

CIRCUIT MECHELEN - LIER

Burgundian heritage, cloisters & Nete river

Tourists from Belgium and abroad are invariably favourably surprised by Mechelen, which is big on charm as well as history. There are other reasons to visit this city of art, too, including its convenient central location and the attractive river landscape around the city centre. Follow the vehicle-free towpaths and you'll be in the country in no time.

This route links Mechelen with Lier, the gateway to the Campine/Kempen region. Lier is located on the confluence of the Grote and Kleine Nete rivers. Writer Felix Timmermans described his beloved town (now dubbed "Pallier town" after his novel of the same name) as the place "where the three winding Netes tie a silver knot." Two fascinating towns, beautiful landscapes, nature and tranquillity: this circular cycling route has it all!

HIGHLIGHTS

1 MECHELEN

In the sixteenth century Mechelen was the political, cultural and religious capital of the Burgundian Netherlands, which is when the region was ruled by the dukes of Burgundy. Today that rich history translates into over 300 listed buildings and five entries on the Unesco world heritage list. The people of Mechelen are very proud of their St. Rumbold's Tower with Skywalk at the top. Other attractions are the Hof van Busleyden Museum, the Palace of Margareta of Austria, the eight historical churches in the city centre and the Beguinage.

2 DUFFEL FORT

The non-profit Kempens Landschap has given this armour-plated railway fort between Mechelen and Antwerp a new lease of life. An exhibition illustrates how the soldiers defended the fort against the barrage of the German troops in 1914. Another looks at the bats that have taken up residence in the underground passages and chambers of the fort. Be sure to round off your visit with a 'Fortuin', the house beer served at Brasserie De Krone, a social project.



Duffel Fort



Grote Markt, Mechelen



The grounds of Roosendaal Abbey



③ THE GROUNDS OF ROOSENDAEL ABBEY

In the thirteenth century, Cistercian nuns founded an abbey in the Nete valley and for five centuries cloister life flourished there. After the French Revolution, it became a fine country house with landscaped grounds. Today Roosendaal is listed and offers a variety of meeting formulas with accommodation. The non-profit organization Kempens Landschap has already restored a number of the buildings, including the 'plague house' near the banks of the Nete.

④ NETE LANDSCAPE

The vehicle-free Neteboorden or 'banks of the River Nete' between Walem and Lier afford beautiful panoramic views. The tides on the Nete are particularly noticeable here. Adjacent to junction 31 on the national cycle network is the Provinciaal Groendomein Neteland, which boasts a wealth of different biotopes. In the spring and autumn the large ponds and the numerous berry bushes attract large numbers of migratory birds. The garden of the Provincial Institute for Environment Education (PIME) makes a great picnic spot.

⑤ LIER

This small town on the Nete has bucketloads of charm. Be sure to stroll round the atmospheric Beguinage, an oasis of peace. Like the Gothic belfry on the Grote Markt, it is a Unesco world heritage site. In the Zimmer Museum you make the acquaintance of the brilliant Lier clock-maker and astrologer Louis Zimmer (1888-1970). A boat trip is a good way to discover some of the town's other nooks and crannies. Then why not join the Pallieters at one of the many pavement cafés and sample a local beer or a typical Lier flan known as a 'vlaaike'!

⑥ WINTER GARDEN OF THE URSULINE NUNS

The turrets of the Ursulines' school and cloister complex dominate the skyline of the village of Onze-Lieve-Vrouw-Waver. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this 'pensionnat de demoiselles' was the boarding school of choice for young society ladies from wealthy families. The star attraction is the stunning art nouveau winter garden, where the young ladies would receive their parents in style. The innovative use of steel and glass and the colourful stained-glass cupola certainly make a statement.

Practical info

STARTING POINT & PARKING

De Nekker provincial sports and leisure centre,
Nekkerspoel-Borcht 19, 2800 Mechelen
Free parking

FOLLOWING THE ROUTE

The route makes use of the national cycle network. Just follow the intersection numbers on the rectangular green and white signs, as shown on the little map in this flyer.

LENGTH

route: 50 km

DESCRIPTION

The terrain is flat. Approximately 28% of the route is vehicle-free.

INTERSECTIONS

57 - 99 - 44 - 46 - 70 - 01 - 37 - 36 - 35 - 49 - 48 - 40 - 30 - 20 -
88 - 89 - 05 - 31 - 66 - 56 - 25 - 55 - 65 - 98 - 11 - 99 - 57

For information about possible diversions: routedokter.be

For more cycling and hiking ideas,
go to visitmechelen.be

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COLOPHON

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Nete Valley Route

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BICYCLE LOOP - 50 KM

**VISIT
MECHELEN**

