

WHY SHOULD I GO TO ANTWERP



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THE CITY YOU DEFINITELY
NEED TO VISIT
BEFORE YOU TURN 30





THIS IS WHY!

Antwerp is modest in size, but big in character and culture, with its historical centre, the hip neighbourhood Het Zuid, and the lively area of Berchem. Whether you're a solo traveller, here with friends, or making new connections along the way, this guide-book is designed to help you navigate the best spots in town.

Visiting this vibrant city doesn't have to break the bank. Explore the different areas, take in the scenery, and soak up the atmosphere. Walk, cycle, and use the trams, rather than taking expensive taxis. Book a nice hostel, join walking tours, and visit the famous sights and museums. And don't forget to have a drink along the Scheldt River, or a picnic in a park to experience the local way of life. Because you don't have to go to the expensive boutiques on Schuttershofstraat to find the treasures that truly enrich your life.

This guidebook has you covered with insights into Antwerp's rich history, colourful street art scene, and unique festivals that bring the city to life. Whether you're an art aficionado, a foodie on the hunt for your next culinary delight, or a nightlife ninja ready to conquer the coolest clubs, Antwerp has something just for you. So, pack your curiosity and most comfortable shoes. Antwerp is waiting for you, and it's going to be an amazing ride. One thing is certain, you will want to come back for more.

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DISTRICTS

Despite its modest size, Antwerp boasts a remarkable number of districts. Below are the areas that this guidebook focuses on. Some points of interest are located just beyond them, but we'll point out the nearest district in those cases.

Historical Centre (Centrum)

The heart of Antwerp, characterised by its rich history, stunning architecture and vibrant atmosphere. It houses iconic landmarks Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal (Cathedral of Our Lady), Grote Markt (Grand Market Square), and the medieval castle Het Steen. The narrow, cobble streets are lined with charming cafés, ancient market squares, boutique shops, and historic buildings. Around the lively Ossenmarkt, you can find the University Quarter, with many student bars, cafés, sandwich shops and restaurants.

Eilandje (North)

Translating to 'Little Island', Eilandje is a historic port area that has undergone extensive redevelopment in recent years. It now boasts waterfront bars, upscale restaurants, and cultural sites such as MAS (Museum aan de Stroom) and the Red Star Line Museum. The marina and historic docks add to its charm, making it a popular destination.

Centraal Station & Diamant (East)

The Central Station district and the adjacent Diamant form a vibrant cultural hub. Many restaurants and shops are based here. In the former district, you will find Chinatown and one of the oldest zoos in the world, while in the latter, you'll discover the diamond dealers that represent Antwerp's fame in the global diamond trade.



Borgerhout (East)

Energetic street life and a thriving food scene are characteristics of multicultural Borgerhout. It's home to bustling markets, diverse eateries, and eclectic shops. Despite its urban character, Borgerhout also boasts green spaces such as the Te Boelaerpark, providing residents with recreational opportunities. Borgerhout is where your taste buds can take a trip around the world without ever leaving the city.

Zurenborg (East)

This district is famous for its stunning Belle Époque architecture, characterised by colourful Art Nouveau and neo-Gothic townhouses. It's a picturesque residential area with tree-lined streets, charming squares, and cosy cafés. The street of Cogels-Osylei is particularly renowned for its architectural beauty,

attracting visitors eager to admire the decorated façades and refined detailing. This is where the magic of Antwerp truly comes to life.

Berchem (East/South)

Berchem is a diverse residential area known for its leafy streets, parks, and historic architecture. It offers a peaceful atmosphere away from the hustle and bustle of the city centre. With its tree-lined streets and quaint cafés, it gives friendly neighbourhood vibes. Berchem's lively squares, local markets, and cultural venues contribute to its vibrant community spirit.

Fashion District & Kaaïen (South)

Calling all fashionistas and style mavens, this is your playground! This district is synonymous with Antwerp's thriving fashion industry and home to renowned fashion academies such as the Royal

Academy of Fine Arts. The district is known for designer boutiques and concept stores where haute couture meets high street. The Kaaïen, or 'quays', along the Scheldt River are popular for leisurely strolls and outdoor events.

Het Zuid (South)

Known as Antwerp's artistic, hip and happening district, Het Zuid is brimming with art galleries, fashionable boutiques, chic cafés, and stylish restaurants. It's a hub for the city's creative community, with its beautiful Belle Époque architecture adding to its allure. The Royal Museum of Fine Arts and the Museum of Contemporary Art are also located here, attracting visitors from all over the world.

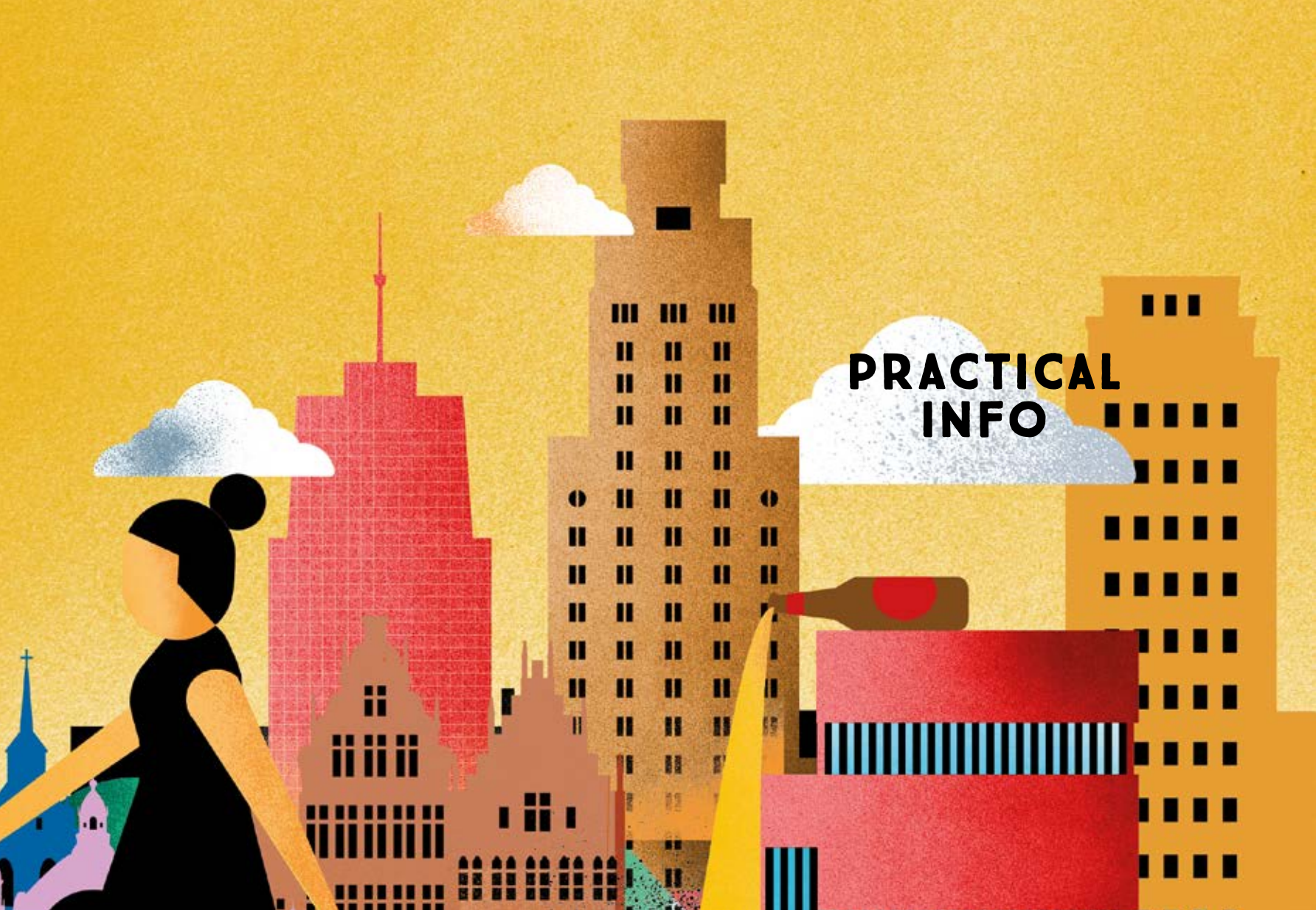
Nieuw Zuid (South)

This district is a modern extension of Het Zuid,

characterised by contemporary architecture, sleek residential blocks, and spacious green areas. It offers a mix of residential, commercial, and recreational spaces, with a focus on sustainable urban development. Nieuw Zuid is rapidly evolving into a vibrant neighbourhood, attracting young professionals and families seeking modern urban living.

Linkeroever (West)

Linkeroever, meaning 'Left Bank', is situated on the west bank of the Scheldt River, opposite the city centre. It offers a more tranquil and residential alternative to the bustling city centre, with spacious parks, recreational facilities, and waterfront promenades. Linkeroever provides stunning views of the Antwerp skyline and is popular for outdoor activities such as cycling, jogging, and picnicking.



**PRACTICAL
INFO**

TRAVEL

Antwerpen-Centraal is a major hub for domestic and international train services. High-speed trains (Eurostar) connect Antwerp with cities like Brussels, Amsterdam, Paris, and London. Regional and local trains also provide convenient connections to other Belgian destinations. The station itself is a stunning architectural masterpiece worth exploring. Find out more at belgiantrain.be.

Several bus companies operate services to and from Antwerp, connecting it with neighbouring cities and countries. The FlixBus network, for example, offers affordable coach services to various European destinations. Visit flixbus.com to plan your journey.

If you are travelling by car, keep in mind that traffic congestion can be significant during peak hours

(particularly around the Antwerp Ring motorway). Because of the Low Emission Zone (LEZ) and the fact that road parking in the Historical Centre is for permit holders only, it is advisable to park your car at one of the nine P+Rs just outside the city. From there, you can take a tram downtown. Check slimnaarantwerpen.be for more info.

Many of Antwerp's attractions, especially those in the Historical Centre, are within walking distance of each other. Exploring the city on foot allows you to soak in the charming architecture, vibrant street life, and hidden gems tucked away in narrow alleyways.

Antwerp is a bike-friendly city. Its dedicated cycling lanes and bike-sharing schemes like Velo Antwerpen, allow both residents



and visitors to easily rent bicycles for short-term use. Cycling is a popular and eco-friendly way to explore the city, especially given Antwerp's relatively flat terrain and compact city centre. Buy a day (€5) or week (€12) pass online and get the first 30 minutes of each ride for free. Go to velo-antwerpen.be to find out how it works.

Bird, Lime, and Poppy offer shared scooters in Antwerp via a free-floating system: they do not have fixed parking spaces, but you locate them with an app. You can unlock a scooter using your smartphone and take off instantly.

Antwerp has an efficient public transport system consisting of trams and buses operated by De Lijn. The city's tram system is particularly convenient for navigating the downtown area and reaching suburban neighbourhoods. A network of

buses complements the tram routes, providing connections to areas not served by rail. If you only use the tram or bus once, it's best to opt for a one-time ride (€2.50). If you use public transport more often, a day ticket (€7.50), 10-journey card (€17) or 3-day pass (€15) will work out cheaper. Buy your ticket online and plan your trip via delijn.be.

You can take DeWaterbus (a ferry) from Hemiksem or Hoboken towards Steenplein in the city centre. After a stop at Linkeroever, you'll sail straight towards the heart of the port. At any DeWaterbus stop, you can transfer to other forms of transport, or continue by bike. Navigate past traffic jams by boat via dewaterbus.be. Cross the Scheldt River between the left and right bank with a free ferry. Bicycles are also allowed free of charge. Check their timetable at agentschapmdk.be.



WHERE TO STAY

B&B Hotels

hotel-bb.com

This chain has two modern hotels with bright rooms in both Centrum and Het Zuid. Options range from single rooms to family rooms hosting four. Both hotels are wheelchair-accessible with dedicated rooms for disabled guests. There is a vending machine for drinks and snacks, and a breakfast buffet is available at an extra charge.

A-STAY

*Pelikaanstraat 86,
Centrum, a-stay.com*

Conveniently located next to Antwerpen-Centraal, you will find this urban hotel with 190 rooms. Want to keep up your workout routine? Hit their gym at all hours of the day. No matter the weather, you can always enjoy their urban garden tent to get some fresh air. All rooms have private bathrooms. A-STAY has a 24/7 *grabn'go* shop and coffee corner. Breakfast is available at an additional charge.

Antwerp Central Hostel (aka Hostel Pulcinella)

*Bogaardeplein 1, Centrum,
jeugdherbergen.be*

In the heart of the city you will find this hostel with large windows, a bright sleeping area, rooftop terrace, lounge, and bar. They have three room types: for two, four, or six people, each with their own bathroom. Good to know; you will receive a linen package to make your own bed, and towels can be rented. Breakfast is included.

Antwerp City Hostel

*Grote Markt 40, Centrum,
antwerpcityhostel.be*

Situated in the heart of Centrum, with the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal around the corner, you will find this hostel in a Baroque guild house. It even has a façade dating back to 1644. You'll find a shared kitchen, bar, and lounge with a pool table, lockers, luggage storage, and vending machines. There are private and shared (mixed/female) rooms for five to twenty people. Breakfast is included.

The Ash Hotel

*Italiëlei 237, Centrum,
ash-antwerp.com*

Choose between a shared dorm if you are visiting with a group of friends or a private room when you would like some peace and quiet. They offer female-only dorms as well as mixed dormitories from 3 to 18 guests. With a fully equipped kitchen, a quiet library, and a communal area. Breakfast is not included, but a small morning meal is available at Bar Alma.

Citybox

*Molenbergstraat 2,
Centrum,
cityboxhotels.com*

This affordable design hotel with a Scandinavian touch has accommodation ranging from single occupancy to family rooms, each equipped with its own bathroom. Some rooms come with a balcony. Breakfast can be purchased at the adjacent partner café. In summer, their backyard transforms into a terrace.

Prizeotel

Tunnelplaats 5, Centrum,
prizeotel.com

The area Eilandje is around the corner from this vibrant and colourful hotel with 144 allergy-free rooms with soundproofed windows. The hotel is wheelchair-accessible and has rooms for disabled guests. A breakfast buffet is available at an extra charge.

Yays

Frankrijklei 33, Centrum,
yays.com

Stylish, spacious and fully equipped studios/apartments close to Antwerpen-Centraal. Options range from studios for two people (36 m²) to apartments for six (87 m²). Also suitable for longer stays. No breakfast available.

↓ YUST



Yust

Coveliersstraat 6, East/
South, yust.com

This creative, colourful, and modern hotel is the perfect place to combine staying the night, enjoying some good food, and sipping a few drinks on their rooftop bar. Yust is also known for its workshops, art exhibitions, talks and gigs, where connecting with strangers is at the heart. There are eight-person (mixed and female-only) dorms with shared bathrooms, and two- or four-person rooms with private bathrooms. Also suitable for longer stays. Breakfast is available at an additional charge.

City Camping at Linkeroever

Jachthavenweg 6, West,
citycampingantwerp.be

Are you feeling a bit more adventurous, and would you like to combine the outdoors with the city of Antwerp? Then camping across the Scheldt River is for you. During the summer season (April to November), the camping is open daily, but during the winter season (November to the end of March) only on Saturdays and Sundays. Bring your own tent or rent a tipi or caravan. On Fridays, a food truck comes around, and a small bakery shop is there on weekends.



GOOD TO KNOW

Language

The primary language spoken in Antwerp is Dutch, but many residents also speak English and French. However, it is appreciated when you attempt basic phrases like: *Goedemorgen* (Good morning), *Goedemiddag* (Good afternoon), *Goedenavond* (Good evening) and *Dank u* (Thank you). The official language may be Dutch, but the spoken language is mainly Antwerps or *Vlaams* (Flemish), which is a dialect/variation of Dutch with its own words.

Opening Hours

Shops are usually open between 10am and 6pm. Supermarkets are generally open between 8am and 8pm. Many shops and businesses,

especially smaller ones, have limited opening hours on Sundays and public holidays. Every first Sunday of the month, and every Sunday in December all shops are open. The antique shops in Kloosterstraat are open every Sunday. Throughout the city, there are many night shops to get the essentials outside of regular opening hours. Check the opening hours of attractions, restaurants, and shops in advance to avoid disappointment.

Cash

It is wise to have some cash on hand for small purchases, as some places, especially markets and smaller shops, do not accept cards. Cash machines can be scarce in some areas, but on

bankautomaten.be you can find the nearest one.

Cuisine

Belgian cuisine is known for its high quality. Don't miss the opportunity to indulge in their chocolate, waffles, Flemish stew, mussels, fries, and beer when you visit. Additionally, Antwerp boasts a diverse culinary scene, with a wide range of international cuisines available in restaurants throughout the city.

Tipping

Tipping is not obligatory in Belgium. However, it is common to round up the bill or leave a small tip for good service, typically around 5 to 10 per cent.

Queer

Antwerp is one of the most open-minded and inclusive cities when it comes to acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community.

There are numerous gay bars and clubs dotted throughout the city. The annual Antwerp Pride in August attracts 100,000 participants from dozens of countries.

Antwerp City Pass

This pass gives you access to lots of tourist attractions, you can use it to travel on public transport, and enjoy lots of discounts. You can buy a pass for 24, 48, or 72 hours. Load the Antwerp City Pass on your smartphone and scan the QR Code in participating museums and attractions. You can buy your pass online at *antwerpcitypass.be*, in person at one of the two Visitor Centres, or at the FOMU museum shop.

Reduced rates at museums

People up to 25 can visit Antwerp museums at reduced rates, so don't forget to bring Photo ID.

↓ STADSFESTZAAL



WHEN TO TRAVEL





ANTWERP IN SPRING

In spring, Antwerp locals try to catch every available ray of sunshine. Even when it's still chilly, you'll find them enjoying a cup of coffee outdoors while catching up with friends, wearing some added layers of warm coats and big scarves. It is also the time when locals start to exercise outdoors to enjoy the milder weather. You will see many runners in streets and parks to practise for the Antwerp 10 Miles.

This is the largest recreational running event in Belgium and has been held every April since 1986. Is a medal the best souvenir you can possibly imagine? Then sign up and bring your running shoes!

Antwerp's parks and gardens are full of blooming flowers,

bursting with tulips, daffodils, and cherry blossoms. The botanical garden Den Botaniek and Stadspark ('City Park') are particularly beautiful in spring. The menus in restaurants change to lighter meals, and seasonal vegetables – like white asparagus – are widely available. Try the 'white gold', as they are often called, Flemish style with hard-boiled egg, parsley and melted butter.

Pentecost, or Whitsun, marks the start of the five-week Sinksenfoor. It is a large fair with over 150 attractions to shake off the winter blues. Don't forget to try some *smoutebollen*; these deep-fried dough balls are a traditional part of every Belgian fair.

ANTWERP IN SUMMER

Summer in Antwerp is characterised by a lively atmosphere, with buzzing outdoor terraces, and parks filled with people who enjoy picnics, sports or chats. Warm weather also invites swimming at the beach of Sint-Anneke or the natural swimming pond of Boekenberg. You can enjoy summer to its fullest without leaving the city.

Almost every weekend, there is an outdoor (music) festival, event or market to choose from, making the city's energy very vibrant and full of life. During the world-famous Tomorrowland dance festival, you will see people from all over the world carrying the flags of their home countries, creating a cheerful ambience in the streets of Antwerp.

Diversity and love are celebrated annually during Antwerp Pride in August. For several days, thousands of people visit the city to attend events, party together, and to enjoy the highlight: the parade with over 100,000 participants.

Evenings are long and warm and often include an ice cream late at night. The best way to end a hot summer day is by taking a stroll along the Scheldt River to watch the sunset. While Antwerp may not have its own coastline, several urban beach bars appear along the river every year. There you can enjoy a laid-back atmosphere, with sand, sun loungers, cocktails, and if you're lucky, live music.

