

France

The Mediterranean Alps **MERCANTOUR**



Southeast of France and bordering Italy, the southern Alps take the name of Mercantour. This mountain range shelters more than 10 000 animal and vegetable species where the recent presence of the wolf testifies to the quality of the environments.

A unique biodiversity linked to its alpine geography, tempered by the influence of the Mediterranean. Its protection is ensured by the Mercantour National Park created in 1979. The park covers an area of 68,500 ha organized around seven stepped valleys from 490 m to 3,143 m above sea level. Far from the light pollution of the Mediterranean Riviera, the National Park campaigns for a limitation of public lighting in the Mercantour and candidate for the label of International Star Sky Reserve.

In this mineral landscape, shaped by glaciers, is the domain of lakes. The most majestic of all, Lake Allos, sits at an altitude of 2,330 m, guarded by immense sandstone towers. It is the largest altitude lake in Europe. Further south, in the Var valley, the erosive force of the rivers have dug amazing and sublime canyons over 300 m high in rocks of intense red.

Traveled by Bronze Age men, the Vallée des Merveilles is home to an archaeological treasure. On its rocks more than 30,000 rock engravings have been carved, hidden during the winter months under a thick snow cover. With the arrival of spring, comes the farrowing season for the chamois, then the summer which consecrates the explosion of colors of the flowers of altitude. With the first autumn frosts, yellow and red decorate the landscapes of the park.

The development of infrastructures dedicated to winter sports and the increased use of the mountains in summer, undermine the fragile balance between preserving biodiversity and human interests, and are the challenges for the future of this natural space.



Haut-Verdon, flowering of the Kuepfer's Buttercup (*Ranunculus kuepferi*), in the background the Allos Lake Towers (2745m).



Haute-Hubaye, Fourane valley, the l'Hubayette river.



Haute-Tinée, sunrise at Col de Pelousette (2730m), the Bonnet Carré (2770m).



Roya and Bevera, Fontanalba valley dotted with thousands of Bronze Age rock carvings, the Jumeaux Lakes (2230m), flowering of the alpenrose or snow-rose (*Rhododendron ferrugineum*).



Haut-Verdon, view from the top of the Petite Tour (2693m) on Lake Allos (2226m) dominated by Mont Pelat (3051m).



Haut-Verdon, reflections of sandstone towers on Lake Allos (2226 m).



Haut-Verdon, reflections of sandstone towers on Lake Allos (2226 m).



Haut-Verdon, the cross of Lake Allos (2226 m), in the background the Tours du Lac.



Roya valley, Casterino valley, flowering in early summer of the alpenrose or snow-rose (*Rhododendron ferrugineum*).



Haut-Verdon, flowering in June of the Küpfers Buttercup (*Ranunculus kuepferi*) around the Allos lake (2226 m).





Haut-Var valley, torrent in the red pelite rocks of the Daluis Gorges.



Valley of Fontanalba, lake of Grenouilles (1997m) dominated by the Mount Bégo (2872m).



Bronze Age rock carvings. Left anthropomorphic figure engraved on the rock called "Sorcerer"





Haute-Tinée, les lacs de Vens, le grand lac supérieur (2325m).



Haut-Verdon, plateau of Lignin lake (2276m), peatlands drained in summer.



Haute-Tinée, the jagged reliefs of the Aiguilles de Tortise (2672m).



Haute-Tinée, panorama sur le Val Stura italien avec le sommet du Monte Oronaye ou Tête de Moïse (3104 m) depuis les Aiguilles de Tortisse (2672m).



Haute-Tinée, l'Arche de Tortisse (2550m) at night lit by moonlight.



Haute-Tinée, the Milky Way seen From the Col de la Bonnette (2802m), the highest road in Europe. In the background, light pollution from the Côte-d'Azur.




Haute-Ubaye, streak of circumpolar stars and the cloud of the Milky Way above the lake and the Tour des Sagnes (2364 m).



Haute-Tinée, the Tortisse Arch (2550 m) at sunrise.

A close-up photograph of a common spotted orchid (Dactylorhiza fuchsii) in sharp focus. The orchid has a tall, slender stem with a dense cluster of small, purple, spotted flowers. The background is a soft-focus field of bright yellow wildflowers under natural light.

Common spotted orchid
(*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*)

A photograph of a mountain house-leek (Sempervivum montanum) growing on a grey, rocky outcrop. The plant has a thick, succulent, green base and a tall, thin stem topped with a cluster of small, pinkish-purple flowers. In the background, a scenic mountain landscape unfolds, featuring a vibrant blue lake (Lac de Lauzanier) nestled in a valley, surrounded by steep, green slopes and distant mountain peaks under a clear blue sky.

The mountain house-
leek or mountain
hens and chicks
(*Sempervivum*
montanum), in the
background the lake
of Lauzanier (2284m)



Haut- Var vallée, Daluis Gorge, Pale Stonecrop (*Sedum sediforme*).



Valley of Roya, valley of Casterino, Gased butterfly or " Pierid of the hawthorn " (*Aporia crataegi*) on a flowers of Martagon or Turk's cap lily (*Lilium martagon*)





Haute-Vésubie, Madone of Fenestre valley, chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) along the lakes of Prals (2280m)



Haut-Verdon, male grown-up Ibex (*Capra ibex*) on the Montagne de l'Avalanche.





Haute-Hubaye, the lake of Lauzanier (2284m)



Roya and Bevera, water plants emerge on the surface of the Long Inférieur Lake (2095m).



Haute-Tinée, Roya valley, a larch (*Larix decidua*) lost in the middle of the fir trees. In autumn the needles of this coniferous tree turn orange-yellow and fall in winter,



Haute-Tinée, Sallevieille valley, at an altitude of 1,700 m during the first autumn frosts, the Roya waterfall is slowly covered with ice.



During the slab, on the grassy slopes of the upper Tinée valley, a deer watches over his harem of hinds.



Haute-Tinée, Roya valley, in autumn the Mélèze (*Larix decidua*) takes on a superb golden ornament.



Haute-Tinée, the Mélèzes forest in the Sallevieille valley.



Haute-Tinée, the parish church of Saint-Dalmas-le-Selvage under the snowflakes.



Haute-Tinée, a fir forest covered by a recent snowfall.



Haute-Tinée, the Tinée river flows in the middle of a valley covered by a heavy snowfall.





Haute-Tinée, the cliffs of Les Aiguilles de Tortisse (2672m).



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