

Aire-sur-la-Lys

Explore the remarkable natural surroundings along the course of the old River Lys and then the line of the Grand Canal.

At the beginning and the end of the walk, note the various engineering works which have made Aire a hydraulic complex unique in the region : weir, sluices, by-pass channel, siphon and lock. The Bassin de 4 Faces is the most representative of these works : previously, it allowed barges to turn in a semi-circle in order to take the required direction : towards the town, towards the Lys or by canal towards Saint-Omer one way or towards Bethune the other. Fort Gassion, previously known as « Saint-Francois », served as an outer defence of the town.

Rising in Lisbourg, twenty km away, the Lys is canalised from Fort Gassion lock onwards. It flows into the Escaut in Ghent in Belgium, 195 km away. The Neufosse Canal, dug in 1825, linked the River Aa with the Canal of Aire. These waterways provided the basis for the construction of the huge, twentieth-century Dunkirk-Valencienne Liaison Canal which now takes push-tows of up to 3000 tons. The



little, ancient lift-bridge at Thiennes by way of contrast is a work of art. At the end of the walk, a detour to the centre of the town encourages you to think of its history. Aire is frontier town, poised between Artois and Flanders. It was first fortified around 1200 and strengthened in the sixteenth century by Emperor Charles V and latterly around 1700 by Vauban. Remnants of the fortifications survive : gates, powder houses, forts, barracks, etc.

Refreshment and accommodation

in Aire town centre, and refreshment at Wittes.

2 circuits explore the historic centre of Aire-sur-la-Lys :

- the walk from one « open book » to another (1 1/2 hours)
- the « step-by-step » circuit (2 hours)

Group visits can be made to : the town watch tower (UNESCO site), the collegiate church, Saint-Jacques Chapel, water cross beds, etc.

Information

Mairie d'Aire-sur-la-Lys

9 Grand'Place - 62 120 Aire-sur-la-Lys
Tél. 03 21 95 40 40 - Fax 03 21 95 40 41
www.ville-airesurlalys.fr

Tourist Office**

Le Bailliage, Grand'Place - 62 921 Aire-sur-la-Lys
Tél./Fax 03 21 39 65 66
www.ot-aioresurlalys.fr

In the community of communes of Aire

Hôtel de Ville - BP 29 - 62 921 Aire-sur-la-Lys Cedex
Tél. 03 21 95 40 59 - Fax 03 21 39 26 74
www.paysdaire.fr/ht

Guided Walks

in the community of
communes of Aire

9

Walk between the River Lys and the Grand Canal



12 km - 4 hours

D Bassin
des 4 faces
Aire-sur-la-Lys

Access : D 157



To download the leaflet for each walk go to
www.ot-aioresurlalys.fr



Waymarks

GRP ®
Nationally
recognised walks

PR ®
Shorter,
local walks

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Nationally
recognised walks

PR ®
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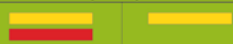
GRP ®
Nationally
recognised walks

PR ®
Shorter,
local walks

keep straight on

change direction

marked footpaths



9

Walk between the River Lys and the Grand Canal



12 km - 4 hours



Walkers' code :

1 - Keep to the paths and marked walks.
2 - Keep dogs on the leash.

3 - Respect crops, farm animals, and machinery.
4 - Be polite to other users of the paths and countryside.

5 - Do not drop litter, take it home with you.
6 - Do not light fires.
7 - Study animals and plants without touching them.
8 - Be quiet and discreet.

9 - Respect signposts and other markers.
10 - Inform the Office of Tourism of any unexpected obstacles, errors in the marking of footpaths, etc. as soon as possible.