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Summer 2021

The Ardenne a truly natural sanctuary



Images from left to right clockwise: Revin by D Truillard / Joigny-sur-meuse by D Truillard / Laetis

The natural beauty of The Ardennes pulls many visitors to its doors for after all, The Ardennes area was named for the goddess Arduinna, meaning 'deep forest'. The region is a high sandstone, shale and granite plateau that has been eroded to an altitude of just 502 metres, sliced by the deep valleys of the rivers Meuse and Semoy.

inhabited by a variety of fauna with attendant native species such as beavers, owls, wild boar and black storks. It is protected by a series of measures including a regional nature park of 117,000 hectares, seven Natura 2000 sites and 54 zones of 'special interest' for fauna and ecology.

The Ardennes is very accessible to the public, whether walking or hiking, cycling or mountain biking, in fact all manner of outdoor activity is possible - sports, nature themed leisure pursuits of all sorts, eco-responsible experiences, educational activities...or just for a change of gorgeous scenery!



Image courtesy of D. Truillard - Bogny-sur-meuse

Heritage Days – 18th & 19th September 2021:

These are the dates in the Ardennes, as all over France, for us to explore the wonderful 'villes d'art et d'histoire' of Sedan and Charleville-Mézières, the 'Petites Cités de Caractère' of Rocroi and Mouzon or places like La Cassine with its vestiges of an old château (site patrimonial).



Image courtesy of D. Truillard - Mouzon

Mouzon is probably the least well known, a lovely town on the River Meuse with an early Gothic masterpiece of a Benedictine abbey, as the powerful church ruled the town for around eight centuries until the end of the eighteenth century. The Burgundy Tower dating from the twelfth century lays testament to the old fortifications. The Benedictine Farm is now a Felt Workshop Museum, telling the story of the last French felt factory which was established here by Alfred Sommer in 1881.



Rocroi was constructed in a distinctive star shape in 1555 by Henry II, to contain the town of Givet where the Spanish were in situ. The 22-year-old Duke of Enghien, known as 'Le Grand Condé' defeated the Spanish in a famous battle of 19th May 1643 – a story told in the museum.



Image courtesy of D. Truillard - Charleville-Mézières

Charleville-Mézières, capital of the Ardennes, was created in 1606 and has one of the finest squares in Europe – the Place Ducale. Birthplace of the extraordinary poet Rimbaud, it is also the world's puppet capital, with the bi-annual Puppet Festival taking place this September. The Museum of the Ardennes here recounts the history of the town right up until the First World War. The two towns of Charleville and Mézières were not united until 1966. Mézières has much of the old fortifications, still visible, as well as the late fifteenth century Notre Dame d'Espérance, with a Durrbach stained glass window and magnificent treasure room.



Image courtesy of D. Truillard - Sedan

Sedan has one of the largest and most impressive castles in Europe, built in 1424. It was a shelter for the Protestants in the religious wars and an independent Principality until the seventeenth century. It was a prosperous, world-famous textile centre until the nineteenth century. It has been classified as a remarkable heritage area, with many an ancient building or private mansion on view. A new Architecture and Heritage centre is about to open very soon.



Image courtesy of D. Truillard - Bière Cuvee d'Arthur

La Cassine en Ardenne is the site of the former Cordeliers Convent built

Light show for the past 37 years. The moving platform on which 1,650 spectators sit is unique in Europe. It has also been identified as an endangered rural heritage site and will receive French Lottery funding. The show takes place in summer right through to the end of October.

**Take a beer cruise on the Meuse ...
and discover a new world – 3rd October 2021**



Image courtesy of L'Echappée Bière

A different way to see the Ardennes on board '[Le Charlemagne](#)' – the river cruise from Haybes offers superb views of the surrounding countryside and the opportunity to learn more about the famous beers of the Ardennes.

The cruise boat leaves at **15.30, 16.30 & 17.30** and takes 45 minutes. During

happy to answer all your questions. A 45-minute tour of the brewery with the producer is included in the price, when you return to shore so you can see how the beer you have enjoyed is made.

Prices: Adults 18 € - Children (12-18 years) 8 € - Free for children under 12.

Very unusually, there is a beer made here in Haybes called "Stockport". This relates to the fact that the town of Stockport provided financial support to Haybes in 1920 after the First World War to help repair the damage.

Beer has been established in the Ardennes for many, many years with 248 craft breweries in situ at the end of the nineteenth century. The first ever magazine devoted to beer was also published here in Sedan in 1865! A slump came about between the wars but a rebirth of the industry took place from about 2000 so there are now something like 13 breweries and micro-breweries producing in the area of 80 different beers.

If the subject is of interest, then try the [Ardenne Beer Pass](#) that offers cruises, brewery tours and tasting of beers in the French and Belgian Ardennes.

Haybes is known as 'Haybes the Rose' or 'Pretty Haybes' – it is simply an enchanting village. The roof tiles are tinted pink and blue, the village square is charming; even the neighbouring woods are gorgeous. Whether the architectural or natural heritage (including the famous Mohron Valley) – it all makes this a 'must see' location. It is also classified as a 'Station verte de vacances'.

Nature in the Ardennes

The Parc Naturel Régional des Ardennes organises a very special annual event in the village of Hargnies, on Saturday 25th September between 18.00 & 22.30. The forest resonates with the bellowing of the deer, specifically the stags marking their territory. All can be experienced in the company of a forest ranger to explain what is happening, then there is a meal included and a film to end the evening. Reservations are required +33 (0)3 24 42 90 57.

Bird Migrations, Bairon Lake – 3rd October 2021

understand the diversity of the winged visitors and observe the birds that are passing through. The Veil-Etang of Lake Bairon is the place to be!



Images courtesy of from left clockwise: G Raskin / Terre Aventures / CRTCA

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).

Note to editors: Lovers of nature, hiking, biking, heritage or local food, the Ardennes region is close at hand and is an invitation to recharge the batteries and enjoy genuine experiences. www.ardennes.com.

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