

De Freissinières to L'Argentière-La Bessée

Vallouise - Freissinières



Vue sur la vallée de la Durance depuis la Crête de la Rortie (© Parc national des Ecrins - Carlos Ayesta)



A magnificent stage that snakes between cliffs, forests and rock needles. A technical stage, too, which calls for mountain experience!

After spending the night in this small mountain village, return to the more bustling life of L'Argentière-la-Bessée. But before you head downhill to the Durance, the day's vertiginous route - between cliffs and rock needles - has some imposing backdrops and breathtaking high views in store for you!

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 4 h 30

Length : 13.7 km

Trek ascent : 688 m

Difficulty : Hard

Type : Stage

Themes : Geology, History and architecture, Pass

Departure : Freissnières

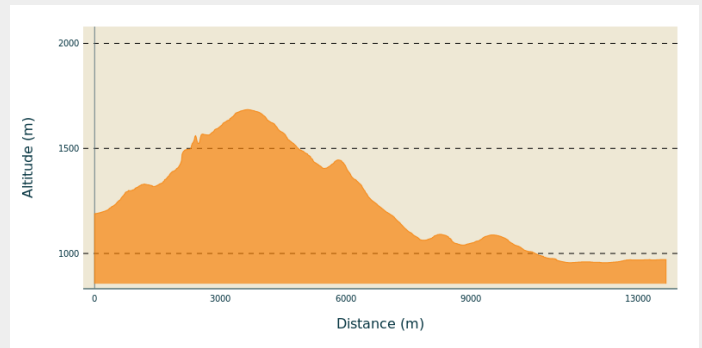
Arrival : L'Argentière-La Bessée

Markings :  Trail  PR  GR

Cities : 1. Freissnières

2. L'Argentière-la-Bessée

Altimetric profile







Min elevation 957 m Max elevation 1686 m





From Freissnières, follow the path taken yesterday until you reach the junction with the paved road downhill from Les Houdouls - 1,280 m - concrete pylon. Follow the road right as far as the hairpin at the via ferrata car park.

1. Via ferrata car park. Take the level path (Clot du Puy, GR). At the state forest sign ("Forêt domaniale"), turn left (via ferrata). The path rises steadily to the cliffs; always follow signs for Clot du Puy. When you arrive at the foot of the rock face, turn right (Clot du Puy) (under the cliffs, vertiginous stretches).
2. When you come to Clot du Puy, turn right (Col de l'Aiguille). The path runs level through forest, following the ridgeline. The ridge tapers off and the path runs left (trail no. 14). (There-and-back walk of a few metres to reach a viewing point). (/!\ Steep rocky steps, technical descent). The path runs between two large boulders and continues downhill (/!\ Steep rocky stretches, technical descent). You come to an intersection, "Crête des Falaises 1,390 m". Take the uphill path (Col de l'Aiguille).
3. At the Col de l'Aiguille, the path drops sharply in tight twists and turns until it reaches the junction with the GR leading from Pallon. Head towards L'Argentière. At the next intersection, head towards Plan Léothaud. The path turns into a track. At the next intersection, stop following the GR waysigns. DO NOT head in the direction of Plan Léothaud, but instead take the track leading uphill on the left. After approximately 800 metres, at the intersection take the path leading downhill to the right (Plan Léothaud). After two hairpins, you come to Plan Léothaud (1,009 m).
4. Follow the paved road that runs downhill. When you reach a junction, turn right onto the Rue Saint Antoine which joins the RD 138a. Cross this road and take an indistinctly marked track opposite (trail no. 23) which leads to a railway underpass. Go through this underpass and turn left onto the track running alongside the railway line. At the intersection with a narrow road (level crossing) continue straight ahead on the paved road (trail no. 23). At the next junction, turn right (lake) and continue on to a car park. Cross the two footbridges that take you across to the right-hand bank of the Durance, at the white water stadium.
5. Head back up to L'Argentière following the walking path. When you come to the industrial zone, continue straight on between the buildings until you reach the L'Argentière train station.

On your path...



-  Huile de marmotte - marmot oil (A)
-  The crag martin (C)
-  The white water stadium (E)
-  The Durance (G)

-  The fire lily (B)
-  The bearberry (D)
-  The Fournel (F)
-  The light rail tractor (H)

All useful information

Advices

This stage is not recommended for people who suffer from vertigo or who are not at ease on steep paths.

At the foot of the cliffs: (on the cliff section, there are several vertiginous stretches and some short rocky stretches where there is a risk of rock falls; do not linger here).

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
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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
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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 1945m d'altitude à une distance de 300m sol.

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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 1525m d'altitude !

Information desks

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Source



Parc national des Ecrins

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

On your path...



✿ Huile de marmotte - marmot oil (A)

In times past, the inhabitants of Freissinières used oil for cooking and lighting. Walnut or almond oil was difficult to produce at this high altitude. The Briançon plum tree or marmottier, however, can withstand the mountain conditions, and the yellow fruits of this tree contain kernels. These kernels were pressed in mills to produce an oil with medicinal virtues: marmot oil. .

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - Parc national des Écrins



✿ The fire lily (B)

In June and early July, the rocks are brightened up here and there by large orange flowers: the fire lily is a splendid plant which grows in the mountains of Europe. It grows in rocky or bush-covered terrain and even - why not? - right on the cliff faces, in dry areas. It is a protected species.

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - Parc national des Écrins



🐦 The crag martin (C)

The birds that are constantly swooping around the cliff are crag martins. They are brown with a beige underside. They have built their nests under small overhangs. This species is very common in the Alps. Partially migratory, crag martins return to the Mediterranean coast in winter, where they join resident populations. So it is the first bird to reappear in the valleys of the Pays des Écrins in late February and the last to leave in October!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - Parc national des Écrins



✿ The bearberry (D)

The floor of the pine forest is carpeted by a creeping sub-shrub with glossy oval evergreen leaves. In spring, the bearberry produces small bell-shaped flowers which are white and edged with pink. They will turn into red berries, edible but floury. Bears love them, hence their name. It is a drought-tolerant plant.

Attribution : Cédric Dentan - Parc national des Écrins



The white water stadium (E)

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 (F)

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 (G)

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 light rail tractor (H)

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