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# Discover Wallonia

Five great routes, and everything else there is  
to know about this motorcycling masterwork...

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**The Ultimate Belgian Getaway**



‘Wallonia: think the Spa Francorchamps race circuit, the World War II Siege of Bastogne and trappist beers...’

# WELCOME



Wallonia is much more famous than you probably imagine. Think the Spa Francorchamps race circuit, the World War II Siege of Bastogne and the world-famous trappist beers from Chimay, Rochefort and Orval. But what you might not know is Wallonia is one of motorcycling’s best-kept secrets. Here are three reasons to ride there this year...

Firstly, Wallonia’s summer is jam-packed with motorcycling events. Barely a weekend goes by in July or August without some classic racing outfit delivering a rock-solid excuse for a dash across the Channel. There’s the brilliant Bikers’ Classics at Spa in July, Mettet’s Superbiker, the unmissable Belgian Classic Trophy at Gedinne and International Road Racing at Chimay

Secondly, Wallonia is easy to get to. This little-known

southern half of Belgium is just 85 miles from the Eurotunnel Terminal, Calais. In fact, it’s so easy to visit Wallonia that more adventurous riders might snub it completely in favour of a day-long slog on French motorway to the Alps. As you will see, they would be missing out.

And thirdly, last-minute trips are do-able. Got the itch for a long weekend’s motorcycle excursion? Are temperatures suddenly looking up? This is the time to consider dropping everything and setting your sights on that Royal King Tiger tank in La Gleize. Plus, Walloon weather is changeable in the shoulder seasons – May, June, September and October. Take advantage of this amazing place and catch that Shuttle.

Reasons to ride? Wallonia provides bucketloads.

**Ben Lindley, Wallonia correspondent**

04	<b>Map &amp; routes</b> Your one-stop resource for riding in Wallonia.
06	<b>Day one: Wallonia’s greatest hits</b> Road racing, bike museums and beer.
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Wallonia, just 85 miles from Calais, is an ideal weekend excursion



# FIVE DAYS IN WALLONIA

Five fantastic days of riding just a stone's throw from Calais



**DAY ONE:**

Wallonia's Greatest Hits

» **What to see?** Madcap collection of ancient motorcycles at Mahymobiles, the Battle of Waterloo, and Chimay's street circuit.

» **Where to ride?** Northern bends of the N529 to Waterloo, and the flat-out N589 cracker to Chimay.

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Right: when you're having a break from riding...

**W**elcome to an action-packed five-day tour of the best Wallonia has to offer. Arriving at the start line couldn't be simpler: the western edge of Wallonia is just 90 minutes ride from the Eurotunnel Terminal, Calais. Plan your visit between June and September for warm weather and sun-drenched roads. In October the Ardennes forest explodes into deep reds and oranges, but there will be rain.

Getting around is surprisingly simple. Some bright spark at Wallonia Highways decided to build a network of dual carriageways throughout the region, creating a kind of hop-on hop-off fast transit system. This means you could lose yourself all day on tiny roads that wriggle around between towns, then spend thirty minutes on a highway to get back to your hotel. Bloomin' marvellous.

As a result, any of these days can be rearranged or chopped into shorter weekend trips if desired. And each of the route files can be downloaded and loaded onto your sat-nav for fire-and-forget simplicity. Simply visit [walloniabelgiumtourism.co.uk](http://walloniabelgiumtourism.co.uk) to find out more.

**DAY TWO:**

Awesome Ardennes

» **What to see?** Gedinne's rough-and-ready road circuit, Hitler's secret bunker, and simply staggering views over the Ardennes.

» **Where to ride?** Too many tip-top roads to mention, but the brilliant bends around Vresse-sur-Semois get a gold star.

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There are three trappist breweries in Wallonia. That'll do nicely

Wallonia isn't all about the countryside the towns are great too

**DAY FIVE:**

Crossing the Meuse

» **What to see?** Saxophones on the bridge at Dinant, and the micro-city of Durbuy with its arch-like rock formation.

» **Where to ride?** Curve along the banks of the River Meuse before plunging down the head-banging N971.

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In Wallonia you are never far from World War 2



**DAY FOUR:**

Riding Through History

» **What to see?** Learn about the Battle of the Bulge at the Bastogne War Museum, then trip over a massive King Tiger tank in La Gleize.

» **Where to ride?** Wake up to the whip-sharp N834 linking La Roche with Bastogne, and explore the countryside idyll around Spa.

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Great roads sit shoulder to shoulder with fantastic history

**DAY THREE:**

The British in Battle

» **What to see?** German lines of advance during the Battle of the Bulge and ensuing British counterattacks, plus the trappist Orval Abbey.

» **Where to ride?** East of Nassogne, the N889 is a wild ride. But a tricky trip to Herbeumont comes a close second.

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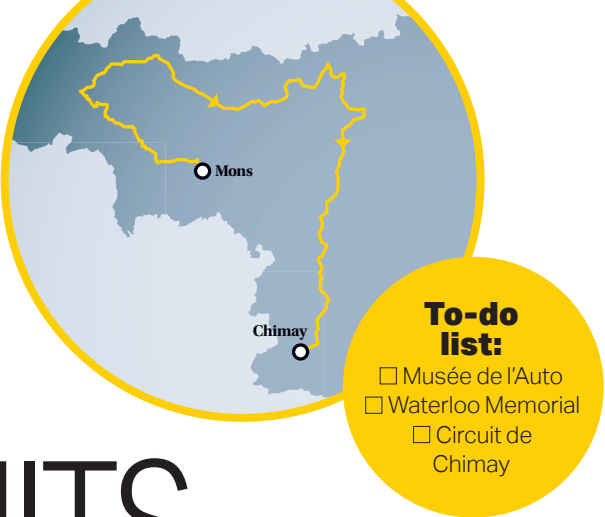
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# DAY ONE: WALLONIA'S GREATEST HITS

Road racing, Belgian beer, historic battlefields – Day One has it all

» **Route** Mons to Chimay » **Distance** 232km » **Duration** 4.5hrs



## To-do list:

- Musée de l'Auto
- Waterloo Memorial
- Circuit de Chimay

**K**ick off the first full day in Wallonia with starter's orders in front of a Sherman tank. It'll be the first of many war relics you'll discover throughout Wallonia. This Sherman has recently rolled into place in front of the Mons Memorial Museum (open Tuesday to Sunday roam to 6pm) a stone's throw south east of the city's elegant central square. If you're here in August keep an eye out for the annual Tanks in Town. Although granted it'd be difficult to miss this huge procession of Second World War military vehicles grumbling towards the Grand Place en masse.

You'll be back here to wine and dine in the city centre at the other end of five fantastic days riding. But now let's open the taps on the N526 towards the mad jumble of automotive exotica that is the Mahymobiles Museum in Leuze-en-Hainaut. Although, en route, please take a moment to pause at Beloeil and gawk at the local Chateau. It's open to explore on summer afternoons.

The great red warehouse of Mahymobiles is unmissable from the road thanks to huge white lettering: Musée de l'Auto. Its collection of cars and motorcycles is huge and varied, and absolutely worth the €10 admission fee. Alongside the typical classic bike regulars sit weird and



Musée de l'Auto: who doesn't like a wander round a bike museum...



Download these routes now at [visitwallonia.be/bike](https://visitwallonia.be/bike)

## Top racetrack: **Circuit de Chimay**

Chimay was a bloomin' fast road circuit back in the day. Case in point: Barry Sheene managed a 134.5mph lap here in 1978. The current layout is only slightly slower, and watching either the Classic Bikes or Open Trophy events here gets the blood pumping. They're both usually scheduled for July, while the Chimay Supersmoto typically takes place in August.

**Location:** Grand prix des frontières 1, 6460 Chimay  
**Website:** [circuit.be](https://circuit.be)

**Butte du Lion:** artificial hill with a lion on top



wonderfuls such as the 1935 Auto-Wheel (a utilitarian moped with less than 10" ground clearance and designed by a bloke in Southampton).

Next set sat-navs for the Battle of Waterloo memorial, but avoid the straight N7 and instead enjoy the much bendier N529 and N533. Riding this way also means you get to see the spectacular Ronquières Inclined Plane: imagine the biggest escalator in the world traversed by a huge bath tub which scoops up boats and deposits them at the top of a hill. Sounds crazy, is spectacular.

Nine miles further west is Wallonia's biggest Butte (the Butte du Lion) – essentially a huge artificial hill atop which stands a lion on a plinth. This unmissable landmark marks the spot where William II of the Netherlands was wounded in action during the Battle of Waterloo, 1815. The unlucky future monarch came from a family of Williams, including his mother Wilhelmine.



## Top beer: **Chimay**

One of Wallonia's best-known exports is produced by Trappist monks, who are beer brewing experts. Chimay ale comes in five shades: gold (4.8%); red (7%); white (8%); blue (9%) and the latest addition, which is green, called Chimay 150 (10%). Clearly this is strong beer – remember you're riding the morning after the night before.

**Website:** [chimay.com](https://chimay.com)

## **Chimay's road circuit: blow of steam after a night on the blue**

Turn south, now, and cross the Sambre River at Charleroi. This used to be the industrial backbone of Belgium, producing, processing and transporting bucketloads of coal, iron and steel along rivers and train tracks. Past Charleroi, watch as the wide open plains of northern Wallonia wrinkle into what's known as High Belgium. Sleepy farmland soon turns to wooded hills and valleys, and the roads get busy in response. Case in point: the final section of today's route between the brutalist dam just north of Cerfontaine and the famous road race circuit at Chimay. The fast curves and top-notch surface make it a proper old-school blat fest. Honda Blackbird eat your heart out.

Rest and recuperate with a local trappist beer on the square outside Chimay's Queen Mary bar. Tomorrow's when the real riding starts.



# DAY TWO: AWESOME ARDENNES

Today is all about fabulous riding roads, and an equally fabulous race circuit..

» Direction Chimay to Bouillon » Distance 162km » Duration 3.5hrs



- Tick list:**
- ☐ Gedinne Race Circuit
  - ☐ Hitler's Wartime Bunker
  - ☐ Le Tombeau du Géant

## Top castle: Bouillon Castle

The imposing bulk of Bouillon Castle impresses even the most disinterested of *Game of Thrones* fans, with massive stone walls, teetering bridges, and intriguing vaulted passageways. And for those who would rather watch paint dry than hike round a medieval pile, the views alone are worth the €11 entry fee. If you're here on Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays in July or August, night tours begin at 10pm and cost the same. You even get to wield a torch.

**Location:** Esplanade Godefroy  
1, 6830 Bouillon  
**bouilloninitiative.be**

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The usual route from Chimay to Bouillon pops through France on the D1, a gently meandering journey that follows the wriggling Semois River from where it pours into the Meuse at French Revin back towards Bouillon. Charming though that may be, it can't beat the smaller, tighter routes surrounding the Gedinne road racing circuit, or the top-notch curves on the N981 as it climbs out of Givet. Time to leave the cars on the D1 and go exploring.

For now, let's begin at the beginning. Lights out on the start line at Chimay race circuit. And they're off, accelerating away gracefully to the maximum allowed speed limit. This is a public road, after all. Shun the N99 for the swoops and banks of the N589 to the French border post in Regniowez, then north towards Brûly-de-Pesche.

It was here, in this quiet village, Adolf Hitler stayed in the final days of the Battle of France. This was his HQ for three weeks from 6-28 June 1940. He will leave soon after signing the Armistice near Compiègne and visiting Paris and some WW1 battlefields. The historical site is open Feb to Nov.

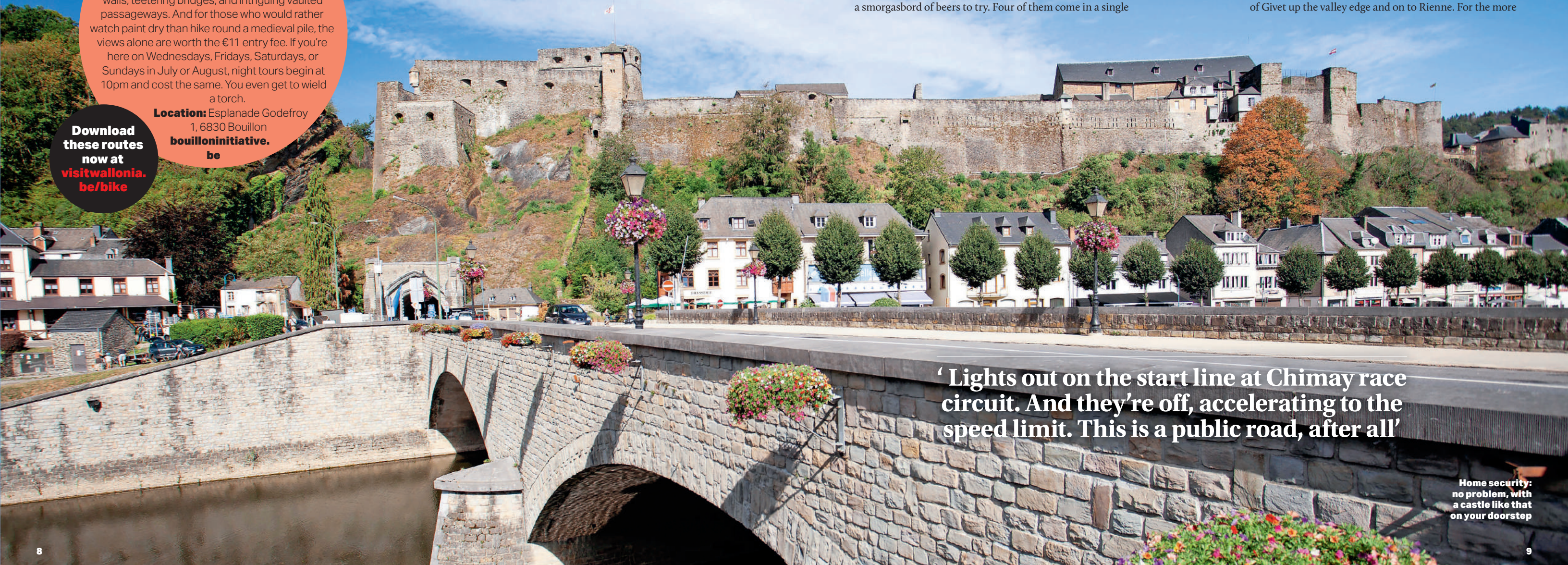
Lighten the mood at the nearby Brasserie des Fagnes. This micro-brewery knows how to throw a party, providing a smorgasbord of beers to try. Four of them come in a single



One for the road? Maybe on a day off...

tray, and master brewer Luc Piron expects local Walloons with superhuman livers to order a tray each. They also brew non-alcoholic beer for youngster and riders/drivers who, quite rightly, want to do the right thing.

Roads and viewpoints from here on out are the stars of the day. A thirty-minute trickle to Givet on the Meuse is nothing but a warm-up for the upcoming stunners. Slingshot out of Givet up the valley edge and on to Rienne. For the more



'Lights out on the start line at Chimay race circuit. And they're off, accelerating to the speed limit. This is a public road, after all'

Home security: no problem, with a castle like that on your doorstep





Just breathe  
it all in

**Top road:  
Hameau des Cretes**

If you're not firm with your sat-nav, you might miss most of this fabulous little road that connects Vresse-sur-Semois with Chairière. Make sure you start in the centre of Vresse opposite the Centre for Tourism. Then cut south west on the N943 to experience wild bends, huge cambers, and racetrack-grade tarmac.

**Coordinates:** 49°52'29.5"N  
4°56'43.1"E

adventurous types, turn off the N981 in Felenne to follow the Belgian-French border on a single-tracker with overhanging trees and thick forest all around.

Two left-hand junctions take us to Gedinne and its infamous road race circuit. Like the most obscure of Irish road races, this 3.14-mile triangle of public road bears almost no defining characteristics outside racing season. Look out for the start-finish box on Rue du Circuit between the villages of Patignies and Gribelle. A tarmac'd chicane was added in 2000 to reduce the risk of carnage at the first junction – errr, corner. The rest of the circuit is surprisingly

**When in  
Wallonia...**



topsy-turvy, with deep troughs and steep climbs making for thrilling spectator sport. And of course, race day hay bales are the only security fencing. Ride it multiple times if you must, and come back in August for the Belgian Classic Trophy. Visit crmb.be for more information.

Head south from Gedinne on the N935, before joining the N914 to Vresse-sur-Semois. Here, just past the tiny village of Petit-Fays, you get a first taste of Walloon switchbacks as the road wrestles down into the Semois Valley. No sooner does it hit the bottom, than it's left at Vresse and straight up the other side with an even better sequence of S-bends and deep, high-camber turns. Take a breather at the Point de Vue Frahan, a spectacular lookout spot in Rochehaut that takes in a huge bend of the Semois and the picturesque village of Frahan nestled within. Grab a refreshing drink with a view at the Point de Vue restaurant, or head to Taverne de Rochehaut if you're looking for a slap-up meal instead.

Le Tombeau du Géant (the Giant's Tomb in English) is a more peaceful version of Frahan: no village, and no restaurant with a view, yet arguably more spectacular. A new parking spot and viewing deck were recently opened by Belgian royalty.

From here, twenty minutes of curve-thrashing will get you to Bouillon and its castle. Many of Belgium's Chateaux are lavish mansions with little in the way of strategic defences. Not Bouillon. First mentioned in 988AD, it's built along a rocky outcrop flanked on three sides by the Semois. Finish the day under its imposing walls at La Brasserie des Ramparts or Le Majestic on the banks of the Semois.

# A WEEKEND AT SPA...

Not a spa, but *the* Spa. One of the world's best race circuits. Enjoy it while you can...

**W**hy visit? The trademark red-yellow kerbing of Wallonia's top-class racetrack leaps between the Ardennes hillsides, creating incredible three-dimensional racing. As a result, motorcycle sport like the Bikers' Classics is mighty exciting to both participate in and watch. We may also soon see international racing here, thanks to a huge €80 million renovation to enlarge runoff areas and the installation of gravel traps. The Endurance World Championship is already slated for June 2022. And what about WSBK or MotoGP? Maybe this famous old circuit will get there one day, soon.

When to go? Most of the big races happen between June and August. The Bikers' Classic typically takes place in early July, and Formula 1 arrives in late August. But as you would expect this is a busy time so get your accomodation lined up if you're staying.

Where to watch? The same hills that give Spa its awesome character provide almost birds-eye views for spectators. On a clear day you can be nose-to-nose with the action at the Rivage hairpin and pick up a long view of Turn 1 over a mile away. If it's the Eau Rouge and Raidillon corners you're eyeing – that famous kink up the hill – buy a ticket for the Gold 4 Grandstand. If that sounds too expensive, book in at Silver 3, with a great atmosphere and views over the long downhill double left of Pouhon. If your wallet's fuller, there's always the Paddock Club views over the Bus Stop chicane onto the start-finish straight.

Where to stay? The circuit lies in the centre of a triangle formed by the towns of Malmedy, Stavelot and Francorchamps. Book into a local B&B for £80 per night. Alternatively try a Logis de Belgique like L'Auberge in Spa, or stay at Hotel Doux Repos which is a few miles east of Trois-Ponts.

## Spa's Races. Get out the diary...

### The Bikers' Classics

A four-hour endurance race on a splendid array of classic machinery. In recent years it's been easy to spot famous Brit racers such as Guy Martin sauntering around the pits (when they're not pinning it through Eau Rouge). Check out the Sultans of Sprint drag race, and do not miss Sunday's parade lap madness.

» **When:** Early July  
» **Website:** bikersclassics.be

### Belgian Grand Prix

You may have heard of Formula One... well it happens at Spa. The Belgian GP features that weird cousin of motorcycling where the machines have four wheels instead of two. But it can't be much of a spectator sport – they call the racers 'drivers' and nobody so much as scrapes a knee. Still spectacular, mind.

» **When:** Late August  
» **Website:** spa-francorchamps.be

### Endurance World Champs

A huge safety overhaul has Spa swapping faux grass for tarmac and gravel traps – all to achieve FIM accreditation and entice the big crowds that follow. We can't wait for June 2022 when Wallonia will once again host a 24-hour motorcycle endurance race. The last time was the 24 Hours of Liège in 2003.

» **When:** Starting June 2022  
» **Website:** fimewc.com



Racing is in the  
Walloon blood

BIKERS' CLASSICS SPA © DGSPORT



# DAY THREE: THE BRITISH IN THE BULGE

Trace the spearhead of German advance during the Battle of the Bulge, and learn how the British ousted the occupation mere weeks later

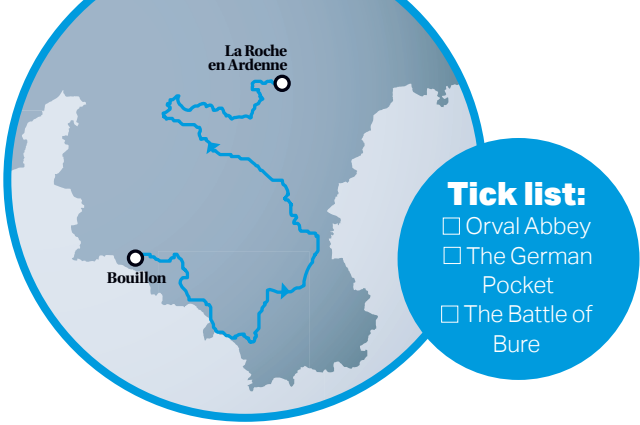
» **Route** Bouillon to La Roche-en-Ardenne » **Distance** 218km » **Duration** 4hrs

**S**tart the day right with an apple tart and coffee at Boulangerie-Pâtisserie Legrand Philippe on the south bank of the Semois. Or try Baisers de Bouillon – Bouillon Kisses in English. These meringue and buttercream morsels are outrageously good.

Full of good coffee and sweet stuff hook up to the N865 east out of Bouillon. This Ardennes winder is reminiscent of the best of yesterday's riding, except faster. Watch out for a ten-metre section of single-lane road where the steep bank has subsided. After that, it's grins and sniggers all the way to Herbeumont Castle. Repeatedly destroyed by French troops during the Thirty Years' War, Herbeumont was finally captured and dismantled in 1657. It's worth a look around today's restoration.

Head south on the N83 and N88 to Orval Abbey. This 950-year-old monastery has a recently renovated welcome centre where keen beans can learn about Orval beer and brush up on Cistercian scriptorium. Orval's trappist brewery is located within the Abbey's walls, and the monks have been brewing since 1628. As with other trappist breweries, profits from beer sales support the monastery and good causes.

From Orval plunge deeper into Wallonia's Deep South by way of the N88 as it wriggles towards Virton, before



## Tick list:

- ☐ Orval Abbey
- ☐ The German Pocket
- ☐ The Battle of Bure



© WBF-DAVID SAMYN

## Take the high ground: Bouillon Castle

turning onto the tiny Rue du Meunier to Habay-la-Neuve. The morning's boulangerie sugar rush will have subsided by now, so stock up on quality chocolates from the Jean Le Chocolatier just off the roundabout in central Habay. This gentleman chocolatier uses the most curious ingredients (turmeric, balsamic vinegar, wasabi), but the results are universally praised.

The second half of the day's ride navigates towns and villages that changed hands during World War 2. This is Battle of the Bulge country, where a surprise German offensive created a deep bulge into Allied-held land during winter 1944/45. Using the N848 and N803 you can trace the route taken by the German Panzer Lehr division as it spearheaded the southern advance far quicker and further than could be supported by their own resupply convoys. Take a detour to the town of Poix-Saint-Hubert for lunch at Restaurant Les Gamines. There you can pore over Second World War battle maps while sampling locally-sourced ingredients and a wide selection of regional beer. Their Saint-Monon honey beer is a winner.

Pass through the village of Bure and enter Rochefort, the last town taken by the Panzer Lehr division before the German advance ran out of steam. Between 3 and 5 January 1945 the British evicted German forces from this area in the Battle of Bure. The Brits would go on to liberate more villages and towns that January, including La Roche-en-Ardenne, to finally link up with the Americans further east. Search out the M-10 Achilles tank destroyer 'Northampton', which was the first tank to enter La Roche on the day of liberation. It sits on the town's esplanade, overlooking an American Sherman tank that currently spends its time in the riverside car park.



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**'Hook up to the N865 east out of Bouillon. This Ardennes winder is reminiscent of the best of yesterday's riding, except faster'**

## Top road: N889, Nassogne

Stunning sequence of curves that cut through dense tree cover from Barriere de Champlon to Nassogne, a town liberated from the Germans by the same British paratroopers that recaptured Bure. The tarmac is in tip-top condition, but be careful of wet leaves on rainy autumn days.

**Coordinates:** 50°07'05.3"N 5°22'54.0"E

## Top museum: Battle of the Ardennes Museum

A section dedicated to the British involvement in the Battle of the Bulge sets this museum apart from its contemporaries. There are over 100 mannequins from both sides of the conflict set over three floors, plus an aptly-named Gun Room housing 90-odd weapons and an Enigma machine for good measure.

Location: Rue Chamont 5, 6980 La Roche-en-Ardenne  
[batarden.be](https://batarden.be)





© WBT C. GRASSIN



## Top tank: Royal King Tiger, La Gleize

Just north of Trois-Ponts lies the sleepy village of La Gleize. It was here that Joachim Peiper's desperate efforts to reach the Meuse in December 1944 faltered completely. Cut off from supplies, his elite German tank unit scuttled their vehicles and escaped Allied capture on foot, leaving behind a Royal King Tiger. When the Allies came to collect scrap metal at the end of the war, one lady paid them to keep one. The price?

One bottle of cognac.

**Location:** Rue de l'Eglise, 4987  
Stoumont  
**december44.com**



**Tanks: they're  
dangerous things**



**'The N834 whips through the village of Bertogne, and past the tank turrets that signal arrival at one of the most famous locations of the Second World War'**

# DAY FOUR: RIDING THROUGH HISTORY

Famous battlegrounds, forgotten tanks, fabulous roads... and the Spa Francorchamps racetrack. It's all to play for, on day four...

» **Direction** La Roche-en-Ardenne to Spa » **Distance** 264km » **Duration** 5hrs



## Tick list:

- ☐ Bastogne War Museum
- ☐ Spa racetrack museum
- ☐ Fort Eben-Emael

**T**oday is a long and satisfying day, so better make an early start: croissant o'clock outside Boulangerie Delhaye in La Roche. Leave town over the southern bridge and get ready for a lively 30 minutes to Bastogne on the N834. It burrows into the landscape, whips through the village of Bertogne, and past the tank turrets that signal arrival at one of the most famous locations of the Second World War.

Bastogne is famous for holding out against immense pressure from an overwhelming opposing force over the Christmas of 1944. Completely cut off from resupply, elements of the 101st US Airborne helped hold Bastogne until Patton's Third Army punched a hole through the encircling Germans. Pop over to the 101st Airborne Museum and read up on the Siege of Bastogne first-hand. Or, take the N874 out of town and follow signs for Memorial du Mardasson. The memorial is now part of the smart-looking Bastogne War Museum which examines the Second World War as a whole, with a deeper emphasis on the Battle of the Bulge. Tickets are €16 per adult.

Rejoin the N874 and ride through the villages of Neffe and Mageret. This route formed the outer defensive road West, where the American Combat Team Cherry would slow the advance of Panzer Lehr before the German unit bypassed Bastogne and headed for its strategic target – the Meuse River and ultimately the port of Antwerp. Turn left to Bourcy, then on to Buret a mere stone's throw from the Luxembourg border.

Next stop, Houffalize. Here, on 5 January, 1945 ninety RAF Lancaster Bombers flattened the town in a shocking night of intentional destruction. The aim was simple: to cut off the remaining German occupation from retreating through the town after the inevitable Allied counter-attack. As a result of this night raid 189 civilians lost their lives. Today the town is home to a 40-tonne German Panther tank which was



## Top hotel: L'Auberge, Spa

Just across the road from the Spa Funicular cable car this hotel restaurant (part of the 'Logis de Belgique') offers locked garages for bike parking in town. The food is good value with eight different types of mussels on the menu.

**Address:** Place du Monument 3,  
4900 Spa  
**aubergedespa.be**

thrown into the river by a mighty bomb blast.

Avoid the handy-yet-humdrum E25 motorway by taking the N860 instead. Choosing this longer route north is immediately worth it, as the 860 scribbles its way towards the Ourthe River. Follow its meandering progress north for more great riding – like the N645 between

Neucy and Targnon. Drop in on Trois-Ponts for a serving of extraordinary Belgian frites – the Belgians have honed the honest chip into a delicious lunchtime snack and a visit to Wallonia is made all the better for this. Sample them in all their glory at Friterie Bertrand close to the centre of Trois-Ponts. In good weather its roof even doubles as a curious outdoor dining area.

**So peaceful, but  
it wasn't always  
this way**



Bellies full, motor on towards Stavelot, and the splendid Spa Francorchamps race track museum. This wacky space – the undercroft of Stavelot’s Abbey – is chocka with famous racing machines, be they from Formula, GT, or motorcycle racing.

Opening hours are 10am to 6pm, seven days a week. The standard ticket price is 10 euros per person with concessions given for under sixes and over 65s. And there is also a tour you can hook on to if that’s your thing. Navigation wise you are looking for Cour de l’Abbaye, B-4970 Stavelot. Once you are in we’d recommend you make a beeline for the interwar bikes made by Belgium’s own Fabrique Nationale.

The track these motorcycles raced on lies only six miles away and is, of course, one of the world’s most iconic and challenging in motorsport. And it’s worth a visit even if there’s no racing actually taking place. Take the tour and get an insight into what goes on behind the scenes of a proper race track.

The evening’s rest spot is at Spa. However, a quick detour to Fort Eben-Emael is absolutely worth the trip over the Meuse. This World War II fort was a linchpin in Belgium’s defence plan back in 1940, against an army invading from the east. The three miles of underground tunnels, connecting 17 battle bunkers, was overrun in just 15 minutes by German paratroopers. Find opening times and more at [fort-eben-emael.be](http://fort-eben-emael.be)

Download these routes now at [visitwallonia.be/bike](http://visitwallonia.be/bike)



BIKERS' CLASSICS SPA © DG SPORT

‘Stavelot’s Abbey is chocka with racing machines, be they Formula GT, or motorcycle racing’



If battlefields aren't so much your thing, racing bikes surely will be...



The Bastogne War museum

©TEMPORA

RIDING IN THE BULGE

It’s hard to think that the stunningly peaceful Ardennes countryside was an incredibly dangerous place. But it was...

In late 1944, Skyline Drive was a ragged defensive line of villages. It was barely held together by thinly-spread and ill-equipped Allied forces just 20 miles east of Bastogne, the region’s key crossroads. This is where, on Saturday 16 December, the Germans crossed the River Our and began the Battle of the Bulge. For the German attack to succeed they needed to advance at lightning quick pace past Bastogne and on to take bridges on the River Meuse. From there, they would strike north to occupy the port of Antwerp. But immediately, the tired and untested Allied troops mounted a top-drawer defence.

The enemy advance was halted, the element of surprise was lost. This allowed time for the 101st Airborne division to reinforce Bastogne against attack. The 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, well-seasoned from action on D-Day and during Operation Market Garden, arrived at Bastogne on Monday 18th December shortly before it was surrounded.

On the same day in the north the vanguard of the 6th Panzer Army pushed west towards Trois-Ponts. But to the Germans’ frustration, Allied engineers were successful in blowing up bridges over the Ambleve River. Advance was proving pretty difficult.

Over and above the surprisingly fierce American resistance, however,

the Germans had another significant problem. Their supply lines were stretched to breaking point. Allied bombing had destroyed nearly all rail infrastructure west of the Rhine, so vehicle fuel had to be transported by truck 100 miles down country roads and resupply by air was equally difficult. Cut off by destroyed bridges, Peiper and the 6th Panzer vanguard requested resupply at La Gleize on the night of 22 December. Most of the parachuted containers landed outside their defensive perimeter and led to a decision to disengage. The 800 German survivors destroyed their vehicles, and escaped on foot to Wamme.

The German advance was halted for good at Celles on Christmas Day, just six miles from Dinant on the River Meuse. The German 5th Panzer spearhead was dangerously far from the body of the army, facing supply problems and limited protection from Allied air attacks.

To make matters worse for the Germans, on 26 December General Patton’s army punched through the German line, creating a narrow corridor to the besieged town of Bastogne. With this new support, Bastogne held out against repeated attacks over the next few days. By the end of January the German force was right back to where they had started.

Remnants of the Bulge

December 44 Museum, La Gleize

A 69-ton Royal King Tiger tank languishes in front of the La Gleize December 44 Museum. A close-up inspection reveals scars of action on the tank’s glacis plate. Read up on the museum at [december44.com](http://december44.com)

» Location: 4987 Stoumont

» Visit on: Day three

101st Airborne Museum, Bastogne

Experience the ferocity of the Siege of Bastogne in all its shocking glory. Exploding artillery shells, trapped and desperate civilians – a sound and light show brings it to life.

» Location: Avenue de la Gare 11, 6600 Bastogne

» Visit on: Day four

Hotton Military Cemetery

Visit Hotton, a cemetery remembering the British and Commonwealth troops who died to push back the Nazi advance. Among the British, Canadians and Australians, lie ten New Zealanders.

» Location: 6990 Hotton

» Visit on: Day three

Panther Medium Tank, Celles

Celles is where the German advance stalled, thanks to a pincer of the British 3rd Royal Tank Regiment and the US 2nd Armored. Look out for the village’s Panther.

» Location: Route d’Achène, 5561 Houyet

» Visit on: Day five



# DAY FIVE: CROSSING THE MEUSE

Beer, chops and sweepers. Ride westwards, switching sides of the majestic River Meuse again and again, on this knockout final ride

» **Direction** Spa to Mons » **Distance** 260km » **Duration** 4.5hrs

## Tick list:

- Durbuy
- Dinant
- Saxophones
- Mettet Race Circuit

**G**lug breakfast coffee at La Gaterie on Spa's Place du Monument, then follow with a morning dose of corner carving on the N697. That should wake you up.

The N697 twists west for an hour before flowing into Durbuy, a perfect nam cake stop in the shadow of the chateau. With just 11,000 residents, this must be one of the smallest cities in Europe (so decreed after John I of Luxembourg got a little too excited back in 1331). Avoid the congested cobbled streets by turning right before the bridge over the River Ourthe, parking up, and walking into the centre. Go on, it'll do you good.

Leave Durbuy the same way you arrived – the road is so good it deserves to be ridden twice. Cut north-west onto flat terrain for the second castle of the day: Chateau de Modave. It's somewhat hidden down a long tree-lined avenue, but a meander around the castle gardens is completely free of charge.

It's not long before you plunge back into the thickly-wooded Ardennes at Celles. This little village is the furthest west that any German units came during the Battle of the Bulge. Their major objective before turning towards the port of Antwerp was the bridge over the Meuse at

## Taking a stylish left in Durbuy



'Like so many fabulous Walloon roads, the route inherits the brilliantly erratic winding of the river it follows'



## Top museum: Maison Leffe

A two-minute trot from Dinant's bridge of saxophones takes you to the doors of Maison Leffe. This place tells the story of Leffe, a beer with roots back to 1240AD. Immerse yourself in a big bath of beer knowledge in the converted chapel, or sample Leffe's massive variety of high-quality tipplés at the bar.

**Location:** Charreau des Capucines 23, 5500 Dinant  
**leffe.com**



wooden mould before baking. The local take on quiche, 'flamiche', is much easier on the molars. Try them both at Couques de Dinant – V Collard.

Leave the imposing Dinant citadel for another day and search out the brilliant tarmac between Anhee and Maredsous Abbey. Like so many fabulous Walloon roads, the route inherits the brilliantly erratic winding of the river it follows at the bottom of a steep valley. Don't miss the imposing ruins of 13th Century Montaigle Castle, open weekends 1pm-5:30pm.

With a final flurry of curves on the small but well-surfaced N971 past Maredsous Abbey, you're out of the Ardennes and into Walloon farm country. Sit back, relax, and start cruising. Pass through Mettet, home to another great Belgian road circuit, turn onto the N40 and rumble into the western city of Mons from where this trip started four days ago. Park up in the central Grand Place, choose a table at Restaurant Le Copenhagen and celebrate with a selection of delicious trappist beers and a Cotelette Al'berdouille – pork chop with a gherkin and shallot mustard sauce.

**The awe inspiring city of Dinant on the banks of the Meuse River**

## Top racetrack: Mettet Circuit

This tight, modern racetrack has moved local competition away from the town centre where racing began. According to local myth-makers, a gent called Auguste Galloy started the road-race craze by lapping local roads until his bike drank all its fuel. Watch the infamous Superbiker supermoto race here in October.

**Location:** Rue Saint-Donat 6, 5640 Mettet  
**circuit-mettet.be**

Dinant – six miles to the west on the N94. By motorbike, though, it's much more enjoyable to take the long way round. Attack the awesome bends above Houyet and streak across countryside to the bridge at Givet. Then follow the Meuse north on the spectacular N96 as it trickles along the river's west bank.

Dinant itself is an unusual town. Known for being the home of saxophone inventor Adolphe Sax, the main bridge is lined with colourful saxes. Above them sits the rounded tower of the Notre-Dame church, itself dominated by a military citadel perched on a huge, sweeping cliff face. Dinant is also famous for producing Europe's hardest biscuit, the Couques de Dinant, which is sweetened with honey and pressed into a

**Download these routes now at [visitwallonia.be/bike](http://visitwallonia.be/bike)**



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