

# THE ECRINS CIRCUIT



## A superb trekking holiday in a quiet corner of the Southern Alps

- A real trek one of the best Alpine `Grande Randonees`
- Experience the wildest and most spectacular reserve in France
- Views of the Barre des Ecrins and Meije
- No camping using only hotel and gite accommodation



HOLIDAY CODE TEC



## France, Trek & Walk, 8 Days

1 night mountain hut / refuge, 4 nights gite / hostel, 2 nights hotel, 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 5 dinners, max group size: 14, 6 days trekking, max. altitude - 2750 metres



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BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE**



## Introduction

This classic trekking route around the high peaks of the Ecrins National Park has long been a favourite 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 a 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 long 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.

## Holiday Itinerary

### Day 1: A single transfer is provided from Turin Airport to the group hotel in Briancon.

A single transfer is provided from Turin Airport to the group hotel in Briancon. KE Land Only package services begin with the night's accommodation at the hotel.



**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.



**ACCOMMODATION  
GITE / HOSTEL**



**ASCENT 850M**



**DISTANCE 17KM**



**GPS DATA [VIEW NOW](#)**



**MEALS BLD**



**DESCENT 1550M**



**TIME 8 - 9 HRS  
WALKING HOURS**

### 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.

	<b>ACCOMMODATION MOUNTAIN HUT / REFUGE</b>		<b>ASCENT 1100M</b>		<b>MEALS BLD</b>		<b>DESCENT 950M</b>
	<b>TIME 6 - 7 HRS WALKING HOURS</b>						



#### 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.

	<b>ACCOMMODATION GITE / HOSTEL</b>		<b>ASCENT 1130M</b>		<b>DISTANCE 13KM</b>		<b>GPS DATA <a href="#">VIEW NOW</a></b>
	<b>MEALS BLD</b>		<b>DESCENT 1250M</b>		<b>TIME 7 - 8 HRS WALKING HOURS</b>		


#### 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).

	<b>ACCOMMODATION GITE / HOSTEL</b>		<b>ASCENT 1550M</b>		<b>MEALS BLD</b>		<b>DESCENT 1250M</b>
	<b>TIME 8 HRS WALKING HOURS</b>						

#### 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.

	<b>ACCOMMODATION GITE / HOSTEL</b>		<b>ASCENT 1460M</b>		<b>DISTANCE 15KM</b>		<b>GPS DATA <a href="#">VIEW NOW</a></b>
	<b>MEALS BLD</b>		<b>DESCENT 1700M</b>		<b>TIME 8 - 9 HRS WALKING HOURS</b>		



### 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.

	<b>ACCOMMODATION HOTEL</b>		<b>ASCENT 1010M</b>		<b>DISTANCE 18KM</b>		<b>GPS DATA <a href="#">VIEW NOW</a></b>
	<b>MEALS BL</b>		<b>DESCENT 1070M</b>		<b>TIME 7 - 8 HRS WALKING HOURS</b>		

### Day 8: Departure day. A single transfer to Turin Airport is provided.

KE Land Only package services end after breakfast. A single early morning transfer to Turin Airport is provided.

	<b>MEALS B</b>
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## 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..

### Food

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.

## Meal Plan

While staying in gites and the mountain refuge, all meals (breakfast, dinner and packed lunches) are included in the holiday price. In Briancon where there is a wide range of dining options, we have left the choice and budget for dinner to you and on these two nights evening meals are not included in the holiday price.

## Joining Arrangements & Transfers

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. These transfers are timed to the arrival and departure of the Ryanair flight from/to London, Stansted Airport. Anyone may use these transfers regardless of their flights but if you are arriving on a flight other than Ryanair from Stansted and wish to make use of the group transfer, you must inform the KE office. The transfer will normally depart from Turin Airport in the late morning of Day 1 and takes an hour and a half to reach Briancon. The return transfer to Turin Airport will leave the group hotel in the early morning of the final day. Please note that airline schedules are subject to change with little notice and therefore these transfer times can change.

It is also possible to travel 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 'The Man in Seat Sixty-One' on the internet.

Contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation. If you are driving to Briancon we will provide route details and directions to the group hotel.

## 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.

## A Typical Day

After breakfast at our overnight accommodation, we try to get a reasonably early start. We will carry a packed lunch and stop off for a picnic at a scenic spot along the day's route. We will generally walk for around four hours in the morning and for three to four hours in the afternoon. We aim to reach our next stop by late afternoon, giving us time to rest for a couple of hours before dinner is served. The pace of the walking is not too fast, as the French 'accompagnateurs' usually work to a rate of ascent of approximately 300 metres per hour. This allows us plenty of time to stop to admire the views and to take photographs.

## Group Leader & Support Staff

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

## 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

We ask you to restrict your luggage to a single trek bag and a small daypack of around 30 - 40 litres. Your main trek bag will be carried between overnight stops in the support vehicles. There is a single night (Day 3) when you will not have access to your main baggage. There is no weight restriction as such other than that imposed by your international carrier.

## KE Trek Bag

All KE clients will receive a FREE KE trek bag. These have been specially made to stand up to the rigours of adventure travel. Your KE bag will be posted to you when your trip is guaranteed to run or on receipt of your booking if the trip is already guaranteed. If you have travelled with us before and already have a KE trek bag you can select an alternative free gift in the booking process.

## 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.

## Group Size And 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

A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required. The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. Please check the relevant embassy or consulate for other nationalities. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday. Visa requirements and charges are subject to change without notice. If you are travelling outside the EU you should have at least 2 blank pages in your passport.

### Visa Europe

UK and USA passport holders do not require a visa.

### Vaccinations

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations. UK residents should obtain a free [European Health Insurance Card \(EHIC\)](#). This entitles you to state provided medical treatment, but is not a substitute for medical travel insurance which is still vital when travelling overseas.

## Currency

The unit of currency in Europe is the Euro.

## Electricity Supply & Plug

We recommend you check if you require an adaptor for your electrical items at:

<http://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets/>

## Preparing For Your Trip

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.

## Know Before You Go

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign & Commonwealth Offices '[Know before you go](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas, and we recommend that all KE travellers take a look at the FCO Travel Advice for their chosen destination on the official FCO website: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk). North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://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 FCO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates direct from the FCO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

## 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

## Books

- Ecrins National Park. Kev Reynolds. (Cicerone)

## Maps

### IGN Serie Bleue Topographic Survey 1:25,000 Scale

The French survey's excellent detailed topographic map series. For full coverage of this route you need 3 sheets: Les Deux Alpes (sheet. 3336 ET). Meije, Pelvoux (sheet. 3436 ET). Briancon, Serre-Chevalier (sheet 3536 OT) There is also a 1:50,000 scale IGN Carte de Randonees sheet that covers the whole of the route. The sheet no is A6 - Ecrins.

## Flight Information

### Flight Inclusive Or Land Only?

On our website we display a UK Flight inclusive package price and Land only package price for the majority of our holidays.

### Land Only Notes

We sell this holiday on a Land Only basis, joining at the group hotel in Briancon. The nearest airport is Turin and we have included within the Land Only package cost a single transfer from and back to this airport. Please refer to Joining Arrangements and Transfers in the trip dossier for further details.

Flights SHOULD NOT be booked until you have received your booking confirmation and the trip is showing 'Guaranteed to Run' or 'Limited'.

We have set up the transfers to work with the Ryanair flights from London Stansted. Click on the 'Flights information' link below for further information on booking low cost airlines. Alternatively if you would prefer to book a 'flight inclusive package' using scheduled airlines from the UK please contact our flights department for a quote. Whilst flight prices are likely to be more expensive you will benefit from full financial protection.

### Flight Options From The US

For help and advice with booking your flights, we recommend you consult our friends at Exito Travel, airfare specialists since 1994. The air team at Exito are familiar with our destinations and know the airports, best airlines and potential pitfalls. If there is ever a flight change, cancellation or air-related issue before or during your travels, it's nice to know you have someone on the Exito air team looking after you. Visit their website at: [www.exitotravel.com](http://www.exitotravel.com) or contact the team on: [keadventure@exitotravel.com](mailto:keadventure@exitotravel.com) &/or via phone at: 800.655.4053 ext. 8507.

## Why Choose KE Adventure Travel?

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#### Experience

KE has 31 years experience of adventure travel worldwide. All of our holidays are accompanied by an experienced leader, some of whom have worked with KE groups for many years. Many are professional guides and instructors with an unrivalled knowledge of the areas in which they work. In many parts of the world, we recruit local guides with appropriate training and experience. In addition to having the technical skills to ensure your safety, KE expects its leaders to be active members of the group. A leader should be fun to travel with and ready to share with you their enthusiasm for adventure travel and their knowledge of the area. Alongside the group leader, there will be a local support crew, which could be just a driver, or a complete team of guides, drivers, porters, mule-herders and cooks. The hard work of our support crews, along with the fascinating insight they can offer into their local culture, is integral to providing you with the very best adventure travel experience.

The team of KE office staff is amongst the most experienced in the business, with the proven ability to set up and operate a worldwide programme of adventures. Every one has adventure travel at heart and joins at least one trip a year. It is this depth of experience that makes KE stand out from other adventure travel operators. When you contact KE, by phone or e-mail, or visit our office, you will find the help and advice you need, from someone who



has actually done the trip and can give you the benefit of their first-hand experience.

KE can guarantee the very best in trek support, excellent food, a good standard of hotel and camp accommodation, plus the back up of one of the most respected companies in the business. Client satisfaction is at the top of our agenda and almost 50% of our bookings each year come from repeat business. If you are looking for adventure then look no further than KE.

## RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AND AWARDS

Responsible Tourism has always fitted naturally with KEs travel ethic. It is important to us that our clients are not the only beneficiaries of the travel experience, but that we share a two-way relationship with the areas that we visit. We make sure that our local staff are well treated and well paid, we respect indigenous cultures, take care to protect the environment and make the most of every opportunity to make a positive contribution wherever we travel.

In addition to holding an AITO 5-star Sustainable Tourism rating, we are recipients of AITO's Achievement in Sustainable Tourism Award in recognition of the work carried out over the past 20 years, giving back to the communities and areas we visit. We have been awarded Highly Commended status in the Best Tour Operator category of the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards, and were named Best Trekking Operator on Earth by National Geographic Magazine, whose criteria included commitment to responsible tourism.

We continue to travel responsibly, and more information on our policy, practice, and specific projects can be found at [www.keadventure.com](http://www.keadventure.com), and on the website of our partner charity the Juniper Trust: [www.junipertrust.co.uk](http://www.junipertrust.co.uk). KEs Mountain Code is issued to our staff, trek leaders and overseas agents, and we recommend it to our clients, too!

## Your Complete Financial Protection

KE Adventure Travel is a fully licensed and bonded tour operator. We are a member of the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO), bonded with the CAA (ATOL 2808) and ABTA licensed (W4341). You can book your trip with KE Adventure Travel in complete confidence that all monies you pay for a trip are fully protected.

## BOOKING YOUR HOLIDAY

### Making a Booking

The easiest way to make your booking is online. You will need to pay a deposit at the time of booking. This is normally £200 but for some holidays with special permit fees or internal flights, this may be more. The amount of deposit required for an individual holiday is given on the dates and prices page of the holiday. Late bookings will require full payment. We cannot confirm any booking until we receive your fully completed booking form.

## Adventure Travel Insurance

**IMPORTANT** - It is a condition of joining any of our trips that you are insured against medical and personal accident risks (to include repatriation costs, air ambulance and helicopter rescue services). We also strongly recommend that you take out holiday cancellation insurance, as all deposits paid are non-refundable. Please ensure that your insurer is aware of your KE Adventure itinerary and can agree to cover the activities being undertaken. You will then need to advise us of your policy details and complete an Insurance Declaration Form.

**CAMPBELL IRVINE DIRECT** travel insurance is available to **EU residents** and will cover the majority of KE Adventure holidays. It has been designed to provide cover for activities normally excluded by other insurers such as trekking, mountain biking and climbing. Please note that certain activities may attract a higher premium. In

addition 'Campbell Irvine Direct' cannot provide cover for KE climbing trips above 6000m. Cover for these can be obtained through either the British Mountaineering Council (BMC) or Snowcard.

**TRAVELEX** is a **USA** based insurer offering travel insurance, which can be used by US citizens and US residents only. KE recommends the "Travelex Select" package for our holidays. If your holiday involves using mountaineering equipment (ropes, harness or crampons), for climbing or glacial travel, you should consider the "Adventure Plus Pak" optional upgrade on the Travelex Select Plan. Please refer to the 'Description of Coverage' for a summary of the terms, conditions, exclusions and limitations of the applicable Protection Plan. This policy will also cover KE climbing trips above 6000m.

**We hope that this trip notes has answered most of your questions.  
Please feel free to contact us and speak to one of our experts.**



## 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
- Thermal baselayer shirts (1 short sleeve, 1 long sleeve)
- 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)
- 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

Please note: This document was downloaded on 13 Mar 2016, and the trip is subject to change.