

Let Antwerp amaze you

Antwerp is the largest city in Flanders. It has more diamonds shining in its shops than any other place in the world. The shops in Antwerp almost look like museums. You—almost literally—find a start-up around every corner.

Antwerp sets the tone in various areas. The city helps kick-start the economic motor of Flanders. The city is the international leader of the diamond trade. And since the breakthrough of the Antwerp Six, it is inextricably connected to fashion.

Antwerp has everything you need to have a good time and it does that in a slightly different way than other cities. What is the secret? The city and its inhabitants go against the grain. The city's residents are convinced that there is always something newer and better to be found. They don't follow but create. And that makes Antwerp surprisingly atypical.

Torrent of ships, knowledge and people

Antwerp owes its restless character to the Scheldt, the river that runs through it. Annually, more than 60,000 inland-navigation and sea-going vessels enter the city through the river. They anchor in a seaport that is located 80 kilometres inland. A unique trump card because that way the hinterland is easily reached. No wonder that Antwerp is an important logistical centre that houses the second largest petrochemical cluster in the world. Not to mention the fact that the Antwerp harbour is the European leader in storage of bananas and coffee.

Thanks to the harbour, much knowledge also flows into the city. International researches and specialised maritime training are no exception in Antwerp. The harbour also made sure that studies related to tropical diseases has become the most normal issue in the heart of Europe: the Antwerp Institute for Tropical Medicine is a stone's throw away from the former Congo docks, where in the first half of the 20th century, all the sick persons from the tropics arrived. Not only the knowledge, but also the people continuously enrich the city. They bring new colours, new flavours and new ideas with them. A diversity that is inspirational. And that in turn, leads to innovation.

Innovative and creative city

Antwerp has always been characterised by its urge for innovation, such as the art of printing that was invented here and Cut in Antwerp and Hearts and Arrows, the international quality marks for diamonds that originated from the city.

It is in Antwerp's DNA to be progressive. You will not find followers here, but doers. Just look at the Academy, the conservatory, the product development programme, the Multimedia Technology programme and the famous fashion department of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts. From Rubens to Tuymans, from the Antwerp Six to Raf Simons: inhabitants of Antwerp want to lead and determine the direction. This pioneering talent also expresses itself in the Antwerp world of enterprise. No wonder that start-ups pop up like mushrooms here. Thanks to the fertile Antwerp soil, they grow into (international) success stories.

Notably different

Everything is just a little different in Antwerp. You shop in buildings that elsewhere would be museums, for instance, you can go shopping in the Stadsfeestzaal which is completely decorated with gold leaf. And during a museum visit, the collection as well as the setting will knock you off your feet: for example, the 'Museum aan de Stroom' (Museum at the River) is most likely the most beautiful outdoor work of art and you can admire the panorama over Antwerp from 60 metres above ground. Every day is different, every day is spectacular. Dining is also done in the most amazing locations—from a chapel to a palace. In this city, even an unfinished cathedral tower succeeds in becoming a world heritage. In the city, you find more diamonds in one square kilometre than anywhere in the world. And the most beautiful library in Belgium, the Nottebohmzaal, is Antwerp's best kept secret. During a city tour, you pass late-classic monuments, art nouveau houses, modern neighbourhoods and contemporary tour de forces. An architectural route that some cities can only dream of.

Discover the diversity

The inhabitants of Antwerp like to call their city a metropolis—do not contradict them—but they also like to call it a village, where everyone knows each other. That is not self-evident, because Antwerp is the largest city in Flanders with more than 510,000 inhabitants and 174 different nationalities. Nevertheless, Antwerp is a metropolis with a small-town sentiment in which you quickly taste all the styles, colours and flavours.