



# Motorbike Trip Around the Argonne region

Leaving from : Sainte-Ménéhould (51) - Distance : 284 km

Joy of driving



Tourist attractions



Ease for two



Unfurling its wooded expanses across three départements, the Argonne region (whose Celtic name, Argoat, means 'land of wood') has known some of the most troubled pages of France's history. Today, this sparsely inhabited region offers lovers of small country roads a rural, picturesque route to discover.

## Sainte-Ménéhould > Lac de Bairon

A few hundred metres and already the scenery is changing. Take the D63 out of **Sainte-Ménéhould** towards Moirment, passing through the centre of the town, and after a few bends you will leave the flats of the Champagne region and its sometimes monotonous vastness behind, heading into a new biotope better suited to letting your motorbike engine bloom: small roads, hints of wood and bends climbing up and down the hillsides.



The Argonne region's topology forms a transition between the Champagne plains and the Lorraine coastline. Alternating between medium-height plateaus (around 300m) and drops, sometimes sheer, drained away by the Aire and Meuse valleys the Argonne region is in a sense born at Sainte-Ménéhould.

Before heading out onto the road you may wish to spend some time walking round the town or even stop off for longer to try the world-renowned local speciality of pig's trotters. Rolled in breadcrumbs, baked in the oven and served hot, it has been the town's signature dish since 1790.



But now it's time to head back to the road. After Moirment you will follow alongside the forest as far as Vienne-la-Ville before arriving at **Vienne-le-Château**. Head on through this village, admiring its church and picturesque orthogonal bell tower, and turn left at the wayside cross onto the D38 towards **Varennnes-en-Argonne**. History lovers will want to stop off in the forest, where you can visit the shelter used by Crown Prince Wilhelm of Prussia, from where he commanded operations in 1916. A small road takes you up to this well-preserved shelter, even if you have to finish the final 500 metres on foot.



### Sightseeings

#### Camp Moreau

RD 63 (between Vienne-le-Château et Binarville)  
51800 Vienne-le-Château  
T 03 26 60 49 40  
[www.argonne.fr](http://www.argonne.fr)



Guided tour of a German rest camp. Open on Saturdays from 09.00 to 12.00, and on the 2nd and 4th Sunday afternoons of July, August and September. Admission 5€.

#### Sainte-Ménéhould Museum

Place du Général Leclerc  
51800 Sainte-Ménéhould - T 03 26 60 80 21  
[www.ville-sainte-menehould.fr](http://www.ville-sainte-menehould.fr)

The new museum presents the history of the city and its region.

#### Fortified Church of Saint-Juvin

08250 Saint-Juvin. Open from Easter to All Saints' Day.

#### the Comtes de Joyeuse Castle

08250 Grandpré. Outside on free access every day from May to October.

Nine kilometres further on the Varennes-en-Argonne museum turns a new page in the history of this forest region, notably back to the arrest of the royal family on 22nd June 1791. If you can find the time to visit this museum, located in the centre of the market town. At Varennes-en-Argonne, take a left onto the D946. This main road, which you will now be following for a few dozen kilometres, dives down into the heart of the Ardennes region. The D946 is less wooded but still attracts tourists as it is on well signposted the 'forests, lakes and abbeys' trail.



The fortified church of Saint-Juvin and the Comtes de Joyeuse Castle in Grandpré are worth a look.

On your road, the **Argonne Discovery Park** offers an opportunity to see up close the life of forest at night-time, as well as to get close to the wolves which have been living in the wild in this region for centuries.



Back on the D946, you arrive at **Vouziers**. Watch out for the speed camera as you head into this town, after which you can either head left along the D977 towards Chesne or spend a few moments visiting Vouziers. From the small market town of Chesne you can also reach the Bairon lake, two bodies of water with a surface area of 120 hectares separated by a dam, which you will need to cross in order to get to the other bank and continue along the route. This water source supplies the Ardennes canal.

## Lac de Bairon > Verdun

After leaving Bairon lake rejoin the D977 heading towards Sedan. Some large bends after the small village of Tannay will let you lean a bit on your bike, although of course in moderation. But make sure you turn immediately left to cross the Mont-Dieu forest and reach the town of the same name, the least populated in the Ardennes region, whose residents are known as 'Montagnards Divins' or 'divine mountain dwellers'! Tree-loving bikers will enjoy seeing the oak, more than 350 years old, which has pride of place in this forest; others won't forget to enjoy the serenity of the panoramic view when the small road drops down towards the Chartreuse du Mont-Dieu (only outside visible), an old monastery founded in 1137 and then converted into a prison before rightly becoming a historic monument.

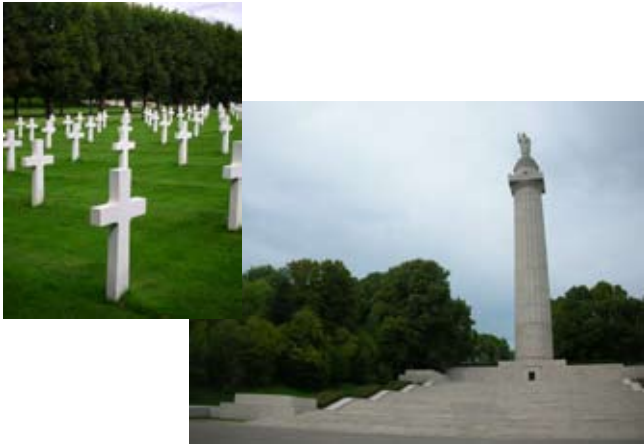


The next section of the itinerary is flowing with history, with battle sites following one after another. After you leave Les Grandes-Armoises there is a succession of hairpin bends to delight fans of tight trajectories. Just above, the **Butte de Stonne** – whose village was taken and retaken 17 times in four days during 1940 and then later reconstructed – offers an excellent opportunity to appreciate the undulating panorama torn apart by the protagonists of the Second World War.



Before you reach Buzancy, where we recommend a stop as we are just about halfway round this trip, you can make a quick detour via the village of Autruche, which has specialised in raising ostriches since 1999!

Leaving Buzancy by the D12, historic sites become more and more frequent. The **Montfaucon-en-Argonne** memorial is truly imposing.



From here, we are only twenty-odd kilometres (via the D18 and D38) from the epicentre of the conflict. The battlefield area, which forms a loop beginning in Bras-sur-Meuse leading back towards **Verdun**, bears witness to the violence and horror of the conflict. Military cemeteries, battlefields, the Douaumont ossuary, remains of destroyed villages and a museum offer enough lessons to prevent history from repeating itself. Be careful on this road as it is very busy at weekends and during school holidays, when buses and camper vans abound.

### Verdun > Sainte-Ménéhould

The city of Verdun's architecture is not especially appealing. Leaving on the D603 towards Châlons-en-Champagne or Sainte-Ménéhould, you are entering the third part of this route, consisting of a final loop through the southern part of the Argonne forest. Heading down the D34 you'll be running alongside a different ecosystem, that of the Lorraine natural park. Fork to the left onto the D159 towards Souilly then Ippécourt, allowing you to briefly follow the **Voie Sacrée** linking Bar-le-Duc to Verdun, a road which was of vital importance in 1916 to fuel the Battle of Verdun and evacuate the injured. Today, it is estimated that a million men and 1.2 million tons of material passed along here.

After Ippécourt the countryside once more regains some of its woody features. The D21 towards Triaucourt-en-Argonne snakes wonderfully through the countryside as it follows a little waterway. After Givry-en-Argonne, heading due north back to the starting point, you will be charmed by pretty villages full of half-timbered buildings as well as by the hamlet of Chemin, where it is the church that is built in this style. There is no doubt that the Argonne region offers plenty of contrasts. A few kilometres further on the D63 takes us back to Sainte-Ménéhould, right at the spot where the loop began!

### Great little restaurants

**Sainte-Ménéhould** You can't pass through here without tasting the famous pig's trotters ! **L'Auberge de Soleil d'Or** - 2 rue Chanzy, T 03 26 60 82 49 - welcomes you into its rustic and warm surroundings. Menus €8 to €30.

Nearby, the **Cheval Rouge** comes just as highly recommended (1 rue Chanzy, T 03 26 60 81 04); if you still have room, make sure you try the brioche French toast for dessert! Menu €12.

**Vouziers** The restaurant **Le Saint-Honoré** - 54 rue Bournizet, T 03 24 71 67 03 - offers inventive cuisine in colourful surroundings, blending the traditions of the south-west with local produce. Menus €11.50 to €18.

**On the Bairon lake, the restaurant Le Panoramic** (T 03 24 30 65 37) is a great place for a quick refreshing stop. Closed Monday. Menus €10 to €15.

**Grandpré** the **Domaine de Montfrix** (T 03 24 30 52 87) offers its guest house rooms and table in a typical house built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century inside a vast farm with cattle and saddle horses. Bed and breakfast since 40€, meal by booking 14€.

**Verdun** The restaurant **Le Bon Séjour** is famed for its grills and pizzas (33 route de Metz, T 03 29 84 66 63). Daily menu €14. Open Tues-Sun all year round.

### Sightseeings

#### Parc Argonne Découverte - Nocturnia

RD 946 - Bois de Roucy, between Vouziers and Grandpré  
08250 Olizy-Primat  
T 03 24 710 738  
[www.parc-argonne-decouverte.fr](http://www.parc-argonne-decouverte.fr)



Open on Saturdays and Sundays during February french holidays (B Zone), in September and in October, from 10.00 to 18.00. Every day from April the 1<sup>st</sup> to November the 7<sup>th</sup> from 10.00 to 6.00 (7.00 in July and August). Admission 10€.

#### Lake de Bairon

08390 Le Chesne

A lake of some 120 hectares consisting of two parts : a natural lake boasts a preserved ecosystem and a reservoir lake devoted to water sports ...

#### First World War heritage

**Around Verdun** : Memorial of the battle of Verdun, Douaumont ossuary. T 03 29 84 14 18 - [www.verdun-tourisme.com](http://www.verdun-tourisme.com)

**Around Suippes** : Massiges tanches, Navarin and Blanc-Mont monuments, Marne 14-18 museum : T 03 26 66 30 59 - [www.marne14-18.fr](http://www.marne14-18.fr)



[www.tourisme-champagne-ardenne.com](http://www.tourisme-champagne-ardenne.com)



Map : Michelin.

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# Road book Around the Argonne region

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Stage	Direction	Towards	On	Km in section	Total km
<b>1<sup>st</sup> section</b>					
Sainte-Ménéhould	↑	Vienne-la-Ville	<b>D63</b>	10	<b>10</b>
Vienne-la-Ville	→	Vienne-le-Château	<b>D63</b>	4	<b>14</b>
Vienne-le-Château	→	La Harazée	<b>D67</b>	4	<b>18</b>
Carrefour	←	Varennnes-en-Argonne	<b>D38</b>	9	<b>27</b>
Varennnes-en-Argonne	←	Vouziers	<b>D946</b>	40	<b>67</b>
Vouziers	→	Sedan	<b>D977</b>	16	<b>83</b>
Le Chesne	←	Lac de Bairon	<b>D991</b>	1	<b>84</b>
Carrefour	→	Lac de Bairon	<b>D212</b>	2	<b>86</b>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> section</b>					
Lac de Bairon	→	Le Chesne	<b>D312</b>	3	<b>89</b>
Carrefour	→	Le Chesne	<b>D12</b>	1	<b>90</b>
Carrefour	←	Sedan	<b>D977</b>	7	<b>97</b>
Carrefour	→	Forêt du Mont-Dieu	<b>D230A</b>	5	<b>102</b>
Carrefour	←	Stonne	<b>D30</b>	4	<b>106</b>
Stonne	→	Buzancy	<b>D24</b>	16	<b>122</b>
Carrefour	←	Buzancy	<b>D947</b>	2	<b>124</b>
Buzancy	→	Bayonville	<b>D12</b>	5	<b>129</b>
Bayonville	↑	Bantheville	<b>D12 puis D15</b>	10	<b>139</b>
Bantheville	↑	Montfaucon-en-Argonne	<b>D15</b>	11	<b>150</b>
Montfaucon-en-Argonne	→	Verdun	<b>D15 puis D18</b>	7	<b>157</b>
Malancourt	↑	Esne-en-Argonne puis Chattancourt	<b>D18</b>	5	<b>162</b>
Carrefour	←	Esne-en-Argonne puis Chattancourt	<b>D38</b>	14	<b>176</b>
Chattancourt	↑	Bras-sur-Meuse	<b>D38 puis D115</b>	8	<b>184</b>
Bras-sur-Meuse	↑	Les champs de bataille puis Verdun	<b>D913</b>	13	<b>197</b>
Carrefour	→	Verdun	<b>D603</b>	5	<b>202</b>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> section</b>					
Verdun	↑	Châlons-en-Champagne	<b>D603</b>	2	<b>204</b>
Carrefour	←	Dugny-sur-Meuse	<b>D34</b>	10	<b>214</b>
Ancemont	→	Souilly	<b>D159</b>	10	<b>224</b>
Carrefour	←	Heippes	<b>Voie sacrée</b>	1	<b>225</b>
Souilly	→	Ippécourt	<b>D21</b>	6	<b>231</b>
Ippécourt	↑	Triaucourt-en-Argonne	<b>D20</b>	16	<b>247</b>
Triaucourt-en-Argonne	→	Givry-en-Argonne	<b>D151</b>	3	<b>250</b>
Senard	←	Givry-en-Argonne	<b>D54</b>	12	<b>262</b>
Givry-en-Argonne	→	Sainte-Ménéhould	<b>D982</b>	2	<b>264</b>
La Neuville-aux-Bois	→	Bournonville	<b>D270</b>	4	<b>268</b>
Carrefour	→	Le Chemin	<b>D65</b>	3	<b>271</b>
Le Chemin	←	Sainte-Ménéhould	<b>D63</b>	13	<b>284</b>