

Nine reasons to visit Antwerp

Antwerp knows how to turn on the charm. Just when you think that you've seen it all, you're in for another surprise. That's because the city and its residents are anything but followers. They are trendsetters, with the belief that things could always be different and better. You're in for a very special treat.

- **Easy to take in**

The best view of the historic city is ... away from the city centre. Cross the river Scheldt – not via the bridge but the impressive underpass (Mark, during your descent, the magnificent wooden escalator) – and admire the Antwerp skyline from the Left Bank.

- **City inland with sea port**

Antwerp has, besides a wide river, a deep sea port 80 kilometres inland. Not only do cruise ships have the exceptional opportunity to moor close to the city, the port also attracts many domestic and seagoing vessels. Interested to find out more about the port? There are several bus, boat and bicycle tours that take you past the ships, quays, cranes and terminals.

- **Enjoy the heights**

The Cathedral of Our Lady is a striking feature in the Antwerp skyline: it is the highest church tower in the Low Lands and features on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Quite an achievement, if you consider that one of the Cathedral's towers remained unfinished. Slightly further up is another attractive tower, that of the MAS. A top collection awaits you at the Museum aan de Stroom (museum at the river): about the world in Antwerp and Antwerp in the world. But the most beautiful work of art lies at your feet: from the rooftop, 60 meters above the ground, you can admire the whole city.

- **Culture with a bonus**

Antwerp boasts quite a few special museums. In addition to their fine collections, they always offer a remarkable extra: the Middelheim Museum is a park full of sculptures; Plantin-Moretus was the first museum to feature on the World Heritage List; in The Rubens House, you walk through the house of the famous master. And then there are

the museum-grade buildings, like the Neoclassical (shopping) Stadsfeestzaal where you 'just' go for a spot of shopping, or the listed buildings of the Antwerp Zoo – one of Europe's oldest and most beautiful city zoos – where many animals live.

- **Gastronomy revisited**

Since appearances also count, the eatery settings in Antwerp are special – ranging from a former chapel, which now houses Michelin-star restaurant The Jane, to the Palace in Meir, which once belonged to Napoleon and where you can now have lunch or catapult cocoa up your nose when you order a chocolate shooter. Antwerp thrives on innovation, something to which your taste buds will be able to testify: thanks to the port's international influence, all cuisines are represented and continue to reinvent themselves. For example, Antwerp boasts a Michelin-star Chinese restaurant and a pita shop which was the first to feature in the Gault Millau gastronomy guide.

- **Most diamonds in the world**

International diamond hallmarks, such as 'Cut in Antwerp', were born in Antwerp. A visit to the Diamond Square Mile should, therefore, not be missing from your itinerary. There are more diamonds in one square mile than in the rest of the world. Peppered across the city, there are plenty of dazzling window displays of goldsmiths and jewellery designers. Their treasures carry the Antwerp Most Brilliant-label, which guarantees quality.

- **Cradle of fashion**

Antwerp residents are trendsetters. Something which is noticeable from the many innovative pop-ups and fledgling start-ups that you come across while shopping, and which also comes to life, of course, in the fashion district. Here, haute couture is not only in the many boutiques, but also on the streets, in the museum (MoMu) and at college. The fashion department of the Royal Academy is one of the world's most influential: the Six of Antwerp, Martin Margiela, Bruno Pieters ... they all graduated here. Even today, many of the great promises, who come to study here, often use the city as their *testing ground* to launch their label. Here, you can be the first to buy from the designers of tomorrow.

- **XL range at an XS distance**

Locals proudly refer to their city as cosmopolitan with a village atmosphere: here, you will find countless shops, museums, squares, architectural delights and terraces, all within walking distance from each other. Or at least within cycling distance, and that's where Antwerp's city bikes (Velos) come in.

- **Always nearby:** Located in the heart of Flanders, in the centre of Europe, Antwerp is easily accessible. From the regional, but even from the national, airport you reach the city in no time. Alternatively, you can take the train - a must, because Antwerp Central railway station has won many beauty awards and has been dubbed Europe's most romantic station. That majestic setting is bound to dull the pain to some extent when it's time to leave.