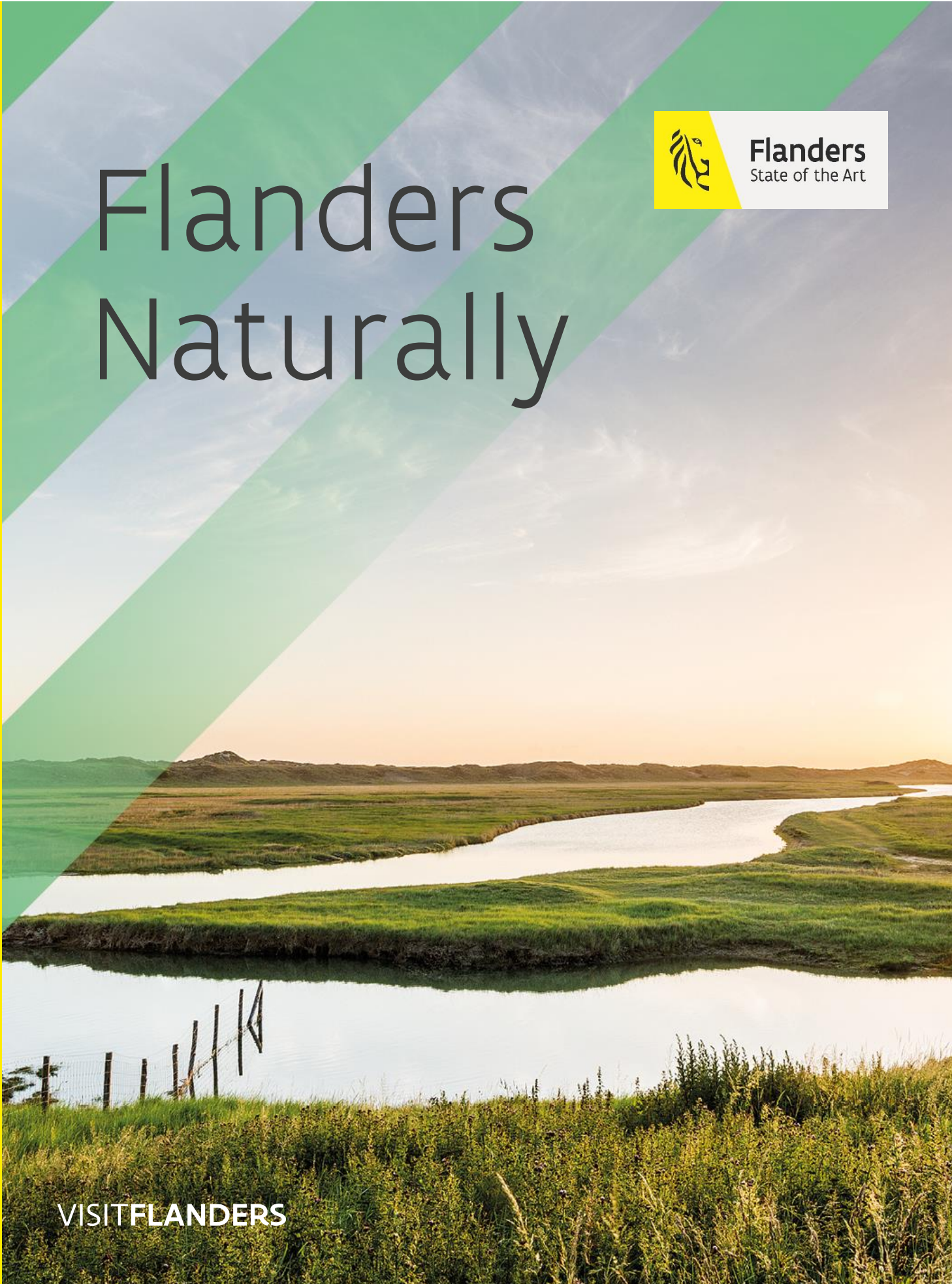
# Flanders Naturally

Flanders
State of the Art



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Dear Friends of Flanders,

We all know Flanders'age old cities packed with heritage. And our Flemish Masters who inspired many generations after them. Or Flanders'unique food and beer culture. And of course... Flanders is also the homeland of cycling.

In addition to centuries of groundbreaking craftmanship, our region is also rich in forests, parks and agricultural landscapes. As well as waterways, the Flemish coasts and the North Sea. From above, Flanders looks like a natural mosaic that retains the same appeal on the ground as well. A lot to explore, to experience, to further develop. We at VISIT**FLANDERS** want to share these green and blue attractions with you under the heading of '**Flanders Naturally**'.

Nature and culture are never far apart in our densely populated region. You traverse a picturesque cultural landscape where you are never devoid of art and heritage via parks, polders, clay pits, rolling hills, dunes, marshes, brook valleys, rivers, meadows and forests. And of a cozy pub, waiting for you behind every bend in the road. That's Flanders: within everyone's reach, every day of the year.

Flanders Naturally opts resolutely for sustainable, meaningful, society-building projects that promote the well-being of the local population. In the long term, this choice will ensure proud residents and entrepreneurs, and a healthy environment where visitors can also feel at home.

We invite you to discover '**Flanders Naturally.**'

© Peter Baas

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# Discover nature in Flanders how you would like to...

## FROM POINT TO POINT: CYCLING AND WALKING NODES CALLED 'KNOOPPUNTENNETWERK'

You can create your own walking or cycling tour by following the numbers you want or choose from the fixed offer that has been created.

Lots of beautiful walks can be found here. Just follow the numbers and enjoy the scenery.

## AS A REAL HIKER: GR ROUTES

GR routes are hiking and cycling routes from one place to another. These walking routes are mainly long-distance routes for the more experienced hiker/cyclist.

Throughout Europe, these routes are marked with the famous white and red stripe or white and yellow stripe and they often cross borders.

You can cross Flanders in 2 ways with the GR routes: From East to West with the GR128 and from North to South with the GR129.

GR trails lead you along special landscapes and villages with unprecedented charm. As much as possible you walk on unpaved roads. During a GR-tour you discover regions and corners you would otherwise never come across.

In 1947, the first Grande Randonnée (GR) was marked in France. In 1962 GR 5, the long distance path from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, was the first GR trail on Belgian soil. In the meantime, the GR network extends across the whole of Europe, from Scandinavia to Spain.

The Flemish network counts almost 5,000 GR kilometers and connects seamlessly with trails in Wallonia and in our neighboring countries.

# WITH YOUR FAMILY:

## Find the trolls in domain 'De Schorre' near Antwerp

7 big trolls, created by artist Thomas Dambo, are living in the domain 'De Schorre' since 2019. With your kids you can search them.

- Website
- Length of the trail: 11,3 km

## Bare foot path

One of the entry gates of the Hoge Kempen National Park is called Lieteberg. The area is entirely designed for children. One of the things you can do is follow a 3 km trail on your bare feet.

- Website
- Length of the trail: 3 km

© Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland vzw

## Lommelse Sahara

The Lommel Sahara is a nature phenomenon! In the middle of an extensive coniferous forest, you will suddenly find yourself in a desert landscape, exceptionally beautiful in the middle of the coniferous woods. The deep blue lake and the unique fauna and flora make a walk to the Lommel Sahara a trip that you will never forget.

- Website
- Different walking trails possible

# In color: Blue Bells

Hallerbos – 'The Blue Forest' – is the most important and most extensive forest area between Zenne and Zoniën. The forest is a crowd favourite thanks to the beautiful purple carpet of bluebells, which bloom around mid-April. The giant Sequoia trees also make a visit to this forest more than worth it.

- Website
- PFD-route
- Length of the trails: 4,8 km or 5,1 km

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## With Flanders delights: Kwaremont

With the Panorama Hiking Route you slowdown in style. After all, you start and end your 16-kilometer trip in the atmospheric artists' village Kwaremont, in the heart of the Flemish Ardennes. The snow-white Sint-Amanduskerkje on the market square is a modest icon in the region. This village has been bursting with creative energy for decades. And today you will immerse yourself in the unique atmosphere of this unusually beautiful village.

- Website
- PDF-route
- Length of the trail: 16 km

© Koen De Langhe

## With a fine blend of culture:

## Arts Parcour GLO´ART

GLO'ART is a global art center in Neerharen-Lanaken, a Belgian border municipality in the valley of the Meuse that connects the Netherlands and Belgium. GLO'ART is a social and cultural non-profit art foundation for talented artists from all over the world. Artists can send their portfolio and apply for a one-month residence at the center. Since 2013, more than three hundred selected artists from sixty countries have found their way to the art center.

- Website

© Glo'art

# With a fine mix of art and culture

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## In the trail of a Great Flemish Master Pieter Bruegel the Elder

This walk offers a blend of nature and culture. Start on the square beside the village church in Sint–Anna–Pede, which has gained world fame thanks to the 'Parable of the Blind' Along the path in the Pede valley you will discover 11 copies of the works of Pieter Bruegel the Elder.

- Website
- Length of the trail: 6,9 km

© Ekkow photography

## Verbeke Foundation: Open-air museum for contemporary art

Culture, nature and ecology go hand in hand at the Verbeke Foundation. With 12 hectares (29.7 acres) of scenic area and 20,000 m² (4,9 acres) of covered space, the Foundation is one of the largest private initiatives for contemporary art throughout Europe. The warehouses of the former Verbeke transport agency were converted into unique exhibition halls. One of the buildings was furnished to exhibit the extraordinary collection of collages and assemblages.

The Foundation is subject to ongoing growth and transformation processes. Artists have a possibility to reside, large and small exhibitions are held at the museum continuously. The Verbeke Foundation resembles a living organism and as such it looks different from one day to the next.

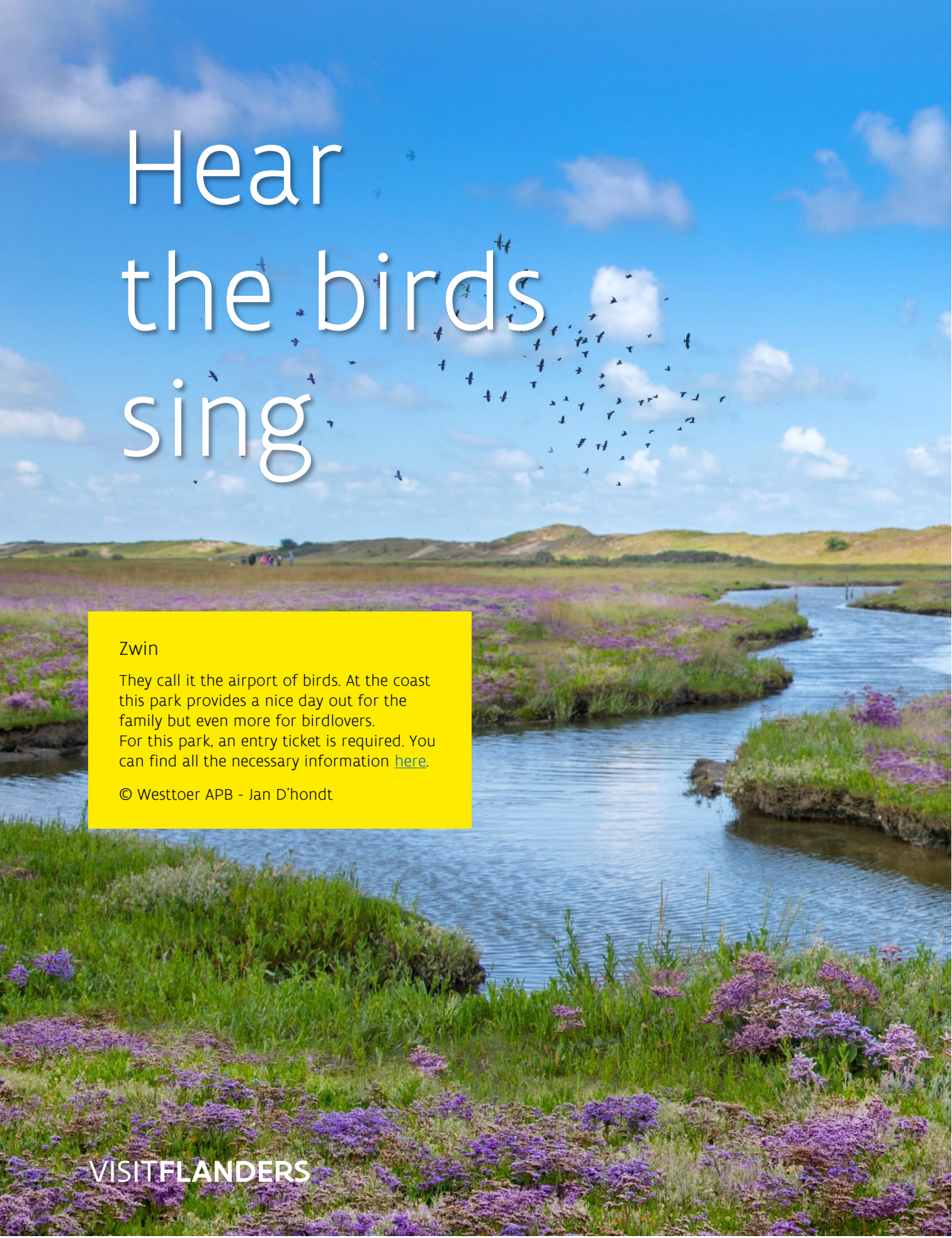
- Website

© Greetje Van Buggenhout

## Remembering our history: Flanders Fields

Three entry points along the Ypres Salient are open for the public. There today's landscape is shown as a witness of the past, 100 years ago, in a historical film, three walking routes, a digital application and a cycling route that connects the three points.

- Website
- Length of the trail: 5 km



# Hear the birds sing

Zwin

They call it the airport of birds. At the coast this park provides a nice day out for the family but even more for birdlovers.
For this park, an entry ticket is required. You can find all the necessary information here.

© Westtoer APB - Jan D'hondt

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## ...as a ranger in Hoge Kempen National Park

Hoge Kempen National Park: nature in all its glory! The National Park in the Belgian province of Limburg is a unique nature reserve where more than 12.700 ha of forest and heathland are managed and protected. The area stretches across the municipalities of Maasmechelen, As, Zutendaal, Lanaken, Dilsen-Stokkem, Bilzen, Bree, Maaseik, Oudsbergen and Genk.

Extensive pine forests alternate with purple flowering heathland, large ponds testify to gravel and sand extraction and high peaks offer great views. Moreover, numerous rare and special animals live in this natural setting.

Everyone is welcome to relax here as much as they like by hiking, biking, ... or just revelling in all this beauty. Nine entrance gates help you on your way.

Together with the Rangers, you can discover the National Park in a relaxed, sometimes active, but always surprising way. Most activities involve hiking, but you can also book a Ranger by bike or horse. They offer tailored activities for people with disabilities.

- Website
- Length of the trails: 1,5 km – 15 km

© Peter Baas

## Walking and cycling through the trees in Bosland (Limburg)

This cycle path safely takes you into higher realms. Quite literally - because you cycle around a double circle all the way up to the treetops, up to ten meters. The cycle path is 700 meters in total. You experience nature in a completely different way and become one with the forest. The path is also accessible to walkers and joggers.

- Website
- Length of the trail: 700 m

© Luc Daelemans

# For the water lover

## The water of Waasland

In times of chattering and twittering, one art has been lost: that of just keeping your mouth shut for a moment. Fortunately, there is still the Waasland, where silence is not a fashion phenomenon but a permanent state of being. That is, if you look in the right places.

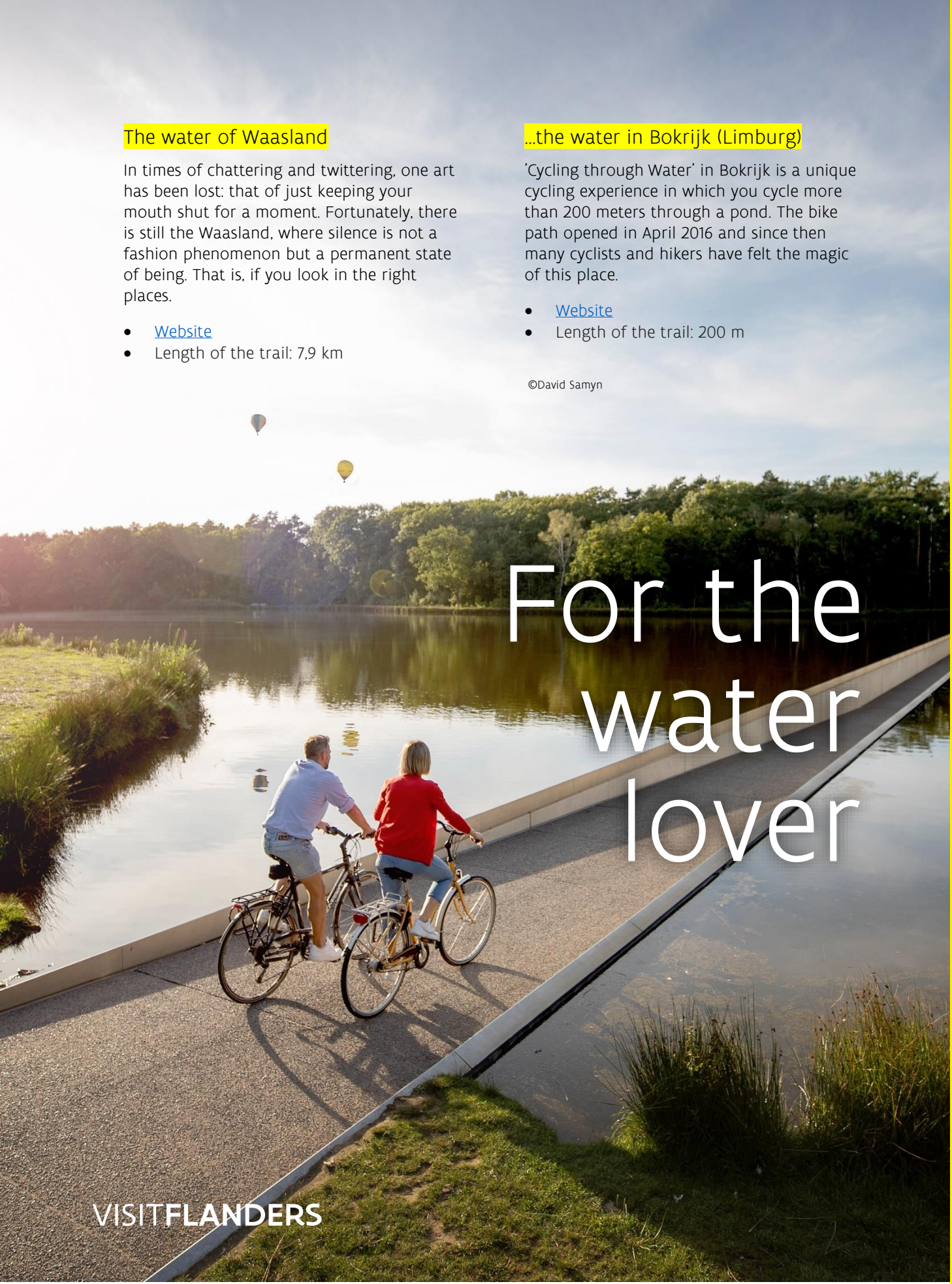
- Website
- Length of the trail: 7,9 km

## ...the water in Bokrijk (Limburg)

'Cycling through Water' in Bokrijk is a unique cycling experience in which you cycle more than 200 meters through a pond. The bike path opened in April 2016 and since then many cyclists and hikers have felt the magic of this place.

- Website
- Length of the trail: 200 m

©David Samyn



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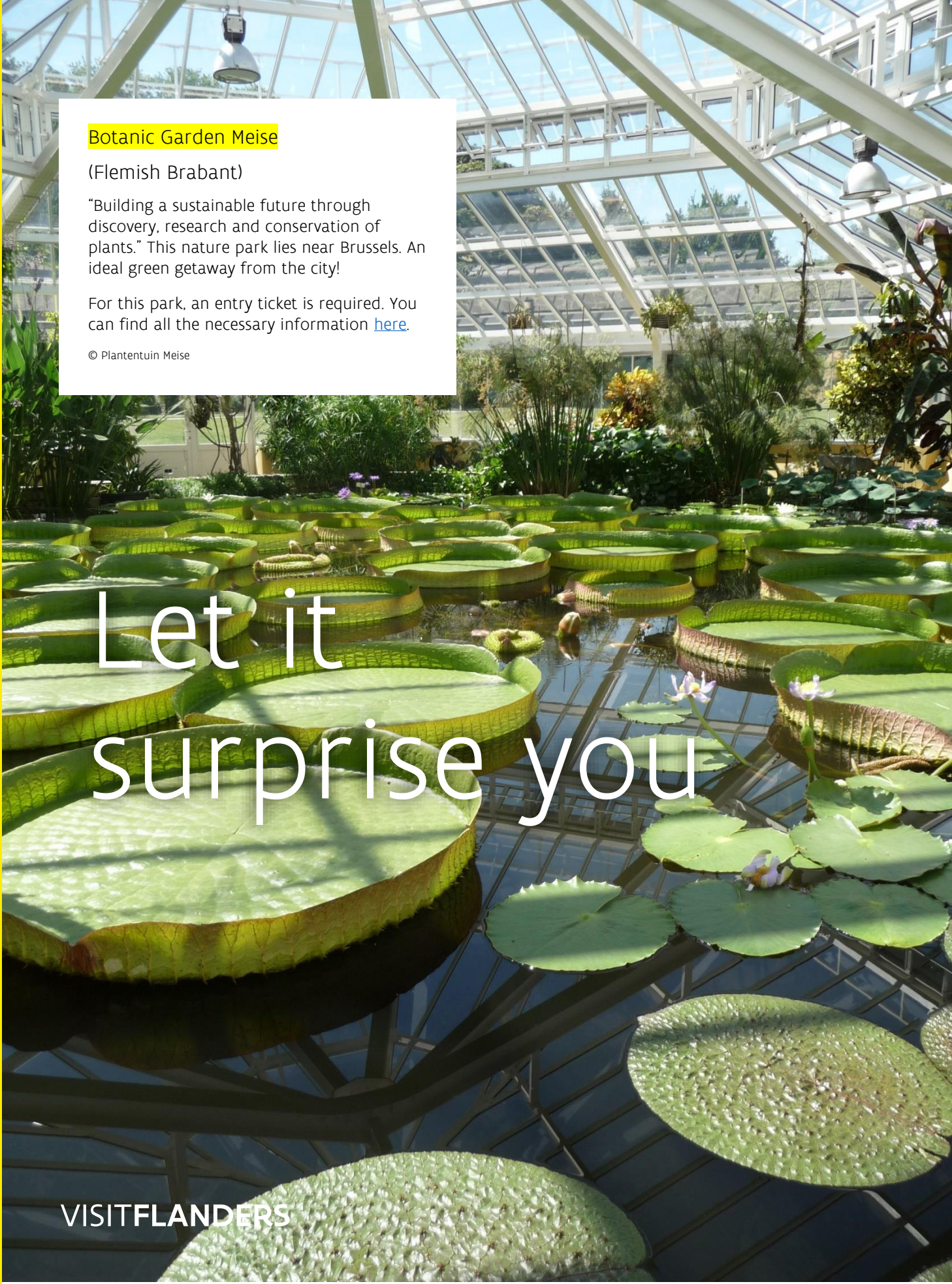

## Botanic Garden Meise

(Flemish Brabant)

"Building a sustainable future through discovery, research and conservation of plants." This nature park lies near Brussels. An ideal green getaway from the city!

For this park, an entry ticket is required. You can find all the necessary information here.

© Plantentuin Meise

# Let it surprise you

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## With gastronomic highlights:

## Belgian Endives Walk

Discover the region famous for its Belgian Endive cultivation. Stop to gaze up at the statue of 'The Belgian Endive farmer' and mosey about the village center of Kampenhout. Visit Bellingen Castle, see if you can spot a nightingale or any other songbird singing among the branches.

- Website
- PDF route
- Length of the trail: 10,4 k

© Breandán Kearney of Belgian Smaak

## Through the Heathland

## (province of Antwerp)

Infinite enjoyment, that is what Grenspark Kalmthoutse Heide represents! This diverse and dynamic nature reserve is situated on both sides of the Belgian-Dutch border and consists of heathlands, fens, forests and land dunes.

- Website

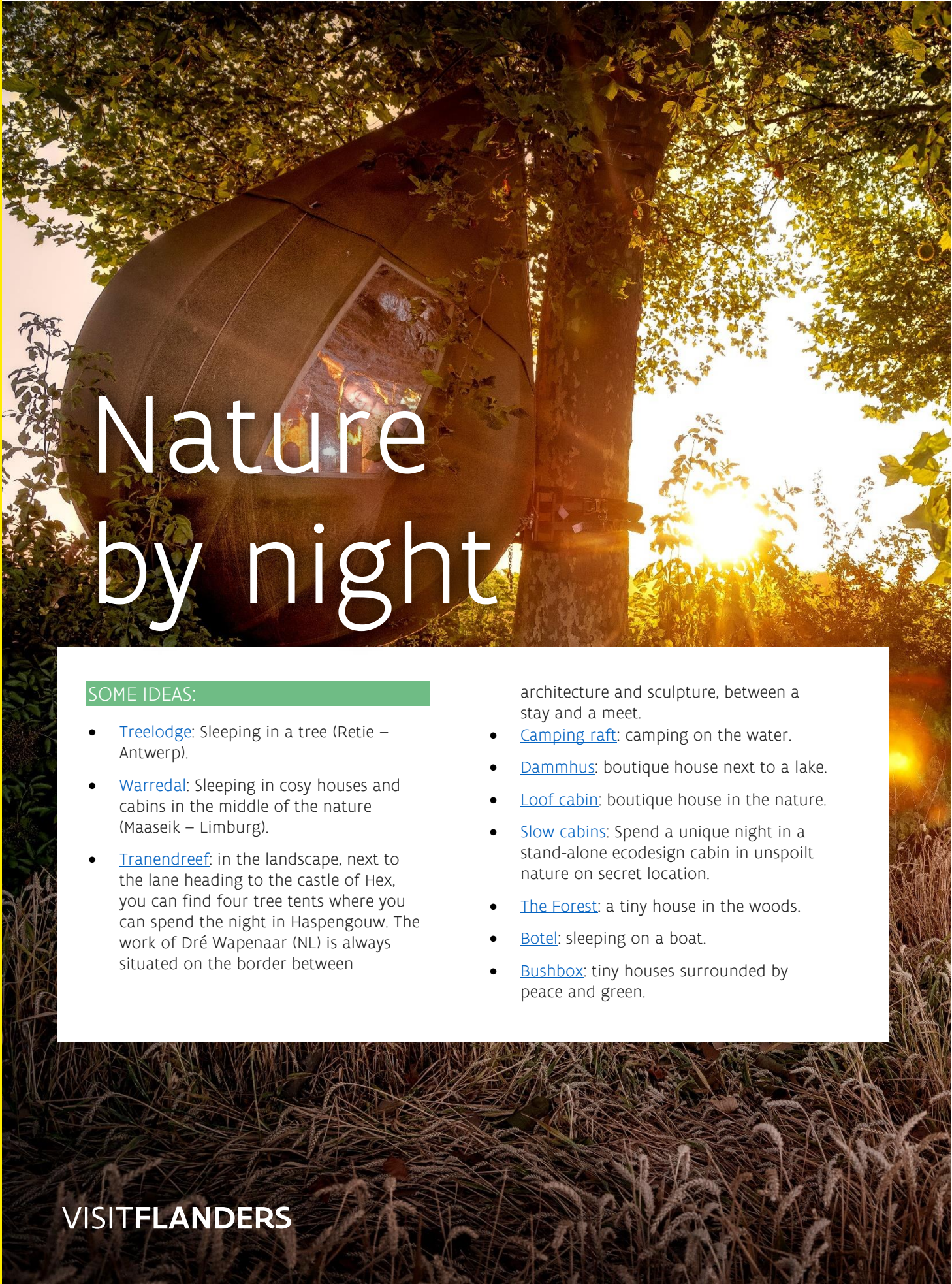
© Tom Linster ANB

## Surprising Voeren

The Voer region is one of Flanders' top hiking destinations. You explore the beautiful scenery by following the junctions of the marked hiking network. About 124 km of pure hiking fun. With its more than 90 numbered intersections (crossroads of walking paths), the hiker can plan the itinerary and length in advance. But you can also follow one of the themed walks leading through forests, past rivers, sunken roads, stately farmhouses and castles, distinctive half-timbered houses, and beautiful views.

- Website
- Length of the Trail: 39 km Inspiration route

© Guido Sweron



# Nature by night

## SOME IDEAS:

- Treelodge: Sleeping in a tree (Retie – Antwerp).
- Warredal: Sleeping in cosy houses and cabins in the middle of the nature (Maaseik – Limburg).
- Tranendreef: in the landscape, next to the lane heading to the castle of Hex, you can find four tree tents where you can spend the night in Haspengouw. The work of Dré Wapenaar (NL) is always situated on the border between architecture and sculpture, between a stay and a meet.
- Camping raft: camping on the water.
- Dammhus: boutique house next to a lake.
- Loof cabin: boutique house in the nature.
- Slow cabins: Spend a unique night in a stand-alone ecodesign cabin in unspoilt nature on secret location.
- The Forest: a tiny house in the woods.
- Botel: sleeping on a boat.
- Bushbox: tiny houses surrounded by peace and green.

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MORE INFORMATION

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