

From La Grave to the Pic du Mas de la Grave refuge

Parc national des Ecrins - La Grave



Hameau du Chazelet (© Parc national des Ecrins - Cyril Coursier)



A gentle stage will take you through the hamlet of Le Chazelet and introduce you to the natural riches of the Buffe valley.

It all starts at the unspoiled village of La Grave... on the south-facing slopes agricultural terraces and villages merge together. The hamlets you pass are testaments to this region's highly distinctive high-mountain way of life: traditional stone houses, churches decorated with tufa... The oratory of Le Chazelet, which the route passes, is not to be missed; it offers an extraordinary panorama over the Alps and the La Meije part of the massif.

Passing through the Buffe valley, overlooked by the Pic du Mas de la Grave, you are surrounded by a pastoral landscape, and in the alpine meadows you are quite likely to come across flocks of sheep guarded by the famous Patou, the Great Pyrenean Mountain dog.

Useful information

Practice : By walk

Duration : 2 h 45

Length : 8.9 km

Trek ascent : 609 m

Difficulty : Easy

Type : Stage

Themes : History and architecture, Hut, Pastoralism

Trek

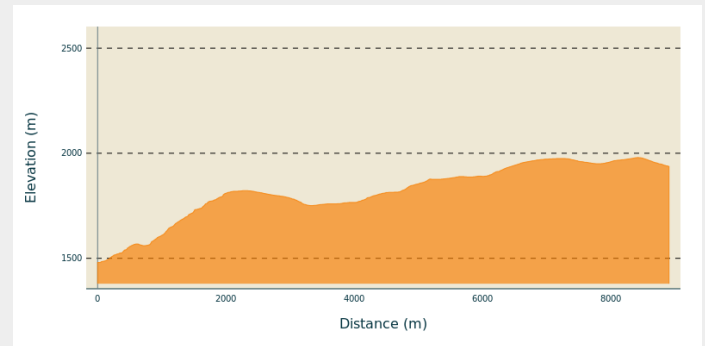
Departure : La Grave

Arrival : Refuge du Pic du Mas de la Grave

Markings :  PR  GR

Cities : 1. La Grave

Altimetric profile

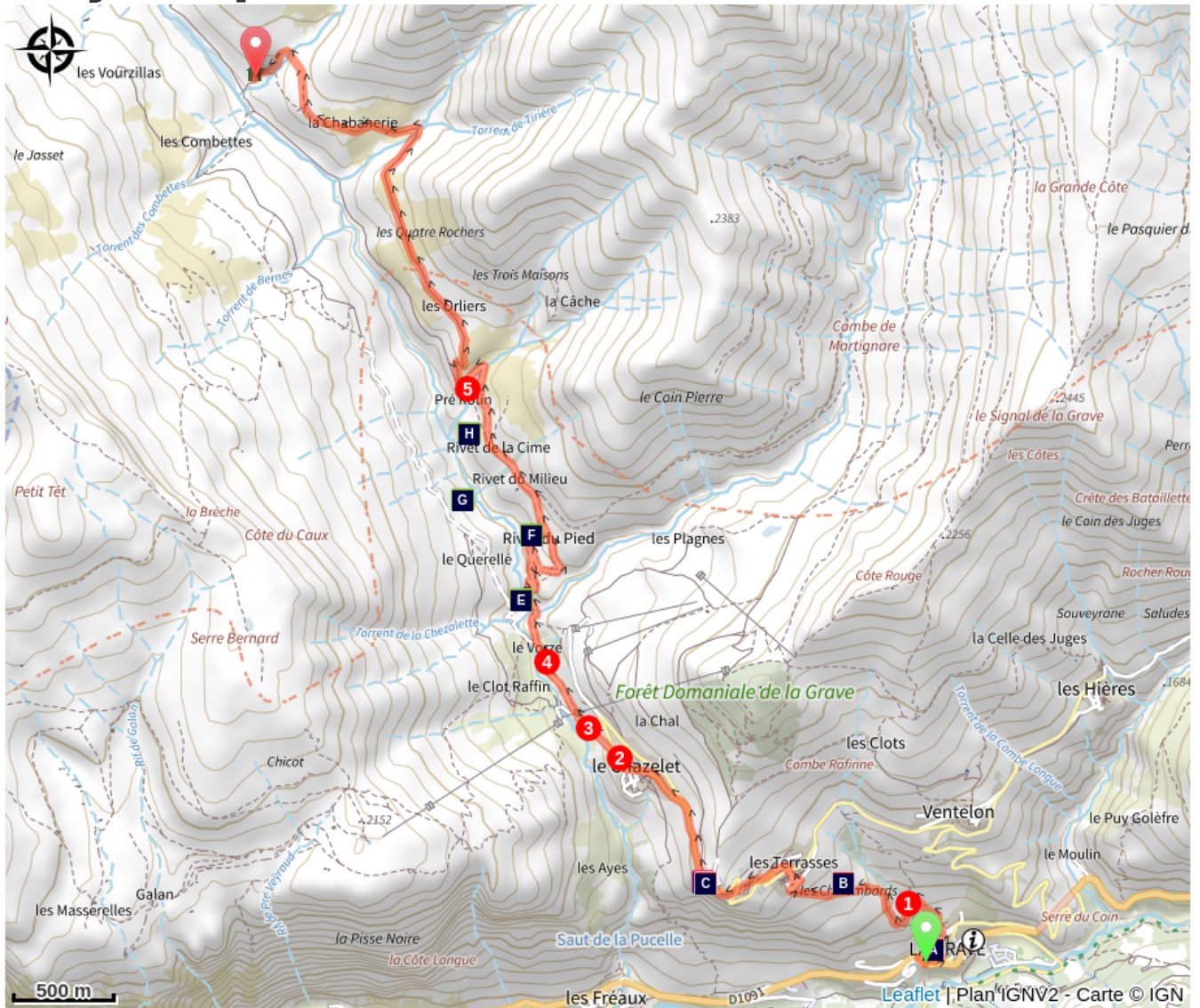










Min elevation 1480 m Max elevation 1981 m

From the car park, take the road on the right, then take the first left, pass in front of the church and stay on this road until it turns into a footpath (GR54).

1. Leave the path and follow the footpath on the left until you reach the hamlet of Les Terrasses. Go through the hamlet staying on the GR, pass the oratory of Le Chazelet (orientation table) and follow the narrow road through the hamlet of Le Chazelet. In Le Chazelet, stay on the main road heading towards the bottom of the cable cars.
2. On leaving the village, turn right onto the road leading to the parking lot, and go straight down.
3. At the fork, stay on the hillside - don't head downhill towards the mountain stream - leaving the GR. Carry on along the wide track.
4. At the next intersection, turn right towards the three hamlets of Les Rivets. Go straight through the hamlets until you reach the tufa cross (1,901m).
5. At the cross, head right uphill towards the Les Orliers high pasture chalet. Continue along the good track, cross the mountain stream La Chabanerie, and on to the chalet of the same name. Stay on the hillside and you then reach the ruins standing on the banks of the mountain stream La Courbeille. Cross the stream and carry on until you reach the Pic du Mas de la Grave refuge.

On your path...



- | | |
|---|--|
|  Notre-Dame de l'Assomption Church (A) |  La Grave terraces (B) |
|  Sainte-Anne du Chazelet oratory (C) |  Chazelet perch (D) |
|  Campanula thyrsoide (E) |  Altitude hayfields (F) |
|  Viviparous lizard (G) |  Common quail (H) |

All useful information

How to come ?

Advised parking

Parking du téléphérique, La Grave

Information desks

Maison du Parc du Briançonnais

Place Médecin-Général Blanchard, 05100 Briançon

brianconnais@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Tel : 04 92 21 08 49

<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...



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.

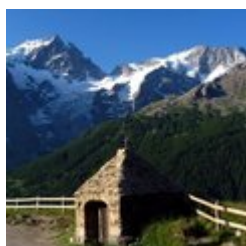
Attribution : Jenny Selberg - OT Hautes Vallées



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



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

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!



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



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



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

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.