



# Fenestre circuit

Vallée haute Vésubie - Saint-Martin-Vésubie



Un ancien poste de chasse en pierres sèches du roi Victor Emmanuel II situé au dessus du Lac de Fenestre (2266 m). (GUIGO Franck)



*A circuit in the heart of the high peaks of the Mercantour. An emblematic itinerary which follows a historical path.*

A mineral environment over which towers Le Gélas, the highest Alpes-Maritimes peak (3143m). This historical path, which reveals the Mercantour's Alpine aspect, served as a passage between Le Comté de Nice and Le Piémont. You may be lucky enough to sport the larger animals which live in the Park...as long as you remain fairly inconspicuous!

## Useful information

Practice : Hiking

Duration : 4 h

Length : 7.5 km

Trek ascent : 646 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Loop

Themes : Archeology and history, Lake, Peak

# Trek

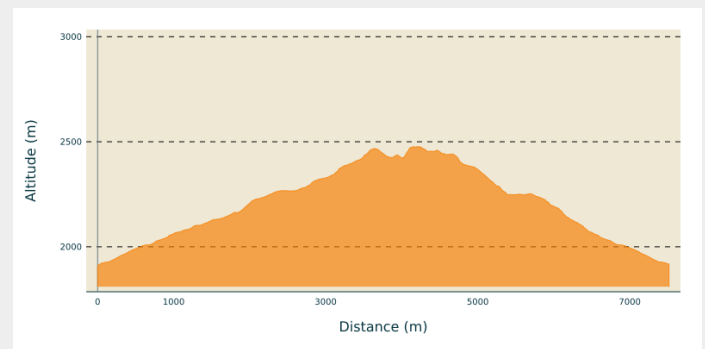
**Departure** : La Madone de Fenestre sanctuary, Saint Martin de Vésubie

**Arrival** : La Madone de Fenestre sanctuary, Saint Martin de Vésubie

**Markings** :  GR  PR

**Cities** : 1. Saint-Martin-Vésubie

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1910 m Max elevation 2476 m

Leave from marker 357. The path zigzags upwards gently on the slope which features the sanctuary. The width and surface of the path may surprise you.

Before crossing the Magnin mountain stream (marker 368), head past the path which leads to Le Pas des Ladres a follow the direction of Le Lac de Fenestre. To the east, you can see Le Pas du Mont Colomb and on its right the northern slopes of Le Grand Caïre (2532 m) and Le Petit Caïre (2413 m).

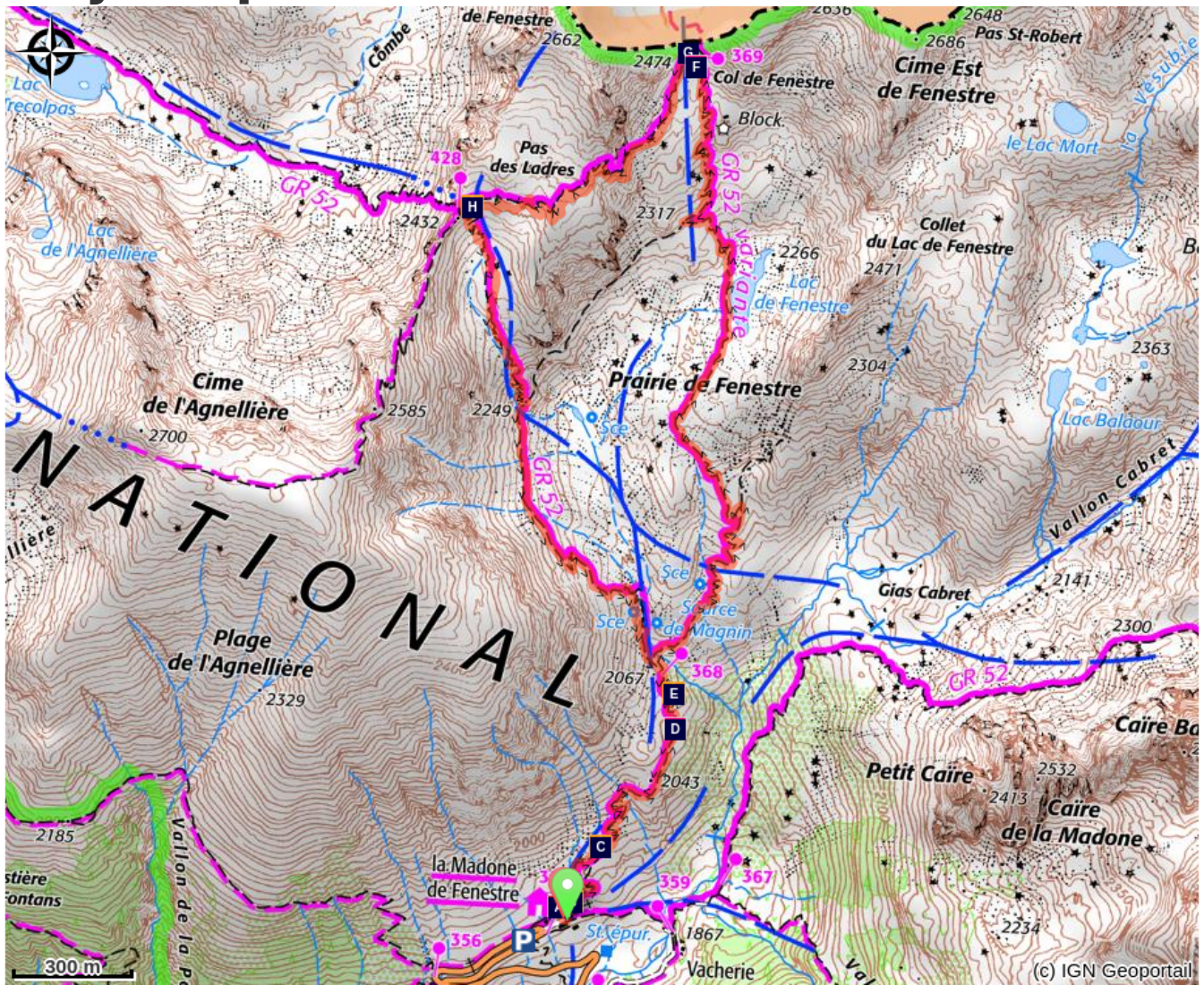
Continue until you reach Le Lac de Fenestre, at an altitude of 2266 metres. It is 250 metres long, 75 metres and up to 4 metres in depth.




The path winds towards Le Col de Fenestre and heads between two bunkers which are sometimes frequented by ibex. You will reach the col after the intersection at marker 369. On the slopes on the Italian side, a barracks denotes the military purposes the area was used for in the past.

Return to marker 369. Turn right towards Le Pas des Ladres (marker 428), which provides an extensive view over the high Boreon valley and Lac de Trecolpas (2150 m). Continue along GR52 towards La Madone de Fenestre.



# On your path...



- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  La Madone de Fenestre refuge (A) |  La Madone de Fenestre sanctuary (B) |
|  Col de Fenestre mule track (C)   |  The scars of erosion (D)            |
|  Terre de cour (E)                |  Col de Fenestre (F)                 |
|  Il Colle di Finestra (G)         |  Pas des Ladres (H)                  |

# 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**

In early season, the path may become more difficult to walk along from Le Pas des Ladres onwards.

## **How to come ?**

### Transports

For access to La Madone de Fenestre: Randobus and minibus.  
Information available at Saint-Martin-Vésubie Tourism Office.

### Access

Reach the sanctuary of La Madone de Fenestre from St-Martin-Vésubie (11 km).  
The departure point is marker 357 behind the refuge (1908 m).

### Advised parking

La Madone de Fenestre sanctuary carpark

## **Information desks**

### **Maison du Parc national du Mercantour - Saint-Martin-Vésubie**

8, Avenue Kellermann - Villa Les Iris,  
06450 Saint-Martin-Vésubie

vesubie@mercantour-parcnational.fr

Tel : 04 93 03 23 15

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

### **Office de Tourisme Métropolitain - Bureau d'information de Belvédère**

Rue Victor Maurel, 06450 Belvédère

info.belvedere@nicecotedazurtourisme.com

Tel : 04 93 03 51 66

<https://www.explorenicecotedazur.com/>

### **Office de Tourisme Métropolitain - Bureau d'information de Valdeblore - La Colmiane**

La Colmiane, 06420 Valdeblore

info.valdeblorelacolmiane@nicecotedazurtourisme.com

Tel : 04 93 23 25 90

<https://www.explorenicecotedazur.com/>

# On your path...

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## La Madone de Fenestre refuge (A)

Club Alpin Français

Capacity: 62 Possibility of eating and having a shower

Warden: Mid-June to late-September + school holidays and weekends in winter

Tel. 04 93 02 83 19

Out of season upon reservation: Patrick Miraillet: 04 93 03 91 02

Online reservations: <http://chaletmadonedefenestre.ffcam.fr/>

Useful numbers:

St-Martin-Vésubie Tourism Office: 04 93 03 21 28

Park House: 04 93 03 23 15

Attribution : CAF / DR



## La Madone de Fenestre sanctuary (B)

In the 8th century, a modest refuge already, providing accommodation for travellers. This sanctuary with its imposing forms was built by the Benedictines of Borgo San Dalmasso and destroyed by the Saracens in the 10th century. The Templars restored it in the 13th century shortly after the Virgin Mary appeared at the Grand Caire window. Subsequently, the sanctuary was devastated by fire several times and then rebuilt. Today it belongs to the diocese of Nice.

Attribution : LEBOUTEILLER Eric





### 🕒 Col de Fenestre mule track (C)

This track has been used for a thousand years and was regularly maintained to allow mules transporting salt to pass with ease. The technique used to make and maintain these tracks involved self-locking stones. Identically sized slabs were arranged vertically in close lines. Fine materials were then used to hold it all in place. Gutters provided a run-off area for rainwater.

Attribution : LOMBART Guy



### 👤 The scars of erosion (D)

When they converge, runoff streams of water leave the ground bare, breaking a fragile equilibrium. In addition, footfall due to tourism damages the ground and raises the question of preservation of natural environments. Plant cover has to be maintained as it protects the ground from erosion and guarantees its stability. Restoration work has been carried out to guide and direct the hundreds of hikers who love these wild areas.

Attribution : GUIGO Franck



### 🕒 Terre de cour (E)

The black rock marks one of the borders of the Terre de Cour, formerly a domain of the Count of Provence, before it was returned to the House of Savoy in the 14th century. Two inscriptions on the black rock provide a reminder of the past: "B" for Belvédère, "SM" for Saint-Martin-Vésubie. Terre de Cour was located exclusively in these two communes but they have to share the ancient rights to pasture and wood with Lantosque and Roquebillière.

Attribution : RICHAUD Philippe



### 📍 Col de Fenestre (F)

A communication route within the House of Savoy, the col became part of Italian territory in 1860 and a border col in 1947, the date at which the border was moved to the watershed. When the weather is clear, the view extends beyond the plain of Pô to 200km to the north: Cervin (4478m) and Mont Rose (4634m) are visible in these conditions.

Attribution : Guigo Franck



## 🏔 Il Colle di Finestra (G)

The pass is a direct link between Valle Gesso and Vésubie, and has been crossed since time immemorial - and immortalized in legend and historical annals - by saints, emperors and invading armies. Before the Savoyes gained direct access to the sea, the Colle di Finestra pass was also an important supply route for the salt trade.

Its name, which first appears in the written records in 1041, has remained unchanged up to the present day: Colle di Finestra or, as written on the military maps of the early 1900s, Colle delle Finestre. The first version is the right one, though, because it refers to a single natural window (Finestra) that splits the northwest crest of the Cayre de la Madone.

Attribution : Roberto Pockaj



## 🕒 Pas des Ladres (H)

In Italian, “ladre” means thief. Indeed, the smugglers coming from Col de Fenestre came through here to reach Saint-Martin-Vésubie and avoiding the carabinieri outpost at La Madone.

From Pas des Ladres, you can Lac de Trecolpas below. Keep your eyes open, chamois often come this way.

Attribution : Franck GUIGO