

# From Les Gourniers to Embrun

Embrunais - Réallon



Vue sur le lac (CDTE Hautes-Alpes)



*After admiring the peaks, this relatively easy stage takes you back down to the valley.*

A timeless journey! Reach Embrun via the valley of Réallon, an ancient passageway between the Champsaur and Durance rivers, to admire its medieval, archiepiscopal and Provençal architecture.

## Useful information

Practice : Horse

Duration : 5 h

Length : 23.7 km

Trek ascent : 616 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Stage

Themes : History and architecture, Lake and glacier, Panorama

# Trek

**Departure** : Les Gourniers, Réallon

**Arrival** : Club Hippique Alpin Serre-Ponçon

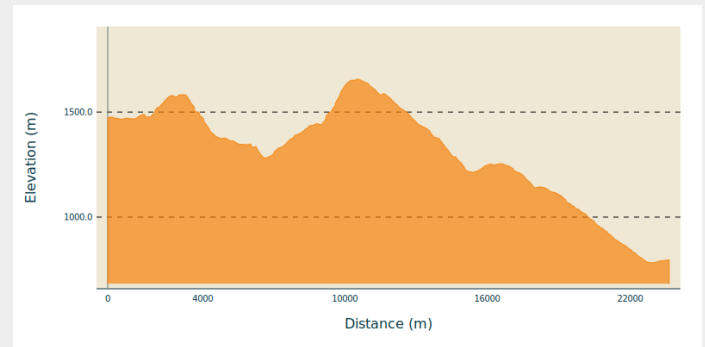
**Markings** :  GRP  GR

**Cities** : 1. Réallon

2. Puy-Saint-Eusèbe

3. Puy-Sanières

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 783 m    Max elevation 1657 m























1. Take the only road (D241 and GR) towards Réallon then continue on the grassy path (GR) that climbs to the left towards the Fort de Réallon. At the fork in the road, ignore the route to L'Oussella/Le Laus, but follow the signs for Fort de Réallon. *The Fort de Réallon was an excellent lookout point and served as a refuge for local residents.* After circling the Fort, retrace your steps and continue on the GR/GRP to Réallon, an authentic hamlet. At Réallon, head down the Charrière de la Pisse to the Charrière Grande (car park, D41) where you can taste and buy home-made syrups and jams.
2. As you leave the hamlet, the GR/GRP splits off from the D41 onto a grassy track that climbs to the left towards Les Méans. The track then narrows, runs alongside a beautiful dry stone wall and boasts beautiful views of Savines-le-Lac and the Grand Morgon.
3. Once you reach Méans, a charming well restored and flower-bedecked hamlet, continue on the road and the GR/GRP, remembering to stop at the fountains, then take the narrow path and balcony towards Puy-Sanières. The path briefly joins a road: climb it to reach the GR/GRP trail on a balcony with beautiful views of the lake, Prunières and Puy-Sanières.
4. At Les Touisses, admire the stream before climbing, on your left, the undergrowth path towards Clot Bouffier, a peaceful, grassy resting place (grazing area). Then continue on the GR/GRP: on the way up, join the forest track, which is comfortable as it was completely gravelled in 2019. The torrent de la Pisse is spectacular.
5. The Chemin de la Baume then comes to a hairpin bend: descend to the right through the Selette and Pré St Martin forest, which boasts superb views of Lake Serre-Ponçon. After 2 hairpin bends, turn right down a side track towards Reyssas canal and then immediately left to ascend to the church of Puy-Saint-Eusèbe, following the stream. After the church, descend and continue left to cross the hamlet (bread oven, stone houses) and, before you leave the hamlet, take the grassy path that descends to the right, the start marked by a concrete post.
6. At the end of this path, cross the D109a and continue straight ahead on a second grassy path. At the junction with the D9, turn left and then take the first forest track on the left. Follow the road, always level and straight ahead, until you reach the road that descends to the right towards Le Serre. Go as far as the



fountain, then take the Chemin des Martuches and turn right onto the Voie du Forest, which leads to the D9.

7. Cross it and take the track opposite down Les Clots and Les Champannes. Cross the ford and continue on the Chemin de Chadenas which leads to the CHASP Equestrian Centre, a stopover for horses.

# On your path...



- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  Short-toed Snake Eagle (A)             |  Mountain farming (B)                                  |
|  Rock Partridge (C)                     |  Water Pipit (D)                                       |
|  The « Clot du Fort » and its canal (E) |  Réallon Castle (F)                                    |
|  Marmot (G)                             |  Short toed Snake Eagle (H)                            |
|  Squirrel (I)                           |  Roe Deer (J)  |
|  Oaks and Pines (K)                     |  Réallon county town (L)                               |
|  Retaining walls (M)                    |  Common Rock Thrush (N)                                |
|  Black Redstart (O)                     |  Clapiers (P)  |
|  The Larch (Q)                          |  Vantage point overlooking the Lac de Serre-Ponçon (R) |
|  Chaffinch (S)                          |  Reyssas Canal (T)                                     |
|  The Grey Cuckoo (U)                    |  Retaining walls (V)                                   |

 Grazing (W)  
 Clapiers (Y)

 Common Kestrel (X)

# All useful information

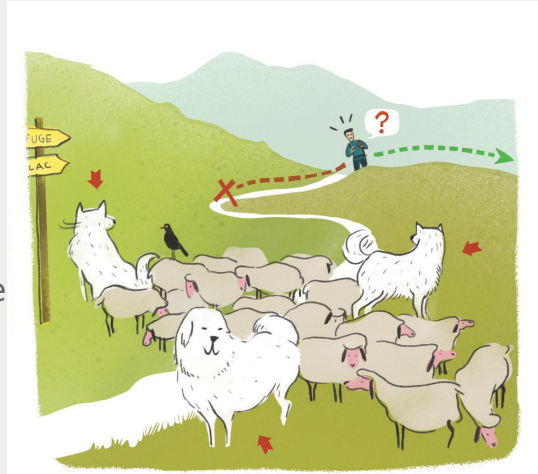
## Herd protection dogs

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](#).



## Advices

- *Aux Gourniers, la marmite de géant creusée par le torrent de Chargès vaut le détour (30', sans cheval). Le parking à l'orée du hameau est bien équipé : WC, tables de pique-nique, eau potable, parking, abri, panneaux d'information sur la faune...*

### **Hébergements partenaires** (comité tourisme équestre 05) :

- Centre équestre CHASP : accueil chevaux, [www.chasp.fr](http://www.chasp.fr)
  - Le Club Hippique Alpin Serre-Ponçon (CHASP) accueille les chevaux pour la nuit, pendant que les cavaliers dorment au CNA (Centre Nautique Alpin : camping)
- La Ferme du Riou Clar : [lafermeduriouclar.wixsite.com/riouclar](http://lafermeduriouclar.wixsite.com/riouclar)



## Gear

Equip yourself with an IGN Top 25 map and the digital route;  
Well-trained horses (gradients, variable terrain, duration, changing climate);  
Inquire before taking a shortcut;  
Doable from mid-May to mid-October.

## How to come ?

## Access

From Gap or Embrun, follow the D9 before joining the D241. Continue to the bottom of the valley as far as the hamlet of Gourniers.

## Advised parking

Car park at the entrance to the hamlet

# 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

### Tourist office Charges

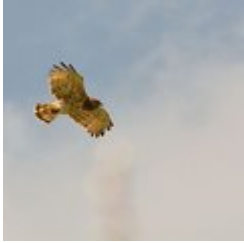
Grand rue, 05230 Charges  
charges@serreponcon-tourisme.com  
Tel : 0492506425  
<https://www.serreponcon.com>



## Source

## On your path...

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### Short-toed Snake Eagle (A)

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

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### Mountain farming (B)

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.

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### Rock Partridge (C)

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



## Water Pipit (D)

This little bird in the Passeriforme family can make itself invisible by flying about against the blue of the sky. It is very discreet. Although, it does know how to make itself heard by calling its name : « pi-pit-pipit-pipit-pipit » and all of a sudden, from its highest point of flight, it lets itself glide to the ground, with its wings out like a parachute it makes a jubilatory « piiiit » sound ! Once it has landed in the meadow grass, it is difficult to see it among the tufts of Festuca.

Attribution : Damien Combrisson - PNE



## The « Clot du Fort » and its canal (E)

With a surface area of approximately 30 ha, the plateau, popularly called the « Clot du Fort », has been used for the cultivation of cereals since Antiquity. At the beginning of the 20th century, a canal measuring around 2,5 km was built from the Pisse torrent to irrigate, via a multitude of secondary canals, 90 privately owned plots. Since these plots having been progressively given over to sheep grazing the canal has fallen in to disuse. It is now reduced to remnants; the path enables you to follow part of the belvedere.

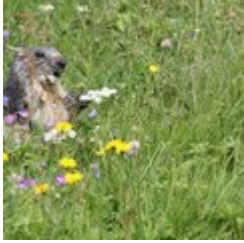
Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



## Réallon Castle (F)

Réallon Castle was no doubt built during the middle of the Hundred Years' War. Its location enabled it to control different means of access in to the valley thanks to the Champas ravine at the East of the enclosure and to it being partially constructed on a sloped terrain. The castle consisted of a dungeon and a vast enclosure which was used as a refuge to shelter the populations around Réallon in the case of a military attack. This enclosure was confined by a semi-circular tower opened towards the inside. Following the initiative of the community of Réallon, this place known as the « Tour à la Gorge », was completely restored in 2013 with the help of the Ecrins National Park. . Source : Association « Patrimoine en Réallonnais ».

Attribution : Olivier Lefrançois - PNE



## Marmot (G)

Some of them live on the plateau. This is the hikers' favourite animal. Maybe you will be lucky enough to see it or to hear it whistle. This big rodent is only visible between April and October it takes refuge during the coldest season in its burrow where it hibernates. It lives in a family, respecting a strict hierarchy. Games, grooming, fighting and bighting create the dominance of the couple and the cohesion of the group. Each one participates in installing the boundaries by rubbing their cheeks on rocks and by depositing droppings and urine. When there is danger, the marmot makes a strong shrill whistle in order to warn the others.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE



## Short toed Snake Eagle (H)

This dry thermophilic slope shelters several reptiles like the Wall Lizard, the Green Lizard, the Aspic Viper or the Grass Snake. The Short toed Snake Eagle essentially eats just reptiles! From the month of March, you will be able to see these large birds flying together in the sky, alternatively swooping and hovering like two silver coloured kites playing in the wind.. Their light coloured stocky silhouettes, their darker coloured heads leave not a shadow of a doubt! The eagles are back.

Attribution : Pascal Saulay - PNE



## Squirrel (I)

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 (J)

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 (K)

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 (L)

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 (M)

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 (N)

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 (O)

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 (P)

"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 (Q)

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.

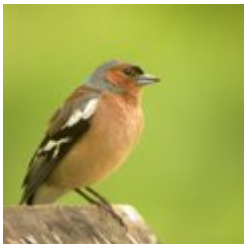
Attribution : Mireille Coulon - PNE



## Vantage point overlooking the Lac de Serre-Ponçon (R)

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 (S)

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 (T)

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 (U)

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 (V)

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 (W)

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 (X)

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 (Y)

"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