



Conseil général de la Meuse

The Renaissance in Meuse
from North to South

The Renaissance in Meuse

From North to South

Travelling from north to south in Meuse gradually reveals the Renaissance.

It is as discreet as it is elegant, combining the charm of country churches with the superb skill of the sculptor Ligier Richier, or the simplicity of the delightful Saulx Valley with the elegance of country houses. Meuse boasts both major and minor masterpieces, works that talk to us, telling tales through the language of stone in acanthus leaves, niches, pilasters, fluting and masks. It's wonderful to explore the upper town in Bar-le-Duc, stroll along the streets in Saint-Mihiel known as the "Florence of Lorraine", cross "Meuse' answer to the Loire Valley", the nickname given to the gentle Saulx Valley with its eye-catching scenery, and continue the trip on the "communal land of the town of Marville".

You won't be told everything – you also have to learn to look for yourself.

You won't have any difficulty following this pictorial exploration of beauty spots, some of them well hidden, others on display. The Renaissance is the gateway to intellectual freedom, a pathway to inventions and new technologies, and a search for a new aesthetic.

In Lorraine, and more particularly in Meuse, you'll be surprised by the many attractions that have survived from the Renaissance period, authentic expressions of the power of the "grandeurs", the Dukes of Bar and Lorraine, and their fondness for all the new trends in thought and style.

So let yourself be guided by Meuse Tourist Board. Let its staff help you plan your trip to Meuse. Ask about contacts, hotels, the best restaurants, a museum and its exhibition, a leisure activity, good ideas for any season of the year ...

You'll quickly realise just how much the Renaissance has become an integral part of our area.

The Renaissance in Meuse From North to South

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Close-up, Twelve Apostle Reredos, St. Epvre's Chapel - Sepvigny - Meuse
Polychrome limestone – mid 16th century. Historic monument



Meuse Tourist Board

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MONTMÉDY

The town of Montmédy in the north of Meuse lies on the border with Luxembourg and Belgium.

Montmédy is best-known for its fortress and the citadel is well worth a visit. It is in excellent condition and proudly displays its “Renaissance” features. A footpath provides visitors with panoramic views.

Inside are two museums:

- the Jules-Bastien Lepage Museum
- the Fortification Museum.



The fortress: an unknown master builder, the construction of a castle on the hilltop (“Mont de Mady”), Emperor Charles V who acquired Montmédy in 1544 and commissioned fortifications – these are just a few stages in the history of the battlements and the Citadel.



With its arcaded houses, Stenay, the gateway to Northern Meuse, is a delightful little town in the heart of the Meuse Valley.

Located close to Belgian abbeys such as Orval, which make excellent beer, Stenay has Europe's largest Beer Museum. In the late 16th century, the fortifications were modernised and the castle district became a modern citadel. Most of the military buildings in this district have survived, including the store built in 1545 that now houses the Beer Museum.



Many of the buildings in the town centre were renovated and updated. They are Renaissance in design and they are topped by the first Mansard roofs. However, the same period also saw the gradual destruction of the arcades. In the 16th century, the Duchy of Lorraine was still a much-coveted area on the eastern borders of France. Building began here with systems of defence but this was followed by the notion of building for pleasure, leading to the beautiful "country houses" dotted across the countryside.

STENAY



LOUPPY SUR-LOISON

MARVILLE

Located in the north between Montmédy and Longuyon, Marville still has a significant number of reminders of days gone by and some wonderful historic buildings.

Although Marville did not really develop until the Renaissance, its history dates back to the Middle Ages.

A powerful aristocrat, Count Thiébaud I of Bar, took over the town at that time and built a fortress there. Marville, with its status as a neutral town, reached its heyday in the 16th and 17th centuries.

It has some rare reminders of the Spanish Renaissance brought to the Gaume area in the south of Belgium, but also displays the Italian and French style in its beautiful houses built for aristocratic, middle class and merchant families who were drawn to the town during its period of prosperity in the 16th century. Even today, the streets are a reminder of this era of luxury. Look at the street corners, study the doorways – they are full of exciting features. There is also life underground in this village, thanks to its cellars.

Many of them are impressive and laid out with wells, bread ovens, fireplaces etc.

The 15th century saw the development of some exceptional funereal monuments referred to as “macabre art”.

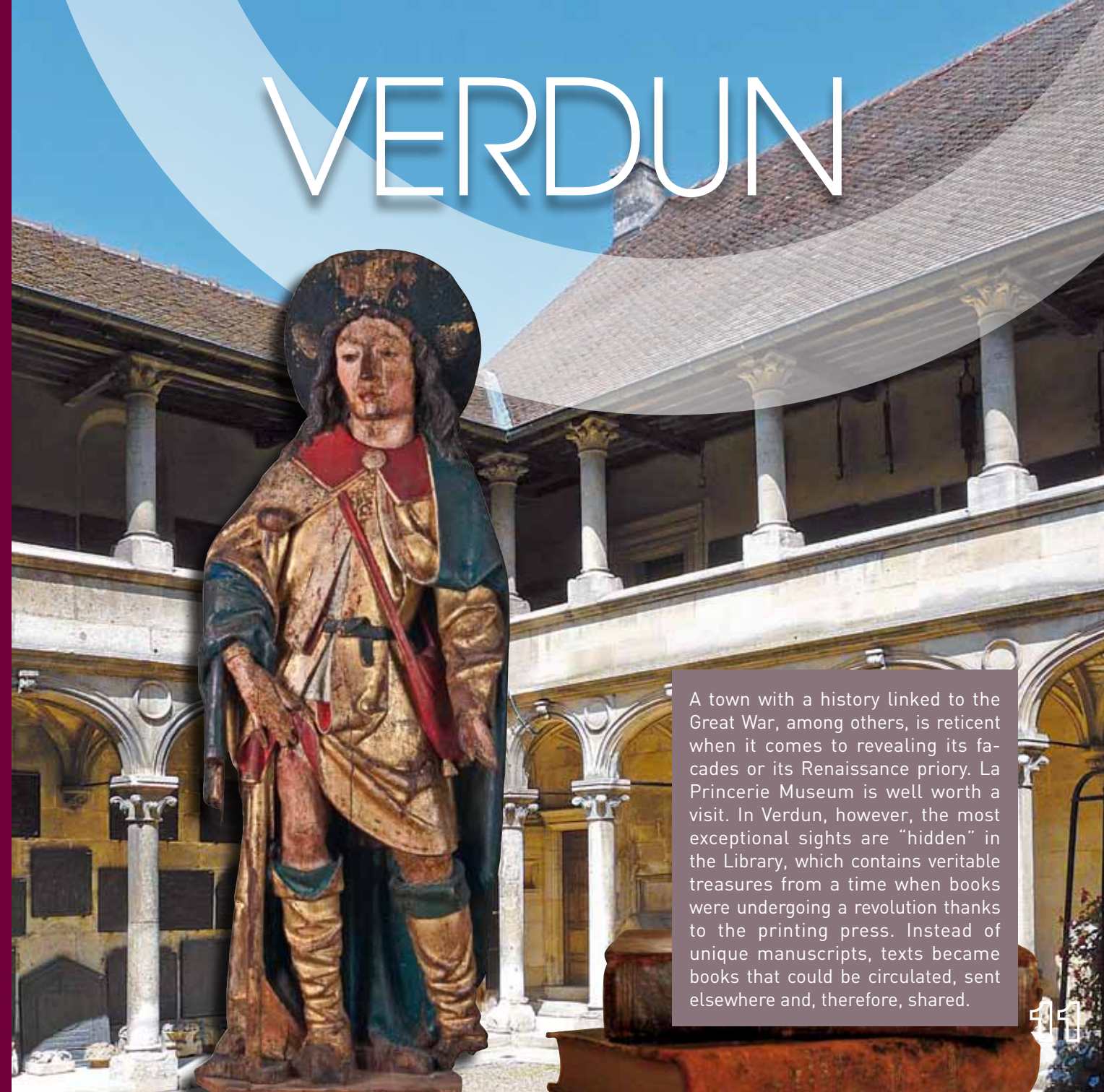


GÉNICOURT-SUR-MEUSE CLERMONT-EN-ARGONNE



The outstanding quality of the polychrome stone statues, the stained-glass windows that were developed and technically advanced during the 16th century and the Pietàs that can be seen, for example, in Clermont-en-Argonne, reveal the talent and craftsmanship available at that time through people such as Jean Crocq, Valentin Bousch, Ligier Richier and his pupils.

VERDUN



A town with a history linked to the Great War, among others, is reticent when it comes to revealing its facades or its Renaissance priory. La Prinerie Museum is well worth a visit. In Verdun, however, the most exceptional sights are "hidden" in the Library, which contains veritable treasures from a time when books were undergoing a revolution thanks to the printing press. Instead of unique manuscripts, texts became books that could be circulated, sent elsewhere and, therefore, shared.

THE LIGIER RICHIER TRAIL

The Ligier Richier Trail in Meuse gives you a chance to see the work of this Renaissance artist from Lorraine (~1500 ~1567) whose creative genius led to comparisons with Michelangelo.

Ask for the special “Ligier Richier” brochure.



BAR-LE-DUC
ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH (EGLISE SAINT-ETIENNE)



CLERMONT-EN-ARGONNE
ST. DIDIER'S CHURCH (EGLISE SAINT-DIDIER)



ÉTAIN
ST. MARTIN'S CHURCH (EGLISE SAINT-MARTIN)



GÉNICOURT-SUR-MEUSE
CHURCH OF ST. MARY MAGDALEN (EGLISE SAINTE-MARIE-MADELEINE)



HATTONCHÂTEL
ST. MAUR'S CHURCH (EGLISE SAINT-MAUR)



SAINT-MIHIEL
ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH (EGLISE SAINT-ETIENNE)
AND THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MICHAEL (EGLISE SAINT-MICHEL)



THE RENAISSANCE IN MEUSE



SAINT-MIHIEL

Located at the gateway to the Lorraine Regional Country Park and backing onto the Meuse, Saint-Mihiel is nicknamed the “Florence of Lorraine” because it was such a centre for the arts during the Renaissance period, when it shared with Bar-le-Duc the status of “capital” of the Bar area.

The Benedictine abbey, collegiate church and middle class houses are reminders of a prosperous past for a town that is proud of being the birthplace, in the 16th century, of the most prestigious of all Lorraine’s sculptors - Ligier Richier. Two of his works can be seen in the town’s churches – The Sepulchre in St. Stephen’s and The Virgin Mary Fainting in St. Michael’s.





Take a stroll and see the varied architecture in Saint-Mihiel's beautiful, amazing and attractive facades. Don't miss the Benedictine Library, which contains more than 8,500 works including 74 manuscripts and 86 very early books. The Museum of Sacred Art highlights the true beauty of heritage items from towns and villages in Meuse (gold and silver, sculptures etc.).





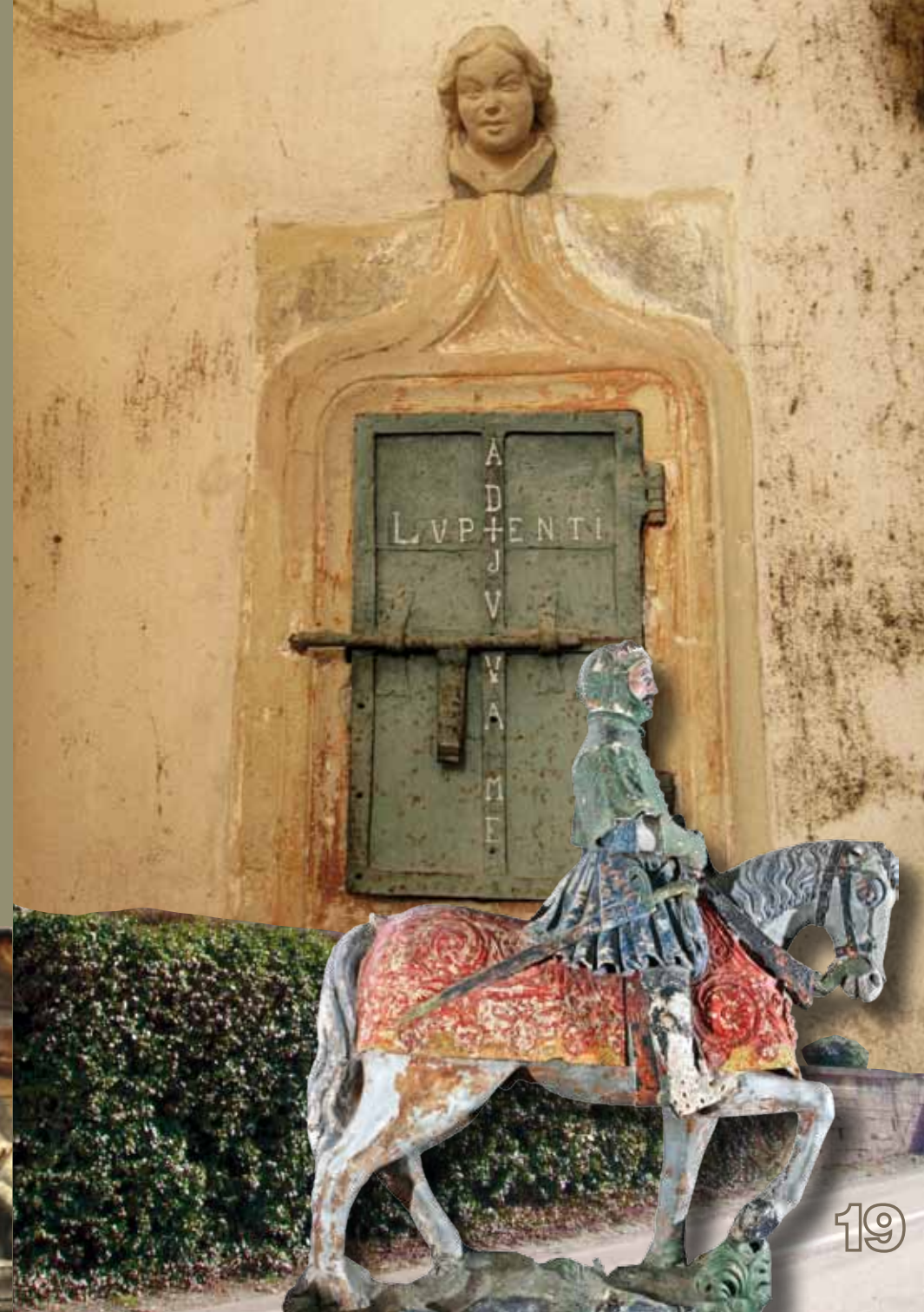
REMBERCOURT-AUX-POTS NAIVES-ROSIÈRES

Take a close look at the stonework in the church in Saint-Louvent. Surprised at such a huge church in such a small village? Remember that this was a place of pilgrimage. In fact, the village had a population of 3,100 in 1635, making it larger than Nancy at that time.

The vaulting and volutes were built in the Flamboyant Gothic style but a change crept in when the piers were erected, with fluted pilasters, pediments, and a carved string course that combines religious and vernacular subjects.

This is an unfinished building but it is dazzlingly beautiful.

Now let's follow St. Maurice as he rides from Naives-Rosières to Bar-le-Duc...





BAR-LE-DUC

Once the capital of the Duchy of Lorraine and located between Reims and Nancy, Bar-le-Duc is now the only town in Lorraine to have been awarded "Town of Artistic and Historic Interest" status. For many years, it was the main town in the powerful, independent Duchy of Bar. It is an architectural gem and has been well preserved. In fact, the upper town with its remarkable Renaissance district stands proudly above the Bar area like a lighthouse.

Whether you're in the upper or lower town, the Renaissance can be seen in countless facades.

In the 10th century, a castle and fortified town were built here to defend the County of Bar against

the kingdom of France. Despite the demolition of the fortress in 1670 and the destruction wreaked during the Revolution, a few traces of the fortifications can still be seen i.e. the Romanesque Gate and clock tower.

Beyond these few reminders of the Middle Ages, the upper town is famous mainly for its 16th-century Renaissance heritage. This was the town's most opulent period in terms of politics and culture. Magnificent mansions and freestone residences can be seen in an urban district that has been classed as a conservation area. Note the ornate architecture on Place Saint-Pierre, with St. Stephen's Church (église Saint-Etienne), home to Ligier Richier's

famous statue "The Skeleton". Beyond the square are wonderful facades in Rue des Ducs. Further downhill is the castle esplanade leading to a building commissioned in 1563 by the Duke of Lorraine and Bar, Charles III, as his personal residence. It now houses the Bar Museum.

The Gilles de Trèves College was built immediately below the esplanade in 1573. It was described by the philosopher Montaigne as "the most beautiful town house in France". It was Gilles de Trèves himself who commissioned the building of the college to provide an education for the town's children.

Rue du Bourg in the lower town was once the business district and it boasts some superb decoration including gargoyles, fluted pilasters, curved pediments etc.





SAULX VALLEY

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“MEUSE’ ANSWER TO THE LOIRE VALLEY”

The Renaissance style of Gilles de Trèves’ castle in Ville-sur-Saulx and La Varenne in Haironville reaches its most consummate expression here while the Château de la Grange in Nettancourt is best-known for its English-style park and its strange rockery grotto.

A large number of arched bridges span the Saulx throughout this part of the trip, stretching from one bank to another.



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www.meuse.fr and tourist information on
www.meusetourism.com**

