

The Vallée des Merveilles takes its name from the thousands of engravings dating from prehistoric times on coloured stone slabs known as "ciappe".

The austere, mineral landscape of the Vallée des Merveilles will intrigue you, as will its mysterious engraved signs... all in the heart of the Mercantour National Park. The tour we are proposing, in this mysterious setting, will delight you with its diversity of landscapes, panoramas and protected mountain fauna. The immediate proximity of the Mediterranean will provide you with ideal conditions for hiking in the heart of this unspoilt massif.

PROGRAMME

Day 1 : Boréon - Pas de Maïris - La Madone de Fenestre

Make your way to Boréon, where you can easily leave your car for the week in one of the many car parks in this small mountain hamlet. After the destructive storm of 2019, this village, which was particularly hard hit compared to the rest of the Mercantour (there is no visible sign of damage along the rest of your route), is rebuilding strongly...

Opposite the Parc Alpha reception area (worth a visit if you arrive the day before), you climb through a remarkable coniferous forest towards the Pas and the small Maïris refuge to reach the Cime du Pisset. A panoramic view of the Vésubie opens up with the famous Gelas in the background, a stone colossus proudly dominating these remote valleys of the Alpes Maritimes.

Descend to the hospices de la Madone de Fenestre where you will spend the night.

HIKING TIME: 5 hours

DISTANCE: 8.5 km

ASCENT : + 845 m

DESCENT : - 400 m

ACCOMMODATION : in a gîte

LUGGAGE ASSISTANCE: with luggage transport (if you have chosen this option)

Day 2 : La Madone de Fenestre - Pas du Mont Coulomb - Saint Grats

Departing from La Madone, don't hesitate to stop at Petite Vacherie, at the edge of the torrent to buy a piece of tome for your picnic, it is delicious (open when the herds are in the mountain pastures). You will go up the Vésubie torrent which has its source on the foothills of Gelas (3143 m) and will contemplate you throughout your ascent of the Pas du Mont Coulomb. Characterized by a narrow gap forming a "secret passage" between the Vésubie and the Gordolasque, the Pas du Mont Coulomb (2548 m) will be one of the passages ideal for beautiful photos.

During your rapid descent on the Gordolasque, you will undoubtedly be watched by herds of ibex or chamois napping in the surrounding bars (be careful)!

Descent to one of the Saint-Grats accommodations.

HIKING TIME: 5 hours

DISTANCE: 11.5 km

ASCENT : + 700 m

DESCENT : - 1050 m

ACCOMMODATION : in a gîte

LUGGAGE ASSISTANCE: with luggage transport (if you have chosen this option)

Day 3 : Saint Grats - Pas de l'Arpette - Refuge des Merveilles

Departing directly from Saint-Grat, we will climb through a dense forest to reach the remarkable valley of Empuonrame.

It is in this mineral universe that we will finish the climb to Pas de l'Arpette (2351 m), under the watchful eyes of herds of chamois. The Pas de l'Arpette constitutes the entrance to the Mercantour National Park as well as the famous Vallée des Merveilles. Descent through the middle of numerous lakes to the Merveilles refuge.

HIKING TIME: 5 hours

DISTANCE: 8 km

ASCENT : + 950 m

DESCENT : - 410 m

ACCOMMODATION : in a refuge

LUGGAGE ASSISTANCE : without baggage transport

Day 4 : Refuge des Merveilles - Vallée des Merveilles - Baisse Basto

A long and busy day visiting where you will have to leave early!

From the Merveilles refuge, we will go up the famous valley of the same name... In this mineral landscape sculpted by the melting of glaciers more than 10,000 years ago, you will evolve in the middle of an archaeological treasure of around 40,000 rock engravings Mostly dated to around 3300 BC.

You will reach the Baisse de la Valmasque (2552 m), Lake Basto then the Baisse Basto (2693 m), a narrow passage in a scree overlooking the Fous valley. Descent via the famous GR52 to the magnificent restored refuge of Nice where a break on Christophe's terrace will be well deserved.

Another 1h30 of descent into the Gordolasque valley to reach your accommodation and your luggage which was not transportable until then.

HIKING TIME: 6h30

DISTANCE: 15.5 km

ASCENT : + 720 m

DESCENT : - 1050 m

ACCOMMODATION : in a gîte

LUGGAGE ASSISTANCE: with luggage transport (if you have chosen this option)

Day 5 : La Baisse de Prals - Baisse aux 5 lacs - La Madone

From Gordolasque valley, a beautiful and intense morning climb awaits you. You will reach the Vésubie valley via the Baisse de Prals (2339 m) from where you will have two options: either go back down to La Madone directly via the "5 lakes", or go around a circus magnificent with 5 ridges, low in elevation, and which will delight fans of panoramic walking. Return to La Madone to spend the night there.

HIKING TIME: 5h

DISTANCE: 7.5 km

ASCENT : + 900 m

DESCENT : - 580 m

ACCOMMODATION : in a gîte

LUGGAGE ASSISTANCE: with luggage transport (if you have chosen this option)

Day 6 : La Madone - Lac et Col de la Fenestre - Lac de Trecolpas - Boréon

A day at altitude awaits you today, with the border pass of Finestra (2475 m) from where you can admire the neighboring Italian Argentera valley. Lake Trecolpas will be ideal for a final snack break at the edge of its green lawns where it will be great to "pair" once again with the very present and accessible fauna of this Mercantour National Park.

Return to Boréon via La Vacherie.

HIKING TIME: 5h30

DISTANCE: 14 km

ASCENT : + 790 m

DESCENT : - 1100 m

ACCOMMODATION : Free night or dispersion

LUGGAGE ASSISTANCE : with luggage transport to the Boréon gîte

FICHE PRATIQUE

ACCUEIL

In Boréon, commune of St Martin Vésubie, where you can leave your luggage at the Boréon gîte.

DISPERSION

In Boréon, your luggage will be at the Boréon gîte.

NIVEAU

Difficult Level.

Overall altitude: between 1500m and 2500m

Altitude of accommodation: 1500 m on average

Duration of stages: 5 to 6 hours of walking per day

Average elevation gain: 850 m per day

Maximum elevation: 950 m.

Maximum altitude of passage: 2600 m.

Nature of the terrain: mid-mountain terrain in alpine pastures with numerous areas of scree, the passage of certain passes may still be snowy at the start of the season.

Particular difficulties: itinerant circuit requiring good physical condition.

HEBERGEMENT

Classic accommodation in a gîte: Collective room for 4 to 12 people, sheets and towels are not provided, toilets are on the landing.

Accommodation in collective rooms for 4 to 6 people, up to 10 at the Refuge des Merveilles.

Night 1: Refuge de la Madonne of Fenestre

Night 2: Le relais des Merveilles or the Gordolasque refuge

Night 3: Refuge des Merveilles

Night 4: Le relais des Merveilles or the Gordolasque refuge

Night 5: Refuge de la Madonne of Fenestre

The meals served in the accommodation are balanced and varied. The cuisine is hearty, adapted to the needs of hikers and often made from local products. Special diets must be specified when booking so that we can advise accommodations.

Picnics can be reserved by La Vie Sauvage at the accommodation by taking the option otherwise you will find the shops necessary for your purchases in the villages. You can also reserve them with the accommodation providers upon your arrival for the next day.

TRANSFERTS INTERNES

No transfer.

PORTAGE DES BAGAGES

Depending on the option chosen:

Without carrying luggage: You carry your personal belongings for the entire duration of the stay.

With luggage transport: You only carry your belongings for the day. The rest of your luggage is transported between accommodations. In the event that luggage transport is not possible in accommodation during the stay, you will carry your personal belongings for one evening. You will find your luggage the following day.

Luggage transport possible every evening except at the Refuge des Merveilles.

GROUPE

From 1 to 20 participants.

ENCADREMENT

No guide on this trip.

Before your departure we will give you a road book specially designed for this circuit, composed of precise instructions which will allow you to carry out your days of discovery and hiking in complete freedom.

To fully enjoy and appreciate your hiking trip, you must be able to ensure your autonomy in the field with the documents provided.

MATERIEL FOURNI

EQUIPEMENT INDIVIDUEL A PREVOIR

Clothes

- 1 sun hat or cap
- 1 scarf
- 1 hat and/or headband
- pair of gloves (optional)
- T-shirts (1 for 2 or 3 days of walking). Avoid cotton, which takes a long time to dry; prefer short-sleeved t-shirts (breathable material) in Capilène (Patagonia), Dryflo (Lowe Alpine), Light Effect (Odlo) etc...
- 1 undershirt (notes as above) or long-sleeved shirt
- 1 fleece fur jacket
- 1 short or Bermuda shorts
- 1 trekking pants
- 1 comfortable pair of pants for the evening
- 1 Gore-tex style jacket, simple and light
- 1 waterproof over-trouser (optional)
- Underwear
- Walking socks (1 pair for 2 to 3 days of walking). Avoid "tennis" type socks (cotton), which take a long time to dry and cause a high risk of blisters; prefer those based on Coolmax for example.
- 1 pair of hiking shoes that hold the ankle well (Vibram type sole), preferably waterproof.
- 1 pair of sandals or casual shoes for the evening
- A swimsuit and a towel

The list of clothing must be adapted according to the chosen season.

Equipment

- 1 pair of excellent quality sunglasses

- 1 pair of telescopic poles (optional): facilitates ascents and descents and very useful for moving on uneven or slippery terrain
 - 1 bottle (preferably 1.5 l)
 - 1 headlamp (optional)
 - 1 compass
 - 1 survival blanket (optional)
 - 1 pocket knife (optional)
 - 1 small pouch (preferably waterproof) to put your money
 - Toiletries: preferably take biodegradable products (there is CAO brand biodegradable liquid soap)
 - 1 towel: there are some that dry quickly: Packtowl brand (available in 4 sizes)
 - Earplug (optional)
 - Toilet paper - sunscreen + lip stick.
- A sheet bag for nights in lodges and refuges

Picnic equipment

- An airtight plastic box
- A cup
- Cutlery

Personal pharmacy

- Your usual medications
- Vitamin C or polyvitamin
- Pain medication: paracetamol preferably
- Elastic adhesive strip (Elastoplast type, 6 cm wide)
- Sets of adhesive dressings + disinfectant compresses
- Double skin (SOS Ampoules, Spenco brand, available in sports stores, pharmacies, drugstores, etc.)
- Mosquito repellent.

LE PRIX COMPREND

- Travel documents,
- Half-board accommodation (dinner, overnight stay and breakfast),
- Organisation and registration fees,
- Tourist taxes.

LE PRIX NE COMPREND PAS

- **The insurance**
- **Round-trip transport to the starting point**
- **Drinks and personal expenses**
- **Picnics.**

