

The itinerary of a Duchy

On the trail of a great fortress

Driving, walking and cycling routes

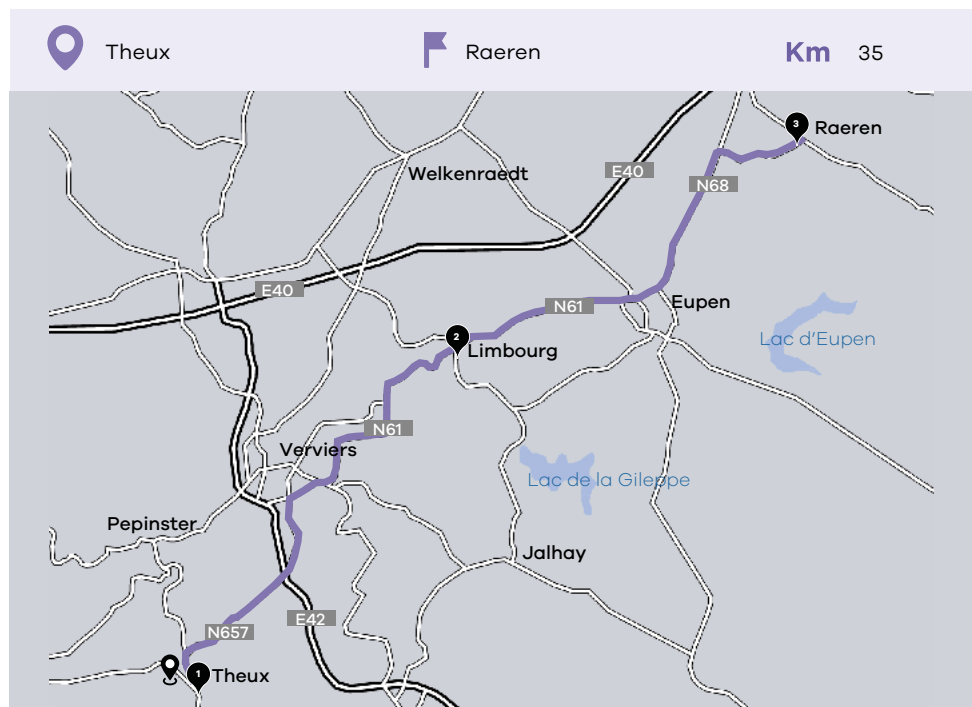


By car



The Itinerary of a Duchy On the trail of a great fortress

From Theux to Raeren, this route crosses the former lands of the Duchy of Limbourg: a region with a rich past and one of the largest forests in Belgium.



Le Château de Franchimont

Whether you are approaching the impressive ruins of the *Château de Franchimont* (Castle), from Theux, Spa or Jevoumont, you absolutely cannot miss them. They are a perfect example of the might of this fortified castle, tasked with protecting the Eastern borders of the Principality of Liège. Its strategic position on the edge of a hill blocked the access to the surrounding valleys. At the end of the Middle Ages, firearms became so widespread that another form of protection had to be considered. Franchimont had to adapt to join the modern era. A second period of work started in 1507 when "Erard de la Marck" (1505-1538) decided to fortify all his castles that were protecting the Principality's borders. At Franchimont, a new 264-m long outer wall was built, but it was pointless. Its strategic role became anecdotal after the 16th century when a powerful artillery appeared that could pound the castle. In 1676, Louis XIV's troops demolished it before it was ravaged and pillaged during the French Revolution. The ravages of time has certainly eroded the proud Franchimont but its prestige and might have remained intact. A sentiment that is still felt while visiting the ruins.

Open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., from 1/05 to 30/09.

Open every day during the Easter and All Saints holidays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Allée du Château, 17

4910 Theux

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www.chateau-franchimont.be



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The Fortified Church of Theux

The 13th century was a turbulent period in our lands. Swarming armed hordes massacred and plundered everything in their path. In open countryside, the population could only count on themselves to ensure their protection. In Theux, a small village, the cemetery was fortified by equipping it with small ramparts and the church, by reinforcing the nave and the roofing. With the tower equipped with loopholes, Theux Church became a stronghold against these armed groups. Nowadays, it constitutes, along with that of Bastogne, the only example of a fortified church in Belgium.

Haut-Neubois

Built in 1908 in a style which resembles the great hotels of Normandy, the *Château du Haut-Neubois*, was lively in summer when the crowned heads and other illustrious figures of the early 20th century used to stroll in Spa to drink the mineral water there. A sweet image of the Belle Époque which was halted during the First World War when Spa became occupied and became a German garrison. The *Château du Haut Neubois* was even the headquarters of Kaiser Wilhelm II during the last eight months of the war. Today, the Ceran Society owns the castle, organising residential language seminars and other events here.



2

The City of Limbourg

Perched on its rocky spur which appears in a loop of the Vesdre river, the small city of Limbourg has magnificently resisted time and been able to preserve its remarkable architectural ensemble. When you walk in the old town, the narrow perpendicular streets are evidence of a safeguarded medieval layout. Since the 18th century, its physiognomy has barely changed for that matter. The architectural simplicity confers harmony to Limbourg: a style that you can see in its houses with stone facades and foundations of limestone blocks. The Duchy of Limbourg resulted, like many other medieval principalities, from the breakup of the Carolingian Empire. In the 11th century, Waleran-Udon, Count of Arlon, built a bunker on the site. During more than two centuries, this duchy enjoyed a certain autonomy. Its territory was vast and was comprised of the entities of Herve, Baelen, Montzen and Walhorn. It also extended to the Middle Ourthe Basin. This coveted place was subjected to many sieges – in 1675, Louis XIV's Army finally conquered it.

A Place of Character

Sart is one of these villages in the Ardennes called herbagère that has retained its ancient character with its numerous 18th and 19th century farmhouses. The Place du Marché is characterised by the architectural style typical of the Spa region and is adorned with its perron and an old oak tree at least 500 years old, ranked as a remarkable tree since 1960. The low houses, with their narrow windows, is evidence of harsh weather that can be experienced near the high plateau. Life, on the edge of the moors, can be particularly hard. Men cut down trees in the forest to create assarts – immense clearings where one could cultivate; the name of the village of Sart is derived from the word assart.





Château de Beusdael

Beyond Sippenaeken, the majestic silhouette of the *Château de Beusdael* (Castle) looms in the distance. Its imposing keep, 12 m wide and 28 m high, dates from the 13th century and is flanked by a soaring spire. In the 16th century, an L-shaped main building was added to the castle which changed the aspect. A transformation which continued under the plans of the architect "Janlet", who added a neo-Gothic chapel.

3

Château de Raeren

Inclining towards the Rhineland, Raeren was one of the most important European centres of pottery in the 14th and 15th centuries. The border village with Germany made a living from this art. Pottery from Raeren is still found throughout the world. This tradition is highlighted in the 14th century castle. It has a magnificent edifice that you enter via a gate preceded by a stone bridge spanning the moats. Inside, more than 2,000 objects are on display, representing the expertise of Raeren's potters.

Open daily, except Mondays, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Burgstraße, 103

4730 Raeren

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www.toepfereimuseum.org



Ferme de la Dîme in Jevoumont

Imposed in the late 8th century by the emperor Charlemagne, the tithe (dîme) was a harvest tax that the Church used to take. All the farmers had to give up a part of their crops to the Prince-Bishops of Liège, so one-tenth as the name indicates. Abolished at the end of the 18th century, the tithe was a part of rural life for almost a thousand years. With its angled towers and loopholes, the fortified farm of Jevoumont became the safe of the Church who stored their takings here. The four-sided fortification was also apt to protect itself from frequent revolts which were then causing blood to flow in the region.

On foot



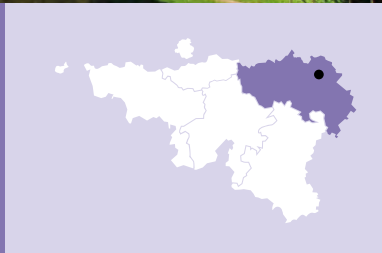
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Around the Château de Franchimont

Walking the length of the imposing fortress, you realise the invincibility that the assailants who found themselves facing its enormous walls must have been confronted with.

The trail snakes along the hillsides to reach what was perhaps the farmyard of yesteryear. Follow the River **Hoëgne** which leads you to the small town, dominated to the west by its fortified church. This is a good opportunity to discover the homogeneity of its centre, demonstrated by its perron and the Mosan-style façades.

Return to **Franchimont** by crossing the railway. Go over the hill. The itinerary runs through pastures that you cross by way of stiles, typical of the nearby Herve region.



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Starting point

Franchimont car park (Allée du Château 17, 4910 Theux).

Car Park

Spaces available at the entrance of the site.

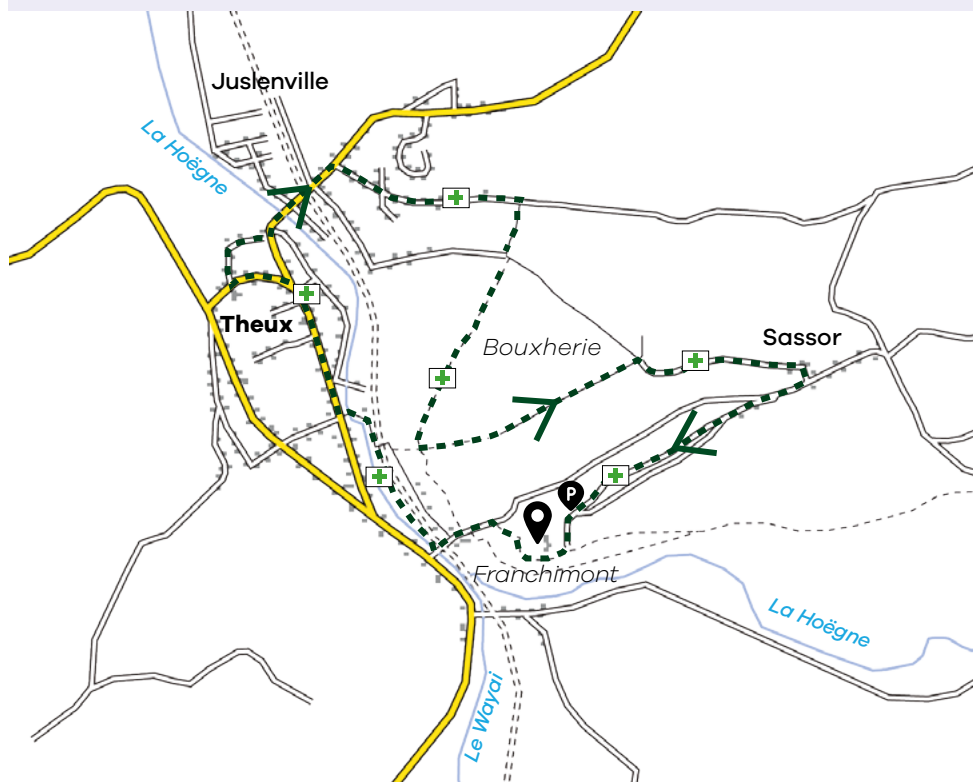
Km 5,4



1H30

MARKINGS 
Green cross (walk 34)

DIFFICULTY ●○○



View and download the route on [visitwallonia.be](https://www.visitwallonia.be)

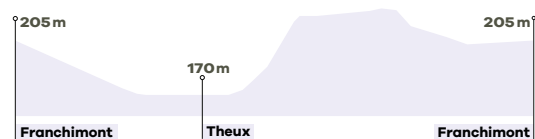
Tip

A walk to do in spring when the hawthorn hedges blooms.

Difficulty

Little difficulty with this walk, except the hill on the outskirts of Theux.

Gradient gain



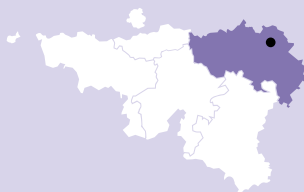
By bike



P. Ouders - Belgium - Prolog

Towards the City of Limbourg

The route begins at the *Barrage de la Gileppe* (dam), a famous work of engineering built by industrialists from Verviers in 1857. The wool industry required, in fact, around forty thousand m3 of pure water daily. Before descending the hairpin bends, you will encounter the imposing 13-metre high lion that watches over the wall, looking towards the East, as if defying the enemy at the time – Germany. At the foot of the dam, the route winds through the meadows and hedges of the Goé region. In the distance, the curious bell tower of the village stands out. Twisted, and mocking the perfection of the straight line, it is not a construction error but the result of an intricate piece of work from the carpenters. A style that is adapted to the climatic conditions and sometimes violent winds which prevail at the foot of the Fagnes (Fens) region. Go over the hill and Limbourg emerges, perched on a rocky promontory. You then reach the centre via the large square, Place Saint-Georges, cobbled with sandstone and pebbles from the river. When you descend towards the valley, you come across a steep hill, criss-crossing the **Baelen** pastures. A landscape which is in sharp contrast to that which you're going to find after Membach, at the foot of Hertognewald – **the largest state forest in Belgium**. A wild universe to travel through until you reach the lake shores which blend into the landscape, by forming multiple creeks amongst the jagged hills. There is a succession of hairpin bends. It is such an enjoyable route that the miles pass quickly, the return journey for this challenging bike ride is also very pleasant.



© WBT - M. Vander Linden - Limbourg - Historical city

Starting point

Parking de *La Gileppe* (Route de la Gileppe 55A, 4845 Jalhay), follow the road towards the exit. Take the little road to the left, going down towards the dam.

Car park

There is a large car park on the site of *la Gileppe*.

Km 24,5



2H20



HYBRID BIKE

DIFFICULTY



View and download the route on [visitwallonia.be](https://www.visitwallonia.be)

Type of Route

RAVeL and country roads. Short passages on stony tracks.

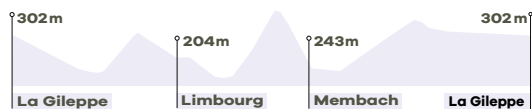
Markings

Follow the point-noeuds (intersecting routes) 37, 36, 35, 39, 38, 61, 62 and 63.


Difficulty


A challenging ride due to the hills which dot the itinerary. The end of the trail is in the forest.

Gradient gain



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The Ultimate Belgian Getaway

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