



Flanders
State of the Art

Micro-adventures in and around Hoge Kempen National Park

EXPERIENCE NATURE IN FLANDERS

Dear friends of Flanders,

Small adventures await you in and around the **Hoge Kempen National Park**. Embrace the vastness of more than 12,000 hectares of pristine nature, spread across 10 municipalities in the heart of Limburg.

Through one of the **entrance gates**, you step into this unique area where dense deciduous and pine forests are interspersed with purple heathlands, shifting dunes and large ponds. The National Park is also home to many rare animals. You might spot a smooth snake or a saddle-backed bush cricket.

Let your curiosity run wild on the diverse **cycle** and **walking routes** that wind through the park. Follow the traces of the (mining) past, let the **stone men** guide you to the top of the slag heap or travel among the stars and planets in the **Cosmodrome**.

In short, there is so much to discover in this unique part of Flanders. Read on, be inspired and experience the most wonderful micro-adventures there yourself.



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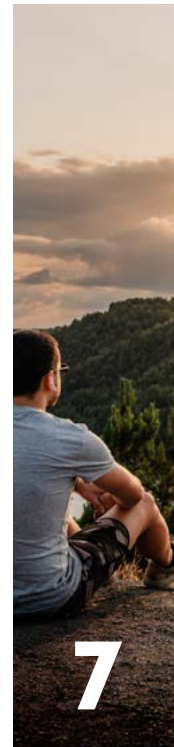
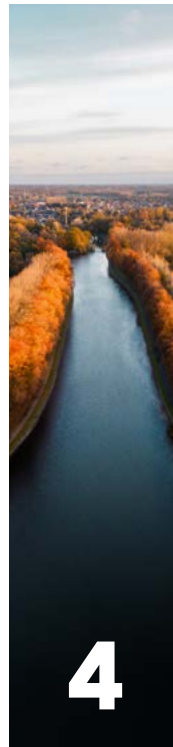
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ACCESSIBILITY AND ENTRANCE GATES

The **Hoge Kempen National Park** is one of the four National Parks in Flanders and is located in the province of **Limburg**. The vast nature reserve stretches across the municipalities of **As**, **Bilzen**, **Bree**, **Dilsen-Stokkem**, **Genk**, **Lanaken**, **Maaseik**, **Maasmechelen**, **Oudsbergen** and **Zutendaal**. With multiple entrance gates, the park offers good accessibility from all sides.

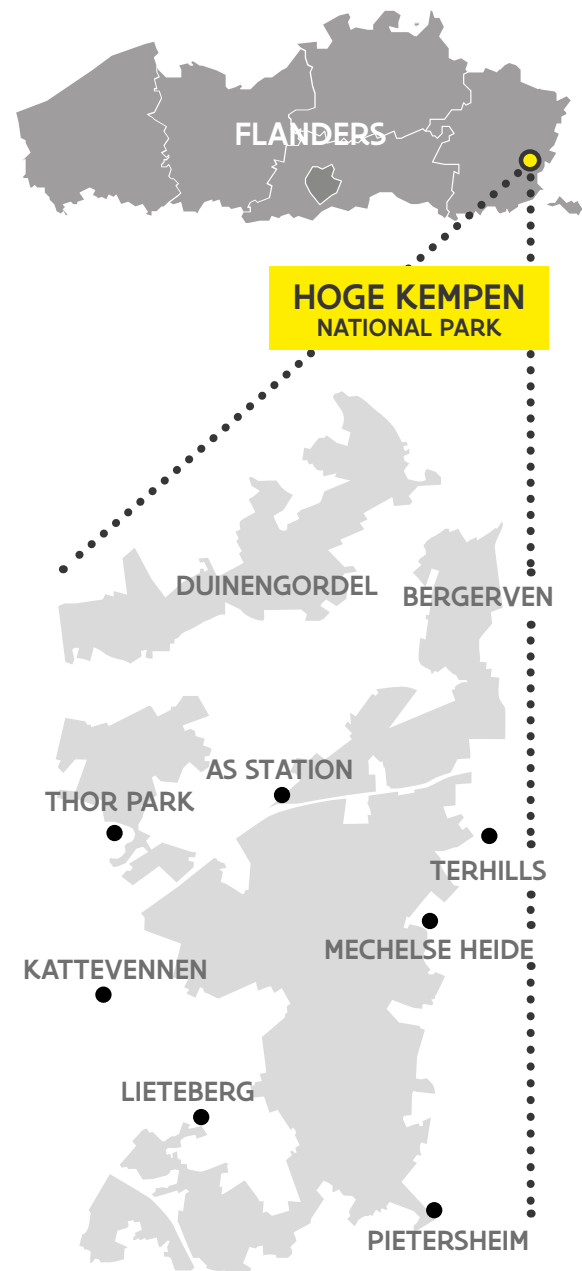
— Accessibility



- The park is easy to reach from Genk railway station. From there, you need to walk a little further to the **Kattevennen Entrance Gate**. At the station, you can also hire a **bicycle** or take a bus to the National Park.



- The Hoge Kempen National Park is easy to reach by car from the E314 motorway via exit 32 (Nationaal Park-West) or 33 (Nationaal Park-Oost). The entrance gates are near these exits.



The entrance gates

This vast nature reserve has nine entrance gates, 3 of which are still under development. These are places on the edge of the National Park which have all the necessary facilities such as ample parking, info signs, catering, toilets, and so on. Moreover, each entrance gate tells its own story and forms the starting point of a different adventure.

Terhills (Maasmechelen)

- Spectacular panoramas
- Main entrance gate with the National Park Visitors' Centre
- Cycle between the slag heaps
- Discover also: the mining heritage, an adventure play pit, the Ecotron and much much more

Find all the practical details [here](#)

Kattevennen (Genk)

- Stargazing in the Cosmodrome
- Stone man route
- Discover also: the mini-golf, playground and much more

Find all the practical details [here](#)

Station As (As)

- Themed around the coal railway line
- Take a roundtrip on a miniature train
- The ideal starting point for a bike ride
- Discover also: a 31-metre-high observation tower and the play forest

Find all the practical details [here](#)

Lieteberg (Zutendaal)

- Step into the world of bees and insects
- Visit insect centre "Entomopolis"
- Discover also: a barefoot trail and butterfly dome

Find all the practical details [here](#)



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© Tim Billman



The entrance gates



© Marjorie Boersma Billzen



© Peter Baas



© Chris König



© Chris König



© Voen Vanmeschelen

Pietersheim (Lanaken)

- Immerse yourself in the noble past of the medieval Moated Castle
 - Stroll around the children's farm with playground
 - Discover also: the gnome trail and two premium walks
- Find all the practical details [here](#)

Mechelse Heide (Lanaken)

- Highest natural point in the National Park
- Enjoy the wide vistas, purple heathland and gravel ponds
- Discover also: the Beestige Boelbos (play forest), the Kids safari and the Hourglass trail

Find all the practical details [here](#)

Duinengordel (Oudsbergen)

- Climb the Oudsberg, the highest land dune in the country
- Explore the Joekelbos, the largest play forest in Flanders
- Discover also: the picnic decks by the water, pole campsites, a ford for the horses and much much more!

Find all the practical details [here](#)

Bergerven (Maaseik)

- A former gravel extraction transformed with water ponds
- Large grazers contribute to the management of the area
- The landscape provides tranquillity and inspiration
- Ideal spot for bird watching

Find all the practical details [here](#)

Thor Park (Genk)

- Climb the slag heaps of the former Waterschei mine
- Notable buildings: the Colony of As and the Waterschei coal mine
- Starting point of the Stone man trail
- Also discover nearby: the Heiderbos, Mijndepot, LABIOMISTA and so much more!

Find all the practical details [here](#)



A WHOLE DAY OF ADVENTURE IN HOGE KEMPEN NATIONAL PARK

Let yourself be surprised by the versatility of the beautiful Hoge Kempen. Discover **the magic of an early morning**, when the sun paints the sky pink and the park awakens. Go on an adventure with a **Ranger** who will enthusiastically point out rare animals and plants during an exciting safari. Or feel the freedom as you traverse the forests on **horseback**. For a unique experience, try the **barefoot trail** in Lieteberg, where your feet can feel the different textures of the trail: from soft sand to cool stones and muddy pools. Go, enjoy and, above all, experience it for yourself.

Climb Flanders’ — highest land dune

Discover the magic of the Oudsberg! The Oudsberg, part of the elongated “Duinengordel”, is the highest and largest land dune in Belgium, rising 85 metres above sea level. At the summit, a breathtaking panorama awaits: dunes, heathland, sand and clusters of trees, surrounded by a green forest belt. Put on your walking shoes and explore the 9 marked walking routes of between 2 and 14 km.

Read all about it **here**.



— Wake up with the sunrise

Experience an enchanting moment in nature. Get up early and head towards **Terhills**. Here, where the Eisdon coal mine operated at full capacity until 1987, you can now enjoy a surprising landscape of hills and lakes. Terhills is not just a place; it is an experience in itself. You feel the history of the mining site, but at the same time you see how nature has found its own way. It is a place of contradictions, where the industrial past flows seamlessly into a lush green oasis.

Climb one of the slag heaps and enjoy breathtaking panoramas. From the peaks, you look out over the Meuse Valley and the National Park. The panoramic slag heap offers the most impressive views, but the others are also more than worthwhile. The perfect adventurous start to the day if you ask us.



On safari with a Ranger

Interested in the special animals and plants that you can find in the park? And not worried about getting sand between your toes? Then join an experienced Ranger out on the trail. The Ranger leads you to the most enchanting and hidden spots, while telling you all about the beauty of nature. During such a trip, you experience things you never would encounter otherwise.

YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN A RANGER ACTIVITY IN 2 WAYS:

- Sign up for a Ranger activity from the activity calendar. Every first and third Sunday of the month, a Ranger goes out with you into one of the sub-areas.
- Book a Ranger activity for you, your family, your friends, your colleagues... Choose the date, location and type of activity that suits you best.



— Trekking on horseback

Riding horseback in the Hoge Kempen National Park is a perfect way to experience the beautiful nature in an adventurous way. With 198 kilometres of bridle and carriage paths, about 85 per cent of which are unpaved, there is plenty of choice for riders and carriage drivers. The network of paths is built according to a node system, allowing you to create your own route.

THERE ARE 3 WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN CHOOSE YOUR ROUTE:

- Use the equestrian map from Toerisme Limburg
- Follow one of the suggested routes
- Create your own route with the route planner

You can find all the details [here](#)



Trot through forests, water, over dunes and along the heathland on [Dream route Duinengordel](#). As well as the soft sand of the dunes, you also come across captivating obstacles. You can also give your horse a barefoot experience there at the ford. A must for horse lovers.

Tiny
Tip

— Barefoot trail

Rediscover nature on the adventurous [barefoot trail in Lieteberg](#). Hang up your shoes and go for a 3 km walk on a controlled surface of wood, stones, tree chips, grass, loam and water. Every step stimulates your feet and your senses. Explore winding paths, defy challenging obstacles and let yourself be surprised by the different textures. The Barefoot Trail is a perfect mix of adventure and relaxation for the whole family.



After your adventurous journey, there is nothing better than relaxing in the cafeteria, where a refreshing honey beer and a slice of Limburg flan await you.

Tiny
Tip

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 the Hoge Kempen National Park and its vicinity, there are many original **places where you can spend the night** and blissfully dream away.

Warredal, Maaseik

Warredal, situated on the edge of the Hoge Kempen National Park, is a magical glamping and recreation domain. Here, it is all about re-energising and connecting with nature and each other, not with the digital world. These cosy cabins in the middle of the Limburg forests are perfect for a quiet holiday without distractions.



Terhills Resort by Center Parcs, Dilsen-Stokkem

In the middle of the forests, right next to Hoge Kempen National Park, a stay in the VIP and Exclusive cottages of the Terhills Resort is a delight. As well as cottages for 2 to 12 people, there is also a swimming pool with infinity pool, a trendy Beach House and much much more.



Castle hotel Pietersheim

Wake up in a beautiful castle, situated in a tranquil setting. With its long driveway, moat and moated castle, you can imagine yourself in a fairy tale here. This charming hotel has 15 rooms and is situated in Lanaken.



Volmolen B&B, Maaseik

Holiday accommodation B&B Volmolen is located by an idyllic water mill, surrounded by two clear babbling streams. Here, nature, culture and sport meet in a harmonious mix. The location is ideal for lovers of walking, cycling, mountain biking, equestrian sports, and carriage trails.



THREE BUCKET LIST EXPERIENCES FOR YOU TO TICK OFF IN HOGE KEMPEN NATIONAL PARK

Imagine the morning mist slowly clearing while you follow the mysterious stone men to the top of the slag heap. Or experience an incredible space adventure in the Cosmodrome's planetarium. Discover our bucket list experiences, tick them off one by one and create your own unforgettable memories.

1. FOLLOW THE STONE MEN TO THE TOP

Put on your walking shoes and let the ancient paths guide you. In Thor Park, the stone men show you the shortest way to the top of the slag heap. Once at the top, catch your breath while enjoying the stunning panoramas.

2. STARGAZING IN THE COSMODROME

Experience an incredible space adventure at the Cosmodrome, the showpiece of entrance gate Kattevennen. Discover the planetarium there, take a tour with an astro-ranger or visit the observatory.

3. NATIONAL PARK TRAIL

The National Park Trail is a long-distance walk of 110 km that takes you along the most beautiful spots in the Hoge Kempen National Park. This trail is one of the few walks in Flanders where, for more than 100 km, you see little building and/or traffic.



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TASTE THE NATURE

Taste the different flavors that the nature in the surroundings of Hoge Kempen National Park has to offer. Here are a few suggestions:

SCHRIJNWERKERS BLUEBERRIES

This 15-hectare blueberry plantation is located in Oudsbergen. From mid-July until the end of August, you can come here and pick the berries yourself. For those who love walking and cycling, there is good news: this plantation borders the car-free cycle route network and numerous walking routes.

'T RORENIJSJE

Situated in a quiet, rural setting next to the cycle route network, 't Rorenijsje offers a wide selection of artisanal farmhouse ice cream and sorbet, perfect for enjoying on the sunny terrace from April until September.

BIESONDER APPLE JUICE

Alden Biesen is home to the largest traditional orchard in Western Europe. With more than 40 hectares of traditional fruit orchards, around the end of September, this location offers an abundance of ripe fruit. And those apples form the basis of the delicious "BIESONDER" apple juice, an authentic regional product from Bilzen.

WINE ESTATE MONTEPERTINI

Experience la dolce vita in Limburg. The Montepertini wine estate produces a high-quality still wine, using the wine grape varieties Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Conclude your bike ride with a visit to this vineyard, where you can enjoy stunning views over Limburg.





Tiny Tip
Order a **picnic basket** and enjoy a delicious lunch at Nomadland or LABIOMISTA.



LABIOMISTA & Nomadland

LABIOMISTA is a living art project by Koen Vanmechelen which can be found on the foundations of an old mine and zoo. It combines art, science and society in one large park with animals, plants, sculptures and architecture. In this way, it forms a meeting place for all sorts in this world.

On the other side of the road from LABIOMISTA, there is **Nomadland**, a spot that connects the neighbourhood with the allotments of Zwartberg. Here you can have a picnic, sample local drinks and delicacies and enjoy the colourful surroundings. Nomadland, built by local residents, artists and the city of Genk, is a meeting place for everyone.

FOR CYCLISTS AND WALKERS: OUT AND ABOUT IN HOGE KEMPEN NATIONAL PARK

The best way to explore Hoge Kempen National Park? Cycling or walking. Fill your lungs with 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.

Tiny Tip

The cycle route network received an update with new nodes. Explore the cycling map [here](#).



Cycle routes

Recommended routes

Follow one of the seven recommended routes already marked out. Especially useful if you are not familiar with the area.

You can find all the details [here](#)

Purple splendour

A mostly flat cycle route through shady pine forests, purple heathland and right across the Hoge Kempen National Park

- **Distance:** 52 km
- **Departure point:** Maasmechelen
- **View the route [here](#)**

Surprising views

Start at the Cosmodrome in Kattevennen (Genk). Thus you cycle straight into the National Park with pine forests as a backdrop. These merge seamlessly into the heathlands of the Mechelse Heide.

- **Distance:** 57 km
- **Departure point:** Maasmechelen
- **View the route [here](#)**

Mountain biking

The Hoge Kempen National Park network contains 400 km of mountain bike trails spread over 13 loops. 98% of the routes are on unpaved paths and are suitable for bikers of all levels.

Discover the routes [here](#)

At the main entrance gate to the Hoge Kempen National Park, called the National Park Visitors' Centre, you can hire e-bikes from 2 April until 30 September. You can also hire bikes at entrance gates Station As, Kattevennen, Lieteberg and Pietersheim.

You can reserve your e-bike [here](#)



Walking routes

Top walks (20km+ walking loops)

Want it to be a little longer? Six unique top walks of more than 20 km have been put together. Each walk is located in a different area of the National Park. These routes are often a combination of shorter walking loops, supplemented by some unique walking trails where there are no signposted routes.

You can read all the info [here](#)

Walking with your dog

Do you enjoy going out with your four-legged friend? Your dog is more than welcome on a leash at most places in the National Park. Furthermore, there are a total of 9 dog-walking zones where your dog has free rein.

You can read all the info [here](#)

Walking packages

The Hoge Kempen National Park has compiled a number of ready-made walking packages with all the highlights of the National Park as well as the award-winning National Park Trail!

View the packages [here](#)

NATIONAL PARK TRAIL

The National Park Trail is a long-distance walk of 110 km that takes you along the most beautiful spots in the Hoge Kempen National Park. This trail is one of the few walks in Flanders where, for more than 100 km, you see little building and/or traffic. In December 2022, this trail achieved the Leading Quality Label, placing it among the 25 best long-distance walks in Europe!

THE FIVE BASIC STAGES:

- KATTEVENNEN → PIETERSHEIM (23,8 km).
- PIETERSHEIM → TERHILLS (23,9 km).
- TERHILLS → DUINENGORDEL (22,6 km).
- DUINENGORDEL → THORPARK (26,8 km).
- THORPARK → KATTEVENNEN (11 km).

Each stage starts and ends at an entrance gateway of the Hoge Kempen National Park, where all facilities are available.

You can find all the details and the topographic map [here](#)



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