

Balcons de Serre-Ponçon on horseback

Parc national des Ecrins - Montgardin



(CDTE Hautes-Alpes)



A route that takes you around the Lac de Serre-Ponçon, taking in all the region's varied treasures.

This route takes in the vineyards and orchards of the Haute-Durance, the pastures of the Avance, the mountain landscapes of the Cathurige and Embrunais regions, the exceptional forest of Boscodon, and the sunny mountain pastures of Les Orres, sometimes on forest tracks, sometimes on steep paths or balconies.

Useful information

Practice : Horse

Duration : 5 days

Length : 124.5 km

Trek ascent : 5005 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Multi-day trekking

Themes : Flora, Geology, History and architecture

Trek

Departure : The "3 lacs" leisure centre, Rochebrune

Arrival : Pontis

Markings : ■ Piste équestre

Cities : 1. Montgardin

2. La Bâtie-Neuve

3. Chorges

4. Prunières

5. Saint-Apollinaire

6. Savines-le-Lac

7. Réallon

8. Puy-Saint-Eusèbe

9. Puy-Sanières

10. Embrun

11. Saint-Sauveur

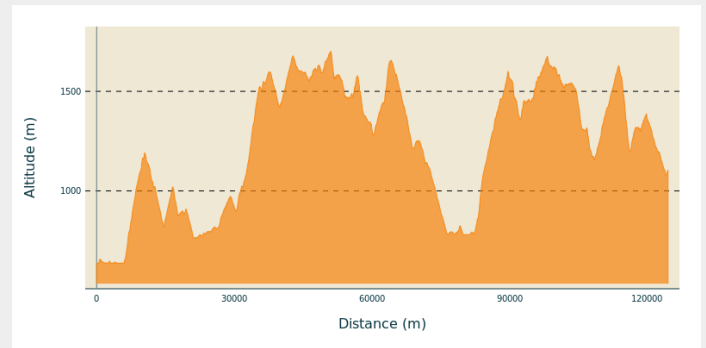
12. Les Orres

13. Baratier

14. Crots

15. Pontis

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 635 m Max elevation 1701 m































The route passes through orchards and then climbs into the forests of l'Avance near Notre-Dame du Laus. After Montgardin, the ascent continues to the Col de la Gardette, the gateway to Réallon and the Mont Guillaume pistes before plunging down towards Embrun. From there, it's back up to Les Orres and on through the Boscodon forest to Pontis.

Stages :

1. From Rochebrune to Montgardin
29.7 km / 1077 m D+ / 6 h
2. From Montgardin to Gourniers
24.3 km / 1247 m D+ / 6 h
3. From Les Gourniers to Embrun
23.7 km / 616 m D+ / 5 h
4. From Embrun to La Montagne
26.4 km / 1306 m D+ / 6 h
5. From La Montagne to Pontis
20.8 km / 755 m D+ / 5 h

On your path...



- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Moyenne Durance State Forest (AA) |  The chapel of Les Fours (AB) |
|  "Piolit-Pic de Chabrières" Natura 2000 site (AC) |  The Golden eagle (AD) |
|  Pasque flower (AE) |  Turk's cap lily (AF) |
|  Short-toed Snake Eagle (AG) |  Mountain farming (AH) |
|  Rock Partridge (AI) |  Squirrel (AJ) |
|  Roe Deer (AK) |  Oaks and Pines (AL) |
|  Réallon county town (AM) |  Retaining walls (AN) |
|  Common Rock Thrush (AO) |  Black Redstart (AP) |
|  Clapiers (AQ) |  The Larch (AR) |
|  Vantage point overlooking the Lac de Serre-Ponçon (AS) |  Chaffinch (AT) |
|  Reyssas Canal (AU) |  The Grey Cuckoo (AV) |
|  Retaining walls (AW) |  Grazing (AX) |
|  Common Kestrel (AY) |  Clapiers (AZ) |
|  The Durance (BA) |  The pastre (BB) |
|  Church of Marie-Madeleine in Les Orres (BC) |  The Larch (BD) |

All useful information

i 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](#).



! Advices

Ayez sur vous une carte IGN Top 25 et le tracé numérique.
Chevaux entraînés (dénivelés, sols variables, durée, climat changeant).
Se renseigner avant d'emprunter un raccourci.
Faisable de mi-mai à mi-octobre.

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 un distance minimale de 300m sol quand vous la survolez soit 1310m d'altitude !

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Merci d'essayer d'éviter la zone ou de rester à un distance minimale de 300m sol quand vous la survolez soit 1400m d'altitude !

Information desks

Tourist office Charges

Grand rue, 05230 Charges

charges@serreponcon-tourisme.com

Tel : 0492506425

<https://www.serreponcon.com>



Source



CDTE des Hautes-Alpes

<https://cdte05.ffe.com>

On your path...

Moyenne Durance State Forest (AA)

Between the Durance, Avance and Luye rivers and the Lac de Serre-Ponçon, this forest encompasses hills and demoiselles coiffées. The site is home to a host of different plant species, birds and butterflies.

The chapel of Les Fours (AB)

Fours (kilns) refer to holes in which gypsum was cooked to make plaster.

.At the end of a path of the cross, the chapel was built on the site of the appearance of the Virgin Mary to the shepherdess Benoîte Rencurel in 1664.

"Piolit-Pic de Chabrières" Natura 2000 site (AC)

(Le Piolit 2664m, les aiguilles de Chabrières 2403m)

These grasslands, scree slopes and forests are home to rare and protected species such as the Fox-tail Milkvetch and the Potentilla delphinensis (for plants), the Jersey Tiger, the Rock partridge, the Greater Horseshoe Bat, the White-clawed crayfish, the red frog and the golden eagle (for animals).



The Golden eagle (AD)

The Golden Eagle is a large bird of prey with a wingspan of up to 2.30 metres. It is a predator par excellence, armed with fearsome weapons: rapid flight adaptable to the most acrobatic situations and powerful, sharp talons. Its sharp eyesight, eight times sharper than a human's, lets it detect its prey: from marmots and young chamois to ptarmigan and hare. The Golden Eagle is also a keen scavenger, especially in winter when food is scarce.

Attribution : Cyril Coursier - PNE



✿ Pasque flower (AE)

If all pasque flowers are identifiable by their thick but soft hairiness, unlike anemones, when they reach maturity they also have a characteristic head of scruffy hair, made up of numerous fluffy white seed heads that will get blown away by the wind. In this family, the pasque flower is the most glamorous and most beautiful. It has the advantage of flowering in spring and displays a remarkable purple-black corolla among the grass that has been faded by the winter.

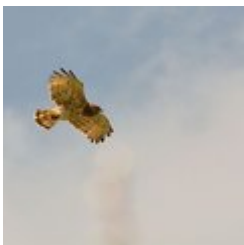
Attribution : Thierry Maillot - PNE



✿ Turk's cap lily (AF)

In the undergrowth at the beginning of the route, then in the meadows, it stands out with its long upright flowering stem. It is embellished by three to ten flowers that are a purple-pink and crimson and have long orange stamen. Admire them without smelling, as they are as beautiful as they are smelly!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



🦅 Short-toed Snake Eagle (AG)

The Short-toed Snake Eagle is a large bird of prey, easily recognisable by its white underside and large, often chocolate-brown head. But it can be confused with some very light common buzzards. This trans-Saharan migrant feeds mainly on reptiles, which it hunts in steppe areas, scrubland, wasteland and rocky areas, but also in the mountains, even in alpine meadows. Its fairly small nest is often built in pine trees.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon © Parc national des Ecrins

👉 Mountain farming (AH)

Each generation has stripped the soil to feed their families and livestock, creating well-exposed, irrigated terraces. As the land made mechanical farming difficult, farming began to decline around 1955.



Rock Partridge (AI)

The Rock Partridge lives in the mountains on well exposed slopes, like those here at Roche Méanne. Every two years, the Ecrins National Park rangers count how many there are on this slope. Before sunrise, they take position in their different « sections » with small tape recorders to imitate the song of these birds. « We listen attentively in case there is an answer ». The song indicates the presence of a « singing male ». « Sometimes we only hear their song, but other times, suddenly, the silence in the mountains is interrupted by the crashing of beating wings which makes us jump. We just have the time to count them and then we see them diving off at top speed ».

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



Squirrel (AJ)

Did you know that the squirrel uses a very elaborate language? It is a sign language, with mimics and expressions, without forgetting the movements of its tail. It also possesses quite an extensive range of sounds. It cackles, yelps, growls or groans, it also chatters. So if you don't see it come out of the woods, don't make a sound, maybe you will be lucky enough to hear this animal secretly expressing itself.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



Roe Deer (AK)

Hidden in the larch forest, the Roe Deer sometimes shows its fine head at dawn or at dusk. Not always easy to see this discreet animal but a few tracks or droppings can give its presence away.: the heart shaped print of its delicate hooves, the trunks of shrubs nicked by young fallow deer rubbing new antlers there to remove the last shreds of velvet, the ground scratched by the young male to mark his territory during the rutting season. Its little round black droppings in piles called « moquettes » in French! Sometimes it is a deep sonorous and guttural bark that resonates in the woods. Have a listen!

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



🌲 Oaks and Pines (AL)

Oaks and pines live here together. They replace the ancient hay meadows once maintained by the inhabitants of Réallon. The pine forest consists of Black Pines and some Scots Pines. The Austrian Black Pine has long, rigid, prickly dark green needles; those of the Scots Pine are short, twisted and bluish green. Due to its hardiness, The Austrian Black Pine was introduced in the 19th century and was often used to restore the eroded soil of the Southern mountains. This was the case on the « sunny » (Southern slope) at Réallon where it was planted by the Mountain Restoration Service at the beginning of the 20th century to stabilize the slopes and to protect the village and the road.

Attribution : Robert Chevalier - PNE

🕒 Réallon county town (AM)

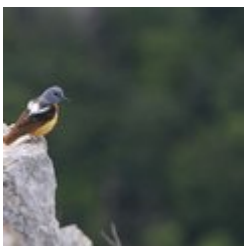
The Réallon valley, fertile and rich in game and fish, was occupied as early as the 8th century BC by a Ligurian people.



👉 Retaining walls (AN)

The retaining walls are made of dry stone. They are called restanques in Provence. In steep areas, they can be used to create farmed terraces by retaining the soil. At the time, their construction enabled generations of farmers to make a living from their land, which became fertile and arable. Today, many researchers and craftsmen are trying to bring back this age-old technique.

Attribution : Amélie Vallier



🇫🇷 Common Rock Thrush (AO)

The Common Rock Thrush likes sunny rocks. It only visits us in April until the end of August to nest either on the ground, or in a rock cavity. Orange breast, blue head, white rump, its song consists of sweet, clear melodious stanzas.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE



Black Redstart (AP)

Mr. Black Redstart sports a grey skullcap and white marking on his wings, a black tail and rump. Originally a mountain bird, it has adapted to other environments, as long as there is a rocky atmosphere. Which is the case here, on the slope of the Roche Méanne. The Black Redstart is a common bird, bright and very lively: it constantly hunts insects in flight and on the ground. Often perched up high on a wall or a rock, it makes brief cries of alarm while bending its legs. Its chatty song, punctuated with sounds of « paper rustling » is characteristic. Partially migratory, it spends winter in the bottom of the valleys.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



Clapiers (AQ)

"Clapier" is the term used in the southern Alps to describe a pile of stones. They are evidence of former farming activities. The stones were once removed to clear the fields. This made it easier to work the soil and saved space. Back then, everything was done by hand.

Attribution : amelie.vallier



The Larch (AR)

The king of trees in the mountains of the Southern Alps, the Larch is the only conifer to lose its needles in winter. In spring, its cones are a characteristic dark purple. Larch is one of Europe's few rot-resistant species. That's why, despite the fact that it twists when dried, it is often used for roofing, drinking troughs and other gutters in mountain villages. Unable to regenerate under its own undergrowth, it needs natural openings, sometimes created by avalanches, if young shoots are to develop. It can be found at altitudes of over 2,200 metres, adopting dwarf forms in these combat zones. The larch seen at this point in the walk is several hundred years old.

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



Vantage point overlooking the Lac de Serre-Ponçon (AS)

This vantage point from the Pra Marin wood offers a sweeping view over the Lac de Serre-Ponçon. To the far left, the bridge of Savines-le-Lac and the Pic Morgon can be seen; to the right the view extends almost as far as the dam downstream from Sauze-du-Lac. In clear weather you can see in the background the La Blanche mountain range and the L'Estrop massif, in Alpes-de-Haute-Provence. On the right-hand shore of the lake stands the hamlet of Chèrines, together with the ski resort of Réallon at the foot of the Aiguilles de Chabrières.

Attribution : amelie.vallier



Chaffinch (AT)

The common chaffinch can easily be recognised by its double white wing stripe. It is the most common and widespread of the three species of chaffinches. Territorial during the breeding season, it gathers into large flocks to feed in winter. From the coast to the alpine zone, a year-round resident in the mountains, it is demanding, although it has a preference for open and cool forests. It is usually a seed-eater, it becomes an insectivore during the breeding season.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



Reyssas Canal (AU)

Shadowing the entire trail, the purpose of this canal is to irrigate the land lower down by capturing water from the Reyssas mountain stream and redirecting it along secondary canals. In places open to the sky and running through cement pipelines in others, this canal is vital to local farmers for irrigating their fields. The canals require regular maintenance. This difficult task is carried out by local people, often as a collective effort, manually transporting the necessary materials.

Attribution : Amélie Vallier



The Grey Cuckoo (AV)

This is a medium-sized migratory bird, identified by its "cuckoo" song, from April to July, between woodland and open spaces. The females seek out the nests of small sparrows and eat one of the eggs of the occupied nest before laying their own. In the cuckooed nest, the cuckoo chick, which is born before the others, will eject all the other eggs so it can be raised by its adoptive parents!

Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



Retaining walls (AW)

The retaining walls are made of dry stone. They are called restanques in Provence. In steep areas, they can be used to create farmed terraces by retaining the soil. At the time, their construction enabled generations of farmers to make a living from their land, which became fertile and arable. Today, many researchers and craftsmen are trying to bring back this age-old technique.

Attribution : Amélie Vallier



Grazing (AX)

Pastoralism is an extensive farming technique practised by livestock farmers. It exploits natural resources to feed the herd. This practice is now thought to have begun around 10,000 years ago. Certain animals with a natural tendency to group together are then domesticated. The search for food led mankind to raise these herds with a nomadic lifestyle. This practice is very important in terms of maintaining open environments and encouraging certain specific species.

Attribution : Faure Joël - PNE



Common Kestrel (AY)

The Common Kestrel is medium-sized. The underside of the wings has a cream colour with black spots. The male's head and top of its tail is blue-grey. This bird of prey flies rapidly, beating its wings fairly continuously, alternating changes of trajectory, short glides and sudden dives. Its characteristic feature is that it comes to a halt in flight, tail open like a fan, wings beating very rapidly, on the lookout for prey. This is known as the "flight of the Holy Spirit".

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



Clapiers (AZ)

"Clavier" is the term used in the southern Alps to describe a pile of stones. They are evidence of former farming activities. The stones were once removed to clear the fields. This made it easier to work the soil and saved space. Back then, everything was done by hand.

Attribution : Amélie Vallier



The Durance (BA)

The Durance is the most important river in Provence and the third largest tributary of the Rhône, behind the Saône and the Isère. It rises in the Hautes-Alpes in the municipality of Montgenèvre and is soon joined by the Clarée and Guisane rivers, which flow past it despite being longer and having a greater flow at the confluence point. The Durance valley has been a major communication route for centuries, and its capricious nature has been controlled by the artificial lake at Serre-Ponçon and a canal running downstream. The old proverb from the Ancien Régime, which once claimed that "the three scourges of Provence are the Mistral, the Durance and Parliament", has now been forgotten, and the Durance now brings nothing but life to the land it irrigates.

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Attribution : Agence Kros_Rémi Fabrègue

The pastre (BB)

This is the Provençal word for shepherd. The trail got its name because of its many traces of pastoral activity along the way. Among other things, you can see the remains of ancient shelters known as muandes. These were used as stopovers between the farm and the mountain pastures during the transhumance up to the summer pastures at the start of the summer and during the transhumance to lower pastures in the autumn.

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Church of Marie-Madeleine in Les Orres (BC)

Characteristic of Hautes-Alpes architecture, it was built around 1501 and is remarkable for its size and painted decorations.

The Larch (BD)

The Hautes-Alpes offers all the right conditions for the development of larch and is home to half of France's larch trees. The larch needs open, sunny land and colonises abandoned plots: it is a "pioneer" species. It can live for 500 years and is the only softwood to shed its needles. Its rot-proof wood can be used to make gutters, fountains and shingles. Its strength makes it ideal for carpentry and its colour also makes it popular in joinery.