

Kortrijk has a rich (in every sense of the word) history that extends all the way back to the Roman Empire. The city flourished in the Middle Ages, with the production of flax and wool, connecting it to both England and France. Today, the textile industry still plays an important part in Kortrijk's economy.

During both World Wars, Kortrijk was partly destroyed. Qualifying this as “fortunate” would be silly, but as things stand, the space that was so brutally created did pave the way for the construction of more modern architecture on the city's ruins. Though the city is typically renowned for its medieval heritage, today's walking tour zooms in on a different era in architectural history.

Exit the Kortrijk train station and turn left onto Tolstraat, then right onto Conservatoriumplein (this is a street). Continue walking, leaving Casinoplein on your right, and at the top of the street, turn right onto Roeland Saverystraat. Have a look at numbers 16 and 18 (1), which are completely different in style, but are both great examples of post-war modernism. Number 18 is especially remarkable for its functionalism. Jean Van Coppenolle designed this house for a doctor, who had his consultation room on the ground floor, with the kitchen and living room being on the first floor, and the bedrooms on the second floor. He used very modern materials for that era (1958) and the façade still feels current. Van Coppenolle travelled extensively through the US and was inspired by architects such as Craig Ellwood and Pierre Koenig. Closer to home, he also took inspiration from the French architect Jean Prouvé, who often used “poor” or economic materials, like Van Coppenolle. Like his colleague Willy Van Der Meer, Van Coppenolle was a socialist architect, designing affordable housing for the middle-class. For this house, however, he had a larger budget to work with, spending it on qualitative materials such as marble for the floors and using concrete and wood for the monumental staircase. On the first floor there's also a gorgeous, custom-built room divider.

Walk to the end of the street, turn left towards the roundabout and take the first street on your left, Hendrik Consciencestraat. Continue to walk down

such as the contrasting colours of the brickwork and the irregular positioning of the windows add interest. At the rear, facing south, the house opens up entirely onto the garden. The positioning on a sloping site led Wybauw to organise the space in staggered levels: the rooms at ground level, which look out onto the avenue and are west-facing, are situated one flight of steps below the other living spaces. From the outside, you can deduce this organisation from the discreet staggering of windows.

8. Avenue Brunard 41, Jacques Wybauw (1960)

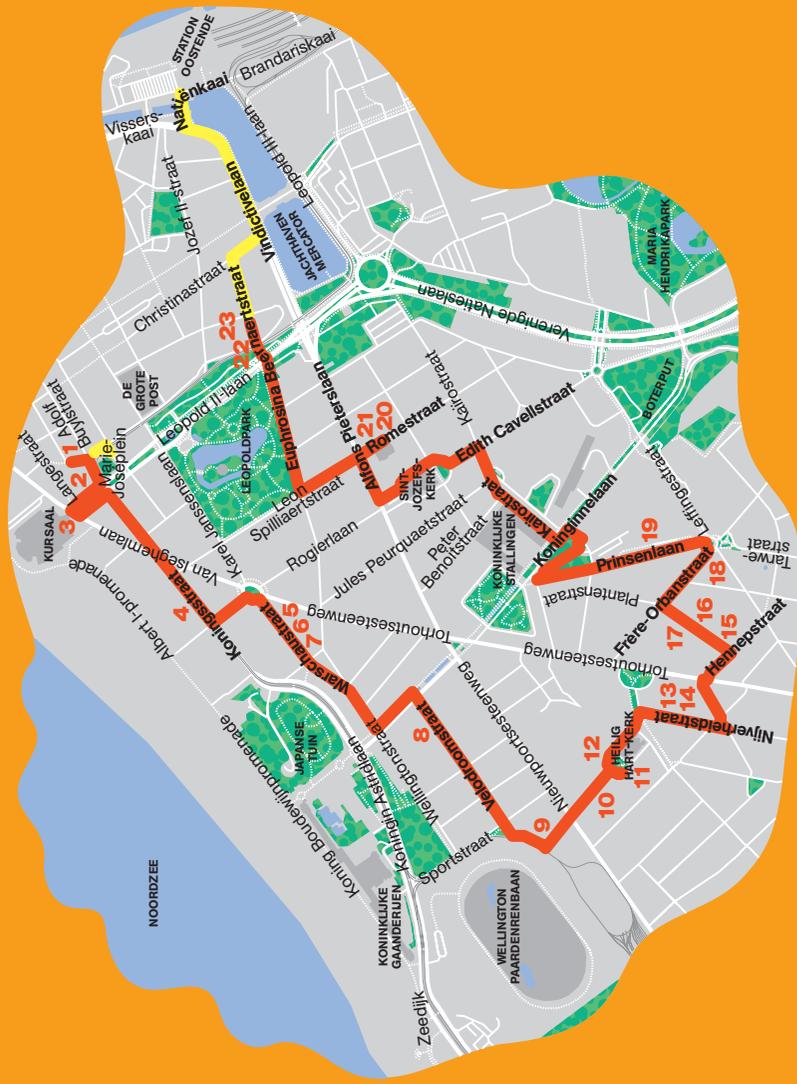


Continue walking along Avenue Brunard until you reach Rue Edith Cavell. In front of you, at number 119 (9), you'll see what is possibly one of the smallest modernist buildings ever built. This tiny white house with curved balconies was designed by Raphaël Delville in 1933, and his name can still be seen on the building's façade.

9. Rue Edith Cavell 119, Raphaël Delville (1933)



Next, turn left onto Rue Edith Cavell, then right onto Rue Roberts Jones and then right again onto Avenue Léo Errera. Number 41 (10) is the former home of art collectors Alice and David Van Buuren, which David designed himself, and which was built by Léon Govaerts and Alexis Van Vaerenbergh in 1928. Unlike David, Alice came from humble origins, and David vowed to introduce her to the world of arts and culture that was so dear to him. Almost everything in their house was made to measure by craftsmen and artists, from the carpets and the furniture to the lighting and everything in between. David later became the director of a private bank and amassed a fortune, which he largely spent on their magnificent art collection. Although they were quite reclusive, they engaged with the artists whom they collected. They became the patrons of Gustave Van de Woestyne, whose work can still be seen inside the house. To give you an idea of just how wealthy the Van Buurens were: when the war broke



4,5 km

- 1** Madridstraat 5
Alfred Danneel
1930s
- 2** Marie-Joséplein 3
Joseph Vanderbanck
1928
- 3** Monaco-Plein
Léon Stymen
1950
- 4** Koningsstraat 43A
Paul Felix
1959
- 5** Warschaustraat 12
Bernard Christiaens
1937
- 6** Warschaustraat 14-20
unknown
1930s
- 7** Warschaustraat 22
Albert-Victor Fobert
1938
- 8** Velodroomstraat 11
Silvain Smis
1930s
- 9** Eduard de
Cuyperstraat 11A
Silvain Smis
1933
- 10** Heilig-Hartlaan 21
Maurice-Albert
Hautekiet
1930s
- 11** Heilig-Hartplein 7
Silvain Smis
1930s
- 12** Heilig-Hartplein 8
Silvain Smis
1930s
- 13** Nijverheidstraat 36
G. Galle
1930s
- 14** Nijverheidstraat 42
Jerome Brackx
1930s
- 15** Plantenstraat 92
unknown
1930s
- 16** Plantenstraat 78
Marcel Van Coillie
1930s
- 17** Plantenstraat 55, 49
unknown
1930s
- 18** Frère-Orbanstraat 65
Marcel Van Coillie
1933
- 19** Prinsenlaan
1930s
- 20** Gentstraat 6
Gaston Eyselinck
1950
- 21** Romestraat 11
Gaston Eyselinck
1955
- 22** Euphosina
Beernaertstraat 21B
Jan Tanghe
1957
- 23** Euphosina
Beernaertstraat 21A
Bernard Christiaens
1937

The names of the architects of numbers 55 and 49 (**17**) unfortunately remain unknown, but they both have a playful quality that is difficult to resist.

17. Plantenstraat 49, unknown (1930s)



Afterwards, turn right onto Frère-Orbanstraat and find number 65 (**18**), by Marcel Colombie, which really stands out, as the door seems so strikingly modern, even though it's originally from the 1930s.

18. Frère-Orbanstraat 65, Marcel Van Coillie (1933)



At the roundabout, head left, and take the first street on your left, the stately Prinsenvaan (**19**). It's easy to see why this is such a princely avenue: the street, which looks out onto the local tennis club, exudes an almost royal quality. Behind it you'll find



Continue walking down De Merodelei until you reach number 114 on your left (3), an elegant example of art deco. The juxtaposition of the yellow brick with the door's soft yellow tones, and the flower relief around it lend the building a poetic quality, making it stand out from other houses of the same period on this street.

3. De Merodelei 114,
Charles Gauquie (1939)



While you make your way to your next stop at De Merodelei 65, let's take a quick, closer look at the Turnhout School, whose members designed this building.

In the 1960s, Turnhout was home to several young architects, who would go on to change the face of this city forever. They included Lou Jansen & Rudi Schiltz, Paul Neefs, and Carli Vanhout & Paul Schellekens. Their work was both innovative and



De Merodelei 187, Ernest Wauters (1932)

Deurne ^(Antwerp)



Menegemlei 23, Renaat Braem (1958)

the building originally also had a roof garden, which later had to be removed due to leaks.

18. Menegemlei 23, Renaat Braem (1958)



Take the second street on your left to walk back to Boekenberglei, where you can see another architect's home at no. 129. Roger Groothaert (**19**) was a strong believer in the integration of architecture and art, a vision he shared with Braem. Together



Avenue Adrien Bayet 11, Willy Van Der Meeren (1952)

Walk back, then turn right onto Avenue Jean-Baptiste Depaire again, stopping at numbers 81 **(13)** and 83 **(14)** for the route's final examples of interbellum architecture. While they are side by side, they represent a completely different aspect of modernist architecture. Number 83 is a big, fat wedding of art deco and the Amsterdam School, featuring alternate brickwork and colourful ironwork. Number 81, on the other hand, is a bit showy but in a very subtle way. But the devil is in the detail: the recessed door, the minimalist ironwork on the door and garage, the cimorné that adorns the ground-floor façade, the mosaics on the columns around the windows, the elegant house number, and the tiny stained-glass window to the left of the front door.

13. Avenue Jean-Baptiste Depaire 81, Janssen (1936)



14. Avenue Jean-Baptiste Depaire 83, unknown (1930s)

