

# The Meuse Valley

**Its Wonderful Romantic Vestiges**

Driving, walking and cycling routes



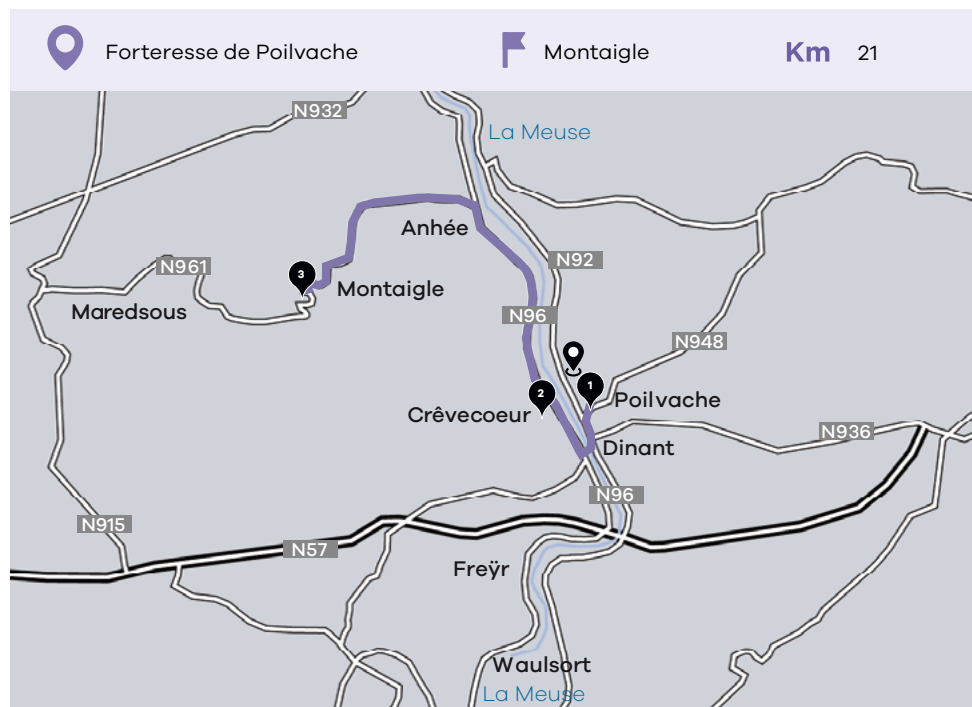
# By car



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## The Meuse Valley and its wonderful romantic vestiges

The Meuse Valley leads the visitor to a land with a rich patrimony and an eventful history. With the establishment of towns like Dinant or Bouvignes, the river constitutes an area of cultural influence and a coveted territory. Here and there the valley reveals the romantic ruins of fortresses which once watched over the river traffic.





### Château Thierry

The creepers and ivy hide a fortress forgotten in history. However, the *Château Thierry* (Castle) was one of the region's most powerful fortresses in the Middle Ages. Perched on a rocky spur, the castle watched over the Meuse Valley and its trade. The lords did not have any qualms about extorting money from merchants and imposing rights of passage for their boats. *Château Thierry* also ensured the protection of the *Abbaye de Waulsort* (Abbey), situated at its feet: spiritual power and seigniorial power helping each other.

## 1 Forteresse de Poilvache

Visible from the Meuse Valley, the fortress stretches over all the rocky spur and is more than 300 m in length. The ruins of Poilvache is evidence of its power back then when it was a veritable walled city. The Count of Luxembourg built a fortress in the 13th century which defended his lands. How challenging to construct a castle opposite the powerful County of Namur, represented by the the *Château de Bouvignes* (Castle)! He gave himself the means by including a town there, encircled by ramparts. Poilvache was considered to be a state fortress. His power was such that he minted his own coins. But his life was fleeting. The Count of Luxembourg's ambitions did not please the Prince-Bishop of Liège. In 1430, warriors from Liège and Dinant laid siege to Poilvache... To penetrate it without attracting the attention of the besieged, the men of war would have covered themselves with cowhide and blended in with the herd which were going into the stronghold: the Trojan Horse must have inspired them... The castle was pillaged and sacked; the walls were destroyed and used as a quarry – an unfortunate fate for a fortress which made all the Counties of the Middle Ages quake in their boots.

Open every weekend and public holidays from the beginning of April to the end of October, from 10.30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Open daily in July and August from 10.30 am. to 6 p.m..

Chemin de Poilvache  
5530 Yvoir  
+32 (0) 82 61 36 82  
[www.poilvache.be](http://www.poilvache.be)



### Crupet

The *Donjon de Crupet* (keep) is part of the landscape of one of the "*Plus Beaux Villages de Wallonie*" (Most Beautiful Villages of Wallonia). The solid edifice is placed like an islet in the middle of the marshlands formed by the course of the Yerve River. Its aspect has barely changed since the 14th century.





## Abbaye de Maredret

There was a kind of monastic fervour from the end of the 19th century in which several new abbeys were constructed around Europe. Maredret, located a stone's throw from *Abbaye de Maredsous*, has an imposing neo-Gothic style and shelters Benedictine nuns. The abbey shop sells jams, fruit pastes and apple juice made with fruits from orchards. You cannot visit but the Benedictine nuns do offer accommodation there.



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## Château de Crêvecoeur and the Maison du Patrimoine Médiéval Mosan

Nowadays, the Middle Ages still seem present in Bouvignes. With a little imagination, you can still hear the sound of horses hooves pounding the cobblestones of the narrow streets descending from the Porte Chevalier. In the 12th century, Bouvignes was at the height of its power. In the uplands, the castle towered over the landscape and its lord imposed formidable power on all the County of Namur. At the foot of the castle, the *Maison du Patrimoine Médiéval Mosan* (Mosan Medieval Heritage House), constructed in the 17th century under Spanish rule, immerses you in the history of the Meuse Valley. The museum visit is interesting and evokes medieval society in its storytelling.

Open daily except Mondays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. from April 1 to October 31 and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. from November 1 to March 31.

Place du Bailliage, 16  
5500 Bouvignes  
+32 (0) 82 22 36 16  
[www.mpmmm.be](http://www.mpmmm.be)



## Maredsous

For 140 years, the *Abbaye de Maredsous* has been influential in the heart of the Moline Valley. Its plan, inherited from those of the *Abbaye d'Aulne* and the *Abbaye de Maredsous*, impresses and gives a glimpse of how the abbeys were during their splendour. Lying in the heart of the lush pastures of the Plateau of Namur, the location of the abbey inspired monks who have been ageing the Maredsous cheese for more than half a century. The Centre Saint Joseph offers the possibility of sampling the abbey's traditional specialities: bread, cheese, beer and other regional produce.





### L'abbaye d'Hastière

In Givet, the course of the River Meuse slows down and flows lazily into the flood plain, before running between the foothills of the limestone massif. Its more rapid flow prevents fords, except in the river bend of Hastière where mankind was able to establish a religious foundation in the Merovingian era. The only remains left of the 11th century Benedictine Abbey is the Romanesque stone of the *Eglise abbatiale Notre-Dame*.

### Abbaye de Waulsort

Four kilometres (2.4 miles) downstream, the presence of an island on the river made it possible for a docking point, so an abbey was constructed there. Lord Eilbert de Florennes went searching for 12 monks in Ireland to evangelise the region. These men from the north, led by Maccallin, laid the first stones of the *Abbaye Bénédictine de Waulsort* (Benedictine Abbey). An abbey which would experience a great destiny, spreading its influence beyond the Condroz region. In contrast to the remote abbeys of the Ardennes Forest who survived by working with wood, those on the banks of the River Meuse made the most of the rights of passage on the river to grant themselves huge profits. The only remains of the Benedictine Abbey are the walls of the cloister and the palace that was transformed into a manorial residence.

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### Le Château de Montaigle

Established on a steep rocky spur overlooking the lovely Molignée Valley, the Montaigle site offers one of the most beautiful settings of a medieval castle that the Romantics have often painted. For its misfortune, this fortress depended on the Dukes of Burgundy. It was destroyed by the troops of Henry II in 1554. It will never be reconstructed but the ruins retain all their majesty.

Open in February, March and November, during weekends and public holidays from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Weekdays during school holidays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Open in April, May and October during weekends and holidays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Open in June and September on weekdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., weekends and holidays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Open in July and August every day from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Rue du Marteau, 10  
522 Onhaye  
+32 (0) 82 69 95 85,  
[www.montaigle.be](http://www.montaigle.be)



### Château de Spontin

The *Château de Spontin* always gives off this impression of might although it was besieged many times. If attackers from Liège hit a brick wall here, assailants from Dinant would succeed nonetheless to pierce its defensive walls in 1465 led by William the Ardennais and then ravaged it. Restored in the 16th century, it evokes the turbulent history of the County of Namur. The castle is private and cannot be visited.





# On foot



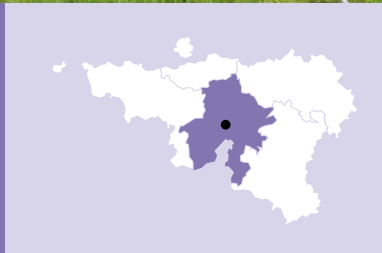
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## Towards Montaigle

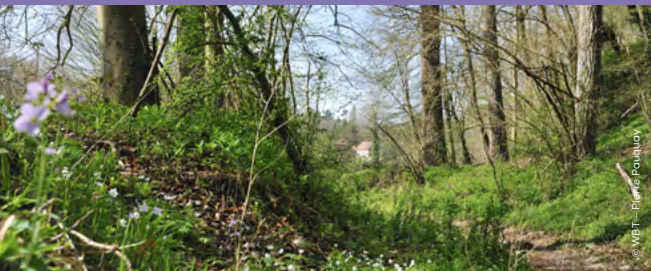
From Falaën, one of the **"Plus Beaux Villages de Wallonie"** (Most Beautiful Villages of Wallonia), the winding route leads you through the depressions of the Condroz in the Namur region.

Further on, you come to a wood, passing via La Héronnière. Follow a stony road – suddenly on the uplands the ruins of the fortress appears. The trail now goes into a magnificent undergrowth dotted with flowers: where you could happily lie down and relax...

Following the "Le Floyon" stream, which is bathed in light, we come to the farm of the former seigneurie. From now on, the path winds and descends towards Falaën where the farm-castle stands, which was built in 1672. It has kept a perfect balance between its agricultural and defensive vocation, with its four-sided design; the three high towers and the drawbridge are remarkably preserved.



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### Starting Point

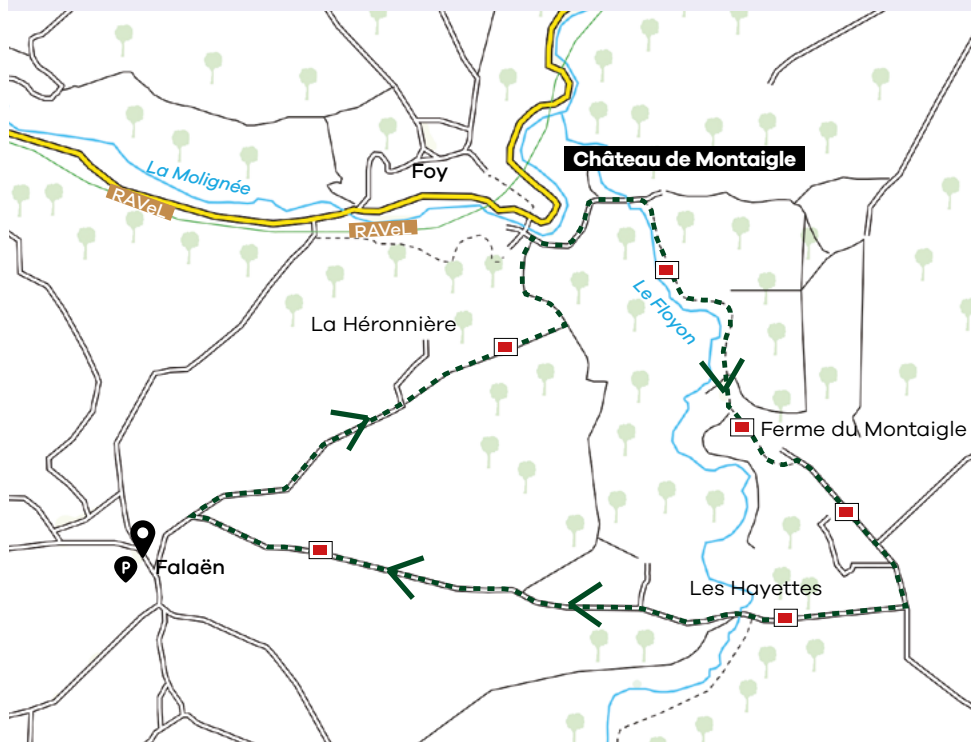
At the Place de Falaën, head off towards Sosoye and take the Rue des Hayettes to the right in 5522 Falaën.

### Car Park

In the village.

**Km****9****3H****MARKINGS**

Red rectangle n°5

**DIFFICULTY**

view and download the routes on [visitwallonia.be](https://www.visitwallonia.be)

### Tip

In Spring, the undergrowth is covered with thousands of flowers.

### Difficulty

Stony path towards Montaigle and a magnificent track in the undergrowth leading to Montaigle Farm.

### Gradient gain



# By bike



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## In the Romantic Molinee Valley

The ride starts at the **Abbaye de Maredsous** and goes to Molinee Valley. Just for once, your means of transport follows another, the “draisine” or railbike of Molinee – a flat-bottomed rail vehicle which also moves by the force of the calf muscles.

By riding along the cycle route you reach the village of **Sosoye**, below the imposing abbey. Leaving the homeland of the mountain people, the itinerary (named after the limestone mountain that dominates it) follows a lovely route running along the Biert stream. It is going to lead you to **Falaën**, another village ranked as one of the “**Plus Beaux Villages de Wallonie**” (Most Beautiful Villages of Wallonia). Soon after the pretty passage to “Le Flavion” stream, the itinerary travels through the countryside of the Condroz and Namur regions. Passing the village of Fler and then the “Ferme (farm) du Bois de Couvert”, ride on country roads devoid of any traffic: a real pleasure. Here there is a descent and then you are on the **RAVeL path of the Molinee** – certainly one of the most stunning in the country. At the tunnel, turn right to discover the abbeys of Maredsous and Maredret – this delightful valley offers so many breaks.



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### Starting Point

Abbaye de Maredsous (rue de Maredsous 11, 5537 Denée).

### Car Park

The reception centre (Centre d'accueil Saint-Vincent) at the Abbaye de Maredsous.



Km

27

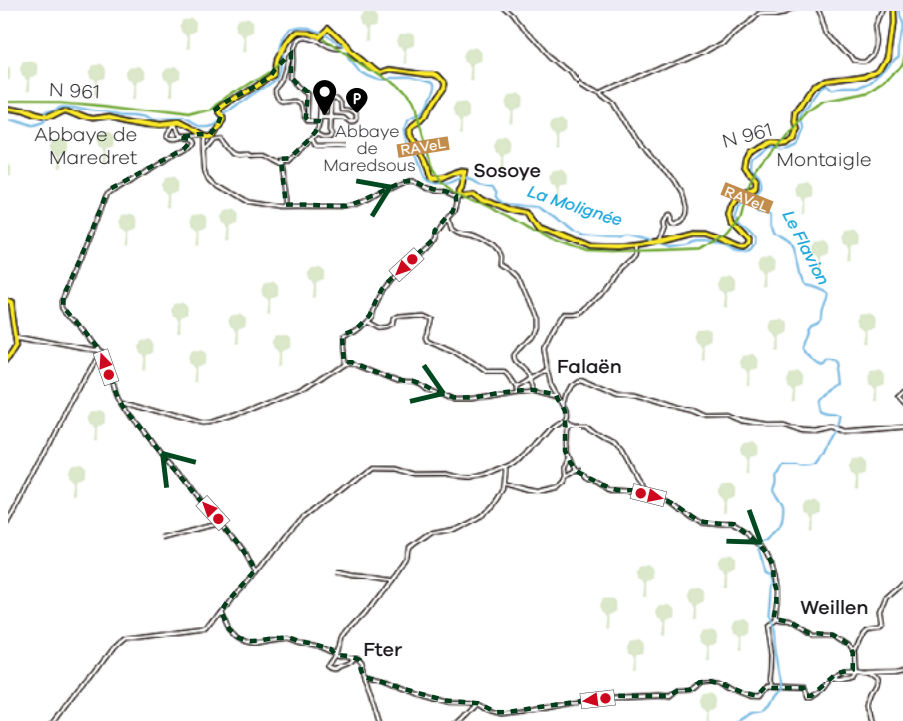


3H00



HYBRID BIKE

DIFFICULTY



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

### Type of Route

RAVeL path and country roads.

### Markings

Follow the markings of red circles and triangles.

### Difficulty


27 km (16 miles) There's a hill to reach Falaën from Sosoye.


### Gradient gain





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**This brochure is published by Wallonia Belgium Tourism (WBT) Company Number: 0888.366.085.**

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