

COLLINES  
ET PLAINES  
D'ARTOIS 14  
18  
HILLS AND PLAINS



# ARRAS / LENS 14-18

## THE INTERNATIONAL REMEMBRANCE DESTINATION



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ARRAS  
*Pays d'Artois*

LENS LIEVIN  
TOURISME

# HILLS AND PLAINS OF ARTOIS : ARRAS / LENS 14-18

## THE INTERNATIONAL REMEMBRANCE DESTINATION

Deeply scarred by the battle line that went through the plains of Lens and the hills of Artois during four long years, the Hills and Plains 14-18 destination in Artois offers a unique worldwide gathering of sites, memorials, cemeteries and museums of the Great War.

No less than 13 out of the 36 major sites of the Chemins de Mémoire are located between Lens and Arras. Among them, the Ring of Remembrance, international memorial of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette which gathers the names of 580,000 soldiers without distinction of rank or nationality and which welcomes almost as many visitors each year. The Canadian National Vimy Memorial or the Wellington Quarry, the Battle of Arras Memorial, offers an immersive experience 20 meters underground, in the footsteps of New Zealand tunnelers. These sites are a must-see and will forever leave their scars through the landscape of the hills and plains of Artois. So many walks and detours that invite you to explore while biking and hiking, with a guide or even on your own...

The Hills and Plains 14-18 destination in Artois is also an opportunity to discover the Louvre-Lens museum and its masterpieces, to taste a craft beer on Arras squares, to watch a soccer game and to feel the special atmosphere of the Bollaert stadium, or to face the rapids of Riverside Park in rafting ... only 50 minutes from Paris, it's time to live the gist.



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© Aurélie Leclercq / Lens-Liévin Tourisme



© Lens-Liévin Tourisme

### HOW TO COME

#### BY MOTORWAY

2hrs from Paris  
 2hrs 30 from Brussels  
 3hrs 30 from London (motorways and Channel Tunnel)

#### BY TRAIN ARRAS OR LENS RAILWAY STATION

1hr from Paris by TGV, with about 6 connections per day by Lens and 5 additional connections by Arras  
 2 hrs from Brussels (via Lille)  
 2 hrs from London (Eurostar and TER link from Lille)

#### BY PLANE

Roissy Charles de Gaulle airport (Paris) then by motorway or TGV  
 Heathrow airport (London) then by motorway or Eurostar  
 From Brussels airport then by motorway or train

## BETWEEN LENS AND ARRAS. THE STORY OF A SHARED HISTORY

Between Lens and Arras, on the hills and plains of Artois, the history of the world and of entire nations unfolded a little over a hundred years ago, written by thousands of men whose stories are still told today to keep them alive in our memories. Today, people come from all over the world to relive this history, to remember those who lived through the war and to discover remembrance sites that pay tribute to them.

It is often geography that writes history. Here, during the First World War, this idea naturally became reality. In 1915, the front line crossed the hills of the Artois region; Vimy Ridge and Lorette Hill, which overlooked the coalfields, attracted all the action: the high points had to be taken to push back the front. For the duration of the conflict, this would be the focus of all of the battles in Artois for the French troops and then for the British. These battles were especially deadly and the human losses were considerable. In 1915, Lorette Hill was frighteningly nicknamed "the hill of 100,000 deaths"...

When the British entered the war to protect and support Belgium, which had been invaded by Germany, they quickly called on their colonies to strengthen their army. Men from all over the world volunteered to enlist, some even lied about their age and sometimes travelled thousands of miles and crossed oceans to come and fight at Souchez, Loos-en-Gohelle or Roclincourt, on the Artois front, which quickly gave it a unique international dimension. For the entire duration of the conflict, some 60 nations fought in Artois from the British colonies of the Foreign Legion.



This included Canadians, New Zealanders, Australians, Indians or Scots and many of them will never return home, buried where they fell, at Vimy, Neuville-Saint-Vaast, Ablain-Saint-Nazaire, Thélus. Some will never be found and will forever rest in the ground we walk on. One hundred years on, their families, their descendants who never knew them, now cross the same oceans, cover the same miles to retrace their steps and pay their respects for a few long minutes at their graves. Here, international history often meets personal matters...

The memorial tourism that we know today is not new: it was in fact around during the war, even before the armistice was signed. In 1916, the Michelin guides appeared, which were very quickly translated into English, suggesting to the families of the missing that they visit the ruins and battlefields, in areas that were sometimes extremely inaccessible, in search of a grave or the place where a husband, a son or a brother had fallen.

These pilgrimages were often arranged from Arras, where the tourist office was established in 1919 opposite the station and in response to these needs: shuttle bus tours were put on, guides accompanied the groups, and hotels and restaurants opened on the route or near the former battlefields to welcome the families who visited from all over France and even all over the world. Everything we know today already came to rest there 100 years ago...

While further afield abroad, the history that unfolded on the hills and plains of Artois is well-known, shared and passed on by the British and the residents of the Commonwealth countries, in France it has been overshadowed by the events that took place at Verdun. It was not until the enlightenment brought by the Centenary of the First World War, from 2014 to 2018, that the French truly discovered the importance and unique international character of the battles of Artois.



These men who came to write their own history also wrote the history of their family and their nation: it is in fact said that it is on the fronts of the First World War that several former British colonies such as Canada, New Zealand or Australia, laid their foundations: "they entered the war with dominion status (colonies), they came out of the war as nations."

It's no coincidence that the Canadian Vimy Memorial is on the Canadian 20 dollar note! It was after the Battle of Vimy Ridge, which was won in April 1917 by Canadian divisions fighting together for the first time, that these soldiers developed a strong sense of belonging to the same nation. This is why it is said that Canada was born here at Vimy.

On the hills and plains of Artois, every town and village has its own memorial or war cemetery. Life has been rebuilt where there was once death on an immense scale and today, calmer landscapes have replaced the battlefields- places that were once destroyed are coming back to life and now welcome hikers, walkers and sportsmen, with sober and subdued monuments paying tribute to the soldiers. The beauty of these places has been restored. These places have a rare emotional power: they tell a story of hope, resilience, rebirth, peace, the strength of the return to life...

The story that unfolded here from 1915 to 1918 is still told throughout the world today: in Wellington, New Zealand, the last memorial to be inaugurated, in March 2021, was for Pacific war service in the form of a conch shell. This same type of shell was found in an underground tunnel in Arras, which was taken and placed there by a New Zealand Maori soldier.

From one end of the world to the other, from one point in time to the other, war creates connections between people. It is this emotion and all these shared stories that the tourist offices of Arras Pays d'Artois and Lens-Liévin wish to pass on and tell by creating the international tourist destination of "Collines et Plaines d'Artois 14-18".



## THE AREAS

### ARRAS AND THE ARTOIS REGION

The area is ideally located halfway between the major capitals of Northern Europe, less than two hours from London and Brussels, and 50 minutes from Paris. That's why the Artois region is a favourite destination for those seeking a relaxing weekend getaway, an action-packed week or an inspiring holiday.

The unmistakable architectural backdrop of the capital of Artois, the timeless charm of the scenery and the picturesque villages of the Artois region create a timeless setting, shaped by 20 centuries of history, where nature and heritage intertwine to support an authentically relaxed way of life and nurture the wonderful encounters.



### LENS-LIEVIN

With the establishment of the Louvre-Lens Museum in 2012, the inclusion of the mining basin on the UNESCO World Heritage List in the same year, and the development of the First World War memorial sites, particularly during the 14-18 Centenary period, Lens-Liévin has become an attractive short-stay tourist destination just 1 hour from Paris and 30 minutes from Lille.

In addition to these symbolic sites, the area gives you the chance to feel powerful emotions and indulge in simple pleasures: a match at Bollaert stadium, a beer and chips with your partner or friends, hiking up the spoil heaps, searching for a family name on the Ring of Remembrance, a visit with your children to the Louvre-Lens Museum, etc. Here, we nurture the art of simplicity and the sense of what is truly important.



## ZOOM: OUR MAJOR SITES

Nowadays, the destination Collines et Plaines d'Artois 14-18 includes the main remembrance sites on the Western Front which tell the story of how the whole world came to fight in Artois.

### DUD CORNER AND LOOS MEMORIAL

#### "We died because our fathers lied!"

The Loos Memorial, located in the Dud Corner Cemetery, commemorates the 20,000 soldiers of the British Imperial Army who have no known grave. Most were killed in the Battle of Loos in September and October of 1915. Among the fallen was John Kipling, the only son of the author of *The Jungle Book*. His son's death caused Rudyard Kipling immense grief. In his war epitaphs, he wrote this now famous phrase: "If any question why we died, / Tell them, because our fathers lied"



© Mélanie Lefebvre / Lens-Liévin Tourisme

### NATIONAL NECROPOLIS OF NOTRE-DAME DE LORETTE

#### The largest French war cemetery

In the post-conflict period, the French government built what would become France's largest national necropolis on the Notre-Dame de Lorette plateau, the theater of grim battles in May 1915. 20,000 individual graves were established there and the bodies of 22,000 other unknown soldiers were grouped together in eight ossuaries, including the one in the lantern tower. It is the memory of those who died for France that the Honorary Guards of Notre-Dame de Lorette watch over every day from March to November.

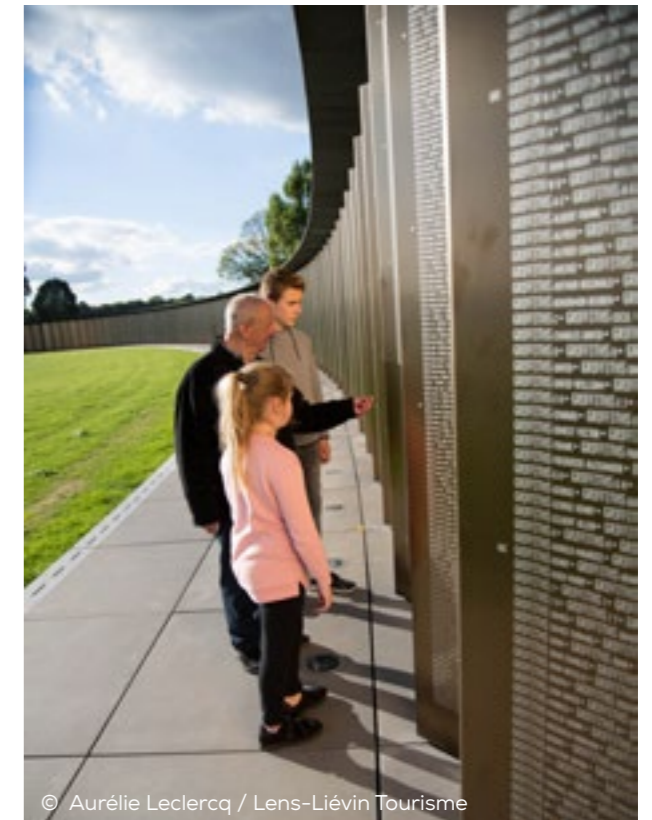


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### THE RING OF REMEMBRANCE

#### All equal and united in death

The unique architecture of the Ring of Remembrance, which is set on the side of the hill, is the work of Philippe Prost. The Ring has a circumference of more than 345 metres, including 56 metres hanging over the side of the hill, reminding us of the fragile balance of this newfound peace. Inaugurated by the French President on 11 November 2014, it lists the names of the 580,000 soldiers killed in the Nord and Pas-de-Calais regions between 1914 and 1918, now united in a posthumous fraternity. They are arranged in alphabetical order and, for the first time, with no distinctions between nationality, rank, gender or religion.



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### HISTORY CENTER OF THE MEMORIAL 14-18 NOTRE-DAME-DE-LORETTE

#### Recounting the war in images

At the foot of the hill of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette in Souchez, a black concrete and glass building, designed by the architect Pierre-Louis Faloci, houses the History Centre. Here, you can see historical objects, previously unseen and high-quality photos, period films and animated maps that give an understanding of the scale of the conflict in Nord-Pas-de-Calais during World War I. More than 300 large-format photographs, both official and anonymous, taken by soldiers, plunge us into the harrowing reality of this terrible war.



© P. Chancel

## CABARET-ROUGE BRITISH CEMETERY

**“There’s some corner of a foreign field that is for ever England” (Rupert Brooke, the Soldier)**

As you come into Souchez there used to be an establishment called the Cabaret Rouge before the war. Although the place has now gone, it gave its name to the war cemetery that the Imperial War Graves Commission set up in 1917 to bring together the remains of 103 burial places in Nord-Pas de Calais. Located between the French cemetery of Notre-Dame de Lorette and the German cemetery at la Maison Blanche, this cemetery reflects the very British spirit that prevails in the arrangement of Commonwealth cemeteries.



© Arras Pays d'Artois Tourisme

## THE GERMAN WAR CEMETERY NECROPOLIS AT LA MAISON BLANCHE

**“Reconciliation over the graves”**

The Maison Blanche Cemetery is the largest German war cemetery in France. Built by the French at the end of the war, it holds the remains of 44,833 soldiers who fell in Artois. The VDK (Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge, German War Graves Commission) refurbished the cemetery in the 1970s. At the entrance, a cross bears these words inscribed in French: “Paix aux hommes de bonne volonté”, which means peace to men of good will. They underline one of the VDK’s purposes: “Reconciliation over the graves”.



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## VIMY RIDGE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA

**Vimy, the birthplace of modern Canada**

The memorial’s two white pylons and their twenty sculpted figures stand proudly in the middle of a 107-hectare park overlooking the mining land. It commemorates the sacrifice of 11,285 Canadian soldiers who were killed in action in France during the Great War but have no known grave. The pylons are erected on the spot where, on 10 April 1917, the Canadian troops, united for the first time within the same army corps, captured Vimy Ridge, constituting a defining moment in the history of the nation.



© JP Godbout / Anciens Combattants Canada

## THE WELLINGTON TUNNEL

**Allied soldiers emerge from beneath the ground...**

As a distraction from the planned French offensive on the Chemin des Dames, the British army launched a huge surprise attack on 9 April 1917 in front of Arras. On that morning, almost 24,000 soldiers, gathered in old underground chalk tunnels close to the German lines, emerged from beneath the ground to mount their attack. By exploring one of the underground networks where these men lived, the Wellington Quarry offers insight into the preparation for the Battle of Arras and how it unfolded.



© Arras Pays d'Artois Tourisme

## AUSTRALIAN MEMORIAL PARK OF BULLECOURT

### The Diggers assault the Hindenburg Line

In April and then May 1917, to support the offensive at the front of Arras, the 5th British Army attacked the village of Bullecourt, a strong link in the German defensive arrangement of the Hindenburg Line. Both operations were failures. The five Australian divisions that were involved suffered nearly 10,000 casualties. It is this defining moment for the Australian nation that the statue of the Digger commemorates. He is literally "the one who digs to protect himself from the shells".



## FAUBOURG D'AMIENS CEMETERY AND ARRAS MEMORIAL

The cemetery contains the graves of 2 652 Commonwealth soldiers, as well as the graves of some German prisoners of war. The surrounding wall, a memorial, bears the names of 35 926 British, New Zealand and South African combatants who fell in the Arras sector and whose bodies were never found. A memorial is also dedicated to the Royal Flying Corp, the British air force personnel killed on the Western Front during the Great War.



## AYETTE INDIAN AND CHINESE CEMETERY

### Asian workers in the Great European War

The Avette Indian and Chinese Cemetery contains the war graves of 80 workers from the East who died at the Artois and Somme fronts. To make up for the lack of labour, the British army recruited volunteer workers in Egypt, South Africa, India and China. These men carried out logistical tasks in the rear bases on the coast and along the front. Some of them also took part in the reconstruction work in the post-war period.



## THE CWGC VISITOR CENTRE - COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES IN FRANCE

The CWGC Visitor Centre is a unique new visitor attraction in Beaurains, near Arras in France that shines a light on the work of the remarkable organization at the heart of remembrance of the war dead. For the first time, visitors will be able to take a look behind-the-scenes at the work that is needed to commemorate the Commonwealth casualties from the First and Second World Wars.



## OFFERS

### CYCLING TOUR - 1 DAY

Between Lens and Arras, the Hills and Plains of Artois destination concentrates an impressive number of memorial sites, which each year attract a public from all over the world to remember. These are the remembrance trails that we suggest you cycle through during a 35-kilometer memorial ride crossing the main sites of the territory: the Canadian Vimy Memorial, the German military cemetery at the White House, the Memorial 14- 18 Notre-Dame de Lorette, the ruined towers of the Mont-Saint-Eloi abbey...

A convivial day to discover its moving places, retracing the history of the men who lived through the First World War.

35 km - Lunch included



### BATTLEFIELD TOUR - 3 HRS

A land steeped in history, the sector of the Artois hills was dissected by the front line from 1914 to 1918. Cemeteries and memorials carry nowadays the scars and verify the intensity of the human sacrifice. Going through these cemeteries reveal to us the diversity of the tributes paid to soldiers according to their nation of origin. This tour will take you from the Ring of Remembrance and the International Necropolis of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette to the Canadian Vimy Memorial, passing through the Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery and the Maison Blanche German Cemetery.



## HILLS AND PLAINS OF ARTOIS : AN INTERNATIONAL BATTLEFRONT

### 3 DAYS - 2 NIGHTS

From 10 to 50 people. Bus rental not included.

#### DAY 1

- Guided tour of Arras : the Squares & the Arts District (1h30)
- Arras upside down (1h15) : Belfry & tasting of local beers and cheeses in the Boves, underground galleries of Arras
- Dinner in a typical restaurant of Arras, nestling in cellar or under archways
- Night in the Mercure hotel \*\*\*\*

#### DAY 2

- Visit of the Wellington Tunnels, memorial of the Battle of Arras (1h30)
- The CWGC Visitor Centre : Commonwealth War Graves in France (1h)
- Lunch in a typical restaurant of Arras, nestling in cellar or under archways
- Guided tour of the Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery in Souchez (1h)
- Guided tour of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial (1h30)
- Guided tour of the Mémorial'14-18 Notre-Dame-de-Lorette (2h)
- Dinner & Night in The Louvre-Lens Hotel\*\*\*\* in Lens

#### DAY 3

- Guided tour at the Louvre-Lens museum (1h30)
- Lunch in a local restaurant





## CONTACTS

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