

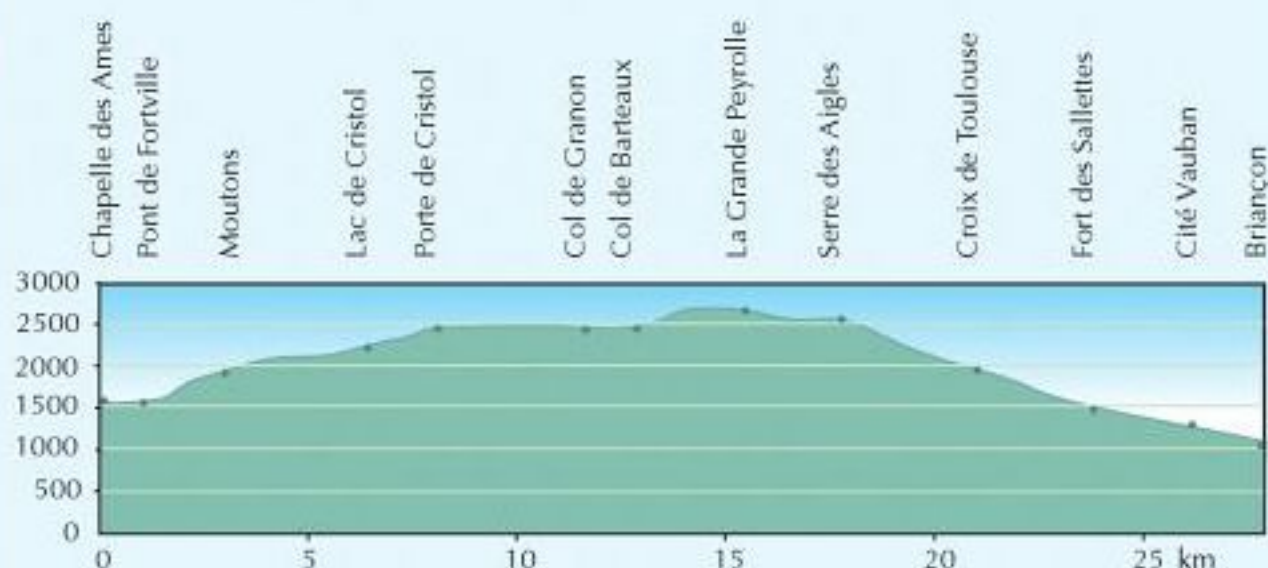
The GR5C, which leaves the main GR5 at the Chapelle des Ames, strives to stay high in the mountains. While much of it is easy, one stretch is exposed and unsuitable for use in very windy weather, or if snow and ice covers the path. This variant route even includes a 'variant' of its own to outflank the rocky crest of the Crête de Peyrolle, but it still leaves a rugged descent. In clear weather this is a splendid walk, highly recommended when compared to the main route, with wonderful and extensive views. A head for heights is an advantage.

Névache is the name for Sallé, Le Cros and other small, conjoined settlements in the Vallée de la Clarée.

Leave the GR5 main route at the **Chapelle des Ames** and follow the GR5C along a road though Sallé (*chambres d'hôte* and restaurant). Turn right along the main road (hotel) to reach Le Cros (hotel). Turn left across the Pont de Fortville and walk straight ahead on a track, then climb through terraced fields into forest. Watch for a path marked to the right, which soon starts zigzagging uphill.

Wider bends feature as the trees thin out, with views of the Vallée de la Clarée. Limestone gives way to quartzite before a junction is reached. Here the GR57 heads left, and the GR5C heads right, so keep right, to cross a shoulder and drop gently among larches to reach the **Ruisseau de Cristol** and a footbridge. Do not cross, but follow the path upstream, leaving dense forest to climb gentle, grassy, sparsely forested slopes to a lovely lake.

2hr **Lac de Cristol 2245m (7365ft).**





Watch carefully for markers, as the route does *not* follow the lakeshore path, but instead turns left just before reaching the lake. Follow the GR5C for the best conditions underfoot, climbing across grassy slopes and a variety of hard sandstone and gritstone to reach a rugged col.

45min **Porte de Cristol 2483m (8146ft)** *View back across the Vallée de la Clarée to the distant Vanoise*

Drop down a short, rugged path and continue straight ahead along a track, signposted for the Col de Granon. Keep left at a junction with another track and climb gently round the slopes of **La Gardiole**. When another junction is reached, keep right and start descending gently. ► Pass above a few buildings to reach a road near a col.

45min **Col de Granon 2413m (7917ft)** *Café; nearby barracks once housed soldiers training for mountain warfare*

Walk down the road past old barracks (water), then turn left down a track signposted for the Crête de Peyrolle. Briefly pass the upper part of a forest, then keep right at a track

The GR5C follows a fine ridge path along the Crête de Peyrolle

Here there is a view from the glaciated Ecrins, to Briançon deep in the valley, with the Col des Ayes framing distant peaks either side of the Ubaye valley.

(**Note** Before reaching the col look out for a variant route signposted to the right – see ‘Variant Avoiding Crête de Peyrolle’, page 196.)

From Croix de la Cime there is a view of the Ecrins, distant Vanoise, and Monte Viso in Italy.

junction. Climb gently towards a col, where the track ends in a turning circle. ◀

30min **Col de Barteaux 2380m (7810ft)**

A well-worn, crunchy quartzite path climbs steeply uphill. Walk along the rugged crest of the **Crête de Peyrolle** – or alongside it, either as the path dictates, or your ability permits. Pass a cross on Croix de la Cime at 2603m (8540ft).

◀ Walk down to a col, still on quartzite, then climb uphill and outflank a dramatic overhanging crest of limestone. The narrow path heads from col to col, rather than summit to summit. After passing **La Grande Peyrolle** and dropping to a col, note the variant route zigzagging up from a steep-sided combe. Keep close to the rocky crest, or even walk along it, to reach the final summit on the ridge, and the last of the extensive views.

1hr 45min **Serre des Aigles 2567m (8422ft)**

The descent is very steep and rocky, so follow the red/white marked path faithfully. The path surface can be bare rock, or loose stones, so take care throughout. After this initial nasty stretch, a better path zigzags down past a few pines to reach a col and a derelict **blockhouse**. Climb past the building on its left-hand side, then follow a well-engineered path downhill. Sometimes it has been cut into the limestone and sometimes it features a built-up edge. The gradient is gentle, but pines press in on both sides at times. Zigzag downhill to a track near a wooden building and transmitter mast. Follow the track down to some ruined stone buildings, then turn left up to a viewpoint.

1hr 15min **Croix de Toulouse 1973m (6437ft)** *View of forts around Briançon, along the valley and up to the Col des Ayes.*

A *via ferrata* drops straight down towards Briançon, but ordinary walkers will follow the path signposted ‘Briançon par le Fort des Salettes’. Zigzag downhill, passing the Font de Bon Repos on one bend (water). One minute there are views to the Col de Montgenèvre, then there are views between

the pines of Briançon. Eventually the zigzag path lands beside a fort.

45min **Fort des Salettes 1452m (4764ft)**

Occasionally open for visits; view of other forts around Briançon

Walk down a track towards a cliff used by rock climbers. Watch for a path down to the left, then continue straight down a track. Walk down a minor road to reach a busy main road. Cross over to reach fortified ramparts near the Porte de Pignerol.

15min **Cité Vauban 1330m (4365ft)** *All services, being part of Briançon*

The GR5C doesn't pass through the ramparts, but turns right and follows them downhill to the **Porte d'Embrun**, where it rejoins the main GR5. Continue down the Chemin Vieux, then left again after a school, down a stepped path on a well-wooded slope. Watch for red/white markers, or if a wrong turning is made, simply follow the **Durance Rivière** downstream. Enter a dirt car park and turn left to cross a bridge. Turn right through another car park to reach a road junction and roundabout. Turn left to start climbing the Col de l'Izoard road, but after the footway runs out, turn right down another road, which leads to a road junction and roundabout near the railway station.

