

discover

ISSUE 76 | APRIL-MAY 2020

BENELUX



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As the best-selling culinary author in Belgium, Pascale Naessens has been credited for launching a real culinary movement over the past decade, helping Belgians ditch their beloved convenience food and fall in love with home cooking once again. We caught up with the former model, who is also an acclaimed ceramic artist, to find out more about her latest English language release, *Low Carb Cookbook with 4 Ingredients*.

THEMES

10 Top Museums, Galleries and Cultural Hotspots

Calling all culture vultures! France, Belgium and Luxembourg are home to an array of world-class museums, creative hubs and historical hotspots. This month's special has plenty to inspire, whether you are an art aficionado, a history buff, or simply craving some cultural satisfaction.

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72 Introducing Mariska Martina

Here at *Discover Benelux* magazine we love promoting the region's rising musical talents. This month we meet Mariska Martina, a London-based singer-songwriter from Holland, whose soothing vocals and heartfelt lyrics have earned comparisons to the likes of Joni Mitchell.

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discover BENELUX

Promoting Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg

Discover Benelux

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Dear Reader,



I hope the April/May issue finds you well. Like the rest of the world, the Benelux has been going through unprecedented times, but it has never been more important for us to stay connected and celebrate the many things we love about our region.

From virtual gallery tours to webinars, there has been plenty to keep you up-lifted, entertained and stimulated from the comfort of your own home recently — you can find inspiration in our regular calendar on page 60 and our business calendar on page 55. Meanwhile, through the pages of our magazine, we want you to explore world-class museums, historical hotspots and some of Europe's most beautiful, unspoiled scenery.

If you have had more time at home recently to brush up on your cookery skills, then you may already have a well-used copy of Pascale Naessens' latest book *Low Carb Cookbook with 4 Ingredients*. The former model and best-selling culinary author has been credited for launching a real culinary movement over the past decade, helping Belgians ditch convenience food and fall in love with home cooking once again. I highly recommend you try her sautéed vegetables with feta — check out the recipe on page 45.

Meanwhile, I also had the pleasure of speaking with Mariska Martina, a London-based singer-songwriter from Holland, whose soothing vocals provide the perfect antidote to stressful times. You can read the interview on page 72, and listen to her music at mariskamartina.com.

Enjoy the magazine.

Anna Villeleger,
Editor



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APRIL/MAY FASHION PICKS

Spring is in full bloom

With the change of the season, we are looking at ways to update our wardrobe. Think elegant floral prints in soft, delicate fabrics to add a touch of whimsical femininity and fun vibes to your attire.

Take the first step into spring and blossom while doing so with these fashion picks.

TEXT: INGRID OPSTAD | PRESS PHOTOS



Pure and simple

We love the simplicity of the huge floral pattern party visible in this bio-cotton number from Oiliy. The puffy sleeves have pleat-details on the shoulder and with the collar it forms an homage to traditional clothes from Dutch fishermen. Use it as a shirt seen here with jeans and a smart trench coat and heels or as a dress with a pair of cool boots.

Oiliy, 'Dijon' dress, €299

Oiliy, 'Poitiers' pants, €169

www.oiliy.com



Delicate

The Ghymo jumper from Bellerose is the perfect top to layer with this season. Delicate and light with its wider collar and regular fit, it is an easy and comfortable everyday piece which is elevated by its subtle floral print.

Bellerose, 'Ghymo' knitwear, €129

www.bellerose.be



Bag it up

If you are looking for a versatile cross-body bag that offers plenty of space for your essentials with a beautiful floral print, this printed cotton bag from Belgian fashion brand A.F.VANDEVORST is a great choice. The bag features an adjustable shoulder strap, an inner zip pocket and a front slip-in pocket.

A.F.VANDEVORST, crossbody bag, €650

www.afvandevorst.be

Strike a pose

With a nod to the '80s this Odessa shirt with a casual fit, revere collar and all over simplistic floral print is the perfect combination of vintage and modern. Style and comfort in perfect harmony. Wear the shirt tucked into your favourite pair of jeans with a retro-style belt and strike a pose.

Farah, 'Odessa' shirt, €73

www.farah.co.uk



Modern classic

Contrasting an indulgent 100 per cent silk finish with a muted grey colour, this tie is a modern classic. The minimal floral pattern makes it right on trend this year, and will make you stand out in any occasion you wear it. Also available in a light-pink shade.

Jaeger, silk floral tie, approx €37

www.jaeger.co.uk



Be bold

With vibrant palettes, unconventional styles and intricate embroidery Belgian fashion designer and brand Dries Van Noten knows all about floral prints. Don't go unnoticed this spring with this elegant and fashionable bomber jacket.

Dries Van Noten, bomber jacket, €950

www.yoox.com



DESIRABLE DESIGNS

Spring cleaning

Traditionally, spring is the season to give your house the makeover it deserves after a long, wet winter. Why not make your spring-cleaning session more fun with some of these great products?

TEXT: MAYA WITTERS | PRESS PHOTOS

1.



1. Eco-friendly cleaning

Biotop is a Belgian family-owned company that creates a range of eco-friendly cleaning products suitable for every bit of dirt in your house, on your clothes and even on your person. Efficient and no-nonsense, their products do the job without harming the environment or your skin. The range is available at organic stores all over Belgium, including the Bioplanet supermarkets.

From €2.39

www.biotopeco.be

3.



2. Durable defences

To keep yourself clean during your spring scouring session, don an apron. With these leather numbers from Dutchdeluxes, you are certain to be protected and look stylish, too. Their super-durable designs will last for decades, making them well worth the investment. Find them at Bijenkorf and across the world.

€150

www.dutchdeluxes.com

2.



3. Stylish storage

If your floor is habitually strewn with kids' toys or your cabinets are about to burst at the seams, opt for some multifunctional storage boxes. These cute designs from trusty Dutch favourite Hema will bring a bit of spring into your home while effectively hiding any mess.

€7

www.hema.nl

4.



4. Bathroom makeover

If your house deserves a makeover, then so do you! And what better way to treat yourself than with some all-natural, Dutch-made hair and body products? Helemaal Shea, as the name suggests, makes shea-based shampoo and soap bars that will transform your beauty routine and make your bathroom smell heavenly.

From €7.79

www.helemaalshea.nl

5.



5. Playful tea towels

This set of two tea towels from Dutch brand Weltevree is determined to make chores more fun: they double as game boards! Ideal for anyone planning to go camping as the weather continues to improve – just bring or improvise some tokens, and get playing. Loser does the dishes!

€19

www.weltevree.eu



American Hotel

The stylish American Hotel, situated on Leidse Square, is maybe one of the most known luxury hotels in Amsterdam. Just like the iconic Café Americain, which is famous for its art deco interior. The tasteful hotel rooms have been designed to assure you a perfect stay. The 175 rooms are divided into Classic rooms, Deluxe rooms and Junior Suites. Café Americain combines historic allure with 21st-century standards. High quality, accessible style and a large dose of personality. Amsterdam-sourced products on the all-day menu are supplemented with fine Dutch ingredients. We are looking forward to welcome you soon!

Leidsekade 97 | 1017 PN Amsterdam | info.american@edenhotels.nl | +31 (0)20 556 3000





THE BENELUX & FRANCE

Top museums, galleries and cultural hotspots

Calling all culture vultures! France and the Benelux region are renowned for having some of the world's finest museums, galleries and cultural hotspots. This month, we delve inside the gems of this fascinating region.

PHOTOS: NBTC



Culture fix

Recent events have seen us all spending more time than usual at home, but that is no reason for us not to get a culture fix. Despite many of the region's museums and galleries being closed lately and exhibitions put on hold, there are many you can visit from the comfort of your own home. For example, France's famous Louvre offers an array of virtual tours. You can explore collections from the Pharaonic period on the Egyptian Antiquities tour, learn more about the remains of the Louvre's Moat in the Medieval Louvre tour or explore the wonders of the Galerie d'Apollon in the Decorative Arts virtual tour.



Van Gogh Museum.

World-famous

Other world-class museums such as the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam and the Musée d'Orsay in Paris are offering some beautiful online exhibitions on Google Arts & Culture. And the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam is offering an interactive Rijks Studio feature, where you can create your own thematic collection, or browse the collections curated by other visitors for a unique digital visit.

Get involved

Meanwhile, the organisers of Art Brussels, one of Belgium's most important yearly art fairs, have been making sure some of the art on display in Belgium's galleries doesn't remain hidden: under the hashtag #ArtBrusselsOnlineExhibitions, it is sharing daily images of art on display behind temporarily closed doors. Follow along on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.



Van Gogh Museum.



Rijksmuseum.



Rijksmuseum.



The Family of Man, Clervaux Castle. Photo: CNA/Romain Girtgen, 2013

DISCOVER BELGIUM & LUXEMBOURG

Top museums, galleries and cultural hotspots

World-class art, culture and history is never far away in Belgium and Luxembourg. From up-and-coming artists to thought-provoking museums and much more, this month's special presents the destinations you need to know about.

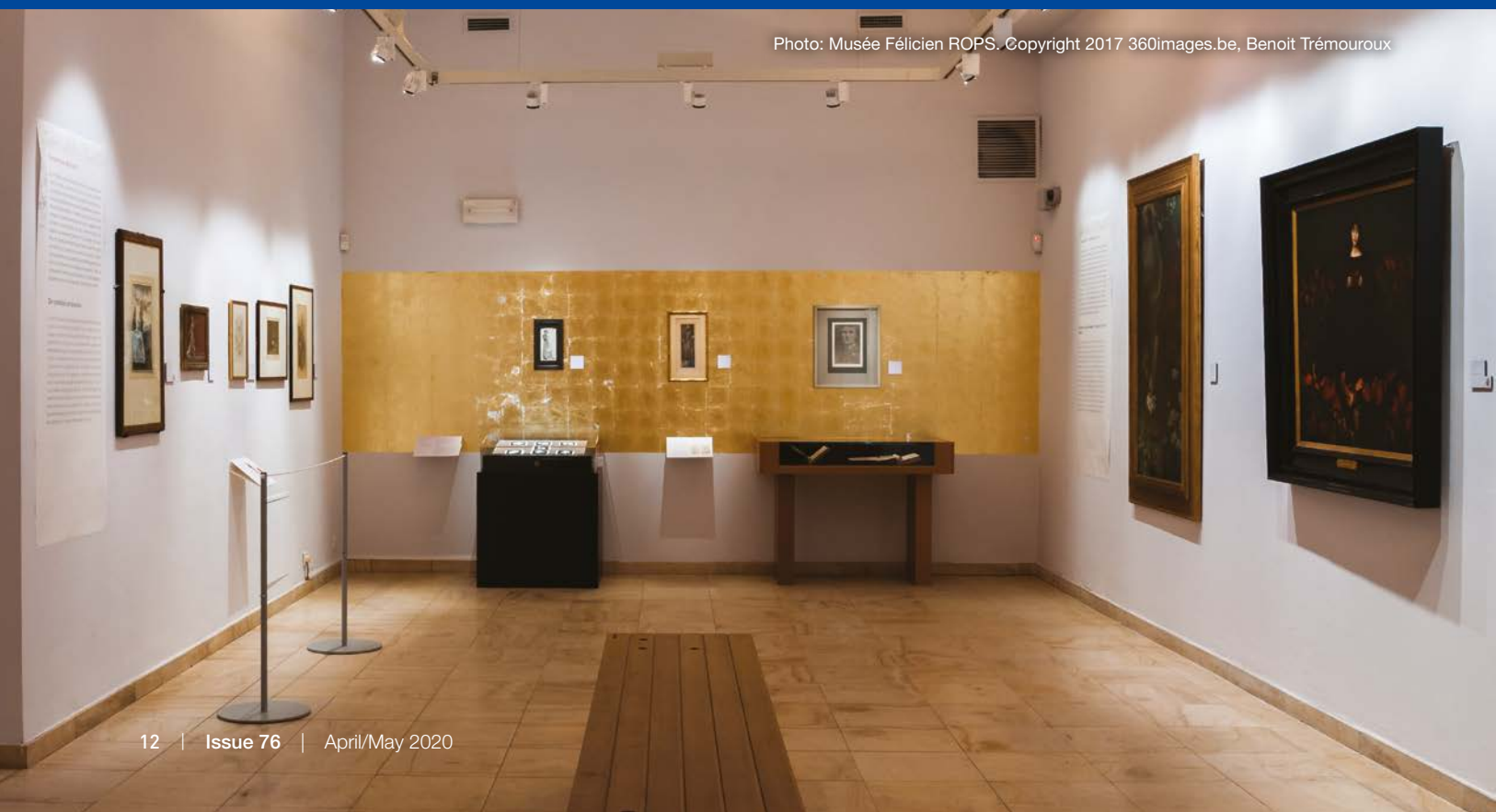


Photo: Musée Félicien ROPS. Copyright 2017 360images.be, Benoit Trémouroux



La cité Miroir. Photo: Pascal Brunet

Cultural dialogue

There is no better way to discover a country's soul than by visiting its museums and galleries, and Belgium and Luxembourg are both home to an array of fascinating institutions. For example, La Cité Miroir in the Belgian city of Liège is housed in a beautiful, Bauhaus-inspired, listed 1940s building, with a high arched ceiling, and is an arts and performance space dedicated to citizenship, the preservation of memory, cultural dialogue and education.

Historic cities

Walking around many of Belgium's cities is like wandering around a huge outdoor museum. A must-visit is Tournai, which sits a stone's throw from the French border on the banks of the river Scheldt. The city has a big reveal in store for 2020: the iconic Notre Dame de Tournai Cathedral has been restored to splendour following almost 20 years of extensive restoration works.

Up-and-coming

If discovering new artists is your thing, then there are countless contemporary art galleries all over Belgium and Luxembourg. There are great places like Nassau 42 Fine Arts in Antwerp, which explicitly aim to welcome visitors who have little prior knowledge of fine arts and who champion up-and-coming talents.



Photo: Galerij Theaxus



Photo: Musée Royal de Mariemont

Musée des Arts Anciens du Namurois.
Photo: Goudji



TOURNAI

History, culture and nature, served up with local beer

TEXT: SHANNA MCGOLDRICK | PHOTOS: VISIT TOURNAI/WAPICT

Tournai is probably the oldest city in Belgium, but it is still capable of surprises. The city, which sits a stone's throw from the French border on the banks of the river Scheldt, has a big reveal in store for 2020: the iconic Notre Dame de Tournai Cathedral has been restored to splendour following almost 20 years of extensive restoration works.

Although the renovations remain ongoing, the removal of the scaffolding that has covered the cathedral's façade for years means that this year, visitors will once again be able to appreciate the 12th-century Gothic masterpiece (the only certified UNESCO World Heritage Site cathedral in Belgium) in all its glory.

Not only does the cathedral's facelift coincide with the 20th anniversary of its UNESCO World Heritage status, but it also comes as the building prepares to celebrate the 850th anniversary of its consecration. The official anniversary takes place in 2021, but a festive programme of events spanning concerts, guided tours and exhibitions, will kick off this summer to honour the historic milestone.

A nature-lover's dream

Famous for being 'both green and blue', due to its proximity to both the river Scheldt and its verdant countryside environs, Tournai is a nature-lover's dream. The city's many parks and gardens provide ample opportunity to reap the ben-

efits of being outdoors, and its bucolic surroundings and 29 nearby rural villages are best explored via activities such as walking and cycling.



Luckily, discovering the area on two wheels has never been easier, thanks to the launch of a new, updated cycling guide for 2020 that details ten different routes for taking in the best of the region. The system utilises a network of signed marker points, known locally as 'points-noeuds', to help cyclists navigate their way around the region. A standout itinerary dubbed 'Bike and Beer' is sure to prove popular with visitors: the route includes the brewery Brasserie Dubuisson, a family establishment that has been brewing 100 per cent natural Belgian beers for more than 250 years. Its tempting beverages available for sampling include cult names such as 'Bush' and 'Cuvée des Trolls', and those with an interest in the brewery's history can delve deeper by taking part in the new interactive 'Beerstorium' experience, which uses virtual reality to take visitors back in time to the establishment's beginnings in 1769.

A somewhat more exotic (and family-friendly) nature-themed experience can also be had at the zoological garden at Tournai's Musée d'Histoire Naturelle. The museum itself is older than Belgium, having been founded in 1828, and features

a 19th-century-esque 'Cabinet des curiosités' that is sure to captivate even the most rigid of imaginations. The brand-new garden, which is divided into themed zones, strikes the same balance, housing snakes, tortoises and even a beehive. A large greenhouse also lets visitors walk amongst clusters of butterflies from all over the world.

A passion for museums

Museums, in fact, are something of a speciality in Tournai. The city counts seven of them in total, ranging from the Art Nouveau gem the Musée des Beaux-Arts (designed by the Belgian architect Victor Horta), to the Centre de la Marionnette, whose impressive collection of puppets includes figurines from Thailand, Vietnam, Portugal and Sicily, to name just a few. History buffs can wile away the hours in the Musée d'Histoire militaire and the Musée d'Archéologie, while arts and crafts aficionados will no doubt be drawn to the Musée de Folklore et des Imaginaires and TAMAT, which specialises in the art of tapestry.

Young at heart

As a festive community, Tournai is known for its joyous annual celebrations, includ-

ing the 'Marché aux Fleurs' – a tradition established in 1825 that sees the city explode into fragrant floral blooms for one day every spring, with flower stalls lining the streets from the train station down to the river bank. Other important moments throughout the year include the accordion-themed musical extravaganza 'L'accordéon, moi j'aime', as well as a Pentecost fête, a summer garden party and the three-day folkloric fête 'Tournai et ses cortèges', featuring a street procession of larger-than life giant figures, held every September. There is usually a reason to wander the animated streets of this city and soak up its jubilant outlook on life. Luckily, it boasts the most restaurants and cafes per capita in Belgium, with locals and tourists alike regularly filling up the many taverns, bistros, cafes and brasseries peppered throughout the city's historic centre. Speciality Belgian chocolates can be sampled throughout the city, and local beers are served on the terraces during the warmer months. Cycling home is not advised!

www.visittournai.be





Mountain landscape with travellers on foot, on horseback and in a carriage - Etching (print) from the collection of the Museum Plantin-Moretus.

On a journey to the 16th century

TEXT: ARNE ADRIAENSSENS | PHOTOS: PLANTIN-MORETUS MUSEUM

We tend to assume that travelling is an invention of the modern age, but it is as old as mankind itself. Ever since we opted for a sedentary existence, we have roamed the earth for a myriad of reasons – food, war, business... In the 16th century, one of these avid travellers was letterpress pioneer Christophe Plantin. With the mini-exhibition *On the road with Plantin. Travel in the 16th century*, Antwerp's Plantin-Moretus Museum lets you tag along on his journeys and explore what it was like to travel in the 1500s.

The Plantin-Moretus Museum in Antwerp is a unique historical site in the heart of the city. It was the house and workshop of the Plantin-Moretus book printer family – the descendants of Christophe Plantin, the Flemish letterpress trailblazer who printed many important folios,

among which the first atlas; the first Dutch dictionary; and the *Biblia Regia*, a ground-breaking, eight-volume bible in five languages. "The fascinating story of these books is told on the first floor," explains Werner van Hoof, curator of historic residence at the museum. "You visit three stunning libraries, as well as other personal rooms of the Plantin-Moretus family and can immerse yourself in their bibliography. The exhibition is divided into four parts: languages, science, religion and man and society." Downstairs, in the former salons, printing halls, offices and store, you get close and personal with the man that was Christophe Plantin and the impact that he had on the world. "Unique is that the family and corporate archives of the Plantin-Moretus family have survived the time as well, providing us with 300 years' worth of corporate and personal details. Alongside our en-

tire museum being UNESCO World Heritage, these documents have received the UNESCO Memory of the World status."

Frequent traveller

This summer, the museum zooms in on Plantin's travels with the mini-exhibition *On the road with Plantin. Travel in the 16th century*. "As a businessman, Christophe Plantin spent a lot of time on the road," explains van Hoof, who is also the curator of this mini-exhibition. "He paid his international contacts and relations a visit, went to the famous book-fair of Frankfurt, visited his store in Paris or headed to his printing house in Leiden. We often think that the 16th century was an immobile era, but some people were travelling regularly already – students, pilgrims, soldiers and tradesmen, to name a few." Obviously, travelling was more difficult back then. As tourism was not

yet organised and travelling over land put you at high risk of being robbed, many travelled over water. "But that was risky as well, as sinking ships were the rule rather than the exception. Distribution of luxury goods, like books, could therefore only be done over the dangerous trails."

Money troubles

The mini-exhibition counts numerous interesting facts and anecdotes. For example, the struggle that these tradesmen had with currency exchanges. "As every country had its own coin, tradesmen always carried a little balance and book with the different currencies with them. This way, they could weigh the money they received and check what it was worth." With the robbers along the roads, tradesmen like Plantin used a system to 'transfer' the money to their hometowns as well. They gave the cash to a local businessman, who would give them a promissory note in return. In return for this paper, one of this businessman's connections would pay out the money upon arrival.

"The story of Plantin and his contemporaries' travels is a fascinating one. While preparing the mini-exhibition, we stumbled upon way more fascinating information than we could possibly fit in our exhibition. That's why we publish a complementary book on the subject as well. People whose curiosity is tickled by our exhibition can read it to immerse themselves even deeper in the matter."

500 years of Christophe Plantin:
In 2020 the Museum Plantin-Moretus celebrates the 500th anniversary of Christophe Plantin.

To celebrate the 500th birthday of Christopher Plantin, the museum hosts another mini-exhibition about Plantin's letters and a big expo about 16th-century inventions (both from 9 October 2020 to 10 January 2021). It also dusts off Plantin's original wood stamps and lets creative souls use them to create something new – both in the museum itself as well as online.

www.museumplantinmoretus.be



Three highwaymen rob a traveller - Copper engraving (print) from the collection of the Museum Plantin-Moretus.



Christophe Plantin.



Photo: Speltdoorn



Photo: Anthony JP Meyer

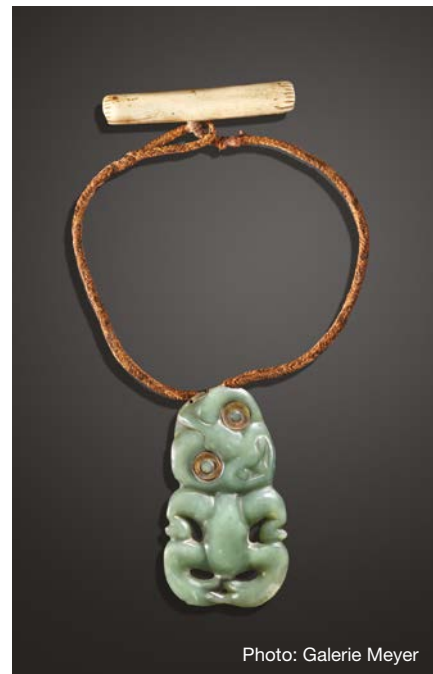


Photo: Galerie Meyer

Green is in the eye of the beholder

TEXT: KATE HARVEY

In modern times, the colour green gives us hope; it is a symbol of sustaining the world for years to come. But what about earlier civilisations? Take a journey through time and space at the *Vert Désir* exhibition in Namur, Belgium – and observe history through a prism of stones such as emerald, jade, jasper and peridot.

History shows us that the colour green arouses a whole spectrum of human emotions: from calm and serenity, to feelings of fear and disgrace. "You might be surprised to know that the colour can tell us a lot about society and collective identities at any one time," explains Anna Trobec, curator of the *Vert Désir* exhibition at the Museum of Ancient Arts in Namur, Belgium. From May till August 2020, the exhibition will dissect the meaning of precious and semi-precious green stones throughout time: including the feminine emerald, serpentine, malachite, peridot and jade.

Each stone challenged the know-how of contemporary craftsmen and jewellers

just as much as the next. The exhibition unpicks both the artistic and geological origins of these beautiful green stones: beginning with their extraction methods, all the way through to their spiritual capacity to become closer to the gods, and enhance female beauty.

The exhibition walks you through a series of civilisations, and presents the stones within each unique context. Discover the significance of the colour green for the Egyptians, who associated it with notions of fertility, vitality and youth, but also with rebirth and the cosmos. The Romans, on the other hand, loved emerald for its dazzling hue. Archaeological evidence, such as funeral portraits, shows a wide variety of Roman necklaces and ear pendants elevating emeralds to the level of gold and pearls.

Visit a series of works from the Middle Ages, where these precious stones were used to craft luxurious objects and symbols of power, such as crowns. Similarly, jade is presented as a valuable treasure in Maori culture. Learn more about how it was

first used to make adze blades before they became popular ornaments. The exhibition also seamlessly weaves in the cultural significance of malachite, a green mineral that was often elegantly blended with gilded bronze in large decorative objects.

These precious green stones continue to captivate and allure us to this day, and emerald is one of the most sought-after materials on the jewellery market. Whether you're an artist, geologist, or a lover of beautiful things, a visit to Namur is certainly worth your while.

Vert Désir will take place from 16 May till 16 August 2020.

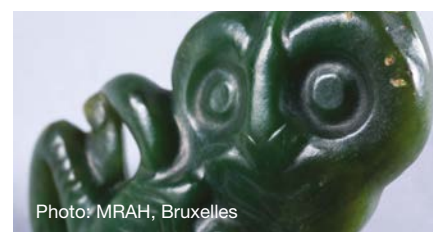


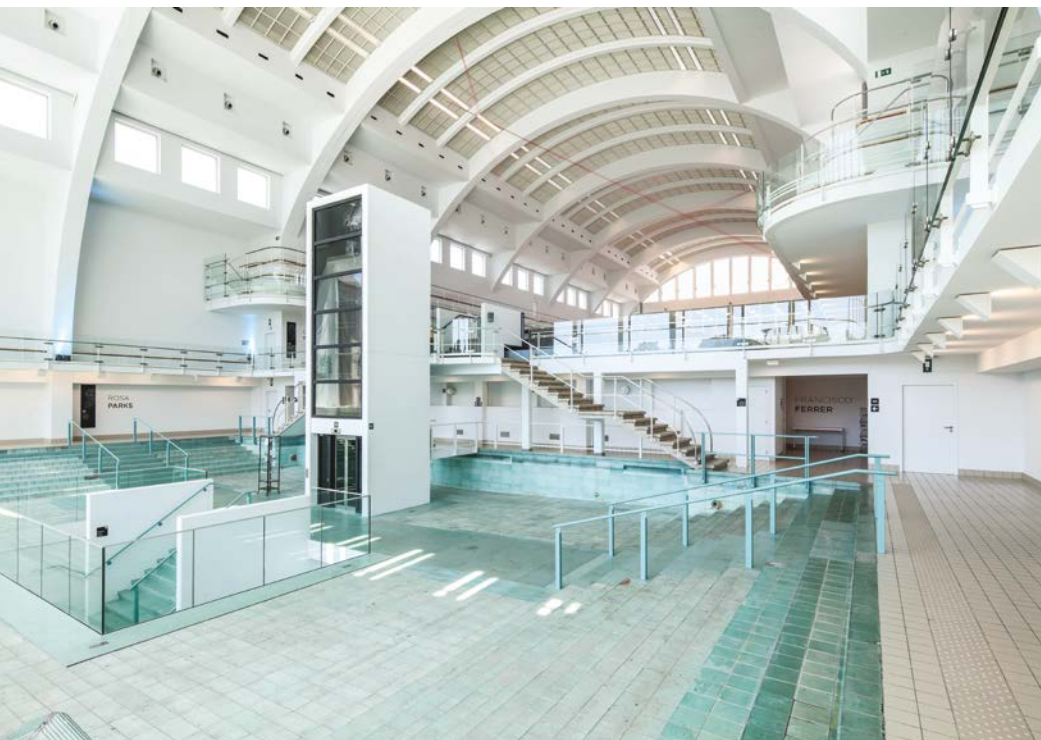
Photo: MRAH, Bruxelles

www.museedesartsanciens.be



Discover Holland's hidden gems

Groningen, like many Dutch cities, is graced with historic canals. Over the years, canals have played an important part in city-life, from flood prevention, to protecting the city from invaders. Visit the picturesque canal cities of Groningen, Leiden and Delft and discover the tales behind these water-side gems.



Holding a mirror to the past in Liège

TEXT: EDDI FIEGEL | PHOTOS: LA CITÉ MIROIR

The idea of reclaiming a historic building for a different purpose is nothing new, but few have been so strikingly reincarnated as La Cité Miroir in the Belgian city of Liège.

Housed in a beautiful, Bauhaus-inspired, listed 1940s building, with a high arched ceiling, La Cité Miroir is an arts and performance space dedicated to citizenship, the preservation of memory, cultural dialogue and education.

The large, impressive space, which spans some 13,000 square metres and was originally designed as the thermal baths of La Sauvenière, hosts two permanent exhibitions, theatre performances, concerts, temporary exhibitions and debates as well as a bookshop and a library.

A changing programme of impressive temporary exhibitions includes shows such as *Giacometti* (October 2020 to January 2021) and *World Press Photo* (November to December 2021), whilst

the two powerful permanent exhibitions very much bring home the ethos and ideas behind La Cité Miroir.

One of these, *Never again: A journey through the Nazi camps to consider resistance today*, explores the journeys taken by deportees to the Nazi concentration camps. Through films, images, survivors' accounts and lighting effects, visitors are taken through this dark chapter in European history. However, at the end of what is often an intense and moving experience, questions are raised about the nature of society today and what can be done to avoid a repetition of history.

The second permanent exhibition at La Cité Miroir is no less powerful. Entitled *Struggles: Stories of Emancipation – become immersed in the fights for a fairer and more cohesive society*, the show revisits workers' struggles and protests from the past. The exhibition aims to serve as a reminder not only that

the social solidarity that Belgium enjoys today has been hard-won by many generations of workers, but that under the impetus of collective action, the world can change.

La Cité Miroir is run by three not-for-profit associations: Les Territoires de la Mémoire, the Centre d'Action Laïque de la Province de Liège and MNEMA, which manages the venue.

Since La Cité Miroir opened in 2014, more than 500,000 visitors have passed through its doors. By enlightening future generations about the past and increasing ties with other cultural associations, the centre is playing a vital part in the regeneration of this part of the city. The idea is that through looking at the past, we can help shape the future.

www.citemiroir.be
Tel: +32 (0)4 230 70 50
Email: info@citemiroir.be



Weaving images into tapestries

TEXT: BAS VAN DUREN | PHOTOS: GALERIJ THEAXUS

Hand-woven tapestries are quite an intrinsic art form and, just like paintings, have the possibility of being perfect for decorations and exhibitions around the world. Dorothea Van De Winkel can tell you all about it, given her penchant for woven art pieces that are made in her studio in the Belgian village of Kwaremont. With Galerij Theaxus, the textile artist is one of Belgium's leading tapestry designers, putting a modern spin on true craftsmanship.

Van De Winkel's love for tapestries happened at an early age when she was growing up in the town of Oudenaarde, where its many ancient churches are decorated with world-renowned hand-woven tapestries. Van De Winkel: "I never saw myself becoming a textile designer making tapestries, but somehow, the fascination for the woven art pieces stuck. I've

followed several courses in Belgium and abroad, wanting to discover everything there is to know about designing and creating tapestries, learning the necessary modern technical skills that nowadays aren't as labour intensive as they used to be."

There's certainly a sense of passion when Van De Winkel describes her tapestries, having made large pieces that can go up to 240 by 185 centimetres on her loom. "Those tapestries are incredibly delightful to make, but it is certainly time consuming. The largest ones take four to five months of eight hours a day to complete." As for her inspiration? "I start my drawings often from my surroundings or from what happens in the world. Kwaremont is quite a picturesque village, with splendid nature all around. It's also why I enjoy making tapestries that start out as pencil drawings,

making abstract shapes and finally adding colour."

Another way the artist gets her dose of inspiration is by travelling on the occasions of the international exhibitions she takes part in with her pieces. The United States, China, Japan and Uruguay are among the countries she has visited. Van De Winkel: "It's an amazing way of encountering people and cultures that can make lasting impressions that give rise to the designs I use for my tapestries. It's also fun to meet like-minded people to discuss and perfect techniques that I can use for my art. My creations are all on display in my gallery. Anybody with just the slightest knack for tapestries and creating art with the use of textile is more than welcome to come and visit me."

www.galerij-theaxus.com

Fine arts for everyone at Nassau 42

TEXT: MAYA WITTERS | PHOTOS: NASSAU 42 FINE ARTS

After a substantial business career, Carine Verbreyt opened Nassau 42 Fine Arts in Antwerp in 2013. The twofold goal of the gallery: to make art more accessible to the layman visitor, and to provide a platform for up-and-coming artists. “The art world can seem quite intimidating, even elitist to many people. I want to change their perspective.”

Nassau 42 Fine Arts explicitly aims to welcome visitors who have little prior knowledge of fine arts. “I want people to discover something new when they come in, and I like to help them find their way in the often confusing art world,” explains Verbreyt. “I create my collections based on what visitors like to discover, what is trendy, and what is artistically valuable.”

“A lot of artists make incredible work, but struggle to get it displayed. I want to give them a platform. That’s also why I don’t work with a particular set of artists over and over again, like many galleries. I display creations by 40 to 50

different artists each year, who work in all sorts of styles and materials.”

Verbreyt keeps her gallery displays harmonious by centring her exhibits around specific themes. In May and June, she will display the work of Antwerp-based Jewish artist Carole Czopp, while the summer months will be dedicated to pop art by the likes of Mat Kemp and Vic Jobé.

“I believe art has to be affordable, without compromising on artistic value,” concludes Verbreyt. “That’s the best way to get people to engage with it.”



Find Nassau 42 Fine Arts at
Nassaustraet 43 in Antwerp, and
online at : www.artnassau42.com

From elegant Chateau to leading art collection

TEXT: PIERRE ANTOINE ZAHND | PHOTO: MUSÉE ROYAL DE MARIEMONT

An hour south of Brussels, the Musée Royal de Mariemont is one of Belgium’s cultural gems. The product of one man’s passion for history, it gathers a collection ranging from Greek and Roman Antiquity to the Far East, while also giving Belgian heritage pride of place. With a collection of some 100,000 pieces, Mariemont ought to be on the list of any culture lover going through Belgium.

A world-class institution with a unique history, Mariemont stands on the grounds of the three successive Chateaux, all since destroyed. Its last owner, Raoul Warocqué, used his family’s industrial fortune to further develop Mariemont and fill it with a vast artistic and historical collection, which he passed on to the Belgian state on his death in 1917. On Christmas Day of 1960, the Chateau caught on fire, but the collection was saved thanks to the prompt intervention of the villagers and the Mariemont

staff. The current Museum, designed by Roger Bastin and reopened in 1975, is a prime example of Brutalist architecture, and still harbours the same ideals of collective culture first exemplified by Raoul Warocqué in his lifetime.

Warocqué’s ample collection reflects his wide-ranging interests and expresses his aim to strike a balance between universality and local identity. In the same afternoon, visitors can admire an original Rodin sculpture, a three-metre, five-tonne statue of Cleopatra from Alexandria, and a wealth of Chinese and Japanese art – including a tea pavilion imported from Kyoto, where tea ceremonies are regularly held. But Mariemont also represents Warocqué’s keen interest in Belgian culture, showcasing regional archeology and porcelain among other artefacts.

Set in a sumptuous, 45-hectare natural park, poised between scientific excellence and accessibility, Mariemont remains a place of

knowledge and wonder for the aficionado and the casual museum-goer alike. Alongside the permanent collection, Mariemont offers modern, interactive exhibitions, immersing audiences into Ancient Egypt or the Samurai, among others. Until 24 May, 2020, the exhibition *Bye Bye, Future! The Art of Time Travelling* will re-examine our past, via contemporary artists, to shed a new light on the future.



Photo: Musée Royal de Mariemont

www.musee-mariemont.be

Making art accessible

TEXT: ELINE JOLING | PHOTOS: ART FORUM

At a time where the only art rental was subsidised by the state, Anne-Mie De Baene changed the scene. Pioneering art libraries in Belgium, Art Forum made authentic art accessible to a wider audience.

Art Forum started as a traditional art gallery located in Antwerp's harbour area, Het Eilandje. With its 40th birthday coming up this year, it has recently opened a second gallery location at the Antwerp Business Suites Hotel. While the galleries provide artists with the space to showcase their new work, most of the lending services are done digitally.

"Based on pictures of the space that needs to be filled, we simulate artworks that we think would fit the room," explains De Baene. "Keeping in mind the colours and furniture, we send the customer a few simulations, some works chosen by the customer and some that we think would work really well. With 40 years of experience behind us, customers trust us to transform their spaces in the best way possible."

The appeal of hiring art is easy to see. Art Forum has a broad collection of art made by Belgian, Dutch and international artists, offering an extensive stock of

paintings, sculptures and photography. With yearly contracts that include all costs such as the advice and transport, and even all risk insurance, customers have the option to change the artwork frequently if they please, but can also opt to buy the work at any point during the loan.

No matter the type of company or size of space that needs to be filled, the team at Art Forum aims to find the perfect piece to transform your space.

art-forum.be



Artist: Mark Boekaert



Artists: André Navez, Jaak Hillen



Artist: Bruno Guihéneuf

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www.seuren-tafels.nl

Where Life imitates Art

TEXT: PIERRE ANTOINE ZAHND | PHOTOS: RONNY HARNIE

In the picturesque Uccle neighbourhood of Brussels, the Alice and David Van Buuren Museum is one of the capital's best-kept secrets for beauty and culture. An impressive art collection, combined with striking architecture and sumptuous gardens, make it an absolute must-go for any art lover.

Originally a private house, the Museum is the former residence of Dutch-Belgian couple David and Alice Van Buuren. Passionate about art, the pair built an arresting Art Deco villa and filled it with works by artists from the 16th to the 20th century, including Henri Fantin-Latour, James Ensor, and the circle of Pieter Bruegel the Elder.

This residence-museum reflects the Van Buurens' enthusiasm for the "total art" aesthetics of the Amsterdam School. Curated by the couple themselves, the House features a wealth of disciplines, such as architecture painting, sculpture, textiles, furniture and botany. The structure itself, designed in the elegant, asymmetrical style of the Dutch style, consists in an interplay of lines showcasing hand-made bricks red, overhanging cornices, and sloping roofs.

The gardens, too, are something of a work of art. Conceived as an extension of the house, they are the fruit of Alice Van Buuren's passion for the integrated nature of the House. Two leading

landscape designers were employed to make the 1.5-hectare gardens the spectacle they are today: Jules Buysens created the Picturesque Garden as well as the stunning Rose Garden, while René Péchère designed the Labyrinth and the eye-catching 'Garden of the Heart'.

The Alice and David Van Buuren Museum was declared a National Heritage Site in 2001. Now more than ever, it serves a testament to the art-collecting couple's singular vision, and remains one of Europe's most unique artistic collections.

www.museumvanbuuren.be

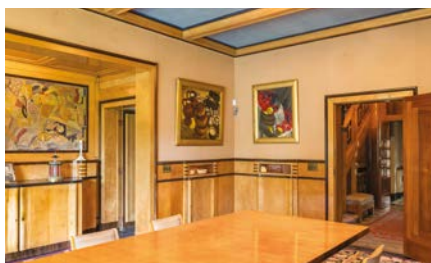


Photo: Museum Van Buuren



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Arlon's art offering

TEXT: COLETTE DAVIDSON | PHOTOS: MUSÉE GASPAR

For visitors to Arlon and locals alike, the Musée Gaspar is an opportunity to bathe in the town's art history and culture. Set in a family home from the 19th century, the museum's intimate setting makes it perfect for an enjoyable outing – with or without the kids.

The Musée Gaspar would be nothing without the Arlonais brothers it is named after: Jean-Marie and Charles Gaspar. Originally a bank, the building that now houses the museum was acquired by the Gaspar family



in 1893. In 1950, Charles offered his home to the town of Arlon, where it has since been dedicated to the local art and folklore.

Two main living room spaces – hosting part of the museum's permanent collections – have been recreated identically to their original luster, from the furniture to the furnishings. Speckled around the rooms are dozens of Jean's sculptures, in an ode to the older of the two brother's passion for the medium, notably his animal renderings.

Charles' photos can also be found hanging in the museum, a testament to his 20 years of

exhibiting across Europe as well as a nod to the pictorialism style of photography.

Within the permanent collection sits a room dedicated to religious art history. Inside are more works by the Gaspar family as well as pieces from the Archeological Institute of Luxembourg, such as a Belgian altar piece from the 16th century and works from chapels around the region.

A temporary exhibition on Arlonais surrealist artist Pol Gavroy is on until 19 April.

The Musée Gaspar, with its inviting and family-friendly atmosphere, is a place for locals as well as those visiting from around the region to learn more about Arlon's rich history.

"We want the museum to act as an open door to our town," says Valérie Peuckert, director of the Musée Gaspar. "We offer a visit to a house that is in and of itself a museum, in a cosy, warm setting."

www.museegaspar.be



Namur's own rebel without a cause

TEXT: EDDI FIEGEL | PHOTOS: MUSÉE FÉLICIEN ROPS. COPYRIGHT 2017 360IMAGES.BE, BENOIT TRÉMOUROUX

Belgium has many fascinating museums, but sometimes it can be the lesser known galleries which prove to be the surprise gems. The Musée Félicien Rops is undoubtedly a case in point.

In a former mansion in a pedestrianised area of old Namur, less than an hour's drive south-east of Brussels, this award-winning museum is home to the most comprehensive collection of paintings, drawings, engravings and letters by the anti-establishment, 19th-century caricaturist, symbolist and engraver Rops.

Although Rops spent much of his later career in Paris, he was originally from Namur, and the collection in the museum, which spans some 700 square metres, includes his illustrations to the poems of his friend – the French poet Charles Baudelaire.

Rops was also a celebrated letter writer and his correspondence therefore forms a major part of the museum, with some 4,000 letters, all of which are also available online at www.ropslettres.be.

Rop's letter writing was held in such esteem that painter Edgar Degas told his friend Manet "That one writes even better than he engraves [...]. If they ever publish his correspondence, I'll sign up".

The museum was awarded the 'People's Choice Award' in 2007 and the 'Museum Award' in 2008 and 2014, and also holds regular temporary exhibitions such as the current show centred on the 19th-century Belgian artist and illustrator Maurice Bonvoisin, better known as 'Mars'. There are also themed activities for children as well as a special guided visit for eight to 12 year olds, entitled 'Rops and Roll'.



Photo: Laloux



www.museerops.be



Antwerp's most shimmering museum

TEXT: ARNE ADRIAENSSENS | PHOTOS: FREDERIK BEYENS

No city shines bright like a diamond as the Flemish metropole that is Antwerp does. As the world's busiest cross-road of the diamond trade, the city is the place to be for all diamond, silver and jewellery aficionados. To immerse yourself in the story behind them all, head to DIVA – a brilliant museum about all that glitters.

The unbreakable relationship between Antwerp and the diamond sector takes us back to the 14th century, when diamonds were transported from India to Venice by the Silk Road. When in the late 15th century, the Portuguese found a faster connection to India by sea, its Jewish community started trading these precious gems instead. Due to the Spanish Inquisition, many Jews fled the country mere decenniums later and ended up in Antwerp, a safe beacon at the time. Once settled, they continued trad-

ing, turning Antwerp into the world capital of diamonds.

Global diamond capital

Throughout the centuries, the sector experienced multiple major setbacks, reveals Eva Olde Monnikhof, the director of DIVA. "After the Second World War, the Jewish community was unwelcome in many cities. Lode Craeybeckx, the mayor of Antwerp at the time, instead welcomed all Jews back into the city and even offered them a free house and starting capital to reboot their businesses. While that was a controversial move at the time, the city has benefited hugely from it, as Antwerp remains the world's most important diamond centre to date."

As of 2018, 86 per cent of all rough diamonds pass through Antwerp, with the sector turning over 40 to 48 billion euro per year. Nonetheless, few Antwerpians

grasp the importance of the sector for their city and country. "That's where we step in. We want to share the stories, tradition and love for diamonds with Belgians and tourists alike."

An interactive journey

DIVA is divided into three themes: diamonds, jewellery and silver – three separate trades with a symbiotic relationship. "In many cases, jewellery is the synthesis of gems and precious metals. Therefore, it is important for us to talk about it as well." DIVA is a merger of the former Diamond Museum and the Silver museum Sterckshof in Antwerp. Therefore, the collection on display showcases a myriad of styles from a wide array of eras.

That link with the past doesn't prevent it from being a modern, interactive hub for all ages. "A visit to DIVA is about experiencing, rather than simply reading and

looking. Amongst other things, we've got an interactive dining table with screens in it around which you can sit down and learn about tableware through the ages and the jewellery people wore. On the screens, you can watch and listen to the story of a dining partner from those same ages." Furthermore, DIVA offers two exciting audio tours: a fact-packed learning experience on the one hand and an exciting journey of fictional stories on the other. "The latter is about the importance of diamonds, jewellery and silverware throughout the ages. The butler guides you around a mansion and shares all the household's secrets with you."

Creating and shopping

To fully immerse yourself into the shimmering world of gems and precious metals, you can attend an initiation or workshop in the museum's atelier (online booking required). You can get close and personal with a silversmith or make your own jewellery with metal clay. This special clay turns entirely silver when baked. So, you can easily sculpt your perfect master-

piece with it. For professionals, DIVA also hosts masterclasses from esteemed international experts. "When Giovanni Corvaja gave a class, we had applications from as far as Japan and Australia. We are proud to collaborate with big names like him."

If you prefer wearing jewellery over making it yourself, you can shop around in DIVA's two boutiques. In the museum shop, you will find fun gem-related gadgets, as well as wallet-friendly jewellery. For a more high-end souvenir, you can visit the in-house store of Silvius Duron. The family behind this label has been internationally active since the '70s. The brand Silvius Duron was established in 2018 and never fails to provide breathtaking, wearable masterpieces.

Victor and Albert Museum in Antwerp

Alongside its stunning permanent collection, DIVA also hosts multiple temporary exhibitions per year. From 30 October 2020 until 1 March 2021, they will display some of the finest jewels from the

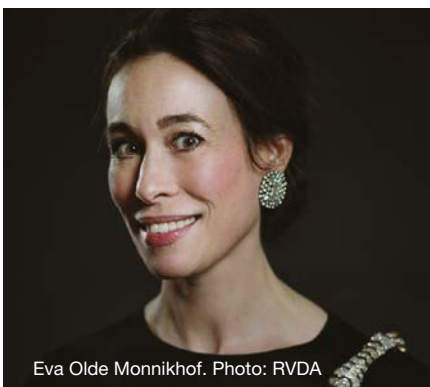
1960s and '70s. It doesn't require an expert's eye to see the difference between these bombastic, over-the-top items and today's minimalist and refined pieces. In collaboration with the Cincinnati Art Museum, DIVA has acquired pieces from all over the world for the exhibition.

From 5 March 2021 to 6 June 2021, DIVA will host an exclusive collaboration with the Victoria and Albert Museum – the world-leading, London-based museum of decorative arts and design. "For the first time in its 170-year existence, it will lend out a part of its permanent collection to other museums worldwide and they have selected DIVA to be the first institute to exhibit them. As our collection matches beautifully with theirs, visitors can expect a unique synergy between these two world-renowned collections, which will guarantee an unforgettable experience."

www.divaantwerp.be

Facebook: [diva.antwerp](https://www.facebook.com/diva.antwerp)

Instagram: [@divaantwerp](https://www.instagram.com/divaantwerp)



Eva Olde Monnikhof. Photo: RVDA





Clervaux Castle. Photo: CNA/Romain Girtgen

The Family of Man at Clervaux Castle.
Photo: CNA/Romain GirtgenArthur Rothstein, *Girl at Gee's Bend, Alabama*, April 1937. Photo: Library of Congress, FSA/OWI Collection

A rare snapshot of photographic history in Luxembourg

TEXT: SHANNA MCGOLDRICK

As a photographer, Edward J. Steichen is regarded as one of the most influential of his time: the Luxembourgish-American creative was a dominant force in the photography world for decades, thanks to his pioneering work with fashion imagery in the early 1900s. But it was also his flair for painting, directing and curation that ensured a rich and enduring artistic legacy that places him amongst the preeminent cultural figures of the 20th century.

In Steichen's birth country of Luxembourg, his international cultural legacy lives on. His photographs are displayed by the National Museum of History and Art (MNHA), while the Centre national de l'audiovisuel (CNA) has ensured that two of the seminal exhibitions he curated during his stint as director of photography at New York's Museum

of Modern Art (MoMA) are re-exhibited permanently in Luxembourg.

The Family of Man is the first of the exhibitions. Having travelled the world and been installed in more than 150 museums globally since it debuted in 1955, this extensive show is now housed permanently at Clervaux castle. Spanning 503 images from legendary photographers such as Robert Capa and Henri Cartier-Bresson, the exhibition has been described as "a manifesto for peace", due to its humanist analysis of life in the years following the Second World War. A worldwide success, it has attracted more than ten million visitors in its time, and was inscribed into the UNESCO 'Memory of the World' list in 2003.

Further south, in the Waassertuerm+Pomhouse in Dudelange, a second exhibition – curated by Steichen in 1962

for MoMA – offers an insight to the impact that the Great Depression of the 1930s and 1940s had on rural farming communities in the US. Titled *The Bitter Years*, the show is a tribute to the power of documentary photography by the Farm Security Administration (FSA), and features work by names such as Dorothea Lange and Arthur Rothstein.

The CNA is committed to preserving these historical exhibitions and at the same time making them available to a large audience. "Our approach at the CNA is to conserve this heritage in Luxembourg," says Anke Reitz, curator of the Steichen Collections CNA. "The expositions themselves are works of art, and that's how we present them."

steichencollections-cna.lu

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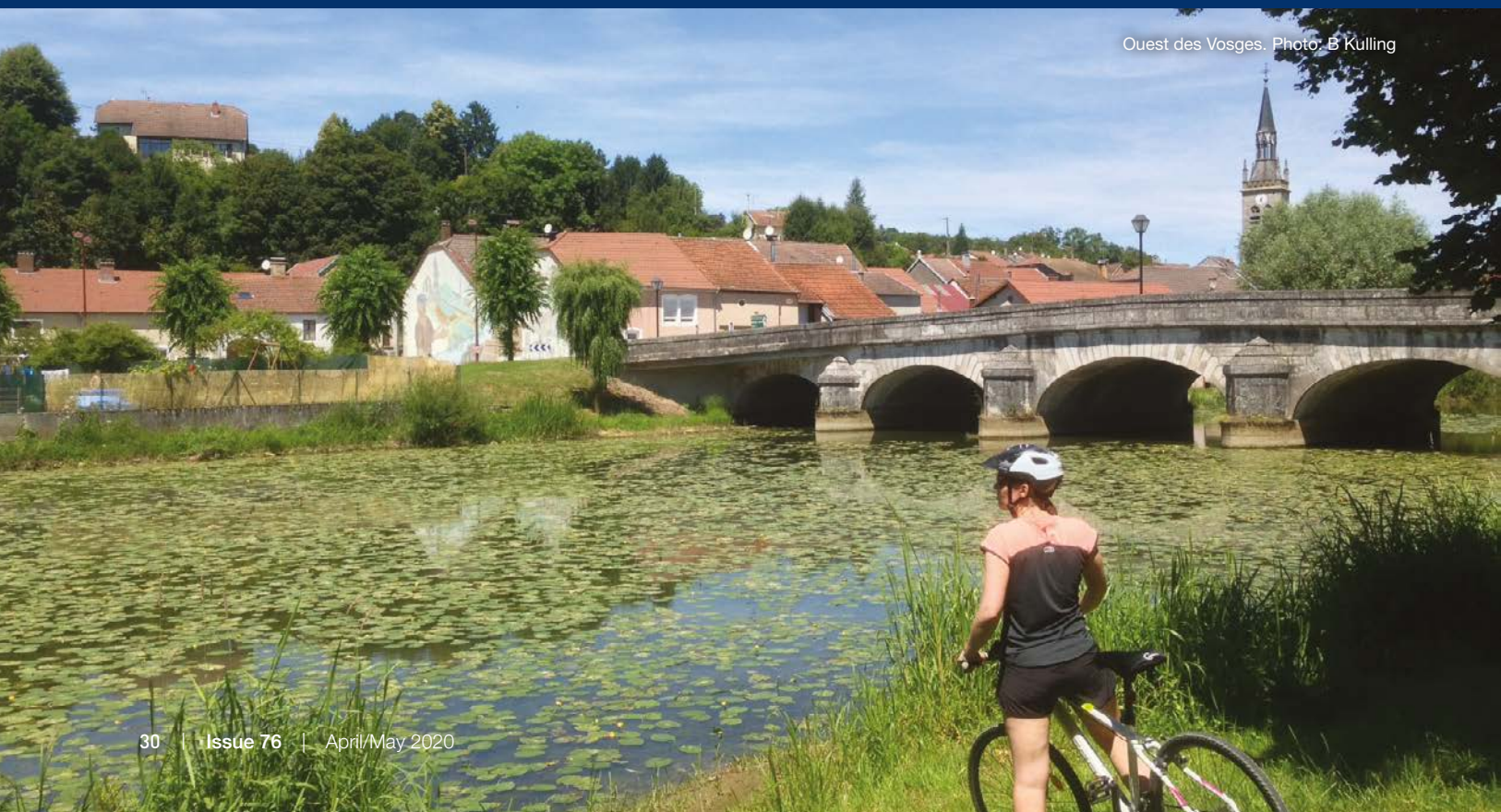


Besançon. Photo: Y. Goux, E. Chatelain,
JC. Sexe, wordelse / Besançon 2019

DISCOVER FRANCE

Top museums, galleries and cultural hotspots

This month's special has plenty to inspire, whether you are an art aficionado, a history buff, or simply craving some cultural satisfaction. We take you on a tour around some of France's must-visit locations.



Ouest des Vosges. Photo: B Kulling



Historial de la Grande Guerre, Salle des Disparus. Photo: Pascal Brunet

Off the beaten track

From world-renowned hotspots to hidden treasures, France has so much to offer. The north-east of France is brimming with gems — nowhere more so than the idyllic Ouest des Vosges region. Here, you will find beautiful countryside mixed with historic hotspots and cultural must-sees. Meanwhile, the verdant city of Besançon is not only home to a UNESCO-listed citadel, the oldest public museum in France, and countless other cultural attractions, but it is also

surrounded by an exceptional natural environment — making it the perfect getaway for nature lovers and culture vultures alike.

Spectacular countryside, memorable museums and architecture

In our special you can also discover France's Pays Rethélois. It may not be one of the best known regions in the country, but to those in the know, it is a haven of spectacular countryside and memorable museums and architecture.

You can also read more about the town of Mâcon, which is less than an hour's drive north of Lyon, and is home to a captivating museum amongst other artistic and cultural gems.

If history is your thing, then do not miss our article on the Historial Museum of the Great War in the heart of the Somme Battlefields, a world-renowned, two-site institution for discovering the ins and outs of one of history's largest conflicts.



Photo: Juniville interpretation trail, Pays Rethélois



Ville de Mâcon. Photo: G. Fontany



Le Fort aux énigmes. Photo: Philippe Massit

OUEST DES VOSGES

Between nature and culture

TEXT: ANNA VILLELEGER

Far away from the crowds, the north-east of France is brimming with hidden gems — nowhere more so than the idyllic Ouest des Vosges region. Here, you will find beautiful countryside mixed with historic hotspots and cultural gems.

With its rugged landscapes, verdant forests and clean, fresh air, Ouest des Vosges is the perfect place to enjoy the great outdoors. The region is home to some wonderful hiking and cycle routes, not to mention great campsites, holiday homes and sites for camping cars. “Spring and summer are probably my favourite seasons here,” begins Virginie Vallée-Ségault, director of the Ouest des Vosges tourist office. “Everything is in flower and there are amazing sunsets.”

Gallo-Roman amphitheatre

When asked about the area’s must-see sites, the director’s first suggestion is the village of Grand, with its impressive Gallo-Roman amphitheatre. “When you look at this small village you wouldn’t expect there to be such an amazing site there — it’s really impressive,” she enthuses. While you are there, you also need to see the beautiful mosaic, which was unearthed in 1883, and restored to its original colours in 2009.

Joan of Arc

It is also worth paying a visit to Domremy-la-Pucelle, home village of the French national heroine Joan of Arc. In the centre of the village you can see the house where she was born, while there is also an interpretation centre nearby which offers vis-

itors multiple resources and educational tours. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the canonisation of Joan of Arc, so there are some special events taking place. Virginie’s top tip for visitors to Domremy-la-Pucelle is the basilica of Saint Jeanne d’Arc. “It is perched above a hill and offers an outstanding view over the river Meuse,” she enthuses. Look out for some spectacular sound and light displays here in June and July.

History and architecture

Another must-visit in the region is the city of Neufchâteau, which will delight history buffs and architecture aficionados alike. Featured in the French tourist guide *100 Plus Beaux Détours* (100 Most Beautiful Detours), the city boasts many historic moments and attractions, including

the Hôtel de Houdreville, a former mansion which now houses the town hall, and boasts an impressive Renaissance Staircase. There is also the Church of St Christophe, which dates from the 11th century and was rebuilt in the 12th century. The Wiriot Chapel, with its complex vault, is the standout feature. "It's truly magnificent, a real gem of the region and unique in Lorraine," smiles Virginie.

Meanwhile, there is St Nicholas Church, which combines Romanesque and Gothic styles and features a crypt dating from the end of the 12th century. The tourist office provides guided tours of the city's various cultural gems during its summer discovery programme, where you can learn more about sites such as the Ancien tribunal d'instance, a former convent, and the Scala, an Italian theatre which was built in 1829 and later transformed into a cinema.

Cycling and cultural heritage

Ouest des Vosges region is a great destination for cycling tourism, featuring in the EuroVelo 19 Meuse Cycle Route, which goes all the way from the plateau of Langres to the Netherlands. The route offers ever-changing scenery, with picturesque towns and villages and cultural heritage sites galore.

Worth a day-trip in the region is the charming town of Châtenois, where you can admire the remains of the Benedictine



Spectacle Son et Lumière - Basilique.
Photo: Jean-Christophe BAILLY

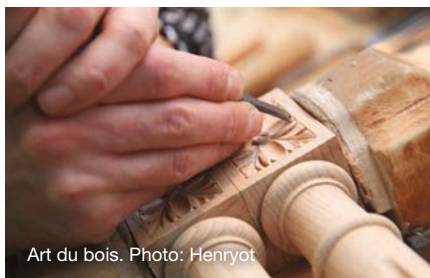
priory of Châtenois. Meanwhile, travellers with children should check out the 'Fort aux Enigmes' puzzle trail – situated in the 19th-century fortification of the Fort of Bourlémont. "With questions about nature and wildlife, it's fun for all the family, and children and discover our local flora and fauna," explains Virginie.

Arts and crafts

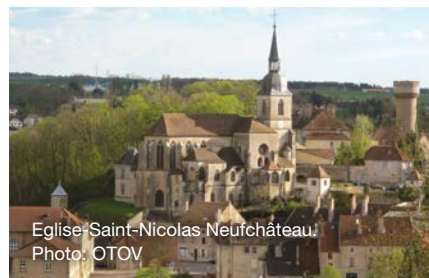
The high quality of the Ouest des Vosges region's forests has contributed greatly to the development of its woodworking industry. Both Neufchâteau and Liffol-le-Grand are renowned for their stylish fur-

niture makers, and in 2012 were labelled Villes et Métiers d'Art (Arts and Crafts Towns), while the headquarters of Liffol obtained a Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) in 2016. The beautiful furniture made in the area is exported to luxury hotels, theatres and palaces around the world. "We don't have a museum dedicated to woodworking yet, but one day maybe!" smiles Virginie.

Start planning your Ouest des Vosges adventure now, at:
www.tourisme-ouest-vosges.fr



Art du bois. Photo: Henryot



Eglise Saint-Nicolas Neufchâteau.
Photo: OTOV



Ancien tribunal Neufchâteau.
Photo: Jean-Pierre GUYOT-Atelier MCL



Prieuré de Châtenois. Photo: OTOV



Amphithéâtre de Grand.
Photo: Philippe Massit



Maison natale de Jeanne d'Arc.
Photo: Conseil général des Vosges



Musée des Beaux Arts.

BESANÇON

A perfect blend of nature & culture

TEXT: ANNA VILLELEGER | PHOTOS: Y. GOUX, E. CHATELAIN, JC. SEXE, WORDELSE /BESANÇON 2019

The verdant city of Besançon is not only home to a UNESCO-listed citadel, the oldest public museum in France, and countless other cultural gems, but it is also surrounded by an exceptional natural environment — making it the perfect getaway for nature lovers and culture vultures alike.

Folded into a crook in the River Doubs, picturesque Besançon delights visitors with its 18th-century town houses, charming streets and splendid squares. Domineering the city from Mt St-Etienne, more than 100 vertical metres above the old town, is the 17th-century Citadelle de Besançon, which was designed by Vauban for Louis XIV and became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008. “It is considered to be one of the finest cit-

adels in France, and boasts spectacular views from its ramparts,” smiles Christine Bresson, head of communication for Grand Besançon.

World-class museums

Other must-sees in the city include the Musée des Beaux-Arts et d’Archéologie (Museum of Fine Art and Archeology), which was founded in 1694, earning it the accolade of France’s oldest public museum. Known locally as the ‘Little Louvre’, it boasts an impressive collection of local Gallo-Roman archaeology, as well as a vast collection of drawings and paintings from the likes of Rodin, Goya and Matisse. Also well worth a visit is the Musée du Temps (Museum of Time), which showcases the history of local watchmaking in a former palace with amazing city views.

Meanwhile, just outside Besançon, on a 37-acre hilly site in Nancray, Christine recommends a visit to the Musée des Maisons Comtoises (Museum of Franche-Comté Houses), which is home to 35 buildings from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries from the Franche-Comté region, including farms, workshops, chapels, and much more.

Literary heritage

Besançon boasts a cultural agenda that is bursting at the seams, with unmissable annual events including the Besançon International Music Festival in September, and the Grand Besançon Métropole book festival, also in September. “The city has a long literary tradition, having been the setting for Stendhal’s 1830 masterpiece *Le Rouge et le Noir* (The

Red and the Black),” says Christine, adding that the novelist Colette had her second home here, and the great Victor Hugo was born here. In fact, no trip to Besançon would be complete without a visit to the *Les Misérables* author’s childhood home, which is open to the public, and you can learn more about his extraordinary literary and political heritage.

Boosting happiness

“This area offers a wonderful marriage of nature and culture,” enthuses Christine. Whether you come to enjoy the historical hotspots or make the most of the various outdoor activities on offer, there is plenty to entice you. The popular EuroVelo 6 cycle route passes through the region, while the River Doubs offers the opportunity for activities on water.

“From walking or cycling in the beautiful forests to paragliding or kayaking, you can truly make the most of the great outdoors, whatever your level of fitness,” enthuses Christine, pointing out that Besançon and its greater region boasts all the ingredients for happiness.

“There’s space, inspiring nature, and so many great events taking place throughout the year,” she concludes, adding that the area also has a hip foodie scene with many great local restaurants. “We have everything you need for a ‘zen’ weekend away!”

boosteurdebonheur.besancon.fr



Maison Victor Hugo.



MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS
ET D'ARCHÉOLOGIE
museum of fine arts and archeology

Besançon city center museums

LES MUSÉES DU CENTRE DE BESANÇON

MUSÉE DU TEMPS
Time museum



www.mbaa.besancon.fr
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MUSÉE
DU TEMPS
May 2020
Palais Granvelle

MUSÉE
DES BEAUX-ARTS
May 2020

Ville de
Besançon



Salle 1914-1916, Péronne. Photo: Aurélien Roger



Salle Aviation, Thiepval.



Fresque Joe Sacco, Thiepval.

HISTORY & REMEMBRANCE

Péronne & Thiepval WWI museums

TEXT: PIERRE ANTOINE ZAHND | PHOTOS: PASCAL BRUNET

In the heart of the Somme Battlefields, the Great War's defining ground, the Historial Museum of the Great War is a world-renowned, two-site institution for discovering the ins and outs of one of history's largest conflicts.

The Historial at Péronne is a prime starting place for discovering the dynamics of the first World War. Organised chronologically, it first illuminates the root causes of the conflict in a recently renovated pre-1914 section. The 1914-1916 gallery explores the mobilisation of the countries involved, and goes on to relate the reality of warfare, opposing the original optimism to the strains of life in the trenches and everyday realities of loss and mourning. The 'display pits' with the effigies of soldiers, armed with their military equipment and personal effects and documents, are a constant surprise to visitors.

The 1916-1918 Gallery presents war in its later stages and the growing efforts towards total and industrial warfare. This

section also highlights the war effort at home. The gallery goes on to highlight the technological advances made throughout the conflict.

One of Péronne's highlights is the Otto Dix Gallery, named after the German painter known for his harsh but arresting depictions of the war's horror. The Museum contains one of the very rare original sets of *Der Krieg* (The War), a series of engravings that give visceral expression to Dix's experiences as a soldier on the front. The tour ends with the Post War Gallery: the Consequences of War.

Close to the Thiepval Memorial dedicated to the Missing (one of the world's most imposing commemorative monuments), the Historial at Thiepval is dedicated to the history of the Battles of the Somme and the memory of the Missing Men.

As an introduction, documentaries and panels outline the history of the Great War, the Battles of the Somme, and the

specific nature of this exceptional site of remembrance.

There, an electronic database allows visitors to discover the events that befell the 14,000 soldiers who were never found, known as the 'Missing'.

The gallery devoted to the Battle of The Somme opens onto a panoramic mural by Joe Sacco; it depicts the harrowing day of 1 July 1916, hour after hour. Reproduced onto 60 metres of black-lit glass, it provides a panoramic view of the battlefield, a graphic narrative of military operations.

The Historial also serves as a celebration: the Gallery of 'Aces' is dedicated to the daredevil pilots who illustrated themselves in feats of aerial combats. The exhibition closes with an emphasis on how the Somme stands at the junction of nations and European history.

www.historial.fr

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Countryside and culture in France's Pays Rethélois

TEXT: EDDI FIEGEL | PHOTOS: PAYS RETHÉLOIS

France's Pays Rethélois may not be one of the best-known regions in the country, but to those in the know, it is a haven of spectacular countryside and memorable museums and architecture.

Midway between the vineyards of France's Champagne region and the forests of the Ardennes massif, the Pays Rethélois' lush valleys and ancient towns are a favourite with nature lovers and bird watchers captivated by the sight of migratory birds in the area's wild forests. Walkers and others are simply drawn to the area as a chance to disconnect from city life amidst the beauty of the countryside.

The area's many walking routes include two parts of the Way of Saint James – the GR624 and Via Campaniensis – and thanks to the support of local conservation groups, these are clearly signposted with geographic and historical details.

Another highlight of the countryside is a special trail following the haunts of French poets Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud,

Following in the footsteps of poet Paul Verlaine

One of the key visits on the 'Rimbaud Verlaine' route, dedicated to Paul Verlaine and his equally famous lover, the French

poet Arthur Rimbaud, is the Musée Verlaine in the small village of Juniville.

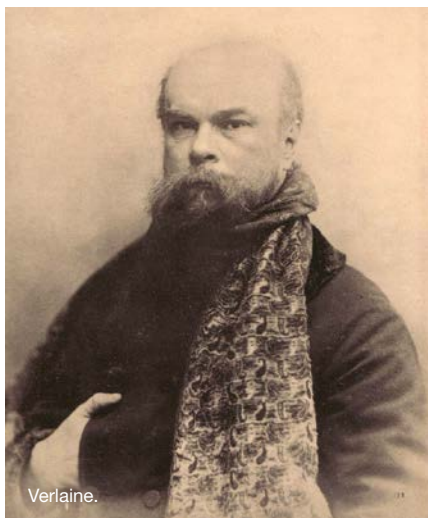
When the 33-year-old Verlaine arrived in the small town of Rethel in 1877, he was already a cause célèbre and famous, not to say infamous, not just as a hugely successful poet but also thanks to the scandal caused by his affair with Rimbaud. Their stormy break-up had culminated in Verlaine shooting his lover in the wrist with a pistol, and this was swiftly followed by Verlaine's subsequent prison sentence.

After periods of exile in both Belgium and England, as well as divorce from

his wife, Verlaine sought a quieter life in Reims and spent the next two years teaching literature and English at the town's Notre Dame de Reims (now the Collège Sorbon).

During Verlaine's time in Reims, in addition to teaching, he also continued writing poetry and articles for the local newspaper, *le Courrier des Ardennes*. His poetry was mainly written at an inn – L'Auberge du Lion d'Or in Juniville – some 15 kilometres from Reims, where he finished *Sagesse (Wisdom)*, the collection which marked his return to Catholicism.

The inn is now home to the Musée Verlaine, which is very much designed to feel as though Verlaine himself has only just left the room. With furniture just as it was in Verlaine's day, the poet's walking stick and hat still lie ready and waiting in their place.



Verlaine.

However, the museum is not solely a museum but also a cultural space with exhibitions of photography and modern art as well as pop, rock and jazz concerts. In 2013, it was awarded 'Maisons des Illustres' status – the French award which is somewhere between a blue plaque and an English Heritage or National Trust seal of approval.

Asfeld – home to one of France's most extraordinary churches

The extraordinary Baroque church of Saint-Didier d'Asfeld in Asfeld is one of the most surprising, lesser-known treasures, of both the Champagne-Ardenne region and indeed France.

Built in the shape of a viola de gamba (the cello-like Baroque musical instrument), the church is remarkable for its lack of straight lines, its colonnaded exterior, domes and oblong cupola; not



to mention its exceptional acoustics, which make it perfect as a venue for classical concerts.

The L'Agora Pays de Rethélois Médiathèque- Museum

Designed by renowned, Reims-based contemporary architect Giovanni Pace, the striking L'Agora Médiathèque-Musée museum opened in 2018 in a converted farmhouse close to the town centre.

Featuring a vast, low-rise central hall with floor-to-ceiling plate-glass windows, the Museum has incorporated the historic stone architecture of the original farm buildings into what is now a highly contemporary structure.

The Museum's rich and varied collection includes everyday artefacts and objects from daily life and industry in the region from the 19th to the 20th century, as well as archaeological finds, coins, medals and seals, military and religious objects and lithographs.

There are also private bequests from local luminaries such as the 19th and 20th century Rethélois painter Eugène Thiéry, as well as Asiatic objects from the collection of one-time Governor of Indo-China, Paul Luce, and sculptures and paintings from the collection of lawyer Paul Chappe.

Recognised by the French Ministry of Culture as a 'Museum of France', the Museum also holds regular educational activities, workshops and events.



Musée Verlaine 1 rue du pont paquis
08310 Juniville. Open from 1 April to 31
October, from Tuesday to Sunday, 2pm
to 6pm.

The tenth Edition of the Viola de Gamba
Baroque music festival will be held
between 26 June and 28 June.

L'Agora Médiathèque-Musée,
rond-point de L'Octroi, Reims

Tel: 00 33 3 24 72 74 85
Email: agora@cc-paysrethelois.fr
www.paysrethelois.fr



Brown-Cheeked Hornbill (*bucconides tractatus*)
bird with an unbreakable beak 2014.
Photo: Vincent Fournier

Art and culture in Mâcon, southern Burgundy

TEXT: EDDI FIEGEL | PHOTOS: VILLE DE MÂCON

Think of Burgundy and most people immediately think of wine, but in the town of Mâcon in the south of the region, less than an hour's drive north of Lyon, a captivating museum is one of the area's artistic and cultural gems.

Musée des Ursulines

Housed in a 17th-century former convent, the Musée des Ursulines traces the history of culture in Burgundy from the past to the present day. Not only is there an impressive archaeological collection covering artefacts from prehistory to the Middle Ages, but also several other permanent collections.

These include the first-floor display, which focuses on regional Burgundy life through the ages, from wine-making to life around the river Saône, whilst the second floor display spans the last five centuries of art.

Vincent Fournier

The Museum also holds fascinating temporary exhibitions such as its current show

dedicated to the work of internationally renowned Burgundian photographic artist Vincent Fournier, whose work is in world class collections such as MOMA in New York and the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

In his work, Fournier explores the connection between nature and technology and the interplay between the real and the imaginary, taking in science fiction and utopian societies.

Espace Lamartine

As part of the museum's focus on Mâcon's cultural heritage, the 200-square-metre Espace Lamartine is dedicated to a permanent exhibition of the work of French, Mâcon-born romantic poet and humanitarian politician Alphonse Lamartine. A permanent collection of his sculptures, paintings, letters and notebooks offers a rare insight into the different areas of this multi-faceted man's work, from his romantic poetry to his governmental work on the abolition of slavery.

Contemporary Art Biennial

In 2021 Mâcon will welcome visitors to the sixth edition of its Contemporary Art Biennial. This edition will be centred around the theme of nature through art and photography. With a series of exhibitions, concerts, workshops and conferences dotted around the town, seven photographers have been invited to explore the natural world, both today and in the future.

Musée des Ursulines:

5 Rue de la Préfecture, Mâcon.

Open Tuesday to Saturday from 10am to midday and from 2pm to 6pm.
Sundays from 2 to 6pm. Closed
1 May and 14 July.

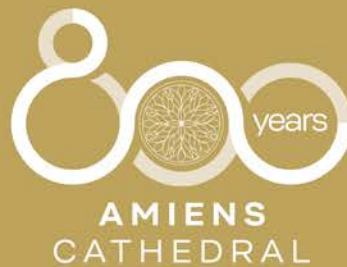
The Vincent Fournier exhibition runs till 20 September.

www.macon.fr

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& PAYS
D'ART &
D'HISTOIRE





PASCALE NAESSENS

Leading a foodie revolution

As the best-selling culinary author in Belgium, Pascale Naessens has been credited for launching a real culinary movement over the past decade, helping Belgians ditch their beloved convenience food and fall in love with home cooking once again. A champion for pure and healthy eating, fresh, simple ingredients are at the heart of all Naessens' cookbooks, which have already been translated into various languages including French, English, German and Chinese. We caught up with the former model, who is also an acclaimed ceramic artist, to find out more about her latest English language release, *Low Carb Cookbook with 4 Ingredients*.

TEXT: ANNA VILLELEGER | PHOTOS: ROOS MESTDAGH/LICHTWAAS

"I think we forgot that food can be very simple," begins Naessens, a former model who published her first book in 2010. "When you're cooking for friends, you don't want to spend hours going to specific shops for loads of different ingredients," she points out. Yet the beauty of Naessens' recipes is their simplicity, as reflected in *Low Carb Cookbook with 4 Ingredients*, which is full of delicious, filling meals. "When I'm cooking I use basic, fresh ingredients — I've always been like this," enthuses the author. "It's a challenge to make new tastes using only four flavours. People always say 'wow' because they are surprised by what you can do. Actually, you can be more crea-

tive when you have limitations — it's like if I'm at home and my husband says 'we don't have anything to eat,' I'll open the fridge and say 'no problem, I can make a starter and a main course with this', I love to come up with new combinations."

Quick and easy

Naessens is constantly inspired to create new dishes and keeps a notebook with her at all times. "Sometimes at night when I can't sleep I think 'oh, maybe I could try that...'" she admits. All the recipes in *Low Carb Cookbook with 4 Ingredients* are divided into preparation times of 10, 15, 20 or 25 minutes. "I like to create something that looks like it's taken two or



three hours, but was actually quick,” grins Naessens. “I love to cook, but I don’t want to spend hours in the kitchen when I could be with friends or my husband.” As the author points out, creating a convivial food experience can be just as important as what we are actually putting into our mouths. “I remember being at the kitchen table with family when I was young. It’s not the food I remember, but being with family. Those are precious memories,” she recalls. “Obviously, I love going to a restaurant once in a while, but cooking for friends and family at home is just so special. I lay everything out on the table and people can pick what they want. The atmosphere is way better.”

Bon vivant

You could certainly describe Naessens as a ‘bon vivant’, and the perfect antidote to the myth that healthy eating is ‘boring’ or ‘tasteless’. The author only follows one rule when it comes to dining, and that is that she never combines fast carbohydrates and proteins. “All my dishes begin with vegetables as a base. And then you can choose whether to add fish, meat, cheese or carbohydrates,” she explains. “We used to go out in nature and eat what we found — we didn’t mix everything. Now, we live in a world of plenty and we buy everything we want all together. But if you put everything together you only have one taste.”

Changing lives

For Naessens, it is all about eating simply, and having respect for your body and your food. “When you see people eating better, they are happier, they have more energy,” she enthuses, adding that many people falsely think that eating healthy is restrictive or too much effort. “It’s funny, because people think they are free to eat what they want. But then you ask them what they eat in a week and it’s just bread, potatoes... It’s always the same — and its sugar,” says the author. “They also think it’s a lot of work to eat healthily, but all they have to do is

buy more fresh ingredients. Then, once you have them at home it only takes ten minutes to make a very nice meal.”

Because Naessens’ recipes are so simple and accessible, she has managed to encourage even the most reluctant of cooks to change their approach to food. This is something, quite rightly, that she is very proud of. “I’ve changed a lot of eating habits in Belgium, and also in Holland over the last few years. I didn’t plan this, but now I’m like ‘Oh my God, look what happened!’ It’s so rewarding.”



Try this tonight...

We delved into *Low Carb Cookbook with 4 Ingredients* to offer you some foodie inspiration. This healthy, quick and easy recipe will not disappoint.

Sautéed vegetables with feta:

Ready in 15 minutes

You will need:

- 1 large zucchini
- 1 red pointed bell pepper
- 7 oz (200 g) feta
- 1½ oz (40 g) flat-leaf parsley

Dice the zucchini into ½-inch (1 cm) cubes. Cook the diced zucchini in a generous splash of olive oil. Meanwhile, slice the bell pepper in rings. Cook them together with the zucchini for a total of approximately 12 minutes. Dice the feta and coarsely chop the parsley. Add these to the vegetables and cook for an additional two minutes.





Amsterdamse Bos.

SPECIAL GUIDE

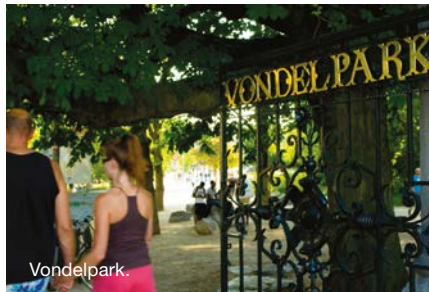
All spotlights on Amsterdam

As the warmer months approach, we explore the delights of the Dutch capital. There's a vibrant cultural scene, hip hangouts and plenty of beautiful outdoor spaces.

TEXT: MAYA WITTERS | PHOTOS: NBTC



Amsterdamse Bos.



THE BEST OUTDOOR SPACES IN AMSTERDAM

In many big cities, opportunities for feeling the grass between your toes may seem thin on the ground. Fear not – Amsterdam bucks this trend. Here are some of the city's best outdoor spaces to enjoy a stroll.

1. Vondel Park

Everyone knows this extensive stretch of greenery and ponds, located just outside the edge of Amsterdam's canal rings. Vondel Park is always lively and bustling with a mix of local street artists and curious tourists who want to enjoy some outdoor time after a lengthy visit to the Rijksmuseum. Not to be missed!

2. Frankendael Park

Apart from plentiful meadows and water features, this park on the east side of Amsterdam, in the Jeruzalem neighbourhood, also features a beautiful old mansion. A lot calmer and more natural than the more central parks of the city, this is a great escape when the hustle and bustle of the capital gets too overwhelming.

3. Amsterdamse Bos

In need of even more space and variety? The Amsterdamse Bos, or Forest of Amsterdam, may not have the most apt name, as it is neither a real forest nor in Amsterdam – it's actually right

next to Amstelveen, just to the south of Amsterdam itself. Nevertheless, this massive recreational area features a giant pond, various playgrounds and adventure courses for kids, a petting zoo, and the opportunity to get lost among the trees. Well worth the trip.

4. Beatrix Park

If you like your parks all trimmed and orderly, Beatrix Park might be the one for you. Established in the 1930s, it is exquisitely landscaped and boasts a wide variety of plants and trees, most of which are labelled for your educational needs. Have a rest on one of the many



Amsterdamse Bos.

benches and watch city life unfold around you.

5. Rembrandt Park

The Rembrandt Park, to the west of Amsterdam's city centre, is less developed and wilder than many other parks in the city. The park is ideal for an afternoon jog, a stroll by the water or a game of fetch with the dog. As it is dedicated to Rembrandt, you will encounter many statues of the world-famous painter on your tour.

6. Tuinpark Nut & Genoegen

This community garden and park near the river IJ consists of a maze of little garden sheds and paddocks where city dwellers come to grow vegetables, fruits and flowers. There's also plenty of wildlife to spot, from squirrels and birds of all sorts to the occasional rabbit. A unique getaway not far from Central Station.



Amsterdamse Bos.



Vondelpark.



Thinking out of the bag

TEXT: MAYA WITTERS | PHOTOS: TASSENMUSEUM

In an old house at the famous Herengracht, one of Amsterdam's hidden gems awaits: the Museum of Bags. But don't expect to find a chronological display of bags through the ages here: this museum uses its collection to spark the visitor's imagination and to tell the stories behind the object. "A bag is a carrier of identity. These personal stories are what we want to show."

The museum's collection itself started from a personal story: that of Hendrikje and Heinz Ivo, who started collecting bags out of personal interest and passion. After two decades of displaying their meticulously assembled collection in their own home in Amstelveen, the museum moved to its prestigious Amsterdam location in 2007.

More than just objects

Last year, Manon Schaap became director of the museum and decided to refresh its approach to displaying the 5,000 bags in its collection. "A bag is not just a pretty ob-

ject: it's a carrier of personality, it contains a story, it exists in a wider context. I don't just want our visitors to look at nice designs; I want them to learn about their origins, the skill and métier that went into making them, their functions, their social connotations and the people that used them."

To create room for the stories behind the bags, Schaap decided to work with thematic exhibitions throughout the year. "We currently have an exhibition of vintage trunks and suitcases, that tells marvellous, imaginative stories about how people used to look at travel. Now we all travel often and light; back in the day, travel was a laborious undertaking, and people brought along loads of suitcases."

Later this year, the museum will look at how bags play a role in film. "We launched an investigation into the symbolism of handbags and how this is used in movies by, for example, Hitchcock. Bags are personal and psychological objects; when you rummage through someone's hand-

bag, you are rummaging through their psyche. With these kinds of stories, we want to tickle people's imagination. The object, in this case the bag, is just the starting point," concludes Schaap.



The museum also serves an elegant high tea (voted one of the best in Amsterdam), and is a splendid party and wedding location.

For more information, visit:
www.tassenmuseum.nl



Yossi Eliahoo.

Revolutionising high-end hospitality

TEXT: ARNE ADRIAENSSENS | PHOTOS: THE ENTOURAGE GROUP

When on the lookout for a unique dining experience in Amsterdam, try one of THE ENTOURAGE GROUP's exciting restaurant concepts. As one of Europe's leading hospitality empires, it never fails to bring the next big thing to Amsterdam and innovate the already-exciting culinary scene of the city. While each of its restaurants serves you a different part of the world, its infallible sense for detail and holistic vision on eating out makes an evening at one of THE ENTOURAGE GROUP's venues a night to remember.

Amsterdam is a Walhalla for tourists. The streets adjoining the picturesque canals are must-strolls for avid city trippers and behind many a door, exciting urban surprises await you. In the last decade,

however, the Dutch capital grew out to become a culinary paradise, as well. Alongside the many restaurants who serve the finger-licking-good traditional dishes and sweet indulgences, the city now is a melting pot of international flavours and exotic scents. And for that, Amsterdam can partially thank THE ENTOURAGE GROUP.

A humble start

While a small imperium today, THE ENTOURAGE GROUP kicked off as a humble business endeavour in 2008 when young hospitality entrepreneurs Yossi Eliahoo and Liran Wizman met each other in London and decided to join forces and open a restaurant in Amsterdam. "We didn't have a ten-year plan back then. Just a shared hunger to

start something," says Yossi, co-founder and co-owner of THE ENTOURAGE GROUP. "It was a new and exciting city for us and we considered that a great challenge. We just wanted to run one restaurant here. We didn't think any bigger than that."

That first restaurant was MOMO, a pan-Asian, fine-dining place with a contemporary and metropolitan vibe. "While the Netherlands – and Amsterdam in particular – have had a soft spot for Asian food for decades already, a modern concept like this was nowhere around at that time. And we believed that it should be."

Non-formal fine-dining

And they couldn't be more right! The opening of MOMO preluded a new era



MR PORTER.

in Amsterdam's culinary scene. "What sets us apart from other fine-dining restaurants is our non-formal atmosphere and our focus on creating experiences. An evening at MOMO is about more than just the food. From the flavours and service to the music and interior, all is streamlined to tell the same story. It is a place of fun and quality, not of protocol and pretentiousness."

On the plates, the focus lies on mixing and matching. Every dish is an explosion of interesting flavour combinations from all corners of the Asian continent. From snow crab and beluga caviar sushi to duck and foie gras, grilled aubergine with karashi-su miso or roasted cauliflower with green jalapeno and dry miso. Don't

worry if these descriptions don't mean anything to you. MOMO is not reserved for connoisseurs alone but is a discovery laboratory for the masses. "The restaurant and the menu are family-orientated and the staff is happy to help you make an educated choice." That same notion applies to the drinks list. With a global selection of wines, great cocktails and some appealing sakes on offer, the bar is just as eclectic as the kitchen. "But our food and drinks share a philosophy. They speak the same language and, therefore, match wonderfully."

Nikkei cuisine

After the success of MOMO, it was merely a matter of time before Yossi and Liran would found their second restau-

rant. In 2012, they opened IZAKAYA; a Japanese restaurant like no other. "An 'izakaya' is an informal, Japanese pub," explains Yossi. "We wanted to take its classic, casual atmosphere and turn it into something very contemporary – both in design and food." This, they achieved by serving Nikkei food, an interesting combination of traditional Peruvian ingredients with Japanese cooking techniques. On the menu are delicious creations like unagi and honeycomb roll sushi or sole in shiso salsa. "Most of our dishes are things that people don't cook at home. The ingredients and equipment can't be found in every kitchen and the preparation of the plates requires very specialised skills. A lunch or dinner at IZAKAYA is, therefore, always exciting."



MR PORTER.



MOMO Restaurant Bar & Lounge.



Sashimi set.



Upon popular demand, IZAKAYA has spread its wings and opened restaurants in two other European cities: Munich and Ibiza. “Scaling this restaurant was not our initial purpose as it is very difficult to do. People often think that we copy-paste our concepts, but that isn’t so. To open a second branch of a restaurant, you need amazing, like-minded people, for a start. You also want the restaurant to fit the city. So, while the core DNA remains the same, you have to make sure that the restaurant blends in in the city.”

Sharing and enjoying meals together

Back in Amsterdam, THE ENTOURAGE GROUP runs two diverse restaurants within the walls of the prestigious W Hotel: MR PORTER – a modern, fine-dining steakhouse; and THE DUCHESS – an elegant, *Michelin*-star restaurant. “While we call MR PORTER a contemporary steakhouse, it is all but your average chop-house,” explains Yossi. “It has an interesting and diverse menu with seafood and vegetarian dishes, as well as carnivorous delicacies. It is about sharing and enjoying a meal together. Our clientele usually doesn’t come for a one-kilogramme steak with chips. Yet, if they do, we will happily serve it, as well.”

Settled at the top floor of the building, MR PORTER offers a meal with a view. Surrounded by giant windows on all sides, the restaurant is bathed in natural light. The eye-catcher of the interior is the beautiful 360-degree bar. “That is a feature that we have in all our restaurants. It is the social heart of our businesses. It is the stage of the bartender and a spot for people to get to know each other.” Recently, MR PORTER went international, with a second branch in sunny Barcelona.

An atypical *Michelin*-star restaurant

A stone’s throw away, you enter THE DUCHESS, serving with a regal twist. “While creating THE DUCHESS, we were inspired by the building itself. It is monumental and impressive, with a high, stained-glass ceiling and mirrors against the walls.” On the sizeable menu, you will find contemporary dishes which are deeply rooted in the French and Italian cuisine. King crab and langoustine tortellini, for



example. Or courgette blossom with goat cheese and honey.

As in most of THE ENTOURAGE GROUP's restaurants, you are welcome at almost any time of the day – from your late-morning coffee until your (one-to-) last nightcap. You can even head to THE DUCHESS for a traditional afternoon tea with fresh sandwiches, warm scones and hand-made macarons.

Being granted a *Michelin* star, THE DUCHESS brings uniqueness and diversity to the legendary guide. "We are an infor-

mal restaurant with plenty of tables and a sharing concept," explains Yossi. "That isn't exactly what the *Michelin Guide* is full of. We offer top-notch and unique food, but we don't want people to get the wrong idea when coming to THE DUCHESS. Because we are not the standard French cuisine establishment that *Michelin* aficionados might expect."

The next adventure

After more than a decade as the leading man of the Dutch culinary scene and the founding of 14 successful hospitality brands in Amsterdam and beyond,

Yossi still loves each of them. "It might sound like a cliché but it is like choosing between your children. Each of them is different but I love them equally." And THE ENTOURAGE GROUP's work is far from done. While founding two new Mexican concepts in the city, it has already cast its eye on its next adventure. "There is always something new to innovate in the city. Something exciting, fun and timeless."

www.the-entouragegroup.com

Facebook: theentouragegroup1

Instagram: @the_entourage_group

Discover their other restaurants:

As THE ENTOURAGE GROUP has way more restaurants than just MOMO, IZAKAYA, THE DUCHESS and MR PORTER, here, we can happily introduce you to the rest of their portfolio as well.

- THE BUTCHER – serves the best bloody burgers of Amsterdam and beyond.
- TONI LOCO – who has the biggest premium Italian-American-style pizza.
- SHIRKHAN – a rich selection of authentic Mumbai street food is served with fresh and homemade products from the tandoori oven.
- BEPITA – bringing homemade pitas inspired by a bountiful Middle Eastern marketplace.
- THE BUTCHER Social Club – a 24-hour-juncture of great food, new music, edgy creativity, metropolitan lifestyle and urban design.
- DO NOT DISTURB – An electrifying bar and lounge where a crowd of the unknown becomes the known.
- LALO Contemporary Mexican Kitchen & Bar, COCO Lounge & Bar THE ENTOURAGE GROUP is spicing up Amsterdam again, by introducing a new cuisine to its portfolio. Introducing the phenomenal LALO Contemporary Mexican Kitchen & Bar and COCO Lounge & Bar. Both located at the crown of the legendary new landmark of Amsterdam, next to the RAI. They will open in the summer of 2020.



Spaghetti with Beluga caviar.



IZAKAYA Asian Kitchen & Bar Amsterdam.

Benelux Business

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‘National culture’ – handle with care

TEXT & PHOTO: STEVE FLINDERS

Dutch social psychologist, Geert Hofstede, died recently at the age of 91. What will be his legacy?

Hofstede was a founder of intercultural studies in the 1970s, following his research involving managers across the world working for IBM, his then employer. He defined a series of cultural dimensions and used his findings to claim that significant variations in attitudes towards inequality, risk, individualism, gender roles and more, can be identified between nation states.

Despite extensive and sustained criticism of his arguments and methodology since then, Hofstede’s dimensions continue to serve as a mainstay of intercultural training. His advocates argue that making people aware of these areas of cultural difference help them to work better with people from other countries.

While Hofstede’s dimensions can be very useful, I doubt the validity of his claims to be able to precisely measure differences between countries. I also have reservations about his archaic and possibly sexist language – one dimension compares more “masculine” with more “feminine” cultures.

More fundamentally, I question the validity of the concept of national culture on which his work is based. Such a monolithic notion fits less and less with the dynamic flux of ethnic, regional, political, religious and organisational cultures in today’s multicultural world.

It’s not just half the Scots and Catalans who maintain that existing nation states are arbitrary constructs. I struggle to define my own national cultures. Britishness is now in a process of disintegration – more testimony to the subjectivity of the concept; while Englishness seems at best diverse, and at worst fragmented and divided. President Macron seems to agree: “Il n’y a pas une culture française. Il y a une culture en France. Elle est diverse,” he said in a recent speech. This translates to “There is no ‘French’ culture. There is a diverse culture in France.”

It can be fun to look at Hofstede’s measurements online to see how, say, the French ‘power distance’ score of 68 – lots of hierarchy – compares with the lean Norwegians’ score of 31. It can be handy to get a snapshot of a country you don’t know. But the statistics make it easy to for-

get that the picture may not be a remotely accurate representation of any given individual. His bar charts too easily emphasise what divides us rather than unites us.

We should be grateful to Hofstede for his conceptual insights, but today we need to move on from simple generalisations about groups of millions of individual human beings.



Steve Flinders is a freelance trainer, writer and coach, based in Malta, who helps people develop their leadership and communication skills for working internationally: steveflind@aol.com

Business Calendar

TEXT: MAYA WITTERS



Photo: Belgian Cloud Summit

Circular Economy, Circular Production & End-of-Life Management

23 April

Webinar

In order to stop our world from becoming one large waste basket, we will need to transform our consumerist society into something more durable. This webinar will explore opportunities for the introduction of circular economy principles in the EU policy framework. Organised by CSR Europe, the European network for Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility, and open to members and associates.

www.csreurope.org

React Summit

Postponed until 11 September

Amsterdam, the Netherlands

React is a powerful JavaScript library for building user interfaces, and Amsterdam has the pleasure of hosting the largest gathering of React developers in the world. With two tracks, more than 25 speakers and close to two thousand attendees, you will be sure to come away buzzing with new knowledge and useful contacts. Will now take place in September.

www.reactsummit.com

Belgium Cloud Summit

Postponed until 23 September

Brussels, Belgium

The Belgian Cloud Summit is a conference aimed at helping businesses adopt a helpful cloud storage strategy. With topics including digital transformation, compliance and security challenges, and applications, this conference will help your business become completely future-orientated. Postponed until 23 September.

www.belgiancloudsummit.com

MISDOOM

Postponed until autumn

Leiden, the Netherlands

The second Multidisciplinary International Symposium on Disinformation in Open Online Media, or MISDOOM for short, was set to take place in Leiden in April, but has

now been postponed until later this year – dates TBC. Given the current Covid-19 outbreak and the appurtenant proliferation of medical advice and questionable information, there will be plenty to talk about.

2020.misdoom.org

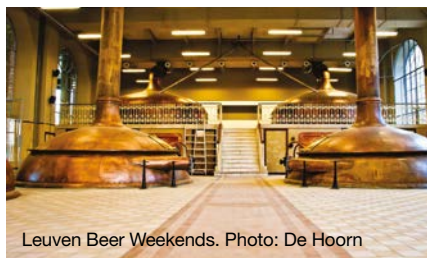
Trends in Brewing Symposium

Postponed until 17-21 January 2021

Leuven, Belgium

The 14th Trends in Brewing Symposium was due to take place in April but has now been moved to January next year in order to accommodate for all the international participants. The theme will be Beer & Society. Expect interesting insights around sustainability, diversification and well-being – including a session on non-alcoholic brewing.

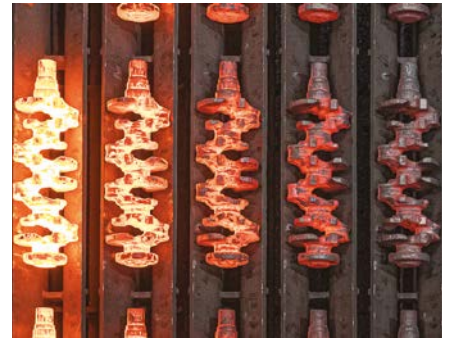
www.trendsinbrewing.org



Leuven Beer Weekends. Photo: De Hoorn



MISDOOM. Photo: Leiden 'Pieterskerk



Industry and entrepreneurship on Paris' doorstep

TEXT: EDDI FIEGEL | PHOTOS: OLIVIER FRAJMAN

Whilst France may be best known for its food, wine and culture, one area of the country has become a byword as the cost-effective choice when it comes to business innovation and technology. Less than one and a half hours from not only Paris, but also the cities of Reims, Nancy and Dijon, the southern Champagne region has an enviably strategic location, ideal both for e-commerce and manufacturing.

Historically known for industries such as textile and agriculture, Sud Champagne is now often known as 'French Tech', renowned for both its technological capabilities and innovation, as well as its exceptional quality of life.

The region's principal towns of Troyes and Chaumont sit amidst lakes, forests and vineyards, meaning Sud Champagne residents can enjoy the benefits of easy access to the lush open countryside around them as well as the rich cultural heritage

and sporting and leisure opportunities provided by the towns themselves.

This, in addition to the significant business advantages and opportunities (particularly when it comes to price compared to Paris), is no doubt why Sud Champagne is one of France's top areas for business development – home to some 24,000 businesses, as well as business schools, laboratories and business associations.

Every year more than 200 entrepreneurs take part in the two day 'Plug & Start' conference, dedicated to entrepreneurship, but Sud Champagne is also a popular choice for other industries.

The area is also a hub for sectors such as the textile industry, the logistics industry with its forward looking warehouses, the food and beverage industry (the region is the second-largest producer of Champagne in the world), the bio-

economy with its production of hemp and sainfoin, 'industry 4.0' (smart manufacturing, 'dark' factories and AI) and medical instruments, as well as the low-carbon energy industry with its production of wind turbine, solar energy and methane; not to mention a position as a world leader in the production of orthopaedic implants.

To ensure that every enterprise succeeds, businesses can enjoy support of the Business Sud Champagne (Business Southern Champagne) economic development agency. Bringing together experts from a range of different sectors, the agency offers businesses a personalised and specifically adapted relocation or set-up programme, encompassing everything from relocating families and finding accommodation (which is around 40 per cent less expensive than Paris) to helping spouses and partners find a job.

www.business-sud-champagne.com



Dr. Vassiliki Laina.

Find the right plastic surgeon for you

TEXT: ANNA VILLELEGER | PHOTOS: CHRISTIAN HAGEN, BIGBOOK AND A MICHAILIDES, NEWSVILLE.BE

Having a cosmetic procedure is a big decision, and finding the right surgeon is an important place to start. Qualifications and expertise are crucial, but in the field of aesthetics, it is also vital to have the same perception as your surgeon.

"For me, plastic surgery is a passion. It is the boldest and most fearless of the healing acts. The thrill and challenge that this specialty offers is beyond description, and has so many different aspects," begins Dr. Vassiliki Laina, who offers a range of face and body procedures at her Brussels practice. "I love human contact and the fact that people confide in me with their medical problems and insecurities. I love the fact that I am in a position to guide and help another human being, and make a substantial difference in their lives."

Dr. Laina completed her undergraduate and postgraduate training in the UK, and was selected for the coveted aesthetic surgery fellowship at The London Clinic, Harley Street. There, she acquired unique

exposure to modern aesthetic surgery techniques, and her devotion to plastic surgery was cemented.

The surgeon explains that two of the most popular surgical procedures for both men and women at the moment are blepharoplasty (eyelid surgery) and liposuction. For ladies, breast augmentation (breast implants) and mastopexy (breast lift) are traditionally popular, and labiaplasty (female genital area surgery) has become increasingly in demand over the last two years.

Before they make a decision, Dr. Laina ensures her patients are well informed, allowing themselves plenty of time before making their mind up. She also aims to enhance patients as naturally as possible: "When it comes to aesthetic surgery, for me, less is more. I feel it is my role to advise and guide patients, keeping in mind their needs and, of course, avoiding any decisions that would possibly harm them. I like my patients to be well informed and take their time before deciding on surgery."

As a passionate perfectionist, another of Dr. Laina's key principles is paying attention to detail: "Whether it is something small like an injection, or something bigger like reconstructive surgery, paying attention to detail pays off when it comes to achieving an excellent result."

In addition to running her busy plastic surgery practice, Dr. Laina works as a paediatric hand specialist at Queen Fabiola Children's University Hospital. "I am very lucky to have achieved a balance between those very different aspects of my specialty, which work in a synergistic way and provide me different kinds of joy and responsibility, and keep me constantly alert and interested in my work," concludes Dr. Laina.

Dr. Vassiliki Laina
Avenue Winston Churchill 157, 1180
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Tel: 0495 69 88 01
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VALENTINO CHOCOLATIER

Say Easter with chocolates

PHOTOS: GIANE LIMA

The taste of Belgium? Chocolate, of course! To experience this taste at its finest, you need look no further than to our favourite address: Valentino Chocolatier. Let us introduce you to this Belgian chocolatier known for creating hand-crafted chocolates with love!

Valentino Chocolatier opened its first shop in the heart of Brussels in 1978. In this tiny atelier, it began using local ingredients to create delicious chocolates – a tradition that is still alive today. A true family-owned and -operated business, Valentino brings together artisanal production with refined flavours and a touch of creativity.

Chocolates to share

Today, Valentino offers even more than just chocolates. In its seven shops, you will find an extensive range of gifts: elegant creations like artisanal pralines, crisp biscuits and even a craft beer that pairs perfectly with dark chocolate – all ideal ways to surprise and delight friends and loved ones!

To ensure each customer finds the perfect gift for every occasion, the brand selects a new look almost every month. That means the packaging, shop interiors and delicacies get a makeover ten times a year! This month, you can step into an Easter-themed paradise full of mouth-watering chocolate bunnies, seasonal delights and 25 flavours of chocolate Easter eggs. You can even indulge in some nostalgia and collect your favourite eggs in a little basket, just like when you were a child!

An international story

Valentino is always looking ahead, also. To provide its customers with the very best service, the brand designed a convenient webshop. This makes it easy to order your favourite chocolates and have them delivered right to your doorstep. It's perfect for chocoholics all across Europe!

In this spirit of crossing borders, Valentino also expresses a sense of globalism through its chocolates. For the past ten years, the chocolatier has showcased

a 'Chocolate of the Month' – an exclusive creation that customers have just 30 days to taste. The most popular flavours are then added to the brand's permanent product offering. Valentino is dedicating a portion of the proceeds from this year's chocolates to its collaboration with Cocoa Horizons, a foundation that supports African cocoa farmers. It's a wonderful opportunity to give back to those working to provide Valentino with its most important ingredient: chocolate.



Ready to taste these chocolates yourself? Order them at:
www.valentinobelgium.com



Nurturing international excellence

TEXT: EMMA JONES | PHOTOS: ST. JOHN'S

At St. John's, students have been following the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum since the 1970s; the IB is a widely recognised gold standard curriculum that is taught worldwide. All students follow the IB programme in the Primary, Middle Years and Diploma programmes from age two and a half to 18. The curriculum is broad-based and academically rigorous, developing students' skills such as evaluation and communication, curiosity and creativity.

The IB is ideally suited for international families as the curriculum is taught in schools right across the globe and recognised by universities worldwide. It is an excellent preparation for higher education; students develop highly proficient research skills and the ability to write academically. St. John's graduates achieve places at highly competitive university courses, including; Oxbridge, Russell Group and Ivy League.

The admissions team is always helpful and happy to put families moving to Belgium in touch with estate agents. Once accepted to the school, new fam-

ilies are contacted by the parent-run Welcome Committee who connect them with a buddy family and provide any support needed as well as welcoming them socially. The school aims to simplify the integration process as much as possible, so families receive a 'Welcome Handbook' detailing food shop recommendations, and even where to find English-speaking medical care.

On campus, all primary, middle, and high-school buildings are interconnected – a great bonus with the temperamental Belgian weather! With classrooms that are described by the head teacher as 'bright, airy and well-equipped, designed to promote collaborative learning', the school also has an open-door policy, and parents are very welcome on campus.

St. John's also provides great extra-curricular programmes and facilities that include a 400-seat theatre, dance studios, the Greene Art Gallery, sports halls, a gym and ample sports fields.

St. John's is always looking to improve its facilities, adding a recently refurbished Early Learning School and a beautifully

appointed boarding house. As a member of the Inspired network with 60 other schools worldwide, it offers inter-school exchanges and welcomed students from South Africa earlier this year. The network has established a unique collaboration with Berklee College of Music in New York to further enrich its outstanding performing arts programme.

International schools nurture a global mindset, intercultural understanding, emotional intelligence and adaptability in students. And with the current shifting job market, students are flexible and open to all eventualities, giving them a competitive advantage and springboard for life.



Ms Elaine Purves, head of school.

stjohns.be



Concertgebouw. Photo: Hans Roggen

Out & About

April and May are traditionally full of spring and Easter-related events in the Benelux. The first festivals take place as the weather improves, art fairs pop up and the competitive sports season gets underway. This year, the coronavirus pandemic has been a significant obstacle for many mass events. Nevertheless, we have tried to provide you with an overview of some of the best happenings – whether on schedule, postponed, or even online.

TEXT: MAYA WITTERS



Tulip Festival.



Tulip Festival

1-30 April, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

One thing is certain: no virus can stop the magnificent tulip fields of the Netherlands from blooming in April, so there will be plenty of beautiful colours to witness. The famous Amsterdam flower parade is sadly cancelled, but we highly recommend a stroll or drive between the flowering meadows.

www.tulipfestivalamsterdam.com

National Museum Week

20-26 April, the Netherlands

At the end of April over 400 museums across the Netherlands put on special events, exhibitions and tours, as well as making entry free or heavily discounted. Make sure to check out how your favourite museum is participating online, and stock up on a super-powered dose of culture!

www.nationalemuseumweek.nl

Brussels Short Film Festival

Postponed, Brussels, Belgium

The renowned Brussels Short Film Festival has been postponed until a later date, but organisers assure us that it will take place sometime in 2020. So stay posted and tune in later this year for a pick of the very best short films Belgium has to offer, as well as an impressive international selection.

www.bsff.be





Rembrandt in Spain

Until 24 May, online

Spain may be on lockdown, but the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum in Madrid did not want its wonderful exhibition featuring the works of Rembrandt to remain behind locked doors. The entire museum is therefore accessible online for a virtual tour of these masterpieces.

www.museothyssen.org

Antwerp 10 Miles

Postponed until autumn, Antwerp, Belgium

The iconic Antwerp 10 Miles, which passes Antwerp's best views and crosses the river Scheldt twice by tunnel, has been postponed until an as-yet-unconfirmed date in autumn. Plenty of time for everyone to get those legs in shape over summer.

www.sport.be/antwerp10miles

Art Brussels

Postponed until 25-28 June, Brussels, Belgium

Art Brussels, one of Belgium's most important yearly art fairs, has been postponed until June. In the meantime, the organisers are making sure some of the art on display in Belgium's galleries doesn't remain hidden: under the hashtag #ArtBrusselsOnlineExhibitions, it is sharing daily images of art on display behind temporarily closed doors. Follow along on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

www.artbrussels.com

Rijks Studio

Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, online

The magnificent Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam famously features a collection so extensive that it is nearly impossible to visit it all in a day. Now, thanks to the interactive Rijks Studio feature, you can create your own thematic

collection, or browse the collections curated by other visitors for a unique digital visit to this legendary museum.

www.rijksmuseum.nl

Opera

La Monnaie, Brussels, online

Opera fans rejoice — Brussels opera house La Monnaie is offering free online streaming of seven opera performances. Its virtual season includes *Frankenstein*, *Macbeth*, *Underworld* and *Aida*.

www.lamonnaie.be

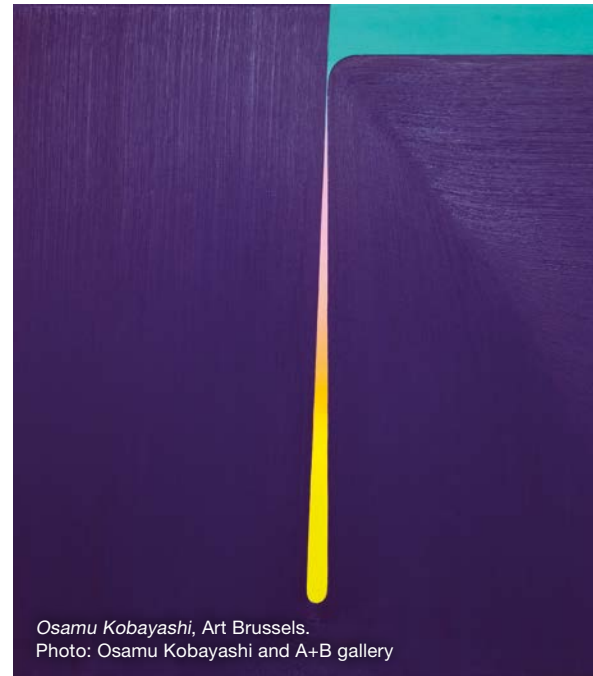
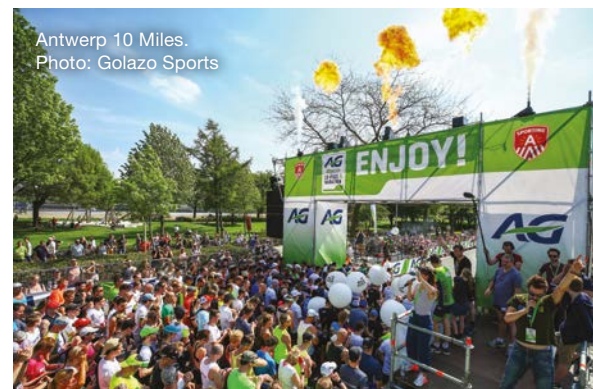
Concertgebouw Live Streams

Concertgebouw Amsterdam, online

Normally you can watch some of the world's greatest classical music performances live at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, but fear



Rijks Museum. Photo: John Lewis Marshall

Osamu Kobayashi, Art Brussels.
Photo: Osamu Kobayashi and A+B galleryAntwerp 10 Miles.
Photo: Golazo Sports

not: even in times of coronavirus you can get your classical music fix. Simply browse the Concertgebouw website and relive some of the best performances of the last few months thanks to their live streams, available for replay. www.concertgebouw.nl

AB Canapé

Ancienne Belgique Brussels, online

Brussels pop and rock venue Ancienne Belgique wants to support everyone who is in self-isolation or quarantine with great music. That's why, under the moniker AB Canapé, the concert hall is providing streams of iconic concerts from the last 20 years. These are available on the AB website, with new streams added every day. The AB staff has also created their own Covid-19 Spotify playlist for your entertainment.

www.abconcerts.be



Photo: Brussels Short Film Festival



NIJMEGEN

Old city, young vibe

TEXT: MAYA WITTERS | PHOTOS: MAX KNEEFEL

Nijmegen, huddled up against the German border, boasts a rich history that includes Roman settlers, merchant prowess and war tragedy. Today, it is one of the most vibrant cities in the Netherlands, where heritage meets pop music and history meets cultural innovation. To celebrate this unique melting pot, the city is launching a new Walk of the Town to help visitors and locals come together and experience everything Nijmegen has to offer.

As the oldest city in the Netherlands, Nijmegen has survived since the first century, when 'Noviomagus' was found-

ed by Roman troops. Through the Middle Ages the city became a vibrant centre of trade, and by the late 1800s the city literally burst at the seams as the walls were taken down to accommodate a growing population.

World War II affected the city dramatically, being one of the first to be overtaken by the German forces and later heavily bombed, causing many historic gems to be lost. After the war, many of these were rebuilt and accompanied by monuments and commemorative spots to honour the lives lost during the war years. Nijmegen recovered to once again become one

of the Netherlands' most exciting cities, and today it is well worth a visit. Especially for those who want to avoid the large crowds and still discover many amazing sights, the city has plenty to offer.

From Walk of the Town...

To help visitors discover its rich history as well as all the modern hotspots Nijmegen boasts, the city is launching a unique initiative: Walk of the Town. This self-guided walking route will trace a path past cultural, gastronomical and historical highlights – quite literally, because the route will be indicated by a painted green line on the ground.

"The line has many benefits: visitors can start the walk anywhere and at any time, and there's no chance of getting lost because you missed a sign somewhere," explains city marketing advisor Andrea Voskens. "The line is geared towards discovery and experience: it will lead past well-known sights as well as hidden gems, and will be enriched with street art, installations and activities." The line will be put into place over the coming months and it is hoped that it will attract many visitors as well as help city residents discover their town from a new perspective.

... to Walk of the World

Nijmegen may be steeped in rich history, but the city has its finger firmly on the pulse of modern culture, too, and boasts a plethora of events to prove it. Local music venue Doornroosje hosts the hottest new acts in national and international pop, rock and electronic music as well as long-established classics. From Dutch heroes Doe Maar to young gun Eefje Visser, Doornroosje is the place to be to discover the best the Netherlands has to offer.

And even if you're after the biggest names in international music, Nijmegen has you



Photo: Bart Kouwenberg



covered on all fronts. Every year the city's Goffertpark welcomes different sorts of artists. The past years Nijmegen has welcomed Eminem, Robbie Williams, U2, Bruce Springsteen, R.E.M. and Muse. In the near future, none other than Paul McCartney will give a concert and German metal legends Rammstein will be hopping across the border. Every year in the last weekend of May, the city hosts the International Music Meeting.

But by far the city's biggest event is the Vierdaagsefeesten in July. With over 1,000 different performances spread over 40+ locations in the city, this is a celebration of summer like no other. The festival coincides with the Walk of the World, a four-day marching event with a military history, during which tens of thousands of brave walking enthusiasts take on daily marches of 30, 40 or 50 kilometres. What better way to see the city and feel the solidarity that reverberates among marchers?

Nights to remember

With so much to see and do, it's certainly worth staying in Nijmegen for a weekend or longer. Luckily, the city likes to welcome travellers in style, with accommodation available at various price points and in every imaginable form. Whether you're after a straightforward business hotel, a luxurious spa experience or a B&B with a personal touch, you'll find all you need thanks to the city's practical Dutch hospitality.

Nijmegen also has plenty to offer on the culinary front, from casual brasseries to top-end restaurants, cosy summer terraces and lots of excellent local produce. And if you're after the very best pancakes in the Netherlands, you're in the right place! More inclined towards a five o'clock pick-me-up? There's local beers to be sampled, and the neighbouring village of Groesbeek is home to the largest vineyard in the country. In short: you're unlikely to go hungry or thirsty during your stay.

Visit www.visitnijmegen.com for practical information about your visit and accommodation. For information about Walk of the Town and upcoming events, visit www.intonijmegen.com.



Photo: Lennard Heijer



Explore Rotterdam from the water

TEXT: MAYA WITTERS | PHOTOS: REBUS

For 20 years, nostalgic passenger ship Nehalennia has been carrying tourists around Rotterdam. Its new trajectory shows you around for two hours, making it the longest available harbour tour of this fascinating city. Get on board and see the wonderful contrasts of Rotterdam's old and new architecture from a different point of view.

The Nehalennia, owned by Rebus Sailing Events, dates all the way back to 1908, but is in excellent shape, explains Ronald Van Vliet. "The ship features a sun deck with a capacity

of 80, as well as 100 seats inside with excellent views, so we can accommodate tourists in virtually any weather circumstances."

Rotterdam, also known as 'Manhattan on the Maas', has an exceptionally interesting skyline featuring a fascinating mixture of old and modern architecture. Highlights on the tour include the Erasmus bridge, Veerharbour, Parkharbour, Euromast, Schiedam, former cruise ship SS Rotterdam and the splendid old Hotel New York. Thanks to the English audio guide, you won't miss any of the best views.

Refreshments and snacks are available on board for those who get peckish along the way, and guests are welcome to walk around the ship and explore the best views from all sides as well as the classic interior. At the end of the two-hour tour, you'll come away with plenty of nice pictures, a lot of interesting historical knowledge about Rotterdam, and a smile on your face.

Get on board the Nehalennia at Boompjeskade 123, between the Erasmus and Willem bridge. From 1 June, Nehalennia sails twice a day, at 10am and 1pm, from Tuesday to Sunday.

Find more information and book online at: www.rebus-info.nl or call: 0031-655826463



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THE DUTCH WAY

Ten things you should know about Holland

TEXT: PAOLA WESTBEEK | PHOTOS: PIXABAY

Feeling at home in a new country not only involves understanding the language, but also the culture. What are the customs, traditions and beliefs of the people who live there and why do they behave the way they do? Becoming acquainted with the culture of a country will enable expats to get the most out of their time abroad while giving them the knowledge to blend in and avoid embarrassing faux pas. Here are ten things you should know about the Netherlands that will help you integrate and get a grasp on Dutch culture.

1. You'll need a bike

Cycling has many advantages. It is a great way to get some exercise and is one of the most pleasant and environ-

mentally sound forms of transportation. In the Netherlands, known as the world's most bike-friendly country (the number of bikes exceeds the number of people), roads are safe and millions are spent annually on bike infrastructure. It is not uncommon to have two bikes: one for running errands or going to work/school, and another for recreation. And forget helmets! The Dutch only wear them when cycling at high speeds for sport!

2. Forget spontaneity

Ask a Dutch person if they'd like to meet up for coffee and chances are they'll first check their agenda before penciling you in a week or so later. Don't expect to drop by a friend's house unannounced and be welcomed with open arms, either!



The Dutch value their spare time and are masters at creating a well-structured life. This lack of spontaneity may not be easy to deal with, especially for those who prefer to live in the moment.

3. The weather is unpredictable

If there's one thing you'll quickly learn when living in the Netherlands, it's to expect the unexpected when it comes to the weather. You may leave the house with clear skies and sunshine, but a few hours later, it may just start to pour! You'll definitely have to come to terms with the fact that if you want to stay dry and warm, practicality should come before fashion, so forget those pretty coats and get yourself one that's waterproof and has a hood – in case it's too windy to use an umbrella!



Design Academy Eindhoven. Photo: Sjoerd Eickmans

4. Dutch design is epic

If you thought tulips and cheese were the top Dutch export products, think again! Today, the Netherlands is also known for its daring (and sometimes quirky) cutting-edge design. In the 21st century, Dutch designers have managed to secure worldwide recognition with their dynamic creations: unique, innovative and decidedly Dutch! The Netherlands boasts some of the world's best design schools (the Design Academy in Eindhoven is the ultimate example) and Dutch museums are open to contemporary ideas and willing to think outside the box when setting up new exhibitions.



5. Learning Dutch is frustrating

Though most Dutch speak English exceptionally well (and eagerly show off their skills if they detect a foreign accent), learning Dutch is highly recommended if you really want to feel at home. But be prepared for a few frustrations! Not only are many Dutch words difficult to pronounce (good luck ever being able to say 'Scheveningen' or 'voordeelurenabonnement'!), but the word order is confusing and there are many irregular verbs to be memorised. Nevertheless, don't lose heart: find a good teacher, listen to Dutch radio, watch Dutch television... and continue speaking Dutch, even when the Dutch speak English to you!



6. The Dutch are brutally honest

Don't expect people to sugarcoat their words in the Netherlands! The Dutch are very direct (sometimes downright blunt) and will not hesitate to give you their unsolicited opinion. Friends – and even colleagues or strangers – will gladly let you know that your new haircut doesn't suit you or that losing a little weight would do you good. Bear in mind, though: they're not trying to be rude or embarrass you (although it will certainly come across that way!), the Dutch simply have a cut-to-the-chase mentality and think truthfulness and transparency are always best.

7. Tolerance is king

Dutch tolerance dates back to at least the 17th century when the Netherlands dominated much of the world's trade and became the most powerful and prosperous nation, one which welcomed people from every corner of the globe. Since then, Dutch society has always prided itself on its high level of tolerance, whether for people of different ethnicities, smoking marijuana, prostitution, euthanasia or LGBT rights. In fact, Amsterdam has always stood at the forefront of gay rights. In 1927, the first gay bar opened in the city, and in 2001, the world's first legal gay marriage took place at the town hall.



Photo: PXHERE

9. Homes are small and tidy

The Netherlands is the most densely populated country in the European Union, with a population density of 488 people per kilometre squared, meaning that space is limited and houses are often small... and tidy! You may just be able to look into your neighbours' kitchen across the street, so don't expect a lot of privacy. The Dutch have always been proud of their well-kept homes and are even known to keep their curtains open, not seeming to be the least bothered by the curious gazes of passers-by.

8. Bread for breakfast... and lunch

Ask the average Dutch person what they had for breakfast (or lunch), and they'll likely mention bread. The beloved 'boterham' (bread slice) is topped with cheese, cold cuts, peanut butter, apple syrup and even the iconic chocolate sprinkles (hagelslag). This might be fine for breakfast, but for some, a lunch of more bread may take some getting used to. The Dutch love affair with bread is even evident in many common sayings: 'broodnodig' (extremely necessary), 'brood op de plank hebben' (to have/earn enough), 'brood verdienen' (earn a living) and 'als warme broodjes over de toonbank vliegen' (to sell fast).



10. The Dutch love coffee

Coffee is serious business in the Netherlands. According to recent statistics from the International Coffee Organisation (ICO), the Dutch come in at fifth place on the list of the world's 20 biggest coffee drinkers. They drink 2.4 cups of coffee per day on average. That's roughly 150 litres of coffee per person, annually. Those numbers, however, could be higher. There's coffee for breakfast, there are morning and afternoon coffee breaks, and many enjoy coffee in the evening after dinner, too. The Dutch love their coffee so much that they often refer to it as their 'bakje troost' (cup of comfort)!



NEW MUSIC SPECIAL

Introducing Mariska Martina

TEXT: ANNA VILLELEGER | PHOTOS: GARY HEISS

Here at *Discover Benelux* magazine we love promoting the region's rising musical talents. This month we meet Mariska Martina, a London-based singer-songwriter from Holland, whose soothing vocals and heartfelt lyrics have earned comparisons to Joni Mitchell.

DB: We love your EP *Feathers*, could you tell us a bit more about it?

MM: *Feathers* started as a concept. I wrote a few brutally honest songs about my mental health, in quite a different style than anything I'd ever done before. I decided I wanted to record them

in a stripped down setting - not only because it was cheaper, but also because I thought it fitted the songs better. I started recording demos with my producer Roddy in his basement home-studio and the situation allowed us to take half a year to experiment with the songs. It was



very much a trial and error process, as it was extremely important to me that the songs reflect their sentiment accurately. Mental health can be a very heavy subject to make art about and I also wanted to make sure it wouldn't come across like a chore.

DB: You have a classical music background. What is your first musical memory?

MM: My first musical memory is coming down the stairs around my fifth birthday and seeing my first cello on the sofa, I remember being on cloud nine! Growing

up, most of my musical inspirations were classical cellists — especially Jaqueline Du Pré and Mischa Maisky, but once I got my hands on a swing CD in my early teens I became absolutely obsessed with Ella Fitzgerald. And then when Norah Jones' first album came out, I was in love. Both of those obsessions have not subsided.

DB: You received some great reviews for *Feathers*. What's next in the pipeline for you?

MM: In the future I'd like to tour. I want to travel the world and make people happy

by playing my music and I want to continue to create music for the rest of my life. I am also working towards finishing my first novel, so if I could be a published author, too, that would be pretty sweet. There are obviously also dreams like winning a Grammy and writing a Bond theme song, but in general my ambition is to keep being creative and make a living out of that.

Discover Mariska Martina's music at:
www.mariskamartina.com

STATES OF ART

Culture doesn't stop

TEXT: MATT ANTONIAK | PHOTO: ERIK SMITS

The news moves at such a pace these days, that rules that apply one day no longer apply the next.

Museums and galleries being closed is a daunting prospect for many. Culture is the glue that binds us, or provides escape from daily life. To have access to that suspended is a concern. Yet fear not, for there are still ways to consume culture and get your art world fix.

Cynics will say that the art's mass migration to the online sphere is long overdue. But in light of the coronavirus crisis, many galleries and museums have moved their offerings online.

Users of Instagram will know it is a great tool for discovering new art. In particular, there are a plethora of accounts documenting exhibitions that have been cut short. Famed mag *ArtForum* and *ArtofSocialDistancing* are prime examples

doing their bit to keep the wheels turning.

If you have a taste for the avant garde, turn to *ArtViewer* or *Contemporary Art Daily*. These blogs, updated daily, highlight stellar exhibitions happening across the globe. Scroll through their comprehensive back catalogue and find galleries you might not have heard of before putting on cutting edge exhibitions.

If you want a more immersive experience, turn to *Google Arts and Culture* – a partnership with 500 organisations worldwide that grants you a virtual tour of hundreds of places. Wanted to visit BOZAR, The Rijksmuseum or MUDAM, but never had the chance? Now's the time!

The Benelux has a rich and vibrant art history, that will not be forgotten about during these turbulent months. Our need to make and to create will not diminish, and art's power to provide hope will be invaluable in the future.



Gallery of Honour, Rijksmuseum.

Matt Antoniak is a visual artist and writer living and working in Newcastle, UK. He works mainly in painting and drawing and is a founding member of the art collective M I L K.

BEER OF THE MONTH

Barista Chocolate Quad

TEXT & PHOTO: STUART FORSTER

Barista Chocolate Quad is a powerful beer brewed at the Kasteel Brouwerij Vanhonsebrouck in the West Flanders village of Emelgem, about 50 minutes' drive from Ghent.

This beer is one of the speciality brews produced at modern premises, opened in 2016, including a restaurant, pub, sizeable shop and visitor centre. Tours explaining the evolution of the brewery over the past 155 years are enhanced by digital handsets with information presented in several languages, including English.

A quad, or quadruple, is a style of strong beer that's typically dark in colour and low in bitterness. This incarnation ticks both of those boxes, the latter meaning it can be enjoyed by people who don't normally go for beer.

As the name of Barista Chocolate Quad hints, its fragrant aroma is dominated by coffee

and chocolate with a malty undertone. Ebony in colour, this beer rises into a creamy, fawn head when poured. It would be easy to confuse this with a stout if the two were placed together on a bar top. The ideal serving temperature is 12 degrees Celsius, significantly warmer than most beers.

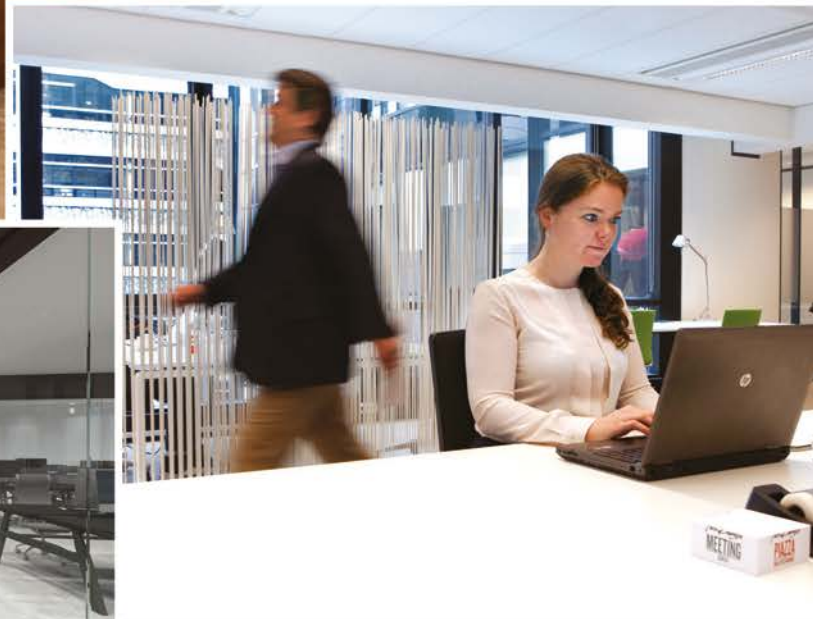
Chocolate and coffee dominate the flavour, too. There's a hint of caramel, also. Smooth to drink, it has a sweet finish, making it the ideal accompaniment to the likes of sticky toffee pudding or a slice of chocolate cake. It's also one to sip after dinner with a square of dark chocolate while conversing about the versatility of Belgian beers. Even better than a rubber duck, it's a lovely indulgent treat while soaking amid bubbles in a hot bath.

Brewer: Kasteel Brouwerij Vanhonsebrouck
Alcohol content: 11 per cent



Stuart Forster was named Journalist of the Year at the 2015, 2016 and 2019 Holland Press Awards. Five generations of his family have been actively involved in the brewing industry.

GARDENS BUSINESS CENTRES



BRAND NEW FLEXIBLE OFFICE SPACES AVAILABLE IN THE HAGUE AND DE MEERN

Gardens Business Centres has two branches: Gardens Business Centre New Babylon in The Hague and Gardens Business Centre Rijnzathe in De Meern.

The contemporary business concept ensures tenants are ensured of a high service level. Offices are fully setup with modern furniture and equipped with very fast internet. In addition, there is a full reception service, an extensive buffet including fresh bean coffee and fresh fruit and there are various meeting rooms that guests can use. This allows tenants to fully focus on their own core business

while all office issues are taken care of by hospitable office managers. Drink receptions are regularly organized so that tenants can get to know and strengthen each other.

The location in The Hague is in the New Babylon building, right next to The Hague Central Station. The branch was opened in 2012 with 50 office units and is currently being expanded considerably with 15 additional units ranging from 20 to 200 square meters. These offices will have an upscale premium look

and feel. Underneath the building is a parking garage with more than 1,200 spots.

The Rijnzathe location in De Meern is located at the most central point in the Netherlands with an unobstructed view of the Utrecht meadows. The location offers 14 fully furnished spaces from 20 to no less than 350 square meters. The branch was recently opened in 2019 and therefore has a fresh, new business look. Next to the building are enough parking spaces that are available to the tenants and guests.

For more information: Thomas van der Zee, Commercial Manager,
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www.gardensbusinesscentres.nl

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