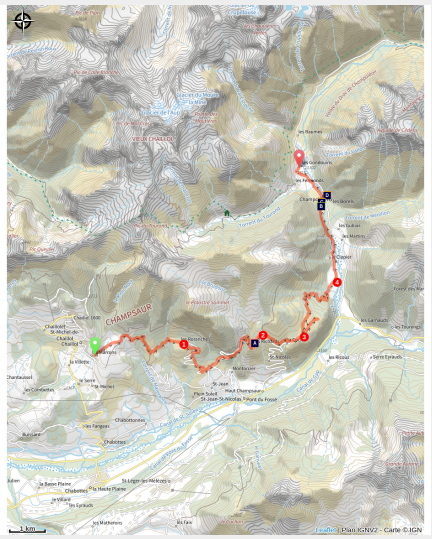
From Les Marrons to Les Gondouins

Parc national des Ecrins

Paysage vers Famourou (© Parc national des Ecrins - CDTE05)



A varied, wild route overlooking the Haut-Champsaur before dropping down into the Champoléon valley along the banks of the Drac Blanc.

From precipitous paths to forest tracks, you will pass through a variety of landscapes: vast belvederes on the La Coche plateau, alpine pastures, remarkable rocky crags and peaks of the Champsaur. You will experience dizzying views of the valleys and wild banks of the Drac Blanc... Not to mention the rich built heritage encountered here and there along the way.

Useful information

Practice : Horse Riding

Duration : 6 h

Length : 19.7 km

Trek ascent : 747 m

Difficulty : Hard

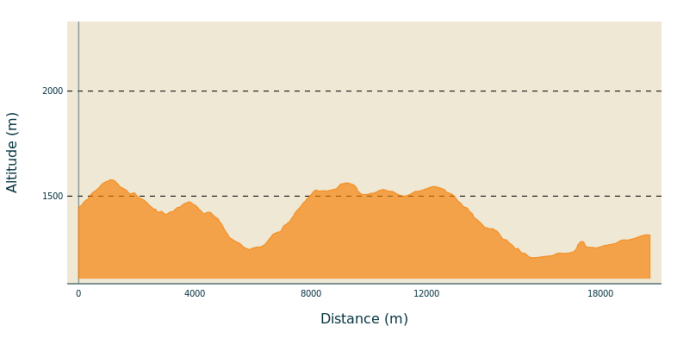
Type : Stage

Themes : Geology

Trek

Departure : Les Marrons
Arrival : Gondouins
Markings : Piste équestre
Cities : 1. Saint-Michel-de-Chaillol
2. Saint-Jean-Saint-Nicolas
3. Champoléon

Altimetric profile

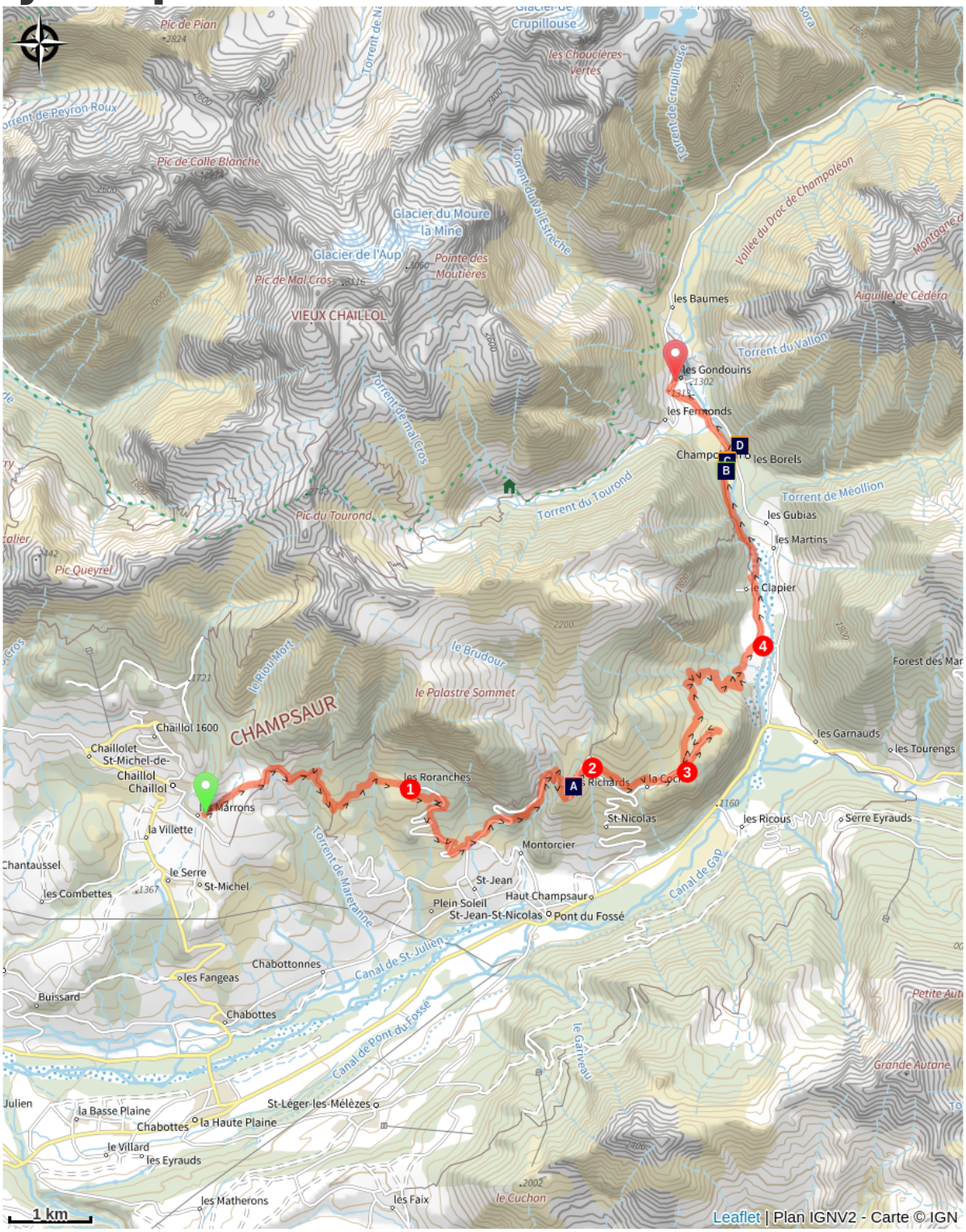


Min elevation 1208 m Max elevation 1579 m

Leaving Les Marrons, follow the Riou uphill (north-east) and, at the shed, fork right towards Famourou along a wooded path. It leads to a grassy track which you join left. At Forest de Famourou, the route comes to a wider track: continue left towards Roranches. A splendid view emerges over the Aiguilles de Famourou and Le Palastre. At Le Coulet and then at Le Vernet, where you go through two wooden cow enclosure gates, always follow signs for Les Roranches.

1. Here, before the bread oven, go down hill to L'Horte via shortcuts signposted "Pied du Palastre" and climb uphill again passing through Les Bonnets and Les Jalligons until you reach La Baumette. Then continue straight ahead on the track heading towards Les Richards on the GR50. Ford across the Brudou (shaky footbridge) and then carry on along the GR route which comes out at Les Richards. Go through Les Richards
2. Continue to head towards La Coche (mountain biking ("VTT") route). When you leave La Coche, continue straight on towards the visitor area ("Aire d'Accueil") and the plateau (picnicking or bivouacking possible).
3. Fork left onto the PR (Petite Randonnée, short-distance trail), just after the car park. At Le Robinet, fork right towards Champoléon along a fine grassy and flat track. This changes into a narrow winding path which drops down into the woods to Les Aryiés and Les Rolands.
4. When you reach the Pied des Vignes, turn left towards Champoléon and continue straight on until you come to the car park in Le Clapier. Here, at the back of the car park take the track which leads towards Champoléon and Roche de Bidou. This track is flat, grassy and sandy in places. Follow it along the Drac Blanc until you come to a narrow path climbing uphill on the left (mountain biking ("VTT")). It comes out at L'Iscles des Borels, where there is a picnic area, and after crossing a wide concrete footbridge it leads to the car park in Les Fermonds. Continue straight on along the road until you reach Les Gondouins.

On your path...



Les Richards (A)
Alpine ibex (B)
Les Borels (C)
Tardons (D)

All useful information

⚠ Advices

You have to cross a cow enclosure in Le Vernet. In the woods at Les Ariés and along the Drac Blanc, the route is shared with mountain bikers.
At Les Roranches, take a moment to admire the chapel of Saint Pancrace, the oratory, the former school and other features.

On the approach to Les Richards: Caution: overhead cables, then 3 steps and a gate!

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.

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 2200m d’altitude à une distance de 300m sol.

On your path...

Les Richards (A)

Perched up at an altitude of 1548 m above Pont-du-Fossé in the commune of Saint-Jean-Saint-Nicolas, the village of Les Richards is a haven of tranquillity. The view is breathtaking over the Autanes and the Champsaur woodlands. This is the starting point for a very popular hiking trail around the mountains or to the summit of the Palastre, and a take-off area for long-distance hang-gliders. It is not unusual for a hang-glider to land in Grenoble and sometimes even in Chamonix after a long day's flight from Les Richards! The record is 162 km, with a landing in Chamonix in 2002.

Alpine ibex (B)

If you take a few minutes' walk at the end of the valley, you will be able to see some Alpine ibex. In September 1994, in Champoléon, some thirty animals from Vanoise area were released by Ecrins National Park rangers. This superb animal is heavier (100 kg) and less timid than the chamois, and is closely related to the domestic goat. It was almost extinct in the Alps. Today it is totally protected in France and is now safe extinction.

Attribution : Rodolphe Papet - PNE

Les Borels (C)

This is most important village in the Chamoléon district (no hamlet bears this name). Until towards the first world war in 1914, the valley lived in a closed circuit for all everyday items. At the Borels there was a weaver (wool and hemp), a miller-baker, an ironmonger, a mason, a breeches-maker and in the other hamlets, a cobbler, two millers, a joiner and two shoemakers. The latter worked from home.

Attribution : Marc Corail - PNE

Tardons (D)

"Tardons" are lambs that are raised on mother's milk in the pastures of the Ecrins massifs. These lambs are celebrated every autumn at the Champoléon agricultural fair. This event spotlights pastoralism and assembles breeders, shepherds and the general public. On the agenda: the sale of sheep, produce market, lamb-based meals and entertainment.

Attribution : Dominique Vincent - PNE