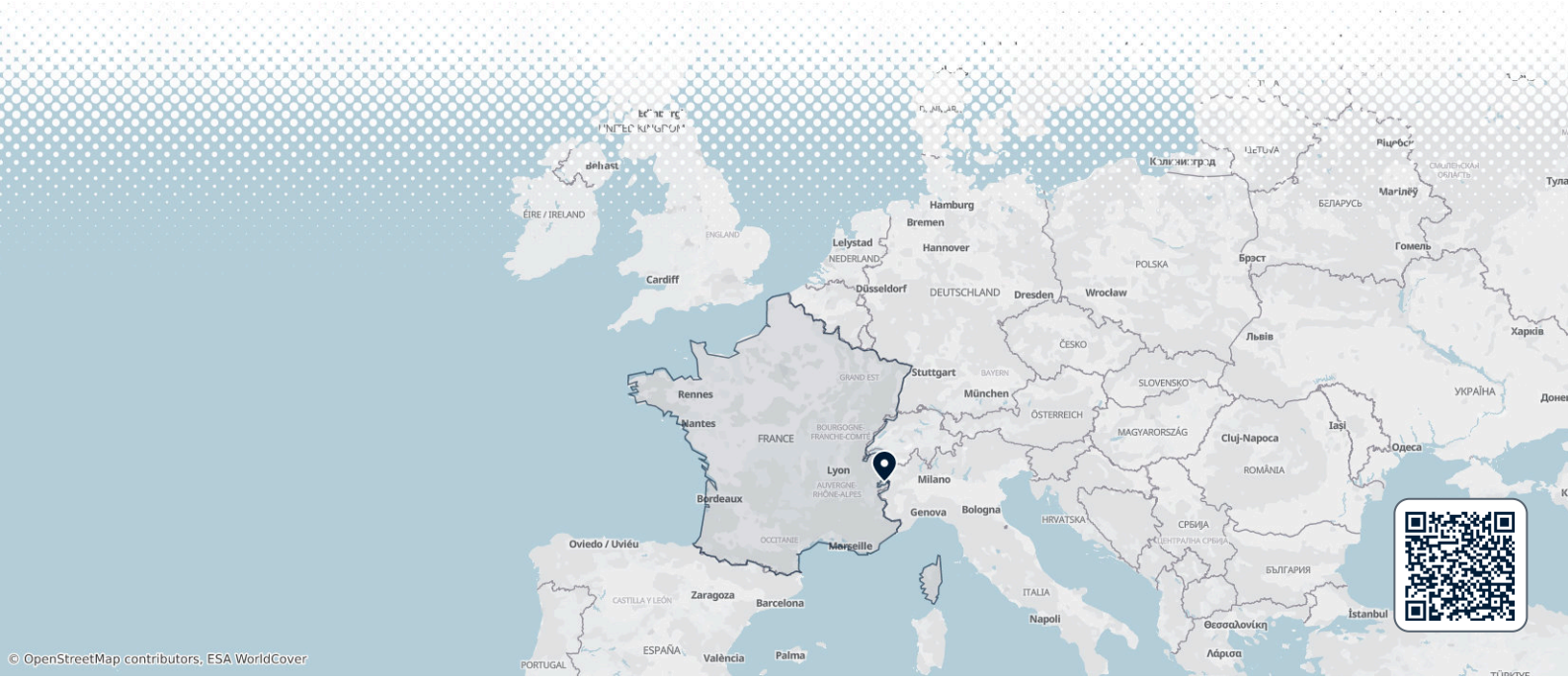


Vanoise National Park

Savoie · France

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Vanoise National Park was created in 1963 and was the first national park in France. It covers more than 500 km² of high Alpine land in Savoie, between the Tarentaise and Maurienne valleys. The terrain is glaciers, lakes, steep valleys and high passes. Several peaks are above 3,500 m, and the highest is Grande Casse at 3,855 m.

This is a park for walkers, mountain-hut trips and wildlife. The Alpine ibex is the emblem of the park, and chamois and marmots are common. No public road crosses the protected core, so you explore on foot. Villages such as Pralognan-la-Vanoise, Termignon and Bonneval-sur-Arc are the usual bases. The park shares a border with Italy's Gran Paradiso National Park, and the two parks cooperate to protect the ibex. Together they cover about 1,250 km².

When to visit

Summer is the main season, from about late June to mid-September. Higher trails can hold snow into early summer, and mountain huts are staffed only for part of the year. Afternoon thunderstorms are common in July and August, so start walks early.

Early summer brings alpine flowers and snow-fed waterfalls. September is quieter and clear, and larch trees turn gold in October. In winter the high park is a ski-touring and snowshoe area, and the ski resorts of Tignes, Val-d'Isère and Aussois are close. The Col de l'Iseran road is closed in winter.

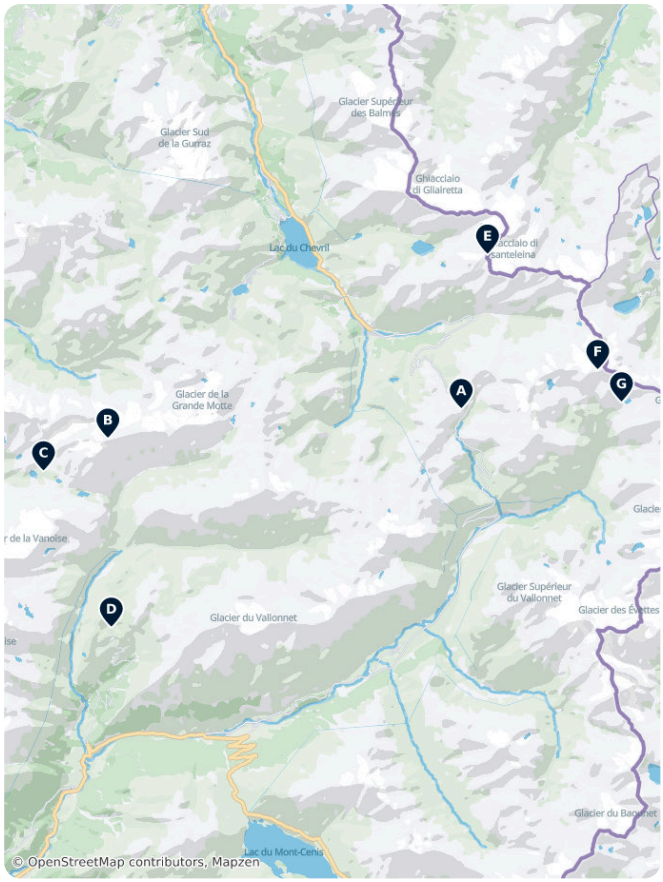
Ibex are easiest to see in summer on high grass slopes, usually in the early morning or evening.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Great Great for skiing	0° / 5° Feels like -4°	-9° / -16°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
February	Great Great for skiing	1° / 6° Feels like -3°	-8° / -17°	Dry air · Calm winds
March	Good Good for skiing	4° / 10° Feels like 0°	-5° / -13°	12 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
April	Poor Poor for skiing	9° / 16° Feels like 6°	0° / -6°	14 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
May	Fair Fair for hiking	15° / 21°	5° / -1°	19 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
June	Good Good for hiking	20° / 26°	9° / 3°	16 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
July	Good Good for hiking	21° / 26°	10° / 5°	Dry air · Calm winds
August	Good Good for hiking	21° / 27°	10° / 5°	Dry air · Calm winds
September	Good Good for hiking	18° / 24°	7° / 1°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
October	Good Good for hiking	13° / 20°	4° / -2°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
November	Good Good for skiing	6° / 13° Feels like 2°	-2° / -11°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds
December	Great Great for skiing	1° / 6° Feels like -3°	-7° / -15°	13 rainy days · Dry air · Calm winds

Best months: July

Climate data: NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights



- A Col de l'Iseran is the highest paved pass in the Alps, at 2,764 m. The road links Val-d'Isère and Bonneval-sur-Arc and is open only in summer. The Tour de France first crossed it in 1938.
- B La Grande Casse is the highest summit in the park, at 3,855 m, with a steep north face about 600 m high. The normal route is not technical for a climber, but it crosses a glacier and needs a guide or alpine experience.
- C Refuge du Col de la Vanoise is a large mountain hut at the Col de la Vanoise, at about 2,500 m. It is the base for the Grande Casse and sits next to the high lakes of the pass. Reserve a place in advance.
- D Parc national de la Vanoise is the central walking area of the park. It has lakes, rock walls, small glaciers and a network of marked trails and huts.
- E Tsanteleina is a peak on the Italian border, above Val-d'Isère. Its north face is popular with ski mountaineers.
- F Grande Aiguille Rousse is a 3,482 m peak near the Col de l'Iseran. It looks across the border to Italy's Gran Paradiso National Park.
- G Refuge du Carro is a mountain hut at about 2,760 m on the Bonneval-sur-Arc side of the park. It is a base for walks and climbs in the upper Maurienne.

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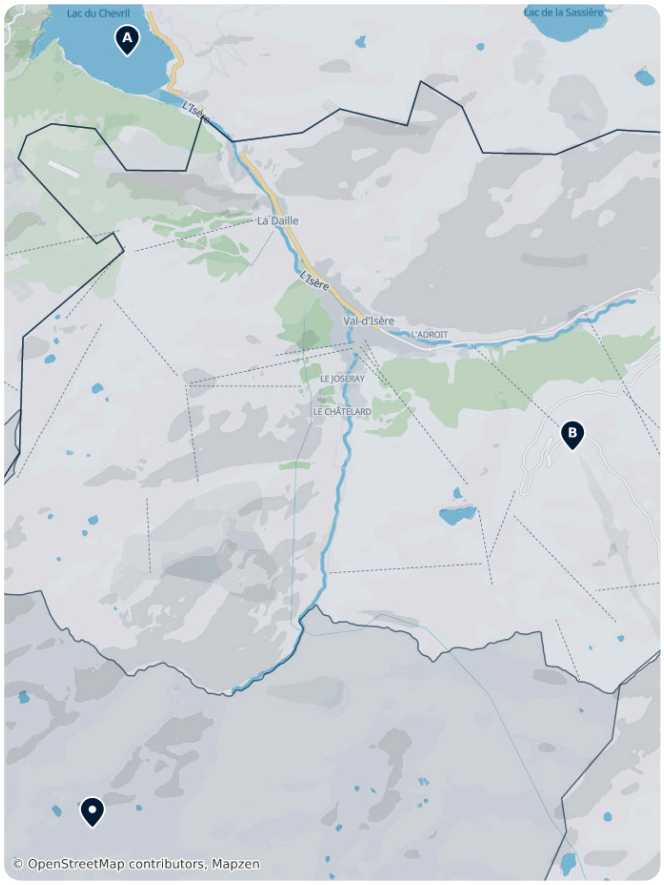
What to experience

- **Watch for ibex at dawn or dusk**: climb above the tree line early and scan the grass slopes. Chamois and marmots are also common. Keep your distance and your voice low.
- **Sleep in a mountain hut**: spend a night in a staffed refuge such as the one at the Col de la Vanoise. You get dinner, breakfast and a bunk. Reservations are needed. Bivouac is allowed only next to certain staffed huts, and you must book it with the hut warden.
- **Walk the high lakes of the Col de la Vanoise**: a classic summer day or overnight walk from Pralognan-la-Vanoise, with views of the Grande Casse.
- **Cross the Col de l'Iseran by bike or car**: a summer road trip over the highest paved pass in the Alps, between two valleys.
- **Ski touring or snowshoeing**: in winter, the quiet slopes around Pralognan-la-Vanoise and Bonneval-sur-Arc suit snowshoes and ski touring. Learn the avalanche conditions before you go.

Day trips

The park has no single entry point, so these trips start from the valley villages. Distances are by road.

- **Bonneval-sur-Arc**: a stone village at the head of the Maurienne valley, near the Italian border. It is one of Les Plus Beaux Villages de France. It is about 20–30 minutes from Termignon by car and is the south start of the Col de l'Iseran road.
- **Val-Cenis and Aussois**: Maurienne villages on the south side of the park, with walking in summer and skiing in winter.
- Ⓐ Tignes and Ⓑ Val-d'Isère: high resorts on the north side of the Col de l'Iseran, with lake walks and lifts in summer.
- **Bourg-Saint-Maurice and Moûtiers**: the main towns of the Tarentaise valley, with shops, a market, the train station and bus links to the resorts.
- **Chambéry**: the historic capital of Savoie, about 1.5 hours or more by car from the park, a good city stop on the way in or out.



Where to explore

These ski resorts border the park and work well as bases, especially in winter:

- Tignes and Val-d'Isère sit on the north side, close to the Col de l'Iseran.
- Courchevel and La Plagne Tarentaise lie on the western edge, in the Tarentaise valley.

Getting there

- **By air**: the main gateways are Geneva (GVA) and Lyon–Saint-Exupéry (LYS). Both are roughly 2.5–3 hours by road from the Tarentaise and Maurienne valleys. Chambéry airport operates mainly in the winter ski season. A transfer by bus or rental car is needed from all of them.
- **By train**: Bourg-Saint-Maurice is the end of the Tarentaise line and has TGV services, with seasonal direct trains from northern Europe. Modane, in the Maurienne, has trains toward Turin and Italy; check current timetables. From both, local buses serve the villages.
- **From Lyon**: Lyon is the largest city within reach and has direct rail links toward Savoie.
- **By bus**: coaches from Chambéry and the airports run to the resorts, mainly in the ski season.

Getting around

- **On foot**: the park core is closed to motor vehicles, so you walk. Trails are marked, but mountain conditions change fast. Carry a map and enough water and food.
- **Valley buses**: local buses and summer shuttles link the main villages and trailheads. Services are thinner outside the ski and summer seasons, so check timetables first.
- **Cycling**: road cyclists come for the Col de l'Iseran and other high passes. Mountain bikes are allowed only on certain tracks in the park.
- **Car**: the practical choice for reaching trailheads in several valleys. See the driving section.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The park is explored on foot on marked mountain trails, with steep climbs and high altitude. Villages at the edge are small and easy to walk.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Road cyclists come for high passes such as the Col de l'Iseran. Mountain bikes are allowed only on certain tracks inside the park.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: yes for flexible trips. Public transport reaches the main villages, but trailheads are spread across several valleys.
- **Col de l'Iseran**: the road is open only in the summer months. Opening and closing dates depend on snow, so check road status before you go. Fuel up in the valley.
- **Parking**: free or paid car parks are at the main trailheads and fill early on summer weekends.
- **Restrictions**: motor vehicles are banned inside the park core, except on a few tracks with a personal permit. Winter chains or winter tyres are normal in the valleys.

Food & drink

This is Savoie mountain food. Look for tartiflette (potatoes, onions and Reblochon cheese), fondue, and Beaufort cheese from the Alpine valleys. Bleu de Termignon is a local blue cheese from the Maurienne.

Eat in the village centres of Pralognan-la-Vanoise, Termignon and Bonneval-sur-Arc. Mountain huts serve a set evening meal, usually with soup and a hot dish. Book the meal when you reserve your bed.

What to eat & drink

BREAKFAST

Croissant
Buttery, flaky laminated pastry and a classic French breakfast staple.

LUNCH

Ratatouille
A Provençal stewed vegetable dish of eggplant, zucchini, peppers, and tomatoes.

DINNER

Coq au Vin
Chicken braised slowly in red wine with mushrooms, onions, and lardons.

Beef Bourguignon · Bœuf Bourguignon
Beef stewed in red Burgundy wine with carrots, onions, and mushrooms.

Escargot · Escargots de Bourgogne
Snails cooked in garlic and parsley butter, a classic starter.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Baguette
Long, crusty white bread loaf bought fresh daily from the local boulangerie.

Cheese · Fromage
France produces hundreds of cheese varieties, often served as a course before dessert.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Crepes · Crêpes
Thin pancakes served sweet with sugar or jam, or savory as galettes.

Macarons
Delicate almond meringue sandwich cookies in a range of flavors and colors.

DRINKS

Wine · Vin
France's wine regions, including Bordeaux, Burgundy, and Champagne, are among the world's most renowned.

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Safety & health

The main risks are mountain risks, not crime. Weather changes fast, and afternoon storms are common in summer. Check the forecast, start early and turn back when the weather worsens. Snow can remain on high trails into early summer, and glaciers need ropes, equipment and a guide.

Mobile coverage is poor in many valleys, so tell someone your route. Call the emergency number and give your position if you need rescue. Altitude above 2,500 m can cause headaches and tiredness for some people.

Park rules protect wildlife and plants. In the park core, dogs are not allowed, fires are banned, and picking flowers, fruit, insects or minerals is forbidden. Drones may not be flown low over the park core without authorisation from the park. Keep noise low to avoid disturbing animals. Rules and visitor information are on the official park site: Vanoise National Park

History

Vanoise National Park was created in 1963 and was the first national park in France. It protects the Alpine ibex and the high mountain landscape. The ibex is now the emblem of the park.

Italy's Gran Paradiso National Park, next to Vanoise, was founded much earlier, in 1922, after the area was a royal hunting reserve. The two parks share a boundary and cooperate on the ibex herds that cross the border.

The Col de l'Iseran road is part of the park's cycling story. The Tour de France first crossed the pass in 1938.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for France at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



Type C / Type E
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
French

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Vanoise National Park's Absolute Essentials

Vanoise National Park, established in 1963 as France's first national park, encompasses the high-altitude terrain between the Tarentaise and Maurienne valleys. This list features the Col de l'Iseran, the highest paved pass in the Alps at 2,770 meters, and the 3,601-meter Tsanteleina peak on the Italian border. The selection also highlights significant water features, including the Cascade de la Fraîche near Pralognan-la-Vanoise and the glacial falls of Cascades les Pissets, showcasing the park's diverse alpine topography and glacial hydrology.





A Col de l'Iseran

Col de l'Iseran is a mountain pass in France, the highest paved pass in the Alps.

D902, 73480, France (45.41712, 7.03084)



B Vanoise National Park

Vanoise National Park is a French national park between the Tarentaise and Maurienne valleys in the French Alps, containing the Vanoise...

Le Chevril, 73320 Tignes, France (45.32868, 6.82953)

english.vanoise-parcnational.fr/fr/vano..., +33 4 79 62 30 54



C Tsanteleina

Tsanteleina is a mountain of the Graian Alps located on the border between Savoie, France and Aosta Valley, Italy.

11010, Italy (45.47952, 7.04598)

D Cascade de la Fraîche

Waterfall located near Pralognan-la-Vanoise, used for ice climbing in winter and situated adjacent to a local via ferrata.

(45.37860, 6.73157)

E Cascade de la Raie

High waterfall situated in the Ponthurin valley near Champagny-le-Haut, accessible via the park's trail network.

(45.56099, 6.90332)

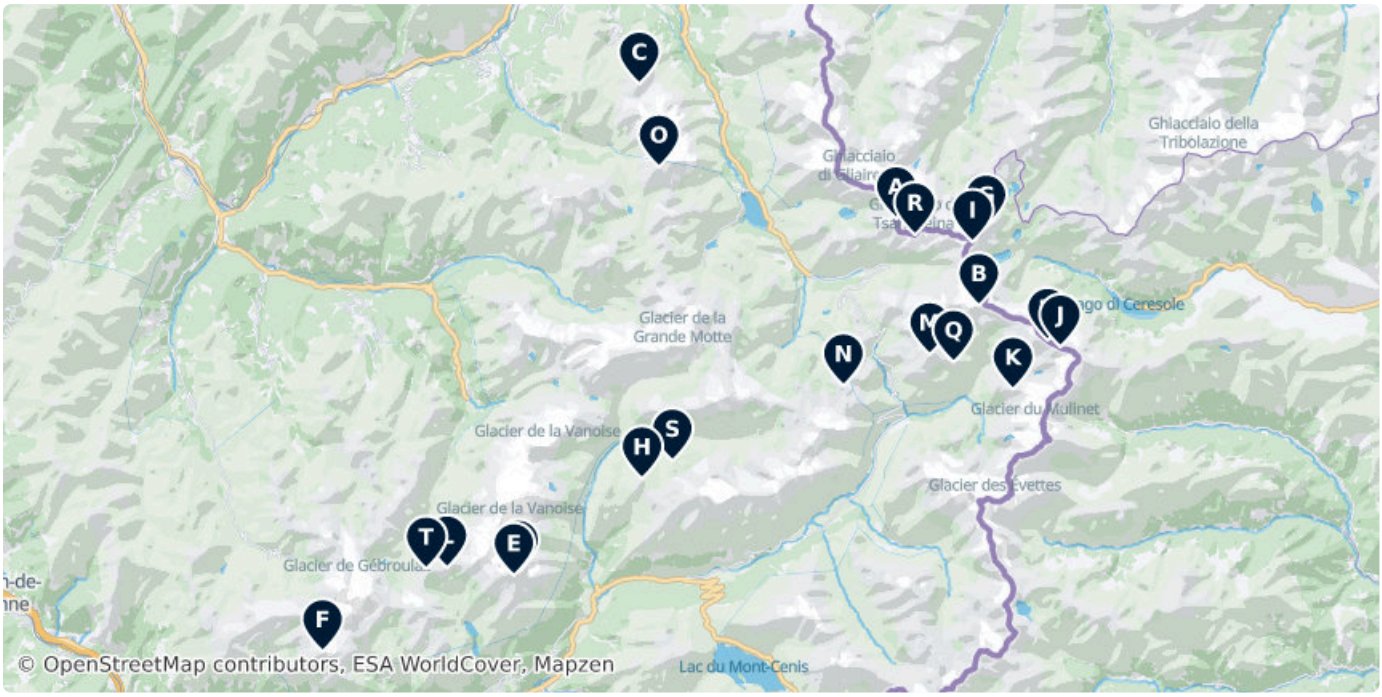
F Cascades les Pissets

Series of waterfalls in the Manchet Valley near Val d'Isère, fed by high-altitude glacial runoff.

(45.39682, 6.95070)

Majestic Mountain Peaks

This collection features prominent summits within the Vanoise National Park and the Graian Alps along the French-Italian border. These peaks, including the glaciated Dent Parrachée and the boundary-marking Levanne group, range from accessible 3,000-meter hiking destinations like Pointe de l'Observatoire to challenging high-altitude mountaineering objectives. The terrain encompasses rugged ridges, alpine glaciers, and panoramic viewpoints overlooking the Tarentaise and Maurienne valleys, reflecting the geological diversity of France's first national park.





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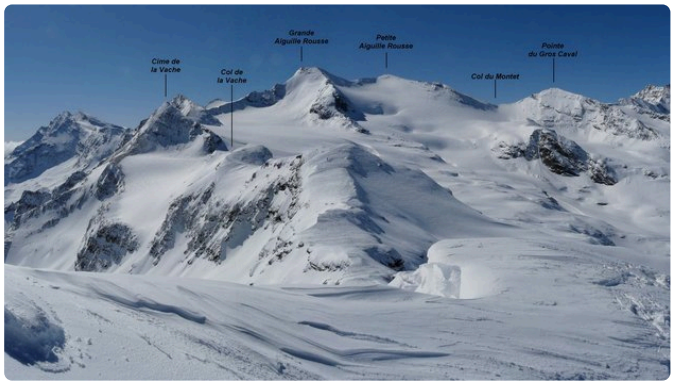


B Grande Aiguille Rousse

A 3,482-meter summit in the Graian Alps situated on the border between France and Italy.

73150, France (45.43288, 7.10938)

geodesie.ign.fr/fiches/index.php

C Aiguille Rouge

Aiguille Rouge is a mountain of Savoie, France. It lies in the Vanoise Massif and has an elevation of 3,227 metres above sea level.

73640, France (45.55190, 6.84870)

D Levanna Occidentale

A 3,593-meter peak within the Levanne group, positioned on the international border between Savoie and the Aosta Valley.

73480, France (45.41410, 7.16209)

geodesie.ign.fr/fiches/index.php

E Pointe de la Fournache

Pointe de la Fournache is a mountain of Savoie, France. It lies in the Massif de la Vanoise range.

73500, France (45.28732, 6.75242)

F Pointe Rénod

Pointe Rénod is a mountain of Savoie, France. It lies in the Massif de la Vanoise range.

73500, France (45.24623, 6.60560)

G Punta Basei

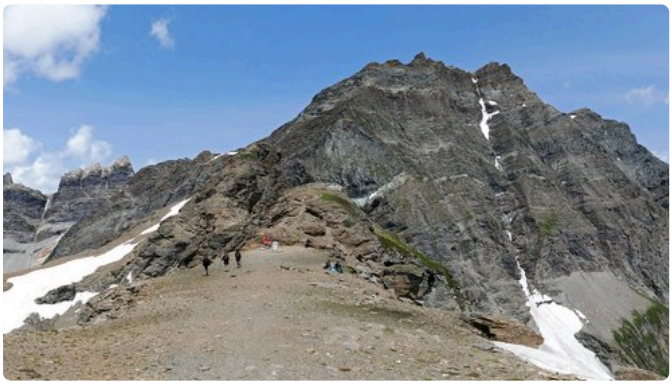
A 3,338-meter glaciated mountain in the Graian Alps, accessible from the Nivolet Pass on the Italian side.

11010, Italy (45.47504, 7.11498)

H Pointe de Lanserlia

A 2,909-meter peak in the Vanoise Massif known for its panoramic views of high-altitude lakes and the Dent Parrachée.

73500, France (45.33956, 6.85075)



I Pointe de la Galise / Punta di Galisia

A major peak of the Graian Alps rising to 3,343 meters, marking the watershed between the Isère and Orco valleys.

10080, Italy (45.46695, 7.10444)

J Levanna Centrale

The highest point of the Levanne massif at 3,619 meters, located on the border between France and Italy.

10080, Italy (45.41056, 7.17194)

K Ouille de Trièves Est

A peak in the Graian Alps near the French-Italian border.

73480, France (45.38774, 7.13560)

geodesie.ign.fr/fiches/index.php

L Tête d'Aussois

A 3,126-meter summit in the Vanoise Massif, often reached via the Fond d'Aussois.

73710, France (45.29144, 6.70104)

geodesie.ign.fr/fiches/index.php

M L'Ouille Noire

A 3,357-meter peak accessible via a relatively straightforward hike from the Col de l'Iseran.

73480, France (45.40646, 7.07162)

camptocamp.org/summits/38030/fr/ouille-noire

N Pointe des Fours

A 3,072-meter summit offering views over the Vanoise glaciers and the Maurienne valley.

73480, France (45.38957, 7.00547)

camptocamp.org/summits/40723/fr/pointe-des-fours

O Dôme des Platières

A glaciated peak in the Vanoise Massif reaching an elevation of 3,473 meters.

73210, France (45.50730, 6.86378)

geodesie.ign.fr/fiches/index.php

P Dent Parrachée

One of the most prominent peaks in the Vanoise Massif, standing at 3,697 meters and dominating the Aussois valley.

73500, France (45.28909, 6.75607)

geodesie.ign.fr/fiches/index.php

Q Ouille des Reys

A mountain peak located in the Graian Alps near the border of France and Italy.

73480, France (45.40225, 7.08995)

geodesie.ign.fr/fiches/index.php

R Punta Calabre

Also known as Pointe Bazel, this 3,445-meter peak sits on the border between the French Savoie and the Italian Aosta Valley.

73150, France (45.47085, 7.06039)

S Le Turc

A mountain summit located within the Vanoise National Park in the Savoie department.

(45.34909, 6.87412)

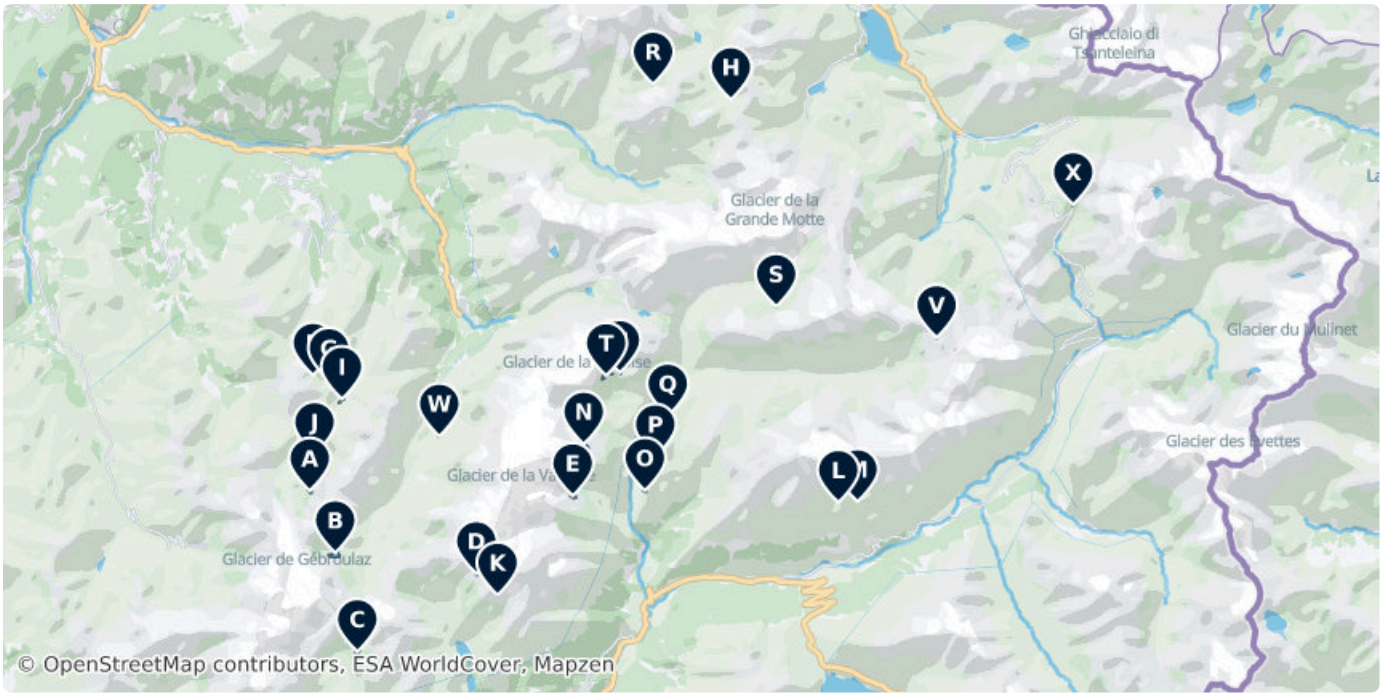
T Pointe de l'Observatoire

A popular 3,016-meter hiking destination providing clear views of the Vanoise glaciers and the surrounding peaks.

73710, France (45.29089, 6.68514)

Alpine Lakes

This selection features high-altitude glacial lakes within the Vanoise National Park, France's first national park. Located at elevations between 2,100 and 2,900 meters, these lakes vary from the deep waters of Lac Merlet Supérieur to the glacial basins of Lac du Génépy. Most are accessible via the GR5 and Tour de la Vanoise hiking networks, offering views of the Grande Casse and Vanoise glaciers.



A Lac du Mont Coua

High-altitude lake at 2,670 meters, situated below the Mont Coua in the Pralognan-la-Vanoise sector.

(45.31779, 6.63852)

B Lac Blanc

Glacial lake at 2,300 meters, located near the Refuge du Lac Blanc at the foot of the Peclet-Polset massif.

73710, France (45.29498, 6.65191)

C Lac de la Partie

Alpine lake at 2,456 meters located on the trail toward the Col de Chavière.

73500, France (45.25860, 6.66346)

D Lac du Génépy

High-altitude lake at 2,906 meters, one of the highest in the park, situated near the Génépy glacier.

(45.28730, 6.72565)

E Lac de l'Arpont

Glacial lake at 2,666 meters located directly below the Dômes de l'Arpont.

(45.31593, 6.77609)

F Lac Merlet Supérieur

At 2,450 meters, this is the deepest lake in the Vanoise National Park, reaching a depth of 28 meters.

(45.36025, 6.64021)

G Lac Merlet Inférieur

Mountain lake at 2,391 meters located on a rocky plateau near the Refuge des Lacs Merlet.

(45.35829, 6.64858)

H Lac du Grattaleu

Small lake at 2,512 meters situated in the Leisse valley near the Col de l'Iseran.

73210, France (45.46140, 6.85890)

I Lac du Pêtre

High-altitude lake at 2,282 meters located in the Courchevel valley area of the national park.

(45.35149, 6.65536)

J Lac de Chanrouge

Alpine lake at 2,445 meters situated near the Col de Chanrouge.

(45.33111, 6.64104)

K Lac des Chaix

High-altitude lake at 2,730 meters located in the remote Cirque du Génépy.

(45.27940, 6.73683)

L Lac de la Fesse

Remote lake at 2,390 meters located in the Vallon de la Leisse.

73480, France (45.31347, 6.91513)

M Lac de Chélou

Small mountain lake at 2,450 meters situated in the eastern sector of the park.

73480, France (45.31374, 6.92519)

N Lac de Chasseforêt

Glacial lake at 2,750 meters located at the base of the Glacier de Chasseforêt.

(45.33490, 6.78187)

O Lac Blanc

Glacial lake at 2,300 meters located near Termignon and the Refuge du Lac Blanc.

(45.31791, 6.81386)

P Lac de Bellecombe

High-altitude lake at 2,310 meters, accessible via the Route de Bellecombe during summer months.

(45.33027, 6.81932)

Q Lac du Lait

Small lake at 2,180 meters located on the high plateau of Termignon along the GR5 trail.

(45.34522, 6.82587)

R Lac du Plan Séry

Lake at 2,370 meters situated in a peat bog environment between the Champagny and Peisey-Nancroix valleys.

(45.46709, 6.81816)

S Lac de la Leisse Dessus

High-altitude lake at 2,488 meters located in the Leisse valley, surrounded by the Grande Motte peaks.

(45.38548, 6.88260)

T Lac de la Roche Ferran

Alpine lake at 2,600 meters located near the Pointe de la Roche Ferran.

(45.36014, 6.79361)

U Lac du Pelve

Glacial lake at 2,500 meters located at the foot of the Glacier du Pelve.

(45.36126, 6.80083)

V Lacs des Roches Blanches

A series of high-altitude lakes at 2,300 meters located in the remote Roche Blanche sector.

(45.37405, 6.96658)

W Lac de Chalet Clou

Small lake at 2,170 meters located near the village of Pralognan-la-Vanoise.

(45.33788, 6.70634)

X Lac Céma

Glacial lake at 2,760 meters, among the highest in the park, located near the Col de l'Iseran.

(45.42290, 7.03804)

DATA SOURCES

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