

# d'Artagnan walk



## The d'Artagnan walk

Since its foundation by the Romans in approx. 10 BC, Maastricht always has been a city of strategic importance.

During the various centuries, several defense works were created. As the city grew and military armament improved, new defensive walls were needed. Many of them are now part of the historic city center of Maastricht.

Maastricht has seen many sieges and played an important part in various battles. During the siege of 1673 by the French, the famous musketeer d'Artagnan was killed outside the city walls, near the "Tongersepoort" (Tongeren Gate) and presumably was buried in the church of Wolder.

In a separate chapter we will tell a bit more about the life and death of d'Artagnan.

André Rieu often mentions that d'Artagnan had his last breakfast in his kitchen, we will analyze whether this was feasible.

We also will pass by two of the three surviving and still operating watermills, with an option to visit the third and as icing on the cake: the walk will lead past André Rieu's birth house!

This walk will lead you through the historic city center and through some of the city parks. All on paved roads and no incline of any significance.

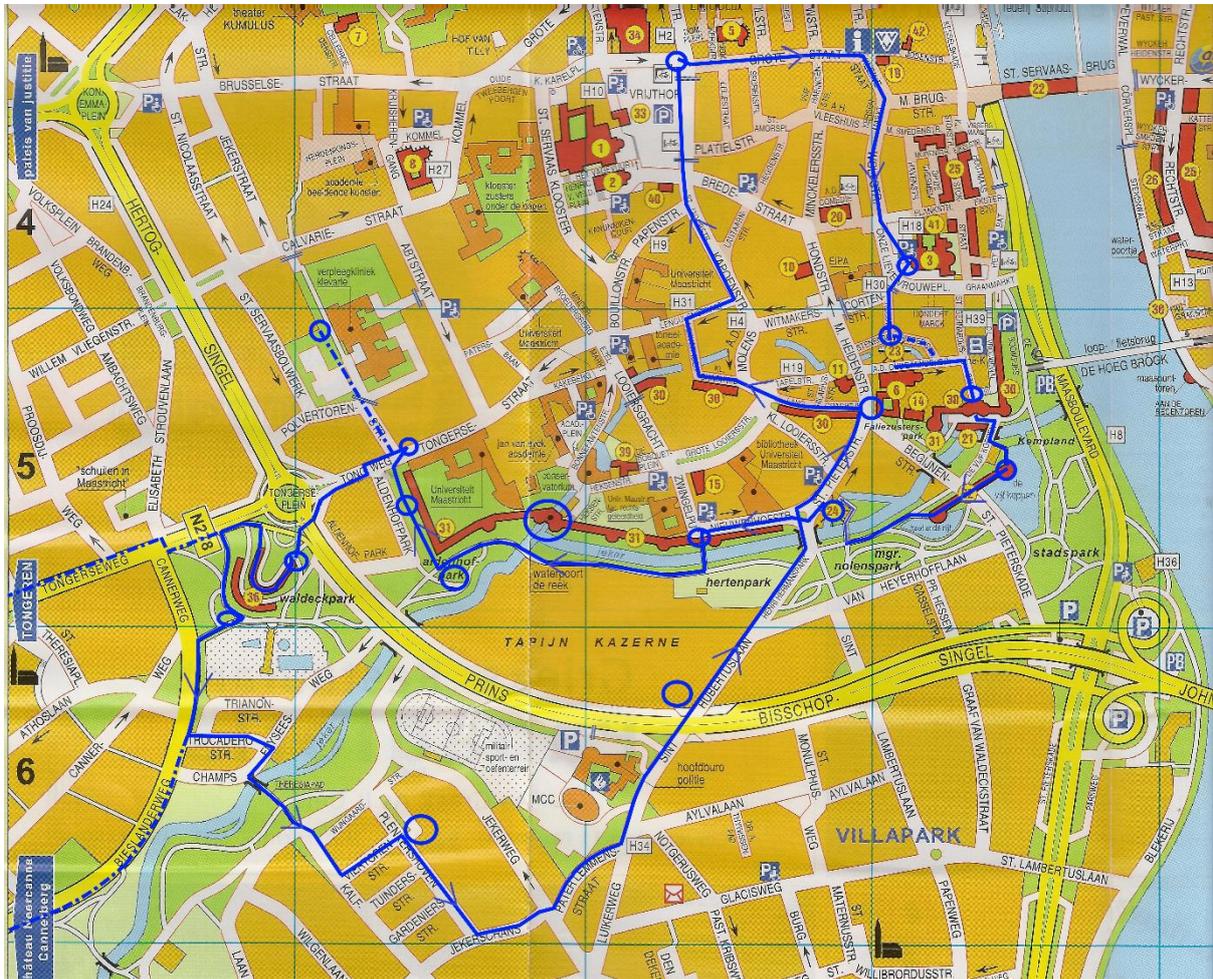
Be sure to wear sturdy footwear, some streets in Maastricht are still paved with cobble-stones.

### Highlights of this walk

- (Remains of) Maastricht defense walls, dating from the Roman times till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century
- Two -and with a small extra walk three- of the still operational watermills of Maastricht
- Place where d'Artagnan died in 1673
- Optional walk to the church where he supposedly has been buried
- André's birth house

## The walk

We will start this walk on the Vrijthof, in front of the MacDonalDs / Gauchos..  
The map below will show the entire walk.



Total length of this walk (without the optional trips) is 5 KM or just over 3 miles and will take between 2 to 3 hours to complete (without the additional excursions). All depending on your walking speed and how much time you spend at the various points of interest.

## The Roman history

Before we start the walk, a little bit about the history of Maastricht.

Maastricht was founded in the first century AD after the Romans had marched from the south, and went on until they reached the river Rhine. To supply the soldiers in the various forts, the Romans built a network of roads. One of the important roads in this region was the road from Boulogne-sur-mer (France), through Bavay and Tongeren (Belgium) to Cologne (Germany). Rivers were major obstacles and this road led to a shallow and easy part to cross the river Maas (Meuse). The Romans named this place "Mosae Trajectum" (place to cross the Maas) which turned into "Maastricht". The Romans built a wooden bridge, the only fixed river crossing to the North Sea! This crossroad was an ideal place for a harbor, trade and lodges.

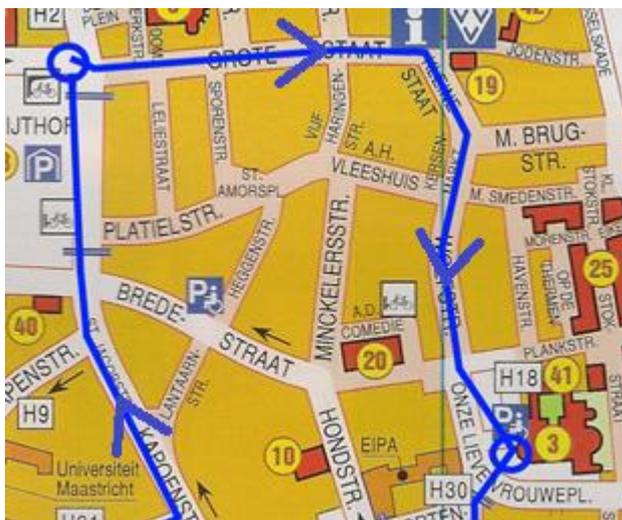
Initially the Roman city had no walls. For more than two centuries, the inhabitants relied on the fortifications along the river Rhine. When the influence of Rome declined in the third century, German tribes started to raid the area.

Around 270 they captured Maastricht and burned down the city. Then the Romans reconsidered the defense of the empire. At strategic places, garrisons were stationed and fortifications built.

The river crossing at Maastricht was such a place. At the beginning of the fourth century, the bridge was rebuilt. On the left bank, next to the bridge, a "Castrum" or walled army camp was built. First erected from wooden poles, later a strong stone wall.

The "Wolfstraat" and the "Onze Lieve Vrouwenplein" (part of our walk) were once part of this "Castrum".

## Start of our walk



We start our walk in front of McDonalds/ Gauchos on the Vrijthof (top-left of the map). From here we cross the road and head into the "Grote Staat", one of the main shopping streets of Maastricht. At the end of this street we will see a former Gothic-style court building "Het Dinghuis". This was built at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century. This building now houses the Tourist Information Office (VVV). Maastricht city maps and the (English) Maastricht and South Limburg Travel Guides, are for sale here. Turn right into the

"Kleine Staat", continue to the intersection with the "Maastrichter Brugstraat" from where you can see the old "Servaas Bridge" to your left. We go straight-on. The street is now named "Kersenmarkt" and then "Wolfstraat". Again a street lined with nice and unique shops.

Pay attention to the Coffee Shop (yes, real coffee!) of "Blanche Dael" at number 28 (right side of the street). This shop roasts their own coffee which is served in many venues in and around Maastricht. Apart from Coffee, they also specialize in teas and freshly roasted peanuts.



Look at the emblem above the door, this shield indicates that Blanche Dael is a

"Hofleverancier". (A business or someone who delivered goods and/or services to a Royal or Imperial Court). This emblem used to be carried by the businesses supplying the royal family of the Netherlands. Today this is no longer true. It is still an emblem granted by our King to businesses over 100 years old with an undisputed reputation. It is not automatically rewarded, but have to apply for it (it's a lengthy procedure and only the die-hards will go for it).

Continue on this street until you enter the "Onze Lieve Vrouwe Plein".

To the left in front of you, you see the "Onze Lieve Vrouwe Kerk", the church of our Beloved Lady.

Cross the square (drinks will come later...) in front of the church and observe the large flat wall of the church. This part of the church was built around 1000 AD.



The large white stones you see at the bottom of the wall, are salvaged (or scavenged) from the original Roman wall. This wall was demolished around that same time the church was built. Maastricht was expanding and needed to grow in size.

The church is one of the oldest in the Netherlands. Although information is scarce, it is thought that the predecessor of this church dates back to the fifth century. As far as knowledge goes, this church was (partly) built on the remains of a Roman temple once dominating this square.

There is still a lot of Roman history to be discovered below the streets of Maastricht. Historians have been able to trace the outline of the original "Castrum" or city wall. Remains of a Roman bathhouse have been discovered around 5 meters / 16 feet below the current street level.

When facing the church wall, you'll see (to your left) the entrance to the church. Immediately inside you see the chapel of "Sterre der Zee" (Stella Maris, Star of the Sea). The chapel is worth visiting. Many people come here for a prayer and to light a candle.



Leave the church again and walk towards the corner of the square (left in front of you). Turn into the Koestraat and continue on this street towards the red building in front of you (23 on the map).



This building houses the "Bisschops molen" (Bishops mill) oldest watermill in the Netherlands (dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century). The mill is one of the three surviving and still operational watermills of Maastricht. The watermill and the milling stones are in perfect condition and used daily to grind "spelt", a predecessor of our current grain. The bakery next door makes bread and all kinds of "vlaai" from this flour. Their products are favored by organic food lovers and by people with some food allergies.



Enter the main door and you will see the milling stones right in front of you. It is not uncommon for this mill to grind the spelt. To your right there is a door into the coffee room of the bakery (the bakery itself is behind this room). Needless to say.. "Koffie and vlaai please!" (If the building is closed, turn left into the "Ridderstraat")



When satisfied, return to the millworks and leave through the rear door crossing a small bridge over the river "Jeker". Here you can see the waterwheel driving the mill. Continue into the narrow street in front of you - Bisschopsmolengang- (don't forget to peek into the bakery on your right). At the end of this short and narrow street, turn left into the "Achter de oude Minnebroeders".

If the watermill and bakery are closed (typically after 5PM) turn left into the narrow "Ridderstraat". Take a look at the first house on your right, adjacent to the red building of the Bisschops molen. A prime example of the local renaissance architecture (Maaslandse renaissance). Pity that such a nice building is hidden away in such a narrow street. Follow this street until you reach the junction with the "Achter de oude Minnebroeders ", then turn left. If you visited the "Bisschopsmolen" and have taken the rear exit, then continue from here. At the end of the street turn right into the "Sint Bernardusstraat" and walk towards the "Helpoort" (Hells gate).





The word "Hell" is the medieval word for "hollow", its former full name was "The gate at the hollow road". The old Roman road used to leave the city at this point. The Helpoort dates back to 1229 AD and is the oldest surviving city gate in The Netherlands. Yep, Maastricht is the 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest city in The Netherlands and has many "oldest in The Netherlands". The picture on the left shows the Helpoort around 1905.

On the left side of the gate (on the small square) there is a door with a flight of stairs leading to a small museum on the first floor dedicated to the (military) history of Maastricht. This gate was once part of the city walls built in 1229. We will see some more remains of this wall later in the walk.

The "Helpoort" used to be one of the nine city gates of Maastricht. Due to the increase in traffic, all city gates except the Helpoort were demolished in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There was no main road at this point and hence this gate was spared.

When you pass underneath the gate, have a look to your right. After about 200 meters (200 yds) there is another small tower, named the "Pater Vink Toren". We'll discuss this tower in a few moments.

Now look straight ahead to the white building in front of you. This building is called the "Pesthuys" or Plague house. This used to be a former paper factory with its own watermill. The building itself had nothing to do with the Plague. Medieval plague victims were housed in tents just behind the building on the other side of the river Jeker. Currently the Pesthuys houses a small theatre. Pass the building on the left side, and in front of you, you will see a flight of stairs. Walk to the top of the stairs, halfway up keep to the left.



When reaching the top of the stairs you are on top of the 16<sup>th</sup> century defensive walls.

This round structure is called "The bastion of the five heads". From the top you will look down onto the field where we have our Maastricht fan picnics!



Why is this structure called "The bastion of the five heads"?

It used to be called "De drie duiven" or "The three pigeons", named after a nearby inn...

On June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1638 the heads of five clergymen were put here on display after being accused of high-treason by the Spanish and immediately executed. A few days later it became clear they were innocent (oops), but from then on the bastion had its new name "Bastion of the five heads". As a "gesture" one of the other towers in the city wall was named after the leader of the clergymen, Father Vink.

Those were the days...



Continue the walk on top of the ramparts to the other Bastion called "Haet ende Nijt" (Hatred and Envy).

From here it slopes down to street level, continue to follow the path upstream along the river.

Now follow the river Jeker. When you reach a small pedestrian bridge, turn right and follow the path a little bit back along the river. To your right you will see a "Fish Ladder". In the city of Maastricht, the river Jeker has three barriers which form a major obstruction for fish and other water creatures. By means of this fish ladder, fish now have a means of navigating up stream again.

Turn left to the archway underneath a building. Just before the archway you see the "Leeuwenmolen", the 2<sup>nd</sup> of three surviving and operational watermills of Maastricht.



Pass through the passage and turn left into the St. Pieterstraat. Cross the intersection into the "Nieuwenhofstraat".

At the other side of the intersection turn around and have a look at the red brick building on the corner of the street. This used to be the guard house of the city gate called "Sint Pieter" which stood on what is now the intersection.



Walk on the left side of the street keeping the 14<sup>th</sup> century city walls to your left.

At the end of these walls you find the "Nieuwenhofpoortje". The first reference to this gate dates back to 1374.

Walk through this gate, cross the bridge and turn right.



We follow the path next to the river Jeker until we cross a small bridge. To your left you see a large number of deserted buildings. This complex used to be the last military barracks of Maastricht, which were abandoned a number of years ago.



From this bridge you have a good view of the "Waterpoort De Reek", this Watergate allowed the water of the river Jeker to flow into town and drive the many watermills in the olden days. No wonder this Watergate was heavily defended.



Cross the bridge and follow the path along the wall. To your left you see a cage like structure in the "Aldenhof Park". This is called "de Berenkuil" or the "Bear's pit".

In 1919 the German Circus Hagenbeck visited Maastricht. This circus had a number of bears and in 1920 the city of Maastricht acquired two of these bears for the entertainment of the Maastricht inhabitants. A special pit was created to house the bears. It was a quite an expensive investment and the idea was to breed with the bears and sell the offspring to cover some of the costs. When the bears arrived, they appeared to be two males, a minor setback...



The initial bears were called "Max" and "Pol" They both died of old age in 1944 and 1945. In 1950 the city of Maastricht acquired another set of bears This time a male and a female, now named "Max" and "Polla". Polla died in 1957 and Max was released by vandals in 1961. In 1962 the Rotary of Maastricht acquired another two bears and guess how they were named... Together with three siblings they lived here until 1993 when the last bear was donated to a zoo.

The current structure you see now dates from 1969. It has been converted into a memorial for (near) extinct animals and used to contain 12 smaller bronze statues. On April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011 seven of the twelve statues were stolen and lost forever.

Return to the city wall and follow the path around a sharp corner in the wall.



It was this section of the wall that was destroyed in June 1673 by French cannons located on top of the St. Pietersberg.

The next day, in a counter attack by the Dutch, d' Artagnan was killed by a musket ball.

In 1675 the wall was rebuild into the structure we see today. Look closely and you can see the various restorations.



Follow the footpath and in front of us we see the statue of d' Artagnan. (Created by the in Maastricht living Russian artist Alexander Taratynov). This statue dates from June 2003 and replaced an older statue lost to vandalism. A copy of this older statue can still be seen in the entrance of the church in the suburb Wolder, where supposedly d' Artagnan is buried.

More information on the life, death and burial of d' Artagnan can be found in the chapter "The life and Death of d'Artagnan" on page 26 of this document.

When you have seen the statue, continue on the footpath until you reach the "Tongerseweg". Here you see a pedestrian crossing. This was the location of a city gate called "Tongersepoot" or the Tongeren gate. The road through this gate leads to the Belgian city of Tongeren, hence its name.

The Tongersepoot was demolished in 1868 after Maastricht lost its military strategic position. The old city gates also hampered the increased traffic and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century all but one city gates were demolished.

In the picture below you see the "Brusselsepoort", the city gate on the road leading towards Brussels in Belgium. The Tongersepoot would have looked the same.



Pay attention to the white guard/excise house in front of the gate. The guardhouse of the Brusselsepoort has been demolished as well, but the one from the Tongersepoot still exists today. It is the white house at the corner across the street.



Pay particular attention to the small box in-between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> window from the left. The night watchman would have a key and he had to wind the mechanism from inside. If he forgot to wind the mechanism or was simply too late, his boss could see that he neglected his duties that night...

Optionally you may walk into the Polvertorenstraat. After about 100 meters/yards you see a nursing home on your right. In front of you there is another section of an old city wall with another statue of d'Artagnan in front of it. You may decide which one looks the best, the bronze statue in the park or this one...

Now return to the guardhouse we have just seen.

Return to the other side of the street again using the pedestrian crossing and turn right towards the roundabout (Tongerseplein). Look to the side of the house in front of you, this contains a mosaic commemorating d'Artagnan.

At the roundabout, use the pedestrian crossing and carefully cross this busy street towards the small park on the other side of the road.





Here you see a simple stone pillar and this is (approximately) the location where d'Artagnan was killed in action. A plaque against the wall described this event.



The area you are now standing looked quite differently in those days. What you now see are the remains of the "Waldeck" bastion, a defensive structure initially built in 1690 (17 years after d' Artagnans death) but significantly modified around 1775.



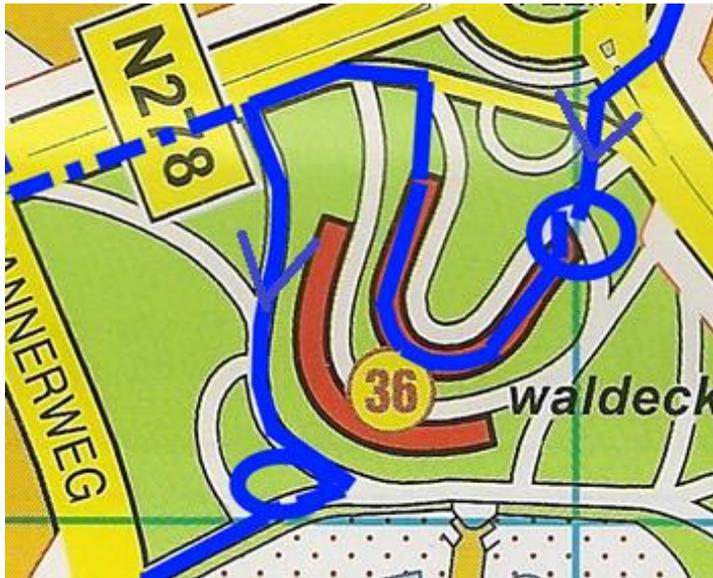
Continue to walk to the right, on the side of the earthen wall you see a small flight of steps leading to a canon on the top of the wall.

Here you can peek into the inner part of the Bastion.

The door you see in front of you is the entrance to a vast labyrinth of underground rooms and passages. Today approx. 10km (6.5 mls) is open to guided tours.

If you would like a tour through these underground passages, please contact the Maastricht Tourist Information (VVV) for more information or see:

<http://www.maastrichtunderground.nl/eng>



Continue to walk along the rim of this U-shaped structure, follow the footpath down and turn left. Stop for a brief moment at the intersection with the 2<sup>nd</sup> footpath on you left hand.

You are now on the Tongerseweg. If you follow this road for approx.. 2.5km (1.5 mls), you enter the suburb of "Wolder". It is assumed that d' Artagnan is buried in the local church in Wolder, the main camp of the French was in the fields just outside Wolder.

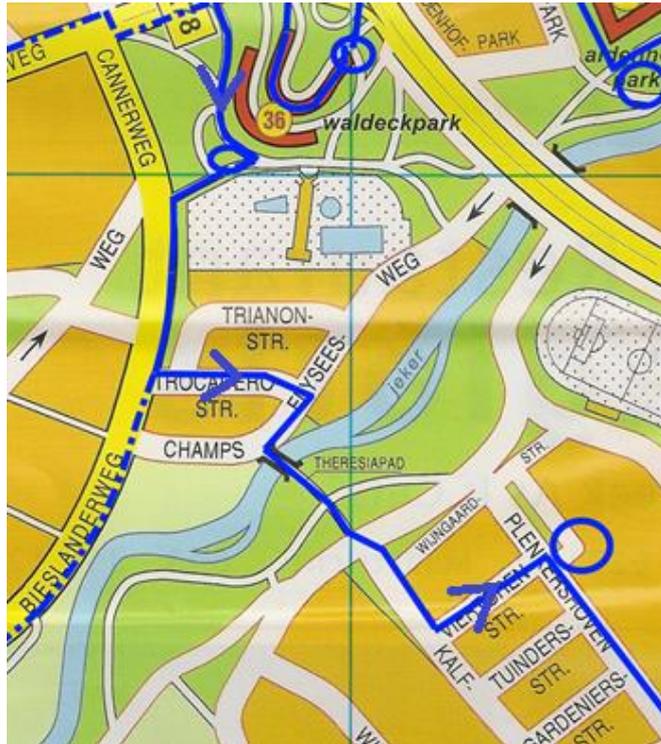
For more information on this optional walk see chapter "Optional visit to the church of Wolder" on page 20. Alternatively you can take a short bus ride from the Vrijthof or Market Square to visit the church (Bus number 3 to Wolder).



For those who continue with this walk, turn left into the footpath. Where the path splits, keep to the right, slightly walking uphill.

At the top you see the tomb of Baron Des Tombe, who was the last Lieutenant General responsible for these defensive structures. What you see today is only a small fragment of the once formidable defense works. Walk around the tomb and take the flight of stairs back to street level, then turn left into the Bieslanderweg. Continue to the corner of first side street named "Trocaderostraat".

From here you can take a small optional walk (approx. 30 minutes round trip) to the third remaining and still operational watermill of Maastricht called "Lombok" . Simply continue down the "Bieslanderweg". See chapter "Optional walk to the third working watermill of Maastricht" on page 24 for more details.



We now head down "Trocaderostreet", turn right into the "Champs Elyseesweg" and after a few steps cross the bridge on your left across the river Jeker. Continue to the street in front of you. Carefully cross the road and stay on the left sidewalk.

Turn left into the 2<sup>nd</sup> street (Viertorenstraat") and walk towards the end of the street. Right in front of you is André's birth house (Plenkershoven 11).

Observe the house from a small distance, don't peek inside etc. the people living here have nothing to do with André and just happen to live in this house.



Turn right into the Plenkershoven. At the T-Junction take a left into the "Jekerschans".



Follow the 'Jekerschans' and continue into the 'Pater Lemmensstraat'. At the end of the street, keep to your left, pass the Maastricht main police station and cross the 'Bisschopssingel' at the traffic lights.

When you have crossed the 'Bisschopssingel', there is a large complex of buildings on your left. These are the 'Tapijn barracks', until recently the last military barracks of Maastricht. Alternative uses for these buildings or the whole complex are being studied at this moment.

We follow the 'Sint Hubertuslaan', cross the bridge over the river Jeker again and turn right into the 'Sint Pieterstraat'. If you have not visited the watermill called the 'Leeuwenmolen' earlier on in the walk, you can still do so now. Turn right into the archway in the white house (nr. 31) on your right. If not, continue down the St Pieterstraat.

Turn left into the 2<sup>nd</sup> street, into the 'Lang Grachtje'. Here we see the remains of the city wall dating back to 1229. When you enter the Lang Grachtje, turn around and observe the modern building behind you. See the architectural 'joke' indicating the location of the old wall.

Also have a peek into the small side street halfway down on the right, a very nice and historical street.





Until a hundred years ago, the 'Lang Grachtje' was a very narrow ally. The arches which are part of the old city wall used to be part of small laborer's houses.

Continue on the 'Lang Grachtje', crossing the 'Grote Looijerstraat' into the 'Klein Grachtje' passing the yellow building on your left. Again you see remains of the city wall of 1229. The road turns right into the 'Verwerhoek'. Have a look at your right, again a view of the river Jeker, ever present in this part of the city.



At the end turn right into the 'Lenculenstraat' and then left into the 'Kapoenstraat'. Follow this street until you reach the Vrijthof square again.

This is the end of this walk. We hope you have enjoyed the nice scenery of some of the historical parts of Maastricht.

## Optional visit to the church of Wolder

There are two ways to travel to the church of Wolder, both are described below.

Please be aware that the church itself is normally closed and only open to the general public during services.

Services are held on Sunday at 09:30 and 11:30, Wednesday at 09:00 and Tuesday and Thursday evenings at 19:00.

The service lasts around 50-60 minutes. If you are not intending to visit the whole service, please plan your visit to arrive approx. 45 minutes after the service has started.

- By foot from the memorial at the roundabout  
This will be a 45 minute walk (1.5 hour return) from the roundabout (approx. 2.5 km / 1.5 mls one way).
- By bus from the Vrijthof or the Markt (Market/Townhall square)

### Wolder church by foot

With your back to the memorial, turn into the main road on your left leading away from the roundabout, see below.



Follow this road for about 2.5 km. Halfway down you will walk past the main Maastricht cemetery (on your right). When it was established in 1812, it was located well outside the city limits, but now fully enclosed by the Maastricht suburbs. Continue to follow the "Tongerseweg" until you see a bright-blue colored petrol (Gasolineatstation "Samba") on the left-hand side of the road.

Take the small street just to the left of the petrol station (Monseigneur Vranckenstraat), the church is just behind the petrol station.



### **Wolder church by bus**

One can also take a short bus ride to the church. The bus stop is located opposite restaurant Monopole, or 30 meters/yards in front of the MacDonald's, on the restaurant side of the Vrijthof. The final stop of this bus is on the small square right behind the church.

Buses from the Vrijthof will depart at .01 and .31 past the hour (Mo-Fri), .02 and .32 past the hour on Saturdays and .29 and .59 past the hour on Sundays.

During the July Rieu concerts in Maastricht, the route of this bus might be slightly altered. When in doubt, walk to the "Markt" (Market/townhall square) and take bus 3 from there. Departure times will be 1-2 minutes earlier than indicated above.

From the square/parking lot there is a small flight of steps leading to the front of the church.

## The church of Wolder

In 1672, there was an old Romanesque church in Wolder (then called "Church of St. Marc"). For quite some time it was in the hands of the Protestant community, but King Louis XIV recently had returned the church into Catholic hands. The church dates back to the 11 century, but at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was in disrepair.



In 1896 a new church (the one we see today) was built over the existing church, allowing services to continue during the construction of the new building. When the exterior of the new building was finished, it took four weeks to demolish the old church inside.

The old church used to contain a tomb with the remains of several French musketeers who died in the siege of Maastricht.

When the old church was demolished, it was recorded that a large amount of bones from below the old floor in the church have been removed. It is not known what has happened with these bones.

Today the church contains a new floor and nothing can be seen any more of the old church or the tombs it contained.

The entrance hall of the church contains a copy of the original statue of d'Artagnan. The original statue was placed in the "Waldeckpark" in 1977 near the current memorial, but in 2006 it was vandalized beyond repair.





The interior is a nice example of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Imagine, the old Romanesque church of Wolder was much smaller. The church you see today was built over the old church, so services could continue. Only during the four weeks it took to demolish the old church, services were held nearby.

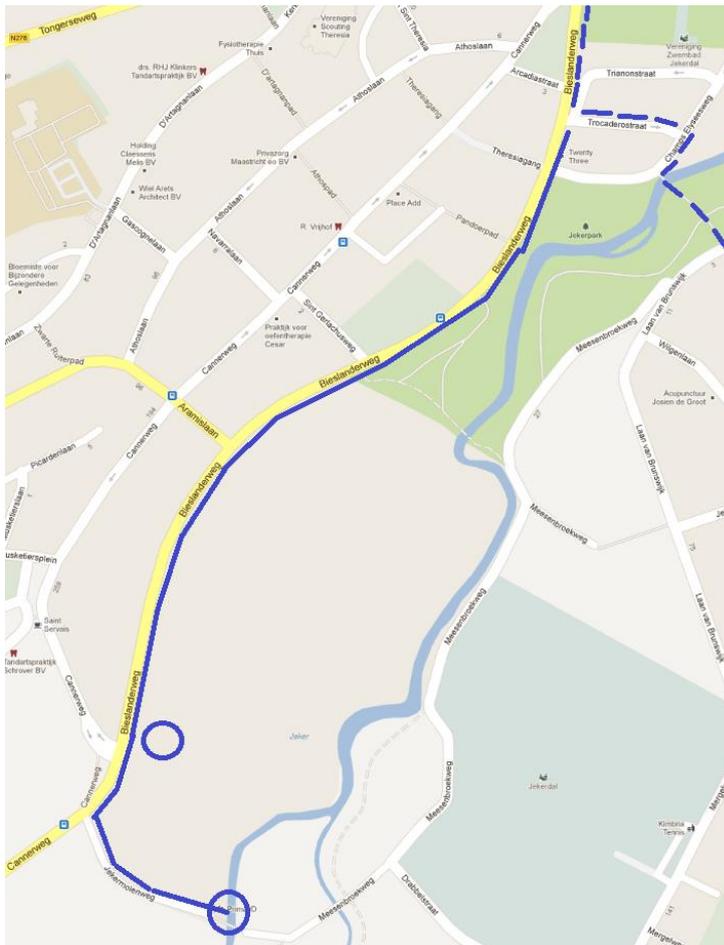
The old church should have fitted between the two rows of pillars you see today.

When we visited the church, a helpful (older) nun pointed us to a spot in the center aisle between the third row of benches from the front (the lighter colored tile at the bottom of the picture.)

As the legend goes, this is the supposed location of the tomb holding the remains of the French Musketeers.



## Optional walk to the third working watermill of Maastricht



After visiting the "Waldeck Bastion" and before turning left into the street named "Trocaderostraat", you may continue down the 'Bieslanderweg' for another 800 meters (0.5 mls), turning left into the "Jekermolenweg."

This optional walk will take approx. 30-45 minutes.



Just before the "Jekermolenweg" you see a small fenced off area (you may enter through the main gate) which contains the 'Sint Servatius Bron' or Saint Servatius Well. When Saint Servatius rested at this spot, spontaneously a well appeared. This should have been around 350 AD...

After you have peeked around a little, continue your walk and turn left into the 'Jekermolenweg'.



At the end of this small road you see a group of houses. A small footpath between the houses will lead to a bridge over the river Jeker. Here you will see the third watermill of Maastricht, called 'Lombok'.

The round structure in the 2<sup>nd</sup> building is the remains of the 2<sup>nd</sup> watermill at this location.

The mills date back to around 1500 AD, the Lombok was mainly used (until 1960) as a water driven grain mill, the 2<sup>nd</sup> mill (now gone) as an oil mill.

When done, return to the main road, turn right, follow this road for approx. 800 meters (0.5 mls) and turn right into the "Trocaderostraat" to continue the walk to André's birth house.



## The life and Death of d'Artagnan

Who was d'Artagnan and why did his name survive in history?  
How did he die and where is he (supposedly) buried?

Charles de Batz-Castelmore, Count d'Artagnan, was born in 1610 or 1611 in the castle of Castelmore from a poor, but noble family in Lupiac, in the French province of Gasconne. In 1627, like many young noblemen, he travelled to the court of Louis XIII in Paris. There he became commander of the 'grey' musketeers, named after the color of their horses.



In fact, they were the King's lifeguards, and accompanied him everywhere. d'Artagnan accomplished delicate tasks at the service of the crown: he escorted important prisoners and carried secret messages. He married in 1659, fathered two sons, but divorced a few years later. In 1672, he became governor of the Flemish city of Lille, which had come under French rule only a few years earlier.

During the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Dutch republic entered the "Golden Age". Ship owners from Amsterdam sent their vessels around the world and rapidly acquired enormous riches (foundation of the VOC (East India) Company which dominated the spice trade with the East). Holland became a refuge for Huguenots and free thinkers of all kinds, and a center of art and science (painters like Rembrandt). Established powers like England and France saw this bloom with a mixture of envy and disdain, and tried in turn to deflate the daring Dutchmen. But this was no easy task.

In 1672 England, France, Münster and Cologne all at once turned against the United Provinces of the Netherlands.

Louis XIV, the Sun King believed that the French speaking regions of Alsace and Wallonia belonged to France's natural territory. He wanted to shift the country's borders to the Rhine river, so he declared war on Holland.

But there was however one problem for the French: to reach the Rhine, Louis XIV had to conquer Maastricht. And Maastricht was one of the strongest fortified cities of Europe.

## The siege of Maastricht

The thirty-four year old Sun King took personal command over the siege of Maastricht. He pitched his tents on the Louwberg hill, next to the church of Wolder. A small community to the south-west of Maastricht. Their English allies were under the guidance of the duke of Monmouth, a natural son of King Charles II.

D'Artagnan was Lieutenant Captain of the first company of the King's musketeers. He was to concentrate his troops' assault on the Tongerse gate (Tongersepoort).

In 1673, the fortress of Sint Pieter, the High and Low Fronts and the Waldeck bastion did not exist yet. But the walls around the city had already been provided with large outworks. To the north of the Tongerse gate for instance, stood a seventy meters long and forty meters wide earthen horn work, perpendicular to the wall and supplied with a hiding place made of stone. Before the gate, among other fortifications, the Dutch had built a brick covered lunette, which later became known as the 'demi-lune des mousquetaires'. To the south, stood yet another lunette, next to the De Reek Water Gate, where the Jeker streams into the city. The city had also been provided with underground passages which helped the besieged garrison identify and undermine the trenches of approach.

The map below shows the location (from left to right) of the "Tongerse Poort/Gate", the Reeker Water Gate. This is a fine example of the maps made by the famous "Blau" brothers and was crafted in 1652.



## The attack

On the night of Saturday 24 to Sunday 25 of June, 1673, the French army captured the advanced lunette before the Tongerse Gate. On Sunday morning, however, the Dutch garrison reconquered it with the use of explosives. The young and unthinking duke of Monmouth now persuaded the sixty-two year old d'Artagnan to take part in a counter attack without sufficient cover.

The musketeer had hardly recovered from the battle of the previous night. As he passed a bottleneck, he was hit in the throat by a musket bullet. D'Artagnan fell and succumbed to the fatal wound. Besides d'Artagnan, thirty-seven men were killed and fifty-three wounded in this battle of the 1st Company of Musketeers, which started the battle with two hundred and fifty strong!



The duke stepped across his corpse and recaptured the lunette. Within a few days, the French army was able to make a breach in the city wall. The siege of Maastricht had lasted only thirteen days when the city surrendered on June 30, 1673.

D'Artagnan had been loved not only by his fellow musketeers, but also by the King himself. On the evening of that fateful Sunday, Louis XIV wrote in a letter to his wife: "Madame, today I lost d'Artagnan, in whom I had every confidence".

## Where is d'Artagnan buried?

Officers of the French army, including the musketeers, were typically buried in a nearby church if they died in battle.

During the siege of Maastricht, the French camp was located in the small city of "Wolder" to the south-west of Maastricht.

Wolder is now a suburb of Maastricht, on the Dutch-Belgium border. It is most likely d'Artagnan was buried in the local church. Unfortunately no records of these burials in the Wolder church exist today, unlike the list of musketeers buried in the church of Heer, a suburb in the south-eastern part of Maastricht. D'Artagnan is not mentioned on this list.

Since June 24<sup>th</sup> 1672, was a very hot day, it is most unlikely that his corpse had been send back to France. Several historians therefore agree that the church of Wolder (the current church of St. Peter and St. Paul) is the most likely burial place. It is also presumed that the church records of this period have been taken back to France. Who knows in which archive they still rest today, waiting to be rediscovered.

In 1672, there was an old Romanesque church in Wolder (then called Church of St. Marc). For quite some time it was in the hands of the Protestant community, but King Louis XIV recently had returned the church into Catholic hands. The church dates back to the 11 century, but at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was in disrepair.



In 1896 a new church (the one we see today) was built over the existing church, allowing services to continue during the construction of the new building. When the exterior of the new building was finished, it took four weeks to demolish the old church inside.

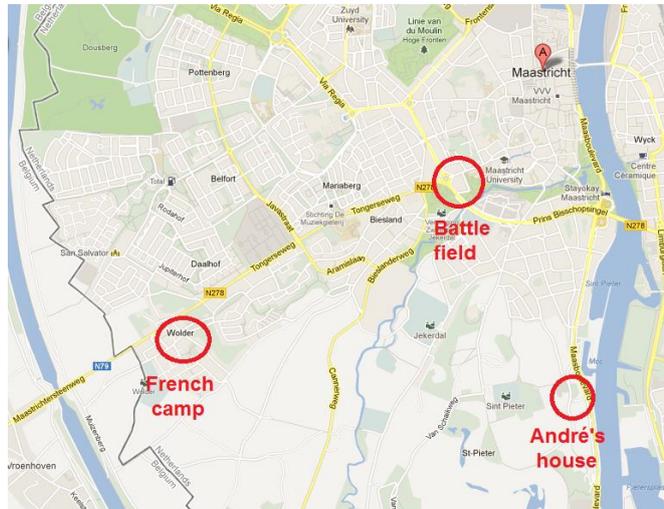
The current church still contains a tomb supposedly containing the remains of French soldiers. Many French soldiers have been buried in this tomb, and during the demolishing of the old church, many remains of former burials were removed. It is therefore highly unlikely that any remains of d'Artagnan survived.

## Did d'Artagnan have his last breakfast in André's castle?

No written record of this breakfast exists, only a few old and persisting rumors.

Let's look at the facts:

- André's castle, then called "*t Spreuwarts Thoorenthien*" (the tower of Spreuwart) is located to the south of Maastricht in what was then French occupied territory.
- It is known that this building was heavily damaged during the siege of Maastricht, although not exactly how heavily during the (just) 13 days of the siege.
- The French military camp was located to the south-east of Maastricht in the city of Wolder (now a suburb).
- On the night of Saturday 24 to Sunday 25 of June, 1673, the French army captured the advanced lunette before the "Tongerse Gate". On Sunday morning, however, the Dutch garrison reconquered it with the use of explosives. Under the command of the English Duke of Monmouth the French launched a counter-attack in which d'Artagnan was killed by a musket bullet to his throat.
- André's castle is less than one mile away from the battlefield. D'Artagnan was a high ranking officer of the Musketeers and certainly would have had some privileges. After the initial battle he could easily have retreated to André's castle instead of the tents in the camp and quickly returned to the "Tongersepoort" after the use of explosives by the Dutch.



Based on the above information, let's give it the benefit of the doubt.

d'Artagnan could have had his last breakfast in André's castle...

## Why did d'Artagnan survive history?

In 1701, Gatiens de Courtilz de Sandras a French novelist, journalist, pamphleteer and memorializer, published biographies and semi-fictional "memoirs" of well known, but deceased persons, all written in the first person.

Many of these people he did not know, his stories were based on interviews with people who knew the characters and on written evidence. 27 years after the death of d'Artagnan, he wrote the "*Mémoires de M. d'Artagnan*".

Courtilz de Sandras served in the army before becoming a writer. He was imprisoned several times in the Bastille where Besmaux, the former companion of d'Artagnan, was a warden and it was most likely from this source that he learned the details of d'Artagnan's life.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Alexander Dumas wrote three novels based on the characters as described in the above mentioned "*Mémoires de M. d'Artagnan*". These novels ("*The Three Musketeers*", "*Twenty Years After*" and "*The Vicomte de Bragelonne*") are highly romanticized and do not reflect the reality of war. Dumas did not describe the fate of the besieged citizens of Maastricht, who were forced to help dig trenches, suffered starvation and were killed by cannon balls flying about. No word either about the beastly rage of mercenaries, to whose merciless hands a city would sometimes be abandoned if it surrendered only after a long siege.

But why should indeed Dumas have written about the miseries of war? His primary intention was after all to tell stories in which readers would dream away...

An endless range of movies and plays have been based on these books and thanks to Dumas, d'Artagnan and his friends the Three Musketeers (Athos, Porthos, and Aramis) still live on today.

*"All for one, one for all" ("Un pour tous, tous pour un")*