



Belgic
Wallo

Villers Abbey, part of Wallonia's exceptional cultural heritage

From Thursday 02 January 2020 to Wednesday 30 December 2020.



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<http://www.villers.be>

The Villers Abbey, built in 1146, now in ruins is a stunning witness of how the Cistercian Monks lived. The site is considered one of the most complete in Europe as it features remains of all the buildings used daily.

History

This extensive monastic complex constructed in the 13th century is an evocative memorial to the small Cistercian community which initially settled here in 1146. Within two centuries of its founding, the monastery had become a wealthy landowner with more than three thousand brothers, 100 monks and an abbot running a large estate of more than 100 square kilometres.

Ransacked in the French revolution and allowed to fall into disrepair over the following two centuries a walk through the lofty walls and arches surviving today gives a vivid insight into abbey life over the centuries. From the chauffoir, where the chimney of the only room kept warm all year is still standing, to the impressive cloisters of the church and the transept, the sheer size of the complex cannot fail to impress.

Outside the walls, the square garden which reflects the Cistercian

ideals of order and balance is bordered by high chestnut trees and was used by the monks to supply vegetables for their table. Beyond, a less formal area was used to cultivate medicinal plants. The ruins lie in a pretty wooded valley and there are themed-based guided visits or discovery walks around the Abbey and its lands available for visitors. Every year in August an international choir festival takes place in its floodlit ruins.

Conclude your visit with stopping at the abbey's microbrewery and vineyard.

The gardens

At the heart of the ruins are 5 fantastic gardens:

- The **Jardin des Simples** (inspired by the medicinal garden used by monk in Middle Ages)
- The **Jardin des Moines** (a modern medicinal garden)
- The **Jardin de l'Abbé** (a French style garden)
- The **Jardin de la Pharmacie** (a 10 acres ornamental garden on the hill)
- The **Jardin des Senteurs and its meditative path** (follow this scented path all the way to the Saint-Bernard chapel).

Many activities are organised throughout the gardens during the year, as well as musical shows and theatre play.

Families

An interactive trail

"Slates" (modern digital ones!) are lent to the visitors. Augmented reality makes the experience interactive, allowing children and adults to see the abbey differently. Fictive characters present parts of the estate, let you see what the site was like in the past and give you access to a wide variety of details. There are riddles to solve too as well as a video on what the monks' life was like. 5 €/tablet

A discovery leaflet

Thanks to this leaflet, roles are reversed: children get a chance to guide their parents through the abbey, thanks to a little help from Monk Radulphe and his anecdotes... There too will be challenges and riddles to solve along the way. The trail lasts for about 1h30. 1 €/leaflet.

Visitors with specific needs

The Villers Abbey is one of the many sites certified by [#link\[taxonomy_term|3037|Access-i\]](#) (meaning with facilities or/activities adapted to travellers with specific needs). You will find more details on the [#link\[externe|35080|Access-i\]](#) website to plan your visit.

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The information contained herein is provided as a guide only.

We recommend that you check with the local supplier before you leave.

Website editor

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