

LANDSCAPE GROUPS

According to the European Landscape Convention, a landscape is a part of an area as perceived by people, whose character results from the action of natural and/or human factors, and their interrelationships. This approach to the landscape, which emphasises perception, has been used to map Walloon landscapes.

A landscape policy

The European Landscape Convention, ratified by Wallonia in 2001, aims to promote the protection, management and planning of landscapes. To this end, various measures have been envisaged, including identifying landscapes and analysing their characteristics, as well as the dynamics and pressures that modify them. Wallonia initiated these tasks of identification and characterisation by publishing the results of the research carried out by the Permanent Conference of Territorial Development (CPDT) into the identification of the landscape territories of Wallonia¹, work which led to the creation of a map of the 13 landscape groups of Wallonia. It has also begun publishing a collection of "Atlas des paysages de Wallonie" (Atlas of Walloon landscapes), in principle 11 volumes, of which 6 have been published to date².

Map of the landscape groups of Wallonia

To characterise the diversity of Walloon landscapes, they have been grouped into homogeneous territorial units, called "landscape territories". The landscape territories were identified, at an initial level, on the basis of the characteristics of the topography, and at a second level, on the basis of the land cover. At a third level, the characteristics of the habitat were examined. As such, 79 landscape territories were identified and grouped into 13 different landscapes groups.

The diversity of Walloon landscapes

In a very brief manner, we can distinguish the following landscape groups in Wallonia: the Hainaut low plateau in the west, which is dominated by crops; the Brabant undulating area, characterised by woodlands and agricultural pockets, but above all by intense urbanisation near Brussels; the Brabant low plateau in the centre and the Hesbaya low plateau in the east, dominated by crops in large-scale plots; the Entre-Vesdre-et-Meuse, which still conceal the archetype of the bocage; the Haine and Sambre area, which is strongly characterised by urbanisation and industrialisation, but also agriculture; the Meuse area, characterised by the topography of the valley; the Fagne area, which offers a large variety of landscapes; the Condroz mid-plateau, with alternating peaks and depressions, and which consists of woodlands, crops and grasslands; the Fagne-Famenne depression, which is essentially grassland, and its southern edge, the Caestienne, which presents a more wooded landscape; the Thiérache, Sarts and Rîèzes area, an undulating plateau dominated by grassland; the northeastern Ardenne high plateau, mainly occupied by grassland and forest and which includes the high plateau of Fagnes; the central Ardenne high plateau, which is characterised by central agricultural plateaus and forest edges; and the Lorraine cuestas area³

^[1] CPDT, 2004 | ^[2] See <http://cpdt.wallonie.be> | ^[3] Cuestas: reliefs composed of a steep, generally wooded slope and a gentle slope on the other side, under crops and grassland

Map 7 Landscape groups

