

= Mont Aiguille =

Mont Aiguille (2 085 m (6 841 ft)) is a mountain in the Vercors Plateau of the French Prealps , located 58 km (36 mi) south of Grenoble , in the commune of Chichilianne , and the département of Isère . The mountain , known as one of the Seven Wonders of Dauphiné , is a relatively flat limestone mesa surrounded by steep cliffs . The mountain lies within an area designated in 1985 as the Vercors Regional Natural Park . Mont Aiguille 's limestone cliffs , especially on the northwest side , are popular with climbers . Its first climb in 1492 was said to mark the birth of mountaineering .

= = Topography and geography = =

Mont Aiguille is a mesa eroded from the Vercors Plateau in the drainage basin of the Rhône . It is surrounded by steep cliffs and has a height of 2 085 metres (6 841 ft) and a clean prominence of 465 m (1 526 ft) . The surrounding terrain is difficult enough to warrant a technical climb as the easiest method of ascent . The mountain is capped with meadows botanically similar to those on the Vercors High Plateau , but beneath the cliffs there are extensive forests . The mountain lies within the Vercors Regional Natural Park and is in the département of Isère . The nearest access by rail is in the village of Saint Martin de Clelles and by road is from the north via the Col de La Bâtie .

= = Geomorphology and geology = =

Geomorphologically , the mountain is a mesa like outlier , that is to say , the remains of a plateau that has been otherwise eroded to leave only a single pillar of rock - weaker or fractured rocks (the so called Jasneuf fault) between the current summit and the Vercors high plateau were eroded over time by over 400 metres , leaving the peak standing on its own . This has resulted in several unique features of Mont Aiguille , including the cliffs , which are almost identical to those on the eastern edge of the Vercors Plateau such as those on the edge of the Grand Veymont , which is the highest point of the range . Another feature resulting from this is the presence of meadows on the summit plateau , which are similar to those to the west on the rest of the Vercors plateau .

Mont Aiguille is a limestone mesa , previously connected to the main body of the high plateau of the Vercors Massif . The summit is made up of lower Barremian strata , deposited during the Cretaceous period . This is the same as the plateau to the west , but not as the immediate environs : the lower slopes are composed of older Hauterivian strata . As easily observed , the bedding planes are all roughly level , although there is some inclination down to the north east .

= = History = =

According to Roman legend , the mountain was torn from the rest of the Vercors when a hunter named Ibicus saw naked goddesses on the mountain and was changed into an ibex as punishment . In the medieval period , Mont Aiguille was traditionally called " Mount Inaccessible " , and typically depicted as an " inverted pyramid " or " mushroom " . Since at least the thirteenth century , the mountain has been regarded as one of the Seven Wonders of Dauphiné . The mountain is most noted for its first ascent in 1492 . Charles VIII ordered that the peak be climbed , so one of his servants , Antoine de Ville , made the ascent using a combination of ladders , ropes and other artificial aids . He was visited in the following days by many local members of the nobility and aristocracy . The team bivouacked on the summit for eight days , erecting small crosses and a stone shelter . The ascent is described by François Rabelais in his Quart Livre . This was the first recorded climb of any technical difficulty , and has been said to mark the beginning of mountaineering . The mountain was not climbed again until 1834 , nearly 350 years later , when it was ascended barefoot by Jean Liotard , accompanied for one quarter of the way by local explorers . Less than a

month later , it was climbed by seven people at the same time , who reportedly danced and sang La Marseillaise on the summit . In 1940 , the top 11 m (36 ft) of the mountain collapsed , reducing the height to 2 085 m (6 841 ft) . Seventeen years later , on 27 August 1957 , the stunt pilot Henri Giraud landed a Piper J 3 Cub on the summit , utilising an 80 m (260 ft) -long , 20 m (66 ft) -wide runway which had been built earlier that day using materials and men lifted to the summit by helicopters . In the following 18 years , he staged a further 51 landings on the summit before his final landing in 1975 , many carrying paying passengers , and often made using skis . The mountain was in 1970 designated as part of the Parc naturel régional du Vercors .

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