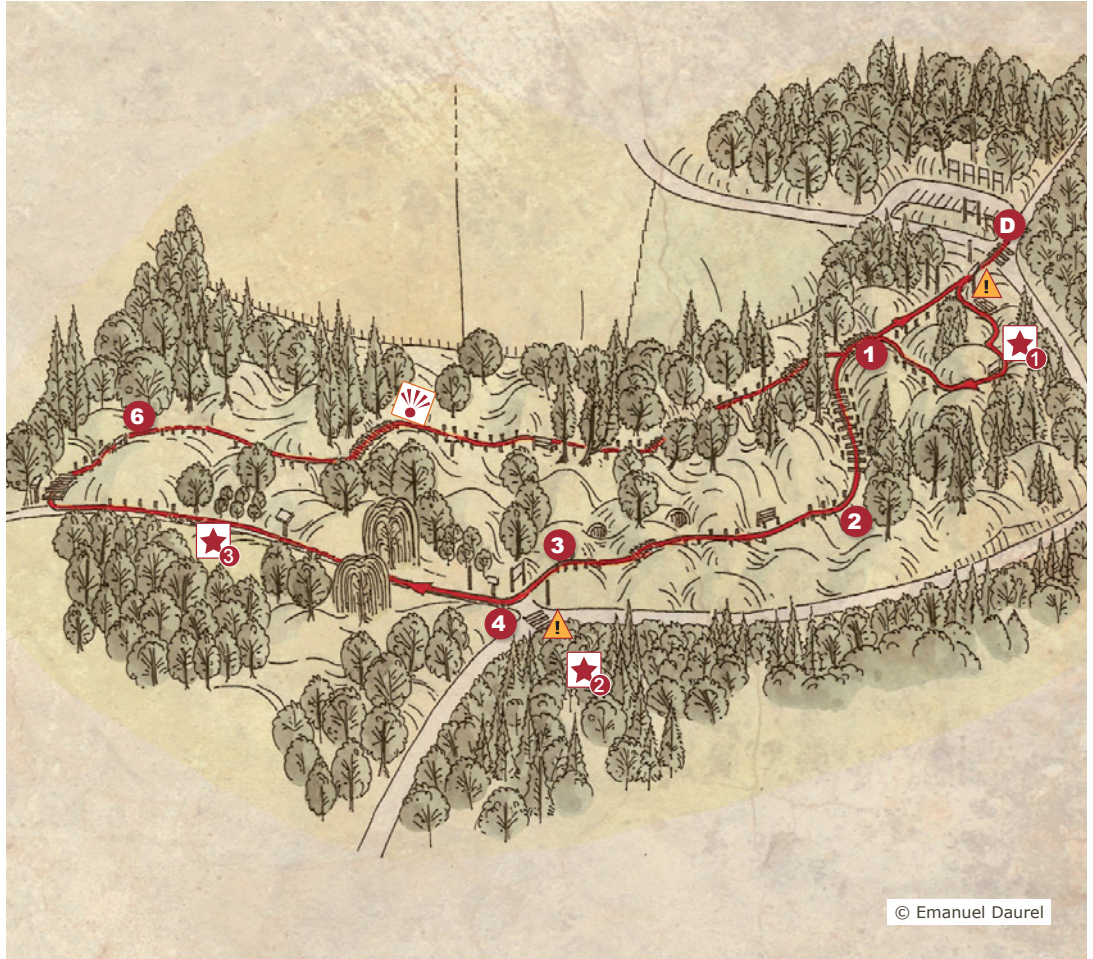




- **Est. time:** 20 min.
- **Length:** 0.6 km
- **Lowest point:** 105m
- **Highest point:** 135m
- **Level:** Very easy
- **Waymarking:** Yellow and brown
- **Passing through:** Craonne

In September 1914 the village was on the front line. It was captured by German forces in January 1915 and its population forced to flee. During the French offensive in April 1917 the village was totally destroyed by shelling. After the failure of this terrible offensive the French army was faced with a wave of mutinies, acts of disobedience that sprang from the soldiers' feelings of revolt and despair, symbolised by the famous "Chanson de Craonne".



© Emanuel Daurel



Craonne in 1916
© Archives départementales

TOURIST INFO.:

Pays de Laon Tourist Information Office
T. 03 23 20 28 62

CREATION AND UPKEEP OF ROUTE:

Office National des Forêts

ON THE ROUTE

- ★₁ Site of old church
- ★₂ Beech tree of Peace
- ★₃ Old Rue de la Pissote

NEARBY

- ★ Observation tower and bunker on the Plateau de Californie
- ★ Old Craonne cemetery
- M Caverne du Dragon, Museum of the Chemin des Dames

- D** Depart from car park at arboretum in Old Craonne (information panels), ⚠ cross D18 road with care. At general panel describing the walk, turn left onto a track running round the ruins of the old church. Continue left and downhill.
- 1** Go down the steps.
- 2** Before the road turn right onto track following the route of the old Rue Saint-Rémi (remains of cellars on the right).
- 3** At the far end, turn left onto a downhill path and walk along the road for 10m. (On the other side, site of the «Beech Tree of Peace», laid out by schoolchildren) ⚠ Take care when crossing!
- 4** Turn right onto the old Rue de la Pissote (there are still traces of old cobblestones).
- 5** Go past track on the left, turn right into woodland.
- 6** Turn right again almost immediately and walk uphill (view of the Plateau de Californie ridge with its observation tower). Carry straight on as far as point 1 then back to car park.

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



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

conception : www.grandnord.fr



ROAD TOUR

Diaries 14/18

9 km - Depart : Caverne du Dragon



Follow the adventures of Andrew Naylor, a British stretcher-bearer, in the Aisne during World War 1 by downloading the Diaries 14-18 application! Visit major battle sites on the Chemin des Dames with the "Between heaven and earth on the Chemin des Dames" audio tour. Audio-guide tour suitable for children over 10.

Application available on App Store et Google Play

Post War History

WHAT BECAME OF THE VILLAGERS?

Most of them never came back. What was the point? They had lost all their possessions in the shelling and plundering. A few cellars remained, their vaulted roofs so well constructed that they had survived everything and were used as shelters first by German then by French troops.

Of the 700 villagers in 1914 only about forty lived there in 1925, growing to a maximum of 150 after the Second World War. All that remains of Old Craonne is a landscape trail featuring a few highly symbolic remains. After the war a new village was built 500m lower down, in an area better suited to modern agriculture.



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Craonne town hall

The marks of war

DESIGNATED AS "RED ZONE"



© Archives départementales

Map of red zone area

Today, Craonne is a village of 850 hectares, 450 of which are still designated as "red zone".

Red zone areas comprise land that cannot be cultivated due to their vast amounts of human remains and unexploded ordnance.

If they were able to rebuild the village a few hundred metres from its original position, as at Ailles or Beaulne, six other villages on the Chemin des Dames disappeared from the map, absorbed by neighbouring districts.

A story of reconstruction

THE ARBORETUM

At the end of the war and as a mark of respect for the dead, certain people argued that the battlefields should be planted with trees.

In 1930 Craonne village council asked the Eaux et Forêts (Forestry commission) to maintain the site of "Old Craonne", turning it into a park to keep alive the memory of the devastated village. An arboretum was planted there in 1941 with financial support from Sweden.

It contains 35 different tree species, including the giant sequoia and Atlas cedar as well as other, less exotic trees. In the early 1970s the arboretum was furnished with information panels and pathways.



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The arboretum yesterday and today

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

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