

SECOND WORLD WAR

Explore Hitler's secret hideout
and go on the trail of the battle
of the Bulge



(© Bastogne War Museum)

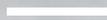
FIRST WORLD WAR

Uncover poignant stories of conflict
and comradeship at ruined fortresses
and moving memorials



© Fort Loncin

WALLONIA IN THE WARS



EXPLORE THE WATERLOO BATTLEFIELD

Follow in the footsteps of Napoleon and Wellington
at a place that changed the course of history

Welcome

UNCOVER A WEALTH OF WARTIME HISTORY IN SCENIC SOUTHERN BELGIUM

Exploring Wallonia's wooded hills and rolling fields dotted with farmhouses, it's hard to imagine a more peaceful spot. Yet, dig a little deeper and you'll quickly discover that these tranquil forests and farmlands hide a wealth of secret wartime history.

It was in Wallonia that Napoleon's army – hellbent on victory, yet destined for disaster – finally met its match at Waterloo. It was in Wallonia that the very first and very last British soldiers died on the western front during the First World War. And it was in Wallonia that Hitler's last big chance to crush and conquer Europe was finally thwarted.

All of this turbulent history is still very much alive here. Whether visiting a major museum or stopping by a remote hamlet, you'll find passionate locals eager to share their region's stories, both tragic and heroic. From farmhouses pockmarked with bullet holes, to rifles embedded in tree roots, history is hard-wired into the landscape here. All that's waiting is for you to come and discover it.

“HISTORY IS HARD-WIRED INTO THE LANDSCAPE HERE”

Dinant –
strength in wartime,
beauty in peacetime



P. 04

NAPOLEON'S WATERLOO SUNSET

Napoleonic Wars

Be transported to the heart of the battle at Waterloo

P. 06

A FIERCELY DEFENDED FORTRESS

First World War

Discover Belgium's troubled history of invasion at the devastated fort of Loncin

P. 08

EXPERIENCE THE BATTLE OF MONS

First World War

Learn about the start and end of Britain's war at the place that witnessed both

P. 11

REFLECT AND REMEMBER

First World War

Uncover poignant stories of conflict and comradeship at Ploegsteert

P. 12

GO UNDERGROUND

Second World War

Embark on a subterranean adventure in a Second World War stronghold

P. 14

HITLER'S SECRET HIDEOUT

Second World War

Unearth the hidden history of the village that became the Nazis' Belgian HQ

P. 16

GERMANY'S LAST GAMBLE

Second World War

Explore the Ardennes forest on the trail of the battle of the Bulge

P. 18

BRITISH BRAVERY AT THE BULGE

Second World War

Discover how British troops helped halt Hitler's advance in the Ardennes

P. 20

ANNUAL EVENTS

A run-down of selected historical re-enactments that Wallonia plays host to every year

A FLASH POINT FOR FIGHTING



The evocative Hougomont Farm

When visiting Waterloo, be sure to make a stop-off at Hougomont farm. This 16th-century redbrick farmstead witnessed one of the battle's most famous and blood-soaked show-downs. Defended by Wellington's Allied troops, Hougomont came under a furious assault from Napoleon's men.

When they finally managed to break in, it seemed that all was lost for the defenders holed up inside. However, the tables were turned when the door was barricaded once more, trapping the French attackers inside.

By the end of the frenzied hand-to-hand fighting, the cornered French troops had been slaughtered. Only one young drummer boy was left alive.

Today, an impressive multimedia film in the farm's barn recounts the dramatic assault in vivid detail. Those keen to immerse themselves in the building's history for longer can even stay overnight, in an apartment run by the Landmark Trust.

Mémorial 1815 – an historical site that transports visitors back to the battle of Waterloo

Follow in the footsteps of Wellington and Napoleon

BE TRANSPORTED TO THE HEART OF THE BATTLE AT WATERLOO

On 18 June 1815, two of history's greatest military commanders went head to head in a battle that was to change the course of history. The site of this world-changing event? A quiet field just south of Brussels, called Waterloo.

Fresh from a victorious battle at Ligny (commemorated today with a fascinating museum), Napoleon's imperial army was carving out a route across Belgium intent on capturing the capital. But at Waterloo, they were intercepted by a British-led Allied army, commanded by brilliant strategist the Duke of Wellington. The Prussian army under Field Marshal Blücher joined the fight soon after.

Weary and outnumbered, Napoleon was out of his depth. By the end of the day, tens of thousands lay dead or wounded, and one of Europe's most formidable forces had finally been brought to his knees.

Wellington's victory at Waterloo has gone down in the history books, so it's no surprise that today the battlefield is a popular tourist spot. Opened to mark the bicentenary of the battle in 2015, The Waterloo 1815 museum takes an extraordinarily modern approach to the past, using cutting-edge interactive exhibits and multimedia experiences to bring the battle to life.

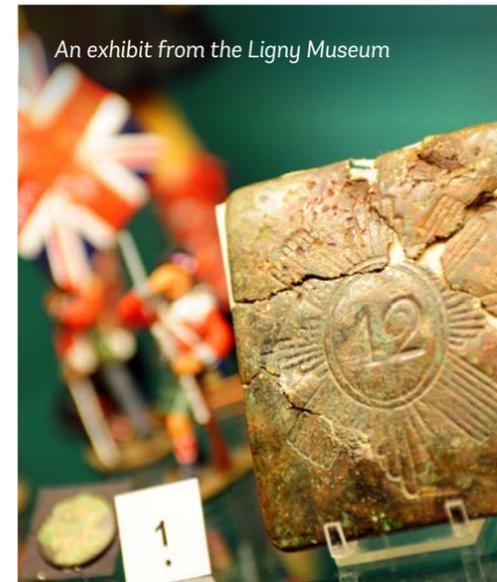
Gilt-framed oil paintings magically spring to life, while regimental drums hide engaging interactive displays. March up a sloped gallery between soldiers from the opposing armies – decked out in pristine, brightly coloured uniforms – and you'll find yourself in a 3D cinema. In an eye-poppingly immersive film, you'll be transported right into the middle of the blood-soaked, mud-splattered battlefield. Just be ready to duck for cover when cavalry men thunder out of the screen towards you.

“CLIMB THE 226 STEPS UP THE LION'S MOUND FOR TRULY SPECTACULAR VIEWS ACROSS THE EXPANSIVE BATTLEFIELD”

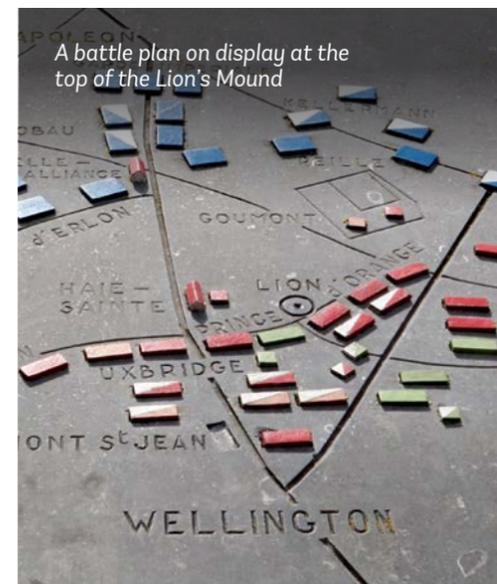
Elsewhere, you can even pop on a pair of virtual reality goggles and join the Duke of Wellington to watch the conflict unfolding from all angles. Keen to discover more about the duke himself? Then head over to the fascinating Wellington Museum in town. It's housed in the original inn that served as the British commander's headquarters during the battle.

Back out on the battlefield, climb the 226 steps up the Lion's Mound for truly spectacular views across the expansive battlefield stretching out below. The 40-metre tall hill was built in 1823-6 to mark the spot where Allied general William of Orange was hit by a musket ball. It's topped by a cast iron lion – intended as a symbol of peace in Europe – staring imperiously across to Napoleon's vanquished homeland.

An exhibit from the Ligny Museum



A battle plan on display at the top of the Lion's Mound



Explore a fiercely defended fortress

DISCOVER BELGIUM'S TROUBLED HISTORY OF INVASION AT THE RUINS OF LONCIN FORT

In August 1914, the commander of Loncin fort gave his men an unequivocal order. Under no circumstances, he instructed them, should they ever surrender. Standing at Loncin's seemingly impenetrable entrance – flanked by gun barrels and a medieval-style drawbridge – it's easy to see how his men would have agreed enthusiastically, convinced that no amount of German firepower could penetrate their indestructible defences.

When it was built between 1888 and 1892, this triangular ditched fort was cutting-edge. Not only was Loncin built from concrete rather than masonry (and also topped with four solid metres of the stuff), it even boasted electricity and showers.

In the attached museum, a myriad of small personal effects found during excavations there – coins, pipes, a wedding ring – give an insight into what everyday life was like in the fort.

When war broke out in 1914, Loncin was one of 12 forts tasked with defending the Liege region. Sure enough, in August the fort came under fierce bombardment from German invaders. While the front of the stronghold still bears the scars of this shelling, venture further into the site and you will discover a site of such devastation it will take your breath away.

After raining down more than 15,000 shells on the Loncin and failing to breach its defences, the Germans turned up the pressure.

In the fort's museum is an artillery shell bigger than a man and weighing more than 800kg. It was one of these monstrous shells, fired from a brand new "Big Bertha" gun, that finally broke Loncin. Landing on a storeroom packed with gunpowder, it wrought utter destruction.

Today, all that remains of the side of the fort which witnessed the explosion is a huge crater. Lying haphazardly around it are mammoth hunks of concrete, which were catapulted into the air before raining down again on the 350 Belgian soldiers trapped within.

Covered with grass and moss, the blasted fort looks like an alien crash landing, its belly ripped open like a bizarre manmade caving system.

A small pond is forming in the crater, while upturned metal cupolas – with their cannons still intact – lie twisted and tangled among the wreckage. Left untouched for more than 100 years, it's a stirring memorial to the Belgian soldiers stationed there, and their determination to defend their country to the last.

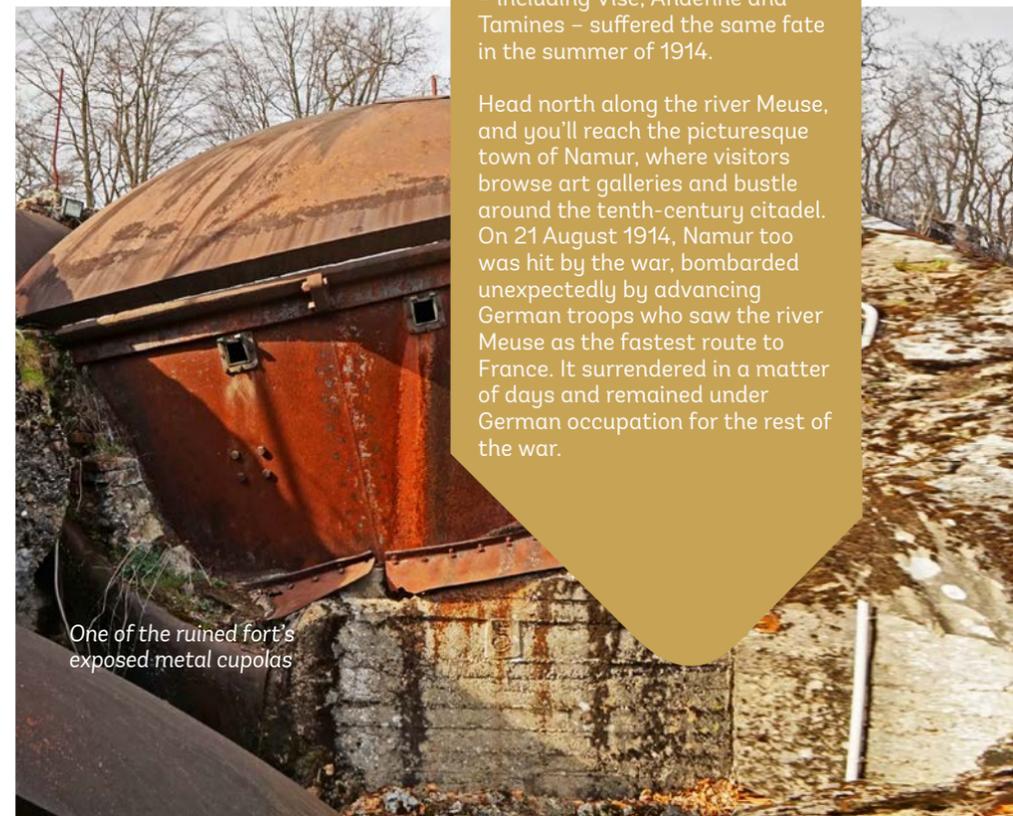
"YOU WILL DISCOVER A SITE OF SUCH DEVASTATION IT WILL TAKE YOUR BREATH AWAY"



Artefacts recovered at Loncin fort



A memorial to those who lost their lives at Loncin



One of the ruined fort's exposed metal cupolas

1914 INVASION: OTHER PLACES TO EXPLORE



Namur Citadel (c) WBT Anibal Trejo

Straddling the Meuse River, the historic town of Dinant is best known as the home of Adolf Sax, inventor of the saxophone, and the beer-brewing Notre-Dame de Leffe Abbey. Above the town, a cable car takes visitors up to an impressive citadel. But back in August 1914, this peaceful town was devastated by bloody fighting between German and French forces.

Believing Dinant to be home to resistance fighters, German troops carried out one of the most shocking massacres of the war, executing 674 unarmed civilians. Six other Belgian towns – including Visé, Andenne and Tamines – suffered the same fate in the summer of 1914.

Head north along the river Meuse, and you'll reach the picturesque town of Namur, where visitors browse art galleries and bustle around the tenth-century citadel. On 21 August 1914, Namur too was hit by the war, bombarded unexpectedly by advancing German troops who saw the river Meuse as the fastest route to France. It surrendered in a matter of days and remained under German occupation for the rest of the war.

MONS MEMORIAL MUSEUM



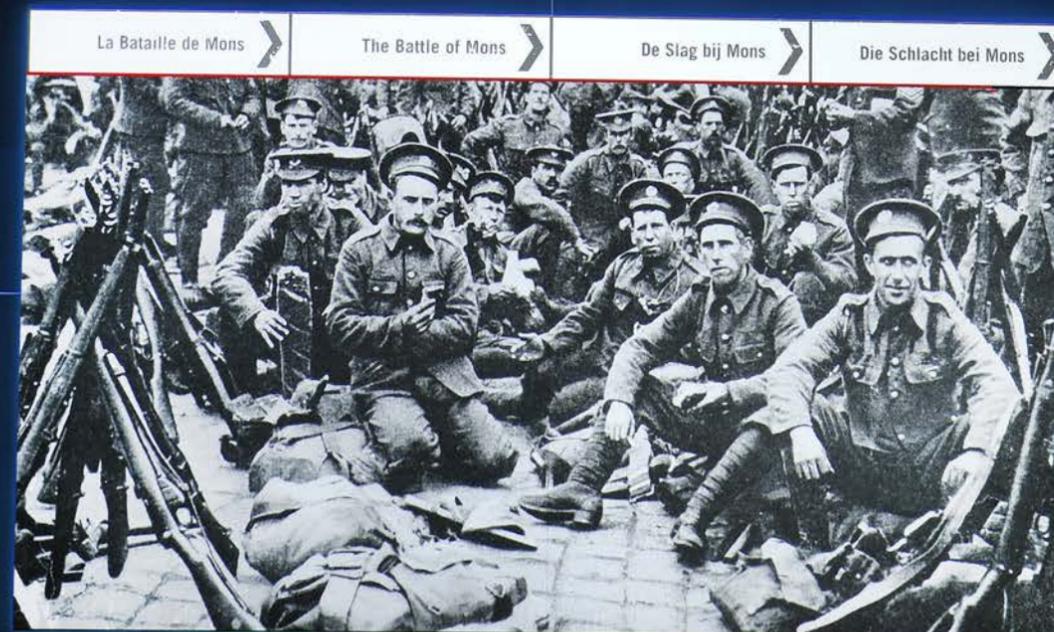
Private Carter, a young British soldier who fought at Mons (c) Ville de Mons

Housed in a restored water plant with elegant glass walls, the Mons Memorial Museum is both historic and strikingly modern. Its arresting and often harrowing exhibitions track the city's troubled history through the two world wars.

A video of shell-shocked veterans and the greatcoat of a Belgian major ripped apart by bomb fragments are just a couple of the poignant and disturbing exhibits that make up the extensive gallery on the battle of 1914.

The museum's inventively designed galleries don't only use artefacts and images to tell their story, but also immersive audio and video. Sounds of exploding shells and marching boots accost you from all angles.

Elsewhere, an immersive 3D cinema experience uses dreamlike inky illustration to recount the legend of the Angels of Mons – a heavenly vision said to have appeared to delirious British soldiers in their hour of need.



Mons Memorial Museum

Experience the battle of Mons

LEARN ABOUT THE BEGINNING AND END OF BRITAIN'S WAR AT THE PLACE THAT WITNESSED BOTH

In the sun-soaked square outside Mons' Gothic town hall, children play in the fountains and people spill out of cafes and bars. Yet just over 100 years ago, the atmosphere here could hardly have been more different. Where tourists and locals now drink and dine al fresco, photographs from 1914 show British soldiers resting up, ready to meet their German opponents for the very first time.

“THE OUTNUMBERED B.E.F. SUFFERED THEIR FIRST REAL LOSSES”

These British troops had been hoping for a quick and decisive victory, but at Mons they were faced with the grim reality of the unprecedented bloodshed that the next four years held in store. In a shocking and unexpected defeat, the outnumbered B.E.F. suffered their first real losses and were forced to retreat more than 200 miles into France.

On the outskirts of the town lies the canal which became a bloody front line. Here, you can still find the rugged, rusted Nimy railway bridge, marked by a small plaque. In 1914, Private Frank Godley and Lieutenant Maurice Dease became the Great War's first recipients of the Victoria Cross for defending the bridge against an overwhelming German onslaught as their comrades escaped. While Godley was captured, Dease was fatally wounded and awarded his VC posthumously.



The first Victoria Crosses of the First World War were awarded to soldiers who defended the Nimy Bridge

Maurice Dease is one of 229 Commonwealth soldiers to be buried at the tranquil St Symphorien military cemetery nearby. Set among vibrant levelled gardens topped with a graceful obelisk, St Symphorien is designed to feel like a forest clearing.

But the cemetery's beauty isn't the only thing that makes it a remarkable place to visit. It also contains the graves of the first and last British soldiers killed on the western front. Both graced by poppies, the headstones of Private John Parr and G E Ellison stand opposite one another, united in a strange symmetry.

“ALL THOSE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES ARE REMEMBERED WITH RESPECT”

What's more, these white Allied graves stand alongside grey memorial stones dedicated to German soldiers, making St Symphorien a place where all those who lost their lives in the conflict are remembered with equal respect.



St Symphorien Military Cemetery (c) CWGC

Reflect & remember

UNCOVER POIGNANT STORIES OF CONFLICT AND COMRADESHIP AT PLOEGSTEERT

On Christmas Day 1914, the guns of the First World War fell silent at Ploegsteert Wood on the western tip of Wallonia. For a brief ceasefire, the bloodshed was put on hold, and soldiers from both sides emerged from the top of their trenches. As German and British troops clambered over barbed wire to come together on a barren stretch of No Man's Land, a game of football broke out.

Ploegsteert's Christmas kick about has gone down in history as a symbol of human spirit triumphing over national divisions. Today, the famous game is marked with an unusual memorial depicting a rusted metal football balanced on a damaged shell. Draped by football scarfs and laden with balls left by visitors, it's a popular spot to reflect, and well worth a visit.

During the early stages of the war, Ploegsteert Wood was one of Belgium's most fiercely contested front lines. Known to the Tommies as

“Plug Street,” it later became a place where British troops could recuperate from the trenches.

One of those stationed there was Winston Churchill, who served in the area as a commanding officer in 1916. On the side of the town hall, you can find a plaque depicting the iconic leader gazing out across the trenches.

The Churchill plaque is one of more than a dozen evocative British memorials and cemeteries to visit around Ploegsteert. Two of the most

“ON A BARREN STRETCH OF NO MAN'S LAND, A GAME OF FOOTBALL BROKE OUT”

significant – known as the “Strand” and “Hyde Park Corner” – stand on British land, gifted to the UK by King Albert I of Belgium.

Around the corner, you'll find the Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing. Surrounded by white marble columns and flanked by two

gigantic proud lions, this impressive monument is carved with the names of more than 11,000 soldiers whose final resting places are unknown.

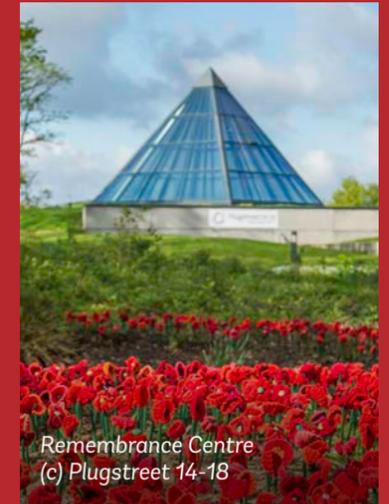


Ploegsteert Memorial to the Missing (c) WBT/Ph. Marée



Remembrance Centre (c) Plugstreet 14-18

PLUGSTREET 14-18 EXPERIENCE



Remembrance Centre (c) Plugstreet 14-18

Head into the woods near the Memorial to the Missing, and you'll come across the underground entrance of the Plugstreet 14-18 Experience. Hidden underneath fields, this interactive visitor centre is topped by a glass pyramid.

It tells the story of a region torn apart by war using resonant films, photographs and animations. As well as documenting the experiences of infantry soldiers and civilians, the centre highlights the dangerous and often deadly role of tunnellers in trench warfare – making its subterranean design particularly meaningful.

Intended as an “interpretative centre” rather than a traditional museum, Plugstreet 14-18 is the perfect place to arm yourself with all the knowledge you need to explore the surrounding area and uncover where the history unfolded for yourself.

Going underground

EMBARK ON A SUBTERRANEAN ADVENTURE IN A SECOND WORLD WAR STRONGHOLD

Built into the rock face, the small entrance of Fort Eben Emael initially looks unassuming. But after its vault-like steel doors close behind you, you'll be pleased to be with a knowledgeable tour guide, as there's a decent chance that you might never find your way out again.

Once inside this underground fortress, 50 metres below the surface, your footsteps echo down the labyrinthine low-ceilinged corridors. In fact, a total of five kilometres of tunnels weave out like a rabbit warren, covering an area equivalent to 150 football fields.

Built between 1932-5, Eben Emael is one of four 'second generation' forts constructed in the Liège region to counter a second German invasion. Located near the German and Dutch borders, it was designed to protect three nearby bridges along the Albert Canal and could house up to 1,200 men. However, hopes of Eben Emael providing an unassailable stronghold against German invaders were dashed when the fortress was infiltrated by a surprise attack.

"THE APPARENTLY IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS WAS CONQUERED IN A MATTER OF HOURS."

On 10 May 1940, German troops landed on the roof in narrow, quiet glider planes. Catching those inside unawares, they detonated a mammoth 50kg charge, blasting a hole in the concrete roof.

The devastating impact of the explosion can still be seen – a staircase below is shattered into twisted fragments, while a door frame stands crumpled and empty, its heavy metal door blown clean off the handles. Once Eben Emael's defences had been breached, the apparently

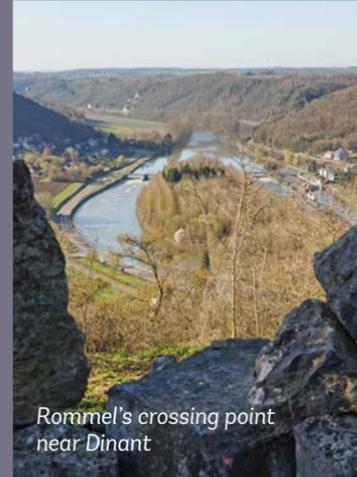
impregnable fortress was conquered in a matter of hours.

In the fort's museum, you can see personal objects belonging to the soldiers who defended the fort in vain, as well as a German glider and a photograph showing its German

infiltrators being awarded the Iron Cross by Hitler himself (pictured right). Back above ground, enjoy the scenic surroundings on one of the walking trails that lead you past the guns and cupolas speckled over the subterranean fort's roof.



A BATTLEFIELD FROM ABOVE

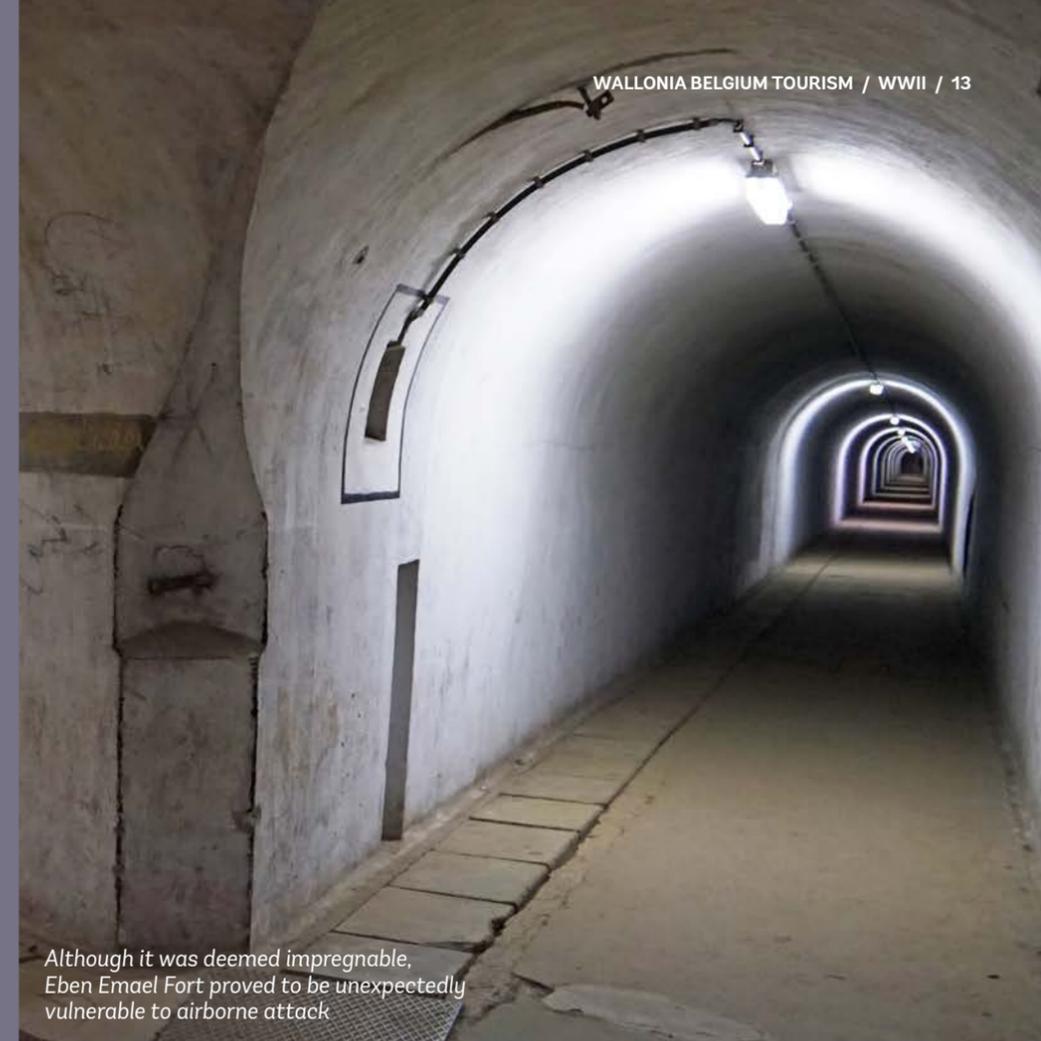


Rommel's crossing point near Dinant

In May 1940, Rommel's advancing German troops reached the river Meuse near the picturesque town of Dinant. With all the bridges destroyed and French troops guarding the riverbank, a key strategical battle ensued.

High on nearby cliffs, the crumbling medieval ruins of Poilvache castle provide the perfect vantage point for surveying where the battle of the Meuse unfolded. From a windswept turret on the cliff edge, you can enjoy spectacular views across the valley, looking down over the spot where the Germans attempted to cross the river by any means possible.

To discover more about the battle of the Meuse, make your way over to the local museum in the sleepy nearby village of Haut le Wastia. Artefacts include rare pilots' uniforms, weapons unearthed from the river and a rubber dinghy used by the Germans to make the fateful river crossing.



Although it was deemed impregnable, Eben Emael Fort proved to be unexpectedly vulnerable to airborne attack



REMEMBERING THE RESISTANCE



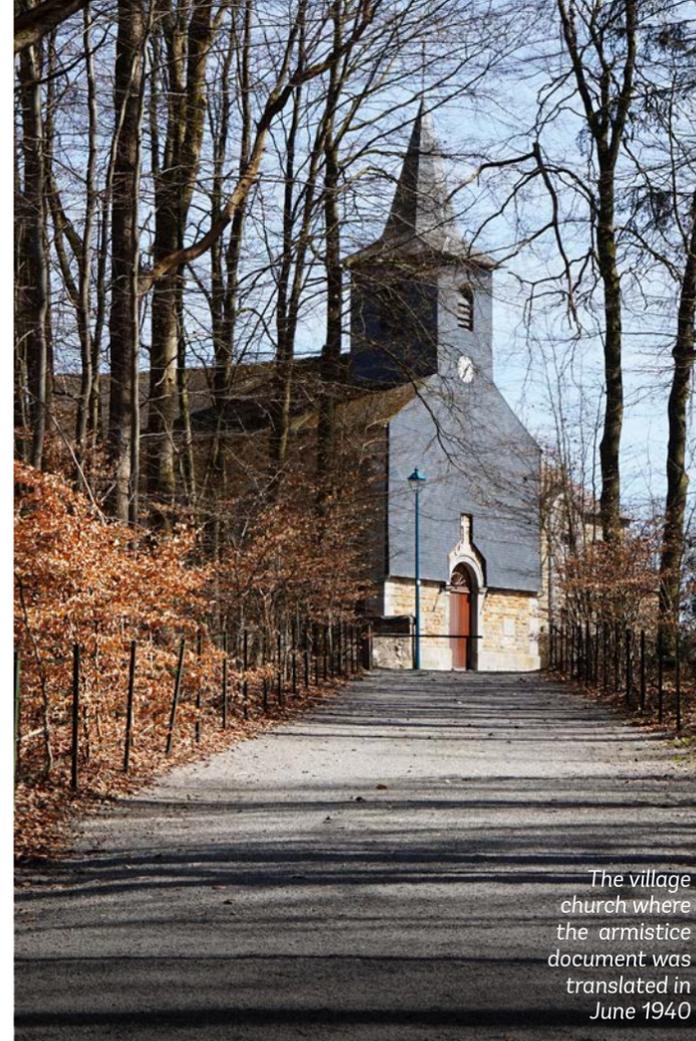
Village of Bande's memorial

Faced with the cruelties of brutal Nazi occupation from 1940–44, many Belgian civilians decided to risk their lives by fighting back. Travel to the village of Bande, and you'll find the statue of a fallen man wearing a simple beret and civilian clothing. Standing on the site of a resistance hangout burned to the ground by the SS, this statue is intended to honour all those who dared to join resistance networks.

It also marks the spot where 34 young men – mostly aged between 17 and 25 – were taken to the cellar of the wrecked café and shot, in retaliation for resistance activities in the area. Descend into the cellar itself to see a moving memorial bearing youthful photographs of all the victims. The atmosphere is chilling.



The woods that served as Hitler's HQ during the French campaign of May and June 1940



The village church where the armistice document was translated in June 1940



Group D from the Hotton Resistance Movement hid in the same forest from 1943 onwards



Adolf Hitler pictured with Goring outside one of his chalets in June 1940

Hitler's hideout

DISCOVER THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF THE VILLAGE THAT BECAME THE NAZI LEADER'S HQ DURING THE FRENCH CAMPAIGN IN JUNE 1940

Wander into the woods outside the sleepy southern hamlet of Brûly-de-Pesche, and you'll stumble across an unexpected sight. Pass by mossy trees and a gentle trickling stream, and a hulking cube of military-grade concrete suddenly looms into view. So, how exactly did a heavy-duty bunker come to be found in this unassuming spot? The answer can be found in an episode from the Second World War once shrouded in secrecy.

On 27 May 1940, 27,000 locals from 27 villages surrounding Brûly-de-Pesche near Chimay were mysteriously evicted without warning, as Germany's 'Organisation Todt' secretly began the construction of a covert forest hideaway. As was later revealed, they were building cabins and bunkers for the arrival of Nazi high command, accompanied by none other than Adolf Hitler himself. It was from this secluded spot close to the border that the dictator conducted the French Campaign.

Arriving on 6 June 1940, Hitler stayed in the village for three weeks, using the school as map room, and a barn as a cinema. Even the local church was utilised. Here, under the flickering glow of candlelight, the terms and conditions of France's surrender

were prepared and translated. It was here that Hitler was filmed slapping his thigh in celebration on hearing news of the country's capitulation. From Brûly-de-Pesche, he drove to Compiègne to sign the armistice, before visiting Paris and moving on to his next headquarters. On 29 June 1940, Brûly-de-Pesche's locals were finally allowed back to their homes.

Today you can visit the reconstructed small chalets along with the rock-solid bunker built specially for Hitler's arrival. His cabin has been turned into a gallery dedicated to the local population, featuring a short, poignant movie.

Meanwhile, the cabin that served as Hitler's mess hall has been renovated into a modern and engaging gallery on the local Belgian resistance, who hid out in these very same woods from 1943 onwards. Nestled in the forest,

it's not hard to imagine resistance fighters among the trees, or emerging from the recreated dug-out.

The gallery celebrates extraordinary stories of heroism in the local area, from the butcher who fed rebel fighters hidden in the forest, to the woman who set up a fake holiday camp in order to hide up to 60 Jewish children from the Nazis.

“THIS COVERT FOREST HIDEAWAY WAS BUILT FOR THE ARRIVAL OF HITLER'S HIGH COMMAND”

Germany's last gamble

EXPLORE THE ARDENNES FOREST ON THE TRAIL OF THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE

In 1944, Hitler made one last desperate attempt to break the Allied advance. He launched a powerful final offensive westwards with the aim of capturing the northern sea port of Antwerp. When the Germans reached the Ardennes, they came up against American-led Allied forces, in what became known as the battle of the Bulge. Reminders are dotted across eastern Wallonia, from memorials at roadsides to bullet holes pockmarking the sides of farmhouses. Whether on a guided tour or exploring by yourself, here are six fascinating spots to uncover:

“REMINDEERS ARE DOTTED ACROSS EASTERN WALLONIA”



01. MALMEDY

In a quiet field near the village of Malmedy, 84 captured Americans were executed by their Nazi captors. What exactly unfolded that day isn't fully known, but a memorial and commemorative museum – the Baugnez 44 Historical Centre – honour the murdered prisoners of war.

02. BASTOGNE

This medieval walled town was a key strategic spot in the battle. Located at a crossroads, it witnessed some of the Ardennes' heaviest fighting. As Christmas 1944 approached, US troops holed up in Bastogne came under a gruelling week-long German siege. Head to the town's 101st Airborne Museum to hear the story of the besieged US soldiers told in gripping detail.

Today, the town square – complete with a US tank punctured by a shell – is named after US general Anthony McAuliffe. When offered the chance to surrender the town, McAuliffe famously glanced up from his maps to simply respond: "nuts". The Americans held out, and each December, Bastogne's residents still throw nuts from the roof of the town hall in honour of the general's famous exclamation.

03. JACK'S WOOD

Tall, looming trees sway silently in this eerily atmospheric and disorientating forest used as a hide-out by US soldiers defending Bastogne. The edge of the tree line is peppered with foxholes used to conceal the men of 'Easy Company' as they waited out a freezing, tension-filled four weeks, before launching a daring offensive over open ground to the nearby village of Foy. This incident is depicted in Steven Spielberg's *Band of Brothers*, as recognised by a nearby monument opened by producer Tom Hanks.



04. ERIC FISHER WOOD MEMORIAL

After his division was surrounded in Germany, US Captain Eric Fisher Wood managed to escape and headed to these woods to hide out. Here, he waged guerilla warfare on the Nazis for a more than a month. In a quiet spot in the middle of the forest, the metallic silhouette of a soldier marks the place where Wood's body was eventually found, surrounded by seven dead German soldiers.



05. MARDASSON MEMORIAL

A short way out of the town of Bastogne, visit the recently redesigned Bastogne War Museum to find out more about the battle from the perspectives of local civilians and soldiers from both sides. Just a stone's throw away stands the impressive Mardasson Monument, memorialising the US sacrifice in the Ardennes. Ascend to the monument's roof for panoramic views of the surrounding farmlands.



06. LT COOK MUSEUM

This tiny museum near the French border marks the spot where the first US soldier lost his life on Belgian soil, shortly after American troops entered the country at Cendron on 2 September 1944. Lieutenant Cook was frying eggs in a barn, when he looked out of the window only to be hit by a bullet.

Today the cowshed contains a personal collection of lovingly curated wartime artefacts, including glass rosaries made from the cockpits of crashed planes, a radio set used by the resistance, and a miniature coffin sent to threaten locals who collaborated with the German occupiers.



The documents of a German prisoner exhibited at the Lt Cook Museum



TANK WARFARE: THREE PLACES TO EXPLORE



Atop a hill in the picturesque farming village of La Gleize stands the mammoth, camouflaged hulk of a German Royal Tiger tank. The tank once belonged to the troops of ruthless SS officer Joachim Pieper, who was forced to abandon 135 vehicles in the area after a nearby bridge was blown up in front of him.



Snaking along the German border, row upon row of what look like perfectly aligned ancient gravestones are sprouting from the earth. These "Dragon's Teeth" are in fact concrete anti-tank defences installed by Hitler's troops between 1936-9. Grippled by clinging lichen and slowly being claimed by the wild, they make for a strange sight.



On a winding road out of Hotton, you'll find a memorial marking the spot where a US Sherman slipped off the road in deadly black ice, hitting a mine left by the retreating Germans. In the town, a tank turret has been transformed into a memorial honouring the 53rd Welsh infantry division.

British bravery at the battle of the Bulge

UNEARTH HOW BRITISH TROOPS HELPED HALT HITLER'S ADVANCE IN THE ARDENNES

As the battle of the Bulge was largely a US endeavour, not many people know that British troops also fought in the Ardennes. Although they may have been fewer in number, these battalions played a vital role. Evidence of British involvement can still be unearthed across eastern Wallonia.

Dominated by densely wooded ridges packed with tall, towering trees, the area known as the 'British sector' stretched over some of the region's most difficult terrain. Today however, these same forests and hills make for some of the most breath-taking landscapes in the region.

Tucked away in a winding valley in a bend on the river Ourthe is the lively summer retreat of La-Roche-en-Ardenne. It was here, under the ruins of the town's 13th century castle, that victorious British and American soldiers finally joined forces. Looking over La Roche sits the first British Achilles tank to come into the town on liberation – painted with a US star to show the Americans that it came in peace – and round the corner, a granite monument is dedicated to the 51st Highlanders who fought for the town's freedom.

Visit the town's substantial museum to find out more about the British during the Bulge. Much of its collection consists of donations from war veterans, including helmets and uniforms from the 51st Highlanders, 53rd Welsh division and other British units.

Graves of British and Commonwealth servicemen who lost their lives in the Ardennes are dotted throughout the area's civilian cemeteries, but the majority can be found at Hotton Commonwealth War Cemetery. Guarded by redbrick walls and bordered by freshly planted flowers the cemetery contains the graves of 666 British and Commonwealth soldiers. At first glance, each of the immaculately kept white graves appears identical.

But look closer and you'll uncover unique messages carved on each. They range from inspirational to heartbreaking. "Here lies one who died so that freedom may live" reads one, another: "In our home is a vacant spot that can never be filled". As these messages highlight, the sacrifice made by British soldiers in the Ardennes was substantial. By holding the Ardennes against Hitler with their US allies, they helped turn the tide in Belgium's battle for liberation.

"THE 'BRITISH SECTOR' STRETCHED OVER SOME OF THE REGION'S MOST DIFFICULT TERRAIN. TODAY IT'S HOME TO BREATH-TAKING LANDSCAPES"



51st Highlanders monument, La Roche



Commonwealth War Cemetery, Hotton



Bataille des Ardennes Museum, La Roche



ANNUAL EVENTS

A RUN-DOWN OF SELECTED HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENTS THAT WALLONIA PLAYS HOST TO EVERY YEAR



(c) Ligny Museum

WATERLOO & BEYOND

- Battle of Ligny – June
- Battle of Waterloo – June

WWI

- Anzac Day, Ploegsteert – April
- Loncin Fort, Liège – August
- Mons Retreat, Mons – August
- Mons – November
- Christmas Truce, Ploegsteert



(c) Tanks in Town

WWII

- Tanks in Town, Mons – September
- 'Nuts', Bastogne – December

COMMEMORATIVE WALKS

- Bure '45 – January
- Haut le Wastia '40 – May
- Cendron '44 – September

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All available dates at the time of writing are shown. Please check the website for updates where full dates are not shown.