

2010

Press Pack – French Ardennes



French Ardennes Tourist Board

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1/ What's new for 2010?

One of the best kept secrets of Northern Europe, The French Ardennes has so much to offer its discerning visitors these days – from stylish chateaux and fine food, all the way through to tree house accommodation and a zip wire experience which reaches top speeds of 100 kilometres per hour.

“Parc Argonne Découverte” (Nocturnia) and its wolves:

- Deep within the Ardennes forest, popular visitor attraction “**Nocturnia**” will be welcoming some new and very eye-catching guests in 2010. An enclosed area of one hectare will be transformed to house a **wolf pack** – where it will be possible to view the relationships between the animals, the raising of young, and their nocturnal behaviour. Operators of Nocturnia are promising “a truly fascinating spectacle for young children as well as for adults”.

Nocturnia, located in Olizy-Primat, will also feature a new, well-equipped reception building. For further details, visit www.nocturnia.fr.

- Having been at the heart of so much conflict through the ages, including both World Wars, The French Ardennes will also be offering its 21st century visitors the chance to experience the life of a soldier on the eve of the First World War.

“Domaine **Fortifié des Ayvelles**”, near to Charleville-Mézières; will replicate a defensive fort capable of housing 900 men. A site designed at the end of the 19th century by General Séré de Rivières to prevent a German invasion, Domaine Fortifié des Ayvelles is a moving, yet strangely serene new visitor attraction, located within a calm and peaceful forest. Further details can be seen at www.fort.ayvelles.free.fr.

The opening date for Domaine Fortifié des Ayvelles will be announced at **the start of 2010**.

- Another 'new opening' in The French Ardennes for 2010 will be the Viola da Gamba.

Built in 1683, the **Baroque church in Asfeld**, is one of the most unusual religious buildings in Northern France – thanks to its viola-shaped ground plan. While its domes and colonnades make it a marvellous celebration of Italian Baroque art, its walls do not possess one single straight line. The church, which has recently been closed for renovation, is set to re-open its doors to visitors in 2010. The village of Asfeld, meanwhile, also stages the unique 'Viola da Gamba Festival' in the last weekend of June 2010.

2/ Relax and Revive

Quiet, hidden, green and rural, The Ardennes is one of the most underexplored and over-looked regions of France – making it a perfect destination in which to 'relax the senses and revive the soul'. There are many options available to experience the French Ardennes, some of the best:

Messing about on the river

Holiday makers who are looking for a very different region of France to explore, as well as a completely different way to do it, are now being offered a wide range of boating holidays throughout the French Ardennes. Two canals and a river provide a selection of routes through the region's through towns, villages and countryside – and local operator **Ardennes Nautisme** offers 14 different styles of boat. Prices vary depending upon the time of year, size of boat, length of stay and number of people travelling. Especially good value for larger families and groups of friends, full details of all of the routes, boats and prices for a weekend, short-break or week-long boating holiday are featured at www.ardennesnautisme.com.

An entirely new way of enjoying the scenery of the River Meuse: cruises on board **La Bohème**. 47 meters long and 5 meters wide... La Bohème imposes its bulk in the Charleville-Mézières and Monthermé docks. Completely refurbished, equipped with a dining room, panoramic balcony, bar, dance floor and boutique, this barge provides gourmet and festive escapades along the waterways. An original idea for a relaxing gastronomic break or a celebration with friends. Also available: cabaret evenings and tea time cruises.

La Bohème – Tel.: +33 (0)6 25 00 09 35

www.restaurant-bateau.com

Hike'n'Bike the French Ardennes

Thanks to the 83km long Trans-Ardennes greenway, the many mountain biking tracks and the quiet roads in its countryside, the Ardennes are a great playground for all kind of cyclists.

And now, a new label allows visitors by bicycle to find the best places to stay! Accommodation and rental places have committed to ensure the best services to cyclists such as: a locker for the bike, a place to clean it, a 'sporty' breakfast, transportation of the luggage to the next accommodation... They boast the label "Les Ardennes à Vélo", easily recognizable.



[More](#)

4/Not to be missed

Charleville-Mézières

Mézières was a fortified city established in the 9th century and a former major trade centre. The 16th century saw turbulent years and wonderful landmarks remain from this time - Tour du Roy; Tour Milard; Tour de l'Ecole and the spectacular gothic Notre Dame de l'Espérance Basilica.

In 1966, Mézières joined forces with its more flamboyant neighbour Charleville, itself established in the 17th century at the whim of a young Italian prince Charles de Gonzague. Together they form the jewel of the French Ardennes, Charleville-Mézières.

The star of this charismatic city is the **Place Ducale**. A delightful arcaded square of golden stone buildings dressed with red brick and slate. This is the heart of the city where many events take place throughout the year from a flea market to a Marionnettes en jardin. The brightly lit, bustling cafes tucked into the arcades around the square are a favourite meeting place, especially on market days, and in the summer terrace tables are at a premium.

The historic Ardennes capital's most illustrious citizen is the Big Puppeteer who lives in Place Winston Churchill at the Institut de la Marionnette. Although actually a clock, he's a showman from the top of his golden head (tucked under the roof) to his feet (planted firmly on the cobbles). On the striking of each hour, from 10.00 to 21.00, his booming voice recites lines from an old legend about the four sons of Aymon as automated figures click into action.

Sedan and the Ardennes' military heritage

Past and recent events have shaped this border country leaving a fascinating legacy of great fortresses, curious fortified churches, vestiges of the notorious Maginot Line and other indelible reminders of two major world wars.

As a region often at the centre movements of people and invasions, the Ardennes has defended itself throughout the course of the centuries. At the start of the XVth century, Evrard III de la Marck embarked on the construction of a formidable castle in **Sedan** which still today remains the largest edifice of its kind in Europe.

In 1555 Charles V, feeling himself threatened by the French kingdom, gave the order to build, on the rocky limestone promontory at **Givet**, an impregnable citadel which was to bear his name: Charlemont. In the mid-XVIth century, faced with this move by Charles V, the French king Henri II built the stronghold of **Rocroi** and its star-shaped fortifications. It was to be the scene of a terrible battle in 1643 and rebuilt by Vauban in 1675.

In the XIXth century the military engineer General Séré de Rivières, built the **Les Ayvelles** fort and gun battery following the 1870 defeat (French-German war). It is currently undergoing refurbishment. And in the 20th century, France constructed the famous **Maginot Line**. The only one of its forts attacked by the Germans is sited at Villy-la-Ferté in the Ardennes. An impressive tour will take you through a maze of tunnels 35 metres below ground.

Woinic

The world's greatest wild boar

The North East of England has "The Angel of the North". And now, The French Ardennes has "Woinic" - the world's greatest wild boar.... Standing 10 meters high, 14 meters long, 5 meters wide and weighing over 50 tonnes, Woinic has been positioned on the highway A34, approximately 30 km from the regional capital Charleville-Mézières: a steel guard, now seemingly keeping watch over the Ardennes' flock. The artist who created Woinic, Eric SLEZIAK took 11 years and 12,000 working hours to create this giant sculpture from small metal pieces. The colossal statue pays tribute to the steel-making heritage of the Ardennes.

Discover the industrial heritage of the French Ardennes

The extraordinary history of the Ardennes metal-workers has found a perfect location: the new Bogny-sur-Meuse Museum of Metallurgy. With more than 700m², in an industrial building loaded with history, the museum displays past metallurgical processes as well as current technologies. A period to be explored in sound and images but also in the open spaces of the machinery display.

Musée de la Métallurgie Ardennaise

Tel. : +33 (0)3 24 35 06 71

5/Events

January

Jan 19 – Feb 5

Festival Of Children And The Cinema « Les Enfants du Cinéma »

Charleville-Mézières

Tel: 00 33 (0) 3 24 33 81 10

<http://lesenfantsducinema.free.fr>

April

4-5 April

Olizy-Primat - Opening of the Parc Argonne Découverte (Nocturnia) and its new wolf park!

Tel.: +33 (0)3 24 71 07 38 – www.nocturnia.fr

23-25 April

Monthermé, Printemps des Légendes, festival of the tales of the Ardennes

Tel.: +33 (0)6 08 60 74 85

www.printempsdeslegendes.com

24-25 April

The **white pudding** of Rethel is so renowned that it deserved its own festival! On **April 26^h** gourmets and chefs will come from the all area to celebrate this speciality!

May

9 May

Roller skating the loop of the Meuse! On the Trans-Ardennes greenway.

Tel.: +33 (0)3 24 57 12 76

15-16 May

Medieval Festival

Sedan invites you to feast "à la médiévale"

www.chateau-fort.sedan.fr

28-29 May

La Cassine **Music Festival**, Vendresse

www.la-cassine.com

June:

19-20 June

Arts and Craft fair at the Post Relay House in Launois-sur-Vence.

Tel.: +33 (0)3 24 35 06 36 –

www.launoissurvence.com

July

28 June-11 July

Festival Marionnettes en Jardin

Charleville-Mézières

Puppet Festival particularly aimed at children.

Tel.: +33 (0)3 24 52 97 65

www.festival-marionnettes.fr

30-31 July

Aymon Folk Festival

Country and Folk music festival

Bogny-sur-Meuse

www.myspace.com/aymonfolkfestival

August

22 August

Street theatre festival

Houldizy

Theatre, music, humour

Tel.: +33 (0)3 24 56 43 31

27-29 August

Festival "Cabaret Vert"

Music festival in Charleville-Mezieres

www.cabaretvert.com

September

5 September

Cycling race in Champagne-Ardennes – Châlons-Sedan

Tel. : + 33(0)6 28 63 46 00

October

16-17 October

Gastronomic Fair “Lire, boire et manger en Ardennes”

Launois-sur-Vence

At the 17th century post relay house

November

11 November

Onion Fair

Givet (Meuse and Semoy Valley)

Large commercial fair in the streets of Givet.

Tel.: +33 (0)3 2 42 06 84

Farmers' Markets

At Jandun

On the first Friday of the month

At Avaux

On the second Friday of the month

At La Cassine

On the third Friday of the month

At Renwez

On the last Friday of the month

Country market

At Belval

On the second Friday of the month

At Tagnon

On the last Friday of the month

In spite of every care being taken in the production of the list bellow some information may be incorrect or incomplete. The French Ardennes Tourist Board cannot be held responsible for any changes to dates of the various events.