

Turning other parts of France green with envy...

The French Ardennes has launched another colourful bid in its efforts to establish itself as one of the "greenest" departments in the whole of France.

History, heritage, geography and ecology are all taken very seriously in this part of northern France.

So much so, in fact, that everything in the latest *Discovery Guide to The French Ardennes* is coloured with varying shades of green.

One of the least-explored corners of France, its rustic, rural character - and unspoiled countryside - lends itself perfectly to holidays spent 'in the great outdoors', exploring a landscape shaped in equal measure over the centuries by the forces of nature and history.

The new campaign draws on all of these elements, as well as some major 'green' developments which have taken shape in recent years – such as the appearance of the 'Voie Verte' ('The Green Path'). This 50-miles track alongside the River Meuse enables visitors to walk, cycle, horse-ride and even rollerblade the full distance between Givet in the north, and the region's capital Charleville-Mézières.

One of the French Ardennes' proudest boasts is that around 30% of the entire region is covered in forests; and in the north, near the Meuse and Semoy Valley, that figure easily more than doubles. It makes for some great walking and cycling, all of which will be packaged and presented in an English-language *Walking & Cycling* guide due to be launched later this year.

Another relatively recent 'newcomer' to the region are the eco-friendly tree houses near to the village of Signy l'Abbaye, offering some of the most unusual accommodation in northern Europe. Located at the top of hundred-year-old oak trees, fifty feet above the ground, the houses are accessible only by a giant footbridge. Fully equipped with rustic furniture, the accommodation gives guests the chance to discover the atmosphere of the forest in the middle of the night.

All of this and more is now colourfully portrayed in the *Discovery Guide*, which not only showcases all of its eco-friendly activities, events and accommodation, but also features some new and very unusual attractions....including a brand new wolf enclosure at the ecological Parc Argonne Découverte ("Nocturnia") attraction in Olizy-Primat, in the south east of the department.

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Parc Argonne Découverte's newest guests will be accommodated in an enclosed area of one hectare, where visitors can learn more about the relationships of a wolf pack – from their eating habits, to the raising of their young cubs.

Once again highlighting the region's "green" credentials, the Guide is packed with enough fresh facts and new ideas to live-up to its front-cover claim that The French Ardennes is "AWESOME"!

And seven highlighted value-for-money short break packages within the Guide help to offer the visitor a spectacular choice of holidays – from staying in a traditional caravan in the countryside for just 45 Euros per night, right the way through to savouring a four night gourmet experience in The Ardennes from 266 Euros per person.

2010 also marks the 70th anniversary of German forces moving into the picturesque border country, which France shares with Belgium, at the outset of World War II – a fact which will be marked at various times, and in several different ways during the year ahead.

The French Ardennes' "awesome" *Destination Guide* for 2010, can be obtained by telephoning +33 (0) 324 56 06 08, or by e-mailing info@ardennes.com.

For further information, visit www.ardennes.com.

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