

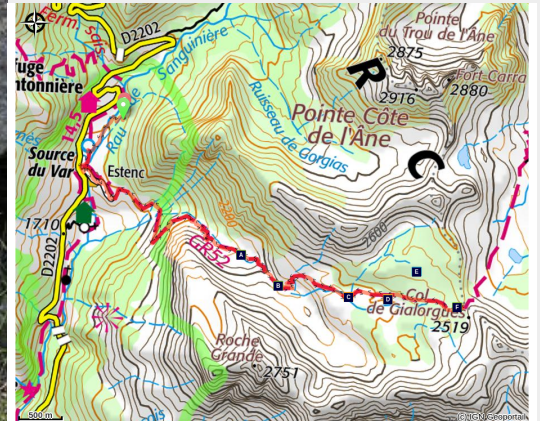


# The Estrop Valley

Vallées haut-Var&Cians - Entraunes



Lagopède alpin (Lagopus mutus), Un lagopède dans un environnement rocheux. (BLANC Jacques)



*A pastoral hike in a big grassy valley surrounded by peaks which have been weathered by erosion.*

In a pastoral universe where the slow waltz of the herds sets the rhythm, this hike gives you a chance to contemplate the succession of grassy valleys shaped by the action of the glacier but also by humans.

## Useful information

Practice : Hiking

Duration : 7 h

Length : 16.5 km

Trek ascent : 844 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Round trip

Themes : Fauna, Pastoralism

# Trek

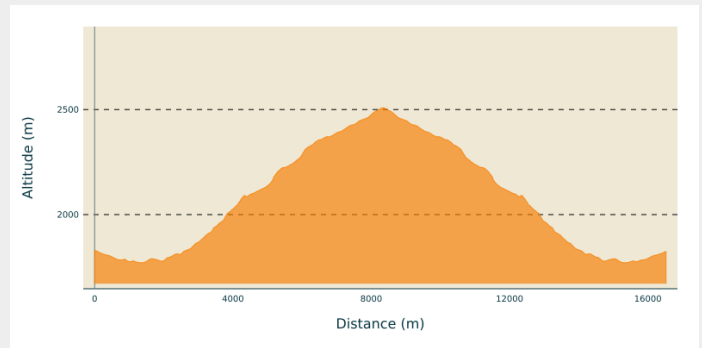
**Departure** : Hamlet of Estenc, Entraunes

**Arrival** : Hamlet of Estenc, Entraunes

**Markings** : ■ PR

**Cities** : 1. Entraunes

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1771 m Max elevation 2509 m

From the entrance to the National Park, follow the itinerary signposted "Col de Gialorgues". Cross the Sanguinière valley and follow the canal until marker 282. A gentle descent through a larch forest leads to the bottom of the Estrop valley, marker 283.

After going over a huge scree, head left at the first intersection.

A zigzagging climb leads to a flatter grassy section populated by Siberian grasshoppers. On the right, the peak of Roche Grande (2752m) where the Alpine ibex can be observed.

The path then climbs to the location named "L'Entonnoir", a spectacular place for erosion. Follow the path which snakes away on the left of a waterfall; there, huddled at the base of a rocky ridge, a hut recalls the pastoral use of this area.

The slope is much less pronounced now, making way for a succession of rounded rises and falls. A delightful path bordered by peat bogs leads to a knoll, whence military fortifications can be seen.


You will finally reach the highpoint of the hike in terms of altitude: the Col de Gialorgues. On the right, the Rocher du Pigeon is home to rock ptarmigans.

A variation on the right allows you to explore two small mountain lakes hidden behind a grassy knoll.

Follow the same route on the return journey.


# On your path...




 Alpine ibex (*Capra ibex*) (A)

 Pastoralism (C)

 The Estrop lakes (E)

 Siberian cricket (*Aeropus sibericus*) (B)

 Military remains (D)

 White-tailed ptarmigan (*Lagopus mutus*) (F)

# 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.

## **How to come ?**

### Access

Hamlet of Estenc, at the foot of the Col de la Cayolle, 200m after the refuge of La Cantonnière.

### Advised parking

Parking du refuge de la Cantonnière

# On your path...

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## Alpine ibex (*Capra ibex*) (A)

A symbol of the high mountains and their giddy peaks, this ungulate disappeared from this region more than 150 years ago.

Since 1987, reintroduction operations have been jointly undertaken by the Mercantour National Park and the Parco naturale Alpi Marittime.

A group of fifty or so have settled at Roche Grande.

To allow them to be identified, the animals are given coloured ear tags. The park staff regularly monitor the development of the species.

Attribution : Philippe PIERINI

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## Siberian cricket (*Aeropus sibericus*) (B)

During the great glacial periods, this orthoptera lived on the plains. As the climate has warmed back up, it has moved to the high mountains, above 2000m. The male can be recognised thanks to its bulging back legs, hence its surname of "Popeye". This herbivore, whose predators include birds, marmots and foxes, is part of the food chain in high-altitude pastures.

Attribution : MALAFOSSE Jean-Pierre

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## Pastoralism (C)

This grassy valley called Estrop (stropia: flock) has been used for pastoral purposes for many a long year: 1500 sheep graze it from August to September. The hut serves as a shelter for the shepherd. The flock rests on the knoll as the abundance of nettles and wild spinach attest. The Alpine grass is a fragile environment where the National Park helps ensure that a biological balance is maintained, while trying to improve the working conditions of shepherds.

Attribution : COSSA Jean-Louis

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## Military remains (D)

Just before the Second World War, the French army decided to build fortifications (bunkers) on Col de Gialorgues with a few to stopping a possible Italian invasion. Military authorities aimed to open a sufficiently wide track to allow all-terrain vehicles to reach Col de Gialorgues. Materials were transported by mules from the camp which was set up at the foot of the Estenc woods, but the soldiers had to rapidly give up due to the stony nature of the ground.

Attribution : Marion BENSA

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## The Estrop lakes (E)

Around 10000 years ago, the glacier occupied the whole valley before it gradually shrank as the climate warmed up, leaving a body of water behind each glacial rock bar. Slowly, erosion overcame this stock of water. As you head up the valley, you are also heading back in time: grasses towards the bottom, peat bogs in the middle, lakes towards the top. Around the wetland areas, Arcto-Alpine species flourish such as the cane and Zweifarbige Seggen which are protected at both a national and a European level.

Attribution : Marion BENSA

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## White-tailed ptarmigan (*Lagopus mutus*) (F)

Also known as the snow quail (or “jalabre” in the local dialect), this bird of the Tetraoninae family is a familiar sight in the high mountains. It is perfectly adapted to the cold and lives all year round at 2500 - 3000m. Three to four times per year, it changes its feathers according to its surrounding environment. In the autumn, the ptarmigans can join together in groups of 20 to 25 individuals. Their main predators are stoats and golden eagles.

Attribution : Jacques BLANC