

Lac de Serre-Ponçon 5-day Mountain Bike Tour

Embrunais



VTT Baie St-Michel (Parc national des Ecrins - Thibaut Blais)



Useful information

Practice : Mountain bike

Duration : 5 days

Length : 155.0 km

Trek ascent : 5687 m

Difficulty : Hard

Type : Multi-day trekking

Themes : History and architecture,
Lake and glacier, Panorama

Almost 150 km of mountain bike trails hugging the shores of one of the gems of the Hautes-Alpes: Lac de Serre-Ponçon. An itinerary unique of its kind, punctuated by perfectly clearly waymarked and single-track trails, with easy-to-negotiate uphill stretches and bracing descents.

With stunning waters and the thrills of the mountain environment, and never straying far from the shoreline of Lac de Serre-Ponçon, this 5-day mountain bike tour will introduce you to unspoiled nature, deserted villages, a beautifully preserved historic abbey... And of course the monumental dam that has tamed the River Durance.

Trek

Departure : Embrun

Arrival : Embrun

Markings : ➡ Itinérance VTT

Cities : 1. Embrun

2. Baratier

3. Crots

4. Savines-le-Lac

5. Pontis

6. Le Lauzet-Ubaye

7. Rousset

8. Espinasses

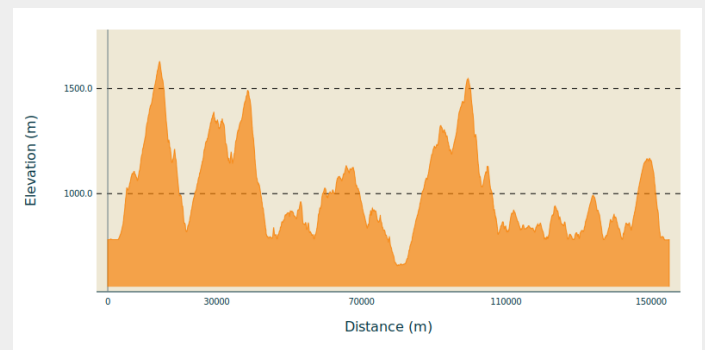
9. Chorges

10. Prunières

11. Saint-Apollinaire

12. Puy-Sanières

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 657 m Max elevation 1629 m

From Embrun, the route rises rapidly into the dense forests of Boscodon. A halt at the Abbey is an opportunity to recharge your batteries mid-way up. A pretty descent down to Savines-le-Lac sets the tone for what is to come: this tour will be fun, technical at times and panoramic.

From Savines, a straightforward ascent leads to the belvedere of Pierre Arnoux. A succession of balcony paths lead down to the perched village of Pontis. You gradually leave the coolness of the beech forest behind to enter a more open landscape of terraces, old hamlets and a dolmen, yet with the magnificence of the lake always within eyesight. The final stretch of this second stage takes an unused railway line along the Ubaye: don't forget to take lamps for the tunnels!

The third stage is the least challenging but just as pretty, running through the plateaus and hills of Ubaye Serre-Ponçon and La Bréole. The trails leading to L'Escoubaye and its belvedere and the descent to the foot of the dam will take your breath away...

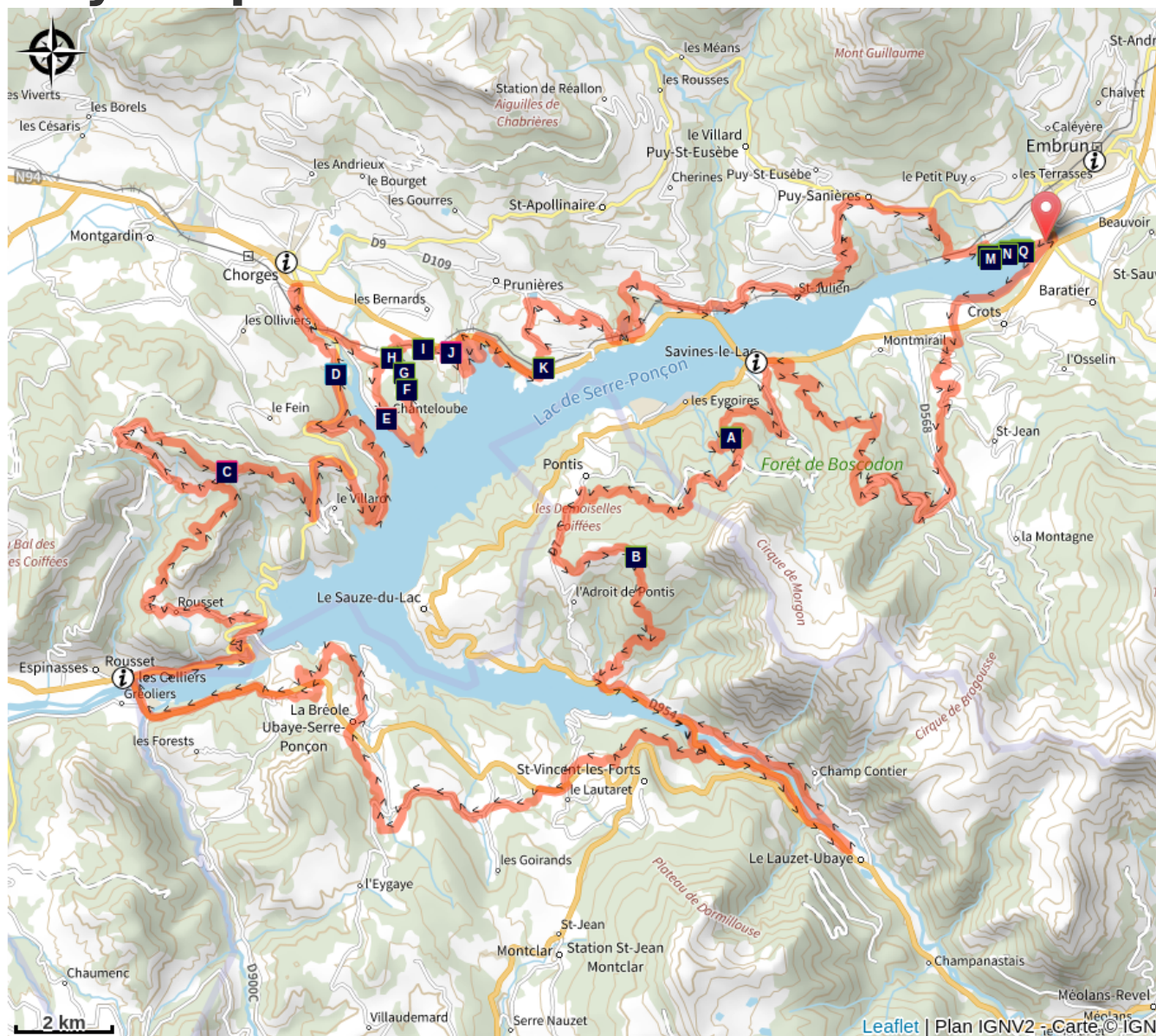
From this imposing dam, a long ascent takes you to an important World War Two Resistance monument, the Croix des Prés, before reaching "Le Ruban". The view from here is undoubtedly the finest on the route. It follows numerous technical descents down to the shores of the lake. Proceed with caution!

The final stretch from Chorges runs past a succession of bays and inlets, an ever-present temptation to take a swim, before heading uphill to Puy-Sanière. Brace yourself for the Descente des Tourniquets. This helter-skelter section is a must-ride for mountain bikers in the Embrunais area.

Stages :

- 1.** From the Embrun lake to Savines-le-Lac
21.4 km / 988 m D+ / 4 h
- 2.** From Savines-le-Lac to Le Lauzet-Ubaye
29.2 km / 1332 m D+ / 5 h
- 3.** From Lauzet-Ubaye to Rousset
28.5 km / 764 m D+ / 4 h
- 4.** From Rousset to Chorges
35.7 km / 1387 m D+ / 5 h
- 5.** From Chorges to Embrun
40.0 km / 1142 m D+ / 4 h 30

On your path...



- | | |
|--|---|
|  White Birch (A) |  Zygaena hilaris (B) |
|  L'Avance Lookout (C) |  Addos mountain stream (D) |
|  Chapel of St-Jacques (E) |  Common magpie (F) |
|  Common juniper (G) |  The field cricket (H) |
|  Messicole plants (I) |  Panorama of the Baie Saint-Michel (J) |
|  The Occellated Lizard (K) |  Great Cormorant (L) |
|  Yellow-legged Gull (M) |  Grass Carp (N) |
|  Mallard (O) |  The fry (P) |
|  Common Perch (Q) | |

All useful information

Advices

Service your bike before you set off. Carry a derailleur hanger, pump, repair kit etc. In the interests of comfort, avoid carrying more than 5kg.
Book your accommodation in advance. There may be no vacancies on the day.
According to your skill level, consider calling on the services of a trip organiser and a mountain biking instructor. They will simplify your organisation and make your trip so much more enjoyable, as well as saving you time.

How to come ?

Transports

Direct train lines : Paris/Briançon ou Marseille/Briançon
TGV to Grenoble, Valence, Aix en Provence.
Booking information and ticketing :
<https://www.oui.sncf/>

TER PACA (Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur) – Chorges railway station or Embrun railway station.
www.ter.sncf.com/paca

Access

From Gap or Briançon, via the N94.

Advised parking

Plan d'eau d'Embrun

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
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 1310m d'altitude !

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Information desks

Maison du Parc de l'Embrunais

Place de l'Église, 05380 Châteauroux-les-Alpes

embrunais@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Tel : 04 92 43 23 31

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



Tourist office Chorges

Grand rue, 05230 Chorges

chorges@serreponcon-tourisme.com

Tel : 0492506425

<https://www.serreponcon.com>



Tourist office Embrun

Place Général Dosse - BP 49, 05202 Embrun

embrun@serreponcon-tourisme.com

Tel : 0492437272

<https://www.serreponcon-tourisme.com/>



Tourist office Savines-le-Lac

9 Avenue de la Combe d'Or, 05160 Savines-le-Lac

savineslelac@serreponcon-tourisme.com

Tel : 0492443100

<https://www.serreponcon-tourisme.com/>



Bureau d'information touristique de Rousset

Les Celliers, 05190 Rousset

tourisme@ccspva.com

Tel : + 33 (0)4 92 54 41 18

<https://www.serreponconvallees.com>

Source



Parc national des Ecrins

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

On your path...



🌸 White Birch (A)

This is a beautiful tree that can reach 15 m in height. Its leaves can be identified by the white tomentose down on the underside. Its white flowers are grouped together in an inflorescence and bud fruit called "alises", which appear at the end of summer. This species likes a lot of light and tolerates dry conditions well. It can be found in open woods and on sunny, even rocky, dry slopes in the mountains.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



🦋 Zygaena hilaris (B)

This is a medium-sized butterfly (25-35 mm wingspan), often brightly coloured, with up to six spots on the inner wing. This Burnet is found on the edges of limestone meadows, steppe-like slopes, dry shrublands and clearings in dry forests. This remarkable species is indicative of the quality of the habitats. It is not nevertheless endangered, which is why it is not on the list of threatened species.

Attribution : Amélie Vallier



📍 L'Avance Lookout (C)

Learn the names of the different peaks in the Valley of l'Avance!

Attribution : Pierre Doussineau - CDRP



💧 Addos mountain stream (D)

The Addos mountain stream (torrent in French) is 4 kilometres long. A mountain stream is a natural water course located in the mountains. The flow regime is characterised by a steep gradient, with a very fast and therefore turbulent water flow producing significant erosion. It is also defined by a significant variation in flow rate depending on precipitation levels. In this mountain stream, as in many others, numerous small sills (small dams) have been created to slow down the water flow and limit the impact of floods.

Attribution : Amélie Vallier



Chapel of St-Jacques (E)

Located in Chanteloube, this church is through to date back to 1510. It has retained all its authenticity, with its exposed stone. It is dedicated to Saint James, one of the 12 apostles and one of the first martyrs of the Catholic church. Its recent restoration has made it possible to hold the traditional celebrations there, in honour of Saint James. The purpose of each one is to commemorate a historical event connected with the saint. When he died, he was taken to Compostella in Spain, hence the name of the pilgrim's Way of Saint James to Santiago de Compostella, a religious route passing along the shores of the Serre-Ponçon lake.

Attribution : Amélie Vallier



Common magpie (F)

This bird can be identified by its black and white plumage with blue-green tints on the wings and tail. Its tail is remarkably long. It can be found all year round in varied open environments. Its omnivorous diet consists of invertebrates, seeds and berries, small rodents, eggs and nestlings and even human rubbish. Except during the nesting period when it is solitary, the magpie is gregarious species which gathers into rather raucous groups in the winter.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE



Common juniper (G)

This bush is a resinous evergreen conifer. It is characterised by its greenish to blue (glaucous) needles with a white line on their upper side, and fruits resembling blue-black berries. It usually tends to grow in warm environments receiving plenty of sunlight. It grows in grassy or scrub covered areas up to 2,000 metres above sea level.

Attribution : Jean-Pierre Nicollet - PNE



The field cricket (H)

Just 18 to 26 mm long, this little insect has a black head which looks a little like a helmet. The female can be told apart from the male by the presence of a third long appendage at the rear of the body. The cricket's song is heard from April onwards. The male sings his chirping song from the entrance to his burrow. The fertile females lay their eggs in the ground, which remain there for two weeks before the larvae emerge.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



✿ Messicole plants (I)

A feature of messicole plants is that they live among crops, even though not sown there deliberately. They are biologically adapted to open areas, and in particular areas that are regularly worked, such as fields. In fact, they use various strategies such as adapting their life cycle and producing large amounts of seeds in order to make up for the disturbance that occurs in their germination area. Many of them are common, such as the poppy, the cornflower and the corn buttercup...

Attribution : Amélie Vallier



📖 Panorama of the Baie Saint-Michel (J)

This area, which has been provided with picnic amenities, offers the most picturesque panorama over the Lac de Serre-Ponçon. In fact, the lake is 2 kilometres wide at this point, and in front of you are the Chapelle Saint Michel and the Pic Morgon, an iconic view of the lake. On your left, to the east, you can see Savines-le-Lac and its bridge. On the right, you can see the secret île de la Tortue.

Attribution : Amélie Vallier



🦎 The Occellated Lizard (K)

This shy lizard is familiar with dry, scrubby environments. It is hard to track down and flees noisily at the slightest danger. It can run very fast, standing up on its legs with its tail raised. Its burrow serves as a refuge and hibernation site, as it is particularly sensitive to the cold. It devours whatever it can find: insects, fruit, molluscs, eggs; small mammals can even be on the menu. It has blue eye-spots on its flanks.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



🦅 Great Cormorant (L)

Size: 90 cm

Attribution : etienne.charles



Yellow-legged Gull (M)

It has travelled up the Durance and settled on the lake, where it finds propitious conditions for its survival (open water). This gull, a cousin of the seagulls, is omnivorous. The colony can be seen around the lake all year round. They are generally grey or white, with black markings on the wings. They have a long, thick beak and yellow webbed feet. The young are grey in colour and take two to four years to acquire adult plumage.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE

Grass Carp (N)

This fish takes its French name (Amour Blanc) from the river it originates in, the "Amur" River, which forms the border between China and Siberia. Its powerful body resembles that of the carp, but its low-set eyes are very different. The well-thought-out and reversible introduction of this species by the town of Embrun and the fishermen is a gentle, ecological and controlled way of solving the problem of plant proliferation in the Embrun water body.



Mallard (O)

Not known to be shy, this dabbling prefers to feed on the surface or at shallow depths by moving forward with alternating circular strokes of its legs: it dips its head into the water and tilts forward. It nests on the banks of the Durance and is omnivorous, feeding on invertebrates, small fish and grasses... The male is easily recognisable during the breeding season by its bright green head. After this period, they moult and adopt a grey-brown colour close to that of the females and young.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE

The fry (P)

This is one of the most common 'white' fish. It has a spindle-shaped body, compressed laterally and covered with large silvery scales. Its lower fins and eyes are tinted red. Opportunistic, it eats both plants and tiny prey such as larvae and mosquitoes. It forms large shoals and most of the lake's anglers take their first steps on the water by catching them.



Common Perch (Q)

The Perch has a grey-green body with dark stripes. Its scales are rough. It has two dorsal fins, one of which has spiny rays. Its lower and caudal fins are orange. It can grow to around forty centimetres. It is a gregarious and opportunistic carnivore. It feeds on invertebrates and crayfish, but also hunts fish in organised packs. It is a chance for many novice anglers to get their first taste of carnivorous fishing.

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Attribution : etienne.charles