

CIRCUIT WALEM – HEFFEN - BATTEL

Over cycle bridges, the Zennegat and hibernating bats

All the water and villages around Mechelen make for photogenic cycling destinations, where you can unwind as you explore at your leisure. On this route there is also an opportunity to stretch your legs. For example, you might like to stroll in the shadow of Walem Fort, which was subjected to heavy shelling by the German army in the First World War.

HIGHLIGHTS

1 WALEM HERE WE COME

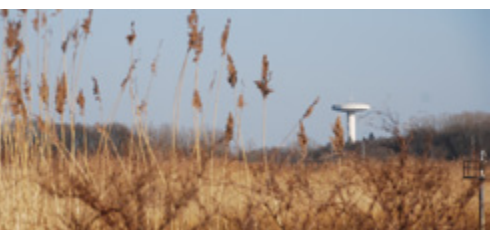
The Dyle, the lifeblood of Mechelen, leads to some wonderful places. Follow the Dyle towpath and the banks of the Vrouwvliet and you come to the route to Walem. From the first half of the 13th century, Walem was governed by aldermen and they had their own parish. Its location on the road to Antwerp and along the Nete and Dyle rivers brought transit and trade and so also prosperity.

2 ROOSENDAEL ESTATE

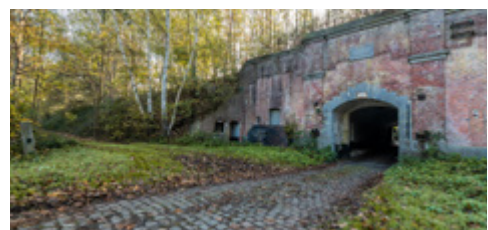
Just before you reach Intersection 55, you cycle past the former Roosendael Abbey. The monumental gatehouse and coach house remind us that in the 13th century Roosendael was home to a community of Cistercian nuns. These days it is a place for relaxation, culture and recreation and you can even spend the night here. The short walk included on this map starts here. You can leave your bicycle in the car park while you brush up on Walem's war history.

3 FOCUS ON WW1

Your walk through Walem takes you to the Church of Our Lady (Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Bijstand), a neo-Gothic church still with its Gothic tower, located on a slight elevation and surrounded by a churchyard. The main attraction, however, is the site of Walem Fort, a target during the First World War. Walem Fort probably bears more visible traces of the unequal battle between the German and Belgian armies in September 1914 than any of the other forts. The nature in this area is extraordinary too. It is an oasis of peace and an important haven for numerous species of rare animals. As various species of hibernating bats have taken up residence here, the fort is protected by European law. It is only possible to visit the fort at specific times and with a guide.



Walem water tower



Walem Fort



Flood area, Battel

Zennegat



Meeting the residents of Walem



Practical information

STARTING POINT

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

FOLLOWING THE ROUTE

The route makes use of the national cycle network. Just follow the intersection numbers on the rectangular green and white signs, as shown on the map in this flyer.

WALKING INTERSECTIONS

97 - 96 - 98 - 65 - (option walk Walem Fort) - 55 - 51 - 52 - 78 - 79 - 94 - 97 - 95 - 93 - Route back to centre.

Website and contact for the national cycle network:
routedokter.be (only in Dutch)

THE WALK: From the car park with your back to the entrance gate, walk to your right into Kloosterstraat and turn left into Besterveld. At the end left and immediately right into Kerkhofstraat, which leads to Koning Alberstraat with the Church of Our Lady (Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk) on your right. However, you follow the busy road to the left, cross the road and you come to Walem Fort. Here you take the path on your left and follow the canal. You turn left onto the path leading to Walk Intersection 249, and from there you follow Walk Intersections 248, 253 and 180. You are back at the starting point.

LENGTH

Bicycle loop: 35,2 km
The walk: 4 km

TERRAIN & ACCESSIBILITY

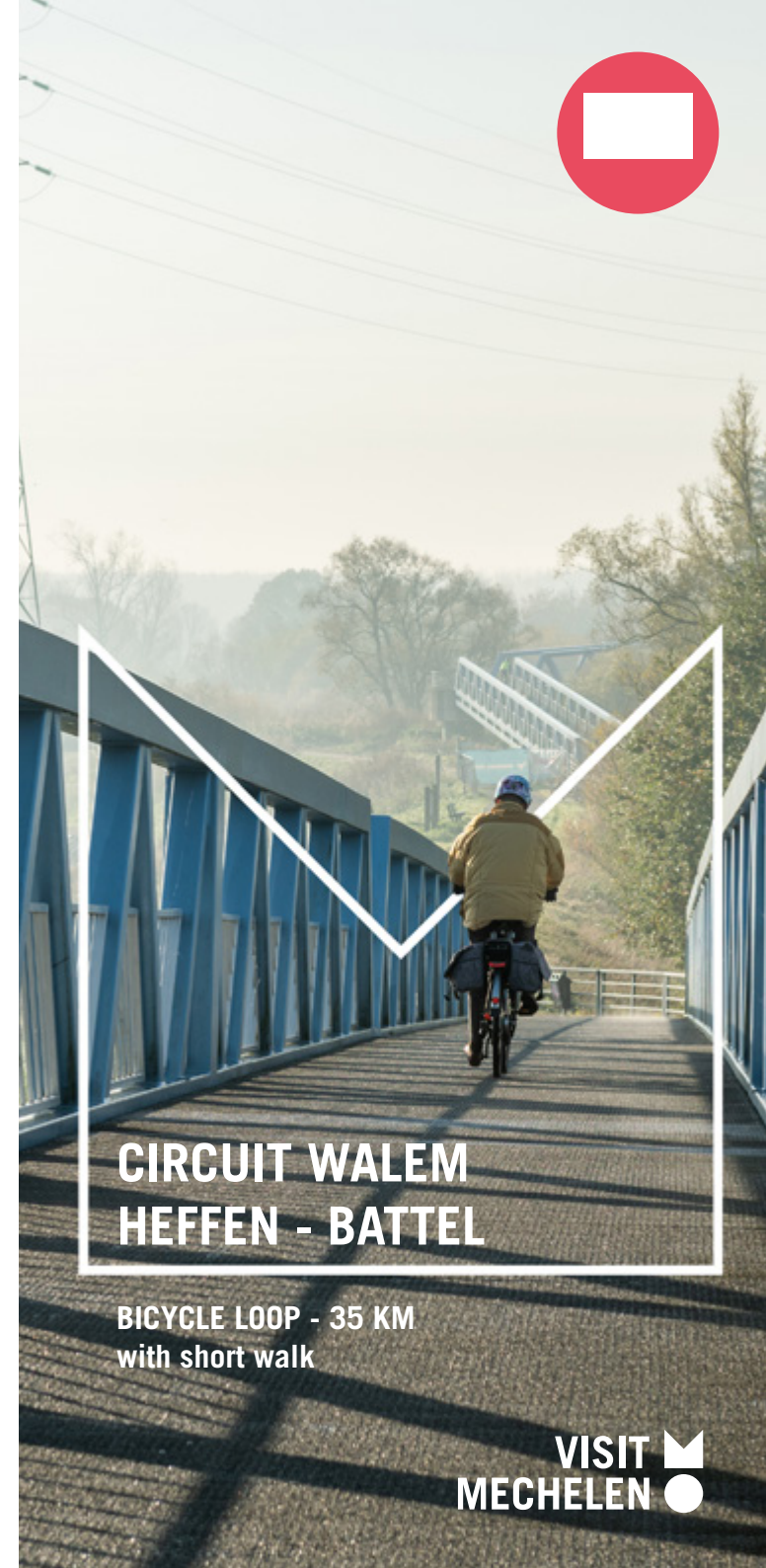
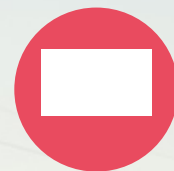
The terrain is flat and most of the route consists of towpaths, unpaved paths and quiet roads.

CONTACT

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COLOPHON

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CIRCUIT WALEM HEFFEN - BATTEL

BICYCLE LOOP - 35 KM
with short walk

VISIT
MECHELEN



4 LEVING A TOLL

You are approaching Intersection 79 where you ride into Heffen, a second village with an interesting story to tell. Its history is closely tied up with the Zenne. The name Heffen probably derives from 'tolheffen', which means 'levy a toll'. A chain was hung across the Zenne to prevent boats sailing through without paying the toll. Mechelen and Heffen benefitted from the wealth brought by shipping. The picturesque square in the heart of the village still boasts a number of authentic buildings like the Brewer's House, the Church of St Amand and the former presbytery.

5 ZENNEGAT

From Heffen cycle alongside the Zenne to one of the most enchanting places on this route: the Zennegat. The Zenne and the Leuven-Dyle Canal converge in this picturesque place and further on flow into the River Rupel along with the River Nete. A collection of old houses, once home to generations of barge haulers, stands at the confluence of the rivers. It's the perfect place for a rest because from here you can see how the various waterways intersect. Moreover, the bridges provide easy access to all the dykes, from where you have a wonderful view of wildlife areas like Den Battelaer and the Oude Dijlearm.

6 ZONE INONDABLE

A little further on, on your right, you will see a controlled flood area. Twice a day, water flows into the Oude Dijlearm – the old branch of the Dyle – through large pipes, creating an area of mud flats and salt marshes, a paradise for water- and marsh birds. Photographers are drawn to this flood area too.

7 BATTEL

Before cycling back to Mechelen, you go through Battel, where traces of prehistoric habitation were found during repair work to the Dyle dyke. The name Battel first appears in the 12th century. Legend has it that the name derives from the English word 'battle'. Indeed, Saint Lambert is thought to have defeated the Normans here. You can catch your breath on the square and admire the Church of St Joseph, which has been turned into a microbrewery and distillery, a meeting place with a relaxed atmosphere.