

BEER
*in
Women's
Hands*

EXPERIENCE GUIDE





TIP

The free **Tasting Map** includes a list of restaurants, pubs and shops that use beer creatively, whether in a beer tapa or in an ice-cream. Check them out and write down your experiences.



DEAR VISITOR you have just opened this booklet. So maybe this is your first introduction to Mechelen. In a way we are just a little bit jealous that you have yet to see, experience and taste Mechelen for the first time. Because we have known our city for quite some time now, but you have the opportunity to explore and discover all these beautiful spots, these amazing buildings and works of art! Lucky you!

In this guide we will take you on a tour full of contrasts. Because Mechelen is a very diverse city, which is precisely why it is so exciting. The city is teeming with magnificent old buildings and has a strong beer tradition. You will be happy to know we have several hip and trendy bars. In Mechelen you can also enjoy the silence, in the city centre or on the top of St Rumbold's Tower. Until you suddenly hear the chimes of the carillon, a revelation and a delight for your ears.

Mechelen created this brochure, called "Beer in women's hands" to enhance beer tasting, adding elegance to the experience. We want you to learn more about the city, as well as tasting what it has to offer. Explore Mechelen's beer history, travel back in time to the era of Margaret of Austria and experience the city with all your senses.

We have left some space on the Tasting Map so you can record your personal impressions. We recommend doing this, so you have a physical, sensory memory of your visit to our fair city. *We hope you enjoy exploring Mechelen.*

*Björn Siffer,
Alderman for Tourism*

*Bart Somers,
Mayor*



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YOU WILL REGULARLY SEE THESE SYMBOLS IN THE BROCHURE.



Our suggestions for other activities in Mechelen.



Additional facts about beer, women or Mechelen. Or even a combination of all three..

Is beer strictly a men's affair? It is a more feminine story than you might surmise. In fact the first beers were brewed by women...



The very first document to refer to beer is an ode that was written 3,800 years ago, to the Sumerian goddess Ninkasi. Her priestesses brewed beer in her honour. In the Middle Ages, women also brewed beer. It was just one of their many household chores. In Mechelen, the beguines stirred the mash in the Middle Ages. These days, you can find Het Anker brewery in the location of the former beguinage.

Unfortunately, over time, people started to think that proper women should not drink, or even brew beer for that matter. Even these days, there are still some pre-conceived ideas about “women and beer” and beer in general. “Beer is not elegant”, “beer will make you gain weight faster than wine” and “order beer in a pub, but wine in a restaurant”, to name but a few. Since 2012, I have endeavoured to finally get rid of all these silly misconceptions, along with a group of other women who also love beer.

That is why I am so enthusiastic about working with the city of Mechelen. Strong women have always wielded a lot of influence here. And the city is also the perfect place to develop our Women and Beer movement even more, with its lovey pubs, excellent restaurants and special beers. So welcome to the city where men and women enjoy delicious beers and tasty food together!

Hoppy greetings!

Sofie



Sofie Vanrafelghem

beer sommelier and the woman behind
“Vrouwen en bier” (Women and Beer)



St Rumbold's Cathedral

We decided to start our walk in a symbolic location, near **Opsinjoorke XXL ❹**, the large yellow statue next to St Rumbold's Cathedral. Opsinjoorke epitomises the eternal drunk, the bad husband, who drinks far too much, always comes home too late and spends all the family allowance. The people of Mechelen mock him by tossing him up into the air with a large sheet.

There is a bronze version of the fat doll in front of the town hall in Grote Markt. There is also an original Opsinjoorke doll, which dates from 1647, and which is still used in ceremonial processions through the city. His name is perpetuated

in Hopsinhor, a hoppy beer of the city brewery, Het Anker.

Why is he called Opsinjoorke? The doll was given its name in 1775 when it fell off the sheet and on the ground in the crowds during a procession. An Antwerp spectator held up his hands to protect himself against the falling doll but was accused instead of trying to steal it. A number of hotheads beat him up. As the doll fell on a "sinjoor" (the nickname for an Antwerper), it goes by the name of Opsinjoorke ever since.

TIP

Climb up St Rumbold's Tower and explore six chambers, which each have their own function, as well as a fully functional clock and two carillons, from up close. Quite unique in Europe! After 538 steps you reach the **skywalk** from where you can take in stunning views of Mechelen and the surrounding region. On sunny days you can even spot the Atomium in Brussels. A few years ago, the tower also welcomed some new, rather special occupants: a couple of peregrine falcons and their chicks.



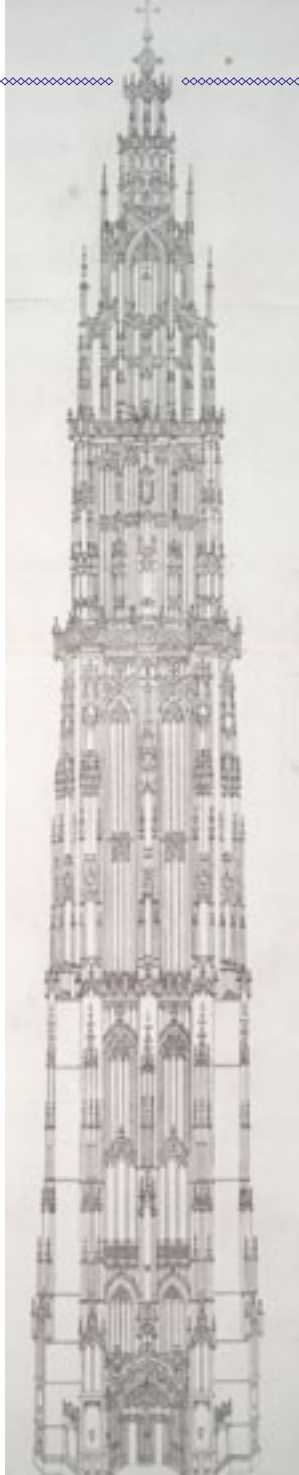
Don't forget to visit **St Rumbold's Cathedral** ②. Here you can see Sir Anthony van Dyck's painting of "Christ on the Cross" among others. However, the eye-catcher is the cathedral's tower, called St Rumbold's Tower. Even though it was never completed, the 97-metre high tower is probably Mechelen's best known sight.

Originally St Rumbold's Tower was supposed to measure 600 Malines feet (about 167 metres) high. Unfortunately construction stopped around 1520 at a height of 97.28 metres.



FIRST AID IN CASE OF THIRST

Since 2009, Mechelen has its own city beer: the Maneblusser. Het Anker brewed a yellow golden beer with an alcohol percentage of 5.8%, using only Belgian hops and a hint of citrus. The Maneblussers is the nickname of the people of Mechelen, which they owe to the following story: "It was a foggy night in 1687. The moon cast its glow on St Rumbold's Tower. A man who had had more than a few beers stepped out of a pub and suddenly started to yell 'Fire! Fire!'. The city's alarm bell was sounded and people soon came running to extinguish the fire. But just as they reached the tower with their buckets, the moon became visible through the fog and the glow disappeared. Since this fortuitous day, the people of Mechelen are known as the 'Maneblussers'."





PATRON SAINTS

St Rumbold's Cathedral is named after the patron saint of Mechelen: Rumbold. The patron saint of the brewers has a very similar name: Arnold. Time to compare them.

The people of Mechelen

NAME: St Rumbold

WHO? Rumoldus (the Latin version of the name Rumbold) was an Irish missionary who travelled to Mechelen around 600 AD to spread the Christian faith.

INTERESTING: St Rumbold's bones are carried around the city in a majestic shrine during the Hanswijk Procession, which winds its way through the streets every year on the Sunday before Ascension. The twenty-five paintings behind the choir that illustrate his life are also interesting.



VS

The beer brewers

NAME: St Arnold

WHO? Arnold of Soissons (1040–1087) was a knight and vassal of the Count of Flanders. He lived as a hermit before being ordained as a bishop. Legend has it that when Flanders was in the throes of bubonic plague and the water was contaminated, Arnold stuck his staff in a brewing copper. All the patients who drank this brew were instantly cured.

INTERESTING: You can recognize St Arnold by his *stuikmand*, a basket used to filter beer.





Margaret of Austria
as a teenager, around 1495.

Grote Markt

After Belgium became independent in 1830, the newly founded nation called on the cities to commission statues that highlighted the country's illustrious history. Antwerp chose Rubens, Ghent Artevelde, Tongeren Ambiorix... However, Mechelen was the only city to choose a woman: **Margaret of Austria** ❶, the governess of the Netherlands.

A strong woman on the throne

Margaret of Austria (1480–1530) was quite a woman. Her early life was not very happy. She had been married off three times before the age of 24. One man divorced her, the other two died at a young age. That is why she made the decision never to marry again and to

concentrate on the education of her nephew, the future Emperor Charles V, instead.

In 1507, Charles and his aunt moved to Mechelen, which thrived under her reign as governess of the Netherlands, entering a Golden Age. Margaret was an intelligent woman, a skilled diplomat but above all, she appreciated culture. She constantly invited musicians, poets, artists and humanists to her palace, thus contributing to the emerging Renaissance.

After Margaret's death, the Habsburg Court moved to Brussels and Mechelen's Golden Age ended.



The statue of Margaret, which dates from 1849, originally was in Grote Markt. After the underground car park was built in 2006, it was transferred to Schoenmarkt.



Café Le Pavillon Belge.



Café Glasgow.

Strong women at the tap

From her pedestal the governess has a nice view of the imposing town hall and belfry and the very bustling **Grote Markt** ❶. The many terraces are a perfect place to enjoy a drink, with the carillon providing some relaxing music.

Some of the pubs here are quite old, and women played an important role in their history. At Grote Markt 26 **Le Pavillon Belge** inn was located for several years. But the people of Mechelen never said they were heading out for a pint at Le Pavillon Belge. Instead they always said they were going to *Zwette Maria* (Black Mary).



ZWETTE MARIA

In the night of Saturday 31 May 1919, the statue of Margaret of Austria was covered in black paint. The offender was never caught. It probably was a student prank. At the time, the statue was still in Grote Markt, near the Le Pavillon Belge inn. According to some, *Zwette Margriet* was the inspiration for the nickname of the owner of Le Pavillon Belge, who was popularly known as “Zwette Maria”.



Emperor Charles V.

Grote Markt 12: While it's officially called **Café Glasgow**, you'll notice there is a neon sign on the façade which reads *Bij Torke Lemberechts*. But the pub is more commonly known as "Bij Jeannine". Named after the daughter-in-law of the legendary football player Victor (Torreke) Lemberechts, who took over the pub of the former KV Mechelen player, together with her husband.

Charles V regularly popped into **Brasserie Den Beer** (Grote Markt 32–33) for a pint. In his era, however, the pub was called "In Den Engel". The story goes that Emperor Charles arrived in Mechelen after a journey of several weeks. He was covered in dust and sweat, which is why the pub owner — called "Kwade Bet" (Angry Beth) by the locals — did not recognise him. "Madam, would it be possible to stay the night?",



Brasserie Den Beer.

the emperor asked. "Give me silk sheets and prepare me a tasty morsel of game". To which Kwade Bet responded: "You can have a bed of straw and a plate of stew". The next day, the emperor returned in full regalia. "That was quite the way to treat me", he said. "From now on, your pub will no longer be called In Den Engel (The Angel). Instead it will be known as In Den Beer (The Bear)". And the bear is still sitting on the façade today.

Beer for every palate



PILS

The most famous beer style worldwide. Created in the city of Pilsen in the Czech Republic in the nineteenth century. A low-fermentation beer, gold-coloured, with a relatively low alcohol percentage: 4.5 to 5.2%.

Examples: Jupiler, Stella Artois, Maes, Cristal

BLONDE BEER

A common denominator for a series of golden and yellow beers, such as abbey beers and tripels.

Examples: Grimbergen Blond, Westmalle Tripel, Maneblusser

GEUZE

Geuze is brewed by mixing young and old Lambic beer and letting it ferment again in the bottle, sometimes for several years. It is typically found in Pajottenland and the Zenne Valley. For beer drinkers who can handle a complex, acidic taste and a sulphurous nose.

Examples: Oud-Beersel, 3 Fonteinen, Boon

IPA

IPA is the abbreviation of India Pale Ale. To ensure that beer would survive the long boat trip to India, additional hops were added. Modern breweries recently rediscovered this type of beer. Nowadays the higher hop content is mainly for flavour purposes only. IPAs are usually quite bitter because they are so hoppy.

Examples: Vedett IPA, Gouden Carolus Hopsinjoor, Triest IPA

FLEMISH OLD BROWN ALE

One of the oldest types of Belgian beer. A deep red-brown colour. The young beer ferments in oak barrels. The fermentation creates the typical, crisp, slightly acidic flavour.

Examples: Rodenbach, Vanderghinste Oud Bruin, Petrus Oud Bruin, Liefmans Goudenband

AMBER ALE

The beer's amber colour is obtained by using the right quantity of burnt malt. Often hints of caramel as a result.

Examples: Bolleke Koninck, Gouden Carolus Ambrio, Palm

BROWN ALE

A common denominator for a series of dark brown high fermentation beers. Usually have a higher alcohol content. Brown ale owes its colour to special burnt malts. Sometimes candy sugar syrup is also used.

Examples: Westmalle Dubbel, Sint-Bernardus Abt 12, Westvleteren 12, Rochefort, Gouden Carolus Classic, Gouden Carolus Cuvée van de Keizer Blauw

STOUT

Dark brown to black beer with a thick frothy head. Usually quite bitter because of the ingredients, including burnt or roasted malt. Hints of chocolate, coffee and liquorice.

Examples: Guinness, Oosterstout, Kempisch Vuur Haverstout, Stout Mokke



The fountains with fish heads and the Aldermen's House in the background, a work by Jean-Paul Laenen.

STOP 3

IJzerenleen

Walk through the narrow street next to the Aldermen's House (Schepenhuis) to get to **IJzerenleen** ③. The Aldermen's House is one of the oldest town halls in the country. Here all the city's charters and treasures were preserved.

Note that you are actually walking on water here! IJzerenleen was one of the city's many canals, used to transport raw materials and merchandise (including beer). It gave out into the River Dijle. Over time, many of the "vlieten" or canals were covered or filled in, including Melaan (→ p. 29) and IJzerenleen.

Many locals consider IJzerenleen to be the city's equivalent of the Parisian Champs Elysées. Fortunately there is less traffic here. However, the street has several imposing façades, nice shops and bars. The fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth-century façades are not the original façades. They were rebuilt after they were destroyed during World War I. The street owes its name to the iron rails that used to run along the canal, which are still there.

Four small fountains with fish heads indicate where the fish market used to be held from the thirteenth century until around 1530. However Margaret of Austria was not very happy about this. She hated the odour of the fish market and gave orders for it to be moved. Her wish was only granted after her death in 1530. From then on the fishmongers were required to set up their stalls in Vismarkt.



LEEN PATAT

Leen Patat, who used to sell potatoes on the market, used to live in one of the small streets around IJzerenleen. One day she got so fed up with her husband, who was constantly drunk, that she took a weight off her scale and smacked him in the head with it (in Dutch they say "ze gaf hem een goei patat", a play on words with the word potato). He dropped dead on the spot. Leen Patat was arrested and put on trial. The whole street came forward as a witness during the trial to testify that Leen merely acted in self-defence. She was acquitted.

Zoutwerf

Turn left just after the splendid Grootbrug into Zoutwerf.

You will immediately notice three eye-catching houses in Zoutwerf, called **De Zalm, Steur and Waag** 📍. The stunning Renaissance house De Zalm was the guild house of the fishmongers. This guild was so rich that it commissioned a work from Rubens, called “The Miraculous Draught of Fishes”. You can still see this painting in the church of Our Lady across the Dijle. In the sixteenth century, De Steur was a warehouse. De Waag was the place where salt was weighed among others.

The “forts along the Dijle” used to be on the other side of the river. Very large families lived in these tiny houses (often they had a surface area of no more than 16 square metres). This is where the chair wicker workers used to live, who manufactured the famous Mechelen chairs for a pittance.

Beer for everyone!

The water in the cities was often polluted and a source of diseases and epidemics. It was much safer to drink beer because the water in the beer was boiled and filtered during the preparation. It was quite normal for the common folk to

“In den Grooten Zalm”, the former guild house of the fishmongers.





Two women making typical Mechelen wickerwork chairs, a wooden chair with a straw seat. From 1880 until 1930, Mechelen was the country's furniture capital.

drink beer every day. Sometimes labourers were also paid part of their wages in beer. That said, the beer then was not as strong as it is today. You can compare the alcohol percentage to table beer. The stronger and better beers were sold exclusively to the nobility and the upper classes.

For centuries, brewing beer was a *women's profession*. In the Middle Ages, it was just another household chore, like doing the laundry and cooking. Over time, small commercial breweries were established, which sold beer to third parties. There was such a brewery at no. 3 in the nineteenth century called the **Drie Koningen Brewery**, ⑦ which was ran by “La Veuve Scheppers”. The Widow Scheppers was born into a family of brewers, which developed a real beer empire in Mechelen. Like Veuve Clicquot



Tivoli Castle was the Scheppers family's country residence.

in France for the eponymous champagne brand, the Widow Scheppers ran the brewery for several years, after her husband died.

Brewing

from grain to BEER

1 MILLING

The malted barley and other grains are first ground to release the starch.

2 MASHING

The grist is then mixed with warm water. This mixture is then gradually heated in various temperature stages. The starch is then transformed into fermentable and unfermentable sugars.

3 FILTERING

The sugar mixture (the wort) is separated from the spent grain. The spent grain can be used as cattle feed.

4 BOILING

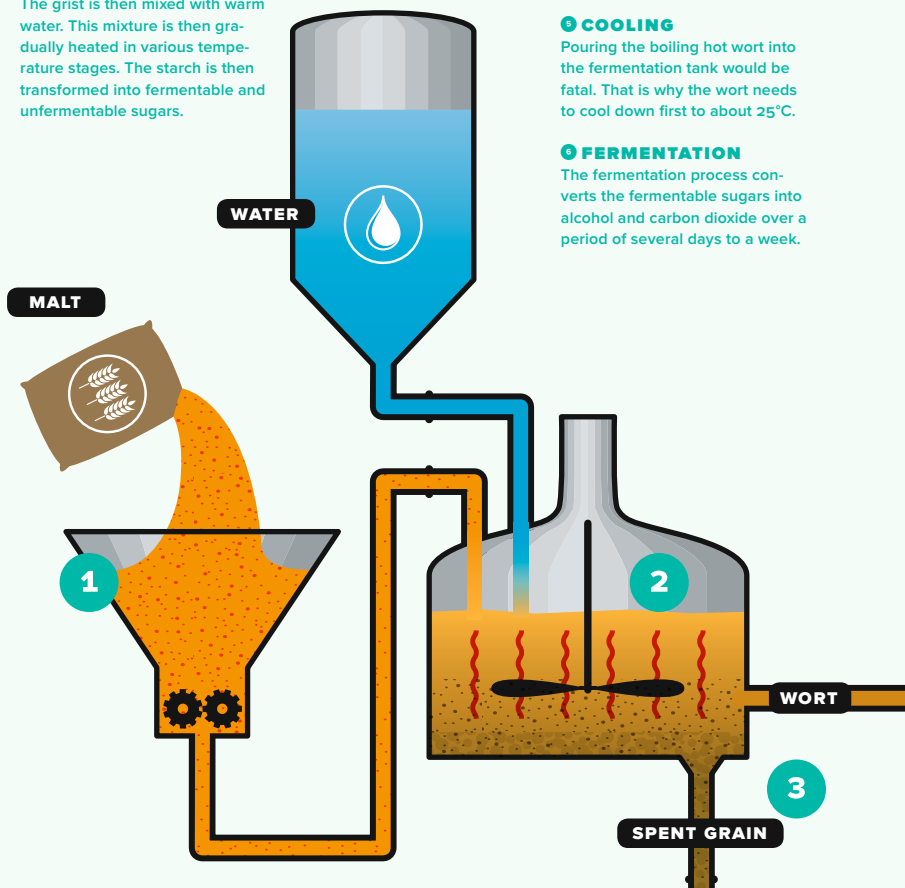
The boiling process lasts about 90 minutes and sterilises the wort. Hops and other ingredients such as spices and additional sugar are added at this stage.

5 COOLING

Pouring the boiling hot wort into the fermentation tank would be fatal. That is why the wort needs to cool down first to about 25°C.

6 FERMENTATION

The fermentation process converts the fermentable sugars into alcohol and carbon dioxide over a period of several days to a week.



OPTIMUM POURING TEMPERATURES

4–5°C	pils
8–12°C	blonde or amber high-fermentation beers
12–14°C	dark high-fermentation beers, lambic and geuze

LAGERING

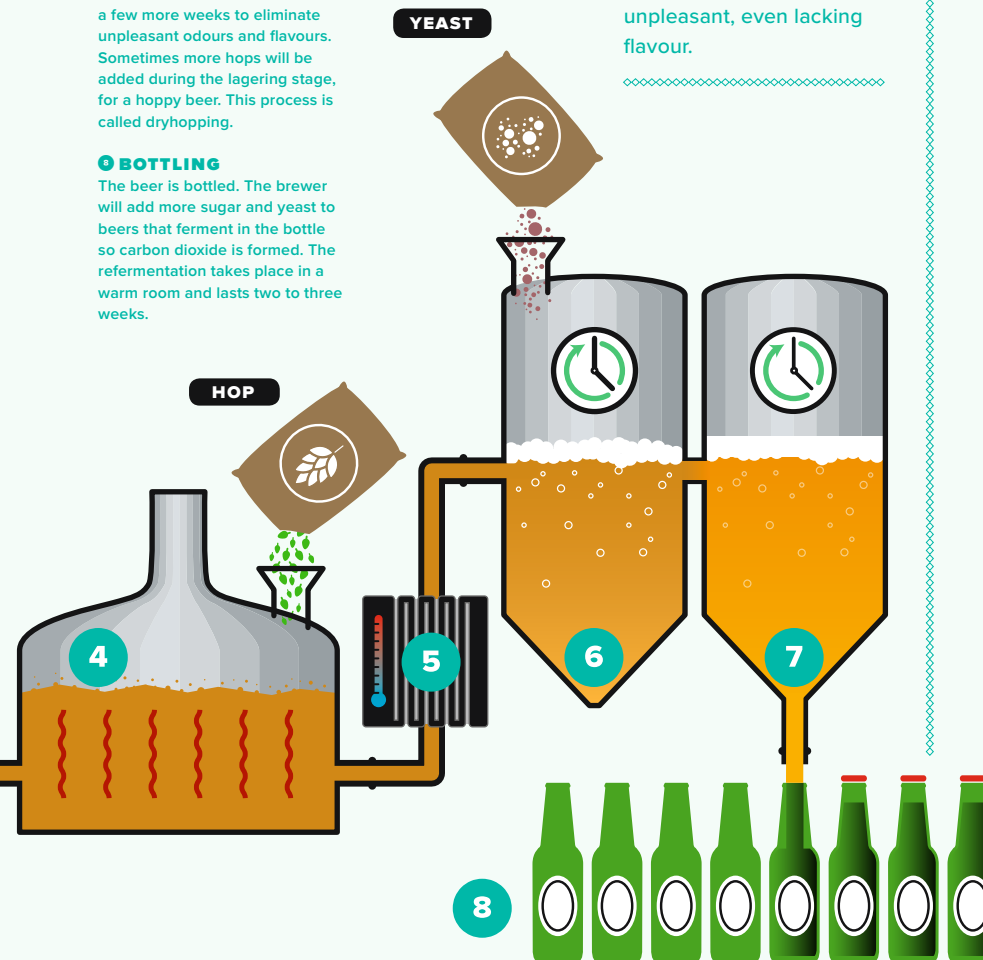
After the main fermentation, the beer will be left to mature a few more weeks to eliminate unpleasant odours and flavours. Sometimes more hops will be added during the lagering stage, for a hoppy beer. This process is called dryhopping.

BOTTLING

The beer is bottled. The brewer will add more sugar and yeast to beers that ferment in the bottle so carbon dioxide is formed. The refermentation takes place in a warm room and lasts two to three weeks.

THE RIGHT TEMPERATURE

Beer may not be served too hot or too cold. When it is too cold, the aromas will not be properly released, which influences the beer's nose. A beer that is poured too hot will lose its refreshing character and tastes rather unpleasant, even lacking flavour.



Lamot & Dismarkt

Walk back to the bridge. You will spot **Huis De Sterre** ❸ next to the small tollhouse by the water. The edifice used to be a castle and the city's prison, until the brewers made it their guild hall in 1485.

A few houses up Guldenstraat, at number 20, was the former **town house of the Lamot family of brewers** ❹.

“Van Lamot word je zot, van Krüger nog vruger”

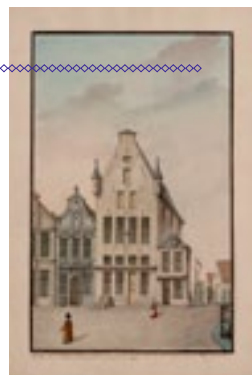
“Lamot will make you crazy. Krüger will achieve this even faster.” This was a popular saying among the soldiers stationed in Mechelen. Krüger was a brewery in Eeklo.

Did you pay attention to the street name? You are in *Van Beethovenstraat*. Yup, the ancestors of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) originally came from Mechelen. A memorial plaque in a display case in the local Novotel refers to the place where his grandparents lived for several years, as does the statue up the street.

On the corner of Zwaanstraatje, you will spot a nice wooden façade and the sign of **In de Pekton** ❺ house. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Mechelen was a prosperous port city.

The original interior of “In de Pekton” inn.





Huis De Sterre.

The Lamot brewery with "In de Pekton" in the background.

"In de Pekton" refers to the place where skippers bought tar for the hull of their boats. It was a legendary inn for several years. Because, as is the case in every port, there are always a lot of pubs near the port. At one time, the city had over 800 inns! There were 65 inns along the Dijle alone during the seventeenth century.

Here you walk through what used to be the beating heart of **the Lamot Brewery** 49. Beer flowed out of the coppers here from 1858 until 1994. In fact, they are still here today. At one point, Lamot

was the fourth largest brewery in Belgium and occupied the entire neighbourhood. Some of the beers that Lamot brewed were Pilsor Lamot, Export Lamot and Maibock. Later it also manufactured the Colibri lemonades. Part of the buildings were spared demolition and in 2005 were converted into a restaurant and a convention and heritage centre, where history and modernity are combined.



Do you feel like a stroll along the water and in green surroundings? Take an additional walk along the Dijle Path to the Botanical Garden. → p. 42



Vismarkt: a lively place
from dawn till dusk.

Vismarkt ☺ and Nauwstraat is the nightlife district of Mechelen. Laidback traditional pubs, stylish lounge bars and trendy eateries... A fun mix and the place to go if you like a night out on the town until the wee hours.



WINE BEFORE BEER, SICK FOR A YEAR...

In the Middle Ages you could deduce someone's social standing by what he or she was drinking. If you were rich, you would serve wine. If you were an ordinary man, you drank beer. The sayings "Beer before wine and you'll feel fine" and "Wine before beer, sick for a year", have strictly nothing to do with the order in which you should drink your alcoholic beverages.



This bas-relief on the façade of “De Duiveltjes” tells the story of the prodigal son.

Haverwerf 📍

Before crossing the Dijle again take a closer look at **the three striking houses** near the bridge. These are three legendary inns from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The corner house is called “Het Paradijske”. The reliefs above the windows depict scenes from the “Garden of Eden” and the “tree of knowledge of good and evil”. “De Duiveltjes” (the little devils), one of the most beautiful wooden façades in Belgium, is in the middle. It used to be called “De Verloren Zoon” (the prodigal son). The story of the wealthy man who spends all his money in the pub and on women but who ends up in a pig sty is depicted above the door. Now it is named after the tiny devils that serve as pillars. The house of “Sint-Jozef” is on the left. The relief of St Joseph and Jesus is a central feature of the façade.



From left to right: Huis Sint-Jozef, De Duiveltjes and Het Paradijske.



BEER WON'T MAKE YOU FAT

A lot of people are convinced that wine contains less calories than beer. And yet they are wrong, says Sofie Vanrafelghem. "Wine often has an alcohol percentage of 12 to 14 percent, which is significantly more than most beers. The higher the alcohol percentage, the higher the calorie intake. So if you drink the same quantity of beer, your alcohol and calorie intake will be lower."

Foodpairing & Beertasting

There's a beer for every dish, even for desserts but how to go about choosing the right one? Beer sommelier Sofie Vanrafelghem shares a word of advice.

"Food pairing with beer is a little like a good marriage. You have two options: a marriage of kindred spirits or a marriage of contrasts. So you need to identify similar flavours in the beer and the dish and make sure that they complement each other.

A sweet dessert, like a white chocolate mousse, works well with an even sweeter beer like a sweet krik beer. The overwhelming sweetness of the dessert will add crispness to the beer. Or you can choose flavours that clash with each other, which add a spark to the pairing and create a combination that will give you a fun taste sensation. There are a number of guidelines, but the main thing to remember is: taste beers and dishes, and don't be afraid of combining them."



THE RIGHT GLASS

“A typical aspect of Belgian beer culture is that every beer has its own glass, an idea that originated in the seventeenth century. This is unique and this custom should be preserved. However, you do not need a specific glass to properly enjoy the beer”, says Sofie. “I prefer to drink beer in elegant glasses, like a wine glass. It adds a certain *je ne sais quoi* to the experience, making it more elegant and tasty”.

TIP

Several Mechelen pubs and restaurants combine beer and food in surprising ways. But that is not all. Beer chocolates, beer bread... as you can see several of Mechelen's traders also have developed some innovative products using Mechelen's beer. We have provided sufficient space on the **Tasting Map** so you can record your own beer experiences and discoveries!



THE PERFECT HEAD

“A perfect head will only dissolve after about 3 minutes and will cover the beer with a thin layer of foam until the glass is empty (15 to 20 minutes).”



The dancing statues of Mariette Teugels
in the courtyard garden of De Cellekens.

Melaan & (De) Cellekens

Here and there you can still see what Mechelen looked like when the canals had not yet been covered. **De Melaan** ⁴⁴ was the largest “vliet” or canal in the city, winding its way from one side of the city to the other. Since 2007 it was uncovered again.

Walk past “Scheppersinstituut”, a large primary and secondary school. The founder of the school was Monsignor Victor Scheppers (1802–1877). Yes indeed, a scion of the well-known brewer’s family (→ p.19).

Check out the game that the fountains near the Conservatory play with you. Rhythmic water jets pop

up depending on your movements. The Water Piano was designed with children in mind, but let’s be honest, everybody loves it, right?

De Cellekens ⁴⁵ was a nineteenth-century almshouse for poor and single women. They could live here for free in a small “cell”, two small rooms with a bed, wardrobe, chair and table. If you peek through the gate, you can see the stunning courtyard garden in which five women dance lithely. These statues were made by Mariette Teugels, a Mechelen-born artist who restored the buildings and has her house, gallery and studio in the space.

The **Church of St Catherine** ⁴⁶ (Sint-Katelijnekerk) is one of eight historic churches in Mechelen. The round window refers to the legend of the martyr Catherine of Alexandria. Catherine was an intelligent and very pious woman. She refused to give up her faith and was therefore tortured on a spiked breaking wheel. But the wheel was struck by lightning at her touch, breaking it. That is why she is always depicted with a wheel. A Catherine wheel is also another name for the skin condition known as rosacea.



DISAPPEARED BREWERIES

To get from Melaan to Katelijnestraat you have to walk through A.B Straat. You may think this is a strange name? Well, it refers to a former brewery, called **Brouwerij AB**. Other streets in the city are also a reminder of the city’s brewing past: Hertshoornstraat, Zwaanstraatje, Sleutelstraatje,... Nowadays Het Anker is the only operational brewery in Mechelen.

Large Beguinage & Het Anker

Walk up Moreelstraat and step into the quiet and charming surroundings of the **Large Beguinage** ⁴⁷ (Groot Begijnhof).

Imagine what it would have been like to live in this city. The beguines were self-sufficient, meaning they had their own bakery, a hospital and church as well as their own brewery.

In 1872, the Van Breedam family opened a modern brewery with a boiler in the present-day Guido Gezellelaan called **Het Anker** ⁴⁸. In the twentieth century the premises were expanded to include the buildings of the beguines' former brewery. Today Het Anker is the last operational brewery in Mechelen, and is ran by the fifth generation of the family.

When the gate in Krankenstraat is open you can walk into the brewery's courtyard. This gate used to be the main entrance of the beguines' hospital, the "kranken-huis". The beguines used to brew beer as a medicine, as you could not drink the water in those days.

From beer to whisky

Het Anker also distils its own whisky called "Gouden Carolus Single Malt" since 2010 in the seventeenth-century family farm in Blaasveld, just outside of Mechelen. The "Gouden Carolus Tripel" is used as the key ingredient for distilling the alcohol.

"Ne zatterik op een ton, ne pater op een non, ne pastoor op een begijn en dan heeft iedereen het zijn."

"A drunk on a barrel, a priest on a nun, a pastor on a beguine and then everyone has what they want." — old Mechelen saying.





Claire Leclef

A STRONG WOMAN

BEHIND A GREAT MAN

The somewhat fetid smell of the brewing process, the sound of the coppers, the laughter in the brewery's pub... Claire Leclef experiences day in, day out what life in a brewery means, with all of her senses. Literally even, as she is the wife of the brewery's owner, Charles Leclef, and they live on the grounds of the Het Anker brewery.

TIP

Visit the brewery and listen to five generations of brewers in the Large Beguinage. You can book online at via www.hetanker.be.

"I consider the fact that I live onsite a privilege. I have a nice view of the buildings, I enjoy the contact with the employees and the typical smell of the wort (the sugar water you obtain by heating the water and grain, ed.). It's easier for my husband too, as he is never stuck in traffic."

She started to feel the urge to start brewing beer herself. "In 2005, the city organised the cultural event 'Mechelen. Stad in Vrouwenhanden' (Mechelen, a city in women's hands). It was a good opportunity to take over the brewery as a woman for a brief period of time. I learnt all there was to know about beer, together with Arabel, the wife of one of our brewers. We spent several mornings brewing beer at 6 a.m. as we learnt the tricks of the trade." Together they developed Margriet, a beer that is not too strong, with an alcohol content of 6.5%. "We added a feminine touch by using dried flowers."

"I married into the beer world. I really am proud of being Charles Leclef's wife. Thanks to his inexhaustible energy, the brewery is what it is today. But don't they say that behind every great man is a great woman?" (laughs)

View of Het Anker
Brewery from
Hoviusstraat.





The church of the beguinage, with a relief of “God the Father”, by Lucas Faydherbe.



WORLD HERITAGE

The Large Beguinage is included on the world-famous UNESCO World Heritage List. “The beguinages bear exceptional witness to the cultural tradition of independent religious women in north-western Europe in the Middle Ages”, according to the website. These are the four other listings in

- ★ **St Rumbold’s Tower**
- ★ **the town hall’s belfry**
- ★ **the giants of Mechelen**
- ★ **Mechelen’s carillon culture**

Beguines

There were beguines in Mechelen since the early nineteenth century. Beguinages were founded in the era of the crusades. A lot of men left but never returned. As a result, there was a surplus of widows, orphans and women who were unable to find a suitable husband.

Women who were unable or not interested in entering a convent went to live together and were self-sufficient. They led a pious, chaste life. However, unlike nuns, they did not profess perpetual vows.



The two last beguines of the Large Beguinage.



NOT ALWAYS AS PIOUS

In 1467, Charles the Bold visited Mechelen. He decided that the beguines would not have to pay taxes or duties on the beer they brewed for themselves. But the beguines did not always play fair and sometimes they sold beer on the black market. An ordinance from 1761 threatened the beguines with a fine of 25 guilders if they continued to sell beer to non-residents of the beguinage.

There were wealthy beguines, often from noble families, who bought or built their own house in the beguinage. Less wealthy beguines rented a room from these owners and took care of the household chores. Beguines without possessions usually resided in the convents.

In 1993 the last beguine, Sister Melanie passed away.



Typical costume of the beguines of the Large Beguinage (c. 1790).

Some of *Het Anker's* Beers



GOUDEN CAROLUS CLASSIC

dark ruby red
8,5 % alc.vol.

• This recognised regional product was inspired by Groot Keizersbier: the best beer which the brewers brewed exclusively for the emperor. Gouden Carolus refers to the emperor's gold coins. An old chronicle mentions that Groot Keizersbier was mainly consumed during the fox hunt "as this fired up the riders and their horses, making them gallop at full speed". Has won several World Beer Awards.

SOFIE RECOMMENDS THIS BEER WITH:

- a creamy blue cheese
- cured and/or smoked meat
- Flemish beef stew
- a dark chocolate lava pudding



GOUDEN CAROLUS AMBRIQ

a light amber colour
8 % alc.vol.

• Gouden Carolus Ambrio is still brewed according to the centuries-old recipe of Mechelschen Bruynen, which dates from 1421. The alcohol percentage of the current version is somewhat higher and it is more finely hopped.

SOFIE RECOMMENDS THIS BEER WITH:

- a mature Gouda-type cheese
- beef carpaccio
- a fowl fillet with forest mushrooms
- tartiflette
- bread pudding
- flan

WITH FOOD
PAIRING TIPS
BY SOFIE
VANRAFELGHEM!



GOUDEN CAROLUS CUVÉE VAN DE KEIZER BLAUW

dark ruby red
11 % alc.vol.

•

This beer is only brewed once a year, on 24 February, the birthday of Emperor Charles. It is a special version of the Gouden Carolus Classic, with a higher alcohol percentage and a secret spice mix.

SOFIE RECOMMENDS THIS BEER WITH:

- Stilton or Roquefort cheese
- deer stew
- crème brûlée
- stewed pears with speculoos ice-cream
- perfect as a digestive after dinner



GOUDEN CAROLUS TRIPEL

Golden and yellow
9 % alc.vol.

•

This beer was originally brewed for the Knights of the Golden Fleece in 1491. This blonde and golden ale is perfect for anyone who appreciates a sturdier, somewhat spicy yet refreshing beer. The hints of camomile and curacao (orange peel) are especially noteworthy. Voted the best tripel beer in the world at the 2012 World Beer Awards.

SOFIE RECOMMENDS THIS BEER WITH:

- Keiems Bloempje and cheese with a washed rind (Li P'tit Rossê, Vieux Panné, a mild Maroilles)
- grilled king prawns with a mango salsa
- asparagus with eggs and butter sauce
- apple crumble



TIP

Guided visits of the
Manufactuur are organised
every Saturday at 10.30 a.m.

A women gives a weaving
demonstration at Koninklijke
Manufactuur De Wit.

Small Beguinage & Ankerbrug

Walk from the Large Beguinage to the Small Beguinage (Klein Begijnhof). You will see a sculpture called “**Brede Heupen**” ¹⁹ (Wide hips) by Frans Walravens in the meadow where the beguines used to shear the sheep and bleach the cloth.

Three beguinages

In the course of history, the beguines lived in several locations in the city. The first beguines moved into the Small Beguinage in the thirteenth century. But one century later, this was already too small. The old and sick beguines stayed here while the others moved to a new beguinage outside the city walls. Around 1560, the new beguinage was destroyed, prompting the beguines to move back into the city. They bought a number of existing houses and built new ones, creating the Large Beguinage. At one point there were 1,800 beguines in Mechelen!

Need a break? The garden of the **Ondernemershuis Oh!** ²⁰ centre for entrepreneurs is a tranquil and green oasis in the city. Here you can still see the water of Duivelsvlietje or Hellevlietje.

Koninklijke Manufactuur De Wit ²¹ in Schoutetstraat is a world-renowned workshop, specialising in the restoration of tapestries. You need a lot of patience and passion to restore a tapestry. That possibly explains why almost all the employees of De Wit are women. Moreover, the Manufactuur also has a prestigious collection of antique and modern tapestries. It can be found in the fifteenth-century Refuge of Tongerlo Abbey. The courtyard garden is planted with the same plants that you see on sixteenth-century tapestries.



Begynnen van't Kleyn-hof.

This is what the beguines of the Small Beguinage looked like (c. 1790).



The Convent of Bethanië, in 1784. You can distinguish the towers of St John's Church and the Refuge of Sint-Truiden in the background.

At no. 4–6, the former Convent of Bethanië, you can still spot the logo of the “**De Posthoorn**” **Brewery** 23, which was established here in the nineteenth century.

One of the most photogenic places in Mechelen is commonly called “**Groen Waterke**” 23 (Green Water) after the duckweed that covers the water. This is a section of Melaan that was never covered. You have an excellent view of the Tower of the Refuge in Sint-Truiden. A fun detail: the tower is full of starling traps, which were used to catch these birds which used to be a delicacy.

It is however also a symbolic place because this is where the roots of Het Anker lie. Jan van den Anker lived here, near Ankerbrug Bridge. A document from 1369 has been preserved, which shows that he paid a brewing tax, making him

the oldest registered brewer in Mechelen. His Mechelsen Bruynen was so popular with the nobility and the upper classes that Emperor Charles even took some with him on his campaigns. ■

Groen Waterke, as seen from Ankerbrug.





"Huiselijke zorgen" (household concerns) by Rik Wouters at the renovated St Rumbold's Churchyard.



RIK WOUTERS AND WOMEN

Rik Wouters (1882–1916) is one of Belgium's most popular painters and sculptors. His career mainly unfolded in Brussels, Amsterdam and Antwerp but he was always fond of Mechelen, where he was born.

Although he died at the young age of 33, Rik Wouters left a magnificent body of work. The key figure in it is his wife and the love of his life Nel. She would dominate his short life and serve as his inspiration. The statue called "Huiselijke Zorgen" (Domestic chores), for which Nel was the model, is installed in St Rumbold's Cemetery. It is his best known work along with "Het Zotte Geweld" (Joie de Vivre).



Had enough of walking? Then stroll back past Rik Wouters' sculpture to the cathedral and Grote Markt.



If you still have some energy left, then add another 1-kilometre loop and visit the palaces of Margaret of Austria and Margaret of York.



THE FOUR INGREDIENTS OF BEER

the Basics...

The combination of a mere four ingredients results in thousands of surprising beers.

1. WATER

- The basic ingredient: makes up about 90% of the beer

2. GRAINS

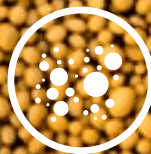
- Contribute flavour, colour and the starch needed for fermentation
- In addition to barley and wheat brewers also uses oats and spelt sometimes
- The grain is first sent to the malting plant, where it is germinated with water and heat, and is then dried. This activates the enzymes in the grain, allowing them to convert the starch into sugars during the brewing process.

3. HOP

- Latin name: *Humulus Lupulus*
- Defines a beer's aroma and extends its shelf life
- A wide range of aromas: citrus (e.g. Citra), passionfruit (e.g. Simcoe)

4. YEAST

- Single-cell micro-organism that converts sugars into alcohol and carbon dioxide
- Also defines flavours, such as banana and clove
- *Different types of yeast:*
- ***Saccaromyces cerevisiae*** is the most frequently used yeast for high-fermentation beers at a high temperature (21–25°C)
- ***Saccaromyces carlsbergensis*** is used for low-fermentation beers (pils) at a low temperature (5–10°C)
- ***Brettanomyces lambicus* and *bruxellensis*** are two of the most important types of yeast which contribute to spontaneous fermentation (Lambic, geuze)



...and more

Spices

- Coriander: e.g. Tripel Karmeliet
- Curaçao vb. in white beer
- Myrtle e.g. Gageleer
- Cinnamon, star anise, cardamom, cloves, cocoa in black, sweet, dark (Christmas) beers
- Stranger ingredients such as vanilla, ginger, thyme, rosemary, juniper berries, bay (leaves), garlic, pepper...

Fruit

- Fresh, deep-frozen, juice or syrup
- Fruit beers are mainly made of cherries or raspberries
- They use an acidic beer like white beer or Lambic as a base



THE REINHEITSGEBOT: WATER, MALT, HOP AND NOTHING ELSE

In 1516, the Bavarian duke Wilhelm IV issued the Reinheitsgebot (Purity Law). This stated that beer could only be brewed with malted grain, water and hop. Yeast was added to the list of ingredients at the end of the seventeenth century, after it was discovered. This meant that brewers could not add spices, fruit, sugar or other ingredients to their beer. The “Reinheitsgebot” was issued to protect consumers from unsafe food. It is still in use five hundred years after it was issued, in large parts of Germany. In Belgium the “Reinheitsgebot” no longer applies, but it is still enforced in large parts of Germany.

From the (Dijle Path to the (Botanical Garden



This additional walk caters to people who appreciate a little bit of peace and quiet and those who like to shop. You will end up in one of the city's green oases, the Botanical Garden (Kruidtuin), as you follow the walking trail on and along the River Dijle. Here you can relax and unwind before you venture out in the shopping fray of Bruul.

The **Dijle Path** 24 winds its way over and along the Dijle, in between the Lamot Convention and Heritage Centre to the Botanical Garden. Seeing Mechelen from the water is also quite interesting, as you look at the city from

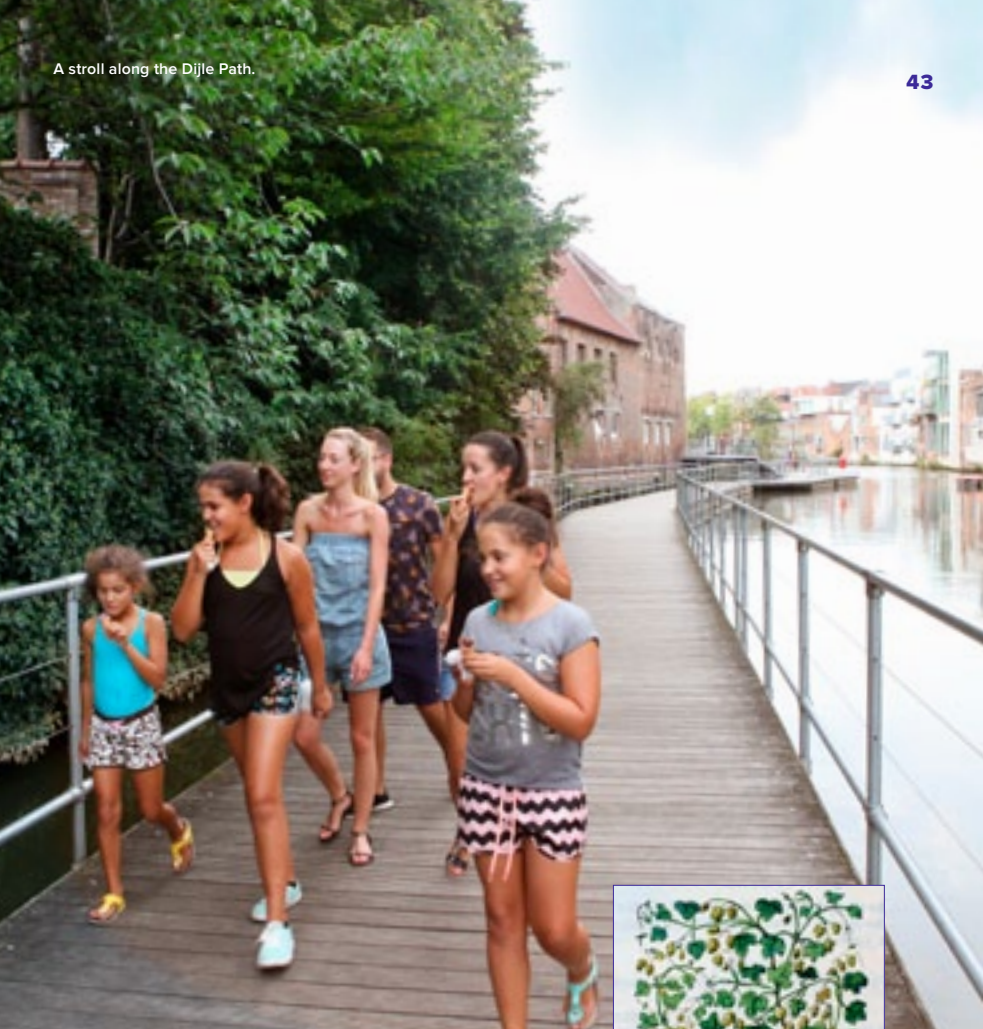
a different perspective. At night the path is nicely lit. The famous Italian architects Secchi and Viganò designed the path.

The **Botanical Garden** 25 or “Botanique” is the largest public park in the historic city centre. This green oasis has an amazing cultural history. It evolved from a medieval garden into a French formal garden and finally was converted into an English landscape park. In the centre of the park you will spot a statue of the famous scientist Rembert Dodoens. He wrote his “Cruydeboek”, an important work about medicinal herbs and plants in the sixteenth century. Pop into the Dodoens Garden, which is part of the Botanical Garden. It was redesigned in 2010 based on a drawing of a hop plant in Dodoens’s Cruydeboek. You will easily recognise the typical shape of the hop cones, the winding vines and the hop leaves in the garden’s design, in the shape of the benches and the beds.

Bruul 26 is Mechelen’s busiest shopping street. Shoppers will be



The Botanical Garden. You can see the statue of Rembert Dodoens in the background.



able to browse to their heart's content in the branches of large chains and in the many nice boutiques. Here you will also discover the Church of Our Lady of Leliendaal, lovely Bruulplein and the world-famous Royal Carillon School Jef Denyn next door. ■



An illustration of 'hoppes' from the 1544 edition of the Cruydeboek.

A long and *hoppy* life

“Cheers”. “Op je gezondheid!” “Santé!”. Most times we propose a toast to good health, and it is easy to see why when we take a closer look at the benefits of beer. The hop plant especially has a beneficial effect. Beer sommelier Sofie Vanrafelghem explains why.

Stress prevention

“Hop belongs to the same family as the cannabis plant. It is a sedative plant that reduces stress.”

A good night's sleep

“You no longer will have to count sheep to fall asleep if you fill your pillow with hop flowers. They have even developed food supplements with valerian and hop, which promote sleep.”

Strong bones

“Women who regularly drink beer have stronger bones than teetotallers.”

Easy menopause

“Hop professor Denis De Keukeleire dedicated his life to studying hop. He considers hop the most feminine plant in nature. He is actually referring to the high levels of phyto-oestrogens in hop. They mimic natural oestrogens, therefore slowing down the typical discomforts associated with menopause without harmful side-effects.”

Cancer prevention

“A component of hop, xanthohumol, apparently prevents the origin and further development of cancer, according to various scientific publications.”



HOP: WOMEN ON TOP

In most countries, except in Great Britain, brewers tend to only use the female hop cones. In Belgium, you are banned from growing male hop plants in a 5-kilometre radius around a field with female hops. The idea is to prevent fertilisation. The male hop plants contain more fats and fatty acids, which are detrimental to the head of the beer.



HILDEGARD VON BINGEN

Many centuries ago breweries did not use hop in beer. They would add various plants and spice mixtures to add flavour to the beer. This changed in the twelfth century when Hildegard von Bingen was the abbess of a German Benedictine abbey. As well as composing classical music, she also wrote scientific treatises, in which she was the first to describe the use of hop to preserve beer longer.

The palaces of the two Margarets



Three palaces of the Burgundian era less than a mile from each other. It is possible in Mechelen. Follow this additional loop and walk from tiny Klapgat to the imposing palaces of Hieronymus van Busleyden, Margaret of Austria and Margaret of York.

Klapgat 27 is a narrow alley that gives out onto St John's Church. As the name indicates, this is where the churchgoers would stop for a chat ("klappen" is dialect for chatting) after Mass. They used to do this so frequently that the alley was named Klapgat.

Several palaces were built in Mechelen in the sixteenth century. Hieronymus van Busleyden,

a member of the Great Council of Malines, a humanist and a good friend of Erasmus, had a magnificent palace built by the renowned architect Keldermans. The **Court of Busleyden** 28 was used as a pawnshop from 1619 until World War I. Here the poor could borrow money at no interest. The building was completely destroyed during the war. Only the walls were still standing. It was subsequently rebuilt and transformed into a city museum. Currently the museum is closed. It is undergoing a complete refurbishment and will reopen to the public as a contemporary city museum in 2018.

Margaret of Austria (→ p. 11) was the governess of the Habsburg





A view of Margaret of York's palace circa 1530.

Netherlands from 1507 until 1530. She lived in the **Court of Savoy** ²⁹, the first Renaissance-style building in the Low Countries and from where this art movement was disseminated. Enjoy the magnificent Renaissance façade and the charming garden. From 1616 until 1796, the Great Council of Malines, the supreme authority in judicial matters in the Southern Netherlands, occupied the building. You can still see Margaret's coat of arms, alongside that of Emperor Charles V and a sculpture of Lady Justice on the façade. Nowadays the building is used as law courts.

Across the street from Margaret of Austria's palace you can see one of the last remnants of the **palace of Margaret of York** ³⁰. The building was originally built as a residence for the Bishop of Cambrai when he was

TIP

There is much more to beer in women's hands than this brochure! You can see, taste and experience first-hand that beer belongs in women's hands in Mechelen, during workshops, dinners, city tours and several other activities. Check www.visitmechelen.be for further information.

in Mechelen. After the death of her husband, Charles the Bold, Margaret withdrew in the enormous "Court of Cambrai". It is also called the imperial court, as Emperor Charles V lived here from 1500 until 1515.



Margaret of York.



Her diamond-shaped coat of arms can be seen just above the small door in the tower, alongside that of her husband, Charles the Bold. The former reception hall in the palace is now used as the city's theatre.

The **Rik Wouters Garden** ³¹ is a new green oasis in the city. A bronze bust by Rik Wouters and a mural by the city's artist Gijs Vanhee pay tribute to the artist who lived at his parents' just around the corner for ten years. Part of a canal has been uncovered again in the garden. You can get to the garden from Befferstraat and Rik Woutersstraat.

Relief of the Knight of the Sea at the top of the façade of Befferstraat 33.

Beer label of Chevalier Marin.



Anyone who looks up at no. 33–35 Befferstraat will notice a beautiful relief featuring a horseshoe and a sculpture of Neptune. It refers to the **De Zeeridder Brewery** ³², which was based here from the sixteenth century onwards. The current building dates from around 1910 and replaces the original wooden façade. De Zeeridder merged around 1890 with another brewery in Befferstraat, namely Het Hoefijzer (25–27, Befferstraat). It was renamed “Le Fer à Cheval et le Chevalier Marin”, amended in 1907 to Brouwerij Chevalier Marin. It mainly produced low-fermentation beers such as pils. The old plant at no. 25, Befferstraat was demolished to make way for new buildings. ■

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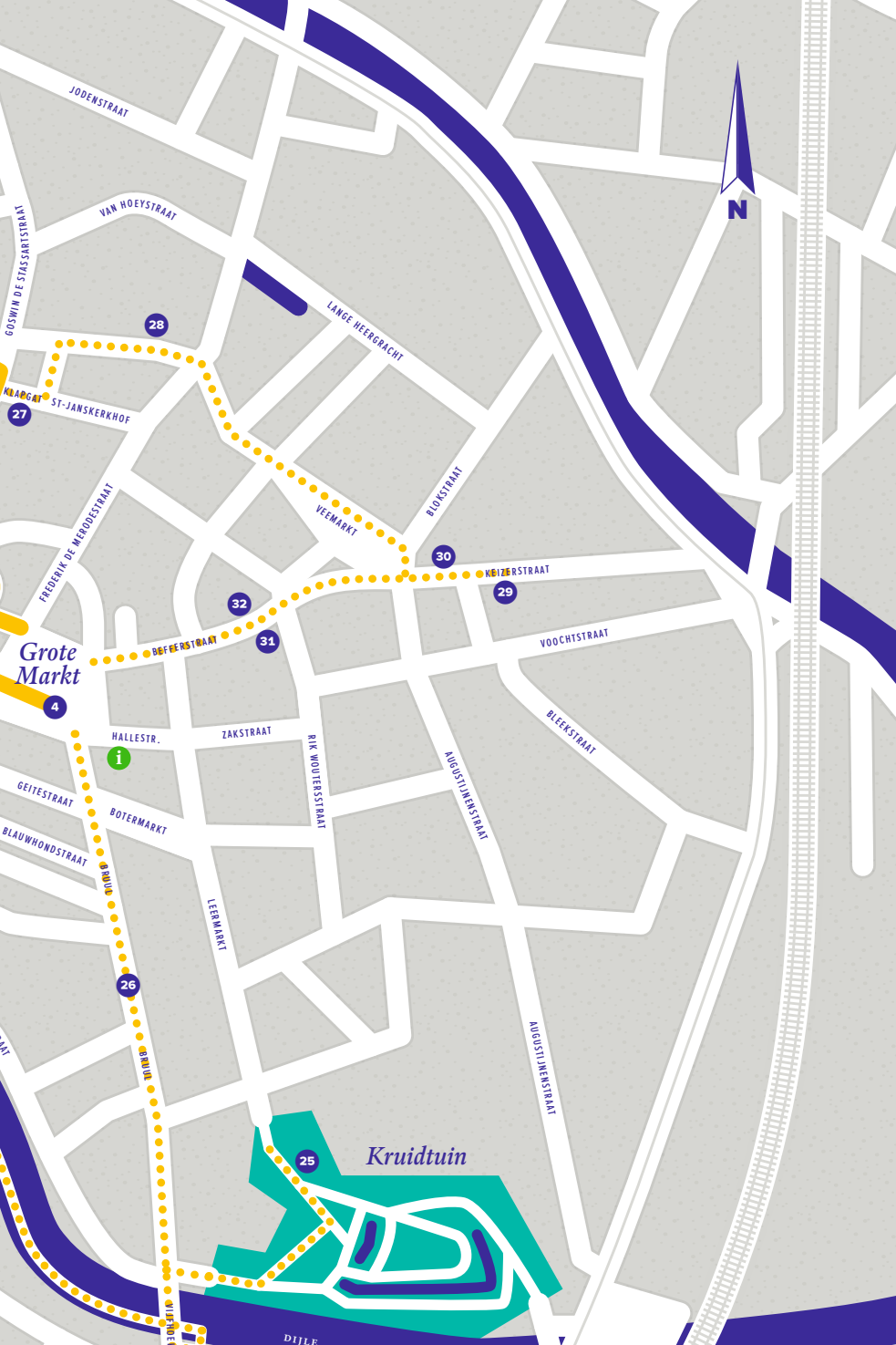
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Mechelen



JODENSTRAAT

VAN HOEYSTRAAT

LANGE HEERGRACHT

28

GOSWIN DE STASSARTSTRAAT

27

ST-JANSKERKHOF

VEEMARKT

BLOKSTRAAT

30

VOIJERSTRAAT

29

FREDERIK DE MERODESTRAAT

32

31

DOFFERSTRAAT

Grote Markt

4

HALLESTR.

i

ZAKSTRAAT

RIK MOIJERSTRAAT

VOOCHTSTRAAT

BLEEKSTRAAT

AUGUSTIJNENSTRAAT

ROTERMARKT

GEITESTRAAT

BLAUWHONDSTRAAT

LEERMARKT

26

DIJLE

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Kruidtuin

25

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