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**Spring 2022**

## The Ardennes, not just friendly, but an eco-friendly destination



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

**The French Ardennes** is one of the finest European destinations for nature lovers, walkers, hikers and cyclists, with an abundance of striking natural landscapes, river valleys, deciduous and pine forests and so forth. This makes it one of the most important in depth eco-friendly destinations with an interesting selection of wildlife and amazing diversity of trails, tracks and

are visibly effective, and these form the main thrust of the tourism effort for 2022.

The French Ardennes is also an ideal location for visitors who like art, culture, and history with places to visit such as top visitor attractions Charleville-Mezieres, birthplace of Rimbaud, Sedan with the largest castle fortress in Europe and the star shaped Rocroi built by Henry II.

As an added bonus, the Departmental Council of the French Ardennes have kept their '**Evadez-vous dans les Ardennes**' promotion for 2022 – so visitors may claim a €100 (approximately £83.00) refund on the cost of their stay.

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## NEW FOR 2022 - ARDENNES ECOTOURISM CLUB



*Image courtesy of The Ardennes ADT*

The Ardennes Ecotourism Club brings 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. The promotion of short trails, of gently roaming and of the responsible management of tourist equipment and activities are among the criteria of the quality charter

referenced and visible for an eco-responsible stay in the Ardennes region, with or without a car.

Whether you are looking for activities, accommodation or somewhere to eat, here are all the [top tips](#) from the members committed to sustainable development: bulk groceries, local craftsmen and producers, repair cafés, used goods boutiques, recycling stores, citizens' cooperatives, voluntary work, permaculture workshops, renewable energy... There are 75 professionals committed to the development of their region, sharing their love of the Ardennes in the presentation of their activities.

For all the new crossborder ecofriendly trails created under the aegis of the club, click [here](#).

## THE ARDENNES REGIONAL NATURE PARK



*Photo courtesy of PNRA*

[The Ardennes Regional Nature Park](#) was designated on 2011 due to its diversity of landscapes and natural and cultural heritage. Over 117,000 hectares in the north of the Ardennes, covering the area stretching from the Meuse and Semoy valleys to the plateau of Rocroi and the wooded valleys of the Thierache, there are seven types of different habitats, home to several special types of flora and fauna.

near to the forest museum. From here tours, excursions, trails and visits are arranged for all ages and abilities. The latest selection of upcoming events can be found [here](#).



*Photo courtesy of PNRA*

As a member of the Ardennes Ecotourism Club, receiving the Sustainable Tourism National Award from TourMag.com and the ATD (sustainable tourism promoters) was special indeed and was deservedly won for [Maison de la Nature's](#) 'Excursions for All' programme. In an old forester's house, the promotion of knowledge about nature is the purpose of the centre.

[Natura 2000](#) is a network of sites where one may learn more about the Argonne region of natural habitats covering beaver tracks for example, oak woods, etc

The Parc Naturel Régional des Ardennes presents a new programme for 2022 aiming to educate all visitors from the general public to professionals of the various more sensitive parts of the Park that need peace and quiet for the better preservations of the local fauna - ['Quiétude Attitude'](#). This has already had two fantastic results.



*Photo courtesy of Pixabay*

- The black stork, a symbol of biodiversity, has found a sustainable home in the Ardennes. It is far shier than its white cousin and builds its home well hidden from the public gaze and close to a suitable source of food.
- The eagle owl is the largest nocturnal bird of prey in Europe and it too has found a home in the Ardennes. It is a powerful predator with an imposing two metre wingspan and known as the 'king of the night time'. It enjoys the remote areas of the Ardennes and feeds on hares, amphibians, birds and fish.

**ENJOY THE GREAT OUTDOORS**



*Photo courtesy of Laetis*

The French Ardennes offer a super array of activities to enjoy, relaxing in wide, open spaces. There are the [walking](#) trails for example - over 1,000 kilometres including 47 marked trails and four GR long-distance hiking paths. There is also a new [online topographical guide](#) now available providing ideas for walks and hikes, with map and photos.

Equally for cyclists and mountain bikers, the opportunities are numerous. The Ardennes form part of the Eurovelo19 trail which runs from the Haute Marne to Rotterdam (1,150km). The Trans-Ardennes Greenway is possible to enjoy by bike, but also on foot and on the water – there are 130 kilometres of waterways. The Ardennes is working on a new Greenway too, scheduled to open next year 2023, the South Ardennes Greenway. Watch this space!

It is not just the Meuse that provides a suitable environment for boating, swimming etc, but also lakes like the Vieilles – Forges where sailing, paddle boarding, canoeing etc are all popular plus there is an enormous aqua centre. It is the premier European spot for carp fishing. Even ‘flying’ is possible in the Ardennes! At Furnay, there is the longest Tyrolean in Europe – 1,200 metres long, 110 metres high and reaching speeds of up to 100 kilometres per hour.

These are just a few of the possibilities - the Ardennes is a haven for activity holidays.



*Image courtesy of Laetis*

## WHERE TO STAY

There is a wide choice of places to stay in the French Ardennes from campsites to chateaux, chambres d'hôtes to gîtes, hotels to apartments. Many accommodation options have excellent green credentials too. For all accommodation options, click [here](#).

## THE MAIN EVENTS 2022



*Photo courtesy of A Thome Darkroom*

## **Festival du Cabaret vert, 17<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> August**

One doesn't need an excuse to visit the Ardennes, however this glorious festival might give you an added impetus to do so. '[Cabaret vert](#)' (Green Cabaret) has been particularly associated in recent years with eco-tourism and the development of sustainable solutions as well as being one of the most highly regarded music festivals in France – it is in the top ten.

This year has fantastic international acts performing – Madness, Liam Gallagher, Slipknot among others, as well as local musicians providing a great mixture of talent. Over 100,000 visitors now visit Charleville-Mézières annually, during the five-day event which unites many varieties of music from hip-hop to rap, electro, rock and so on..

The festival, which has been going for over 16 years, has always had a remit to help promote the Ardennes but the efforts to do so run year-round with over 100 personnel and thousands of volunteers working year-round on various projects, which these days are more and more focused towards the eco-friendly and sustainability, award winning credentials that the Ardennes can already boast.





*Photo courtesy of Clement Hardouin Darkroom*

The food fair supports fair trade and short supply chains, so over 40 beer makers are engaged in this activity, for example and other initiatives such as tree planting, solar energy, dry toilets and waste collection are practised. A newsletter is compiled after each festival outlining the successes accomplished during the event. For example, in 2019, 86 tons of rubbish was collected over the five days, of which 75% was recycled. There are tips included to give readers some idea on how to successfully recycle their own rubbish as the aim is to encourage this behaviour year-round and on a personal basis. There is a forum too during the festival, for discussion of exclusively 'green' issues known as The Ideal.

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*Photo courtesy of S Ortega-Dubois*

## **The Sedan Medieval Festival 14<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> May**

An annual event, very popular with all generations, The [Sedan Medieval Festival](#) is taking place in Sedan in what is the largest castle fortress in Europe. There are shows, competitions, workshops, play areas and all sorts of demonstrations - cooking, glassmaking, dressmaking and so on – just as daily life was in those long-gone days. There is a medieval market with over 100 stalls, travelling musicians, combat shows...all culminating in a big parade with over 400 costumed participants.

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*Photo courtesy of Herve Dapremont*

## **World Puppet Festival taster....' Le Temps d'M' (The Time of M) 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> September**

The next biannual [World Puppet Festival](#) takes place in Charleville-Mézières 16th - 24th September 2023, so this year there is an interim event, **Le Temps d/M**. This will include the presentations of ten different artistic groups showcasing their work in what is the national and international puppet capital. The various companies interact not only amongst themselves but also with other types of artistic movements, to experiment with multidiscipline creation. Reservations can be made as of June this year.

To give you an idea of the tremendous popularity of the World Puppet Festival, last year's event attracted over 180,000 visitors to the 'In' and 'Off' and street events, and 87 participating puppet companies. The town is also home to the French National School of Puppet Art which emphasises the importance of this extraordinarily exciting festival.

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*Image courtesy of Céline Lecomte*

**La Cassine, Robin Hood – a new production for 2022 – 16<sup>th</sup> July – 13<sup>th</sup> August 2022.**

[La Cassine](#) incorporates the remains of a sixteenth century castle built by Louis de Gonzagues, father of the founder of Charleville. For over 37 years events have taken place here throughout the summer between April and September, put together by a volunteer troupe of more than 150 locals.

The centrepiece of the annual event is the sound and light performance enacted mid-July – mid August. This year the theme of the show is Robin Hood.

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*Image courtesy of Festival des confréries ardennaises*

## **Festival des confréries ardennaises, (Ardennes brotherhoods) 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> May, place Ducale Charleville-Mézières**

This is your opportunity to really experience the delights of true Ardennes gastronomy. [The Festival des Confréries Ardennaises](#) started in 2004 and is unique in France, as well as being award winning – the *Prix d'Excellence du Conseil Européens des Confreries Oenogastronomiques* 2016. Over 50 different 'brotherhoods' are represented coming from all over the Ardennes, highlighting the diversity and richness of the local cuisine. Last year, over 1,800 plates of food were consumed!

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

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\* Voir conditions sur www.cd08.fr - Conception - Conseil Départemental des Ardennes - Photo - Adobe - Pictogramme - Freepik

### 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 Ardenne:** 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](http://www.ardennes.com).



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