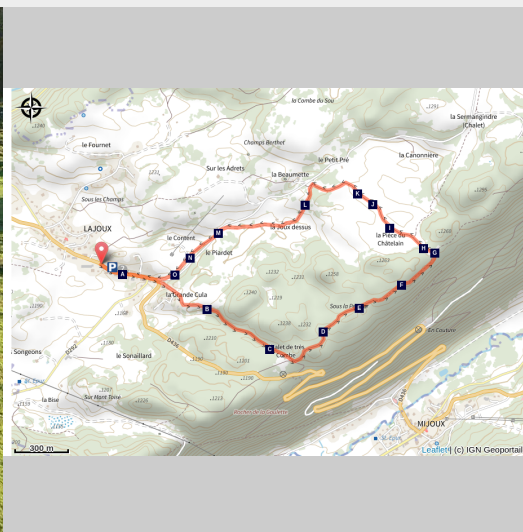
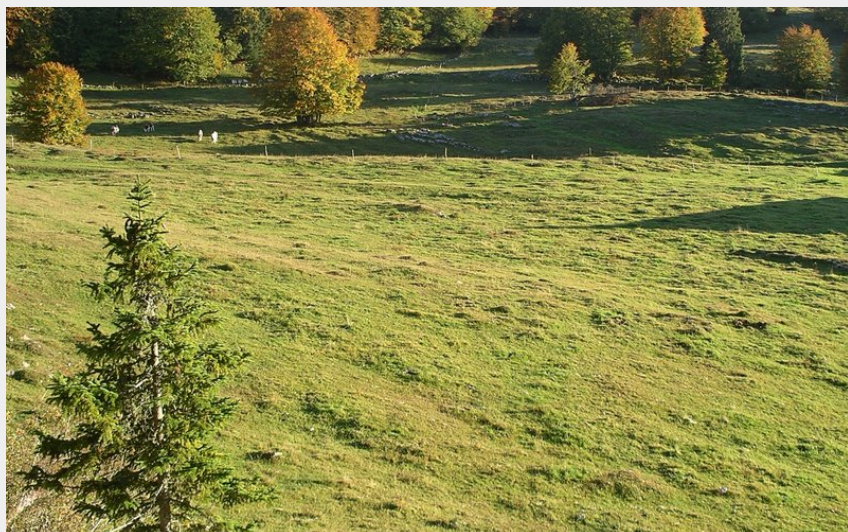
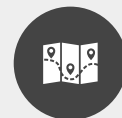


# Massacre Forest trail

Haut-Jura Saint-Claude - Lajoux



Combe de Lajoux (PNRHJ / Philippe Andlauer)

This hike unfolds in the heart of the High Combes, the highest plateaux of the Jura mountain range, which were once entirely covered by forest.

The former clearings, profiting subsistence farming and nowadays organic cheese production, have opened the way for large spaces with an extremely rich flora. In spring, the crocuses open the ball, quickly followed by spring gentian, elder-flowered orchids and Lady's Mantle.

## Useful information

Practice : Nature trail

Duration : 2 h

Length : 4.9 km

Trek ascent : 118 m

Difficulty : Easy




Type : Circular

Themes : Fauna – Flora, History & heritage

# Trek

Departure : Maison du Parc in Lajoux

Arrival : Maison du Parc in Lajoux

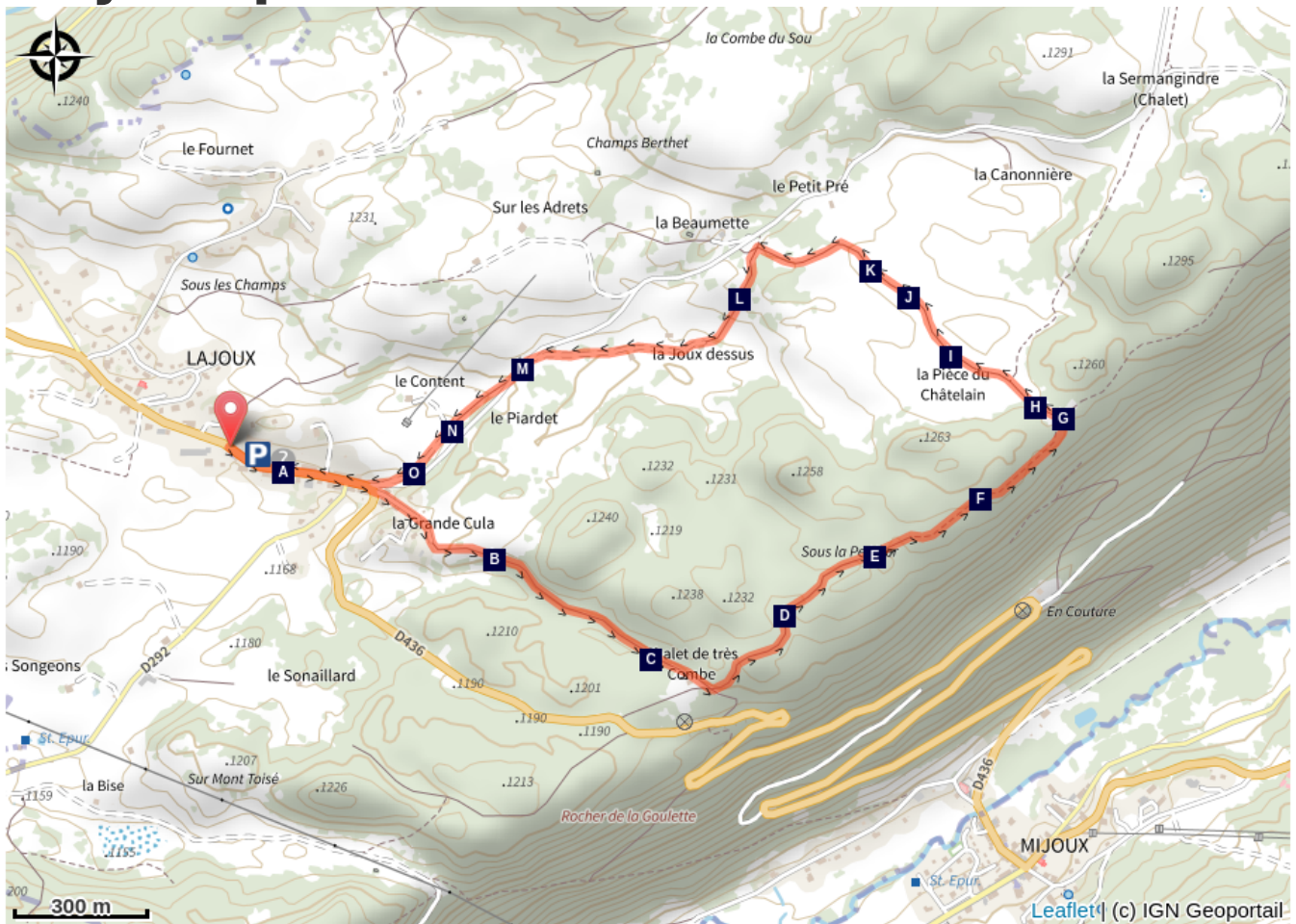
Markings :  GR® (Long distance)  GTJ Pédestre (Jura cross-country hiking route)  
 PR® (Walking & hiking trail)

From **LAJOUX**, the trail cuts through the village towards Mijoux (white and red waymarking), heading past the front of the Maison du Parc. At **Route Royale**, the road ascends steeply and reaches a pasture (MTB path). The path continues pleasantly until it reaches **Trécombe**.

Branch off to your left (yellow waymarking) on a forest path that is rocky, muddy and hilly. Exit through the pasture and descend the combe to the left on a grassy path. Continue on this path, leaving the intersection at **La Pièce du Châtelain** to your right and heading to **Le Petit Pré** (white and red waymarking).

The grassy and later stony path (yellow waymarking) descends to your left, and heads past the farms in Sur la Joux before coming to “route du Massacre”. Follow the road to your left for 50 m before joining up with **Route Royale** and **LAJOUX** via the path just under the road.

# On your path...



The Maison du Parc (A)

Route Royale (Royal Road), Route  
du Sel (Salt Road) (C)

The song thrush (E)

Thousands of interrelated species  
(G)

The western capercaillie (I)

Cabins in the middle of pastures  
(K)

Well-protected wealth (M)

Floral diversity in natural prairies  
(O)

In the middle of the flowers, the  
great yellow gentian (B)

Selection forests (D)

High forests (F)

Low dry-stone walls (H)

What is grown must grow through  
heritage (J)

Wooded meadows and rocks (L)

Mortmain, the serfdom of abbeys  
(N)

# All useful information

## **Advices**

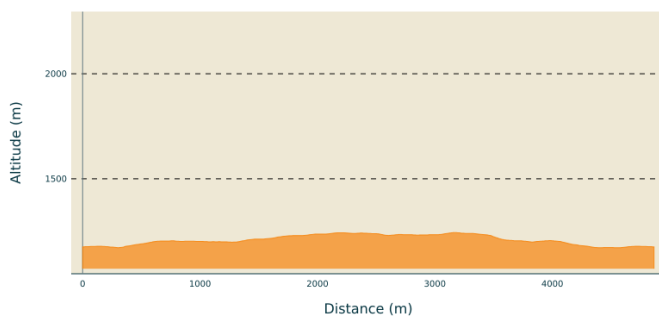
This trail passes through pastures with livestock and forest paths. To respect the owners and farmers granting you passage, and for the security of livestock and wild fauna, we ask that you remain on the waymarked paths.

Use the adapted passageways to get across fencing and be sure to close gateways behind you. Lastly, please keep your dog on a lead if you have one.

Wild flowers are beautiful, they may be rare and protected and often wilt quickly. Do not pick them! They will delight the next hikers.

In case of forest works (felling, skidding, etc.), for your safety, know when to stop and turn around.

## **Altimetric profile**



Min elevation 1172 m  
Max elevation 1244 m

## **Transports**

To visit and get about in the High-Jura, visit [www.reshaut-jura.fr](http://www.reshaut-jura.fr), the eco-mobility portal listing all means of transport within the Park.

## **Access**

20 km east of Saint-Claude via the D 436.

## **Advised parking**

At the centre of the village, near the Maison du Parc and the Information Point.

## **i** Information desks

Maison du Parc  
29, Le Village, 39310 Lajoux  
parc@parc-haut-jura.fr  
Tel : 03 84 34 12 30  
<http://www.parc-haut-jura.fr>



Tourist information centre - Haut-Jura  
Saint-Claude  
3 place de l'Abbaye, 39200 Saint-  
Claude  
Tel : +33 (0)3 84 45 34 24  
<https://www.haut-jura-saint-claude.com/>



# On your path...

---



## The Maison du Parc (A)

The Maison du Parc, which serves as head office for the High-Jura Regional Natural Park, has remarkable architecture and shingled facades. It offers visitors a chance to discover the region through exhibits, projections and a tour of a “Grenier-fort” (a strong attic). The exhibit takes visitors through each of the aspects of the High-Jura, in a colourful, modern and interactive setting: landscapes, nature, craftsmanship and industries, tourism, agriculture and forestry. An acoustic stroll offers an unexpected, poetic and vivid opportunity to submerge oneself into nature in the High-Jura through its exceptional sounds. Finally, two remarkable and recent films on landscapes complete and illustrate the visit: one on the geology of the Jura massif and the other on peat bogs.

Attribution : PNRHJ / Patricia Louvrier

---



## In the middle of the flowers, the great yellow gentian (B)

Typical of these environments, the great yellow gentian will be by your side every step of this hike. A fun fact: if you squash the gentian’s fruit between your fingers, do you recognise the smell? It smells of peas.

Attribution : PNRHJ / Jean Claude Marchand

---



## Route Royale (Royal Road), Route du Sel (Salt Road) (C)

The road you are on is called “Route Royale” (Royal Road) or “Route du Sel” (Salt Road), which once linked Saint-Claude to Geneva via Mijoux and Gex. At the time, the Jura would sell salt from Lons-le-Saunier to Switzerland. The road was built in 1742 by “corvées”: taxes paid in days of work.

The narrow “Route Royale” was deemed too dangerous due to its short steep bends and was replaced during the early 20th century by the current road between Lajoux and the La Faucille pass.

Attribution : PNRHJ / Gilles Prost



## Selection forests (D)

How beautiful and natural are the High-Jura forests? Did we say natural? Well not entirely: they bear the mark of Man, who has exploited these lands for centuries. Here, forests are “managed”: mature trees are harvested first, a diverse range of species and ages are preserved and the forest regenerates by itself. Local knowledge is used to serve a diverse range of wood activities (carpentry, construction, cheese boxes, shingles, toys, firewood, etc.).

Attribution : PNRHJ / Léo Poudré

---



## The song thrush (E)

There’s no approaching a forest on a spring morning without hearing the song thrush. Its loud chant is essentially based on short musical patterns that it repeats two or three times. It builds its nests in forked branches.

Attribution : Fabrice Croset

---



## High forests (F)

Here, you are at an altitude of 1200 metres. Altitude decides which trees are found in the forest, based on each species’ preference. The two main coniferous trees in this forest are the spruce and the pine tree. A few small details set these trees apart. Can you tell which is which? The spruce has brown bark and round needles, whilst the pine tree has a greyer trunk with flat and vivid green needles.

Attribution : PNRHJ / Gilles Prost

---



## Thousands of interrelated species (G)

Red ant nests are easy to spot in this clearing. It is said that up to 2000 insect species can live in these nests. Some use the ant nest without causing any damage, whilst others are parasites. This mound of twigs also serves as a pantry to the black woodpecker who feeds on ants. This same bird bores holes into tree trunks in the search of larvae. When these holes are abandoned by the woodpecker, the boreal owl uses them as a temporary home.

Attribution : PNRHJ / Gilles Prost



## Low dry-stone walls (H)

Low dry-stone walls have outlined Jura landscapes for centuries. They set out the limits for plots of land, mark the frontier between France and Switzerland, border hay fields or vegetable plots and flank the “vies” (lanes). Built without any binding agent, these dry-stone walls are constructed according to ancestral building practices. Now typical features of these landscapes, they are also home to a remarkably diverse fauna and flora.

Attribution : PNRHJ / Gilles Prost

---



## The western capercaillie (I)

Further north, the Forêt du Massacre (Massacre forest) is home to one of the High-Jura’s most iconic birds: the western capercaillie. A sign of the diversity of high forests, this bird - also known as the wood grouse - is omnipresent here. The male favours old forests, while the female, who moves around more, prefers to spend her winters in bushy areas and raise her young in clearings. This bird is particularly sensitive to disturbances in the winter. There isn’t much chance of seeing one, but if you do, be sure to stay quiet and make the most of this extraordinary moment.

Attribution : PNRHJ / Léo Poudré

---

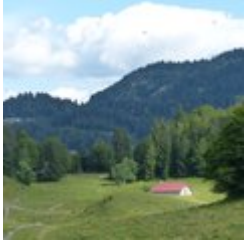


## What is grown must grow through heritage (J)

During the 19th century, pastures held more value than woods. Dividing land at each change in generation would have led to these lands being progressively split up until they lost all value. For this reason, families in the High-Jura found an original legal arrangement to share inheritance without dividing plots of land: “what is grown must grow”. With what is grown being the trees, and what must grow being the grass that is harvested as hay or that is grazed on every year.

Attribution : PNRHJ / Gilles Prost





### Cabins in the middle of pastures (K)

When the forests started being cleared during the 12th century, driven by the monks of the Saint-Claude abbey, residents of the High-Jura opened-up the High Combes. They created vast areas for grazing, in which they built cabins useful for milking in the summer. The cabin to your right, at the bottom of the combe below the road, is called the “Cannonière”. Its architecture is typical of cabins in this region. It is one of the rare examples that is still used for agricultural purposes. Here, pastures are used by Montbeliarde cows, who produce milk for cheese.

Attribution : PNRHJ / Gilles Prost

---



### Wooded meadows and rocks (L)

You are now between a pasture and a forest, which is typically known here as a wooded meadow. Typical of the High-Jura landscape, the preservation of these environments is closely tied to grazing habits and they tend to close up as soon as grazing decreases.

Take a few minutes to also notice how rocks have been colonised by pioneer plants. Through the gradual appearance of lichen and moss in the forest, this wooded meadow provides a summary of how landscapes have evolved.

Attribution : PNRHJ / Philippe Andlauer

---



### Well-protected wealth (M)

To the left of your path, you will see a “grenier fort”, or a strong attic, set back from the main house. What is in there today, no one knows. But do feel free to visit the strong attic of the Maison du Parc in Lajoux. The keys alone are worth the detour!

Attribution : PNRHJ / Gilles Prost



## Mortmain, the serfdom of abbeys (N)

The Haute-Joux conquest started here in the 5th century. During the 15th century, a type of serfdom imposed by the very powerful Saint-Claude abbey forced families to stay under the same roof: this was called mortmain.

In a certain way, mortmain was the start of craftsmanship at home, as to leave for work in the city was to risk losing family property.

Attribution : PNRHJ / Gilles Prost

---

## Floral diversity in natural prairies (O)

The prairies stretching out before you are one of the High-Jura's treasures. Here, hayfields contain a wide range of plants. Never laboured or sown, most prairies in the region are natural.