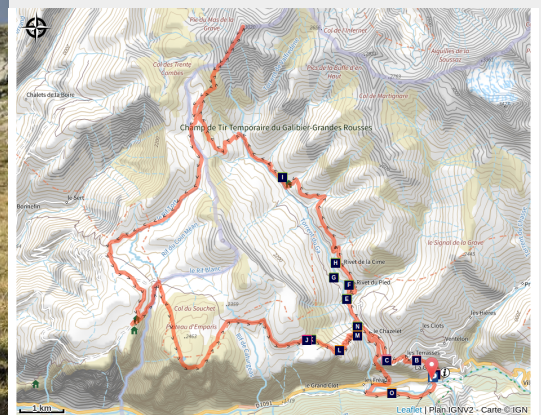


# Tour from La Grave to the Plateau d'Emperis via the Pic du Mas de la Grave

Briançonnais



Randonneurs au Lac Noir - Plateau d'emparis, devant la Meije (© Parc national des Ecrins - Carlos Ayesta)



*3 days' walking to tackle the ascent of the Pic du Mas de La Grave and discover the Plateau d'Emperis, a stunning belvedere overlooking Les Écrins.*

Throughout the trek, which runs through small villages and hamlets and is dominated by the majestic summits of Les Écrins, your every step is surrounded by beauty and awe. After a vertiginous climb up to the imposing Pic du Mas de la Grave, you are rewarded by a 360° vista of the magical Plateau d'Emperis and its lakes.

Animal husbandry, nature and the high mountain environment will delight not only avid mountain heritage lovers but also those of a contemplative persuasion.

## Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 3 days

Length : 40.8 km

Trek ascent : 2210 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Multi-day trekking

Themes : Lake and glacier, Pastoralism, Top

# Trek

**Departure** : La Grave

**Arrival** : La Grave

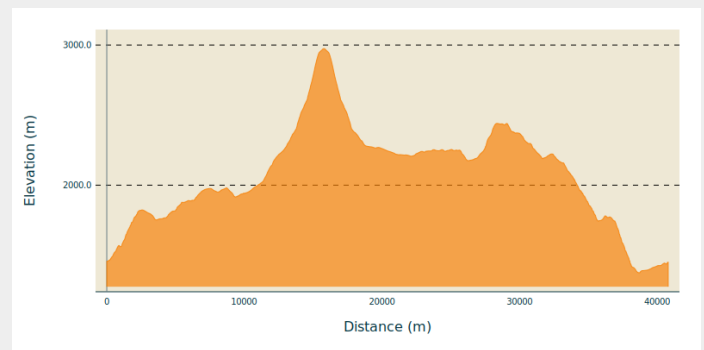
**Markings** :  PR  GR

**Cities** : 1. La Grave

2. Besse

3. Mizoën

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1375 m Max elevation 2975 m

This excursion starts with a relatively short first stage inviting you to roam between villages and hamlets, to cross the Buffe valley and its alpine pastures, highly prized grazing grounds for the seasonal flock migrations. It ends at the refuge of the Pic du Mas de La Grave, standing at the foot of the peak.

The second day is dominated by the imposing presence of the Pic du Mas de La Grave (3,020m). From the valley, the climb up to the Pic is a must for experienced hikers, and offers an imposing 360° view. Then back to overnight in the refuges of Le Fay and Les Mouterres.

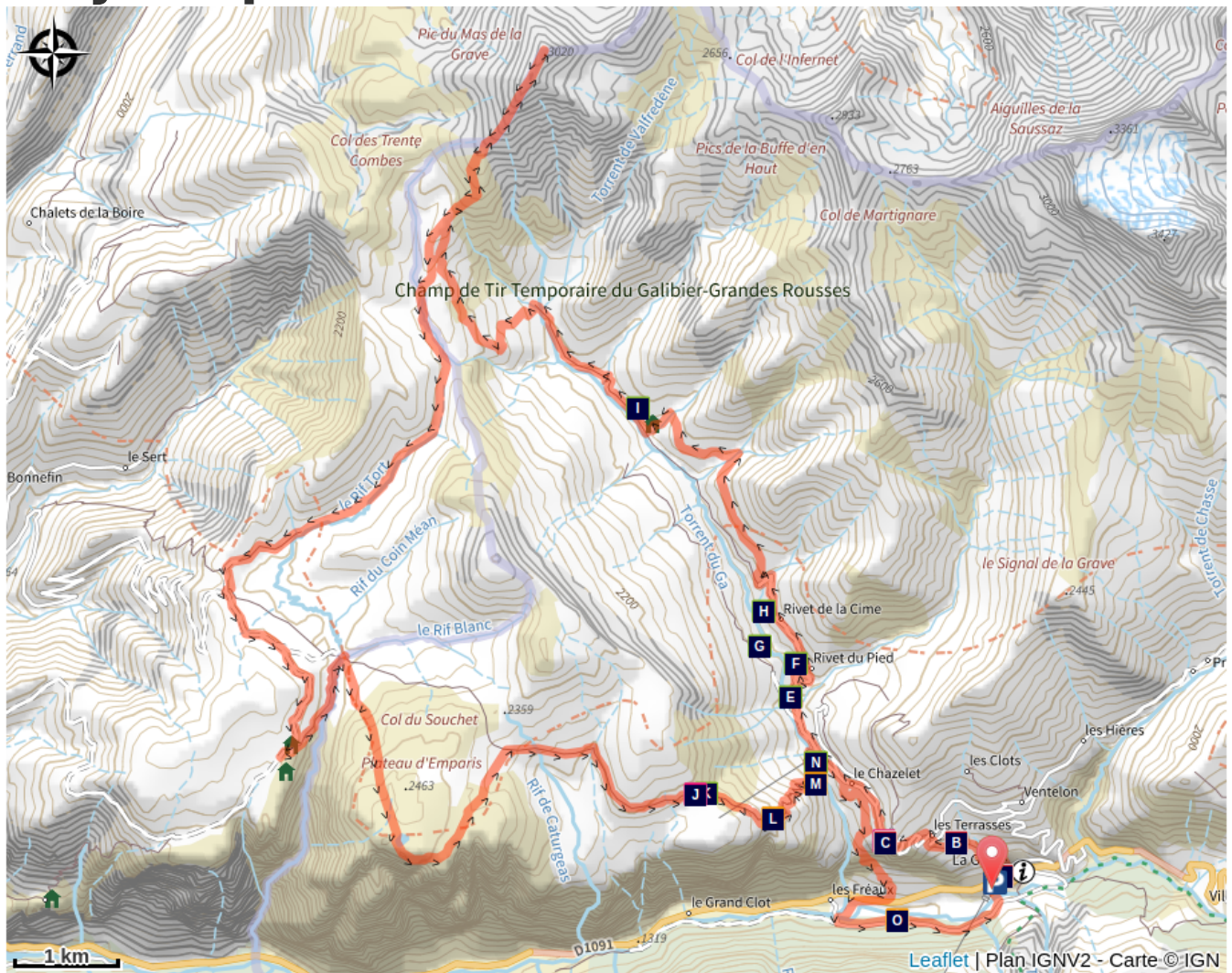
The last stage merges with the GR®54 before running back uphill, offering hikers an unrivalled view from the Plateau d'Emparis and its two iconic lakes, Lac Nerié and Lac Noir. Here the high peaks of the massif come into view and the glaciers of Les Écrins and La Meije. This stage ends by passing through Le Chazelet and Les Fréaux, marking a return to civilisation through the Romanche valley.
















## Stages :

1. From La Grave to the Pic du Mas de la Grave refuge  
8.9 km / 610 m D+ / 2 h 45
2. From the Pic du Mas de la Grave refuge to the refuges of Les Mouterres and Le Fay  
16.2 km / 1136 m D+ / 8 h
3. The refuges of Les Mouterres and Le Fay via the Plateau d'Emperis  
16.2 km / 481 m D+ / 5 h 30



# On your path...



-  Notre-Dame de l'Assomption Church (A)
-  Sainte-Anne du Chazelet oratory (C)
-  Campanula thyrsoides (E)
-  Viviparous lizard (G)
-  A "plague" of voles (I)
-  Small Apollo (K)
-  Agricultural work in Autumn and Winter (M)
-  Les Fréaux près de la Grave, Charles Bertier (O)
-  La Grave terraces (B)
-  Chazelet perch (D)
-  Altitude hayfields (F)
-  Common quail (H)
-  The Emparis Plateau (J)
-  Agricultural work in Spring and Summer (L)
-  White-throated dipper (N)

# All useful information

## Herd protection dogs

In mountain pastures, protection dogs are there to protect the herds from predators (wolves, etc.).

When I hike I adapt my behavior by going around the herd and pausing for the dog to identify me.

Find out more about the actions to adopt with the article "[Protection dogs: a context and actions to adopt](#)".

Tell us about your meeting by answering this [survey](#).



## How to come ?

### Transports

By train, Grenoble SNCF station : [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com)

By bus :

Bus lines in Région Sud : <https://zou.maregionsud.fr/>

Bus lines in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes : <https://carsisere.auvergnerrhonealpes.fr/>

Bus lines in Isère : <https://www.itinisere.fr/>

### Access

From Bourg d'Oisans, follow the D1091 until you reach La Grave.

From Briançon, follow the D1091 until you reach La Grave.

### Advised parking

La Grave

# 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 2450m.

## 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 une distance minimale de 300m sol quand vous la survolez soit 2160m d'altitude !

## **Information desks**

### **Information center "Col du Lautaret" (summer only)**

Col du Lautaret, 05220 Le Monêtier-les-bains

brianconnais@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Tel : 04 92 24 49 74

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



### **Tourist information office of La Grave**

RD1091, 05320 La Grave

lagrave@hautesvallees.com

Tel : (+33) 04 76 79 90 05

<https://www.hautesvallees.com/la-grave/>



## **Source**



Parc national des Ecrins

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

# On your path...

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## Notre-Dame de l'Assomption Church (A)

Listed as an historic monument, Notre Dame de l'Assomption church towers over La Grave. In First Romanesque style, this remarkable building is thought to date from the 11th century, making it the oldest building in the town. All around the church is a cemetery with graves marked by wooden crosses and decorated with brass hearts, facing the giants of ice.

Attribution : Jenny Selberg - OT Hautes Vallées

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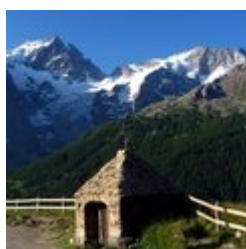


## La Grave terraces (B)

On the south-facing slope of La Grave, terraced farmland and villages are inseparable. This is a European-wide landscape uniting many architectural, archaeological and natural elements. This mountain farming system was shaped mainly by past and present agricultural activity. The steep terrain at the time required terracing for it to be farmed. These former planted terraces are today natural meadowland, which is mowed or used for grazing. It is highly sensitive to this new pastoral usage, and is little by little showing signs of soil erosion.

Attribution : Eric Vannard - PNE

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## Sainte-Anne du Chazelet oratory (C)

Although it stands beside an ordinary road, the Chazelet oratory is famous for one of the most beautiful panoramas of the Alps and the Meije mountains. Built in dry stone, the edifice is at 1 834 m and overlooks the valley and the Ecrins and Meije mountains. It has been sketched, photographed and painted many times, including in the famous Meije by the Japanese painter Foujita.

Recently a new orientation table was placed a few metres above the oratory. In two parts, it shows the northern slope of the Meije and the southern slope in the direction of Chazelet and Savoie.

Attribution : PNE

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## Chazelet perch (D)

To test your head for heights, there is nothing like this new, life-size game played facing the Meije a steel walkway suspended over empty space. The first few steps are daunting, but reaching the end of the walkway – or rather, empty space – calls for even more courage! Beneath your feet, all the way down below is the village of Les Fréaux, nestling against the Romanche, and above you, the giants of ice. If you add in the element of air, with gusts of wind blowing all around you, then strong sensations are guaranteed!

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## Campanula thyrsoide (E)

This flower is an emblem of the area of La Grave and is recognisable among all others thanks to its yellow flowers that form a compact flower head also known as "thyrses". It is edible in a cheese-topped bake and is one of the rare biennial alpine plants. The seeds are scattered in the autumn and in the first year grow into big long leaves that form a rosette. Blossoming only occurs in the second year, when after ensuring reproduction, the plant dies.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE

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## Altitude hayfields (F)

Natural hayfields are of great biological variety and are home to associations of plants that blossom freely. From this botanical variety come a multitude of insects and more particularly butterflies that find an ideal environment for their development. Maintaining the balance of these zones is essential, even more so at this altitude and in such a valley.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE

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## Viviparous lizard (G)

The viviparous or common lizard is present in the north of the park where it lives in cool, damp zones (moors, alpine and subalpine meadows, or at the edge of streams). It has this name as the females, in certain populations, keep the eggs in their abdomen until they hatch. Affected by any development that leads to the destruction of wet zones, it is a protected species all over France and considered vulnerable on a regional level.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE

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## Common quail (H)

Generally present in fields of cereal crops, the common quail also occupies the mountain meadows up to 2000 m or more. In the long grass, it pecks at insects and later on at the seeds as they reach maturity. A very discreet bird, it nests in the ground in a little dip, where it can lay twice to replace eggs in the case of destruction. Its song, that can be heard night and day, often gives it away: "pay your debts" is the male's song to keep its rivals at bay.



## A "plague" of voles (I)

The European water vole, also called the rat taupier (mole-like rat) in French, is one of the biggest species of voles. Its breeding cycle is such that the species can undergo phases of infestation. Although the causes are not fully understood, this cyclic problem started a few years ago in the valley of La Buffe, at an altitude of 2,000 metres. Although the first signs of the presence of voles in a meadow are undoubtedly the "molehills" they create, when they constitute a plague, they can completely overturn the earth, which could be mistaken for ploughed land.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson



## The Emparis Plateau (J)

The mule path follows the edge of the Southern border of the plateau which is completely dedicated to pastoralism and tourism. It offers an exceptional view of the Meije whose marked relief contrasts with this gentle landscape. It welcomes 7 refuges and pastoral cabins as well as remarkable fauna, like the Mountain Hare and the Mountain Apollo butterfly. The challenge for this site is to preserve its pastoral character.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



## Small Apollo (K)

The Small Apollo is a rare and protected butterfly. It has finely striped black and white antennae, and a tiny red ocellus (eye) on each of its forewings. With a wingspan of 60 to 80 mm, it is the lord and master of the orangey-yellow beds of mountain saxifrages where it takes care of its eggs and feeds its caterpillars.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



## Agricultural work in Spring and Summer (L)

In Spring the soil had to be moved up the land using crates pulled by mules. Ploughing, sowing, planting followed rye (which stayed in the ground for two years), barley, oats and potatoes. Summer was not finished until the barns were full of hay. Scythes that had been beaten on an anvil, rakes, and nets were used every day. In order to ensure the overwintering of the animals, a certain number of loads (around 80 kg of hay) were necessary: 25 for each dairy cow and 5 for each sheep.

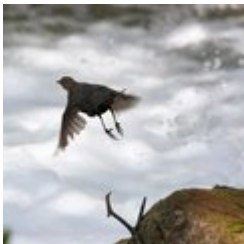
Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



## Agricultural work in Autumn and Winter (M)

From September, cereal crops were cut with the scythe and the sickle, dried in “bourles” (small stacks of ten sheafs) on the top of the land (fields). Once beaten, the grains of rye were dried in the sun «soleillaient », they were taken to the mill and then to the oven to be made in to black bread. From the end of November until the beginning of May, the animals had to be tended to in the stables. The manure from the cows was transported to the fields using sledges, while the sheep dung was dried and cut in to, pieces, and burnt to produce heat and energy for cooking. In the dairy, milk was made in to butter and cheese.

Attribution : Denis Clavreul



## White-throated dipper (N)

Perched on a large, partly immersed pebble, the dipper sways to and fro with its tail aloft, and then dives down head first into the swirling water. This surprising passerine is unusual in moving underwater against the current in search of food. Thanks to a thin membrane protecting its eyes from the water, it can spot its prey (worms, small shellfish, water insect larva), before lifting its head out of the water and letting the current carry it gently along. It then takes up a new surveillance position and starts the process all over again.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - PNE



## 🕒 Les Fréaux près de la Grave, Charles Bertier (O)

The Romanche valley was a source in inspiration for numerous painters of mountain landscapes. It inspired Charles Bertier (1860-1924) to paint the oil on canvas *Les Fréaux près de la Grave* in 1894. Introduced to landscape painting by J. Achard and to mountain landscape painting by Laurent Guétal (who was a priest so was also known as L'Abbé Guétal) this Grenoble-born artist thought nothing of setting up his easel on the highest peaks of the Dauphiné Alps. With canvases such as *L'approche de l'orage en Oisans* (1900), he made it his mission to give his contemporaries an understanding of the mountains.

Attribution : © Musée de Grenoble