

Walk with the storks

A stone's throw from the city centre are large expanses of pastureland: the Lower Dyle Valley. This route starts in the centre of Muizen village. Savour the peace and quiet of Barebeek Valley before heading for the Leuven-Dyle Canal. Return to the village along the Dyle dyke.

HIGHLIGHTS

1 CHURCH TOWER

Muizen grew up on the southern bank of the River Dyle. You are now right in the heart of the village with a view of what remains of St Lambert's Church. It was built in the 17th century, the earlier church having been destroyed during religious riots in the 1570s. A German V-1 flying bomb intended for the port of Antwerp and shot out of the air by Americans in 1944, destroyed St Lambert's Church almost in its entirety. Only the tower was spared. You can still admire it here, next to the replacement St Lambert's Church built in the 1960s.

2 STORKS

You may have seen a few storks flying over. You usually spot one or two off Beukenboomstraat, or on the stork's nest in the churchyard on your left. Storks pretty well disappeared from Western Europe midway through the last century. Attempts to reintroduce them proved successful, not least at Planckendael ZOO in the 1990s. Many of the birds spend the winter months in Spain and West Africa, more than 4,000 kilometres away. But in March/April they return here to their familiar surroundings and you see them foraging for food in the wildlife areas along the Dyle.

3 BAREBEEK VALLEY

A varied landscape unfolds on the left bank of the Dyle. Natuurpunt Mechels Rivierengebied, a branch of the Natuurpunt volunteer organization for the protection of nature in Flanders, manages the delta of the Barebeek, a wildlife area made up of wet pastureland and fields. The pastures regularly come under water in the winter, a godsend for ducks and meadow birds. Planckendael's storks can often be spotted in the Barebeek Valley where supplies of food are plentiful. Slugs, earthworms, grasshoppers, beetles, frogs, mice and moles are among their favourites.



Churc Tower in Muizen



Brasserie 'De Ridder van Musena' on the banks of the River Dyle

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4 PLANCKENDAEL ZOO

The Leuven-Dyle Canal, formerly also known as the Leuvense Vaart, has connected the Vaartkom (Inner Harbour) in Leuven with the Dyle since 1752. You are now walking in the direction of Leuven. After a couple of hundred meters, the grounds of Planckendael ZOO come into view on your left. With a spot of luck, you will see elephants, penguins and flamingos. This dyke is particularly popular with cyclists in the spring and summer.

5 BUDDHIST TEMPLE

Behind the walls of this handsome farmstead is Wat Dhammapateep, a Belgian Buddhist temple in the tradition of the Thai Theravada. The temple was built in 2005 but only moved to Muizen in 2017. It boasts a statue of Buddha, the largest stone statue of its kind in Europe today.

6 POLLARD WILLOWS

You are back in Barebeek Valley where rows of pollard willows draw beautiful lines in the landscape. Little owls like to breed in the often hollow willows. On the other side of the Dyle is a scenic area which extends all the way to the village of Bonheiden and the Mispeldonk wildlife area. The landscape is very varied, ranging from arid grassland and hedged hayfields to moist deciduous forests and re-established heathland.

7 DYLE DYKE

Walk to the end of the Dyle dyke and then back towards the centre of the village of Muizen. If you would like to extend your walk by a couple of kilometres, cross the Dyle bridge (Dijlebrug). At the Natuurpunt visitor centre in Muizenhoekstraat, you will find information about marked walks in Mispeldonk and the nearby Mechels Broek.

Practical information

STARTING PLACE

Parking / Village square Muizen - Dorp, 2812 Muizen

Public transport: De Lijn, urban line 3
« Mechelen Station - Muizen » -> stop « J. Van Geelstraat »
(walk 200 m to starting point "Dorp")

FOLLOWING THE ROUTE ON FOOT

Cross the pedestrian crossing, walk along August Lenaertsstraat, left Korte Nieuwstraat, left Magdalenastraat to pedestrian crossing, cross over to the right, cross Vlamingenstraat (left of bridge), left Rubensstraat, right Beukenboomstraat, right Kerkenbos, from here Intersection 58 on the Cycle Network to the Leuven-Dyle Canal tow path (Muizenvaart), left under railway bridge, left Prinsenveldstraat, right to pedestrian crossing, cross, along Willendries, under railway bridge, cross railway, left follow Kerkenbos, gravel path on right Ottershoekstraat, left Dyle towpath, cross Brugstraat, follow path diagonally to the left, over Dyle bridge (Dijlebrug), back to starting point in village.

TERRAIN & ACCESSIBILITY

Depending on the season, bring suitable shoes (muddy trails) – course not accessible to wheelchairs and strollers.

LENGTH

Standard route: 9 km

CONTACT

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COLOPHON

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CIRCUIT MUIZEN

WALKING ROUTE - 9 KM