

The Ecrins Circuit - GR54

Trip Code: TEC

Version: TEC The Ecrins Circuit Trek - GR54



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



CHALLENGING



HIGHLIGHTS

- Trek on the GR54, one of the finest Alpine `Grande Randonees`
- Experience the wildest and most spectacular National Park in France
- Enjoy views of the Barre des Ecrins and Meije on this alpine walking holiday
- Hotel and gite accommodation throughout

AT A GLANCE

- 6 days trekking
- Max. altitude - 2750 metres
- Join at Turin

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

- 7 Breakfasts
- 6 Lunches
- 5 Dinners
- 2 nights Hotel
- 4 nights Gite / Hostel
- 1 nights Mountain Hut / Refuge

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

Introduction

This truly classic walking holiday in France's southern Alps takes us around the high peaks of the Ecrins National Park, along a route that has long been a favourite and well kept secret amongst French 'randonneurs'. Largely following the route of the GR54, we explore the high valleys of the Valgaudemar Oisans and Briancon regions with their picturesque villages high trails and spectacular viewpoints. This is one of the wildest regions in the Alps and has a central core of high and glaciated peaks including the Meije (3983m), the Barre des Ecrins (4102m,) the Pelvoux, the Agneaux, the Ailefroide and the Olan. Circling these peaks with our English-speaking local 'accompagnateur' we have the chance to experience the pastoral heritage of this delightful region where shepherds and their shaggy 'patous' dogs still roam the high flower-filled pastures. With an average of around 7 hours walking per day on good way-marked trails, this is a reasonably challenging and very rewarding Alpine trekking holiday.

Is this holiday for you?

This is a superb walking week in a quiet corner of the Alps. Completing a clockwise circuit around the Ecrins Massif we follow the way-marked footpaths of the GR54 for most of the route. Each day we have between 5 and 8 hours of walking with a considerable amount of ascent and descent. Our main baggage is transported between overnight stops and is accessible each evening with the exception of the night we spend at the Refuge de la Chaumette which cannot be reached by road. This is a relatively tough Alpine trekking holiday with 6 long days.

Itinerary

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DAY 1

A single transfer is provided from Turin Airport to the group hotel in Briancon.

Your holiday starts at the group hotel in Briancon. A single transfer is provided from Turin Airport to the group hotel in Briancon.



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 2

Walk from Les Combes across the Col de Vallouise (2589m) and into the Vallouise Valley.

After breakfast at the hotel, we meet our support vehicles and make the short transfer to the hamlet of Les Combes, where we begin our clockwise circuit. Our route takes us through the rhododendrons of the Partias Reserve, gaining height steadily to the Col de la Trancoulette (2293m). We then follow a meandering path between the glacial moraines and Alpine meadows of the high corrie of the Peyre du Fey to reach a second pass, the Col de Vallouise (2589m) where we have great views of the Pelvoux and the Barre des Ecrins. Crossing the pass, we drop down into the Vallouise Valley, where we check in at our gite accommodation.

Meals: **B L D**



Accommodation
Gite / Hostel



Ascent
850M



Descent
1550M



Time
8 - 9 hrs walking



Distance
17KM





DAY 3

From Entre les Aygues, cross the Col de l'Aup Martin (2761m) to the Refuge du Pre-de-la-Chaumette.

In the morning, we let our support vehicles take us as far as the roadhead at Entre les Aygues. From here, we cross a gravel outwash plain and follow a track through scrubby trees to enter the pretty Vallon de la Selle. To begin with the angle of ascent is very gradual and we pass the Lacroix Refuge before starting a steeper climb across high pasture and then scree to the first of the day's passes, the Col de l'Aup Martin

(2761m). It is only a short distance to the next pass, the Pas de la Cavale (2735m), where we begin our descent into the Valley of Champoleon. Zig-zagging down, we arrive at our overnight accommodation at the Refuge du Pre de la Chaumette (1810m), hidden in its high valley amongst green grazing land. The support vehicle cannot access the Refuge de la Chaumette and group members will need to carry a few personal items including a sheet sleeping bag for the overnight at this refuge.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Mountain Hut / Refuge		Ascent 1100M		Descent 950M		Time 6 - 7 hrs walking
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DAY 4

Cross 3 cols, including the Col de Vallonpierre (2607m). Transfer to La Chapelle-en-Valgaudemar.

Today, we climb up directly behind the refuge and take an impressive path that contours around the imposing peak of Sirac (3441m), with its hanging glaciers. There are 3 cols to negotiate; Valette, Gouiran and Vallonpierre (2607m), before we can descend into the valley of Valgaudemar and take our picnic lunch beside the lake of Vallonpierre. Reaching the chalet at Gioberney, we take a shuttle bus down the valley to La Chapelle en Valgaudemar, where we check in at our gite accommodation.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Gite / Hostel		Ascent 1130M		Descent 1250M		Time 7 - 8 hrs walking		Distance 13KM
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DAY 5

Walk via the Col de la Vaurze (2490m) to Desert en Valjouffrey. Transfer to Valsenestre.

After another short transfer to Villar-Loubiere, we start our ascent to the Col de la Vaurze (2500m) on a well-marked trail that zig-zags upwards through forest and pasture to the Souffles Refuge (1968m). This haven of peace and tranquillity, overlooking the valley, is a great place to take a break, with excellent views of the magnificent Mont Olan (3564m). After completing our climb to the Col de la Vaurze, we are faced with a long and at times rocky descent to the village of Désert en Valjouffrey, which has something of an 'end of the world' ambience. From here, we make the short transfer into the Beranger Valley to our gite at Valsenestre (1295m).






Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Gite / Hostel		Ascent 1750M		Descent 1550M		Time 8 - 9 hrs walking		Distance 17KM
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DAY 6**Climb to cross the Col de la Muzelle (2613m), long descent to Venosq and drive to Besse en Oisans.**

Our route leads up to the headwaters of the Beranger torrent, easily at first. Then, we get a view of the impressive Col de la Muzelle (2613m) ahead, a squarish pass between two craggy mountains. It is a steep and zig-zagging climb up to the pass, where our efforts are rewarded by magnificent views of Lac de la Muzelle and a number of glaciated peaks. We make the long descent to Venosc at the junction of 2 valleys and from there transfer to the village of Besse en Oisans and our overnight gite.

Meals: **B L D**

 Accommodation Gite / Hostel	 Ascent 1460M	 Descent 1700M	 Time 8 - 9 hrs walking	 Distance 15KM
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DAY 7**Walk via the north side of the Romanche Valley and the Plateau d'Emparis to La Grave. Drive to Briancon.**

Today's hike takes us up onto a high grazing area on the north side of the Romanche Valley and opposite the snowfields and rocky summits of the Meije (3983m). Known as the Plateau d'Emparis, this grassy 'alpage' at a height of between 2200 and 2400 metres is well used by shepherds and their flocks during the summer months. Descending by way of a number of impressive waterfalls, we reach the ski station of La Grave and complete our day's hike with a walk alongside the Romanche stream to Villar d'Arêne (1670m). Here, we meet our support vehicle and drive back to the hotel in Briancon.

Meals: **B L**

 Accommodation Hotel	 Ascent 1010M	 Descent 1070M	 Time 7 - 8 hrs walking	 Distance 18KM
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DAY 8**Departure day. A single transfer to Turin Airport is provided.**

Your holidays ends after breakfast. A single early morning transfer to Turin Airport is provided.

Meals: **B**

Holiday Information

What's Included

- A group transfer from Turin Airport on Day 1 and back to Turin Airport on Day 8
- An experienced English-speaking local tour leader
- All accommodation as described
- Meals as detailed in the Meal Plan
- All land transport involved in the itinerary
- Baggage transfers between each overnight stop with the exception of Day 3 to the Refuge de la Chaumette

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Airport transfers other than the group transfer
- Some meals as detailed in the Meal Plan
- Miscellaneous expenses - drinks and souvenirs etc..

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

TRAVEL TO YOUR DESTINATION

In some cases you may choose to take a ferry and/or train to your holiday start and end destination. Please see further information on [Travelling by Train](#).

If flying from the UK there are low cost airlines available to the start and from the end of your holiday.

To benefit from full financial protection, ease your holiday planning, and avoid dealing with airlines, we can book scheduled flights from the UK as part of a flight inclusive package. Scheduled flights are usually more expensive than low cost alternatives, however potentially less stressful if your flight is cancelled or delayed. If you book flights through KE Adventure Travel we will [offset the carbon of your flight](#).

Included in the Land Only cost of the trip, we provide a single group transfer in each direction between Turin Airport and the group hotel in Briancon.

It is also possible to travel direct to Briancon on the train from London. Take the Eurostar train from London Saint Pancras to Paris Gare du Nord. Then, take the overnight (sleeper) train from Paris Gare d'Austerlitz to Briancon, which arrives at breakfast time. For information about train travel between the UK and Briancon, check out www.seat61.com

Contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

Food & Water

When in the towns and villages all tap water is drinkable. In mountain huts there is usually not a sustainable drinking water supply. Water in plastic bottles is brought in to the hut. All huts have a recycling point. If you have to purchase water in plastic bottles please buy the largest bottle you can so as to use less plastic. Please take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) to treat your water if you can fill from a local stream. Bottled water is not provided. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles. Local authorities are working to find solutions to using plastic water bottles in huts. We monitor the situation carefully for updates.

Continental breakfasts are provided - cereals, fruit juice, tea and coffee, bread and a variety of spreads including jam, honey and Nutella, for example. Each day at breakfast, the tour leader will lay out the items that will make up the group's packed lunches - bread, cheese, sliced ham, tinned tuna, sausage, salad, fruit. For each day of the trip there will also be a couple of small high-sugar 'energy food' items provided for each group member. At each of the gites and at the mountain refuge, a full 3-course dinner will be served, usually a soup dish, followed by some wholesome local speciality and a desert.

Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your diet with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

Accommodation

During this trip, the group will spend 2 nights at an hotel in Briancon. The accommodation here is twin-sharing with en-suite facilities. Once on trek, we have 4 nights in gites and 1 night at the Refuge de la Chaumette. Accommodation for these 6 nights is generally in non-segregated dormitory style rooms with bunk beds and shared facilities.

Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be accompanied by an experienced and qualified, English-speaking local 'accompagnateur'.

Altitude

This holiday involves going to moderately high altitude. During the course of your trip you will reach altitudes in excess of 2500 metres. Most people will have no difficulty with this level of altitude but before coming on the holiday, we recommend you read the advice on [trekking at high altitude](#). You can also talk to one of our trekking experts if you have any concerns about altitude.

Spending Money

150 euros will easily cover all personal expenses including the 2 evening meals in Briancon. There are cash point facilities in Briancon.

Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage (maximum weight 15kg) and a daypack (of around 30 - 40 litres). Luggage with wheels is useful for this holiday. For international flights please check your baggage allowance with your airline. Your main bag will be transferred between overnight stops. There is one night when you will not have access to your main bag. It is not possible to ride with the baggage transfer vehicle.

Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

General Information

Passport & Visas

Europe

Your passport must meet 2 requirements. It must be:

- less than 10 years old on the day you enter (check the 'date of issue')
- valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave (check the 'expiry date')

For the latest details on visiting countries within the EU or the European Economic Area (EEA), please check the UK Government website

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday. Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

Vaccinations

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations.

GHIC / Medical cover

UK residents should carry a free Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC). This entitles you to state provided medical treatment when you're visiting an EU country or Switzerland. This is not a substitute for medical travel insurance which is vital when travelling overseas.

Currency

The currency for part or all of this holiday is the Euro.

Preparing for your Holiday

It makes a lot of sense to spend some time before coming on a trekking trip getting some additional exercise. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable you will find the experience. We would suggest that you adopt a weekly exercise regime leading up to your trip. Before departure, we suggest that you try to fit in a number of long walks in hilly country.

Climate

Generally, the temperatures that we can expect to encounter during the day will be reasonably warm, in the range 18 to 28 degrees centigrade. At night in the valleys we can expect the temperature to drop to between 10 and 15 degrees centigrade. The weather is usually stable at this time of year, but mountainous areas do generate their own weather systems and occasional rain and even stormy weather cannot be ruled out

Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that prior to travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at travelaware.campaign.gov.uk and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: www.travel.state.gov for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

Books

- Ecrins National Park. Kev Reynolds. (Cicerone)

Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

Please note that a paper copy of your travel insurance is required if you are travelling to Huaraz and the Huayhuash region.

Equipment Information

Equipment List

The following checklist should help you with your packing. As a general rule, you should always try to keep the weight of your equipment to a minimum.

You must bring the following items:

- Hiking boots
- Gaiters
- Socks
- Underwear
- Trekking trousers
- Lightweight waterproof overtrousers
- Thermal baselayer - leggings
- Baselayer shirts (1 short sleeve, 1 long sleeve) - quick dry, not cotton
- Lightweight trekking shirts (not cotton)

- Fleece jacket or warm jumper
- Waterproof jacket
- Warm fleece gloves or mittens
- Warm hat
- Sunhat
- Sunglasses
- Ear plugs (especially if you are not the one snoring)
- Sheet sleeping bag or sleeping bag liner
- Daypack 30 - 40 litres
- Headtorch and spare batteries
- Sun protection (including total bloc for lips, nose etc.)
- Water bottles 1 litre (x2) (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Water purification tablets
- Washbag and toiletries
- Small towel
- Antibacterial hand wash
- Basic First Aid Kit including: Antiseptic cream, throat lozenges, diarrhoea treatment (Imodium), painkillers, plasters and blister treatment, insect repellent, and re-hydration salts (Dioralite).
- Small Tupperware or similar box with lid (Approx 1 Litre capacity) for lunch salads
- Spoon and penknife

◆ **The following items are optional:**

- Spare laces
- Shorts
- Trekking poles
- Camera
- Travel clothes
- Small padlock to lock trek bag
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

Cotswold Outdoor



Many of the Equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers.
[>> Find out more](#)

Why Choose KE

Why KE

Shhhhhhhhh! Despite being the oldest and largest of the french National Parks, with some of the most dramatic scenery, the remote location of The Ecrins means it remains a well kept secret. If you are looking for stunning scenery, but tranquil trails, then this is the walking holiday for you. Expert Knowledge KE's very own Martina travelled on this holiday in 2019, and she loved it! Get in touch with the KE office and Martina will be happy to answer your questions.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 22/05/2024 and the trip is subject to change