

Home-grown TV

TV Eén promises more local series for the schedule this autumn

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Care is in the house

Flanders Care is funding the testing of nine new products to make home health care easier

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Art on the move

Moving arts festival Sideways travels along the countryside, accompanied by a multi-media donkey

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Full steam ahead

Relive a past era on board a working steam train, restored at a unique volunteer-run museum in Maldegem

Andy Furniere

Steam trains puffed slowly to a halt in Flanders – and everywhere else – between the 1950s and 1960s, replaced by diesel and then fully by electrically powered trains. But you can still ride the rails on a coal-operated steam train at Maldegem's Steam Centre, founded in 1986 by model train enthusiasts who, tired of their small-scale highjinks, began working with the real thing

There are still a few model trains on display at the Stoomcentrum, or Steam Centre, in Maldegem, but the real attractions are Fred and Yvonne. Fred dates from the 1920s but is still going strong. And though Yvonne is about 30 years his senior, she, too, still has a bit of life in her.

Fred and Yvonne are steam locomotives, and you can see them in motion at the Steam Centre, established by railway

enthusiasts 26 years ago in the small town in East Flanders. Steam engines are not just restored to serve as museum pieces at the former train station site, some of them carry passengers between Maldegem and Eeklo on Sundays.

Volunteers at the centre are now preparing carriages of the luxury express trains created by Belgian Georges Nagelmackers, reviving the times of the famous Orient Express line.

Entering the station of Maldegem is an instant trip back in time, as the platforms are filled with steam engines and carriages from around the beginning of the previous century. Visitors can board four of the steam trains and a diesel train and take a short journey towards the village Donk in open carriages on a narrow gauge railway of 60 centimetres wide. In a stationary carriage serving as a cinema, you are taken back by archive images, short films and newsreels to an era when railway workers shovelled coal to produce the steam

that drove the engines, and trains roared into stations while belching clouds of steam.

For once in a station, you can safely cross the tracks to visit the permanent exhibition sheltered inside the large on-site train shed. A variety of small objects and accessories are on show, including model trains, ancient schedules and a conductor's uniform, but the eye-catchers are the huge steam machines. You can get a closer look at the intricate mechanics of Marie, a steam locomotive, but also of an industrial steam engine from 1921. This machine used to drive all the looms at the weaving mill Van Themssche in Sint-Amandsberg, a district of Ghent. There is also a steam-powered fire engine built in 1910, which the fire department of Gullegem, West Flanders, could operate after seven minutes of heating, quick at the time. The collection includes a diesel train as well, a successor of the engines from the steam era.

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FACE OF FLANDERS

Tijs Mauroo



Alan Hope

In an Olympic year short on medals for Belgian athletes (see p5), the one face that made most of an impact on Flemish TV viewers has to be Tijs Mauroo, VRT news' man in London. He was there at the start; he stayed with us to the end; and he put in a shining performance all the way through. Mauroo is a boyish-looking 35, and his 11 years' service for the public broadcaster makes him something of a veteran. But his sterling service at the Olympics wasn't something you would have predicted. He started off as a general reporter, which means anything that isn't court cases or politics, later becoming an aerospace specialist, on everything from airlines to spaceships. Yet his training was in Germanic languages and literature (including English), which he studied in Leuven. After graduating, he studied journalism at the Vlekhoo in Brussels. At Vlekhoo, he interned for a time at Radio 1. His English training seems to have

served him well in London, though it didn't – despite much effort – snag him an interview with mayor Boris Johnson (who used to be a correspondent in Brussels, when the shoe was on the other foot). Mauroo did, though, soak up the atmosphere of the Games, not only in the stadiums – where he convinced a British journalist to become a fan of Flemish hurdler Elodie Ouedraogo – but out on the streets. Mauroo is from West Flanders originally (and moved back to live near Ypres despite working for the VRT in Brussels), so he has cycling in his blood. All the more reason to respect the London cyclist, who comes in many shapes, he reported, but who all have one thing in common: "A wild look in the eyes, telling me that their one and only goal was to survive the jungle of London traffic." His next project, after the Games? "The start of the great commemoration of the centenary of the First World War in 2014."

News in brief

A moratorium on **campaigning in the media** in the run-up to the municipal elections in October does not apply online, Flemish minister for administrative affairs Geert Bourgeois said. The moratorium forbids all campaigning on radio and TV and commercial billboards. However, the law was written in 1994, when there was no Facebook and Twitter. According to Bourgeois' office, anything not expressly banned by the law is permitted. Paid advertising, including online, remains forbidden.

The non-profit that manages the popular **world culture centre Het Zuiderschuis** in Antwerp is to be dismantled, and the centre will cease operating. The centre has debts of about €350,000, and earlier this year found out its application for government culture subsidies had been rejected. The Zuiderschuis was launched in 1992 in a former hydraulic power station of the Flemish Renaissance style and has received subsidies since 1996. The city of Antwerp is now seeking new tenants.

A man was injured after he and a friend were attacked by three men in the Brussels commune of Anderlecht, in **another incident of gay bashing**. One of the attackers, a 35-year-old man already known to police, has been arrested.

Ten bunkers and **artillery and observation posts from the First World War** in the area of Ypres have been granted provisional protected status in order to preserve them in their original condition in the run-up to the centenary of the war in 2014. The sites are in Ypres, Langemark-Poelkapelle and Zonnebeke and are what remains of posts in German positions. An observation post in Boezinge, for example, has a sort of dormer window, which allowed

forward observers to send light signals back to the troops on the front line. A final decision on preservation status is expected to follow in a year.

Proximus has installed **two new GSM masts** on the Pukkelpop festival grounds, doubling the mobile network capacity for visitors. Last August the network came under severe strain after the storm in which five people were killed, making communications between festival-goers and their families difficult. The festival takes place from 16 to 18 August.

Ecokerk, the environmental organisation of the Flemish church community, is on the hunt for "**the fairest church in Flanders**" – the one that does the most to promote and support the use of fair-trade products. "We want parishes to go the extra mile," a spokesperson said. "A lot of them already use fair-trade coffee and fruit juice, but not all by any means. We're thinking of fair-trade dishes on the altar or chasubles made of fair-trade cotton."

Archaeologists working in Elversele in East Flanders, just on the border with Antwerp province, have discovered a **rare coin dating from the time of the Eburons**, the tribe of the chieftain Ambiorix (about 50 BC). The coin depicts the image of a horse and wagon. The discovery was actually made two years ago but has only now been announced by the Waasland archaeological service so as not to encourage treasure hunters while the works continued.

The sound of chirping chaffinches was too much for one local man in Veldegem, West Flanders, last week, driving him to hang up protest posters and broadcast louder bird noises to disrupt the last event of the season in the unusual Flemish sport of

vinkenzetting, where participants set up cages containing finches alongside the roads and count the number of bird calls. The winner is the one who marks off the most calls in an hour. The local council has promised to look into the problem in September.

Work on one of the **three runways at Brussels Airport** finished last Friday sooner than expected, airport management said. The works had caused disruption earlier in the week when one of the two remaining runways was closed because of wind, leading to flight delays. Meanwhile, the airport introduced a new baggage-handling system that promises to make baggage transport more secure and faster, especially for transit passengers.

A record 10,957 participants turned up for the start of **this year's Dodentocht**, or Death March, a gruelling 100-kilometre walk in Antwerp, East Flanders and Flemish Brabant provinces, beginning in Bornem. The event started on Friday evening at 21.00, and by 6.40 on Saturday, the first arrivals were ready to cross the finish line, only to find it didn't open until 07.00. Nearly 7,000 people finished the course within the 24-hour limit.

► www.dodentocht.be

Clarification

In the *Flanders Today* article "With a little help from my friend" (1 August 2012), about a buddy system in which socially isolated people – mostly psychiatric patients – are paired with volunteer "buddies", we ran an interview with a woman diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). The article did not mean to imply that CFS is a psychiatric condition. The programme assists former psychiatric patients and those who are socially isolated for other reasons.

FLANDERS TODAY

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Hans De Loore

OFFSIDE

Heck of a hangover

You could understand if your employer took exception to you having a drink at work. However, Tom Noble wasn't planning to drink at work when he decided to take on the world record for downing the most bottles of Flügel. The record attempt was to take place in the aptly-titled "feest- & danscafé" 't Veurleste in Antwerp. But Noble is a driver for the public transport authority De Lijn, and they said "no", even if it is on his own time and he has the next day off.

De Lijn sent the bus driver "a letter in which we advise him against taking part in this record attempt," a spokesperson for De Lijn said. "We ask that not only for his own health but because it does not correspond with the attitude we expect from a bus driver."

Flügel is a bottled vodka drink with an alcohol level of 10%. The record, held by a Dutchman, stands at 110 bottles drained in the space of three hours. That's 22 litres of something that's slightly stronger than Westmalle Tripel. Noble announced he would not just break the record but dash it by drinking 200 bottles.

"Depending on his weight and what he's had to eat, Tom would have between 3.5 and 9.0 grams [of alcohol] per litre of blood," commented toxicologist Kristof Maudens. The legal limit for a driver is 0.5, while the level for certain death is about 5. "My advice then is very clear: Please don't do this."

In the end, 't Veurleste café decided not to host the stunt.



© Flügel

Full steam ahead

Steam trains rumbled across Flanders until just 50 years ago

► continued from page 1

The shed is not only a museum, but also the workshop of the railway enthusiasts restoring old engines throughout the year. At the moment, the volunteers are working on the Belgian steam engine Bébert, a recent acquisition. One of the volunteers tells me it can take them up to three years to get an engine on track again. "They are often in terrible shape after spending years at a scrapyard, lost and forgotten," he says. "That makes us all the more proud to see them in full force again, attracting the admiration of our passengers. It sure beats building model trains."

That was exactly the thought of the pioneers of the Steam Centre, a club of a dozen model train builders, who took over the station site after the rail transport authority NMBS stopped freight traffic to Maldegem in the 1980s. Maldegem hadn't seen a passenger train, meanwhile, since 1959.

After practising on the narrow gauge railway in the direction of Bruges, the enthusiasts also put the normal gauge to Eeklo to use again. Now the group of volunteers at the centre has grown to about 80 members, and railway activity is full steam again on Sundays and holidays. There are additional special train rides on Valentine's day and around Sinterklaas. Both annual events, the International Steam Festival in May and the Railway Festival in August (see sidebar) attracts many visitors of all ages.

Honeymoon by train

Steam Centre president Jason Van Landschoot has been hooked on steam engines since he was a child and saw a tourist steam train. "I first heard a terrible racket, and then a giant black monster in a vapour cloud passed by puffing and hissing. It was a machine that truly seemed alive," he recalls. "I was so excited that I decided on the spot to become a steam train driver one day. And so I did eventually, proving wrong the people who laughed at my dream," he smiles.

The nostalgic value of the steam trains is enormous, as they refer to a time – that ended only half a century ago – when almost all Flemings went on holiday abroad by steam train, rather than car or plane. Travelling conditions were often less agreeable than now, however, especially on the wooden benches of third class. But steam engines were not slow: the fastest steam locomotive ever reached 203

km/h.

Erik Cooremans, a volunteer at the Steam Centre, tells me about family trips to Spain and Scotland – and also his honeymoon in Austria – all by train. "There was not as much comfort then, but every time you felt elated when that train dangerously thundered into the station, and you could get on it," he says. "The several places where we stopped in different countries were always busy and colourful spots. I miss that romance in travelling today. Although I admit I don't mind staying clean instead of getting covered in soot from the smoke."

Machinist for a day

To revive the days of long-distance train travelling, but in absolute style, the Steam Centre is restoring carriages of the luxury express train company created by Belgian Georges Nagelmackers: the International Sleeping-Car Company. Their famous sleeper trains include the Orient Express that travelled between Paris and Istanbul and the Blue Trains between Calais and the French Riviera. The Steam Centre is now working to get a Blue Train into prime shape for passengers by next Valentine's Day.

Steam trains required an enormous amount of technical knowledge and

"It sure beats building model trains"

much more organisation by staff than today's electrically powered trains, says Van Landschoot. "They didn't just have to push a button and listen to the on-board computer," he says. "The whole team had to ensure that the engine was constantly under steam. Every quarter of an hour, someone went to check and, if necessary, replenish the machine with water and coal or oil. It was a source of pride to maintain your train well; there were even awards for best machinists."

Because the centre received so many inquiries from those who wanted to experience this teamwork, the Steam Centre lets people be a machinist for one day. You start early in the morning and, after polishing, greasing and stoking up the steam engine, you can take passengers on several rides from Maldegem to Eeklo and back.



Visit the Steam Centre in Maldegem, East Flanders, on Sundays to ride Flanders' old rail networks on restored steam trains

(The driving itself is always done by someone from the centre.)

Restoring history

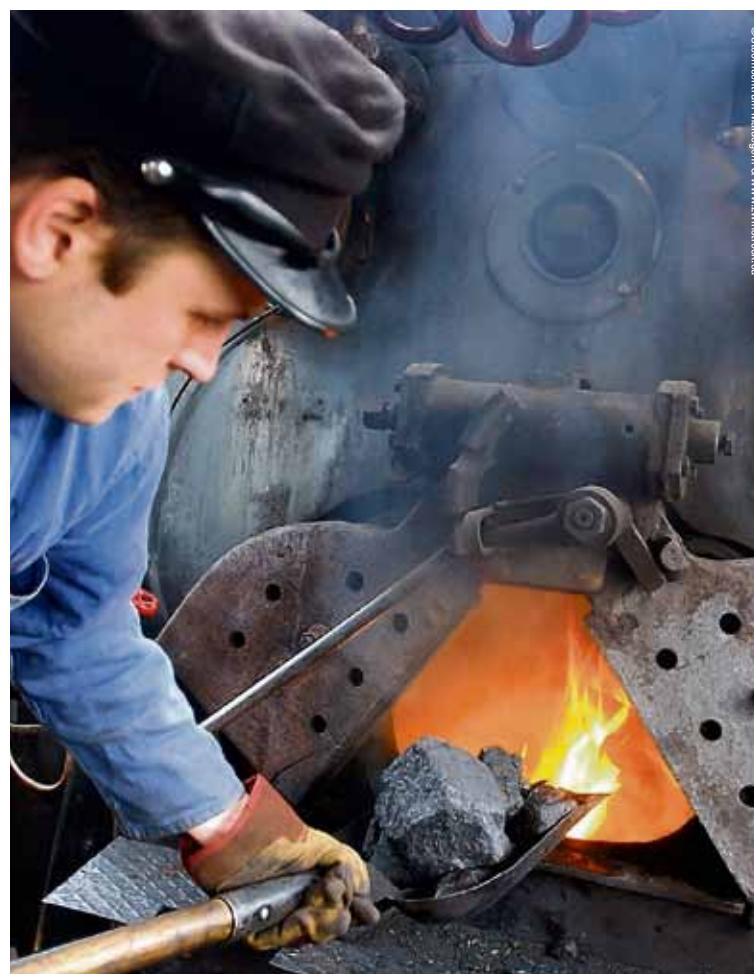
Flemings were among the first in the world – after Americans and the British – to power and ride steam trains. Shortly after Belgium's independence in 1830, mainland Europe's first passenger line, between Mechelen and Brussels, debuted.

The region has also been active in the creation of the machines, most famously with the steam train builder Carels in Ghent, which produced first steam and then diesel trains for more than 160 years. Flemish engineers revolutionised the technology and design of steam trains: Egide Walschaerts invented the Walschaerts valve gear, Alfred Belpaire the Belpaire firebox and the famous architect and designer Henry van de Velde innovated the interior of train carriages. The steam locomotives proved essential in transporting the freight that arrived in the harbour of Antwerp and the coal from the mines of Limburg.

The centre is planning to expand its exhibition space next year with a large hall for temporary exhibitions, focusing on, for example, the use of trains during the war or for the deportations of Jewish prisoners. "We don't just want to restore the machinery of our trains," explains Van Landschoot, "but also their history, with all its stories."

RIDING THE STEAM TRAINS

The steam trains rumble between Maldegem and Eeklo through the green Meetjesland on Sundays and holidays the all year long. The trip is around 10 kilometres and takes half an hour, with stops. The trains on the narrow gauge line towards the village Donk ride on the same days and travel about two kilometres, which lasts approximately 20 minutes. Until the end of August, you can also enjoy a ride on board a diesel train on Wednesdays and Fridays.



RAIL FESTIVAL THIS WEEKEND

The Steam Centre's annual festival this month celebrates the establishing of the railway line from Eeklo to Bruges in 1862, and thus of the station in Maldegem. Apart from extra train rides on the normal and narrow gauge lines, a special exhibition will commemorate the history of the

station site.

You'll also get the chance to see antique steam trams of the vicinal rail system that crossed the entire country until the middle of the previous century, before buses came more into use. "Imagine a tram system like the coast trams throughout the whole of Belgium,

pulled by steam engines," says Jason Van Landschoot. "It is an essential image of the Belle Époque in Flanders." The trams are on loan from the NMBS only for the festival. Several stands will also be on site for the festival, including one that offers the original Steam Beer.

18-19 AUGUST

Steam Centre Festival

Stationsplein 8, Maldegem

► www.stoomcentrum.be

Fire damages shops in Brussels

The fire in the city's Nieuwstraat shopping street flared up again this week

Alan Hope

Almost a week after fire broke out in the floors above a number of shops on Brussels' Nieuwstraat, leading to evacuations and the temporary closure of some businesses, the fire flared up again this Monday. As *Flanders Today* went to press, the fire brigade was on the scene. The blaze started last week in a group of buildings above chains H&M, Forever 21 and Hema. The fire is believed to have started as a result of works being carried out in the upper floors, an area of some 10,000 square metres being converted into apartments.

The fire started on Tuesday evening and sent a pall of smoke over the centre of the city. Buildings were evacuated, and shops in the area remained closed for a time on Wednesday. While H&M reported there was no damage to stock, Hema has remained closed because of a fear of structural damage.

Several offices of Flemish ministers are in the immediate vicinity of the blaze site, but those buildings were reported not to have suffered any damage. No-one was injured in the fire, though two firefighters at the scene were slightly hurt.



School programme increases driving exam success

Six out of 10 young people who learn driving theory at secondary school pass their driving exam the first time, according to the Flemish traffic science foundation VSV. Before the start of the programme Rijbewijs op school (Driving Licence at School) in 2008, only 48% of learners in the age-group passed on the first attempt.

In the last school year, more than 43,000 students from nearly 800 schools in Flanders took part in the programme, which allows all 17-year-olds to prepare for the theory test. In September, mobility minister Hilde Crevits announced, the VSV will start an online platform for the programme to allow students to study for their theory exam online.



Investigation into workplace bullying

Flanders' home affairs minister Geert Bourgeois has ordered an investigation into a case of workplace bullying that ended in the suicide of the victim. The bullying took place in the technical services department of Sint-Genesius-Rode in Flemish Brabant.

The 49-year-old man, identified as Bruno D, was found dead by neighbours in his home two weeks ago. In a note left at the scene, he blamed co-workers and a campaign of organised workplace harassment for his decision to end his life and accused the municipal authorities of failing to support him.

According to witnesses, the bullying included stealing and defacing property, verbal abuse and even physical violence. According to reports, one of Bruno D's colleagues had informed mayor Miriam Rolin by registered letter on three occasions about the situation. The municipality agreed that the

letters had been seen by the mayor, municipal secretary and head of personnel, all of whom had then met with the letter-writer and agreed he would deliver a detailed report on every new incident. According to a joint statement released by the three, no further information was received. It later emerged that a letter had later been sent to the council from another source, describing a similar campaign of harassment against another employee. The Brussels prosecutor's office has assigned an investigating magistrate to enquire into the circumstances. Bourgeois said he was "shocked" by what had happened, noting that every municipal authority, like any employer, is legally obliged to take action against bullying. He has now asked the governor of the province, Lodewijk De Witte, to carry out his own investigation into the case, with a view to possible disciplinary procedures against those responsible, in the event of negligence.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

49%

of the personnel employed by the Flemish government is female, according to the government's staff statistics. Ten years ago, the figure stood at 38.8%

15.7%

fewer job vacancies in July this year than the same time last year, according to the employment agency VDAB. However, open vacancies for highly skilled jobs rose by 3.1%

19,392

building permits granted for new houses and apartments in Belgium in the first quarter of this year, an increase of 44% on the same period last year and the best figure for the period in five years

60%

of truck drivers stopped by police in a spot-check in Mechelen were in breach of the rules on driving hours and rest periods. Of the 25 trucks checked, 15 were fined, 14 of those coming from outside Belgium

9,358

more places in the trams of Ghent and Antwerp, with the purchase by public transport authority De Lijn of 48 new low-floor trams – 38 for Antwerp and 10 for Ghent – approved by mobility minister Hilde Crevits

FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

Socialist crown prince

Showing off his silver Fender Stratocaster. This is how *De Standaard* presented John Crombez (SPA) some days ago. Now there was a side we had not seen yet from the man who was omnipresent in the media since he became secretary of state for Fraud Control.

Just like tax evasion is something of a national sport, fraud control has always been somewhat of a national joke. Whenever a budget needed to be drawn up in the past, any amount lacking would be categorised as "to be expected from fraud control" – upon which nothing was ever heard of it.

Crombez's predecessor Carl Devlies was one of the first to take fraud control seriously, but it was Crombez who made it a hot topic. With plenty of enthusiasm and a disarming sincerity, he has taken on problematic areas such as the horeca and building industries, both known for undeclared labour and fraud of all kinds. Whenever he encounters criticism, Crombez retorts that the people in the industry themselves ask for the reforms. He also pleads for lower taxes, in return for a stricter control. Nonetheless, not everyone approves of the new approach. The man with the guitar has come under fire the most for a measure he did not take himself: fines of over 300% for personal expenses deducted as business expenses. Some believed that this might mean the end of the long-established business lunch. One businessman spoke of a witch hunt and started an online petition called Stop de Fiscale Onzin (Stop the Fiscal Nonsense), which more than 5,000 entrepreneurs have signed so far. A TV debate on the subject became something of a non-event after Crombez himself declared the proposed fines exaggerated.

Even with his guitar around his neck, the 38-year-old Crombez looks and talks like your average Joe. A misleading impression, because he is also an economics professor at Ghent University. Vice-prime minister Johan Vande Lanotte handpicked him, in a way that is traditional in the socialist party. Crombez went on to become the head of Vande Lanotte's cabinet and moved back to Ostend, where he is seen as Vande Lanotte's crown prince.

Like his mentor, John Crombez is one of the hardest working men in Belgian politics. That may make him the person to end the comical ring to the term "fraud control". And if that does not work out, there is still a career as a rock star to pursue.

Students set out on Solar Tour

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters this week gave the starting signal for the 14-day Solar Tour, in which students from Leuven will tour Flanders in their solar-powered car. Umicar Imagine (pictured) came 10th out of 37 competitors in the World Solar Challenge in Australia last year.

The car is a project of students from Groep T in Leuven, an international engineering college. Teams from Groep T have taken part in five solar challenges so far, and a new team is currently working on preparations for the next one in Australia in 2013. The team is sponsored by metals company Umicore, which supplies the germanium used in solar cells.

The World Solar Challenge takes place every two years and involves driving a solar-powered car from Darwin to Adelaide across the outback, a distance of more than 3,000 km. The race was won by a team from Tokai University in Japan.

The Solar Tour started in Brussels and moved on this week to Leuven, Antwerp and Bruges, spending this coming weekend at Ostend and De Panne.

► www.solarteam.be



© Groep T

Two weeks and one bronze later...

Many Flemish athletes got first-time experience – if few medals – at the Olympic Games

Leo Cendrowicz

For all the dazzling spectacle and heroics on show during the London Olympics, it was a tough experience for the fittest and finest from Flanders, who brought home just one medal from the two week sporting extravaganza.

That one medal was a bronze by Evi Van Acker in the Laser Radial sailing. Flemish fans at home and at the event itself off the coast of Weymouth cheered wildly as the 26-year-old from Zaffelare steered herself into a medal position at the last minute.

The Belgian Olympic team contained some 115 hopefuls, of which more than two-thirds were Flemish. Belgium as a whole was able to win two more medals, a bronze in judo for Charline Van Snick and a silver for Lionel Cox in the 50m rifle prone. Still, the overall performance failed to match the high expectations set by the Flemish when they set off for London three weeks ago and Belgian delegation head Eddy De Smedt, who set a target of six medals. The biggest disappointment came with the Borlée twins from Brussels. Some

2.4 million television viewers across the country watched as Jonathan and Kevin lined up for the final of the 400m, whose seven others runners all hailed from the Caribbean. But the twins appeared to have burned out in the heats and semi-finals, with Kevin trailing in fifth in 44.81 and Jonathan sixth in 44.83. In fact, Jonathan's 44.43 second, national record-breaking heat would have won him the silver medal in the finals.

They were back in competition in the final of the 400m relay – along with Nils Duerinck (in for the injured Jente Bouckaert) and Antoine Gillet – but the team came sixth.

Faltering stars and close calls

Tia Hellebaut, who won Belgium's only gold medal in Beijing four years ago, could only manage a fifth place in the high jump. On her second comeback after giving birth to a second child last year, the 34-year-old failed to clear the 2m mark, well behind the 2.05m winning jump of Russia's Anna



Turnhout-born Hans Van Alphen took fourth place in the decathlon at the Olympics

Chicherova.

Kim Clijsters was knocked out in the tennis quarter-finals to world number three, Maria Sharapova. And in the cycling road race, Jürgen Roelandts finished in seventh place position, with Philippe Gilbert 19th (he later came 17th in the time trial) and Tom Boonen 28th.

While the British *Daily Mirror* jokingly called Flemish track cyclist Gijs Van Hoecke's night on the town a gold medal performance (with many accompanying photos of the drunken 20-year-old being carried out of a bar), the Belgian Olympic Committee failed to see the funny side: Van Hoecke was ordered to pack his bags and was sent

straight home.

But there were also close calls for the Flemish. In the decathlon, Hans Van Alphen took fourth place, with 8,447 points, even winning the concluding 1,500 metres. Ilse Heylen narrowly lost out on a bronze medal in the women's under-52kg judo. And in hockey, where Belgium's men and women's teams were both competing in their first Olympics, there were some impressive performances, including the men's team Red Lions beating South Korea, India and Spain to claim a fifth place final position.

Flemish sport now needs to find ways to get back into the game. As other countries have shown – notably the host nation, which came third in the medals table – shrewd investment can deliver dividends over the years. There are potential medal winners in Flanders, but it will require fresh resources, different policy priorities and hard graft if they are to strike gold in Rio in 2016.

► www.topsportvlaanderen.be

More home-grown series on Eén

Less purchased series means more original productions from the public broadcaster

Alan Hope

Flemish public broadcasting channel Eén announced the highlights of its autumn-season line-up last week, and the emphasis is on home-grown productions and fewer repeats.

One of the main attractions will be the new news magazine *Iedereen beroemd* (Everybody's Famous), airing six evenings a week following the 19.00 news. The show is the successor to *Man bijt hond*, which departs with its production house Woestijnvis, now the owners of commercial channels VT4 and VijfTV. *Man bijt hond* achieved classic status, and all eyes will now be on its successor to see if the VRT pulls off the challenge of producing similar quality in-house.

Early evening programming sticks with the channel's blue-chip stocks: after the 18.00 news comes the cooking show *Dagelijkse kost* with star chef Jeroen Meus, then the quiz show *Blokken*, literally an old favourite. After *Iedereen beroemd* comes the soap *Thuis* on Monday to Friday, and on Saturday the nature

show *Dieren in nesten* (Animals in Nests). The prime-time slot – from 20.40 to the late news at 22.15 – is reserved almost exclusively for Flemish productions, from the hip home-improvement show *Fabriek romantiek* (Factory Romance) to the new game show *Twee tot de zesde macht* (Two to the Sixth Power) with Bart De Pauw, to the return of the consumer show *Ook getest op mensen* (Also Tested on People). Exceptions to the home-grown rule include *Midsomer Murders* with John Nettles on Friday and the historical series *The Tudors* on Saturday evening.

Flemish drama gains a fixed spot in the schedules with a number of new series: *De Vijfhoek* is set in a multicultural neighbourhood in Brussels; that's followed on Tuesday evenings by *Wolven*, with Axel Daeseleire as an anti-fraud detective in the federal police. On Sundays there's *The Spiral*, an interactive crime series with an international cast. Later Bart De Pauw returns with a drama set in the world of amateur quiz fans. In December, real-life couple

Filip Peeters and An Miller star in the new crime series *Salamander*.

Comedy is represented by the sketch show *Loslopend wild*, which will hope to mirror the success of programmes like *Benidorm Bastards* and *Wat als* (What If?). Music across the generational divide comes with *In de mix*, in which Flemish R&B singer and DJ Brahim (pictured) brings together a young rapper and a Flemish crooner, who then have to perform each other's material in their own style.

News anchor Freek Braeckman and radio personality Tomas De Soete have the unenviable task, later in the year following the municipal elections, of reproducing the success and popularity of *De laatste show* to close out the evening.

"We want to play to our strengths – live and fresh television – but also tackle our weaknesses, like bought-in series and repeats," commented network manager Jean Philip De Tender.

► www.een.be



Singer and DJ Brahim hosts *In de mix*, where he challenges rappers and crooners to take on each other's style

ROSKAM WORKING ON HBO SERIES



© Eric Laignard / BELGA

Michaël Roskam, director of the Oscar-nominated film *Rundskop* (*Bullhead*), has started work on the pilot episode of a proposed new series for the US cable channel HBO, home of *The Sopranos*, *The Wire* and *Six Feet Under*. Roskam (pictured) created the concept and story of *Buda Bridge Bitch*, which is set in a version of Brussels in the near future. The director will write the pilot script and hopes

to direct it. Film director and creative Michael Mann (*Miami Vice*, *Heat*) and producer Mark Johnson (*Breaking Bad*) have been brought onto the project. Roskam stresses that the series is still in the development stage. "Writing and staying focussed are now what's required," he said. "There are a lot of things that could go wrong before *Buda Bridge Bitch* is on screens."

THE WEEK
IN BUSINESSCall centre
► Stefanini

Workers at the Stefanini call centre in the Brussels' commune of Evere have called off strike action over the loss of 182 of the centre's 240 jobs, after management promised to restart negotiations. Stefanini works mainly for Belgacom subsidiaries Proximus (mobile) and Skynet (internet), whose services were disrupted during last week's action.

Chemicals
► DSM

Dutch chemical company DSM will scrap 1,000 jobs worldwide from a work force of more than 22,000 after net profits fell in the last quarter by 90% compared to the previous year. DSM has facilities in Genk, Limburg province, and Deinze, East Flanders.

Coffee
► Starbucks

American coffee-shop chain Starbucks will open a new branch in Bruges train station, the first in West Flanders. Autogrill, the company that manages the Starbucks franchise in Belgium, also opened a branch last week in Brussels North metro station.

Property
► Belfius

Belfius bank has been unable to find a buyer or tenant for the Dexia tower in central Brussels, the third-tallest building in Brussels. Belfius (formerly Dexia Bank) has three office buildings in the capital and estimates overcapacity of 50,000 square metres by 2014.

Shopping centres
► Uplace

The owners of the planned Uplace shopping centre in Machelen have won an action brought against them by a group of competing developers before the Council of State. The consortium of Iret, Bosstraat and Woluwe Viaduct claimed the arrival of Uplace destroyed their plans for their own shopping centre in the area, but the Council of State said that was a normal business risk. A number of other actions against Uplace are pending.

Solar power
► Photovoltaic

Workers at solar panel producer Photovoltaic, based in Tienen, Flemish Brabant, last week voted in favour of a plan proposed by management to cover the closure of the plant in September and the loss of 276 jobs. The plan involves early retirements, redundancy payments and outplacement counselling.

Damaged reactor might never re-open

Doel's third reactor poses no danger to environment or public, says minister

Alan Hope

The third reactor at the Doel nuclear power station in East Flanders may never reopen, according to emails within the federal agency for nuclear control (FANC), revealed last week by member of parliament Kristof Calvo (Groen). The reactor was closed in June when cracks appeared in the steel casing of the reactor chamber.

The emails predict a long period of analysis, evaluation and advice before a decision is made on the reopening of the reactor and stresses "rejecting further exploitation unless it is clearly demonstrated there is no risk. In the current state of the situation, it cannot be ruled out that Doel 3 may not reopen." The reactor was due to close in 2022.

The problem came to light during a routine inspection and is thought to possibly have something to do with the design of the casing. The casing was manufactured by the now defunct

Dutch company Rotterdam Drydocks. Federal interior minister Joëlle Milquet stressed that there is no current danger to the public and promised that the safety of workers and public would be the primary concern in any enquiry. The continued closure of Doel 3 does not represent an immediate problem for the electricity supply, according to grid manager Elia, because of the low peak demand during the summer months. If the situation were to continue until winter, however, meeting demand could be a problem. FANC, meanwhile, pointed out that it is too soon to come to conclusions about the future of Doel 3. "The mail states the two most extreme possible conclusions: Either there is no problem, and the reactor can be restarted, or the integrity of the reactor cannot be guaranteed, and it cannot be restarted," said spokesperson Karina De Beule. "But between those two extremes are a hundred other possibilities."



© Shutterstock

Desso workers vote for redundancies

The decision concerned fewer than 100 workers, but it has caused reactions of shock and outrage on the part of employers and unions alike. Last week, workers at Desso, the manufacturer of artificial turf, based in Dendermonde, East Flanders, voted narrowly to reject a plan agreed between management and unions that would have guaranteed no forced redundancies. The workers opted instead to lose their jobs.

In July, Desso announced a restructuring that would involve hiving off the tufting and coating of its artificial surfaces to another producer – Domo, based in Sint-Niklaas. Desso would continue to research and develop new fibres, but the change would mean the loss of 91 jobs.

During talks with unions, it was decided that plans would involve only five obligatory redundancies, with the rest of the workers being transferred to either Desso's textiles division or to Domo. Those who moved over to Domo would receive a €6,000 premium, keep their salaries for a year and retain their service entitlements.

But when the plan was presented to a vote of workers, they rejected it by 45 to 42. This rejects the chance of carrying on working and also, management warned, placed another 26 jobs at risk. The motivation for the no-vote is not clear. "Maybe some people had hoped for a huge redundancy payment," commented one union representative. "But this is the textile sector, after all."

Desso said it intends to interview the workers to

find out what their priorities are, but all sides are in general agreement that the no-voters prefer to take a lump sum pay-off from Desso before taking their chances in the job market.

Unizo, the organisation that represents small business owners, said it would work in the coming months for a change to the system of workers' rights in redundancy cases, so that the emphasis shifted away from compensation payments and towards retraining and finding new jobs.

In trying to salvage the agreement with Domo, Desso has raised the transfer premium to €12,000 in the hope of finding 27 who will accept the move to Sint-Niklaas.



© Desso

Telenet bows out of Base race

Mechelen-based telecoms company Telenet pulled out of the race to take over Base, a subsidiary of the Dutch KPN and Belgium's third largest mobile phone network. Telenet has a cable TV, internet and fixed-line phone network and currently provides mobile in partnership with Mobistar. The acquisition of Base would have meant needing to install its own GSM masts in an area already seen by many as over-provided. Telenet will continue to partner with Mobistar. "We have carefully weighed all of the options, and Telenet is going to give preference to intensive partnerships rather than acquisitions in fulfilling our mobile ambitions," a company spokesperson said. Telenet recently announced two new mobile data packages, King and Kong.

Meanwhile Base is still for sale, and the frontrunner seems to be De Persgroep, the media corporation that publishes *De Morgen* and owns the television stations VTM and 2BE. Persgroep CEO Christian Van Thillo could be considering the takeover of Base as a means of bringing the content his subsidiaries produce direct to the customer, without having to pass through Telenet.

All interested parties have lodged their first non-binding bid for Base. Those offers will now be considered by KPN and serious contenders invited to inspect the company's books.

National Bank governor "out of line", says Peeters

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters has responded strongly to warnings from the governor of the National Bank, Luc Coene (pictured), that Belgium could be facing a recession by the end of the year. Coene's statement was given in an interview with financial daily *De Tijd*.

"I've just come back from London, where I convinced foreign investors of the advantages of setting up a business here; at the same time, Mr Coene succeeds in raising concerns," Peeters told the VRT. "In hard times, the National Bank should be a pillar of strength."

Peeters also criticised Coene for going to the media rather than advising the government. "He can and should warn the government against hard times,

but putting the pressure on the ministers through the media is way out of line."

Federal budget minister Johan Vande Lanotte agreed. "It's a bit strange that a deputy prime minister should learn this kind of thing from the media," he said.

Coene's interview also included a prediction that Dexia would require a new injection of government aid in the short term. "I've made it perfectly clear that they needn't come knocking on our door," Peeters said. Flanders has already taken on the weight of the debts of the Municipal Holding, and Peeters' proposal for the nationalisation of Dexia had been rejected by then-finance minister Didier Reynders, he said. "It goes without saying that

Flanders is not prepared now to add anything to the Dexia money-hole."



Increasing independence

Flanders' Care supports new projects to improve the lives of patients living at home

Andy Furniere

Flanders' Care, the Flemish government's platform for innovation and entrepreneurship in health care, is investing €1.5 million in nine new projects that innovate the health care sector through advanced medical technology. The projects focus on preventive care, patient autonomy, overcoming social isolation and the use of ICT applications to share medical data. Patients, caregivers, health-care providers and entrepreneurs will test the benefits of the new technology over the next two years. After funding five demonstration projects at the end of last year, the government of Flanders has selected nine more that meet the criteria of two additional calls for projects. The second call focused on cooperation between health-care providers and entrepreneurs, while only care partners could present their project for the third call.

"We support innovations that are nearly ready to be implemented, but the quality and financial feasibility need to be tested on a relevant target group of users," explains Karolien Hantson of the Impulse Office of Flanders' Care. Target groups of all projects are elderly persons, people with dementia and the disabled.

Patient autonomy

All of the projects currently being tested are designed to help these target groups remain independent and to ensure that the health-care sector continues to reach more people. In the Telerehab III project, for example, lifetech company Yorbody Belgium, the Jessa Hospital and University of Leuven help chronically ill heart patients build their physical condition via e-coaching and a movement meter – the Yorbody.

"The Yorbody determines your physical activity and sends text messages or e-mails with exercise suggestions based on your personal profile, while cardiologists monitor your condition," explains David Manshoven, head of Yorbody Belgium.

The Christian Mutuality (CM) in Leuven, meanwhile, has teamed up with telecommunications company Belgacom and home nursing organisations Landelijke Thuiszorg and White Yellow Cross to provide video communication in home care. Elderly people, disabled persons and chronically ill patients who feel socially isolated receive a tablet computer to communicate with family, friends and nurses. "Those without a social network are put into contact with trained volunteers," says Karolien Machiels, project coordinator of the home care department at CM Leuven.

Sharing data

Three projects improve the sharing of medical data. For e-Diamant, high-tech enterprise Fifthplay provides internet gateways that young people with type 1 diabetes – a lack of insulin – will use to transmit their blood sugar levels. The technology automatically sends the measurement values to an electronic platform that the youngsters, their parents and the doctors of the Diabetes Clinic for Children and Adolescents of the Antwerp University Hospital can access. "The doctor can react immediately if something is wrong, and parents get an insight into the behaviour of their child," relates Peter Van Vooren, sales director of Fifthplay. The same concept applies to iheart2care4 of the White Yellow Cross Limburg, the Hospital East



With the iheart2care4 telemonitoring system, patients with chronic heart failure can measure their vitals and post them on a platform accessible to health-care workers

Limburg and the University of Hasselt. With a telemonitoring system, elderly persons with chronic heart failure measure their blood pressure, pulse and weight. The results are shared on a platform accessible for cardiologists, nurses and doctors.

"We give patients the ability to take care of themselves while assuring their security," says Luc Bijnens, director of White Yellow Cross Limburg. "A health-care provider is always ready to intervene."

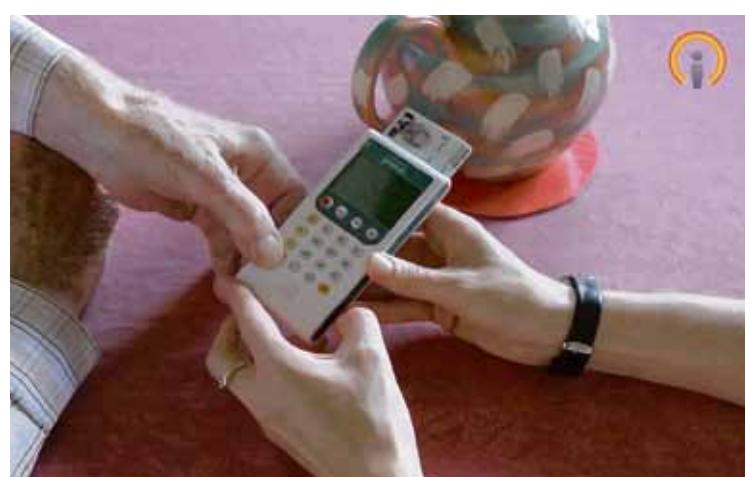
Also using technology is the interactive eZorg communication platform of Landelijke Zorg, which uses technology normally employed

by the banking sector, with which patients can share medical data with doctors and nurses.

As a preventive care project, the White Yellow Cross of East Flanders equips health-care providers with tablet computers to follow up the electronic files of patients with chronic pain, diabetes or bedsores. "We can avoid long-term stays in the hospital and postpone a move to a rest home by detecting problems earlier," says Mia De Caluwé, director of care quality and innovation at the White Yellow Cross East Flanders.

► www.flanderscare.be

THE PROJECTS



Living lab ALS-digital: People with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) can direct a laser pointer with their head or eye at a computer screen to type words, which are then communicated through a speech generating

device.

Care4Safety: A customised home system with sensors that sends out an alarm if the occupant falls or has an epileptic seizure. It warns the responsible services in case of a fire, burglary or leak.

Tele-Rehab III: The Yorbody device measures the physical activity of chronic heart patients with low complication risks and encourages them to do rehabilitation exercises adjusted to their personal profile with messages to a cell phone.

Interactive eZorg-communication platform: A digital platform makes the medical file of a patient available for the health-care provider, caregiver and patient (pictured).

Visual communication in home health care: A tablet helps an elderly person, chronically ill patient or person with a handicap to communicate with family members, friends and home health nurses.

e-Diamant: Through an internet gateway, minors with type 1 diabetes send the measurement results of their blood sugar levels

to the doctor. The health-care provider and parents follow up the condition of the youngsters on an electronic care platform.

Serious Gaming for ADHD: A computer game teaches children ages eight to 12 with an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) certain skills important in daily life. They learn to organise, manage time and interact socially.

Mobile application: Via a mobile application, home health nurses measure levels of pain and follow up on bedsores and complications of diabetes patients. Staff continually examine and exchange the data, so that problems are detected earlier.

iheart2care4: Elderly heart patients measure their own blood pressure, pulse and weight at home and send the results to their cardiologist, nurse and doctor.

THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

The field trial of genetically modified (GM) potatoes in Wetteren, East Flanders, has delivered positive results for the second year in a row. The Flemish Institute for Agriculture and Fisheries Research (ILVO) announced that the potatoes still show resistance against potato blight. They will be harvested at the end of September. Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters visited the field trial and underlined the importance of the initiative. "Especially in a wet growing season like this year, the potato disease ruins many crops. The annual damage is estimated at around €50 million," Peeters said. According to ILVO, the GM potatoes would make it to the consumer by around 2020.

Flemings started to speak colloquial Dutch as a result of the economic growth and increased standards of living that followed the Second World War, writes linguist Koen Plevoets of the University College Ghent in the language magazine Over taal. The upper and middle classes no longer felt obliged to conform to the prestigious variants of the standard language, and Flemings developed a so-called *tussentaal* (in-between language). This is a specific variety of Belgian Dutch that is situated somewhere in-between dialects and the standard language. An example, Plevoets says is using *ge* or *gij* instead of the standard *je* or *jij* ("you").

Fine dust particles are the culprit in most environmental illnesses in Flanders, reports the Flemish Environment Agency (VMM) in their latest environmental report. The VMM examined, among other things, the effects of carbon dioxide, dioxin in food, electromagnetic fields, noise, heat, lead, fine dust, ozone, UV radiation and second-hand smoke. Fine dust turned out to be responsible for three-quarters of all health damage caused by environmental factors. Exposure to transport noise (traffic, railways and airports) is the second-greatest cause of damage, followed by passive smoking.

Ghent University, the University College Ghent (HoGent) and the Artevelde University College Ghent are launching a higher education course in forensic behavioural sciences to improve the knowledge and skills of health-care professionals working with people displaying antisocial and criminal behaviour. The multidisciplinary course consists of 12 evening lectures, during which guest lecturers will share practical experience in forensic health care. AF



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How far are you going?

The joys and perils of hitchhiking through the eyes of Flemish travellers

Lawrence DeGeest

The idea of hitchhiking conjures up two very different extremes: lazy, hazy days spent on the road less travelled, discovering yourself and your fellow human being, or trying to escape from an axe-wielding mad man. Most hitchhiking experiences fall naturally between the two, as we discover from some former Flemish scouts.

Standing on an empty motorway, holding out your thumb, hoping someone – anyone – will stop their car and let you in. At the dawn of the 21st century, hitchhiking is increasingly dismissed as an anachronism, while modern travel has sophisticated to the extent that a traveller can buy a ticket and take the ride without uttering a word to anybody.

That is a shame, especially if you are traveling in Flanders. Done right, you can ride your thumb across the region, collecting stories as you go. Take it from your correspondent, who holds the world record in kilometres hitchhiked in yacht shoes. Or take it from some Flemish young people. “In hitchhiking, you’re only sure of one thing: your destination,” says Julien Vander Straeten, a Flemish entrepreneur who lives in Poland. “For the rest, you have to let go of the fear of the unknown. It’s a genuine feeling: to be at the mercy of others. It’s not a financial choice: It’s a lifestyle.”

There were hitches, he says, “that made me live a year in a week”. Vander Straeten first hitchhiked as a 12-year-old scout with close friend and now wide-wandering veterinarian Boris Serck.

“The best hitchhiking trip I ever had was with a friend in Morocco,” says Serck. They tried to communicate with the driver, to no avail. “But we ended up at his place and were invited for dinner. It was Christmas Day, so a family meal meant the world to us, even though Christmas meant nothing to them!”

Another fellow *Gentenaar*, Lorenzo Bown, likewise began his hitching career in the same boy scout



Flemish young people hitchhike around the continent

troop. “When we needed to get somewhere, we used our thumbs to get there early so we could drink some beers in the city,” he says. Flemish people, who tend to be reputed as private look-awayers, are used to hitchhikers, he says. “Maybe because we have lots of scouts, so everybody knows someone who did it,” notes Bown. “Or maybe because we’re less afraid of hitchhiking here than people are in other countries. But it’s easier.”

Getting to know the strangers

There are a variety of reasons why people hitchhike. For some, it’s the lack of expense; for some, the kick of the unknown. But what comes up again and again in conversations with hitchhikers is how it reduces the fear of strangers. In a culture filled with warnings about the dangers of

strangers, hitchhiking serves as a reminder of the benefits of meeting new people. You can be brutally honest (the taxi-cab effect); you can exclusively represent your best traits to reinforce them (and diminish your poorer traits); you can learn something new about yourself from a completely neutral companion.

“It’s like couch surfing,” says Vander Straeten. “You enter people’s lives for a moment.”

Hitchhiking is at its heart a

Knokke’. It made going to Brooklyn that much more fun.”

The female factor

Hitchhiking, however, can be a completely different experience for women, who suggest to never do it solo. “I learned a very important lesson when I was 17,” says *Gentenaar* Elis Martens. “I was hitching in France with two other scouts, and nobody would pick us up, so we started to knock people’s windows at the traffic lights and beg

signs of doing so by becoming a leisure sport. Students at Durham University in the UK participate in summer “Jailbreak”, where they see who can travel the farthest from campus without paying. Ride-share websites are also popping up that combine hitchhiking with carpooling, solving the matching problem by getting people together before they hit the road.

Tips for hitchers

These experienced hitchers have tips to offer novices: make conversation and don’t get in the car if you have a bad feeling about the person. If you’re a woman, don’t go alone. Even with two, it can be dangerous.

“Smile, to show you’re ok,” says Bown. “Don’t walk with your back to traffic, and mind your body language.” Also, don’t wear headphones when hitchhiking, as it makes you look anti-social. Adds Serck: “I try to diminish my height a little.”

“I must admit, I’m always very happy when it’s a woman stopping,” says Martens. “I often get the question if I’m not scared to hitchhike alone. I always pretend I’m not.”

Although hitchhiking is generally for those who appreciate the journey as much as the destination, it’s not without practical purposes. Upon breaking his bicycle wheel on his way to work, your correspondent once managed to hitch a ride the rest of the way in a pickup truck filled with chickens. Said the driver before he left: “I wish I’d done that more often when I had the chance.”

“It’s like couch surfing. You enter people’s lives for a moment”

matching situation. So is life. People are out there, trying to find each other, trying to get in a car together and drive to that place they want to be. “I still do it as often as I can,” says Vander Straeten, “not out of necessity but for my personal well-being.”

Hitchhiking forces interaction. It may be profound, or it may not. What matters is the possibility that sharing a ride brings you closer to something intangible, something to call upon in rainy moments.

“I used to hitchhike to the seaside to visit my sister when I was a teenager, or back home after partying at the Geentse Feesten,” says a Flemish consultant who now lives in New York. “Here in New York when I’m hailing a cab after work, all the memories come back to me. Once I got in, and the driver said ‘where to’, and I said: ‘to

them to take us with them.’

It worked; a guy in a Mercedes said OK. “He wasn’t very talkative, and I think he was in a rush because he was going 200 kilometres an hour – driving like a mad dog,” says Martens. “We were all very scared, and it got worse when I discovered that my seat belt didn’t work. The lesson I learned was to never beg for a hitch.”

Martens thinks that hitchhiking is getting less popular in Flanders. Research by the UK journal *Sociological Research Online* found the same, throughout Europe. Contributors to the decline include the speed and availability of modern travel, the relative ease of owning a car and horror stories of kidnapped and murdered hitchhikers.

Despite these impasses, hitchhiking is more likely to transform than to disappear. Already it is showing



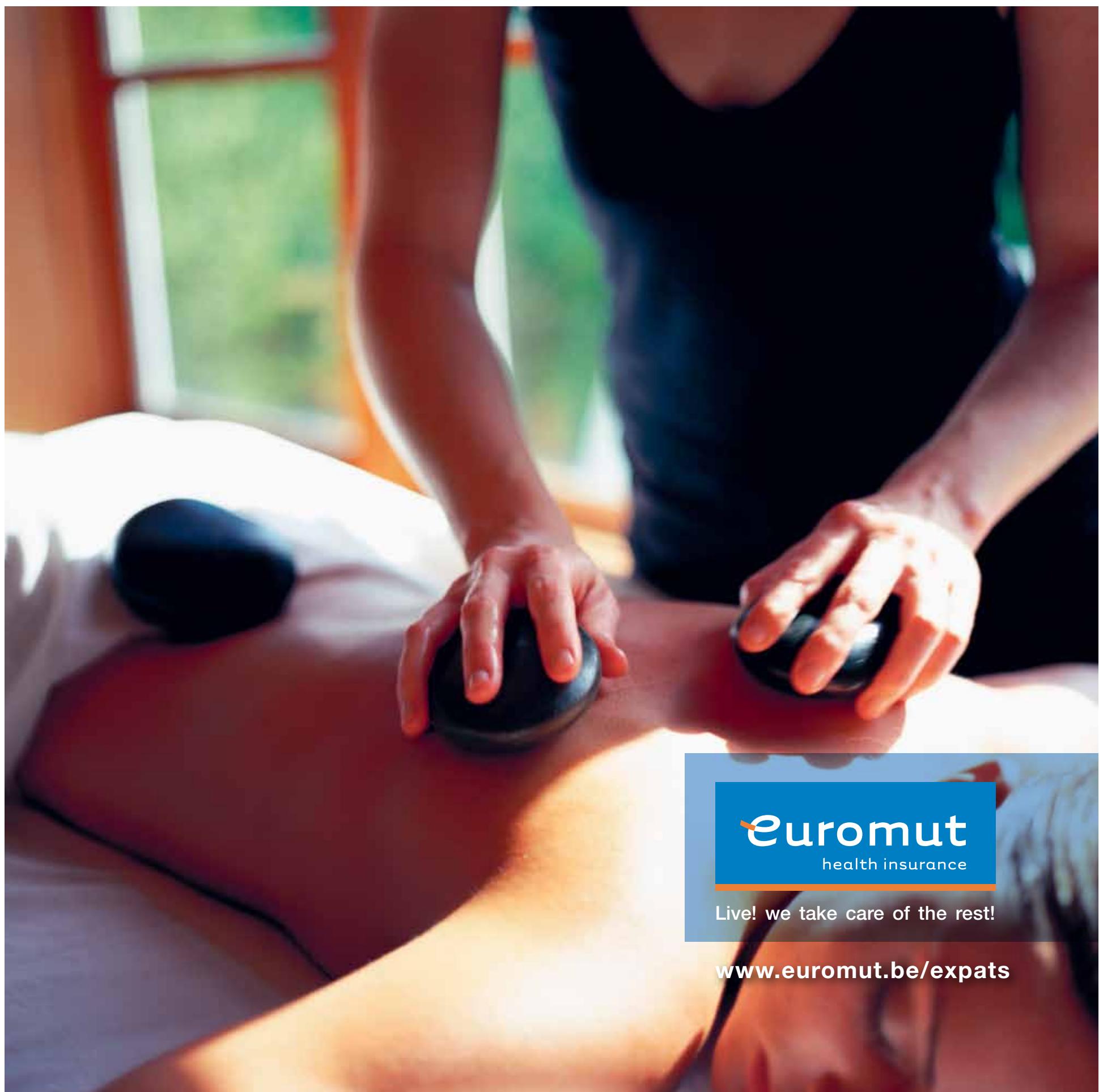
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Fun on wheels

Drop in on a travelling playground this month across Flanders

Alan Hope

The **Pretkamjonet** is a travelling playground, so if you can't bring the kids to the fun, they'll bring the fun to you. It's basically a van (hence "camionette") filled with sport and play materials, costumes, circus props, arts and crafts and anything else that might be needed to amuse six- to 12-year-olds for a day – though smaller children and even parents and grandparents are by no means excluded. In Bredene, West Flanders, it shows up every Wednesday and Friday at one of the local play areas from 13.30 to 17.30 – and it's all free.

► www.tinyurl.com/bredenepretkamjonet

There's also a **Pretkamjonet** in **Ghent** on 21 August at the Sint-Laurentius park from 14.00 to 17.00. This is not a place to drop kids off – at least one responsible adult has to hang around, but what better excuse could there be for an afternoon of fun? Download the brochure at the website for more places and dates in Ghent. The city also has a Pretbisiklet ("bicyclette"), which is the same sort of thing but loaded onto bikes. The times and places of their appearance are included in the brochure, and for all of these events, there's no cost and no reservation required.

► www.tinyurl.com/pretkamjonet

The city of Antwerp has made the letter "A" its trademark, and the **A-card** is available free for anyone aged four to 12, which allows them access to a huge variety of different activities. The district of Hoboken, for example, is offering a visit to a fire station, a kids' concert at Rivierenhof and an afternoon of Playstation for teenagers. For all the details, go to any library, swimming



© Corbis

pool, cultural centre or museum in Antwerp and hand over €3, then log in to the website reserved for users. The card offers special deals all year, not just in the summer.

► <http://a-kaart.antwerpen.be>

Most of the events we've covered in our kids' summer activities series have required at least some knowledge of Dutch. If that's not your kids' mother tongue, perhaps they could benefit from a language course organised by De Rand

and Panta Rhei specifically for **kids whose first language isn't Dutch**. The advantages of that are obvious: Even if you don't plan on staying in Brussels or Flanders long term, children who learn a second language later find it easier to learn a third and so on. The course starts on 20 August and costs €100 a week, or €85 if you live in one of the facility municipalities around Brussels. The course takes place in the Bosuil cultural centre in Overijse.

► www.tinyurl.com/babbelkous

If the kids have been bitten by the sports bug during the Olympics, how about taking the field in the **stadium of STVV**, the local football club of Sint-Truiden in Limburg? Both girls and boys up to 16 are welcome at the Stayen stadium (the name is the local dialect pronunciation of staden, which used to be an area of town). The ground is open every day from 12.00 to 17.00 (except 23 August, when the women's team trains), and

it's okay to just turn up kitted-out and join in. For smaller children, there's a play area on the terrace of the Grand café of the Hotel Stayen, right next to the ground. And it's all free.

► www.stvv.com/jeugd

More links to kids' activities this month can be found on our website (under "Active")

Contributions to this article were made by Olga Hope

STREEKPRODUCT SERIES

Alan Hope



Flemish coffee

Coffee might seem like one of the least Flemish of all the region's products, but in fact, although the beans are grown in exotic climes, from Ethiopia to Colombia and from Rwanda to Papua New Guinea, handling them differs from country to country and province to province. Six of Flanders' 161 officially recognised streekproducten, or regional products, are blends of coffee.

The difference lies in the various blends of beans and how they are roasted. In the Leie region of West Flanders, home to Grootmoeders Koffie of Gullegem, the preference is for Arabica beans, intensely roasted. The coffee has been produced by the Hanssens family since 1935. The beans are from Central and South America and contain little caffeine, giving a light flavour, typical of the area.

In the Kempen area of Antwerp province, meanwhile, seven different Arabica beans are blended and roasted in the same drum-shaped machine that's been used by Huis Manendonckx since 1933, to give a mildly roasted flavour. Beans

here are roasted every two weeks, while over in Veerle-Laakdal, also in the Kempen, roasting takes place three times every week. At Veerle-Laakdal, the beans are pure Arabica from Guatemala and Brazil, and it's possible to buy them on the spot, straight out of the roaster.

The port of Antwerp, not surprisingly, lies central to the import of coffee: the city's Verheyen coffee uses a rich mixture of various beans: Maragogype from Brazil; Tarazu from Costa Rica; Chihosa from Zimbabwe; Makassar from Indonesia; Yigacheffe from Ethiopia and Las Brisas from Nicaragua. They also use 3% Robusta beans, which are higher in caffeine but lower in price, and are sometimes considered inferior to Arabica. The Robusta flavour, however, is essential to the Italian espresso and is what gives that coffee its kick and its *crema*.

A more robust flavour is preferred in parts of Flanders from the Hageland in Flemish Brabant through to neighbouring Limburg, from roughly 70% Central American beans and the rest from

Africa and the Indian subcontinent. The flavour of the three blends of Koffie Noé in Landen is stronger than the coffees produced in West Flanders and Antwerp, not only because of the choice of beans but also because roasting takes place at temperatures as high as 260 degrees, compared to the more usual 220 to 230 degrees elsewhere. Maes Koffie in Hasselt also tends toward the stronger roast.

Obviously, the choice is all a matter of taste. Those who like their coffee with the spoon standing straight up in the cup will find Flemish blends a little weak, though it's at this end of the scale where the flavours are more subtly nuanced and the differences in beans more discernible. Nothing compares to the experience of freshly roasted beans, however, still warm from the drum, the aroma filling the house before the water has even boiled. The best preparation, in most cases, is a simple drip-filter.

► www.streekproduct.be

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Taking art for a walk

The Sideways Festival is a month-long trek across Belgium promoting ecology and culture

Ian Mundell

With arts festivals such as Track in Ghent and Beaufort along the Flemish coast, you go from one place to another, seeing installations or performances in specific locations. The Sideways festival is slightly different: here, it's the artists who do the travelling, creating the work as they go along. You can join in the walk or arrange to check in with them when the caravan comes to a halt during one of the five festival weekends. Or you can follow their progress via the internet by connecting with DonkeyXote, the festival's multimedia beast of burden. The mission of festival organiser Trage Wegen, a non-profit based in Ghent, is to promote slow travel. This means leaving motor vehicles behind and taking to lesser-known paths in order to get from A to B. "We're an environmental organisation, but at the same time we always try to open up the scope of what we do," says coordinator Andy Vandevyvere.

Beyond sustainable transport, slow travel is about improving quality of life, exploring our relationship with the landscape and reflecting on heritage. "For years we've been playing with the idea of inviting artists to work on these paths and on all the topics connected with them," Vandevyvere explains. "We also noticed that a lot of contemporary artists are doing interesting things in this regard, using walking, for example, as a means of expression or as an art practice. A lot of artists are doing interesting work on landscapes, spatial planning, rural and urban development. All of these things are connected to the paths and trails that we promote."

The idea of creating a moving festival came when the government of Flanders agreed to put money into the project. "Usually these paths are a very local matter and our work is mostly with local communities," says Vandevyvere. "We had to ask: how can we work all over Flanders? Then we had the idea of trying to walk across it using these paths, to make it a mobile festival and to traverse the country."

Are you a wayfarer or a site explorer?

Sideways begins on 17 August in the West Flanders town of Menen, close to the French border. Over the subsequent week, it dips down into the Walloon province of Hainault before coming to rest in Herzele, East Flanders, for its second weekend. The following week's journey takes Sideways to Brussels, then the week after that it turns north to Turnhout, after which it shadows the Dutch border back south to finish on 17 September in Zutendaal, Limburg province.

The 33 projects by international artists that make up Sideways fall into two broad camps. There are the wayfarers, who will walk some or all of the route, and the site explorers, who will create



DonkeyXote attracts much attention while passing through town equipped with multimedia devices to record the Sideways experience

work specifically for the weekends when Sideways stops over in a town or city.

For some of the wayfarers, the journey is part of an artistic performance. For example, the Russian/American duo making up KM Performance Company will walk the whole route connected by 2.4 metres of rope, while Flemish artist Benjamin Verdonck will be hiding artistic booby traps between

tellers Joe Baele and Hugh Lupton, who will share the results of their research along the way and over the weekends.

The site explorers are also mobile, but in a more localised sense. For example, the OKNO partnership plans to lead people on a search for edible plants in Brussels, while Jacqueline Schoemaker and Jozua Zaagman explore a labyrinth of informal

So, alongside storytelling and plant gathering are projects involving satellite technology and new media. The best of the bunch is DonkeyXote, the multimedia donkey, accompanied by Italian artist Peter Ankh and kitted out with a camera, computer, GPS, sound recording system and solar panels. "It's a bit like the social hub and mobile office of the festival," says Vandevyvere. "This will allow us to document experiences, encounters and impressions along the way."

"If you put on your shoes, go outside and walk, it's not as passive as buying a ticket and watching something"

Brussels and Turnhout.

Then there is Boris Nieslony of Germany, who will travel part of the way with a table tied to his back. "From the outset, this was a very strong image that we liked a lot," says Vandevyvere. "It was only afterwards that we started to think about its significance, and it's actually pretty rich. Just the act of doing it is affecting."

DonkeyXote: the multimedia donkey

For others the walk is an act of research or creation that will result in works that can be presented later on. The simplest example of this is Flemish artist Reg Carremans, who walks with pieces of canvas strapped to his feet, later assembling them into a "pathscape". "He picks up traces along the route," says Vandevyvere. "He will be painting while walking, turning walking into an art work." Different traces will be picked up by photographer Daniel Nicolae Djamo, sound artist Davide Tidoni and story

pathways or "desire lines" in the urban fabric. Jeremy Wood will instruct people in Menen and Brussels how to create art with a global positioning system (GPS), while the collective Glasbak will lead sound-assisted explorations of the fringes of Brussels and Zutendaal.

A more tangential project is Flemish artist Filip Van Dingen's re-staging of a canal journey between Antwerp and Brussels described by Robert Louis Stevenson in his 1878 book *An Inland Voyage*. The results will be presented in Turnhout. "This opens our reflection to consider waterways as passageways in the landscape that could also be used for mobility purposes," says Vandevyvere.

The juxtaposition of old and new technologies is in fact an important theme of the festival. "We didn't want to fall into the romantic ideal of the solitary walker having some sudden flash of inspiration," says Vandevyvere. "It's important that it's a group dynamic, and we wanted to have a diversity of approaches."

These encounters are an integral part of the project, and people are expected to get involved. "If you put on your walking shoes, go outside and walk, it's not as passive as buying a ticket and watching something," explains Sinta Wibowo, the festival's production manager.

Some people will simply come along to see what is happening, but others have already asked if they can participate in other ways such as documenting the festival with cameras or other media. "Some people are coming along to write; some will walk in silence because they are meditating," says Wibowo. "It's up to people how they would like to interpret the walking expedition."

"Each day is open," Vandevyvere adds. "If the group of people walking or some of the artists feel they should make a detour, that's possible. A lot depends on the people you meet on the way; if something is happening 500 metres further on, and you want to go and have a look, you can. That's what walking is all about."

► www.sideways2012.be

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Danish director Lars von Trier, whose films, such as *Breaking the Waves* and *Manderlay*, are famously prone to controversy, will **shoot part of his next project in Ghent**, according to the city's alderman of culture. Scouts for the film were exploring locations in Ghent last week. The new film is called *The Nymphomaniac* and is reportedly starring Willem Defoe and Charlotte Gainsbourg, both of whom also starred in Von Trier's 2009 film *Antichrist*.

There are still a few **tickets available to the Leonard Cohen** concerts in Ghent's Sint-Pietersplein on 15, 17 and 18 August. Several shows were added after the first two sold out so quickly. Tickets are €58.50 to €88.50. The inimitable Canadian songwriter, who will move on to play concerts in Amsterdam after Ghent, also sold out the square two summers ago.

► www.leonardcoheningent.be

Three new installations have been added to the unique Klankenbos, or Sound Forest, in Neerpelt, Limburg province. The forest, surrounding the Dommelhof culture centre, is dotted with interactive sound installations by international artists. In one of the new installations, "Composed Nature", visitors can dial a telephone number to make 24 birch trees play a composition. Two additional sound installations can be found inside the culture centre until 26 August in the temporary exhibition *Awakening Woods*.

► www.musica.be

Two Flemish feature films have been chosen to screen at the **Montréal World Film Festival**, which begins on 23 August. Patricia Toye's *Little Black Spiders*, set in the 1970s and telling the story of pregnant teenage girls sent to a secret location to give birth, will screen as part of the Focus on World Cinema programme. *Little Black Spiders* will also open the Ostend Film Festival next month. Tom Heene's debut feature *Welcome Home*, meanwhile, which premieres in Venice before heading to Montréal, will have a chance at one of the awards in the First Films World Competition. It was also reported this week that *A Turtle's Tale: Sammy's Adventures*, one of Flemish director Ban Stassen's 3D animated movies, will open in China later this month. In circulation since 2010, the film has been released in more than 80 countries and has earned €70 million in ticket sales, which, according to the director, makes it the highest grossing Belgian film ever made. *Sammy 2* comes out in local cinemas next week.

► www.nwave.com

Flanders' longest-running jazz festival

Jazz Middelheim

Laurens Bouckaert

Antwerp's annual festival Jazz Middelheim has never set out to please a mainstream crowd, but always seems to attract it anyway. Is it the magnificent location of the urban park Den Brandt? Is it the totally relaxed and family-friendly atmosphere (with even a day care for little ones while the grown-ups enjoy the gigs)? Is it the catering, which seems to get better every year and doesn't only consist of your typical festival fast food? Maybe it's just the fact that Jazz Middelheim doesn't pretend to be anything else but an authentic, traditional jazz fest and sticks to what it does best.

In the end, it's probably a combination of all those things that gives Flanders' oldest jazz festival its grandeur.

The 2012 edition will again feature the festival's godfather, Toots Thielemans. The Brussels-born harmonica icon is celebrating his 90th (!) birthday this year and, in celebration, headlines the second day of this year's festival. He will surround himself

with a quartet of musicians of his choice and a playlist for which he has been given carte blanche. It's the final concert of his Flanders tour, and each and every one of his Middelheim performances have proven to be memorable moments in European jazz history, so this should prove to be a significant event of which any jazz cat will want to be a part.

Other legendary names on the bill include the great alto saxophonist Ornette Coleman (pictured), bass player Avishai Cohen (one of contemporary jazz's biggest artists), South African jazz god Abdullah Ibrahim and the 75-year-old Italian singer-songwriter Paolo Conte, who started out as a jazz musician in the 1950s but broadened his musical horizons as the years went by.

The first day, meanwhile, features the Night of the Jazz Guitars, a truly unique encounter between the world's most renowned jazz guitarist, Larry Coryell, and Flanders' most renowned jazz guitarist, Philip Catherine. The latter is a master,

having played with artists like Dexter Gordon, Chet Baker and Charles Mingus, who, back in the '80s called him a "young Django Reinhardt". Jazz fans who are following recent developments in the genre's universe will surely be on the look out for British singer Zara McFarlane, who was discovered by BBC DJ (and veritable jazz encyclopaedia) Gilles Peterson. She will be backed by a pianist, a contrabassist, a saxophonist and a drummer on her pass through Middelheim. Another gig that is Middelheim-esque is Eric Vloeimans & Holland Baroque Society, which will fuse classic baroque themes with contemporary jazz.

Staged now more than 30 times, Jazz Middelheim is one of Europe's oldest jazz festivals, and it has managed, through the decades, to maintain the balance between tradition and the fresh, edgy fusion new jazz fans have come to expect. If you've never attended, this is an excellent year to start.



16-19 August | Park Den Brandt, Beukenlaan 12, Antwerp

► www.jazzmiddelheim.be

CONCERT

Crime and the City Solution

After years of drifting through their native Australia and then Europe, post-punk collective Crime and the City Solution found themselves in the Berlin of the late 1980s. It was the perfect backdrop to the bleak but romantic drama of singer Simon Bonney's desperate character sketches, sometimes mumbled, sometimes whispered and sometimes barked. By the early '90s, however, Crime had disintegrated, and Bonney decamped again, this time to the United States. There he recorded a couple of full-on country-western solo albums – both *Forever* and *Everyman* rank among that lost decade's most woefully overlooked gems – before disappearing back to Australia. Now Crime is back with a vengeance, with Mute Records announcing the release of not one but two new discs, a retrospective compilation and a new studio album, *American Twilight*, recorded in Detroit by the latest incarnation of the band. Reprising their roles are Bonney and two other Crime veterans, fiddler Bronwyn Adams and guitarist Alexander Hacke. The line-up is rounded out by a quartet of distinguished new recruits, all of them holding impressive CVs: Troy Gregory (The Witches), Matthew Smith (Outrageous Cherry), David Eugene Edwards (16 Horsepower) and Jim White (The Dirty Three). Visual artist Danielle de Picciotto is also on board, supplying album artwork and live multimedia as Crime and the City Solution undertake their first tour in twenty years. We are grateful that the band's two-week sprint from Los Angeles to (where else?) Berlin is set to pause in our corner of Europe. **Georgio Valentino**



29 October, 19.30 | Vooruit, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23, Ghent

► www.vooruit.be

CONCERTS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark: The seminal New Romantic group from Liverpool are still at it after more than 30 years

AUG 15, 19.00 at Openluchttheater Rivierenhof, Turnhoutsebaan 232

► www.openluchttheater.be

Brussels

The Moon Invaders: Brussels Summer Festival draws to a close this weekend, but not before presenting Belgium's very own ska revivalists

AUG 16, 20.00 on Kunstberg

► www.bsf.be

Oostkamp (West Flanders)

Gipsy's in het Park: The annual festival of Roma music and storytelling celebrates its 10th anniversary, with performances by Gyula Csikos Gipsy Cimbalom Band, De Piotto's Special, Emilia Kirova and Tizgani and Fanfare Ciocarlia

AUG 18, 18.00-midnight at Beuken Park, Hogedreef

► www.gipsysinhetpark.be

PARADE

Praalstoet van de Gouden Boom

Bruges is legendary for its medieval beauty, and the annual Procession of the Golden Tree offers a chance to see a slice of 15th-century life, when Charles the Bold was running the place. The pageant has been celebrated in Bruges every five years since 1958 with giants, floats and thousands of participants dressed in period costumes. The main event is the marriage of Charles, then Duke of Burgundy (and, more importantly for the locals, Count of Flanders) and his English bride, Princess Margaret of York. It was described by contemporaries as a thoroughly decadent affair, involving a week-long wedding reception and a jousting match in the town square. The modern Praalstoet revives the ancient legend of the golden tree and the history of Flanders, followed by the royal newlyweds' triumphal entry into Bruges. **GV**

19 & 26 August, 15.30 | Across Bruges | ► www.goudenboomstoet.be

MORE PARADES THIS WEEK

Oosteklo (East Flanders)

Flower and harvest procession: A celebration of locally grown goods in the Oosteklo district of Assenede

AUG 19, 16.00 at Dorpsplein

► www.oosteklo.com

Overmere (East Flanders)

Reuzenstoet: 75th anniversary edition of Overmere's march of the reuzen, or giants. The giants in question are local folk caricatures Philippo and Isabella, both standing over three metres tall, and wee Philiep, measuring in at a dwarfish 1.6m.

AUG 19, 15.30 across Overmere centre

► www.reuzen-overmere.be

VISUAL ARTS

Pieter De Bruyne: Pioneer of Postmodernism

Pieter De Bruyne may not be a household name, but the current crop of Flemish designers owes a massive debt to this artist who experimented with postmodernism over a half-century ago. De Bruyne's furniture and interior designs were winning awards at home and abroad almost immediately after his graduation from Sint-Lucas Brussels in 1953. Design, he believed, should be not only aesthetically pleasing but accessible to everyone. By the 1970s, however, De Bruyne would distance himself from the industrial model and opt instead to craft unique pieces for individual customers. It was during this period that his imagination soared. From here until his death in 1987, De Bruyne was responsible for some of the most remarkable – often flat-out bizarre – designs in the region. (Pictured is a "column cupboard".) This isn't your grandfather's furniture. **gv**



Until 21 October |
Design Museum, Jan Breydelstraat 5, Ghent
► www.design.museum.gent.be

MORE VISUAL ARTS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Justin Lee Stansfield: Entrance: British visual artist meditates on entrances as physical and conceptual thresholds
Until SEP 9 at RA, Kloosterstraat 13
► www.justinleestansfield.com

Brussels

Junctions: Lara Dhondt: Brussels' Bozar and Antwerp's Photo Museum collaborate for the Junctions series of contemporary photography. This third edition features Flemish photographer Lara Dhondt
Until SEP 16 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23
► www.bozar.be

Ghent

Vincent Geyskins: UnDEAD: Is painting dead? This contemporary Flemish painter demonstrates that the medium in fact exists in a limbo between life and death
Until SEP 2 at SMAK, Citadelpark
► www.smak.be

SPECIAL EVENT

Flower Carpet

This event has been held at Brussels' Grote Markt every other year for over four decades, but its roots go back even further. Flemish landscape architect E Stautemans had been experimenting with the flower carpet concept all over Flanders since the 1950s. Indeed, he would later go on to share his famous designs all of Europe. Another architect, Mark Schautteet, is in charge these days, but the tradition is still going strong. The thing itself is a marvel, measuring nearly 80 metres in length. An army 120 volunteers spends the 48-hour countdown installing hundreds of thousands of begonias, cultivated in Ghent. The theme of this year's edition is Africa, so expect extra elements, such as barks, sands and precious materials imported for the occasion. The flower carpet can be viewed from ground level or, for a more aerial perspective, from the top of the balcony of City Hall. **gv**



15-19 August | Grote Markt, Brussels | ► www.flowercarpet.be

MORE SPECIAL EVENTS THIS WEEK

Hasselt

Oban Matsuir: The Japanese Garden's ongoing 20th anniversary festivities include this atmospheric event, including a Japanese dinner, storytelling and a traditional lantern spectacle on the pond. Reserve in advance.

Aug 18, 18.00 at the Japanese Garden, Verwilghensingel 23

► www.20jaarjapansetuin.be

Leuven

Navanadi Yoga Festival: Enjoy a weekend of Yoga, meditation and music on the outskirts of Leuven. Kids are entertained in the Yoga Village, while parents explore nirvana with yoga instructors from all over the world

AUG 24-26 at Hotel Bremberg, Bremberg 1

► www.navanadifestival.com

CAFÉ SPOTLIGHT

Diana Goodwin

Café Den Turk

Botermarkt 3, Ghent

The first time I stumbled across Café Den Turk, on a self-guided walking tour of Ghent with a visiting American friend, I thought it looked too good to be true: The weathered hand-painted sign over the door ("Anno 1228"), the centuries-old stone facade with leaded glass windows, the perfect location across from the Stadhuis in the centre of the old city. Seasoned (and jaded) traveller that I am, I assumed it was probably going to be crowded and overpriced, a sure-fire tourist trap.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. When I actually poked my head in and took a look around on a subsequent visit, I found that the "oldest café in Ghent" is a cosy, down-to-earth watering hole, popular with locals yet welcoming to strangers and tourists.

Den Turk is a classic brown café, with chequered tile floors, vintage glass lamps hanging over small wooden tables and old black-and-white photographs on the walls. Supposedly the name refers to its origins as a coffee house, serving the new drink imported from Turkey. It's housed in a 15th-century building adjoining Sint-Jorishof, a Ghent landmark that originally belonged to the guild of crossbowmen, from the same period.

It's now a favourite stop whenever I take visiting friends to Ghent for the day. With its central location close to all the must-see destinations like Sint-Baaf's Cathedral, the Belfort and the Cloth Hall, it makes an



ideal stopping point to take a break from sightseeing (*another church?*) and enjoy a cold Belgian beer. The menu is strong on Trappists and local brews, and a few snacks like spaghetti are also on offer.

Café Den Turk is open year-round, seven days a week. The hours, according to the text printed at the bottom of the *bierkaart*, are from 11:00 *tot als 't interessantste... volk weg is* ("until all the most interesting people are gone"). The bar also serves as an occasional venue for live jazz and blues.

► www.cafedenturk.be

BITE

Café Parti ★★★★

The waiting room of a travel agency is the setting for my latest culinary adventure. Located next door to Airstop across from Ghent's main train station, Café Parti is the brainchild of the travel agency owner's son, Tom Klüssendorf, and business partner, Wim Vandamme. The two opened the upscale brasserie 11 years ago, with immediate success.

References to travel abound in the sleek, contemporary dining room; every table is named after a world city, and the black-and-white photos by Flemish photographer Carl De Keyzer depicts international locales. The back wall is a set of massive sliding glass doors that give out onto the surprisingly lush and spacious garden where our party of six has reserved a table. It's pouring buckets outside, but we are snug and dry under a big white awning.

Despite the fact that we're here to say goodbye to dear friends moving back to the US, spirits are high, and we order a round of aperitifs, including Orval and Gruit, the local beer. We decide to share three starters: tuna tartare, vegetarian croquettes and Thai beef carpaccio.

The tuna is the overwhelming favourite, with dark red cubes of raw tuna arranged in a cylindrical tower, accompanied by wasabi mayonnaise and a mound of crunchy, gelatinous seaweed salad. The croquettes are popular, too: crunchy on the outside and filled with creamy goat cheese. The thin slices of beef in the Thai-style carpaccio are ever so slightly grilled on each side and topped with spring onions, lime, fresh mint and coriander and a sprinkling of roasted sesame seeds.

We raise our glasses of merlot in a toast before tucking into the main courses. An oven-baked salmon is prepared *gravadlax*,

or "buried", referring to the traditional Nordic method of marinating it under a layer of salt, sugar and dill. This modern version has a salty, tangy coating and is lightly oven grilled, leaving the inside buttery and soft enough to melt on your tongue. Underneath is an over-generous helping of hand-rolled gnocchi. The potato pasta dumplings are covered in a tasty green pesto sauce and topped with crisp rocket salad. A huge dollop of sour cream completes the dish.

The two friends who ordered the baked squid are impressed by its size and flavour. The tender, fleshy body is packed with couscous and scampi. It comes with a salad of Italian cress and Mediterranean rocket with a citrusy dressing.

Another friend is enjoying an expertly cooked medium-rare steak of the Australian grain-fed variety, its outer layer seared in a pungent mixture of herbs and freshly ground black pepper. The accompanying béarnaise sauce is rich and delicious, with visible leaves of bittersweet tarragon. It also comes with fries, mayo and a romaine salad.

But it is the vegetarian grilled aubergine dish that makes the biggest impression on me. The thick slices of aubergine have a meaty texture and a wisely subtle earthy flavour, amped up by a mouth-watering tomato tapenade, fruit-infused olive oil, rocket salad, melty buffalo mozzarella and sharp parmesan cheese.

The pasta dish is the least inventive of the bunch, but that's not saying much. Lukewarm strands of al dente tagliatelle mingle with silky slices of Ganda ham, buffalo mozzarella, sun-dried tomatoes and rocket salad. It's hearty and comforting food, seemingly just right for this misty evening farewell party.

We finish off with a toffee panna cotta, two potent Irish coffees,

an aesthetically pleasing glass of Roomer (a Ghent liqueur with floating elderberry blossoms) and a strong coffee. The bill comes to €44 per person.

► www.cafe-parti.be



► Koningin Maria Hendrikaplein 65a, Ghent; 09.242.32.91

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TALKING DUTCH

Lessons from children



As I'm sitting inside looking at a computer screen, it is a beautiful day outside (for Brussels, that is). It's one of those mornings: still chilly but full of promise of a warm, sunny, summer afternoon. It is mid-August – not even – *en ik ben weer aan het werk*, I'm back to work.

I must admit that freelance writing can hardly be qualified as work – it's not exactly coal mining – but still. *De vakantie is voorbij*. My holidays, as such, are over. No more watching the Olympics every day. No more nurturing my sudden interest in sports such as synchronised swimming or beach volleyball. Similarly, learning a language may or may not be considered hard work. But there is one organisation in Flanders that aims to blur the line between the two. The non-profit Roeland vzw (for *vereniging zonder winstoogmerk*, or association without profit as a

purpose) in Ghent offers something they call *taalvakanties*, language holidays, or language summer camps for kids.

"Een taal leer je al doende," it says on their website. You learn a language best in practice, by doing things, rather than sitting at home reading up on grammar (even though that, too, is important). That is why at such a language camp, children aged seven to 19 will create their own newspaper, for example, or blog or movie or even theatre play. On a recent afternoon in a library in Ghent, in the presence of a Flemish TV news crew, the kids at camp were reading to themselves and each other. *"Spiegeltje, spiegeltje aan de wand, wie is de mooiste van het land?"* read a little girl named Mai Do. Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?

She then went on to explain, in impressively good Dutch, those vital statistics taught in the first

week to all Dutch learners in Flanders: *"Ik kom van Vietnam en ben hier al bijna één jaar."* She is from Vietnam and has already lived in Flanders nearly a year. She said that she likes it here, even though sometimes she misses her family. *"Ik vind het hier leuk, maar soms mis ik mijn familie."*

Edem Folly, a bright-looking kid from Togo, promptly became my personal hero when he said something that I've been telling you over and over again. *"Het is een leuke taal. En nee, ik vind dat niet moeilijk. Want als je veel naar de Nederlandse TV kijkt, dan ga je dat snel leren."*

It is a fun language. And no, I don't think it is difficult. Because if you watch Dutch-language TV a lot, you learn it quickly.

► www.roeland.be

talkingdutch@hotmail.com

Philip Ebels

The last word...

Wedded bliss

"Steven can wash my hair, then carry me to bed."

The Dodentocht (see p2) took its toll on Deborah Francois, who faced a marriage proposal from her boyfriend Steven as she finished her 100-kilometre trek. (She said yes)

Having a fine time

"The radars are very finely tuned, and the tolerance is really not very high. Not paying is not a good idea." 100,000 Belgian holiday-makers can expect a speeding fine from the French authorities under a new agreement that came into force last month

Drum role

"I hadn't drummed for so long, now I'm going through the blisters-on-hands stage again."

Bent Van Looy, frontman of Das Pop, has joined Soulwax on drums for a tour of South Korea and Japan

Easy rider

"In politics, you've got bikers, and you've got people with a bike."

Brussels minister Guy Vanhengel is convinced he's one of the former, on his Ducati Multistrada 1200cc

NEXT WEEK
IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

Art theft is nothing new, but stealing public sculptures weighing hundreds of kilos seems an extreme venture. Due to the rising price of copper, though, thieves are getting more and more bold. We'll tell you how the rash of thefts is affecting Flanders and how one city is tackling the problem

Science and education

A Flemish linguist has discovered a village in southern Poland where the people speak a dialect of Dutch. We'll tell you how he found them, why no one ever knew of them before and the possible danger of the language being lost

Arts

Chika Unigwe is one of those rare authors in Flanders who writes in Dutch even though it's not her first language. Born in Nigeria and now at home in Turnhout, Unigwe talks to *Flanders Today* about her many books and essays and the implications of culture on her work