

**Belgium**  
**Wallonia**

# BIKER'S GUIDE TO **WALLONIA** THE BELGIAN ARDENNES

**Over  
1300km  
of brilliant  
routes inside**



Great rides, amazing events and places to visit in southern Belgium



# Welcome

**W**ALLONIA'S WHITE LINES trickle through forests, wander beside meandering rivers, cut between cliffs and race across the high plateau. Flanked on each side by rich, dark tarmac, they pull you out of countless corners, pin balling you forwards, sunlight piercing the canopy and strobing your visor. And they always lead to a great destination: a hulking wartime tank quietly guarding La Gleize's village square, the start-finish straight of Gedinne's racetrack, a museum in Bastogne stuffed with the relics of World War II. It's what sets Wallonia apart from other motorcycling destinations: whatever direction you choose to go, there's always something great at the end.

You ride through the history books, following lines of advancing tanks from the Battle of the Bulge, past the fortresses and citadels that make up Wallonia's well-used defences. Discover the region's turbulent past with the Battlefields route on page 14. But there's also a strong road racing culture to rival Ireland's own. Circuits such as Spa-Francorchamps have formalized their road races and spectacularly upgraded their tracks. Others are still assembling hay bales and conducting races on public roads. Visit the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps on page 8, and ride road racing routes on page 18.

Whatever your chosen destination, it's those white lines, crinkled by countryside, that make travelling between them into a real adventure.



**Ben Lindley**  
Staff Writer,  
*Bike* magazine

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Ride on two of Wallonia's most famous road racing tracks

Hazy afternoon  
sun, a comfy 22  
degrees, the  
addictive N947





# Welcome to Wall

Wallonia is one of biking's best kept secrets. Explore this hidden treasure on 1300km of great routes.

Brussels

**E**VER HEARD OF Wallonia? It's the southern half of Belgium, and as far as motorcyclists are concerned, the more exciting half. It's home to the Spa-Francorchamps race circuit, classic racing at Gedinne, famous World War II landmarks like Bastogne, and the Belgian Ardennes. Expect to eat delicious potato tartiflette, Trappist beer, and copious amounts of chips and mayonnaise – the Belgian fast food of choice. Find chips at any local friterie – the equivalent of a British fish'n'chip shop.

Visit between June and September for fantastic weather. October is for risk-takers: the whole area turns into a leafy golden spectacle, but there's a higher chance of rain. Good weather for the weekend? The region's only a short hop across the Channel with Eurotunnel. From there it's only a 90-minute ride to Tournai at Wallonia's western edge. With this fast crossing you could be cruising along Ardennes river valleys within four hours.

Tournai

Charleroi

Chimay

Hitler's bunker

FRANCE

Head for Wallonia and expect superb riding such as this wherever you go



## 1. Enter Wallonia

### Tournai to Chimay

**What to see?** Chimay's famous Trappist monastery, and Hitler's Battle of France bunker which you'll find at Bruly-de-Pesche

**Where to ride?** The steep cambers of the N589 between Baileux and Cul-des-Sarts, and the Beloeil Chateau seen from Chemin Du Major  
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## 2. Riding to Spa

### Tournai to Spa-Francorchamps

**What to see?** Diverse classic bikes at the Mahymobiles Museum, and the Ronquieres canal boat escalator

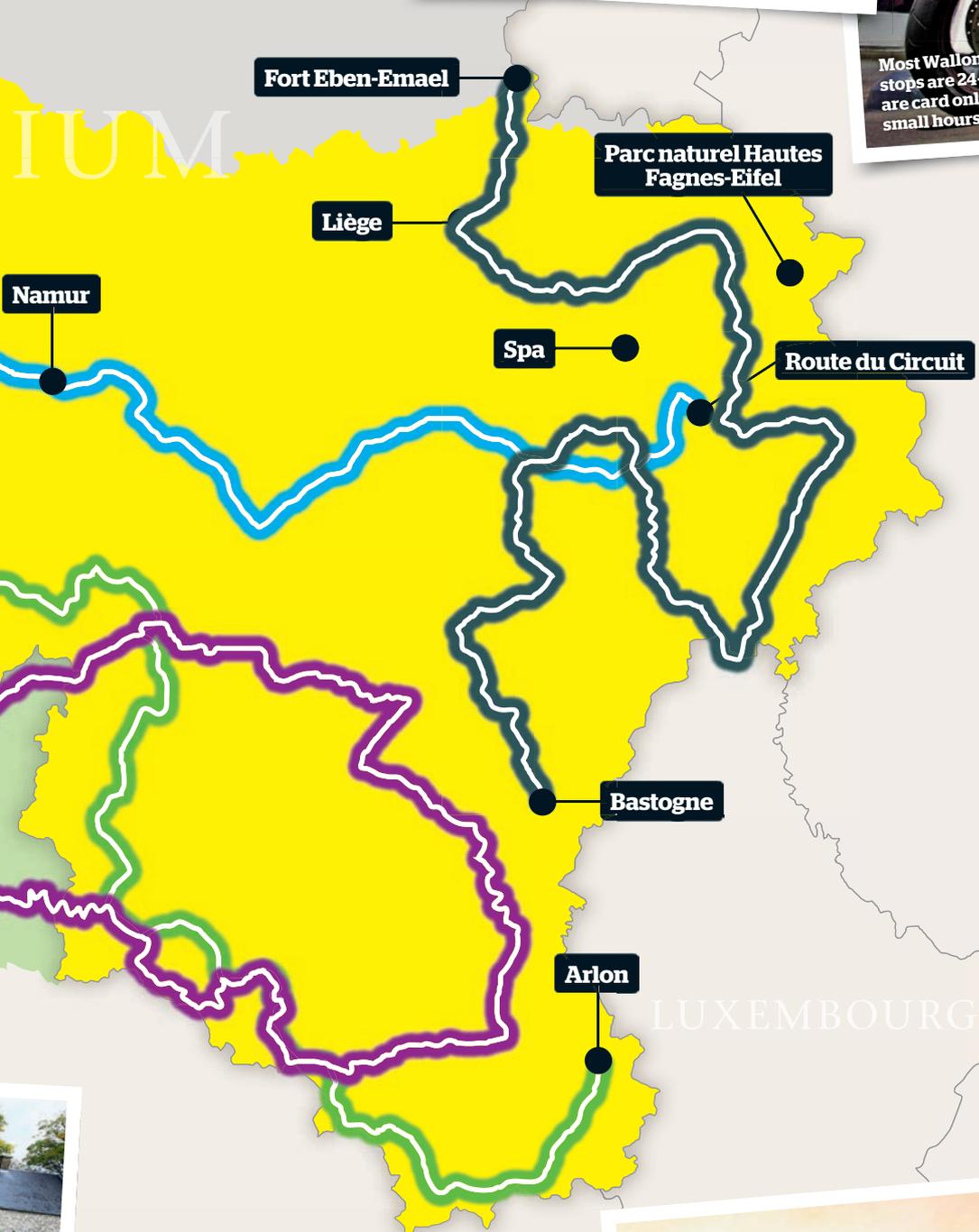
**Where to ride?** Cobbled switchbacks on Namur's citadel road, and the racetrack-smooth N66 just west of Stavelot

**Page 8**



Namur citadel - Namur is the capital city of Wallonia

# onia



### 3. Explore the Ardennes Chimay to Chimay

**What to see?** The beautiful Meuse and Semois valleys from hillside viewpoints, and the Gaume Jazz Festival in August

**Where to ride?** Nassogne's N889 blasts through quiet woodland, while the the Semois valley provides calm riding

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### 4. Belgian Battlefields Eben-Emael to Bastogne

**What to see?** Eben-Emael, the Belgian fortress that was defeated in a single day, and the Royal King Tiger at La Gleize

**Where to ride?** The squirrelling N89 to La Roche-en-Ardenne, and the fast N62 between St Vith and Luxembourg's border

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### 5. Roads and road races Charleroi to Arlon

**What to see?** Supermoto racing at Mettet in October, and Dinant - the home of saxophone inventor Adolphe Sax

**Where to ride?** The public roads that make up Gedinne's circuit, and the stormin' N88 just south of Orval Abbey

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# Enter Wallonia

Take your first steps into Wallonia with a ride from the city of Tournai, past grand castles and monasteries, to Chimay...

✓ **Trappist beer** ✓ **curving roads** ✓ **Hitler's bunker**

From **Tournai** to **Chimay**, distance **170km**, time **3hrs**

**T**HE FORTIFIED CITY of Tournai in western most Wallonia was the only Belgian municipality ever to be ruled by the English. Henry VIII led the siege and the city's capture during the Italian Wars, attended mass in Tournai Cathedral on 2 October 1513, and commissioned new fortifications and a citadel. Track down the Tour de Henri VIII just north of the centre before riding out along Grand Chemin, through Leuze-en-Hainaut, and south-east on the N526 to Chateau de Beloeil.

Beloeil's Chateau started life as a medieval fortress before evolving into a stately home which, unusually, is surrounded by water that laps at the castle walls. Entrance to castle and gardens is 10 euros and the site is open between April and October. Make sure you ride the Chemin du Major road that runs along the southern edge of the grounds. The view north, along the manicured lawns and over the ornamental lake to the Chateau beyond is spectacular in late afternoon or at sunset. There's no restricted access here, so the road's open all year round.

Another great option is a ride towards Mons on the N526, past sleepy Belgian villages and through the city's suburbs, before arriving in the Grand Place. There's



**Above: Chimay Blue is a true Trappist beer and weighs in at a stiff 9% abv**

motorcycle parking right outside the ornate town hall and cafés with outside seating. If you stay overnight walk south to the Marché aux Herbes, which comes alive in the evening: its many bars stay open late. The Hotel Dream on Rue de la Grande Triperie is a four-star affair with private, gated parking for motorcycles. It's good value outside high season, too, with rooms starting at £55. Dine in at the hotel's Mea Culpa restaurant, or walk the 500 metres back to the Grand Place for food with a view.

Beyond Mons, the landscape changes. Gentle hills punctuate the farmed landscape and force roads to arc and wind. Bridging the River Sambre you enter the Fagnes – or Fens – region of Wallonia. From here head for Chimay and its famous Trappist monk brewery. Follow the smooth and snaking N978 south over the L'Eau d'Heure lakes, refuel at a classic petrol pump on Rue du Lac in Virelles, and pause in Chimay for a bite to eat at La Chimassiette.

Six miles south of the town lies the birthplace of one of Wallonia's best and most famous beers: Chimay. Brewed by Trappist monks at Scourmont Abbey, Chimay is sold throughout Europe – a testament to its quality. The abbey's front door might look closed to outsiders, but turn the handle and it opens into an oasis of peaceful gardens and stone quads.

**Below: Chateau de Beloeil – stately homes are a feature of western Wallonia**



**START**  
Tournai



## Must ride

### N589, Baileux to Regniowez

Brushing the border with France, the N589 barrels you along at a storming pace. The S-bend just south of Baileux is well-cambered fun and worth repeating, but keep an eye out for leaves on the road in Autumn. Turn right just before Nimelette to reach Scourmont and the Abbaye de Chimay.

N526

N562

Chimay

Baileux

N589

**FINISH**  
Bruly-de-Pesche

Cul-des-Sarts

## Must see

### Hitler's Bunker

Hidden deep in the folds of Belgian border country lies an unassuming village called Bruly-de-Pesche. It was here in 1940 that Adolf Hitler resided during the final days of the Battle of France. It was from here that he left to attend the Armistice with France, and here that he returned after his visit to Paris. Certainly not a feel-good stop-off, but one worthy of your time.

**Address:** Place Saint-Meen, 5660 Bruly-de-Pesche, Belgium

**More Info:** open 18 February to 12 November, adults €6

**Website:** bdp1940.be



**'Hills punctuate the landscape and force roads to arc and wind'**



# Riding to Spa

Laze along leafy lanes and devour the N66. All in the pursuit of racing perfection... Spa

✓ **Valley road** ✓ **dramatic castle**  
✓ **classic race circuit**

From **Tournai** to **Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps**, distance **263km**, time **5hrs**

**R**IDE OUT OF Tournai on the N529, pass over the E429 and quicken the tempo for the next 12 miles of smooth curves through quiet farming country. Skirt the border with Flanders, Belgium's northern region and drop down towards Nivelles. The N534 follows the Brussels-Charleroi canal which is one of the most important waterways in Belgium.

Pause at the Ronquieres inclined plane, a section of canal that cuts out the need for 14 locks with an ingenious escalator-style arrangement. Helped by a 5200-tonne counterweight, the inclined plane drags a 'chest' of water, complete with floating 1350-tonne boat, up the incline at just under walking pace. It takes about 22 minutes to lift a boat to the top of the 1432-metre track, or 67.73 metres of vertical height. Just enough time for a relaxing mug of coffee. Visit the sloping lock between April and October, 10am to 7pm for a tour.

Skirt Nivelles and Genappe and ride through the old single-lane archway at the ruined Abbaye de Villers. This Cistercian abbey was abandoned back in 1796 but has now been recreated virtually, which you immerse yourself in via the screen of a tablet you hold as you walk the grounds. It's very impressive augmented reality that details the lives the monks led, part of which involved brewing beer. And thanks to accounting records the proportions of barley, spelt and hops used in the process are still known and the beer is being made again.

Panniers filled turn onto the N93 and ride east towards Namur and its magnificent citadel. The imposing structure sits on a promontory looking out over the confluence of the Sambre and Meuse rivers and it's readily accessible by bike. Surprisingly, the cobbles that switchback their way up the hillside are open to the public. It's an awe-inspiring ride as the route takes a 270-degree turn around a turreted outcrop and passes back over itself an extra ten metres in the air.

Turn right after the bridge, park up and gaze out over the streets below. This is a perfect place to spend a warm

The Mahymobiles collection. Look out for the 1938 Gnome&Rone 750 XA



**START**  
Tournai

N529

## Must see

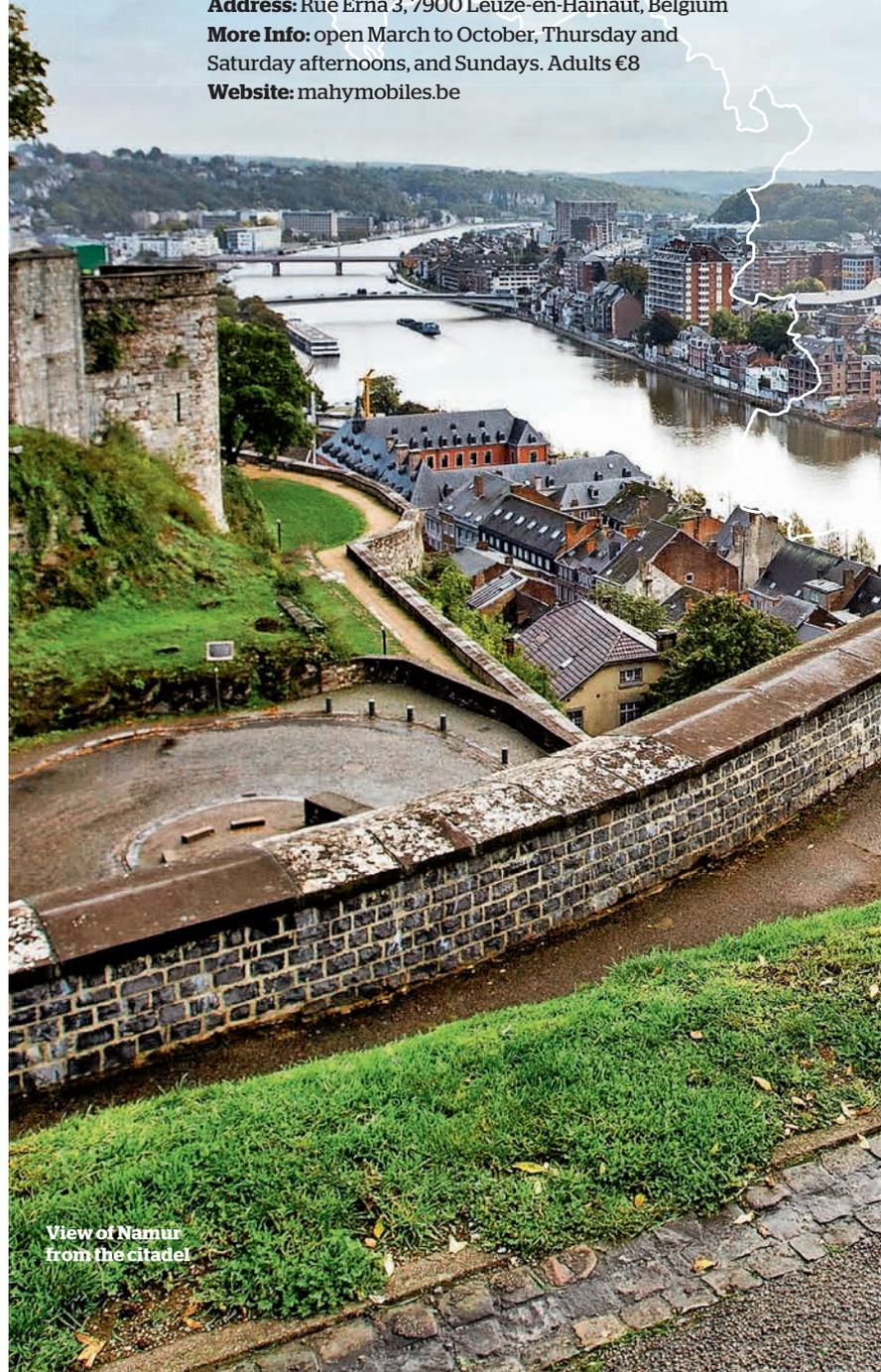
### **Mahymobiles Museum (Leuze-en-Hainaut, just east of Tournai)**

A sumptuous collection of automotive exotica situated just ten miles from central Tournai. Cars and bikes? Three hundred and sixteen of them, from a 1925 Alfa RLSS to a 1954 Zundapp Bella. Nose around for the 1906 Peugeot single-cylinder and the Gnome Rhone 750 XA with its wacky chassis.

**Address:** Rue Erna 3, 7900 Leuze-en-Hainaut, Belgium

**More Info:** open March to October, Thursday and Saturday afternoons, and Sundays. Adults €8

**Website:** mahymobiles.be



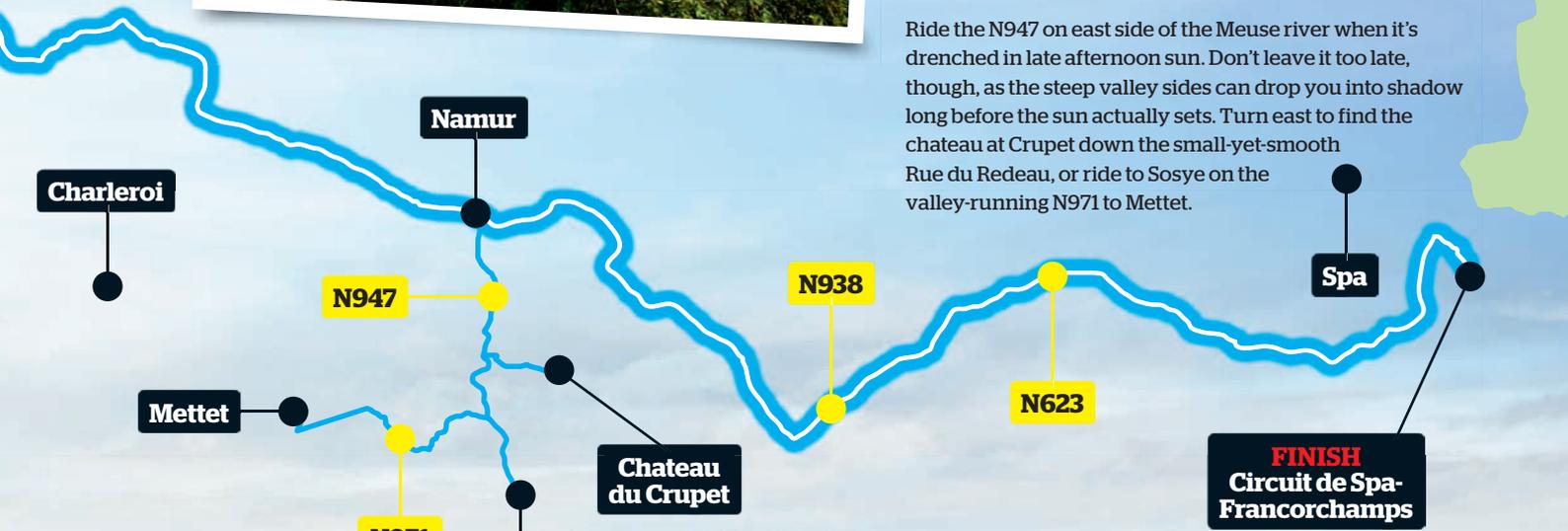
View of Namur from the citadel



Roads are quiet and the views spectacular

### Must ride Meuse Valley, Namur to Dinant (just south of Namur)

Ride the N947 on east side of the Meuse river when it's drenched in late afternoon sun. Don't leave it too late, though, as the steep valley sides can drop you into shadow long before the sun actually sets. Turn east to find the chateau at Crupet down the small-yet-smooth Rue du Redeau, or ride to Sosye on the valley-running N971 to Mettet.





# 'It's an awe-inspiring ride as the route takes a 270-degree turn around a turreted outcrop'



**Great food and wonderful beer wait at the end of every ride**

summer sunset, benches provided. Spending more time in the area? Take a scenic ride south following the undulations of the Meuse to Dinant, cross the river and ride back on the other side. It's the N947 on the east side, the N92 on the west and the return trip will take you around an hour.

Escape Namur's suburbs on the wide N90 before burrowing south on the N942 to Goyet and beyond. Here's where the towns are left behind and the adventurous riding begins. Take a mixture of minor roads through the villages of Gesves, leafy Hamois and turn left on the N938 just after Scy. Gradually the hills close in around you until, just after Jenneret, the really twisty valley riding begins. Enjoy the curves of the N623, keep an eye out for blind bends and fallen leaves, pass through Hamoir, and rejoice in the blissful N66.

Between Hamoir and Stavelot, the N66 delivers a fantastic selection of well-surfaced bends. East of the E25 the surface becomes stunningly good, begging you to lean further and guide your bike effortlessly through some really memorable chicanes. Before you know it you'll be passing the fantastic Doux Repos Hostellerie and entering

Trois-Ponts. Instead of following the signs for the Spa circuit, turn left in Stavelot when the fingerboard reads '5 Francorchams'. This allows you to approach the circuit from the north west, along the fast and smooth N62C for a final hurrah before reaching the gates of Spa.

## **Must stay** **Hotel Doux Repos (half way between Les Forges and Trois-Ponts)**

If you are looking for absolute peace and tranquility after your day's riding head for the Hotel Doux Repos off the N66. The rooms offer uninterrupted views across the sleepy valley and the evening menu is as great as the splendid wood-panelled dining room it's served in.

Of course the food is absolutely delicious and very well presented. How about potato croquettes

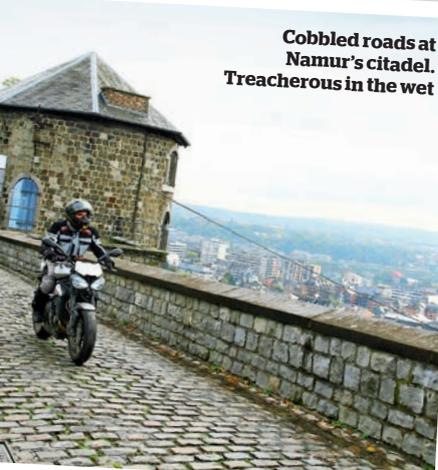
fashioned to look like pears? To accompany the excellent food how about trying the Trois Ponts beer at €4.20 a bottle. It must be one of the best blondes in the world.

**Address:** Haute Bodeux 34, 4983 Trois-Ponts, Belgium

**More Info:** open 18 February to 12 November, from €90 per night

**Website:** logishotels.com





**Cobbled roads at Namur's citadel. Treacherous in the wet**



**Belgians handily mark the beginnings of all their best roads. Look out for this sign**



**The Bikers' Classics is held at Spa in early July**

# World-class road racing

Four fantastic circuits call Wallonia their home. Each with their own character, history, and style

The Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps, or Spa for short, is one of the world's premier circuits and a fan-favourite. The home of the Belgian Grand Prix and Bikers' Classics, Spa began as a true road circuit in 1920. The triangle formed by routes 32, 23, and 440 between Spa-Francorchamps, Malmedy and Stavelot was chosen as the site for the revival of the La Meuse Cup, for cars. Unfortunately just one car entered, so the first ever event was quickly changed into a 23-bike-strong motorcycle race. The track was tarmac'd seven years later. Spa's roads stayed partly open until 2003, when it finally became a permanently closed racetrack. Visiting outside race season? Jump on a guided tour: they run between March and November, start at 2pm and cost €9.50 per person.

Unlike Spa the roads that coalesce into Gedinne's circuit are open nearly all year round. Think of it as the Belgian equivalent to Olivers Mount here in the UK. Riding west towards Gedinne on the N935, turn right towards Patignies on Rue du Circuit. Continue to turn left, and you'll find yourself back where you started. That's the triangular Gedinne circuit ridden, then.

## Plan your trip... Races

### 1 Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps

**Known for:** The Bikers' Classics, held on the turn between June and July: bikersclassics.be  
**Address:** Route du Circuit 55, 4970 Stavelot, Belgium  
**Circuit info:** spa-francorchamps.be

### 2 Circuit de Chimay

**Known for:** The Classic Bikes and the modern Open Trophy, both in July.  
**Address:** Grand prix des frontières 1, 6460 Chimay, Belgium  
**Circuit info:** circuit.be



**Mettet's Superbiker supermoto race**

Less well known in the UK are the Chimay and Mettet tracks. Tight, clean and fast, the modern Circuit Jules Tacheny at Mettet is a bespoke racetrack that has taken only some of the action away from the town centre. That's where Mettet's racing began, runs local legend, thanks to a certain Auguste Galloy who continually lapped the same three roads until his bike ran out of fuel. Slightly slower than this original circuit was Chimay's 1975 Grand Prix des Frontieres layout. Barry Sheene managed a 134.50mph average speed here in 1978, slightly faster than today's TT lap records.



### 3 Circuit du Gedinne

**Known for:** The Belgian Classic Trophy and its many hay bales. Head there in August for all the action.  
**Address:** 5575 Gedinne, Belgium  
**Circuit info:** crmb.be

### 4 Circuit Jules Tacheny, Mettet

**Known for:** supermoto race named Superbiker held in October: superbiker.com  
**Address:** Rue Saint-Donat 6, 5640 Mettet, Belgium  
**Circuit info:** circuit-mettet.be



# Explore the Ardennes

Dive deep into the river valleys of the Ardennes on a circular route that's all about riding great roads

✓ Scribbling tarmac ✓ hidden towns ✓ grand valleys

From **Chimay** to **Chimay**, distance **350km**, time **6hrs**

**START/FINISH**  
Chimay

**N99**

**Givet**

**Houyet**

**'Roads deliver twist after twist on smooth, centre-lined tarmac'**

## Must ride

### N889, N4 - Nassogne

An intense winder that cuts through dense tree cover in a series of fast curves, near 270° bends and 90° flicks. The countryside here isn't flat and you feel the elevation change all along its eight-mile stretch. Worth repeating.

**D1**

**D31**

**Vresse-sur-Semois**

## The Meuse River Vresse-sur-Semois

Break away from the town of Chimay, pass the Trappist Scourmont Abbey and head towards Cul-des-Sarts, then turn right at the unmanned border post into France. It's here that the route picks up the grand Meuse River, tracing its curving outline through wooded valleys back towards the border with Belgium. You're riding the D1, a wide

open road perfect for hazy summer afternoons or misty shoulder season mornings. It's thirsty work riding riverside roads, so stop at Monthermé for a coffee on Café Le Laval Dieu's sunlit terrace. It looks south over the Semois, visible on the right as you cross Monthermé's bridge. From here it's another 30 minutes of riding to Vresse-sur-Semois.

Wooded valleys characterise Belgian border country



## Houyet Swing Rochefort - Chimay

Leave Rochefort on the N911 to line up some of the best riding Wallonia has to offer. They're the N929's Houyet bends that dodge down steep, wooded hillside towards the small town of Houyet. The surface is thankfully much grippier than that of the similarly twisty N89 on its descent into La Roche-en-Ardenne, and there's little chance of meeting

large vehicles mid-run. They're easily accessible from the E411 motorway, too, so Houyet makes for a great coffee stop on any north-south journey. Cool your head on the straighter roads that flow to Givet and pause for a meal on the banks of the Meuse. Don't get here late or the restaurants that line the north side of the river will be in evening shade. v v



**Above: Rochefort to Chimay: some of the best riding in Wallonia**

**Right: Habay to Rochefort: Battle of the Bulge territory**



## Forest and Farmland Habay - Rochefort

Streak north on the N40 to Fauvillers and then on to Saint-Hubert, where there's the option to spend a night at the newly refurbished Hotel Le Val de Poix five miles west of the town. Prices for a double room start at £70. Explore north to find the village of Bure, the site of a tough battle between British

and German troops in the Battle of the Bulge. It took a whole three days of close fighting and 16 tank casualties to secure the village, fending off a total of four German counterattacks in the process. The only remaining evidence now is a small memorial that stands in the church gardens.

Rochefort

N889  
Nassogne

Saint-Hubert

N848

N865

Florenville

Rossignol

Habay



Gaume's jazz festival is that way

## Ardennes Straights Vresse-sur-Semois - Habay

From Vresse to Bouillon, roads deliver twist after twist on smooth, centre-lined tarmac. Viewpoints flash past as you rise and fall between valleys. Stop on the N819 just before Rochehaut and look south for a splendid view of Frahan, a village nestled in a curve of the Semois river. Punching out of the Semois valley on the N884, the route breaks from constant valley-bottom curving. Unwind on the N83 past Florenville before turning onto the N839 and N891 for a calm cruise through unassuming Wallonian farm country. Lucky enough to be passing through Rossignol in August? Search out the Gaume Jazz Festival for good music and local beer.



# Belgian battlefields



Rattle along the German border to discover Belgium's battling history, and a choice selection of Wallonia's bendiest roads...

## ✓ War relics and mesmerizing museums

From **Eben-Emael** to **Bastogne** distance **277km**, time **5hrs**

**A**H, THE IMPREGNABLE Eben-Emael fortress, built just before the Second World War to dissuade invasion from the East. Belgium's defensive forts hadn't been much use in 1914 when Germany had shelled them into submission with its long-distance cannon, the 42cm Big Bertha howitzer. And so, reasoned Belgian high command, the new fortress must be made impervious to long range bombardment. Concrete was reinforced, gun turrets were less tightly packed, and ventilation was much improved. Yet despite these improvements, 86 German paratroopers were able to land in 11 gliders on the smooth surface of the fort and destroy most of its armaments in 15 minutes. See the damage they did for yourself by visiting

**(Below) N89 is a must ride Wallonian gem, just be careful of the glassy smooth tarmac if it rains**

between March and November. For more information go to [fort-eben-emael.be](http://fort-eben-emael.be)

Ride south alongside the Meuse River and then east on the wide-open N61 to Eupen. You're now in Eupen-Malmedy, the mostly German-speaking region Hitler annexed after Belgium capitulated in 1940. Turn south and blaze across the High Fens national park on the N68. Up here, close to the border, valley-carving rivers are absolutely nowhere to be seen. Pause for a delicious meal at the Mont Rigi restaurant: a fillet of duckling with raspberry sauce will cost 19 euros. Following your lunch leave your bike in the restaurant carpark and take a short walk through fenland. It'll sharpen the senses for the descent into Malmedy.





## Must ride...

### **N89, E25 to La Roche-en-Ardenne (north-east of La Roche)**

Tunnelling through dense Ardennes tree cover, the N89 ties itself in knots towards La Roche. Once the road decides that it's on a downward trajectory, there's no stopping its relentless pursuit of the valley floor. Expect blind twists, carving turns and unreliable road surfaces. Avoid sections of glassy tarmac in the rain - they're incredibly slippery.

## Must see...

### **La Gleize's Royal King Tiger (just north of Trois Ponts)**

It was at La Gleize that Commander SS Peiper and the remnants of the attacking German force found themselves surrounded near the end of December 1944. With no escape route for the tanks the Germans ran out of fuel and abandoned them. They left behind 135 armoured vehicles, including Royal King Tiger II #213 (above), bought from an Allied soldier by a local for a bottle of cognac.





# 'A US Sherman tank is used as a park bench by teenagers'



Rove east to Bullingen and then closer to the German border to visit the Hasselpath – an area of fields and woodland still dotted with dug-outs and pillboxes from the Second World War. Fighting raged through this area multiple times, surviving emplacements being manned by both sides at points during the hostilities. The Hasselpath memorial is east off the N658 north of Krinkelt, while woodland foxholes of the 393rd Infantry can be discovered west of Germany's Route 265 just north of Miescheid. Back in Wallonia, ride the smooth and arcing N658 south west to the town of St Vith.

It's now December 1944. Germany is preparing for its last major offensive on the western front. Its plan: to smash through light allied defences, encircle four allied armies and force the allies to negotiate a peace treaty. A quiet Western Front would mean resources could be switched east to deal with the Soviets. Over a thousand tanks and 400,000+ men took part in the German offensive over snow-clad terrain. Speed of advance was key, but it soon became obvious things weren't moving fast enough. The battle for St Vith set the advance back four days. After furious bombing the only pre-war structure left standing was the Buchel Tower.

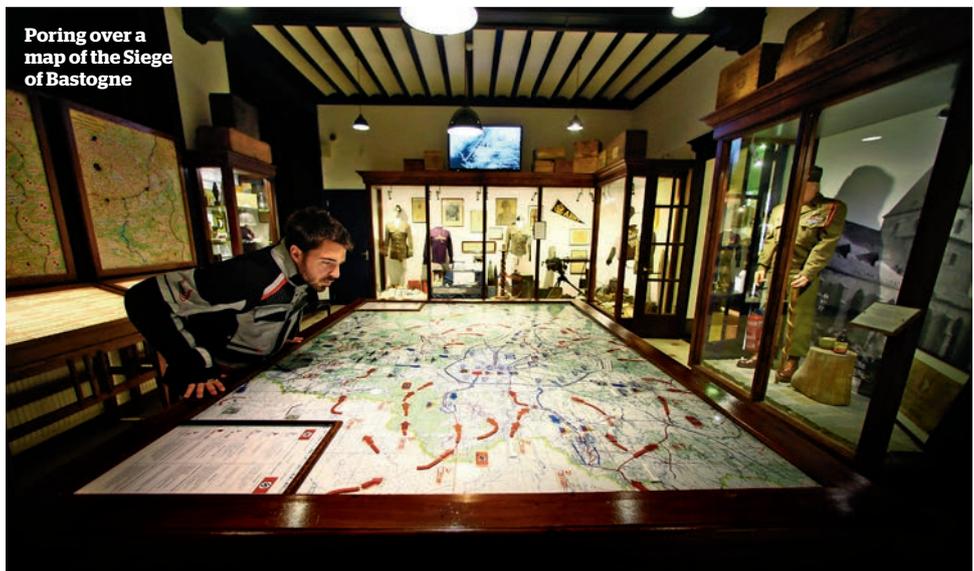
Continue to Trois Ponts on the fantastic N62 and N68 – two roads built for cruisers, with smooth tarmac and a glut of lazy curves. The route now takes to quieter roads running towards the village of La Gleize with its Royal King Tiger tank parked outside the local museum. Half an hour further west is Manhay's Panther tank, chained up at a roundabout in the middle of town. It's the same story at the charming town of La Roche-en-Ardenne – a British Achilles tank destroyer watches over a junction above the town centre, and a US Sherman is used as a park bench by teenagers next to the river. It's then just a quick blast down the meandering N834 to Bastogne, where the 101st Airborne survived a siege in the winter of 1944.

## Must eat at... Bistro Leo (in Bastogne)

Relax in Leo's classically-styled bistro instead of the pricier Wagon Leo complete with train car frontage, right next door. The bistro's at the top of the hill in central Bastogne. Order delicious €2.40 café au lait and a

€13.50 floriflette - a potato dish with bacon, onions, and local cheese. Upmarket riding fuel. **Address:** Rue du Sablon 4/8, 6600 Bastogne, Belgium **More info:** wagon-leo.com





Poring over a map of the Siege of Bastogne

## A day at the museums...

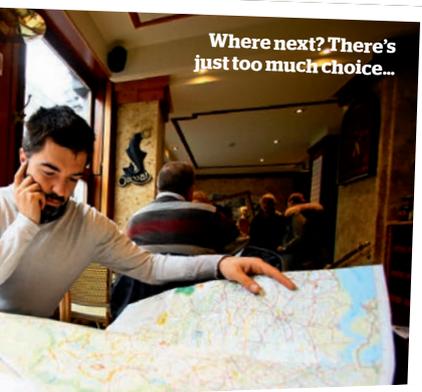
if you're interested in learning more about Wallonia's turbulent past there are fabulous museums and collections dotted throughout. And each is at the end of a great Ardennes road

It starts like any other evening in December 1944. Peace and quiet, interspersed with the chug of diesel engines, laughter and the rustle of trees in the wind. But then the sirens start, and all hell starts to break loose around you. AA guns hurl slugs skyward as the Junkers bombers drone overhead, shouts and screams fill your ears, and then the bombs start to fall. You're there, experiencing a night in a surrounded and cut-off Bastogne. At least, for the few minutes you spend in a basement room of the 101st Airborne Museum in Bastogne, you're there. A clever trick of the light and high-quality speaker set-up make it almost real.

But the Battle of the Bulge wasn't just fought by the US Army. The Museum of the Battle of the Ardennes in La Roche en Ardennes is the only such establishment to deliver a section on the British part in that conflict. Read up on how they helped liberate La Roche over at the town's

Rue Chamont. Further north, at La Gleize, the smart December 44 museum resides deferentially beside the village's Royal King Tiger. Head inside to discover artefacts from the Ardennes offensive, including a mortar that lounged in local resident Miss Maria George's orchard for 40 years.

Museum hopping also takes Wallonia's automotive history into account. Far west is the Mahymobiles Collection, a privately-owned assemblage of classic cars and motorcycles. More information about that on page 8. But real racing history can be glimpsed at the Spa-Francorchamps Racetrack Museum just three miles south of the circuit. It's housed in the grand surroundings of Stavelot Abbey and boasts a discerning selection of motorcycles, Formula 1, Formula 3, and GT cars.



Where next? There's just too much choice...



### Plan your trip... museums

#### 1 101st Airborne Museum

**Look for:** the underground bunker with blitz sound and light show - humbling.  
**Address:** Avenue de la Gare 11, 6600 Bastogne, Belgium.  
**Opening times:** Wednesday to Sunday 10am-5pm year round, €8 adult.  
**More info:** 101airbornemuseumbastogne.com

#### 2 The Museum of the Battle of the Ardennes

**Look for:** the Enigma decoding machine kept snug in the museum's Gun Room.  
**Address:** Rue Chamont 5, 6980 La Roche-en-Ardenne, Belgium.  
**Opening times:** Tuesday to Sunday 10am-6pm April to December, €8 adult.  
**More info:** batarden.be

#### 3 December 44 Museum

**Look for:** the battle scars on the Royal King Tiger II's glacis plate, just outside the museum. It brings it all to life.  
**Address:** Rue de l'Eglise, 4987 Stoumont, Belgium.  
**Opening times:** Tuesday to Sunday 10am-6pm, except January, €7.50 adult  
**More info:** december44.com

#### 4 Spa-Francorchamps Racetrack Museum

**Look for:** the collection of eleven bikes kept in the Abbey's vaulted cellar.  
**Address:** Cour de l'Abbaye, 4970 Stavelot, Belgium.  
**Opening times:** Daily 10am-6pm, closed for Christmas and Easter.  
**More info:** musee-circuit.be



# Roads and road races

Ride roads that make up two of Wallonia's racetracks: first Mettet and then Gedinne

## ✓ Mettet, Gedinne and the Semois Valley

From **Charleroi** to **Arlon**, distance **247km**, time **4.5hrs**



### Must ride N977, Mettet to Rosee (just south of Mettet)

This road marches over classic rolling hills, between fields thick with crops in summer, distance meted out by regularly-placed telegraph poles. Much better to ride than to look at on a map, the surface is smooth, the speed high, and the view superb. A route short enough to warrant repeating in both directions.



### Must see Le Mont de Zatroou Lookout

Elevation change is rife in the thick of the Ardennes, thanks to the Semois cutting a path deep into the Walloon forests. But roads seldom give riders the opportunity to view the splendid landscape they're riding. A break in the trees on Le Mont de Zatroou road, just west of Auby-sur-Semois, provides a perfect picture opportunity.

**Where is it?** Mont de Zatroou, 6830 Bouillon



**‘The countryside erupts with the sound of classic motorcycle engines’**



**Staple diet for the financially strapped**

PICTURE: JOHN STANLEY

**B**OTH METTET AND Gedinne offer the Walloon equivalent of Irish road racing thanks to closed public roads and high-speed motorcycle racing. Start by negotiating the outer limits of Charleroi and pick up the N573 to Mettet...

Track layouts have evolved, retired and been created in the near-hundred years since racing first began here. The longest-serving layout looks like a bow tie when seen from above, with the Estroy roundabout forming the knot. Orient yourself using the Total fuel station: it sits between the outward and returning westward roads – the N98 and N932. Riding the route it is easy to imagine the incredible speeds racers would have been hitting during races. In fact, in order to slow affairs down a tad, a chicane was introduced on the N932 in 1977. Stop off for a coffee at the nearby bar – look for the Hall Sportif sign just opposite the Jules Tacheny car park.

Refuelled, head south on the fast N977 to Rosee, before burrowing down to meet the Meuse river on the N915. Follow the river to the east, keeping an eye out for the stately gardens of Freyr sur Meuse that cascade towards the river. Enter Dinant, a town subjected to heavy bombing in the First World War. It was also the home of Adolphe Sax, inventor of the saxophone who lived in a street that now bears his name. Cross the bridge below the fortress and return south on the other side of the river. There's a great slab of rock that splits the road in two here – it's the Rocher Bayard, said to have been split from the cliff face by a giant horse on its flight from Emperor Charlemagne. Turn east just after the rock towards the terrific bends of Houyet on the N94.

Cut southwards from Houyet, crossing both the N911 and N40 in search of the Gedinne circuit. Like Mettet, Gedinne's racing takes place on public roads – this time in a triangle between Gribelle, Patignies and Gedinne. Come race time the sleepy Walloon countryside erupts with the sound of classic motorcycle engines bothering the redline. Hay bales are all that line the roads to stop sliding bikes from crashing into the surrounding fields. The events here are spectacular.

Pass through Gedinne, out towards Houdremont and on to Vresse-sur-Semois, making sure to take on the switchbacks of the N914 just south of Petit-Fays. Road surfaces in and around the Semois valley are sometimes questionable, so proceed with care along the N819 and N865 to Florenville. Further south still lies the Trappist abbey of Orval, home of the Orval brewery, guest house and cheese factory. Wriggle along the French border on the N88, head into the sunset on the lazy N870, and arrive at Arlon in time for a delicious 19 euro evening meal of rabbit fillet in champagne sauce at La Table de Marie on Rue des Remparts.

In association with



**Thread your way through Wallonia, past grand citadels and cosy villages, along Battle of the Bulge attack lines, to the world-famous race track at Spa-Francorchamps**

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