

# Tourist routes in the Orne



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## August 44 loop

A 10-stage historical circuit around the strategic sites of the last Battle of Normandy and the famous Falaise-Chambois Pocket.

This route is signed and equipped with information boards. It takes in the Montormel Memorial, Chambois, the Corridor of Death at St-Lambert-sur-Dives, Coudehard, Aubry-en-Exmes and Tournai-sur-Dives. A visit to the Montormel Memorial is advised to better understand the circuit and the course of the battle.

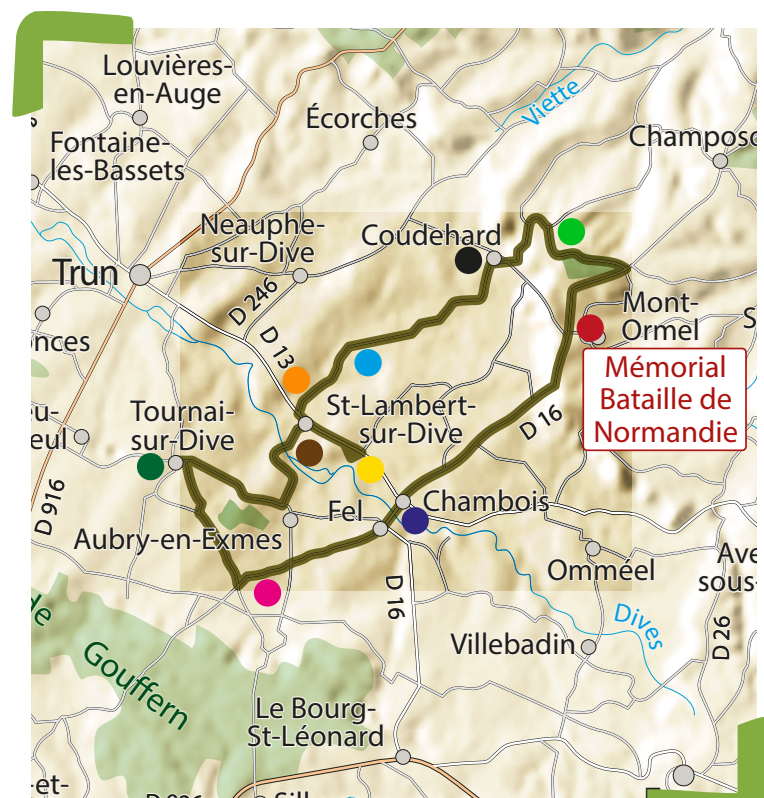
## Useful information

30 km loop

Contact:

- The Montormel Memorial -  
(Tel. : +33 2 33 67 38 61)

Tourisme 61  
Tel. : +33 2 33 28 88 71  
[www.ornetourisme.com](http://www.ornetourisme.com)



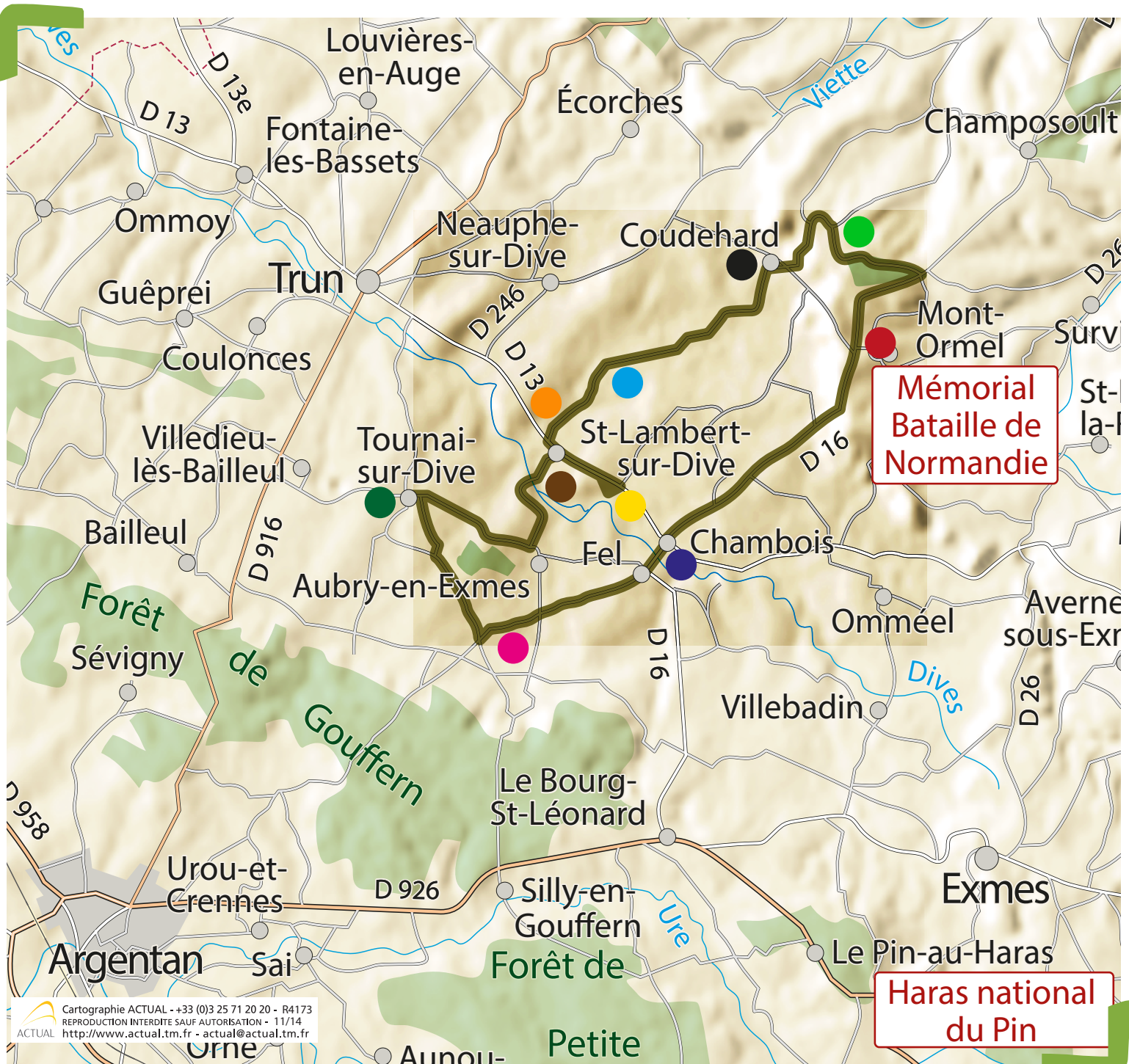
# August 44 loop

En chemin...

- Mémorial de Montormel
- Chambois - Fel
- Aubry-en-Exmes
- Tournai-sur-Dives
- Saint-Lambert-sur-Dives (in front of the church)
- Chambois - Gué de Moissy (at the ford)
- Saint-Lambert-sur-Dives (place de la mairie)
- Saint-Lambert-sur-Dives - Bourgogne
- Coudehard - La cour du Bosq
- Coudehard - Hill 262

Download the free app "Les Trois Jours d'Agata" - a geolocalised interactive visit to discover as a family and by car the key sites of the last battle of Normandy, around Montormel in the Orne: Chambois, Aubry-sur-Exmes, Tournai-sur-Dives, Saint-Lambert, Moissy Ford, the Corridor of Death, Coudehard, the Polish Cemetery - Boisjos, Boisjos,

Extensive audio content: the voice of Agata and a former radio operator retracing the events, with archive images and original photos; a detailed embedded interactive map with augmented reality acts as your guide and pinpoints each stop on the route; augmented reality with scenes from the war and of soldiers' lives superimposed onto today's landscapes.



Cartographie ACTUAL - +33 (0)3 25 71 20 20 - R4173  
REPRODUCTION INTERDITE SAUF AUTORISATION - 11/14  
<http://www.actual.tm.fr> - [actual@actual.tm.fr](mailto:actual@actual.tm.fr)



# August 44 loop

In August 1944, following 72 days of combat, the Allies encircled the German troops in the Dives valley. Discover the famous Falaise-Chambois Pocket, where the final engagements of the Battle of Normandy were fought.

On 19 to 21 August 1944, soldiers from five different countries met (America, Canada, France and Poland), forming a pocket around 100,000 German soldiers (50,000 escaped, 10,000 were killed and 40,000 taken prisoner).

## ● **Mémorial de Montormel :**

> The Memorial entrance

It's around noon on the 19 August 1944. An advanced detachment of the 1st Polish Armoured Regiment reach the site of this car park and surprise a retreating German column. In a few minutes, the column is devastated. Their last evacuation corridor has just been temporarily cut off. But the Germans counterattack to re-open the corridor. Two days of extraordinarily violent combat ensue before the trap around the German army is closed.

## ● **Aubry-en-Exmes :**

> Near the church

Holed up in the forest of Gouffern during the day, it is only during the night that the Germans attempt to escape from the shelling and fighter-bombers. It is a scene of horror, but the German troops manage to open paths through the hedges to allow convoys to pass. Only smoking wrecks remain.

The bodies are already starting to decompose, distraught and injured horses criss-cross the plain. When night falls, it becomes impossible to move on the battle field. The flames billowing from the church provide the only point of reference.

## ● **Saint-Lambert-sur-Dives :**

> Place de la Mairie

The small group of Canadians led by Major Currie slow the German retreat by destroying the bridges over the Dives at Saint-Lambert-sur-Dives. But, under pressure from the 100,000 surrounded German troops, the detachment is forced to consolidate at Hill 118 at the northern edge of the commune. Major Currie will receive a Victoria Cross, the British Empire's highest award for gallantry, for his actions in Saint-Lambert, the first received by a Canadian serviceman for the campaign in North-West Europe.

## ● **Saint-Lambert-sur-Dives :**

> In front of the church

In this indescribable chaos, more than 50,000 German soldiers cross the Dives, mainly at the bridge below the church. Armoured units and vehicles of all descriptions, including horse-drawn carriages, are stuck in a giant traffic jam on this narrow bridge and are regularly hit by Allied artillery strikes.

General Von Lüttwitz, Commander of the 2nd Panzer Division describes the crossing of the Dives in Saint-Lambert in his memoirs: "The crossing of the Dives bridge was particularly horrendous, the bodies of dead soldiers, dead horses, vehicles and other equipment which had been thrown in the river from the bridge created a macabre chaos".

## ● **Coudehard - La cour du Bosq :**

> La cour du Bosq

La Cour du Bosq at the end of the Corridor of Death is the location where thousands of retreating Germans meet. They regroup here, before overcoming the final obstacle separating them from their lines. General Meindl, Commander of the 2nd Parachute Corp, tasked with the breakthrough, forms his command post here and attempts to organise the retreat.

## ● **Chambois - Fel :**

> At the Place du Donjon

It's around 7pm on the 19 August 1944 when the Americans arriving from the south and the Polish coming from the north meet: the Falaise-Chambois Pocket is formed. Major Zgorzelski from the 1st Polish Armoured Division and Captain Waters from the US Army's 90th Infantry Division shake hands to symbolise the formation of the pocket. They won't seal the pocket off completely until the 21 August when the last German units are destroyed or surrender..

## ● **Tournai-sur-Dives :**

> Place de la mairie

Abbot Launay fixes a sheet from the top of the steeple to serve as a white flag (on display at the Memorial). As this is unsuccessful, he then goes to meet the Allies. Returning to Tournai with a single Canadian, they take 300 Germans prisoner in what will become the surrender yard. The signal is given and during the afternoon, 1,500 other Germans arrive at the same place. The number of surrenders rises too high everywhere and the battle is over.

## ● **Chambois - Gué de Moissy :**

> The ford

After the destruction of the Saint-Lambert bridges on 19 August 1944, this ford becomes the only means of crossing the natural anti-tank ditch formed by the Dives. Under artillery fire and relentless attacks by Allied planes, thousands of German soldiers descend on this narrow passage. Tempers flare and many men come to blows trying to force their way across. SS officers with guns drawn try to create a semblance of order to the reigning chaos.

## ● **Saint-Lambert-sur-Dives - Bourgogne :**

> Between Saint-Lambert-sur-Dives and Coudehard

This narrow strip of land between the Dives and La Cour du Bosque at the foot of the Polish position was baptised the Corridor of Death by the Germans, a name which has gone down in history. It takes many hours under artillery fire to cross this 5 km corridor with a width ranging from tens of metres to 3 km, the only escape path for the retreating German army.

## ● **Coudehard - Côte 262 Nord :**

> View of the Polish Cemetery

"Hill 262": the name given to this hill refers to the altitude given on the Allies' operational maps.

The Polish named it Maczuga (the mace), because of its shape and because of the impact that this position would have on the German army. For three days, the Poles base themselves on this hill overlooking the end of the Corridor of Death, harassing and slowing the German retreat. Under fire from all directions, they resist until the German assaults are exhausted.

Source: Montormel Memorial