



Spring 2023

What's new and what's happening in the French Ardennes in 2023?



Photo credit: David Truillard

Why should the French Ardennes be on the bucket list of places to visit in 2023?

The Ardennes is closer than one may think, and for lovers of nature and sustainability, activities such as cycling and walking, or local cuisine using local products, are an open invitation to relax and rejuvenate while benefiting from a real change of scene.

There are some exciting things happening this year such as the 22nd edition of the World Puppet Theatre Festival in Charleville-Mézières, the opening of the new South Ardennes Greenway, the inauguration of the Battle of Stonne reception centre and the reopening of the Draft Horse Museum in Buzancy.



Photo credit: Laëtis

The Ardennes is a region of varied and striking landscapes intersected by the arboreal curves of the Meuse and Semoy rivers, where deep forests teeming with game give way to peat moors and chalky plains in the south, interspersed with dramatic cliffs, uplands and peaks. The deciduous and pine forests are home to an abundance of wildlife (deer, boar, black stork, owl, beaver etc.) and outstanding plants and flowers, with a Regional Nature Park and dozens of

classified

natural

sites.

This magnificent natural setting offers extensive walking and cycling trails and a wide range of nature excursions, outdoor activities for all the family and eco-friendly immersions. It boasts numerous characterful local towns renowned for their art and history, and charming villages.

What events are taking place in 2023?



Photo credit: David Truillard

World Puppet Festival

16th - 24th September 2023, Charleville-Mézières

Founded in 1961 by Jacques Félix, the world's biggest puppet theatre festival, held every two years, is a unique key event in the region. It will bring together for its 22th edition, puppet companies from all corners and every continent of the world to perform shows aimed just as much at adults as at children in 50 different venues across the town. An important centre for marionettists and puppeteers,

Charleville-Mézières has not only established an International Puppet Institute (UNIMA), but also a school of higher education in Puppet Arts (École Nationale Supérieure des Arts de la Marionnette - ESNAM) and the International Institute of Puppet, which offers a three-year puppetry course to 30 students. Programme available from June.

Tél. +33(0)3 24 59 94 94 www.festival-marionnette.com



Photo credit: Philippe Mangen

Tell us more about
Charleville-Mézières...



Photo credit: David Truillard

As well as being the world puppet capital, Charleville-Mézières is also the birthplace of Arthur Rimbaud, born here in 1854. The Rimbaud Museum tells the story of his life as a poet and adventurer.

The Ducale Beach arrives for **July/August**, when 565 tons of sand make a massive fun beach in the centre of town for sport and relaxation.



Photo credit: David Truillard

Sedan Medieval Festival

20th - 21st May 2023, Sedan



Photo credits: Pierre Holley

Enjoy travelling in time in the heart of Europe's greatest fortified castle: camps, shows, workshops and children's play areas, re-enactments of daily life (cooking, smithy, glassmaking, making clothes, etc.) and a medieval market with over one hundred stalls. The castle and its surroundings will be enlivened by a score of travelling companies from musicians to street theatre, with combat demonstrations and shows, all of whom will take part in the grand procession on the Saturday evening followed by a performance, alongside 400 other costumed participants.

Tel. +33 (0)3 24 29 98 80 - www.chateau-fort-sedan.fr

For full programme: www.ardennes.com



Photo credit: David Truillard

Tell us more about
Sedan...



Photo credit: David Truillard

Sedan, dominated by Europe's greatest fortified castle, is a mute witness to the history of France. It was an independent principality until 1642, a city of refuge for persecuted Protestants. The renowned Marshall Turenne was born there. Its world-famous cloth factories ensured its golden age from the 17th to 19th centuries. This historic town centre, classified as an "exceptional heritage site", testifies to its military, religious and industrial past.

Tel. +33 (0)3 24 27 84 85 - www.sedan.fr

Cabaret Vert Festival
16th - 20th August 2023, Charleville-Mézières



Photo credit: G Morisette

Considered to be among the top ten French festivals, the Cabaret Vert, which takes its name from Rimbaud's poem, has been rocking Charleville-Mézières for over 17 years. The 2023 edition promises to be no exception, with more than 100,000 festival-goers expected.

During the four days of the Festival, in a setting magnified by the grandeur of the scenography, four venues will host over one hundred concerts, from big names of the music scene to local talents and new discoveries, the wide-ranging programme will include rock and electro, hip-hop and French music in a festival where music is ingeniously combined with street theatre and art, together with a strip-cartoon festival where some forty authors will be there to meet their readers.



Photo credit: M Tchakmakdjian

The Cabaret, which has been supported since its beginnings by a project for the promotion and development of the Ardennes region, is a genuine community undertaking sustained throughout the year by the joint commitment of some one hundred participants, and by over 2,300 voluntary workers during the Festival.

As a sponsor of fine food (fair trading and short supply chains) and good hops (more than 40 local beers), its commitment to sustainable development has already won awards. It practices selective waste collection, dry toilets, solar panels and tree planting, as well as “The Ideal”, an alternative, futuristic, optimistic village which aims to be a forum for debates on sustainable development and society in general, with conferences, workshops, cinema, etc. With the backing of Music Moves Europe and Musicare, the Festival is trialling the DECARB-ON programme and initiating a low-carbon strategy.

Tel. +33 (0)3 24 36 12 68 www.cabaretvert.com

“La Cassine en Ardenne®”
- the cultural season including *son et lumière* -
April - September 2023, La Cassine



Photo credit: David Truillard

For the past 38 years the remains of the 16th century castle of La Cassine, built by Louis de Gonzague, the father of the founder of Charleville, has hosted a *son et lumière* performance produced and interpreted by 150 voluntary players. The site is also home to the former Cordeliers monastery built between 1579 and 1587, and occupied by six priests and six deacons. Within a cannon shot of the castle, at the end of the mall and the vegetable garden, it was secularised during the French Revolution and converted into a farm. The Cassine en Ardenne® is a unique experience in Europe, where from 15th July to 12th August 2023, 1,650 spectators will take their seats on a covered stand that will carry them 300 metres along a scenic and pyrotechnic trail to watch the ‘Robin Hood’ show.

The Cassine en Ardenne® is also the centre of a cultural season from April to September: giant Cluedo, open-air cinema, peoples’ market, a medieval

weekend and an armoured combat tournament. On-site catering is provided (300 places in the chapel, foodbus, farm, etc.).

Tel. +33 (0)3 24 35 44 84 www.la-cassine.com

Dates for food and drink fans...



Photo credit: David Truillard

Gastronomic Brotherhood Food Festival

6th - 7th May 2023, Charleville-Mézières

Beer Festival

27th - 29th May 2023, Charleville-Mézières

Onion Fair

11th November 2023, Givet

Ardennes de France, gastronomy and expertise

The collective label "Ardennes de France", managed by the Ardennes Tourist Board, encompasses expressing the specific expertise of the Ardennes region (galette à suc, salted meats, safran, honey, meat, beers, etc.).

Subject to a strict charter, Ardennes de France is the guarantee of local production and expertise whose basic criteria are the origin, quality and exceptional character of the produce.

Tel. +33 (0)3 24 56 67 73 www.ardennes.com

What's new this year?

NEW...

The reopening of the Draft Horse Museum



Photo credit: Céline Lecomte

The museum in the horseshoe-shaped outbuildings of the former palace of Augéard, an 18th century miniature Versailles in Buzancy, was reopened in July 2022. It aims to present the role of the horse throughout history, and its contribution to today's society in the context of sustainable development, where draft horse are being recalled for work in vineyards, for school transport and for rubbish collection.

Visitors will find horse collars, yokes, a variety of horseshoes and horse-drawn vehicles such as a shooting break and a hearse. Rides in a *balouche* around the La Samaritaine Lake are on offer.

[Draft Horse Enthusiasts Association](#) Tel: +33 (0)6 18 25 53 83

NEW...
The Battle of Stonne opens its remembrance site



The "sugar loaf" in Stonne is a high point with an altitude of 338 metres. Strategically vital, it was the site of decisive fighting between the French and German armies, making it the "Verdun of May 1940". In Spring 2023, to facilitate understanding of this historic episode, the Association of Municipalities of the Portes du Luxembourg will inaugurate a reception centre dedicated to the Battle

of Stonne, and will install a series of explanatory panels on the strategic mount.

The historic tour of the Battle of Stonne, created by the Ardennes 40 Association, comprises some 15 explanatory markers situated on the battlefields of May and June 1940.

Tel. 03 24 26 19 91 - www.mouzon.fr



Photo credits: Communauté de Communes des Portes du Luxembourg

NEW...
The South Ardennes Greenway



Photo credit: David Truillard

The new South Ardennes Greenway will be fully open in 2023. This secure 110 km circuit has been developed along the towpath of the Ardennes Canal, the Aisne and Vouziers, connecting the village of Pont à Bar with Brienne sur Aisne, on the border of the Aisne administrative region.

An exploratory stroll through the idyllic south Ardennes countryside: recreational cruising on the canal, picturesque villages and scenic farmland. Surprises await touring cyclists, such as the impressive staircase locks between Le Chesne and Semuy, or Asfeld's unusual baroque church. Arthur Rimbaud used to take the train in Vonq, while Charlemagne had a palace in Attigny...

There is a new map of the greenways with the Trans-Ardennes on one side and the South Ardennes on the reverse. Click [here](#) for the link to the brochure.

This is a practical interactive guide to prepare exploration of the greenways - where to rent a bike, what to see and do, where to spend the night, where to eat, etc

www.voiesvertes.cd08.fr

Tell us more about...
The Ardennes Regional Nature Park



Photo credit: Parc naturel régional

Officially designated in 2011 owing to the wealth and quality of its natural and cultural heritage, the Ardennes regional nature park (PNR) surprises by the diversity of its landscapes. It extends over 117,000 hectares to the north of the Ardennes region, from the leafy meanderings of the Meuse and Semoy valleys to the peaty moors of the Plateau de Rocroi, passing through the gentle wooded valleys of the Thiérache.

Tel. +33 (0)3 24 42 90 57 www.parc-naturel-ardennes.fr

NEW...
The Ardennes on Foot

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www.ffrandonnee.fr

As noted above there are hiking circuits all over the region, including 46 marked trails selected by the Comité Départemental de Randonnée Pédestre (Ardennes Hiking Board) in its topographic guide, “The Ardennes on Foot” **with a NEW edition in 2023**, plus four GRs (long-distance hiking paths): in the west of the Ardennes, the mythical GR 654 to Saint-Jacques de Compostelle and the GR 12 which connects Amsterdam and Paris; in the east, the GR 14 from Paris to Malmédy and the GR 16 which follows the Semoy river.

The **online topographical [guide](#)** provides ideas and descriptions of circuits for walkers, cyclists or MTB fans, with maps, photos, terrain profiles and GPX files.

Travelling to the Ardennes:



Photo credit: Céline Lecomte

From the UK travel by train – just 5.30 hours via Lille on Eurostar from London or travel by car via Calais on the A26 and A34.

Where to stay?:

There is a wide choice of places to stay in the French Ardennes from campsites to chateaux, chambres d'hotels to gites, hotels to apartments. Many accommodation options have excellent green credentials too

For all accommodation options click [here](#).

Note to editors:

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. For further information visit www.ardennes.com or <http://gb.ardennes.com>





Photo credits from top left clockwise: David Truillard, Laetis, Laetis, Ardennes, Laetis, Anne Frezard, Laetis, Terre Aventures



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