

The Ardennes Cross-Border Slate Mine Trail and its Travelling Exhibition CATAREX

Our cross-border trail is an Interreg France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen micro-project, cofunded by the European Union, developed on the initiative of the non-profit association Groupement d'Animation Socio-Culturelle de Oignies-en-Thiérache and in partnership with the Association Ardenne Wallonne and the villages of Fumay and Haybes.

The shale seam from which the slate is extracted weaves its way without boundaries between our three villages. Down the centuries, its industrial exploitation is characterised by similarities but also differences from one village to another...

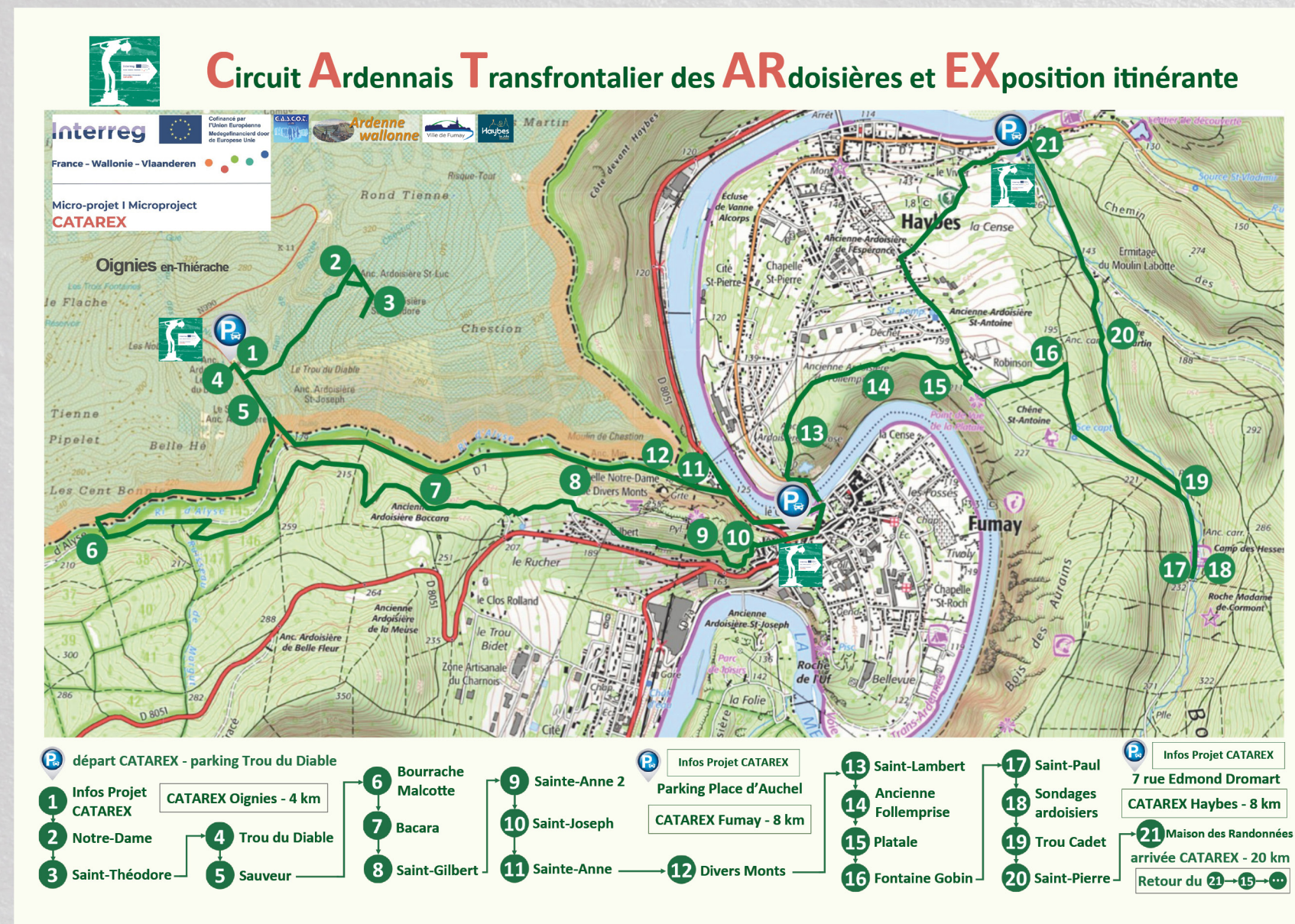
With the closure of the slate mines, each village has striven to build on its own legacy and history through various initiatives.

All the partners quickly signed up to the idea of a joint cross-border project, each proving to be a "mine" of information as it matured.

Numerous partners and volunteers have been instrumental to its success

Our warmest thanks go to the town of Rimogne for its support and its donation of two wagons, the Local Council of Viroinval, Icare non-profit association, Viroinval Tourist Office, the Belgian Nature and Forestry Agency, the Musée du Malgré-Tout, the Écomusée du Viroin, Charleville Tourist Board, the Ardennes Regional Nature Park, the association 87 AD Prod, the Maison de l'Ardoise slate museum in Rimogne, the Musée de l'Ardoise slate museum in Fumay, the Fondation Chimay-Warsoise and the Maison des Associations de l'Entre Sambre et Meuse and The National Forests Office.

Starting point of the Oignies - Fumay - Haybes Cross-border Slate Mine Trail



Hikers are free to choose their starting point, whether in Oignies, at the Trou du Diable car park, in Fumay, on Place d'Auchel or in Haybes, at the Maison des Randonnées.

Nineteen former slate quarrying sites and information points dot the 20km route.

Naturally, these trails cannot cover all the slate quarrying sites in these three villages. Each village has its own local trail, following in the footsteps of its own slate mining past.

You can find all this information on the joint website: «The CATAREX Cross-border Slate Trail» and on the CATAREX Facebook and Instagram pages.

Brochure

A brochure provides information on all the routes in the form of a topographic map guide with a photo and presentation of each site. It is available free of charge in French, Dutch or English. It also features the 19 information panels with QR codes that link to our website, providing a wealth of additional information. The brochure can be downloaded from our website. It is also available:

- In Oignies: from the GASCOT non-profit association and from the Épicerie des Ardoisières grocery.
- In Fumay: from the Town Hall, from the Musée de l'Ardoise Michel Paradon - Espace Culturel des Carmélites.
- In Haybes: from the Town Hall, from the Maison des Randonnées and the Library.
- From Viroinval Tourist Office, the Vireux-Wallerand Community Tourist Office and the Musée de l'Ardoise slate museum in Rimogne.

As part of the Catarex project, an exhibition has been put together on the theme of our shale belt, telling the story of how the industry shaped our regions. Designed as a travelling exhibition, it can therefore be easily made available on the initiative of our associations and our villages or on request by booking it via the Ardenne Wallonne secretariat: francoise.menage@sfr.fr

Haybes hiking centre

This forestry trail complements the local Haybes slate mine trail, but unfortunately these two trails cannot cover all the former Haybes slate mines, which are scattered all over village land.

Slate mines can be found along the Haybes-Hargnies road: Sainte-Barbe, with its 3 operating sites, and Saint-Vladimir are two examples.

On the other side of the Meuse, the remains of the very old and important Providence slate mine can still be seen in winter and spring, before the foliage has grown back, as can the Belle-Joyeuse slate mine, which dates back to the 17th century.

As is the case in Haybes, the trail cannot take in all the slate mines in Fumay and Oignies-en-Thiérache.



The Providence slate mine during the 1914-1918 war



The Sainte-Barbe slate mine, one of the flooded entrances