

## The vineyards of the St. Pietersberg.

The Romans who founded Maastricht, enjoyed life. They could not do without a good glass of wine. In this era, drinking water was not always reliable. Hence, beer and wine were most often drunk. In those good old days, climate was warmer than it is today.

The Romans could grow their grapes on the slopes of the St. Pietersberg (Mount St. Peter).

In time, the Romans left, the climate became cooler and the grapevines disappeared from the St. Pietersberg.

The cultivating of grapevines which can grow in cooler climates, and the changing climate of today, made it possible to grow grapes again in the Maastricht region.



## Bike route with a little bit of walking.

The total route is about 12KM (8 Miles). The route leads across the border, into Belgium.

Suggestion is to rent a bike and you could take your packed lunch with you. The entire route is virtually flat, so no strenuous up- or downhill sections (well.... one small uphill part, but this is relatively steep, so you have to walk uphill anyway. Alternative route is provided).

Bikes can be rented at:

Courtens Bike Sports, Calvariestraat 16, 6211 NJ Maastricht.

Price per bike per day from € 12.50. Deposit € 20.

If you plan to rent a bike, it is suggested to make a reservation.

Phone: +31 (0)43 321 3820 or send an email to

[info@courtensbikesports.nl](mailto:info@courtensbikesports.nl) indicating your name and phone number, date of rental and return, type of bike (city or mountain bike) and number of bikes (including male or female versions).

Courtens Bike Sports is open from

Tue - Fri 09:00 (9AM) - 18:00 (6PM),

Sat: 09:00(9AM) - 16:00 (4PM)

and from 18:00 (6PM) to 18.30 (6.30PM)

From April 1st till Sept. 30 also on

Sun & Mo 10:00 - 12:00 and 18:00 - 18:30

Be sure to bring a valid ID when renting a bike!

**BIKE RENTAL**



**Courtens Bike sports**  
Maastricht 043-321 3820

**See better by bike!**

€ 0,50 DISCOUNT

Only 2 min. of the Vrijthof



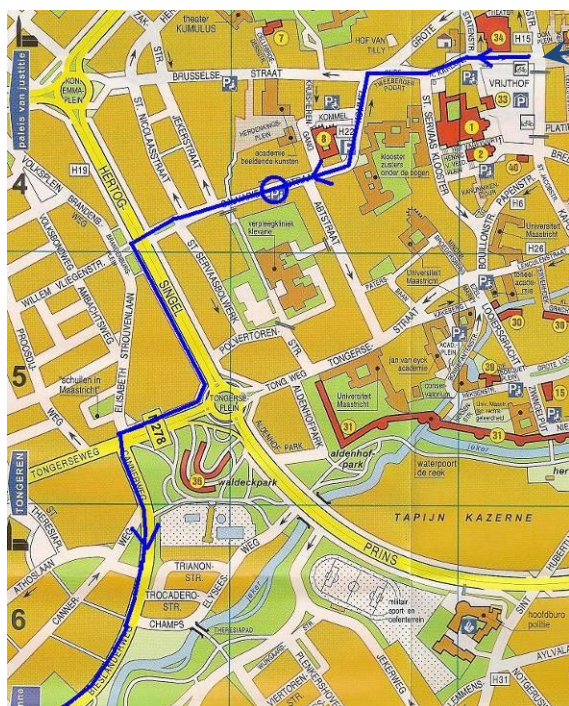
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**Courtens Bike sports**

Calvariestraat 16, Maastricht  
Tel: +31 (0)43 321 38 20  
[www.fietsverhuurmaastricht.nl](http://www.fietsverhuurmaastricht.nl)  
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## Start of the walk



Start of walk

Walk to the bike rental shop.

Start the walk in front of the McDonalds at the Vrijthof. Leave the Vrijthof on the opposite side of the square and turn left into the 2<sup>nd</sup> street (Kommel).

It does not matter if you do this trip on foot or by bike, we will pass the bike rental shop on our walk

About 50 meters into this street, you will see the former "Kruisheren" church/convent, now converted into the "Kruisheren" design Hotel. The disused church/convent was given a new purpose by Camille Oostwegel, a good friend of André Rieu. We will see another of Camille's properties later on, during the trip.

The initial idea was to create a classic interior, but Mr. Oostwegel was unable to acquire enough antiques to decorate the building and rooms. His wife suggested to choose for the opposite, a very modern design.

Take a look inside the hotel, and see how ancient architecture and modern design go hand-in-hand. Walk towards the left and head for the bar. Just in front of the bar there is a nice see-through wine cellar. Return to the reception. To the right are the bathrooms. May I suggest you to make a sanitary stop here? Find an artistic surprise in the bathrooms!




Exit the hotel and turn right twice. Continue past the hotel, into the Calvariestraat. Here you will find the bike shop on the right side of the street.

Either pick up your bike and cycle, -or continue walking- to the end of this street.

Note: Keep to the right with your bikes. Many streets (unfortunately not all streets) have bike lanes. If there is a bike lane you **have** to use it.



Cross the busy Hertog Singel (Maastricht ring road) and turn left onto the road parallel to this Singel. Head towards the roundabout (traffic circle Tongerseplein). At the roundabout, take a right into the Tongerseweg. In the park on your left, you see the Waldeck bastion, which is part of the ramparts, built in 1610. Another indication of the strategic military position of Maastricht. At the other side of the traffic circle, (behind the houses) in the Aldenhofpark, you can find the statue of the famous musketeer d'Artagnan, indicated with  on the map.



150 meters after the roundabout, at the end of the park, turn left into the "Cannerweg".

Continue on the road until you leave town. Near the end of the houses is the highest elevation on the trip...

You are now in the "Jeker valley". This little river meanders through the fields on your left.

After a while, you will see a small shrine on the left side of the road. This is the location of a historic well, said to be "founded" by St. Servaas. The basilica on the Vrijthof is named after this saint.



On the hill to your right, you will see the first vineyards. Continue to walk/cycle till you come to an intersection where a small road (path) leads uphill to the farmhouse.





At the top-left of the hill, you see the "Apostel Hoeve".

In 1970 the owners of this farm were the first to start planting grapevines again. You can walk uphill (Dalingsweg) or turn around to the farm on your left ("Hoeve Nekem").

In both farms you can taste (and buy) the Limburg wine, but for the Apostel Hoeve it is by appointment only. Suggestion is to visit "Hoeve Nekem".



Go 100 meters into the side road, turn right and walk up to Hoeve Nekem. At the end of the archway on the right hand wall there is a doorbell. Press the bell and someone will meet you. They have excellent wines. When we are in the neighborhood, we regularly buy a supply of their Maastricht Riesling wines. They have three kinds of white wines from dry to semi-sweet and a very nice red Pinot Noir.

When you are sober again, continue the trip on the "Cannerweg".

After about 600 meters, the road turns slightly to the left.

At this point, optionally you may turn right, onto a road signposted "Chateau Neercanne". This (dead-end) road will go slightly uphill and leads through the Canner forest to the rear of the castle (French: Chateau). There are some nice walks in this small forest area. The hillside is littered with cave entrances, used to excavate the soft marl stone. You may be able to visit the "Jesuit cave". (Jezuïeten grot).

These caves have been decorated by Jesuit monks with beautiful charcoal drawings.

Public tours are available on Saturdays at 10AM, 12AM, 2PM and 4PM.

See <http://www.jezuïetenberg.nl/English/english.html> for more information.



Return back to the main road and/or continue towards the Chateau.

On your left you will see a building. It is the former customs office, but since the forming of the BeNeLux trade agreement (Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg) and the forming of the European Union, this building now has a new purpose.



In front of you, you will now see the majestic building of "Chateau Neercanne". Built in 1698. It is the only terraced castle in the Netherlands.

In 1984, Camille Oostwegel acquired Chateau Neercanne. Like the "Kruisheren Hotel" we have seen in the beginning of this trip, he turned this castle into an exclusive hotel and restaurant (one Michelin star).

On the left side of the Chateau, there is a small vineyard. The Chateau makes its own red wine (Pinot Noir).

Enjoy the sight of this building. Then continue towards the village of Kanne.

Just before you enter this village, take a look to your left. Here you see the river Jeker meandering through the country side. In the background you can see the St. Pietersberg. (Mount Saint Peter). On the slopes of the hill, there is another small vineyard, the "Wijngaardgroeve".



When the layout of the road changes, you enter Belgium. In the good old days (before the Euro), you had to change money here.

Follow the main road through this typical Belgium village.

The village hosts a few places to take a short rest. Try the local "Frituur" (Pommes frites). Here you can get French fries Belgium style. Some prefer these fries over the traditional French fries we generally eat. If you listen carefully, the dialect the people speak here, is slightly different from what you hear in Maastricht. This language is called "Flemish", the version of the Dutch language spoken in the northern part of Belgium. Belgium is a country divided by two languages, Flemish (Dutch) and Walloons (French). Slightly later on we will meet again the language barrier.

Continue on the main road until you reach the bridge over the "Albert" canal. (Albert is the present King of Belgium). The canal was dug from 1930 to 1939.

From here it is possible to take an alternative route over the Belgium part of the St. Pietersberg, adding another 6KM (4 MIs) to the trip with a very steep climb and decent. When you do this trip by car you have to take this alternative route. Only bikes are allowed on the road along the canal. For the alternative route see page 12.



Just as the road slopes up to the bridge, there is a side road to the left.

Be careful crossing this road and turn to the right into the bike path parallel to the slope. When you reach the canal, turn left. At this point there are some picnic tables for your (packed) lunch or simply sit in the grass along the bank of the canal. Be sure to turn left at the canal (do not pass under the bridge), otherwise it may become a very long trip.....



Follow the canal until you hit the locks, where the canal meets the river Meuse (Maas).



You will notice that Belgium is a country of passionate bikers. It is not uncommon to pass (or be passed by) amateur race cyclist(s). If you see a group coming towards you or they ring their bells when they approach you from behind, give them room to pass.

At a given moment, you will cycle along a near vertical cliff. This section of the canal has been cut straight through the St. Pietersberg. Stop halfway and look at all the different layers you can see in the cliff. You can easily recognize bands of hard pebbles, hated by the people who dug all those tunnels in the mountain, to excavate the soft marl stone. These people were paid by the block they excavated and hitting these hard pebbles meant a lot of very hard work without decent pay. Pick up a piece of this yellowish stone and see how soft it is. André's castle is largely built from this material. No wonder André mentions in many of his interviews that if you are finished making repairs to the castle on one side, you can start all over again on the other side.



At the end of the cliff, you will come to the "Sluis van Lanaye" or Lanaye lock system.

I am not 100% sure if you can walk around on the complex.

The difference in the water level on both sides is 15 meters or yards! The highest difference in height, both in Belgium and The Netherlands.

Just before you reach the locks you can see the water level in the canal on your right and the river beyond the locks on your left.

Quite impressive.

Why such a lock system in the river?

The river Meuse (Maas) originates in France and flows through Belgium and The Netherlands to drain off in the North Sea. It is mainly fed by rain water. There are little tributaries or melt water from large snow areas which feed the river.

That's why the Romans selected a shallow area in the river (now called Maastricht) where they could easily cross the trickle of water for nine months out of the year. Only in spring large amounts of water will flow downstream. With the help of several lock systems in the river, an artificial water level is maintained, so ships can traverse the river year around.



Have a look around at the various road signs and descriptive panels. Notice something? Everything is in French! The St. Pietersberg divides Belgium in two halves: Flemish and Walloons.

Don't cross the lock system, but head straight north towards the big chimney in the distant. This road is not so good, poorly maintained concrete slabs. When the road surface suddenly improves (nice blacktop), you are back in Holland. No other signs to tell you.

Just before the ENCI cement factory a bike path begins, which immediately leads you to a parallel road on the left side of the main road.

Follow this road and pass the ENCI cement factory.



When you can look past the buildings, you can see what a gaping hole this factory already has excavated in the mountain.

Here seen from the top of the St. Pietersberg.

From this vantage point, you really can see how big this hole is.

Just beyond the cement factory, there is a side road to the left, signposted: "Buitengoed Slavante"

Here you have two options:

Continue the (flat) road you are currently on (stick to the parallel road on the left, don't cycle on the main road). You will then pass André's castle.

Alternatively turn left toward Slavante (a little bit uphill). Leave your bike in the parking lot and have a refreshment at Slavante restaurant.

When re-energized, pick up the bike and follow the path through a small archway (near the steps leading up/down to the restaurant). To your right, you will see another small vineyard. This is the beginning of the "Ursulinenweg". Follow this road.

After a small walk/cycle through the fields, you will see some houses on the right side of the road. (To the left you see the road leading uphill to the cave entrance).





After the fourth house you will see a small sign mentioning "Lourdes Grot"  
 Pass through the door and have a look inside!  
 It was built by a merchant in 1874 in the garden of his house, after his visit to Lourdes. His house later became a convent, but this house/convent is long gone. The only thing left is this oldest Lourdes cave in The Netherlands.

Continue on the road until you come to the church behind André's castle.  
 Opposite the church, you will see a stone wall made out of the soft marl, excavated from the mountain. Many people have scratched their names in the wall. This has nothing to do with André, and it is possibly a local custom. The dates mentioned, go way back before André acquired the castle. Lovers meeting place?

André is very keen on his privacy. Please behave accordingly when you visit the area around his house!



The churchyard is also worth a visit. Abbeys and cloisters are rapidly disappearing in the Netherlands. The southern part of the Netherlands (specifically the region of Maastricht) still has a number of them. Many of the congregation members have found their last resting place in the cemetery around the church. Have a look around and spot the communal graves of a dozen or so congregations.

Follow the "Ursulinenweg" (Ursulinen is the name of a congregation or nun's order which was located at the Lourdes Cave) until it merges with the busy "Lage Kanaaldijk" (Low Canal Dike). This time, cross the main road and turn to the right for a front view of André's castle. How beautiful!!! So romantic!



André is very keen on his privacy. Please behave accordingly when you visit the area around his house!



The house in front of the castle was restored for Marc, but (2012) we have indications he does not live there anymore. Pierre, his wife Eefje and the twin girls Linde and Lieke, live in a big house, next to the white villa where André and Marjorie live. The castle is used as office and representation purposes. The row of low white houses is also André's property!



Now head back in the direction of Maastricht. It's best to stay on the river side, keep the river Maas (Meuse) on your right side.

On your left (to the right of the castle) you will see a white house. This is André's living house. Further to the right is Pierre's house.

Follow the river for approximately 300 meters (900 ft), until you see a small road on the right called "St. Pieter Sluis weg". (If you turn right too soon, you'll end up at the clubhouse of the local yacht club. In that case: take the next turn to the right, that will be the St. Pieter Sluis weg!)



## From André's Castle back to the Vrijthof

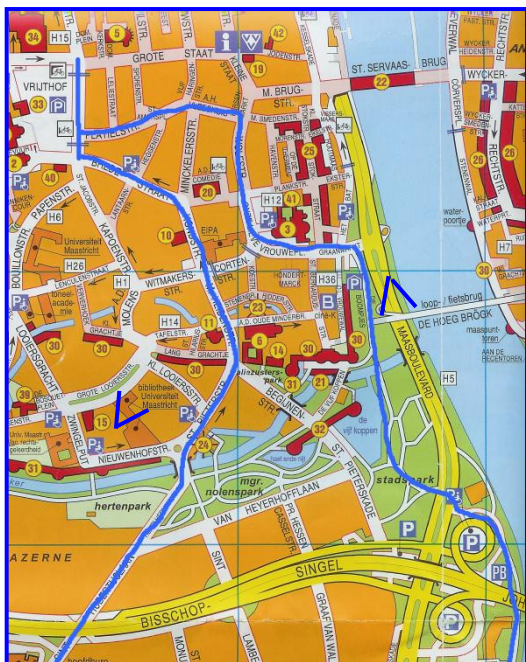
Follow the "St. Pieter Sluis weg" until you pass underneath the "Kennedy" bridge. To the right you will see the building of the Limburg regional council, partially built on an island in the river.



Behind the bridge you will see the prominent dome shaped building of the "Bonnefanten Museum" which is located in the "Ceramique" area. This area is briefly described in the Maastricht walk. The Bonnefanten Museum is the foremost museum of old masters and contemporary fine art in the province of Limburg. The museum is housed in a building designed by the Italian architect Aldo Rossi. Together with the Cupola on the river Maas, it is one of Maastricht's most prominent landmarks.







When passing underneath the bridge, follow the path keeping the parking lot underneath the bridge on your left. Cross the (busy) “Maas Boulevard” and head into the City Park. Walk (don't cycle) straight towards the lake. Here is where we have our fans picnic, opposite the bastion named “Vijf Koppen” (Five Heads). Continue along the lake, and keep the twelfth century city walls with guns to your left. At your right you will see the pedestrian and cyclists bridge to the Ceramique area. At the end of the historic city wall, turn left into the “Graanmarkt”. This will bring you back to the “Onze Lieve Vrouweplein”, with all its cafés and terraces. If only there would be a free table.....

Cross the square and continue into the “Wolfstraat” (pedestrian area!). Then take the first street to the left “Achter het Vleeshuis”, and continue into “Platielstraat” with its cozy little square “St. Amorsplein” (another chance to get a drink or so).

This street will lead you back to the Vrijthof with many more terraces and.... André's daily sound check is at about 5 PM. You will not want to miss that!! You'll see him ride a bicycle to

check the sound, while you take a rest and drink your wine or beer.

Now, for those who have rented a bike be sure to return it before the bike shop closes!

## Alternative route

For those with a lot of stamina, there is a possibility to extend the trip with about 6 KM (4 miles). If you make this trip by car, you need to take this route, the road alongside the Albert Canal is for bikers only. This diversion will lead you over the Belgium part of the St Pietersberg (Montagne St. Pieter as it is called here). There will be a steep winding road uphill and an even steeper winding road downhill. Typically you will need to walk uphill.

In Kanne cross the canal, go straight on at the roundabout and follow the main road. Initially this road is called "Chaussée des Grenadiers" then "Rue de la Vallée". From the roundabout, follow the road for approx. 1.9 KM then take a left turn into the "Rue de Garage". After 500 meters the road splits, take the sharp turn left and make your way uphill. Follow this road over the Mount St. Pieter and enjoy the view. Halfway you start to go downhill again. First the road will make a turn to the left, then to the right. In this bend there is a small parking lot (on the other side of the road, so be careful turning into the parking lot!". From here you have a nice view over the Dutch/Belgium landscape. At this point check the breaks of your bike! You will now go relatively steep downhill and halfway there is a tight U-turn. When you reach the river Meuse again, cross the bridge and turn left ("Quai de Caster". Follow this road until you reach the lock system. Cross to the other side of the river at the end of the lock system. From here you can follow the route again as described on page: 7.



The dotted line in the picture above show this alternative route.



Important links:

History of Maastricht:

This splendid site is unfortunately in Dutch only, but even so worth a visit:

<http://www.zichtopmaastricht.nl/files/index.php?suid=4>

Basilica of St. Servaas (also in English)

<http://www.sintservaas.nl/indexf.html>

Vineyards (Dutch only):

<http://www.hoevenekum.nl>

<http://www.apostelhoeve.nl>

Chateau Neercanne / Kruisherren hotel

<http://www.chateauhotels.nl/ENG/index1.htm>

Bonnefanten museum

<http://www.bonnefanten.nl/>

Wikipedia on Maastricht

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maastricht>

Tourist information of Maastricht (German/English/French)

<http://www.vvvmaastricht.nl>

## **Acknowledgements:**

Many thanks to John for the final correction of the text.

All pictures in this document are taken by Ruud and Ineke with the exception of:

(Part of) VVV Maastricht City map. Full maps can be obtained from the VVV Tourist Office (VVV) for a nominal fee.

This document was made by Ruud and Ineke, third edition, May 2010.