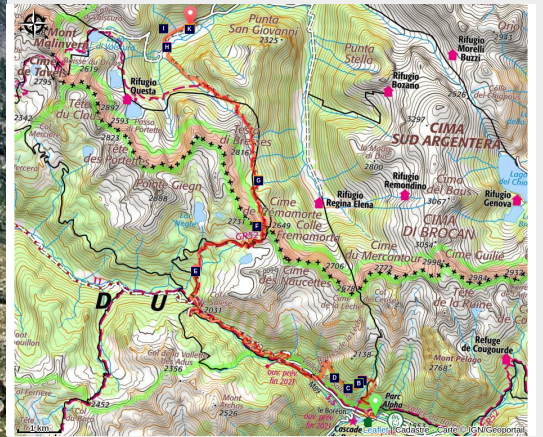




# The Wolf Trail - Argentera & Mercantour - Stage 4

Vallée haute Vésubie - Saint-Martin-Vésubie



Randonnée au lac des Bresses, (2458 m), et la cime de Frémamorte, (2731 m). (Patrice Tordjiman - PNM)

## Useful information

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Practice : Hiking

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Duration : 8 h

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Length : 24.8 km

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Trek ascent : 1601 m

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Difficulty : Hard

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Type : Walking breaks

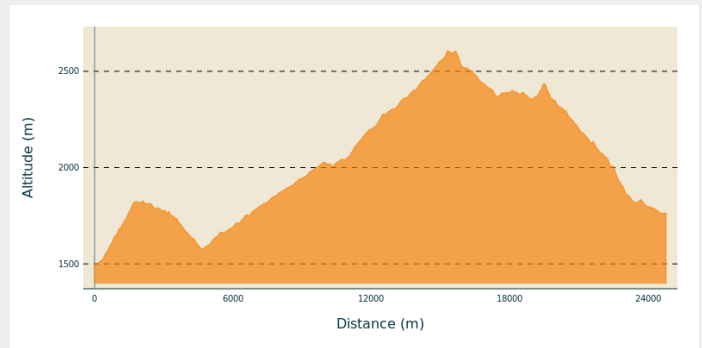
# Trek

**Departure** : Boréon

**Arrival** : Valasco refuge

**Cities** : 1. Saint-Martin-Vésubie  
2. Valdeblore  
3. Valdieri

## Altimetric profile

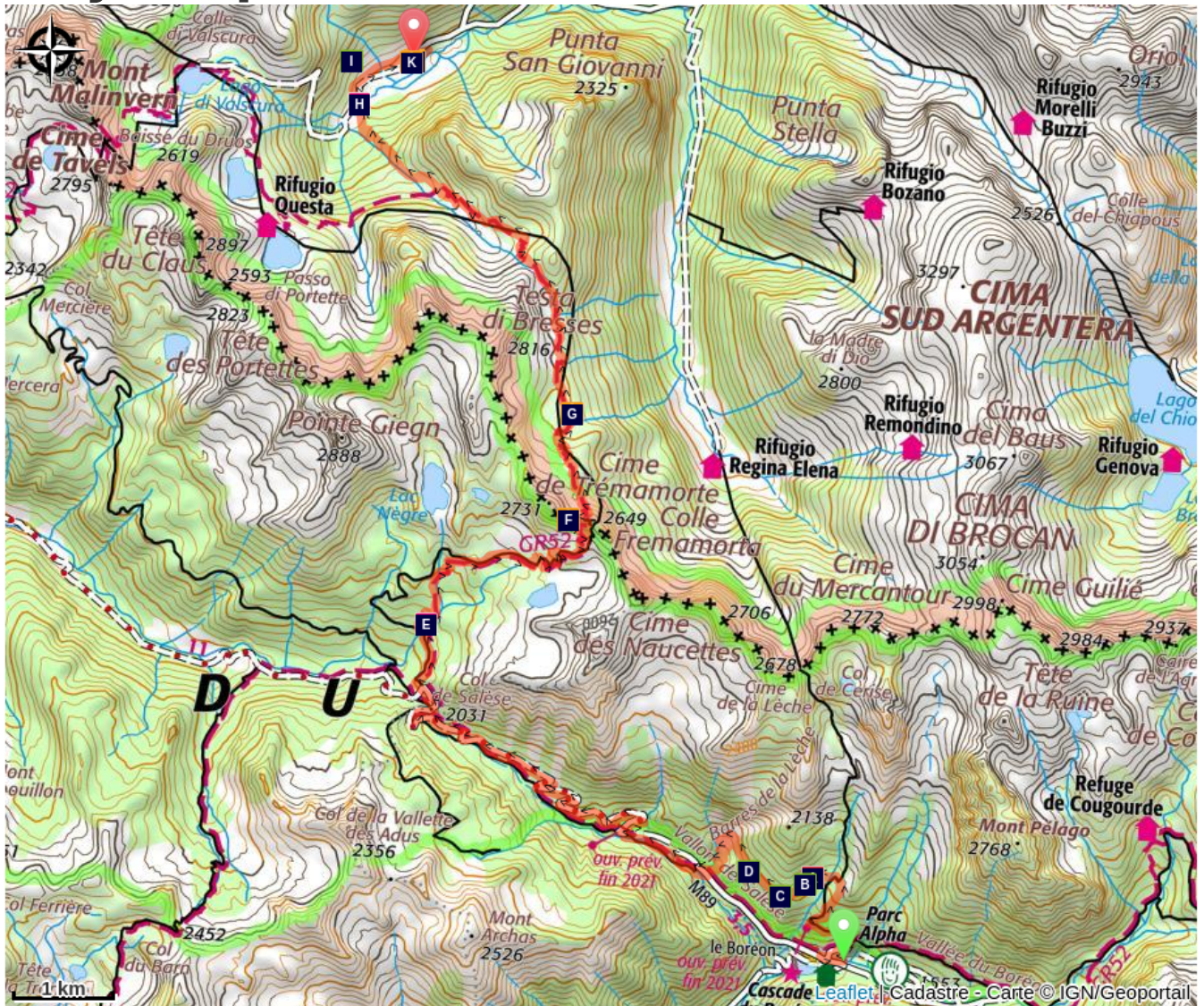










Min elevation 1497 m Max elevation 2606 m

From the Boréon lodge (marker 370), head uphill past the last chalets until you reach the Erps-Cerise junction (marker 371) and take the path on the left which take you up through the forest to the Cavalet plateau (marker 372, 373, 374). You will reach the site of the Cavalet cow barn along a flatter section (1815 m – marker 375). Continue easily in a westerly direction on wide track which is virtually flat before heading downhill towards the rocky bars of La Lèche, the climbing site at St-Martin-Vésubie. Continue on the easy descent along a small track which reaches the road to Salèse (marker 399). Once you get to the carpark (marker 434), take the path with GR52 markers along by the river to reach the Salèse col and track (2031m marker 436). Continue along the track to reach the other slope until 268. Take the path on the right (yellow markers). Cross a footbridge (marker 269). Continue to the right heading north towards Lac Nègre and Col de Frémamorte. You will reach Camp Soubran at 2270m (marker 270). Go to Lac Nègre and head along between the lakes as you go uphill towards Col de Frémamorte (2615m). You will now be on the French-Italian border which is denoted by several military buildings. Go down on the Italian side and pass close to the lakes of Fremamorte and the Giulia bivouac. Head back uphill on the left to pass Col de Valesco (2429m). Do not take the path for the Questa refuge and follow the wide path for La Vallée Morte which joins up with the wide Piano Valasco track and reaches the Valasco refuge (1764m).



# On your path...



-  Cow barns (A)
-  Wolf (*Canis lupus*) (C)
-  Argentera granite (E)
-  The Umberto I shelter (G)
-  The larch (I)
-  The Valasco Royal Hunting Lodge (K)
-  Conifers (B)
-  Chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) (D)
-  The Cima di Fremamorta barracks (F)
-  The Pian del Valasco waterfall (H)
-  Rifugio Valasco, former hunting lodge (J)

# 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.

# On your path...

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## Cow barns (A)

This element of the community system allowed the inhabitants of the valley to place their cows into the charge of a guardian who would be responsible for them as they enjoyed the high-altitude pastures in summer. Mountain dwellers were thereby free to participate in the hay cutting and other agricultural activities close to the villages.

The cow barns which you can see on the Erps and Le Cavalet circuit were temporarily used during the summer, which explains why they are small. Today, only two farmers still work on the site of Boréon, owning or hosting thirty or so cows each.

Attribution : RIFFLET François

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## Conifers (B)

These resinous trees, with leaves shaped like needles or scales, produce conical fruits, hence the name given to this group. The larch is the only conifer which loses its needles in the winter. They are grouped together in clumps of 15 to 20. This species is only present in the Alps. It can also be found at the upper limit of the forest as it needs light to develop.

Attribution : F. Guigo

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## Wolf (*Canis lupus*) (C)

In 1992, wolves came back into this area of their own accord, crossing the border from Italy, but they remain very secretive in the park.

They live in packs of 4 to 6 individuals, each pack having a territory which covers some 200 to 300 km<sup>2</sup>.

Its diet is highly varied, mainly eating wild ungulates (mouflons, chamois, wild boar, deer) in addition to domestic ones (sheep), but it also eats small rodents, birds, insects and vegetal matter (wild berries, mushrooms,...).

Its role as a regulator of wild fauna needs to be underlines. This species is protected by national and international regulations and it has a natural place in the food chain and the ecosystem.

Attribution : JOULOT Christian

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## Chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) (D)

A mountain dweller par excellence, the chamois can climb 1000m upwards in 15 minutes (a hiker would take 3 hours). It is easy to spot. The population of chamois is high and it roams along the mountains, from the forests and grasslands to the peaks.

It can be recognised thanks to its horns, which are straight and then curved backwards, and quite small compared to those of the ibex. Its forehead and cheeks are white, separated by two black bands from its ears to its muzzle.

Attribution : P. Pierini

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## Argentera granite (E)

If you look closely at this grey rock, you will see that it is made of different minerals. Quartz (grey) and feldspar (white) sometimes big with a few sparkling areas here and there on the rock. This is black mica and more specifically biotite.

You have discovered blocks of granite. All the minerals it is made up of are contiguous and visible with the naked eye. The texture is igneous, characteristic of plutonic rocks which crystallised deep in the earth.

Attribution : PIERINI Philippe

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## The Cima di Fremamorta barracks (F)

The barracks building is an imposing structure and is still in relatively good condition: The camouflage paint on the doors is still visible, and there are a good number of windows and doors left, outside and inside. Outside, there are traces of the open-air kitchen, used by the troops during the warm months. The barracks could house a garrison of 60.

Along the last stretch of uphill trail, as well as in the nearby Val Morta, there remain a few telephone poles in larch, on which were strung the wires for communications between defensive outposts.

Attribution : Roberto Pockaj

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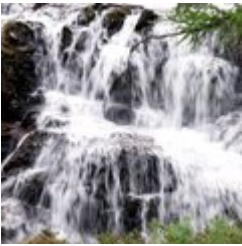


## The Umberto I shelter (G)

This is in fact a large barracks, designed to house 130 soldiers and 4 officers. Built in 1894, it was readapted on three separate occasions, the last of which in 1934, when another section was added on one side of the main building to house the kitchen, and a freestanding structure was also erected. The ruins of an old storage barn and stables can be seen just above the barracks.

Attribution : Roberto Pockaj

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## The Pian del Valasco waterfall (H)

The mass of rocks over which the water falls is a typical example of a glacial rock step. During the glaciations it formed the lower limit of the lake at the foot of the glacier. A tongue of the glacier extended beyond the step.

Attribution : Roberto Pockaj

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## The larch (I)

This type of forest is rather localized in the Maritime Alps, which notoriously represent the realm of the beech forest. It covers the slopes at the heads of the valleys with sparse and luminous populations, sometimes grazed by the herds that have climbed the mountain pastures. Most of the time their purity is not natural, but induced by man: in fact, over the centuries, man has favored this tree species to the detriment of others, such as the stone pine, for example, because they are less favorable for exercising the grazing due to the increased shading of the soil.

Attribution : Cati Caballo



## 🕒 Refugio Valasco, former hunting lodge (J)

This is where King Victor Emmanuel II of Italy had a hunting lodge built, a singular “castle”, square in shape and with a crenelated tower. It has since been transformed into a high-altitude refuge, much to the delight of hikers.

From the Valasco plateau where the refuge is located, you can easily reach the area of the Valascura lakes, heading along the magnificent road built by hunters in the early 20th century. Part of the road is paved, allowing you to go through an area which is littered with boulders and debris.

A mule track leads to the panoramic col of Valmiana.

Attribution : A. Rivelli / PNAM

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## 🕒 The Valasco Royal Hunting Lodge (K)

The construction of a "Country House" in Vallasco, which Vittorio Emanuele II would later utilize for his hunting parties in the Royal Reserve, dates back to the years after 1868, when there were probably four buildings standing on the plateau. However, the Royal Hunting Lodge, at least the one we admire today, was probably built after 1873, although sources differ on this. Its history has been turbulent, and marred by a series of fires until, following an important restructuring by its current owner, in 2008 it was transformed into an alpine refuge.

Attribution : Roberto Pockaj