

Vars

LA FORÊT BLANCHE



VAL D'ESCREINS

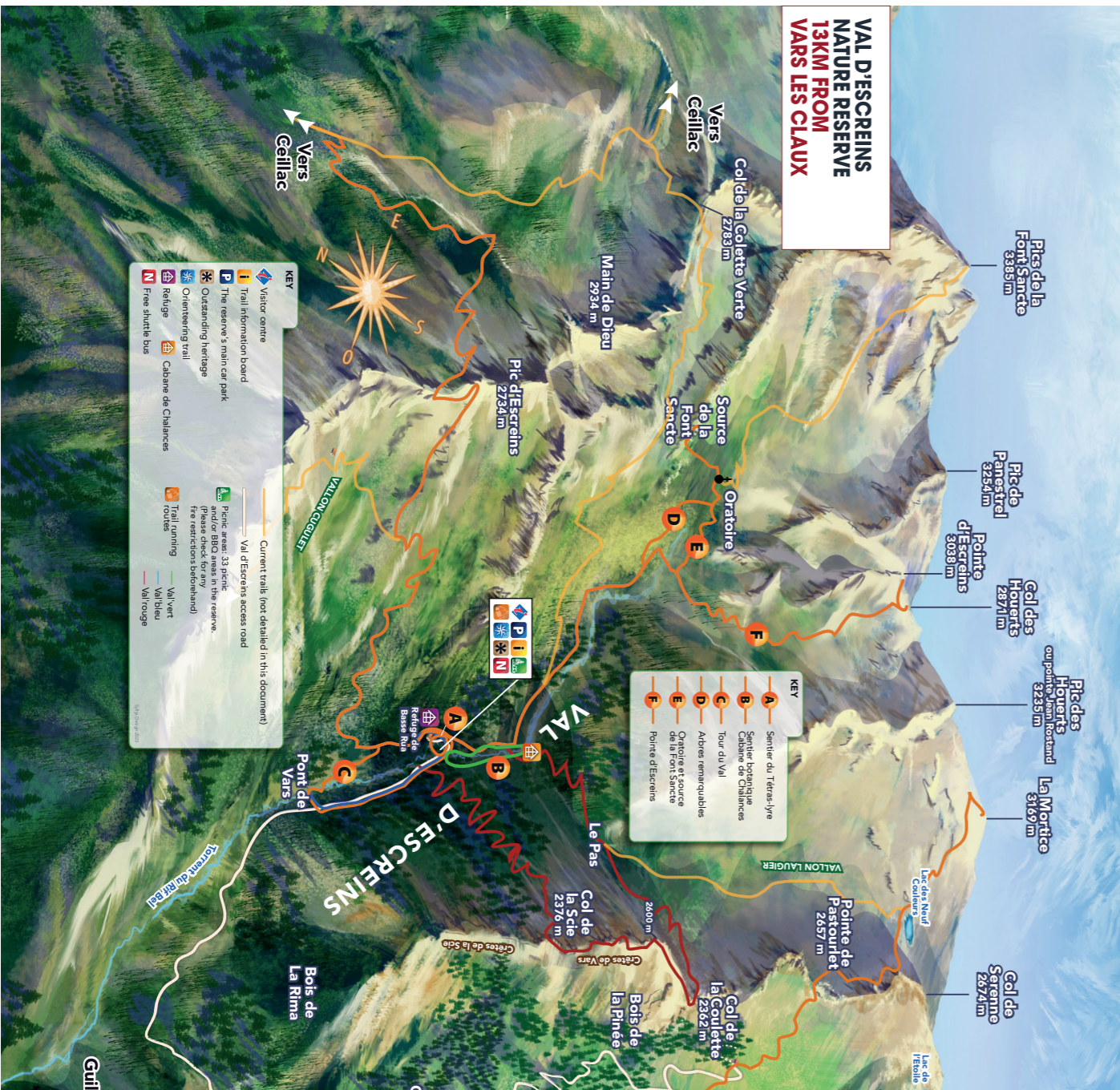
COMMUNAL NATURE RESERVE

YOUR BEAUTY SPOT IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Surface area: 25km².

Altitude: 1600m at Pont de Vars to 3385m at Pic de la Font-Sainte.

River: Rif-Bel, tributary of the Chagne, itself a tributary of the Guil.



- Wild animals and livestock need peace and quiet. Don't make any unnecessary noise.
- Dogs must be kept on a lead.
- Please don't roll stones down the hills as you may accidentally hurt someone.
- Agricultural area
- Please don't pick the flowers, even if there are lots of them. Some species are protected.
- Don't light fires outside the designated areas.
- No vehicles allowed beyond the car park except service vehicles
- No bivouacs and camping allowed

FREE SHUTTLE BUSES TOVAL:
Timeables and information available from Tourist Information, on vars.com and the VARS app



YOU ARE IN A "ZERO WASTE" AREA:
Please take your litter with you and dispose of it in the recycling facilities provided in the Vars villages. No fly tipping.

LET'S ALL DO OUR BIT FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Escreins Visitor Centre
Opening times: 9am-1pm / 2pm-5pm daily
July 6th-September 1st 2024.

Vars les Claux and Vars Sainte-Marie Tourist Information
+33 4 92 46 51 31
WWW.VARS.COM

Refuge de Basse Rua :

Vars Town Hall
05560 Vars Sainte-Marie
+33 4 92 46 50 09

THE VAL D'ESCREINS / NATURE RESERVE

Val d'Escreins is one of the biggest municipal nature reserves in France and brings the great outdoors to the masses. A haven for flora and fauna, this "middle ground" between the Vallée de Vars and Queyras, champions hiking, walking and relaxing in natural surroundings. It feels massive, it's like the end of the Earth. Once you've passed the winding road, a door closes behind every visitor and lets them into a slice of Canada in Vars.

A POTTED / HISTORY



A glacier moulded the valley into a trough and it's grown hundreds of metres in a matter of 16,000 years.

The mountains are carved out of thick limestone with lofty peaks such as Font-Sainte (alt. 3385m).



A medieval village in Escreins was first mentioned in writing in 1432 as the hamlets of Haute-Rue and Basse-Rua. Shepherds and foresters lived here.

Pilgrims would organise a procession every year during droughts to visit the Font-Sainte spring to pray for rain. Legend has it that a young shepherdess discovered the spring by some miracle.



Locals realised how perfect the land in Val d'Escreins was for wheat growing and began building here. The industry gradually moved into livestock farming. The locals returned to Vars or Guillestre in winter.



The village burnt down in 1916. Mystery surrounds the event and there are all kinds of stories about it. With the men out fighting the war, the village couldn't be saved and was left abandoned. Animals still graze on Val d'Escreins. The chapel was restored in 1982 using traditional regional methods and materials (larch shingles, stone etc.).

YOUR NATURE EXPERIENCES / IN THE VALLEY

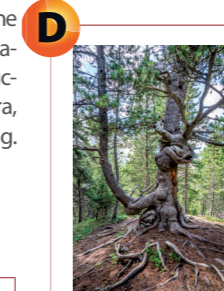
A LESSON IN FLORA AND FAUNA
If you want to get to grips with the real Val d'Escreins, you need to put all your senses on high alert. Keep your eyes peeled for the Val's plant and animal species.

HIT PAUSE
Take a break for a picnic, a waterfront barbecue in one of the many designated areas or an al fresco meal at a restaurant... it's like time stands still. The choice is yours!

HOP, SKIP, JUMP
Enjoy a range of walks at your own pace. Keep it short and sweet with the kids, push your limits if you're a keen walker or do a "3000" up to Pointe d'Escreins via the Col des Houerts if you're a hardened hiker!



THE TETRAS LYRE EDUCATIONAL TRAIL
is an all-round way to explore the setting. Family-friendly information boards provide an introduction to the local geology, flora, history and traditional housing. Self-guided tour, 1 hour.



THE ARBRES REMARQUABLES TRAIL
Take a deep dive into Val d'Escreins and its "genetic" heritage. Walkers can meet a dozen trees that are hundreds of years old and measure over 4m in circumference! Duration: 3 hours.



BOTANICAL/ CABANE DE CHALANCES TRAIL
Learn something new on your walk with an easy signposted loop introducing you to the natural species you'll see along

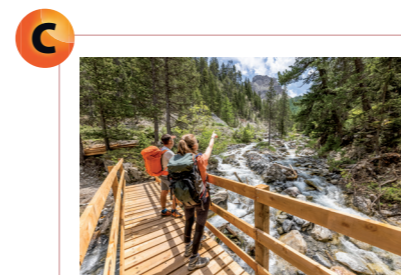
the way: Swiss pines, larches, junipers, all kinds of gentians and so much more.

You can buy the botanical booklet for this trail from Vars Tourist Information. It lists all the species you may meet and guides you on your walk.



THE FONT SANCTE ORATORY AND SPRING HIKE

Soak up the unspoilt Val countryside on a 2.5 hour walk to the oratory and an extra 30 minute hike to the spring. Level: medium



TOUR DU VAL D'ESCREINS
Squeeze every drop from the site on a stunning 1.5 hr hike through forests, along rivers and unspoilt natural surroundings. 5.5km



ORIENTEERING TRAIL




Explore 3 different fun-filled routes on your own, in a group or as a family. Grab a map and compass from the visitor centre and set off in search of the wooden markers scattered around the valley. When you find each marker, punch the matching box on your card using the red punch in the wooden marker. Have fun and test your sense of analysis and observation!

Keep an eye on the weekly event schedule at Tourist Information for what's on at the nature reserve.

VAL / TRAIL RUNNING ROUTES:



3 trails for all abilities await at Val d'Escreins:

-  **"Parcours VERT": beginner**
Distance: 3937km / Minimum altitude: 1781m. / Maximum altitude: 1889m / Elevation: 121m.
-  **"Parcours BLEU": intermediate**
Distance: 9218km / Minimum altitude: 1615m. / Maximum altitude: 1888m / Elevation: 319m.
-  **"Parcours ROUGE": advanced**
Distance: 9125km / Minimum altitude: 1780m. / Maximum altitude: 2552m / Elevation: 788m.

You can pick up a leaflet detailing all the permanent trail running routes in Vars from Tourist Information and the Val visitor centre.