the way the village-resort of Pelvoux and the hamlet of Puy-Aillaud, which is both agricultural and touristic! An immersion into the history of mountain life and mountain economy

## Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 6 h

Length : 16.5 km

Trek ascent : 662 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Stage

Themes : History and architecture, Panorama

**Departure** : Ailefroide

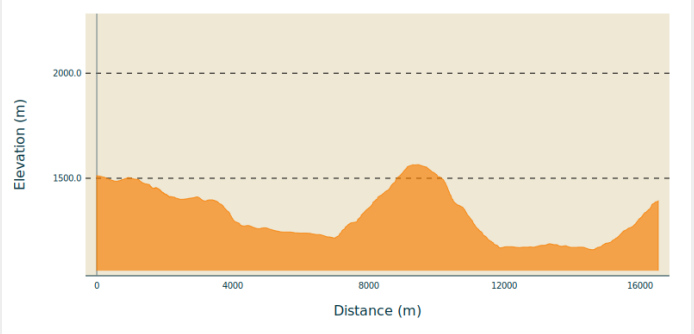
**Arrival** : Puy-Saint-Vincent 1400

**Markings** :  Trail  PR  GR

**Cities** : 1. Vallouise-Pelvoux

2. Puy-Saint-Vincent

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1160 m Max elevation 1565 m

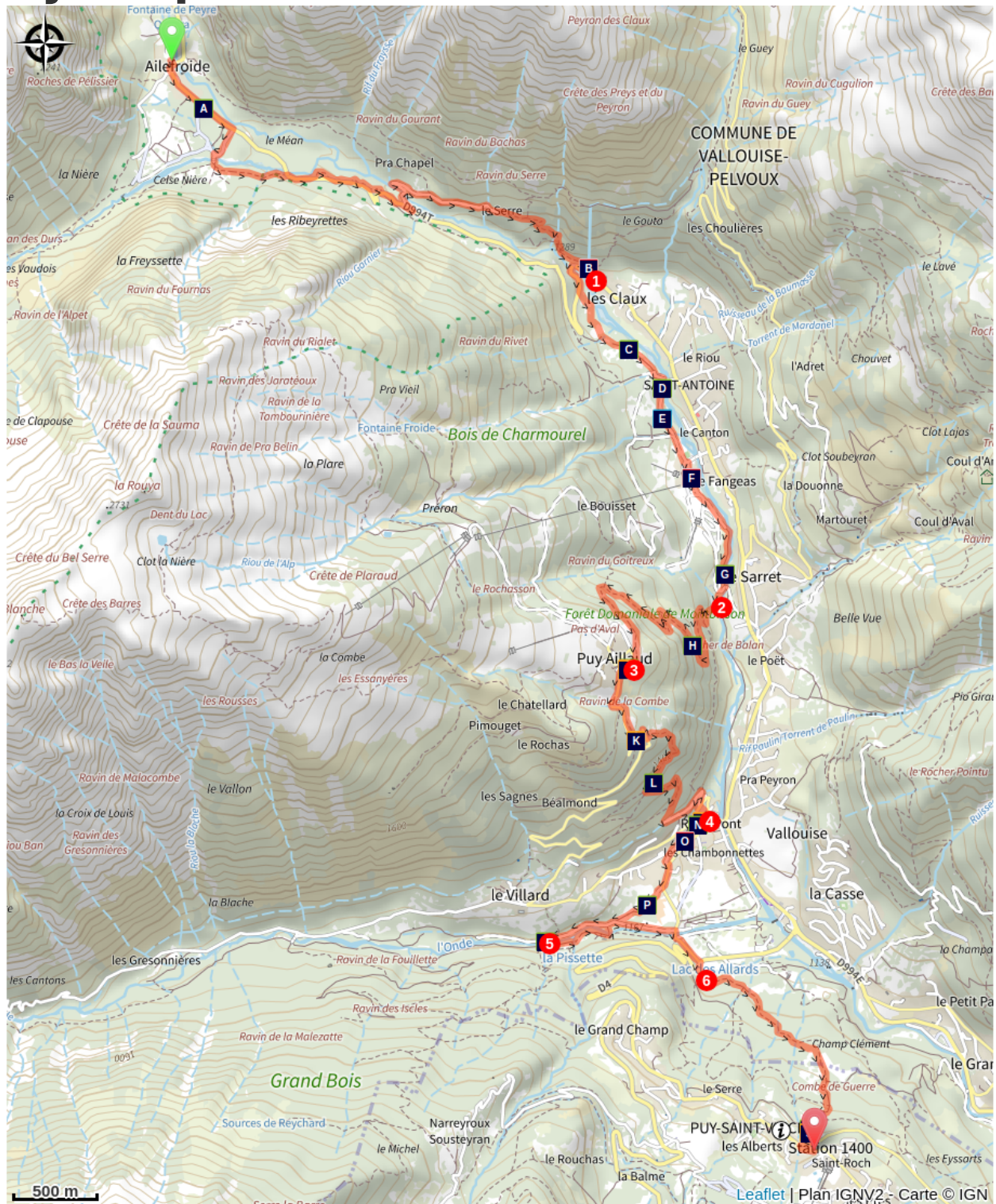
Setting off from Ailefroide, follow the road towards Pelvoux until you come to the bridge spanning the mountain stream (1.5 km). 100 metres beyond the bridge, take the path on the left (Pelvoux). When the path meets the road (1,419 m), follow it for approximately 200 metres (trail no. 15), then take the track on the left (letter box) (trail no. 15). Cross the bridge and follow the track. Go straight on at the next intersection (trail no. 1). After two small chalets, the track turns into a path (Croix du Serre) and runs down to Les Claux.







1. You meet the Ailefroide road. Go through the tunnel, cross the bridge and stay on the road for 150 metres, then take the track on the left. Stay on the narrow paved road on the right-hand bank of the mountain stream (Le Sarret) until you reach the car park at the Pelvoux resort. Go past the swimming pool and stay on the paved road that hugs the river. After the last houses, stay on the wide track along the Gyr. At the next intersection, take the uphill track towards Vallouise.
2. The Gyr riverbank is left behind as you rise uphill towards Puy Aillaud. On the hairpin bend, take the path on the left. After 50 metres, turn right (Puy Aillaud).
3. In Puy Aillaud, follow the posts in the Puy Aillaud meadow. Join the road and head towards Vallouise past the chapel. After leaving the village, a few dozen metres along the road take the path running down on the left (Vallouise). When you come to the chapel, do not go straight on but instead follow the road on the left. After the hairpin bend, take a narrow (steep!) path on the left (trail no. 19). At the first houses, follow the paved road (downhill), cross the Entre-les-Aygues road and take a small path opposite which leads to the village square.
4. In Vallouise, go across the square and along the street opposite which leads past the bread oven. At the intersection ("Vallouise 1,170"), follow the sign to Pont des Fontaines. The track runs through the meadows and joins the track running along the left-hand bank of the Onde. Follow this track until you reach the Pont des Fontaines (2nd bridge). Cross the bridge and turn left. After 250 metres, you have the option of a there-and-back detour to the La Pissette waterfall (20 minutes). Make your way back onto the path running along the left-hand bank of the Onde, to the bridge (Pont Gérandoine).
5. Cross the bridge and continue along the road to the junction with the D4, where you follow the sign for Puy St Vincent. Just as you are coming out of the first hairpin bend, take the track on the left (Champ Clément, GR waysign). At the







following junctions, always follow signs for Les Alberts (GR). When you reach the main road, skirt around the SDIS (fire service) building (pedestrian walkway, metal steps). Then take the paved road on the left as far as St Roch..










# On your path...



-  The golden eagle (A)
-  Cool meadow (C)
-  The Gyr (E)
-  Silver spike grass (G)
-  The rock sparrow (I)
-  The chapel of Saint-Jean (K)

-  The penstock pipe (B)
-  The grey alder (D)
-  The ski resort of Pelvoux-Vallouise (F)
-  The shrubby milkwort (H)
-  The hamlet of Puy Aillaud (J)
-  The downy oak (L)

-  The church in Vallouise (M)
-  Vallouise (O)
-  The great goldenrod (Q)
-  The Sentier du Facteur - the postman's path (S)

-  The lesser horseshoe bat (N)
-  The northern wryneck (P)
-  The clouded Apollo (R)

# All useful information

## **Advices**

Before you come out onto the plateau of Puy Aillaud, there is a short rocky stretch that requires the use of hands, called "La Cheminée". It does not present any real difficulty but can be daunting.

After Puy Aillaud and the chapel, there is a very steep descent offering little grip in dry weather and slippery if the ground is wet).

# 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 !

Attention en zone cœur du Parc National des Écrins une réglementation spécifique aux sports de nature s'applique : <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/thematique/sports-de-nature>

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## **Information desks**

### **Bureau d'Information Touristique de Puy Saint Vincent 1400**

Les Alberts, 05290 Puy Saint Vincent  
1400 m

[contact@paysdesecrins.com](mailto:contact@paysdesecrins.com)

Tel : +33(0)4 92 23 35 80

<https://www.paysdesecrins.com/>



## **Source**



Parc national des Ecrins

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



# On your path...

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## The golden eagle (A)

A pair of eagles lives in the Ailefroide valley. Every pair has a very large hunting territory, which means there can be no more than one pair in a small valley of this size. This pair has built several eyries in the cliff walls around Ailefroide: just one is occupied every year, after a few refurbishments. The eyries are located at the lower altitudes of the hunting territory, so that the eagles can easily bring heavy prey back to the eaglet.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - Parc national des Écrins

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## The penstock pipe (B)

This penstock pipe carries water to the Le Claux hydroelectric power plant, located just below here, which exploits the water from the Les Écrins massif. The power plant was inaugurated in 1932. At the time, the electricity generated was primarily used to power the aluminium factory located in L'Argentière-La Bessée.

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins

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## Cool meadow (C)

The track passes through a meadow area, which is categorised as "cool" because of the ground water content there. A botanist quickly recognises this type of meadow through its range of plant life and, in particular, the presence of bistort, a bottle brush-shaped plant bearing a dense spike of tiny pink flowers at the top of its stem. It is also called langue de boeuf ("ox tongue" in English) because of the shape of its leaves.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins

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## The grey alder (D)

In the valleys of the Alps and the Jura, the grey alder often grows in place of the black alder, present in many parts of France. Like its cousin, it grows on riversides and plays an important role in stabilising the banks. If it is cut down, its wood is bright orange in colour. But why cut it down?

Attribution : Nicollet Bernard - Parc national des Écrins



## The Gyr (E)

Humans are decidedly bizarre animals: they build, knock down and start again. To protect the new infrastructures of Pelvoux, the Gyr was dammed. But, not able to flow as it did before, it deepened its bed, thus placing the foundations in danger of damage. And so works were carried out to widen its bed, allowing it to flow more naturally. This is also more favourable for biodiversity, as well as protecting the developed urban areas.

Attribution : Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins



## The ski resort of Pelvoux-Vallouise (F)

The route first leads through the small ski resort of Pelvoux-Vallouise, built in 1982. Very family-focused, in winter it's the ideal place for young children to learn to ski, with small lifts lower down, while their big brothers and sisters can ski higher up.

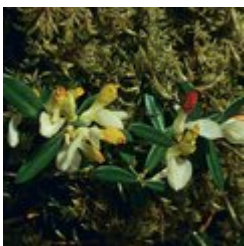
Attribution : Pelvoux Office de tourisme du Pays des Écrins



## Silver spike grass (G)

A grass grows in large clumps on the embankment: silver spike grass. It is adapted to stony, dry and sunny ground. Its inflorescences reflecting silvery-gold glints create a beautiful effect, but they are particularly noticeable in the late summer, when it forms large shimmering bouquets in the evening sunlight.

Attribution : Nicolas Marie-Geneviève - Parc national des Écrins



## The shrubby milkwort (H)

The shrubby milkwort grows in the undergrowth. This creeping sub-shrub has glossy oval leaves, similar to box leaves. The flowers are white and orangey yellow. Common in the Alps, it grows in open woods and dry forests.

Attribution : Jean-Pierre Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



## The rock sparrow (I)

A little flock of rock sparrows can often be spotted around Puy Aillaud. This large sparrow earned its French name moineau souldie, (sourcil meaning eyebrow) because it has a large white eye-stripe. It also has a dark head, a brown back with white stripes, and a white breast and underside striped with light brown. It has a small yellow throat spot, often not visible. It is a year-round resident.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins



## The hamlet of Puy Aillaud (J)

Puy Aillaud is a permanently inhabited hamlet and the highest in Vallouise (1,580 m). This hamlet has preserved some beautiful traditional houses.

Attribution : Jean-Philippe Telmon - Parc national des Écrins



## The chapel of Saint-Jean (K)

Surrounded by a cemetery and with a bench installed to the front of its façade, this pretty little seventeenth century chapel has an air of peaceful tranquillity. Maybe to sit and watch the trail runners?

Attribution : Office de tourisme Pays des Écrins



## The downy oak (L)

The route leads down a warm slope, where the downy oak reigns supreme. It is a small oak tree with a twisted growth habit and with marescent leaves, that is to say, they dry out in the autumn but remain on the tree all winter. It is called "downy" because the young branches, buds and sometimes the undersides of its leaves are covered in a fine down. It is a tree that grows happily on the warm dry slopes.

Attribution : Parc national des Écrins



## The church in Vallouise (M)

The church of Saint-Étienne dates from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Inside is an altarpiece and a tabernacle in gilded wood dating from the eighteenth century, together with some mural paintings. Not far from the church stands the late sixteenth-century Chapel of the Penitents with a nineteenth-century painted facade.

Attribution : Thibaut Blais



## The lesser horseshoe bat (N)

In summer, bats take up residence in the church roof. The species living here is the lesser horseshoe bat, which has been in serious decline over recent decades. Every year, the mothers return after hibernating in caves and each one gives birth to one bat pup. Bats are insectivore mammals threatened by the insecticides used on farmland and on wooden structures and the loss of their hunting habitats and roosts, among other things. They are all protected.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



## Vallouise (O)

Multi-storey houses - typical of the architecture in the valley in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - stand on the old village street. The ground floor was reserved for animals, the first floor for habitation and the upper floors for grain storage. People moved from one floor to another by means of balconies interconnected by a staircase. Many of these balconies are arcaded with stone columns. This type of arcaded balcony is found throughout the valley.

Attribution : Pierre Nossereau



## The northern wryneck (P)

The old trees in the orchard are home to the northern wryneck. It has a loud song, rather like that of the green woodpecker, only slower. This bird owes its name to the extreme way it extends and twists its neck when it feels threatened. Its French name torcol fourmilier is a reference to the fact that it feeds on ants (fourmils in French). Difficult to spot because its plumage merges into the colour of the tree trunks, it gives its presence away by its song when it returns from its migration.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - Parc national des Écrins



### ✿ The great goldenrod (Q)

In damp spots on the edge of the track, swathes of tall plants grow. It forms great plumes of tiny yellow plants. The great goldenrod, still known as the tête d'or or "head of gold" is a plant native to North America and introduced into Europe in the eighteenth century as an ornamental. Since then, it has colonised a large are of Europe and in some places it even competes with the local flora.

Attribution : Cédric Dentan - Parc national des Écrins



### 🇫🇷 The clouded Apollo (R)

This butterfly with hyaline (glass-like) translucent white wings, marked with two black spots, flutters around the clearing or the edges of the forest, where the host plants of its caterpillars grow: the corydalis. Although abundant locally, it is nevertheless a species in sharp decline and is protected.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



### 🍊 The Sentier du Facteur - the postman's path (S)

In former times, the postman would take this path every day: He would set out from Vallouise, deliver letters in Puy-Saint-Vincent and drop back down to Vallouise, stopping at the hamlets of Parcher on the way. In the winter, when the snow was too deep, the Traversouires (the inhabitants of Puy-Saint-Vincent) donned their snowshoes and wielded their shovels to clear the postman's path down to Vallouise.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - Parc national des Écrins