

DISCOVER L'EPINE. HAUTES ALPES

A panoramic lookout

From the car park and the Auberge des Baronniees, if you go up towards the village and the top of the hill (10 min walk), you reach a tower dominating the village, on the location of the old castle. A vestige of a windmill (very rare in the area) built after the Revolution, it has been converted into a pigeon house.

The eye embraces nearly the entire territory ... provided you fancy the mountain pastures located behind the northern slope and which lead to Le Duffre (1757m), the "top of Baronniees". You will enjoy the patchwork of the fields, the course of the river Blème and its many torrents, the network of the roads and paths, the hamlets and isolated farms.

On the *adret* side (exposed to the sun), the wooded slopes (oaks and pines) climb up to Bonnet Rouge, a beautiful destination for the hikers (1645m). On the *ubac* side (north-facing slope), the pretty road winds up and reaches the lavenders fields and Le Grand Bois.

Turning East, you will see also the *roubines* – dark blue marls, rich in fossils we call "wolf's teeth", and, further, beyond the Gorges of Montclus to the white cliffs on the other bank of Buëch. Westwards, the landscape opens on the sunny valley of Rosans.



Facing South, your eye will plunge down onto the roofs of the village, built on the south and sunny side of this mound standing in the middle of the valley. In the XII-XIIIth century, for better protection, the inhabitants settled down at the foot of the castle - a simple dungeon - and encircled their village with a wall closed by three doors, forming a characteristic shape in *buttonhole*. Only does remain the oriental door, in a semi-broken bow.

A village "of character"

The situation of the village determines the form of the houses. Narrow, sticking to each other, built in height, they have several floors and levels of entrances: stable or cellar on the ground floor, a floor in the middle - stores or hay - and the housing floor opening on the street. Streets follow the wall lines and communicate with each other by *andronees* - covered passages or staircases.

In the heart of the village, on the place where people formerly played real tennis, the parochial church, reconstructed in the XIXth century after the collapse of its vault, faces the former presbytery.

At east end, a chapel of the XIIth century, of Provençal Romanic style, is dedicated to Saint Sebastian, the protector against epidemics, and where from the travelers suspected to be vector were checked and taken away.

From 1562 to the Edict of Nantes in 1598, eight civil religion wars destroyed the country, the tower-castle, the walls and the churches and the village was set on fire. The reconstruction was laborious throughout the XVIIth century and the castle was replaced by a seigniorial house.



On the former path to Serres, beyond the Cemetery, an XVIIth Oratory is dedicated to the Virgin. A survival of a pre-Christian water worship, it was, in case of droughts, the place of ceremonies to call upon rain and of belief in eye diseases therapeutic. As recently as a few decades ago, processions used to go there regularly.



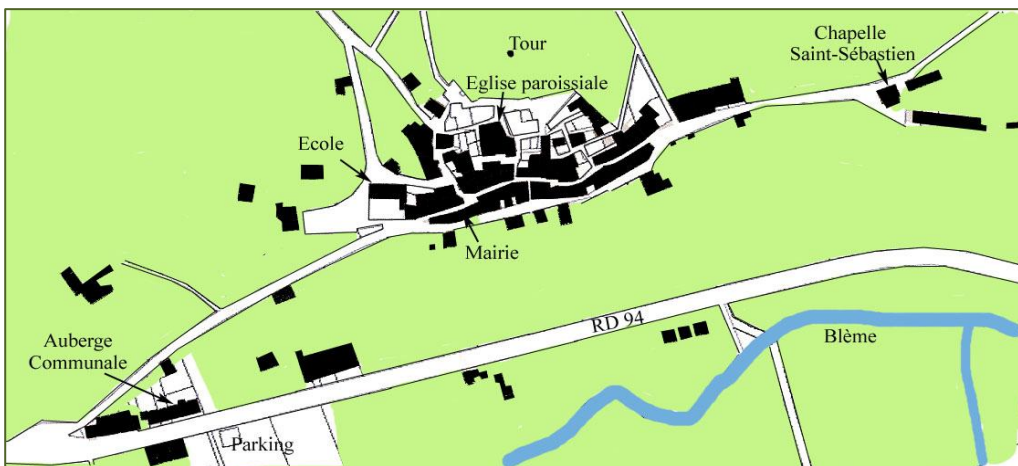
Wandering among streets and paths, you'll fall across two fountains/trough/washing basin, pigeon houses and several wrought iron calvaries of the XIXth.

A place inhabited for 8000 years

The territory holds numerous sites of prehistoric settlement - palaeolithic and bronze ages - as well as tracks of constructions and graves of the Gallo-Roman period.

In the hamlet of L'Eglise (1km northwest of the village), on the site of a gallo-roman villa, a clunisian priory was built in the year 988 and endowed with an impressive church of Provençal Romanic style, Notre-Dame of Beaulieu. Only are left some stones covered by thorns.

L'Epine counted up to 700 inhabitants by the middle of the XIXth century. Struck by the drift from the land, then by the Great War heavy losses, the community underwent a strong depopulation until 1980 (141 inhabitants). But it tends to revive and its population now reaches 200 inhabitants.



A farming-based economy

The community used to live on agricultural and pastoral activities, based on food-producing, until the upheavals caused by the arrival of the railroad in the valley of Buëch. During the XXth century, farming got specialized in lavender and cereals culture as well as in sheep breeding. Today, eight farmers are in activity.

A fair for 400 years

If you are in the region on September 17th, you can participate in the *Squash Fair* which exists for more than four centuries. In 1596, Henry the IVth granted us the right to hold fairs three times a year, of which that of September is still vivid and very busy.

A recognized félibre

L'Epine is the birth place of Father Pascal (1848-1932), first writer and main author of texts in alpine Provençal dialect, a friend of Frédéric Mistral and the founder of the Félibre Society, the *Escola de la Mountagno*. A plate indicates its native house, situated at the east end of the village.

A vivid landscape

On hillsides, a rich and varied flora stages from Mediterranean to alpine type. You can discover it by walking on the path of a discovery path (**chemin d'interprétation**) which starts at the Auberge car park. The fauna also is very diverse, from big mammals such as boars, roe and deers to migratory birds - thrushes, quails, woodcocks, and pigeons - and the predators. Thus, it is a favorite place for hunters, a traditional practice. The area is crossed by numerous hiking trails which allow discovering the landscapes and the built heritage.



L'AUBERGE DES BARONNIES

café-restaurant chambres d'hôtes

The chef William and Julie, who manage it since July 2016, the municipality of L'Epine who created and restored it, will be happy to welcome you.

<http://www.aubergedesbaronnies.fr>



INFORMATION

Office de Tourisme de Serres.

Mairie de l'Epine, Grand rue.

<http://www.mairielepine-hautesalpes.com>

<http://www.ecobalade.fr/balade/Balade-de-l-Epine-Sentier-Decouverte-Serrois>

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