



# Tour of the Aiguille de la Vanoise and Col de la Vanoise from Pralognan-la-Vanoise

Vanoise - PRALOGNAN-LA-VANOISE



Refuge CAF du Col de la Vanoise (Karine RENAUD)

*A hike terraced between the village and the high mountain, in the footsteps of renowned mountaineers, on the ancestral salt and cheese road. A real journey through time.*

"A tour full of history, grandiose landscapes and a high-mountain setting. This route will delight lovers of wide open spaces. Discover the charms of the succession of glaciers, lakes and waterfalls. Admire these colourful flowers at the foot of the vertiginous walls. And, if you are lucky, you may see in this magnificent setting the famous bearded vulture, otherwise known as the ""bone breaker""."

## Useful information

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Practice : Walking hike

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Duration : 6 h

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Length : 15.9 km

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Trek ascent : 1240 m

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Difficulty : Difficult

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Type : Loop

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Themes : Lake and glacier, Refuge, Viewpoint

# Trek

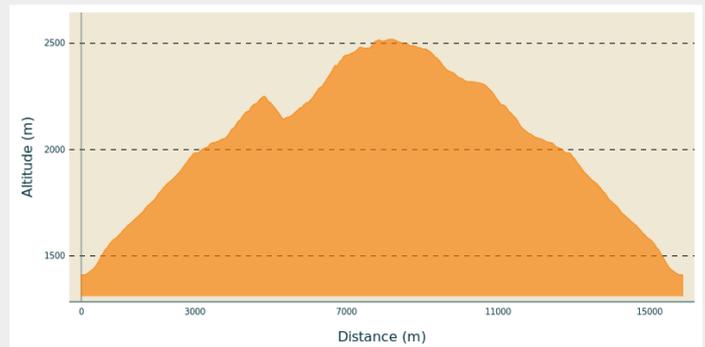
**Departure** : Maison de la Vanoise,  
Pralognan-la-Vanoise

**Arrival** : Maison de la Vanoise, Pralognan-  
la-Vanoise

**Markings** :  GR

**Cities** : 1. PRALOGNAN-LA-VANOISE

## Altimetric profile



Min elevation 1410 m Max elevation 2519 m

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From the Maison du Parc and tourist office, go up Avenue de Chasseforêt and take the first street on your left. Continue straight ahead in the direction of the village of Bieux until Fontanettes. Once you arrive at Fontanettes, cross the village, follow the GR®55 above the Auberge des Fontanettes (north-east direction) and reach the Refuge des Barmettes (2,012 m in altitude).

Variation: you can take the Mont Bochor cable-car and get to the Refuge des Barmettes by following a terraced path

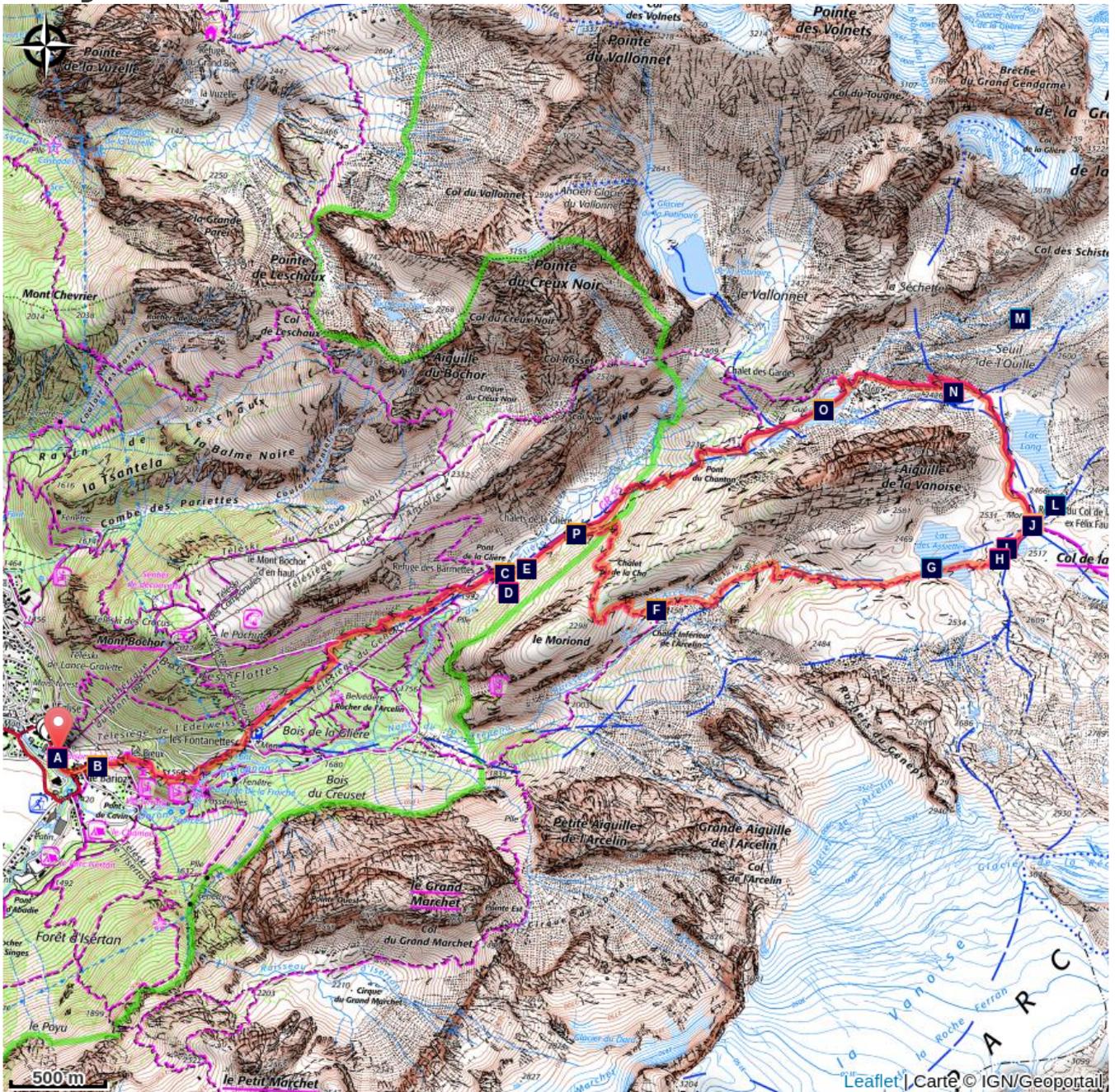
After the Refuge des Barmettes, cross the Pont de la Glière and stay on the stone-lined path. Just before the "Chalets de la Glière", turn right (junction at 2,050 m in altitude), following the direction of "L'Arcelin 1h00". Climb in the direction of the Col du Moriond and descend in the direction of the ruins of the Chalet Inférieur de l'Arcelin. At this level, climb back to the "Col de la Vanoise" indicated at 1h00.

At the Refuge du Col de la Vanoise, take the path on the right in the direction of the Refuge "d'Entre-Deux-Eaux 2h00" and continue on until Lac Rond.

To return, turn around to the Col de la Vanoise. Take the trail in the direction of the Refuge des Barmettes (1h15) following the GR®55 north and leaving Lac Long on the right. Cross the Lac des Vaches by the stone ford and descend to the village of Pralognan via the GR®55 passing through the hamlets of Fontanettes and Bieux.

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# On your path...



-  Mont Bochor cable car (A)
-  The Pont de la Glière (C)
-  Downstream of the chalets of la Glière is the salt road (E)
-  Lac des Assiettes (G)
-  View over the Col de la Vanoise, the Refuge Felix Faure and the Grande Casse (I)
-  The Refuge du Col de la Vanoise (K)
-  The Glacier de la Grande Casse (M)
-  The hamlet of Barioz (B)
-  View over the Refuge des Barmettes (D)
-  The lower chalet of Arcelin (F)
-  View over the Lac des Assiettes (H)
-  The Refuges of Col de la Vanoise. (J)
-  Col de la Vanoise: Grande Casse and the Glacier des Grands Couloirs (L)
-  The Grande Casse Glacier (N)

# 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.

## **Advices**

Leave your dog at home or with someone you trust.

## **How to come ?**

### Transports

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Rail connection to Moûtiers. Information: [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com)

Then transport by coach to Pralognan-village. Information: [www.transavoie.com](http://www.transavoie.com)

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### Access

RD 915 to the village centre

### Advised parking

Mairie, Car park

# Environmental sensitive areas

Along your trek, you will go through sensitive areas related to the presence of a specific species or environment. In these areas, an appropriate behaviour allows to contribute to their preservation. For detailed information, specific forms are accessible for each area.

## Bearded vulture

Sensitivity period: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, November, Decembre

Contact: Parc national de la Vanoise  
Jérôme CAVAILHES - 06.89.17.78.02 [jerome.cavailhes@vanoise-parcnational.fr](mailto:jerome.cavailhes@vanoise-parcnational.fr)

ATTENTION : nidification du Gypaète barbu !

En concertation avec les acteurs locaux, une zone de sensibilité majeure (ZSM) a été définie pour les Gypaètes barbus de Pralognan.

Toutes les activités dans cette zone sont à proscrire : survol motorisé ou non motorisé, ski, randonnée, chasse, escalade, etc ...

Cette espèce est particulièrement sensible au dérangement. Afin de favoriser les conditions de reproduction jusqu'à l'envol d'un gypaéton, il s'est avéré nécessaire de mettre en place cette zone sensible.

## Information desks

### Office de Tourisme de Pralognan-la-Vanoise

290 avenue de Chasseforêt, 73710  
Pralognan-la-Vanoise  
[info@pralognan.com](mailto:info@pralognan.com)  
Tel : 04 79 08 79 08  
<https://www.pralognan.com>

### Maison du Parc national de la Vanoise - Pralognan

Maison de la Vanoise, Avenue  
Chasseforêt, 73710 Pralognan-la-Vanoise  
[info.pralognan@vanoise-parcnational.fr](mailto:info.pralognan@vanoise-parcnational.fr)  
Tel : 04 79 08 71 49  
<https://www.vanoise-parcnational.fr>

# On your path...

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## ✿ Mont Bochor cable car (A)

To round off your scenic outing, the Mont Bochor cable car takes you up to an altitude of 2,010m in just 3 minutes! At the top, you'll find an orientation table at an altitude of 2,023m, on the promontory of Mont Bochor, with 360° panoramic views over the Vanoise glaciers and peaks! In summer, this is also a start point for a range of hiking and mountain bike trails.

The history behind the Bochor cable car is a fascinating one! In the olden days, when our ancestors had to cross the mountain ravines, they used ropes on which makeshift gondolas were pulled along, carrying timber or livestock. This system was the precursor to our modern-day cable car! And this is how, in 1951, construction began on the very first service cable car for transporting tools and materials up to Mont Bochor. Timber posts supported the cables on which the cable car would travel. In 1952, the cable car was finally inaugurated after a challenging construction period, and its landmark maiden flight as it were took place that 31 December. In February 1953, it was finally commissioned: at the time it was the fastest cable car in the world!

Facts & figures at a glance:

Altitude of the bottom platform: 1416.50m

Altitude of the top platform: 2002.50m

Elevation gain: 586m

Length: 1086m

Course: 1048m

Journey time: 207 seconds

Max. slope gradient: 92%

Average slope gradient: 66%

10 trips an hour

32 passengers per car

170,000 journeys in winter

Open in the winter and summer.

Find out more in the guide Destination de légende : le téléphérique du Mont-Bochor (in French): <https://fr.calameo.com/read/0010480179e1abe5e2695>

Attribution : aptv\_redac



## The hamlet of Barioz (B)

The hamlet of Barioz comes from the word Barium, meaning “customs barrier”. This is where the salt road begins. All goods were subject to tolls. The Col de la Vanoise was dreaded in bad weather, and before setting off on their journey, travellers would implore the protection of Notre-Dame-des-Sept-Douleurs in the chapel of Barioz. Inside, on one of the paintings you will find Saint-Antoine, a hermit, patron of the mule-drivers, protector of small livestock and domestic animals.

Attribution : PNV - GARNIER Alexandre



## The Pont de la Glière (C)

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To get to the Glière mountain pasture, you have to cross the stream and an ""invisible barrier"". Effectively, a bridge with a “Canadian passage” prevents the herds from crossing. This consists of cylindrical bars spaced apart and arranged horizontally on the ground. The ungulates (cows, sheep) are unable to cross this barrier. They would risk wedging their hooves in between the bars.

The Favre family once worked the Glière mountain pasture and produced ""tomme"" before the appellation ""Beaufort"" appeared. Today, this pasture has been taken over by a young farmer who grazes sheep and produces sheep cheese."

Attribution : PNV - GOTTI Christophe



## View over the Refuge des Barmettes (D)

The Refuge des Barmettes comes into view in the upper limit of the ski slopes of Pralognan-la-Vanoise, as can be seen in the centre of the image by the detachable chairlift of Génépi, installed during the summer of 2007. The refuge works in winter more like a high-altitude restaurant as opposed to a refuge in the usual sense of the term. In the process of modernisation, the refuge’s façade walls are awaiting new stone and wooden cladding. The grass has grown back on the slopes of the chairlift. The newly green tracks, besides looking prettier, are also easier to groom. To the right, a small light-wood log cabin houses the ski patrollers and an emergency station.

Attribution : PNV - Beatrix Von Conta



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## Downstream of the chalets of la Glière is the salt road (E)

Downstream from the chalets of la Glière, you will merge onto an old mule road lined with dry stone walls. It was used for pack-saddled and shod animals to carry heavy loads. The low walls prohibited passing animals from entering the meadows. Some stones are engraved and bear witness to the repeated passages of man from the Neolithic to the present day. This route, known as the “Salt Road” was also of strategic importance for the counts and dukes of Savoy and the kings of Piedmont-Sardinia for salt trading. It was also used to access the alpine pastures, transport the cheeses and to get to Maurienne. Finally, the alpine hunters, in charge of defending the frontiers, found the salt road to be the perfect ground for their training.

Attribution : PNV - GOTTI Christophe

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## The lower chalet of Arcelin (F)

The lower chalet of the Arcelin is used as a shepherd’s hut (Arcelin is a derivative of archellins, arcelle, arch and means habitation, shepherd’s hut). This type of chalet was used between mid-June and the end of September by families who left the village of Pralognan and settled in the mountains. The farmers would make the cheese (tomme) on site.



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## Lac des Assiettes (G)

10,500 years ago, the tongue of the Glacier of the Grands Couloirs / Réchasse which flowed towards the valley of l’Arcelin stopped at the Lac des Assiettes. This formed a moraine-dammed lake at the level of a limestone rock bar. During the Little Ice Age, the Lac des Assiettes was obstructed by an independent underground ice cap system. This could hold water for a large part of the summer months and perhaps year round thanks to the great periods of glacial flood (1550-1650, 1700-1780, 1820 -1860) according to Bravard and Marnezy (1981).

Today we are witnessing the death of this lake because of “alluviation”. In fact, alluvial erosions upstream (pebbles, gravels, clays ...) which are transported by the torrents, filled this lake. The latter are swiftly colonised by pioneer plant species (linaria alpina, Silene acaulis).

Attribution : PNV - GOTTI Christophe



## ☼ View over the Lac des Assiettes (H)

Located on the old commercial and tourist route from Pralognan to Termignon by the Col de la Vanoise, the Lac des Assiettes, below the Vanoise pass and needle, completely dried up in 1995. The existing plan of course keeps track, but with the loss of a picturesque reflection of the sky, it is also a biotope, an essential element of ecological diversity.

Attribution : Collection V.O. Communication



## ☼ View over the Col de la Vanoise, the Refuge Felix Faure and the Grande Casse (I)

The commercial crossing of the Col de la Vanoise has evolved into a mountaineering base at the Grande Casse, the highest peak in Savoy, with a series of refuges providing accommodation since 1878, including the famous Félix Faure, built in 1903 by the CAF, completed in 1974 by two prefabricated buildings classified as twentieth century heritage and now replaced. But the evolution mainly concerns the melting glacier of the Grands Couloirs, particularly the 1935 tongues that changed the historic route of ascent of 1860, but also the tongue of 1820-30 as the lateral moraines would indicate.

Attribution : Editions Dauphin



## 🏠 The Refuges of Col de la Vanoise. (J)

"Five refuges have been built at the Col de la Vanoise. The first was built between 1876 and 1879. Its ruins are still visible from the Lac des Assiettes. The second stone refuge dates back to 1902. It was named after the President of the Republic Felix Faure, who was also renowned for his death in charming company. Then, in the 1970s, two prefabricated buildings were added. In 2000, the refuge changed name to become ""Refuge du Col de la Vanoise"". Finally, a 5th refuge was opened in 2014 to replace the 2 prefabricated buildings. It belongs to the Club Alpin Français."

Attribution : PNV - GOTTI Christophe



## The Refuge du Col de la Vanoise (K)

The first refuge dates back to 1879 and operated until the winter of 1898-1899 when it lost its roof during a snowstorm. The Refuge Félix Faure, named in honour of the President of the Republic and emeritus mountaineer, was opened on the 6th August 1902. Additional outbuildings were added to the building in 1974. Finally, it was completely restructured and completed with a new building by the Club Alpin Français in 2012-2013. Since 2009 it has been called the Refuge du Col de la Vanoise.

Attribution : PNV - GOTTI Christophe

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## Col de la Vanoise: Grande Casse and the Glacier des Grands Couloirs (L)

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La Grande Casse, the highest peak of Vanoise (3,855 m in altitude) demarcates the watershed between Tarentaise and Maurienne. Its summit is partly covered by the Glacier des Grands Couloirs which stretches westward towards Pralognan. During the last ice age (the Würm), which began 125,000 years ago and ended 11,500 years ago, the alpine glacier tongues stopped 30 km from Lyon. Then, the glaciers went through a series of advances and retreats depending on the climate. For example, in the "Little Ice Age" between 1600 and 1850 approximately, the glaciers experienced a major advance of their glacial tongues. Today, we notice a sharp retreat of the glacier front as is seen by observing the hanging Glacier des Grands Couloirs. Behind the glacier's front face, we can clearly see the area abandoned by the glacier (the "abandoned glacier" or the "glarier").

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Attribution : PNV - GOTTI Christophe

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## The Glacier de la Grande Casse (M)

Here too, we see a significant retreat of the front of the Glacier de la Grande Casse. At the threshold of the Ouille, you can admire the imposing lateral moraines that testify to the past presence of the glacier. These are rocky mounds of various sizes, carried along by the ice on the sides of the glacier. The glacier, in turn, occupies only the upstream part of the valley and forms a cirque between the Pointe de la Petite Glière and the Aiguille de l'Épéna, at the foot of the Col de la Grande Casse.



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## ❁ The Grande Casse Glacier (N)

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The Glacier of La Grande Casse and Aiguilles de la Glière

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Attribution : Collection Christian Gros