dwars

UNIVERSITY OF ANTWERP STUDENT MAGAZINE

STUDENT LIFE FOR DUMMIES

CRASH COURSE IN FLEMISH

ANTWERP'S HIDDEN GEMS

dwars GOES ENGLISH | SEPTEMBER 2025 | FREE | WWW.DWARS.BE

DON'T SEND YOUR CAT!

Antwerp: Belgium's capital of fashion and the heart of the diamond industry. For you, a student, glamour and glittering gems might not be important. But if you're interested: our chic boutiques can be found near the Meir shopping street and our diamonds are located around the Central Station. We, on the other hand, suggest you discover the Stadscampus (the campus in the city centre) and its neighbourhood first, as it can seem like quite a maze. Luckily, we have a more appealing labyrinth for you to practise your orientation skills on page 22.

Did you already manage to find the lecture hall for your next class? Great! Have you found your favourite coffee shop yet? Perfect. Now you can start studying and enjoying your student life here, of course. You probably already had unforgettable university experiences at home and made lifelong friends there, but why shouldn't there be room for some more? Curious as to what Antwerp's student life has in store? Check out page 4 to learn more about local traditions and interesting clubs for you to join. Whether you're a chess expert (page 21), a musical virtuoso (page 19) or you want to meet other students fascinated by African or Asian culture (pages 16 and 17), we're sure there's something for you. So, make sure to visit the open days and don't just 'send your cat', as Flemish people call not showing up. If you're eager to fit in with the locals, you can learn some typical Flemish words on page 13.

illustrations: Ine Cuypers
layout: Ine Cuypers

But most of all, welcome to Antwerp! This semester or year, you will embark on a great adventure with new people, new food, a new culture … We here at dwars are really curious about all your future adventures, but who are we exactly and what do we mean by dwars?

It's a fun Dutch word that has multiple meanings. If a tree has fallen over and now lies across the street and blocks vehicles from passing, then the tree is lying dwars. More figuratively, and more positively too, this student magazine loves to lie dwars as well. Similarly to a tree lying across the road, you are now forced to think for yourself and come up with a solution: will you wait until someone else calls the fire brigade? Will you turn around and find another street? Maybe you will look for a chainsaw and clear the road yourself.

Being a student in Antwerp requires you to make different, yet comparable choices: will you do nothing and wait – 'look the cat out of the tree', as Flemish people say? Will you 'send your cat', or will you give your feline friend a break and go out there and do it yourself? Whatever you choose, we wish you good luck, great friends and even better experiences!

Thijs van Dam and Laura Aerts,
Editor-in-Chief and Deputy Editor

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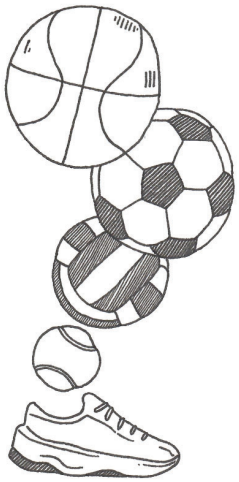


10 Antwerp's hidden gems

't St:A:d

Now that you made it to Antwerp, you probably want to know the best places to hang out after a long day of studying. These are some of our favourite spots in the city.

13 Flemish 101

Did you just get your own *kot* in *'t Stad* but now you are 'hearing the thunder in Cologne' because you can't understand Flemish? Don't worry, dwars has got you covered.

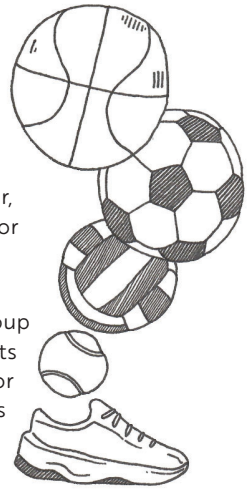
STUDENT LIFE FOR DUMMIES

'Student life' (*studentenleven* in Dutch) is a well-known, albeit infamous term that you might have heard the past couple of months while planning to study abroad. Perhaps you read it during a frazzled midnight search through the Internet contemplating what you've signed up for, or you may have heard it from fellow daring students with endless stories of their escapades in their host countries. No matter where you heard the term, we will guide you through the extensive landscape of student life in Antwerp, with special attention to many clubs and organisations.

Student clubs exist in all shapes and sizes and organise numerous activities such as pub crawls, *cantussen* (an activity where students sit at tables and drink copious amounts of beer while singing from a special songbook), *TD's* (large parties in venues), panel talks and workshops. Perhaps you may first encounter your faculty or department club. This is the club associated with your programme, which will introduce itself in your auditorium at the beginning of the academic year. You can easily recognise a *praesidium* – the board of a club – by the wide ribbons across their chest. All faculty and department clubs are united in two umbrella councils or *kringraden*: one for the Stadscampus, which is located in the city centre, and one for the campuses in the green outskirts of Antwerp. What is the purpose of an umbrella council? Creating unity between the organisations, setting up joint events and organising meetings with the presidents and vice presidents of each club.

But that's not all: within and outside of these umbrella councils, theme clubs exist that are not affiliated with just one faculty or department. You can even find study clubs on the Stadscampus. These theme and study clubs have a broader scope but still focus on only a portion of the university's students. Are you still following? Let's clarify with an example: De Chips (Stadscampus) and Campinaria (green campuses) are two theme clubs that focus on students living in student housing or *koten*. However, the official classifications are sometimes a bit flawed: some theme and study clubs are very closely related to a specific course. At an activity organised by Conservatio, you will quickly notice that there are many students studying Conservation-Restoration. You will see the same kind of trend at Socio-Economica and Imbit. It should come as no surprise that a club like Capitant, which aims to bridge the gap between students and the financial world with lectures such as Start To Invest, attracts more economics students than literature students.

sweating it out with the UA Sports Council



The UA Sports Council is a special club on its own. The association is very similar to a typical student club: it is part of the umbrella councils, has a board that wears wide ribbons and regularly organises student activities. However, with two boards, one for the Stadscampus (CST) and one for the green campuses (BC), it is something of an outsider.

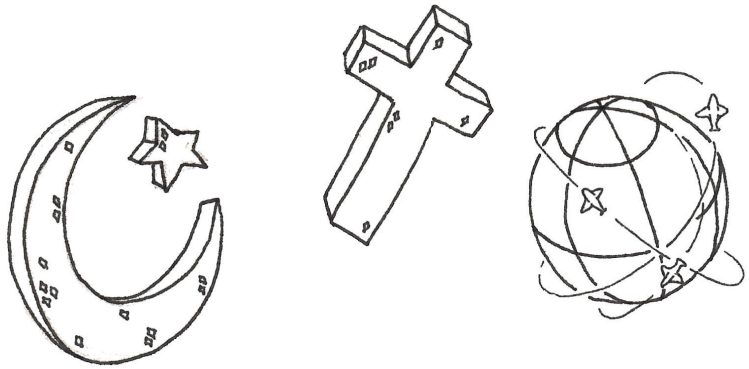
These boards aim to keep you fit through their range of group lessons and they also organise competitions. The Sports Council CST leads the Antwerp Students League (ASL) for various sports such as football and basketball. The Sports Council BC organises the Interfac competition, in which the student associations of the green campuses compete against each other every week in a different sport.

religious, ethnic or political inspiration

Completely different types of associations are the religious, ethnic or politically inspired associations. In Antwerp, you can find the religious associations Mahara and Ichtus. Mahara's mission is to unite and inspire students and alumni based on Islamic values. There are no wide ribbons or club songs, and the activities are somewhat atypical. For example, they organise an iftar, various workshops, and panel talks on political themes such as decolonisation. Ichtus, on the other hand, is a Protestant student association that focusses more on (religious) togetherness and the study of religious texts.

The focus of ASA and AYO is on creating more ethnic awareness and (re)discovering roots. ASA, short for Asian Student Association, organises all kinds of activities related to Asian culture, such as a dumpling workshop and boba high tea. AYO stands for African Youth Organisation and organises game nights, museum visits and Sip & Paint evenings, among other things. Their goal is to bring together students with African roots and anyone interested in African culture. Read more about ASA and AYO on pages 16 and 17.

The list of politically inclined associations is more extensive. Like political parties, they span the entire political spectrum. However, there is not always a one-on-one relationship. For example, Comac and Jong Groen StuAnt are affiliated with PVDA and Groen respectively, while the liberal LVSV and the conservative KVHV actively emphasise their independence. While you probably will not associate with the political organisations as an international student, it is still relevant information concerning the political climate of Flanders.



the international scene

A number of clubs in Antwerp are branches of an international network. These include ELSA, ESN and AIESEC, all three of which belong to the umbrella council of the Stadscampus but differ from other clubs. ELSA, or European Law Students' Association, connects law students from 42 different countries, making it the largest student lawyers' association in the world. It welcomes international students and introduces them to student life in Antwerp. ESN does the same, but for all Erasmus students. AIESEC focusses on leadership potential through volunteer work and internships abroad.

Another club with international dimensions is AntwerpMUN. The club is dedicated to diplomacy and international relations and organises UN simulations. It is an organisation for and by students of diplomacy, law, international politics and economics.

dedication to good causes

There are also clubs dedicated to helping students and good causes. One of them is the theme club Prisma, based on the Stadscampus. Each academic year, they devote themselves to a good cause and organise events to raise funds, announcing their chosen charity at the start of the year. They're best known for the Bloedserieus blood drive in cooperation with the Belgian Red Cross, and for donating all proceeds to their chosen cause. This year they will donate to Kleine Tijger vzw, an organisation that brings sick children into contact with art and culture.

For dedicated law students, there is the Antwerp Law School Consultancy, ALSC for short. The association helps students and young entrepreneurs to resolve legal issues in an accessible manner and free of charge. It is also useful for non-law students, as it is the place to be for disputes with your landlord. ▷

from beer talks to coffee chats

Alongside planned activities and clubs, informal meet-ups in bars and cafés play an equally important role in student life. In the city centre, Ossenmarkt and Stadswaag are especially popular spots for students to grab a drink. Ossenmarkt even has several cosy coffee bars where you can drop in at any time of the day. Elsewhere in and around the student neighbourhood, you will always find somewhere to quench your thirst.

Students on the green campuses unfortunately miss out on the charm of lively squares lined with café terraces. But don't worry, café De Buis welcomes thirsty students with open arms.

cultural activities

By now, it should be clear that there is more going on around the university than just shouting loudly at parties or hanging out in cafés. However, one important aspect is still missing: culture. Typical student clubs occasionally organise cultural activities such as movie nights or museum visits. Lingua, the department club for Linguistic and Literary Studies and Applied Linguistics, goes one step further with its annual short film festival and various open mics. It is not without reason that the club presents itself as *the* cultural club of Antwerp.

There are also music and theatre associations, and you will soon notice that they all have the same rehearsal space: Prinses16. This refers to the address Prinsesstraat 16 and is located above the better-known Universitas, a magical place for all your printing and textbook needs. Prinses16 also houses the Student Council office and our own editorial office.

Impressed by this huge range of activities? In reality, there is much more to experience. For example, there is De Flamingo's, which brings together LGBTQIA+ students, or Mythica, which mainly organises geeky activities. In addition to UAntwerp, there are other higher education institutions in Antwerp that also have their own clubs, who would all love to see you at their activities.

doop or nope

Even if you have not researched the student clubs of Antwerp, you may have heard of the infamous case of Sanda Dia from 2018. This tragedy began with an initiation to a student club in Leuven and, sadly, ended in the death of a student. Since then, hearing about initiation, or *dopen*, has often left a foul taste in the mouths of new students.

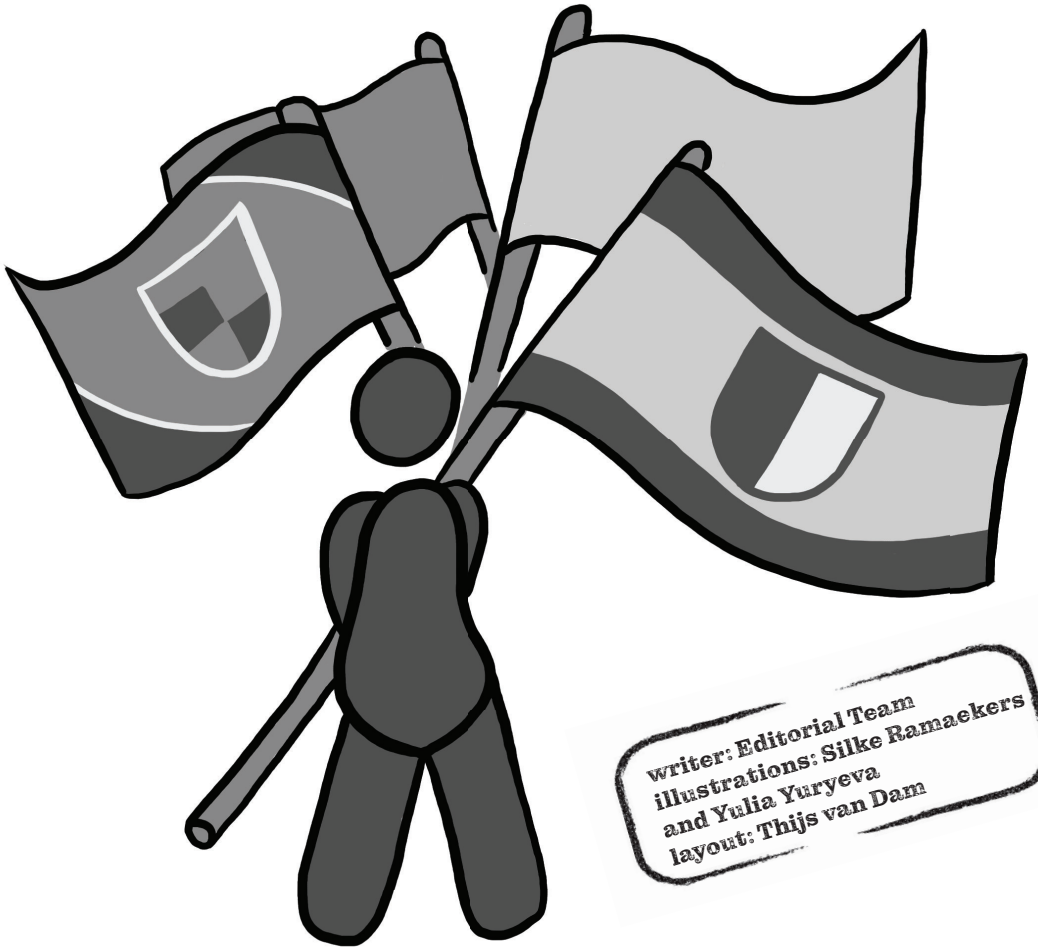
But what is *dopen*, and what has changed since this tragedy? Many student clubs still organise initiations in various forms: some last only a day, others a week, though more and more clubs now opt for shorter versions. On such a day, the *schachten* (the initiating students) have to dress up and complete a series of activities, often ending in a 'smearing feast', where full members throw or make the *schachten* eat disgusting food. At the end of the day, participants recite an oath and are officially initiated into the club.

However, it doesn't end there. *Schachten* have to prove themselves throughout the year by completing tasks to earn the title of *commilito*, which is awarded after an *ontgroening* where they recite another oath and can finally call themselves a full member of the club.

You might be asking: why would anyone want to go through all of this? There are many reasons: to make new friends, participate in typical student culture, gain kudos within their chosen club, or they simply enjoy the process. Some even initiate with multiple clubs because they like it that much.

To ensure that this process can still be safe and enjoyable, the Antwerp city council has introduced the *doop- en feestcharter* (initiation and party charter) as a set of guidelines for student clubs. Clubs have to sign the charter and follow its rules if they wish to keep holding initiations. The charter aims to preserve the physical and mental well-being of the participants and to limit alcohol use.

Whether you get initiated or not is entirely up to you. Still unsure? Many clubs organise information evenings at the start of the academic year, where you can ask questions in a relaxed atmosphere. You can also wait and get initiated in a later year. One last piece of motherly advice: you'll find friends for life anyway, even without an initiation. □



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THE SUSTAINABLE DORM

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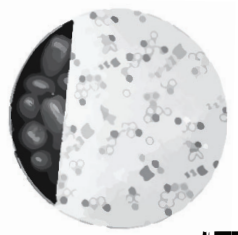
Living in a student dorm can be very overwhelming. Especially if you want to take sustainability into account, it can be extra complicated and expensive. Do you want to contribute to a sustainable world without sacrificing your student budget? Make your student dorm a bit greener with these simple and budget-friendly tips!

tip 1

There's a high chance that you use disposable razors for shaving. Although they might be cheap, they are harmful for the environment and let's be honest: they barely work anyway. A one-time investment in a safety razor will benefit you for the rest of your life. You probably never have to throw it away, you just have to replace the metal blade occasionally. A safety razor consists solely of metal, so it can be recycled easily. An example of a web shop where you can buy affordable safety razors is *bamboozy.nl*.

tip 2

If you live in a student dorm, you will inevitably have to cook for yourself. If you have any leftovers after a meal, you might opt for plastic wrap to keep them fresh. However, it is easy to replace plastic wrap with a sustainable alternative: beeswax wrap. These wraps are cotton cloths coated with wax that you can reuse after rinsing with water. You can find the most budget-friendly beeswax wraps at the discount store Wibra.



tip 3

As a student, you often have to depend on coffee and tea to get through the day. That's why purchasing a reusable coffee cup is a sustainable choice. You can use the cup at the vending machines on campus, in your favourite coffee bar or to transport your own coffee or tea from home. Remember to choose a leakproof cup, so that you can carry it safely in your backpack without spilling. A reusable coffee cup can be found anywhere online or in stores; there's plenty of choice.

tip 4

Of course, you will also have to keep your dorm clean and tidy. Cleaning products from the supermarket often contain harmful chemicals and are thus damaging to the environment. But don't worry, there are sustainable alternatives! You can easily make your own supplies with ingredients like vinegar and baking soda. Homemade cleaning products are often as effective as their premade counterparts, but they are cheaper and more sustainable. Do you want to avoid disposable packaging completely? Then the products from *brauzz.com* might be for you. This website offers reusable spray bottles with refills that you can dilute with water. The refills are packaged in paper bags that can be recycled, so they are completely free of plastic.

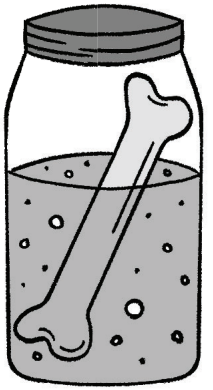
By applying these easy and affordable tips, you won't just make your dorm greener, you'll also contribute to a more sustainable world. Every small step in the right direction can make a great difference. ☐

#STUDY INFLUENCERS

It's time: you're in Antwerp and now the real studying has started; at least, that is what everyone is telling you. Exams will be here sooner than you think, and your surroundings won't let you forget that. Unfortunately, even the precious escape of the Internet isn't safe anymore. You've probably seen them pass by on your screen: the student influencers. These accounts don't commit themselves to lip syncing, dancing or over-the-top acting: that's right, even studying can get you thousands of followers.

Anyone who picks up their phone every so often while studying is mostly hoping not to be confronted with the dark cloud of exam season during a scrolling session. Unfortunately, there are profiles galore which, each in their own way, can make an already stressed student feel even worse. Unless you get really lucky: sometimes relatable skits or panicking fellow students can motivate you a little. However, if you've got bad luck, you will encounter one of the following types.

Number one: The #Aesthetic. These shiny, skinny Labubu girls won't deviate from their enviable orderly lifestyles just because exams are coming. Structured and organised, they make their matcha lattes and fill their water bottles to show you sugar-sweet studying clips with a fitting piano tune underneath. After watching these videos, you tend to feel completely motivated: I want to be like that! But the moment you're crying at your desk and thinking back to these kinds of people, your situation feels even more tragic than it already did.



Number two: The Superhero. At first glance, these influencers are very relatable: they procrastinate until the last possible moment, drink unhealthy amounts of Monster and then pull an all-nighter studying. Don't be fooled, though: unless you get lucky, these kinds of people pass with flying colours nine times out of ten and turn out to be some kind of genius. They might make the doomscrolling student feel better for a while, but they're not exactly a good example to follow.

Number three: The Study Beast. These students revel in their superiority: they have the art of studying down to a T. They set their alarm for 3 a.m., in order to then consume strengthening concoctions like bone broths and protein yoghurt and study until the sun goes down. Maybe their life does not seem as attractive as that of number one, but the effect stays the same: you feel utterly, completely inferior.

It's not only the gorgeous holiday pics, the expensive outfits or the picture-perfect relationships on the Internet that make you feel like you're doing something wrong: the way you study apparently needs to improve as well. It's maybe better to skip these videos. In the end, what works for you is best. □

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ANTWERP'S HIDDEN GEMS

As you have already read, there is enough to do on and around campus to take your mind off the dull lecture halls for a moment. Not really interested in all that collegiate stuff or do you simply feel like you have too much spare time on your hands? Great news: you are now a student in *'t Stad*! It is not without reason that proud locals call the rest of the country Antwerp's parking lot: even outside of university life, there is loads to do here. If you are looking for a place to start, have a look at our writers' favourite spots in town.

Krugerplein – Stien

Krugerplein is the cosiest spot to relax after a full day of classes. This green square is located in the heart of the Borgerhout neighbourhood and is ideal for escaping the hustle and bustle of the city and your typical student bubble. Playing children and chatting locals create a homely and inviting atmosphere.

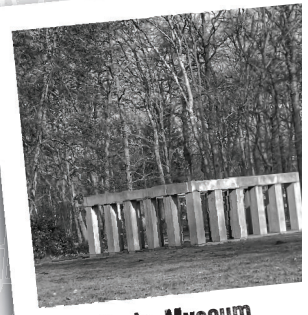
What makes Krugerplein *the* best spot in Antwerp are the many possibilities it offers, so you can plan out your day exactly as you want. Craving something sweet? Then you can go for ice cream at Borgo Gelato. Be warned, though: the flavours are so surprising that you will be torn between multiple options. Do you prefer something salty instead? Then Frituur Tina (lauded in 2023 as the best *frituur* in Antwerp!) is the place to be for fries and a broad selection of vegetarian and vegan fried snacks. You can then eat all this delicious food on the cosiest terrace in Antwerp at Bar Leon. If you're a student on a budget, you can also opt for enjoying a homemade lunch on the grass or on one of the picnic tables.

Come have a look, and before you know it, Krugerplein will also be your favourite spot in town!

Krugerplein

Krugerplein

Fritkot Max


Middelheim Museum

Fritkot Max – Laurens

If you think about things typical to Belgian culture, it won't take long before someone mentions the famous Belgian *frietkot* or *frituur*: a snack bar where they sell fries and a wide array of burgers and fried snacks. When selecting my favourite spot in Antwerp, I put aside the well-known tourist destinations like Het Steen, the MAS or the Cathedral of Our Lady. Instead, I chose a place that puts a smile on my face every time I think about it.

My favourite spot is Fritkot Max. This eye-catching green building seems frozen in time. This in fact holds some truth: the exterior is still very similar to how it looked in 1842. When you go inside, you'll see that the interior is a homage to the original location of the snack bar. Originally, the *frituur* was located on Burchtplein, which no longer exists, but today you can find it on the centrally located Groenplaats.

The fries are served in the classic pointed bag or *puntzak* and taste delicious. Every time I enter the snack bar, I feel like a child again. The display case full of snacks, the smell of fresh fries and the cup of sauce that you get to fill yourself: it makes me happy over and over again.

What's more, there is a fry museum on the first floor – probably the only museum that you can enter holding a bag of fries.

Eating tasty fries and discovering some culture: what more could people living in Belgium want?

Middelheim Museum – Lena

In Wilrijk, close to Middelheim park, there is a piece of art on the shore of a small stream. The object is crooked like a banana and has both blue and white pieces. The students with classes on the green campuses are probably familiar with this work of art, but I doubt that the others will think about a boat based on this description.

This piece of art, made by Erwin Wurm, is known by two names. The most common one is 'the limp boat', but the official title is *Misconceivable*. If you ask me, both names are equally fitting. The first one gives a perfect description of the art piece, as it is indeed not much more than a bent boat; the second one dives into the absurd and inconceivable character of the sculpture.

Middelheim park is full of these kinds of surprises. Some artworks and sculptures are more humorous than others, but all of them are original and because of the temporary exhibits, there is always something new to discover. The park might not be a student hotspot, but it's a real gem in Wilrijk. A (free!) visit is absolutely worth it to admire the different artworks, to enjoy nature and to relax in the late summer sun after the first hectic weeks of the academic year. ▷

Café De Muze – Pauline

As a brand-new student in Antwerp, you will naturally be wondering about the best place to have a drink with friends after a long day of classes. For me, that wasn't a difficult question. In my first week here – by now already two years ago – I immediately knew where to go: De Muze.

On my twelfth birthday, my dad took me to this historic jazz bar located on Melkmarkt to see my older brother perform. If I was technically allowed to be in there was another question, but it was an unforgettable night. The three stories of the building are buzzing with music and life: downstairs everyone's close together, with the murmur of voices and clinking glasses; upstairs it's a little quieter, where you can really absorb the music.

Eight years later, I'm standing there with friends as a student myself: sometimes with a glass of wine and a nice conversation, sometimes just listening to the music.

De Muze feels like a small piece of a metropolis. It brings everyone together: young and old, locals and visitors. You're not really a student in Antwerp if you've never been here: it's part of the city. The bartenders are always friendly and during performances you pay a little extra – true to the original idea of giving artists a stage. The name itself says it all: De Muze – the muse – exists to inspire.

Café De Muze

De Zwaan

De Zwaan - Ainize

As an international student, you'll want to share all the best experiences and places in Antwerp with your friends and family back home. While you're taking photos of Groenplaats and Grote Markt, I recommend you don't miss Hendrik Conscienceplein. You can proudly show off the Hendrik Conscience Heritage Library and Saint Charles Borromeo Church, both impressive and culturally enriching. However, what makes the square truly unforgettable for students is café De Zwaan on the corner. De Zwaan is a student café where you can enjoy a drink with friends and easily strike up a conversation with the people around you, which is perfect for meeting new people and immersing yourself in Antwerp's student culture. And the best part? The student discount makes it totally worth it. On top of that, it's only a five-minute walk from the Stadscampus, which is ideal for grabbing a pint after a long day of classes or during a break between lectures (but maybe don't mention that little detail at home). □

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A FIVE-MINUTE CRASH COURSE IN FLEMISH

One of the fun challenges of studying abroad is learning the local language. In Flanders, people speak their own variant of Dutch called Flemish. It can't be learned on Duolingo, but who needs Duolingo when you have dwars? This quick guide will teach you four Flemish words that will instantly make you sound like a local from Antwerp – or from *'t Stad*, as you should call it from now on. Let's get started, or as they would say in Flemish: *vooruit met de geit* ('forward with the goat')!

Instead of calling Antwerp by its name, locals call it *'t Stad*. It's the equivalent of referring to your city as The City, capital letters included. People from Antwerp are stereotypically known to have *nen dikke nek* ('a thick neck'), meaning they can be quite arrogant or conceited. It's no coincidence that they refer to the rest of Flanders as their parking lot, as the expression *Antwerpen is 't Stad en de rest is parking* denotes. Despite their superiority complex, there's no denying that Antwerp really is a great city – dare I say, the greatest.

I can already hear you thinking: isn't that French? *Oui, certainement*. Knowing some French words – even those as basic as 'thank you' – is an easy hack to sound more like a local. Since French is one of Belgium's three official languages, many French words have found their way into Flemish dialects. You'll often hear students say *merci* alongside other (slightly more formal) expressions of thanks like *dank u* and *dankjewel*. If you want to up your game further, you can try using *mercikes* instead. The diminutive suffix '*-ke(s)*' is typical of the Antwerp dialect and makes the word sound cuter, since you're literally saying 'many little *merci's*'.

You might have already encountered this word while searching for accommodation near the campus, and chances are you now have one yourself. *Kot* is the typical Flemish word for a student dorm. If people ask you where you live, you can answer with *ik zit op kot*. The literal translation is a bit awkward ('I sit on dorm'), but it simply means that you live in student accommodation. If you have a *kot*, you might find your building completely deserted during the weekends. This is because many Flemish students who live in a *kot* go back home at the weekend – together with their dirty laundry, to be washed by *de mama* at home.

This little four-letter word is like a magical interjection: you can use it wherever and whenever you want, and you'll sound the most Flemish you ever have. You could call *amai* a more versatile version of 'wow', but that comparison doesn't quite cut it. *Amai* can be used to indicate surprise, frustration, delight or disappointment. You might say: "*Amai*, I'm tired today" or "*Amai*, where did all my housemates go?" And hopefully, you can now say: "*Amai*, I already know some Flemish!" □

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layout: Lena Vercammen

Once upon a time,
Fairytales
the monstrous Antigoon demanded money from all who sailed the Scheldt.
If they did not pay, their hands were cut off.
So, the boatmen continued to be plagued...
...until Brabo came to the rescue!
He cut off Antigoon's own hand
and threw it in the Scheldt,
symbolising the end of Antigoon's reign.

And that is how 'hand werpen' became
Antwerpen
Welcome to our city!
Here we have:
the university campuses
Komida, the shad restaurant
A lot of cosy cafés
Meir, the big shopping street
Lots of culture, like museums
And of course a lot of Antwerp hands cookies
MiLA

ASIAN STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

Are you missing your Asian home or just looking to discover rich cultures and make a dozen new friends? Then the Asian Students Association (ASA) might just be the perfect fit for you! Celebrating their fifth year of existence, ASA Antwerp is more ambitious than ever to bring together all students fascinated by Asian culture. We interviewed this year's president and student of International Entrepreneurship Mobina Mousavi: "ASA is an association where you feel like you've been there for years, even though it's only your first week!"

Inspired by their older sister organisation in Leuven, ASA Antwerp was established in 2021 by students of Asian descent who wanted to combine their social life at the university with their love for Asian culture. On their Instagram and TikTok pages, you get a great taste of all the activities and events ASA organises: from Asian movie nights to workshops at soju bars, casino and board game nights, city trips, and even the ASA Olympics. Both outgoing party people as well as those who enjoy calmer activities are welcome at ASA. "I was just starting my 'next chapter' in life and wanted to meet new people, but I don't drink and I don't really go clubbing. One of my friends suggested ASA and at my first event I immediately felt at home," Mobina tells us. "ASA is one of the student associations that doesn't participate in hazing or any other initiation rituals that could make our members uncomfortable."

"The first and last events of the year are usually the most spectacular. ASA strives to be inclusive and welcoming to all, so you can really talk to anyone and no one feels left out. At every event, there are people who don't speak Dutch, so they will be grouped together along with others who don't mind speaking English," Mobina explains. "We plan many events together with ASA Leuven, and many students from Ghent, for example, come to our events as they don't have a similar organisation over there. And even though ASA Antwerp is associated with UAntwerp specifically, students from all campuses and schools in the city are welcome."

Mobina also gives us a sneak peek at what we can expect from ASA this year: "Some events will be 'regionally themed', meaning that they will revolve around specific parts of Asia. Students will meet these cultures and get to know more about their traditions, food and music through fun activities and workshops. Those who visit every region will get a great surprise at our grand gala at the end of the year!" Students who are only in Antwerp for one semester can become members all the same. "With our membership card, you get great benefits and discounts up to fifty percent at our events and at our sponsoring club," Mobina explains.

Interested in coming to one of ASA's events? "You can reach us basically anywhere: besides Instagram and TikTok, we also have a Facebook page, an email address and even LinkedIn. All we're missing is an official telephone number!" Mobina concludes: "ASA's goal is to connect students with each other through their interest in Asia and to learn about these cultures in a very positive way that everyone can enjoy." □

writer: Stijn Crick
photography: ASA (external)
layout: Ine Cuypers

writer: Stijn Crick
photography: AYO (external)
layout: Ine Cuypers

AFRICAN YOUTH ORGANISATION

Are you looking to connect with other students of African descent? Do you want to learn more about the rich variety of African cultures in Antwerp? African Youth Organisation Belgium (AYO) gives everyone a warm welcome! dwars interviewed new co-president Elisabeth Vergauwen and last year's president Eseosa Gevers. "At AYO we focus on friendship and connection, and we try to find a perfect balance between light-hearted fun and educational activities."

Chances are, you would soon have heard from AYO without this article anyway. Five years ago, AYO's members decided to partake in the Black Lives Matter protests and started organising formal and informal events in and around the university. "For some events, like panel talks on colonialism or film screenings, we invite a big audience, because we want to inform as many people as possible," Eseosa explains. "We also made a conscious decision not to participate in hazing or any initiation rituals that scare off many students."

Besides these more serious events, AYO hosts a wide range of cosy get-togethers and fun, original activities. Eseosa elaborates: "It doesn't have to be serious all the time, of course. Most of our events are much more informal. My own absolute favourites are the potlucks we host multiple times per year. Good food brings everyone together and we learn so much from each other's cultures this way. It's also a great way to see the intersectionality at AYO: we have both Christians and Muslims, members born in Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and South America, but we share a table and love getting to know more about each other and ourselves." AYO knows that not only food, but also sports, culture and music connect. They have their famous Sip & Paint evenings, organise a variety of sports events and last year they had a successful Open Mic night. "Seeing how great the Open Mic night was, we're already planning to bring it back this year," Elisabeth promises. "We always have a big crowd turning up for our football matches and this year, we'll be introducing even more sport activities. Some members want to try padel, so we've added that to the list already!"

"We know that it can be very intimidating for an international student to try and socialise or go to events organised by student clubs," Eseosa acknowledges. "You may feel like an outsider if you don't speak Dutch and going out can be expensive. At AYO, we want to make you feel welcome instantly and we do our best to keep entry fees low. And even though many events are theoretically in Dutch, our members come from so many backgrounds that you'll likely feel an instant connection with many of them." Elisabeth adds: "Above all, AYO wants to be a safe space for black and African students. We organise events like a Ladies-Only Night or a Hair Day at a black-owned hairdressing salon here in Antwerp."

Interested in coming to one of AYO's events? "You can always reach out to us via our Instagram page or via our new website," Elisabeth and Eseosa explain. They conclude: "Whether it's via food, panel talks, sports events, quiz nights or parties, at AYO you get to know lots of cultures and people from all over the world, right here in Antwerp!" □

7AJA A7SAN / BETTER LIFE

Under the call to prayer's hush,

you laugh – louder than the minaret's echo –

And I remember the first time I saw you

Curly hair captured under that black hijab,

and you wrap your scarf with the precision of prayer.

You teased "safi, hadi qdimeem", *(this is ooold)*

Handing me mint tea, sugar-sticky and warm,

Like the secrets we've kept folded between our palms.

We were just best friends then –

Or that's what everyone called it –

But my chest was already yearning

My chest was already learning

How to bow towards you five times a day.

Not sin. Not shame. Just the way,

Your eyes soften when you talk about us

And how you say maybe –

We dream out loud now,

In a small flat away from home,

The stray cats that beg for crumbs at our door.

We are not a tragedy;

We are two women kneading

Our own future,

Where our love is love because we say so.

When my mother calls, you mouth *labas 3lik? (everything alright?)*

And I grin, hamdoulilah, because I am. *(Thank God)*

Because we are.

Happy unhidden – like a crescent moon

You notice before anyone else.

We hold hands on the rooftop at dusk;

No lighting strikes.

Only the azan threading into the stars *(call to prayer)*

While you whisper, "wach kayn chi 7aja a7san mn hada?" *(is there a life better than this?)*

And I know there isn't.

writer: Dina Alitem
illustrations: Hanne Colémont
layout: Ine Cuypers

DE ANTWERPSE STUDENTENHARMONIE

Trumpeters, trombonists and saxophonists: pay attention. Antwerp has its own concert band for students and they're looking for you. Ruth De Maeyer and Lauranne Vandeputte, president and vice president, tell you everything you need to know about Antwerp's concert band or *studentenharmonie.*

"We are an orchestra for students and alumni," explains Ruth, "and we host two concerts a year, one in winter and one in spring. Throughout the year, we also organise other activities, such as bowling or mini-golf."

"Our repertoire consists of a wide range of songs, sometimes salsa, sometimes jazz, sometimes more classical. Each concert also includes a piece of film score." This year, for example, they will be playing tunes from – drumrolls please – *The Blues Brothers* and *Snow White*. So, who's invited to the weekly rehearsals in preparation for their beautiful concerts? "Right now, we're mainly looking for wind instruments," Lauranne shares. And, important for the drumrolls: "Percussionists are also welcome," adds Ruth. "After the weekly rehearsals, especially after the first one, we'll go out for a drink so everyone can get to know each other," Lauranne notes enthusiastically.

On Monday 29 September and 6 October, de Antwerpse Studentenharmonie holds open rehearals. At 7.30 p.m., Prinses16 is the place to be to show your musical talent and to blow everyone away! ☐

writer: Thijs van Dam
photography: external
layout: Lena Vercammen

SYMPHONIC CITY SOUNDS

SCS does not stand for Sleepless College Students or Sociable *Cantus* Squad, it stands for Symphonic City Sounds. A symphonic orchestra for students and alumni, doesn't that sound fun? dwars has even better news: new musicians are welcome. President Celine Meylemans and clarinettist Jeroen Standaert tell us more.

Top-level skills aren't required, Jeroen states: "It's very accessible. If you can play your instrument, you're in. If necessary, scores can be adapted." Celine adds that there are no auditions, so everyone can join. "Our goal is for every student who plays an instrument to join a music club, whether that's the symphonic orchestra or the concert band. Don't let your instrument gather dust."

Which instruments are they looking for? "Violins and cellos, basically all string instruments. It's kind of the downside of a symphonic orchestra. Two or three of each wind instrument will do – but there are never enough violins. Everyone can come and have a look at the open rehearsals, but actually, every rehearsal is an open one," Jeroen shares. SCS plays a wide selection of music: "For the spring concert, we'll be playing Mozart, but also music from *How to Train Your Dragon* and Shostakovich's waltz."

Unfortunately, we can't convey the beautiful sounds through this article, but you can discover the binding force of music yourself during the open rehearsals on Sunday 28 September and 5 October at 7 p.m. With music, without strings attached, at Prinses16. ☐

TWISTED FRAMES

Twisted Frames is University of Antwerp's own film club, founded by film students Nelle and Charlie. When they noticed that there was no longer a culture club dedicated solely to film, they decided to form their own.

You can visit the club each first Wednesday of the month at cinema and arthouse Klappei in Borgerhout, and each third Wednesday on the Stadscampus. The film always starts at 7.15 p.m. and the program is very diverse: from big blockbusters to foreign arthouse gems.

After the screening, there's a friendly discussion for those who are interested. There, people reflect on the themes, characters and the overall impact of the film. Everyone can join the conversation, share ideas or just listen to the opinions of others. These discussions are later combined in a Letterboxd review, which you can find on their profile @twistedframes.

The best thing about Twisted Frames? The screenings are free, you don't have to sign up and everyone is welcome, whether you're a hardcore film nerd or you just want to enjoy a cozy, fun evening. It's a nice place to discover new films, meet people and marvel about what you saw, together. Take your friends and discover your new favourite film! □

THE ANTWERP UNIVERSITY CHOIR

Is the shower too small for your vocal talents? Have you always wanted to sing at the top of your lungs? Are your vocal cords ready for a musical challenge? Does your heart overflow with love for music? President Lotte Buyl tells us more about her great passion: the Antwerp University Choir, also known as UKA.

writer: Thijs van Dam
photography: external
layout: Lena Vercammen

When dwars asks Lotte how she would describe UKA, she doesn't answer with words like singing, rehearsing, or performing, but foremost with: "a close group of friends," after which she adds, "who come together to sing." Each semester they work towards their *moment suprême*: first the winter concert, then the one in the spring, both with a different theme each year. But it doesn't end there:

"We also organise *cantussen*, a barbecue and the last two years we've also been on an international trip together."

"Everyone is welcome to join. Being able to read music is not required. We only ask that you can pick up the right tone from the others. During the first open rehearsal, there's a vocal orientation where the conductor listens how high or low you sing. Afterwards, we work together, as one group, towards a beautiful end result."

Each Tuesday at 7 p.m., UKA rehearses on the third floor of Prinses16. The first open rehearsal is on Tuesday 30 September; the second one's the week after. □

DE RODE LOPER

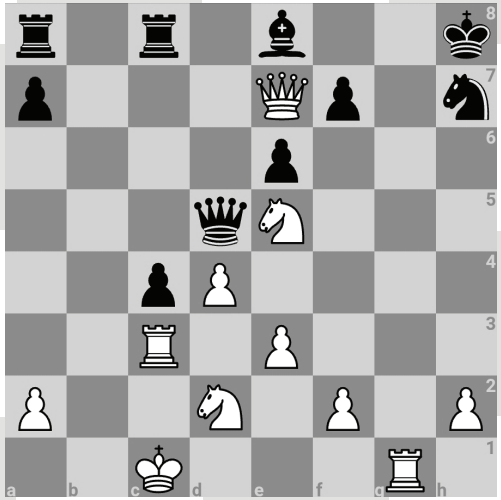
Can you solve our chess puzzles in no time? Or have you always wanted to learn how to? From Carlsen to Polgar, from beginner to expert: student chess club De Rode Loper is here to help you. Every Thursday evening the club offers space to play *chess.com* – or *lichess,* for the experts among us – in real life. Vladomeare Obolonskyy, president but above all chess player, gives a sneak peek behind the black-and-white curtain.

As per usual, the club will kick off the chess season with its famous pizza night. Every Thursday, De Rode Loper plays chess in different locations in Antwerp. Feel free to drop by and who knows, you might just checkmate a few players. Where will they be playing this Thursday? How can I join the ASL Chess Competition? And which activities are planned? You can find the answers to all these questions on their social media.

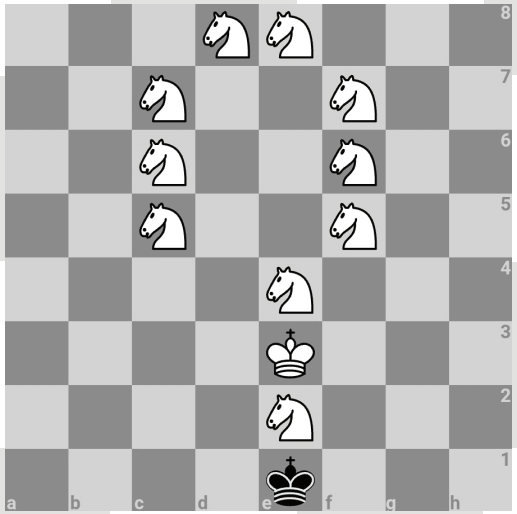
Vladomeare explains: "Besides playing 'regular chess' during club nights, we also organise extra activities, for example the ASL Chess Competition *(Antwerp Student League, ed.)* and in the spring we take part in the international PCU tournament in Antwerp." But their agenda is also filled with smaller events: "Every year, we also organise theme and poker nights." People who want to join the committee are also welcome. "Whether it's to help with social media or with club nights, everyone is welcome."

CHESS PUZZLES

WHITE TO MOVE
MATE IN 2



WHITE TO MOVE
MATE IN 3



Student chess club De Rode Loper blesses us with well-thought-out chess puzzles in every edition. The rules are simple: there is only one winning move or combination of moves. This can be checkmate, but also material gain or escaping from a deadly trap.

solutions 1.Qxf7 Bxf7 2. Nxf7# | 1. Kf3 Kd1/Kf1 2. Ne3+ Ke1 3. Nd3#

New in Antwerp and searching for the best coffee? The city has plenty of coffee spots to study, relax or meet friends. Trace your way through the labyrinth to uncover cafés where great coffee and cosy study vibes meet.

Cuperus Horsey
Paardenmarkt 28

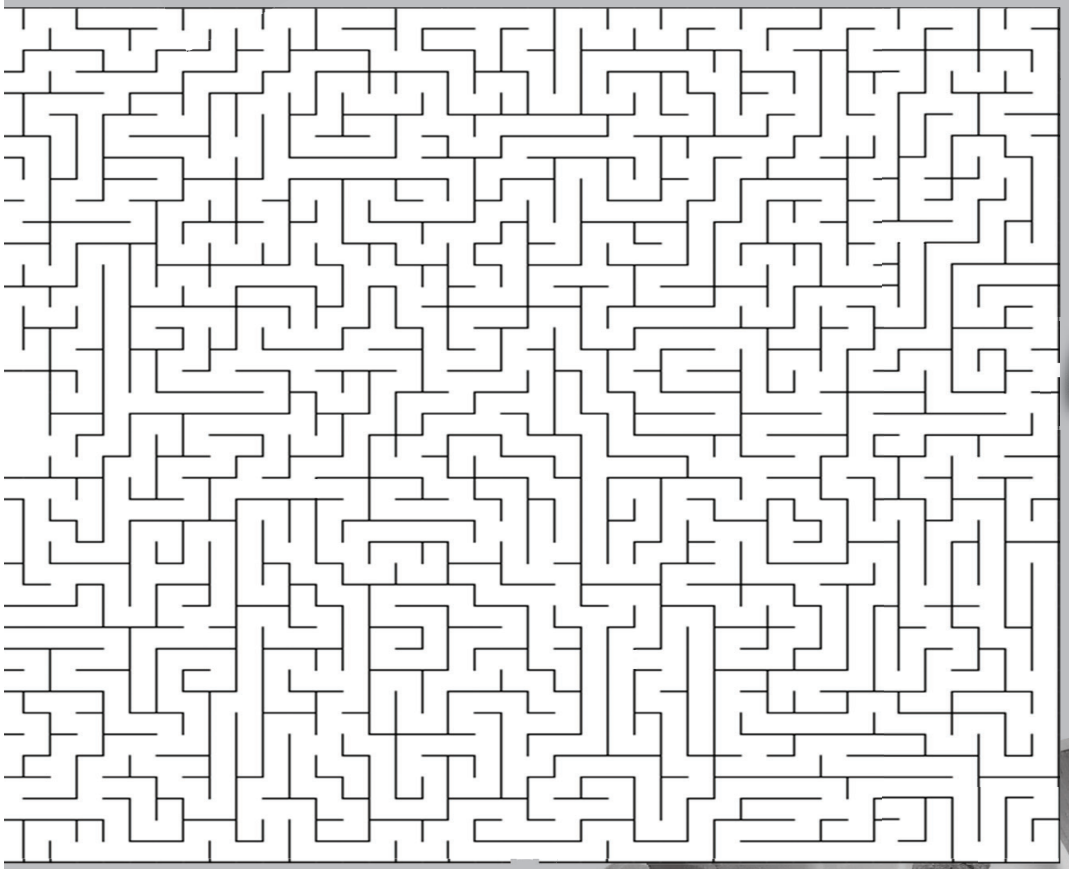
Velka Koffie
Sint-Jacobsmarkt 1

Vandoag is 't
Prinsesstraat 2

start here

Caffènation
Mechelsesteenweg 16

THE GREAT LATTE LABYRINTH



Copain
Ossenmarkt 30

Tartoer
Ossenmarkt 23

WORD SEARCH

e	s	t	u	d	e	n	t	l	i	f	e	s
b	r	a	b	o	n	k	c	a	j	r	o	t
y	c	f	n	y	o	r	u	b	d	i	p	a
a	a	l	b	t	u	u	l	u	o	e	r	d
n	n	e	d	e	w	g	t	b	r	t	i	s
t	t	m	r	r	e	e	u	u	m	k	n	c
i	u	i	i	t	i	r	r	m	l	o	s	a
g	s	s	e	e	i	p	e	p	i	t	e	m
o	s	h	e	n	a	l	c	a	f	e	s	p
o	e	m	i	d	d	e	l	h	e	i	m	u
n	n	n	k	t	w	i	u	d	w	a	r	s
g	r	o	e	n	e	n	b	o	r	g	e	r
e	r	p	n	c	h	e	s	s	a	m	a	i

amai
antigoon
antwerp
beer
brabo
café
cantussen
chess
culture clubs
dorm life
drie eiken
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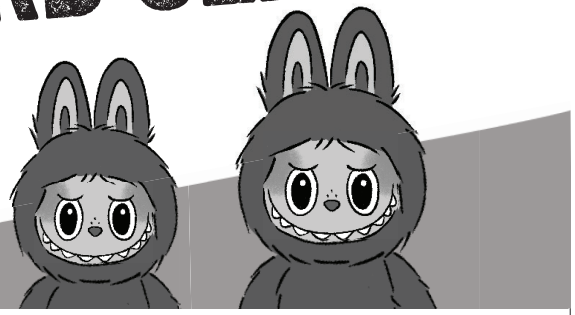
flemish
frietkot
groenenborger
krugerplein
labubu
middelheim
prinses
stadscampus
student life



ME WAITING FOR
SUNSHINE IN BELGIUM

WHEN SOMEONE STARTS
TALKING TO YOU IN FLEMISH
i like your funny words magic man

ME TRYING TO
BE A GOOD STUDENT
BELGIAN
BEER

ANY CITY
IN THE WORLD
YOU
ANTWERP
ANY
CITY IN
THE WORLD
ANTWERP

WHEN YOU SUCCESSFULLY
ORDER FRIES IN DUTCH

BELGIANS AFTER EATING
PLAIN BREAD WITH CHEESE FOR LUNCH
delicious
Finally, some good fucking food

BELGITUDE

SATIRE

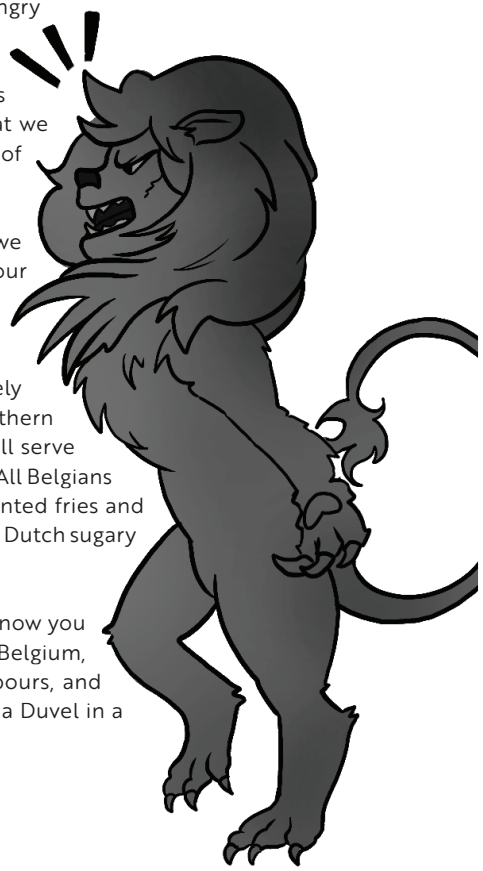
writer: Myrddin-Merlijn Groffi
illustrations: Silke Ramaekers
layout: Lena Vercammen

First of all: welcome to our little country. Second of all: my condolences to your vitamin D levels; it's unlikely that you'll see the sun again before you leave. You may have a few questions, such as 'why am I here?' and 'what can I do around here?' I can't really answer those for you, but both answers likely involve beer. Other questions you may have are about what Belgium even is and why it exists. What binds a country where both halves can't understand each other without Google Translate?

The honest answer is very little; Belgium is the country equivalent to an old bickering couple that can neither be happy together nor leave each other. Yet, like any old bickering couple that won't split up, there is something that keeps us together. At the end of the last century, the term *belgitude* was coined to explain our shared Belgian spirit. Allow me to explain.

Those who wish to understand this Belgian spirit need not read any great literary epics or incomprehensible works of philosophy. Simply watching the children's show *Samson en Gert* will do the trick. In every episode, someone knocks on the door, walks in, and says they had to knock because the doorbell doesn't work. The bell never gets fixed; the characters simply adapt to it not working, yet they never miss a chance to complain about it. That's how it goes with everything in this country: our bike infrastructure is often downright dangerous, but we still use our bicycles, simply calling the unseparated cycling lanes 'murder lanes' to express our disdain.

Life would be bleak if all we did was complain, so we drink as well. Since this is our main joy in life, we take it very seriously. Every beer brand has its own glass, and you had better learn which goes with which, because pouring your beer into the wrong one will result in an angry mob chasing you out of the country. You should also keep in mind that most beers have higher alcohol percentages than you may be used to; this is so that we need fewer glasses to forget the misery of living in Belgium.

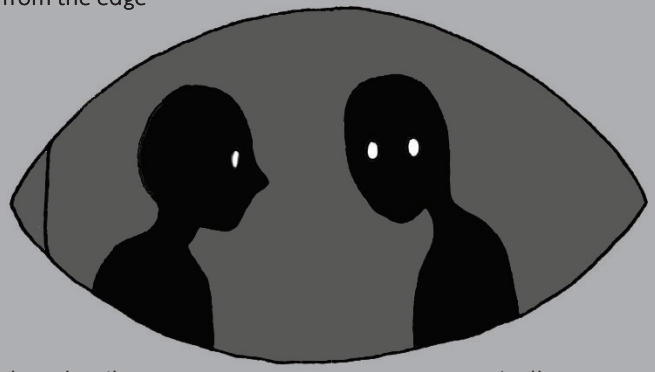


What perhaps unites us most is that we dislike each other less than we dislike our neighbours. Sure, the Walloons speak a language we can't understand, but at least they don't speak with an annoying accent like the Dutch do. We may barely be capable of ordering a beer in the southern half of the country, but at least they will serve us actual beer instead of sparkling pee. All Belgians will be angry if you say the French invented fries and likewise be fuming if you dare to put the Dutch sugary abomination called *frietsaus* on them.

There's a lot more to *belgitude*, but by now you should get the gist: complain about Belgium, complain even more about our neighbours, and drink beer. And remember: never pour a Duvel in a Stella glass. □

THE FLIGHT

they tell us
to open our broken wings
seal our smiles of cracked glass with
honey and brass
to sing farewell to hells and heavens of before (though we shout for home)
flinging ourselves away from the edge



they haunt us
with catatonic whispers of futures past and presents hidden
an old possibility of now
forgotten in futile dreams and fear of the dark (both of them screaming)
closed eyes of therebefore and missed maybes

they watch us
kiss us on frigid foreheads and smile
drive us on to the opposite of remaining
staining our cheeks with bloody fingers (they claw at nothing)
reminding of what it feels like to return

ecstatically

(they are desperate)

they push us

and they tell us to jump

falling

or

soaring.

writer: Julie Vanstraelen
illustrations: Yulia Yuryeva
layout: Lena Vercammen

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