

# Briançon / L'Argentière-la-Bessée

## La Durance à vélo

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**Départ**  
Briançon**Arrivée**  
L'Argentière-la-Bessée**Durée**  
1 h 25 min**Distance**  
21,28 Km**Niveau**  
I cycle often**Thématique**  
Mountains, Canals &  
intimate rivers

The dramatic town of Briançon and its Vauban Citadel, perched at over 1,300m in altitude, cry out to be explored before you set off on your cycling adventure. In the immediate Briançonnais area, there are several strategic forts on the surrounding heights, signalling the historical importance of the area, that you can reach quite easily by foot. After exploring the area, it's time to get on your bike! Heading south, the Durance River, your companion for this whole cycling trip, makes its presence felt, notably via the impressive gorges it has carved out down the millennia. Riding along, you'll follow its rapids and cross its waters, rewarded with splendid panoramic views. Once you reach Les Vigneaux, you'll have tackled this stage's climbs, so enjoy the well-deserved descent beside the Gyrone, a wild torrent guiding you down to L'Argentière.

## The cycle route

Cycling out from Briançon, enjoy a gentle start, along a cycle path following the east bank of the Durance River. Next, branch off towards Villard-Saint-Pancrace to join the D36 road, known as the Route des Espagnols, along which you descend gradually to Saint-Martin-de-Queyrières. A short stretch on the larger N94 road then enables you to cross the Durance Valley to reach the river's west bank. From here, you climb a splendid road, the D4, dominating the spectacular Durance Gorges. Take care, as this portion of the stage is narrow as well as being shared with motorized traffic. Continue on to Les Vigneaux, after which there's a gentle descent, running beside the Gyrone River, to L'Argentière-la-Bessée, a little riverside town at the foot of the magnificent Écrins Range.

## Tourist offices

- [Serre-Chevalier Vallée Briançon](#) - 04 92 24 98 98
- [Hautes Vallées](#) : secteur Izoard - 06 07 07 31 08
- [Bureau d'information touristique du Pays des Écrins](#) : 23 rue de la République, 05120 L'Argentière-la-Bessée - 04 92 23 03 11

## SNCF train stations and services

- **Briançon train station** - terminus of several lines, including :
  - Regional train lines (TER) : [Briançon - Marseille](#) ; [Briançon - Valence](#) ; [Briançon - Grenoble](#)
  - [Intercités de Nuit \(night train\) : Paris-Austerlitz → Briançon](#) → With sleeping carriages offering bunk beds (couchettes) and spaces for bikes (you must book your seat(s) and space for bike(s) in advance)
- **L'Argentière Les Écrins train station**
  - [Line TER 61](#)
  - [Intercités de Nuit : Paris-Austerlitz → Briançon](#) → With sleeping carriages offering bunk beds (couchettes) and spaces for bikes (you must book your seat(s) and space for bike(s) in advance).

→ The night train arrives early in the morning, ideal for

*starting out on your cycling adventure at the coolest part of the day, having slept well on board the train.*

### **Don't miss**

- **Briançon Cité Vauban**: the historic town centre, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its fantastic fortifications designed by Louis XIV's exceptional military architect, Vauban; the Maison du Parc National des Écrins, a centre presenting the major Alpine range of the Écrins, beside which Briançon stands; the town's frescoes as well as its unique military heritage.
- **Pont d'Asfeld & Fort des Têtes**: an extraordinary single-arch bridge just below Briançon offering breathtaking views down on the Durance River; plus, you can reach the Fort des Têtes from here by foot for a warm-up before you start cycling.
- **Parc de la Schappe**: a green haven below the historic, ramparted centre of Briançon, public gardens providing a great place for a refreshing stop before you cycle off.
- **Gorges de la Durance**: the road passing on high through these gorges offers stunning views of the Durance Valley, on what is one of the most spectacular stretches along this whole cycle route.
- **Les Vigneaux**: a charming village located mid-slope above the confluence of the Durance and Gyrone Rivers, at the entrance to the Vallouise Valley marked by soaring peaks.
- **Église Saint-Laurent des Vigneaux**: a church with remarkable 15th-century frescoes, accessed directly from the road.
- **L'Argentière-la-Bessée**: a gateway into the Parc National des Écrins, a French national park; the Plan d'eau, or lake; the section for white-water rafting; hiking trails (including to the Fournel Valley and the Deslioures Reserve); the former silver mine open to visitors; all told, a lively, practical stop, with train station, services and accommodation suitable for cyclists.

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This topographic map shows the area around Argentière-les-Ecrins. The Durance river flows through the center. Key locations include Argentière-les-Ecrins, Le Plan d'Argue, La Bessée du Milieu, and La Bessée Basse. The map also shows the Parc national des Ecrins (aire d'adhésion) to the east. Various roads are marked, including the N 94 and the D100. The map includes contour lines indicating elevation, with peaks reaching up to 1500m. The area is characterized by green hills and a network of roads and paths.