

CIRCUIT MECHELEN - MECHELS BROEK

Water, birds & observation towers

In the shadow of St Rumbold's Cathedral, to the east side of Mechelen, is a magnificent meadow landscape that runs alongside the meandering Dyle: the Lower Dyle Valley, a ribbon of wildlife areas where you can unwind completely while walking or observing birds from one of the bird watching huts. This walk leads to the 'Mechels Broek' wildlife area, a green lung close to the city. You can walk there from the centre along the peaceful Dyle path.

HIGHLIGHTS

1 BOTANICAL GARDEN

The first part of the walk leads through the Botanical Garden, a green oasis in the historic city centre. Known locally as "Den Botanique", this park owes its name to Rembert Dodoens. In the sixteenth century, this famous scientist wrote the 'Cruydenboek', the first work about medicinal plants and herbs. Around the statue of Rembert Dodoens you'll find 250 different types of herbs planted according to variety and colour.

2 ALONG AND OVER THE DYLE

Walk along the IJzerenleen, cross the Hoogbrug (high bridge) and continue on your way along the floating Dyle Path. You may see a passing passenger boat or the odd energetic paddleboarder or canoeist. You can enjoy walking on and next to the water both in the city and just outside it.

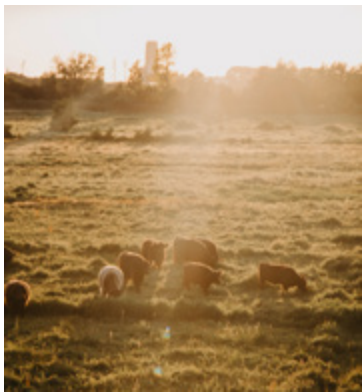
3 DE NEKKER PROVINCIAL SPORTS AND LEISURE CENTRE

After crossing the lock, you come to the De Nekker Sports and Leisure Centre, where you can take your pick of any number of indoor and outdoor sports. Take a dip in the lake or clock up lengths in the Nekkerpool swimming pool complex or simply lie back and sunbathe. In the meantime, the children can let off steam in the indoor and outdoor playgrounds.

4 WATERBIRDS' PARADISE

This is a veritable paradise for waterbirds, but its ponds and expansive landscapes also make it a wonderful destination for walkers.





The reed beds, sedge fields and ditches make it a paradise for waterbirds, including the bluethroat and the Eurasian wigeon. You could almost describe it as an international airport for ducks and other birds, particularly in the winter! From the bird hide and lookout tower you can observe the wildlife undisturbed and view the magnificent area from a very different perspective.

5 GOOD-NATURED GALLOWAYS

Another notable animal species you may encounter here in the meadows at any time of the year are the Galloway cattle. This Scottish breed is highly independent, good-natured and unfussy when it comes to food. This makes them the ideal nature conservationists for the Mechels Broek. Indeed, they can take most of the credit for the variation in the landscape! The way they graze creates a grassland mosaic of short turf and patches of taller grass, providing ideal cover for plant and animal life.

6 BOMB CRATERS

The Dyle path affords a good view of the meadows dotted with beautifully round pools of water. They were bomb craters created in the Second World War when a number of bombs missed their target (Muizen marshalling yard) and exploded in the Mechels Broek meadows. The pools are now home to a great variety of water life. Northern crested newts, water frogs, dragonflies and sticklebacks have turned a battlefield into a peaceful habitat.

TIP: Approximately half-way along the A.S. Adventure Walk, you will find yourself close to the path leading to the bird hide, hidden between two houses. Be sure to go and take a look there too.

Practical information

STARTING PLACE

Tourist information office Visit Mechelen, Schepenhuis: Vleeshouwersstraat 6, 2800 Mechelen.

FOLLOWING THE ROUTE ON FOOT

The walk starts at the Schepenhuis. You follow the IJzerenleen and cross the Grootbrug (Big Bridge) to the other side, where the steps on the left lead down to the Dyle path. Follow this duckboard walkway to the end. When you come up, cross the bridge over the Dyle and go straight into the Botanical Garden. Follow the GR footpath (red and yellow stripes), past the Thomas More college of higher education, under the railway bridges, over the lock and past the De Neker provincial sports and leisure centre and eventually you come out at the Mechels Broek wildlife area. To stay on this walk, follow Natuurpunt's circular AS Adventure Walk through the wildlife area. Return to the centre via the same route.

The Natuurpunt visitor centre at Muizenhoekstraat 7, 2812 Mechelen will be happy to provide more information and answer questions about the wildlife area.

LENGTH

Standard route: 11 km

TERRAIN & ACCESSIBILITY

The paths in the wildlife area are not accessible for wheelchairs or prams and buggies.

Go to [visitmechelen.be](https://www.visitmechelen.be) for more brilliant walking and cycling ideas!

CONTACT

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COLOPHON

Text: Visit Mechelen, **layout:** Visit Mechelen, **printer:** Antilope De Bie Printing, **map:** Open Street Map Elke Feussels, **photos:** Visit Mechelen, **publisher:** Björn Siffer, VVV Mechelen vzw, Vleeshouwersstraat 6, 2800 Mechelen - D/2022/10717/26



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WALKING ROUTE - 11 KM

