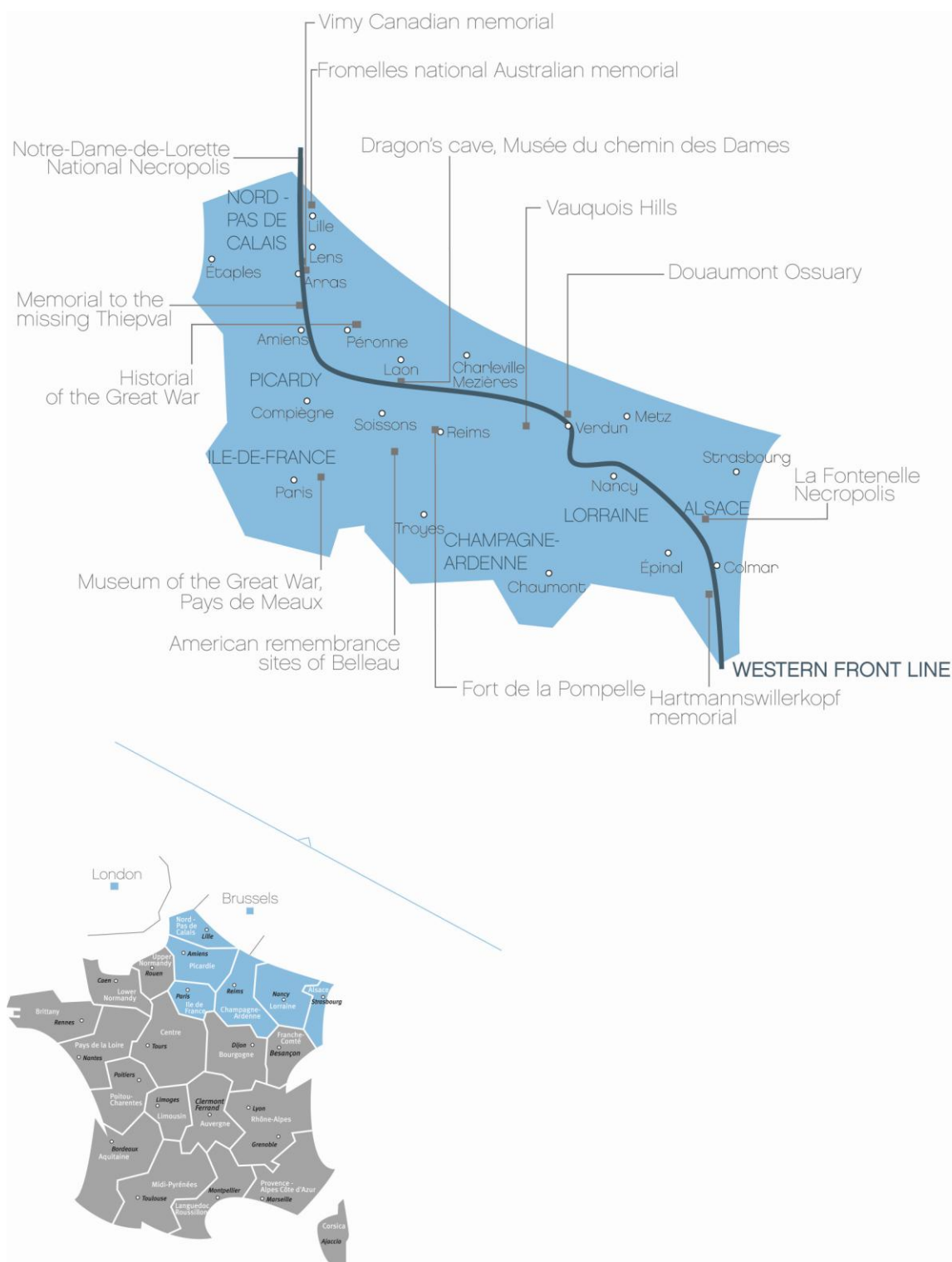




France commemorates the Great War:

The top 14 sites to visit

In 2014, France is commemorating the centenary of the Great War. In this document, you will find information on the top 14 memorial sites on the Western Front to visit during your next stay in France. Several events are taking place to pay tribute to the soldiers who fell during this worldwide conflict.



Nord-Pas de Calais

NOTRE-DAME-DE-LORETTE NATIONAL NECROPOLIS

Between Lens and Arras, the Artois Hills are home to numerous memorial sites created to pay homage to the men of the French army who fell, particularly in the offensives of May and September 1915 in the region. Notre-Dame-de-Lorette National Necropolis in Ablain-Saint-Nazaire, with 20,000 graves, and another 22,000 bodies of other soldiers in ossuaries, remains the largest military cemetery in France.

Upcoming event: On 11 November 2014, as part of the international Armistice ceremony, the [International Memorial to Fallen Soldiers in Nord-Pas de Calais during WWI](#) will open in Ablain-Saint-Nazaire.

FROMELLES AUSTRALIAN MEMORIAL PARK

'The worst 24 hours in the history of the Australian nation,' is how some described Australia's baptism of fire in the Battle of Fromelles on 19 July 1916. By the end of the day 5,533 Australian, 1,400 British and about 1,500 German soldiers had been killed, wounded or declared missing. Inaugurated in 1998, the monument is symbolic of the heroism and the sense of camaraderie shown by the soldiers of the Australian Imperial Force in their baptism of fire on European soil. A replica of this statue by sculptor Peter Corlett, who also designed the Digger of Bullecourt, can be seen on Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance.

Upcoming event: The [Bataille de Fromelles Museum](#) will open its doors in July 2014.

VIMY RIDGE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA

In total more than 60,000 Canadians lost their lives in the Great War, and the Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada (the official name of the memorial) pays tribute to their sacrifice. Several violent and bloody conflicts took place on the Artois Hills, strategic peaks overlooking mining areas. The Vimy Ridge site, located on land that France gifted to Canada, is one of Europe's most prestigious Canadian monuments. This historic memorial is engraved with the names of those who died in battle. It pays tribute to the 66,000 young Canadians who lost their lives in France and commemorates the battle of 9 April 1917.

Find out more: [Vimy Canadian Memorial](#)

Upcoming event in Nord-Pas de Calais:

From 28 May to 6 October 2014, the Louvre-Lens Museum is hosting the exhibition [The Disasters of War – 1800-2014](#).

PICARDY - Somme, the circuit of remembrance

HISTORIAL, MUSEUM OF THE GREAT WAR - PERONNE

The German occupation of the town of Péronne began in August 1914, and it immediately became a centre for intense military and logistical activity, particularly during the Battle of the Somme. Built by the Conseil Général de la Somme in 1992, the Historial of the Great War gives an introduction to the Circuit of Remembrance. This outstanding museum compares and objectively examines the painful experiences of the 3 main warring parties according to historical chronology. The Historial's collections of over 1,600 exhibited objects, and the quality of its temporary exhibitions give visitors an excellent understanding of the historical and military dimensions of the First World War. For more information: [Historial, Museum of the Great War](#)

Upcoming event: On 2 July 2014, The 6th Continent, a land art installation by landscape architect Gilles Clément, will be unveiled in Péronne.

MEMORIAL TO THE MISSING AT THIEPVAL

The fighting to take the hill and village of Thiepval began on 1 July and ended on 26 September 1916. In 1932 the British government decided to erect the Memorial to the Missing at Thiepval, an imposing brick and stone monument 45 m high, designed by the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens. It is the largest British war memorial in the world. It commemorates the 72,205 men of the British and South African armies who died or were reported as missing in action between July 1915 and March 1918. **The visitor centre will host a presentation on the role of Thiepval in the Battle of the Somme.** For more information: [Memorial to the Missing at Thiepval](#)

Upcoming event: From 1 July to 10 October 2014, Thiepval will welcome [The Lost Men France](#), a land art installation by South African artist Paul Emmanuel.

Upcoming event: From 12 to 14 September 2014, the Centenary of the Great War will be commemorated with an [airshow](#) in Amiens.

PICARDY - Aisne 1914-1918

LA CAVERNE DU DRAGON, CHEMIN DES DAMES MUSEUM

On the Chemin des Dames isthmus, at the narrowest point of the plateau, below the front lines, is the Caverne du Dragon, the Chemin des Dames museum. The site was an old stone quarry, in operation from the 16th to the 19th century, which became an underground barracks in the Great War. From 1915 it was taken over by German troops who installed electricity, gun positions and dressing stations. Visitors to the Caverne du Dragon can explore the many tunnels which bear witness to the presence of soldiers. The Caverne museum also holds temporary themed exhibitions. In light of the up and coming centenary, the existing reception building for the Caverne du Dragon will be rearranged to provide visitors with more information on the battlefields of the Chemin des Dames.

For more information: [Caverne du Dragon](#)

Upcoming event: From 16 April to 20 December 2014, the Museum will host the exhibition [September 2014: British Troops in Chemin des Dames](#).

BELLEAU

The wood at Belleau was the scene of terrible fighting from 6th to 25th June 1918. Using machine guns and fighting hand to hand, the Marines halted the German advance and gained mastery of the battlefield of Belleau Wood. For its baptism of fire, the 2nd Division suffered 7,876 dead, wounded or missing in action. Belleau Wood still has the remains of trenches, shell holes and ruins. A huge chapel with a neo-Romanesque bell tower, erected on the site of the trenches, dominates the American cemetery where nearly 2,300 soldiers rest in peace. Across the road, the village church faces the cemetery. At the centre of Belleau village stands the Remembrance Museum of Belleau 1914-1918, officially opened on 24th May 2008. For the American army, Belleau has become a symbol of commemoration on Memorial Day, a day dedicated to the memory of those young American soldiers who gave their lives to save France.

For more information: [Belleau](#)

Champagne-Ardenne

FORT DE LA POMPELLE

The Fort de la Pompelle played an important role in the 1914-1918 war. It was built between 1880 and 1883 as part of Reims' defences on the designs of General Séré de Rivières after the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871). It was the only fort to remain in the hands of the allied forces during WWI and protected the city of Reims. Reconverted into a museum, Fort de la Pompelle contains important military collections, including the unique Friese collection of some 560 items of headgear that belonged to the German imperial army.

For more information: [Fort de la Pompelle](#)

Upcoming event: In June 2014, the [Fort de la Pompelle and its museum are being renovated](#) so visitors can discover and understand this historic site and its heritage.

BATTLES OF THE MARNE MEMORIAL IN DORMANS

Set in the heart of the grounds of Dormans Castle, this Memorial is the largest memorial dedicated to the soldiers who fell during the battles of the Marne. The complex was built between 1921 and 1931 at the initiative of Marshal Foch and includes a crypt, a chapel and an ossuary containing the remains of a thousand soldiers of all nationalities. The building is the venue for numerous exhibitions which look at the First World War. The large museum area presents objects and photographs from the Great War and an impressive collection of craftwork from the trenches.

For more information: [Marne Memorials](#)

Upcoming event: In October 2014, Châlons-en-Champagne is hosting [War On Screen](#), the first film festival on the themes of war and conflict.

Lorraine – Verdun

DOUAUMONT OSSUARY

After the horror of over four years of dreadful war, the remains of 130,000 French and German soldiers were gathered from the devastated battlefield of Verdun and given a final resting place together in the Ossuary vaults. There is an audio-visual room with 120 seats on the lower ground floor with a film show: 'Verdun, the men of mud'.

For more information: [Douaumont Ossuary](#)

VAUQUOIS HILL

From 24 September 1914, the Germans occupied this hill and turned it into a fortress. After several offensives, the French regained control in March 1915. This signalled the start of a static battle of attrition that lasted for four years. In Argonne, prominent for the use of mines, the Vauquois Hill is the best example of underground "living" quarters. Now the subject of careful preservation, excellent guided visits clearly explain the combat in this reminder of hidden warfare in a subterranean world.

For more information: [Vauquois Hill](#)

Upcoming event: From 15 February to 21 September 2014, the Lorraine Museum in Nancy is hosting the exhibition [Summer 1914: Nancy and Lorraine in Wartime](#).

Upcoming event: From 20 June to 26 July 2014, the sound and light show [From Flames to Light](#) poignantly re-enacts the Battle of Verdun.

The Great War on the Vosges Front

NECROPOLE DE LA FONTENELLE

After the front was established on 12 September 1914 on Fontenelle Hill, a pre-war nursery school, the Germans and French found themselves in a head-on confrontation. On 23rd June 1915, with the help of the explosions of underground mines and the reinforcement of well-equipped heavy artillery, the Germans inflicted a severe defeat on the French by reaching the summit. However, on 8th and 23rd July of the same year, two violent counterattacks saw the French troops regain a foothold on the hill. 1,500 prisoners were taken. After 25th July, mine warfare raged while raids replaced frontal attacks in the trenches. Despite the determination of the Germans, the heights of La Fontenelle remained in French hands. In 1925, a monument was inaugurated near the cemetery containing the bodies of 2,348 French soldiers. The German soldiers were brought together at the cemetery of Senones.

For more information: [Nécropole de la Fontenelle](#)

MEMORIAL DU HARTMANNSWILLERKOPF

The Hartmannswillerkopf, given the abbreviation "HWK" by the German command, is a pyramid-shaped rocky outcrop that overlooks the south of the Plain of Alsace. In 1915, French infantrymen nicknamed it the "Vieil-Armand" and then described it as a "man-eater" or the "Mountain of Death". At a maximum height of 956 metres, its strategic position was at stake during fierce fighting between 26th December 1914 and 9th January 1915.

Estimated losses suggest a figure of 25,000 deaths on both sides. Among the 6,000 shelters built, half of them are still visible, marking a 90-kilometre route of trenches. The "Hartmannswillerkopf 14-18" National Monument is one of the four national monuments to the First World War in France.

For more information: [Hartmannswillerkopf](#)

Paris Ile-de-France

MUSEUM OF THE GREAT WAR, PAYS DE MEAUX

With a collection that is unique in Europe, the Museum of the Great War, Pays de Meaux offers a new perspective on the first global conflict, through innovative displays which illustrate the huge social changes and upheaval it caused. These attractive displays open up the Great War to people from all different backgrounds. From the reconstruction of a battlefield to the planes and tanks in the main gallery, through projections, soundscapes and interactive displays, the museum plays on visitors' senses (items to touch and handle, etc.) using the most up-to-date techniques.

For more information: [Museum of the Great War, Pays de Meaux](#)

Upcoming event: From 28 June to 30 December 2014, the museum is hosting the exhibition [Join Now! The British Empire Goes to War](#).

“The Western Front 14 – 18: When their Story Becomes our History”

This logo identifies all the regions on the Western Front that were affected by battles during the First World War. It conveys a message of peace that is focused on the future, inviting countries around the world to discover and share France’s shared history.

The flowers of remembrance symbolise the heavy losses suffered by all the nations that took part in the conflict: the blue cornflower for France, the forget-me-not for Germany and the poppy for the Commonwealth. The combination of these flowers reinforces the logo’s message of peace.

