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Opening days and hours are deliberately not printed in this guide to avoid spreading inaccurate information. The loose leaf we slip inside this guide is regularly updated. You can also find all that information on our website or at the tourist office.





How do I know when I should go to the restaurant?

French people usually lunch between 12:00 and 14:00 and have dinner between 19:00 and 20:30. Consequently, restaurants are open at these same times. Likewise, we recommend you make a reservation to be sure to get a table.



Why are shops and services closed?

It might be for two reasons. First, you should note that, generally, in France, most of the local shops and services are closed on Sundays and Mondays. However supermarkets are open, even on Sundays mornings for most of them.

The other reason is because today might be a bank holiday. There are no rules about opening or not during a bank holiday. Most of the shops and public services will be closed. However some touristic places might be open. We recommend you to give a call or check online for each place you'd like to visit, just to be sure not to end up in front of closed gates.



During the summer season, there are several bank holidays:

May 1st is Labour Day, on this one particularly, most of the shops, services and touristic places will be closed.

May 8th is to celebrate the end of the Second World War (V.E. Day).

In May and June: **Ascension Day and the weekend of Pentecost** are also bank holidays but due to the calendar their dates change every year.

July 14th is the French Bastille Day (start of the French Revolution). The day before is very often the occasion to celebrate with fireworks.

August 15th is the Feast of Assumption.

You might have noticed that some of the French bank holidays are related to the Bible. Even though France has been a non-religious country since 1905, the calendar has kept some old traditions, including Christian bank holidays.



I need a doctor or medications, but it's Sunday. Where should I go?

If you are looking for a doctor or a pharmacy on Sundays, we recommend you to go to the closest tourist office where the agent will give you the number and address of the closest emergency chemist. The closest hospitals are in Soissons and Compiègne.

Emergency number from a foreign phone: 112



Our local markets

As the very image of the country way of life, weekly markets are ideal to fill-up your basket with fresh products such as local veggies, fruit, or fish and meat but also flowers, honey or clothes and fabrics.



Vic-sur-Aisne

market on Wednesday morning (B2)

Villers-Cotterêts

market on Thursday morning and little market on Sunday morning (B4)

La Ferté-Milon

little market on Friday morning and farmers' market on the second Sunday of every month (B5)

La Vache-Noire

country market the second Sunday of the month (C2)

Our producers & farmers

Our countryside region is home to a lot of farmers and producers. As a real open-air garden, the territory has been know for a long time for the quality of its fruit and vegetables which can sourced directly from our many orchads and vegetable farms. Did you know that there is also the cultivation of saffron in the forest of Retz? No hesitation, grab your basket!





Les jardins de Pontarcher

(fruit, vegetables and flowers to pick yourself) RN 31 02290 AMBLENY (C2) +33 6 14 85 42 71 www.lesjardinsdepontarcher.fr

Chèvrerie Myrtille et Compagnie

(sale of goat's cheese) Lieu- dit Falloise 02290 NOUVRON-VINGRÉ (C1) +33 6 41 99 99 20

Les produits de Chouy

(sale of honey and beef)
2 rue de fresne
02210 CHOUY (D4)
+33 6 72 86 45 61

Le domaine de Pouy

(sale and help yourself picking of apples, pears and potatoes) Le Pouy 02600 MORTEFONTAINE (B3) +33 3 23 96 34 85 www.ledomainedepouy.com

Les vergers de Dampleux

(sale of fruit, vegetables and local products) Avenue de la Ferté-Milon – 02600 VILLERS-COTTERÊTS (B4) +33 6 87 81 76 10 www.vergers-dampleux.fr

Les vergers du petit marais

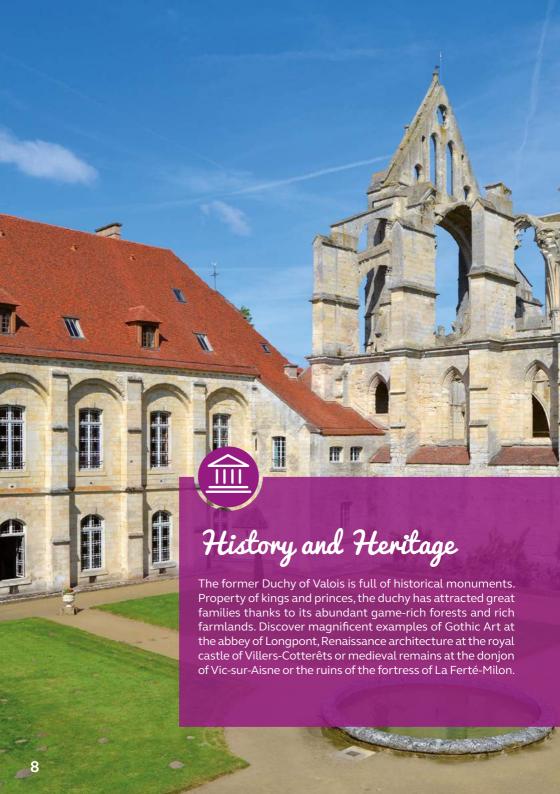
(sale of fruit and local products)
Ferme des pommiers
02600 OIGNY-EN-VALOIS (B4)
+33 7 78 13 16 26

Le safran de Retz

(saffron and beans of Soissons) Ferme de Baisemont 02600 OIGNY-EN-VALOIS (B4) +33 3 23 72 58 19

La ferme des marronniers

(sale of apples and pears) 1 route de Compiègne - 02600 TAILLEFONTAINE (A3) +33 3 23 96 01 65



Vic-sur-Aisne, a peacefully place

Vic-sur-Aisne is a charming village of approximately 1700 inhabitants. The main square is the very heart of the town. **The market takes place there every Wednesday morning.** It is the perfect occasion to buy fresh fruit and vegetables from local producers but also cheese and meat or a bouquet of fresh flowers. With its shops, restaurants, and terraces (perfect spot to drink a beer or enjoy a hot cup of tea), overlooked by the medieval donjon, this place invites you to relax and enjoy the moment.

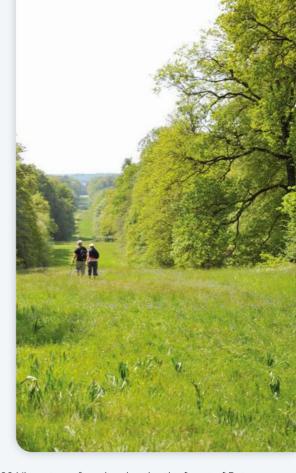
Built during the 8th century, the imposing donjon of Vic-sur-Aisne dominates the main square and welcomes you upon your arrival. Converted into a habitable dwelling during the 17th century, it has retained its medieval appearance. After visiting the donjon, stroll through the majestic gardens. The symmetrical composition is the distinctive feature of the classical style. During the 19th century the park was turned into a landscaped garden, for romantic walks, with statues, a colonnade, stone benches and ruins inviting visitors to daydream.

Donjon of Vic-sur-Aisne
2 rue de Pompone
02290 VIC-SUR-AISNE
+33 3 23 55 04 60 B2
www.chateau-de-vic.com



The forest of Retz and its heritage

Welcome to forest of Retz where 13,225 hectares of green awaits you. Enjoy a privileged moment in nature to break with everyday life and fall under the spell of birdsong and a palette of colors. Far from the stress of the city, nice discoveries are waiting for you: the forest hides remarkable natural heritage and some unusual treasures! Many ancient legends come from these woods and it would not be impossible if, at the turn of the Clouise Stone, a huge monolith from the Neolithic, you came across a druid or some fairies. The forest is essentially a beech forest. Thirty remarkable trees are identified here and there. It is home to many common species including the majestic deer, the emblematic animal of royal hunts. There are also rarer species, today protected, such as the salamander, the black woodpecker and the rhinolophe, a species of little bat. Nowadays, the forest is managed by the Office National des Forêts.





With its 600 kilometres of road and paths, the forest of Retz is also **the best place to practise hiking**. Whether you are a novice or a seasoned hiker, you will certainly find a circuit adapted to your level and your desires.

Located at the top of a 220 meters high hill, **General Mangin's observation tower** offers one of the highest point of view of the local area. On each of its eight floors, thanks to games, sound records and a spyglass, you will discover everything about the wildlife and flora of the forest of Retz but also its crucial role during the offensive of July 1918 wich lead to the Armistice.

From this point you can also enjoy three hikes including one dedicated to the First World War which will lead you to **the Guards' Grave Cemetry** where 98 British soldiers are buried. Back at the very beginning of the war, these brave soldiers fought long and hard in these woods to stop the German progression toward Paris and save their fellow comrades and Allies who were retreating.

Villers-Cotterêts, a royal estate



The château is currently closed to the public but has been chosen by the President of the Republic himself to become the "Cité Internationale de la Langue Française". The project has been entrusted to the Centre des Monuments Nationaux (CMN). The CMN is a national institution in charge of care, conservation and enlightenment of many historical places in France such as the castle of Pierrefonds nearby or the famous Mont-Saint-Michel. The château will open its doors in 2022. In the meantime. we invite you to pay a visit to the Maison du Projet where you will learn more about the future of this marvelous witness of the French Renaissance.

In 1530, after his captivity in Madrid, François 1er decided to have a castle built in Villers-Cotterêts mainly because of the surrounding forest of Retz which was, alrealdy at that early time, one of the biggest of Europe. The kings and princes of France enjoyed it especially to practise hunting. Architecturally speaking, the château is a pure French Renaissance monument, taking inspiration from Italian trends. King François 1er particularly liked this castle and very regularly spend weeks here. In August 1539, François 1er signed the Decree of Villers-Cotterêts which introduced the use of French in official acts and laid down the foundations of civil status. His son, King Henri II, signed here the Auld Alliance treaty between France and Scotland to celebrate a new union after François II and Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, got married. After decades of kings and gueens, the château became the property of the dukes of Orléans (who were direct relatives to the reigning kings) until the French Revolution. Then, from the early 19th century until 2014 and through the wars, the château was turned successively into a nursing home for poor people, a military hospital,

a kommandantur and then a retirement house.

Located nearby the château itself, settled in a small street away from the crowd, the Pavillon Henri II is absolutely the last remaining monument from the original royal estate of the 16th century. This pavilion, regularly opened to the public, houses some treasures coming from the château which were saved during the French Revolution.

Did you know that Villers-Cotterêts is where Alexandre Dumas was born and raised? The writer of the Three Musketeers was born here. in 1802. From his childhood to his adulthood Alexandre Dumas grew up in these streets. exploring every corner of the town and the forest of Retz. The Alexandre Dumas Museum is dedicated to the Dumas family.

Château of Villers-Cotterêts **Place Aristide Briand** www.chateau-villers-cotterets.fr

Pavillon Henri II impasse du manège +33 6 60 75 52 67 www.pavillonhenriii.com

Dumas Museum 24 rue Demoustier +33 3 23 96 23 30 webmuseo.com/ws/musee-dumas 02600 VILLERS-COTTERÊTS AB4



A picturesque city: La Ferté-Milon



It was Louis 1er, Duke of Orléans, who started the construction of **the castle** at the end of the 14th century. The monument would have been a perfect example of the transition between medieval and pre-Renaissance architecture. However, the castle never got the chance to be completed due to the Duke's assassination in 1407.

During the French religious wars, King Henri IV dismantled a part of the building. As a consequence, only its facade remains today. The facade itself not only pre-figures the dimensions of the entire structure but is also an incredible piece of art and architecture. A huge bas-relief representing the the Virgin's Coronation is sitated in the middle of it with three angles below, holding the coat of arms of Louis d'Orléans. Walk around the remains of this impressive castle from where a panorama over the city and the forest awaits you. Walk around the medieval paved streets of this picturesque village: history is waiting for you at everycorner: the 13th century Notre-Dame church, the fortified gates and old buildings are real witnesses of the past and are part of the local heritage.

La Ferté-Milon is not only a charming village. It is also the birthplace of one of the most famous French drama writers: Jean Racine. His former house has been turned into a museum dedicated to the author. There is another, uncommon museum at La Ferté-Milon: the museum of the Agricultural Mechanism which is dedicated to rural life, its traditions and handicraft which are about to, or already have, disappear(ed) due to our modern way of life. The museum also houses one of the biggest collections of tractors in Europe.

The Ourcg has its source near Fère-en-Tardenois. During the 16th century work of canalization of the river began at a spot called Port-aux-Perches. The canal supplied Paris with water, grain

and wood until late 19th century. The Ourcq canal, which is 96 kilometers long, is now home to tourist activities such as hiking on the towpath and the navigation of pleasure boats. While strolling in La Ferté-Milon, you will be able to cross the Ourcg on a metallic footbridge dating from 1868 that we owe to the famous

engineer Gustave Eiffel.

Château Rue du vieux château

Racine Museum 2 rue des bouchers +33 3 23 96 29 85

Museum of the agricultural mechanism 68 bis rue de la Chaussée +33 3 23 96 29 85

02460 LA FERTÉ-MILON & B5



longport, a village with character

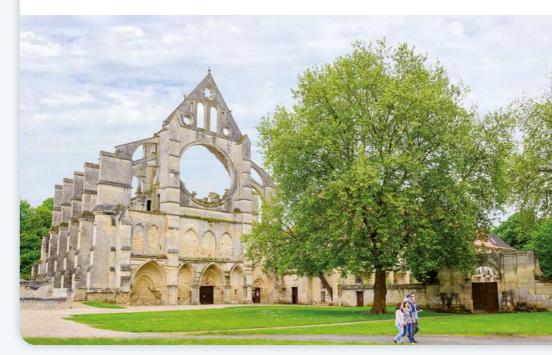
Nestling alongside the forest of Retz, **Longpont is a charming and picturesque village**. The name Longpont literally means "long bridge". According to the legend, it is said that the first human settlement occurred during the Roman era and that, due to the river La Savière, the only way to reach the village was by crossing a long bridge.

Though it still looks like an untouched medieval village, it was almost entilery destroyed by bombing during the First World War in 1918. If you look carefully, you will noticed some details which reveal that the village was reconstructed in the 1920's by the way in which the limestone was cut to rebuilt the houses.

Located on the main square, the abbey is the very heart of the village and the community. The ruins of this great historical monument, originally founded in 1131 by Saint-Bernard, are a unique example of what a cathedral-sized gothic abbey looked like. The main building has unfortunately suffered over the last centuries, especially during the First World War when the Germans set it on fire while retreating in 1918. Fortunately, the vaulted room, and the cloister are still there and you can discover it during immersive guided visits.

Abbey of Longpont

2 place de l'abbaye - 02600 LONGPONT
www.abbayedelongpont.fr C3



The castle of Montgobert

The castle of Montgobert is **the only example of classical architecture in the Aisne**. Over the centuries, it has been the property of Pauline Bonaparte (Sister of Napoléon 1st) and her husband, General Leclerc, and was then turned into military headquarters during the Great War. The castle now offers 30 rooms dedicated to old tools and crafts and also to local traditions and history such as the First World War, or the hunting customs. The park is the ideal place to take a deep breath of fresh air.

47 allée du château 02600 MONTGOBERT

+33 3 23 96 36 69

www.chateaudemontgobert.com 🕮 c3



The abbey of Valsery



Founded in 1125, the abbey of Valsery is one of **the oldest creations of the Prémontrés** religious order. The monument has been successively destroyed, rebuilt and changed through its 900 years of history. After the French Revolution, it even became a private castle. After the First World War and its bombardments, the abbey has been left in a state of neglect for decades.

Today, thanks to a group of volunteers made of archaeology and History lovers, the abbey is being carefully restored. During the guided tour, the volunteers will show you the different archaeological artefacts of sculpture and

architecture they have discovered. You'll be able to enjoy the chapter house and its marvelous polychrome stains on the walls.

The priory of Longpré



Founded in 1180 for the sisters of the Fontevrault Abbey, the priory is settled in the heart of a verdurous valley. Thanks to a restoration in 1994, the beauty of its religious architecture is now perfectly enlightened. You will enjoy the charm and quiet of the priory itself and its four medieval inspired gardens **invite you to introspection.**

Rue de la vallée de Baudrimont 02600 HARAMONT +33 3 23 96 33 85 www.prieuredelongpre.com

les Fossés

Les Fossés is a cute Renaissance castle from the 15th century, erected on the foundations of a former medieval construction. It has been restored shortly before the war of 1870. Its park is formed of majestic trees including a Virginia tulip tree imported here during the 19th century. The limestone mansion reflection in the waters truly adds to the romantic character of this secret treasure. Alexandre Dumas himself lived here, way long before he became the famous author we all know today.

26 rue de la vallée de Baudrimont 02600 HARAMONT +33 3 23 96 85 98



La Muette



The gardens of La Muette are remarkable for several reasons. The way it has been designed offers the perfect balance between French and English garden styles. The park, shaped in terraces, hosts a hundred species of trees and bushes. Get lost into the fruit tree labyrinth and walk along the water path. Once on the 16th century terrace, enjoy the view above the vallée de l'Automne and on the forest of Retz. This little escapade will lead you to the box tree and roses garden where colors and smells melted for your greatest enjoyment.

2 rue du château 02600 LARGNY-SUR-AUTOMNE +33 6 45 50 84 76 www.jardinsdelamuette.com 🕮 🗚

les Charmettes

Les Charmettes have been imagined by Auguste Castellant during the 19th century. The man was a great admirer of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and organized great parties around Rousseau's philosophy and lifestyle. Even the name of the gardens is connected to Jean-Jacques Rousseau as it was the name of his property in Savoie. During your visit, you will discover and explore this mysterious English styled park where sources, ponds, caves, statues but also temples to Nature and Philosophy invite to contemplation.

4 route de Vez 02600 LARGNY-SUR-AUTOMNF A4







Electric bike rental



Looking for a bike ride in the forest of Retz? You can rent a mountain bike or an electrical bike to start your exploration of the exceptional forest and its treasures.

Hotel de l'abbaye

8 rue des tourelles 02600 Longpont (C3 +33 3 23 90 02 44 - www.hotel-abbaye-longpont.fr

Cycles du Retz 94 rue du général Leclerc 02600 Villers-Cotterêts AB4 +33 3 23 72 61 32 - www.cyclesduretz.fr

How to get a fishing license?

In France, you are not allowed to fish freely. You need to get a license to be allowed to practice. The easier way to buy one is to go the Decathlon store, located in Soissons, where the staff will help you to choose the proper license according to your needs.



Parc des Moulins - 02200 SOISSONS D2



Cruises on the Ourcg canal

Port-aux-Perches is an unmissable place that combines typical French "guinguette", cabaret,

theme days and cruises on the Ourcg. With family or friends, enjoy the restaurant or lunch cruise aboard the boat Le Clignon. You will savour local menus cooked by the chef. The atmosphere is assured by musicians playing a repertoire from the 30's to nowadays and cabaret artists who will drive you to an off-beat world full of glitter, glitz, humor and emotion. Compulsory reservation.

2-4 rue François Mitterrand 02460 SILLY-LA-POTERIE

+33 6 29 05 56 91 - www.portauxperches.fr 🕮 C5







Parc Canopée

Parc Canopée offers eleven courses in height, fully equipped in line of continuous life, 1 metre to 20 meters from the ground. Tyrolean of 80 meters, jump of Tarzan, nets, Nepalese bridge and Monkey Bridge will make the joy of the big ones. Children are not forgotten with three adapted courses, mixing huts and balance games. The park also offers cross-country skateboarding, racing orientation and benjee-jump for hours of thrills.

D943 - rue de la Foulée 02290 AMBLENY +33 6 10 47 53 02 www.canopeeaventure.com

Paintball Retz tactical games

Retz Tactical games is 16,000 square meters to practice paintball and airsoft in the forest. Come take colors! The land is equipped with structures and wooden fortifications to test your tactical mind with family or friends. The management team is composed by experienced players who would be glad to guide you and make your experience a wonderful adventure!

Route du moulin - 02600 LARGNY-SUR-AUTOMNE +33 6 73 47 28 06 A4





Swimming pool

To stay in good shape or to have fun with friends or family, our swimming pool is the good idea that will ravish everyone with its indoor and outdoor pools. Even the youngest one will enjoy the summer vibes thanks to the outdoor paddling pool. Ready to dive in?

Rue Alfred Juneaux 02600 VILLERS-COTTERÊTS +33 3 23 96 18 27 B4

Discover the territory on horseback



Between woods and open countryside, our region is vast to explore. One of the best to do it is on a horseback. Whatever is you are a one day rider or a confirmed cavalier, our equestrians schools are the perfect places to find your equine companion for long rides or jumping. Get in touch with one of the school and get your riding boots!

Les écuries du pas Saint-Martin

12, rue des Fosses - AMBLENY (C2) +33 3 23 74 05 92 ecuriedupassaintmartin.ffe.com

Les écuries du Rozé

384, rue de Roche - BERNY-RIVIÈRE (B2) +33 6 85 20 98 64 - www.ecuries-du-roze.fr

Le centre équestre de Berny-Rivière

42, rue de la Fabrique - BERNY-RIVIÈRE (B2) +33 6 25 62 47 40

L'école française d'équitation de Dampleux

5 route de Fleury - DAMPLEUX (C4) +33 3 23 96 20 83 equitation.dampleux.perso.neuf.fr

Myequidream

2 bis, hameau de la Grille - LONGPONT (C3) +33 6 07 25 88 58 - www.myequidream.com

Le centre équestre de Villers-Cotterêts

40, route de Compiègne VILLERS-COTTERÊTS (B4) +33 3 23 96 42 18 centreequestre-villerscotterets.ffe.com



Move

How to go to Paris?

You might want to take advantage of being in the Aisne to go to Paris. Here are our tips for getting to Paris easily:

- It is possible to go Paris by car, using the national road 2 (RN2). It will lead you directly to Paris. However, there are often traffic jams and it might be tricky (and expensive!) to find somewhere to park the car all day long while you are enjoying museums and shopping.
- However you have to stick to a time of departure, we recommend going to Paris by train.

Three train stations, located in Villers-Cotterêts, Compiègne and Soissons will get you to the train station Paris-Gare du Nord in less than one hour. From this train station, you'll be able to take the underground and buy a one day ticket which allows you to travel as much as you wish during the day.

How to go to amusement park?

Disneyland

As Disneyland is close, we recommend you go by car. It's easy and there are parking spots right next to the park (these are not free) and so you'll be able to enjoy an entire day with Mickey and his friends. Getting to Disneyland is in the same direction as Paris. Take RN2 towards Paris and then, just follow the sign with Mickey (dress like a magician) on it. It can't be easier!

Parc Astérix

To meet the most popular French comic book hero, the small but powerful Gallic Astérix, we recommend you to go by car. Take RN2 into the direction of Paris. The entrance to the park is on the highway A1. There are car parks next to the Park (these are not free). Let's go for a funny day with Astérix and his friend Obélix who fell into the magic potion when he was little.





You have been greeted by:









Ségolène





Where am I?

Y

To come visit us



Airport:

Roissy Charles de Gaulle 45 min



Ferry:

Calais 2h30



Train station:

Villers-Cotterêts



Motorway:

Nationale 2 or A1





6, place Aristide Briand - 02600 Villers-Cotterêts +33 3 23 96 55 10 / ot@retzenvalois.fr

> JANUARY-NOVEMBER-DECEMBER from Monday to Saturday 9:30-12:30 / 13:30-17:30

FEBRUARY-MARCH-APRIL-MAY-OCTOBER from Monday to Saturday 9:30-12:30 / 14:00-18:00

JUNE-JULY-AUGUST-SEPTEMBER From Tuesday to Saturday 9:30-12:30 / 14:00-18:00

On Sunday 10:00-12:45 / 13:30-17:00 BANK HOLIDAYS: consult us

Summer Tourist Office

Camping de la Croix du Vieux Pont 8 rue de la Fabrique - 02290 Berny-Rivière

PARIS •

Tourist Office of Retz-en-Valois



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Office de tourisme