

# Maastricht City walk

## MAASTRICHT CITY WALK (I)

With its magnificent churches, historic public buildings, city walls and countless period houses (many with beautiful gable-stones), Maastricht is blessed with an extremely rich architectural heritage. The city walk described in this folder will provide you with a good impression of all there is to see in Maastricht, one of the oldest cities of the Netherlands. The walk takes approximately one hour.





Our point of departure is "Het Dinghuis", the VVV Tourist Information Office. This gothic courthouse was constructed between the end of the 15th century (half-timbered north wall) and the beginning of the 16th century (front of marl and Namur stone).

Turn left into **Kleine Staat**. When you come to **Kersenmarkt** (the old Cherry Market), take the first turning left, **Maastrichter Smedenstraat**. This elegant covered shopping street marks the start of the historic **Stokstraat Quarter**, which underwent complete renovation between 1957 and 1983. The building facades with their interesting gable-stones date mainly from the 17th and 18th centuries and provide a good example of the Maasland Renaissance style. In the course of your city walk, you will come to recognize this rich architectural style by the high saddle roofs (which form a reminder of the fact that Maastricht was a fortified city, where roomy attics were very useful for storing provisions for times of siege), the brickwork facades, the freestone window and door surrounds and the marlstone gable decorations.

Continue along the first street to your right, **Havenstraat**, to the small square **Op de Thermen**. Now go up the steps and turn right immediately, down the steps to **Morenstraat**. Set into the paving of the square you will find several colourful contours. At this site Gallo-Roman baths and turrets have been excavated, proof that the Romans established a settlement here on the River Maas (Meuse), named "Mosae Trajectum" (Maas crossing) = Maastricht.

Continue to the east end of **Morenstraatje**, and then turn right to enter the main street of this quarter, **Stokstraat**. In this street you will find some of Maastricht's most exclusive shops, as well as a number of beautiful period houses with attractive gable-stones. Especially noteworthy are No. 11: "Nous desiron la paix", 1790; No. 14: "In de rode poort", 1739; No. 17, in Louis XIV style, 1740-1770; No. 28: "In den steenen Bergh", 1669; and No. 37: "In den Swaen", 1774. Before turning into **Plankstraat**, admire

the "figurehead" statue by Artuur Spronken. At the end of **Plankstraat**, we arrive at **Onze Lieve Vrouwenplein**.

Here, rising high in the middle of the square, we see the Basilica of Our Lady, its famous west front flanked by two round "stepped" towers. With its towering walls and loopholes, the basilica looks more like a fortified castle than a church. This imposing building, constructed in carboniferous sandstone, dates right back to before the year 1000. The nave was built in the 12th century. This, the oldest



church of Maastricht, formed the hub of Liège-governed Maastricht before the city's walls were constructed in 1229. It is well worth having a look inside (not during church services). This Basilica of Our Lady and St. Servatius' Basilica ("Vrijthof" Square) are the only churches in the Netherlands with two crypts: one below the east choir and one below the west section. The most remarkable feature is the 12th century Romanesque choir, with its two-tier pillaring. Many of the capitals of the lower tier are decorated with old testament scenes. Leave the church via the "Stella Mare" chapel, turn left and follow the south side, where, at the corner of **Stokstraat**, you will see a guardhouse dating from 1786, used in former times to guard one of the city gates ("Onze Lieve Vrouwepoort").

Now cross the street and turn right, beyond **St. Bernardusstraat**, up onto the city wall. This section ("Onze Lieve Vrouwewal") was constructed post-1229 as part of the first medieval city wall, and was later incorporated in the second medieval city wall, built post-1294. From the top of the wall you can see the east city quarter "Wyck" on the opposite side of the Maas. From 1229, Wyck also had fortification works, remains of which can still be seen along the river bank: to the left the "Water Gate" and further to the right one of the towers of the old wall can be discerned (the "Round Bastion of Lambrecht"), while the riverside wall also served as part of the city wall. Away to the left you can see St. Servatius' Bridge and behind it the silhouette of Maastricht's industry. This old

bridge over the Maas was built between 1280 and 1289 to replace an older bridge that had collapsed in the year 1275. The bridge originally had eight arches and was wood-covered at the Wyck end.

At the end of the wall, go down the steps and through the "Helpoort". This gate also formed part of the first city wall. The gate was originally fitted with a portcullis; the rabet can still be seen in the gate's arched vault. Notice the projecting parapet (or machicolation) above the actual gateway; in former times the floor was provided with openings through which the enemy could be bombarded with missiles.

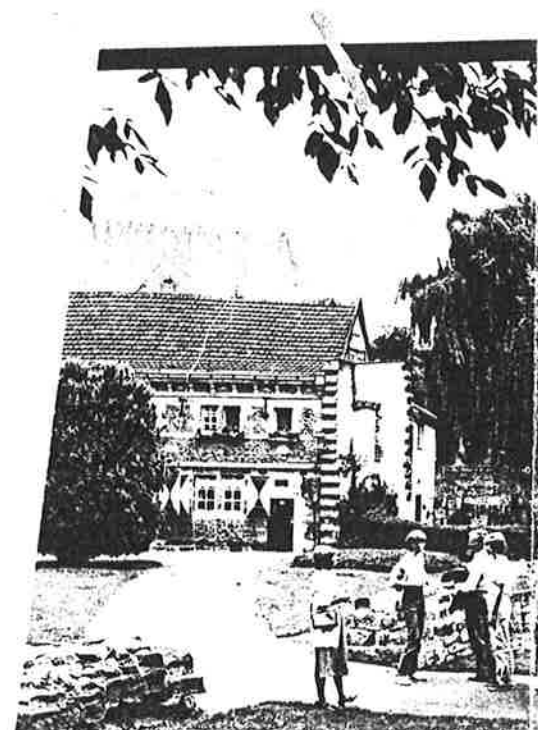
Opposite the "Helpoort" is the "Plague House", a name the building does not deserve. It is in fact a former watermill, built around 1775 — as the cramp irons show — as a paper-mill. Near this mill were the barracks for the town's plague-sufferers.

You now pass the first "drive-through" gateway in the city wall, and cross the River Jeker. Turn right once you are over the bridge. Here you see the "Father, Vinck Tower", dating from the time of the second medieval wall, and also forming link with the first wall.

To the left, adjacent to the tower, yet another example of Maastricht's rich heritage: the former **Faliezusters Nunnery**. This building, with its red and white window-shutters, dates from 1647 and is built in the characteristic Maasland Renaissance style.

Now continue through the park, and turn right into **St. Pietersstraat**. Before turning left down **Lang Grachtje** we draw your attention to the 14th century Gothic church of the Minorites congregation ("Eerste Minderbroederskerk"), with its impressive system of flying buttresses on either side of the portal. Opposite, the 17th century Walloon Church.

**Lang Grachtje** is a continuation of the first city wall. In spring, flowering lilac and blush of wild flowers give the street a





special charm. At No. 12, turn right into **Hilariusstraatje**, a little street unknown even to many of the city's inhabitants. Then turn left into **Tafelstraat**, where many historic buildings are sure to catch your attention.

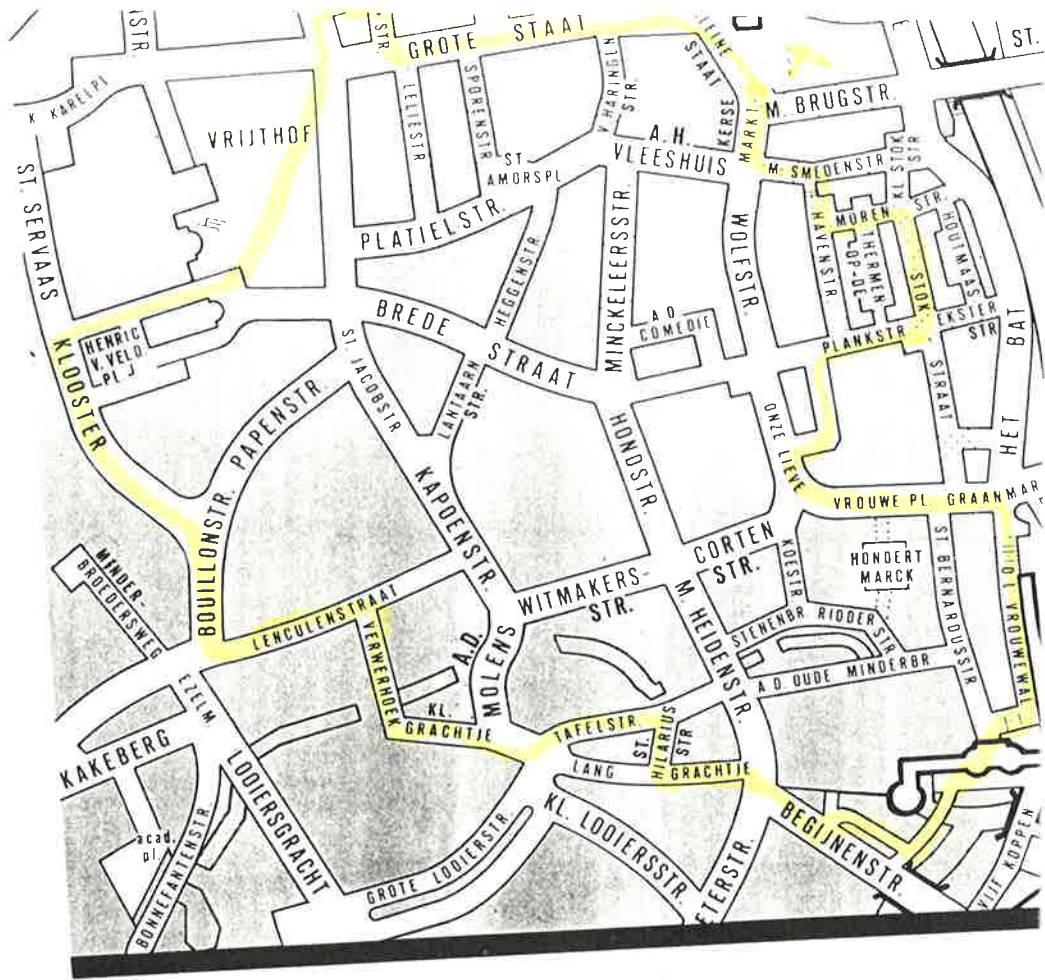
Straight ahead of you at the end of **Tafelstraat**, before you turn right into the street **Achter de Molens** ("Behind the mills"), you will see **Grote Looiersstraat**, a street in the shade of old lime trees where more and more of the period houses are being restored. The names of these and two other streets in the vicinity form a reminder that bygone times the city's leather tanners carried out their trade here. At the end of the street is the Natural History Museum.

Turn right at the end of **Tafelstraat** into **Achter de Molens**. On your left there is a beautiful old gable-stone from the former "Duke's Mill", complete with chronogram. Almost immediately, cross the street into **klein Grachtje**, continuing along the first city wall. Then cross back over the River Aker via **Verwerhoek**.

Turn left into **Lenculenstraat**, where you will see Maastricht's Drama Academy on your left. You are now in the student quarter, with Limburg State University, the van Eyck Art Academy and the Conservatorium (Academy of Music). At the end of **Lenculenstraat**, turn right down **Bouillonstraat**.

Just a little to your right you can see the former Provincial Government House, built between 1930 and 1935 by government architect G.C. Bremer. An unpretentious building, decorated by Limburg's own artists.

Opposite the entrance, cross the street and continue down **St. Servaasklooster**. On your right you can see the government building guardhouse, dating from 1770, with the Artillery arms left and right of the entrance. The portals where the guardsmen stood on their horses have windows fitted with windows.



You are now on "**Henric van Veldeke square**", named after the Netherlands first poet, a bronze statue of whom is to be seen between the flowerbeds (Charles Vos, 1934). Veldeke is best known for his translation of the Legend of St. Servatius (1164). Next to the "Staarzaal" congress and concert centre, note the impressive Louis XV and XVI period dwelling (No. 29). From this square you have a very good view of St. John's Church, with its approx. 70-metre-high red tower. This gothic church is mainly 12th century. The other large church visible is that of St. Servatius, which is said to have been built around a small sepulchral church built prior to 560 A.D. Certain, at any rate, is that construction of the present church was started in about 950, with regular extensions being carried out up to the 15th century. The portal at the bottom of the steps dates back to the 13th century, and is unique in the Netherlands. Known as the "Berg Portal", it is decorated with statuettes portraying figures from the old and new testaments. This church is to be closed to the public for a few years for extensive restoration work. The entrance to the treasury — which will remain open during this period — is to be found on the "Vrijthof" side.

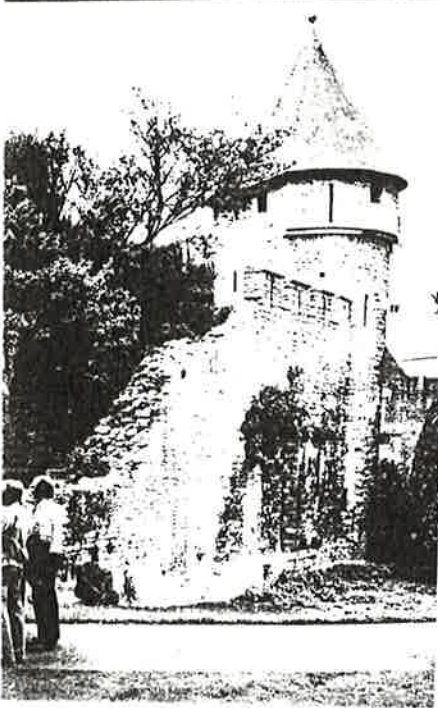
Walk down to "**Vrijthof Square**" via the passage between the two churches. Crossing the square diagonally, you will see the Namur stone Military Guard House (18th century) with its colonnade adjacent to the east choir of St. Servatius church. It was from this headquarters that the city walls were controlled. To the right, at No. 18, the Spanish — or Brabant — Government House, seat of the Dukes of Brabant. This was also where Charles V and Philip II took up residence when visiting the city. Other interesting buildings



are No. 15 ("In den Ouden Vogelstruys") with a magnificent gable-stone and No. 8 ("Momus"), built in 1883 as Maastricht's "carnival temple".

Continue down **Helmstraat** on the north side of "**Vrijthof Square**". On the small square to your right, **Dominicanerplein**, stand the former Dominican Church (1294) and the Bonnefanten Museum, Limburg's Museum of Art and Antiquities, now occupying two storeys of the "Entre Deux" covered shopping centre.

In front of the Dominican Church, turn right into **Dominicanerstraat** and then left into **Grote Staat**. Follow this shopping street and you will find yourself back at "**Het Dinghuis**", your point of departure and the end of this city walk. We hope you have enjoyed this "voyage of discovery" through the city of Maastricht.





**VVV Maastricht  
Tourist Office**

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*Front cover:  
Detail of the so-called "Paris" model of  
Maastricht, to be seen in the Bonnefantenmuseum.*