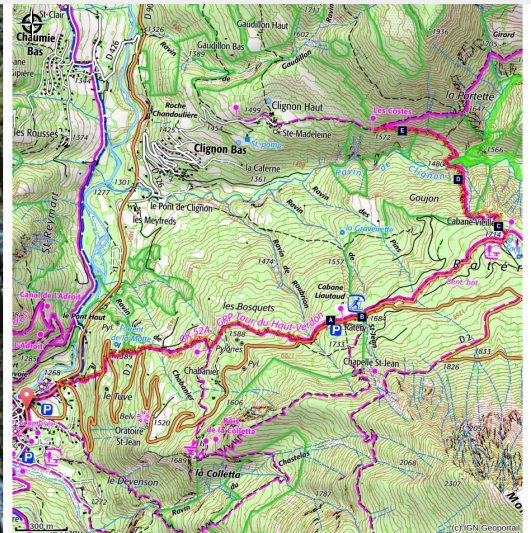# Ratery Forest

Vallée haut Verdon - Colmars

Forêt de Ratery (LE BOUTEILLER Eric)



*A pleasant walk through a forest planted by humans. A panoramic view over the Colmars' fortified enclosure.*

The herd crushes a green shoot underfoot, the axe chops down the fertile tree. Then the water carries away the sterile earth. The hillside becomes a moving desert and the tree dies before man. And thus man becomes the gardener of the mountain.

## Useful information

Practice : Hiking

Duration : 5 h

Length : 11.3 km

Trek ascent : 802 m

Difficulty : Easy

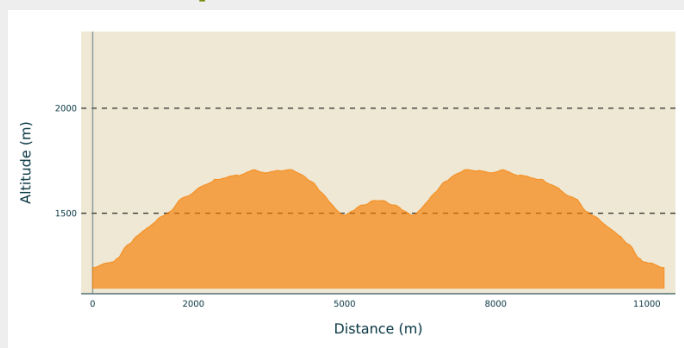Type : Round trip

Themes : Flora, Viewpoint

# Trek

**Departure** : Colmars-les-alpes
**Arrival** : Forêt de Ratery
**Markings** : ⯈ Moutain biking ▬ PR
**Cities** : 1. Colmars

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1241 m   Max elevation 1708 m

Walk along the road for about a hundred metres before taking a path to the left (gate). Ratery Fountain is a refreshing place to stop for a picnic in the summer warmth.
In summer, it is delightful to ride a mountain bike through the forest (onsite rental possible).
Quicker walkers should be able to reach the site in 1 hour from Colmars by taking the marked path (GR52A) which goes from Fort de Savoie carpark.
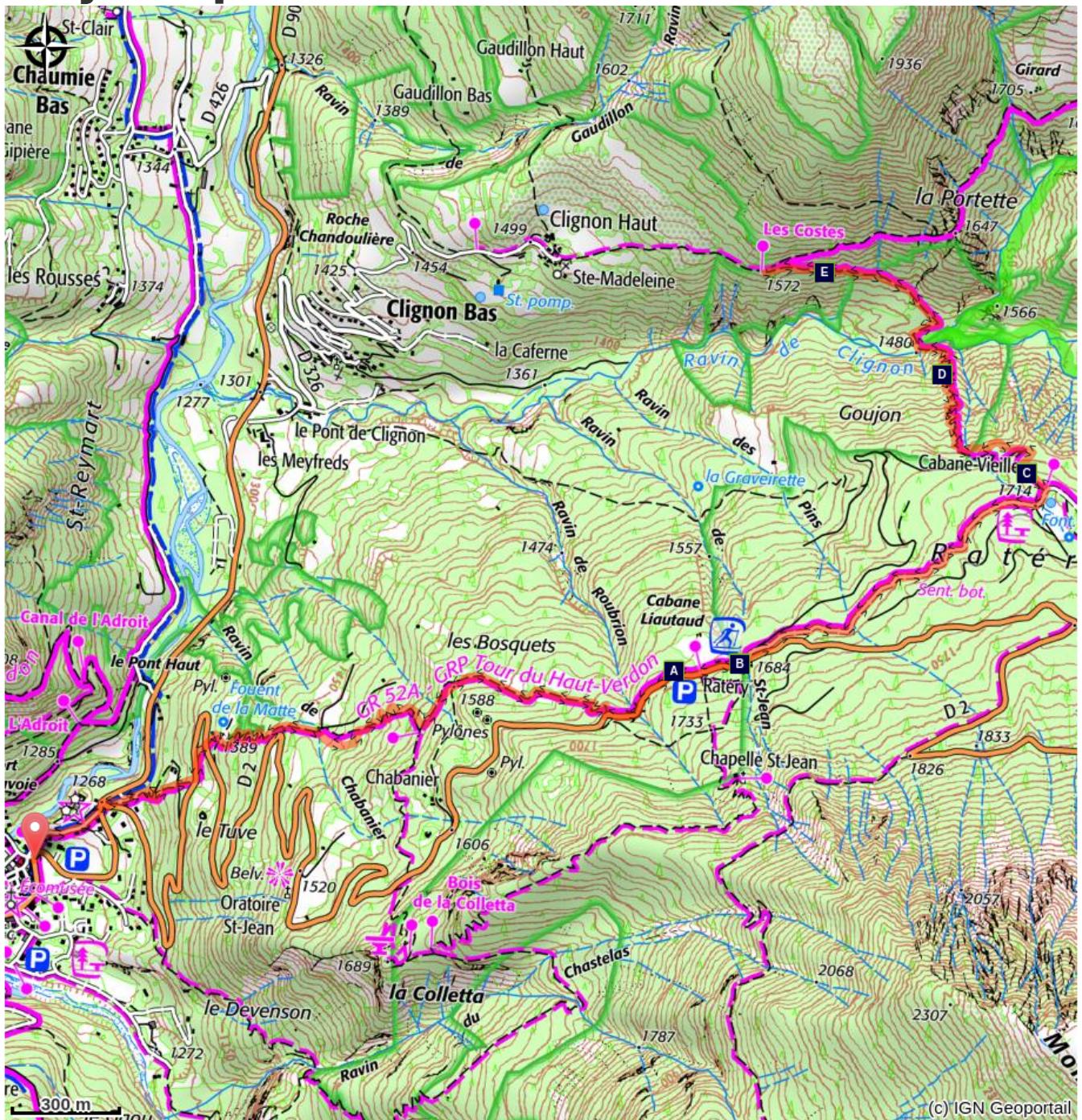The path passes close to an old house followed by abandoned fields which have today been taken over by larch trees. Shortly afterwards, the Ratery forest track begins, through a beautiful forest of larch interspersed by the squat, dark green silhouettes of a few Swiss pines. A network of cross-country skiing trails has recently been created; check the sign at the start of the trail in order to head directly towards Ratery Fountain. The wooden huts and benches in the clearing are the remainders of intense forestry activity.
Take the departmental hiking blueprint path on the left, indicated with red and yellow markers.
Through the pine and spruce forest, it heads downwards towards the Clignon ravine, which you cross via two footbridges, then continues up the southern face, joining up with the Cirque de l'Encombrette path.
Follow the same route for the return journey, although you can turn the walk into a circuit: at the fork in the path, take the left fork to get to the hamlet of Clignon-Haut, then Clignon-Bas and finally Colmars; this last stage is on a tarmacked road.

# On your path...



✳ The larch tree, endemic to Europe (A)

✳ Swiss pine (B)

✳ The forest of Ratery (C)

✳ Contrasting forest floors (D)

✳ Different side of the same mountain (E)

# All useful information

## ⚠ Advices

In summer you can follow this route on a mountain bike (onsite rental possible)

## How to come ?

Transports

Lignes départementales dans les Alpes-de-HauteProvence, Lignes régulières / hebdomadaires Digne-les-Bains, Barcelonnette, Larche et Digne-les-Bains, Colmars, Allos.

Service de navettes gratuites dans le Val d'Allos (Transports Haut-Verdon Voyages) : https://www.valdallos.com/bus-station.html

Access

In Colmars, takes the Allos road. Just as you leave the village, when you reach Fort de Savoie, take the road on the right towards Col des Champs. It winds through the forest, hanging on the mountainside for 8km, leading to a clearing where Ratery's Cross-Country Skiing and Mountain Biking Centre is located.

Advised parking

Ratery Cross-Country Skiing and Mountain Biking Centre

## ⓘ Information desks

**Verdon Tourisme - Bureau d'information touristique de Colmars-Les-Alpes**
Ancienne auberge fleurie, 04370 Colmars les Alpes

colmarslesalpes@verdontourisme.com
Tel : 04 92 83 41 92
http://www.verdontourisme.com

# On your path...

## ✽ The larch tree, endemic to Europe (A)

An endemic species in Europe, this conifer grows well in sunny mountain areas. It can reach 1000 year in age and it does not suffer from major problems with insects.

However, the larch tortrix does cause it damage: the caterpillar eats shoots and causes the needles to go yellow and fall prematurely; the larch then looks like a dead tree in the midst of summer. While the best trunks are selected for felling, the undergrowth is used for pasture by the herds which congregate in the light shade it provides.

Attribution : MARTIN DHERMONT Laurent

## ✽ Swiss pine (B)

A companion to the larch in high-altitude terrain, the Swiss pine is the symbol of the plant world's victory over the mineral world. Here it reaches the southern and western limits of its domain, which explains why it is so rare.
This stocky tree of 1000 years old, which flowers for the first time when it is 60-70 and then every 6-10 years. The nutcracker, a noisy and careful bird, loves to eat its seeds.

Attribution : GUIGO Franck

## ✽ The forest of Ratery (C)

For centuries, the territory of the Haut Verdon valley supported the needs of a large rural population. Trees were cut down to supply wood for heating and for building houses as fires were a regular occurrence.
With the ground being trampled, boulders removed, and in the absence of sufficient vegetation cover, erosion by mountain stream became terrible. In the 19th century, awareness of the problem grew and at the end of the century, replanting of trees began in at Ratery. Today, it is a "remarkable forest station, which tree lovers come to visit from miles away".

Attribution : Eric Le Bouteiller - Parc national du Mercantour

## ❋ Contrasting forest floors (D)

The larch forest is illuminated with a carpet of summer flowers: in its calcified soil grows orange lilies or martagon lilies, woodland geraniums and lychnis all sparkle there. In fir and spruce forests, which are dark and damp: a desert of acidic ground spreads between the tree trunks, covered with a thin layer of yellowing needles.

Attribution : MARTIN DHERMONT Laurent



## ❋ Different side of the same mountain (E)

On one side, the great Alpine forest covers the northern face: this is the shadowy side, a cold and damp world. On the other side is warm Provence. A southern slope at the same angle as a northern one receives ten times as much heat. Broom, lavender and Scotch pine envelop walkers in their bewitching scents.

Attribution : MARTIN DHERMONT Laurent