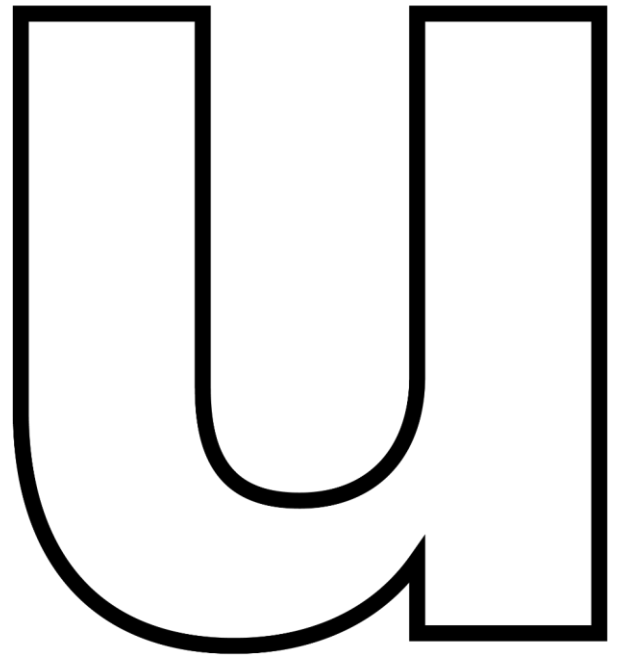
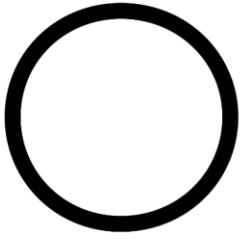


Press release



Poster
Graphic design Pam&Jenny ©
urban.brussels

Heritage Days 2026

OUR LANDSCAPE, OUR LEGACY



Event

Heritage Days 2026 –
38th edition

Organiser

Urban

When

19 and 20 September

Where

Various places in Brussels Capital Region

Website

Heritedays.urban.brussels

Contact

jdp-omd@urban.brussels

Introduction

For 38 years, Urban has invited visitors to spend an entire weekend rediscovering and appreciating Brussels' cultural heritage through the Heritage Days. What began in France in 1984 as 'Les Journées Portes Ouvertes' grew, thanks to its tremendous success, into an annual event in which 49 countries now take part. Belgium joined the initiative in 1989 and has since been one of the event's pioneers, alongside the Netherlands, Sweden and Malta.



Today, the Heritage Days / Open Monument Days have become one of the cultural highlights eagerly anticipated each year by thousands of visitors from Brussels, Flanders, Wallonia and far beyond.

Heritage Days 2025
Jonathan Ortegat © urban.brussels

Although the three regions each organise these days in their own way, the guiding principle remains the same: to introduce as many people as possible to the wealth of our heritage, which often opens its doors to the general public especially for the occasion. Year after year, our audiences prove that it works.

Last year, more than 50,000 people from Belgium and abroad took part in over 190 activities during the Heritage Days / Open Monument Days in Brussels, undoubtedly helping to raise general awareness of heritage conservation in the broadest sense.

Ans Persoons, State Secretary of the Brussels-Capital Region for the Environment, responsible for Climate, Urban Renewal, Heritage and the Image of Brussels:

“A city is constantly evolving. The spirit of the times shapes the way our buildings and public spaces are designed. In a major city like Brussels, the landscape is created by people and adapts to new needs, new technologies and new ideas. What do we preserve, what do we let go, and what do we give a new purpose? These questions have fueled intense urban debates for decades. In a region where space and resources are scarce and demands are high, Heritage Days invites us to reflect on the many transformations that have already shaped Brussels' landscape, while also looking towards the future. During this weekend, we open the doors of places that are usually closed to the public and take visitors on surprising journeys through the city. Completely free of charge and open to everyone. »



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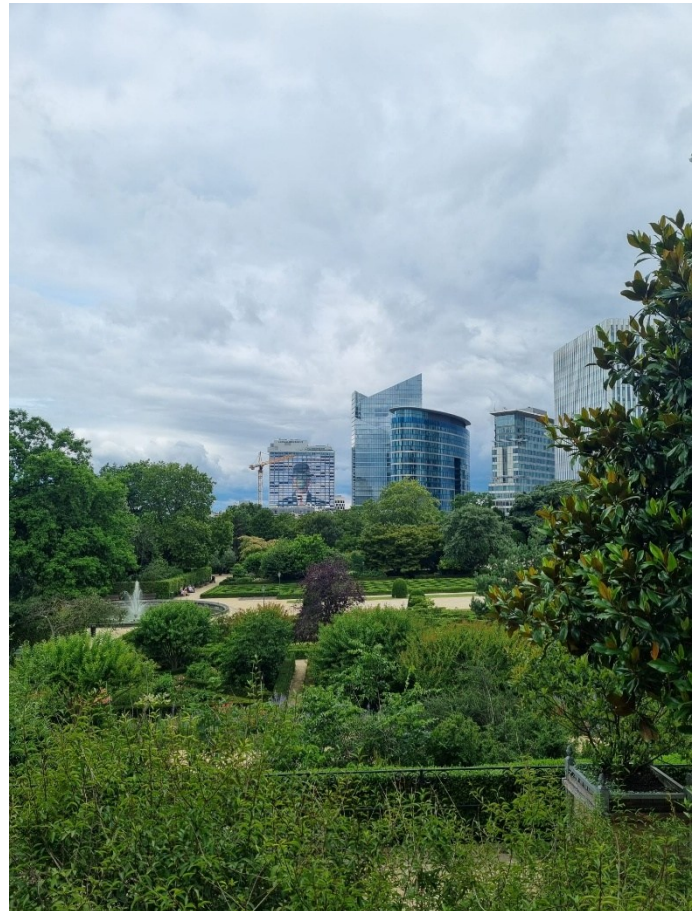
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View on Northern Quarter
© Christophe Mouzelard



Rooftop ornaments
As seen from Grand Place
M. Vanhulst © urban.brussels



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The theme

For one weekend, Brussels will become an open landscape of stories, places and perspectives. During the Heritage Days, Urban invites visitors to see the city with fresh eyes, through the lens of landscape: its monuments, hidden panoramas, green spaces, crafts and living memories, under the title **'OUR LANDSCAPE, OUR LEGACY'**.

Heritage is not only what we inherit from the past, but also what we cherish, shape and pass on today to the generations of tomorrow.

Brussels cityscapes, whether a square, park, street or panorama, emerge from the interaction between buildings, open space, vegetation and infrastructure, as well as mobility, sounds, lighting and social practices that bring them to life. They form a dynamic system that evolves over time, shaped by public policy, architectural choices, economic developments, cultural movements and successive generations.

Under the title **'OUR LANDSCAPE, OUR LEGACY'**, the event highlights a broad spectrum of heritage: from iconic places and new heritage to sites undergoing transformation, urban neighbourhoods, castles and repurposed buildings. Brussels' natural and rural landscapes also receive due attention, as do places that invite visitors to experience the city from another perspective: from below, from above or through a global lens. Art in public space, intangible heritage, collections and culinary stories reveal the richness and diversity of our shared heritage, while meeting places and mobility show how landscape, use and everyday experience are constantly intertwined.



Duden Park from above
Schmitt-GlobalView © urban.brussels



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Sarah Lagrillière, Deputy Director-General of Urban:

“The urban landscape is more than an image.

The urban landscape tells us how we inhabit, shape and pass on our city in everyday life. It reflects our shared past, our daily practices and the way we imagine the future.

More than ever, we need to broaden our perspective. Climate challenges and social change invite us to work together to build an inclusive, accessible and resilient city.

These Heritage Days offer an opportunity to enrich our perspective, so that we can better appreciate and preserve our present living environment and continue to develop it harmoniously, with future generations in mind.”

Find out more about Urban’s annual theme for the cultural programme [here](#).

WIELS marsh
Fabio Bertoldi © urban.brussels





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“Europe, a common heritage”

The Heritage Days / Open Monument Days are organised as part of the European Heritage Days, an initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Commission.

Every year, during the weekends of September, numerous sites and monuments across Europe, many of which are normally closed to visitors, open to the public free of charge. This gives European citizens an opportunity to discover and learn more about their shared cultural heritage. They are also encouraged to play an active role in protecting and promoting this heritage for present and future generations, under the motto “Europe, a common heritage”.

In 2026, Brussels also received special European recognition: the project ‘Resist, Reinvent, Revive’ centered on Le BRASS in Forest was selected for a European Heritage Days Stories grant from the Council of Europe and the European Union.

The project brings together industrial heritage, living memory, artistic creation and the biodiversity of the WIELS Marsh, demonstrating how heritage can contribute to a resilient and sustainable future. In doing so, the Heritage Days / Open Monument Days underline not only the importance of our past, but also the role of heritage in the society of tomorrow.

More information is available [here](#).



Le BRASS
© Bruno Dias Ventura, Lara Herbinia
et Rozenn Quéré



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Activities linked to the theme

This year's programme includes more than 270 varied activities across all 19 Brussels municipalities. Visitors can enjoy exhibitions, performances, walks, cycle tours, talks and guided tours of exceptional buildings.

Up high: hidden panoramas

Anyone wishing to see Brussels from a different perspective will be taken quite literally to new heights during the Heritage Days / Open Monument Days. A number of towers, rooftop terraces and viewpoints will exceptionally open to the public. From above, the city unfolds as a living landscape of rooftops, church towers, parks, broad avenues and hidden green spaces.

Visitors will enjoy exceptional access to the south tower of the Cathedral of St Michael and St Gudula, the roof of ARLON53, and the panoramic viewpoints at KBR, the former RTT central administration building and The Gradient. After several years of closure, the Halle Gate will also reopen its attic and wall walk to the public, with renewed access to the roof as an added attraction.

From the Church of Our Lady of Laeken to the Collegiate Church of St Peter and St Guido in Anderlecht, each panorama tells a different story about Brussels. One view reveals the city's historical layers, while another shows how nature, infrastructure and architecture are continually intertwined.

One particular highlight is the view from the top of the Brusilia Tower in Schaerbeek. Designed by Jacques Cuisinier and built between 1970 and 1974, this modernist residential tower offers an impressive 360° panorama of Brussels and far beyond. It is a unique opportunity to read the city as a landscape in motion.



A tiny fraction of
the view from the 34th floor
© Jacques de Selliers



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Intimate locations: highly exclusive gems

For those who enjoy exceptional places and intimate discoveries, the programme also includes several visits with very limited capacity. These exclusive gems provide access to locations that are normally hidden or only very rarely accessible.

Visitors can discover the roof of the BELvue Museum, with a spectacular panorama over the Royal Palace and Brussels Park. The Barbier House, a modernist home overlooking the contested Donderberg site, will also open its doors. In the Sainte-Catherine district, Wirtz's secret garden awaits: a 160 m² urban oasis hidden within an inner courtyard and designed by landscape architect Jacques Wirtz.



The secret garden of Wirtz
David Serati © urban.brussels



Interior House Barbier
© Endre Sebok - Explore.Brussels



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Behind the scenes: expertise and traditional crafts

From local production to centuries-old traditions, this part of the programme takes visitors behind the scenes to meet craftspeople and discover places that keep Brussels expertise alive.

At the historic Vinaigrerie Sainte Odile, visitors can discover the distinctive character of an artisan vinegar producer, while Les Savonneries Bruxelloises opens its workshops and shows how a traditional soap maker continues to supply the Belgian Royal Court today.

At Hof-ter-Musschen in Woluwe-Saint-Lambert, an old bread oven comes to life through demonstrations and traditional breadmaking in the heart of a protected Brabant farmhouse. The Laeken watercress bed also features on this trail of local knowledge, production and living heritage.



Vinegar factory Sainte-Odile
© Vinaigrerie Sainte-Odile



Workshops of the Savonneries
Bruxelloises
© Ateliers des Savonneries
Bruxelloises



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Life in a castle: exceptional residences and impressive parks

Castle life also has a place in the programme, with exceptional residences where monumental architecture meets the grandeur of surrounding parks and gardens.

Visitors can explore the Castle of Rivieren in Ganshoren, Tournay-Solvay Castle in Watermael-Boitsfort, Castel de Lindthout in Montgomery and the Manoir d'Anjou in Woluwe-Saint-Pierre.

The International School of Brussels, housed in the former Bischoffsheim Castle in Watermael-Boitsfort, and the Domaine Allard in Uccle also offer a glimpse of this less familiar heritage.

Early birds and night owls

For early birds and nocturnal explorers, this programme offers a series of activities through which Brussels can be experienced at unusual times and from surprising angles: in the first light of morning, at dusk, and through art, heritage, craftsmanship and panoramic views.

These include a tranquil morning walk through green and heritage-rich places in Brussels, from the gardens of La Cambre Abbey to Tenbosch Park and a hidden private garden in Saint-Gilles, as well as an evening walk between Avenue Louise and Place Royale exploring how lighting transforms the urban landscape.

Some doors can be difficult to open. For one day, Maison des Cultures et de la Cohésion Sociale in Molenbeek, the Brussels Circus School and Vaartkapoen will take over public space to meet passers-by and local residents. Taster sessions, workshops and experiences will be offered, with streets and pavements becoming a stage for street art until late in the evening.

Temporary exhibitions: art collections normally hidden from view

During the Heritage Days, several iconic buildings will open their doors for temporary exhibitions featuring documents, artworks and collections that are usually hidden from the public. At the Royal Stables of the Palace of the Academies, old postcards and urban landscapes will transport visitors to belle époque Brussels. At Saint-Gilles Town Hall, *Landscapes of Ashes and Light* explores the work of local artist Pierre Paulus. The WHALL cultural centre in Woluwe-Saint-Pierre will also reveal historic views of the municipality through paintings and postcards.

Heritage for everyone: opening doors wider

For several years, Urban has worked with Arts & Culture to offer guided tours in French Belgian Sign Language for deaf and hard-of-hearing visitors. Audio tours are also available, enabling the widest possible audience to enjoy the heritage. Based on last year's visitor survey, this year's programme has been expanded to include coach and Waterbus tours, as well as a broader range of activities for children. Once again, the Heritage Days place accessibility, inclusion and visitor experience at the heart of the event.



Avenue Louise by night
Diego Pettinarigo © urban.brussels



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Partnerships

This year, Urban is joining forces with several partners to increase the visibility of the Heritage Days. By working together, combining expertise and building new bridges between heritage, nature, sustainable urban development and active mobility, these partnerships offer visitors surprising perspectives on the Brussels cityscape.

Renature Time

This year, Urban and its Heritage Days / Open Monument Days are joining forces with Renature Time, an initiative of Brussels Environment, in a unique partnership highlighting the Nature City and its heritage.

This programme of activities invites the public to rediscover Brussels as a living landscape in which nature, heritage and urban development are closely intertwined. Through walks, visits, workshops and participatory activities, it explores well-known green spaces as well as hidden or unexpected natural areas: from the Sonian Forest, Osseghem Park, Hof ter Musschen and Ganshoren Marsh to Zenne Park, the WIELS Marsh, Biestebroecck Marsh, the Laeken watercress farm and green oases in the heart of the city.



The watercress farm in Laken:
CRESSONDO

These 25 activities sit at the intersection of both programmes and have been branded the Renature Time label.

They invite visitors to see urban nature with fresh eyes: not as something outside Brussels, but as an essential part of its history, daily life and future.

Both events begin at the same time, offering full immersion. During the Heritage Days, visitors can take a deep dive into Brussels heritage, including its living and natural heritage. The journey of discovery can then continue until 18 October.



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ERDF, European Regional Development Fund

As part of the #EUInMyRegion campaign, an initiative of the European Commission in close cooperation with the ERDF Directorate of the Brussels Regional Public Service, numerous free #EUInMyRegion activities will be organised in September and October.

The aim? To show Brussels residents how the European Union and the Brussels-Capital Region are investing tangibly in their living environment. These projects contribute to key themes such as innovation, the energy transition, sustainable development, entrepreneurship and social cohesion.

This year, the #EUInMyRegion campaign is joining the 2026 Heritage Days. Together, they show how European and regional investment is helping to shape the Brussels landscape today and can be easily identified by the #EUInMyRegion label.



Mazui / Zinneke
© Delphine Mathy



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National Lottery / Pro Vélo

With the support of the National Lottery, which is committed to preserving heritage and making culture accessible to all, Urban and Pro Velo are presenting a programme of cultural cycling activities as part of the Heritage Days / Open Monument Days. This initiative invites the public to discover Brussels differently through its cultural, natural and social heritage, in keeping with the theme “Our Landscape, Our Legacy”.

Four themed cycle routes, identifiable by the National Lottery label, highlight the diversity of Brussels’ landscapes and the richness of the Region’s urban mosaic. Cycling effortlessly connects different places and neighbourhoods while offering a gentle, active and accessible way to experience heritage.



Brussels by bike
© Pro Velo



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Matrimony Days

The eighth edition of Matrimony Days will take place from 25 to 27 September across Brussels and at the Bruegel Cultural Centre, the event's main base.

'Matrimony' refers to tangible or intangible assets of artistic or historical importance originating from women.

As in previous years, Matrimony Days will offer around thirty free activities, including talks, workshops, guided tours and activities for children and families.

The eighth edition of Matrimony Days, held since 2019, will shine a spotlight on women who never emerged from the shadows: lacemakers, factory workers, archivists, curators and artists erased from the history books. In short, all the women who shaped our heritage without ever receiving recognition for it.



Matrimony Days
L'architecture qui dégenre © Design:
Loraine Furter & Lissa Choukrane

www.matrimonydays.be


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Practical information

For environmental and economic reasons, the full programme will no longer be available as a printed brochure this year. The complete programme and an interactive map of all Heritage Days locations and activities are available on the [Heritage Days website](https://publication.urban.brussels/heritedays/2026/PRESS/), together with the date on which bookings open.

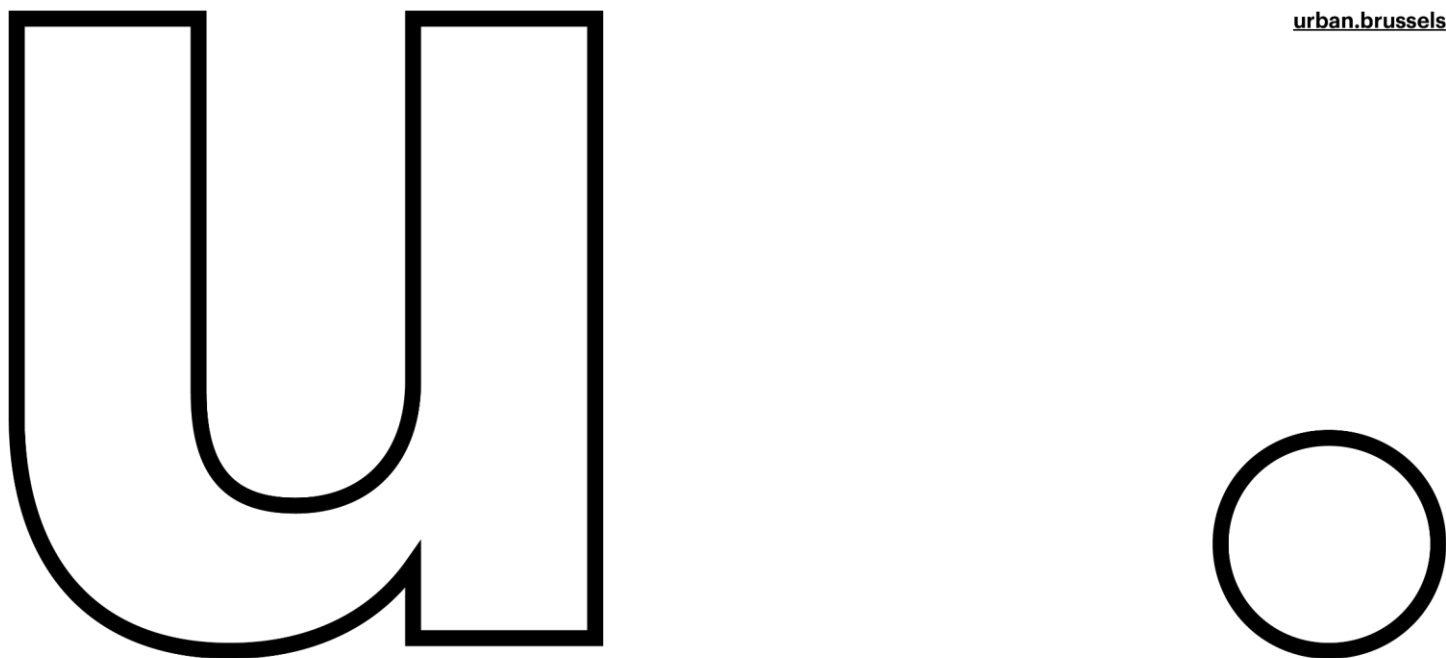
New this year: throughout the entire weekend, you are warmly welcome at our Information Point, located at 20 Mont des Arts (from 10 a.m to 5 p.m). Drop in for programme information, a friendly chat, a cup of coffee, answers to your questions or to purchase one of our publications.

The complete press pack, including photographs and visuals, is available here:

<https://publication.urban.brussels/heritedays/2026/PRESS/>

Poster
Graphic design Pam&Jenny ©
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architecture and culture for the city.