



Diedendorf Castle

The castle's builder Jean Streiff von Lauenstein is the man behind the welches' arrival in the region. It was he who convinced the Count of Nassau-Saarbrücken to accept them. The Count gave him land at Diedendorf where he set about building the castle. This small fortified manor built in 1577 is typical of the architectural and ornamental style of the Alsatian Renaissance of the 16th century.

Take the time to visit it ...

The port of Harskirschen

The Houillères de la Sarre Canal and the canalized Sarre river together form a 105 km long waterway with 27 locks, constituting the western border of the Alsace Bossue area. The tow path, which was once used by horses to draw canal barges, today welcomes cyclists, rollerbladers, hikers and fishermen. It has never been so popular! By bicycle, this tow path can take you to Saarbrücken in Germany to the north and the Arzviller inclined plane in Moselle to the south.



The traditional orchards

The trees in the numerous orchards to be seen along the way are usually not treated. These include apple, plum and cherry trees, but also walnut and pear trees. These orchards are ecological biotopes. Why? Because they are home to a range of fauna and flora no longer found on intensively farmed plots using industrial agricultural methods. A thriving community found ONLY in the orchards.



An "Empress Eugénie" rest bench

On market days, country folk would make their way to the villages with their farm produce. The women would carry a basket on their heads while the men would carry one on their backs. During pauses along the way, these country people would place their baskets on the crossbeam while they themselves sat down on the bench. The "Empress Eugénie" rest benches were an initiative from the Prefect of the Bas-Rhin region, Auguste-César West, based on a wish expressed by Empress Eugénie de Montijo in 1853, at the time of the first anniversary of her marriage to Emperor Napoleon III. More than 400 of these commemorative monuments made from Vosges sandstone were erected along the Alsatian roads and trails.



THE NORTHERN WELCHE VILLAGE TRAIL



The complete Huguenot village trail covers approximately 38 km.

Caution: Lorentzen is around 10 km away from the starting point (Wolsthof). The trail is not marked out and you should not take any notice of the existing signposting for bicycles.

What is *Alsace bossue*?

This is a hilly area between Alsace and Lorraine. To the east, heading towards the Alsatian plain, we find forested hills on a bed of sandstone, while to the west the plain of Lorraine features a deeper calcareous and clay soil which is used for agriculture. The gentle terrain offers sweeping views across the open landscapes.



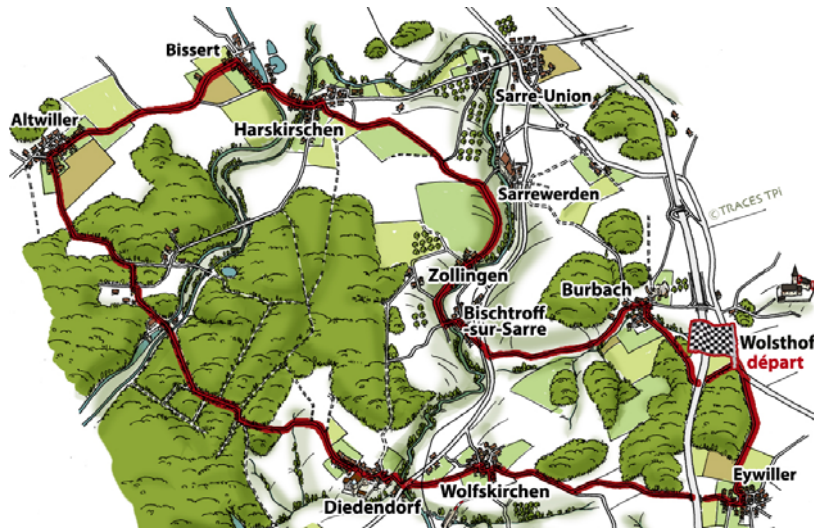
The welche villages


Back in the 16th century, the area that you will be travelling through belonged to the Counts of Nassau-Sarrewerden who introduced the Reformation here. Open to those of a different confession, from 1559 onwards the earldom of Sarrewerden welcomed refugees from Lorraine, Belgium and northern France, who were fleeing religious persecution in the Kingdom of France and the Duchy of Lorraine. They rebuilt and repopulated seven villages which have been known ever since as the "welche villages": **Rauwiller, Goerlingen, Eywiller, Burbach, Kirrberg, Diedendorf and Altwiller.**

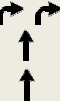
What does "welche" mean?


This is a German word which means "French". Any French person ending up in Germany was referred to as *welche*. Indeed, up until 1793, these villages were part of the German Holy Roman Empire. A *welche* village is therefore a village in which French is spoken. The Huguenots brought their customs, their faith and their language. Although they quickly learned the local German dialect, the immigrants continued to use their language. Almost 200 years later, it is by no means rare to find people still speaking French here.


THE NORTHERN WELCHE VILLAGE TRAIL





 **Starting point: the Wolsthof car park (on the outskirts of Berg), on road number RD 1061.**
To begin the trail, head down **rue de la Forêt**, on the left, near the bus shelter, and continue as far as **Eywiller**

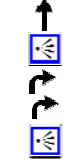
 **Travelling through Eywiller (a welche village)**
When you arrive in the village, turn right twice in quick succession and continue on to Wolfskirchen.
You will travel alongside the Eywiller district forest before entering that of Wolfskirchen.
At the bottom of the hill you will see a Napoleonic bench dating from 1854.
Continue along the road on the D55. On the left you will see the orchards.


 **Travelling through Wolfskirchen**
Turn left at the "Toutes directions" sign and continue on to Diedendorf on the D55.
Continue to the left, still on the D55.
Turn left at the crossroads, towards Niederstinzell and Fénétrange on the D8.
Caution: you'll be travelling on a very busy road. Take great care!
At the roundabout, take the D55 on the right, heading towards Diedendorf. This is the main street.


 **Travelling through Diedendorf (a welche village)**
Continue straight ahead towards Altwiller.
At the village, stop off at Diedendorf Castle before crossing Bonnefontaine Forest, then the Houillères de la Sarre Canal. Pause for a break along the canal. Continue straight ahead after the lock until you reach the hamlet of Bonnefontaine and continue through it.
Take great care at the crossroads and turn left, then right on the C1 toward Altwiller. Be very careful on this road.

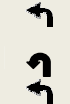
 **Travelling through Altwiller (a welche village)**
Turn right at the half-timbered house into rue de Harskirchen.
Continue straight ahead at the cemetery on the D23.
Continue straight ahead after the village, heading towards Harskirchen - Bissert.
Further on, after the village, don't miss the next left: a road which is off-limits to trucks.
Continue straight ahead towards the downhill section


 **Travelling through Bissert**
Turn right into Rue des Seigneurs on the D423, then turn left onto the D23 heading towards the bridge over the Houillères de la Sarre Canal, then right heading towards Harskirchen

 **Travelling through Harskirchen**
Continue straight ahead on the D23 heading towards Sarre-Union.
You will pass in front of a remarkable STENGEL church.
On the uphill part, turn right into rue de Zollingen - towards Sarrewerden, then take the D96 on your right, still heading towards **Sarrewerden** where you can visit the collegiate church of Saint Blaise, the former mill on the Sarre, and take a trip on a flat-bottomed river boat on the Sarre.

 **Travelling through Zollingen**
Continue straight ahead towards Zollingen on the D96 and go through the village.
You will be travelling alongside the Sarre which is on your left.
Stay on the D96 to the left, crossing the Sarre, towards Bischtroff-sur-Sarre.

 **Travelling through Bischtroff-sur-Sarre**
Continue straight ahead following the "Toutes directions" sign on the D96, towards Burbach.
At the roundabout, take the second exit heading towards Burbach.

 **Travelling through Burbach (a welche village)**
Travel through Burbach. After the lime tree in front of the church, continue along the road for 100 m as far as the rhinoceros on your right where you can take a break.
Then backtrack and turn left at the lime tree.
Turn left at the fountain (rue de la montée) until you reach the edge of the forest.

 **Back to the starting point**
Turn left just before the information sign.
As you leave the forest, turn right then left and go through the tunnel under the motorway. Turn left after the bridge and you should have the motorway on your left. Continue alongside this. Turn right onto the gravel path just before the secondary road to get back to **your starting point**.