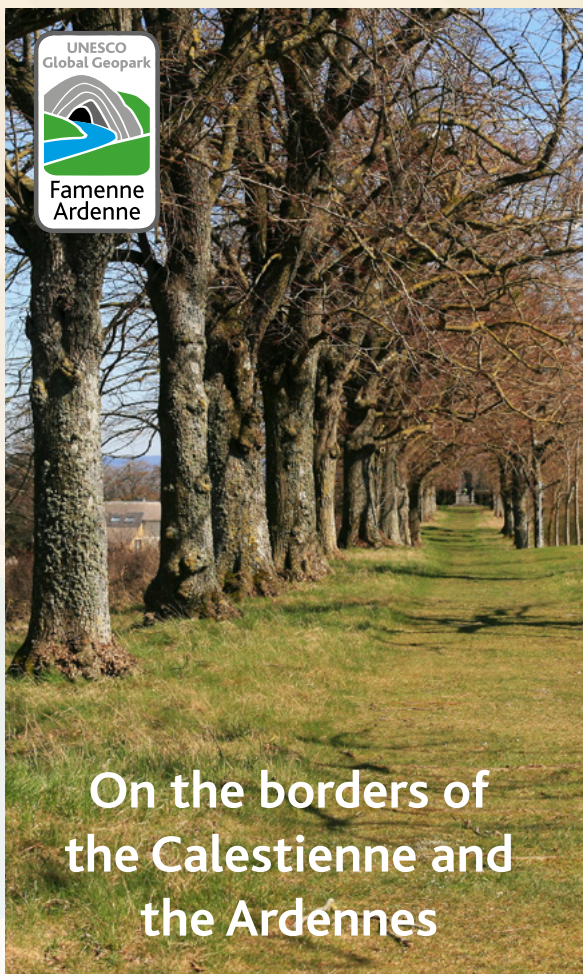


# GEOTRAIL

# WELLIN



On the borders of  
the Calestienne and  
the Ardennes



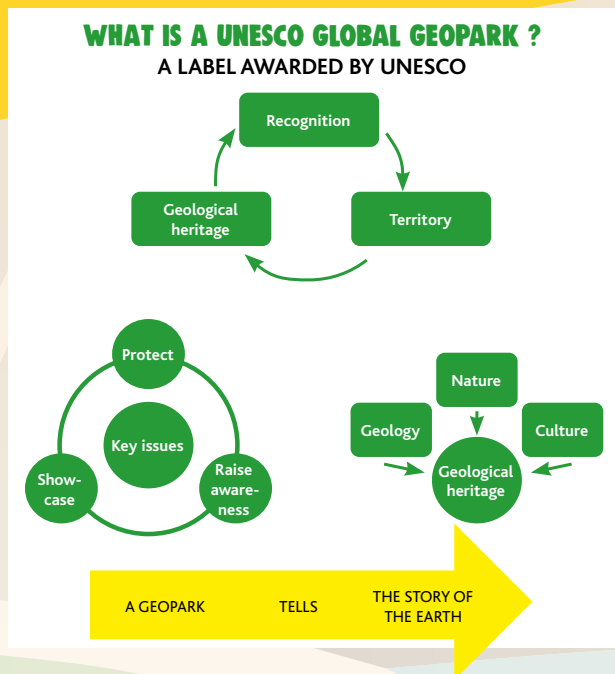
United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Famenne - Ardenne  
UNESCO  
Global Geopark



# WHAT IS A GEOPARK ?



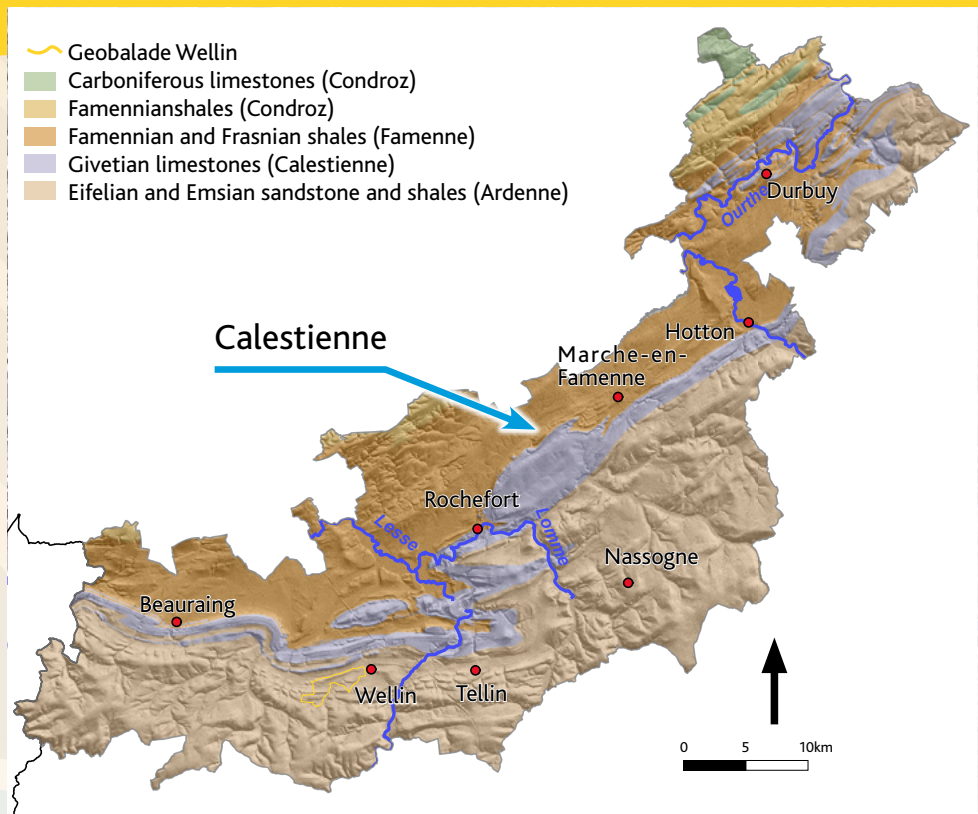
UNESCO Global Geopark is a label awarded by UNESCO to a single, unified geographical area where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. At the end of 2019, there were 147 Global Geoparks in 41 countries around the world.

## L'UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK FAMENNE-ARDENNE

The Geopark encompasses the municipalities of Beauraing, Wellin, Tellin, Rochefort, Nassogne, Marchen-Famenne, Hotton and Durbuy, all sharing the distinction of being located on the Calestienne, a transitional strip of 910 km<sup>2</sup> separating the Famenne and the Ardennes, and home to a population of 67,250 inhabitants. The two outstanding geological features of the Geopark are its Calestienne limestones and their caves (karst systems) as they relate to the geological structure of the region.

### The Calestienne

The landscapes found within the Geopark frequently reflect what lies beneath the surface. Among these landscapes, one particular strip stands out: the Calestienne, the common thread of the entire Geopark. This strip, consisting mainly of Givetian limestones, runs from Chimay in the west to Remouchamps in the east. It is bounded to the south by the Ardennes and to the north by the Famenne depression. The term Calestienne may be derived from the German Kalkstein (limestone), or from a prefix referring



A simplified map of the Famenne-Ardenne UNESCO Global Geopark superimposed on a relief map (LIDAR image), highlighting the link between the geology and the geomorphology. Sandstones are more resistant than limestones, which in turn are more resistant than shales, resulting in the relief visible on the map: to the south rise the heights of the Ardennes, ending in a narrow depression scooped out of the Eifelian shales, the limestone strip of the Calestienne standing out in relief (in blue) and to the north the shales of the depression (in brown). (Data sources: "Wallonia Public Service" <http://geoportail.wallonie.be>).

either to limestone or to heat (plants that grow on limestone are more thermophilic than those that prefer shale soils) – and from the Walloon word Tienne, meaning a high place.

### Geological history

1. The geological history of the Geopark begins during the Devonian period (419 to 359 Ma) with the sedimentation of deposits of horizontal layers on the ocean beds.
2. These sediments will gradually become buried under their own accu-

System	Series	Stage	Age Ma
Devonian	Upper	Famennian	359
		Frasnian	372
	Middle	Givetian	383
		Eifelian	388
	Lower	Emsian	393
		Pragian	408
		Lochkovian	411
			419

En géologie, la chronologie se réfère souvent au tableau stratigraphique. Ici un extrait pour le système dévonien (qui fait partie de l'ère paléozoïque). Les étages portent les noms des lieux où ils sont décrits. Le Geopark se situe au cœur de ces lieux importants pour la géologie du Dévonien moyen et supérieur.

mulation and undergo a slow process of transformation into solid rock. The main rocks beneath the Geopark are thus sedimentary: shales, sandstones and limestones.

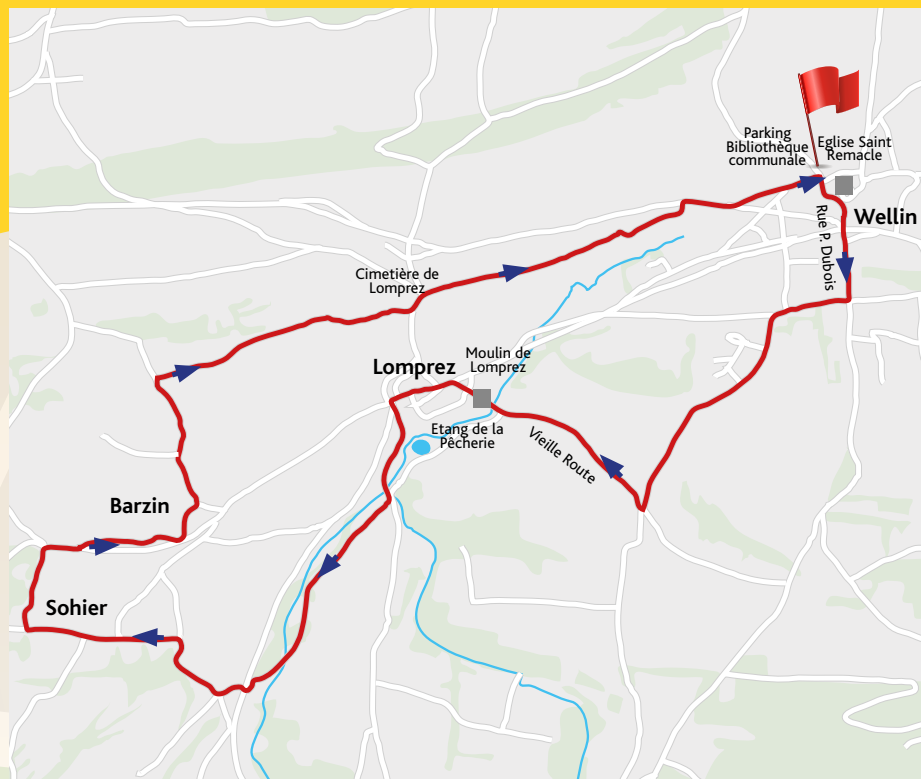
3. These rocks would later undergo severe deformation, some 320 Ma ago, during the formation of an ancient mountain chain (the Variscan orogeny), the remains of which form the Geopark. This event is what produced the many folds and faults now clearly visible in the landscape, such as the Durbuy anticline.

4. The mountain chain was soon eroded down to a vast flat surface known as a peneplain, which still constitutes the subhorizontal skyline visible throughout Upper Belgium. During the latter part of the Secondary era (Mesozoic) and the early part of the Tertiary (Cenozoic), a warm and humid climate profoundly altered the limestone rocks and formed ghost-rocks, the precursors to caves. In the second part of the Cenozoic, the Ardennes bedrock was uplifted, the river system became incised and caves formed.

## THE COUNTRYSIDE CODE :

- ▶ Respect nature, geological heritage, wildlife and plants; do not pick plants, flowers or fruit of any kind.
- ▶ Follow the highway code, which applies on country lanes just as much as on the rest of the road network, and obey any prohibitions or restrictions on traffic.
- ▶ Use the pavement wherever there is one, otherwise walk on the left-hand side of the road, facing oncoming traffic.
- ▶ Make sure you are visible to road-users at all times (wear light-coloured clothing).
- ▶ Opt for full-length trousers to ward off ticks.
- ▶ Stay on the paths by following and sticking to the permanent or temporary waymarking.
- ▶ Scrupulously respect private property: you must obtain the owner's permission before entering.
- ▶ When you meet other walkers, remain courteous at all times and be the first to offer a greeting.
- ▶ Keep noise to a minimum, to avoid causing nuisance to others.
- ▶ Do not startle or disturb grazing animals.
- ▶ Keep your dog on a lead and under control.
- ▶ Take all your litter home with you.
- ▶ Lighting fires is strictly prohibited.





**Start/finish :** Municipal library car park,  
6900 Wellin

**GPS (WGS84):** Latitude : N 50.0826 °  
Longitude : E 5.112°

**Distance/time :** 9,5 km – 2½ hours

**Elevation change :** 130 m

**Level :** easy

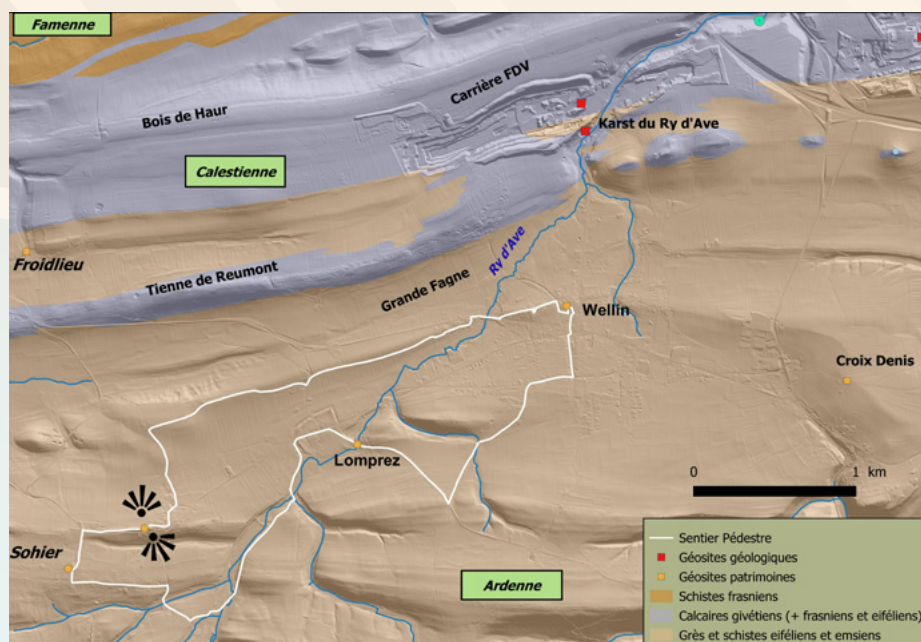




Welcome to this countryside walk around the town of Wellin, the starting point for your geotrail exploring the Famenne-Ardenne Geopark. Before getting started, let's take a quick look at the history of Wellin, which stretches back a very long way. A series of archaeological excavations has shed some light on its early origins. The town takes its name from Wadalinus, a Frankish landowner. These different digs, which unearthed some richly furnished 6th century tombs, were instrumental in dating the origins of the town at least back to this period. They also provided proof of habitation, uncovering 80 post holes for wooden houses, indicating that Wellin was the centre of a vast Merovingian estate. It was the then Major-domo or Mayor of the Palace, Carloman, son of Charles Martel, who ultimately gifted his lands to the Abbey of Stavelot-Malmédy in 747.

As the figure below shows, the trail winds its entire way across the clastic rocks of the Ardennes, but offers a

fine panorama over the Calestienne from the vantage point of Sohier.



Showing the trail path (white line) overlaid on a view of the relief taken by LIDAR. The Calestienne limestones are shown in blue, and are made up here of two bands running WSW/ENE and meeting at Wellin. To the north lie the shales of the Famenne depression, and to the south the clastic rocks of the Ardennes. The points indicate the geosites to be found in the UNESCO Famenne-Ardenne Global Geopark. ("Data sources: Wallonia Public Service" <http://geoportail.wallonie.be>).



Leave the car park behind you and turn right into Rue des Hayettes. At the end of the street, turn right onto Route de Lavaux-Sainte-Anne and then immediately left into Place de l'Eglise. Take the time to walk around the square and admire the first geosite on the trail

The church of Saint Remacle, with its imposing square tower, dates from 1766 and was originally dedicated to Saint Martin. And yet it lies at the centre of a fortified place dating from feudal times, although the enclosure and the ditch have been breached at several points. The archaeological excavations also revealed a gateway into the enclosure. The line of the enclosure is fairly easy to trace, since it corresponds fairly closely to the lanes surrounding the church and the former parish cemetery. This 18th century building is an integral part of Wellin's scenery and played an important role in its history, including serving as a place of refuge for the townsfolk in times of war. Inside the church, you will find Romanesque baptismal fonts dating from the early 13th century. Interestingly, given the nature of the soil found in the Famenne-Ardenne Geopark, the fonts are flanked by four limestone heads standing 94 cm high.

Now head for the main square of Wel-





lin. Walk along the left-hand side of the square and enter Rue Paul Dubois. After 250 metres, turn right into Rue Lomprez d'en haut. At the end of this street, after some 300 metres, turn left into Rue des Goulettes and circle the Cent-Cinquantième estate. Carry straight on.

At the next fork in the road, turn right onto Vieille Route.

Take the time to observe the landscape on your right, looking north. Opposite you, a wooded hill stretching from west to east marks the strip of Calestienne limestone; the eastern extremity ends at a working quarry (the Fond des Vaulx quarry). In the foreground, in a slight depression, stands the village of Wellin, identifiable by the bell-tower of its church.

Continue along Vieille Route and down into the village of Lomprez. On reaching the village, some 250 metres further on you will find a small bridge over the Ry d'Ave stream and, 50 metres after that, the communal mill of Lomprez on your right<sup>(1)</sup>.

The mill at Lomprez is part of a group of buildings belonging historically to the fortified village of Lomprez. The mill stands alongside an imposing farmhouse said to date from the same

period as a mediaeval castle built in the 12th century. The pond that once fed the millstream was dug out subsequently, on the orders of the Count La Roche. The mill is the last surviving building from this mediaeval period, and continued to operate as a working mill until 1920. The millwheel has now undergone renovation and the millpond has been replaced by a car park and a village hall (just behind you). Do pay a visit to the mill, if time permits: it is a unique opportunity for a close-up view of all the complicated machinery of millstones, sifters, hoppers, bucket conveyors and gear-



1. The mill is a private property: all that can be seen from the road is part of the outside of the building. It is possible to arrange a visit to the mill, including the mechanism and the water-wheel, but only by prior appointment (Contact details: 15, Vieille Route, 6924 Lomprez - Mr. & Mrs. Mahy T. and Thiry J.-M. "Le Moulin Banal" - +32(0)84 38 91 76).



wheels, all still in place and all looking ready to resume their old tasks at a moment's notice.

Carry straight on along Vieille Route and turn left at the end onto the main road. Admire Lomprenz church as you pass it by on your left. 250 metres further on, turn left into Rue de Gouba. This leads you downhill towards a fish farm. After 350 metres, turn right onto a narrow dirt path along the bank of the Ry d'Ave. At the end of the path, you will come to Route de Haut Fays. Take a left onto this road for 100 metres and then turn sharp right onto a narrow dirt path. At the end of this path, turn right into Rue Gohaut and head up towards the village of Sohier. After 300 metres, turn left into Rue Basse. Walk through

the village and, after 600 metres, turn right into Rue de la Place. You are now in the very centre of the village of Sohier. Time, perhaps, to rest for a while on one of the little benches opposite the village church.

Sohier stands on the borders of the Calestienne and the Ardennes, and is famous for its architectural heritage: this includes in particular its many traditional houses and its 13 farms, all now beautifully restored and maintained, but not forgetting its scenic views, its ancient oak, the Gros Chêne, its former school, the church of Saint-Lambert (1870) and the presbytery. It is the quality and uniformity of its buildings, most built from natural stone in the 19th centu-



ry, that has earned Sohier recognition as one of the “Most Beautiful Villages in Wallonia”. The photo shows a section of the outer wall of one of the village farmhouses. Alongside the greyish limestone fieldstones (easily identified by their smooth surface), you can also see various colours of sandstone (generally greenish, but sometimes brownish or red and with a rough surface). But the villagers of Sohier can also take some of the credit for the accolade bestowed on

their village: every year, at the start of summer, the entire village is filled with flowers. Sohier also has a long history. The burial ground discovered at the spot known as “Le Gibet” (the gibbet) has yielded evidence of Gallo-Roman occupation in the 1st century. Excavations have revealed pottery, coins and other artefacts. In later times, the village grew up around its fortress, which was originally encircled by a moat. Over a period of four centuries, just three families, all inter-related, held the Seigneury and castle of Sohier.



Leave Sohier via Rue de l'Église. At the end of the street, cross the road and turn right into Rue de Lomprez. 100 metres ahead, you will see an imposing avenue of linden trees. Make your way into the avenue.



The Drève des Tilleuls and the Neo-Gothic Chapel

This is the final stopping-place on your walk through the region of Welin. The Drève, an avenue of linden trees, stands slightly outside the village on a hillside of clastic rock, and offers an impressive panorama. To the south, the land rises fairly smoothly, pastures fading in the distance into deep forests: this is the Ardennes. In the opposite direction, looking northward, the terrain is more varied. In the foreground, you can make out a depression, La Grande Fagne, carved out of soft rock easily eroded by a combination of frost and run-off, and by root action. This rock has the composition of clay but has been consolidated by a lengthy geological process into a hard rock known to geologists as schist. Beyond this depression, the land rises towards a wooded hill running east to west, the Tienne de

Reumont. Walking this hill, you will note a number of limestone outcrops indicating that we have now entered the Calestienne. After a stretch of schists, the limestone strip continues for over a kilometre (Bois de Haur). For an idea of the scale of the strip, we need to look west, towards the bell-tower of Lomprey church; just above the level of the motorway, you can make out the working face of the Limites quarry where the limestone is extracted. To the north of the Calestienne, the broad Famenne depression lies in the shales of the Upper Devonian, before the terrain rises sharply to the Condroz.

The Drève des Tilleuls leads to the Chapel of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, built in 1860 on the orders of the Baroness Baré de Comogne. To reach the oratory, you must first negotiate the magnificent alley of trees symbolising the seven sorrows of the



View from the Drève des Tilleuls in Sohier, looking northwards.



Virgin. The chapel is neo-Gothic in style and built on asiltstone promontory. And since history is often interwoven with religion, in times of drought the faithful would come together in procession along the avenue to the chapel to pray for rain.

Leaving the Drève des Tilleuls, you come to the village of Barzin. At the first crossroads, turn left down Chemin de la Fontaine. When you reach the end, take the dirt path that continues downhill on your left. Carry straight on across the fields. After 400 metres, take the first right.

Continue alongside the fields until you reach a cemetery. Take the main road for

30 metres to your left and then take the first right. Continue along this dirt path until you come to Rue de Beauraing.

Cross the main road and turn right along it for 200 metres before taking a left into Rue Tibalet. When you reach the end, take Rue Hayettes downhill to your right and return to your vehicle at the municipal library car park.



## Sources :

DUMOULIN, V. et BLOCKMANS, S (2013). Geological map of Wallonia. Pondrôme-Wellin 59/5-6, 1/25000. Service public de Wallonie.

## Tourist information offices

### **Maison du Tourisme de la Forêt de Saint-Hubert**

Place du Marché, 15 - 6870 Saint-Hubert (B)

T. : +32(0)61/61.30.10

[info@foretdesainthubert-tourisme.be](mailto:info@foretdesainthubert-tourisme.be)

[www.saint-hubert-tourisme.be](http://www.saint-hubert-tourisme.be)

Open 7 days a week. 1 March to 31 October: 9am to 5.30pm. 1 November to end February: 9.30am to 4.30pm; 24 and 31 December 9.30 am to 3pm. Closed on 1 January and 25 December.

### **Wellin Municipal Tourist Office**

Laboratoire de la Vie Rurale

Rue de la Place

6920 Sohier (B)

T. : +32(0)84/41.33.59

[tourisme@wellin.be](mailto:tourisme@wellin.be)

[www.wellin.be](http://www.wellin.be)

Open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 9am to 1pm

### **Geopark Famenne-Ardenne, asbl**

Place Théo Lannoy, 2

5580 Han-sur-Lesse (B)

T. : +32(0)84/36.79.30

[geopark@geoparkfamenneardenne.be](mailto:geopark@geoparkfamenneardenne.be)

[www.geoparkfamenneardenne.be](http://www.geoparkfamenneardenne.be)