



**Flanders**  
State of the Art

# Micro-adventures in Scheldt Valley National Park

EXPERIENCE NATURE IN FLANDERS

© Bjorn Snelgers

VISITFLANDERS

## Dear friends of Flanders,

Small adventures await you in Scheldt Valley National Park.

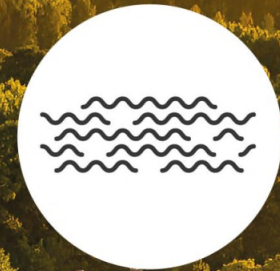
Scheldt Valley National Park is a patchwork quilt of wetlands, lakes, marshes, picturesque villages, vast fields, .... The tidal nature with salt, brackish and fresh zones extending so deep inland is unique in Europe and you can feel that. After all, the otter chose the Scheldt valley for its 'comeback' in Flanders, as well as the beaver, black-tailed godwit, little bittern, purple heron and the migratory white-tailed eagle who also feel at home here.

Cycle along the Scheldt, walk through the vast polders, visit historic castles and picturesque villages. Or just enjoy the peace and quiet in one of the many nature areas. With its rich history and beautiful landscapes, the Scheldt Valley is a must-visit for nature lovers and culture seekers.

A trip along the towpath between Antwerp and Ghent, with the wind in your hair comes highly recommended. Or start your adventure with a trip on DeWaterbus - an experience in itself. Or how about a journey on a steam train, a walk through one of the picturesque villages or waking up on a raft?

In short, there is so much to discover in Scheldt Valley National Park.

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



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## LOCATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

You can find **National Park Scheldt Valley** centrally located in Flanders. This unique nature area stretches out between the art cities of **Ghent** and **Antwerp** and is a paradise for nature lovers, culture seekers and micro-adventurers. Along the Scheldt and its tributaries, there is a mosaic of vast polders, lakes, picturesque villages and historic towns.

Scheldt Valley National Park is more than just nature. It is also a region with a rich history. Indeed, much heritage is inextricably linked to the Scheldt and its tributaries. Explore the historical centres of cities such as **Ghent**, **Antwerp** and **Dendermonde** or visit numerous impressive castles and abbeys.

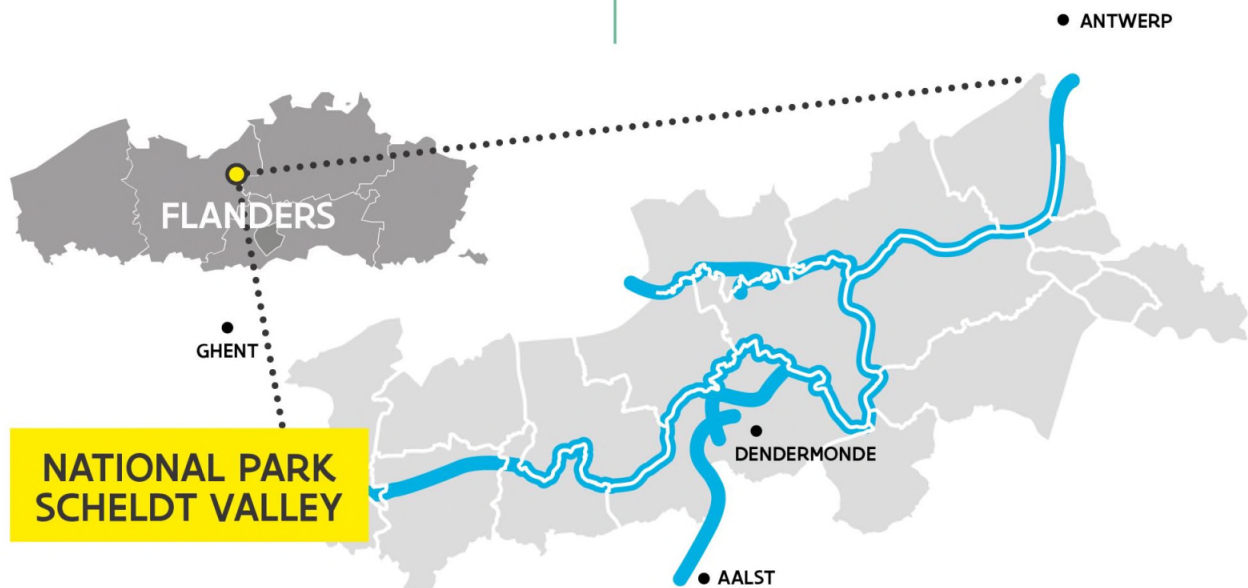


In Scheldt Valley National Park, you can cycle along the Scheldt from Ghent to Antwerp, from the Dam Valley to the Polders of Hoboken. Everywhere you go, you come across beautiful tidal nature, green meadows and vast fields hidden behind dykes.

### ABOUT THE SCHELDT ROUTE

Alternate nature and cultural experiences on a cycling holiday with the Scheldt as the blue thread. Cycle along the beautiful and diverse route through stunning nature with many places to pause and have a picnic. Or stop in cities such as Oudenaarde, Ghent or Antwerp. There are ferries which you can use to cross the river.

- **Distance:** 181 km
- **View the route [here](#)**



# Start your visit to the Scheldt Valley in one of the great castles

Between Ghent and Antwerp, a number of unique castles watch over the Scheldt. The castles are the gateway to the river nature surrounding them. Behind their sturdy walls are fascinating stories about a glorious past. Here, in the midst of a beautiful green setting, you can relive the rich history of the Scheldt Valley and its inhabitants.



## MARNIX DE SAINTE ALDEGONDE CASTLE (BORNEM)

At Bornem Castle, it feels like Disney has worked its magic but that is not all! This historical gem also houses an impressive collection of Bruegel prints and an exhibition full of beautiful, old carriages waiting to be discovered.



## D'URSEL CASTLE (HINGENE)

As well as the fairy-tale castle of Bornem, there is also the magnificent, ochre-coloured d'Ursel Castle in Hingene. This majestic building is a real eye-catcher with walkways that take you past stunning water features and along grand, historic avenues. The castle regularly opens its doors for special events and exhibitions, offering visitors a unique chance to view this historical gem.



## LAARNE CASTLE (LAARNE)

Step inside Laarne Castle and travel back in time. Laarne Castle is a beautifully preserved, medieval moated castle dating back to the 13th century. Although the inhabitants are long gone, their stories linger in the walls of this ancient castle. Behind the striking facade, a grim past is concealed: in the early 1600s, the six notorious Laarne witch trials took place here.



## WISSEKERKE CASTLE (BAZEL)

Wissekerke castle is one of the first neo-Gothic castles in Belgium. Today, it is one big time machine with imaginative projections, three different audio stories, fascinating objects, touch screens, a digital quiz and soundscapes.

# A WHOLE DAY OF MICRO-ADVENTURES IN SCHELDT VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

Explore winding towpaths and serene waterways, from DeWaterbus to SUP routes. Spot rare water birds in the Kalkense Meersen, or cycle past majestic castles and through charming villages. Or would you prefer a bit of culture? Step back in time in the park of d'Ursel Castle or discover the picturesque Vlassenbroek, where tranquillity and inspiration go hand in hand. From wherever you start, the Scheldt Valley treats you to a unique blend of nature, adventure and history. Curious? Find out more.

## – 3x on the water

**Banks connected by small ferries. Towpaths and dykes tailored to walkers and cyclists. You can experience Scheldt Valley National Park in countless ways, on and off the water. Whether that is from DeWaterbus, a SUP or ferry: you choose!**

### DEWATERBUS

No crowds, no traffic jams, no endless asphalt. Just pure tranquillity, rippling water, chirping birds and breathtaking views along the water's edge. Stress and traffic woes disappear like snow in the sun. With DeWaterbus, you can travel to Antwerp in a unique and relaxing way.

Along the way, enjoy a stunning panorama: the skyline, historic buildings and imposing ships. It is the perfect start for a bike trip through the Scheldt Valley, if you ask us.

**DeWaterbus stops at the following locations:** Lillo, Liefkenshoek, Kallo, Zwijndrecht, Sint-Anna Linkeroever, Steenplein Antwerp, Kruibeke and Hemiksem.





### SUP AROUND THE DURME

Stand Up Paddling (SUP) is all the rage, and for good reason. If you stand upright, you have a great overview of everything happening on the banks - at least, if you can keep your balance...

**Tiny Tip**  
Explore the Waasland from on the water! The Waasland Paddle Route (approx. 30 km) leads you along beautiful nature, historic spots and convivial terraces. Perfect for a day of kayaking, canoeing or supping.



### THE LITTLE FERRY BOATS!

No better way to discover Scheldt Valley National Park than on the water. The ferries are a lovely break during your walking and cycling exploration. All year round, the ferryman ferries across the river at no charge! And your bike? Don't forget to take it with you on board.

## Spot waterbirds in —the Kalkense Meersen

If you want to experience once more what total peace feels like, you should go walking in the **Kalkense Meersen**. Here, with the Scheldt River in the background, the water is constantly playing games with the land. The Sigma plans have something to do with this. These provide additional water buffers in the event of floods. This area, too, was handed back to nature, which now has free reign in the vast fields.

But the Kalkense Meersen are more than just controlled floodplains. It is where many thousands of meadow birds come to seek refuge away from the inhabited world. Each corner of the wetlands has its own inhabitants. The shallow ditches and water features provide nesting opportunities for a variety of waterfowl, such as the shoveler and the rare garganey. In the reedbeds, you may spot the proud bluethroat or hear the busy song of the reed warbler. In the flowery hay meadows, the reed bunting, stonechat and even the endangered whinchat have returned to nest. The common redstart and the little owl feel at home in the numerous pollard willows.

© Wesley Poelman



© Stefanie Favre

### Cycle along —Scheldt castles

Convivial villages, breathtaking nature and not one but two castles! The Scheldt Castles cycle route guides you past the grandeur of yesteryear. During your journey, the meandering waters of the Scheldt are never far away.

- **Distance:** 59 km
- **Departure point:** Bornem Abbey
- **View the route [here](#)**



© Roel Fenne Scheldeland

### Explore picturesque —Vlassenbroek

Those who love picturesque spots, where time seems to stand still, should definitely visit Vlassenbroek. This charming polder village, situated on a loop in the river Scheldt in East Flanders, is a haven for nature lovers, artists and anyone looking to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

With its winding dykes, open fields and lovely pollard willows, Vlassenbroek offers a postcard-worthy view. No wonder countless painters and photographers have found their inspiration here! The village itself consists of a handful of houses, a cosy inn and a picturesque church. Thus, the perfect place to get lost in for a while.



## Tiny Tip

If you are ever in the vicinity of the Donkmeer, it is worthwhile making a visit to the Eendenkooi. That is an open-air museum where you can spot storks, ducks, geese, herons and other waterbirds in abundance. Definitely keep your eyes open for the black-tailed godwit. This typical and rare bird is a handsome creature often seen in these parts.



## Escape for a moment in the park of — d'Ursel Castle

Step through the monumental gates and discover an oasis of calm. Enjoy the magnificent views of the majestic castle and enjoy the freedom as you stroll over the vast lawns and by the sparkling water features. Who knows, along the way, you might spot a playful squirrel, a bird of prey or even a graceful deer. The park is open daily from sunrise to sunset.



## WALK IN THE DUKE'S FOOTSTEPS

For centuries, the dukes took their guests on a tour du propriétaire; a personal tour of the estate's most picturesque spots. With the free walking brochure - available at the gatehouse or online - you can follow in the footsteps of this tradition. Discover the rich history of the castle grounds and experience the park as the Duke himself experienced it.

## Tiny Tip

Stop at the de Notelaer pavilion and recharge your batteries with stunning views of the Scheldt.



# 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 Scheldt Valley National Park and the vicinity, there are many original places where you can spend the night and blissfully dream away. Here are a few suggestions:



## **Flotjes kamperen (Berlare)**

Wake up to the twittering of happy birds and the gentle, rippling waters of the Donkmeer. That is possible. In the municipality of Berlare, you can now camp on a raft in the beautiful nature surroundings of the Donk. For those who are seeking ultimate relaxation, beauty and rest, because you will sleep like a log.



## **ScraB&Ble (Weert)**

In the water-rich Weert, in the heart of the Scheldeland and near the polders of Bornem, you lodge in the holiday homes Stil & Water. These two charming and comfortable cottages are located on the Scheldt dyke and have been tastefully decorated by hosts Katja and Isabel. The ideal base to enjoy the splendour and tranquillity of the water and the peaceful area of Weert.



## **De Boskabanne (Laarne)**

The recreation domain and event location Prullenbos is a true paradise for young and old, with a fishing pond, inn, play valley and plenty of leisure facilities. Even better: groups of up to 36 people can enjoy a very comfortable stay in the beautiful holiday home De Boskabanne. And the very best part: partying is absolutely allowed!



## **Holiday home Atelier van Antonine (Hingene)**

Looking for a holiday home with a soul and a story? In Hingene, Duchess Antonine opens her painting atelier for you. Not simply an atelier, but a lavish retreat in a beautiful palace. Located on the edge of a breathtaking castle park, carefully designed and maintained. An elegant place, where the walls whisper a fascinating history and rich stories.



## **Heritage lodging Fort Liezele (Puurs-Sint-Amands)**

In the guest rooms Kanonnier & Commandant, you are sure to sleep soundly. After all, you are staying in a real fortress. To be more specific, Fort Liezele in Puurs-Sint-Amands, the best-preserved armoured fort of the belt around Antwerp.



## **B&B La Corderie (Hamme)**

In a historic director's house from 1885, converted into a very elegant B&B, La Corderie is run with the utmost dedication. Furthermore, it enjoys a perfect location in Wuitensgemeente Hamme, right between Ghent and Antwerp. On the banks of the Scheldt and the Durme, you can embark on the most beautiful cycling or walking trips. An interesting detail is the story of the rope-making industry, which runs as a central theme through this municipality and this accommodation.



## **Pitten in de bomen (Hingene)**

Camp in one of De Notelaer's four tree pods. A tree pod can accommodate up to two adults and two children. In the evening, you can barbecue or build a campfire in the bivouac zone.

# TASTE THE NATURE

**Taste the different flavours that the Scheldt Valley has to offer. The unique landscape of the Scheldt Valley is greatly enjoyed: as a walker who enjoys the peace and quiet, as a jogger on the dyke, as a hunter in the fields, as a nature lover, as a tourist on a terrace, as a restaurateur working with regional products, ...**

This is why the Scheldt Valley embraces short-chain agriculture. Products purchased directly from farmers have a great added value: they are super fresh and super tasty, the farmer receives a fair price for them and there is less strain on the environment because of the saving in packaging and food miles. so, advantages all around!

**Here are a few ideas:**

- **Self-picking farm GRONDIG (Destelbergen):**  
Pick your own strawberries, raspberries, red currants, gooseberries, black currants and blackberries and visit pigs Teddy & Marieke.
- **Jersey breeder Pedro De Gelder (Uitbergen):**  
Here, the rich milk from the jersey cows is made into butter, cheese, yoghurt, cottage cheese, ice cream, rice pudding and custard. You can find their products in the farm shop.

## — Viticulture

Wine from East Flanders! Yes, that's right! White, red, sparkling, rosé ... over the past decade, viticulture in East Flanders has grown exponentially, from 6 to almost 40 wine estates. Growth has been accompanied by a strong professionalisation within the sector. You can taste that! The accumulated knowledge and experience of the winemakers has lead to an ever-improving wine quality.

Check out the [East Flanders wine list](#) and go exploring!



## HEILIG HART BREWERY

A brewery in a church: that is not very common. The Heilig Hart Brewery brews in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father stands for the classic Belgian beers, including a saison, a double and a triple. The Son is all about experimentation: smaller and one-off brews based on their own hop varieties, planted in the church's garden, and a selection of forgotten herbs such as yarrow, lovage, skirret or wild garlic. And the brews in the name of the Holy Spirit - or yeast - come from the cooling vessel in the church, where the beers can ferment spontaneously with the natural yeasts in the environment. Certainly worth a visit!

# TICKED OFF: 3 bucket list experiences

Take a nostalgic ride on an antique steam train and travel through charming villages and historic landscapes. Discover the most beautiful bend of the Scheldt in idyllic Sint-Amands, a place that once inspired poets. Or take off your shoes and explore the Gentbrugse Meersen via an adventurous barefoot path.

Discover our bucket list experiences, tick them off one by one, and create your own unforgettable memories.



© Frederic Leullusien

## Tiny Tip

Get off at one of the stations and explore these charming villages.

## Take a ride on a steam train

If a trip on an antique steam train sounds good to you, set course for Dendermonde. Indeed, there you will find an amazing tribute to the train.

With steam locomotives, diesel locomotives and old-fashioned carriages bursting with charm. This activity immerses you completely in the region's industrial past. The whistle has been blown: make sure that you are in your compartment!

The steam train takes you on a 14-kilometre-long journey on a railway line through the Scheldt Valley every Sunday in July, August and September. You can get on and off in Baasrode-North, Sint-Amands and Oppuurs. Find out more [here](#).



### Tiny Tip

By the way, did you know you can 'bank hop' here? With the triangular ferry Mariekerke - Moerzeke - Sint-Amands, you are on the other side in no time.

## The most beautiful bend — in the Scheldt

According to insiders, the most beautiful bend in the Scheldt is to be found at the authentic Scheldt village of Sint-Amands. A picturesque piece of Flanders that has inspired many artists throughout history. It is no coincidence that poet Emile Verhaeren chose this spot as his final resting place. His mausoleum adorns these banks, and the museum dedicated to him is just two hundred metres away.

## Enjoyment or adventurous — sports in the green

Are you in the vicinity of Ghent and do you have a sudden craving for a walk in nature? Then meet it with a trip to the Gentbrugse Meersen. This is a magnificent open wetland area, where boggy fields alternate with breathtaking natural views and wondrous waterbirds.

The Gentbrugse Meersen are fully accessible. So you do not have to remain on the beaten track: you are free to explore everywhere. Do you really want to get your feet dirty? Then try the barefoot trail that meanders pleasantly through the area. The path is completely natural and runs for about a kilometre. It evolves with the seasons and leads you through the grass, sand, mud and water. Pure adventure - best to wash your feet afterwards.



# FOR CYCLISTS AND WALKERS: OUT AND ABOUT IN SCHELDT VALLEY NATIONAL PARK



The best way to explore Scheldt Valley National Park? By bike or on foot. Fill your lungs with the 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

### Kingfisher route

From the lively bustle of the Donkmeer to the wide-open tranquillity of the Kalkense Meersen and then a dip in the pond of provincial domain Nieuwdonk: how much variety can you take in one cycling day?

- **Distance:** 35.3 km
- **Departure point:** Berlare
- **View the route [here](#)**

### Bluethroat route

Cycle along two rivers with a trip starting from Dendermonde, where the Dender flows into the Scheldt. Along the way, you see the impact these two rivers have had on the landscape and the people who live here.

- **Distance:** 37.5 km
- **Departure point:** Dendermonde
- **View the route [here](#)**

### Eel Route

For this route, it is best to set some time aside. You need to use a ferry to cross the water no less than four times along this route. In exchange for the wait, you cycle through some of the most beautiful natural areas that dot the banks of the Scheldt and Durme.

- **Distance:** 40.4 km
- **Departure point:** Bornem
- **View the route [here](#)**

### Beaver route

Between Temse and Kruikebe, the Scheldt only increases in grandeur. This is certainly the case near Rupelmonde, where both the Rupel and the Sea Canal to Brussels flow into the river. The flood plains along this route are also impressive, with the Polders of Kruikebe as one of the crown jewels.

- **Distance:** 38.8 km
- **Departure point:** Hemiksem
- **View the route [here](#)**



### **The Scheldt Route**

Since 2021, the **Scheldt Route** has been one of the new iconic routes of Visit Flanders. Over 180 kilometers, you cycle through the stunning nature of the Scheldt, from Spiere-Helkijn in Hainaut to the Dutch border. The signposted route seamlessly connects with international trails, making it perfect for a multi-day cycling holiday.



## Walking routes

### **Kruibeke Creek**

Take the opportunity to see Kruibeke's typical polder landscape with this scenic route. Tidal nature, alder swamp forests and grassland bird areas alternate with each other. The icing on the cake? A bit of art as well as a fairy-tale moated castle.

- **Distance:** 7.3 km
- **Departure point:** Bazel
- **View the route [here](#)**

### **Old Scheldt**

A good hundred metres past the village centre of Kalken and you are already in the Kalkense Meersen. In this endless patchwork of meadows and grasslands, the inhabited world seems far away.

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

### **From Wieze to Denderbelle**

Between Wieze and Denderbelle, you follow an undeniable highlight. You walk from one nature spot to another alongside the Dender, rest at picnic benches with beautiful views and can count on some delicious pit stops.

- **Distance:** 16.4 km
- **Departure point:** Wieze
- **View the route [here](#)**

### **Tour of Dendermonde**

Located on both the Scheldt and the Dender, Dendermonde is criss-crossed and surrounded by water. The city breathes history and is characterised by a unique heritage, but it is also home to beautiful nature that begs to be discovered on foot. This walking route combines all those gems.

- **Distance:** 9.3 km
- **Departure point:** Dendermonde
- **View the route [here](#)**

### **Sombeke-Oude Durme**

This walking loop runs south of the Durme and leads you to the border of Waasmunster and Hamme, where you explore the area around the Old Durme.

- **Distance:** 6.6 km
- **Departure point:** Waasmunster
- **View the route [here](#)**



## Walk of the year 2020

Great Route paths? The GR128 Flanders Route, the GR5A Walking Route of Flanders and the [Streek-GR Waas- en Reynaertland](#) each offer their own unique exploration of this beautiful region. In 2020, the Streek-GR Waas- en Reynaertland was voted the most beautiful walk in the Benelux! This route starts in Lokeren, follows the Durme and Scheldt rivers, and ends, after 175 kilometres, in Hulst (The Netherlands).



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## COLOPHON

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