



# TOPOONYMY

## To name is to know

Toponymy is the linguistic study of place names and goes hand in hand with the discovery and exploration of the massifs.

Certain place names go back to the times of the first human occupation. "Alpes", the first example we find is Celtic and gives its name to the chain of mountains. Derivatives include "Aplettaaz", "Aplette" or "Arpette". It describes the high altitude pastures which local populations soon came to value.

Place names can reflect the close-nit relationship of a population with their environment:

- Accidents of relief: l'Aiguille Percée (eye of the needle), la Balme (rock shelter, a pre-Roman word meaning cave or crevice), la Grande Parei (from the old French Perei: for "Paroi" meaning wall or face), the Col de la Leisse (a mixture of patois and Latin: meaning the summit is above), the Plan Clapey (from the Germanic root "Klap": a heap of rocks), the Grande Casse (the name of the summit with its huge south-facing scree slopes comes from the Maurienne patois word "Cassa" which describes a mass of fallen rocks).

- The existence of impressive rocks: the Rocher Blanc (White Rock), the l'Aiguille Noire (Black Needle), the Terres Rouges (Red Earth), the Tufs or Tovièvre (from the Latin\* "tufaria": tuff quarry).

- Terms which accentuate the position or situation of a place: la Reculaz (Retreat), the Combes d'Amont (Upstream Valley), Lognan (from the Latin "longanium": far).

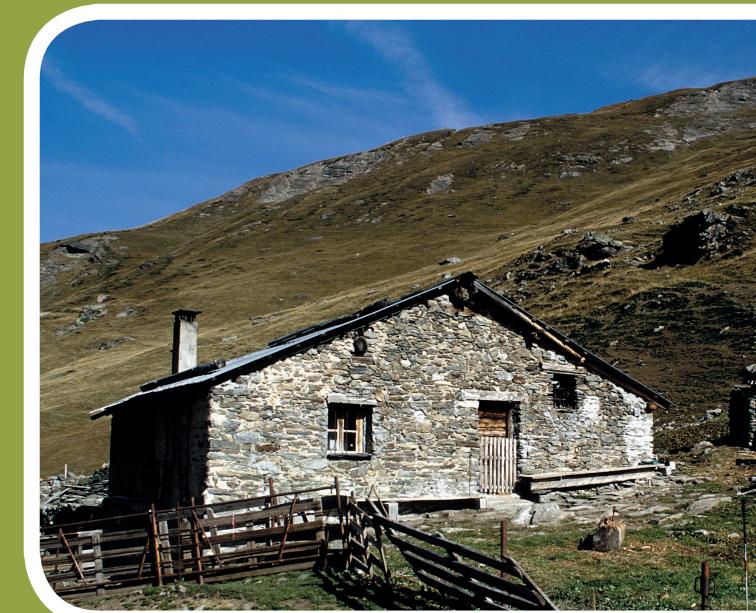
Climatic and hydrological references include: the Combe du Glaçon (Ice Valley, today enjoyed by ice climbers), Le Nant Cruet (from the Celtic "Nanto" which describes a stream and the patois word "croêt": small), Le Lavachet (from the old French "avalier" (swallow), "descendre" (descend): sloping place.



Walk 24

# NAZONDE

(1,880 m)



- Place names linked to particular flora or fauna: Plan du Genève (Genevieve Plain), the Grapillon des Merles (Blackbird Grapillon), the Rochers du Génépy (Genepy Rocks), the Pointe des Plates des Chamois (Chamois Peak), les Boisses (from the Latin "buxéa", "buxus": boxwood or wood; a place planted with boxwood or just woodland), les Brévières (not necessarily from the Latin "berberia": sheep pasture, but perhaps a form of "brucaria": heather), Orsières (from the Latin "ursaria": a place frequented by bears), the Bois de la Laye (from "aya": wood, coppice, forest).

- Place names linked to human activity: the Chargeur (Loader; where wood or hay is loaded), the Balme du Menuisier (Carpenter's Rock Shelter), Chavonnes (from the Latin "Capanna": a hut and the surrounding properties).

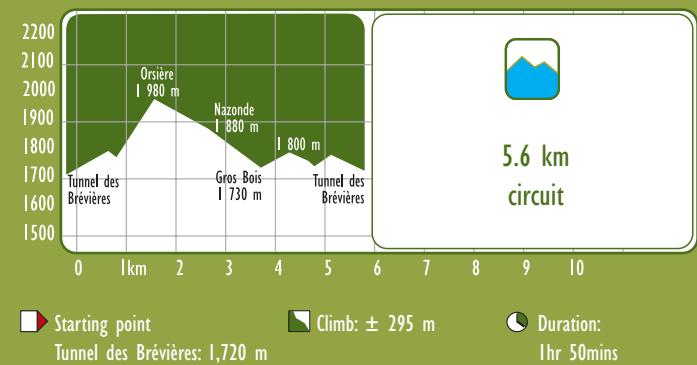
All these place names were found in the area of Tignes, the only place using this name in the whole of France. Of Latin origin, Tignes could be the name of the owner of villas (as in rural estates from Roman times); the oldest known name of the settlement is Tinis (1273), deriving from the name Tinius.

\* Latin root: spoken or written after the fall of the Roman Empire and during the Middle Ages.

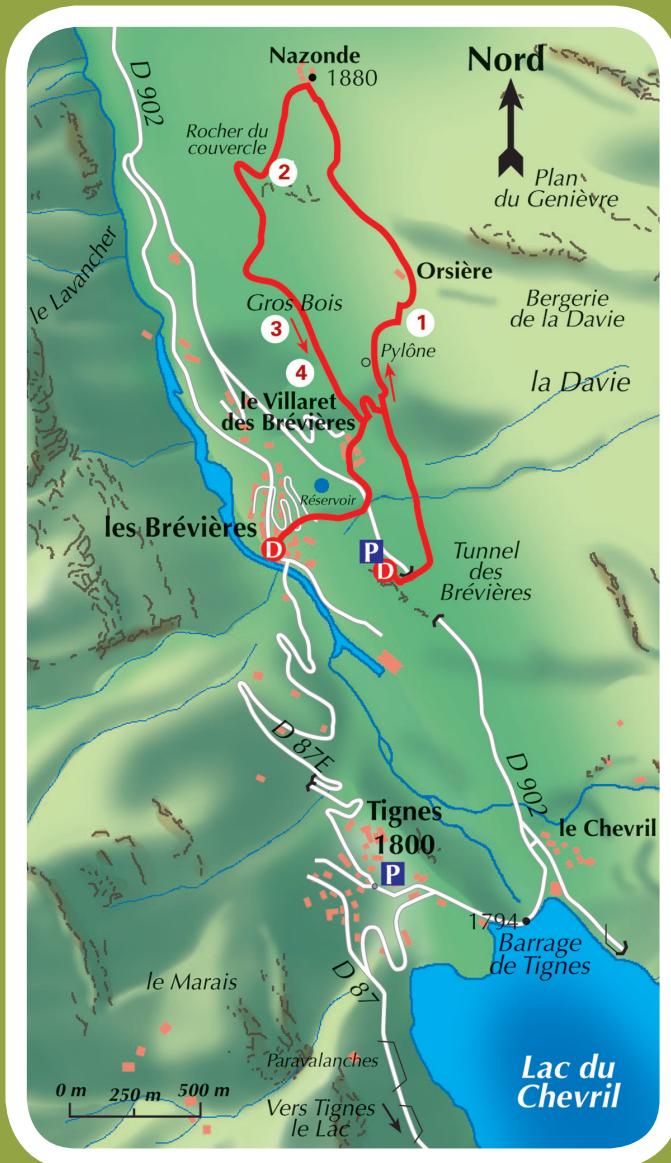
Text: Dominique Juin

## HIGHLIGHTS:

A walk which includes visible signs of times gone by, between forest and pasture in the most unspoilt part of Tignes.



# Walk 24 NAZONDE



## STARTING POINT:

- Driving from Tignes le Lac, follow the D87 until you reach the dam. At the junction with the D902, turn left towards Bourg-Saint-Maurice. Drive for about one kilometre and park on the left straight after the les Brévières tunnel in the large lay-by.
- From les Brévières, the path starts near the church opposite the post office. It goes past old stone houses, near a public garden and climbs up between two apartment buildings. After 15 minutes, you will cross the D902. The path continues and after 5 minutes you will arrive at Villaret des Brévières.

## DURATION:

### Circuit:

- From the les Brévières tunnel: 1hr 50mins
- From les Brévières: 2hrs 30mins

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

Flocks of sheep, dogs must be kept on a lead.  
Take extra care when walking on the D902 road.

*At the turn of the century, several families still lived in Villaret des Brévières. About twenty children would go to the school 180 m lower down at les Brévières. Those children who didn't have family there to look after them at lunchtime had to make the journey twice a day.*

## ROUTE:

### Starting Point:

- From the les Brévières tunnel, take the path which starts on the same side as the car park and goes over the tunnel. At the first fork in the path, turn left towards "Nazonde". At the next intersection, do not go down towards the village, continue straight on towards Nazonde. Climb steadily up to the EDF pylon. Here you join up with the route from les Brévières.
- In Villaret des Brévières, turn left, then after 25 m turn right onto the path. From the beginning, the first three hundred metres are steep, winding and out in the open. Go over three divisions in the path in the direction of Nazonde.

Arrive at the EDF pylon and the hard work is done.

**1** The path is the same for both routes at this point. After a forest section you will see the village of Orsière. At the next fork in the path, there is a possible detour via the Bergerie de la Davie. Otherwise, continue on towards Nazonde along a pleasant path, going down through the larch and spruce trees. Nazonde was inhabited all year round up to the 1780s. Notice the lack of natural water here. It was piped in by wooden gutters put directly on the ground which can still be seen upstream of the valley.

**2** To return, go down in the direction of Villaret des Brévières, walking through a block field. An oratory is a reminder of the fervour of religious beliefs of the mountain people.

**3** At the next intersection, at the place known as "Gros Bois", take the left path.

**4** After a short climb, you will arrive in an area of old mown pasture terraces, supported by stone walls. Notice the sycamore trees (*Acer pseudoplatanus L*) close to the villages. Their semi-hard wood retains a level of flexibility and is good for making wooden clogs and certain types of furniture.

In the village of Villaret des Brévières, find the chapel to get back on the path which leads to les Brévières. Otherwise, head for "le Saut" to get back on the path back to the car park along the D road.