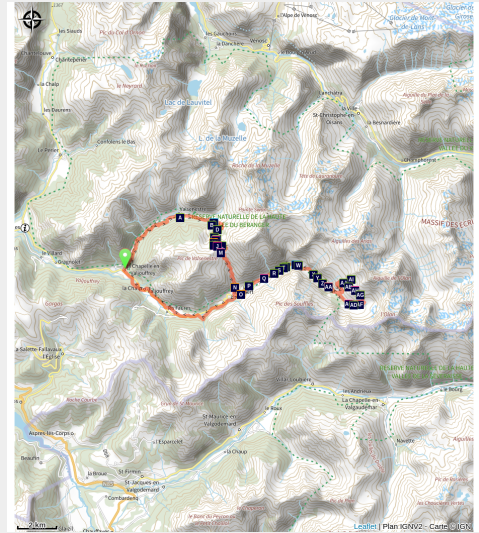


# Tour of Pic de Valsenestre

Valbonnais - Valjouffrey



Vallée de la Bonne (Pascal Saulay - PNE)



*Flirt with high peaks and experience the many facets of mountain life on this tour of agro-pastoral, forest and mineral landscapes.*

Five hamlets, home to 130 permanent inhabitants, a high-altitude refuge nestling against the foot of a slender north face, forests, meadows, mossy scree, alpine meadows, granite peaks and needles, névés... Take the Pic de Valsenestre tour is discover an exceptional area with a wide variety of landscapes.

## Useful information

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Practice : By walk

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Duration : 5 days

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Length : 44.7 km

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Trek ascent : 2576 m

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Difficulty : Medium

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Type : Multi-day trekking

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Themes : Fauna, Flora, Geology

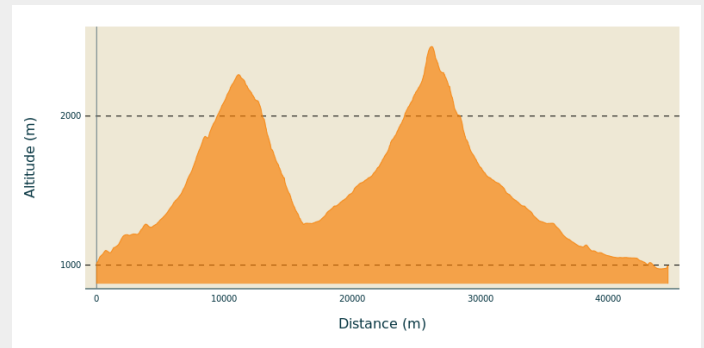
# Trek

**Departure** : La Chapelle-en-Valjouffrey

**Arrival** : La Chapelle-en-Valjouffrey

**Cities** : 1. Valjouffrey

## Altimetric profile



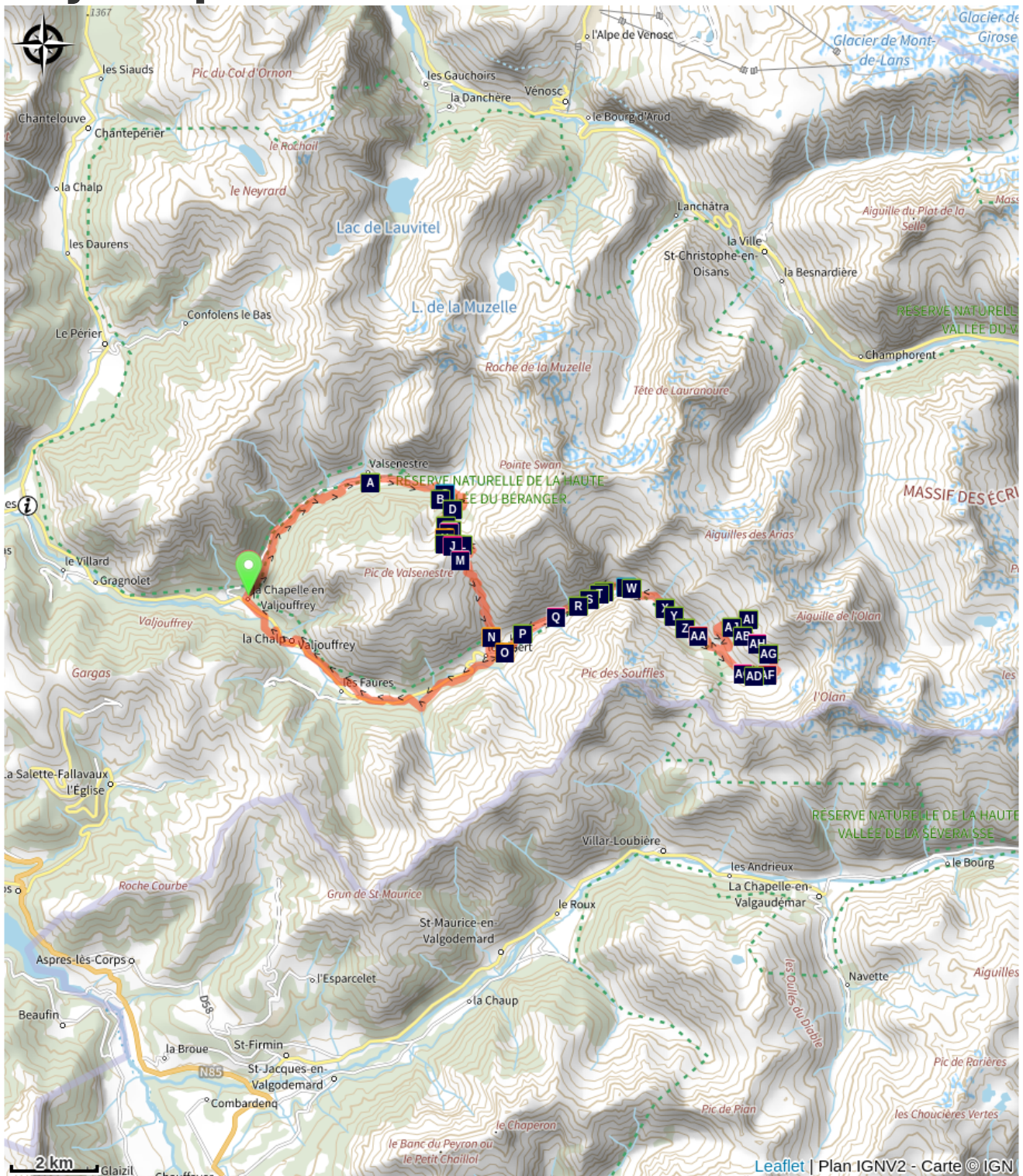
Min elevation 976 m Max elevation 2468 m













The entire Tour du Pic de Valsenestre takes place in a single commune : Valjouffrey. The first stage of this itinerary links the hamlet of La Chapelle-en-Valjouffrey to Valsenestre in less than two hours, along the left bank of the Torrent du Béranger. After a night in Valsenestre, you'll reach Le Désert-en-Valjouffrey. Agriculture and tourism keep this remote hamlet, where home to around twenty permanent residents year-round. The route follows the GR 54 over the Côte Belle pass (2290 m). On the way up, you'll come across the spectacular flakes of the limestone columns of Valsenestre. At the pass, you'll enjoy splendid views of Le Rocher de la Muzelle and the surrounding peaks. The third day takes you from Désert-en-Valjouffrey to the Font Turbat refuge. A gently sloping path winding through meadows takes you in 1h30 to the cascade de la Pisse. From here, the path becomes a footpath. You soon discover a characteristic glacial valley and the imposing north face of L'Olan, which will accompany you on the slow ascent to the refuge. The fourth day takes you back to the Désert via the wild route of the Petit Vallon. From the refuge, you climb up to the Col des Lauvets, which opens up a view of the route back to Le Désert and the Font Turbat valley. Take one last look at L'Olan before starting your descent. The last day of your journey will take you, in a more pastoral and bucolic atmosphere, to La Chapelle-en-Valjouffrey, after passing through the hamlet of Les Faures and crossing that of La Chalp. It's back to life on the valley floor.

## Stages :

- 1.** From Chapelle-en-Valjouffrey to Valsenestre  
5.1 km / 354 m D+ / 2 h
- 2.** From Valsenestre to Désert-en-Valjouffray  
11.3 km / 989 m D+ / 6 h
- 3.** From Le Désert-en-Valjouffrey to Font Turbat refuge  
8.9 km / 899 m D+ / 3 h 30
- 4.** From Font Turbat refuge to Le Désert-en-Valjouffrey via Petit Vallon  
10.9 km / 303 m D+ / 3 h
- 5.** From Le Désert-en-Valjouffrey to La Chapelle-en-Valjouffrey  
8.8 km / 38 m D+ / 3 h

# On your path...



- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  Natural Hayfields (AA)        |  Tall herb fringe communities (AB)           |
|  Timber dams (AC)              |  Monkshood (AD)                              |
|  Pleurospermum austriacum (AE) |  Alpine columbine (AF)                       |
|  Côte Belle organs (AG)        |  Flock of sheep (AH)                         |
|  European violet willow (AI)   |  Landscape of the cirque de Valsenestre (AJ) |
|  Edelweiss (AK)                |  Viviparous Lizard (AL)                      |

-  New path (AM)
-  Hay Fields (AO)
-  Glacial valley (AQ)
-  Rhododendron (AS)
-  White-throated Dipper (AU)
-  Mountain Hare (AW)
-  Ring Ouzel (AY)
-  Châtellerat Cabin (BA)
-  Pic de l'Olan (BC)
-  Common Pipistrelle (BE)
-  The alpine accentor (BG)
-  The griffon vulture (BI)
-  Paravalanche (AN)
-  Common Chiffchaff (AP)
-  Cob web House Leek (AR)
-  Apollo (AT)
-  Cascade de la Pisse (AV)
-  Eurasian Siskin (AX)
-  Red Fox (AZ)
-  Dark green fritillary (BB)
-  Savi Pipistrelle Bat (BD)
-  Font Turbat Refuge (BF)
-  View of L'Olan (BH)
-  The ring ouzel (BJ)

# All useful information

## **Is in the midst of the park**

The national park is an unrestricted natural area but subjected to regulations which must be known by all visitors.



## **Advices**

Two passages of over 2000m high : please check access conditions before setting off.

Reservations are recommended if you wish to sleep in a refuge.

## **How to come ?**

### Transports

Come by bus :

<https://www.itinisere.fr/>

<https://carsisere.auvergnerhonealpes.fr/>

<https://zou.maregionsud.fr/>

### Access

From Entraigues, take the D117 towards "Valjouffrey". La Chalp-en-Valjouffrey is the third hamlet after Entraigues.

# 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 !

Attention en zone cœur du Parc National des Écrins une réglementation spécifique aux sports de nature s'applique : <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/thematique/sports-de-nature>

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de la zone à une distance de survol de 300m sol soit à une altitude minimale de 2200m.

## **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 2300m.

## **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.

Attention le survol motorisé dans la zone cœur Parc National des Écrins est interdit en-dessous de 1000m sol et une réglementation spécifique s'applique au survol non-motorisé.

Voir la réglementation pour les survols non-motorisés : <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/les-survol-non-motorises>

Voir la réglementation pour les survol motorisés : <https://www.ecrins-parcnational.fr/les-survol-non-motorises>



## Information desks

### **Maison du Parc du Valbonnais**

Place du Docteur Eyraud, 38740  
Entraigues

valbonnais@ecrins-parcnational.fr

Tel : 04 76 30 20 61

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



## Source



Parc national des Ecrins

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

# On your path...

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## ✿ Natural Hayfields (AA)

Agricultural specialists consider a meadow as natural if it has not been ploughed or fertilised over the last ten years. This is the case for those that you will see, surrounded by hedges, at the start of the hike. The meadows have an important variety of plant life and consequently attract multitudes of pollinating insects, including domesticated bees of course.

Attribution : Marc Corail - PNE

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## ✿ Tall herb fringe communities (AB)

Tall herb fringe communities form a landscape linked to very precise conditions in terms of climate (wet summers and snowy winters), topography (long ubac slopes where névé sometimes remains on the ground deep into the summer), altitude (subalpine tier from 1600 to 2100 metres) and soil (unsaturated soils with large water reserves).

Attribution : Pierre-Emmanuel Dequest -PNE

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## 💧 Timber dams (AC)

In the Combe des Echareennes, as you take the path to the left, you can see, in the gorges of the Béranger mountain stream, wooden dams made by the RTM (mountain terrain restoration department of the National Forests Office) to hold back the flow of debris carried down from the mountains during heavy rain and floods.

Attribution : Samy Jendoubi - PNE

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## ✿ Monkshood (AD)

This is a typical plant in tall herb fringe communities, measuring 50 to 100 cm. It has royal blue flowers shaped like helmets and grouped together in loose bunches. Their particularity is that they are highly toxic! Herbivores are aware of this and don't eat them.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE



### Pleurospermum austriacum (AE)

This robust hardy perennial with a thick, hollow and grooved stalk belongs to the parsley and carrot family, and can grow from 60 to 150 cm high. Its large umbels of white flowers bloom from July to September. Very little known, in France it only grows in the Alpine areas and for this reason is worthy of attention.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet

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### Alpine columbine (AF)

This is an uncommon and protected species, measuring 30 to 60 cm. The flowers are quite large and have a magnificent blue colour, blossoming at the head of the stem, and are the only ones with five petals in the corolla. They are not to be confused with the common columbine, which has smaller flowers and is more widespread.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE

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### Côte Belle organs (AG)

A striking geological phenomenon, the big organs , also known as the big library, were formed when the Alps were born. They were formed by thin grey-blue limestone sheets and by more highly eroded soft schistose marl. A series of perpendicular cracks in the layers divide the slabs into remarkable columns.

Attribution : Jonathan Le Roi - PNE

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### Flock of sheep (AH)

A flock of sheep belonging to local farmers graze at the summit of the mountain pass near the Pic de Valsenestre. In summer these animals with their thick woolly coats can enjoy the shade of the willows that you can see just before arriving at the col (alt. 2220 m).

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE

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### ✿ European violet willow (AI)

This is a shrub in the subalpine tier. It is less than one metre tall and grows in small groups on the ubac. At lower altitude, it may grow taller. You can recognise it from a distance through its characteristic shiny, silvery colour and its growth in circular beds. Adult leaves feel very silky on both sides.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE

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### 📍 Landscape of the cirque de Valsenestre (AJ)

From the mountain pass, climb the little summit above to better see the landscape which shows the cirque de Valsenestre : on the left is the Signal du Lauvitel (2901m) and the Clapier du Perron (3169m), the mountain pass at Muzelle (2613m) where the GR54 is. At this level you can really see a geological fault separating the Grandes Rousses which are granite from the Muzelle block in gneiss. On the right, the principal summits are the Roche de la Muzelle (3465 m), and the pointe Swan (3294m). Le col de Côte-Belle separates the Pic de Valsenestre (2752m) on the left from the l'Aiguille des Marmes (3046 m) on the right.

Attribution : Christophe Albert - PNE

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### ✿ Edelweiss (AK)

In Latin léontopodium signifies the foot of the lion which is the general shape of the edelweiss. By looking at it closely, you realize that it is not one flower but a group of 5 to 10 flowers grouped in a flower head. The edelweiss is in the astéracées family like dandelions. It is a white plant, milky and perennial growing in rocky alpine meadows at subalpine level up to 2900 m. It often mixes with the Alpine Aster. The emblem of numerous guides, it symbolizes the high mountains and represents strength in the language of flowers...

Attribution : Marie-Geneviève Nicolas - PNE

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## Viviparous Lizard (AL)

The viviparous lizard can be distinguished from the wall lizard by its rounded muzzle. It is capable of living at an altitude of 2500m and you will most often see them in the meadows. It likes to warm itself in the sun, resting on the grass or the dry moss to hunt grasshoppers, crickets or spiders. During the winter, it buries under the ground where in a lethargic state it can survive negative temperatures. The viviparous lizard is named like this because the females keep their eggs in their abdomen up until they hatch. So the young are completely formed when they are born, it is an adaptation to the cold environment.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE

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## New path (AM)

The last section of the path allows access to the mountain pass has required numerous days of maintenance since its creation. In fact the unstable character of the soil associated with the steepness of the slope have made it necessary for the rangers to create wooden benches to contain the weight of the earth.. In Autumn 2012, it was decided to create a new section of the path by using part of a sheep track further East in the direction of the Marmes mountain pass. The work was carried out by a team creating 50 m per day during 26 days with pick-axes and courage. In total, it is a section measuring 1300 m which has been created, which makes the path less steep and much more stable.

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## Paravalanche (AN)

In 1961 and 1962 big avalanches descended as far as the riverbed of the Bonne, threatening the houses in the hamlet at Désert en Vajouffrey. In 1982 major works enabled the construction of a paravalanche in order to increase the safety of the hamlet and the prairies, by diverting possible threats coming from the Côte-belle valley.

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## 👉 Hay Fields (AO)

The hayfields where the grass is mown have been improved over the generations by the extraction of stones which have then been stacked in piles which are known locally as "clapiers". These piles of stones mark the boundaries between the crops and the flocks.



## 🐦 Common Chiffchaff (AP)

A bird that you hear but do not see, the Common Chiffchaff nicknamed the "écu counter". Its song, which is very easy to identify, evokes the sound of gold coins falling one by one in to the cash register as they are counted. Green-brown and greyish on top, its feathers are off white underneath, beige on the chest with a barely visible pale brow.

Attribution : PNE - Saulay Pascal



## 🏔️ Glacial valley (AQ)

The high valley of Bonne, or Font Turbat, is a typical glacial valley in the form of a trough with morainic bars marking the stages of the retreat of the glacier. The lower shelves or glacial shoulders are suspended above the trough 500 to 600 m in size of which the steep sides dominate the layers of scree and the alluvial fans (mass of debris transported by the water It finishes upstream by a vast cirque at the imposing foot of the rocky wall of the Olan (3 564 m), hemmed in at its foot by the Maye black glacier. At the time of the last glaciation of Würm, 10 000 years ago, the two glaciers of Font Turbat and Maye joined together and fed into a powerful glacial tongue in the Bonne valley. It formed the valley in to the shape of a basin by scraping and polishing rocky walls in the granite. The lowest moraines, masses of rocky debris transported by the glaciers are situated around Châtellerat cabin.

Attribution : PNE - Nicollet Bernard



### Cob web House Leek (AR)

Thick leaves organized in tight rosettes shoot up towards the sky twists of white hairs which are quite similar to the traps woven by certain spiders. Not less competitive than the rhododendrons, The Cobweb House Leek is adapted to resist drought. The main rosette and the smaller shoots well grouped together; make a real water reserve which is then marvelously stocked by the fleshy leaves... It also develops many kinds of hairs that collect the dew.

Attribution : PNE - Warluzelle Olivier

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### Rhododendron (AS)

Nicknamed the rose of the devil, the rhododendron ferrugineum has the capacity of placing itself between the rocks and boulders where the soil is rare. It keeps its stiff leaves which are dark green and shiny and rust coloured underneath right through the winter. It gets its name from this rust colour. Every year, between the end of July and the beginning of August its branches are crowned with bouquets of flowers coloured rose and purple.

Attribution : PNE - Vincent Dominique

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### Apollo (AT)

A big white butterfly with black and red markings is not shy; the Apollo is easy to see between the middle of June until the end of July... It lays its eggs on the White Stonecrop, a perennial plant with white flowers living on scree and gravel... The male Apollo is born before the female and waits patiently to procreate. It is to be noted that it benefits from national protection; its transport and destruction are forbidden.

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien

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## White-throated Dipper (AU)

Easier to observe than the Common Chiffchaff, the White-throated Dipper lives beside rivers and mountain torrents... A little red and grey bird, with a short tail, it has a fine beak, a white mark on the chin and on the chest. This astonishing sparrow has the particularity of being able to walk under the water against the current in search of food. It flattens itself down and grips on to the bottom with its claws, opens its eyes, which are protected from the flow by a fine membrane and spots worms, larvae, little crustaceans and fish.

Attribution : PNE - Chevalier Robert

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## Cascade de la Pisse (AV)

With its origin in the high crystalline ground, the torrent bounces down waterfalls and cascades until it meets the Pisse at a height of 40 m.

Attribution : PNE - Nicollet Jean-Pierre

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## Mountain Hare (AW)

There are many Mountain Hares or Blue Hares that observe you; the opposite is rarely true... Brown in summer, white in winter, the Mountain Hare is present across the Alps. Like the European Hare from which it differs being smaller, with a white tail and shorter ears, It leaves Y shaped tracks in the snow due to the way it moves in little jumps (it brings its back legs in front of the front legs.). However, it is often its tracks and its little dry, round droppings that indicate its passage. Its large fluffy feet are like snowshoes enabling it to stay on the surface of the snow even when it is powdery.

Attribution : PNE - Couloumy Christian

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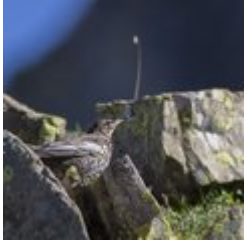
## Eurasian Siskin (AX)

Feeding principally on the seeds of the Alder, the Birch and conifers, the Eurasian Siskin only nests in conifer forests in the mountains of the Northern Alps during the reproduction period... The male, more colourful than the female, can be recognized from its bright green-yellow feathers its black forehead and its little white bib under the beak. It is in winter, that you can observe them, sometimes in big groups, descended from the mountains in search of food...

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien

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## Ring Ouzel (AY)

The Ring Ouzel is easy to identify: it endorses the black feathering of the blackbird, but is distinguished from it by the big white bib on the chest, the light borders of its wings and abdomen. Insects, grasshoppers, worms and berries make up its menu. This shy mountain blackbird, that flies fast, lives at the edge of forests of larch, Scots pines, Spruce and Swiss Pines pins at an altitude of between 1 000 to 2 500 m. Present in the mountainous massifs it nests in the lower branches or in the hollow trunk of a tree, a crack in the rock or building. Essentially a migrator, the Ring Ouzel hibernates in Spain or in Northern Africa. It comes back to the Alps from the month of March.

Attribution : PNE - Saulay Pascal



## Red Fox (AZ)

The Fox was originally called the goupil in French and this animal was the central character of the hugely famous “novel” written in the 12th century about a goupil called "Renart" (later “Renard”), who was, a clever knight tricking and making fun of the clergy and the powerful who were unable to deal with the people. Renart made fun of them and was sometimes cruel. He was so popular that his name became that of the animal species he portrayed. Another literary reference to this animal is by Jean de la Fontaine whose character « Maître Renard » features in twenty of his fables...

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien



## Châtellerat Cabin (BA)

In 1908, Châtellerat pastoral cabin was hastily built by the community of Valjouffrey. Destroyed several times in avalanches, is still sheltered numerous mountaineers. It was rebuilt in 1921 in a less exposed place and already ideas about a « real » refuge were growing.

Attribution : PNE - Nicollet Jean-Pierre



## Dark green fritillary (BB)

Thanks to its impressive wingspan, the dark green fritillary makes its presence noticed! The top side of its wings is a beautiful orangey colour embellished with black spots. Underneath, they are marked with bands of mother-of-pearl against a background of greenish scales. This is a large butterfly with a wingspan of 50 to 60 cm. It is relatively common but is becoming less so due to loss of habitat, caused by changes in farming practices. In fact, its caterpillar which is black dotted with orange spots along its sides, essentially feeds on violet leaves which are only found in extensively grazed meadows.

Attribution : Bernard Nicollet - PNE

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## Pic de l'Olan (BC)

It was on the 29th June 1877 that Coolidge, with Christian Almer father and son, carried out the first ascent of the pic de l'Olan. On the 5th August 1980, Arthur Cust with Pierre Gaspard and Roderon opened the Northern ridge. At that time the bivouac was still obligatory at the bottom of the Bonne valley.

Attribution : PNE - Nicollet Jean-Pierre

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## Savi Pipistrelle Bat (BD)

With a small size, and a contrasted coat, an off white abdomen and a golden brown back, Savi's Pipistrelle can be recognized by the black membranes, its rather pointed muzzle and at the end of its tail from which several vertebrae are visible by the uropatagium, a skin membrane situated between the two hind legs... With a calm nature, this bat is a rock species mainly from the South, but it can also reach the high mountains at an altitude of more than 3 000 m.

Attribution : PNE - Combrisson Damien



## Common Pipistrelle (BE)

Brown with relatively short ears, the Common Pipistrelle and the Soprano Pipistrelle fight over the title of the smallest bat in Europe... The Common Pipistrelle can be seen in very diverse environments even above an altitude of 2 000 m. At the time of Jules Ferry, school books boasted about the merits of bats. In fact, insectivores, they consume every day a quarter to a third of their own body weight in mosquitoes and other insects.. They emit ultra-sounds which are inaudible to the human ear but detectable thanks to a captor. This technique enables them to orient themselves when moving about at night to capture their prey. They can often be seen around street lighting hunting the insects that have been attracted by the light.

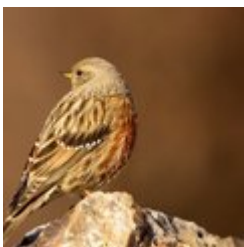
Attribution : PNE - Nicollet Jean-Pierre



## Font Turbat Refuge (BF)

During the summer of 1923, the guide Célestin Bernard took charge of the construction of the refuge at Font Turbat. Several great mountaineering names are associated with it like Guery, Ripert, Frendo, Fourastier, Boell, who came to explore the mountains at Valjouvrey. In 1934, Devies and Gervasutti traced a historic itinerary in the North-West face of the Pic de l'Olan. 22 years later, the direct Couzy-Desmaison (ED) was opened to the left of the previous one, surmounting the steepest part of the face. The construction of the refuge As it stands now dates from 1962. It was extended and renovated in 1996-1997.

Attribution : PNE - Albert Christophe



## The alpine accentor (BG)

The alpine accentor is a bird just slightly bigger than a sparrow, very hardy, grey in colour but speckled with russet on a grey belly. It lives in open alpine meadows and feeds on the ground on the many invertebrates, often close to the snow line. You might also spy it near the refuge because it comes for the crumbs dropped by hikers.

When winter comes, the cold and the snow force it to drop down into the valley and it often comes to the villages, seeking the protection offered by houses.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



## View of L'Olan (BH)

L'Olan stands at 3,564 metres above sea level and it consists of three peaks, the highest of which is the most northerly. For the first time L'Olan was climbed up to the top of the central peak on 8 July 1875, and then up to the top of the north peak on 29 June 1877, by the famous William August Brevoort Coolidge and his guide Almer. L'Olan is the iconic peak not only of the valley but also of the western part of the Les Écrins massif. From here, you can see the north slope which is one of the highest and wildest mountain faces in the Alps, like Les Drus (in the Mont-Blanc massif). Its name is a distortion of the word l'auran which used to mean «windy mountain».

Attribution : Parc national des Ecrins

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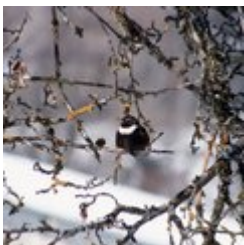


## The griffon vulture (BI)

This enormous bird of prey with a wingspan of almost three metres is a relatively recent sight here in the mountains, after a reintroduction programme in the late 1990s. In summer, they constantly circle the skies in groups, on the lookout for the corpses of sheep or large wild mammal to take apart and devour. This impressive carrion bird plays a valuable cleaning-up role in the alpine pastures.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE

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## The ring ouzel (BJ)

The ring ouzel is easily identifiable: it sports the same plumage as the black ouzel but is distinguished from it by a large white bib on its breast and light edges on the feathers of its wings and underside. Its diet is largely made up of insects, grasshoppers, worms and berries. This shy, swift-flying mountain-dwelling ouzel lives on the edges of forests of larch, Scots pine, spruce and Swiss pine, at altitudes of between 1,000 and 2,500 metres. It nests in low branches or hollow tree trunks or crevices in rocks or buildings. Essentially a migratory bird, the ring ouzel overwinters in Spain or North Africa and returns to the Alps in March.

Attribution : Pierre Dumas - PNE

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