

# PARCS NATURELS RÉGIONAUX de Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur



# Inspiration & discovery

Une autre vie s'invente ici



Parc  
naturel  
régional  
de Camargue



Parc  
naturel  
régional  
des Alpilles



Parc  
naturel  
régional  
de la Sainte-Baume



Parc  
naturel  
régional  
du Luberon



Parc  
naturel  
régional  
des Baronnies  
provençales



Région  
Provence  
Alpes  
Côte d'Azur



Parc  
naturel  
régional  
du Mont-Ventoux



Parc  
naturel  
régional  
du Verdon



Parc  
naturel  
régional  
des Préalpes d'Azur



Parc  
naturel  
régional  
du Queyras

# *One Region, eight Regional Natural Parks, one Park in projet*



## *Regional Natural Parks ...*

### *... living territories, lands of discovery*

The Regional Natural Parks are wonderful areas for outdoor activities. There are iconic sites and exceptional landscapes, miles of paths, hiking tours, educational trails, birdwatching sites... all waiting for you to discover them. Together with various partners, the Parks have set up a multitude of exploration activities and open-air sports... for all kinds of users.

The Regional Natural Parks are fragile, inhabited rural areas. They are towns and villages gathered together in a local project to protect and develop their area, to maintain its quality of life, and to foster forms of economic development that aim to achieve a balance between nature and human activities. The people who live in the parks have thousands of stories to tell.

**When you explore the Parks, you'll make friends with locals, and share their experiences and emotions!**







*On foot, by bike, by mountain bike or on horseback ...*

*... share the treasures of our unspoilt countryside!*

Discover, in your own way and time, a mosaic of landscapes, the remarkable fauna and flora of Provence, a little-known rural heritage from the Mediterranean to the Alps.

Designed for all kinds of users, from families to sports fanatics, this user-friendly and innovative website\* will help you to prepare hikes and outings in the Regional Natural Parks in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region: Alpilles, Baronnies provençales, Camargue, Luberon, Préalpes d'Azur, Queyras and Verdon. Sainte-Baume coming soon.

Each trail provides practical information (time, difficulty, altitude difference, step-by-step, map, 3D, GPS ...) and tells you about the most remarkable points of interest such as the natural, cultural or landscape heritage, as well as the Region's agriculture and craftwork.

With one click, you can also generate your "trail guide" free of charge ... and set off on your trip without any worries to explore, experience and understand our unspoilt countryside. Each trail tells you about the life of the area, enabling you to truly encounter the countryside through their remarkable landscapes, local products, know-how, traditional buildings, and many other things.

*Find the trail that fits you at [cheminsdesparcs.fr](http://cheminsdesparcs.fr)*

*(\*) Available in French and English, and in Italian for the Queyras.*









*The Valeurs Parc naturel régional brand ...*

*... living with sustainable development values every day*

Choosing local products, outdoor activities, sites to visit or accommodation that are branded *Valeurs Parc naturel régional* means meeting local professionals who contribute to the sustainable development of their area so that you can discover all the best that it has to offer.

Concretely, our professionals :

- commit to enhancing the life of their villages and participating in the actions of the Park
- guide you in exploring their area in an authentic, low-impact way
- take care of biodiversity
- measure the impacts of their business on the environment
- favour short supply chains and high-quality local products
- preserve and renovate traditional buildings
- are members of a network of tourist service providers, farmers and craftspeople who believe in and strive for the values of sustainable tourism
- have the desire – through all these commitments – to give you the keys to their local area and make your stay an unforgettable experience.

Wherever you are in the Regional Natural Parks of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur and throughout France, choose professionals who are branded VALEURS PARC NATUREL RÉGIONAL !

*Find them at [consommer-parc.fr](http://consommer-parc.fr)*

*(French only, English coming soon)*





*Valeurs Parc naturel régional is a collective brand, trademarked by the French State. The various Regional Natural Parks are responsible for managing it in their area.*



## Contact

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# Alpilles

*Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, Les-Baux-de-Provence... Between the Rhône and Durance rivers rise the Alpilles, a range of low mountains with 16 typically Provencal villages. Olive groves and vineyards, ancient sites and exceptional wildlife... come and explore the landscapes immortalised by Van Gogh!*

## Landscapes ...

### *... to be devoured*

Symbol of the Alpilles Regional Natural Park, the olive tree fashions the landscapes of the massif and delights the food lovers with its olives, oils and tapenades. Washed down with a local wine, the landscapes here provide a full menu with their fruits, vegetables, bull beef or lamb, goats' cheeses and honey.

To discover these little treasures and the secrets of how they are made, what better than to go directly to see their producers, who will be delighted to reveal gourmet Provence to you, and its best kept secret, the terroir of the Alpilles !



## Birdwatching ...

### ... any way the wind blows

Like a rocky island of craggy limestone ridges, the massif of the Alpilles has woods and garrigue scrubland, rocky habitats, dry grasslands, traditional farmland and even wetlands. This diversity of Mediterranean habitats explains the area's very high level of biodiversity, especially in terms of birds.

They call you to roam the crags armed with binoculars and a telescope to spot the range's iconic species : Short-toed snake Eagle, Egyptian Vulture, or even the mythical Bonelli's Eagle, one of the rarest species of raptor in France.



© PNRA

## On foot, by bike, on horseback ...

### ... take the time to ramble

Immerse yourself in the paintings of Vincent van Gogh and revel in a feast of light and colour. Once again there is a vast palette of sensations awaiting you : strolling through the local market to choose your groceries, hiking with the family, or cycling up a mountain with friends.

On foot, by bike or on horseback, it's by taking the time to explore the massif that you will unveil its most beautiful aspects. Experience the art de vivre of the Alpilles !





# Alpilles

## Focus on ...

### ... the *Maison du Parc*

Situated in the heart of Saint-Rémy-de-Provence, the old farmhouse of la Cloutière was entirely refurbished to become the Maison du Parc des Alpilles. Open Monday to Friday from 9 am to midday and from 2 to 5 pm, it is a multifunctional space that not only houses the Park team but also a visitor reception centre, exhibition areas, and rooms for local associations.

A comprehensive resource centre for the Park's natural and cultural heritage, its goal is to enable local people, visitors and tourists to find out about all the 16 communes that make up the Park.

## In the footsteps ...

### ... of the *Romans*

Both north and south of the range, the Ancient Romans built more than 50km of aqueducts to collect the water of the Alpilles and transport it to the city of Arles. Among the most beautiful vestiges that you can see today is the Barbegal mill near Fontvieille. Here you can admire the spectacle of the aqueduct arches crossing hills and olive groves. And the visit also reveals the ruins of a gigantic Roman mill complex of major archaeological interest. The panorama is unique.

Another exceptional site is the ruins of the city antique de Glanum close to what is now Saint-Rémy-de-Provence. The site is a listed National Monument where you can immerse yourself in Roman life with its baths, forum and temples, and much more...





## 10

- Surface area : 151,000 ha including 25,000 ha of farmland
- The massif : 30 km long by 10 km wide with a highest point of 498 metres (Tour des Opies)
- Population : 70 000 inhabitants
- Communes : 16 communes
- Department : Bouches-du-Rhône
- National networks : Natura 2000
- European programme LIFE des Alpilles 2013 - 2018

## Contact

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 Baronnies Provencales  
@baronnies.provencales

 @pnr\_baronnies

# Baronnies provençales



*Situated in Provence, between the Alps and Mont-Ventoux, the massif of the Baronnies provençales is a region of natural splendours offering a sunny climate and magnificent landscapes. Roaming the Baronnies provençales means letting yourself be guided by your senses: tasting, smelling, hearing, seeing and touching.*

### Well-being ...

#### ... an art de vivre!

Fragrant aromatic and medicinal plants are essential to the identity of the Baronnies provençales. Just walk along a path and you'll see why. At every twist and turn it's common to come across wild thyme, rosemary or a field of lavender.

Indelibly imprinted on the landscapes and the senses, these plants are an integral part of an unspoilt quality of life and art de vivre: all kinds of thermal springs and spas, herbal remedies and high-quality natural cosmetics for you to discover !







## Focus on ...

### ... Infusettes

« Infusettes » are infusions of aromatic plants produced and conditioned in the Baronnies provençales. They comply with the specifications of organic farming. A bag of Infusettes contains 28 herbal teas: 4 limeflower infusions, 4 lemon verbena, 4 thyme, 4 rosemary, 4 fennel, 4 lavender and 4 lemon balm.

On sale in Tourist Offices *relais du Parc*, information centres and from accommodation providers, they are great way to sample a piece of the Baronnies provençales !



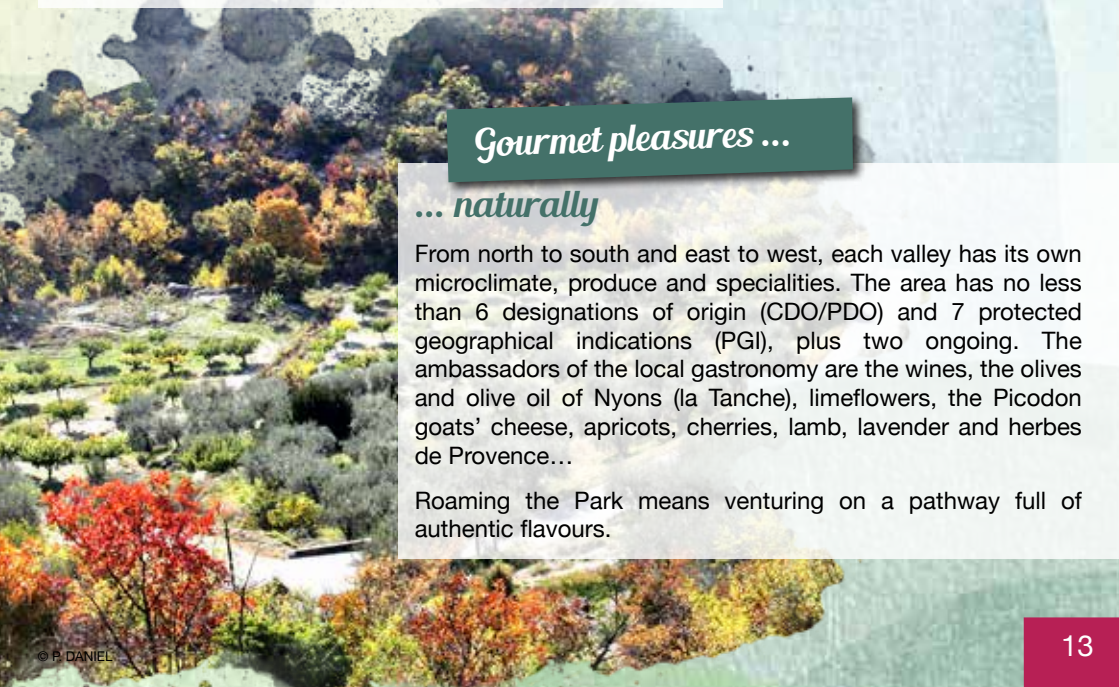
© PNRBp

## Gourmet pleasures ...

### ... naturally

From north to south and east to west, each valley has its own microclimate, produce and specialities. The area has no less than 6 designations of origin (CDO/PDO) and 7 protected geographical indications (PGI), plus two ongoing. The ambassadors of the local gastronomy are the wines, the olives and olive oil of Nyons (la Tanche), limeflowers, the Picodon goats' cheese, apricots, cherries, lamb, lavender and herbes de Provence...

Roaming the Park means venturing on a pathway full of authentic flavours.



# Baronnies provençales

## Under the stars...

### ... our nights are the finest

The night is really dark, that's the time to open your eyes wide! Far from the major conurbations, the Park's night skies are exceptionally deep and clear, waiting for you to contemplate them and get away from it all. Their darkness is ideal for observation. Exploring the Park means coming across a great many viewpoints and belvederes for nature watching, scattered here and there in the landscape.

The curious visitor equipped with binoculars or telescope can enjoy open-air astronomy in an unspoilt environment. The most adventurous will take advantage of the cooler night-time to walk under the stars, when nocturnal animals are out and about. Bats, owls, insects ... all kinds of wildlife to (re)discover !

Find more : [nuitsouslesetoiles.com](http://nuitsouslesetoiles.com)

## A trip...

### ... into nature

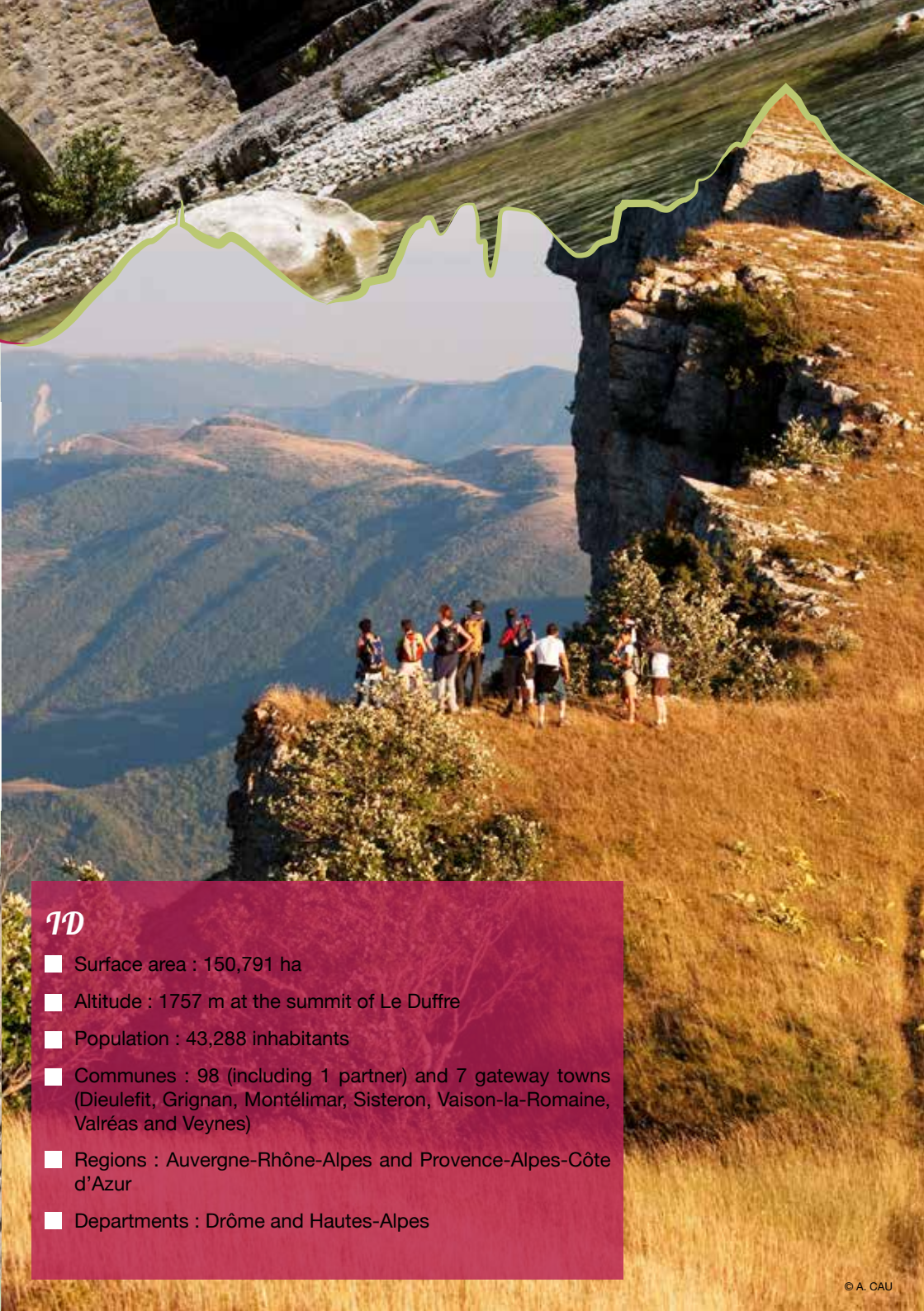
The cliffs of the Baronnies provençales are a climber's paradise: more than 1500 routes providing for all levels, with some internationally renowned sites.

Between fields of lavender, orchards, marlstone formations and limestone screes, the Baronnies provençales contains a huge variety of trails. Walkers, riders and mountain bikers can choose from a vast network of paths. The rolling landscapes are made for diverse and delightful trips. Road cyclists can take advantage of the massif to get some practice before testing themselves in the ascent of the neighbouring Mont-Ventoux.

The mountains of the Park can also be admired from the air: some of the best air conditions in France make it a joy for para- and hang-gliders !







## 10

- Surface area : 150,791 ha
- Altitude : 1757 m at the summit of Le Duffre
- Population : 43,288 inhabitants
- Communes : 98 (including 1 partner) and 7 gateway towns (Dieulefit, Grignan, Montélimar, Sisteron, Vaison-la-Romaine, Valréas and Veynes)
- Regions : Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes and Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur
- Departments : Drôme and Hautes-Alpes

## Contact

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# Camargue

*A vast wetland in the delta of the Rhône and beside the Mediterranean Sea, the Camargue is an exceptional protected natural area and a stronghold of Provençal culture. Let yourself be guided by the local people, let them communicate their passion for their land: your one and only wish will be to come back again.*

## Observe ...

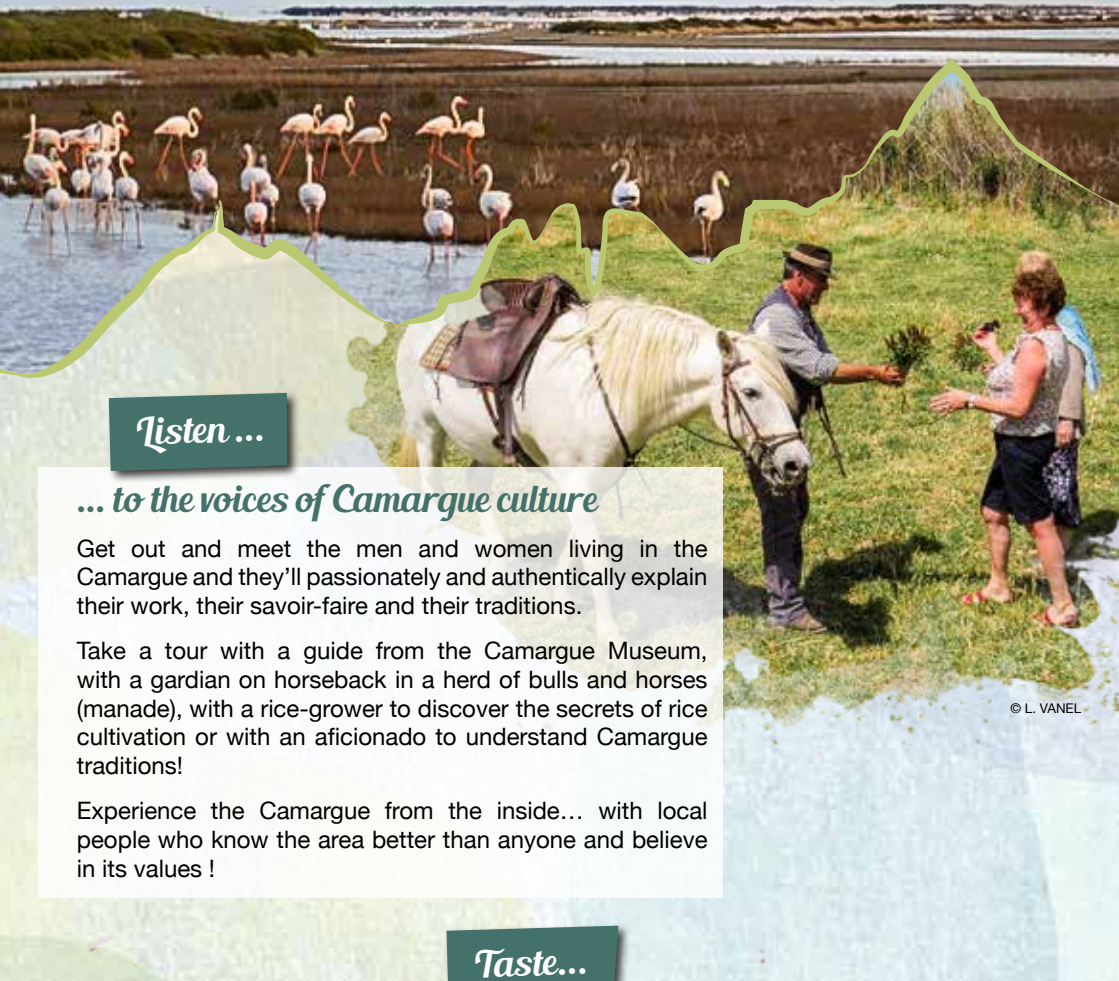
### *... this extraordinary natural world*

As soon as you cross the Rhône, you are in the Camargue, immersed in a natural world made up of marshes and lagoons.

With your binoculars round your neck, wander through these vast expanses in search of that rare bird, nesting in a thicket, hidden in a reedbed or wading across a mirror of water. The Camargue hosts almost two thirds of the bird species that can be observed in France, and there are many sites set up for you to discover them in all their diversity.







*Listen ...*

### *... to the voices of Camargue culture*

Get out and meet the men and women living in the Camargue and they'll passionately and authentically explain their work, their savoir-faire and their traditions.

Take a tour with a guide from the Camargue Museum, with a gardian on horseback in a herd of bulls and horses (manade), with a rice-grower to discover the secrets of rice cultivation or with an aficionado to understand Camargue traditions!

Experience the Camargue from the inside... with local people who know the area better than anyone and believe in its values !

© L. VANEL

*Taste...*

### *... our quality produce*

Sharpen your senses and hone your taste buds by tasting our specialities and local produce from both land and sea. Some prefer to sample fry from the Etang du Vaccarès lagoon or tellines, delicious little shellfish seasoned with garlic and parsley, while others prefer to discover bull beef, grilled with fleur de sel or cooked in a stew, the famous gardianne.

One thing is certain, our fishers, farmers and restaurateurs place the emphasis on quality, which is officially recognised by means of several labels such as PDO\* bull beef, PGI\* Camargue rice, organic wines branded Valeurs Parc...

\* PDO: Protected Designation of Origin

\* PGI: Protected Geographical Indication



# Camargue

## Discover...

### ... our immense beaches

Variations of blue between sea and sky, shades of white between sand and shells, let yourself be dazzled by the beaches of the Camargue. The colours of the beach at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer are those of the towels laid out on the white sand!

For lovers of the great outdoors, in the southeast of the delta near Salin-de-Giraud you can discover the wild beach of Piémanson, well worth the detour.

The boldest will take advantage of the winds in the Gulf to Beauduc to power their kiteboard and enjoy one of the most remarkable kitesurfing spots in France ! And Napoléon Beach near Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône with its 10 km of fine sand is every bit as special as it neighbours.



© P. DANIEL

## Roam ...

### ... alongside the lagoons and marshes of the Camargue

Take a weekend, in any season and at your pace, to follow the minor roads and paths that run beside the lagoons and marshes of the Camargue.

There are many round tours for you to discover all the diversity of landscapes of this exceptional protected area.

Don't miss out on the most essential routes : the ViaRhôna, which runs along the banks of the Rhône all the way from Lake Geneva via Arles to Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône, or the sea dike Digue à la Mer that weaves between the Camargue Nature Reserve and the Mediterranean Sea !



© T. SERAY





## 10

- Surface area : 100,000 ha
- Seafront : 75 km
- Population : 10 000 inhabitants
- Communes : 3 (Arles, Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône, Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer)
- Department : Bouches-du-Rhône
- International networks: UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Ramsar site, Natura 2000
- National networks: 2 nature reserves, 1 marine reserve, Local Agenda 21

# Contact

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parcduluberon.fr

 Parc naturel régional du Luberon

# Luberon



*Halfway between the Alps and the Mediterranean, the Luberon Regional Natural Park is a lively and unspoilt area on and around the Luberon massif. The Luberon's mosaic of landscapes results from both the juxtaposition of highly diverse natural habitats and the signs of long-lasting human presence, with its villages, often on hilltops, and farmlands. Dry-stone constructions include walls and terraces for farming, and traditional shepherds' huts called bories, which are so characteristic that one was chosen as the emblem of the Park.*

## The Luberon by bike ...

### ... 20 years of experience !

From east to west and north to south, the Luberon can be fully explored through its network of bicycle and mountain bike trails. There are no less than 493 km of waymarked routes for you to cross the diverse landscapes of the Luberon on little minor roads and cycle paths (Around the Luberon : 236 km, Ogres à vélo (Ochres by bike) : 50 km, the Calavon cycle route: 37 km, Pays d'Aigues by bike : 91 km).

There are two mobile phone applications, Les ochres à vélo and Challenge de Lure, to further enhance your exploration. For electric or conventional mountain bikes there are two main itineraries (>300 km) and a waymarked site (250 km) offering multiples combinations of trails.

Vélo Loisir Provence is an association of bicycle tourism professionals that works with a network of service providers using their label Accueil vélo to ensure that your stay is well organised : quality of services, accommodation and provisions, and equipment suited to cyclists' needs.

Find out more : [veloloisirluberon.com](http://veloloisirluberon.com)





## Local produce ...

### ... the delicious riches of the Luberon

The Luberon has an exceptionally wide range of terroirs, with no less than 12 PDOs and PGIs\*!

Wines, olive oil, fruit and vegetables, cereals, dairy and meat products, honey, truffles, candied fruit... The area produces everything that makes up the Mediterranean diet, recognised by UNESCO as a healthy way to eat. The Valeurs Parc naturel régional brand labels flour and bread made from Millers' Apt Wheat and some twenty Luberon PDO wines.

Gourmet visitors and responsible consumers will easily find all this fine produce at farmers' markets or in the outlets of the producers themselves.

\* PDO: Protected Designation of Origin

\* PGI: Protected Geographical Indication

## Wine tourism ...

### ... vineyards to be shared!

The Luberon is both a geographical area and a PDO wine. An intrinsic part of the landscape, vines and wines can be enjoyed in many different ways : tastings at the winery, picnics and bike rides in the vineyards, museums, specialist regional wine shops, accommodation, restaurants, and much more... A panoply of activities and discoveries where wine and vines are keys to understanding the region.

Find out more : [wine-tourism-provence.co.uk](http://wine-tourism-provence.co.uk) or [vins-luberon.fr/en](http://vins-luberon.fr/en)



# Luberon

## Geotourism in the Luberon...

### ... an invitation to explore the heritage of the Earth!

Geology is everywhere in the landscapes of the Luberon, in the diversity of its rocky outcrops, white limestones, red sands, grey clays... and in the richness of its fossil heritage.

And this geodiversity is also to be seen in the ways the villages are situated and their architecture, the position of farmland, and the distribution of natural habitats...

The Luberon Park is a listed UNESCO Global Geopark, international recognition of the actions undertaken to protect and develop its geological, cultural and natural heritage. It is also a lever for the sustainable development of flourishing touristic and economic activity concerning the riches of the Earth.

There is an interactive geotourism map presenting the major geosites in the Luberon and the « geo-partners » ready to welcome and guide you during your visits.

*Find out more: [parcduluberon.fr/carte-geotouristique](http://parcduluberon.fr/carte-geotouristique) (in French only)*



© C. GARNIER





A photograph of a stone tower, likely a watchtower or a small fortification, built from rough-hewn stones. The tower is conical in shape and has a small, dark arched entrance at its base. It is situated in a lush, green forest with dense foliage. The top of the image is framed by a decorative, wavy border with a green and yellow color scheme, featuring some blurred floral elements.

## 10

- Surface area: 185,145 ha
- Altitude: 1125 m at the summit of the Mourre-Nègre
- Population : 178 000 inhabitants
- Communes: 77 including 5 main towns (Cavaillon, Apt, Pertuis, Manosque and Forcalquier)
- Departments: Alpes-de-Haute-Provence and Vaucluse
- International networks: UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and Global Geopark
- National networks: Natural Geological Reserve, Natura 2000, Local Agenda 21



## Contact

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 Parc naturel régional des Préalpes d'Azur  
[@pnr.prealpesdazur](https://www.facebook.com/pnr.prealpesdazur)

*Rising from the Mediterranean coast towards the Alps, the Préalpes d'Azur are a land of exchange and contrast. A vast area at the crossroads of different influences: between sea and mountain, between human activities and nature, the Préalpes d'Azur is an alternation of valleys and passes, of ridges and folds, of hilltop villages full of narrow alleys and panoramas as far as the eye can see... Let yourself be transported to the Préalpes d'Azur!*

### *Feet on the ground ...*

#### *... head in the stars*

With more than 1900 caves and hollows, the Préalpes d'Azur are packed with deep and mysterious chasms. Everywhere the interaction of rock and water has created extraordinary sculptures: gaps and canyons, cliffs and moonlike karstic plateaux communicating between this underground world and the stars.

The pure skies of the Préalpes d'Azur, far from the background light pollution of the big cities, are ideal for admiring the immense spectacle of the celestial vault!



# Préalpes d'Azur

*A balcony on the Alps ...*

*... and the Mediterranean*

Whether they are well concealed, splendid or breath-taking, the landscapes of the Préalpes d'Azur look like nowhere else! They were carved by nature and then by local people, who sculpted their slopes with dry-stone walls which they call restanques.

Roaming the interlacing folds and ridges, you'll be amazed by the 360° vistas and the ever-changing perspectives ranging from the blue of the sea to the snow-capped summits of the Alps.

© F. JOUVE

## Hilltop history

By turns hidden, mysterious and colourful, the villages of the Préalpes d'Azur are remarkable for their strong identities, forged over the centuries.

With histories dating back to prehistoric times, Roman rule, the Knights Templar or Napoléon Bonaparte, these hilltop villages are gems of vernacular architecture. They offer impregnable views and bear witness to the adaptation of human activities to the area's soaring crags and deep gorges.



## *The Préalpes d'Azur...*

### *... a land for all seasons*

On foot, by bike, on horseback, in snowshoes, on skis, whatever the season, everything is ready for you to explore the Préalpes d'Azur! There are two resorts for all kinds of outdoor activities, whether in winter to enjoy the snow with a view of the sea, or in summer to live up to the challenge of mountain biking or a treetop adventure trail ... the pleasure of an authentic, low-impact stay is 100 % guaranteed!



## *Keep natural!*

From the damp meadows to the desert-like plateaux, from the soaring cliffs to the inaccessible gorges, everything comes together to create a very rich fauna and flora.

Historical human activities, by creating the clearings, meadows and grazing land, have led to the establishment of new, highly biodiverse habitats. The list of endemic species, i.e. those that are found nowhere else, is a long one, a sign of unique biological richness!





# Préalpes d'Azur


10

- Surface area : 90,000 ha
- Altitude : 1778 m at the summit of Cheiron, 2 ski resorts
- Population : 31 000 inhabitants
- Communes : 45 including Grasse and Vence
- Department : Alpes-Maritimes
- National networks : Natura 2000, Local Agenda 21

## Contact

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 Parc naturel régional du Queyras  
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*Far from the main lines of communication, nestled right next to the Italian border and protected by tall peaks, you'll find yourself in the high-mountain landscapes and woods and stone-built villages of the Regional Natural Park of the Queyras. Come and meet the men and women who live here, in these spectacular - still wild - natural surroundings.*

*Friend, while you're here ...*

*... don't count the hours !*

A land of sunshine and contrasts, the Queyras is known for the many, often very historic, sundials that ornament the walls of its villages, especially Saint Véran. You can see the works of the famous 19th century Italian sundial maker Giovanni Francesco Zarbula, together with those of other less well known but equally inspired artists.

If you are interested in this cultural heritage, don't hesitate to pay a visit to the little local museums to discover the intimate human warmth of the valley.



## Wood ...

### *... in flower !*

Essential to the area since time immemorial, woodworking and traditional carving are to be found everywhere in the Queyras. Anything here is an excuse to make wooden roses bloom, from the oldest piece of furniture to the most contemporary creation to be seen at the Maison de l'artisanat in Château-Ville-Vieille. Carved, turned, scorched, painted, transformed into toys or jewellery, wood is still the emblematic local material.

How could it be otherwise, given the magnificent forests that carpet the landscape?

© Vinzi Studio CRT

## A high place ...

### *... or flavours*

With dairies collecting the milk from several alpine meadows, and some farmers making cheese from their own milk production, the Queyras is a land for food lovers : cheese made from cows' milk, ewes' milk or goats' milk, hard or soft, pressed, blue, cooked, raw: the range of sensations is incredible!

Complete your menu with more of the area's exceptional hand-crafted produce : charcuterie, condiments, soup herbs, liqueurs, jams, infusions and different types of cakes...



## *Breathe !*

Roam the high trails on foot or by mountain bike, among the colourful meadows, the cool of the undergrowth, the quiet of the summits, and .... breathe! Change your pace ... listen to the silence, observe the wildlife and the exuberance of the nature around you.

Don't forget to greet the shepherd if you cross paths with his flock. You are a guest in this other world, where sharing the environment is a way of life.



© PNRQ

## *Snow ...*

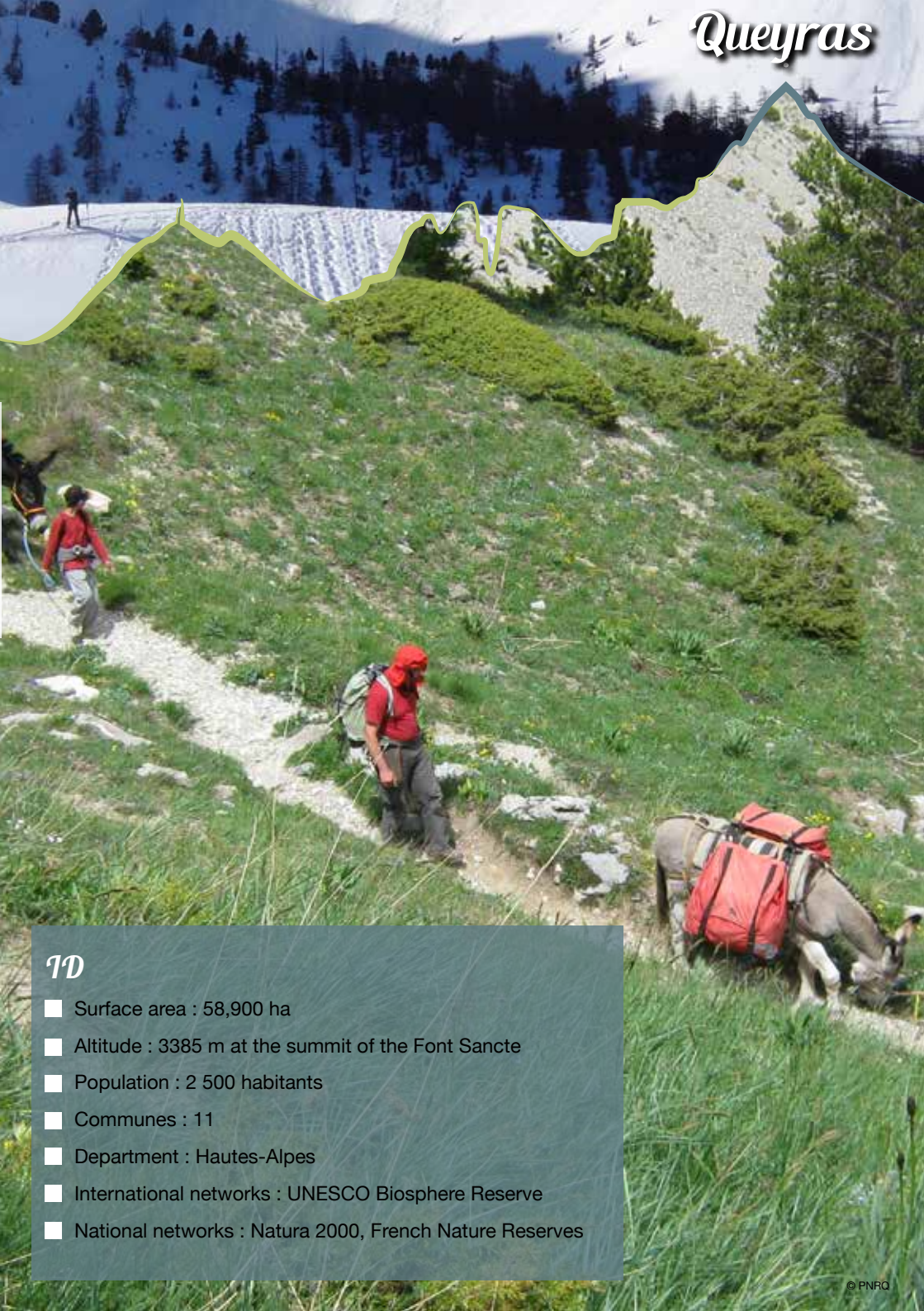
### *... it's magical !*

And when winter comes, gradually, in the magic light of twirling snowflakes, the summits, meadows and villages take on their mantle of white. It's the time for tobogganing and snowball fights, of noses reddened by the freezing air, and of the warm atmosphere of the fireside.

Enjoy the pleasures of every type of skiing, or set off on more intimate journeys, the immensity of the mountains is ready to welcome you, as long as you don't disturb your four-legged hosts!







## 10

- Surface area : 58,900 ha
- Altitude : 3385 m at the summit of the Font Sancte
- Population : 2 500 habitants
- Communes : 11
- Department : Hautes-Alpes
- International networks : UNESCO Biosphere Reserve
- National networks : Natura 2000, French Nature Reserves



## Contact

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pnr-saintebaume.fr

# Sainte-Baume

*From its 1148 m eyrie, with its 12 km-long limestone cliffs, the Mountain of the Sainte-Baume dominates Lower Provence and harbours a forest of exceptional biodiversity. The ridge affords a unique 360° panorama. An incredible natural belvedere, it has soaring views over the Mediterranean Sea, from the Gulf of Lion to the Îles d'Or, and watches over the Provençal hinterland, as far as the Alps and Mont Ventoux.*

## A mountain ...

### ... in Provence

Its landscapes, sculpted out of limestone, contrast between an arid environment typical of the South of France, particularly on its southern and western flanks, and fresh, lush vegetation in the northern part, sometimes reminiscent of the Alps.

Here and there, medieval castles (Le Beausset, Nans-les-Pins, Rougiers ...) and hilltop villages (La Cadière d'Azur, Le Castellet, Evenos, ...), rise from the heights above the plains, a landscape fashioned by Man harbouring many vestiges of the past.

In the Provençal villages of the Sainte-Baume, which have conserved their historic charm, popular traditions persist, which are dear to the hearts of the local people. Among the liveliest are the Cercles provençaux (local societies), and the festivities and processions of Saint-Eloi.



## Land of Man ...

### ... sacred forest

A major site of pilgrimage, spirituality and Christianity, the Sainte-Baume contains a grotto, the Holy Grotto (in the Provençal language, the word for grotto is « baumo ») where, according to Provençal tradition, Mary-Magdalene sought refuge and lived the last years of her life as a hermit. The feeling of sacredness is very strong, unsettling, almost palpable.

On the Way of Saint James, which ends at Santiago de Compostela, you can halt at the Hostelry of the Sainte-Baume, where the Dominican monks continue their mission as guardians of this unique site.

The Sainte-Baume is also an important place for the traditional Compagnonnage network of skilled artisans. For a Compagnon, the climb up to the Holy Grotto through the sacred forest is a rite of passage, after which he or she may have a special sash printed with the symbol of Sainte-Baume and sign the record book.

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## Rejuvenation ...

### ... through spirituality

Ideal for introspection, contemplation and communion with nature, the Sainte-Baume inspires and breathes new life into you. In such beautiful natural surroundings, you'll feel rejuvenated and find a new sense of being. You'll be surprised by the exceptional atmosphere, experience and environment, and discover for yourself what it means to be in this « place where the spirit breathes ».

The spirit of this special site is also felt in the contrast between the different landscapes, and the combination of influences that makes the Sainte-Baume like nowhere else.





# Sainte-Baume



## Water tower ...

### *... and stories of ice*

Astonishing! The dryness of the summer masks - under your feet - enormous quantities of subterranean water that make the Sainte-Baume the water tower for the whole of Lower Provence !

The mysterious water is filtered through the interstices of the rocks before bursting forth in mountain springs, and in the many traditional springs of the surrounding villages. For almost two centuries, the area was known for its « natural » ice, produced all year round and then transported to the major towns in nocturnal convoys of carts, or on the backs of donkeys and mules.

There are still some buildings today, such as the icehouses of Pivaut, Bertagne and Les Encanaux, that bear witness to this extraordinary period of « white gold ». And the many rivers and streams remain, together with all the creatures that live in and around them.



## Delicate flavours ...

### *... filled with sunshine*

The products of our terroir will surprise you with their subtle flavours ... Figs, plums, olives, capers, chick peas, goats' cheese, grilled lamb, honey and Provençal nougat combine in all kinds of audacious ways and are perfectly accompanied by the fine wines of Bandol, Côtes de Provence and Coteaux Varois en Provence.

For the true tastes of Provence, let Jean-Baptiste Reboul be your guide. Born in Roquebrussanne, he is the author of a recipe book that has been the reference work on Provençal cuisine for more than a century. Or let yourself be looked after by one of our many restaurateurs, passionate about serving traditional dishes... or adding a contemporary touch.







## 10

- Surface area : 81,000 ha
- Altitude : 1 148 m
- Population : 187,700 inhabitants, including 58 000 in the core zone
- Communes : 26 29, including 3 main towns (Aubagne, Brignoles and Saint-Maximin-la-Sainte-Baume)
- Departments : Bouches-du-Rhône and Var

# Contact

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*The Verdon means exceptional landscapes that attract visitors from all over the world. The listed site of the Verdon Gorge, the lower gorges, the lakes, the Valensole Plateau... these landscapes are infused with the power of the natural forces that carve the rocks and dig the rivers. They are also the expression of human activities, which have shaped and redefined the environment over the centuries.*

## *Between white water...*

### *... and large lakes*

The Verdon is first of all the story of a river than flows for 165 km from its source in the Southern Alps. Half-way along its path, the Verdon makes its way through the gorges, with its meanders taking advantage of the least fault in the limestone relief of the Alpine foothills.

The water of the Verdon is precious because it provides energy and serves as a reservoir of drinking water for the whole region. It harbours natural habitats of exceptional biodiversity. It's also a wonderful location for leisure activities. The alternation between running water, large lakes and gorges is ideal for all kinds of outdoor sports.





# Verdon

## On the trails of the Verdon ...

### ... in every season!

A link between Provence and the Alps, the Verdon has a mixture of Mediterranean and Alpine influences that makes for wonderful trips on foot, by bike or on horseback, and a broad range of activities for all 4 seasons.

You will particularly appreciate the mountains of the Artuby and Prealps for their coolness in summer. The hardest visitors will want to climb Mont Chiran, 1905 m, or the Puy de Rent, 1996 m, to feel on top of the world and see for miles! In spring, autumn and winter, on the Valensole Plateau or in the hills of the Upper Var, you will feel the gentler side of the Verdon, tinted by the almond trees in flower and the rippling of the lavender fields.



© A. GOUBELY

## The secret heart of the Verdon ...

### ... the Blanc-Martel trail

In 1928, the inhabitants of the villages of the Gorges, under the guidance of the Touring club de France, created this trail in the footsteps of the explorer and speleologist Edouard-Alfred Martel. It was an incredible technical challenge to overcome the various difficulties presented by the relief. The most audacious stretch is undoubtedly the ladders of the Imbert Breach. Near the end, approaching the Samson Corridor, the trail goes through the tunnels drilled at the same period as the exploration of the gorges in 1905. From then till now, all the developments have sought to preserve the exceptional character of the Grand Canyon of the Verdon.





## The Verdon...

### ... between your hands

As in other regions, the inhabitants of the Verdon have developed skills closely linked with the resources to be found in the area. These family-based craft activities were of any different types: preparing dishes and condiments from farm produce or leaves picked in the wild, tanning, weaving, basketry, working with wood or stone.

The village of Aiguines, for example, once famous for turning studded boules for the local game of Pétanque, still has a wood turning school. Throughout the year it offers talks, demonstrations and training courses for beginners or experienced turners.

*Find out more : [escoulen.com/en](http://escoulen.com/en) and [museedestourneursurbois.com](http://museedestourneursurbois.com) (in French only)*



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## Head in the stars ...

### ... on the summit of Mont Chiran

The night skies of the Verdon are especially beautiful because of the quality of the air and the absence of background light pollution. To get even closer to this celestial spectacle and be within reach of the Great Bear, the Mont Chiran Observatory, situated at an altitude of 1905 metres, organises nights for you to encounter the stars.

Once night has fallen, you can discover nebulas and galaxies using the observatory's powerful telescope. It is the Chiran Refuge, which is next door to the observatory, that manages the site and receives the visitors.

*Find out more : [astro-blieux.fr](http://astro-blieux.fr)*







# Verdon


10

- Surface area : 188,000 ha
- Altitude : Puy de Rent (1996 m), Mourre de Chanier (1930 m)
- Population : 33 000 inhabitants
- Communes : 46
- Department: Alpes-de-Haute-Provence and Var



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## Une autre vie s'invente ici

