

Cycling network in east flanders

**How to
use the
cycling
network?**

A quick guide to using the cycle network!

We've made a selection of the most beautiful and safe cycling routes and marked them on a map, creating a comprehensive network for cyclists.



**Five
family-friendly
cycling routes**

A pdf or gpx of each route can be downloaded via the links included in this document.

01. Het Leen cycling route

Cycle towards the Schipdonk Canal from Het Leen Provincial Domain, and then to the Lieve, the oldest canal in Flanders, with a diversion along the Lembeek forests.

► www.routen.be/het-leen-fietsroute (dutch version)

Accessibility assets

These roads are wide and almost all paved, so every cyclist can enjoy this beautiful tour unhindered.

Possible points for attention

During this cycle tour, you'll have to cross a busy road, which requires some attention. There is also a small cobblestone section and a narrowed road. Nothing insurmountable, provided you find the right assistance. The people you meet along the way are naturally keen to help out. Don't hesitate to talk to them.

► Starting point

JUNCTION 57 > HET LEEN PROVINCIAL DOMAIN

This former military area has been reclaimed by nature and is now a deciduous forest stretching over 260 hectares. Spend hours here walking, cycling, and exploring along the numerous paved paths that wind through the forest. The staff of the forest information centre will be happy to help you with all your questions about forests, trees, and wood. The arboretum itself is internationally known for its magnolias, camellias, rhododendrons, and viburnums. The total collection contains more than 7,000 species and a wide variety of trees, shrubs, and perennials. A visit when the fields are in bloom is highly recommended!

JUNCTION 54-56-59 > SCHIPDONK CANAL

The Schipdonk Canal – colloquially known as 'De Stinker' – was dug in the 19th century to drain off the heavily polluted water of the Leie, hence its nickname. Fortunately, the fish are now swimming again and the canal no longer smells funky.

JUNCTION 13-15 > BEIRTJESBRUG

This romantic spot on the River Lieve is particularly popular with fishermen. The name refers to the Ghent 'night soil' or 'liquid manure' that was brought by ship to fertilise the land. It is said that the night soil was 'tasted' or checked for quality here.

JUNCTION 15-28-30 > THE LIEVE CANAL

Centuries ago, the Lieve, the oldest canal in Flanders, guaranteed Ghent a fast waterway connection with the Zwin. Today, the 'Liefken' flows through the landscape like a picturesque canal.

DE AKKERHOEVE

An obligatory stop between the fields and along the Lievepad, this cosy tea room offers tasty snacks and artisanal ice cream, crepes, and other sweet treats. For the children, there is an enclosed playground and an animal pasture. During the warmer months, a summer bar opens up here as well.

JUNCTION 11-5-88 > LEMBEEK FORESTS

The Lembeek forests are spread across the territory of Lembeke, Waarschoot, Sleidinge, and Oosteklo. The Bardelaere Museum on the forest's edge tells the story of the ancient Meetjesland. Nearby is the Heihoek, which has become a tourist attraction thanks to its numerous catering establishments. In the Kwadenbos, a beautiful piece of woodland in the Lievegem section of the Lembeek forests, lies one of the most beautiful avenues in the entire woodland area.

► End point

JUNCTION 57 > HET LEEN PROVINCIAL DOMAIN

02. De Gavers cycling route

Explore a few suburbs of Geraardsbergen, the 'gateway to the Flemish Ardennes' and one of the oldest cities in Belgium. The mighty river Dender keeps you company for 5.5 kilometres on this short loop.

► www.routen.be/de-gavers-fietsroute (dutch version)

Accessibility assets

The paths are in excellent condition and contain almost exclusively paved surfaces. There are plenty of adapted parking spaces.

Possible points for attention

It is probably best to avoid the steep bridge at the youth hostel 't Schipken. This can be done through a brief detour from starting point 74 to junction 73 and following the path to the left of the large bridge over the Dender. Afterwards, connect to the marked cycling route again.

Be extra careful when crossing the Aalstsesteenweg!

The road by the picnic bench at junction 67 is unpaved, so make sure your tyres are ready for that!

The level crossing towards junction 69 has a slope of about 7.5% over ten metres. It's doable for many people, but some cyclists might need some extra help here.

The De Gravers Provincial Domain is the perfect destination for those who want to stay in a green and wheelchair-friendly environment, without sacrificing easy access to a wide range of activities. The domain has a recreational pond, various sports facilities, and an indoor swimming pool with shower-chairs, making sure everyone is as comfortable as possible.

There are five bungalows for rent on this domain, one of which is fully adapted for wheelchair users. It's the perfect and accessible setting for a great weekend in the Flemish Ardennes!

► Starting point

JUNCTION 74 > DE GAVERS PROVINCIAL DOMAIN

There is no shortage of leisure possibilities in this 20-hectare provincial domain at the foot of the Oudenberg. This includes for people with a disability: the walking and cycling paths are wide and paved, the covered Gaver Pool is accessible, and the campsite has adapted sanitary facilities. The landscaped swimming and beach area attract water enthusiasts of all kinds! There is a playground for the kids, and a variety of water sports such as surfing, kayaking, rowing, or paddle boats are sure to provide some fun thrills! The tour-boat provides a relaxing outing on the lake to calm down after all the excitement. Have a bite to eat or a drink in the cafeteria or in the lovely outdoor dining area.

JUNCTION 6 > BEAUPRÉ ABBEY

This 13th-century walled abbey just outside the village centre of Grimminge is listed as a monument. Once upon a time, this was one of the most important Cistercian abbeys in the Low Countries. It was built on a 'bellum pratum' or 'beautiful meadow' along the Dender. The name Beaupré originates from Latin.

DENDER-MARK QUIET ZONE

This 'monument of silence' between the Dender and Mark rivers is located on the border between East Flemish and Flemish Brabant. It was the first in Flanders to be awarded the title of 'stiltegebied' (quiet zone): a place where peace and quiet are central and where you can get lost in the sounds of nature.

JUNCTION 67-74 > IDEGEM LOCK

Cycle along one of the few remaining manually operated ferries in the country near the Idegem lock, equipped with an authentic metal drawbridge. The ferry pilot pulls the ferry back and forth via two tensioned steel cables, which sink to the bottom of the Dender after these trips to allow the boats to pass. In the past, the ferry was used to transport cattle. Now, it is a special attraction for cyclists and hikers, on Sundays and public holidays from May to September.

JUNCTION 74-73-80 > GERAARDSBERGEN

Still have some time left to cycle a few more kilometres to Geraardsbergen? You won't regret it because this 'oldest city in Flanders' is very much worth a visit. Geraardsbergen – Giesbaargen colloquially – is known far and wide for its three assets, which happen to be three Ms: Manneken-Pis, Mattentaarten, and the Muur. The first of these can be found on the Markt: the statue of Manneken-Pis dates back to 1459 and is therefore exactly 160 years older than its famous brother in Brussels. Mattentaarten, a sweet delicacy recognised as a European regional product, can be bought at any bakery in town. And the Muur, of course, is the legendary cobbled section on the Oudenberg, on which aspiring cycling gods have their teeth rattled every year. And don't forget to go for a stroll: with its mediaeval town structure, Geraardsbergen is ideal for exploring on foot. Discover alleys, ancient streets, fascinating architecture, and numerous monuments all within a relatively small area.

► End point

JUNCTION 74 > DE GAVERS PROVINCIAL DOMAIN

03. The Ceder cycling Route

An instant holiday feeling is guaranteed along the Leie between Deinze and Ghent! This short tour takes you through the breathtaking landscape that inspired so many artists throughout the years.

► www.routen.be/de-ceder-fietsroute (dutch version)

Accessibility assets

The wide, paved cycling paths are in excellent condition. You have access to the Mudel, the Marktplein, the Sint-Poppoplein, and the Church of Our Lady. There are adapted sanitary facilities along the way in the Mudel.

Possible points for attention

Seating and picnic benches are not always easily accessible. There are some speed bumps and there is also a short stretch without a paved cycling path. You will have to cycle on the road for a while there, but if you pay attention, it should not be an insurmountable obstacle.

► Starting point

JUNCTION 13 > DE CEDER HOLIDAY CENTRE

Continue to recover in peace and quiet at De Ceder recovery centre in Deinze after a stay in hospital or if you are temporarily unable to get the care you need at home. But holidaymakers that don't need care are also more than welcome here. Alone or in a group, young or old, looking for peace and quiet or determined to explore the Leie region by bike, everyone is welcome. De Ceder combines a beautiful setting and a renovated infrastructure with excellent cuisine in the tavern.

JUNCTION 7-5 > MUSEUM OF DEINZE AND THE LEIE REGION (MUDEL)

The Leie region inspired generations of Latem artists and other local artists. This museum is the place to be if you'd like to go on a journey from 1860 to present day. Let yourself be amazed by Emile Claus' The beet harvest, Xavier De Cock's equally famous *Crossing of the ferry on the Leie at Latem*, and further works by George Minne, Constant Permeke, Raoul De Keyser and many others. Make sure you don't miss the chapter on industrial archaeology: besides being a meeting place for artists, Deinze was also known for its production of silk, prams, and toys a century ago.

DE BRIELMEERSEN RECREATIONAL DOMAIN

This 40-hectare recreational domain lies between the Leie and the Schipdonk Canal. With its playground, animal park, maze, and miniature golf course it is a true paradise for children. Keep an eye on things as you sip a coffee or regional beer while relaxing in the cafeteria's outdoor dining area.

JUNCTION 6 > BRASSERIE BRUNO

Would you like to sample the local art and traditional dishes? Take a breather at Brasserie Bruno, a former warehouse with an outdoor dining area on the Leieboorden. It's always nice to sit on the private garden patio in the back. In summer, an additional outdoor dining area on the quay along the Leie opens for you to enjoy!

JUNCTION 6-9 > LEISURE

Cycle a very comfortable three kilometres between junctions 6 and 9, on the towpath along the Leie. It was here that Albijn van den Abeele, the patron of Latem painters, often immortalised the Leiemeersen on canvas in fresh colours and bright light.

JUNCTION 11 > ASTENE LOCK

The Astene lock complex, with its drawbridge, lockmaster's house, and towpath, is a protected village landscape. Close to the bridge lockmaster Wim, often accompanied by his parrot Boris, runs the Oud Sashuis, an authentic tavern with a cosy outdoor dining area. Inside, you'll find a nice collection of shipping attributes and maritime paintings. Quench your thirst with a Schobiak house beer and satisfy your hunger with a hearty sandwich or a generous 'plankske van het huis' (house charcuterie board).

► End point

JUNCTION 13 > DE CEDER HOLIDAY CENTRE

04. The Zwalm Valley cycling Route

Depart from the spring village of Dikkelvenne for a ride through the Zwalm Valley, a popular cycling and hiking area in the Flemish Ardennes. On your route: water mills, hilly landscapes, cafés where time seems to have stopped, and even an idyllic piece of Switzerland in Flanders.

► www.routen.be/de-zwalmstreek-fietsroute (dutch version)

► Starting point

JUNCTION 47 > DIKKELVENNE, VILLAGE OF SPRINGS

Dikkelvenne is home to the Spring of Saint Christiana, a Scottish or Anglo-Saxon princess who is said to have settled here around 715. The devout Christian crossed the canal and came to Dikkelvenne via the Scheldt. Springs flowed everywhere she stopped, providing Dikkelvenne with its many sources of water.

Coincidentally, the village was without water at this time. Christiana casually tapped on 'De Rotse' – the old heart of Dikkelvenne – and water suddenly bubbled up. They repeated this in other places and Dikkelvenne, the Village of Springs was born. The church and the cemetery stood on 'De Rotse' until 1824. The grounds were redesigned as a park and the neo-Gothic Christiana Chapel was built in 1895. Don't hesitate to explore this idyllic location. The nearby Christianabronnen water and lemonade factory is still active.

ESTAMINET DE ROTSE

This bar is the ideal place to sample the beer of Contreras: an artisanal, family run brewery from Gavere. Enjoy beer such as Valeir, Contrapile and Tonneke on De Rotse's lovely terrace. You can also sate your hunger in the picturesque location! Their menu boasts delicious brasserie-style dishes, and offers pancakes, baked goods and ice cream for visitors with a sweet tooth.

JUNCTION 98 > BLUE CASTLE

Nestled between the Scheldt and hills of the Flemish Ardennes is a quiet spot full of agricultural wonder! The site that once housed the spring water and lemonade factory Windeke Bron, has been transformed into an area for organic vegetable growing. Around the castle are centuries-old meadows, home to flocks of grazing Ardense Voskop-sheep.

In the historic vegetable garden you'll find forgotten vegetables, berries, herbs and an orchard. Several outlets in Ghent and the Flemish Ardennes are supplied with organic fruits and vegetables from the farm.

JUNCTION 50 > DIKKELE

You'll think you're in a dream when you walk into Dikkele, but we promise you it's real life. This charming Zwalm-village is packed to the brim with nostalgic charm. It had a population of barely 180 people, a 19th century church, walled rectory in the middle of the rolling fields. The enchanting village centre has been protected by the Flemish Government since 1980.

The landscape surrounds the village in a protective embrace. Shielded from the outside world by the surrounding hills, that barely reveal the top of the church. There is barely any traffic, the people of Dikkele preferring to walk or cycle to their destinations!

BAR DE CASINO

This local inn is one of the cosiest places you'll encounter in East Flanders. The menu includes Leuvense stoof and local delicacies, like the beer of the Contreras brewery. Guarding the door is a statue that remembers the De Wever brewery, which was active in the village until 1983.

JUNCTION 53-67 > LITTLE SWITZERLAND

This idyllic location owes its name to a miller. His little pond seemed to him as charming as Lake Geneva. The Zwalmbeek was a mighty river, roaring through the 'mountains' of Switzerland. Thus, Little Switzerland was born. There's even a little plaque with the exact distance to the real Switzerland: exactly 513 kilometres. Until the end of September, the meadows, hammocks and beach chairs are available for you to relax and recharge. You can sample the local delicacies in OHNE's Bosbar, one of the first zero-waste bars in East Flanders. After that, this little fairytale is closing for renovations.

ZWALM-MILL

Once the property of St Peter's Abbey, the Zwalm-Mill is a magnificent piece of technical heritage, hidden within the green Zwalmvalley. Up until the 20th century wheat, linseed, and tobacco were ground here. In 2010, the mill was restored and given a small hydroelectric power station.

To visit the building itself, you need an appointment. The old lockkeeper's house now serves as the touristic information centre Streekpunt Zwalm. Don't hesitate to drop by for any info on the Zwalmregion and the Flemish Ardennes.

JUNCTION 57 > THE KAAIHOEVE

Hidden with the heavenly green of the Scheldt Valley, the Kaaihoeve is an ideal location from which to stage explorations into nature. The provincial nature reserve offers many interactive ways to learn about nature and the environment. You can also stop here to observe the region's interesting animals and plants.

The word 'kaai', which translates to 'quay' or 'wharf', is a reference to a time long since past. Before the canalisation of the Scheldt, Meilegem used to have a jetty. The jetty didn't stick around, but the name did! Scattered throughout the landscape are old barns and courtyard walls, and their region's orchards contain a rich bounty during the season. Come and enjoy the many trails or barefoot paths and be at one with nature.

► End point

JUNCTION 47

05. The 'Bergeend' cycling route

The towpaths along the Scheldt are the ideal place for an outing, on foot or by bike. Pedal effortlessly out of Ghent, towards Gentbrugse Meersen, the castles of Destelbergen and Laarne, to Wetteren and back again.

► www.routen.be/bergeend-fietsroute (dutch version)

► Starting point

DE BLAARMEERSEN SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL CENTRE

You approach the route from the Blaarmeersen and continue towards the Portus Ganda marina, cycling along the banks of the Scheldt. This way, you also ride along the Reep, where the Leie and the Scheldt were finally brought back together in 2018.

JUNCTION 4-5 > GHENT

Flanders' most versatile and bicycle-friendly city spoils you with a mix of culture, history, hospitable (veggie) restaurants, and lots of ambience. Settle down at a table along the Graslei or Korenlei, take an audio tour of the Gravensteen voiced by comedian Wouter Deprez, stroll through picturesque Patershol, and take that romantic selfie from St Michael's Bridge. Don't miss the Van Eyck year in Ghent, which has been extended due to Covid!

JUNCTION 5-7 > GENTBRUGGE LAKES

Not only waterbirds, birds of prey, and waders are delighted with the landscape of the Gentbrugge lakes, but the inhabitants of Ghent also easily find their way to this natural, 240-hectare 'pool'. A small adjustment to the cycling network means you can now ride right through it, past the birth forest, the play forest, and the peace monument. Your climb to the top is rewarded with a magnificent view of the surroundings.

JUNCTION 21-24 > LAARNE CASTLE

The sublime 14th-century Laarne Castle is one of the best-preserved fortified castles in Flanders. It houses an impressive art collection with Brussels tapestries, 16th-century furniture, and a fine collection of silver. Supposed witches were locked up here during the infamous witch trials in the early 17th century.

JUNCTION 28 > PRULLENBOS

Prullenbos Bram Elewaut

Enjoy drinks, ice creams, crepes, and small savoury snacks in a picturesque forest with a large area for the children to play. Group accommodations in the Prullenbos are also possible: the Boskabanne has 36 beds in 7 rooms.

JUNCTION 36-37-34 > WETTEREN

The new footbridge across the Scheldt brings cyclists and hikers safely to the heart of Wetteren, a town often mentioned as the place where the lost Mystic Lamb panel, The Just Judges, may have been hidden. Suspected thief Arsène Goedertier was from here and took his secret to the grave in 1934. Goedertier's house is at Wegvoeringstraat 5; a few years ago, the St Gertrudis Church was relentlessly searched in an effort to find the missing Judges, but their efforts were in vain.

► End point

GHENT/BLAARMEERSEN

This guide was developed as part of the project 'Soft Landing Flanders: a smooth landing for international tech start-ups & scale-ups'.



AGENTSCHAP
INNOVEREN &
ONDERNEMEN



EFRO
EUROPEES FONDS
VOOR REGIONALE
ONTWIKKELING