



Flanders
State of the Art

Micro-adventures in Meuse Valley River Park

EXPERIENCE NATURE IN FLANDERS

Dear friends of Flanders,

Micro adventures await you in **Meuse Valley River Park**, where unspoiled nature and rich culture come together. Along **the 40-kilometre border** the river Meuse flows between Belgian and Dutch **Limburg**, the imposing rain-fed river that shapes this unique landscape. Here, **wild river nature** meets **charming Meuse villages**, each with its own fascinating history and authentic charm.

The Meuse, the backbone of the River Park, has sculpted a landscape that is unique in the Benelux. Its banks are a **haven** for countless water birds, butterflies, dragonflies, wild bees, special flowers and herbs. Even gnawing beavers and grazing **Konik horses** have a home here.

Leave the beaten track and immerse yourself in the wild river nature. Discover the tangle of old river arms, canals and gravel banks, which together with the **picturesque villages** form a very varied landscape. The Meuse Valley River Park offers a range of unique activities on the Lakes and is known for its 'untamed nature' - where you are free to leave the paths and explore nature in all its glory.

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.



Contents

ACCESSIBILITY AND GATEWAY VILLAGES 4

- Kessenich
- Aldeneik
- Stokkem (Visitor Center 'De Wissen')
- Leut
- Oud-Rekem
- Dutch bank

THE WHOLE DAY OF MICRO-ADVENTURES IN MEUSE VALLEY RIVER PARK 6

- Water fun on the Meuse Lakes
- On safari in Meuse Valley River Park
- Art on the Meuse
- Search for beavers accompanied by a Meuse Scout (MaasVerkenner)

SPEND THE NIGHT IN NATURE 10

TASTE THE NATURE 11

- Wine estates
- Regional products

TICK OFF THREE BUCKET LIST EXPERIENCES 12

- Do the Long-Distance Walk
- Bird watching at sunrise
- Raft camping

FOR CYCLISTS AND WALKERS: OUT AND ABOUT IN MEUSE VALLEY RIVER PARK 13

- Cycle routes
- Walking routes



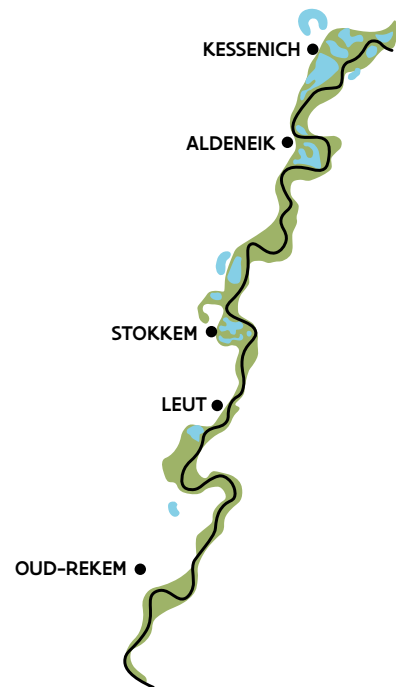


© Dan Verbruggen

ACCESSIBILITY AND GATEWAY VILLAGES

The Meuse Valley River Park is an imposing park that stretches along the banks of the River Meuse in Belgian and Dutch Limburg. Covering an area of over 13,000 hectares, it forms a special cross-border area. Along the Meuse, there are **five villages on the Flemish side: Kessenich, Aldeneik, Stokkem, Leut and Oud-Rekem**. These 'gateway villages' are within easy reach, no matter which direction you come from.

The 5 Flemish gateway villages are the best starting points for exploring the area. The starting points are signposted from the N78 and all have parking spaces and information boards. The information boards explain more about the area and walking routes. On the Dutch side, you also start from the Meuse villages, where there are parking spaces and information boards. For those coming by train, Meuse Valley River Park begins a few kilometres to the north of Maastricht station.



© Dan Verbruggen



© Visit Maasmeehlen

The gateway villages

Each gateway village is the starting point for an established walking area. On the Flemish side, there are six walking areas, each with its own unique character (the five gateway villages + walking area Elen).

Start your adventure here:

Kessenich

- A delightful combination of nature and culture
- Walk to the 'end of Belgium' (red loop) or Borgitter Castle (blue loop)
- Wild river nature, beaver tracks and a bird hide in Koningssteen - Kollegreend nature reserve (red walking loop)

Discover the Kessenich walking area [here](#)

Aldeneik

- Picnic by the lakes in Heerenlaak
- **Aldeneick wine estate:** learn more about grape growing in the Meuse Valley and follow the entire process from grape to wine in a bottle.
- Soak up history in Maaseik and Aldeneik
- Pilgrimage village Heppeneert

Discover the Aldeneik walking area [here](#)

Stokkem

- **Visitor Center De Wissen**
- Take the little ferry across the Meuse
- Mud watchtower in the Negenoord - Kerkeweerd nature reserve: stunning views across the region
- Maria Park in Oud-Dilsen
- Gastronomy: restaurant Vivendum

Discover the Stokkem walking area [here](#)

Leut

- A perfect combination of nature and culture
- The tree walk through the castle park
- Take the little ferry from nearby Meeswijk
- Vilain XIII Castle
- Mining area Eisden - village

Discover the Leut walking area [here](#)

Oud-Rekem

- Explore the authentic centre of the village.
- Chosen as the most beautiful village in Flanders in 2008
- Discover the three churches, a chapel, castle and the museum pharmacy
- Nature reserve the Oude Weerd, where donkeys are used for grazing
- d'Aspremont - Lynden Castle

Discover the Oud-Rekem walking area [here](#)

THE WHOLE DAY ON MICRO-ADVENTURES IN MEUSE VALLEY RIVER PARK

Whether you love water, art or want to see wildlife; the Meuse Valley Landscape Park is the place for you. Dive into the **refreshing waters** of the Meuse Lakes and try your hand at swimming, sailing or stand-up paddling. Or why not hire a kayak and paddle downstream on the Meuse while enjoying the tranquillity, babbling water and beautiful surroundings. Or would you prefer to keep both feet on the ground? Then put on your walking shoes and go on an adventure. **Search for beavers accompanied by a Meuse Scout (MaasVerkenner)**, admire the panoramic views and let yourself be surprised by the beautiful surroundings. Furthermore, art lovers can indulge themselves in **Art on the Meuse**.

What are you waiting for?



Water fun on — the Meuse Lakes

KAYAKING

From the water, you can experience the splendour of the surrounding nature at its best. Why not hire a kayak or canoe? You can choose from trips ranging from 9 to 21 km, with different start and finish locations.

INFO AND RESERVATION:

Kayak Maasland and rafting
+32 (0)89 71 73 90

info@kajakmaasland.be
www.kajakmaasland.be



Kayak Maasland, in collaboration with Meuse Valley River Park, is offering a free 'Meuse Cleanup Package'. This package includes a grabber, rubbish bag and gloves, so you can collect litter along the way while enjoying your journey.

Handy tip

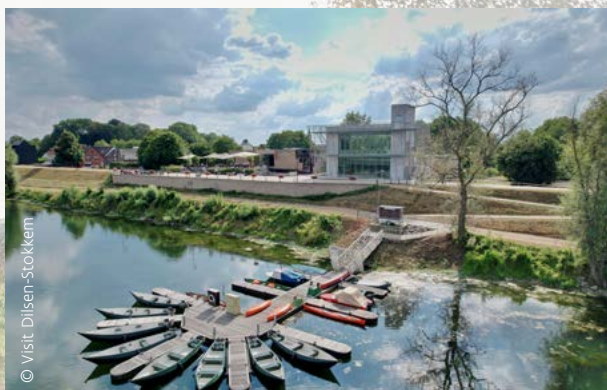
SILENT SLOOPS (STILSLOEPEN)

Want to experience the beauty of Meuse Valley River Park in peace and quiet? Then a trip on a silent sloop is for you. These electrically powered boats from Botel Ophoven are silent, simple to operate and you do not need a boating licence to use them.



WHISPER BOATS (FLUISTERBOTEN)

In Dilsen-Stokkem, you can hire an electric boat for a pleasant trip on the Oude Maas and surrounding lakes. You can combine the boat trip with a stroll along the Meuse. The whisper boats can be booked from April to October.



On safari in Meuse — Valley River Park

Put on your hiking boots for an adventurous walk in Negenoord-Kerkeweerd. A nature guide will lead you right through the open plains where Konik horses and Galloway cattle create their own paths. Discover why these grazers are so important and explore this unique nature reserve.

Read all about it [here](#).

Large grazers, such as Konik horses and Galloway cattle, play a crucial role in the development of these new wilderness areas. Together, they prevent the area from being choked by lush vegetation when the water rises. With both horses and cattle grazing on the landscape, **a dynamic patchwork of open grassland, wild thickets and shrubs** is created and constantly evolving.

— Art on the Meuse

Art on the Meuse is an ambitious project bringing art to the Limburg Meuse Valley. The project explores how humans and nature shape the landscape. Four themes take centre stage: river dynamics, border blurring, gravel industry and site-specific stories. Artists will work around these themes and so **strengthen the connection between the Meuse and its inhabitants**. The river, which is a border on paper, actually acts as a connecting lifeline for the Meuse Valley. The challenge for art, design and architecture is to create new connections with the phenomena in this beautiful area.



Discover 'Tree of Life', the artwork by Mark Dion (USA) on a hill near Herbricht.

Tiny tip

Search for beavers accompanied by a Meuse Scout (MaasVerkenner)

You will probably not come across these mysterious inhabitants of the River Park anytime soon, but you cannot miss the traces they leave behind! During this activity, you learn about the beaver's hidden life and how to recognise its tracks. **The Meuse Scouts (MaasVerkenners)** will assist in your search.



Spend the night in nature

From the first rays of the sun peeking through the leaves, to the song of birds greeting the day: nothing is more relaxing than waking up in the midst of nature. In Meuse Valley River Park and its vicinity, there are many original places to spend the night where you can dream away blissfully.

B&B Botel Ophoven, Kinrooi

Botel Ophoven is a floating hotel and restaurant where you can enjoy stunning views of the water while dining or staying overnight. An extraordinary experience!

Warredal, Maaseik

Warredal, situated on the edge of Hoge Kempen National Park, is a magical glamping and recreation experience. The focus is on 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, away from the distractions of the modern world.

Camping raft (treibgut), Kinrooi

The Treibgut rafts of Sailcenter Limburg offer a 'back to basics' camping experience on the water. These unique and rustic rafts let you enjoy nature away from crowded marinas or jetties. The raft serves as a holiday home, swimming island, sun deck, fishing spot or a place to hang out on the water.

De Sjeiven Dörpel, Maaseik

De Sjeiven Dörpel in Maaseik is a family-run hotel and brasserie where you can enjoy comfortable rooms and delicious home-cooked meals. Located within walking distance of the Meuse, it is perfect for relaxing in peace.

Au Nom De Dieu, Dilsen-Stokkem

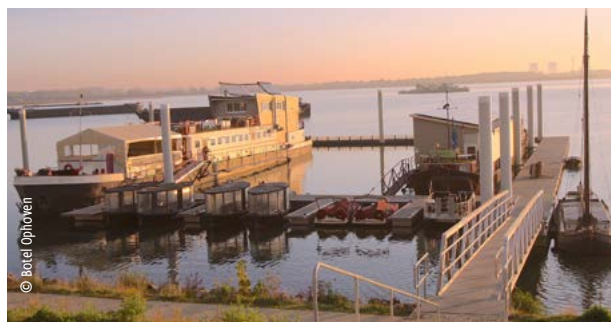
Au Nom De Dieu in Dilsen-Stokkem is a charming hotel located in the old presbytery of Lanklaar. Here, you can spend a lovely night in the middle of the Maasland. Hostess Christel will gladly show you the way to unique places and the most beautiful cycle routes of Limburg.

B&B Haerlekijn, Maasmechelen

B&B Haerlekijn is located in the rural village of Meeswijk, in the heart of the Meuse Valley, right on the Limburg cycle network. The key word at B&B Haerlekijn is 'relaxation': that is what the peaceful country life, the silence around the B&B, the excellent overnight accommodation and the extensive breakfast guarantee. Hostess Annick & her husband Frank will welcome you and look after you with the utmost care and are happy to start you off on your walk.

B&B Slapen bij Sint Pieter, Lanaken

Discover peace and nature in the most beautiful village in Flanders: Oud-Rekem. At 'B&B Slapen bij Sint Pieter', you can enjoy a beautifully decorated and spacious room with its own gas fireplace and lounge. Moreover, there are a great many delicious dining options within walking distance. It's an ideal base!



Tiny tip
Also discover
the camping rafts of
De Wissen among
the bucket list
experiences.

TASTE THE NATURE

The Meuse Valley is one of the driest and sunniest regions in the Benelux region. The **pebble and gravel terrain** provides the perfect soil for cultivating wine with the distinctive mineral aroma of the Meuse. Savour the different flavours that the nature in and around Meuse Valley River Park has to offer. Here are a few suggestions:



ALDENEYCK WINE ESTATE

On a sun-drenched south-eastern slope along the Meuse with a mineral-rich gravel that is excellent for grapevines, Karel and Tine Henckens-Linssen passionately cultivate the Pinot varieties, Chardonnay, Riesling and three sparkling wines. The Aldeneyck wines have even been awarded the title of best Belgian wine on multiple occasions. Go and taste them for yourself!

THILESNA WINE ESTATE

Thilesna wine estate is located in the heart of the Maasland. With the utmost dedication, Pinot Auxerrois, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris and Riesling vines are cultivated.

DE POORTERIJ

This restaurant in Elen, in the middle of the Meuse Valley, serves seasonal cuisine with many vegetables and herbs from its own garden. It is known as one of the best vegetable restaurants in the world.

VIVENDUM

This restaurant in Dilsen-Stokkem offers light, pure cuisine with local produce and inspiration from the Meuse Valley. Chef Alex Clevers creates tasty dishes using local ingredients.

Tiny tip

Cycle via **the Vegetable Route (Groenteroute) (41 km)** through the beautiful agricultural landscape, created and maintained for years by the farmers and market gardeners.

The largest vegetable garden in Flanders

Did you know that Kinrooi calls itself the 'largest vegetable garden in Flanders'? More than 30 different varieties of fruit and vegetables are grown in this municipality. Presiding over this large vegetable garden is, of course, the queen: the asparagus.

TICK OFF THREE BUCKET LIST EXPERIENCES

Just imagine: the morning mist slowly clearing as you spot a Mute Swan, Kingfisher or Great Crested Grebe. Or how about a **long-distance walk** along the **most beautiful landscapes and cosy villages** of the Meuse Valley? When night falls, you can admire the sunset from your **camping raft**. Discover our bucket list experiences, tick them off one by one and create your own unforgettable memories.

1. DO THE LONG DISTANCE WALK

The Long Distance Walk was specially developed for enthusiasts of multi-day walks. This 137-km cross-border hike connects the 11 municipalities in Meuse Valley River Park and takes you past the most beautiful landscapes and lovely villages. This walk was chosen as 'Best Walking Route of the Benelux' in April 2021.

2. BIRD WATCHING AT SUNRISE

The Meuse Valley forms part of a number of important **bird migration routes**. Especially during the spring and autumn migration, there are unusual species to be observed here. Some breed here, others come here to spend the winter. But there are also a great many species you see throughout the year. You do not need to be an expert to spot birds in the Meuse Valley.

3. RAFT CAMPING

The camping rafts of **De Wissen** can be found in the middle of the **Negenoord nature reserve (Dilsen-Stokkem)**, in the heart of the Meuse Valley. **Two camping rafts** are available, each accessible only by **Canadian canoe**. These rafts are located in separate creeks of the Oude Maas. Here, you can enjoy an oasis of peace away from all the hustle and bustle. From your sleeping bag, admire the sunset and watch the many water birds unnoticed. If you are lucky, a beaver may even swim past your raft!

More information is available on the Dilsen-Stokkem Tourism website.



Handy tip
Look at the bird's eye **view map** of the Landscape Park here. It introduces you to some common or unusual bird species that you can find in the park.



For cyclists and walkers: out and about in Meuse Valley River Park

The best way to explore Meuse Valley River Park is by 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.





Cycle routes

As you cycle through the Meuse Valley River Park, the area's uniqueness and charm immediately becomes apparent. The winter embankments are **car-free** so you can cycle undisturbed for kilometres while fully enjoying the **beautiful views**. Moreover, a little ferry makes it **easy to cross** to and from the Dutch side of the river.

It is no coincidence that the Meuse Valley is **the most popular region for cycling tourists in Flanders!** The **starting spots in the gateway villages are an ideal point of departure** for a cycle tour in Meuse Valley River Park. There is always ample parking available and the tourist information offices nearby can provide you with a cycling map or more info about the region. You can always find a charging point for electric bicycles close to the start points.

Where the Meuse is boss

Enjoy kilometres of cycling pleasure along endless banks interspersed with some cultural highlights.

- **Distance:** 50 km
- **Departure point:** Meuse Centre De Wissen
- **View the route [here](#)**

Cycle route network

With the **extensive cycle route network**, you can create your own route using the nodes which are indicated in both directions. Using them, you decide the direction in which to go and how long your ride is. The cycle route networks connect seamlessly with each other. The system is the same, only the colour of the signs is different. In Flanders, you follow the blue signs, in the Netherlands the green ones.



Through the most beautiful village and magical Maastricht

This cross-border cycling loop, with a few moderate climbs, takes you past historical highlights such as medieval Oud-Rekem, which was chosen as the most beautiful village in Flanders in 2008.

- **Distance:** 66 km
- **Departure point:** Riemst
- **View the route [here](#)**

From the white town to Maasland renaissance

This route takes you through the northern part of the Maasland. You pass many cultural and historical sights such as the statue of the Van Eyck brothers in Maaseik, the Aldeneyck wine estate and the white town of Thorn.

- **Distance:** 66 km
- **Departure point:** Maaseik
- **View the route [here](#)**

International Meuse Cycle Route

Hop on your bike and cycle through three countries (France, Belgium and the Netherlands) via 30 stages. On the 1,152 km of signposted roads, you discover dozens of cities, towns and villages. Thanks to the ferries, you can choose which side of the river you cycle along!

- **View the route [here](#)**



Walking routes

The Meuse Valley is the **perfect place to relax and to take a long walk**. **Six walking routes** have been created on the Flemish side of the Meuse and there is one on the Dutch side of the river. Together, they **stretch for over 200 km** and take you past the most beautiful places in Meuse Valley River Park.

All the walking routes on the Flemish side of the river are **signposted** using wooden posts bearing coloured symbols that indicate each of the routes. If you follow a particular symbol, you walk along the walking loop and return to the same starting point. If you want to combine two or more walking routes, keep an eye on the walk changes.

Leut - Trees walk

The park around Castle Vilain XIII is home to some very special species of tree. To discover all these unique giants, follow the tree walk.

- **Distance:** 3.7 km
- **Departure point:** Vilain XIII Castle
- **View the route [here](#)**

Aldeneik - yellow walking route

Walk from the charming Meuse village of Aldeneik to the historic centre of Maaseik. Stop by the Aldeneyck wine estate on Friday or Saturday and taste the delicious wines.

- **Distance:** 10.7 km
- **Departure point:** Maaseik
- **View the route [here](#)**

Oud-Rekem - red walking route

Indulge in your love of culture in one of the most authentic village centres in the Limburg Meuse Valley.

- **Distance:** 15.4 km
- **Departure point:** Oud-Rekem
- **View the route [here](#)**

Stokkem - orange walking route

This walk lets you see how beautiful nature can be in an area where the Meuse has its way.

- **Distance:** 7 km
- **Departure point:** Visitor Center De Wissen
- **View the route [here](#)**



Flanders
State of the Art

COLOPHON

RESPONSIBLE PUBLISHER

Peter De Wilde, VISITFLANDERS,
Grasmarkt 61, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

LEGAL DEPOSIT

D/2024/5635/33

MORE INFORMATION

nature@visitflanders.com

www.visitflanders.com

COPYRIGHTS

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a database or retrieval system, or be published in any form or in any way (electronically, mechanically, by print, photoprint, microfilm or any other means) without prior written permission from the Publisher.