

Battle Field Tours and Tourism



Brabantse Wal
Bergen op Zoom | Steenbergen | Woensdrecht

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OP ZOOM





MONUMENTS

NATURE

EVENTS

WATER & LEISURE

BATTLE FIELD TOURS AND TOURISM IN THE BERGEN OP ZOOM REGION (BRABANTSE WAL)

Bergen op Zoom, September 2015

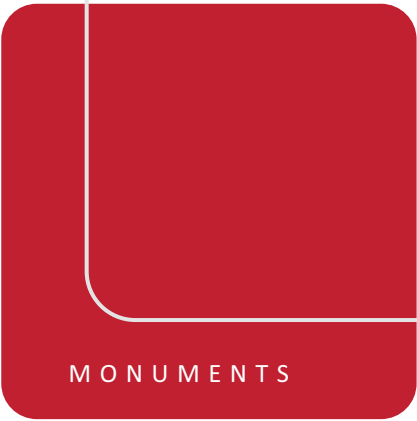
70 years have passed since the end of World War II, but the interest it inspires is greater than ever. Popular TV stations seemingly broadcast documentaries on this most violent conflict in the history of mankind almost incessantly. You might think that everything has already been said and written about the Second World War, but there is an increasing number of new publications and books which provide fresh insights into the War itself, the background against which this conflict arose and its global consequences. So it is not surprising that the interest of the general public in World War II is increasing, and that more and more people want to become better educated about this conflict.

In close cooperation with the Liberation Route Europe Foundation and certain Canadian partners and heritage organizations, we gladly play our role in sharing our knowledge about World War II and the position of our part of the country within it.

Through this brochure, we would like to attract your attention to our venture, and share with you the excellent opportunities that our region has to offer to the visitor who is interested in Battle Field Tourism. Our region has a rich and eventful past when it comes to conflicts and warfare, specifically with regard to the Second World War. It is not without reason that there are two large war cemeteries in Bergen op Zoom, the final resting place of almost 2,500 soldiers who paid the ultimate price for our freedom.

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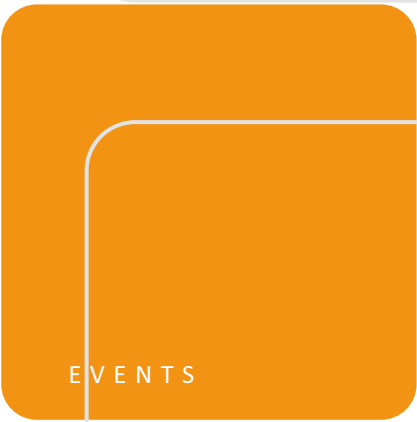




INTRODUCTION TO BERGEN OP ZOOM AND THE BRABANTSE WAL REGION

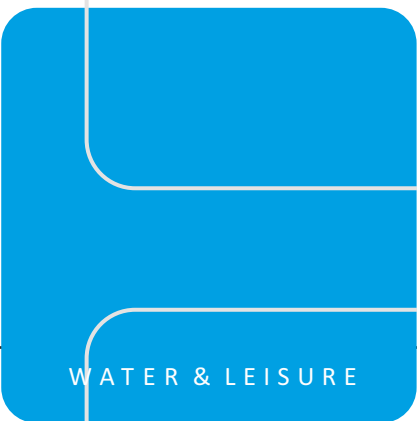
*Global city in the making
Where Brabant embraces Zeeland
Sparkles like an ancient pearl
Delightful Bergen op Zoom
The theatre of good living*

Halverwege wereldsteden
Waar Brabant Zeeland kust
Ligt als eeuwenoude parel
Aangenaam Bergen op Zoom
Theater van het goede leven



These five lines say everything about our geographical position and our essence as a city. We are located at the crossroads of several major economic areas and we have excellent connections with the major tourist centres of north-west Europe.

Bergen op Zoom is a vibrant city with a rich and eventful past. For more than eight centuries, Bergen op Zoom has been the fulcrum between Brabant and Zeeland, and Flanders and the southern Randstad. The influences of these areas can be found in both the city and its inhabitants. The Brabant and Flemish influences are reflected in the hospitality and friendliness of the city. The influences of Zeeland and Rotterdam, on the other hand, are expressed in a clear-headed view on life and more business-like qualities. With a backdrop of more than 800 listed buildings and a variety of shopping and dining opportunities, Bergen op Zoom is a delightful city to stay in. The atmospheric old town, coupled with the beautiful countryside along the strip of small hills known as De Brabantse Wal and the town's easy accessibility, make Bergen op Zoom both an attractive destination and base.



Bergen op Zoom is an animated and bustling city. However, we understand the art of treating our history with respect, and annually organize the World War II commemorations. Since 2014, the Bergen op Zoom Canadian War Cemetery has organised the Canadian National Remembrance Day in the Netherlands.



Brabantse Wal
Bergen op Zoom | Steenberg | Woensdrecht

...waar Brabant Zeeland kust...




PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Bergen op Zoom in the Netherlands and the City of Edmonton have a long history of solidarity beginning in 1944 when Canadian soldiers liberated Bergen op Zoom;

AND WHEREAS, many of these Canadian soldiers went with the South Alberta Regiment, now known as the South Alberta Light Horse Regiment;

AND WHEREAS, Edmonton is proud of its participation in historical efforts to enable and support the freedom of citizens in Europe and worldwide;

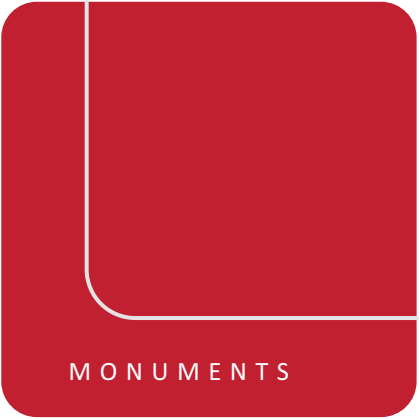
AND WHEREAS, in today's international climate, forming specific global connections between municipalities brings social and economic benefit to everyone involved and is becoming increasingly important;

THEREFORE, MAYOR STEPHEN MANDEL, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM AN OFFICIAL FRIENDSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF EDMONTON AND BERGEN OP ZOOM.

Dated this 29th day of July, 2013

Stephen Mandel
Stephen Mandel
MAYOR OF THE CITY OF EDMONTON





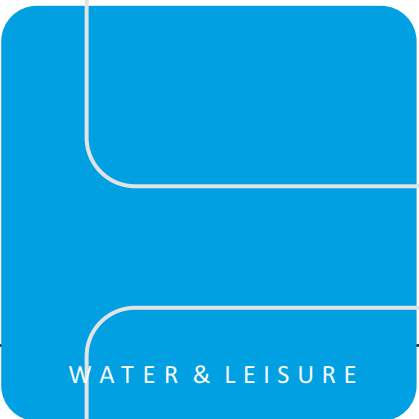
BERGEN OP ZOOM AND CANADA

Bergen op Zoom is a city of communication. Literally, with its up to date infrastructure, but also in a figurative sense. Bergen op Zoom maintains a strong affiliation with Canada. This deep-rooted relationship has its origins in World War II: Bergen op Zoom was liberated by Canadian units.

We not only maintain contact with the headquarters of the regiments that liberated the city and the region, but – due to the great Canadian War Cemetery on our territory - we have close contact with a diverse variety of Canadian factions. Based on an MOU which was signed in 2014 together with the Canadian Government, we will be working with Canada in the coming years not only to increase the awareness of the Canadian efforts during the Second World War, but also to strengthen the various ties between us, such as economy and education.

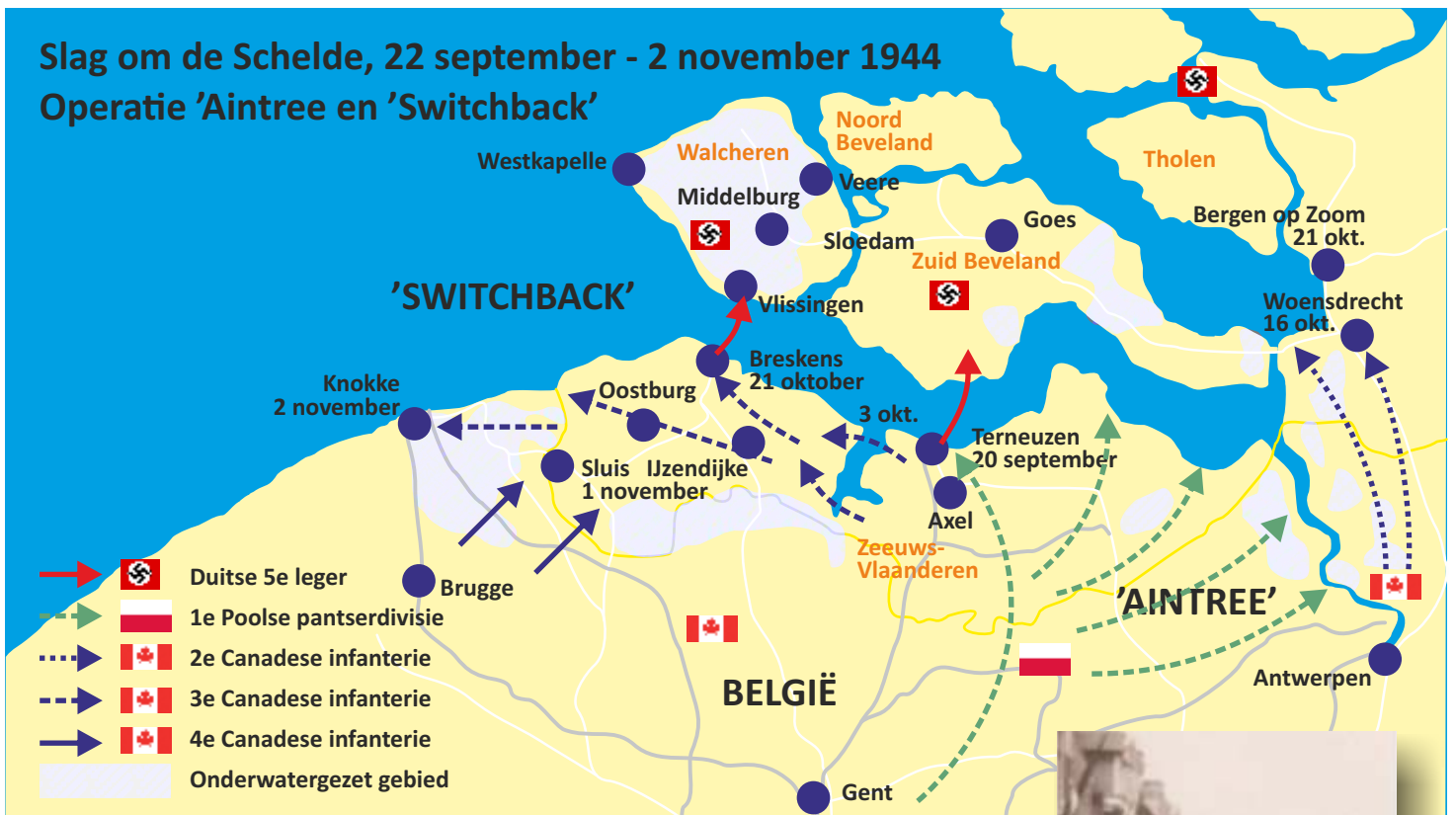


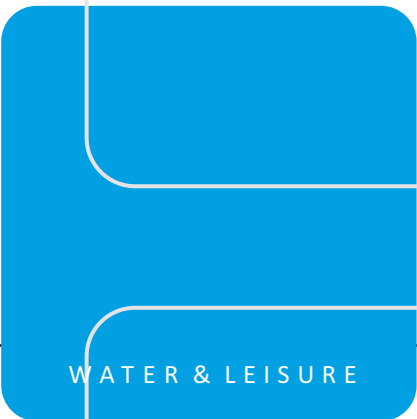
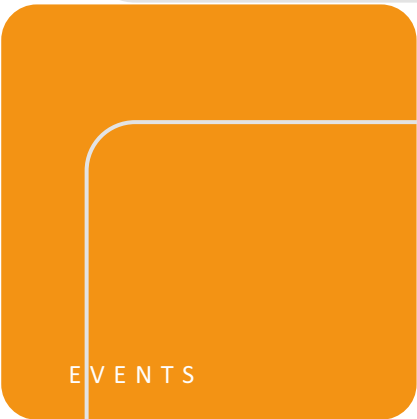
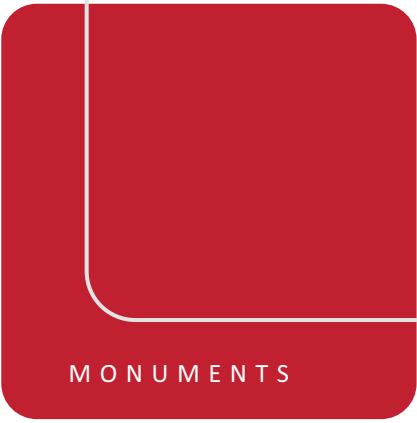
We are fully aware of the increasing importance of looking beyond one's own borders in the current international economic climate.



Slag om de Schelde, 22 september - 2 november 1944

Operatie 'Aintree' en 'Switchback'





DE BRABANTSE WAL / THE BERGEN OP ZOOM REGION, CENTRE OF THE ALLIED ADVANCE IN NW EUROPE

Bergen op Zoom is part of the hilly region known as De Brabantse Wal. In the autumn of 1944, this area was the centre of the Allied effort to take back the ports of Antwerp. In October-November 1944, there were heavy battles to the south and north of Bergen op Zoom to retake the islands of Zeeland, which would facilitate a free passage to Antwerp. The Antwerp ports were crucial to further the advance in NW Europe and to provide the allies with the necessary advantage for the defeat of Nazi Germany.

The battle for the liberation of the ports of Antwerp was under Canadian command and involved the deployment of several allied nationalities. Besides Canadians, these included British, Polish, Norwegian, French, Belgian, Scottish and Dutch units. The battle was exceptionally fierce and took place in an inhospitable landscape subject to extreme tides. It lasted 86 days and cost the Allies alone nearly 13,000 casualties. More than 40,000 German prisoners of war were taken; the suffering of the population was unimaginable and the material damage on the vast battlefield was enormous. In the village of Woensdrecht, for example, hardly any houses remain which were built before 1944.

De Brabantse Wal lies exactly in the centre of the western route taken by the Allies in 1944. The advance began in Normandy and ended in northern Germany. The distance by road between Normandy and Bergen op Zoom, and between Bergen op Zoom and northern Germany is, in both cases, about 550 km (5.5 hours by car).

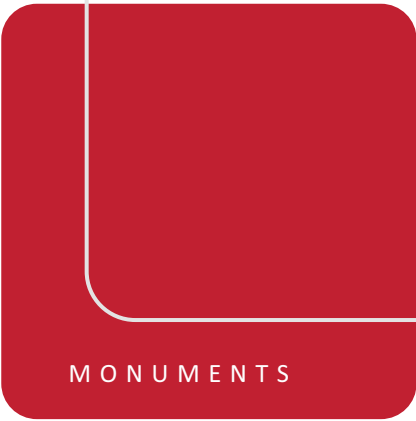


Brabantse Wal

Bergen op Zoom | Steenbergen | Woensdrecht

...waar Brabant Zeeland kust...





LOCATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Road

As indicated earlier, Bergen op Zoom is situated at the junction of the roads that form the inter-connection between London and Antwerp-Rotterdam-Amsterdam-Brussels-Paris and the European hinterland. The A4, A16, A27, A58, A29 and A59 motorways guarantee easy and quick access to the major population centres and major tourist destinations in the Netherlands, Flanders, north-west France, south-west England and north-west Germany. Bergen op Zoom is never further than a 4.5 hour drive from the various metropolitan areas of the Randstad, the urban regions of Brussels-Antwerp, London / south-west England and the Ruhr district. There are 140 million people in this area.



Rail

Bergen op Zoom has a regular train service, with direct connections to Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Schiphol Airport.

West Brabant is connected to the European high speed rail network via Breda. The journey to Paris takes 2.5 hours using this service and it's 4.5 hours to London. If you use this high speed line, which is also connected with the international airport Schiphol (Amsterdam), you can save valuable time when booking a flight. The high-speed rail service can do this for you.

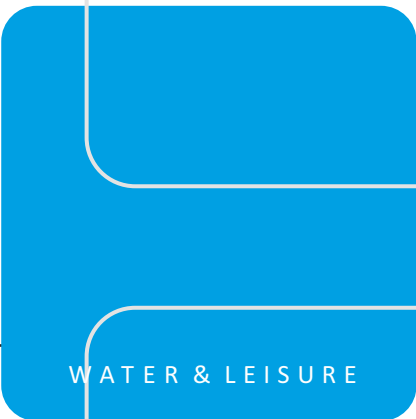
Airports

The international airports of Schiphol (Amsterdam) and Zaventem (Brussels) are less than one and a half hours, and one hour, respectively from Bergen op Zoom / De Brabantse Wal by car. There are regional airports in Rotterdam (40 minutes), Eindhoven (75 minutes) and Antwerp (30 minutes).



Accommodation

The region has an extensive and varied range of overnight accommodation in all price ranges. From B & B to five-star hotels and from camp-sites to deluxe villas: the region has it all. A full list of accommodation options is available from the website of the VVV (Tourist Information Centre) Brabantse Wal. www.vvvbrabantsewal.nl

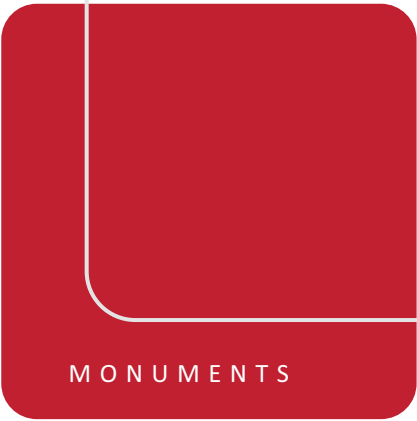


Brabantse Wal

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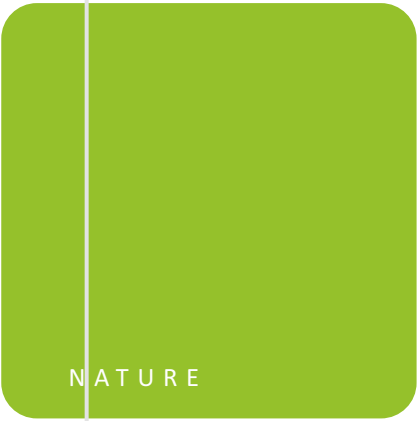
...waar Brabant Zeeland Kust...





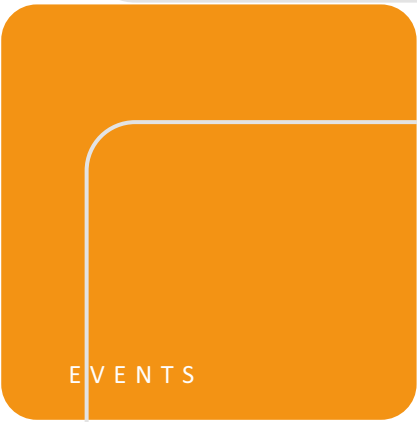
AFFILIATED PARTIES

The development of Battle Field Tourism focuses on sharing knowledge about the Allied advance in 1944-1945 and World War II in general. We do this using routes and relics associated with the Second World War. We work closely with the Liberation Route Europe Foundation, Liberation Museum Zeeland (this museum tells the story of the Battle of the Scheldt), local heritage organisations, the Dutch Embassy in Canada, the Canadian Embassy in the Netherlands and Canadian institutions and organisations dedicated to WW II and the national history of Canada.



Audio Pillar Liberation Route Europe

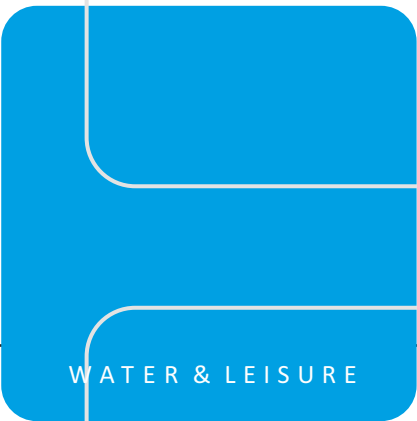
These pillars tell the story of the Allied advance in north-west Europe. The pillars for our region are concerned with the Battle of the Scheldt. Based on testimonies of soldiers and civilians, the visitor is taken through the events of World War II. For more information: www.liberationroute.com



Contact

De Brabantse Wal has a professional and independent tourist information service. The VVV Brabantse Wal, with offices in Bergen op Zoom, Steenbergen and Hoogerheide is not only a source of information with plenty of WW II products and routes for visitors to the region, but it is also happy to assist in arranging visits to the city and surrounding area, and to organise customised visits with a guide to key World War II sites in the city and its vicinity.

Besides gaining knowledge and seeing World War II attributes, it is important to include more light-hearted activities in this visit. Bergen op Zoom and De Brabantse Wal offer countless opportunities for shopping and for enjoying the historic atmosphere of the city and the natural beauty of De Brabantse Wal, so settle down on one of the numerous terraces in the city or surrounding countryside, or enjoy eating out in one of the many wonderful restaurants. VVV Brabantse Wal will gladly show you the extensive palette of possibilities.



Tourist Brabantse Wal
www.vvvbrabantsewal.nl
 phone: +31,164,277,484 and +31,164,277,483
 mail: info@vvvbrabantsewal.nl

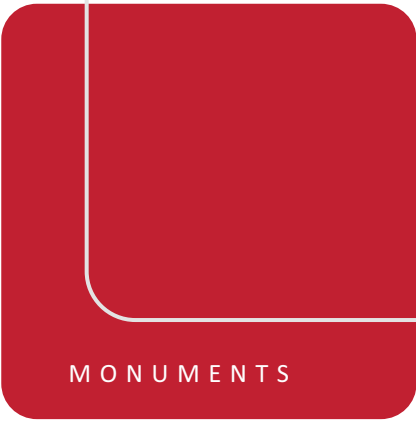


Brabantse Wal

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...waar Brabant Zeeland Kust...





A LITTLE HISTORY

On October 27 1944 the Germans had retreated behind the canal De Zoom, a natural obstacle. Canadian tanks were kept at a safe distance. This canal had to be taken in order to advance. On October 29 1944, a Canadian attack took place during the night. There was bitter house-to-house fighting. During one of these fights something remarkable happened. In an attempt to return to his own lines, the Canadian sergeant Charles Kipp suddenly came face to face with a German paramilitary, who was aiming a machine gun at him. When the attention of the German faltered momentarily, Sergeant Kipp seized his chance and turned his own gun on the German. So there were the two soldiers with their guns aimed at each other, barely three meters apart. Not a word was spoken.

Motionlessly, they looked at each other. Then, as if already agreed, both soldiers simultaneously let their weapons drop until both guns were pointing at the ground. Then the German saluted Kipp, performed an about-turn and disappeared. Sergeant Kipp saluted back and made a fast exit.

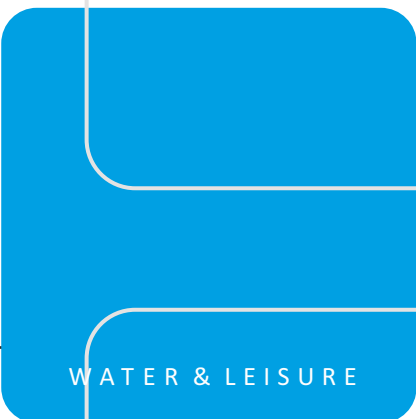


Years later, Kipp met a group of German veterans from the 6th Para Regiment during a visit to Bergen op Zoom, including the former officer Carl Heinz Holst. For a long time, he had been trumpeting the same "wild" story to anyone who would listen. Independently of one another, the two had been telling the same story all those years, only to meet in 1986 in Bergen op Zoom and recognize each other.

From that day on, everyone believed their story. The two became close friends and even went on holiday together.



Left Lt. Carl Heinz Holst. Right Sgt. Charles D. Kipp



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...waar Brabant Zeeland Kust...

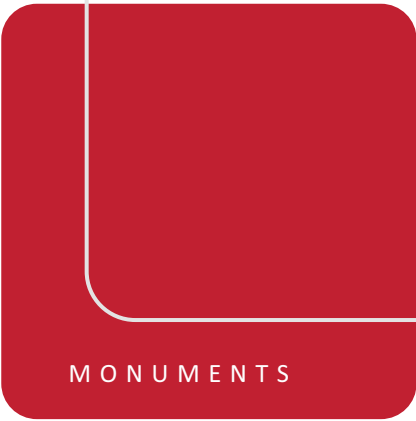


70 JAAR BEVRIJDING BERGEN OP ZOOM e.o.

70th anniversary of the Liberation
of the Bergen op Zoom area







SUMMARY

By means of this brochure, we would like to draw your attention to Bergen op Zoom / De Brabantse Wal. We are convinced that our profile perfectly fits your needs for the development and support of Battle Field Tourism and Battle Field Tours. We work with fast and direct lines of communication, and this, combined with our transparent methods, means we can quickly respond to your specific questions and needs.

We would be most happy to give you the opportunity to get to know our city and region better. A visit to Bergen op Zoom and De Brabantse Wal will give you the chance to form your own opinion – on location - of the excellent ambiance our region offers the tourist.

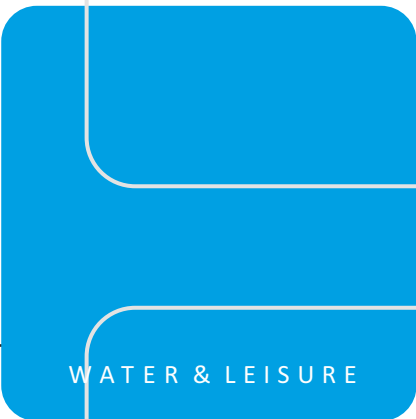


If this appeals to you, please get in touch. We are very willing meet up and become better acquainted.

Yours sincerely,

Regional Organisation De Brabantse Wal,
Martin Groffen, Chairman

Municipality of Bergen op Zoom,
Ton Linssen, Alderman Tourism







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