



- **Est. time:** 4hr30
- **Length:** 14km
- **Lowest point:** 40m
- **Highest point:** 139m
- **Level:** Difficult
- **Waymarking:** Yellow & green
- **Passing through:** Vic-sur-Aisne, Saint-Christophe-à-Berry, Nouvron-Vingré, Bery-Rivière

On 12th September 1914 the first Battle of the Marne had just come to an end. The Germans were forced to retreat northwards and cross the river Aisne. Its banks are dominated by high plateaus topped by underground quarries, called "creutes". They offered excellent shelter to soldiers. In just a few days the war of movement became one of position. To protect themselves from German shelling, the French dug the first trenches.



ON THE ROUTE

- ★ 1 Pacifist inspired war memorial at Saint-Christophe-à-Berry.
- ★ 2 Monument to executed soldiers and cellars in which they would have been locked up before their execution at Bery-Rivière.
- ★ 3 On outskirts of Bery-Rivière, "Villa du poilu" written on wall of house at side of the road.

NEARBY

- ★ Confrécourt quarries at Nouvron-Vingré
Reservations: 03 23 55 92 41
- 📍 GPS treasure hunt.
More info on www.geocaching.com

TOURIST INFO.:

Vic-sur-Aisne Tourist Information office
Tel. 03 23 55 92 41

CREATION AND UPKEEP OF ROUTE:

Communauté de Communes du Pays de la Vallée de l'Aisne

Route card taken from www.randonner.fr the Aisne walking/hiking website.



See all our good deals on www.facebook.com/randonnee.aisne

- D** From square at Vic-sur-Aisne, facing the château, turn right towards Saint-Christophe-à-Berry. Walk 800m along Rue St-Christophe, then turn right into Rue de Presles. After 100m, turn left towards Bery-Rivière (country lane). After 300m take first track on the left, going towards a wood. At second fork, bear right for Chapeaumont.
- 1** After a gentle climb, go through chicane gate (private property on both sides of track). Follow the white pegs for 500m. Pass by hollow concealing command post of Lieutenant-Colonel Reboul (structure built of local stone, half buried below ground) with its quarry. Turn left twice, towards the Fontaine Ste-Anne. Leave through gate on left-hand side (view of fountain on the right). Go down 300m towards St-Christophe. At bottom, before the road, turn right for 100m, then left.
- 2** When level with church of St-Christophe, go to the front of war memorial depicting grandfather and grandson grieving for their dear departed, then turn right towards Bery.
- 3** After 800m, take track on the right before the bridge. After 1 km turn right towards Vingré.
- 4** Go through the village. Pass by memorial to executed soldiers on left-hand side (don't miss the cellar in which condemned men wrote their last letters) and turn right to the wayside cross. Go uphill, carry on right.
- 5** At the Broken cross memorial (see information panel for explanation of its symbolism), turn right away from the plain and cross the plateau.
- 6** Facing the wood, turn right. Off route: 150m away go down steps to the left into Confrécourt quarries. At the junction, turn left onto track leading to Bery-Rivière.
- 7** Going downhill, take path on the left leading to village.
- 8** When level with the Mairie, take street facing you and carry straight on towards Vic-sur-Aisne. On outskirts of Bery, on left-hand side, the walls of a house have been carved by soldiers ("villa du poilu", thoughts, someone's profile, etc...). Return to centre of Vic.



Episodes in History



ROAD TRIP

The Anne Morgan route

82 km – Depart Blérancourt



© Médiathèque de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine

Ford T.

Typical car of the 1910s

Anne Morgan was a pioneering American humanitarian who drove her Ford Model T all over Picardy from 1917, helping the civilian population. The route links the 5 towns where she set up an operations centre for CARD (Comité Américain pour les Régions Dévastées): Blérancourt, Anizy-le-Château, Coucy-le-Château, Soissons, Vic-sur-Aisne.

Do this road trip using "The Anne Morgan Route" application available on App store and Google Play.

See details of WW1 centenary events on www.aisne14-18.com and in brochure available for free in all Aisne Tourist Information offices

Find «Aisne-14-18» on



Everyday history

SHELTER FOR SOLDIERS: THE "CREUTES"

A special feature of the Soissonnais front can be seen in its remarkable underground remains. Old underground stone quarries, called "creutes", were used as shelters and quarters by French and German soldiers. Varying in size from one site to another, these tunnels housed command posts, kitchens, barracks, even medical facilities, as in the Confrécourt quarries. The entrance to the main quarry was surmounted by the insignia of a colonial regiment, the 1st Zouaves. A neighbouring quarry, called the "Hospital" housed a first-aid station. It was less than a kilometre from the French front lines.



© Soissonnais 14-18

Entrance to quarries at Confrécourt

A story of martyrs

EXECUTED AS A WARNING TO OTHERS

In the first months of the war, faced with an army that had not yet proved itself, military justice was extremely harsh. On 27th November 1914, at Vingré, 24 men were accused of desertion in the face of the enemy after they withdrew. They explained that they had been following orders from their second lieutenant but he denied this and blamed them.

On 3rd December 1914 a war council condemned 6 of them to death.

The Vingré Martyrs, as they came to be known, were rehabilitated by the Court of Cassation on 29th January 1921. Opposite the memorial in their honour stands the cellar where they waited to be shot. The names of the "martyrs" can be seen on houses in the village. Their photographs and last letters have been recently added.



© F-X Dessirier

A soldier's last letter to his wife

A story of women

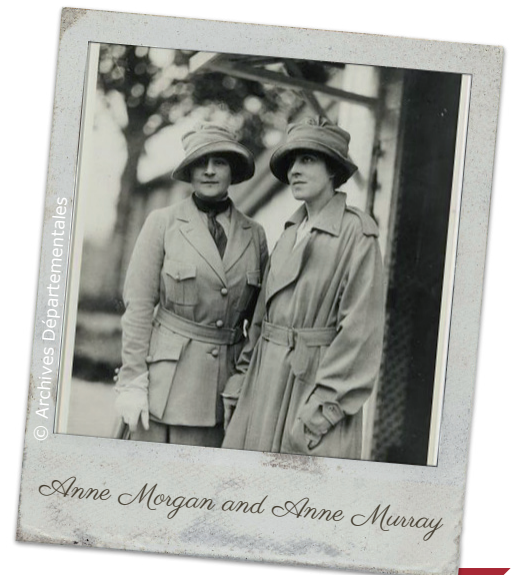
GUARDIAN ANGELS FOR THE "FLATTENED" LANDS

Just after March 1917, when the Germans withdrew to the Hindenburg line, CARD (Comité américain des Régions dévastées), directed by Anne Murray Dike and Anne Morgan, moved into the Château de Blérancourt.

Anne Morgan was the daughter of the very wealthy American banker, J. B. Morgan. She established an outpost at Vic-sur-Aisne and trained female members of this committee.

Nurses, lady-doctors, nutritionists, female lorry drivers brought comforts and a little cheer to those living in the "flattened lands".

The female members of CARD also aimed "to help people help themselves, by providing material assistance", in the words of Anne Murray Dike. The committee acquired 30 tractors and sold seeds at cost price, enabling the replanting of 3,000 hectares of fields and vegetable gardens.



© Archives Départementales

Anne Morgan and Anne Murray