



# 13 WALKS

TROUGH THE HEART OF THE  
**GREAT WAR**



Follow our hiking trails and historic routes to immerse yourself into the History of the First World War.










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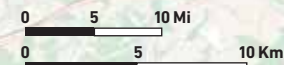
# 13 WALKS



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# THE FRONT FROM THE AISNE TO THE OISE

## 1914

**August 3<sup>rd</sup>:** Germany declares war on France.

**August 30<sup>th</sup>:** The Germans surge into the Oise and Aisne departments.

**September 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>:** First Battle of the Marne, violent clashes in the Forest of Retz.

**Mid-September:** Withdrawal of the German forces to the right bank of the Aisne river, beginning of the "race to the sea", stabilisation of the front line and first trenches.

**September 12<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>:** First Battle of the Chemin des Dames.

**End of September:** Front line set for a period of 30 months between the Somme and the Chemin des Dames.

## 1915

**January 8<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>:** Battle of Crouy, known as the "Soissons Affair".

**June 6<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>:** Battle of Quennevières.

## 1916

**The year 1916** was marked by the Franco-British offensive on the Somme and the German offensive on Verdun, while the Aisne and Oise departments were temporarily spared.

**April 13<sup>th</sup>:** First French gas attack tests at Quennevières.

## 1917

**February-March:** German retreat to the Hindenburg Line to shorten the front (Alberich operation).

**April 6<sup>th</sup>:** The United States enters the war alongside France and its allies.

**April 16<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>:** Nivelle Offensive on the Chemin des Dames which ends in failure with very heavy losses (around 300,000 French soldiers killed or missing). First use of tanks by the French army.

**May 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>:** The French offensive resumed on the Chemin des Dames with the capture of Craonne and the Plateau de Californie eastward.

**May 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>:** Fighting at the Laffaux mill on the Chemin des Dames.

**End of May - end of June:** Mutinies in the French army at Chemin des Dames and at the rear (mutinies in Cœuvres).

**October 23<sup>rd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>:** Battle of La Malmaison: the Chemin des Dames returns to the French at the end of the month.

## 1918

**March 21<sup>st</sup>:** Beginning of the German offensive in Picardy: battles of Noyon, Mont-Renaud and Plémont.

**April 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>:** German attack from the Saint-Gobain forest and French withdrawal to the South of the Ailette river.

**May 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>:** Lightning offensive by the Germans on the Chemin des Dames, capture of Soissons, Fère-en-Tardenois and pocket formed between the Ourcq and the Marne as far as Château-Thierry.

**May 31<sup>st</sup>:** First engagement of French light tanks (Renault FT 17) towards Chaudun. Captain d'Avout commanded the last cavalry charge of the French army between Chaudun and Berzy-le-Sec.

**June:** Battles of the Ru de Retz and the Savière on the outskirts of the Forest of Retz.

**June 1<sup>st</sup>:** The Germans reach Château-Thierry.

**June 9<sup>th</sup>:** Beginning of the Battle of the Matz to counter the 4<sup>th</sup> German offensive between Montdidier and Noyon towards Compiègne.

**July 15<sup>th</sup>-July 31<sup>st</sup>:** German offensive known as "Friedensturm" (the Peace Offensive) which should make it possible to cross the Marne and march on Paris. The Second Battle of the Marne begins.

**July 18<sup>th</sup>:** Counter-offensive known as the Villers-Cotterêts counter-offensive led by General Mangin over a 45-kilometres long frontline from Soissons to Château-Thierry. Tank and air support are crucial.

**August 4<sup>th</sup>:** The Château-Thierry barrier is removed.

**August 10<sup>th</sup>:** Beginning of the final French offensive in the Oise department.

**September 2<sup>nd</sup>:** Liberation of the Oise, the first department to return to French control.

**September 29<sup>th</sup>:** The Hindenburg Line is crossed in the Aisne department by Anglo-American forces.

**November 9<sup>th</sup>:** Proclamation of the Weimar Republic and abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II.

**November 11<sup>th</sup>:** Armistice signed in the clearing of Rethondes in the Forest of Compiègne.



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## PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR HIKERS

### Hiking charter:

- Respect nature, avoid excessive picking flowers and pick up your rubbish
- Respect other users, the paths are not for one person's use only
- Stay on the paths and use extreme caution when crossing roads
- Keep your dog on a lead
- When changing route, respect the markings which take precedence over the route description in this booklet

### A few recommendations:

- Choose a hiking trail that suits your abilities
- Wear clothes and shoes suitable for walking
- Make sure you have enough food and water for the longest hiking trails



### Marking of the trails

Fédération Française de Randonnée



	GR	GRdP	PR
<b>Right direction</b>			
<b>Change of direction</b>			
<b>Wrong direction</b>			

### Other hikes in the area:

- In the Oise department: <https://www.oisetourisme.com/pied> [in French]
- In the Aisne department: [www.randonner.fr](http://www.randonner.fr) [in French]

# 1 THE BOIS DES LOGES ROUTE

## CRAPEAUMESNIL



Level : Easy



6 km  
3.7 mi



1h45



43 m



Bois des Loges memorial area, Crapeaumesnil

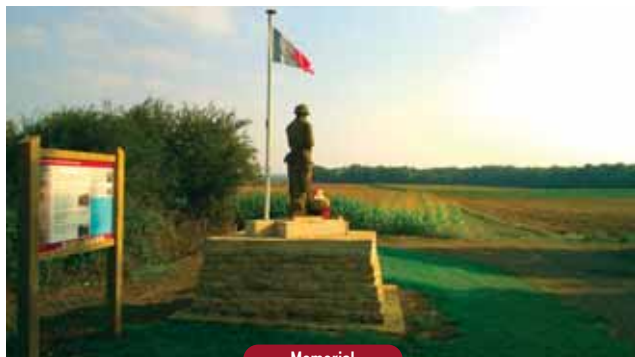
Thanks to the historical panels installed along the 6 km (3.7 mi) walk, discover the history of the “Bois des Loges” during the gruelling period of trench warfare from 1914 to 1917.



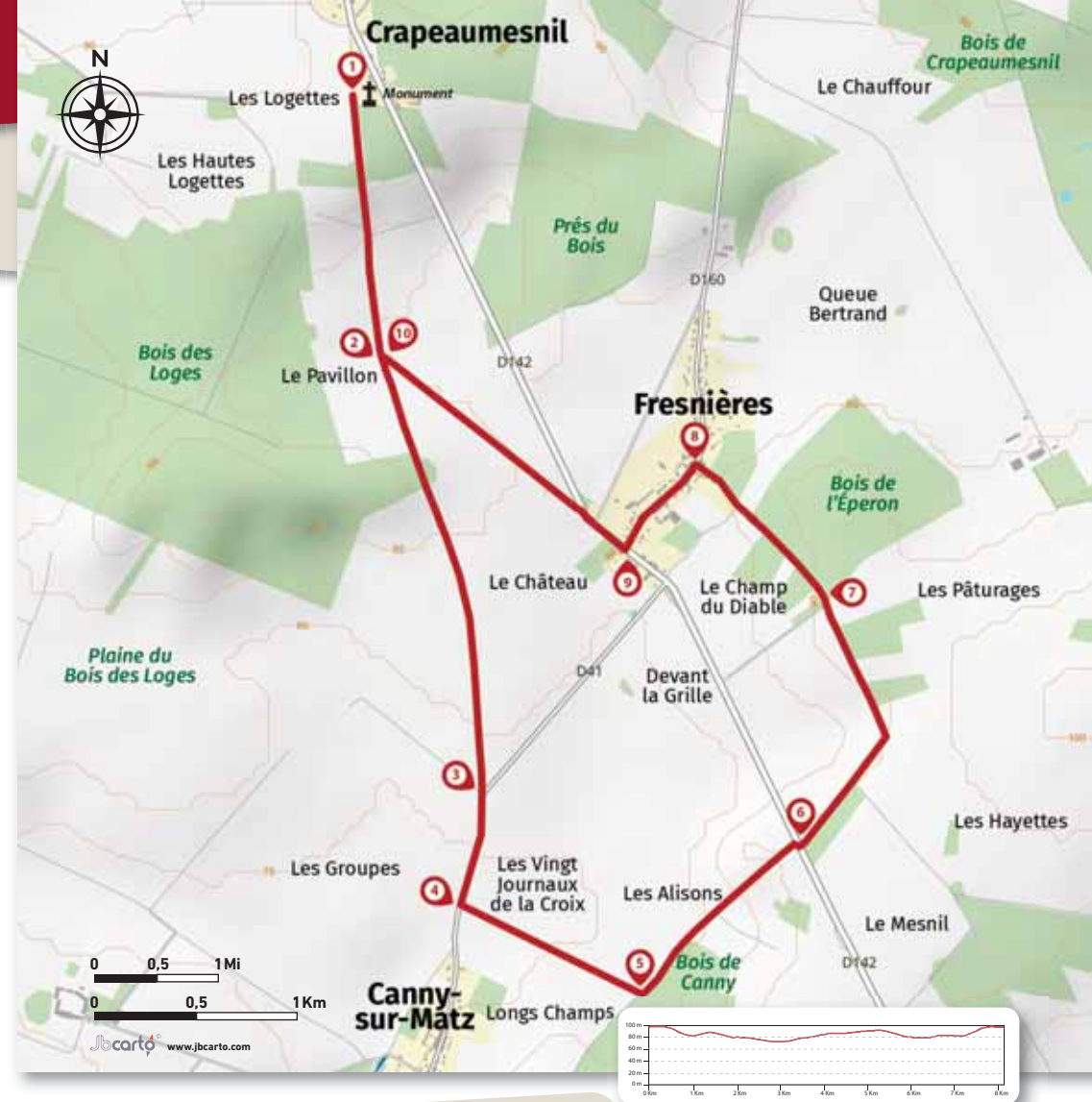
Ruined church of Crapeaumesnil, 1915

From September 1914, the French and German armies tried to overtake each other towards the north-west where the front line was not yet set. This was the beginning of the “Race to the Sea”. Between Beuvraignes and Fresnières, some deadly fighting took place until the Germans captured Crapeaumesnil. Not far away from the village, the “Bois des Loges” was strongly occupied by the French in October 1914. In fact, they blocked the access to Compiègne and Paris. This position remained unchanged until the German retreat in March 1917.

- 1 The route starts in front of the memorial. Take the path parallel to the edge of the “Bois des Loges”.
- 2 At the junction of the two trails, take the right hand lane in the direction of the “Bois des Loges”.
- 3 When you meet the road, follow it in the direction of Canny-sur-Matz.
- 4 Before entering the village of Canny-sur-Matz, turn left on the path leading to the woods.
- 5 Arriving at the “Bois de Canny”, turn left and follow the edge.
- 6 At the junction with the road, cross it with caution and rejoin the opposite path. Continue until you reach the “Bois de l'Eperon” crossroads.
- 7 Continue in the same direction to the village of Fresnières.
- 8 When you reach the main road, called “la Grande Rue”, turn left and continue until you reach the crossroads with the D142 departmental road.
- 9 At the crossroads, turn right and follow the D142 for 200 m (220 yd). At the cemetery, take the path on your left.
- 10 Back on the path you started on, turn right to reach the memorial area.



Memorial



Shelter with the bust of Kaiser Wilhelm II watching over german soldiers, 1915



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An Infantryman's Silhouette

## 2 HISTORICAL CIRCUIT

### THIESCOURT



Level : **Medium**



8,5 km  
5.3 mi



2h10



137 m



Church square,  
Thiescourt

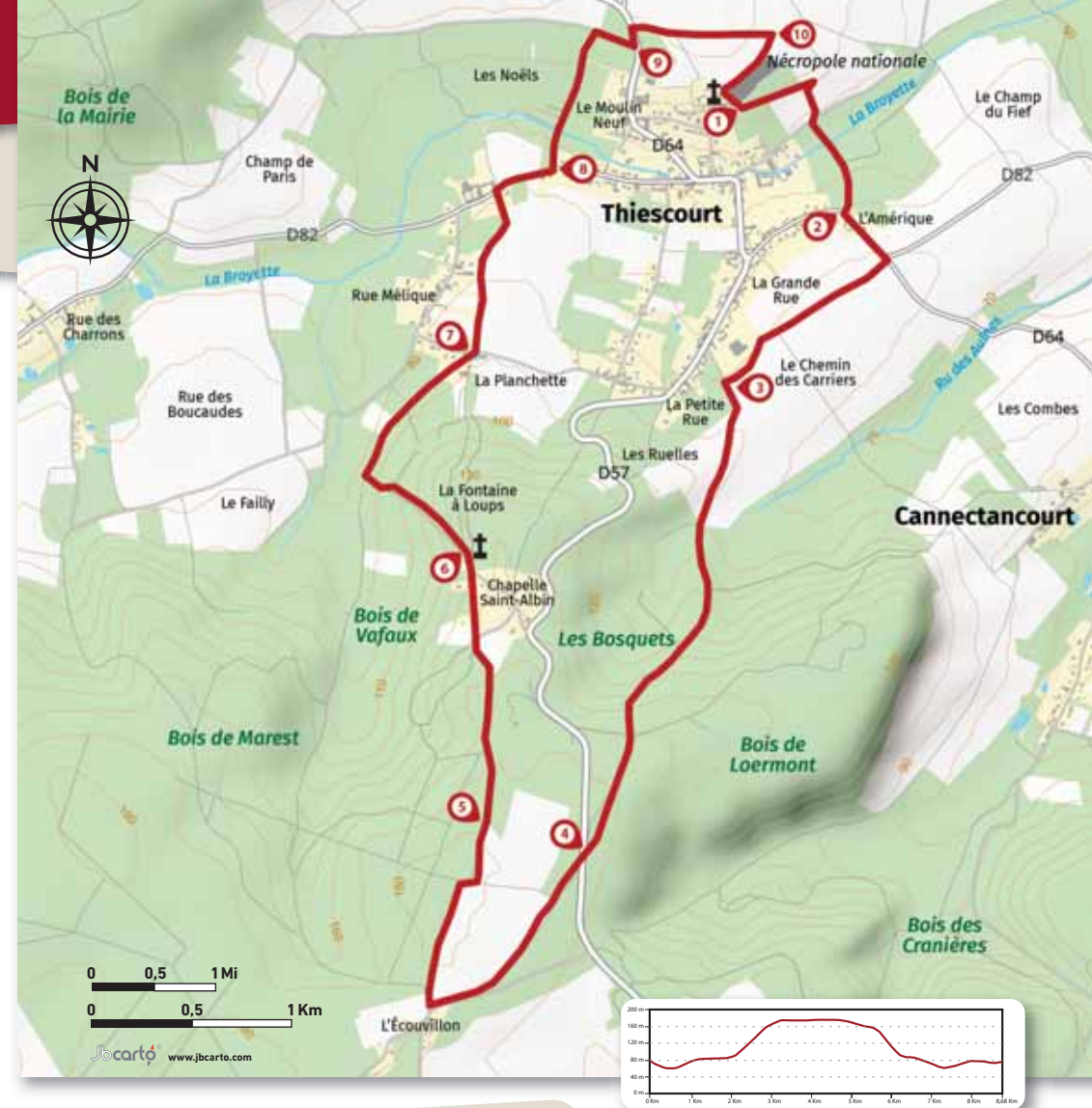


**Discover the Thiescourt forest, known as Picardy's Little Switzerland. The 8.5 km (5.3 mi) walk unveils a multitude of historical remains and remarkable treasures, including former stone quarries that served as a refuge for soldiers on both sides.**

In mid-September 1914, the front was set at Thiescourt. The village would be divided in two parts for almost 30 months. Gradually, the villagers in the French part were evacuated, while the inhabitants under German occupation were taken hostage, often cooped up in cellars and subjected to terrible restrictions. After a brief return to calm following the German retreat in March 1917, the village was at the core of the offensives of March and June 1918. Thiescourt was definitively liberated a few weeks later in August 1918.

On your way, do not hesitate to visit the "La Botte" quarry in Cconnectancourt! The Germans moved into this quarry as early as 1914 in order to protect themselves from bombings: the large network of underground pathway on the site is an iconic testimony of military development during trench warfare. Information to "Les Souterrains 14-18 de la Carmoye" [a.petreaux@laposte.net](mailto:a.petreaux@laposte.net) +33 (0)6 26 58 12 23

- 1 The walk starts at the church of Thiescourt. Go around the building and take the path on the right between the new and the old civil cemeteries. After walking along the pastures, turn right to go down towards a small road. Cross the trail and take the path opposite to cross the brook known as "de la Broyette". Continue on the path until you reach the road.
- 2 Turn left and follow the verge along the D82 departmental road to the "Croix du Tilleul" crossroads. At the crossroads, turn onto the stone path on the right.
- 3 At the end of the path, turn left towards the massif and continue in the same direction on the north side of the forest to reach the top of the "Bois de Loermont" hill.
- 4 Cross the road in order to meet a path 30 m (33 yd) further on the left that leads to the hamlet of "L'Écouvillon". Before the houses, take the path on the right and follow the woods for 700 m (770 yd).
- 5 Enter the woods and go straight ahead. Then, walk along the old stone quarries of Saint-Albin and cross the Chapelle Saint-Albin clearing.
- 6 At the intersection, turn left to go down and join the Fontaine à Loups path. Continue to the right to reach the "Croix Blanche" crossroads.
- 7 At these crossroads, cross the road and take the opposite path.
- 8 When this path meets the road, turn right and follow the verge. Take the first path to the left to cross the brook again.
- 9 At the end of the path, turn right to join the main road. Take the offset path by 50 m (55 yd) on the left to reach the crossroads leading to the Military Necropolis of Thiescourt.
- 10 Return to the church.



Trench at "La Botte" quarry



Information panel

# 3 THE CITÉ SAINT-GOBAIN THOUROTTE



Level : Very easy

2,5 km  
1.5 mi

1h00

12 m

**P** Town hall square, Thourotte

A 2.5 km (1.5 mi) route with eight information panels to help you discover the industrial upheaval experienced by the village of Thourotte in the aftermath of the First World War.



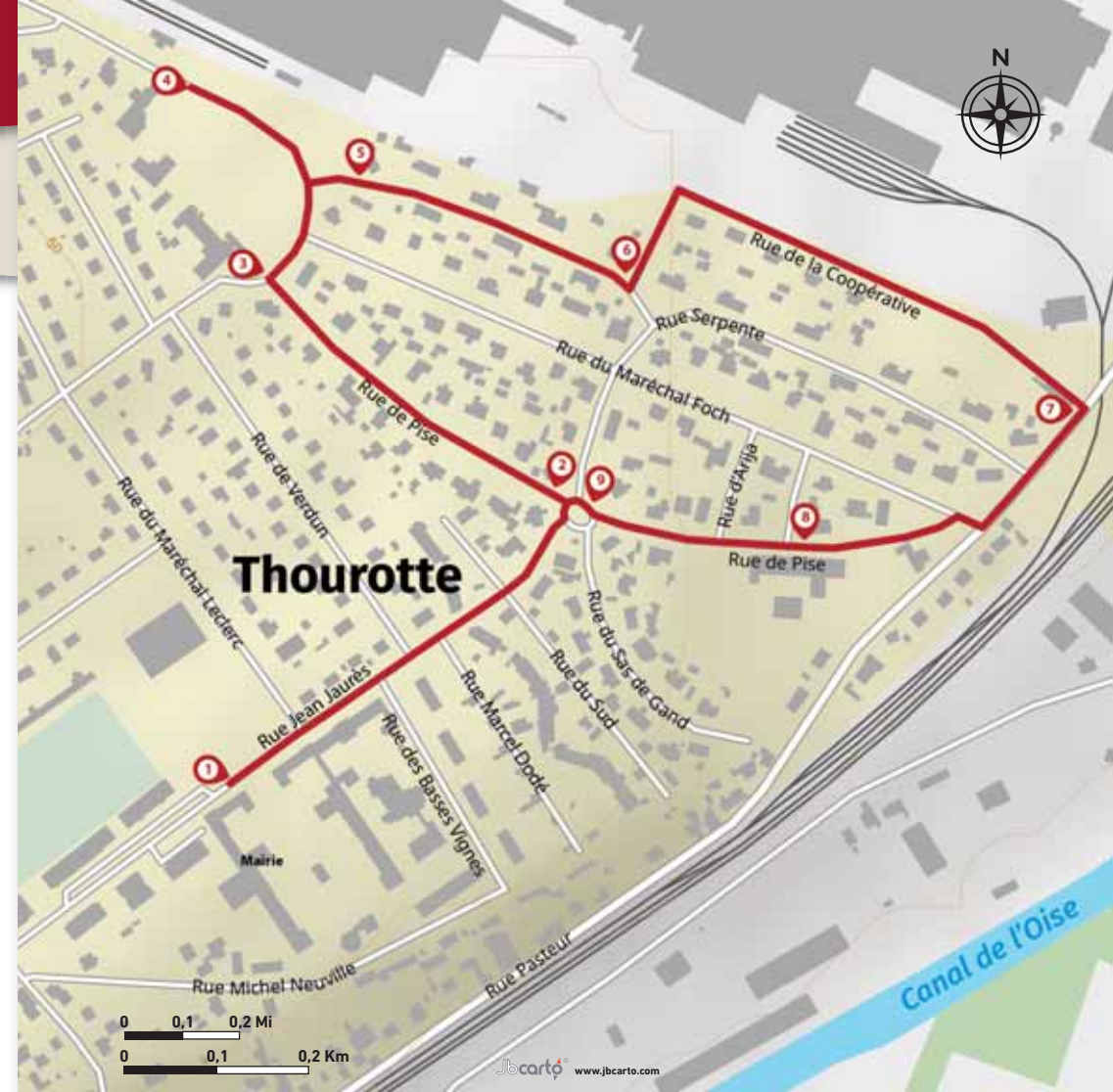
Information Panel No. 6

In 1919, the Saint-Gobain Group set its sights on Thourotte in order to rebuild – in a single location – its factories that were destroyed during the war. This small village benefited from areas and lines of communication that aroused the company's interest. Partly financed by war reparations, the Chantereine glass factory and the workers' housing estate were therefore created. Thourotte was transformed and its modernism symbolises the rebirth of a region ravaged by several years of war.



Primary school built by the company

- 1 The route starts at the Thourotte town hall where there are two information panels. Head towards the third one by walking along "Rue Jean Jaurès" until the roundabout.
- 2 Facing the panel, take a right onto "Rue de Pise".
- 3 Turn right towards "Place Saint-Gobain", the venue for the company's various events and ceremonies.
- 4 Continue on to the Louise de Marillac chapel and the former Saint-Gobain dispensary. Cross the street and retrace your steps.
- 5 Take "Rue Serpente".
- 6 Turn left onto "Rue de la Coopérative" with its singular architecture. Continue to the Saint-Gobain factory entrance.
- 7 Facing the panel, turn left and then take the 3<sup>rd</sup> street on the right, "Rue de Pise".
- 8 Continue to the right after the nursery and primary school, an educational service also provided by the company.
- 9 At the roundabout, turn left onto "Rue Jean Jaurès" to get back to the starting point.



Construction of the factory and its workers' housing estate



Information Panel No. 8

# 4 FIRST GERMAN VILLAGE ON THE ROAD TO PARIS

## CHIRY-OURSCAMP



Level : Easy



7 km  
4.3 mi



2h00



116 m



Place Jehan Froissart,  
Chiry

This 7 km (4.3 mi) route invites you to discover the history of Chiry-Ourscamp, village where inhabitants of the Noyon area took refuge during the Great War. The castle and abbey walls still keep many marks of the bombings.



Orientation table

On August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1914, the President of France declared the "general mobilisation". The next day, the German Empire invaded France from the north-east. On August 29<sup>th</sup>, Noyon's inhabitants were warned of the imminent invasion of their town by enemy troops and took refuge in Chiry-Ourscamp. This village, located in the third line of the trenches, ended up being occupied by the Germans. It was also divided in two parts due to the destruction of the bridge over the Oise river. Although Ourscamp was somehow spared from the massive destruction of 1915, Chiry was blasted during the German withdrawal in 1917 and the bombings in 1918.

Variant: small loop possible from numbers 1 to 10 (3.8 km/2.4 mi).

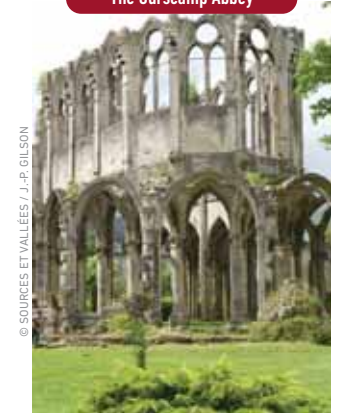
- 1 The route starts at "Place Jehan Froissart", near the first information panel. Cross "Rue Royale". Walk along it on the left and pass two information panels.  
*Off-route:* do not hesitate to visit the Memorial Area dedicated to the civilian victims of the First World War in the Oise, located on "Rue du Point du Jour" on your right.
- 2 Cross the street again and take "Rue du Marais". Continue to the crossroads with "Rue du Four", where the war memorial is located.
- 3 Turn right until the next crossroads. Then continue on your left and go up "Rue de l'Église".
- 4 Turn right when you reach the church and the town hall where the fourth panel is. Continue straight on "Rue du Château". Look at the Mennechet castle on the left, whose history is told on the fifth panel. Go up this street to the crossroads.
- 5 Take the dirt path in front of the garrison house with the 6<sup>th</sup> information panel located a few metres away. Continue straight on towards the orientation table and the magnificent panoramic view there. Retrace your steps and turn right. Climb the hill to the top.
- 6 Follow the path to the left and pass the seventh panel on the Mennechet tower.
- 7 At the crossroads, go straight ahead. Go 150 m (160 yd) further down the trail to the next sign and the orientation table. Go down the dirt path.
- 8 At the end of the path, take the street on the right.
- 9 At the crossroads, turn left onto "Rue de Mauconseil".
- 10 At the end of the street, cross "Rue Royale". If you want to, you can return to the starting point on your left or discover the Sainte-Anne chapel on your right. To reach Ourscamp, go straight on "Rue du Lavoir". Turn right on "Rue des Douze Setiers".
- 11 Turn left on "Rue de la Justice", also signposted as the D48 road, until the "Place Saint-Eloi" where the panel about the abbey and its spinning mill is located.
- 12 In front of the building, continue on the right, on "Rue de l'Abbaye".
- 13 At the intersection, turn right where the cross and the last panel are located and turn back to the starting point.



The Mennechet Castle



The Ourscamp Abbey



# 5 FOLLOWING THE PATHS OF THE GREAT WAR

## TRACY-LE-MONT



Level : Easy

6,5 km  
4 mi

2 h

81 m

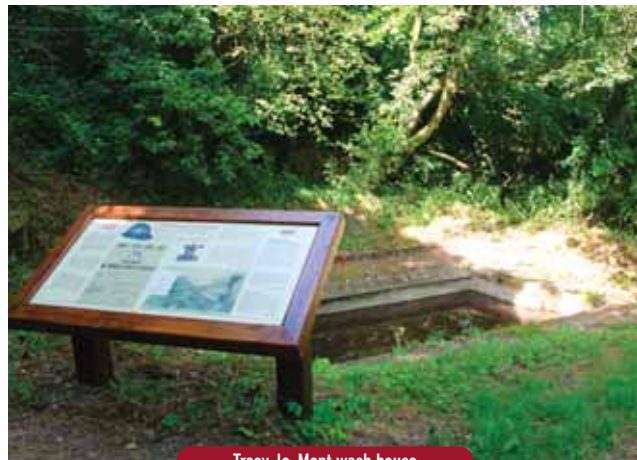
**P** Church square, Tracy-le-Mont

Discover the tragic history of Tracy-le-Mont and the civilians in this area during the war thanks to this 6.5 km (4 mi) route marked out by information panels and silhouettes of French soldiers.



Silhouette of a French soldier on the route

On the eve of the First World War, Tracy-le-Mont was a dynamic village with a population of about 2,000, famous for its brush factories. On 31<sup>st</sup> August 1914, it was invaded by the Germans and finally liberated a few days later, on 13<sup>th</sup> September. Located near the front line, the village was bombed several times. It was the starting point for the Battle of Quennevières in June 1915, which resulted in more than 14,000 casualties. A century later, the population of Tracy-le-Mont is still lower than before 1914.



Tracy-le-Mont wash house

- 1 The route starts behind the church of Tracy-le-Mont, in front of an information panel. Go straight ahead and go down the stairs.
- 2 At the junction, turn left and go straight on. Pass through the hamlet of Bernanval.
- 3 Turn left towards Bimont.
- 4 At the crossroads, go straight ahead, pass the old farm of Bimont and continue until the old cemetery.
- 5 Retrace your steps.
- 6 At the first crossroads, turn left. At the next, turn right.
- 7 At the junction, turn left and continue straight ahead to reach the plateau near the National Necropolis.
- 8 Take the road on the right until you re-enter the village.
- 9 Take the first road on the left and follow the quarries of Tracy-le-Mont. Then turn right and continue straight ahead along the main street.
- 10 Turn right at the site of the former Knights Templar Commandery. At the junction, turn left and come back towards the church.



Tracy-le-Mont: Colonel alongside Zouaves and Infantrymen, 1915



The bandaging house in the hamlet of Bernanval



# 6 NAMPCEL AND THE GERMAN ARMY

## NAMPCEL



Level: **Very easy**

2,5 km  
1.6 mi

1h30

51 m

Place de la Mairie,  
Nampcel

Immerse yourself in the daily life of Nampcel during the German occupation on this 2.5 km (1.6 mi) route with information panels.

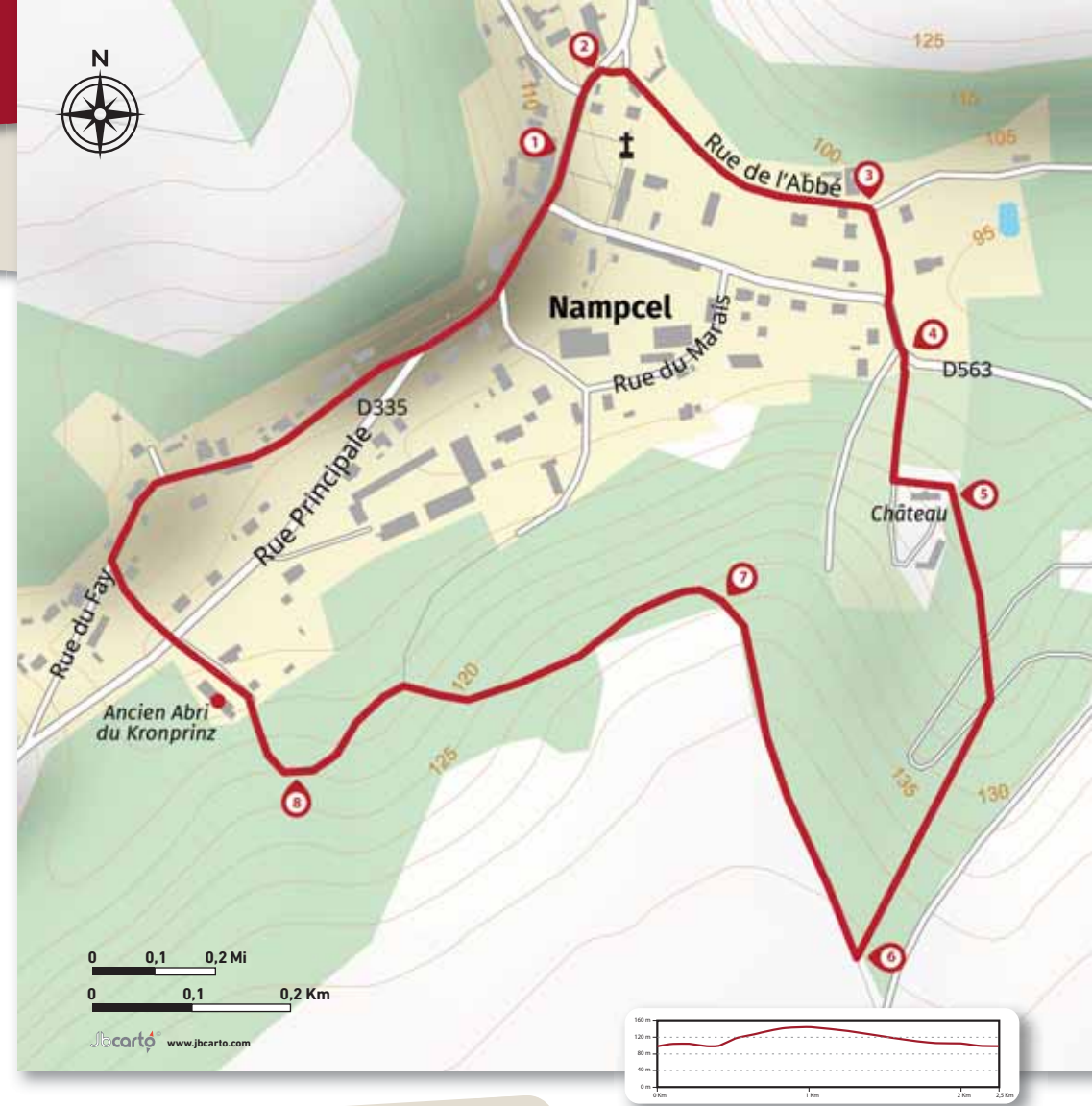


German artillery bunker

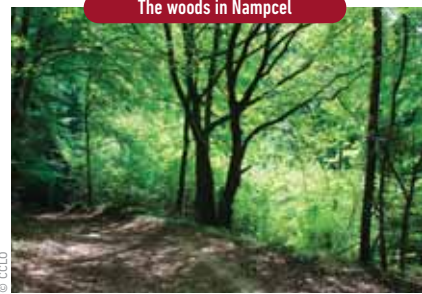
Nampcel was occupied from 31 August 1914 until March 1917, when the Germans withdrew to the Hindenburg Line. This village at the rear of the front was again in the hands of German troops between May and August 1918. Almost completely destroyed during the conflict, only two houses survived and can be seen today. The Kronprinz Shelter is one of the many vestiges of the village of Nampcel that prove the presence of soldiers and the proximity of the fighting. This German bunker, the regimental command centre, is one of the most imposing remnants of the Great War in the area.

Information on guided tours of the Kronprinz Shelter at the Pierrefonds Tourist Office: +33 (0)3 44 42 81 44.

- 1 The route starts at "Place de la Mairie" [town hall square] in Nampcel in front of the first information panel.
- 2 Turn right onto "Rue de l'Abbé" where the second information panel is located.
- 3 At the junction, turn right and continue straight ahead on this street.
- 4 At the second junction, across the street, take the "Pertron to Couvillot" path. Be careful, turn left to go along the wall of the building. The third information panel is located after the house, on the upward slope.
- 5 Go straight ahead, cross the road and follow the rural path.
- 6 Once off the path on the plateau, turn right and take "Rue Hatte" along the woods to reach the fourth panel.
- 7 Follow the main path down to the village where the fifth panel is located.
- 8 Continue on the main path that branches off to the right. Enter on the "Bois du Fay" path. Go past the Kronprinz Shelter before reading the last panel on the left. To get back to the starting point, cross the main street, go to the end of the "Bois du Fay" path, then turn right and go straight on.



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The woods in Nampcel

Civilians in front of the church in the 1910s



Nampcel in 1915

© COLL. D. GUÉNAFF



© OISETOURISME / G. SWEILLINCXX

The Kronprinz Shelter

# 7 IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FRENCH SOLDIERS

## VIC-SUR-AISNE



Level: **Medium**



14 km  
8.7 mi



4h30



209 m



Place du Général de Gaulle,  
Vic-sur-Aisne



This 14 km (8.7 mi) walk combines the discovery of Vic-sur-Aisne and the villages marked by the Great War as well as the exploration of the local landscapes.



Vic-sur-Aisne war memorial

On 12<sup>th</sup> September 1914 the first Battle of the Marne had just come to an end. The Germans were forced to retreat northwards and cross the river Aisne. Its banks are dominated by high plateaux above underground limestone quarries called “creutes”. The quarries are located just behind the front line and offered excellent shelter for the soldiers. Both armies were instructed to hold their positions and the French were first to dig trenches from German shelling. The plateau of Vingré is where trench warfare properly started.

- 1 Facing the château, turn right towards Saint-Christophe-à-Berry. Walk 800 m (880 yd) along “Rue Saint-Christophe”, then turn right into “Rue de Presles”. After 100 m (110 yd), turn left towards Berny-Rivière (country lane). After 300 m (330 yd) take first track on the left, going towards a wood. At second fork, bear right for Chapeaumont.
- 2 After a gentle climb, go through chicane gate (private property on both sides of track). Follow the white pegs for 500 m (550 yd). Pass nearby Lieutenant Colonel Reboul’s former command post (structure built of local stone, half buried below the ground). Turn left twice, towards the “Fontaine Sainte-Anne”. Leave through gate on left-hand side (view of fountain on the right). Go down 300 m (330 yd) towards Saint-Christophe. At bottom, before the road, turn right for 100 m (110 yd), then left.
- 3 When level with the church of Saint-Christophe, stand in front of war memorial depicting grandfather and grandson grieving for their lost ones, then turn right towards Berry.
- 4 After 800 m (880 yd), take track on the right before the bridge. After 1 km (1100 yd) turn right towards Vingré.
- 5 Go through the village. Pass by memorial to executed soldiers on left-hand side (don’t miss the cellar in which condemned men wrote their last letters) and turn right at the crossroad. Go uphill, carry on right.
- 6 At the Broken Cross memorial (see information panel for explanation of its symbolism), turn right away from the plain and cross the plateau.
- 7 Facing the wood, turn right.
- 8 Going downhill, take the path on the left leading to the village.
- 9 When level with the town hall of Berny, take street facing you and carry straight on towards Vic-sur-Aisne. On the outskirts of Berny, on left-hand side, the walls of a house have been carved by soldiers (“villa du poilu”, thoughts, someone’s profile, etc.). Return to centre of Vic.

– This circuit comes from [randonner.fr](http://randonner.fr), the website for hiking in the Aisne –



The Keep at Vic-sur-Aisne



Saint-Christophe-à-Berry war memorial

# 8 GENERAL MANGIN'S OBSERVATION TOWER

## FOREST OF RETZ



Level: **Easy**



4,7 km  
3 mi



1h30



69 m



Parking of the General Mangin's Observation Tower

**Let yourself be tempted by this beautiful walk in the forest of Retz. This 4.7 km (3 mi) circuit allows you to follow landmarks from the First World War all the way up to General Mangin's Observation Tower, the highlight of the walk.**

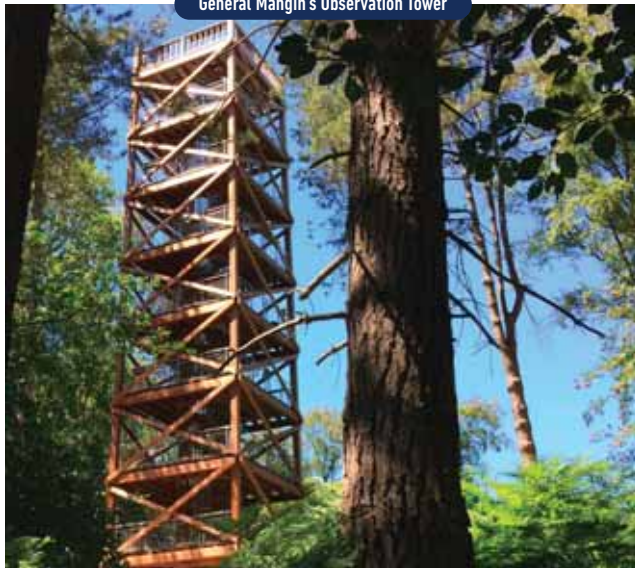
The forest of Retz occupied a strategic position during the First World War as it was near the front and provided Paris with a natural, protective barrier. The French Army chose an elevated position in the forest, known as the "tour Réaumont", to erect a 30 metres high wooden observation post. It was from the top of this tower that General Mangin commanded a victorious counter-attack against the Germans in July 1918.

Rebuilt during the Centenary of WWI, the General Mangin's Observation Tower offers one of the highest point of view of the region. On each of its eight floors, thanks to games, sound records and a spyglass, you will discover everything related to the wildlife and the flora of the forest of Retz but also its crucial role during the counteroffensive of July 1918 which leads to the Armistice. Free access all year long.

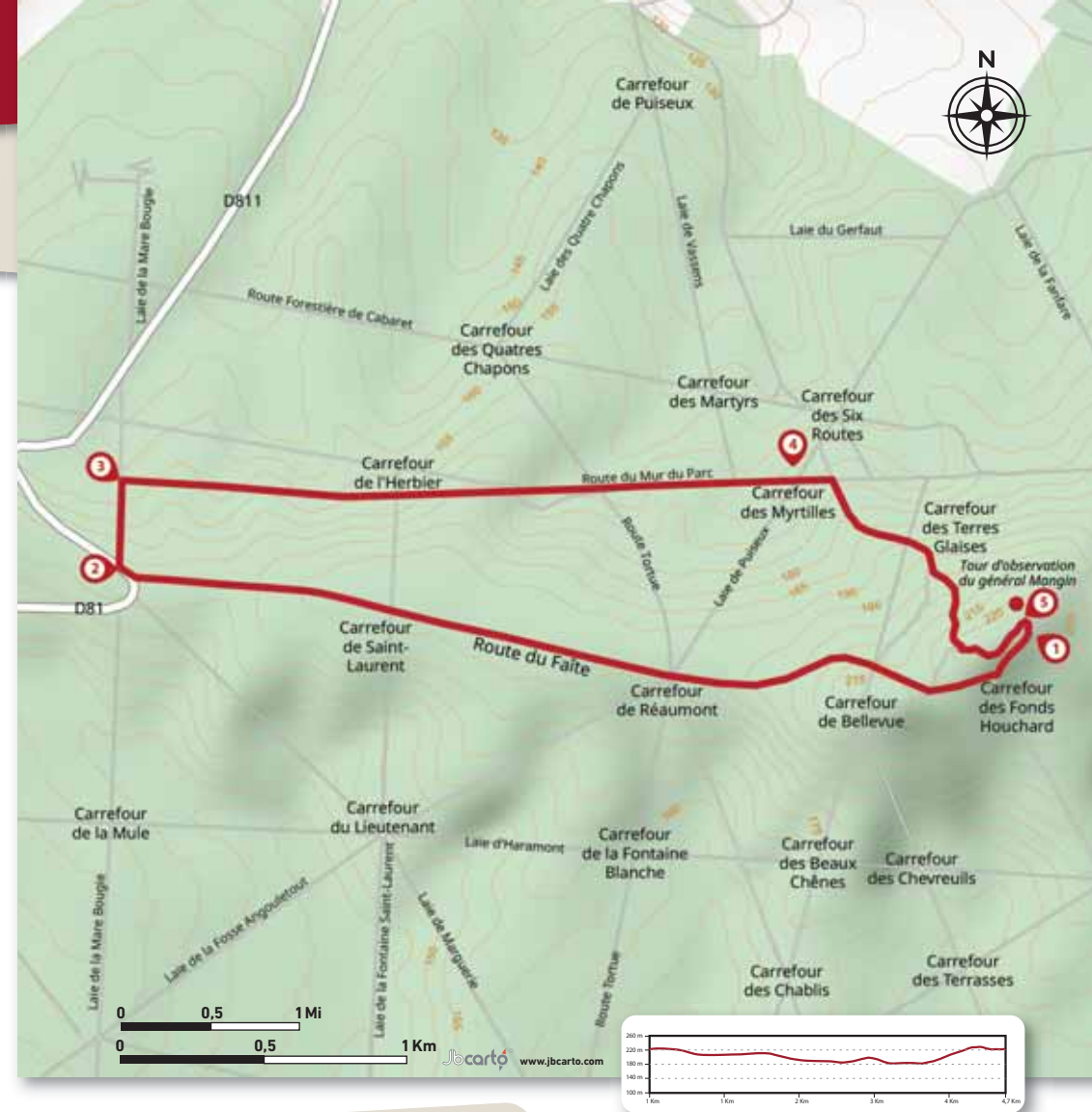
- 1 Directions to the starting point: from the N2, take the D81 towards Vivières. Turn right at the bend and drive 2 km (1.3 mi) along "Route du Faîte" (in the direction of General Mangin's Observation Tower). The car park is on the left, after "Carrefour des Fonds Houchard" (barrier and sign posts). Leave your car. Opposite the signpost marking the beginning of the walk, turn left along the road you have just driven along: "Route du Faîte". Follow this road for 2 km (1.3 mi). On the left is located the Lieutenant de Chasseval's grave; further along on the right, you can see the Pintiau Fountain.
- 2 At the D81 crossroads (opposite: the "Passant, arrête-toi" memorial), walk very carefully along the right hand side of the road for 50 m (55 yd) (danger, busy road!) and then follow a track leading down to the right.
- 3 Take the first track on the right with red and white road markers.
- 4 100 m (110 yd) after "Carrefour des Myrtilles", turn right along a little alley that turns into a steeper path.
- 5 At the very top, turn left towards the Mangin memorial. Walk down the track to return to the starting point. Make the most of this last step to discover the General Mangin's Observation Tower. On its eight floors, discover the life of the forest of Retz and its history, as well as the role played by these woods in the victory of July 18, 1918.

– This circuit comes from [randonner.fr](http://randonner.fr), the website for hiking in the Aisne –

General Mangin's Observation Tower



© OF RETZ-ENVALLOIS



"Passant arrête-toi" memorial



© OF RETZ-ENVALLOIS



© OF RETZ-ENVALLOIS

The panorama at the top of the tower

# 9 THE CHALMONT MOUND

## OULCHY-LE-CHÂTEAU



Level: **Easy**



13,1 km  
8 mi



1h00



155 m



Place du Château,  
Oulchy-le-Château

Located in the heart of the site of the fighting in the spring and summer 1918, this route designed for mountain and hybrid bikes will make you discover one of the most remarkable monuments of the Great War, both by its size and the originality of its composition.

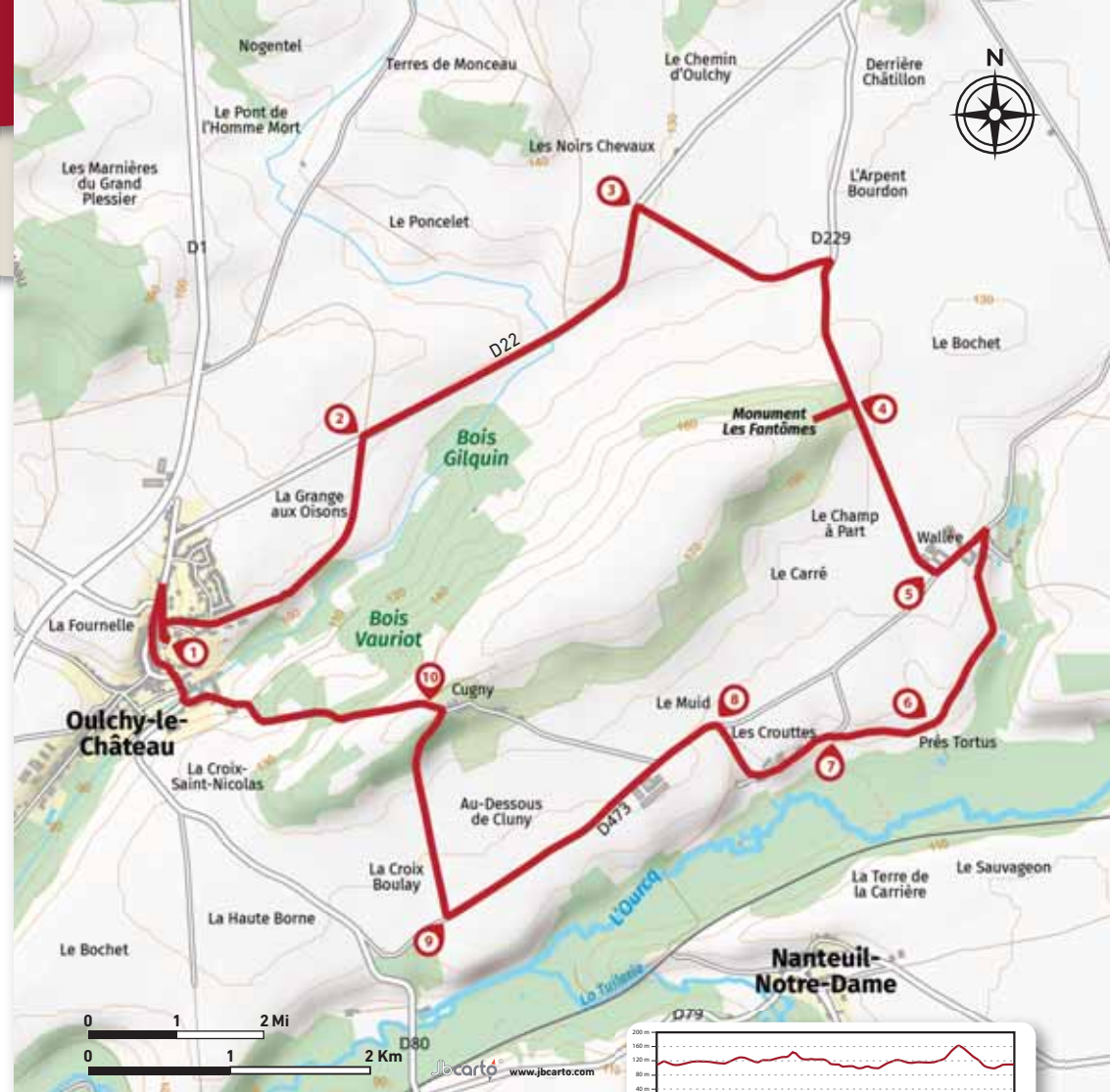
The fate of the second Battle of the Marne was decided there. The counter-offensive led by Generals Degoutte and Mangin was launched on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1918. From July 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>, on the very spot where the "Les Fantômes" [The Ghosts] monument stands and on the plains opposite, the battle was raging. The Chalmont mound was captured and the enemy pushed back east.

From 1930 to 1934, Paul Landowski sculpted this monument in pink granite to commemorate this decisive victory. Inaugurated on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1935 by Albert Lebrun, President of France, the monumental work serves as a tribute to the men who gave their lives for the final victory. A statue of a woman that represents France and the steps that bring to mind the four years of war are overlooked by eight figures: seven soldiers with their army corps and a naked man who symbolises a hero and martyr.

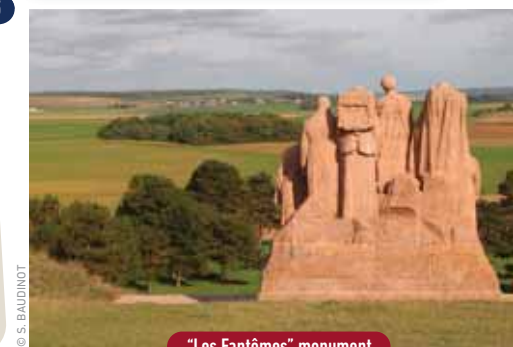
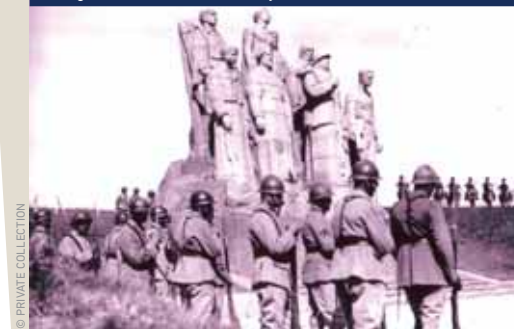
Markings: **yellow** (mountain biking).  
Take caution on the road sections.

- 1 From "Place du Château", walk along "Avenue du Prieuré" for 50 m (55 yd) and turn right onto the "Rue Saint-Jacques" which leads to the old railway line known as "Chemin de la Petite Ligne" [The Little Line Railway] as far as the D22 road.
- 2 Take the road on the right for 1.5 km (1640 yd).
- 3 At the second bend, turn right onto a countryside path. At the end of the path, turn right onto the D229.
- 4 At the statue "La France", go up the Chalmont mound to the "Fantômes" monument. Then turn back to continue on the D229.
- 5 Turn left and enter the hamlet of Wallée via "Rue des Deux Fermes". After the church, turn right in the dead end, then right at the fork in the road ("Grand'Rue") and continue by the Mony path towards Les Crouttes.  
*Off circuit (500 m/550 yd to the rear):* going straight on after the church, there are some caves with a picnic area. A peaceful and highly recommended place.
- 6 Continue straight on towards the hamlet of "Les Crouttes".
- 7 Turn left onto "Rue des Crouttes", crossing through the hamlet of the same name and turn right onto the D473.
- 8 Take the D473 (towards Cugny). At the sheds, go straight on for 1 km (1100 yd).
- 9 Turn right onto the rural path.
- 10 When you reach the church at Cugny, turn left onto the paved road. After entering Oulchy-le-Château, turn right onto "Rue du Pont", then right again onto "Rue des Fosses". At the end, turn right on "Rue du Docteur Manichon". Follow the hairpin bend round to the right to reach the "Rue du Prieuré" and get back to the starting point.

– This circuit comes from [randonner.fr](http://randonner.fr), the website for hiking in the Aisne –



Inauguration of the monument by the President of France on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1935



"Les Fantômes" monument

# 10 THE FOUNTAIN SAINT-OUEN

## CHIVRES-VAL



Level: **Medium**



12 km  
7.5 mi



3h30



154 m



Fort de Condé car park,  
Chivres-Val

Markings: yellow and green.

- 1 Walk in a straight line across the agricultural land of the plateau, passing a calvary and cutting onto the D1890 (with views of the Mennejean farm and the N2).
- 2 Continue along a path marked out in white and red, skirting a wood with remains of limestone quarrying and a block-house, then a heath with birches.
- 3 At the fork, go down the path and enjoy the characteristic view of the landscape of this hilly area. Continue to the left along a recently opened forest trail offering views of the village of Sancy-les-Cheminots, nestled at the bottom of a valley. Continue to the right towards the village: with the garden of remembrance and the Saint-Ouen fountain.
- 4 Take the D1580 opposite, go up on the left by the first grassy path which passes above the cemetery and runs along a heath. Turn right.
- 5 At the junction, leave the path and continue to the right, join and follow the D15 for 100 m (109 yd).
- 6 Cross the road (be careful!), go down the grassy path and pass through a small wet valley, partly planted with poplars and typical of this region. Then continue towards the wooded slopes.
- 7 At the fork in the road, stay on the left hand path that goes along the edge of a field and through the woods.
- 8 When you come out of the woods, continue to stay on the right.
- 9 In the open field, at the crossroads, go straight on towards Celles-sur-Aisne.
- 10 Take the D1580 for 20 m (22 yd) and turn right onto a grassy path.
- 11 At the hunters' hut, go up the D1890 (be careful!).
- 12 Cross the road with care, turn left onto a path through the woods to the plateau.
- 13 Meet up with and go down the paved road (banks cut into the limestone).
- 14 Take the first dirt path on the right, go up the plateau.
- 15 Turn left and come back to the fort.

– This circuit comes from [randonner.fr](http://randonner.fr), the website for hiking in the Aisne –

This hike starts in front of the **Fort de Condé**, part of the **Séré de Rivières system built in order to protect Paris after the defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (1870)**.



Sancy-les-Cheminots town hall dating from the Reconstruction

Located at the foot of the Chemin des Dames, the village of Sancy was reduced to a wasteland in 1918. Paul Busquet, head of the National Railway Office, looked for the grave of his son who died in battle... This martyred village was able to rise from the ashes thanks to its adoption by the French national railway workers' union, the "Union Nationale des Cheminots". So it was renamed "Sancy-les-Cheminots". The "garden of remembrance" houses the grave of Lucien Busquet, son of Paul the railwayman, as well as the headstone of the aviator Quentin Roosevelt, son of the President of the United States... This hike also gives you the opportunity to walk in the footsteps of Anne Morgan and the CARD [the American Committee for Devastated France], who travelled Picardy driving Ford model T cars starting 1917 to come to the aid of civilians.



Barracks yard in the Fort de Condé



The armored casemate of the Fort de Condé

# 11 EXPLORING THE CHEMIN DES DAMES

## AIZY-JOUY



Level: **Advanced**



12.1 km  
7.6 mi



4h00



233 m



Place de la Mairie,  
Aizy-Jouy

**A very unique atmosphere linked to the violent and deadly fighting of the First World War still floats over the Chemin des Dames.**



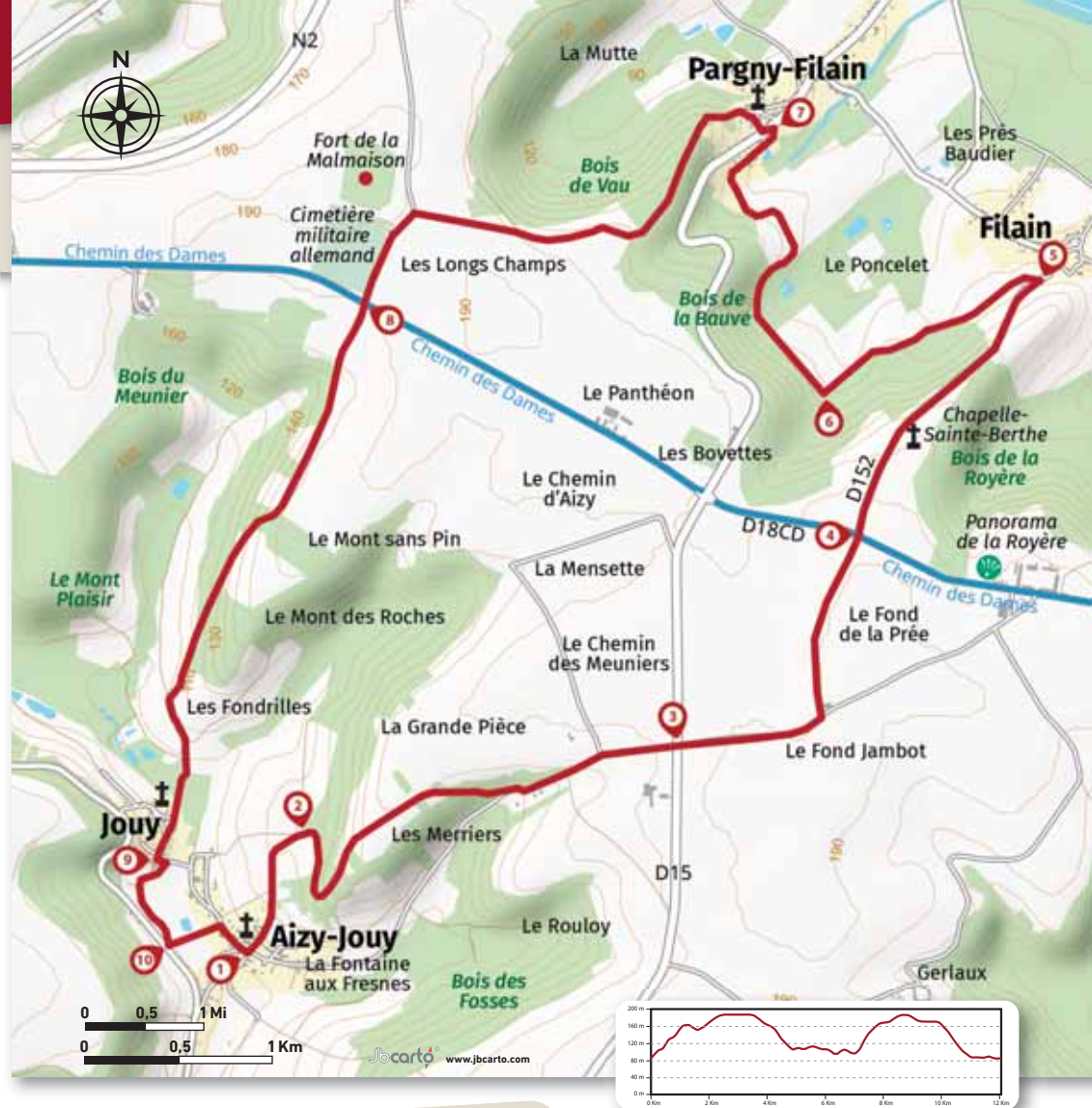
Sainte-Berthe Chapel

The Nivelle Offensive of 16<sup>th</sup> April 1917 lives on in everyone's memory: here, many villages that were wiped off the map have never been rebuilt, and thousands of hectares of land are still classified as a red zone (forbidden from any human activity). The Chemin des Dames is dotted with memorial sites which take us back to the atmosphere of the time: the Fort de La Malmaison, the chapels of Sainte-Berthe and Cerny, the Caverne du Dragon [the Dragon's Cave], the French military cemetery at Cerny and the German one at La Malmaison (the latter created after the fighting of June 1940). You will be able to walk to most of these sites, whereas Cerny and the Caverne du Dragon can be accessed by car at the end of your hike.

Markings: yellow and green.

- 1 From the car park, go to the church at Aizy. Go up "Rue du Guet" in order to reach the entrance of a path.
  - 2 At the "Cinq Voies" crossing, take the first winding path on the right that leads to the plateau. Pass by the "Rocher du Guet" (view of the valley). Continue straight ahead skirting the sinkhole (a type of cave). Join the municipal road and follow it straight ahead.
  - 3 At the crossing with the D15, take a gravel road opposite, then turn onto the first path on the left.
  - 4 At the crossing with the D18 (Chemin des Dames), cross the road (be careful!) and go down the D152.  
*Off the trail:* turn right towards one of the information sites along the Chemin des Dames (panoramic view). Skirt the Sainte-Berthe chapel and go down towards the village of Filain.
  - 5 At the bottom of the hill, before Filain, take the path on the left which catches up with the edge of a wood. Continue straight on at the next crossroads.
  - 6 Turn right after 500 m (546 yd) to stay at the foot of the hill. Continue to the village of Pargny-Filain.
- Enjoy your stay in Pargny-Filain to discover his "memory lane".
- 7 Cross the D15, go straight on until you reach the church and turn left. Continue straight on uphill and at the next fork in the road, take the path on the right towards the Fort de la Malmaison (view on the right over the valley and Laon). At the intersection, turn left onto "Route du Fort" and skirt round the German cemetery.  
*Off the trail on the right:* information site on the Chemin des Dames and remains of the fort.
  - 8 At the crossroads, cross the D18 again (be careful!). Continue straight ahead on the municipal road that goes down towards Aizy-Jouy. Pass by the former school and village hall and the church at Jouy and turn left.
  - 9 Turn right onto "Rue Sainte-Blaise". After the last house, continue on the green path that turns left.
  - 10 When you get close to the cemetery, turn left on "Rue de l'Archet", skirt around the municipal pond (picnic area) and then go to the town hall.

– This circuit comes from [randonner.fr](http://randonner.fr), the website for hiking in the Aisne –



Panorama from La Royère over the Chemin des Dames



# 12 THE LOST VILLAGES TOUR

## CHEMIN DES DAMES



Road circuit



35 km (21.7 mi)



1 to 4 hours

Discover the lost villages of the Chemin des Dames and relive the tragic destiny of these places of remembrance. At each site, an information panel traces its past.

In 1914, the soon to be battlefield of the Chemin des Dames included several villages that were built around agriculture and forestry. The villages of Ailles, Cerny, Chevreux, Chivy, Courtecon, La Vallée-Foulon, Moussy-Verneuil and Troyon, located on the front line, were evacuated during the conflict and completely destroyed during the fighting and bombings. After the war, they were located in the "red zone", which includes the most devastated areas: it is considered permanently not suitable for living and cultivating. There is still only vestiges of these villages destroyed by bombs. They are sometimes accompanied by a memorial, such as the one that inform you of the former location of the village of Ailles. On the edge of a small road in the middle of nowhere, the La Vallée-Foulon wash house is still supplied with water from its nearby spring, while in Chivy, shell craters have let some ruins emerge around the rebuilt chapel.

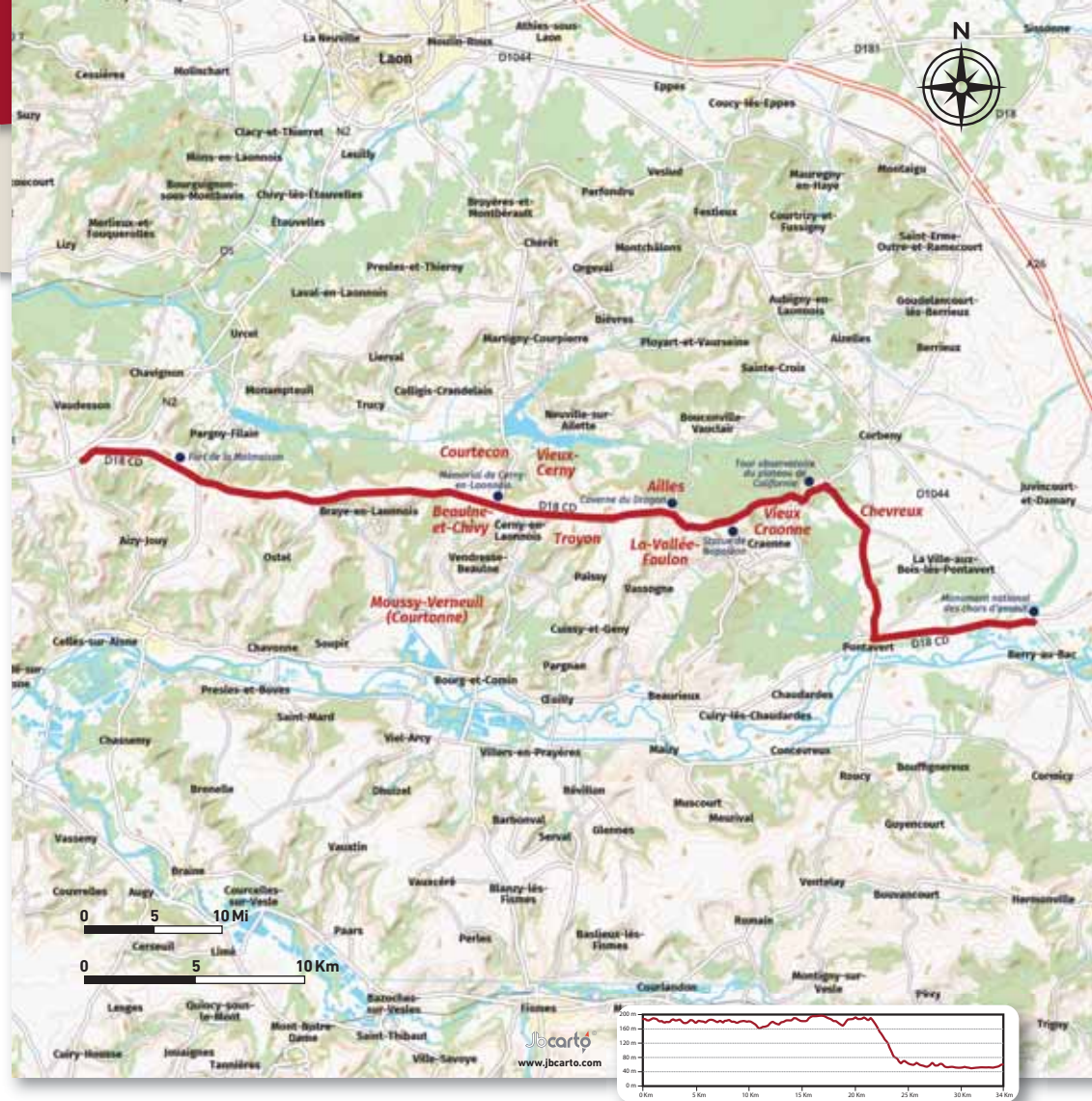
Markings: follow the blue road marking D 18 CD.  
Special feature: this circuit is not a loop.



Postcard of Courtecon before the war



Ailles. Martin's local shop



Panorama overlooking the Old Craonne



# 13 THE POSTMAN'S PATH

## BOUCONVILLE-VAUCLAIR



Level: **Advanced**

10,5 km AR  
(6.2 mi RT)

4h00

103 m

**P** Parking of the Vauclair Abbey

Follow in the footsteps of the postman, whose action kept soldiers in touch with their loved ones through letters and packages bringing them a little comfort.



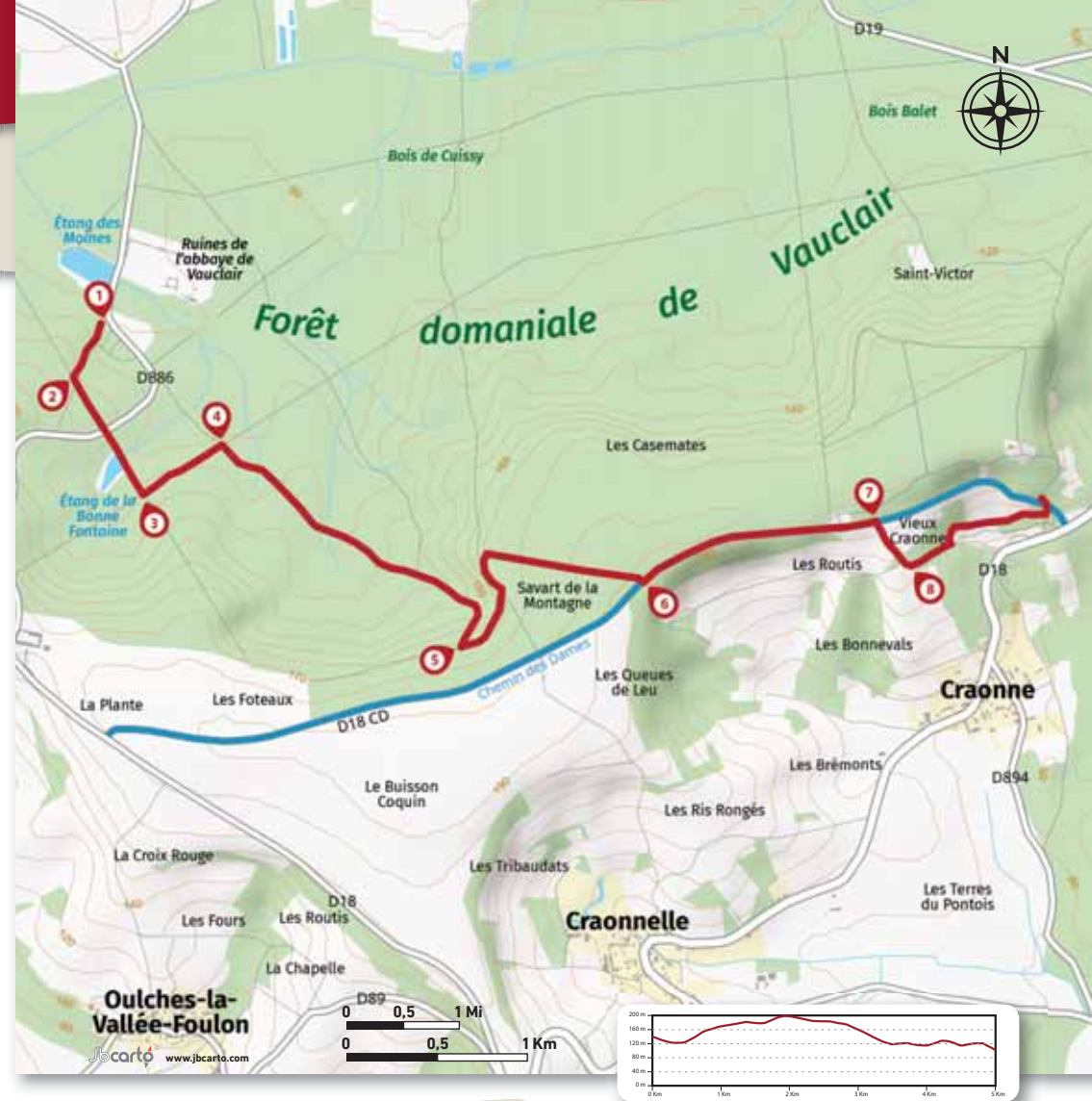
The "Plateau de Californie" Observatory

Billions of letters were exchanged over more than four years between soldiers at the front line and their families. Early on, the military high command understood that exchanging letters allowed the men to make it through. In a company, the post officer's arrival was undoubtedly the most anticipated event of the day. He had to brave the trenches in order to carry the news to the front lines.

Markings: postman's silhouette.  
Special feature: this circuit is not a loop.

- 1 Start from the car park of the Vauclair Abbey, cross the road and take the "Chemin des Dames" forest track (start panel).
- 2 Then the first path on your left (the pond track) will lead you to the D886. Cross it with caution to go back into the forest and along the "Bonne Fontaine" pond.
- 3 At the next crossing, turn left, pass the site of an old German battery (panel) to reach the "Allée des Frères Anciaux".
- 4 Walk up it on the right.
- 5 One hundred metres before joining the D 18 Chemin des Dames, take the path on your left for 150 m (160 yd) to slip into the Bordeaux trench (panel) (watch out for the stumps!), follow the entrance to a sap (panel), exit left again onto the path for 200 m (220 yd), passing in front of the Gérardmer embankment (panel) and turn right until the D 18 CD.
- 6 Cross (with caution) this road to go down into the Balcon trench (panel) and continue left to the calvary (orientation table and information panels).
- 7 Go down the path to the right of the road and turn left twice, going up between meadows and Vieux Craonne to arrive at the beginning of the arboretum.
- 8 Turn left to cross (with caution) the main road and reach "Place de la Croisette" (starting panel). For the return journey, retrace your steps!

– This circuit comes from [randonner.fr](http://randonner.fr), the website for hiking in the Aisne –



Ruins of the Vauclair Abbey







### How to discover the Musée Territoire 14-18

By car : 1 hour from Paris, 1 hour 30 from Lille, 30 minutes from Reims

By train : Numerous services to the stations of Compiègne, Noyon, Villers-Cotterêts, Soissons and Laon

By plane : 1 hour from Beauvais Airport and Paris Charles-de-Gaulle Airport

For more information get in touch with our local Tourist Offices  
(see below) and visit our website:  
**en.musee-territoire-1418.fr**

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#### TO PIERREFONDS, LISIÈRES DE L'OISE

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+33 (0)3 44 42 81 44  
contact@destination-pierrefonds.fr  
[www.destination-pierrefonds.fr](http://www.destination-pierrefonds.fr)

#### TO PAYS DE LAON

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[www.tourisme-paysdelaon.com](http://www.tourisme-paysdelaon.com)

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During the Summer season:

Summer Tourist Office  
Camping La Croix du Vieux Pont  
8, rue de la Fabrique - 02290 Berny-Rivière

#### TO VAL DE L' AISNE

Fort de Condé - 02880 Chivres-Val  
+33 (0)3 23 54 40 00  
fortdeconde@cc-valdeaisne.fr

#### TO RÉGION DE COMPIÈGNE

Place de l'Hôtel de Ville - 60200 Compiègne  
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tourisme@agglo-compiegne.fr  
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