



# TOURIST MAGAZINE

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Tourist Office





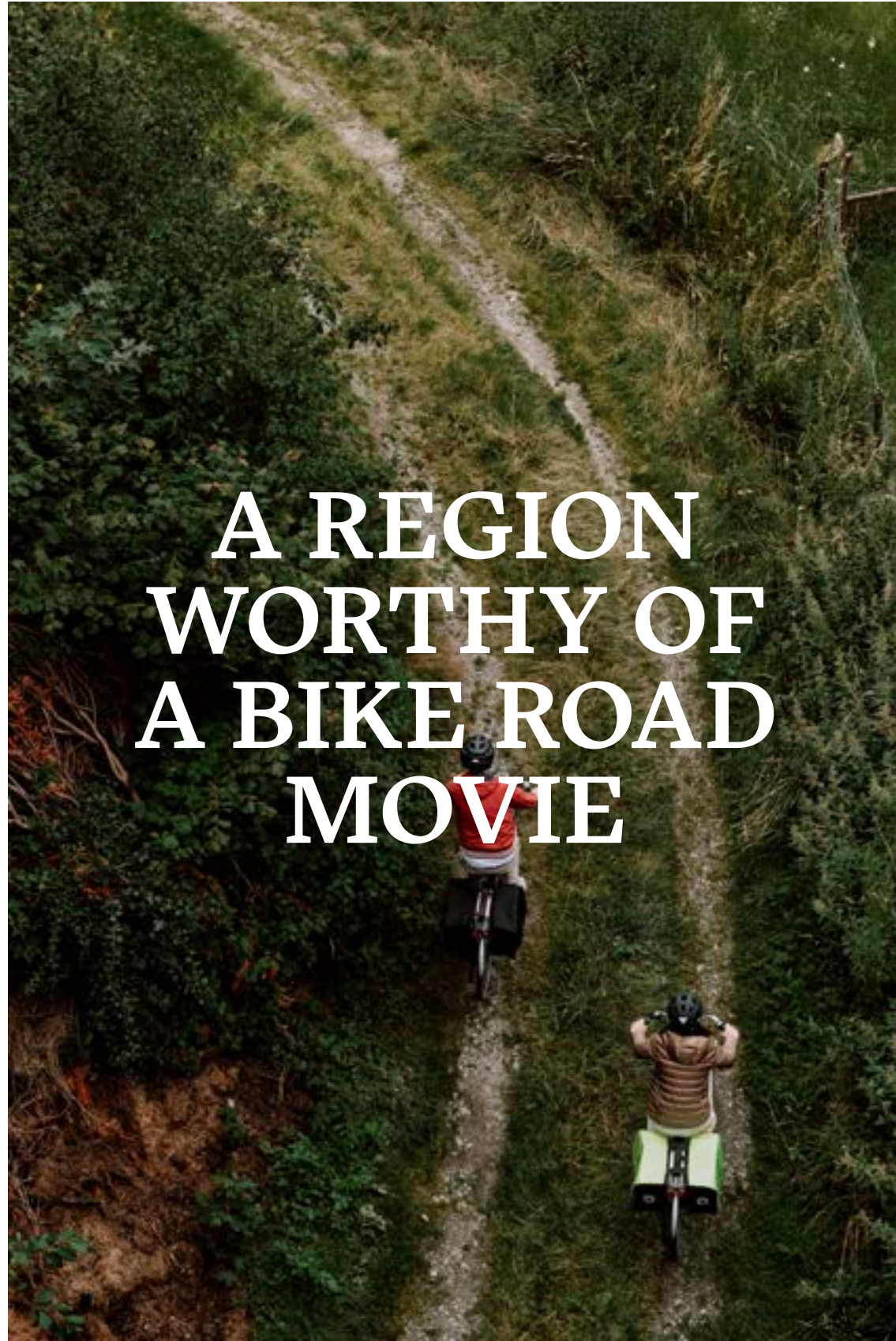
- Getaways with friends
- Family getaways
- Getaways for couples

# IT IS TIME TO TRAVEL DIFFERENTLY

No need to travel far to get away. Set off on an adventure that's off the beaten track. Unspoilt nature, centuries-old forests, five of the most beautiful bodies of water in Belgium and more – the **Pays des Lacs** is sure to move you. From a simple stroll and tasting specialities to water sports and watching wildlife, boredom is a thing of the past. Allow yourself to be enchanted by the charm of the Pays des Lacs, a genuine gem located in the heart of Belgium.



Find us at:  
[www.lepaysdeslacs.be](http://www.lepaysdeslacs.be)



# A REGION WORTHY OF A BIKE ROAD MOVIE

**“The region’s power, which is quite rare in general, is the different landscapes within just a few kilometres. Everything is beautiful and so different. You go from forest to meadow, from a plain to a copse, in very little time.**

**I often take my bike to explore the area. I go on the RAVeL, which connects Thuin, Beaumont and the Eau d’Heure lakes or I just go where I feel, and where the roads take me. I know that there are ‘Lake Circuits’, quite nice bike routes between France and Belgium that are practical and without too many climbs or descents.**

**I really like the still quite wild and natural aspect of the Eau d’Heure lakes. When I’m riding through the area, I feel like I’m on holiday. I especially like The Spin. It’s sort of eco-friendly water-skiing pulled by a cable, in the middle of a lake. You don’t always realise the wealth of this region. When you come across English, French or German people in our area, you really become aware of it.**

**This region is a place for travelling, a real road movie by bike.”**



**KID NOIZE,  
Brussels DJ**



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**KID NOIZE**

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# REASONS TO EXPLORE THE PAYS DES LACS REGION

Many walking, cycling, mountain-biking and equestrian routes reveal hidden nooks.

## THE REGION DELIGHTS TRAVELLERS LOOKING FOR NATURE, AUTHENTICITY AND PEACEFUL GETAWAYS.



“The locals even take the time to talk to tourists. When sitting at a table in a bistro or walking around a village, you talk to people,” says Christine Charue, the director of the **Pays des Lacs** Tourist Office. “For me, it is easy to speak naturally. We see each other, you say hello, you have a discussion. It is spontaneous.”

### Authenticity

The tourist options are part of the landscapes. “The activities take place around natural resources: forests, lakes, rivers... like the high ropes course, bivouacs, cable skiing, windsurfing initiation or electric boats on the rivers.”

What’s more, the local artists and artisans open their doors and offer the opportunity to share in their passion in workshops. Local legends presented as Challenges offer another way of discovering the region.

Local products (beers, macarons, escavèches, etc.) or built heritage (castles, medieval towns, etc.) are revealed to those who take the time to discover them.

### Preserved natural areas

There is little development in this area, which means there are many areas places left to explore. “I really like walking in this area. I feel good. It feels like I am the first person to visit, to discover places that are still relatively untouched.”

Vast natural expanses invite you to relax. The activities on offer in the Forêt du Pays de Chimay provide astonishing possibilities for immersion and the Entre-Sambre-et-Meuse Nature Reserve encourages you to discover local biodiversity.

When you come to explore the region, don’t forget a blanket. “This is an essential accessory for stopping for a picnic along a lake, in front of a panoramic vista or for stargazing in the middle of the fields.”



# GETAWAYS WITH FRIENDS

# WHY TRAVEL DIFFERENTLY BY BIKE?



**FOR FABIENNE, THIS LIGHT MODE OF TRANSPORT HAS BECOME AN ESSENTIAL ALLY FOR EXPLORING WITH HER FRIENDS.**

Did you know?

You can enjoy a picnic basket, prepared by Spamboux farm using its fresh produce. This is available by booking with the farm directly or with the Syndicat d'Initiative de Lobbes or the Couvin Tourist Office.

Good to know:

Plan a stop at the only fresh-fruit distillery in the area, located in Biercée, to try its spirits, liqueurs, gins and local aperitifs.

"We adapt the bike routes according to points of interest," explains this fifty-year-old. "For example, we left the RaVEL network to discover the Medieval City of Lobbes, with its majestic Saint-Ursmer Collegiate Church and the Folcuin garden. Or along the towpath at Merbes-le-Château, to observe birds and tarpans, wild horses, in the Labuissière nature reserve."

Close to places and people

"With two bags and my bike, I'm off. I travel light," she tells us. The bike allows her to get close to the places she discovers. "We often stop to chat to the locals. We travel at our own pace." Depending on their preferences, they can stop at a little bistro in a secluded village.

Awareness of time and distances

"I can more easily identify the geography of places. To reach **the heights of Thuin**, we climbed a steep road. We really felt the difference between the Quartier des Bateliers and the Belfry." Fabienne also perceives the distance more subtly. "The journey is gradual. We move from one landscape to another through all five of our senses."

Safety

For her, journeys by bike are safe. "We could go **from Charleroi to Chimay**, passing the Eau d'Heure lakes, by bike and using adapted trails. It all depends on our preferences and our athletic abilities." But feel free to combine modes of transport for more variety. "Some cyclists take the steam train in Thuin with their bike, in order to get a different look at the Sambre Valley."



**MÉLANIE, FLORENT, JONATHAN AND EMMA  
HAPPILY PUSHED THEIR LIMITS THANKS TO  
AN “EXTREME SPORT” GIFT VOUCHER.**

**HECK,  
I’LL DO IT!**



**I was happy to have my feet on the ground**  
– Mélanie at [Natura Parc](#)

Despite her fear of heights, Mélanie tried the experience at Natura Parc, an adventure park made up of several courses in the trees (tree climbing, zip line, monkey bridge, etc.). “On the first ladders, I started to shake, to have jelly legs.”

During the course, her friends encouraged her. Thanks to them, she reached the end of the course. “I’m really glad I did, although I was glad to have my feet on the ground.”



**I was happy overtaking**  
– Florent at [Fagnes go-karting](#)

A motorsport enthusiast, Florent wanted to try the Mariembourg circuit. Renowned worldwide, the only Belgian outdoor track has hosted many champions. “Knowing that Ayrton Senna raced on this circuit is exhilarating.”

He tried it with friends. “The excitement is there from the start, from the beginning of the race.” He enjoyed the challenge: “With each lap, I got a little bit of satisfaction, especially if the person I was passing was a friend who doesn’t like to lose.”



**I really had a feeling of freedom in the woods – Carole at the [Magic Trott](#)**

Carole wanted to try out an all-terrain scooter, an activity on offer next to Aulne Abbey. “The vehicle is a little scary – it’s quite clunky. It’s a mixture between a city scooter and a bike.”

After covering a few kilometres, the forty-year-old really felt comfortable on the scooter. She soon got up to 16 mph. “Above all, I loved the sections through the woods: you discover unknown places with no effort and above all, in silence.”



**I really felt the speed – Jonathan at the [Spin Cablepark](#)**

Jonathan received tickets to test the water ski-lift pulled by a winch, which is unique to the Eau d’Heure lakes.

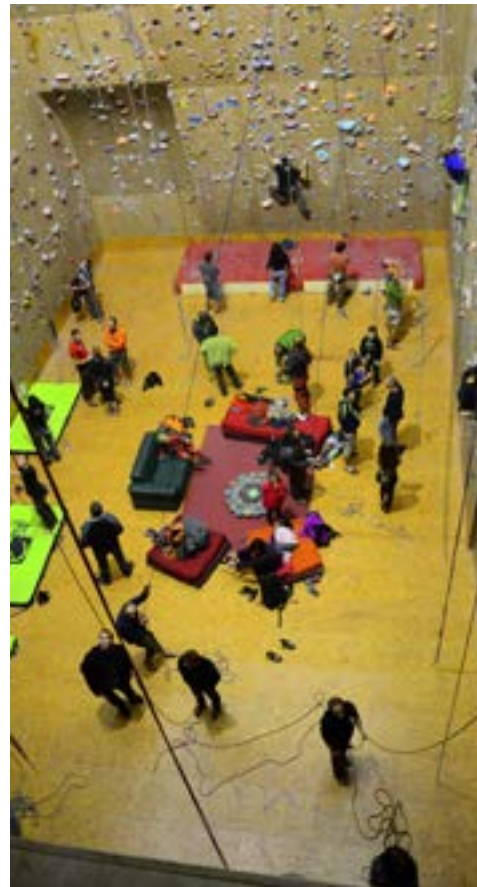
The introduction to Spin Cablepark takes place sitting on a board. “I didn’t expect it to go that fast. I fell several times on the first few laps. Fortunately, the water cushions the fall.”

In the queue, he interacts with other participants. He gradually gains confidence and really enjoys it. For him, “the experience is worth the journey”.

**Another challenge:**  
Why not solve the puzzle of one of the region’s best escape rooms, the Chimay Escape Room?



**Raining?**  
Try the Doische indoor climbing centre.



**RAPHAËL DEMOULIN, A NATURE GUIDE AT BALAD'ET VOUS, REVEALS THE BENEFITS OF NATURAL COOKING, WHILE AVOIDING THE PITFALLS. A GREAT WAY TO EAT AT A LOW COST.**

**A real feast on your lawn**

"There are edible wild plants everywhere: dandelion, sorrel, nettle..." says Raphaël. "What's crazy is that the flavours vary."

When he organises wild plant picking and cooking workshops, the attendees can't believe everything there is to eat within a few square metres.

**Plantain quiche**

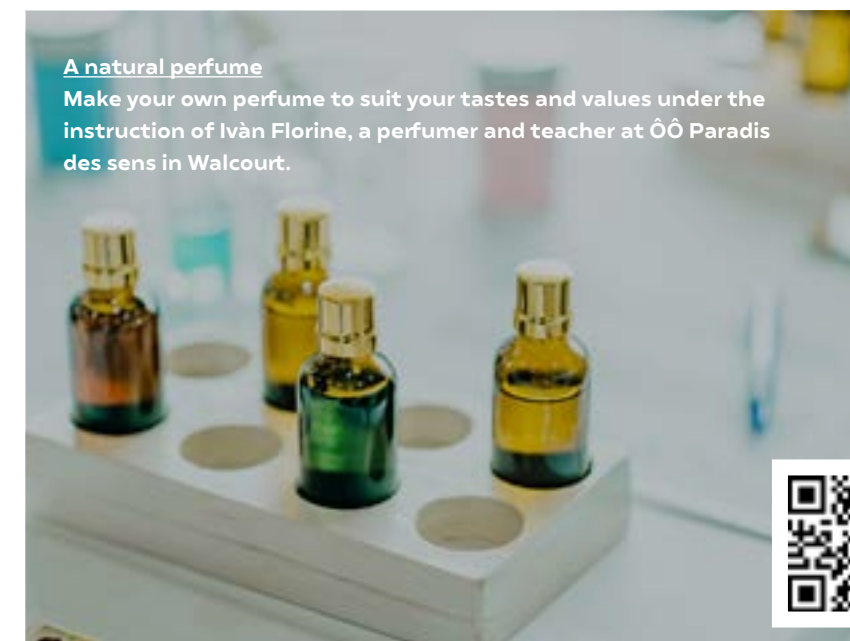
Far from the clichés, Raphaël does not want to limit his cooking to wild plants. "The body is no longer used to being 100% sustained by wild plants which are very rich in oligo-elements."

This nature guide has therefore chosen to draw inspiration from traditional recipe books for his workshops, while adding a touch of wild cooking. "The plantain quiche or fish papillotes made with sorrel leaves are very popular."

**Being certain of what you're picking**

Before picking any wild plants, you must show caution. "If you're not sure of the variety of plant you're picking or if you don't know how to wash it, you must avoid eating it."

Beyond instructions to be careful, cooking with wild plants is a way of reclaiming food and giving the body what it needs, or even more. "Try dandelion honey – you won't forget it easily."



**A natural perfume**

Make your own perfume to suit your tastes and values under the instruction of Ivàn Florine, a perfumer and teacher at ÔÔ Paradis des sens in Walcourt.

# WHAT IF WE TASTED SOME WILD PLANTS?



# THE PRIDE OF WEARING THE FOLKLORIC WALKERS' COSTUME

EVERY YEAR, AT THE END OF JULY, JEAN-FRANÇOIS WALKS IN THE **SAINTE-ANNE FOLKLORIC PROCESSION** THROUGH HIS VILLAGE, IN SILENRIEUX. TO HIM, IT'S OF TRUE CULTURAL INTEREST, AND ABOVE ALL, IT'S VISUALLY STUNNING.

"We have all seen our dads, grandfathers and uncles walk in the procession. So I'm proud to represent the village. The procession is over 400 years old, it's one of the oldest," says Jean-François.

#### **A real vector of social connection**

The procession brings together all the villagers, no matter their age. "More than 350 of us walk in procession. This festivity attracts an audience and creates a wonderful buzz."

Beyond the festive aspect, the folkloric setting with the costumes, fanfares and shots fired attracts lots of people, both locals and those who have come from afar.

The Sainte-Anne procession is one of the 15 folkloric processions recognised by Unesco.

#### **Experience the arrival of Charles V in Beaumont 'in real life'**

Discover the Re-enactment of the legend of Beaumont: Charles V and the three men from Auvergne is an event that only takes place every five years. An impressive spectacle not to be missed in 2025.



**THE BRASSERIE DES EAUX VIVES IN DOISCHE, IS A REAL FAVOURITE, COMBINING LOCAL BEERS AND BOOKS IN A FRIENDLY, AUTHENTIC ATMOSPHERE.**

"We are the only brewery to have married our beers in the presence of the burgomaster. Monsieur Mouche and Mam'zelle Bibiche, two of our beers, got married. Mam'zelle Bibiche became Dame Bibiche. And La Bichette, a light lager, was born shortly afterwards." This anecdote told by Tristan Ratz, the communication manager, sets the tone. Here, the atmosphere is pleasant and good-natured.

#### **Hops from less than 7 km away**

The beers are produced with local hops. Brewers use dried flowers, called cones. "No sugar is added to our beers, there's only malt and water. Sometimes, depending on the beer, we add spices or herbs."

Recently, the brewery has also offered beers aged in a barrel of red wine and malt jelly, made from must (juice extracted from malt cereals).

# BOOKS FOR A LOCAL BEER



#### **An authentic cultural location**

"Often, people are impressed by the building framework when they come to us," explains Tristan. The brewery, established in a building dating from the 18th century, has kept its rustic appearance. Archives are exhibited on the tables.

The walls are decorated with all kinds of books. "Each year at the end of May is book day. Authors are introduced. Book lovers attend. At certain times of day, you can even pay for your beer with books."



# THREE UNIQUE WALKS

**THESE WALKS REVEAL ASTONISHING LANDSCAPES YOU GET TO SEE PART OF THE REGION IN ITS UNSPOILT STATE, MARKED BY ITS HISTORY AND BIODIVERSITY.**

**1. Along the [Grande Traversée trail in the Pays de Chimay Forest](#)**

This trail is over 175 kilometres long and crosses many different sites. “We move from a wooded landscape, made up of fields and meadows separated by hedges, to a forest massif, which is dominated by oak trees. We then cross a very rugged limestone area, marked by rock, to arrive at a coniferous forest,” says Christine Charue, director of the Pays des Lacs Tourist Office. This hike is done over several days, with the possibility of sleeping in a bivouac or in guest rooms along the way. The Mazée camp area is renowned for the panorama that extends over 180 degrees over the entire region. “This walk took our breath away on several occasions. We did not at all expect to be immersed in such different landscapes in such a short distance. Between valleys and rocky outcrops, it’s very diverse.”



**2. [Terril du Pétria: a key part of our history](#)**

As astonishing as it may seem, you start from the centre of Fontaine-l'Évêque, along a main road, and enter a Natura 2000 classified area in just a few steps. “It’s pretty crazy to think that nature has taken back its right to slag heaps, which are made up of waste from mining,” Christine tells us. The walk is 2 kilometres long and runs through the nature reserve. It crosses areas made up of birch trees, but it also runs along ponds where dragonflies, frogs, etc., can be observed. The heights of this green heap offer an astonishing view of the slag heaps. “This walk allows you to get a better understanding of the region, which is marked by heavy industry and reinvested in natural corners. We were surprised by the number of different flowers, by the wild nature which we really did not expect, in this urban environment.”





The bivouacs of the Pays de Chimay Forest, the first to be created in Wallonia, allow hikers to immerse themselves in areas of very beautiful natural resources for several days.

### **3. Along the marble and water**

"You start the walk in the heart of the village of Rance, just in front of the marble museum," explains Virginie Denis, employee at the Sivry-Rance Tourist Office, as astonishing as that may seem. "I often recommend paying a visit to it before starting the discovery. It helps to understand everything that you will come across on the way."

The many trails linked to the exploitation of red marble appeal to hikers. The route passes in front of the church, which contains marble furniture, next to an old quarry, alongside a house entirely covered with marble and so on.

"If you look closely at the red marble, you will discover fossils, called 'rat tails', which are typical of the region."

The **Ry d'Hernoy walk** crosses many different landscapes in just 10 kilometres. "If some walks in Belgium can be boring sometimes, this one is unexpected! We first pass through the urban centre and the alleys of the village, then we cross meadows, followed by a deciduous forest and, finally, find ourselves by the lakes. Take advantage of a bucolic setting on the way to have a picnic."

This route is very successful, regardless of the season. "I really like doing it in the autumn, to take advantage of the beautiful colours of the season."

# MAKE A CUP OUT OF LOCAL CLAY



**IN CHIMAY, ISABELLE SAINTES FROM THE ATELIER D'ISA INTRODUCES US TO THE ART OF POTTERY AND CERAMICS IN AN INSPIRING, TASTEFULLY DECORATED WORKSHOP.**

### A great gift idea?

Treat yourself or someone else to a cosy night's stay in Isabelle's ceramic room, just above the pottery workshop.

1. Mould the ball of clay in your hands, with a potter's wheel or with a plaster shape (the technique of stamping).
2. Put the shape in a kiln at 1,000 degrees for 48 hours.
3. Paint the biscuit-fired piece (technically, we enamel it).
4. Put the shape back in a kiln at 1,200 degrees for 48 hours.
5. The little bonus: enjoy your coffee in your cup while you chat to Isabelle.



# FAMILY GETAWAYS

**THIS COMMON YET LITTLE KNOWN ANIMAL INVITES YOU TO SLOW YOUR PACE AND TAKE THE TIME TO APPRECIATE THE FIELDS, FORESTS AND VILLAGE OF SAUTOUR IN A DIFFERENT WAY.**

“The donkey really helps people feel soothed. From the start, the animal creates a peaceful mood for those walking with it to enjoy the walk in a different way,” says Karl Bondroit from [Balad’ânes in L’Hermeton](#). “The animal facilitates our enjoyment of nature.”

Before each walk, Karl explains the basics of how to interact with the donkey during the outing, in particular to respond calmly to the animal if there is a problem. “When you reassure the donkey, you must talk to him and keep calm yourself as well.”

# TOTAL IMMERSION IN NATURE WITH A DONKEY, HOW ABOUT IT?

## **Wonder in nature that is still a little wild**

On returning from the walk, the attendees’ reaction is unanimous. “Often, they tell me they were surprised, that they didn’t expect it to be this lovely,” Karl tells us.

In his opinion, just adapting our pace to the donkey’s sets us off to explore and be amazed.

## **Accompanied by a nature guide**

You can also try the experience with a nature guide. “This guide talks about what we’re seeing, encourages us to smell plants, touch them and taste some of them. He really provides interesting insight.”

## **Good to know:**

Find out different ways to come into contact with donkeys, such as hikes ([Équi-Shet in Anderlues and Ânes & Co in Walcourt](#)), or enjoy an aperitif with a donkey ([États d’Ânes in Viroinval](#)).



**THE TRIP STARTS AS SOON AS YOU'VE SHUT THE FRONT DOOR. THE TRAIN OR BUS JOURNEY IS ALREADY PART OF THE OUTING. WHAT DO WE LIKE ABOUT IT? THE RELAXING ASPECT OF BEING DRIVEN, WITH NO PARKING OR REFUELLING BOTHER.**

**PARENTS SHARE THEIR IDEAS WITH US.**

# HOW ABOUT AN OUTING ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT?



**The ruins of Aulne Abbey – Camille, mum of Lallie, 10 and Naëlle, 12.**

“The journey from Landelies station to [Aulne Abbey](#), along the towpath, is quite enchanting,” says Camille. Plan around thirty minutes’ walk to start the day. “I know that in July and August there’s a direct bus from Charleroi to Aulne Abbey. It’s handy for short legs.”

The thirty-year-old took advantage of the bus to visit the ruins of Aulne Abbey with her daughters and friends. “We loved the guided tour. They’re always interesting.”

After the tour, Camille and the whole troop enjoyed a quick bite to eat at Café Leblon and took a trip on an electric boat. “The girls liked going up to the lock in the boat.”



**Paddle-boarding and a beach – Alena, mum of Jules, 9 and Jeanne, 11**

Alena took the children to the region from Welkenraedt (Liège). “The bus journey from Walcourt to the [Eau d’Heure Lakes](#) is nice,” says Alena. “What’s not easy is planning the public transport connections. But we took advantage of the waiting times to play hide-and-seek.”

The bus stop is just opposite Landal Village. Everything’s there: restaurant, mini-golf, playground... and the beach. “In the Fun space, we did paddle-boarding. The children laughed a lot. In the evening, we had drinks on the beach. The lovely atmosphere reminded us of the holidays.”

The next day, before getting back on the bus, the whole family went on a bike ride. “We hired bikes – it’s easy and convenient. For the children, it’s not too steep.”





**A fortified city – Ophélie, mum of Lou, 9 and Hugo, 14**

Ophélie set off to explore Chimay with her two children. “A bus takes you to Chimay through the countryside and all the little neighbouring villages. It’s very pretty, you just have to take the time to appreciate this discovery.”

Once there, the family played the Secrets of Chimay game, a sort of giant treasure hunt in the city. “The trail led us to some magnificent places, and the questions we had to answer weren’t always easy but they taught us a lot.”

These explorers ended their day at the [Château de Chimay](#). “What left an impression on the children was visiting a castle that was still inhabited. The mini-golf in the grounds and the drink on the terrace made the end of the day special.”

**[Want to try out a new aquatic adventure?](#)**  
Aqua Bubble Boom provides 2,500 m2 of floating inflatables (slides, swings, climbing walls...) on one of the Eau d’Heure Lakes. It’s very refreshing in hot weather!



**THE BONUS: back to the past by train – Olivier, dad of Faustine, 4 and Justin, 2**

Olivier and his children went to explore Treignes by [steam train](#). “It’s impressive: first you hear the chimney, then the sound of the train on the rails and finally, you see the engine and the carriages arrive.”

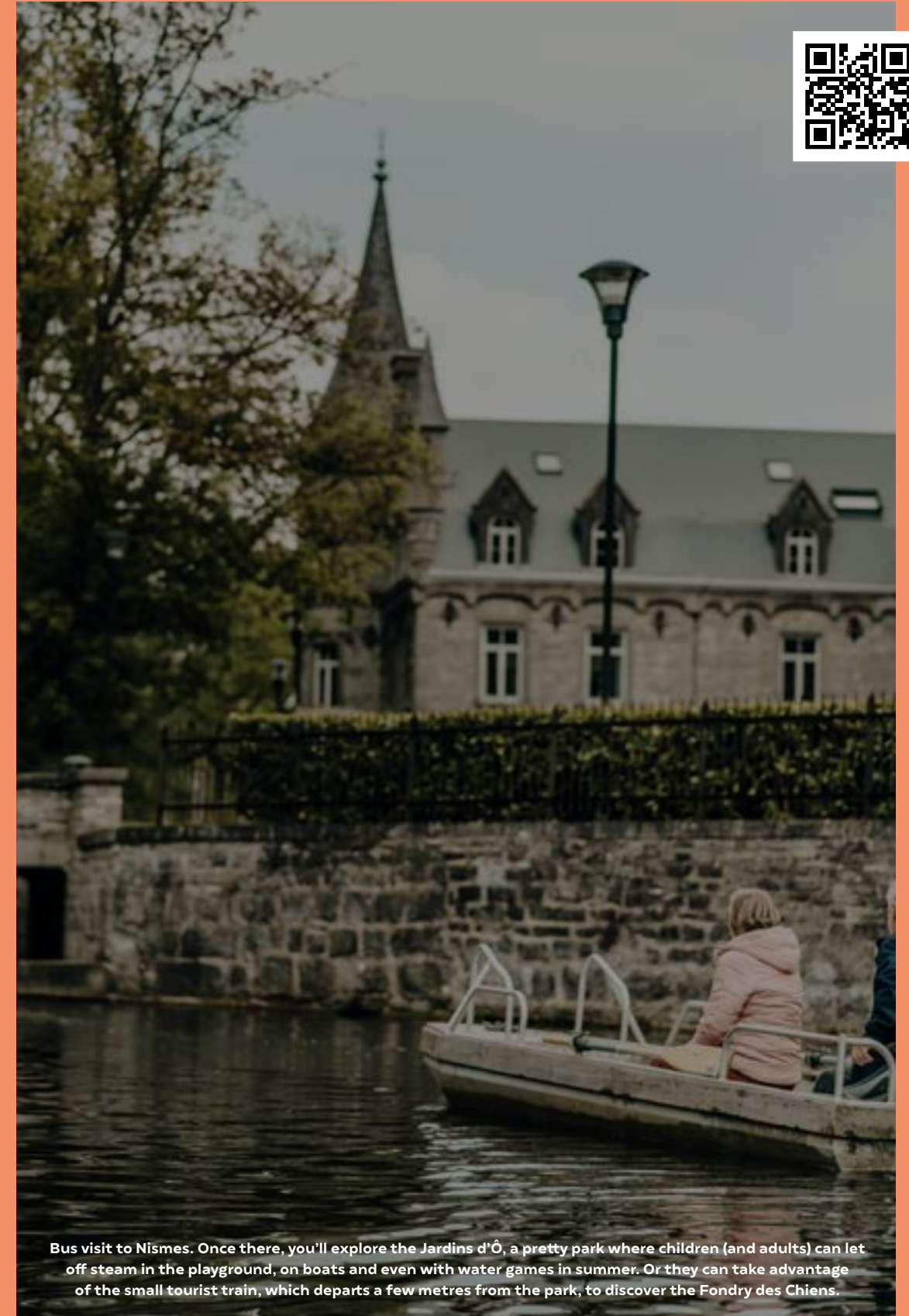
The train leaves from Mariembourg, crosses the valleys, forest and meadows and then reaches Treignes. “Once there, we explored the village, with a stop at the École d’Autrefois (‘School of Yore’) The children loved the historical re-creation, even if Justin was a little overwhelmed.”

Olivier’s family had a bite to eat on the terrace of the Espace Arthur Masson. Then they ended the day with a visit to the Viroin Ecomuseum, a few metres from there – Faustine also loved decorating her wooden clog – before getting back on the steam train.

**[Are the children feeling restless?](#)**  
The Landal Village indoor play area allows children to let off steam in an elaborate space with slides, balls and courses.



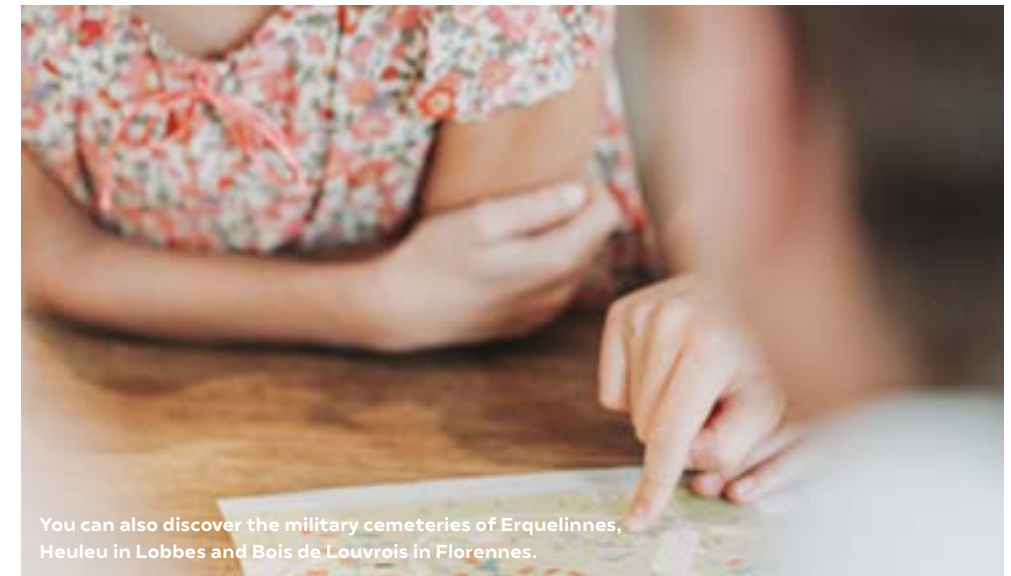
**[Raining?](#)**  
Discover the interactive and fun [Printing Museum in Thuin](#), which is suitable for children aged 6 and over.



Bus visit to Nismes. Once there, you’ll explore the Jardins d’Ô, a pretty park where children (and adults) can let off steam in the playground, on boats and even with water games in summer. Or they can take advantage of the small tourist train, which departs a few metres from the park, to discover the Fondry des Chiens.

**GOOD OR BAD IDEA? HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO HELP THE YOUNG GENERATION UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF THESE HISTORIC PLACES, WHILE RAISING THEIR AWARENESS OF CURRENT EVENTS.**

# DARLING, I'M OFF TO VISIT THE MILITARY CEMETERY WITH THE CHILDREN



You can also discover the military cemeteries of Erquelinnes, Heuleu in Lobbes and Bois de Louvrois in Florennes.

## **Making the military cemetery concrete**

The portico, white crosses and grass don't always give you an idea of the scale of the historical event. "With children in years 6 and 7, I explain that these 247 tombs in [Collarmont cemetery](#) only represent part of the battle," explains Achille Van Yperzeele, a historian. "In total, we're talking about 4,000 victims in eight hours on this battlefield. It's as if one class died every minute in a school day."

He finishes by explaining that all these people fought for Belgium's liberation in 14-18.

## **Personalising the location**

Achille also encourages children to take in every tomb. He specifies that those who went to fight were 20-21 years old. "I ask the children whether they have an older brother or sister and I tell them that it could have been their brother or cousin who went to fight."

This approach helps the children gain a better understanding of the reality of what happened.

## **Creating a connection with the present day**

This historian never ends his visit without mentioning the notion of peace. "We're incredibly lucky that neither we nor our parents have seen war. Unfortunately, that's not the case everywhere."

For this historian, it's important to preserve this kind of place. It helps us remember the sacrifice of many and the major damage that wars cause.

# HOW CAN THE ECOSYSTEM BE PRESERVED IN A TOURIST CAVE?

## Where Hitler resided...

To all those who want to remember World War II, a crucial period for our grandparents, and above all, to avoid repeating the same mistakes, visit **Hitler's Bunker** in Brûly-de-Pesche, where the Führer and his group stayed in June 1940 before invading France.

- The open-air exhibit also tells us how the resistance developed, or how the enemy strategically occupied our countryside.
- Discover the fountain of Saint-Méen, which, it seems, treats skin problems.

## A SPECIAL TOURIST CENTRE AND SCIENTIFIC MONITORING ENABLE THE **NEPTUNE CAVES** SITE TO IDENTIFY ENDANGERED SPECIES.

“In recent years, we have changed all the old lighting to LEDs,” explains Maryse Bourlard, the manager of the Couvin Tourist Office.

“This type of bulb, which is cooler and less luminous, reduces the appearance of foam, a type of pollution for an underground environment. In addition, we turn off the lights after each visit, in order to limit photosynthesis.”

### Open based on the needs of nature

Accessible to the public since World War II, the caves are closed during the hibernation period. «The closure period allows bats to hibernate.”

In addition, the guides' mission is to make the public aware of respecting the natural environment, which is very sensitive. “Touching the walls leaves traces of acidity, due to perspiration. This stops the growth of stalagmites and stalactites.”

### Beyond the underground environment

Awareness-raising work is also continuing around the cave, which is classified as a Natura 2000 zone.

“Some children pick orchids. They are not always aware that it is a protected species.”



**ANTOINE LEBLON, EDUCATIONAL MANAGER, HAS DESIGNED THE MUSÉE DU MALGRÉ TOUT TO MAKE THE VISIT CAPTIVATING FOR ALL AGES.**

**What is there to appeal to children?**

"We organise experimental workshops. Children play with prehistoric instruments, paint with old paint or build a fire with stones. The experience must be practical. This practice allows us to explain the major periods in history."

**Are you able to give a concrete image of the major periods?**

"We generally use popular culture. We often use the image of Obelix, or that of the caveman with his animal skin. We explain to them why these images are caricatures."

For example, why prehistoric man used more than a club to defend himself, or the reasons why men and dinosaurs never existed together. The clichés disappear as questions are asked. Knowledge is refined."

**And for the prehistoric sites, how do you do it?**

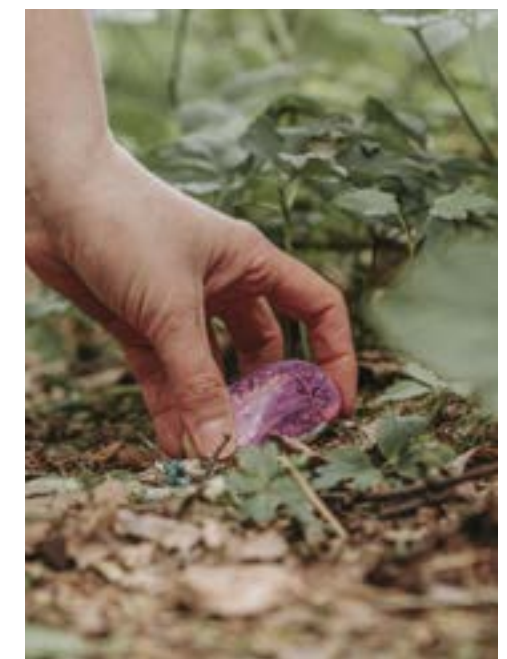
"Children are often ambivalent to seeing the ruins of a Gallo-Roman villa. We draw their attention by comparing the periods; what has changed today compared to our past. For example, the tractor now replaces the work carried out by 80 men in a day a century ago. Then I ask them to consider how they would manage to accommodate so many people in their homes."

**Good to know:**

**An area for board games, crafts, cartoons, colouring, etc. allows families to discuss their discoveries.**

**When the pebbles go on a journey...**

**Find travellers' pebbles in Couvin and everywhere in the region. Pebbles painted with pretty patterns and deposited during walks as you wish. On the pebble, you will see the artist's name and postcode. Find out how far this pebble has come via the Facebook group. Try the experiment yourself by painting pebbles in a creative way!**



# WHEN A PREHISTORIC MUSEUM INSPIRES CHILDREN



# THREE THINGS WE DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE PHILIPPEVILLE UNDERGROUND PASSAGES

“IT’S SURPRISING TO SEE A STRUCTURE OF THIS KIND UNDER THE TOWN,” IS WHAT VISITORS OFTEN SAY AT THE END OF THE TOUR, TO GUILLAUME MASARD, GUIDE AND TOURIST OFFICE COORDINATOR IN PHILIPPEVILLE.

**1. The underground network extended over more than ten kilometres in the 17th century.**

The tour explores over 400 metres of this network today. And soon, 1,200 metres will be accessible.

**2. All the galleries were built by hand from limestone.**

1.80 metres high and 1.20 metres wide, they represent a major technical and historical achievement that is recognised in the region.

**3. The underground passages have significant changes in elevation.**

At the time, they took into account the pits and wall of the fortress, which have now disappeared.

All there's left to do is follow in the footsteps of Louis XIV and Napoleon who took refuge in Philippeville.



## Fagnes Brewery, a noteworthy destination

Think of this place if you want to discover a local brewery (even with a little museum to explain how beer is made) and to have a bite to eat, especially with children (indoor and outdoor play areas) in a friendly atmosphere.



# IN THE SHOES OF A MILITARY AVIATOR

**MEETING AT THE SPITFIRE MUSEUM OF FLORENNES WITH PHILIPPE GOFFIN, AN F-16 PILOT**

**What do you like about your job?**

"I particularly like the power and technology of fighter planes. Throughout my career, I've learnt to fly these very sophisticated machines, to participate in and manage formations of two, four and six planes... All for operational purposes. We fly to defend the airspace, perform reconnaissance, participate in foreign training, etc."

**Very technical while being significant...**

"Yes, we have a lot of responsibilities, but we get a lot of recognition. When I worked in Afghanistan, I supported the troops on the ground. It had a real impact. I was faced with the reality of war. It leaves traces and, above all, it gives meaning to our work."

**What is it like on a daily basis?**

"Maintenance takes a lot of time. We train often, sometimes with the chance to fly over spectacular landscapes. On a training flight, I flew over the skies of Morocco. I started in the north with a very green landscape, then I crossed the mountains to finally discover the desert. It was very nice."

**A leap into the world of planes**

Discover all the technology of the old military planes that marked the Florennes base at the Spitfire Museum, which has been fully renovated. Exhibition of F-84, Mirage, F-16 or cruise missiles. All these highly sophisticated machines help us get a better understanding of their technical prowess, as well as their military challenges.



**Raining?**

The **Musée sur la Guerre 40-45 et la Libération**, located in Monceau-Imbrechies, allows you to stay dry while getting a better understanding of the daily lives of soldiers in our grandparents' era.

**Put yourself in the shoes of a brigadier**

Head to the Gabelous Circuit in Momignies to discover the routes smugglers used to move goods from one frontier to another during World War II.





# GETAWAYS FOR COUPLES

**DARE TO IMMERSE YOURSELF IN NATURE FOR A FEW HOURS AT **AQUASCOPE DE VIRELLES**, FAR REMOVED FROM JAM AND TOAST AND THE MORNING RACE FOR THE KEYS**

This is not an ornithological walk consisting of observing all the birds. Rather, we offer an "immersive experience": the idea is to wake up with the day, at your own pace, in the heart of nature. "It's a moment for ourselves that we experience in a group," explains Stéphanie, the nature coordinator.

"When we arrive near the reeds, we are drawn into nature. We awaken in symbiosis with what surrounds us."

**Disconnect**

To make the most of the experience, you should be comfortably and warmly dressed. "We recommend good boots, a blanket, etc. It is cold in the morning, even in the middle of summer." Stéphanie also insists on being fully present in the moment. "We suggest turning your mobile phone off, not looking at the time, letting go of the idea of seeing certain animals, etc. You just need to pay attention to what the lake shares with us."

# THE WILD DAWN OR WAKING UP BY A LAKE

**Be surprised**

Stéphanie welcomes participants when it is still dark. For her, the crucial moment comes at the cut-off point: when the group allows itself to be surprised, as if it had fallen into another world. "The expanse of the lake, the dawn and the boat in a rabaska (a type of canoe) create a very special atmosphere. There is that precise moment when people step out of their comfort zone and truly enjoy what they are experiencing in that moment." As the minutes go by, the lake comes to life. The ducks come out of the water, the geese fly away..

**Just curious**

"This walk is a rather unique experience. It awakens certain emotions in us. It's magical." The magic of the wild dawn ends with a breakfast made from local produce, which is served by the lake.

**Good to know:**

**Walk along the banks of the lake at any time of year to discover its impressive flora and fauna.**

**Sleep in a wood cabin by the lake with a view of the wilderness.**





**THEY TELL US WHAT THEY LIKE ABOUT THUIN,  
A MEDIEVAL CITY THAT IS BELOVED BY WALKERS.**



# THESE THUDINIANS AND THEIR CITY: A GREAT LOVE STORY

## **Waking up to the bells of the [belfry](#). – Sandrine**

“The belfry is the rallying symbol for many Thudinians,” this resident of the Grand’Rue tells us. “For me, this tower has accompanied me through different stages of my life. It is my workplace, symbolising my career. It’s also part of my balance: despite moving to Thuin, I’ve always had a window with a view of this building.” For her, the Belfry, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has a unique history. “The tower played both an administrative and a religious role. Usually, it is a tower or a steeple. Here, our belfry rang to communicate messages to the inhabitants and for religious services.” To all those who do not know the belfry, she invites them to discover it from the inside. “Interest is awakened through the four walls. As you climb the steps, you discover the old clock weights, then the bells, after the chime and, finally, the view of the valley.” The belfry, which measures 60 metres high, is 120 metres from the level of the Sambre. It can be seen from afar.

## **Integrated in the heart of a [medieval city](#). – Valérian**

“We have a microclimate here. I’ve planted kiwis, strawberries, grapes, etc.,” explains Valérian, the owner of three garden levels with 6.2 acres. Under the permaculture model, the terraces are covered with ground-cover plants (wood strawberries, nettles, clovers, etc.). The vegetable garden is planted in mounds and in squares. Valérian gets along well with his neighbours. “Given the layout, we help each other with the maintenance of the plots. I’ll mow the neighbour’s lawn, for example. I also set up beehives with another neighbour, whom I visit regularly.” As a child, he dreamed of living in a house on this street, one of the last to have a hanging garden without being located in the Grand Rue. «The acoustics are special: I hear the drums during the Napoleonic march, the children crying when they cycle down the alleys, the laughter during the harvest in the Clos des Zouaves vineyard and so on.”



**Sea legs in the [Boatmen's quarter](#)  
– Jocelyne**

“When I enter the area, I take the cobblestone street. I feel like I am somewhere else. It's very special,” reveals this 60-year-old, whose house runs along the Sambre in the Quartier des Bateliers. The houses are small and colourful. They are decorated with many marine accessories: old boat name-plates, anchors, mooring chains, etc. She has always lived in the neighbourhood, which reflects her own personal history. «My grandfather was a boatman, so was my father... My mother didn't like boats, so we stayed in Thuin.” And: “My father used to tell me that he lived his childhood in a world of his own. He lived 24 hours a day with his family. He travelled according to their wishes...” A former owner of the Café du Rivage, she takes great pleasure in chatting with former boatmen who live in neighbouring houses. «It is a whole nomadic universe guided by rivers that we discover through the words of the elders.”



**Follow the [Current Art in Medieval Land](#)**

Through the city, discover the works created and integrated within this medieval city. To create their work, the various artists were inspired by heritage, architecture and the environment of the exhibition spaces. Stroll through the gardens, along the banks of the Sambre or in the Bois du Grand Bon Dieu in search of these astonishing works.

**Try local produce**

Enjoy a bistro in the heart of this medieval city to try local produce. You can also bring back local wine as a souvenir. The vineyard of the non-profit organisation, Clos des Zouaves, is located in the hanging gardens. This naturally sweet wine is vinified a few kilometres from the city, in partnership with the Biercée distillery, and is unique within the region.

# WHAT IS HIDING BEHIND THE **RAMPARTS** OF WALCOURT?

**ANNICK TRÉVIS, A MEMBER OF THE “PASSEURS DE REMPARTS”, TELLS US ABOUT THE APPEAL OF AN OLD FORTIFIED CITY THROUGH ITS RAMPARTS.**

**How do these old walls make you feel?**

“The ramparts are part of a whole. This historical part is still visible, but you have to imagine everything else. They surrounded the fortified square, which was dominated by the Saint-Materne Basilica. Through the walls, we can better understand the geopolitical strategy of the time, in terms of access to roads, gateways and rivers.”

**And more specifically, when you walk around the ramparts...**

“You will be able to see traces of old grain mills, a watchtower in ruelle Frère Hugo, fortified posterns, a bridge that once allowed water to be supplied to the mill, etc. We can completely miss these historic gems if we don't pay attention.”

**Any tips for visiting?**

“Although the 2.5 kilometre marked walk along the ramparts allows you to understand the historical side of things, I recommend strolling through the alleys. They are romantic when you stroll them as a couple. It makes you feel as though time is standing still. Films and adverts have also been filmed here.”

**Tour Salamandre**

Head to Beaumont to discover an old 11th century keep, which represents significant remains of a fortress.



**A CRAZY EVENING IN THE PETIT THÉÂTRE OR A CAR RACE ON THE CIRCUIT: PHILIPPE DE RIQUET DE CARAMAN-CHIMAY SHARES HIS MEMORIES OF HIS CITY WITH US.**

“For me, **Chimay** is synonymous with family gatherings at home [see the Château]. We get together around events such as Christmas,” the Prince tells us. “In fact, this house really reminds me of my childhood. I remember evenings dancing in the Petit Théâtre, where we put speakers on the stage and we danced or big games in the park behind the house.”

**Marked by the racing circuit and Virelles lake**

This Chimay native also remembers the Chimay Circuit. “At the time, many champions came to race at the Circuit. It is the oldest one in Belgium. Today, it mainly hosts motorcycle races, which bring in up to 15–16,000 visitors a year.”

# THE PRINCE OF CHIMAY TELLS US ABOUT CHIMAY



**Good to know:**

Discover the secret of Chimay. While moving around the city, discover the puzzles left for you..





### **Sharing environmental and culinary heritage**

For him, the region can be discovered through outings on foot or by bike. “The railway, which was created by my grandfather, is one of the first in Belgium. It has become part of the RAVel network. It is a very pleasant route.”

But the region can also be discovered through its cuisine. “If I have to present the region to outsiders, I usually offer a pot of escavèche, bernadins and a Chimay beer, particularly if I go to the United States. The beer has a reputation in Texas for being the only one that can knock a cowboy off his horse!”



### **For more details:**

**Chimay is known for escavèche, a pickled fish dish. At the time, the Spanish imported this recipe to keep the fish fresh during transport. The dish was transported in large stoneware pots. Today, enjoy this regional speciality served with fries and/or a beer.**

# BACKSTAGE AT THE MOST BEAUTIFUL VILLAGES IN WALLONIA



**BEYOND APPEARANCE-BASED CRITERIA,  
A VILLAGE IS LISTED DUE TO ITS HARMONIOUS  
INTEGRATION INTO ITS ENVIRONMENT.**

“The image of a pretty village is often rather cliché. We imagine old buildings, flowers, etc.,” says Alain Collin, President of the most beautiful villages in Wallonia non-profit organisation. “Our view is different. We want to promote the unique identity of each village based on agro-geographic zones. A good example is Vierves-sur-Viroin, which is fully embedded in the valley.”

### **Typical for the region**

A listed village is assessed based on its geological, landscape and plant-based characteristics. “In Barbençon, attention should be paid to the church, the old farms, the lake, etc.

Some visitors stop at Auberge du Lac to soak up as much of the place as possible.” The heritage inherited from the past in these five villages in the region is also highlighted through information panels. “An old photo of the marble features of the village of Soulme gives an idea of the activity.”

### **Dynamic life**

Numerous events are organised in these listed villages, notably thanks to villagers who are proud of their heritage. “In Ragnies, for example, they organise a romantic night during the summer solstice. It attracts large numbers of visitors.”

### **Good idea:**

**Appreciate the importance of the ‘Eau Blanche’ river that crosses through the village of Lompret. A walk in the municipality will enable you see how the rural buildings, fauna and flora blend in together.**



# MINI-GUIDE TO AWAKEN YOUR CREATIVITY



**CLAIRE BERCKMANS, SCIENTIFIC COORDINATOR AND MEDIATOR AT THE MUSEUM OF SMALL FORMAT CONTEMPORARY ART IN NISMES, TAKES US TO ENJOY A TIMELESS EXPERIENCE WITH JUST A PIECE OF PAPER AND A PENCIL.**

**What does the experience consist of?**

First of all you visit the exhibition – the only one that just accepts works that arrive in an A4 envelope – and then, you go on a hike in the Viroin-Hermeton Nature Reserve to sketch a landscape, drawing inspiration from one of the works.

**I'm no good at drawing. Is that a problem?**

Not at all -- anyone can enjoy the experience. We walk through the museum looking for works that amuse us, move us, and appeal to us.

There are more than 4,000 works of over 75 different nationalities.

All techniques are accepted here (engraving, digital, watercolour, etc.). With this diversity, everyone can find what they're looking for... and inspiration for their own work.

**Then, the creative magic starts to work**

Just as you wander freely through the exhibition, opening the drawers you want, you walk through the countryside looking for something that speaks to you. You create your own work on a sheet of paper. The area is quite inspiring, in particular with the Fondry des Chiens. The idea of this experience is to look at what is around us from another perspective, and above all, to have fun.



**Another inspiring idea:**

Relax at the Wellness Centre of the Golden Lakes Hotel, with its saunas, hammams, jacuzzi, swimming pool... for a completely zen-like and energising experience. Surprise yourself with a Japanese massage or a treatment straight from India.

# THREE IDEAS TO CONVINCEN YOU TO TRY FOOTGOLF

"The 'footgolf' course is the most popular golf course at the club," says Philippe Xhardez, manager of the Pro1Golf Club at the Eau d'Heure Lakes. "The participants are quite varied: families, groups of young people, colleagues for team-building... all try the experience and are enchanted by it."

## BUT WOULD YOU ENJOY IT? YES, AND HERE'S WHY.

### **1. It's accessible to all, even the least sporty people.**

Footgolf is played on a golf green and entails getting a football into a hole with the fewest kicks possible. "The aim is not to run after the ball or make passes – everyone takes turns."

### **2. There's no need to be a great footballer or football fan to like footgolf.**

"The only thing that's the same as in football is the size of the ball. Those who can shoot accurately have a slight advantage, but it doesn't really affect the experience. What people above all remember is the good-natured atmosphere all along the course."

### **3. Get some air in an enchanting setting, in any season.**

The green is situated on the banks of the Eau d'Heure Lakes, with a stunning view over the expanse of water. "The course is almost 600 metres long, with a magnificent horizon."



## Enjoy a beer with an atypical brewer

Dare to cross the threshold of the **Erquelinnes brewery** and meet Alain Brootcoorens, one of the establishment's official brewers. This true beer lover will tell you both about the history of the land and the local folklore.

Take a walk in the brewery garden where you'll find hop plants (up to 4 metres high in September) and many fruit trees.



# ROMANTIC WALK IN A MEDIEVAL GARDEN

**THE VOLUNTEERS OF FOLCUIN GARDEN, SITUATED IN LOBBES, HAVE DRAWN INSPIRATION FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO DESIGN THE SURROUNDS OF THE OLDEST CHURCH IN BELGIUM.**

“We’ve been maintaining this land for twenty years, and over time, it has become a real haven of peace for the locals, those who are curious and plant experts,” says Gérard Hubert, a volunteer for the Friends of Saint-Ursmer Collegiate Church of Lobbes.

#### **An ‘almost’ spiritual place**

These twenty nature lovers decided to draw inspiration from the Middle Ages to design the garden. At the time, the faithful went beyond the simple notion of the utilitarian garden and cultivated it to get to heaven.

The garden, laid out as a chequerboard, comprises medicinal plants, fruit trees, flowers (roses, lilies, etc.) and vegetable plots. A fountain stands in the middle of the squares.

#### **Source of inspiration**

The garden covers about one square kilometre and attracts many. “June/July is really the loveliest period, although each season has its own charm. In early summer, all the plants are blooming.”



# PROFESSION: FEATHER WORKER



**EMMANUELLE BÉDUNEAU  
DESIGNS ART OBJECTS  
MADE FROM FEATHERS IN  
HER ART LABORATORY IN  
HAM-SUR-HEURE. SHE SAYS  
HER CREATIONS ARE A REAL  
ODE TO ANIMALS AND THE  
LIVING.**

"I try to glean most of my feathers. Some birds have up to 20,000 feathers on them. You just have to gather them when they fall," she tells us. "I then work on each feather to give it a second life."

## **Feathers in her everyday life**

Far from frilly boas or carnival costumes, Emmanuelle introduces us to feather work in everyday objects. She explores all the fields of textiles (hats, bows, broaches, earrings, etc.) and interior decoration (lights, baskets, etc.), a brand new approach to an already unusual profession.

As a designer, Emmanuelle above all thinks about the needs the objects meet, their shape and their materials. "I would like all my creations to last at least 150 years."

## **The pleasure of the living**

Emmanuelle spends several hours or even several days on each piece. Using feather worker's tweezers (like hair tweezers), some of the pieces she creates have up to 4,000 feathers.

As an ethnologist, this eco-sensitive artist tries to embody the living in each of her creations. "I designed a vase made from goose feathers, which highlights the animal aspect of my approach. I create instinctively."

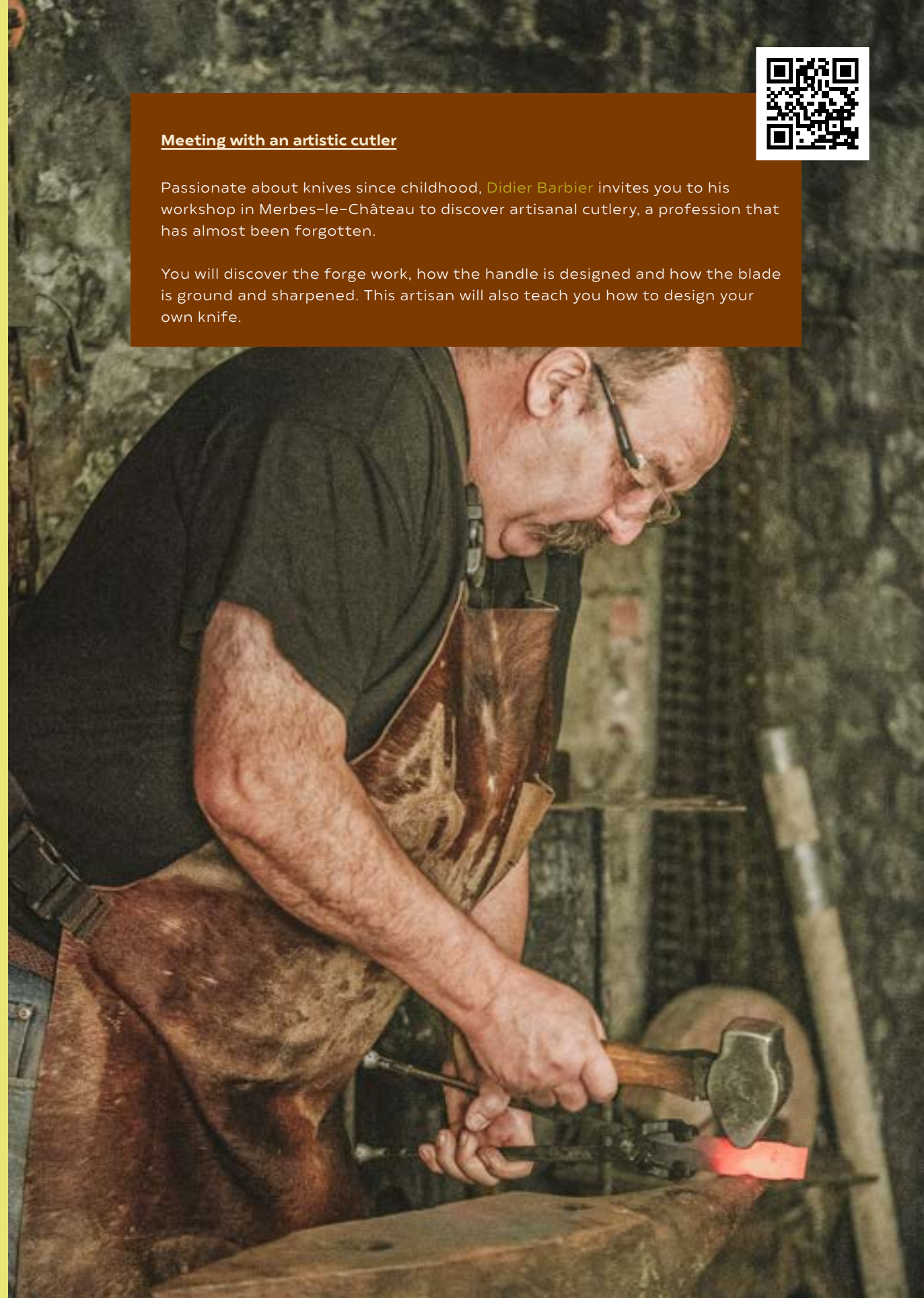
She shares her passion with workshops open to everyone.



## **Meeting with an artistic cutler**

Passionate about knives since childhood, **Didier Barbier** invites you to his workshop in Merbes-le-Château to discover artisanal cutlery, a profession that has almost been forgotten.

You will discover the forge work, how the handle is designed and how the blade is ground and sharpened. This artisan will also teach you how to design your own knife.







Discover the [Labuissière Nature Reserve](#), which is still little known to the public. Explore a path several hundred metres long to watch grey herons, frogs and newts... without being seen.





- Getaways with friends ●
- Family getaways ●
- Getaways for couples ●



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