



**Where did the welches come from?**  
 The first Huguenot refugees came from nearby Lorraine and Champagne. Their reformed (i.e. Calvinist) religion was different from that of the county's other inhabitants who, just like their Prince, were followers of the Augsburg confession. The welche families arrived in large numbers, forming a sufficiently large community to be almost self-sufficient. They intermarried and found marriage partners in the other Huguenot villages.

**Eschwiller's "Stengel" church**



To put an end to the quarrels between Protestants and Catholics, who had to share the religious buildings in Alsace Bossue, in 1776 Louis XV and the Prince of Nassau-Saarbrücken signed a treaty providing for the construction of six churches.

The construction programme was handled by Friedrich Joachim STENGEL, chief architect to the Court of Nassau-Saarbrücken and the results can be admired at Berg or Harskirchen among others.

**Heckeland**  
 The landscape here is undulating and typical of that traditionally used for mixed farming and rearing, with a patchwork quilt of farmland, meadows and small wooded areas. The plots are separated by large numbers of hedges, hence its name: the "hedge country".



**Alsace Bossue's nicknames**  
 The inhabitants of a number of villages in the Alsace Bossue area have been given nicknames over the years. Some of these are quite mischievous and are applied to all of the inhabitants of a given village, based on their customs, their behaviour or on time-old anecdotes.  
 As an example, no fewer than three nicknames are used to refer to the inhabitants of Baerendorf: "Klowe, (uncouth), or "Bäerklowe", (awkward bears) and "Katzekepp", (cat heads) referring to the bangers which the inhabitants had a habit of setting off whatever the occasion.

**The "Napoleonic Oaks" in the Forest of Hirschland**  
 At the end of the trail, you cannot fail to notice two impressive large oaks which are approximately 400 years old. Known as the "Napoleonic Oaks" they got their name thanks to their thickset appearance, reminiscent of that of the Emperor. Nearby, the forest oaks grow tightly packed together, with their slender, willowy appearance being due to their efforts to grow towards the light despite being hemmed in by their neighbours. Our two Napoleonic Oaks grew all alone, stretching out their branches towards the sunlight.



**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.**



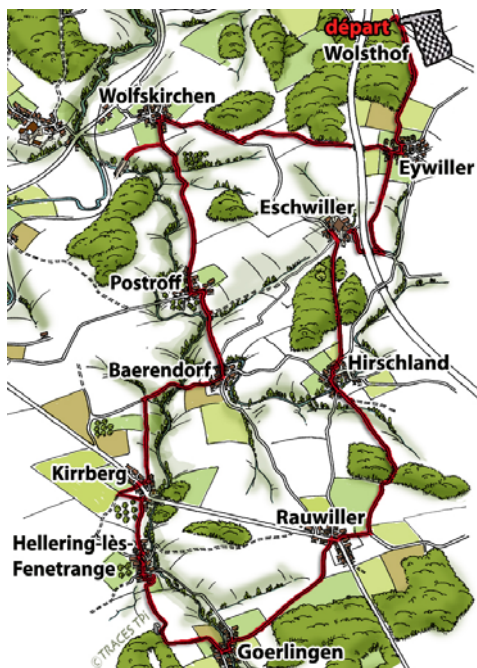
**The welche villages**  
 Back in the 16th century, the area that you will be travelling through belonged to the Counts of Nassau-Sarrewerden who introduced the Reformation here. Open to those of a different confession, from 1559 onwards the earldom of Sarrewerden welcomed refugees from Lorraine, Belgium 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 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 abandonment of the villages before the arrival of the welches**  
 Toward the end of the Middle Ages, the villages were gradually abandoned due to a period of recession brought about as a result of poor climatic conditions, epidemics, disagreements between the region's Counts and the successive arrival of Spanish, German or French troops.

## THE SOUTHERN WELCHE VILLAGES TRAIL



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

**Travelling through Eywiller (a welche village)**  
When you arrive in the village, turn right twice in quick succession.  
Turn left into rue des Prés.  
Then continue straight ahead along rue de la Bergerie, on the gravel path.  
Take care on the downhill section then turn right and go under the A4 heading towards Eschwiller.

**Travelling through Eschwiller**  
At the crossroads after the church, turn left into rue de la Forêt, on the D655.  
Turn right at the small cross, after rue de l'Etang, and leave Eschwiller.

**Travelling through Hirschland**  
At the stop sign, turn right into rue Principale (main street).  
Then turn right, heading towards Rauwiller, followed by a left turn, still heading towards Rauwiller.  
After the bridge over the Isch, turn left into rue de la Forêt, and then right after the snail farm.

**Travelling through Hirschland Forest**  
Continue straight ahead in the forest (the middle trail), then take the gravel path on the right to leave the forest. Next, continue alongside the fields and stay on the main path.  
Continue straight ahead and admire the view of the Donon on your left.  
At the "Cédez le passage" (give way) sign, turn right and continue along the D172 until you reach Rauwiller.

**Travelling through Rauwiller (a welche village), a "Village in Bloom"**  
Turn right at the "Cédez le passage" (give way) sign.  
Caution: take great care due to the heavy traffic.  
Next, turn left on the D40, towards Sarrebourg (rest area, Place de l'Eglise), then stay on the D40 as far as Goerlingen, continuing to take great care due to traffic.

**Travelling through Goerlingen (a welche village)**  
Follow the D40 on your left – towards Sarrebourg – You will go under the Bruchbach bridge.  
Next, turn right into rue du Moulin, and good luck for the uphill part!  
Stay on this road and continue alongside the hedges on your left as you cycle uphill.  
At the top, take a break at the bench to admire the local landscapes.  
Take the gravel path on the right at the entrance to the forest and continue along it as far as Hellingring.  
(Foray into the Moselle region).

**Travelling through Helling-lès-Fenetrange (Moselle)**  
Watch out for the steep downhill section then turn left at the bottom.  
Then head left at the crossroads via the secondary road.  
Turn left at the municipal boundary sign and begin the uphill part heading out of Helling-lès-Fenetrange

**Travelling through Kirrberg (a welche village)**  
On the D790, on the downhill part before the intersection with the D1, turn left into chemin des amoureux after the second fire hydrant.  
Turn right at the small bridge, then right again in the village.  
Then left at the church heading towards Baerendorf on the D690.  
Take great care as you cross the D1

**Travelling through Baerendorf**  
Turn left at the chapel then left again towards Poströff

**Travelling through Poströff**  
On the D94, continue through the village and turn left towards the church, then turn right – towards Sarre-Union and Wolfskirchen.  
Just before Wolfskirchen, you can make a 1km detour by heading left toward the protected Pont de l'Isch (Isch Bridge) site.

**Travelling through Wolfskirchen**  
Turn right at the stop sign, heading towards Eywiller, on the D55.  
After Wolfskirchen, turn left at the Napoleonic bench to travel back to Eywiller.

**Travelling through Eywiller**  
At the bend, turn left and left again as you leave the village.  
Follow the trail until you get back to your starting point at the **Wolsthof car park**.