

## Day tours in the southern French Alps

*The Queyras is 650 square kilometres of natural park on the eastern border of France, south of Briançon and to the east of the Ecrins. Its highest village, St Veran, is the highest habitation in Europe at just over 2000m, and there are many peaks over 3000m in the park. In winter there is only one road access to the area via the stunning Gorges du Guil, the two high passes of col d'Izoard and col Agnel both closing from November through to May due to snow cover. The park has 5 small ski resorts, Ceillac, St Veran, Aiguilles, Abries, and Arvieux. These resorts, particularly Ceillac and St Veran, are great starting off points for day tours with single uplift passes available for 4€ to get the first few hundred meters of climbing easily out of the way.*

*The Ecrins National park in the Dauphine Alps culminates in the 4102m Barre des Ecrins. The central region of the park is steep, rocky and glaciated. The southern tip of the park extends into more gently angled terrain without glacial cover which is ideal for ski touring, with classic tours such as the Tête de Vautisse, Grand Pinier and Mourre Froid.*

*To the south of Guillestre lies a chain of mountains between the Durance and Ubaye valleys that doesn't really have a name but is often referred to locally as the Parapillon range with the summit of the same name being its highest point at 2990m, and a great ski tour. With road access up to the Col de Vars and road and lift access up at Crevoux and Les Orres there are numerous day tour possibilities in this area. A day skiing at Crevoux is not to be missed for the powder seekers. This practically unknown resort with only two drag lifts takes you up 950m to a ridgeline from which you can traverse to a good spot and ski virgin powder all the way back to the valley, even days after a snow fall. With lift passes costing less than €15 a day it is also a bargain. Again it is possible to buy a single uplift pass here to gain access to the higher peaks in the area.*

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> February to 7<sup>th</sup> March 2009 (possible to do either week or both)

**Standard:** There is something for everyone here. The vast majority of the touring opportunities are in the middle grades. We can choose tours on a daily basis depending on the weather and how the group is feeling, and can split into more than one group on certain days if there are different goals. The trip is aimed at self sufficient ski tourers who are happy heading off on their own given some local knowledge and directions. This, however, does not preclude the use of a guide if so desired.

**Location:** Guillestre is a small town sandwiched between the Queyras, the Ecrins and the Parapillon range. It is an ideal starting off point for day tours in each of these areas, as well as easy access to resort skiing at Vars, Risoul and Ceillac.

**Accommodation:** Le Chateau in Guillestre is an excellent chambres d'hôtes (B&B) accommodating up to 10 people. Evening meals will be possible on a few nights at Le Chateau, and there are a number of good places to eat in the town centre which is just 200m away on foot.

**Travel:** The nearest airports are Cuneo, Turin and Marseille. Hire cars will be needed for getting to the trail heads each day. Driving out is also an option with the Calais to Guillestre leg taking about 12 hours. It is possible to come by train to the 'Montdauphin' train station either on overnight sleepers from Paris or on Eurostar/TGV to Valance then via normal trains. At Le Chateau we have a 6 seater van that can be used for collecting people from the train station and for getting to the trail heads.

**Equipment:** Avalanche transceiver, shovel and probe are obligatory. Touring skis and bindings, skins, harscheisen. No glacier travel is envisaged so there is no need for glacier travel equipment but it might be worth having crampons and an ice axe if you are hoping to get into some steeper couloirs. Warm clothes,

**Maps and guidebooks:** There is a selection of recommended guidebooks at [alpinebreak.com/guide-books/](http://alpinebreak.com/guide-books/) with the two TopoNeige books by Louis Volle on the French amazon list being the best. Maps for this area are the IGN 1:25,000 series; 3537ET – Guillestre, 3637OT – Mont Viso, 3437ET – Orcieres-Merlette, 3536OT – Briancon. We can also print out specific maps for each day trip using our IGN software.

**Insurance:** You will need suitable rescue and medical insurance for off piste skiing and ski touring. The French sports shop Au Vieux Campeur do a great insurance that covers you for many sports, and has a 'vie privée' option which also covers you for non sporting accidents. You are strongly advised to have cover for third party claims, cancellation and curtailment and loss or damage to equipment.

**Cost:** Accommodation €165.00 per person per week, based on two people sharing a room. This covers the accommodation at Le Chateau with breakfast included. It does not cover travel to Guillestre, evening meals, packed lunches, insurance, lift passes, or any additional food or drink. A budget of €15 to €20 per night to eat out in Guillestre should be sufficient. Bookings for Le Chateau need to be made by mid January at the latest.

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**Links:** [www.alpinebreak.com](http://www.alpinebreak.com), [www.lechateauguillestre.com](http://www.lechateauguillestre.com), [www.skitour.fr](http://www.skitour.fr)