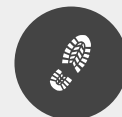


# Tré la Tête Glacier, return by the gorge



CC Pays du Mont-Blanc - Les Contamines-Montjoie



Coucher de soleil sur le glacier (Geoffrey Garcel - CEN 74)



*A day loop on different types of terrain for a variety of landscapes, a pleasure to the eye.*

From the forest to the edge of the glacier, this hike runs through varied environments which will reveal different aspects of the highest nature reserve in France.

## Useful information

Practice : Summer hike

Duration : 6 h

Length : 13.3 km

Trek ascent : 963 m

Difficulty : Medium

Type : Boucle

Themes : Archéologie et histoire, Géologie, Lac et glacier, Point de vue

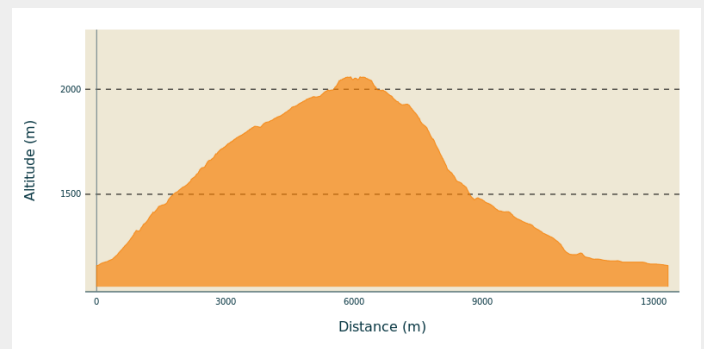
# Trek

**Departure** : Parking « Tré la Tête », les Contamines Montjoie

**Arrival** : Parking Tré la Tête, les Contamines Montjoie

**Cities** : 1. Les Contamines-Montjoie

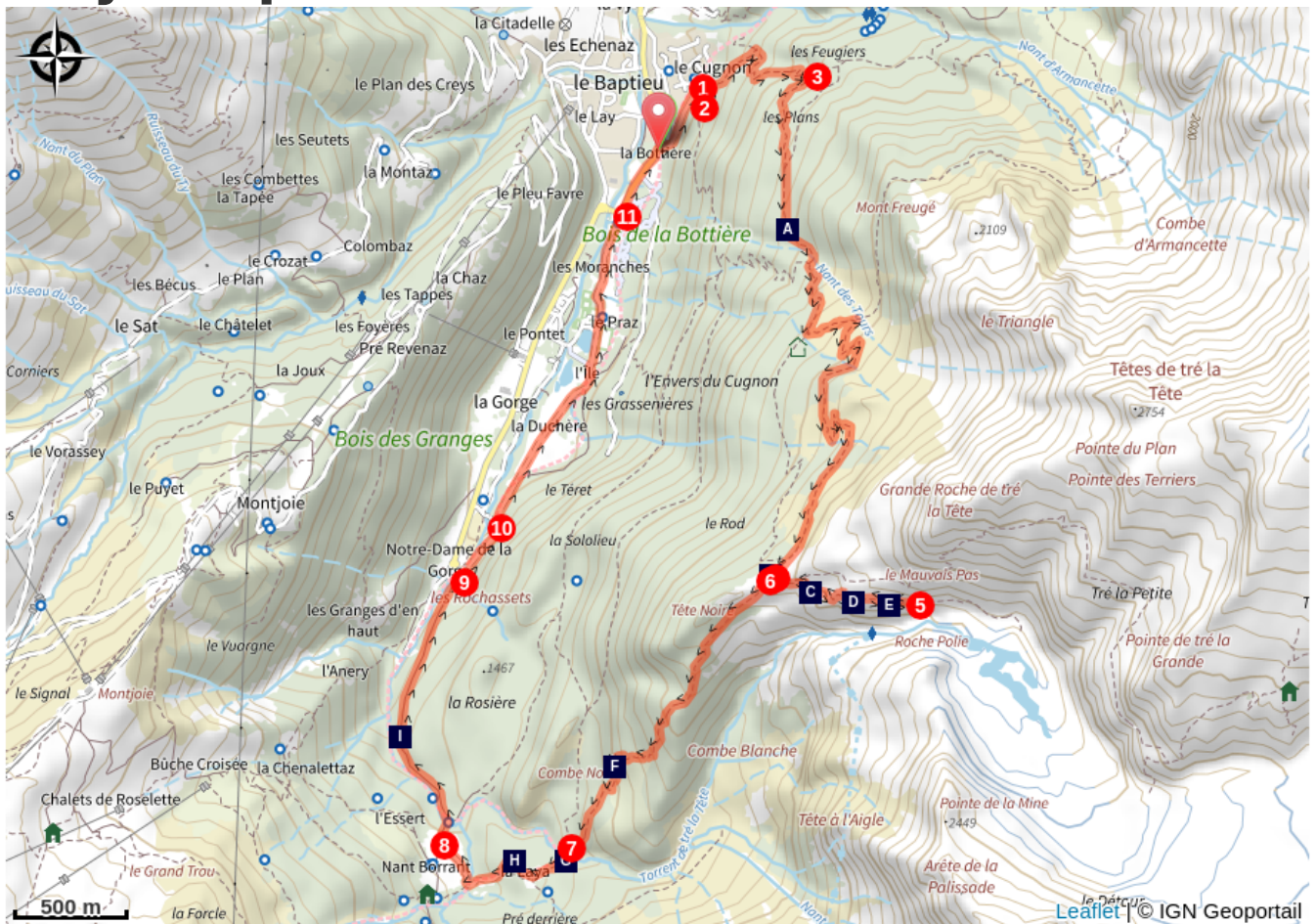
## Altimetric profile












Min elevation 1160 m Max elevation 2059 m

Leave the car park in Contamines-Montjoie and follow the paved road along the edge of the forest. At the junction, take the path on your right signposted "Refuge de Tré-la-Tête". Turn left onto the footpath signposted "Tré-la-Tête par les plans". At the crossroads, follow the Claudius Bernard path towards the refuge. At the refuge, take the left-hand path to the Glacier de Tré-la-Tête. You have arrived. Use the same path to return to the refuge. At the fork in the path, take the left-hand path down. Turn left and cross the bridge opposite the waterfall. Turn right and head back down towards Notre-Dame de la Gorge. Continue straight ahead on the path alongside the stream. Continue straight ahead. The path ends here. Go back up along the paved road to find the car park 150m further down.

# On your path...



-  The Hazel Grouse (A)
-  A glacier and humans (C)
-  Tré-la-tête glacier (E)
-  Combe noire waterfall (G)
-  Rosière boglands (I)
-  Tré-la-Tête refuge (B)
-  World's first under-glacier water supply (D)
-  The Combe noire viewpoint (F)
-  The Alpine Autumn Crocus (H)

# All useful information

## Animaux acceptés

Votre chien est autorisé dans cette zone d'espace naturel. Il est conseillé de le tenir en laisse. À l'approche d'un troupeau, il est obligatoire de lui mettre une laisse. Par sa présence, son odeur et ses déjections, votre chien peut perturber la biodiversité. Sa divagation dans la nature peut avoir des conséquences lourdes pour la faune sauvage et les troupeaux (transmission de germes, stress de la faune sauvage, destruction des couvées au sol). Les chiens sont interdits en cœur de parcs nationaux et dans la plupart des réserves naturelles.

## Advices

This itinerary runs through a nature reserve, please consult the regulations.

## How to come ?

### Transports

Reach Contamines-Monjoie and at the exit of the village, cross the bridge over the Armancette torrent and follow the signs until the Tré-la-Tête car park. The parking is located on the left of the road just before the town exit sign.

### Access

Head for Les Contamines-Monjoie and as you leave the village, cross the bridge over the Armancette stream and follow the signs to the Tré-la-Tête car park. The car park is on the left of the road immediately before the village exit sign.

### Advised parking

Parking Tré la tête

# Environmental sensitive areas

Along your trek, you will go through sensitive areas related to the presence of a specific species or environment. In these areas, an appropriate behaviour allows to contribute to their preservation. For detailed information, specific forms are accessible for each area.

## **Black grouse - winter**

Sensitivity period: January, February, March, April, Decembre

La Combe Blanche est une zone sensible pour la faune.  
Afin de ne pas déranger les animaux, évitez de skier dans les zones arborées.

## **Black grouse - winter**

Sensitivity period: January, February, March, April, Decembre

Les contreforts de Jovet abritent des zones d'hivernage pour la faune : tétras-lyres, chamois, cervidés.

Les zones arborées sont à éviter pour ne pas déranger les animaux. Repérer le couloir unique de descente qui évite les zones de quiétude.

## **Réserve naturelle nationale des Contamines-Montjoie**

Sensitivity period:

Contact: Asters - Conservatoire d'espaces naturels de Haute-Savoie  
[contact@cen-haute-savoie.org](mailto:contact@cen-haute-savoie.org)



# On your path...

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## The Hazel Grouse (A)

It is the smallest and most discreet of the mountain Galliformes species. Being an exclusively forest-dwelling species, it is much less well-known than the Lyre Grouse or the Rock Ptarmigan! Yet it is also important from a biological and scientific point of view: it is an environmental change indicator species. It's quite picky in its needs for vegetation and variety of tree species. Degraded and badly managed forests jeopardise its survival, which is one of the main causes of the species' decline.

Attribution : Geoffrey Garcel - CEN 74

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## Tré-la-Tête refuge (B)

This refuge, situated at an altitude of 1970 m, has a history spanning over a century. Founded in 1907 to accommodate the pioneers of mountaineering, it is now a meeting place for all mountain enthusiasts. Whether you're a mountaineering enthusiast, a hiker on a day trip or a touring mountaineer, this is where your paths may cross. Conveniently located, it offers breathtaking views of the surrounding peaks as well as of the village 900 m below!

Attribution : Geoffrey Garcel - CEN 74

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## A glacier and humans (C)

The Tré-la-Tête glacier is a mountaineering paradise. It is bordered by the legendary peaks of the Mont-Blanc massif, such as the Dômes de Miage and the Aiguille Nord de Tré-la-Tête, the highest point in the Nature Reserve at 3,892m. It is the crossing point for a number of regular and ski-mountaineering routes. Since the end of the nineteenth century, it has played an important role in the evolution of mountaineering.

Attribution : Geoffrey Garcel - CEN 74



## World's first under-glacier water supply (D)

In 1939, Max Waeber, an engineer, secured a world's first under-glacier water source. The captured water is still used to irrigate an artificial lake (Lac de la Girotte, in the Beaufortin region) across ten kilometres of underground tunnels, for the purposes of hydropower generation. In 2011, the Nature Reserve, in partnership with EDF, carried out a programme to dismantle the industrial infrastructure linked to the creation of this water supply (sleeping quarters and cable cars).

Attribution : CEN 74



## Tré-la-tête glacier (E)

This glacier, the name of which means "over the head", is the fourth largest in France! It is being studied in relation to climate change. Its condition has been monitored by the Nature Reserve since 2014, assessing the volume of ice gained or lost. This is known as mass balance. It is 8 km long, and its tongue of ice runs from the Infranchissable pass on the Italian border at an altitude of 3,300 m, right up to the place where you are standing!

Attribution : Geoffrey Garcel - CEN 74



## The Combe noire viewpoint (F)

Make the most of this scenic viewpoint to catch your breath. But be careful, this place is unsafe as the rock is slippery! You overlook the forest and the village of "Combe noire". The name comes from the forest that is almost exclusively covered in dark spruce. From this stunning vantage point, you can see the Rollaz mountain pastures which are part of the GR footpath. From left to right, you can see the Roches rouges, the Roches franches, the Aiguilles de la Pennaz, the Col du Bonhomme, the Rocher du Bonhomme and finally the Tête Nord des Fours.

Attribution : Geoffrey Garcel - CEN 74



## Combe noire waterfall (G)

When you stop at this bridge, you can feel the fresh spray from the Combe Noire waterfall and just imagine that the Tré-la-Tête glacier arrived here in 1870! Since then, the glacier has melted a few hundred metres, but its presence can still be felt through the raging river, which has formed impressive sculptures known as "potholes of giants" as it erodes the rock in a thunderous racket!

Attribution : Geoffrey Garcel - CEN 74



## ☘ The Alpine Autumn Crocus (H)

It's the end of summer... This is the time of year when the Alpine Autumn Crocus blossoms. Its name comes from Colchis in Greece, home to infamous poisoner Medea. This plant contains a highly toxic alkaloid: colchicine. According to the alchemists, this substance, when used in very small doses, could be used to treat rheumatism and episodes of gout.

Attribution : Julien Heuret - CEN 74

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## ☘ Rosière boglands (I)

On your left are the Rosière boglands, but be careful to only admire them while walking along the path, as they are fragile environments and hidden treasures of biodiversity! Tracing its origins from the Ice Age, this boggy area is the result of a glacier erosion which caused water to stagnate. This is the kingdom of carnivorous plants such as the Alpine cattail or the round-leaved sundew...

Attribution : Geoffrey Garcel - CEN 74