

Les Quatre Saisons - Winter 2026

A seasonal “news-in-brief” update for the UK travel media, from The French Ardennes

What’s New for 2027: including the opening of a new hotel in Charleville-Mézières

It promises to be another big year for The French Ardennes in 2027, as one of the most overlooked regions in France continues to build its profile amongst UK holidaymakers on the back of the official opening on a new Grand Route walking trail in the Spring, and the latest edition of the World Puppet Festival from 17 to 26 September. Even better news for travellers to this part of France is the announcement that the long-awaited four-star Grand Hôtel Ducale is now scheduled to open in March 2027. The stylish ‘deconstructed’ hotel, is located within the magnificent Place Ducale in the former “Criée” (auction hall) building, a site linked closely to the history and life of the region’s first city, Charleville-Mézières. The former tourist office will house separate apartments, as well as reception areas. Other major highlights for coming year in The French Ardennes include the annual Médiéval Festival of Sedan on the third weekend of May and Le Cabaret Vert – one of the most popular music festivals in the whole of France, from 19 to 22 August.

The postbox which created a ‘dead poets society’

A renewed interest in the French poet Arthur Rimbaud - possibly as a result of the 2024 Bob Dylan biopic *A Complete Unknown*, starring Timothée Chalamet as a 19-year-old Bob Dylan arriving in New York City - has as resulted in a pile of mail being sent to his grave. Two or three times a week mail is delivered to the postbox that was renovated in 2024. It is inscribed with the poet’s name, outside the entrance to the cemetery in Charleville-Mézières where he was buried in 1891. Some of those trying to commune with the dead poet seem to find solace in writing to another tortured soul, who stunned the Paris literary scene as a precocious teen attempting to chart the unconscious mind in poems striking for their modernism. Dylan, and others - including Patti Smith - were inspired and influenced by Rimbaud’s work. Although neither are known to have sent a letter to Arthur Rimbaud..! The postbox was recently featured on France 3 TV.

Following in some fantastical footsteps

Highlights of the new French “Grand Tour” trail in The Ardennes - as walked by freelance travel writer Caroline Mills - were featured in the pages of the *Daily Telegraph* travel section at the end of August. The trail offers the chance for visitors to follow in the “fantastical footsteps” of Arduinna - the mythological Celtic goddess of woodland - on a 219m trail, through France and Belgium. As Caroline wrote, “But it’s not just Arduinna’s forest that makes this trail so worthwhile. Here there are striking views of river bends (both the Meuse and Semois) after a demanding climb, easy-going sections amid open countryside, and settlements that have witnessed action in three conflicts in the last 150-plus years: the Franco-Prussian War and the two World Wars”.

Seasonal festive treats

Red turkeys, white puddings and red sugar sweets are just some of the famous festive flavours of The French Ardennes. In Rethel, there’s a festive dish available every day of the year, thanks to its white sausages. But it’s a local delicacy that also finds a very special place on the table at Christmas, with “Boudin blanc de Rethel” also enjoying protected geographical indication status. The red turkey was introduced to the Ardennes, when it found its way onto the table of Charles IX for the celebration of his wedding with Elisabeth of Austria, at the basilica of Mézières on 26 November 1570. One of the sweetest Christmas traditions are red sugar sweets. Now a symbol of the Ardennes’ culinary heritage, the coloured and flavoured sugar is poured by hand into traditional moulds, representing animals, characters and objects.

Marionettes in bars? Meet The Barionnettes in France.

Launched in 2022, [The Barionnettes](#) provide the opportunity for visitors to The French Ardennes to discover puppetry throughout the year in Charleville-Mézières. A regular event during which puppeteers perform in the city’s bars, the schedule for each Barionnette performance is released about a month in advance. The next set of performances - expected

to be held between November 2026 and June 2027 - will be announced online. It is, of course, also another "World Puppet Festival" year for The French Ardennes in 2027.

ENDS

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