

Site map



Timeline of Val Saint Lambert

1202 – Monastic foundation
The Val Saint Lambert site begins when the Prince-Bishop of Liège grants these lands to the Cistercian monks.

1826 – First furnace and official founding
Lighting of the first furnace and founding of the public limited company "Verreries et Établissements du Val Saint Lambert".

1841 – First national recognition
At the Belgian Industry Exhibition, VSL stands out for its technical innovations (rich cutting, double/triple-layered glass, filigrees).

1894 – The Vase of the 9 Provinces
Léon Ledru creates a monumental piece for the Antwerp World's Fair: 2 years of work, 20 artisans, 82 elements, 200 kg.

1904 – Golden age of the crystalworks
Record production: 160,000 pieces per day, 5,000 employees across four sites (Seraing, Jemeppe, Namur, Herbatte) and 90% exported.

1960s – Industrial decline
The beginning of a downturn linked to the steel crisis and international competition.

Since the 1970s – Artisanal excellence
Refocus on high-end know-how and artistic creation.

2026 – Bicentennial celebrations of the Val Saint Lambert Crystalworks

Walks

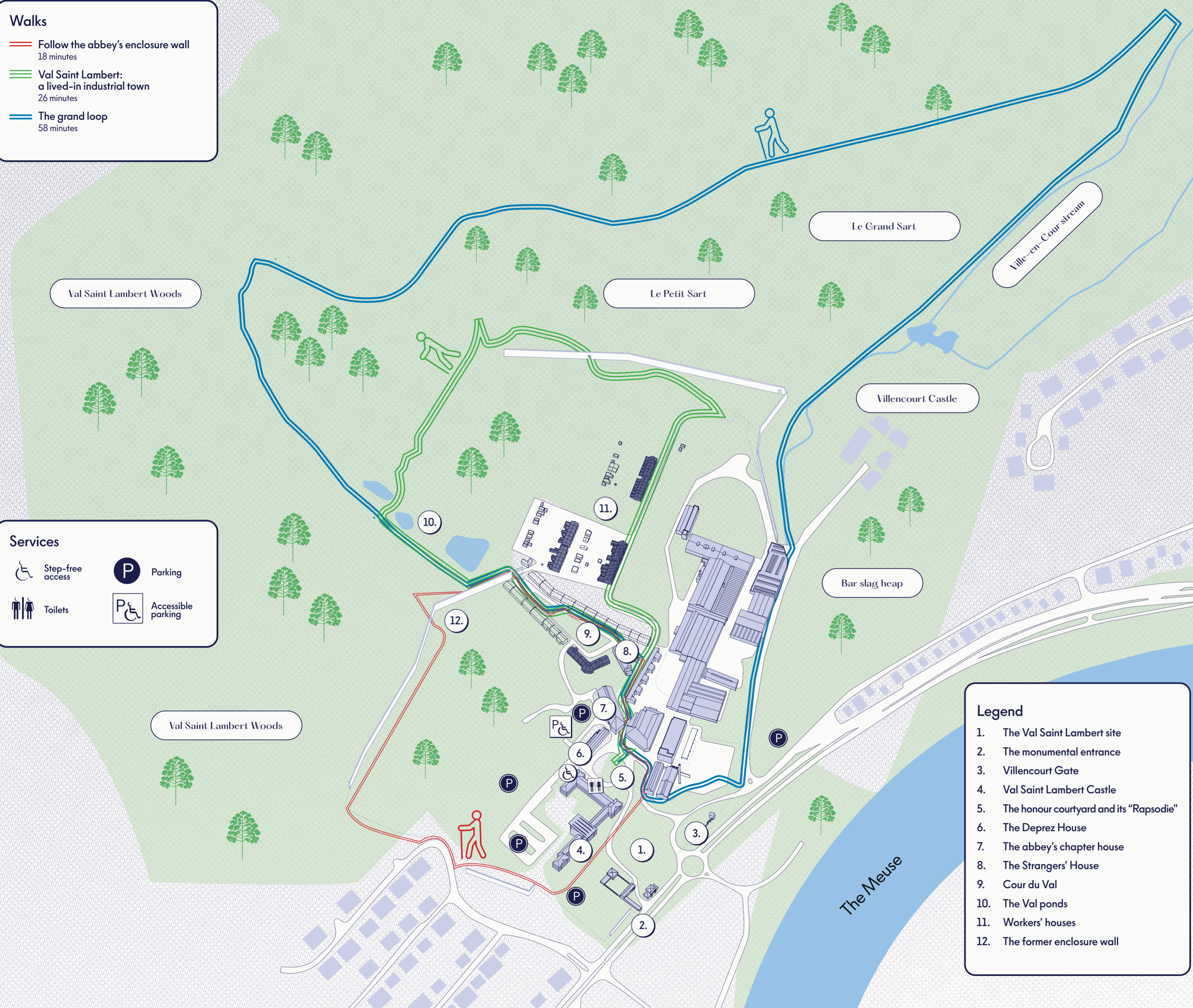
- Follow the abbey's enclosure wall
18 minutes
- Val Saint Lambert: a lived-in industrial town
26 minutes
- The grand loop
58 minutes

Services

- Step-free access
- Toilets
- Parking
- Accessible parking

Legend

- The Val Saint Lambert site
- The monumental entrance
- Villencourt Gate
- Val Saint Lambert Castle
- The honour courtyard and its "Rapsodie"
- The Deprez House
- The abbey's chapter house
- The Strangers' House
- Cour du Val
- The Val ponds
- Workers' houses
- The former enclosure wall



1.

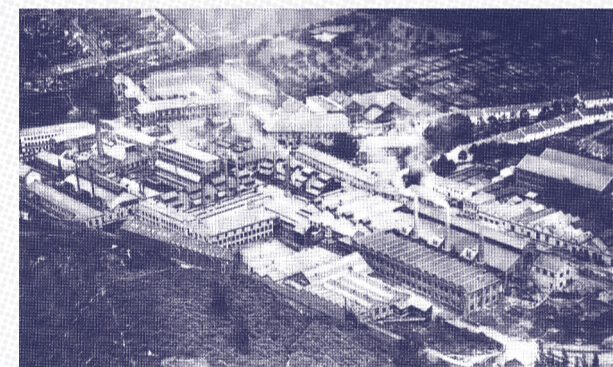
The Val Saint Lambert site

Everything begins in the 13th century, when a community of Cistercian monks builds its abbey in a peaceful valley. Gradually worn down by time, the site is rebuilt during the 18th century.

In 1826, Lelièvre and Kemlin take over the abbey to found the Crystalworks, turning the place into a vast industrial complex and a key regional economic engine.



Depiction of the abbey (17th century)



Aerial view of the Cristalleries (circa 1965)

This momentum gives rise to a true workers' community, organised around work, housing and services, supporting up to 5,000 workers at the beginning of the 20th century.

But the turbulence of history—wars, crises and industrial transformations—weakens the company, whose decline accelerates from the 1970s onwards.

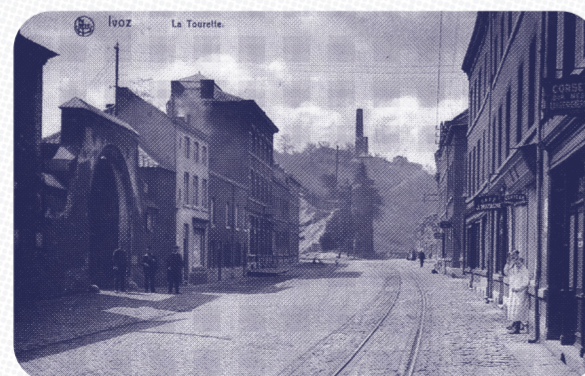
Activity then refocuses on artisanal craftsmanship and prestige pieces, as is still the case today.

2.

The monumental entrance

Built at the end of the 18th century, the monumental entrance first served as the abbey's threshold, then as the Crystalworks' entrance from 1826. The road to its left still follows the route of the former railway line that supplied the workshops. The proximity of coal, waterways and later rail fostered the site's rapid growth.

At the peak of the Crystalworks, entries and exits were strictly controlled and guards closed the gates at 10 pm. Inside the walls, workers' life was still shaped by festivities, dances and a vibrant pride.



Villencourt Gate

3.

Villencourt Gate

This former entrance portico is a 16th-century vestige. It was then the main entrance to the original abbey. Isolated from the site when the roundabout and the new road to Tihange were built in the 1990s, it is still visible in its original location.

4.

Val Saint Lambert Castle

Built between 1762 and 1765 by architect Jean-Gilles Jacob, the former abbatial palace is now known as the "Château du Val".

Its brick-and-limestone facades, punctuated by projecting bays and triangular pediments, illustrate the Mosan neoclassical style of the 18th century.



Val Saint Lambert Castle (circa 1930)

During the Crystalworks' industrial period, the building housed administrative offices, workers' accommodation, as well as the station and loading platforms through which raw materials and finished pieces transited. The rear of the abbatial palace, directly connected to the railway, was then covered with warehouses that have since disappeared.

Between 1996 and 2007, architect Daniel Dethier led a major renovation project that redefined the relationship to the place while diversifying its uses. The polychrome windows of the front facade were created by Belgian artist Jean Glibert, who passed away in 2024.



The architecture of the Château du Val: between heritage and renewal



View of the exterior of the Musée du Val Saint-Lambert

5.

The honour courtyard and its "Rapsodie"

Prestigious clients and official events were welcomed in the honour courtyard of the Crystalworks.

Today, you can admire "Rapsodie", a monumental steel artwork topped with a stainless-steel sphere—an homage to master glassmaker Louis Leloup, a major figure in Belgian glass art.

6.

The Deprez House

Built in 1885 on the site of a former 18th-century infirmary, it bears the name of Jules Deprez, director of the Crystalworks between 1863 and 1889.

A statue in his honour once adorned the facade, but only the plinth remains since the bust disappeared in the 1970s.

In 1894, his son Georges takes over and modernises the Crystalworks: electric lighting, development of shops and an exhibition room...

In 1896, he commissions a town house in Brussels from Victor Horta, a sign of the Crystalworks' prestige on the eve of the 20th century.

7.

The abbey's chapter house

A vestige of the 13th-century Gothic cloister, the chapter house retains ribbed vaults, column capitals and Gothic openings. Converted in the 18th century into a store and later a warehouse, it was restored in 1983 after a fire. Today it hosts cultural events.



The chapter house, a Gothic vestige from the 13th century

8.

The Strangers' House

Built in the 17th century, the Strangers' house symbolises monastic hospitality: pilgrims and visitors were welcomed here. It later became a band hall and then a domestic-science school. It is now unoccupied, but remains an essential witness to life on the site.

9.

Cour du Val

A 19th-century workers' housing complex illustrating the Crystalworks' paternalistic urban planning. Its brick houses were once white-washed with lime. Bombed in 1944 and later degraded, it was renovated between 1980 and 1990 by architect Pierre Sauveur, who preserved its original spirit.

10.

The Val ponds

Located above the Cour du Val, three ponds are now dedicated to fishing. Two were created by the Crystalworks for water retention, then abandoned in the 19th century and restored around 1980 by enthusiasts. A third pond was created in the late 1990s



Crystalworks Courtyard

11.

Workers' houses (20th century)

Built in the early 20th century, they accompanied the expansion of the Crystalworks' workforce, then at its peak. They remain a structuring element of the site's social landscape.

12

The former enclosure wall

Built in several phases in the 17th century, the enclosure wall was altered by major 18th-century works, the growth of the Crystalwork and 20th-century road developments. Despite these transformations, several sections still preserve their historic route, visible today.