

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

Our cross-border trail is an Interreg France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen micro-project, co-funded 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...

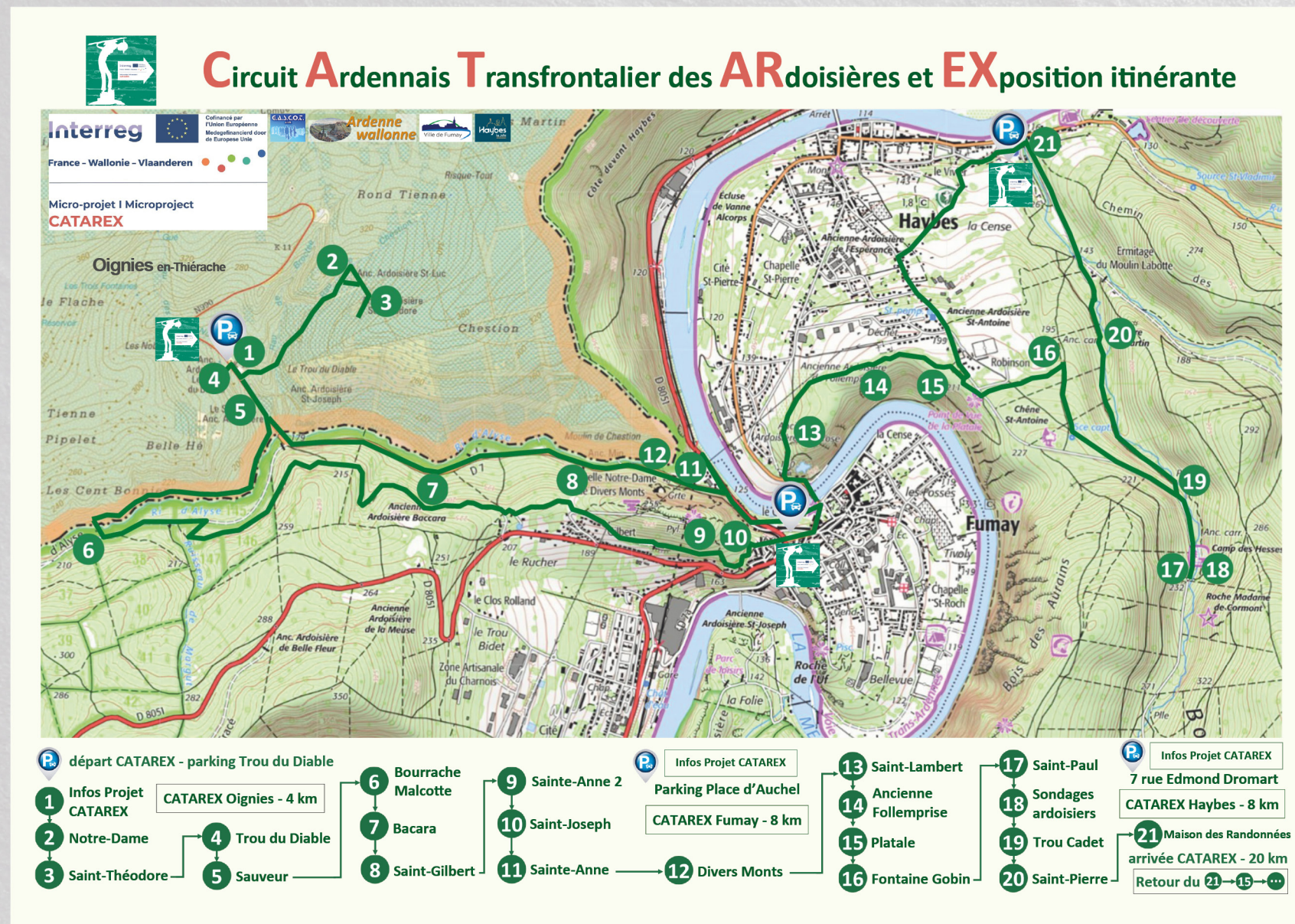
With the closure of the slate mines, each village has striven to build on its own legacy and history through various initiatives.

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

Fumay, the heart of slate mining

If slate is the mineral heart of the Fumay region, then the River Meuse is the artery that allowed this small border village along the River Meuse to flourish. The region's slate mining activities, which may very well date back to Gallo-Roman times, were the mainstay of local life until 1971. Oral tradition also suggests that there were no fewer than 300 slate mines, some of which were dug right out of the cellars. Just take a stroll through the oldest part of Fumay, nestling in a bend in the River Meuse, and you'll realise that the houses are built from slate.

From Fumay to Haybes, via the village of Oignies, an entire region lived from the slate that was extracted locally before being sent to the economic hubs along the River Meuse, such as Namur and Liège to be sold on.

It is important to remember that this part of the Ardennes was for a long time under the influence of the Netherlands.

Just take the *Espace culturel des Carmélites*, home to the museum's collections. It is housed in a former Carmelite convent founded in 1630 by the Princes of Chimay. These economic links would last until the early 20th century, whether through the export of stone, through investments or through the use of Belgian labour.

With its roofs, large retaining walls and piles of slag waste known locally as "*verdeaux*", slate has shaped the regional landscape.

But these visible traces are only a small part of the stone that was worked beneath our feet, up to a depth of 205 to 300 metres.

This history and the traditions associated with it can be discovered at the Espace culturel des Carmélites, as told by the *Musée de l'ardoise Michel Paradon*, but also at the *Marie-Louise Goffart Library*.

We also invite you to follow the various *Heritage Trails* that you can consult on the village's website, or by scanning the QR-Codes you will find on various buildings or at different various points around our village.

Espace culturel



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