



Flanders
State of the Art

Micro-adventures in National Park Forests of Brabant

EXPERIENCE NATURE IN FLANDERS

© www.natierbos.be

VISITFLANDERS

Dear friends of Flanders,

Small adventures await you in the **National Park Forests of Brabant**. Are you ready to leave the hustle and bustle of the city behind and dive into nature? Then this **green region**, situated between **Brussels**, **Halle** and **Leuven**, offers the perfect escape.

Explore ancient forests such as the enchanting **Hallerbos** in the west, the centrally located **Sonian Forest** and the **Meerdaalwoud** with the green valley of the Dyle in the east. With more than 10,000 hectares of unspoiled nature, you can wander through **robust forests**, follow **meandering rivers** and explore **open fields**. From the **iconic bluebells in the Hallerbos** to the breathtaking sunken roads on the Brabant plateau, there is so much to discover in this unique part of Flanders.

Put on your sturdy shoes and venture along the **multimove trail in the Meerdaalwoud**, go on **beaver safari with a packraft** or travel around the world via **700 species of tree**. Or would you prefer something more sporting? Then ride your own **Gravel World Championship** right through the heart of the National Park.

Read on, get inspired and experience the most wonderful micro-adventures there yourself.



Contents

LOCATION AND ACCESSIBILITY 4

THE FORESTS OF BRABANT 5

- Hallerbos
- Sonian forest
- Meerdaalwoud

A WHOLE DAY ON MICRO-ADVENTURE IN NATIONAL PARK FORESTS OF BRABANT 8

- On beaver safari in the Dyle valley
- Multimoving in the Meerdaalwoud
- Travel around the world via more than 700 species of tree
- Adventurous outdoor sports
- Alpaca pleasure à la carte

AWAKEN IN NATURE 10

TASTE THE NATURE 11

TICKED OFF: 3 BUCKET LIST EXPERIENCES 12

- Bluebell Festival
- Ad's Path
- Ride your own Grave
- World Championship

FOR CYCLISTS AND WALKERS 14

- Cycle routes
- Walking routes & *Treinstappers*





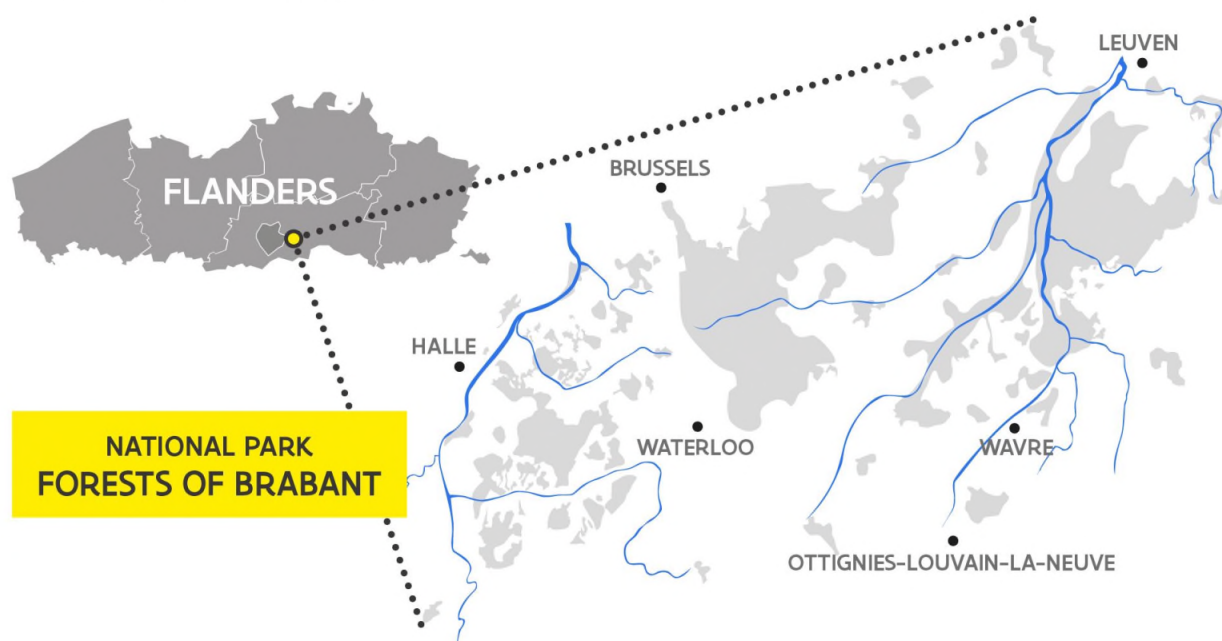
LOCATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

National Park Forests of Brabant, with its beautiful forests and heathlands, forms a **green belt** around **Brussels**. The area stretches out over the municipalities of **Beersel**, **Bertem**, **Bierbeek**, **Halle**, **Hoeilaart**, **Huldenberg**, **Kortenberg**, **Leuven**, **Linkebeek**, **Oud-Heverlee**, **Overijse** and **Tervuren**; a vast park containing a patchwork of ancient forests, meandering rivers and rolling landscapes. Once a 'no man's land', it is now a **paradise for nature lovers and micro-adventurers**.

Unique location — between the art cities

The National Park Forests of Brabant is a **stone's throw** from the internationally renowned cultural and art cities of **Brussels** and **Leuven**. By train or car, you can get there in just fifteen minutes! Start your adventure from:

- **Brussels**: the ideal base for visiting the **Sonian Forest**
- **Leuven**: the perfect base to explore the **Meerdaalwoud** and the green valley of the Dyle river
- **Halle**: ideal for a visit to the **Hallerbos**



Hallerbos

The Hallerbos is a vast natural area situated between the Zenne and the Sonian Forest. Every year, around mid-April, the forest transforms into a fairytale landscape covered in a beautiful purple carpet of bluebells. This enchanting sea of flowers attracts visitors from far and wide and offers a unique walking experience. The bluebells, along with the other spring blooms, are the showpiece of the forest. Wild daffodils, wood anemones, celandine, and wild garlic follow one another in a colourful spectacle.

This beautiful nature reserve is not only a feast for the eyes, but also a resting area for various mammals such as **deer, squirrels and mustelids**. Many other animal species also feel at home here. For instance, the Hallerbos is **home to one of the largest populations of fire salamanders** in Flanders. The **black woodpecker**, the largest woodpecker species in the forest, chisels hollows in the trees that serve as shelters for rare bats.

A visit to the Hallerbos is an unforgettable experience, whether you come for the magnificent flower carpets, the rich fauna, or simply to enjoy the peace and beauty of nature. So put on your walking shoes and discover the magic of this special forest!

— Accessibility

The Hallerbos is easy to reach by bicycle, public transport or car.



- The Hallerbos is just **4.9 km from Halle railway station**: ideal for a bike ride!
- **Need to hire a bicycle?** At Halle station, Blue-bikes are available both at the bike point and via a digital lock
- View the cycle route [here](#)



- On weekdays: line 114 from the TEC. This runs from Halle station to the 'Vlasmarkt' stop on Nijvelsesteenweg. From there, it is a 4-minute walk to the Forest Museum.
- On Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays: bus line 2
 - › This runs every 30 min from Halle station to 'Lembeek Congo'. From there, it is a 17-minute walk to Vlasmarktdreef (forest entrance)
 - › View the walking route [here](#)



- Set your GPS to car park 11 Houtveld or car park 1 Hogebermweg
- People with disabilities should use car park 4 Dries

The Sonian Forest

Just 10 kilometres from the Grote Markt in Brussels, you find the vast Sonian Forest, one of the largest forested areas in Flanders. With 4,000 hectares of greenery, it is the breathing lung of Brussels. This beautiful forest forms the heart of the Woods of Brabant and is proudly listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Once part of the ancient Silva Carbonaria, the 'charcoal forest', in Roman times it stretched from the Rhine and Moselle rivers to the North Sea.

What was once the favourite hunting ground of monarchs and dukes is now the largest and most beautiful **beech forest** in the country. Some of the beech trees are over 200 years old! Breathe in the fresh forest air as you walk among these majestic trees. Spot **deer, foxes, wild boars** and a merry band of **wild rabbits and squirrels**. Bird lovers can enjoy the crows, magpies and jays, and the melodies of songbirds.

Visit this majestic forest, step back in time and escape the bustle of the city. The Sonian Forest is waiting for you!

—Accessibility

Start your adventure in the Sonian Forest via one of the various entry gateways at the edge of the forest. These gateways provide good accessibility and are the ideal starting point for exploring the beautiful forest.

View the overview map [here](#)

—Start your adventure here:

TERVUREN PARK

- Enjoy stunning views while strolling along the long avenues, past the ponds and the impressive buildings.
- Bitten by culture? Then visit the [Africa Museum](#)

TERVUREN ARBORETUM

- Visit the [Tervuren Geographical Arboretum](#) and discover more than 400 species of tree from all over the world

GROENENDAAL

- Immerse yourself in the history of Groenendaal Priory
- Visit the Jan van Ruusbroec Forest Museum
- Off-leash zone for dogs

JEZUS-EIK

- Large play zone
- Several hospitality establishments available
- The Arboretum is nearby

MIDDENHUT

- Easy access from Saint-Genesius Rode
- Discover beautiful walks along lanes and valleys
- Large new off-leash zone

BOSVOORDE RACECOURSE

- Close to Brussels city centre
- Pay a visit to the old horse racing course
- Visit the valley and ponds of the Verdrongen Kinderen nature reserve

RED CLOISTER

- Easy to reach by public transport
- Valley with the Klabots ponds, the Emperor's Spring (Keizersbron) and the slopes with their beautiful heather vegetation

DOMAIN RÉGIONAL SOLVAY

- Designed in English landscape style
- Terhulpen Castle
- Expansive grasslands and water elements

Find all the practical info [here](#)

Meerdaalwoud

The Meerdaalwoud is a green oasis just 3 kilometres from lively Leuven. Here you find not only the largest deciduous forest in Flanders, but also a wealth of natural wonders. The Meerdaalwoud is situated at the transition of sandy loam and loamy soils. The difference in altitude created a varied forest with a wide variety of trees and shrubs. Some beech and oak trees are more than 300 years old and have a trunk circumference of more than 5 metres.

And there is more. Imagine: **deer**, a majestic sight in this forest since time immemorial, their graceful movements forming a silent dance that brings the forest to life. It is like stepping back in time, where nature rules and the animals are in charge.

For the **bird watchers** among us, the Meerdaalwoud is a true paradise. Three different species of woodpecker - the little, middle and great spotted woodpecker - drum their own rhythms here, as if they are setting the heartbeat of the forest.

And then there are the silent giants: the **centuries-old beeches and oaks**, whose stories are as deeply rooted as they are themselves. Walking under their canopy, you feel the echoes of times gone by.

So, what are you waiting for? Put on your walking shoes, fill your lungs with the pure forest air and let your senses be enchanted by the magic of the Meerdaalwoud. A place where you leave the hectic pace of everyday life behind and the whispers of nature take you on an adventure.

— Accessibility

The Meerdaalwoud is easy to reach by bicycle, public transport or car.



- The cycle nodes 81-77-78-79 can be found in the forest itself
- You enter the forest via nodes 90-82-80 and 40



- Busses 6 - 7 - 8 bring you to the stop Bierbeek de borre
- Bus 18 of TEC stops at Naamsesteenweg
- By train, get off at Oud-Heverlee or Sint-Joris-Weert stations (Leuven-Ottignies line)



- Cars are prohibited in the forest.
- (For now) you can use the Brise Tout car park (Bierbeek entrance), the De Torenvalk car park (Blanden), or the small car park alongside Naamsesteenweg near the Ecoduct

A whole day on micro-adventure in National Park Forests of Brabant

Get ready to start... GO! The National Park Forests of Brabant is bursting with micro-adventures. Search for beavers during a **packraft safari**, unleash your inner Tarzan on the **multimove trail**, or unwind with a bit of **forest bathing**. Discover the rich diversity of more than **700 species of tree**, get the adrenaline flowing through your veins with challenging **outdoor sports**, and fall for the charm of the **alpacas**. Whether you crave **water fun**, tranquillity or wildlife, the National Park has it all. Put on your adventurous shoes and be amazed by this stunning landscape. What are you waiting for?

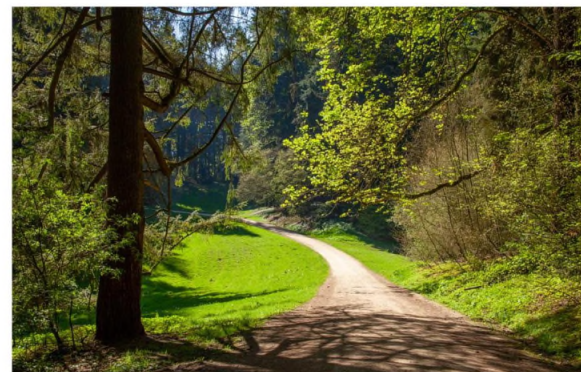


On beaver safari in — the Dyle valley

Delve into the world of the beaver, Europe's largest rodent, during an **exciting beaver safari**! Beavers, which are increasingly finding their place in Flanders, are true landscape artists. They leave a **trail of gnawed wood**, paths and burrows and live in and around the water - right where your safari takes place!

As night falls, the chance of actually spotting these fascinating animals increases. And what better way to do that than from the water?

With a **packraft** as your perfect ally, you glide through an active beaver territory. From your own stable boat, you can look around and let yourself be overwhelmed by nature. Along the way, you learn all about the beaver's way of life, and all the traces it leaves behind are pointed out.



Travel around the world via more than — 700 species of tree

Take a trip around the world at the **Tervuren Geographical Arboretum**, where you can find more than **700 species of tree**! Be guided along the royal walk and discover the most beautiful spots. Stroll through the beautiful nature, wander along imposing avenues and explore a labyrinth of grassy open valleys. Trees and shrubs from North America, Europe and Asia are grouped here by area of origin in about 100 different sections covering a total of 120 hectares.

Address: Arboretum Tervuren entrance gateway, parking Vlaktedreef (3080 Tervuren)



Multimoving in — the Meerdaalwoud

Discover the adventurous **Multimove trail in the Meerdaalwoud**, a vibrant mix of open grasslands and play forest. This almost 2-km-long trail invites children to explore, with different wooden structures that stimulate the twelve Multimove movement skills.

From climbing and stepping poles, a swing, a xylophone, a giant catapult to a balance beam, children have ample opportunity to climb, jump, land, slide, hit, pull, push, walk and run.

And the adventure does not stop with the trail! In the play forest, children can let their imaginations run wild, build camps and romp to their heart's content.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION:

- Location: Reception gateway De Torenvalk, Naamsesteenweg 72 in Blanden (Oud-Heverlee)
- Start at the observation tower by the car park
- The Multimove trail is accessible free of charge between sunrise and sunset



Looking for peace and beauty? Then **Lake Overijse-Genval** is the place for you. Enjoy a peaceful walk by the lake, admire the Belle Époque buildings or treat yourself to a meal at one of the many waterfront restaurants. You can also hire a kayak or rowing boat here.



Adventurous — outdoor sports

Ready for a wild outdoor adventure? Here we go!

- **Duckwing (Huldenberg)**: Whether you want to unleash your creativity in workshops such as making a bee hotel, or you want to feel the adrenaline with activities such as kick biking and canoeing, Duckwing has it all.
- **The Shelter (Korbeek-Dijle)**: This is a one-stop shop for adventure. Whether you are alone, with friends or family, or planning a company outing, The Shelter offers a range of tailored and safe outdoor activities.
- **Dyle Floats (Oud-Heverlee)**: Explore the Dyle and Demer by canoe or raft, or try other exciting activities such as laser shooting and viking games.



— Alpaca pleasure à la carte

Sint-Alpaca-Rode, a hidden gem on the banks of the Dyle, is your ultimate destination for an **unforgettable alpaca experience**. Feel their soft fur under your fingers, feed them right from your hand and learn fascinating facts about these charming creatures. Whether you are looking for a serene stroll or a lively **meet, greet & feed**, Sint-Alpaca-Rode offers it all.

But wait, there is more! Imagine staying in a **luxury glamping tent** for the weekend and waking up to the soothing sound of alpacas grazing gently in the distance. The site is fully accessible by wheelchair, allowing everyone to enjoy this unique experience.

Spend the night in nature

From the first rays of the sun slipping through the leaves to the song of birds greeting the day, nothing is more relaxing than waking up in the midst of nature. In the Hoge Kempen National Park and its vicinity, there are many original places where you can spend the night and blissfully dream away.



Duckwing Outdoor (Huldenberg):

From April until October, you can stay here in a beautiful spacious teepee in the green Huldenberg.



La Vista (Tervuren):

With 1 studio and 2 apartments, enjoy the peace and quiet that nature brings, close to the Tervuren Arboretum.



B&B Baron's House (Neerijse):

Situated in nature reserve the Doode Bemde, this B&B lends itself perfectly to cycling and walking trips.



Cowcooning (Huldenberg):

Experience the luxury of glamping in the breathtaking Forests of Brabant.



The Lodge (Heverlee):

Stay here in a stylish and contemporary manner in green surroundings.



JOLY Garden (Overijse):

Discover an oasis of calm on the edge of the Sonian Forest, with a choice between a tiny house or studio.



B&B Hallerbos (Halle):

This B&B is ideally located in the front garden of the beautiful Hallerbos.



B&B Miranoza (Oud-Heverlee):

Located by the Meerdaalwoud, this architectural gem features two charming guest rooms and offers perfume workshops.



Bosnest (Halle):

This former forester's house is situated on the edge of the Hallerbos.



B&B Hippo-Droom (Hoeilaart):

B&B Hippo-Droom is located in the heart of the Sonian Forest, close to Brussels, in a charming, restored Belle Époque villa.

TASTE THE NATURE

Flemish Brabant, a beer paradise, is home to numerous breweries and blending houses. These craftsmen cherish the centuries-old traditions of lambic brewing and geuze blending. Lambic, unique for its brewing process and spontaneous fermentation in wooden barrels, is a beer you will not find anywhere else in the world. Lambic is also used as a base to make the better-known geuze and kriek beers.

Go there and make sure that you taste these special brews for yourself.

Here are a few suggestions:

LINDEMANS BREWERY

The Lindemans family started a lambic brewery in Vlezenbeek as long ago as 1809. This went so well that the family closed the farm to concentrate on brewing. Today, Lindemans still brews lambic as the basis for numerous authentic and innovative beers.

TIMMERMANS BREWERY

The brewery was founded in 1702, making it one of the oldest lambic breweries in the country. You can enjoy lambic, geuze and faro as well as fruit beers such as kriek, peach and raspberry.

ANGERIK BREWERY

This brewery makes only high-fermentation beers from Belgian hops and malt. It does so using an old method: the different parts of the brewing installation are placed on top of each other. No pumps are needed, gravity does the work.

DE TROCH BREWERY

As with many lambic breweries, the origins of De Troch brewery lie in a farmhouse, in 1795. The installation is virtually unchanged and it is a gem of archaeological industry.

BOON BREWERY

The first traces of what is now called Boon Brewery can be traced back to 1680. The brewery is one of the few to work using the 'cloudy wort' method, also known as the 'slime' method. This is the oldest traditional brewing method for lambic beer.

OD-BEERSEL BREWERY

Oud Beersel brewery has been brewing lambic beers according to the time-honoured tradition since 1882. Here they brew Oude Geuze and Oud Beersel, which was voted the world's best Lambic/Geuze beer. The blonde triple, Bersalis, is also worth a try.

MORT SUBITE BREWERY

Lover of a delicious geuze or kriek beer? Then a visit to Mort Subite brewery is not one to miss. The brewery belongs to the select group of breweries that produce geuze in an artisanal manner.

GEUZE BLENDERY DE CAM

In Geuze blendery De Cam, an old Dutch word for brewery, lambic from artisanal geuze breweries is re-fermented into smooth, authentic geuze. The beer matures in 100-year-old oak barrels. The history of De Cam dates back to at least the early 18th century.

BEER CENTRE DE LAMBIK

'De Lambiek' in Beersel is the world's first visitors' centre for Geuze and Lambic beers. During your visit, you learn about these local products and their producers using all your senses. You learn about the brewing process, with all its secrets, and find out how important these beers are for the region.

TICKED OFF: 3 bucket list experiences

Imagine the early afternoon sun gently slipping through the trees as you admire the beautiful purple sea of bluebells during the Bluebell Festival. Or perhaps you follow Ad's Path, a journey through a fairytale world with gentle bears, modern neanderthals, metres-high toadstools and other playful figures. And if you are up for a challenge, why not ride your own Gravel World Championship, a thrilling bike ride over the National Park's rugged trails? Discover our bucket list experiences, tick them off one by one and create your own unforgettable memories.





© www.hallerbos.be



© Toerisme Vlaams-Brabant, Lander Loeckx



© David Stockman

1. BLUEBELL FESTIVAL

A walk in the Hallerbos is highly recommended all year round, but in **mid-April and early May** it is even more special. Around that time, the bluebells are in bloom. These spring blooms create a **beautiful vivid purple carpet**. During the flowering period, free shuttle buses and rental bikes are provided between Halle station and the Hallerbos.

Learn all about it [here](#).

2. AD'S PATH

Start your adventure at Heverlee Arboretum and be transported to an enchanted world full of friendly bears, modern-day neanderthals, giant toadstools and other fantasy figures. All this is the work of **local artist Ad Wouters**. He transforms the **trunks of dead oak trees into beautiful sculptures**, turning the Meerdaalwoud and Heverleebos into a fairytale landscape. For lovers of nature and culture, 'Ad's Path' is an absolute must. So put on your walking shoes and discover the magic of this place.

Learn all about it [here](#).

3. RIDE YOUR OWN GRAVEL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

On Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 October 2024, the **world championships for gravel bikes** are being held in Flanders. The race for the world title on unpaved roads takes place between Halle and Leuven. Fancy riding on these yourself?

THEN YOU HAVE THESE TWO OPTIONS:

- **Gravel World Championship route of 136 km:** This challenging route takes you through the heart of the National Park Forests of Brabant. You cycle on unpaved paths and enjoy the natural beauty of the region.
- **Shorter route of 80 km:** For those who prefer fewer kilometres, there is a shorter loop that takes you around and through the finishing place of Leuven. Along the way, you pass through the beautiful Meerdaalwoud, the hills of Tervuren and Huldenberg, before finally ending up back in the green hinterland of Leuven.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION:

- Download your gravel routes [here](#)
- [Hire](#) your gravel bike from The Shelter, among others

FOR CYCLISTS AND WALKERS: OUT AND ABOUT IN NATIONAL PARK FORESTS OF BRABANT

The best way to explore National Park Forests of Brabant? Cycling or walking. Fill your lungs with fresh air and enjoy the most beautiful spots and most spectacular views along the way. To get you started, we have some great cycle and walking routes ready for you.



Cycle routes

De Brabantse Pijl

Conquer legendary hills and feel the adrenaline as you hurtle over the iconic cobblestones. And after all that effort? Catch your breath at one of the many convivial cycling cafés along the route.

- **Distance:** 97.1 km
- **Departure point:** Oud-Heverlee
- **View the route [here](#)**

Hallerbos route

The Hallerbos route combines the natural beauty of the Hallerbos with the heritage of the town of Halle.

- **Distance:** 29 km
- **Departure point:** Halle
- **View the route [here](#)**

Voer Valley route

A surprising green journey with a noble allure.

- **Distance:** 46.9 km
- **Departure point:** Leuven
- **View the route [here](#)**

Tiny tip

Looking for something more adventurous? Then discover the gravel routes [here](#)!

These 2 routes are part of **Flanders' Finest Cycle Routes**, a selection of the **25 most beautiful, themed routes** that Flanders boasts. These routes are the ideal way to experience Flanders and its beautiful nature, local gastronomy and unique heritage:

SONIAN ROUTE

- **Distance:** 42 km
- **Departure point:** Jezus-Eik
- **View the route [here](#)**

LAMBIC-GEUZE ROUTE

- **Distance:** 41 km
- **Departure point:** Halle
- **View the route [here](#)**



Walking routes

IJse walk

Using the river IJse as guide, explore the beautiful countryside and forests between Huldenberg and Loonbeek. The highlight of the walk is the castle domain where Felix Sohier experimented with the cultivation of grapes.

- **Distance:** 8.9 km
- **Departure point:** Huldenberg
- **View the route [here](#)**

Bertembos walk

Explore the Bertembos and the Eikenbos, along with the surrounding fields north of the Voer Valley. On the way, a stop at play forest 't Vossenhol is a must. Here, children can climb, romp and swing with natural play elements. Enjoy the scenic sunken roads and sweeping vistas. And do not forget to take in the scent of the wood anemones during early spring!

- **Distance:** 9 km
- **Departure point:** Bertem
- **View the route [here](#)**

Schavaai walk

Explore the scenic Schavaai walk, which takes you through Bierbeek's old village centre and along the babbling Mollenbeek brook. During your walk, you wander over field and forest roads, and pass vast fields and imposing farmsteads. The Mollendaalbos, part of the Meerdaalwoud, and a remnant of the Silva Carbonaria, makes this walk extra special.

- **Distance:** 7.9 km
- **Departure point:** Bierbeek
- **View the route [here](#)**

Kesterbeek walk

Discover the picturesque Kesterbeek walk, which begins just a stone's throw from the Herman Teirlinck House. As you wander through the hilly countryside, enjoy the beautiful views of various valleys, the Pajottenland and even Brussels. And do not forget to sample the local lambic traditional brew along the way at the Beer House of the Oud-Beersel Brewery!

- **Distance:** 8,1 km
- **Departure point:** Beersel
- **View the route [here](#)**

Alambic walk

Explore the land of lambic beer on foot. This walk takes you through the Zenne Valley, where wild yeasts from the air are responsible for the unique spontaneous fermenting of the beer. Along the way, enjoy a lambic beer at the Boon Bar of the Boon Brewery. The Alambic Walk offers a unique blend of culture, history and local beer pleasure!

- **Distance:** 7,1 km
- **Departure point:** Lembeek
- **View the route [here](#)**

Five Oaks walk

Enjoy the peace, nature and beautiful oaks during the Five Oaks walk in the Heverleebos. During this walk - as the name suggests - you stroll past numerous oak trees. Most species originate from Europe and North America, but there are also specimens from Asia and Japan. The majestic oaks provide an impressive backdrop.

- **Distance:** 8,7 km
- **Departure point:** Heverlee
- **View the route [here](#)**

With the **Treinstappers** (train walks), you walk **from station to station** over the Flemish GR trails. Sounds good? It gets even better! There are also two treinstappers that take you through the National Park Forests of Brabant.

Treinstapper Groenendaal – Halle

- **Distance:** 22 km
- **Departure point:** Groenendaal railway station
- **View the route [here](#)**

Treinstapper Sint-Joris-Weert Leuven

- **Distance:** 21,5 km
- **Departure point:** Sint-Joris-Weert railway station
- **View the route [here](#)**



Flanders
State of the Art

COLOPHON

RESPONSIBLE PUBLISHER

Peter De Wilde, VISITFLANDERS,
Grasmarkt 61, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

LEGAL DEPOSIT

D/2024/5635/38

MORE INFORMATION

nature@visitflanders.com
www.visitflanders.com

COPYRIGHTS

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a database or retrieval system, or be published in any form or in any way (electronically, mechanically, by print, photoprint, microfilm or any other means) without prior written permission from the Publisher.

VISITFLANDERS