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Summer 2022

## Sustainable Tourism in the French Ardennes



*Photo credit: Laetis*

The Ardennes region is a truly **natural** sanctuary incorporating the valleys of the Meuse and Semoy rivers, the cliffs of Pointe Givet, the deep forests, woodlands and wetlands, chalky plains and mountains. It is especially important therefore to protect a glorious natural landscape such as this for future generations. There are 54 special zones here renowned for their ecology and fauna, seven Natura 2000 sites and a regional park covering 117,000 hectares which is 22% of the region.

Although being the perfect spot for welcoming visitors wanting to experience a truly amazing holiday, the inhabitants of the Ardennes (which comes from the goddess *Arduinna* meaning 'deep forest') are very enthusiastic about sustainable, ecological methods to protect the environment. There are several initiatives that show this adherence to sustainable methods whilst welcoming the tourists. Many of these are educational programmes trying to ensure locals and visitors understand these green issues.

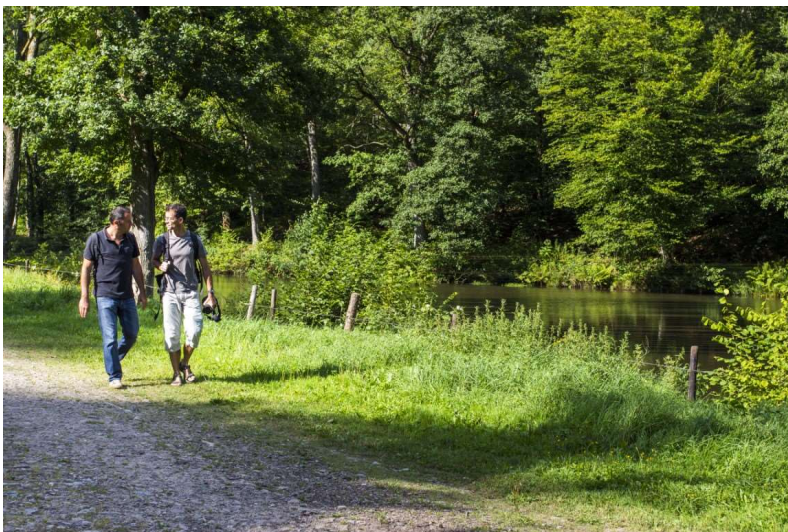


*Photo credit: Laetis*

A big plus is that our carbon footprint from the UK is not devastating when visiting the Ardennes as there is no need for long airplane journeys and it is not far from the Channel Ports by car either. Train connections are excellent with the Eurostar via Paris and onward.

For the visitor in 2022 there is a strong accent on eco-tourism and 'green' holidays, and not just 'greenwashing' but serious eco-friendly initiatives that respect the countryside. It's not just lip service to a fashionable cause.

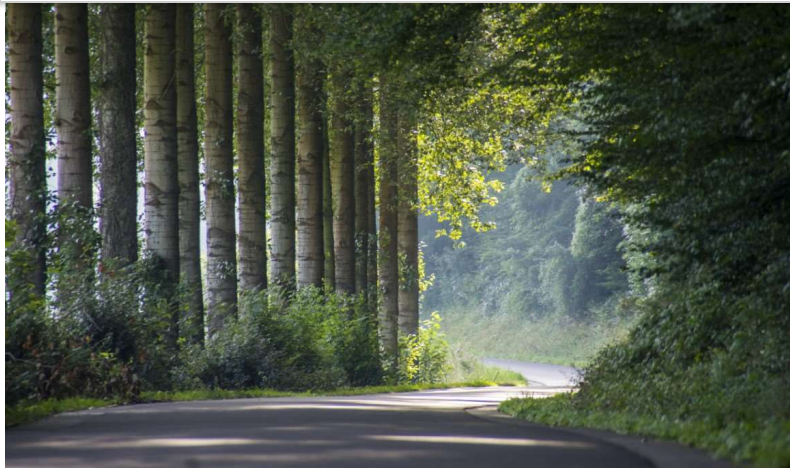
### ARDENNES ECOTOURISM CLUB



*Photo credit: Laetis*

As an example, take the new [Ardennes Ecotourism Club](#), bringing together more than a hundred tourism professionals in the Ardennes region who practice sustainable tourism in order to preserve their environment and contribute to the local economy.





*Photo credit: Laetis*

The objective of the Club is to offer visitors services that are all grounded in sustainability. To this end, the organisers of the Club are on hand to help all participants such as accommodation providers, guides, activity specialists etc, find more ecological ways to present and use their products. Just about to be introduced are a couple of new projects – one to better maintain walking and hiking routes in the area, especially those that cross frontiers and the other I to help restauranters and bar owners to better get rid of their waste, with less of an impact on the environment by way of a shorter transition to the point of disposal. In other words, they promote shorter supply chains, car-free holidays, low-carbon transport methods, etc.

### ARDENNES REGIONAL NATURE PARK



*Photo credit: PNR ARDENNES*

The **Ardennes Regional Nature Park** includes seven different types of habitat and was designated in 2011. There are more than 300 kilometres of marked walking trails, 400 kilometres of mountain biking routes, 100 km of green lanes three climbing sites and eight launch areas for paragliders.

Located in Renwez, the **Park Visitor Centre** was inaugurated in 2020, close to the forest museum, a premium venue for welcoming tourists. It is built of natural materials like wood and stone, and natural renewable insulating materials. There are guided park visits available from February to November, sharing



*Photo credit: Laetis*

Another great initiative is the [Maison de la Nature Visitors Centre](#) located in the former forester's house in Boult-aux-Bois in the Argonne, whose very reason for existence is to raise awareness of environmental issues within the general community, for locals and visitors alike. The 'excursions for all' programme they run is one of the reasons why they were awarded the 2020 national award for sustainable tourism. La Maison de la Nature offers trips into the Domaine de Belval, etc...

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## MESSING ABOUT ON THE WATER!



*Photo credit: Laetis*

For those on **activity holidays** there are constant upgrades to the infrastructures that promote greener methods of enjoying your chosen activity – cycling, walking, water-based activities and so on. Just take a couple of examples.





*Photo credit: PNR ARDENNES*

The Ardennes are working on a **NEW [Greenway](#)** for **cyclists**, scheduled to open next year 2023, the South Ardennes Greenway 110km along the Canal des Ardennes and also connected to the Trans-Ardennes Greenway. 55 kilometres are going to be opened to the cyclists this summer 2022. Watch this space!

The first stage of the works is finished and 55km will open this summer, between Le Chesne and Vieux-lès-Asfeld.



*Photo credit: Celine Lecomte*

For those who enjoy **water based** holidays the **[Bairon Lake](#)** comprises two lakes, an old lake and its reed bed, separated by a dam and transformed into a nature reserve (Natura 2000) and a reservoir for water sports welcoming more than 200,000 people a year with supervised paddle boarding, canoeing, pedalos, catamarans, wind surfing, sailing activities for disabled people plus mini golf, pedal go-karts, educational flora and fauna workshops, fishing, a sandy beach, picnic areas and playgrounds. The Bairon Lake has been awarded the 'Pavillon Bleu' label in 2022.

'**Ardenn'plage**' at the Bairon Lake: 18 July -20 August 2022 returns to this leisure arena with all sorts of free activities such as processions, concerts, DJ sets, as well as quizzes with many different prizes to win; something for everybody to enjoy, young and old alike. From Monday to Saturday each week. All sorts of participation sports will be available such as handball, boxing, football, tennis, table tennis, laser archery, sailing, beach rugby, basketball, mountain biking, hikes, archery, karate, excursions around the lake ...and much more! There is car parking available close by and bars/restaurants as well as

Otherwise for a lovely family visit, no activity necessary, try the [Parc Argonne Découverte](#) in Olizy-Primat – an animal paradise in the heart of the forest, just ten minutes from Vouziers. It combines some fun activities with nature - so wolves, racoons, eagles, bats, insects, snakes.... It is also a veterinary hospital for animals and one may enrol to be a 'Keeper for the Day' to have a unique view behind the scenes.

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## Where to stay



*Photo credit: Laetis*

There is a wide choice of [places to stay](#) in the French Ardennes from campsites to chateaux, chambres d'hotes to gites, hotels to apartments.

Many accommodation options have excellent green credentials too. For example, treetop cabins made of untreated wood more than 15 metres high in the heart of the canopy or with spectacular views over wild countryside, are very popular, as are charming cabins at ground level surrounded by lakes, forests, streams and springs. Often these self-catering chalets use candlelight and wood-burning stoves, oil lamps and vintage cookers – all slightly removed from modern life! Otherwise try a houseboat, gypsy caravan, kerterre, Finnish Kotas, Japanese ryokan or Mongolian yurt. These options offer an unforgettable experience to the holidaymaker.

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**A big bonus for visitors - Evadez vous!**





**A big bonus for visitors - Evadez vous!**

For all visitors, a sum of up to 100 Euros can be reimbursed if staying a minimum of two consecutive nights either in a restaurant or when buying a local activity either sporting or cultural to a minimum amount of 200 Euros. This offer is valid until the end of December 2022.

**Travelling to the Ardennes**



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**Travelling to the Ardennes:** The nearest airport is Belgium South Charleroi, 100km to the north of Charleville-Mézières and there is a direct train connection to Paris Gare de l'Est taking 1 hour 45 minutes. To drive from the ferry and Eurotunnel terminals in and around Calais, take the A26 south to exit 14 (Juvincourt-et-Damary), the D925 east via Roizy, then pick up the A34 to Charleville-Mézières (3.5 hrs).

region is close at hand and is an invitation to recharge the batteries and enjoy genuine experiences. For further information visit [www.ardennes.com](http://www.ardennes.com) or <http://gb.ardennes.com>



Photo credits from top left clockwise: Ardennes, Eric Corlay, Ardennes, Ardennes, David Truillard, David Truillard, Laetic, Ardennes

**Regional Tourism Agency of the Grand Est**  
 5, Rue de Jéricho - BP 50319 - 51013 Châlons-en-Champagne cedex - France  
 T 00 33 (0)3 26 21 85 80 - F 00 33 (0)3 26 21 85 90  
[www.tourisme-champagne-ardenne.com](http://www.tourisme-champagne-ardenne.com)



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**Email:** [gilliangreenpr@gmail.com](mailto:gilliangreenpr@gmail.com)

**Mobile:** +44 (0) 7515 283 287

**Website:** [www.gilliangreenpr.com](http://www.gilliangreenpr.com)

**Twitter:** @ggpruk

**Instagram:** gilliangreenpr

**112 Dorchester Road, Surrey, KT4 8PA**

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