VERDUN, MEUSE

An appointment with history

Press Pack 2018
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A short history lesson

At a time when Europe dominated the world, two defensive alliances - the Triple Entente (France, United Kingdom, Russia and their colonial empires and the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy and their colonial empires) – formed to avoid a war between the great powers. But the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, changed the course of events. The alliances came into play and a regional conflict in the Balkans between Austria-Hungary and Russia turned first of all into a European conflict and then a world war.

1914-1918. For 4 years, the world was at war. The result was apocalyptic: 9.5 million dead or missing, including 1.4 million French victims, 2 million Germans and 1.8 million Russians.

73.8 million men were mobilised all over the world (French, Germans, British, Russians, Italians, Serbs, Romanians, Belgians, Greeks, Portuguese, Montenegrins, Austro-Hungarians, Americans, Australians, Canadians, Japanese...).

From August 1914 to November 1918, blood flowed on the soil of Lorraine, as hundreds of thousands died. From the Vosges massif, the only part of the front in France to see mountain fighting, to Verdun, site of the longest battle in the war, taking in Metz, which was annexed, and Nancy, which remained French, Lorraine was at the heart of the conflict. And today it still bears witness to its history. Meuse, through which the front line ran from the Argonne to the Saint-Mihiel Salient, is an exceptional living conservatory of the First World War: remains, testimonials to the fighting, places to aid the understanding of History, memorial sites and places for quiet contemplation. These battlefield sites, all close to each other, offer a chance to immerse yourself in history.
Verdun 1916, 300 days, 300 nights of fighting... The symbolic battle of the First World War

More than any other city, Verdun became symbolic of the Great War due to the intensity and duration of the fighting there, which led to 700,000 casualties, many European, but also African and American.

After the annexation of Lorraine after the 1870 war, Verdun, a former garrison town in the 19th century, became a strategic location just 50 km away from the new border between France and Germany. Many fortifications were built between 1874 and 1914, as if in preparation for a future conflict foretold.

In February 1916, while the first great battles of the war were raging on other fronts, the German Commander-in-Chief Falkenhayn decided to launch an offensive to subjugate the French. And Verdun found itself in the midst of a battle that would last 300 days. Less heavily armed and with fewer men (fewer than 650 guns and mortars compared with 1,400 longer range guns on the other side), the two French divisions that found themselves facing the German 5th army had only one duty: to resist.

On 21 February at 7 am, on the North front the Germans began pounding the enemy lines with shells of all calibres. In spite of the French defences, they advanced and in a few days gained between 6 and 8 km of terrain. On 24 February, the French defence was crushed. On the 25th, the Germans took Fort Douaumont.

For 300 days, troops from all over France poured into Verdun (70% of the 8 million French soldiers mobilised passed through Verdun) and it became the focal point of the world.

Ten months which saw the longest battle of the First World War, which left behind it a desolate landscape, destroyed and disfigured by the shelling, and a veritable sanctuary where hundreds of thousands of soldiers fell.

Today, people of all generations come here to remember and to try to understand the First World War and the terrible chain of events that pushed humanity into this tragedy.

With the richest "Great War" heritage in the world, Verdun, and more widely Lorraine, represents a historical asset and an authentic place of remembrance: sites that bear the scars of War, displays on the day-to-day lives of soldiers and civilians during the Great War, educational museums that explain what led to the conflict and the sequence of events from the first battles to the armistice. As well as the traditional visits, educational and entertaining animations suitable for all the family have been developed, and there are plenty of opportunities for outings that combine sport and culture among the places of remembrance. There are new tours and itineraries and interactive tools to see the places where our history unfolded in a new light and which bear witness to Franco-German reconciliation and the construction of modern Europe.
Details of over 40 Great War sites in Meuse on the free app "AUTOUR DE VERDUN"
**21 February - 18 December - Battle of Verdun 1916**

- **21 February**: First German offensive launched on the right bank to take Verdun. Fighting in the Bois des Caures, where Colonel Driant fell.
- **25 February**: Fort Douaumont taken by the Germans. Philippe Pétain took command of operations at Verdun, setting up his headquarters in Souilly town hall. Setting up of the Voie Sacrée (Sacred Way).
- **6 March**: First German offensive on the left bank of the Meuse.
- **7 June**: Fort Vaux taken by the Germans.
- **11 July**: Last German push towards Verdun: fighting at Fleury-devant-Douaumont, which changed hands 16 times in 10 months. Fort Souville held out. Deprived of troops by the Battle of the Somme, General Staff gave up on its offensive strategy.
- **13 September**: The city of Verdun awarded the Legion of Honour.
- **3 November**: Fort Vaux taken back by the French.
- **18 December**: End of the Battle of Verdun (right bank).
**Historical timeline**

### 1917
- **6 April** United States’ entry into the War
- **August** The French took back the left bank of the Verdun battlefield (Mort-Homme, Cote 304)

### 1918
- **12-15 September** Franco-American offensive and victory at the Saint-Mihiel Salient
- **26 September** Beginning of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive by the US First Army
- **11 November** Signing of the Armistice by the Germans at Rhetondes

### 1919
- **28 June** Signing of the Treaty of Versailles

### 1920
- **10 November** Choice of the Unknown Soldier at Verdun
A multi-faceted programme of events

The key themes of the Centenary of the Great War in 2018 in Meuse will be the Americans in WWI and the armistice. To foster the transmission of values and the understanding of history, what we have to do is inform as many people as possible, and reach out to the younger generation.

Exhibition ”LA BEAUTE SAUVERA LE MONDE”
Beauty will save the world at Verdun, Meuse Lorraine
From December 2017 to August 2018

This monumental photography exhibition delivers a strong message of humanity and optimism through the presentation of huge pictures of wonders of today's world. The moving views lead the visitors from the Verdun Memorial Museum located on the WWI battlefield to the town center of Verdun like a symbolic itinerary to celebrate the end of the First World War, 100 years after. A cultural event based on the work of Thierry Suzan, famous reporter for GEO magazine, recognized for its high quality and in-depth investigated reports on the great aims on Planet Earth.

More information : www.meusetourism.com
www.tourisme-verdun.com

22-23 septembre 2018

Participative ceremony at the Meuse-Argonne cemetery, in Meuse Lorraine. As night falls, over 14,000 candles will be lit at the Meuse-Argonne cemetery at Romagne-sous-Montfaucon, in remembrance of all American soldiers. Volunteers take up positions at various crosses, each next to a specific grave, whose history they will share with any visitors who stop to look. Youngsters of all ages are encouraged to learn about the stories behind each of these 14,246 marble crosses. This event will honour the promise made by General Pershing: “Time will not dim the glory of their deeds”.

More information : Nécropole de Romagne-sous-Montfaucon
+33 (0)3 29 85 14 18 - meuse-argonne@abmc.gov

11 November 2018

Festivities and official ceremony to celebrate the centennial of the Armistice at Verdun, Bar-le-Duc and along the Sacred Way.

Other exhibitions not to be missed :
- From Spring 2018
  "Saint-Mihiel 1914-1918, from the occupation to liberation“ honouring the memory of the Americans, at the Benedictine abbaye in Saint-Mihiel
- Until December 2018 - at the Centre Mondial de la Paix, Verdun (Meuse)
  “What remains of the Great War?”

Information : www.tourisme-meuse.com
The essential Verdun battlefield sites

A visit to the Verdun Battlefield is an essential step in understanding the intensity of the fighting, the life of the soldiers and the artillery duel that marked the Great War.

The Verdun Memorial gains an extra floor

In the heart of the Battlefield, the Verdun Memorial, which first opened in 1967 under the patronage of French Academician and war veteran Maurice Genevoix, is one of the most important Great War museums in Europe. It is also one of the only museums built on the actual site of a battle.

After 2 years of renovation and extension work, and a reopening symbolically scheduled in February 2016, the Verdun Memorial offers a high-quality museum experience. An extra floor offers a unique panoramic view that helps visitors to understand how the earth was shattered and the landscape transformed and then rebuilt thanks to the remarkable management by the national forestry commission, the ONF, of this Forêt d’Exception®, a conservatory of authentic Great War remains

The scenography

Spread over three levels, a collection of 2,000 objects, a multitude of photographs, many previously unseen, French and German personal accounts, and exceptional audiovisual exhibits provide insights into the experience of soldiers from all horizons who came here to fight.

As soon as they enter, visitors are invited to situate the Battle of Verdun in time and History, and then to follow in the footsteps of a soldier on his way to the front. The ground floor is dedicated to the experience of the French and German frontline soldiers. Faithful to the founding idea of the Memorial to preserve an area of the shattered earth in memory of all the soldiers of the Great War, the new displays are centred on a 100 m² audiovisual exhibit that evokes the dramatic experience of the combatants on a devastated battlefield. A crypt takes the visitor into the fragile personal space of a soldier under heavy gunfire.

On the first floor, visitors enter the geopolitical context of the battle. This second level introduces the visitor to the aviators, gunners and military staff involved in the battle, as well as life immediately behind the lines, where the medics worked tirelessly.

On the top floor, entirely created for 2016, the Memorial’s walls open up onto the surrounding countryside and the visitor can visualise the changes to the landscape thanks to interactive kiosks.

There is a temporary exhibition space, a documentation centre (whose collection can be consulted on www.documentation.memorial-verdun.fr), a lounge area and a teaching room.

Allow at least 1 hr 30 for your visit.

Information : Mémorial de Verdun
T. : +33 (0)3 29 88 19 16 - www.memorial-verdun.fr

VERDUN, MEUSE

Renovated in 2016

Press contacts :
CDT Meuse - Christel RIGOLOT
T. +33 (0)3 29 45 78 40 - c.rigolot@cdt-meuse.fr
Lorraine Tourism - Carine DELANNE-BUCH
T. +33 (0)3 83 80 01 89 - carine.buch@tourisme-lorraine.fr
The construction of the Douaumont Ossuary began in 1920 on the initiative of Mgr Ginisty, Bishop of Verdun, who wanted to give a decent burial to the men who fell at the Battle of Verdun. The monument consists of a 137-metre long cloister housing the tombs containing the remains of 130,000 unidentified French and German soldiers and the flame of remembrance, which burns on ceremonial occasions, a chapel and a 46-metre high tower, called the Lantern of the Dead, which offers a panoramic view of the entire battlefield. Half way up the tower there is a war museum containing military equipment and uniforms and objects that belonged to French and German soldiers.

Information: Ossuaire de Douaumont
+33 (0)3 29 84 54 81 / www.verdun-douaumont.com

A film, "Verdun, Men of Mud", is also projected in the Ossuary.
In front of the Ossuary lies the National Necropolis, an immense cemetery where 16,000 French soldiers rest. To the west of the cemetery, there is a monument honouring the memory of the Jewish soldiers who fell, with the pages of a bible with an inscription in Hebrew. To the east there is a monument honouring the memory of the Muslim dead.

Information: Ossuaire de Douaumont
+33 (0)3 29 84 54 81 / www.verdun-douaumont.com

Fort Douaumont, a major military prize in the Battle of Verdun

Fort Douaumont was the largest and strongest fort in the Verdun fortifications. But at the beginning of the First World War, the French general staff no longer believed in the usefulness of fixed fortifications, as they had become convinced that only an offensive would secure victory. The destruction of the Franco-Belgian forts in Meuse seemed to confirm this idea. On 5 August 1915 a decree was signed authorising the withdrawal of the garrisons, the weapons and munitions and the supplies from the forts, therefore leaving the fort vulnerable.

Considered as the centrepiece of the belt of fortifications protecting the city of Verdun, it was taken by surprise on 25 February 1916, four days after the beginning of the Battle of Verdun, and would be occupied by the German army for eight months. It would provide shelter for its troops and an essential foothold that would enable it to continue its offensive. In spite of several attempts to recapture the fort, it was only on 24 October 1916 that it was taken back by the French army. To better understand the strategic role played by this fort and its emotional impact, in particular for the Germans, a multimedia guide is available for individual visitors: a touch screen device with numerous films and photographs taken at the time, documents from the archives, commentaries and personal stories. A new way of discovering what there is to see on the site: a barrack room, the 155 mm gun turret or the cemetery with the tombs of 600 German soldiers.

Information: Fort de Douaumont
T. +33 (0)3 29 84 41 91 - www.tourisme-meuse.com

Fort Vaux, a symbol of courage and heroism

After taking Fort Douaumont, the German army made Fort Vaux one of its main objectives and concentrated its infantry troops on the right bank of the Meuse. At the beginning of March 1916, the Germans, who had managed to get within a few hundred yards of the fort, began a hundred-day siege. Inside the fort, under a deluge of artillery fire, the resistance was organised in spite of shortages of provisions and water.

On 1 June the Germans reached the fort. From 2 to 7 June 1916, thanks to the heroism of Major Raynal and his garrison, the fort held off the German 50th division, but after some very hard fighting, the defenders, exhausted, were forced to surrender. However, the Germans failed to take Verdun and in the autumn, they abandoned Fort Vaux. Today guided tours lasting 45 minutes and a multimedia guide take you back in time to discover this place, a symbol of French heroism, and the epic story of its commander, Major Raynal and his last carrier pigeon.

Information: Fort de Vaux
T. +33 (0)3 29 88 32 88 - www.verdun-meuse.fr
In the heart of Verdun city centre, overlooking the River Meuse, in 2016 the old Officers’ mess becomes the "Les Jardins du Mess". This new name is intended to emphasise the natural setting and the diversity of the potential for stays in Verdun. Situated in an elegant 19th century brick and stone building with a mansard roof, the hotel and restaurant are decorated in a contemporary style. The 4 floors are entirely dedicated to the guests’ well-being: lobby, hotel, restaurant, bar, spa, wooded grounds are all conducive to a relaxing stay. Before retiring to one of the rooms, guests can linger in the relaxation area with its sauna and Jacuzzi overlooking the hotel grounds. Treatments and massages are also available.

In the ground floor restaurant, which can seat up to a hundred guests, the chef will awaken your taste buds with his "bistronomic" cuisine, offering dishes made from quality fresh organic produce. The restaurant and bar also have terraces overlooking the grounds. On the first floor a fully equipped, modular reception room can host up to 150 people for banquets or seminars. The hotel has 40 rooms, from 19 to 71 sq.m for private guests: 7 suites at €290, 9 superior rooms at €210, 11 mid-range rooms at €170 and 13 "comfort" rooms at €135. 24 rooms are available for groups.

Information : Les Jardins du Mess
T. +33 (0)3 29 80 14 18 - www.lesjardinsdumess.fr

Hôtel de Montaulbain

In a quiet street at the heart of the town of Verdun, a charming historic house hosts the 10 newly renovated comfortable rooms of the 3 stars hotel De Montaulbain. Special offer: a Champagne bottle will be offered by the hotel on reservation of a 3 nights stay with the code : Montaulbain55.

Information : http://hoteldemontaulbain.fr
Meuse is full of sites that transport you, that grab you and give you the impression that you are walking in the footsteps of those that "made" Verdun, quite simply with no fuss and no need for commentaries...

Meuse also offers sites that use scenography and digital tools to help the visitor to identify with and understand what life was like for the men here 100 years ago. An ideal, educational approach to complement a visit to the Verdun battlefield.

IN VERDUN

The underground citadel: logistics centre, general staff, choice of the Unknown Soldier

Logistics centre during the war, the underground citadel at Verdun could accommodate 2,000 men and featured a bakery, a telegraph centre, kitchens, dormitories, sick bays, six powder stores... Originally built in the 17th century, with further galleries dug out between 1886 and 1893, this site served as a rear base for the soldiers during the Battle of Verdun. It was also here that the Unknown Soldier was chosen in 1920. The visit takes place aboard a small train with an audioguide. The audiovisual animations and exhibits provide an insight into the daily life of the soldiers in this underground city, an idea of the military organisation and a picture of the diverse origins and stories of the soldiers, volunteers or conscripts, involved in this war.

Information: Citadelle Souterraine
T. +33 (0)3 29 84 84 42 - www.citadelle-souterraine-verdun.fr
Be an actor for an evening : join the “Des Flammes à la lumière” show

In 2016 for the 20th anniversary of Europe’s largest sound and light show on the Great War, the organisers, the Connaissance de la Meuse association, have significantly changed the show, with new scenes evoking the daily life of the soldiers, life behind the front line, Verdun under the flames.

Acted out by 250 French and German volunteers, this show appeals to a wide audience, of all geographical origins and generations, who are touched by the message of peace and hope it puts across.

Spectators who wish to take part in the show themselves are invited to come and visit the installations and the set on the Friday evening, then to watch the performance immediately afterwards. On the Saturday, kitted out with an “actor” badge and a role card, they will be able to slip on a costume and, guided by one of the volunteer actors, step on stage to take part in this historical piece. Souvenir photo at the end of the show!

Dates : every Friday and Saturday evening from 22 June to 28 July 2018

Also note: Connaissance de la Meuse has created an app “Champs de Bataille Verdun” (available on Apple Store and Google) which offers users an immersion into the fighting of the Great War with videos reconstituting events, numerous images from the time and historical commentaries, to enable them to visit the 1914-18 sites in Meuse at their own pace.

Information : Connaissance de la Meuse
T. +33 (0)3 29 84 50 00 - cdm@cdm55.fr - www.spectacle-verdun.com/

Prestige weekend with ”Des Flammes... à la lumière”

2 days/1 night including overnight stay at the 4-star Hostellerie du Château des Monthairons, including breakfast, dinner and a VIP welcome at the ”Des Flammes... à la lumière” show (behind-the-scenes backstage visit, seat in the official box, free booklet on the 14/18 war or programme, drinks after the show, car parking close by...).

Price : €209 per person. Valid from 22 June to 28 July 2018.

Information : T. +33 (0)3 29 84 50 00
www.spectacle-verdun.com

Visitor and actor
Remains of the trenches at the Saint-Mihiel Salient

Situated 35 km south-west of Verdun, the Saint-Mihiel Salient was taken early in the war by the Germans, in 1914, to cut off the route between Nancy and Verdun and hinder French supply lines.

In spite of fierce fighting throughout the war, it was only taken back in 1918 with the support of the Americans. Today numerous remains of the trenches can still be seen, in an exceptional state of conservation; here you can appreciate the famous face-to-face aspect of the war, as it has remained in our collective memory.

The trenches, often lined with concrete on the German side, can be seen from above, from special platforms.

Saint-Mihiel Salient 14-18 war sites:
- Apremont-la-Forêt, the Bavarians’ and Roffignac trenches with their firing steps and gun ports;
- Bois Brûlé, famous for the command given by an NCO named Péricard “Debout les morts” (Dead men, arise!) (8 April 1915), and location of the Gobessart German hospital.
- the Croix des Redoutes, a cross erected in 1925 in memory of the French troops who fought here.

These different sites can be visited at your leisure. Guided tours are organised by the Cœur de Lorraine tourist office, which also offers an educational activity for schoolchildren, “Du Piou Piou au Poilu” so that they can discover history in an interactive way in the Saint-Mihiel Salient trenches.

Information : www.coeurdelorraine-tourisme.fr

The Butte de Vauquois: bearing witness to mine warfare

After the stabilisation of the front line, faced with the impossibility of advancing on the ground, the French and German armies resorted to mines. This was the case at Les Eparges, a site well known thanks to Maurice Genevoix’s book “Ceux de 14” (The Men of 1914), and in the Argonne area between the Marne and Verdun.

The village of Vauquois was annihilated in February 1915 during bitter fighting that literally cut the hill (the “Butte”) in two, completely changing the landscape. Today, access to the Butte de Vauquois overlooking the impressive craters made by the explosives and the restored French and German trenches is free. Guided tours of the underground living quarters are available with advanced booking and a small donation to support the association. However, the number of visitors is limited for safety reasons and to preserve the site.

Information : L’Association des Amis de Vauquois et de sa Région
T. +33 (0)3 29 80 73 15
Further afield ...

The "Voie Sacrée", Verdun’s lifeline

The only route linking the rear lines with the battlefields, the Voie Sacrée (Sacred Way), so named by writer Maurice Barrès in reference to the Roman “Via Sacra” the route of the Roman Triumph, leads from Bar-le-Duc to Verdun. During the 10 months of the Battle of Verdun, day and night it carried almost 2,400,000 men and thousands of tonnes of munitions and supplies. Commemorative milestones topped with a French soldier’s helmet and decorated with a martyr’s palm mark each kilometre of the road.

The Musée de la Voie Sacrée in Souilly, housed in the town hall that served as the headquarters of the French Second Army and then of the American First Army, tells the story of this legendary road.

Contact : T. +33 (0)6 75 82 81 29 - www.voie-sacree.com

The Ravin du Génie

The Ravin du Génie is situated about fifteen kilometres from Verdun alongside the Route de la Haute-Chevauchée, in the northern part of the Lachalade forest. This site was occupied by the 1st engineers’ regiment, which played a key role in mine warfare in Argonne. It was used to store engineering materials and equipment (caves ideal for storing ammunition, gunpowder and explosives, cement, etc.) and as living quarters for the men (kitchen, dormitories, etc.). It was blown up by the Americans in 1918 to prevent the Germans trying to occupy it, and after that it remained untouched for almost a century. The Ravin du Génie was unique in the way it collected, filtered and stored water to distribute to the combat zones. The site has recently been restored and an open air museum opened in June 2015.

Information : www.tourisme-argonne-1418.fr
Open all year round.

Museum of the soldier’s daily life during the Great war

Guns, bayonets, munitions are on show here, along with mess tins, shoes, wooden pipes … the “Romagne 14-18” museum is the fruit of the work of one man, Jean-Paul de Vries. For over 30 years, this passionate collector has been picking up all the objects abandoned around the village of Romagne by French, American and German soldiers during the Great War. A painstaking task that today enables visitors to imagine what life was like for the soldiers. Here you can touch the objects, be surprised by the weight of the guns, read newspapers from the period and even soldiers’ letters...

To complement the visit to the museum, Jean-Paul de Vries organises walks around the battlefields around Romagne-sous-Montfaucon.

Contact : T. +33 (0)3 29 85 10 14 - www.romagne14-18.com
Centenary Escapade on a low budget

A simple and welcoming address close to the 1914-18 sites in the heart of the Argonne forest.

Amongst the remarkable vestiges of the Great War: the Butte de Vauquois, the Montfaucon American Monument, the Romagne-sous-Montfaucon American cemetery, the Romagne 1914-18 Museum: an astonishing site where you are allowed to touch the exhibits.

2 days / 1 night starting from €55 per person, for:
- 1 night in a double room
- breakfast and dinner for two, including: aperitif – starter – main course – cheese – dessert.

Information: www.tourisme-meuse.com

The Séré de Rivières forts

After the 1870 war, the French general staff charged General Séré de Rivières with reinforcing the defences along the new French-German border. He had a fortified system built that ran from Belfort to Epinal and from Toul to Verdun.

It is possible to visit some of the forts, such as Villey-le-Sec, where a narrow gauge train, as at the time, takes you round the site and offers stunning views of the Woëvre plain. Another example: the Fort d’Uxegney (near Epinal), the only fortification that has remained intact. See also: the fortifications at Troyon, which victoriously resisted German bombing in September 1914, saving Verdun from encirclement; the fort at Jouy-sous-les-Côtes, which served as a rear base for the Americans; the Fort de Liouville (Hauts de Meuse), which halted the invasion of Apremont and Marbotte during the First World War; near Toul, the Fort du Vieux Canton, and in the western Vosges, the Fort de Bourlémont, a major component in the defence system along the Eastern border.

Information: www.tourisme-lorraine.fr/memoire

”Histoires 14-18” app

Between 1914 and 1918, the First World War was mainly played out on the Western Front.

A 700-kilometre long front line running from the North Sea to Switzerland, along which the largest battles of the Great War were fought: Marne, Artois, Champagne, Verdun, the Somme, the Chemin des Dames...

A century later, reporter Augustin Berger, commissioned to write a book about the four years of the war, set out to find the last people still able to tell their story. One question haunted him: what were those millions of soldiers who were sent into battle thinking? How did those who survived cope? This is the story of a world war that was mainly played out on the Western front in Europe.

App available from Apple Store and Google Play.
The role of the Americans in the Great War

The United States officially entered the First World War on 6 April 1917, when President Wilson declared war on Germany. It was the first time the United States would be fighting outside its own territory with a real army.

This official entry into the war came at a time when the French and British were in great difficulties. The Allies would launch the offensives at Saint-Mihiel (July-September 1918) and Meuse-Argonne (October-November 1918), before crossing the Rhine. When the Armistice was signed, there were 1,894,000 American soldiers on French soil. As well as taking part in the fighting, the Americans would also be involved in rebuilding several towns in Meuse. Wealthy private donors and various institutions would fund the construction of town halls, schools, hospices, memorials, etc., such as the Tranchée des Baionnettes (Bayonet Trench) and the village of Hattonchâtel.

From East to West, the American memorials

These attacks explain why today Meuse has the greatest number of American memorials (the two largest cemeteries, over 50 monuments and steles).

The tribute to the soldiers in Argonne

D
ominating the Argonne plain, the Montfaucon tower, erected and maintained by the American Battle Monuments Commission, is surmounted by a statue symbolising liberty. Standing 60 m high, it commemorates the American army’s victory in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive and the retaking of Montfaucon hill on 26 and 27 September 1918. A staircase leads to an observation platform at the top of the column with magnificent views over the ground won in this offensive, at the time the greatest battle in American history. A stone’s throw away lies the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, the largest American cemetery in Europe with 14,246 crosses.

American Battle Monuments Commission : www.abmc.gov
Montsec American Monument

In the East of the Department, the Saint-Mihiel Salient was the theatre of fighting throughout the First World War. Today several monuments still bear witness to these events, including the Montsec American Memorial built by the United States in 1932 on the Butte de Montsec hill. Built of Euville stone, it consists of a circular colonnade in the manner of a Greek temple, with a bronze relief map at its centre showing the American units that fought at the Saint-Mihiel Salient. It offers a magnificent panoramic view of the Lac de Madine and the Meuse hills.

American Battle Monuments Commission: www.abmc.gov

14-18 Centenary Escapade (Varennes-en-Argonne)

Special Centenary stay including 3 days of visits.
4 days/3 nights for one person, including: 4 nights in the Au fil de l’Aire guest house (in Varennes-en-Argonne) with breakfast, packed lunch, “table d’hôtes” evening meal, a guide for the visits, admission charges (where applicable), tasting of regional produce.
Details of the visits:
Day 1: the Haute Chevauchée, the Kronprinz shelters, the Ravin du Génie
Day 2: the Butte de Vauquois (visit of the underground galleries on the 1st Sunday of each month), Varennes museum.
Day 3: Montfaucon American Cemetery, Romagne-sous-Montfaucon museum, the Montfaucon Tower, tasting of regional produce.
Price: from €289 per person. This package can be adapted.

Information: www.tourisme-meuse.com
Office de Tourisme du Pays d’Argonne: T. +33(0)3 29 88 42 22 - www.tourisme-argonne-1418.fr

Press contacts:
CDT Meuse - Christel RIGOLOT
T. +33 (0)3 29 45 78 40 - c.rigolot@cdt-meuse.fr
Lorraine Tourism - Carine DELANNE-BUCH
T. +33 (0)3 83 80 01 89 - carine.buch@tourisme-lorraine.fr
The Great War explained to kids

One of the main aims of the Great War Centenary commemorations is to encourage intergenerational transmission. The idea is to provide the younger generation with the keys to understanding the Great War and to encourage them to reflect on the lessons of History. To deal with this sensitive subject, numerous entertaining educational activities have been devised by the local tourist authorities in order to provide families with tailored responses to their desire to find out more about history and remember the past. These activities provide opportunities to create some instructive and entertaining exchanges between children, parents and grandparents.

The Quest for the Bayonet with friendly frog Vadrouille la Grenouille

Vadrouille la Grenouille is a game designed for children aged 6-12 which aims to deal with the Battle of Verdun in an original and recreational way. Vadrouille la Grenouille is worried, he has lost his bayonet on the Verdun battlefield. You must help him to find his weapon. In 6 stages, starting from the Tranchée des Baïonnettes (Bayonet Trench) and passing through the Douaumont Ossuary, the destroyed village of Fleury-devant-Douaumont and Forts Douaumont and Vaux, children will have fun solving a series of puzzles. In booklet form the game is available free from Verdun Tourist Office or the Battlefield sites, or it can be downloaded from the website: www.vadrouillelagrenouille.eu

Follow the guides!

Gaspard the Rat at Fort Douaumont

In the form of a game booklet the "Gaspard le Rat au Fort de Douaumont" guide is designed to help families approach the history of the fort and the reality of war, in a style suitable for children. The little rat in his "Poilu" (French soldier's) uniform, lives in the Fort and has witnessed the terrible fighting at the Battle of Verdun. He tells his story to the children and invites them to follow him. He will show them some of the most emblematic parts of the Fort: the main gun turret, the communications trench, the German cemetery.

Gaston the Pigeon at Fort Vaux

Another game booklet, the "Gaston au Fort de Vaux" guide. If they follow the indications given by Gaston, a pigeon in a "Poilu" uniform who knows the site inside out, youngsters will be able to see the dovecote, the command post, the communications station, the Bourges bunker with its two 745 mm guns. During the visit, they will discover the important role played by animals during the Great War.

Information: www.vacances-famille-meuse.fr
The Pass Lorraine: the passport to all the remembrance sites

Ideal for families! The Pass Lorraine, free and available to all, allows you to visit all the region’s most prestigious tourist sites, whilst benefiting from numerous advantages. Enjoy free drinks, special offers, gifts and other deals thanks to this passport that turns its holders into veritable VIPs. Remembrance sites included in the Pass: the World Peace Centre in Verdun, the “Des flammes à la lumière” show, the Verdun underground citadel, Forts Vaux and Douaumont.

www.passlorraine.com

Treasure hunt

In the footsteps of Sister Gabrielle

A veritable figure of the Great War, Sister Gabrielle stayed in Clermont-en-Argonne for the entire 4 years of the war to take care of the sick in the village, French or German. In particular, thanks to her care, Camille Guéret, who was suffering from dysentery, survived the War.

In this treasure hunt, you will be looking for some treasure hidden by Sister Gabrielle, with the help of Camille, a "Poilu" (French soldier) during the Great War. Children are invited to hunt for the treasure during the course of a walk packed with clues. Starting out from Lochères, they can borrow a handheld GPS device from the Tourist Office or use a Smartphone (geocaching app to download for free) and follow the trail step by step to Claon in order to find the hidden objects. And all those who manage to work out the message left by Sister will get a reward when they return to the Tourist Office!

Office de Tourisme du Pays d’Argonne
T. +33 (0)3 29 88 42 22
www.tourisme-argonne-1418.fr

Press contacts:
CDT Meuse - Christel RIGOLOT
T. +33 (0)3 29 45 78 40 - c.rigolot@cdt-meuse.fr
Lorraine Tourism - Carine DELANNE-BUCH
T. +33 (0)3 83 80 01 89 - carine.buch@tourisme-lorraine.fr
The Falouse fortifications

Overlooking the Meuse valley, this modern fortified structure built between 1906 and 1908, is one of only two, the other being Fort Vacherauville (1910), to have been built entirely of concrete. The last fortress built around Verdun, on the French rear lines, its role was to provide surveillance of the means of communication from Toul and to fill a gap in the defences between the forts at Dugny and Haudainville. As it was never bombed, the fort is in a state of perfect conservation. Visitors can see scenes of everyday life at the fort with resin dummies representing French soldiers behind the lines in 1916. See also: the machine gun turret, the infantry sentry box and the turret for two 75 mm guns.

Information: T. +33 (0)3 29 90 70 50 - www.ouvragedelafalouse.fr

Ramble on the Eparges and Saillant de Saint-Mihiel

2 days / 1 night, €86 / person

Just 20km from Verdun, this historical walk proposes a ramble through the key sites of the Eparges battle, crossing the Meuse vineyards and orchards.

Not to be missed: Point X overlooking the Woëvre Plain, the many craters left from the violent mine-warfare; the Calonne trenches.

This offer includes:

- 1 night in a “comfort” double room and buffet breakfast.
- “Market Menu” dinner.
- Guide for the 65 hiking tours available during the stay.
- 1 takeaway picnic hamper.

Booking:
Hôtel restaurant du Lac de Madine
T. +33 (0)3 29 89 34 80
www.hotel-lac-madine.com
Discover nature and the great outdoors
an original approach to the battlefields

The Forest of Verdun: the “Red Zone” has gone green

In June 2014, Verdun was awarded the national label “Forêt d’Exception”. This distinction, awarded by the national forestry commission, the ONF, recognises excellence in the management of forests known for their unique heritage in terms of history, landscape, biodiversity or particularly valuable woods. To date, Verdun is the second public forest in France to be awarded this title. And yet, at the end of the Great War, the battlefield was like a moonscape, devastated by the fighting.

With the aim of preserving the remains left by the battle, as well as the memory of those who fought, the Water and Forests administration, predecessor of the ONF, was given the task of managing the reforestation of the Verdun Red Zone by the State. From 1923 onwards, 36 million trees were planted. In just five years, these former agricultural lands were covered by 60% conifers and 40% hardwoods. Today the forest surrounds the Ossuary, the cemetery at Fleury-devant-Douaumont and the Verdun Memorial.

The biodiversity observed in the forest is astonishing, and a specific heritage of the Great War. Gradually over the years the ONF has been replacing the conifers with beech, more suited to local ecological conditions. Wild orchids grow among the grasses and can easily be spotted by walkers. Yellow-bellied toads, newts and other amphibians abound because of the irregular terrain. Since 2016, a visitor centre next door to the Verdun Memorial has been providing visitors with a wide range of services and information both on the Verdun battlefield Forêt d’Exception and on all the Great War sites in Meuse.

Go on a ramble through the ”Forêt d’Exception” of Verdun with an ONF guide

On “The Forests of 14-18 History” rambles and the “rando trek”, an ONF guide will take you on foot to remains that would otherwise be inaccessible. It is a veritable immersion in the heart of the battlefield, which will help you to understand how the landscape was transformed, with all the historical aspects and ecological consequences. These rambles take you to monuments you will probably never have heard of, such as Fort Souville or Fort Froideterre, whose ruins are rendered all the more impressive as nature has reclaimed its rights. The programme includes a presentation of the natural environment (post-war reforestation, forestry, botany, amphibians…) and of course the chance to discover the 14-18 sites.

More information on the visits organised by the ONF on www.lesforetsdelhistoire14-18.fr and other possibilities : www.tourisme-verdun.com
Flights over the battlefields

On board a light aircraft, it is possible to fly over the main First World War remembrance sites in Meuse. The circuit offered by the Robert Thiéry air club takes you over the Meuse hills, the city of Verdun and the Red Zone, where you will see the military cemeteries, the Douaumont Ossuary and Forts Vaux and Douaumont. This aerial view helps you to get a clear perception of the perimeter of the battle and the strategic stakes.

Information: Mr. THOUVENIN  
T.: +33 (0)6 33 40 24 99

Nordic walking

April to September (1 excursion per month): you’ll be in the capable hands of an ASCM accredited guide (Verdun branch), who’ll teach you all about the benefits of Nordic walking (inspired by skiing), as well as how to use your sticks correctly.


Contact: Grand Verdun Tourist Office - +33 (0)3 29 86 14 18 - contact@tourisme-verdun.com

Sporting events

In the framework of the centenary of the battle of the First World War, a vast programme of sporting events will be organised for the widest possible audience.

Amongst this year’s highlights:
- Trenches Trail on 25 March 2018 Timed race. International event giving participants an opportunity to explore the battlefield of Verdun from a novel perspective.

Distances ranging from 15km to over 50km. Nordic walking also possible.

Contact: www.traildestranchees.com

- Trail run along the Saint Mihiel Salient with 5 different routes, including 1 walk.

- 5th edition of the Meuse Great War half Marathon at Verdun.

Press contacts:
CDT Meuse - Christel RIGOLOT  
T. +33 (0)3 29 45 78 40 - c.rigolot@cdt-meuse.fr
Lorraine Tourism - Carine DELANNE-BUCH  
T. +33 (0)3 83 80 01 89 - carine.buch@tourisme-lorraine.fr
The battle of Le Grand Couronné and its main sites

When fighting first broke out in summer 1914, Nancy was only a few kilometres away from the German border, due to the annexation of Alsace and Moselle in 1871. Le Grand Couronné, a string of hills to the East of Nancy, became a strategic location, and was the theatre of bitter fighting that caused many casualties between 4 and 12 September 1914. Thanks to the courage and bravery of the French troops, the Battle of Le Grand Couronné was won and Nancy was saved! It also allowed the front line to be stabilised in this area for the duration of the war and avoided the French troops being attacked from behind during the Battle of the Marne. The Le Prêtre woods, near Pont-à-Mousson, and the Le Léomont hill, near Lunéville, are the main sites to see.

Information: www.tourisme-lorraine.fr

The Vosges Front trails

In the only sector in the Great War that saw mountain fighting, the Vosges Front sites can all be reached on foot. A godsend for the history-loving hiker! Alone or with a specialist guide, you can discover this site that has remained unchanged since October 1914 all year round.

Protected by its forest setting, the Vosges Front still contains all the traces left by the First World War. Hikers can discover what amounts to an open-air museum along some 100 km of waymarked trails: trenches, galleries, relict trees and an impressive concrete barrier that runs from the La Chapelotte pass, which saw mine warfare over a period of 30 months, to the Sundgau in the South of Alsace. Among the trails suggested by the tourist office:

- La Chapelotte pass: a 2 to 9 km circuit that takes in German trenches, mine entrances, funnel-shaped cavities caused by underground explosions, blockhouses, etc...
- The "Cote 627" trail around La Fontenelle cemetery, entirely accessible to people with reduced mobility: 1.2 km in the French and German trenches, with scenes laid out and interpretation boards.

Information: www.front-vosges-14-18.eu

Further afield

History walks in Meuse

The CDT Meuse offers a chance to discover the Great War remembrance sites at your own pace, with a selection of walks around the remains. Cards detailing the walks can be collected from the CDT office or downloaded on www.tourisme-meuse.com
Pre-war

1870-1871, a region bruised by the Annexation

After defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, Lorraine lost part of its territory; Nancy remained occupied by German troops until the Frankfurt Treaty was applied in full. For over forty years, the two enemy nations would face each other on the soil of Lorraine, and the people of Moselle were confronted with a painful choice: to stay and become German, or leave and lose everything.

The Musée Départemental de la Guerre de 1870 et de l’Annexion

This museum entirely dedicated to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 and the annexation of a part of Lorraine by the German Empire, opened in 2014. With a rich permanent exhibition covering 900 sq.m and especially rare French and German collections, the museum looks at the questions raised by this conflict from another angle: German unity, life in the annexed territories, the tensions in the run-up to the First World War.

Information: T. +33 (0)3 87 33 69 40
www.musee-gravelotte.fr

Metz-Nancy: two faces of the same conflict

With the annexation, Nancy, which remained French, saw an influx of people and in particular intellectuals and artists, who would contribute to the development of the Art Nouveau movement and the foundation of the Ecole de Nancy. Metz, which became German, was the subject of a wide-ranging urban planning initiative desired by William II. The new quarter was built around the enormous grey sandstone railway station and included buildings with multi-coloured façades and private houses built by architects from all over Europe. The different architectural trends of the Belle Epoque all feature (Neo-Romanesque, Art Deco, Jugendstil).

Information: www.tourisme-metz.com
www.nancy-tourisme.fr

Press contacts:
CDT Meuse - Christel RIGOLOT
T. +33 (0)3 29 45 78 40 - c.rigolot@cdt-meuse.fr
Lorraine Tourism - Carine DELANNE-BUCH
T. +33 (0)3 83 80 01 89 - carine.buch@tourisme-lorraine.fr
Post-war

The Maginot Line and the Hackenberg fort

Due to its strategic location, Lorraine once again found itself in the front line on the eve of the Second World War. The traumas of the past led the French army to strengthen its lines of defence, in particular by building the Maginot Line, which was meant to halt an advancing German army. Unfortunately History would write a different story and the many forts along the Maginot Line were not subjected to the attacks they were designed to resist!

http://maginot-hackenberg.com

Exhibition

"What remains of the Great War?"

Covering more than 600 sq.m of space at the World Peace Centre in Verdun, this exhibition aims to explain the First World War, its impact on the 20th century, Europe and the world. Using the latest technologies (3D, augmented reality and video), it immerses the visitor in the Great War. Military and civilian objects as well as images (prints, photos, posters) will impress visitors by their intimacy and modernity and provide a realistic impression of a society at war.

The World Centre for Peace, Freedom and Human Rights

For 20 years, the World Peace Centre has been a centre of excellence for remembrance (14-18 and Franco-German), an exhibition centre and a venue for meetings and exchanges (conferences, concerts, literary events, bookshop with over 400 references for adults and children). It is also a player in business tourism, offering reception rooms with the capacity to host between 20 and 300 people. It is situated in the prestigious Episcopal Palace of Verdun designed in 1724 by Robert de Cotte, a favourite architect of Louis XV. Its fine rounded façade, main courtyard, gardens and state rooms make it one of the jewels of French classical architecture.

Information : Centre Mondial de la Paix
T. +33 (0)3 29 86 55 00 - www.cmipaix.eu

Information : www.cmipaix.eu
Open every day from 10 am to 6 pm at the World Peace Centre in Verdun.
Today and tomorrow

The network of bodies involved in 14-18 Western Front tourism

From the Nord-Pas-de-Calais to Alsace, the Regions, Departments and tourist offices in the geographical area concerned by the First World War have worked with Atout France and the Mission du Centenaire de la Première Guerre Mondiale to organise joint actions on welcoming tourists, promotion and communication to develop remembrance tourism. Familiarisation trips, reception events, press packs, maps, films and other useful tools support the planning of First World War-themed circuits and stays.

Discover all the essential 14-18 Western Front sites: centenaire.org

UNESCO candidature: First World War burial and memorial sites (Western Front)

Created in 2011, the “Paysages et sites de mémoire de la Grande Guerre” association has identified all the remarkable sites on the 14-18 War Western Front, from the Belgian border and the North Sea to the Franco-Swiss border. Its aim: to have about a hundred French and Belgian burial and memorial sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The cemeteries, necropolises, monuments and memorials selected represent a new attitude to the death of the soldier in combat: because of the hitherto unseen scale of the loss of human life due to the industrial nature of the fighting in the First World War. This had given rise to a new cult of the dead, recognising their individual identities for the first time, as the only humane response to the inhumanity of war. Cemeteries where French, German, British, American, Romanian or Australian soldiers lie... All these sites reflect the international presence on the Western Front.

Find our more: http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5886/

Discover all the essential 14-18 Western Front sites: centenaire.org

Press contacts:
CDT Meuse - Christel RIGOLOT
T. +33 (0)3 29 45 78 40 - c.rigolot@cdt-meuse.fr
Lorraine Tourism - Carine DELANNE-BUCH
T. +33 (0)3 83 80 01 89 - carine.buch@tourisme-lorraine.fr
Resources available!
List not exhaustive

Reference websites:
www.verdun2016.org

On remembrance tourism in Meuse:
http://www.meusetourism.com

CDT Meuse historical department site:
www.verdun-meuse.fr 
and www.meuse-grande-guerre.fr

On remembrance tourism in Lorraine:
www.tourisme-lorraine.fr/memoire

"Espace Education" - European history and culture
Site with educational resources for teachers to help them teach the history curriculum:
www.espace-ehce.fr

Photos – Videos:
Fonds image 14-18: a site specialised in the 14-18 with a collection of several thousand still, animated and relief images, created by the Conservatoire Régional de l’Image Nancy-Lorraine.
www.imagesde14-18.eu

Photo library of Lorraine Tourisme, with a collection specially dedicated to remembrance tourism. To access the collection, contact Carine Delanne-Buch.
Contact for the CDT Meuse photo library: Aurore Achard - a.achard@cdt-meuse.fr

Videos: YouTube Tourisme Lorraine with a special remembrance tourism playlist
Direct link:
Verdun Meuse 1914-918: www.youtube.com/HKRfU

Key figures
In November 2015 the Observatoire Lorrain du Tourisme published a complete dossier on remembrance tourism in Lorraine. Visitor numbers, analysis of clientele, average spend per day, etc.
www.observatoire-lorraine.fr / under "Aménagement" - "Mémoire militaire"

Publications:
First World War Centenary in Meuse
Themed brochure on Meuse for group tourism professionals:

Map of the essential remembrance sites in Meuse
The sites included are the most emblematic memorial and historical heritage sites in Meuse.
http://www.meusetourism.com

Le Guide du Routard
Grande Guerre 14-18 / Les chemins de mémoire
For the centenary of the First World War, the Routard series and the Mission du Centenaire have brought out a guide to the front from Flanders to the Vosges. Discover all the sites and monuments that still bear witness to the biggest worldwide conflict in the 20th century.
Find out more:

Michelin guide
"Champs de Bataille" collection
The Michelin guides to the battlefields revisited to combine history and recent events on the occasion of the centenary of the Great War.
Our contacts are available to answer all enquiries and receive you in person.

Your contact in Meuse
Comité Départemental du Tourisme de la Meuse
33 rue des Grangettes 55000 Bar-le-Duc
T. +33 (0)3 29 45 78 40
www.meusetourism.com
Press contact:
Christel Rigolot
c.rigolot@cdt-meuse.fr

Your contact in Lorraine
Lorraine Tourism
Abbaye des Prémontrés
BP 97 54704 Pont-à-Mousson Cedex
T. +33 (0)3.83.80.01.80
www.tourisme-lorraine.fr
Carine Delanne-Buch, press attaché
T. +33 (0)3 83 80 01 89 (direct line)
carine.buch@tourisme-lorraine.fr

VERDUN
T. +33 (0)3 29 86 14 18
mail: contact@tourisme-verdun.com
www.tourisme-verdun.com

ARGONNE
Clermont-en-Argonne :
T. +33 (0)3 29 88 42 22
mail: tourisme.argonne@wanadoo.fr
www.tourisme-argonne-1418.fr

SAILLANT DE SAINT-MIHIEL/ LES EPARGES
Saint Mihiel : Tél/Fax. +33 (0)3 29 89 06 47
mail: accueil@coeurdelorraine-tourisme.fr

BEHIND THE GERMAN LINES
Damvillers - Spincourt : T. +33 (0)3 29 85 56 26
mail: tourisme@damvillers-spincourt.fr
www.tourisme-spincourt.com

BEHIND THE FRENCH LINES
Dieue-sur-Meuse :
T. +33 (0)3 29 87 60 75
mail: tourisme@valdemeuse.fr
www.tourisme-val-de-meuse.eu
Bar-le-Duc : T. +33 (0)3 29 79 11 13
mail: barleduc.tourisme@wanadoo.fr
www.tourisme-barleduc.fr