



**D Starting point**

**P Parking**

Car Park, Bouchon Mairie (Townhall). Follow the road past the Mairie and the church. At the end, turn right and follow the road for several metres.

- 1 On your left, climb the steps at the flank of the embankment to join the trail.
- 2 At the view point signpost, continue along the trail at the edge of the embankment and follow it into the wood.
- 3 When you leave the wood, take the trail to the left by the pasture.
- 4 Go into the wooded area on the left and come out into the heart of the chalk-bank after 100 metres.
- 5 Follow the path down to reach the steps. At the bottom of the steps, turn right.
- 6 Go through the tunnel
- 7 As you leave the tunnel, take the steps on the right to reach the chalk-banks.
- 8 When you arrive at the edge of the copse, take the trail down towards the road, go over the stile and turn to the right towards Villers-sous-Ailly

**V View point**

**i Information point**

**Be careful:** Only pedestrians are allowed on this trail. It is closed during the hunting periods (signposted at entrance). Be careful not to trespass as paths are close to private properties. Dogs must be held on leads when crossing fields during grazing periods.

This trail is maintained by the Conservatoire d'Espaces Naturel de Picardie

**For more information:**

- Tourist Offices:  
Long : 03 22 31 82 50 / [www.long.fr](http://www.long.fr)  
Picquigny : 03 22 51 46 85 / [www.otcco.fr](http://www.otcco.fr)
- Somme Tourist Board:  
[www.somme-tourisme.com](http://www.somme-tourisme.com)  
[www.somme-nature.com](http://www.somme-nature.com)

Managers of the site:



# La Somme

## The Chalk-Banks of the Bouchon Valley at Villers-sous-Ailly

**Bouchon,**  
16km from  
Picquigny,  
34km from  
Amiens

This walk will take you from Bouchon to Villers-sous-Ailly to explore the chalk-banks. It is a walk full of contrasts, different altitudes and remarkable variety. Follow along the tops of the banks in the footsteps of the shepherds...



**D Starting at:** Bouchon Mairie (Town Hall)

**🕒 Time:** 3 hours 10m

**🔄 Distance:** 12,8km

**🚶 Route:** difficult

- ▶ Spring
- ▶ Summer
- ▶ Autumn
- ▶ Winter



This leaflet was created by the Somme County Council  
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## Exploring the natural sites

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## The Chalk-banks of Bouchon and Villers-sous-Ailly

The Bouchon and Villers-sous-Ailly area is certainly worth a visit. The chalk-banks offer a very rich habitat. The alternation between the dry areas and wooded areas perfectly illustrates the evolution of the chalk-banks. On the chalky hillside, in the midst of the juniper trees, you'll discover a remarkable and varied fauna and flora, thriving thanks to the conservation work of the Conservatoire d'Espaces Naturels de Picardie.



Christophe Volant,  
Goat Farmer

"To see some forty goats in the pastures of the hillside

from spring to mid-September makes me think of a hillside of vines. Sometimes I see deer in amongst them. In 2010 we opened a cheese dairy at Etoile. We can now make cheese and sell it after having milked the goats directly on the chalk-banks".

### About the site

- > **Proprietor:** Municipalities of Bouchon and Villers-sous-Ailly
- > **Size:** 15ha
- > **Managed by:** Conservatoire d'espaces naturels de Picardie
- > **Maintenance partners:** A goat and sheep farmer from Etoile and a sheep farmer from Ailly-le-Haut-Clocher
- > **Financial partners:** Europe, State, Regional Council of Picardy, Somme County Council

### The chalk-banks of Bouchon – Villers-sous-Ailly

The starting point of this walk is situated in the village of Bouchon. Park close to the Mairie (town hall) and church and follow the road down through the village to reach the path that climbs up to the heights dominating the village. The path then continues on to the first view point overlooking the chalk-banks and the dry valley. Go through the copse and then follow along the edge of the fallow land for 500 metres. You are on the steepest part of the chalk-bank and the panoramic views are magnificent.

### A Southern Feel

After the flat area, take the trail to the left which goes down to a half-wooded, half-dry area: the chalk-banks are close by. You will know when you reach them when you meet the first juniper trees, the only native conifers of the region; they cover the hillside.



**Adonis Blue:** This butterfly is intimately linked to the chalk-banks because its caterpillar lives on the Horseshoe Vetch.

A vast amount of maintenance work has been carried out: brush cutting and clearing the juniper thickets. This work was carried out by the Conservatoire d'espaces naturels de Picardie, which manages the site, and has allowed nature to reclaim the area. This is proved when you see the carpets of short grasses, the yellow flowers of the Horseshoe Vetch, the Yellow Rockrose and the Globularia that flower here once more: attracting many different species of butterflies and insects. Butterflies such as Small Blues

and Swallowtails, which have a wingspan of up to 10cm, can be seen here. During the warm seasons, "maguetes" (goats in the Picardy language) come to graze here; this also helps to maintain the area and prevents it from becoming overgrown.

On the slopes of the chalk-banks, Pasque Flowers, Orange Thyme and many types of wild orchids, such as the Fragrant Orchid, can be found according to the seasons. In the summer, sun-loving insects, such as crickets and grasshoppers, thrive here.

### Contrasting habitats

Following the path down you will come to some steps. Once at the bottom take the road to the right that passes under a motorway tunnel. Another set of steps will now take you into the heart of the chalk-banks of Villers-sous-Ailly. Maintained by the sheep, this is a very rich

habitat, and worth close attention.

The wild orchids here are even more remarkable (Lady Orchid, Military Orchid, etc.). At the end of the trail, which crosses the chalk-banks on the edge of the woods, rejoin the road by crossing the stile and, climbing the dry valley, continue on to the village of Villers-sous-Ailly. Follow a sheltered road in the direction of Long, and rejoin the plateau, taking you across the fields to an exceptional view point overlooking the chalk-banks. The return journey is made by the minor road. Before arriving at the village of Bouchon, with your back to the chalk-bank, follow the path through the fields to the heights. As you approach Long, you will be able to admire the wonderful panoramic views over the wetlands and ponds of the Somme Valley.



Like the majority of the heights of the Somme Valley, the chalk-banks of Bouchon were for a long time used by shepherds during their journeys. When this practice came to an end they became overgrown with bushes and scrub. Now, the area is maintained once more through the efficient work carried out by volunteers, helping the site managers to clear and brush cut the area. The goats also help with their healthy appetites, eating not only the grass but also the young tree shoots. A herd has been established on the site in partnership with Christophe Volant, a local goat farmer. He now has a cheese dairy and produces a cheese called "T'chot larris" (The Little Chalk-bank).



**Rockrose:** The Yellow Rockrose, a species typical of chalky, grassy areas, punctuates the vegetation with its fine and fragile yellow petals. It withers quickly with rain.