

THE GR5 TRAIL – BENELUX AND LORRAINE



About the Author

Carroll Dorgan was born and educated in the United States. Pushed by the absence of jobs for inexperienced history graduates where he happened to be living in 1975 and pulled by his wanderlust, Carroll pursued a teaching career for a decade in international schools in Iran, Belgium, England and France. He then returned to California to qualify as a lawyer, but soon moved back to Europe to practise international law in the Netherlands and France. In all of those places, he explored nearby hiking trails. While living in Liège, he discovered the GR5, which passes near the city on its way from Hoek van Holland to Nice.

Over the years, the GR5 became his favourite trail. Carroll hiked in the Olympics, Cascades, Sierras and Green Mountains in the United States and the Pyrenees and Auvergne in France, but he was always drawn back to the GR5. Upon completing a trek on the GR5 in the Vosges, Jura and Alps in 1989, he dreamt of hiking the entire trail someday. The dream became a plan and then his first adventure after retiring in 2015. Carroll enjoyed that long trek so much – and is so keen to share his enthusiasm for the trail – that he returned to the GR5 to write this guide to the Northern GR5. Carroll lives in France with Mary, his wife and hiking companion.

THE GR5 TRAIL – BENELUX AND LORRAINE

THE NORTH SEA TO THE VOSGES MOUNTAINS

by Carroll Dorgan

CICERONE

JUNIPER HOUSE, MURLEY MOSS,
OXENHOLME ROAD, KENDAL, CUMBRIA LA9 7RL
www.cicerone.co.uk

© Carroll Dorgan 2018

First edition 2018

ISBN: 978 1 85284 959 7

Printed by KHL Printing, Singapore

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

All photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.



Route mapping by Lovell Johns www.lovelljohns.com



The routes of the GR®, PR® and GRP® paths in this guide have been reproduced with the permission of the Fédération Française de la Randonnée Pédestre holder of the exclusive rights of the routes. The names GR®, PR® and GRP® are

registered trademarks. © FFRP 2018 for all GR®, PR® and GRP® paths appearing in this work.

Contains OpenStreetMap.org data © OpenStreetMap contributors, CC-BY-SA. NASA relief data courtesy of ESRI

To Mary, my companion on all of life's trails

Updates to this guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/959/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency, although naturally we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

Register your book: To sign up to receive free updates, special offers and GPX files where available, register your book at www.cicerone.co.uk.

Front cover: Vineyards around Machtum on the Moselle River (Stage 35)

CONTENTS

Map key	8
Overview map	9
Route summary table	10
INTRODUCTION	13
What it's like to hike the Northern GR5	14
Landscape	15
Wildlife	18
History	20
When to go	24
Getting there (and back)	24
Accommodation	25
Food and drink	26
Clothing and equipment	27
Waymarking	28
Maps	29
Language	30
Money	31
Staying in touch	31
Health and safety	32
Using this guide	32
1 THE NETHERLANDS	35
Stage 1 Hoek van Holland to Maasland	38
Stage 2 Maasland to Brielle	43
Stage 3 Brielle to Rockanje	49
Stage 4 Rockanje to Goedereede	52
Stage 5 Goedereede to Herkingen	56
Stage 6 Herkingen to Nieuw-Vossemeer	59
Stage 7 Nieuw-Vossemeer to Bergen op Zoom	64
2 FLANDERS	69
Stage 8 Bergen op Zoom to Kalmthout	72
Stage 9 Kalmthout to Brecht	79
Stage 10 Brecht to Zoersel	83
Stage 11 Zoersel to Herentals	87
Stage 12 Herentals to Westerlo	92
Stage 13 Westerlo to Scherpenheuvel	96
Stage 14 Scherpenheuvel to Diest	101
Stage 15 Diest to Lummen	105
Stage 16 Lummen to Stokrooie	110
Stage 17 Stokrooie to Bokrijk Provincial Domain	114
Stage 18 Bokrijk Provincial Domain to Zutendaal	118

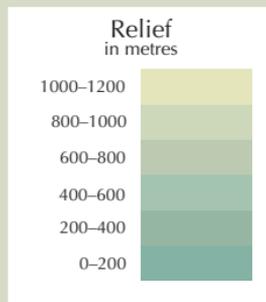
Stage 19	Zutendaal to Maastricht	123
Stage 20	Maastricht to Eben-Emael	130
3 WALLONIA		135
Stage 21	Eben-Emael to Visé	138
Stage 22	Visé to Soumagne	142
Stage 23	Soumagne to Banneux	147
Stage 24	Banneux to Spa	151
Stage 25	Spa to Stavelot	155
Stage 26	Stavelot to Commanster	160
Stage 27	Commanster to Ouren	166
4 LUXEMBOURG		173
Stage 28	Ouren to Obereisenbach	176
Stage 29	Obereisenbach to Vianden	180
Stage 30	Vianden to Blesbréck	186
Stage 31	Blesbréck to Beaufort	189
Stage 32	Beaufort to Echternach	194
Stage 33	Echternach to Wasserbillig	200
Stage 34	Wasserbillig to Grevenmacher	205
Stage 35	Grevenmacher to Remich	209
Stage 36	Remich to Montenach	215
5 LORRAINE		221
Stage 37	Montenach to Saint-Hubert	224
Stage 38	Saint-Hubert to Metz	229
Stage 39	Metz to Gorze	235
Stage 40	Gorze to Pagny-sur-Moselle	241
Stage 41	Pagny-sur-Moselle to Montauville	244
Stage 42	Montauville to Liverdun	249
Stage 43	Liverdun to Bioncourt	254
Stage 44	Bioncourt to Vic-sur-Seille	259
Stage 45	Vic-sur-Seille to Tarquimpol	263
Stage 46	Tarquimpol to Gondrexange	268
Stage 47	Gondrexange to Abreschviller	272
Stage 48	Abreschviller to Col du Donon	276
Stage 49	Col du Donon to Schirmeck	281
Appendix A	Route planner	284
Appendix B	Four 5-day itineraries on the GR5	288
Appendix C	Accommodation along the route	290
Appendix D	Useful contacts	297
Appendix E	A little Dutch and French for hikers	301

Eben-Emael's church (Stage 20)



Symbols used on 1:100K stage maps

	route
	alternative route
	start point
	finish point
	direction of route
	woodland/forest
	urban areas
	international border
	station/railway
	peak
	youth hostel
	campground
	building
	church or chapel/monastery/cross
	castle
	pass
	other feature
	water feature
	viewpoint



Additional features on section overview maps

-  airport
-  stage

SCALE: 1:100,000



Contour lines are drawn at 50m intervals and highlighted at 200m intervals.

GPX files

GPX files for all stages can be downloaded free at www.cicerone.co.uk/959/GPX.



ROUTE SUMMARY TABLE

Note that the stage distances in this table are the distances you will need to walk to reach accommodation (or centres of accommodation) if you stage the route in this way, and therefore vary slightly from the distances in the route planner in Appendix A, which are all between points on the GR5.

Stage	Start	Distance (km)	Time	Page
1 The Netherlands				
Stage 1	Hoek van Holland	18.5	4hr 15min	38
Stage 2	Maasland	12.8	3hr 30min	43
Stage 3	Brielle	18.0	4hr 15min	49
Stage 4	Rockanje	13.2	3hr	52
Stage 5	Goedereede	18.5	4hr	56
Stage 6	Herkingen	24.0	5hr 15min	59
Stage 7	Nieuw-Vossemeer	18.7	4hr 30min	64
	Section Total	123.7	28hr 45min	
2 Flanders				
Stage 8	Bergen op Zoom	27.0	6hr	72
Stage 9	Kalmthout	22.8	5hr	79
Stage 10	Brecht	13.5	3hr	83
Stage 11	Zoersel	21.5	5hr	87
Stage 12	Herentals	16.5	3hr 45min	92
Stage 13	Westerlo	24.0	5hr 15min	96
Stage 14	Scherpenheuvel	10.0	2hr 15min	101
Stage 15	Diest	15.5	3hr 30min	105
Stage 16	Lummen	18.5	4hr 15min	110
Stage 17	Stokrooie	16.0	3hr 45min	114
Stage 18	Bokrijk Provincial Domain	20.6	4hr 45min	118
Stage 19	Zutendaal	30.0	7hr 30min	123
Stage 20	Maastricht	13.0	3hr 15min	130
	Section Total	248.9	57hr 15min	
3 Wallonia				
Stage 21	Eben-Emael	19.0	4hr 30min	138
Stage 22	Visé	24.5	6hr 30min	142

ROUTE SUMMARY TABLE

Stage	Start	Distance (km)	Time	Page
Stage 23	Soumagne	15.5	4hr 30min	147
Stage 24	Banneux	17.0	5hr	151
Stage 25	Spa	16.0	5hr	155
Stage 26	Stavelot	25.0	6hr 30min	160
Stage 27	Commanster	26.0	6hr	166
	Section Total	143.0	37hr	

4 Luxembourg

Stage 28	Ouren	20.0	6hr	176
Stage 29	Obereisenbach	23.0	7hr	180
Stage 30	Vianden	14.0	4hr	186
Stage 31	Bleesbréck	16.5	4hr 30min	189
Stage 32	Beaufort	16.8	5hr	194
Stage 33	Echternach	26.4	7hr 30min	200
Stage 34	Wasserbillig	14.0	3hr 30min	205
Stage 35	Grevenmacher	26.0	6hr 30min	209
Stage 36	Remich	27.3	6hr 30min	215
	Section Total	184.0	50hr 30min	

5 Lorraine

Stage 37	Montenach	30.0	7hr 30min	224
Stage 38	Saint-Hubert	24.6	6hr	229
Stage 39	Metz	24.2	6hr 30min	235
Stage 40	Gorze	15.6	4hr 15min	241
Stage 41	Pagny-sur-Moselle	19.5	5hr	244
Stage 42	Montauville	33.2	8hr 30min	249
Stage 43	Liverdun	32.0	7hr	254
Stage 44	Bioncourt	21.0	4hr 45min	259
Stage 45	Vic-sur-Seille	23.7	5hr	263
Stage 46	Tarquimpol	22.8	5hr	268
Stage 47	Gondrexange	22.4	5hr	272
Stage 48	Abreschviller	21.8	6hr 30min	276
Stage 49	Col du Donon	8.3	2hr 15min	281
	Section Total	299.1	73hr 15min	
	Route Total	998.7	247hr 15min	



Rock face in the Petite Suisse Luxembourgeoise (Stage 32)

INTRODUCTION



When you step off the ferry at Hoek van Holland – or alight from the metro at the station next to the terminal – you will see a tall signpost with arms pointing in different directions. There, marked with the standard white-and-red blaze that will be your lodestar in the coming days, weeks or longer, is your sign: GR5 Hoek van Holland – Nice 2289. Fear not – those are merely kilometres, not miles! The thought that the trail indicated by this sign close to the blustery North Sea goes all the way to Nice, on the sunny Mediterranean, is both thrilling and daunting. So you touch the signpost for good luck (or take a selfie) and set off, but you may make a short detour to the nearby beach to dip your

toe in the North Sea before starting this trek. If you're attracted to symbolic gestures – or just want a unique souvenir of the adventure – you might even collect a small sample of North Sea water to carry south.

You're hiking on the fabled GR5 (Grande Randonnée 5 or Grote Routepad 5), a long-distance trail that passes through the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and several regions of eastern France (Lorraine, the Vosges, the Jura and the Alps), plus small segments of Swiss territory around Lac Léman (Lake Geneva), to Nice. Some people trek the entire GR5 in one outing, which may take three to four months. Many others hike sections

THE GR5 TRAIL – BENELUX AND LORRAINE

of the GR5 that interest them, sometimes completing the entire trail over the course of several years. Hiking through, say, the Ardennes, you may meet people who got together last year to walk across the Netherlands and who are planning a walk in Luxembourg next year. Some people simply walk on interesting trails that happen to be part of the GR5, such as the path in Voornes Duin that approaches the bird sanctuary around Breede Water in Holland or the trail across the forested ridges of the Côte de Moselle south of Metz.

This guide has been written for everyone who walks on the GR5 in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Lorraine – the ‘Northern GR5’. The guide will launch through-hikers from Hoek van Holland and accompany them to Schirmeck in the northern Vosges Mountains, where it passes the baton to Cicerone’s guide: *The GR5 Trail – Vosges*

and Jura, in turn followed by *The GR5 Trail – The French Alps: Geneva to the Mediterranean*. Those planning a shorter walk on the Northern GR5 can select a section in this guide that looks most interesting and is best suited to the season and time available (or see Appendix B for some shorter suggestions). There are also many options, outlined in the route descriptions, for travelling to and from points along the Northern GR5 using public transport.

WHAT IT’S LIKE TO HIKE THE NORTHERN GR5

Walking on the Northern GR5 is relatively easy and ideal for those who don’t want to hike up and down steep mountains – or not just yet. In fact walking the length of the route, about 990km from Hoek van Holland to Schirmeck, would be excellent fitness training for



the mountains of the Vosges, the Jura and the Alps.

There are many different ways to enjoy the Northern GR5. Some trekkers stride forward at a sustained rhythm, with their sights set perhaps on the Mediterranean Sea. Others meander, taking time to admire the view here and to visit a museum there. Some trekkers consider it important to walk the entire trail, while others do not hesitate to catch a train or bus to avoid a section of the trail that does not interest them. You can spend nights in comfortable hotels and B&Bs, supplemented by the occasional youth hostel and gîte d'étape. Or you can camp (discreetly) near the trail with a tent and sleeping bag. Similarly, you can choose to eat and drink very well or subsist on cheap, high-calorie fuel. And, of course, nothing prevents you from mixing these approaches. A fine dinner and night in a good hotel can be a well-earned reward after several days of opening tins and roughing it.

This northern European expedition is also much more than a walk through nature – it's a cultural experience. You will cross the Delta region of the Netherlands, through two regions of Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia) that comprise three linguistic communities (Flemish, French and German), along Luxembourg's eastern border (closely linked with Germany) and across Lorraine, a region with a distinctive place in French – and, indeed, European – history. Along the way, you will meet an interesting variety of people (including other walkers), observe different styles of architecture and sample diverse culinary traditions.



*Statue of Queen Wilhelmina and
Brielle Historical Museum (Stage 2)*

Or your experience of the GR5 could be a museum tour. From the tug-boat museum in Maassluis, passing the flint museum within the extraordinary Tour d'Eben-Ezer near Eben-Emael, to the salt museum in Marsal, there are interesting and often unusual museums beside the trail – not to mention world-renowned art museums such as the Centre Pompidou-Metz. You will also see many historic buildings along the way, both religious (such as St Étienne Cathedral in Metz) and secular (such as the picture-book castles at Beaufort and Vianden).

LANDSCAPE

In this guide, the Northern GR5 is divided into five sections: the Netherlands, Flanders, Wallonia, Luxembourg and Lorraine.

STAGE 1

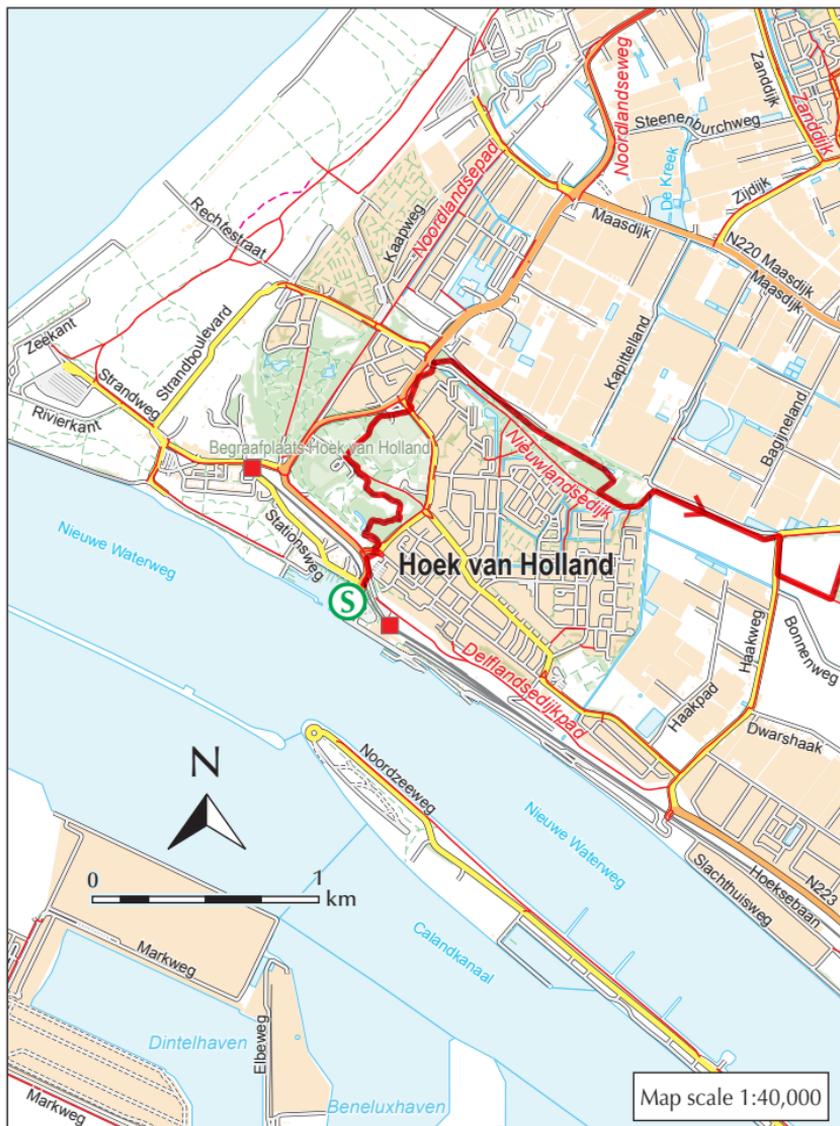
Hoek van Holland to Maasland

Start	Hoek van Holland Haven metro station
Finish	Maasland
Distance	18.5km
Time	4hr 15min
Map	37 West Rotterdam
Refreshments	None
Transport	Ferry from Harwich (UK) to Hoek van Holland; train to Rotterdam Central Station and RET Metro B to Hoek van Holland Haven
Accommodation	B&B in Maasland

This first stage of the GR5 is convenient for those who arrive in Hoek van Holland around midday. (Those who start earlier in the day may opt to walk an additional 2.8km to Maassluis, a city with more services.) The route to Maasland follows trails through woods and bicycle paths across polders. It is interesting to observe the intensive agriculture in large greenhouses and the spinning wind turbines beside active commercial waterways.

There is a cemetery on the left side of Kerkhofweg with Commonwealth war graves, including those of RAF fliers who died during the Wehrmacht offensive in May 1940.

The GR5 starts at a tall pole, standing beside the Hoek van Holland Haven **metro station** and near the ferry terminal, with arms pointing in different directions. One points the way to 'GR5 Hoek van Holland – Nice 2289'. Cross the railway tracks here and follow Harwichweg. Turn left after 100 metres where a GR mark points into a wooded **park**. The GR5 wanders through this park, following a well-marked route. About 100 metres after entering the park, turn right beside a small pond, then left where the trail comes within sight of the road (on the right). Turn right at a field with exercise apparatus, right again to descend a short flight of steps and left on a paved path (Kerkhofweg). ◀ Turn right beside the pitch of a rugby club called 'The Hookers'. Emerging from the woods, the trail passes a football stadium.



The GR5 reaches Harwichweg: turn left and then right to walk on a path parallel to Dirk van den Burgweg, with a children’s play area on the right. Shortly after passing the Hotel Noordzee on the left, the path enters a **forest** with a



GR mark clearly indicating the route. The trail continues generally southeast, with well-placed GR marks – except at an unmarked T-junction about 15 minutes after entering these woods: turn right here.

After passing a canal and residential housing on the right, leave the woods and continue beside an open field on the right. At Haakweg, the GR5 follows three sides of a quadrilateral, rather than continue straight ahead on the path. Turn right on Haakweg, left on a path after 200 metres (KP29), and left again on a trail that runs along the west side of a wooded area, the **Staelduinse Bosch**. A sign identifies the trail as the 'Grote Rivierapad' (Great Riviera Path), confirming that you are indeed walking toward the Mediterranean Sea. The trail reaches the northwest corner of the woods and turns right into them. ▶ The GR5 meanders through the woods and is generally well marked, but there is one turn that is easy to miss. Watch for the GR mark indicating a right turn into the woods just after passing a house on the left.

Leaving the Staelduinse Bosch, turn right on Staelduinlaan. After crossing Bonnenlaan, turn left on a bicycle path. The path crosses the **Oranjekanaal** (KP78), turns right and continues southwest for 400m.

*Residential
neighbourhood in
Hoek van Holland*

Several concrete bunkers built here by the Germans during World War II are now bat sanctuaries (*vleermuisreservaat*). Their darkness and constant temperature create an ideal environment for bats.

You will see many **wind turbines** in the Delta area – and feel the wind that turns them! In 2017, wind power in the Netherlands produced more than 9.6 billion kWh of electricity, nearly 60% of the country's total production by renewable sources. The Dutch (like other Europeans) are increasing their wind power capacity. During Stage 6, you will pass the new Krammer Wind Park, where 34 wind turbines are being built (scheduled for completion in 2019).

Curving left, the GR5 follows a path beside the **Oranjedijk** and large greenhouses devoted to the cultivation of vegetables. Turn right after 500 metres (KP90) and walk on Polderhaakdwarsweg to Polderhaakweg. Turn left here and walk 1.3km to Spuidijk. The road curves left to join the Oranjedijk road after 500 metres. The GR5 turns right here and follows the road for 1.5km before reaching the end of the Oranjedijk itself.

At the end of Oranjedijk, pass an equestrian centre, Manege de Nieuwe Oranjehoeve, and continue on a bicycle path that enters **Maassluis** (KP16). The park here is a good place for a picnic. Leaving the park, walk northeast along a path beside a street. After crossing a main road, turn right and walk down a small road to a bridge on the

Friendly cattle guard a footbridge across a ditch in the Maasland polder



left. Cross that bridge and follow a road (Westgaag) beside a canal. This road passes under the **A20** motorway. About 500 metres after the motorway, the GR5 follows a bicycle path to the right. Then, 50 metres further, the GR5 leaves the path. It crosses a small bridge on the right and sets off across the fields upon a line of concrete paving stones. Maasland's two church steeples are visible on the horizon to the southeast.

Enter **Maasland**, a residential town, through a small park called 't hoenderpark. Cross a canal and turn left on Koningin Julianaweg for a tour of this quiet town. Wander through the town beside its canal and along bicycle paths. The general direction is south toward an intersection in the southwestern corner of the town, where you will find the GR5 if it has been temporarily lost. You can skip the walk through central Maasland by turning right on Koningin Julianaweg, which re-joins the GR5 at that intersection.

Services are limited in Maasland, but the town has what is needed for a comfortable overnight stay: a B&B, a supermarket and a restaurant.

STAGE 2

Maasland to Brielle

Start	Maasland
Finish	Brielle
Distance	12.8km
Time	3hr 30min (plus about 30min for the ferry)
Map	37 West Rotterdam
Refreshments	Cafés/restaurants and shops in Maassluis; cafés at Rozenburg ferry landing and beside Brielse Meer
Accommodation	B&B in Maassluis; hotels, B&Bs and campground with trekkershutten in Brielle
Transport options	Maassluis is on Rotterdam metro line B, so you could begin a walk on the GR5 there. Alternatively, combine Stages 1 and 2 (30.5km), departing early from Hoek van Holland to arrive in Brielle in the late afternoon. Connexion bus 106 links Rozenburg with Brielle.