

## INTRODUCTION TO HAUTS-DE-FRANCE

- ***Easily Accessible Region, Full of Inspiration for Groups  
Looking to Experience A Taste of Authentic France*** -

Hauts-de-France, France's northernmost region, is the UK's closest international driving destination offering a truly authentic French experience on our doorstep. Easily accessible for groups and coach parties via the Channel Tunnel and ferry services, there is a wealth of inspiration for group holidays for a variety of interests. From historic WW1 Battlefields and iconic WW2 sites such as Dunkirk and the extraordinary museum at La Coupole, there are also beautiful gardens, grand chateaux and of course plenty of opportunities to sample fine French cuisine and wines – including Champagne. With wide open beaches, fascinating cities and towns and a great range of accommodation, the region offers a huge choice of activities, experiences, and options for all different types of group holidays.

Made up of 5 departments, Hauts-de-France was formed in 2016 when Nord-Pas-de-Calais was merged with Picardy and includes the area from Pas-de-Calais and Nord in the North down to the Somme, Aisne and Oise. Suggestions for groups include the following:

### **WW1: [Thiepval Memorial and Museum](#)**

Located in the heart of the Somme Battlefields, the Thiepval Memorial and Museum provide a moving tribute to the Great War, and a must-visit element of any trip to explore the Somme Battlefields. The Memorial pays tribute to 72,337 missing British and South African servicemen who died in the Battles of the Somme between 1915 and 1918 with no known grave. Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, it has been described as 'the greatest executed British work of monumental architecture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century' and is the largest Commonwealth war memorial in the world. It is currently undergoing renovation and will re-open in 2022. The recently renovated Museum provides an insight into the history of the Great War, the Battle of the Somme and the Remembrance site. There is a permanent exhibition featuring archaeological artefacts, multimedia, and large-scale installations such as the replica of Charles Guynemer's aeroplane and a moving 60-metre long mural by Joe Sacco providing an imaginary window onto the 1 July 1916 battlefield. ***Groups can access specially created itineraries and rates depending on their requirements.***

### **WW2: [La Coupole](#)**

This incredible museum is built on the site of an abandoned Nazi bunker that was originally intended to be one of the main launch sites for V2 rocket launches to attack London and Southern England in the Second World War. Located on the hills near Saint-Omer, La Coupole is about 40 minutes' drive inland from Calais. Constructed alongside a disused chalk quarry, the design incorporates a huge concrete dome ('coupole') and was built above a network of tunnels with storage areas, launch facilities and crew quarters.



The entrance to the museum is through the Ida railway tunnel, and tunnels which were originally used for storage are now home to various exhibits. With tours in English, visitors can learn all about the German occupation of France during World War II, the history and use of the V-weapons that had been planned to be launched from the site, as well as ongoing exhibitions. Additionally, the museum incorporates a memorial to the 8,000 people who were shot in or deported from the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region during the war. There is also an impressive 3D Planetarium, focusing on the space age. The combination of history and science makes for a truly memorable day out. ***La Coupole has several offers for groups ranging from visit-only rates to catering packages, themed days and tasting sessions.***

### **Gardens Galore: Jardins de Valloires**

Garden lovers will be spoilt for choice in the Hauts-de-France region, and if you're looking to create a dedicated gardens itinerary, there are rich pickings to be had, from grand chateau gardens to hidden gems and from artist-inspired gardens to authentic medicinal gardens on castle ramparts. One option that works particularly well for groups is the Jardins de Valloires in the Authie Valley in Somme. Combining an historic 18<sup>th</sup> Century Cistercian Abbey with some truly atmospheric gardens and a great restaurant on site, it ticks all the boxes.

The gardens feature five different 'islands', each with a different theme including a sensory garden, classic French garden and fabulous rose garden. The gardens – classed as a 'Jardin Remarquable' - are the work of landscape designer Gilles Clement, who also designed the Parc Andre Citroen. The main garden has a classical French feel, whilst the sensory garden integrates touch, scent, sound and taste. The marsh garden, with its wilderness feel, is evocative of the surrounding Authie landscapes and the rose garden is a true treat for the senses, with over 200 varieties of modern and antique roses. ***Groups can benefit from guided tours of the gardens and special group rates.***

### **Champagne: [Champagne Pannier](#)**

Aisne, in the south east of Hauts-de-France, accounts for 10% of France's champagne production and has some tempting cellars to visit, including the Champagne Pannier cellars, in the heart of the Marne valley vineyards in Château-Thierry. With a history dating back to the late 1800's, Champagne Pannier benefits from an exceptional geographic location, where some of the finest Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier grapes are grown, providing the champagne with a delicious fruity character. The Pannier Caves offer a fantastic opportunity for groups, with daily English tours and the chance to explore atmospheric, 2km-long underground cellars which were dug in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, where the cuvees slowly reach their full maturity. What better way to complete the visit than with a tasting, and perhaps buy a few bottles to remember your visit. ***Daily Tours in English for Groups.***



### **Chateaux: [Château de Chantilly](#)**

There are plenty of chateaux to choose from in the Hauts-de-France region, but perhaps the jewel in the crown and a really great choice for group visits is the magnificent 'Château de Chantilly'. With the combination it offers of the chateau itself, with sumptuous interiors, a superb garden, several restaurants, as well as magnificent stables with a museum dedicated to horses, along with equestrian shows and dressage displays, it makes for a complete day out. The chateau was the work of Henri d'Orléans, Duke of Aumale, son of the last King of France, Louis-Philippe, considered to be the greatest collector of his time. The series of rooms that house the Duke's collection are known as the "Condé Museum" – a nod to his ancestors, the Princes of Condé. Along with lavish interiors and princely suites, including the newly renovated private suites of the Duke and Duchess, which can be visited on a special tour, the amazing collection of antique paintings on display is second in size only to the Louvre.

The gardens, covering some 115 hectares, are a delight to visit, with a number of different gardens, which reflect the fashions of specific periods. Also ideal for groups is an annual Flower Show, held each year in May and October. The French-style garden was created by André Le Nôtre, creator of the gardens at Versailles, in the 17th century and it is said they were his favourite. The large French-style borders and lawns, with immense, geometric ponds reflecting the sky provides one of the most iconic views of the chateau. Along with numerous fountains, water features and statues, the effect is truly breathtaking. The Anglo-Chinese Garden, created in the 1780s, comprises a pretty Hamlet, made up of five, beamed cottages, which were the model for Marie-Antoinette's Hamlet in the Petit Trianon in Versailles. Finally, the English Garden, designed in the 19th century, has a truly romantic feel. As well as romantic structures such as the temple of Venus, inhabited by swans and waterfowl that nest on its many islands, there is an 'island of love' with a statue of Eros and the beautiful Beauvais Waterfall. ***Groups benefit from special rates, one free ticket for every twenty purchased, free coach parking and drop off and can bring their own tour guides. There are also enticing special packages for groups combining activities with catering offers at the restaurants and added extras such as a private Chantilly Cream Demonstration or an Arts de la Table workshop.***

### **Culture: [Louvre-Lens](#)**

Located in the heart of the former nord-Pas-de-Calais mining basin – a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Louvre-Lens museum was opened in 2012 and offers a unique visitor experience for groups. It has a phenomenal design – a huge glass and aluminium building created by SANAA Japanese architects, in the heart of a 20-hectare park designed by landscaper Catherine Mosbach. Created with the objective of enabling visitors to discover the Louvre, but in a different way, it is home to more than 200 masterpieces from the Louvre's huge collections, displayed in a spectacular space of over 3,000 square metres. In the 'Gallery of Time' – which is at the heart of the Louvre-Lens experience, visitors are taken on a journey through the history of art, set within its historical context, from the creation of writing in the 4th Millennium BC right through to the industrial revolution in the mid-19th century. Each year, there are temporary exhibitions which take a different slant on the Louvre's collections, and themed exhibitions from museums in the Hauts-de-France region. ***Dedicated tours can be offered for groups, with priority access, special rates and a variety of itineraries available.***

*Sharing strong ties*

HAUTS-DE-FRANCE



Région  
Hauts-de-France

**For more details and ideas on group itineraries to the Hauts-de-France region, contact Fanny Francois, UK Business Developer on [fanny.francois@hautsdefrancetourisme.com](mailto:fanny.francois@hautsdefrancetourisme.com)**

**---ENDS---**

**For further media information, please contact: [ukpress@hautsdefrancetourisme.com](mailto:ukpress@hautsdefrancetourisme.com)**

Sarah Bolam on 07714 337756 or Nicole Walsh on 07771 554027