

## VANOISE NATIONAL PARK AND REFUGE.

Rosel is one of the four official entrance points to Vanoise National Park. The building facing you is the 'entrance refuge' (refuge and restaurant). It is a jewel of contemporary mountain architecture. It is a stopping point on the Alps long hiking trail which runs from Lake Geneva to the Mediterranean, but also serves as an information and activity centre for the National Park.



The entrance refuge

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[The VNP is the oldest national park in France. When was it founded ?](#)

- = In 1859 by the Duke of Savoy.
- = In 1953 following the creation of the Tignes dam, engulfing this neighbouring village.
- = In 1963 by the French government.

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## ROSUEL LIFE.

Rosel is a precious place. The people living in the valley often get together here to celebrate the mountain and richness of life in this land of snow. It is the venue for St John's Night bonfires in June, the Feast of the Assumption on 15 August with its costumes and mountain links, and the 'Démontagnée' in early October.

What about during the winter ? It can be reached on cross-country skis, snowshoes or foot to see wild animals in their winter habitat. You can also get here in a sleigh drawn by horses, dogs or reindeer !

[Which animal does not change its coat for the winter ?](#)

- = The fox.
- = The mountain hare.
- = The stoat.

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## PEAKS AND MOUNTAINS.

Until the 16th century, these peaks did not have names : this was a kingdom of rock falls and serac collapses. The word 'mountain' meant 'summer Alpine pasture'. When people started to look to the peaks, they were given the names of the 'mountains' that they overlooked. Situated to the left of the range of peaks, the Saint-Esprit peak is directly above a 'mountain' owned by the Saint Esprit brotherhood. The beautiful 'mountains' were managed using the very old, sustainable system of 'common fruit', a pooling of resources, shepherds, pots and other utensils.

[What is the 'fruit' of a mountain ?](#)

- = Flat stones for building shelters.
- = Blocks of ice for preservation purposes.
- = Beaufort and Tomme cheese.



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## FROM BEARS TO STAGS.

The last bear in Peisey Nancroix was killed in the 1890s. It was as tall as a barn door. Over time some animals have disappeared and others have returned, with the most recent being the stag ! The little fawns are born in May, well hidden among the blueberry shrubs. In September, the bellows of large stags reverberate from one side of the mountain to the other.

[What other animal disappeared from our mountains and was reintroduced by humans ?](#)

- = The chamois, emblematic of these mountains.
- = The ibex, the reason that Vanoise National Park was founded.
- = The marmot, too heavily hunted for a long time.

## LES BETTIÈRES.

A tranquil hamlet surrounded by grassland, but a bold place to live!

The houses date from the 18th century. The danger in this period was the river which swept through and destroyed the entire valley. Today, a lot of its water is used to generate electricity.

Behind this hamlet you will see large boulders that look like a giant's toys strewn across the grass.



Les Bettières

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[What type of forest protects these houses from rock falls ?](#)

- = Mostly spruce.
- = Mostly larch.
- = Mostly pine.

## DUCHES.

A 'Duche' is a spring whose water spreads across a flat area, a rather rare occurrence in the mountains. Before it finds its way, this water often feeds into peatland, a wetland area where plants grow in the water.

These swamps were a danger to shepherds with their soft earth, seemingly bottomless black holes... So which diabolical animal do they resemble ?

A snake, of course ! Moreover, even today the swamp is a refuge for rare vipers, which are excellent swimmers and feed on frogs, insects and small mice.



A Duche

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[How did people protect cattle, sheep and goats from the vipers ?](#)

- = By putting a bell around their necks.
- = By protecting their feet.
- = By smearing them with a foul-smelling repellent.



Beaupraz chapel

## TUFF, CALM AND SUN.

When the chapel was built there was not a single tree in the valley, having all disappeared underground to support the tunnels in the silver mine. Fortunately the mountain dwellers had a better material to use in building the chapel, namely a golden tuff rock called cagneule, a seam of which runs past the hamlet. This is a fairly light type of limestone which is easy to cut, perfect for making the vaulted door, bell tower and winders. It is what gives this chapel – which fits so well in its green surroundings – its warmth and charm !

[When was this chapel built ?](#)

- = 1793
- = 1798
- = 1802

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## A MODEL AVALANCHE.

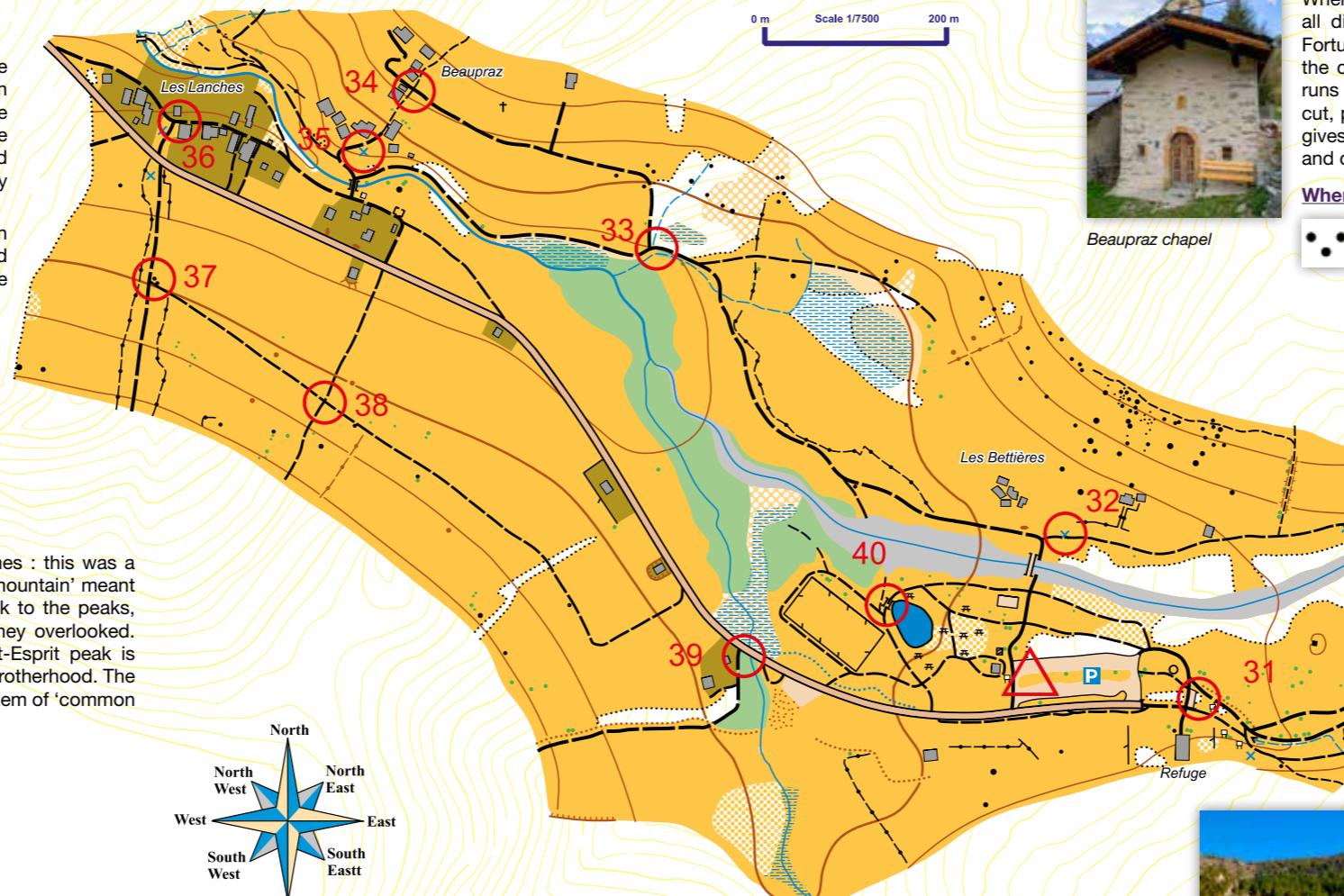
You are looking at the aptly named north face of the Bellecôte, with a drop of 1867 metres between the summit and the hamlet.

An avalanche will flow all the way down this face and hurtle towards the hamlet of Les Lanches. At the bottom of the slope it is trapped in a natural funnel. At the end of this gully, a small hill will often divert the avalanche and save the hamlet – but this is not always the case. In 1995, an avalanche destroyed twelve houses.

[How did the rock to the left of Beaupraz bridge get there ?](#)

- = It is a boulder placed there by a former glacier.
- = It was once above the hamlet but was pushed down by an avalanche, and is what destroyed the houses.
- = It fell down the mountain many centuries ago.

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Midday Ladies

## JUST A PILE OF ROCKS ?

In society of the past, life was so harsh that nothing could be achieved alone. Solidarity meant survival. Some people had beautiful meadows whilst others did not have enough for their animals to graze, so the community set some of the grassland aside for their use. The walls around you separate private, well-cleared plots from the area open to all, which was less well cared for. A wild world shares the riches of this area which is not intensely farmed: birds, weasels, stoats and also children who gorge on its gooseberries, raspberries and strawberries!



The hamlet of Les Lanches

## NINE MONTHS OF WINTER, THREE MONTHS OF HELL.

Halfway between the villages and the Alpine pastures, the hamlet of Les Lanches is a montagnette. Families move in during the spring and split into two groups in mid-June: the first continues a nomadic life with the cows on the Alpine pastures where they make cheese, whilst the second makes hay and looks after the crops. Pastoral life is punctuated by a hundred days of strenuous labour. In the autumn, the only comfortable season, everyone gathers in the montagnette. People and animals are well fed and the barns are filled, before everyone returns to the village.

[Why do the houses have a large hump on the uphill side ?](#)

- = To insulate the house from snowstorms.
- = To strengthen the house's loadbearing wall.
- = It is a 'bend' designed to divert an avalanche.

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- = The sun falls there at midday.
- = They are petrified statues of three climbers from the Midi.
- = From up there, you can see as far as the Côte d'Azur when the weather is clear.

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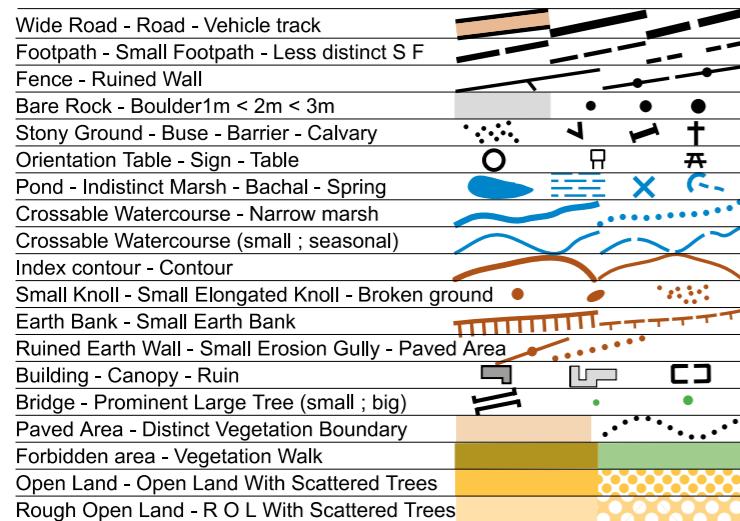
## RULES OF THE GAME



10 places on the map are circled with a number next to them. At each place you will find a wooden post with a punching clip. There is text and a photo offering you information about the site or telling you about a characteristic feature. Punch the question box on your map and compare the punch hole shape to find out the answer to the question. Follow the trail at your own pace and in whatever order you choose, ensuring that you are always respectful of the environment.

HAPPY HIKING !

## LEGEND



## INFORMATIONS

PEISEY-VALLANDRY OFFERS OTHER DISCOVERY TRAILS : A LANDSCAPE READING TRAIL, A PALAIS DE LA MINE TOUR AND A DISCOVERY TRAIL.

PEISEY-VALLANDRY HAS AN OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL GUIDES TO HELP YOU EXPLORE.



VISIT THE TOURIST OFFICE WEBSITE.

TEL : 04 79 07 94 28

DOWNLOADABLE BROCHURE.

Did you enjoy this trail ?  
Visit the website  
[www.cap-orientation.com](http://www.cap-orientation.com)  
to discover more trails  
all over France !

## TRAIL FEATURES :

3.2 km

Duration : 1 hr 30

Difficulty level :  
beginners upwards.

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# PEISEY-VALLANDRY

## STOAT TRACKS



Stoats are very inquisitive and mischievous creatures, and have always lived in this valley. They are equally at home on the edges of forests as they are in human barns. From winter to summer as the animal's coat changes, follow the tracks of this charming guide and investigate our little mountains. Be inquisitive and respectful of your surroundings, and the mountains and their inhabitants will reward you !

