



HIKING PLAN

Cologne → Leuven

15 Days · 201 km · 2 Countries

June 19 – July 3, 2026

*Along the Jakobsweg & Via Mosana
through the Rhineland, Pays de Herve & Haspengouw*

A BitcoinWalk Community Offering

bitcoinwalk.org

Beginner-friendly walk with hotel accommodations

Overview

This 15-day hike takes you from Cologne Cathedral to the Belgian university city of Leuven. The route follows the Rhenish Jakobsweg (Way of St. James) to Aachen, crosses the border into Belgium, and winds through the scenic Pays de Herve and the Haspengouw fruit-growing region into the heart of Flemish Brabant.

The route is designed for beginners: predominantly flat to gently rolling terrain, moderate daily stages averaging 13 km, and a solid roof over your head every night.

At a Glance

Start Date	Friday, June 19, 2026
Arrival Date	Friday, July 3, 2026
Total Distance	201 km in 15 stages
Daily Average	13.4 km
Shortest Stage	10 km (Day 4: Düren → Langerwehe, Day 7: Aachen → Kelmis, Day 9: Dalhem → Visé, Day 12: Borgloon → Sint-Truiden)
Longest Stage	20 km (Day 15: Tienen → Leuven – Arrival day!)
Countries	Germany (Days 1–6), Belgium (Days 7–15)
Terrain	90% flat to gently rolling; only Day 8 (Pays de Herve) is somewhat hilly
Trail Markings	Jakobsweg (shell), Via Mosana, GR markings (red-white)
Accommodation	Hotels & guesthouses (single room approx. €60–120/night)

Route Overview

Week 1 (Days 1–7): Cologne → Aachen → Kelmis — Along the Rhenish Jakobsweg through the Cologne Lowlands and the Jülich Plains. Flat terrain, well-marked pilgrim trails. Day 7: border crossing into Belgium.

Week 2 (Days 8–15): Kelmis → Tongeren → Leuven — Through the hilly Pays de Herve, down into the Meuse Valley, then through the gentle Haspengouw fruit-growing landscape into the heart of Brabant. Diverse scenery with cultural highlights.

The 15 Stages in Detail

Day 1 · Fri, Jun 19 · Cologne → Frechen · 12 km

Terrain	Flat, urban
Trail Markings	Jakobsweg (shell waymarks)
Highlights	Start at Cologne Cathedral, Ehrenfeld district, Frechen City Park
Accommodation	Hotel Markt3 Frechen or Barbarossa Hotel

Day 2 · Sat, Jun 20 · Frechen → Kerpen · 13 km

Terrain	Flat, rural
Trail Markings	Jakobsweg
Highlights	Kottenforst-Ville Nature Park, Kolping town of Kerpen
Accommodation	ibis Kerpen or local guesthouse

Day 3 · Sun, Jun 21 · Kerpen → Düren · 18 km

Terrain	Flat (plains)
Trail Markings	Jakobsweg (longest stage of Week 1)
Highlights	Jülich Plains, St. Anna Church Düren
Accommodation	Hotel am Markt Düren or HOTEL Mariaweiler Hof

Tip: Longest stage of the first week. Start early! The terrain is completely flat (plains), so very manageable. A rest stop in Merzenich is possible.

Day 4 · Mon, Jun 22 · Düren → Langerwehe · 10 km

Terrain	Flat to gentle
Trail Markings	Jakobsweg
Highlights	Pottery Museum Langerwehe, Inde Valley
Accommodation	Hotel St. Jobser Hof or Hotel Siebenschläfer

Day 5 · Tue, Jun 23 · Langerwehe → Eschweiler · 12 km

Terrain	Gently rolling
Trail Markings	Jakobsweg
Highlights	Inde Valley, Eschweiler Old Town, Eschweiler Castle

Accommodation	Hotel Krone Eschweiler
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Day 6 · Wed, Jun 24 · Eschweiler → Aachen · 15 km

Terrain	Gently rolling
Trail Markings	Jakobsweg (last stage in Germany)
Highlights	Aachen Cathedral (UNESCO), Town Hall, Elisenbrunnen, Carolus Thermal Baths
Accommodation	Hotel Drei Könige, ibis Aachen Marschierter etc.

Tip: Allow extra time for Aachen! The cathedral (UNESCO World Heritage, burial site of Charlemagne) and the old town are absolutely worth visiting. Relax in the Carolus Thermal Baths in the evening.

Day 7 · Thu, Jun 25 · Aachen → Kelmis (BE) · 10 km

Terrain	Gently rolling
Trail Markings	Via Mosana / GR trails
Highlights	Border crossing into Belgium, Neutral-Moresnet history, Vieille Montagne
Accommodation	Park Hotel Kelmis or Pension Heide Kelmis

Border Crossing: Today you leave Germany! No border post (Schengen), but you enter the German-speaking Community of Belgium. Kelmis was the curious “Neutral-Moresnet” until 1919 – a micro-state!

Day 8 · Fri, Jun 26 · Kelmis → Dalhem · 14 km

Terrain	Hilly (Pays de Herve)
Trail Markings	Tour du Pays de Herve / GR waymarks
Highlights	Bocage landscape, orchards, hedgerows, medieval Dalhem (hilliest stage!)
Accommodation	Hotel Berneau or Le Relais de la Maillère

Note: Hilliest stage of the entire tour! The Pays de Herve is a beautiful bocage landscape with hedgerows and orchards. Take your time and enjoy the views.

Day 9 · Sat, Jun 27 · Dalhem → Visé · 10 km

Terrain	Downhill, then flat
Trail Markings	GR trails
Highlights	Descent to the Meuse Valley, Visé Old Town, Meuse promenade
Accommodation	Hotel in Visé

Day 10 · Sun, Jun 28 · Visé → Tongeren · 16 km

Terrain	Gently rolling
Trail Markings	Regional hiking trails
Highlights	Oldest town in Belgium! Gallo-Roman Museum, Basilica, Beguinage
Accommodation	Eburon Hotel or Ambiotel Tongeren

Highlight: Tongeren is the oldest town in Belgium (founded 15 BC as “Atuatuca Tungrorum”). The Gallo-Roman Museum is excellent. On Sundays, the Grote Markt hosts a famous antiques market!

Day 11 · Mon, Jun 29 · Tongeren → Borgloon · 14 km

Terrain	Gently undulating
Trail Markings	Haspengouw hiking routes
Highlights	Haspengouw fruit orchards, "Reading between the Lines" church art installation
Accommodation	Eburon Hotel Borgloon or B&B Het Loonderhof

Art Tip: “Reading between the Lines” near Borgloon is a transparent church sculpture made of steel plates – one of the most photographed artworks in Belgium.

Day 12 · Tue, Jun 30 · Borgloon → Sint-Truiden · 10 km

Terrain	Gently undulating
Trail Markings	Haspengouw hiking routes
Highlights	Grote Markt, Abbey Tower, Beguinage (UNESCO World Heritage)
Accommodation	Hotel Stayen or Kasteel van Ordingen

Day 13 · Wed, Jul 1 · Sint-Truiden → Landen · 15 km

Terrain	Flat
Trail Markings	Regional hiking trails
Highlights	Tumuli (burial mounds), Haspengouw agricultural landscape
Accommodation	Hotel in Landen

Day 14 · Thu, Jul 2 · Landen → Tienen · 12 km

Terrain	Flat
Trail Markings	Regional hiking trails
Highlights	Grote Markt Tienen, Sugar Museum
Accommodation	Hotel in Tienen

Day 15 · Fri, Jul 3 · Tienen → Leuven · 20 km

Terrain	Flat to gentle
Trail Markings	Cycle/hiking path Tienen-Leuven
Highlights	Arrival! Grote Markt, Gothic Town Hall, Oude Markt – "Longest Bar in Europe"
Accommodation	Celebration night in Leuven!

You made it! The longest stage of the tour, but motivation will carry you to the finish! If your legs get heavy: trains run from Tienen to Leuven in just 15 minutes. Celebrate your achievement at the "Oude Markt" – the "Longest Bar in Europe"!

Stage Overview

Day	Date	Stage	km	Terrain
1	Fri, Jun 19	Cologne → Frechen	12	Flat, urban
2	Sat, Jun 20	Frechen → Kerpen	13	Flat, rural
3	Sun, Jun 21	Kerpen → Düren	18	Flat (plains)
4	Mon, Jun 22	Düren → Langerwehe	10	Flat to gentle
5	Tue, Jun 23	Langerwehe → Eschweiler	12	Gently rolling
6	Wed, Jun 24	Eschweiler → Aachen	15	Gently rolling
7	Thu, Jun 25	Aachen → Kelmis (BE)	10	Gently rolling
8	Fri, Jun 26	Kelmis → Dalhem	14	Hilly (Pays de Herve)
9	Sat, Jun 27	Dalhem → Visé	10	Downhill, then flat
10	Sun, Jun 28	Visé → Tongeren	16	Gently rolling
11	Mon, Jun 29	Tongeren → Borgloon	14	Gently undulating
12	Tue, Jun 30	Borgloon → Sint-Truiden	10	Gently undulating
13	Wed, Jul 1	Sint-Truiden → Landen	15	Flat
14	Thu, Jul 2	Landen → Tienen	12	Flat
15	Fri, Jul 3	Tienen → Leuven	20	Flat to gentle
		TOTAL	201	

Packing List

Pack light! With hotel accommodations you don't need a sleeping bag or tent. Target: backpack under 8 kg.

Clothing

- ☐ 1 pair of hiking boots (must be broken in!)
- ☐ 1 pair of light sandals/flip-flops for evenings
- ☐ 3 pairs of hiking socks (merino wool recommended)
- ☐ 2 quick-dry t-shirts/shirts
- ☐ 1 long hiking pants (zip-off/convertible ideal)
- ☐ 1 pair of shorts
- ☐ 1 fleece jacket or light sweater
- ☐ 1 rain jacket (waterproof, breathable)
- ☐ Underwear (3 sets, quick-dry)
- ☐ 1 sun hat or cap

Equipment

- ☐ Backpack (30–40 liters, with hip belt)
- ☐ Rain cover for backpack
- ☐ 2 water bottles (0.75 L each) or hydration bladder
- ☐ Hiking poles (optional but recommended for knees)
- ☐ Headlamp/flashlight
- ☐ First aid kit (blister plasters ESSENTIAL!)
- ☐ Sunscreen SPF 50
- ☐ Insect repellent
- ☐ Microfiber towel
- ☐ Zip-lock bags for documents

Documents & Tech

- ☐ ID card / passport
- ☐ European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)
- ☐ Smartphone with offline maps (Komoot, Maps.me)
- ☐ Power bank (min. 10,000 mAh)
- ☐ Charging cable
- ☐ Copy of hotel reservations
- ☐ Debit/credit card + some cash
- ☐ Hiking maps as backup (Jakobsweg guide recommended)

Budget Estimate

All prices are approximate for June/July 2026 and may vary depending on season and booking time.

Item	Per Day	15 Days
Accommodation (single w/ breakfast)	€70–120	€1,050–1,800
Lunch / snacks	€10–20	€150–300
Dinner	€15–30	€225–450
Drinks / cafés	€5–10	€75–150
Museums / admission fees	~€3	~€50
Emergency fund / misc.	~€5	~€75
TOTAL (estimated)	€108–188	€1,625–2,825

Money-saving tip: Book early (at least 4–6 weeks ahead) to save significantly on accommodation. In Belgium, B&Bs are often cheaper than hotels and offer hearty breakfasts. A supermarket picnic works great for lunch.

Practical Information

Border Crossings

The route passes through two countries: Germany (Days 1–6) and Belgium (Days 7–15). Both are in the Schengen Area, so there are no border controls. Still carry your ID!

Interesting: In Kelmis (Day 7) you are in the German-speaking Community of Belgium – German is spoken here. From Dalhem/Visé the language switches to French, and from Tongeren onward to Dutch (Flemish).

Currency

Both Germany and Belgium use the Euro. Debit and credit cards are accepted almost everywhere. In smaller Belgian towns, cash can be useful.

Languages Along the Route

Stage	Region	Language
Days 1–6	North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany	German
Days 7–8	German-speaking Community, Belgium	German
Days 9–10	Wallonia (Visé/Tongeren area)	French / Dutch
Days 11–15	Flanders (Limburg/Brabant)	Dutch (Flemish)

Weather in June/July

Late June to early July is ideal hiking weather. Expect daytime highs of 20–25°C, occasionally up to 30°C. Rain is possible (pack a rain jacket!), but the days are long (sunrise approx. 5:30 AM, sunset approx. 9:45 PM).

Emergency Numbers

Service	Germany	Belgium
General Emergency	112	112
Police	110	101
Medical On-Call Service	116 117	1733

Navigation & Apps

Komoot: Ideal for route planning and offline navigation. Download maps for NRW, Wallonia, and Flanders in advance. The Jakobsweg route is available as a community route.

Maps.me: Good free offline maps as backup.

Jakobsweg App: Specialized app for the Rhenish Jakobsweg with hostel directory.

Getting There & Back

Getting there: Cologne Central Station is the ideal starting point – right next to the Cathedral.

Getting back: Regular trains run from Leuven to Cologne (change in Brussels or Liège, approx. 2.5–3 hours). Thalys/Eurostar or IC connections available.

Important Tips for Beginners

- Break in hiking boots 2–3 weeks beforehand (avoid blisters!)
- Apply blister plasters at the first sign – don't wait
- Start early (7–8 AM) to avoid midday heat
- Drink at least 2 liters of water per day
- Take breaks every 45–60 minutes
- Elevate your feet in the evening and do stretching exercises
- If you feel pain: take a rest day rather than pushing through
- Book accommodation 4–6 weeks in advance, especially in smaller towns

Buen Camino & Happy Hiking!

From Cologne to Leuven – step by step.