



## French Ardennes promotes itself in 2025 as 'The World Capital of Puppets'

Once named amongst the world's 'Top 20 Events to Travel For', the World Puppet Festival will be held in Charleville-Mézières, France this year from 19 to 28 September.

A key event in the life of the French Ardennes region for more than 60 years the World Puppet Festival is once again set to bring together puppet companies from all corners and every continent of the world, who will then work their magic to transform this quiet, historic town into a densely populated and highly atmospheric World Capital of Puppets.

The ideal choice for the one of the biggest-ever gatherings of puppets in the world with almost 155,000 spectators, Charleville-Mézières is a centre for marionettes and puppeteers - boasting an association with the art which stretches as far back as 1941. That was the year a 17-years old Jacques Felix first introduced a puppet theatre to the town, as a means of lifting spirits during the German occupation of the town.

Home to the largest gathering of puppeteers in the world, Charleville-Mézières is a centre for the creation and support of artists, and houses the Pôle International de la Marionnette (International Puppet Centre), which has only recently been created to bring together the festival offices, the Higher National School of Puppet Arts (ESNAM) and the International Puppet Institute (IMM) - making this the largest centre in the world for this art form.

In 1991, the town also unveiled what has become one of its most endearing tourist attractions, 'The Grand Marionnettiste' - The Great Puppeteer's Clock. Built into the façade of the Institut de la Marionnette, every hour - between 10.00 and 21.00 - it presents an episode from the legend of the Four Sons of Aymon...a heroic medieval saga linked to the geography and history of the Ardennes. The full story is also told in one complete showing every Saturday at 21.15.

The event itself has developed to the point where more than 50 different venues across the town are now needed to help to host up to 250 performing companies from around 25 countries. And while the programme of shows during the Festival are aimed as much at adults as at children, the event itself is also an incredible opportunity for stretching the boundaries of the art in all of its forms - from the traditional, to the contemporary.

Full details of the 23rd edition of the World Puppet Festival will be announced in June. For now, its history, and the tradition of puppetry in the Ardennes are featured on the website [www.festival-marionnette.com](http://www.festival-marionnette.com).

Just three hours' drive time from Calais, and linked from the UK with the high-speed TGV trains (via Paris or Lille), further details about The French Ardennes can be found at <https://www.ardennes.com/en/>.

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