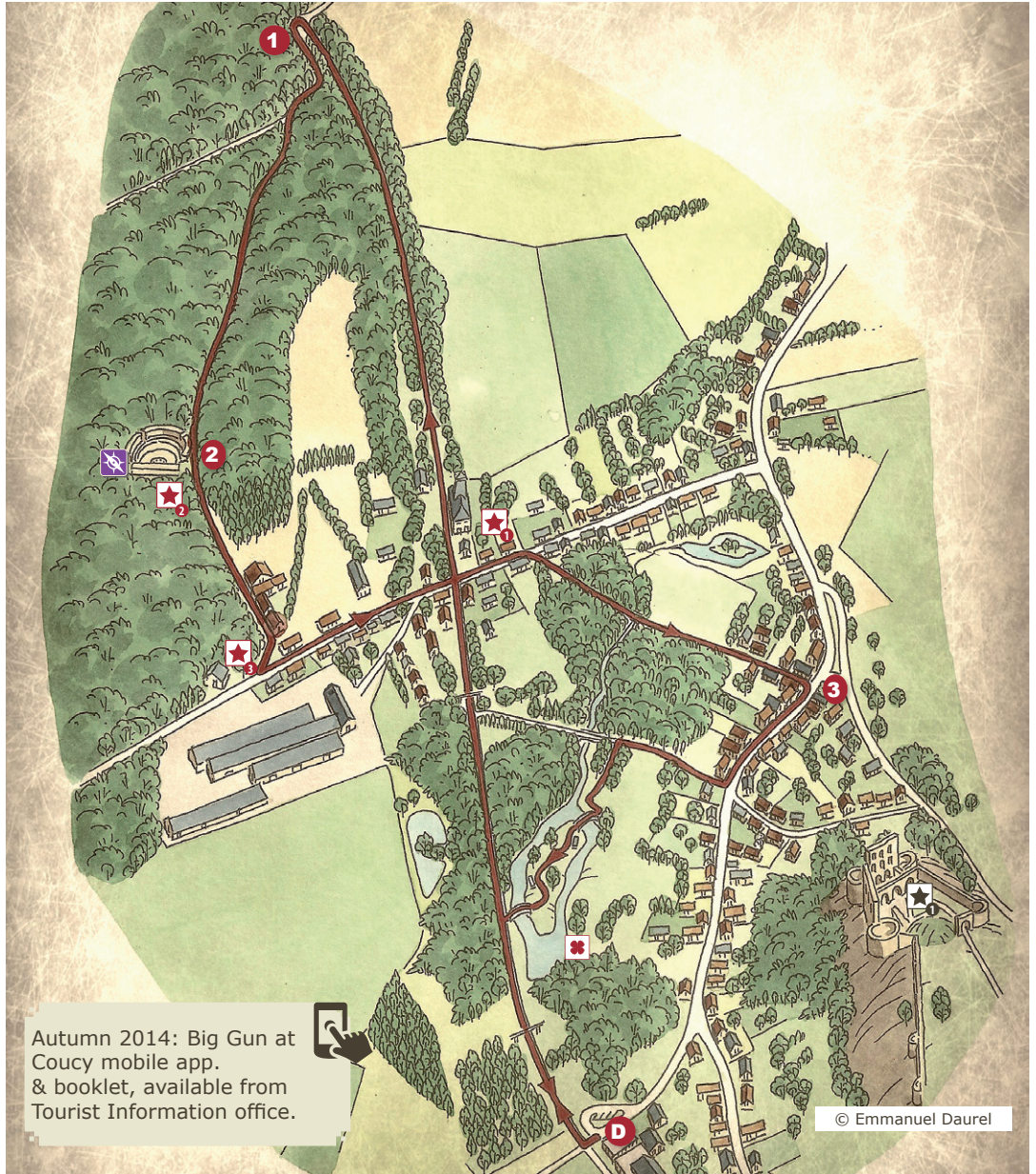




- **Est. time:** 1hr
- **Length:** 3.7km
- **Lowest point:** 50m
- **Highest point:** 79m
- **Level:** Easy
- **Waymarking:** none
- **Passing through:** Coucy-le-Château

The town of Coucy-Le-Château is an ideal observation post: from the top of the castle keep you can see for 40 km around, from Noyon to Chauny; from Compiègne to Laon. Standing some way off from the Chemin des Dames front line, the town was relatively safe. Down below, 500m from the town, the railway had a marshalling yard, used for storage and handling. On 1st September 1914 Coucy-le-Château fell into German hands.



Autumn 2014: Big Gun at Coucy mobile app. & booklet, available from Tourist Information office.

© Emmanuel Daurel

View of Coucy castle in 1914
© Archives départementales

TOURIST INFO.:
Coucy-le-Château Tourist
Information office
Tel. 03 23 52 44 55

**CREATION AND UPKEEP
OF ROUTE:**
Communauté de Communes
du Val de l'Ailette and
Mairie of Coucy-le-Château

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

ON THE ROUTE

- ☒ Coucy lake
- ☒ Coucy railway station
- ☒ Big gun firing stand
- ☒ Reconstruction hut

NEARBY

- ☒ Remains of medieval castle of Coucy
- ☒ Coucy Tower-Museum
- M Museum & Château of Biérancourt
- ☒ GPS Treasure hunt.
More info. on www.geocaching.com

- D** From car park opposite Coucy college. Turn right onto old railway track. Pass by lake (*picnic, fishing, information board*). Cross street and go past front of railway station (*information board*). Continue for 700 m.
- 2** Go down stoney track, pass by sawmill (*on right a wooden hut from the Reconstruction period*). Turn left into Rue du Montoir. Pass by level crossing keeper's house and 100m further on go down footpath. Cross brook and continue as far as Avenue de Framlingham.
- 3** Turn right. At the minimarket take the track on the right. Before the little wooden bridge, turn left towards the lake. Cross over lake and back to departure point.



See all our good
deals on
[www.facebook.com/
randonnee.aisne](http://www.facebook.com/randonnee.aisne)



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.

A Railway story

Before the war the railways flourished. With its two railway stations, Coucy-le-Château became one of the most popular sights in France. Trains were also used to transport goods to nearby factories.

In late 1914 the Germans began to prepare for the arrival of the big gun. They undertook enormous tasks: earthworks and a concrete firing stand.

They laid a branch line, built a temporary bridge over the railway line, laid rails right into the woods and installed a travelling crane (150 tonnes) to lower the big gun (17m long, weighing 70 tonnes) into position!

The equipment was delivered in parts. 200 men worked on the project for 6 months.

TEMPORARY BRIDGE COUCY RAILWAY STATION



Coucy-le-Château railway station pre-1914

Story of a big gun

THE STORY OF LONG-RANGE GUN AT COUCY

In 1915, in the woods of the lower town, near the marshalling yard, the German army set up, in the utmost secrecy, a gun with a range of nearly 40km, firing 750kg shells. Its main targets were Compiègne, Villers-Cotterêts and Oulchy-le-Château, all towns used to supply the French front. This cannon was operational by April 1915. On 14th June shells were fired at Compiègne, hitting the town centre and palace and causing the townspeople to panic. The French general staff ordered an aerial reconnaissance. Four days later, Georges Guynemer, one of France's best known war pilots, located the German gun's position.



© Archives Départementales de l'Aisne

Firing stand for big gun at Coucy

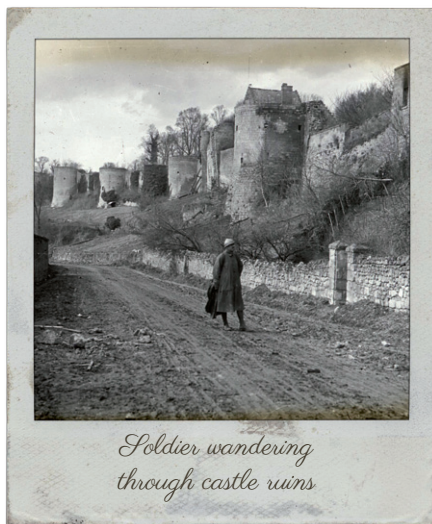
A story of destruction

GERMAN WITHDRAWAL, THE HINDENBURG LINE

In 1916 the German army changed tactics, deciding to consolidate its defence lines around the Hindenburg line before making a strategic withdrawal in March 1917.

While construction work went on at the new position, a scorched earth policy was put in place: anything that could be of use to the French army was taken away. Telephone lines and electrical machines were dismantled and transported behind the new lines. The land around La Fère was flooded. Bridges, footbridges, canal locks, important community and civil engineering structures were destroyed.

The destruction of Coucy was also planned. On 20th March 1917, after the inhabitants had been evacuated, the town was destroyed and the castle keep blown up using 28 tonnes of dynamite.



© Archives Départementales de l'Aisne

Soldier wandering through castle ruins

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

