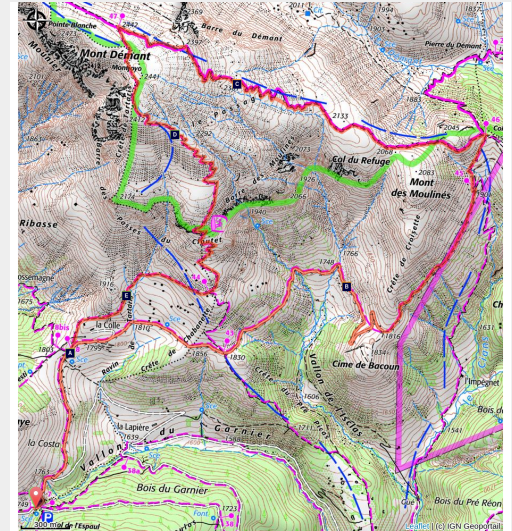




# Démant circuit

Vallées haut-Var&Cians - Péone



Les Barres calcaires du Démant à Péone, striées de ravines ou roubines par l'érosion. Eclairage automnal. (Marc EVENOT)

*Once you reach around 2000m in altitude, you will have left the Mediterranean lavender and broom behind you and entered into an unfamiliar lunar landscape, illuminated by brightly coloured Alpine flowers.*

Take a look at the elements which will help you understand the development of the Black Mountain. A pyramid born in the Alpine ocean, it has become a high-altitude desert whose summits offers one of the finest belvederes in the Alpes d'Azur.

## Useful information

Practice : Hiking

Duration : 5 h

Length : 14.5 km

Trek ascent : 834 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Loop

Themes : Archeology and history, Flora, Peak

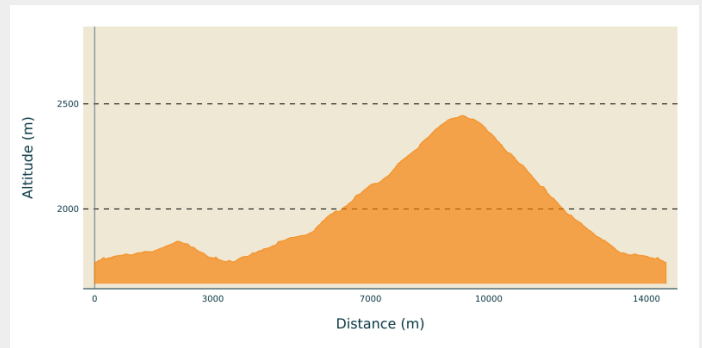
# Trek

**Departure** : Col de l'Espaul, Valberg  
(commune of Péone)

**Arrival** : Col de l'Espaul, Valberg  
(commune of Péone)

**Cities** : 1. Péone  
2. Beuil

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1744 m Max elevation 2444 m

At the Park information boards, follow the dirt track which leads to La Colle along the mountainside.

After the first houses, at marker 8, take the Mont Mounier itinerary which skirts around the houses, heading alongside the drinking trough and then the old sheep dips. A wide path rises, touching on the agricultural terraces. At marker 44, you will be able to appreciate the panoramic view over Beuil and Valberg.

You will reach a first flatter, grassy section, followed by another flatter section and then reach the heart of the Park. Go over the ridge of Les Passes.

At marker 47, another stop will be required to enjoy the panorama to the east of the Mercantour mountain chain and the direct view onto the ruined observatory.

Head right, taking GR5 on the slopes of La Tinée. The path runs alongside the eroded slopes until Col des Moulins, providing a view of the hamlet of Vignols and the Longon plateau.

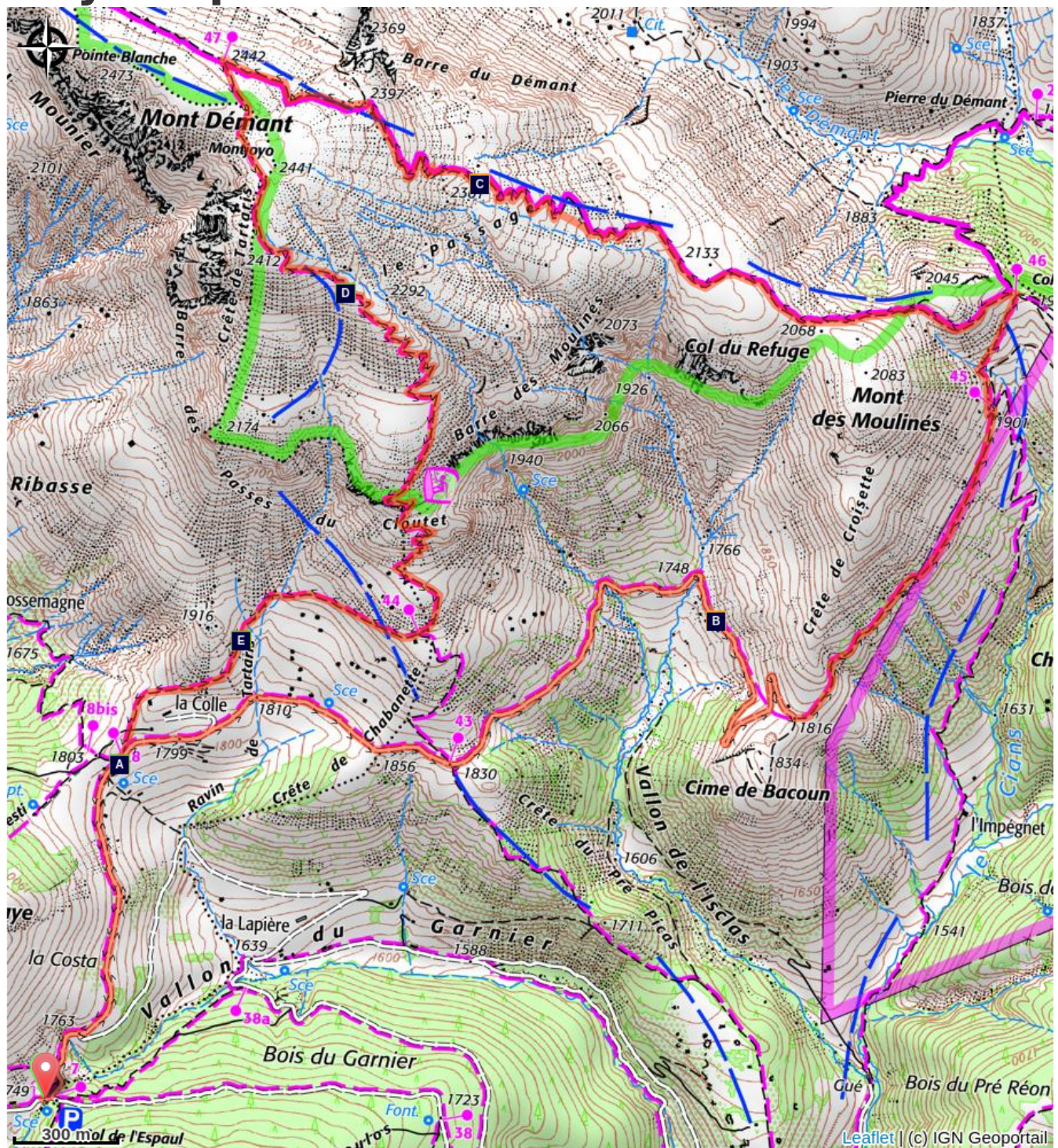
Head downwards onto the southern slopes towards the springs at Cians and at marker 45 you will reach the military track. Then follow directions to Col de l'Espaul until you reach the pastoral hut.




A narrow footpath shortcutting the zigzagging path heads to the valley of Les Isclas and the former military camp around the barn.



A 3km return journey via the path to Col de l'Espaul.



# On your path...



-  Star gentian (*Gentiana cruciata*) (A)
-  A mountain desert (C)
-  Observing marmots (*Marmotta marmotta*) (E)

-  Reading the landscape (B)
-  The invaluable flowers (D)



# 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**

A hike which is exposed to the elements with no opportunities for filling water bottle along the way. Make sure that you take a hat and a full drinking bottle.

A more strenuous variation is available when you reach marker 47 towards the peak of Mont Mounier (2817m) by turning left onto GR5. This will take two extra hours and includes another 300m climbing.

## **How to come ?**

### Access

At Valberg, opposite the chapel of Notre-Dame des Neige, turn left onto the road towards Les Huerris which rises via Avenue Jean Ray up to the Centre de l'Équipement. Then turn right onto the road towards La Colle, reaching the Col de l'Espaul (1748m) carpark 3km further on. National Park information board.

### Advised parking

Carpark, Col de l'Espaul

## **Accessibility**

Adaptation work is due to take place in 2015 on Col de l'Espaul.

 **Information desks**

**Office du tourisme de Beuil**

1 rue du Comté de Beuil, 06470 Beuil

[office.de.tourisme@beuil.fr](mailto:office.de.tourisme@beuil.fr)

Tel : 04 93 02 32 58

<http://www.beuil.com/>

# On your path...

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## ✿ Star gentian (*Gentiana cruciata*) (A)

Around the hamlet of La Colle, you may be lucky enough to find some star gentian (*Gentiana cruciata*). This is an herbaceous plant which grows in clumps; it has erect stalks, large, pointed leaves and blue flowers with 4 petals, which are grouped under the upper leaves. This gentian serves as a “nest” for the mountain Alcon blue butterfly (*Maculinea rebeli*): in this picture, you can distinctly see the eggs laid by the insect.

Attribution : MARTIN-DHERMONT Laurent

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## 🕒 Reading the landscape (B)

To understand this landscape, one needs to go beyond the appearance and look carefully at it to spot the clues pointing at agricultural life which, throughout the centuries, shaped it. Meadows scattered with fruit trees, barns, pastoral huts and ruins of military camps are so many visual traces of the activities of the past.

During the Napoleonic period, many owners shared the irrigated meadows as well as the cultivated land. Little by little, cultivation was abandoned in favour of pasture.

In 1954, the Robion family from Beuil still came to cut the hay. And then, pastoralism went into decline. Pasture zones were gradually taken over by broom and, in places, trees such as Scotch pine or larch blocked the access to the former military camp.

Attribution : LOMBART Guy

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## 🕒 A mountain desert (C)

In 1467, under pressure from the community, Count Grimaldi of Beuil accorded the right for people to cut down trees on the mountains of Mounier described at the time as "Alpes" (pastures), proving that the forest was present there.

In 1624, the Duke of Savoie has the trees cleared from the last spinneys on Mounier to build galleys in the port of Villefranche.

Today, the few thousand transhumant sheep maintain this desert-like landscape. Yet in place, small larch trees are trying to establish themselves. Let us bet that studies carried out on the pastures by the Park alongside the shepherds will improve the situation from the point of view of protecting nature.

Attribution : GOURON Claude

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## ✿ The invaluable flowers (D)

Barely have you gone over the limestone bar with its scents of lavender and broom before you are in the Alps. At this altitude, flowers adapt to survive, becoming perennial, stunted, colourful and strong smelling. Among the species present, *Berardia Lanuginosa* and alpine bellflower are endemic to the southern Alps and are protected by the law. In the world of plants, the flower is the most elaborate reproductive organ that nature has created. How could you not respect that!

Attribution : MALAFOSSE Jean-Pierre

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## 🐹 Observing marmots (*Marmotta marmotta*) (E)

If you want to observe marmots, in the valley below the path which runs alongside the agricultural terraces, you will need to be quiet, attentive and position yourself upwind, then look in the meadows for the holes they make, with fresh earth around them and linked by a network of tracks. With the help of a pair of binoculars, you will have no problem spotting some marmots and their young eating, playing or sunning themselves. A long, repeated call signifies that an unfamiliar presence has been detected (very probably you). A single sharp call means that the golden eagle is around, looking for its favourite prey. In this case, they all dash off to their burrows!

Attribution : BLANC Jacques