

Tour des Monges

Sisteron - Sisteron



Les hauteurs de Saint-Geniez (Martin Champon)



This tour takes you on a journey to explore one of France's least-visited mountain ranges. From alpine pastures to secluded valleys, these five days in the heart of the Monges will satisfy your thirst for adventure and discovery.

The landscapes of the Monges preserve the legacy of climatic phenomena from the last major ice ages. During the last glacial period (known as the Würm, lasting from 78,000 to 13,000 years ago), a glacier covered the northern slopes of the Monges peak.

Thanks to the geological diversity of the soils, pastoral activity (transhumance since the Middle Ages), and the dual climatic influence—Alpine and Mediterranean—the Monges are home to a rich variety of plant and animal life. Certain biotopes are classified at the European level for their faunal and floral significance (ZNIEFF, Natura 2000).

Useful information

Practice : Trek

Duration : 5 days

Length : 106.2 km

Trek ascent : 5007 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Itinérance

Themes : Lake, waterfall and river, Off the beaten track, Pastoralism

Trek

Departure : Tourist Information Office, Sisteron

Arrival : Tourist Information Office, Sisteron

Markings :  PR  GRP  GR

Cities : 1. Sisteron

2. Entrepierres

3. Saint-Geniez

4. Authon

5. Valavoire

6. Bayons

7. Clamensane

8. Motte-du-Caire

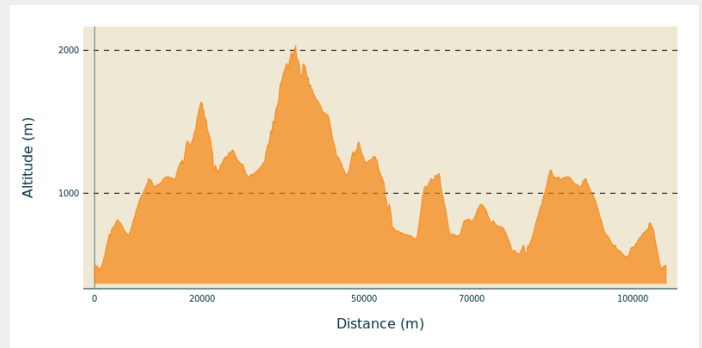
9. Nibles

10. Vaumeilh

11. Châteaufort

12. Valernes

Altimetric profile



Min elevation 467 m Max elevation 2031 m

Starting in Sisteron, this route follows the GR6 / GR 653 D trail to St-Geniez. From there, the trail winds through the heart of this mountain range with its varied terrain, featuring long, bare, rocky ridges that offer panoramic views of the valleys and run alongside miles of forest.

After climbing the small peak of Trainon, the route passes through Authon before following the ridges to reach the highest point of the Sisteronais-Buëch, the summit of the Monges, at an altitude of 2,115 meters. Just below, Lac des Monges is a must-see stop on the circuit, with its mountain hut situated near the water.

After Esparron-la-Bâtie, the route follows the D1, where it is possible to hitchhike or arrange a vehicle transfer to Clamensane.

In the Sasse Valley, the route passes through the villages of Nibles and Châteaufort before returning to Saint-Geniez and then to the starting point.

Stages :

- 1.** Step 1 : Sisteron - Saint-Geniez
14.3 km / 844 m D+ /
- 2.** Step 2 : Saint-Geniez - Authon
14.4 km / 839 m D+ /
- 3.** Step 3: Authon - Beaudinard (via the summit and Monges lake)
16.4 km / 1102 m D+ /
- 4.** Step 4 : Beaudinard - Clamensane (Reynier bridge)
12.4 km / 372 m D+ /
- 5.** Step 5 : Clamensane - Saint Geniez
27.2 km / 1432 m D+ /
- 6.** Step 6 : Saint-Geniez - Sisteron
19.2 km / 347 m D+ /

On your path...



- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  The Durance River (A) |  La Bastié source (B) |
|  Orientation table (C) |  Golden Eagle (Aigle royal) (D) |
|  Monges lake (E) |  The transhumance (F) |
|  La Motte du Caire sequoias (G) | |

All useful information

Advices

WARNING: On this route, you may encounter livestock guard dogs tasked with protecting herds from wolf attacks.

To minimize the risk of conflict, **bringing pets is strongly discouraged, even if they are on a leash.**

Cyclists, please be especially vigilant: upon seeing a herd, **you must get off your bike, stop, and allow the dogs to identify you.** Then, give the herd a wide berth, keeping your bike between you and the guard dog.

In any case, remain calm, avoid sudden movements, and do not attempt to cross through the herd.

→ To learn more about how to behave around guard dogs: <https://rando.sisteron-alpesprovencales.fr/information/14-Les-patous-et-nous-!>

- To avoid walking along the road section (D1), you can arrange for a ride (contact the Sisteron les Alpes Provençales Tourist Office for information) or hitchhike (www.rezopouce.fr) from Pont de Reynier to Clamensane or Nibles.
- These stages are provided for informational purposes only. You may modify them as you see fit. Several options are available for spending the night in a cabin or a few kilometers from the proposed route (Refuge du Seignas, Lac des Monges Cabin, Gîte Retrouvance® du Lac des Monges, Gîte de la Maison d'Alix in Reynier).
- At the end of the 5th stage, you can arrange a vehicle transfer back to Sisteron or start over at Stage 1 by adding an extra day of hiking.

Gear

In winter, the loop trail may remain accessible with the proper equipment. We recommend that you take snow conditions and weather conditions into account.

How to come ?

Transports

Let's limit car travel and consider public transportation and carpooling: <https://zou.maregionsud.fr>

Access

From Gap (50 km), follow Route 85, then take the A12 from La Saulce to Sisteron.

Advised parking

Parking lot to the right of the Baume Bridge, along the departmental road, Sisteron

Information desks

Office de Tourisme Sisteron Les Alpes Provençales - bureau de Sisteron

1 place de la République, 04200 Sisteron

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Tel : 04 92 61 36 50

<https://www.sisteron-alpesprovencales.fr/>



On your path...



The Durance River (A)

More than a mere river, the **Durance** is a force of nature. From its source in Mongenèvre at an altitude of 2300 metres it rolls its way over 302 kilometres until it finally flows into the Rhône. Over time, there has been greater control by man over the river, particularly with the construction of **the Serre-Ponçon dam**, and it is an essential artery for the Hautes-Alpes.

Source : www.hautes-alpes.net

Attribution : CCSB

La Bastié source (B)

This route goes up onto the wild ridges between the Monges summit and Jouère summit. The rise through the forest allows you to reach the Sapie pass where the landscape opens onto mountain pastures and offers a great panoramic view on the surrounding mountains and further, the Durance valley.

Orientation table (C)

At the summit of Coste Belle, located just a few meters from the highest point of the Monges hike, a semi-circular orientation table was installed in 2017, highlighting the many peaks visible on the horizon. From this panoramic viewpoint, you can spot the peaks of the Vercors, Dévoluy, Ecrins, Queyras, Ubaye, Mercantour, Verdon, and Luberon mountain ranges.



Golden Eagle (Aigle royal) (D)

This “king of birds” or bird of Zeus regularly soars over the entire mountain range, leaving no animal indifferent. Marmots whistle if he gives them the chance, other birds flutter about, while the chough or, at times, the raven, scolds him.

The royal attribute, beyond its appearance, its flight, the stern gaze it seems to possess, and the strength of its beak and talons, has long been associated with the power of the one it seems to embody: the monarch. Yet, in ornithological terminology, this term means nothing other than “true” or “real.” The Golden Eagle is therefore above all the true eagle, the genuine eagle. Capable of living for over 25 years, this “king of birds” possesses vision eight times more acute than that of a human. Its nesting site generally consists of several nests or roosts in which one or two young attempt to survive. Very often, a lack of food proves fatal to the youngest chick. Once it leaves the nest, the young eagle is easily recognizable by the clearly visible white spots on and under its wings and tail: the distinctive markings clearly visible in our photo.

Attribution : Office de Tourisme La Motte du Caire



Monges lake (E)

Lake des Monges is an artificial lake created in 1970 when the forest road was opened. Originally, the site was a marsh, and with the construction of the dam, the lake gradually formed (fed by snowmelt and rainfall).

Its depth varies significantly, ranging from 1.80 m to 2 m.

The Sisteron Fishing Association has carried out numerous stocking efforts (with various species: trout, Arctic char, carp, etc.), but only the tench have survived.

Fishing is permitted (standard fishing license required).

Attribution : Office de Tourisme La Motte du Caire



🐏 The transhumance (F)

In the past, from Provence to the Southern Alps, vast herds would make their way to the Alps as summer approached. These transhumances (from the Greek “trans,” meaning “across,” and “humus,” meaning “soil”) took place along mountain trails or paths reserved primarily for the movement of herds. These routes played a vital role in attracting people, fostering strong local economies, as well as shaping culture, architecture, biological diversity, and the environmental value of the region. On this trail, you find yourself in the heart of one of these transhumance routes (after descending through the beech forest to the pastures of Clapouse). Today, most livestock is transported by livestock trucks. Nevertheless, come fall, the bleating of sheep and the ringing of cowbells still echo across these highlands of Provence.

Attribution : Office de Tourisme La Motte du Caire



✿ La Motte du Caire sequoias (G)

By the end of the 19th century, erosion had reached catastrophic levels in the Southern Alps. The cause was centuries of rampant deforestation, which left bare soil vulnerable to runoff.

Several laws were successively enacted, giving the government the authority to intervene—sometimes against the will of residents who were unaware of what was at stake.

Forest houses were built to house Water and Forestry personnel and to prepare for future plantings using the surrounding nurseries.

Numerous experiments were conducted to establish the Austrian black pine as the preferred species for reforestation.

But foresters liked to shade their homes with majestic and decorative exotic species, such as the redwoods and cedars seen here.

Just north of La Motte du Caire, the Saignon basin is a good example of ongoing research into the evolution of these man-made forests. There is also a trail with educational resources (informational signs).

In the heart of the UNESCO Geoparc of Haute-Provence, some sites mention reforestation and erosion: Brusquet forest parc, Demontzey parc (located at Labouret pass) and Draix experimental basins.

Source : <https://www.geoparchauteprovence.com/>

Attribution : Office de Tourisme La Motte du Caire