

# Maastricht walks



Maastricht is regarded as one of the oldest towns in the Netherlands (rivaling with Nijmegen). It was founded by the Romans.

Since we are all here for the André Rieu open air concerts on the Vrijthof, there will be plenty of time during the day to explore the city and its surroundings. Put on your sneakers. Be sure you'll be back at the Vrijthof at 5 pm (daily sound-check!!). You won't want to miss that!!

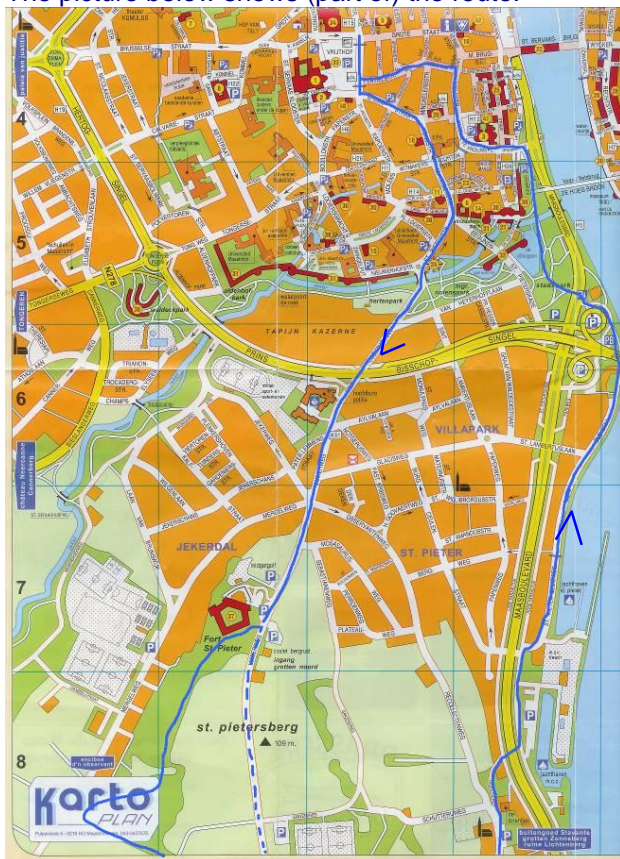
This document contains a walk over and around the St. Pietersberg (St. Peter's mountain, 109 meters "high"), with a nice stroll through the countryside.

In this walk, we'll visit places related to André, including his castle (named "de Torentjes", which means "little towers").

# A walk to André's castle via the St. Pietersberg

If you want to escape the busy streets of Maastricht, then this second walk is highly recommended. This walk is about 6 km (3.7 miles) and will lead you over the St. Pietersberg, passing André's castle and back along the banks of the river Maas. The walk will lead through fields, partially through a forest and there will be some up and downhill sections (moderate elevations), so sturdy shoes are required. For those who want to visit the caves in the St. Pietersberg, a pullover, cardigan or coat is advised, since it is only 10° C (50° F) inside. A guided tour will take another hour.

The picture below shows (part of) the route.



## Vrijthof to Fort St. Pieter



This walk will start on the Vrijthof Square.

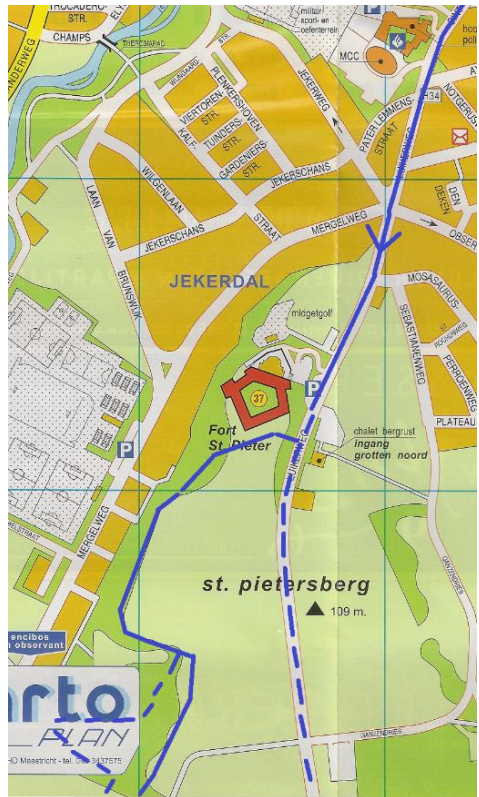
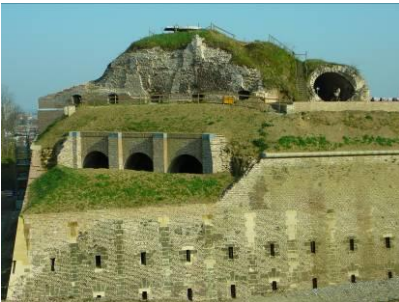
From the corner at the Gauchos (McDonalds) restaurant, walk along the restaurants and take the second street on the left "Brede straat" (Broad Street) at the opposite corner of the Vrijthof.

When you see the white building of the former Jesuit church, turn right into the "Hondstraat" (Dog Street). Follow this street halfway where it becomes "M. Heidenstraat" and later on "St. Pieterstraat". If you have not yet visited the watermill in this street "Leeuwenmolen" (Lions mill), then take a peek through the passage in the white building (number 31) on the left, halfway through the St. Pieterstraat. (see pages 8 and 9 of the City walk).

At the end of the St. Pieterstraat turn left and cross the bridge over the river "Jeker". Now follow the main road until you come to the traffic lights where you will cross the Maastricht ring road. The building to the right, in front of you, is the local police headquarters. Follow this road, which will go slightly uphill.

Near the city edge, the main road will turn to the right, but we will continue walking straight up hill on “Luikerstraat”.

To the right you will see the remains of the eighteenth century fortifications called “Fort St. Pieter”. Maastricht has always been an important military town, due to its strategic location. This fortification was built in 1701-1702. It rises up from a pentagonal base-plan, with two major galleries at its center and a circumferential gallery around its five sides.



From here, you can take the path through the fields on the top of the hill (solid blue line) or continue on the “Luikerstraat” uphill (passing the entry to “Grotten Noord” on your left side) until you come to an intersection at the top of the hill. Here the routes will merge again. Note: Near the top of the hill (on your left side) there is a fenced-off area where dogs can walk freely. André walks his dogs (two poodles) here as well. Wow, we’d wish he did! The whole “St. Pietersberg” is a protected natural environment and everywhere else dogs must be kept on a leash.





### Walk through the fields on top of the hill:

At the right (opposite the restaurant building "Chalet Bergrust" of the "Grotten Noord"), you will see a path/stairway leading uphill to the rear of the fortification, with the sign: "Sint Pietersberg". Note: this is the steepest section of the entire walk (20 m or 60 ft. elevation). Remember the choice is adventure, nice views or a walk along a dull street...

In 2012 and 2013 the fortress is undergoing an extensive restoration. The situation may change without notice.

For those who will follow "Luikerstraat", just continue the main road uphill. On your left side, you will see "Chalet Bergrust", which is the entrance to the "Grotten Noord" (Northern Caves complex). Tours will take

one hour, starting every hour from 11AM to 4 PM. English tours at: 0.30PM (12:30) and 2PM (14:00) Cave tours can also be done at "Buitengoed Slavante", see page 10.

The "St. Pietersberg caves" are the result of centuries of excavation of marl, a soft sand stone. This is a kind of limestone. The best example of a building made out of this type of stone is André's castle. Inside the St. Pietersberg is



an enormous labyrinth of more than 20.000 passages. In fact they are no caves, but it is a mine. The stone-hewers have left their marks. On the walls are interesting inscriptions, some extremely old. Artists too, have been at work

here. During the many sieges Maastricht has suffered and also during the last world war, local inhabitants used the passages as a shelter. Some of the emergency provisions can still be seen.

The temperature in the caves is 10° Celsius (50 F). It is therefore advised to take a cardigan, pullover or coat with you. The round-trips, which last about an hour, are led by official VVV Tourist Office guides. Two sections of the labyrinths of “mount” St. Pieter are open to the public: the Northern Caves and the “Zonneberg caves” (near “Buitengoed Slavante”) further along the walk (page 10).

### Fort St. Pieter forest walk



Walk up the flight of stairs until you come to the crest of the hill. Now follow the moat to the other corner of the fort. From here, a path will lead to the left, following a line of trees. Continue on this path. On your right side, you will have a nice view of the outskirts of Maastricht and you can look for miles over the Belgian countryside. Pay particular attention to slopes of the hill in front of you, here you see some of Maastricht's vineyards.

Follow the path until you come to another line of trees. Here you must make a decision, take the path through the forest or the route via the fields.

In the picture on the right, you can see the entrance of the path through the forest leading off to the right.

The forest route: Follow this path for about 300 meters, until the path slopes down and appears to leave the forest again. At this point you will come to a T-junction. Take a left turn and follow the path until you come to a paved road, then turn left and follow this road. After a short distance on the right, you will see a vista point overlooking the huge excavation of the ENCI cement works.

Route through the fields:

At the above point, continue on the main path for approx. 30 meters/yards, then follow the path through the fields on your right until you reach a paved road, then turn left towards the vista point.



Unfortunately a large part of the St. Pietersberg has been converted into cement. The factory is old and in need of a major overhaul. The local government is reluctant to extend permission for further excavation. Hence there are now plans to close the factory in the near future (2018?). Many locals will welcome this idea!

The valley you now see is called the "Oehoe vallei" or "Eagle Owl's valley", this is one of the older sections of the quarry. The valley has its own unique plants and wildlife, including the Eagle Owl. When the factory is closed, the remainder of the quarry will be converted into a nature reserve.



If you look to the left vertical wall of the valley, you may see what appears to be holes.

These are actually the remains of the extensive underground labyrinth of corridors. In the past, miners would cut these corridors to excavate the soft marl stone, used in many older buildings in Maastricht. Parts of the labyrinth or 'caves' can be visited at "Buitengoed Slavante" which we will pass later during the walk. Only a small section is open to the public, many corridors are unstable and susceptible to collapse (not the corridors you can visit!).

## **On to “Buitengoed Slavante” with its Zonneberg caves.**

From the vista point follow the paved road until you come to a T-junction. This is the “Luikerweg” again. People who have taken the shortcut uphill will merge here.

Take a right hand turn onto the “Luikerweg”. After about 200 meters (600 ft), turn left into an unpaved road. Follow the path until you come to a section of trees, turn right and follow the tree line.

The part of the walk will lead you through some fields and you will cross several gates. Be sure to close the gates again when you have passed them!





At the end of the tree line turn right and follow the crest of the hill. At this point you have a very nice view of the church which is in front of André's castle. If you prefer a shortcut from here, you may hop over the fence, and walk in a straight line to the church, crossing the field, and then follow the path downhill (this is an "unofficial" shortcut).



For those who did not take the shortcut, follow the crest of the hill. There may be sheep or cows in the fields. Sheep will walk away if you approach them. Cows can be curious, but friendly. On your left, you will pass the “Hoeve Zonneberg”, one of the typical farm houses in this region. Currently, this building is in use by the department that takes care of this nature reserve.

Continue on the path until you pass through a gate. Then turn left onto a paved road and after about 20 m (60 ft), take a right turn. Again, at this point it is possible to take a shortcut. Turn left and follow the paved road downhill, or follow the unpaved road leading off to the right (recommended, otherwise you will miss a coffee stop...). Follow this unpaved path, and on the left side you will see some picnic tables. Continue for another 200 meters (600 ft) until you see a lonely bench on the left. Just before this bench, you will see a gate with a sign “Naar Buitengoed Slavante”. Pass through this gate and walk downhill.



You will now come to a restaurant. This is a good time for a lunch or refreshment. Try a “Wieckse Rosé”, a rosé-beer from the local brewery which tastes like blackcurrant!

It is a light beer (4% alcohol).

Can you see the Maastricht coat-of-arms on the bottle?

This brewery is located in the area of Maastricht called “Wieck” (or Wyck).

From the Vrijthof, just across the Servaas bridge.



If you intend to visit the caves, tickets can be bought at a kiosk next to the restaurant. They will offer an English tour at 1.30 PM. All other tours will be in Dutch (from 10:55 AM to 3:55 PM daily, and on Sunday from 1.55 to 3:55 PM). The tour will take about one hour.

## Zonneberg caves to André's castle

The entrance to the caves is right below the farmhouse “Zonneberg”, that we just passed on the crest of the hill. For those who will take a tour to the caves, just follow the tour guide. When you exit the caves again, walk down hill again and turn left onto the “Ursulinenweg” (do not follow the tour group which heads back to Slavante). This is the road to André's castle.

For those who want to skip the cave tour, walk down to the parking lot. At the bottom of the stairs, turn left onto a narrow street, passing underneath an arch. This is the beginning of the “Ursulinenweg”. Follow this road.



After a small walk 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!

Continue on the road until you come to the church near 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 nuns order) until it merges with the busy “Lage Kanaaldijk” (Low Canal Dike). Cross the road and turn to the right for a front view of André’s castle. How beautiful!!! So romantic!





The castle is used as office and for representation purposes. André and Marjorie live in the white house to the right.



André apparently also owns the houses in front of his castle. Pierre used to live in the row of white houses and Marc (André's oldest son) lived in the house on the right. Both have now moved, Pierre is living nearby, Marc elsewhere in the country.

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

Now walk 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, which also belongs to André. This is the house where André, Marjorie, Marc and Pierre used to live.



Follow the river for approximately 300 meters (900 ft), until you see a small road to the right. Don't go in, otherwise you end up at the clubhouse of the local yacht club. Take the next path to the right called "St. Pieter Sluis weg" and continue following the path along the riverbank.

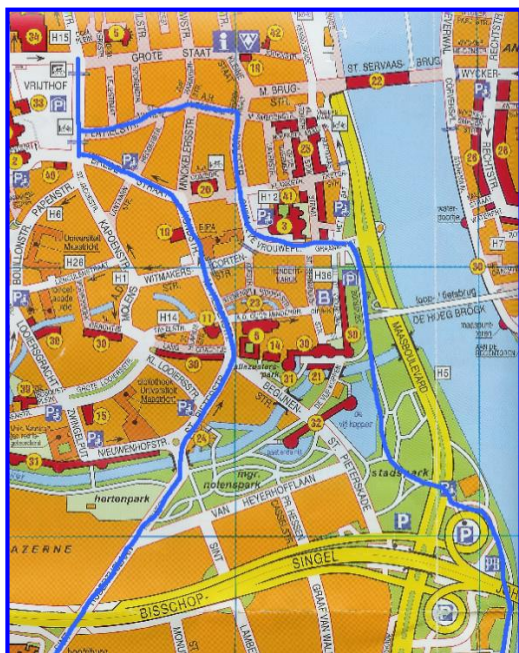
## From André's Castle back to the Vrijthof

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 first 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 and the parking lot will be underneath the bridge on your left. Cross the (busy) “Maas Boulevard” and head into the City Park. Walk 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”. 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 Square 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.

The end of the St. Pietersberg walk.

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>

Sterre der Zee and Basilica

<http://www.sterre-der-zee.nl>

Bonnefantien museum

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

Wikipedia on Maastricht

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

Tourist information of Maastricht (German/English/French)

<http://www.vvvmaastricht.nl>

In historic days, houses did not have numbers, but were identified by depictive stone tablets above the doorways. Many of these tablets still survive today.

Visit <http://www.gevelstenen.net/maastricht/index.htm> to see the remaining tablets in Maastricht (see “adressen”)

## **Acknowledgements:**

Many thanks to Ruth, Jim, Bobbie and 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.

Page 5, Grotten Noord, taken from [www.vvvmaastricht.nl](http://www.vvvmaastricht.nl)

Page 6 and 8, aerial maps of Google Earth.

This document made by Ruud and Ineke, seventh edition, May 2013.