

Aeroplane

Vlaamse Technische Kring

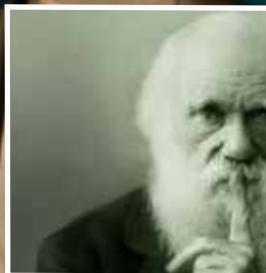
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Word from the president

Dear friends,

With great pleasure I'm able to open the first Aeroplane of the academic year 2015-2106. And it's an even greater pleasure to welcome you all to Leuven, the most vibrant university city in the world. The next couple of months you'll discover why Leuven is such a unique city, unparalleled by others. With a little help from my vice-president Eline (see below), discovering the beauty that is Leuven will certainly be a marvelous experience.

By now you're probably wondering why I'm babbling on about some university city and why you just can't enjoy the sparkling layout of the Aeroplane. Well, as president of the student association representing the students of the Faculty of Engineering Science, babbling, ranting and randomly shouting are just a small part of my job description. More importantly though, as president it's my job to make sure that your voice is heard on all educational levels. Furthermore, I try to make sure that VTK as a whole is there to represent you and to provide you with the best experience possible.

Ranging from a sandwich bars, parties, our own bar, a book store, cultural activities, sports and much, much more... VTK will be there to help you get on your way in Leuven and have the time of your life.

Whenever you see me on campus or on activities, make sure to say hi, I'll buy you one of our marvelous Belgian beers!

Lucas

Word from the vice-president

Hey everyone!

I'm Eline, the vice-president of VTK. I'm in my last year of Computer Sciences. If you would ever like to work on a VTK party (for at least 2 hours) (and receive coupons in return) (and get your ticket refunded) or if you would like to play on our grand piano, I'm your go-to person. But enough about me. I would like to congratulate YOU to pick Leuven as your Erasmus destination. Agreed, the studies are hard, but the city and the student life are so great that it really compensates. I actually never went on Erasmus myself, so I can't really compare myself, but I heard from my friends (who went to London and Lausanne) that we are spoiled. If you want to go out, you can, and you don't have to pay a ridiculous entrance fee, and you don't have to eat lasagne from the Colruyt for a whole week to be able to pay for your drinks. (Of course, that is only compared to London and Lausanne. I will have to do a full research by partying all over the world.

Who wants to join in my scientifically justified research?) You've been in Leuven for ca. 2-3 months now if I'm not mistaken. I hope you had fun discovering Leuven, and by extension Belgium. To help you with your quest, I have some tips for you left:

- Fakbar 't Elixlr: Shame on you if you haven't been there! Of course, this is the best bar in the world. Needs no further comments.
- Blauwe Kater: a bar with a very extensive range of beers and blues gigs on Mondays! Make sure you go early for the gig because the bar is always packed.
- Café Noir or Koffie Onan: Good place for a coffee!
- Visit Ghent, not Bruges. In my opinion, Bruges is just too touristic, whereas Ghent is alive and real.
- Go buy pralines!

BELGIUM'S HIDDEN TREASURE

Mechelen

Every international student undoubtedly has already planned or is planning to visit some of our country's most famous cities like Bruges,

Ghent, Brussels, Antwerp... But Belgium also has a lot of hidden treasures: smaller but nonetheless beautiful cities. One of them is Mechelen.

At a distance of only a half an hour away from Leuven by train, Mechelen lies really close. Perfect for you to try it out on a sunny, autumn day.

The eye catcher...

... is located on Mechelen's Grote Markt: The St Rumold's Tower. The construction of this impressive tower started in 1452. Though never finished, the tower, with its 97m height, is still the true symbol of Mechelen. Being more than only a tower, it is also a beautiful cathedral, a Belfort (used formerly to chime the hour or to raise the alarm) and recognized as UNESCO World Heritage.

After visiting the cathedral, climb the tower. You will discover six separate rooms, a carillon, a working tower clock and last but not least, a breathtaking view on Mechelen and its surroundings. On a cloudless day, you can even see the tower of the cathedral of Antwerp! Definitely worth the effort!

Open when?

Sunday to Friday from 1pm to 6pm
Saturday from 10am to 6pm
Last climb: 4:40pm

Entrance fee

adults € 8 | groups (min. 10 pers.) € 6 | kids and youth from 4 years old till 26 years old: € 3 | groups (min. 10 pers.) € 3

Legend of the late-arriving people of Mechelen

Legend has it that the people of Mechelen were always late, arriving at what was called "Mechelen time". Sorry! Consequently in the eighteenth century they hung the largest timepiece in the world on the four sides of St Rumbold's Tower. The gigantic clock-faces were larger than those of Big Ben in London. They only indicated the hour. For the minutes in-between, people had to listen to the carillon.

And we still do that. The timepiece is no longer there but the carillon plays tunes every quarter of an hour. Unique to Mechelen is the strike between each quarter, every seven-and-a-half-minutes. That is the 'Mechels halfke' - the 'Mechelen half'.

A trip to a Belgian city is not complete without...

... The local beer! And not just any beer. Gouden Carolus, one of my personal favorites, is brewed in brewery Het Anker in Mechelen. The brewery was founded in 1369 and is one of the oldest of Belgium. The brewery started out as a family business. Jan uit den Anker was the founder, his son took over the business, and so on...

The amber-coloured beer they brewed was called the 'Mechelschen Bruynen' and was popular with both the bourgeoisie and the nobility. It still exists nowadays and bears the name 'Gouden Carolus Ambrio'. In the 1990s the premises were given a makeover. Charles Leclef, the fifth generation of the family, restored the old buildings and modernized the refrigeration, fermentation and lagering facilities. There are several versions of Gouden Carolus. The most famous is undoubtedly the Gouden Carolus Classic. This special beer won -for the 3rd time - the gold medal at the World Beer Awards in 2012. The jury described the beer as following: "Full, rich nose of molasses, toffee and pear drops. Powerful yet smooth. (...) Plenty of body with rich fruit flavors and a long warming finish."

Perfect to quench your thirst after climbing the tower? I think so!

Open when?

Monday through Thursday closed
Friday through Sunday
11 u. - 12.30 u. , 13 u. - 14.30 u.
Price: € 8

Points of interest

- ◇ Grote markt
- ◇ St Romboutstoren
- ◇ Brouwerij het Anker
- ◇ Groot Begijnhof
- ◇ Dossin Kazerne
- ◇ Speelgoedmuseum



A quiet walk in the Beguinage

Just like Leuven, Mechelen possesses a beautiful and picturesque Beguinage. Ideal for whoever feels like taking a relaxing stroll.

Flanders and its Beguinages

Beguinages were small towns within a town. They had their own bakery, brewery, nursing home, church and bleaching fields. Beguinages were founded in the time of the crusades. Many of the men who left on a crusade never returned, which resulted in a surplus of women: widows, orphans and women who failed to find a suitable husband. Going and living in a convent was one solution, but many convents only took aristocratic or well-to-do women. Women who didn't enter a convent for whatever reason, went to live together and together were able to sustain themselves. The main difference with convents was that the beguines did not take the life-long vows of poverty, obedience and chastity. So they were not tied to the beguinage for life, though most did live out their life there. Initially the church treated them as heretics, but gradually they were accepted on condition that they led a devout life. This was how beguinages in Flanders originated.

The Dossin Base

The Dossin Base is a special place of remembrance for Belgium. During the Second World War, the base, known as 'SS Sammellager Mecheln', was the site where more than 25.000 Jews and Gypsies from Belgium and Northern France waited for their death. To make sure now and future generations remember the historical significance of this place and these events, a brand-new museum was founded. What is unique about this project is the combination of the story of the Holocaust on one hand, and the theme of Human Rights on the other. Point of interest for architect students: the museum was designed by leading architect and former Flemish Government Architect Bob Van Reeth.

Open when?

Monday-Friday 9am - 5pm
Saturday - Sunday 9.30am - 5pm
Closed on Wednesdays

The Toy museum

The Toy Museum boasts one of the largest collections of toys in Europe. You'll find toys from all over the world, from early toys to modern ones. There's much more to the museum visit than just looking: you can play traditional games and relive historical events such as the Battle of Waterloo (precisely 200 years ago in 2015) as if you had been there in person. Which of these toys did you play with yourself? And would young children still do so today? The museum brings vibrant memories of childhood back to young and old.

Open when?

Tuesday to Sunday 10 am - 5 pm
Closed on Mondays
Price: € 8,50

Other highlights

Can't get enough of Mechelen? There are still lots of alternative sights and activities in this beautiful city, e.g. boat trips along the inner Dyle, "eight historical churches", the Palace of Margareth of Austria, the Vismarkt, ...

International Experiences

The year is almost coming to a close, and we've asked some international students to write about their experiences in Leuven. Studying in a foreign country can be scary, and when you arrive, many things won't turn out as expected. But in the end, most of the surprises will be happy ones, and you'll learn that a year abroad truly is an amazing experience that no one can ever take away from you. Jehan (India) and Javi (Spain) shared with us their stories about expectations versus reality, studying versus partying, and what makes Leuven such a wonderful place to be.



Jehan

Leuven, the first time I actually thought about the concept of living here was just a few days after getting my last admission letter. Europe was never really in the plan. I like most other countries in the universal mindset, and set my target at USA. It was not that I didn't get in anywhere else, I was just curious, as my mind finally had some free time marked with the abrupt end of all the expectation and anxiety of awaiting results. It

was now the serious thinking time, sitting down after all the buzz of having all the world as my options, I soon realized what my options really are. Leuven was not a blind pick out of the box, but it was the most recommended EU College for my proclivity towards research in Nanotechnology by my seniors. The funny thing was no one in USA was aware of Leuven and mentioning Belgium just made matters worse. It was like European colleges were on

a different planet to them and the same vice versa. Belgium, a country 107 times smaller than mine, with the main languages being German, Dutch and French, none in my forte. But worst of all every time I googled for feedback, HitchHikers guide would pop with his blunt bold comment "Belgium is the rudest word in the Universe, yet by strange coincidence, also the name of a country in earth, completely banned in all parts of the galaxy,

except in on part where they don't know what it means and in serious screenplays".

My sisters take was that's why the chocolate from there was bitter and not sweet (It didn't help!!). Parents also were not so inclined, being the first in the family to go abroad for education and that too in a place where no one speaks English terrified them. After extensive networking my parents found a distant relative of mine in Germany whose only comment about Belgium was "Our beer is better ". It soon became pointless to involve others, it was all on me and me alone. Finally I decided, not because of Tomorrowland but that it would be much less of a financial burden on my parents and myself to take Leuven, it didn't go well at the dinner table when I announced my decision and with time it didn't get better.

Finally three months later with my bags packed and tears everywhere, I said bye to all my friends and family who gathered at the airport as if to pay me their respects, (We Indians make an

emotional movie out of every small thing). It was in the plane that I met my first friend, "Proshant". I was approached by a hefty gentleman saying his family was given all window seats, and he wanted to change seats with me to be beside them. Not being stingy with the window which surprisingly most people invest their time while booking, I agreed. I shifted to the back on an aisle seat and next to me was Proshant. From there I slowly got introduced to the multitude of Indians in Belgium and especially in Leuven itself. Leuven was not some remote town but it was one of the most culturally rich and historical places in Europe. That's what you get when the person next to you studies anthropology. We soon went our separate ways when we reached the airport but fate had it that we would cross again as roommates in Leuven City Hostel. I tried to prepare myself for when I reached Brussels as you can't always rely on Google. I approached the gentleman at the supermarket cash counter , took a deep breath , collected my wits and in my own pace with confidence

tried to muster up all the French that I learnt from the Duolingo app that I so sporadically practiced back home and in my most earnest effort tried to say " Which direction is Ravenstraat ? ". Smirking with a smile seeing how I was struggling to pronounce, he stopped me to ask "Do you know English? ". For one second I thought there is a God. It was from that moment that all the misconceptions went out the door, I soon came to realize that Leuven was a student town truly blessed with a blend of beautiful rich history and an international outlook which I had never come to experience ever before. It is here that passions and fantasies became a reality. Indians aren't so welcoming to change, that is why beyond cricket and chess other games aren't really there. Youtube used to be a magical window where people were free and not judged to do what they like. I would have never dreamt in just six months I would find so many likeminded people here, now I spent my Friday's playing " Go " with my friend Alex from the Netherlands, Cards against humanity on Saturdays with board game night



at Pangaea and D&D session on Sundays. The University is also quite different, the focus in India is theoretical and less conceptual, with the main focus being around remembering standard proofs and their immediate applications. Strong focus is given on manipulation over understanding. I knew I would be expected to be more practical here, but the concept of an oral exam at first frightened me. It was only after my first experience that I really understood the value. So many times the understanding depth of people, even from a student to a professor, is different in the ways we visualize or understand or interpret things. It was during an oral exam when I just told the professor that I can't understand what you are asking of me in this question that he told me just explain what you understood that I realized what exactly was the purpose of the question. The skill and outlook of the professors has truly expanded the views I had with my field. I have learnt and also shared my culture many times here in Leuven. Yes, it did take much time to get accustomed to certain cultural shocks, from a professor offering beer to regular greetings by kissing one on the cheek. Yet truly I feel that despite our differences, I feel very humbled and grateful to have the company of friends that I have today for not only their cultural tolerance and acceptance, but also the sheer joy

of their company. To my Polish friends who say that it is never too late to have a drink, to my Croatian friends to whom any random topic can be conversation, to my Iranian friends in how we keep saying that nothing has changed in 1400 years (It's a Zoroastrian thing), to my American friends who like making the most serious conversation out of the most unexpected subjects. And to all my friends I have truly experienced an international learning and grooming atmosphere here, and I am truly indebted to you all.

But what makes Leuven so memorable to me, are the small attachments I have gained where the tiniest extra effort taken by others makes you feel right at home. The letters in the occasional soup at De Moete, the unlimited free Alma fries paradox, to the general confusion I get when I ask someone what beer I should try. How randomly some nights students throw water balloons at pedestrians, to the profound efforts everyone takes to correctly pronounce my name in my own language, to the weird bug print in the toilets, free coffee at the department machine, random free beer a guy gives you if he bought more than he can handle or when you dressed pretty good for Halloween, to the disgust when I

tell people how I love the French fries here. But the amazing part is that Leuven, although so rich and expressive in sharing its culture, has never enforced it upon others and has led to a kind of symbiotic paradise between their culture and ours. I have not lost my identity here in Leuven, I still celebrate Indian festivals and eat Indian food which I can both order and cook almost every day. Leuven is a site of some of the best Turkish, Ethiopian, Italian, Iranian food I had in a long time, and the Indian food here is also not that bad. There is no shortage of awesome cultural events, going from St Patrick's Day to some really messed up traditions like Cantus, but utmost all the freedom of open minded expression here in Leuven is blissful, one can feel free to protest a certain act peacefully here and voice their opinion. Something like that back home is so often met with police raids, tear gas and overflow of dramatization, melodrama and manipulation. I truly enjoy Flemish people, VTK has truly spent a great time and consideration to make us international students feel at home here. Truly awesome are the member of VTK organizing committee like Christophe, Marijn, and Job who have always taken time out to make life here just more fun, that some days I don't really feel away from home.



Javi

My experience in Leuven started in those warm and nice days of September, between beers and laughs. Since the very beginning I knew I wanted to come here, however, I would never have guessed what Leuven is really like. Leuven means having everything in one place; Leuven has it all, from young people to a great University, without forgetting beers, parties, beautiful buildings, activities and cultural life... There isn't a day when you have to stay at home; there are always things to do, opportunities to get, people to meet, etc. I would like to explain my experience by dismantling three lies about living here. First big lie: "Belgians are not kind towards foreign people", Before coming, I had been told by people that "in the end, you will be only with other Erasmus people", and this is the biggest lie ever; I have

made, not only very good friends, but best friends here, friends I do know will be there for a long time, because afterwards I have also been told that if you have a Belgian friend, you have him forever. For instance, I still remember one day in the canteen, I had not enough money to pay my food, and suddenly a guy that I had never seen just paid for my food without knowing neither my name or my Facebook; of course, I returned his money some days after. Second even bigger lie: "Leuven is only party", there is no doubt about that Leuven IS party, nevertheless there are much more things here: it is a very active city, with exhibitions, museums, concerts, libraries, shops, architecture and arts, workshops, markets, events... As an example we have the ExistenzWeek, the week when all the students of 4th year of Architecture do their best to create a beautiful space in an abandoned

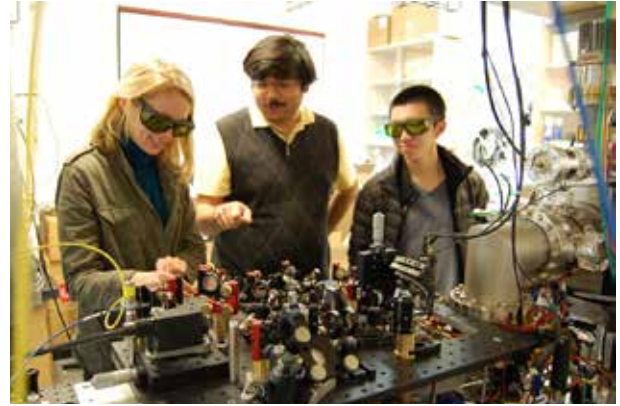
building and turn it into a cultural-exchange space, with exhibitions, lectures, parties, cafes... Third - and not less important - lie: "It is horrible to live with this weather", this is the first thing everybody will say when you decide to go to Northern Europe from the South; but definitely I have to say that although this is not Andalusia sunny every day, you also learn how to take advantage of the weather, and especially how to enjoy every day, no matter if it is sunny, cloudy, or whatever. The happiness you will have one sunny day seeing all the parks full of people on the grass and the terraces of the Oude Markt absolutely full is something you cannot feel in a Mediterranean climate. Coming to Leuven has been one of the best choices of my life, and now I feel sort of engaged with this city and with Belgium: I do know I will be back someday after finishing my Erasmus.



Last month in engineering

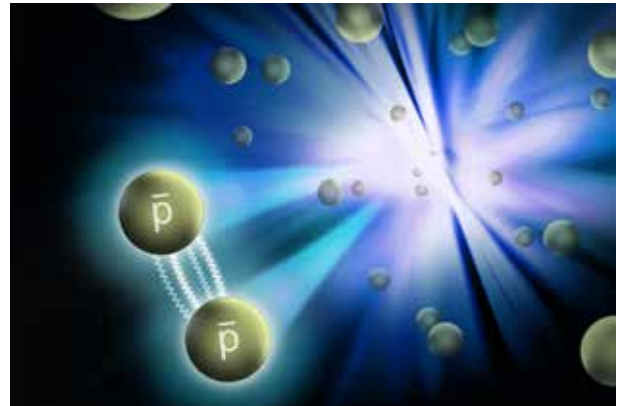
The Quantum Zeno Effect

Researchers have experimentally confirmed the “Quantum Zeno effect”, which states that atoms can’t move while you’re looking at them. They were able to suppress the quantum tunnelling (this is when a particle goes through a barrier which it classically shouldn’t) of atoms by observing them. While observed, the atoms started to behave as classical particles. This could lead to a whole new range of applications.



Physicists measure force between anti-matter particles

For the first time, scientists have measured the force of interaction between antimatter particles. The force between two antiprotons was found to be attractive and strong, like for ordinary protons. They achieved this by recreating the conditions of the very first moments after the big-bang, in search of answering the question: why is there almost no antimatter left in our universe?



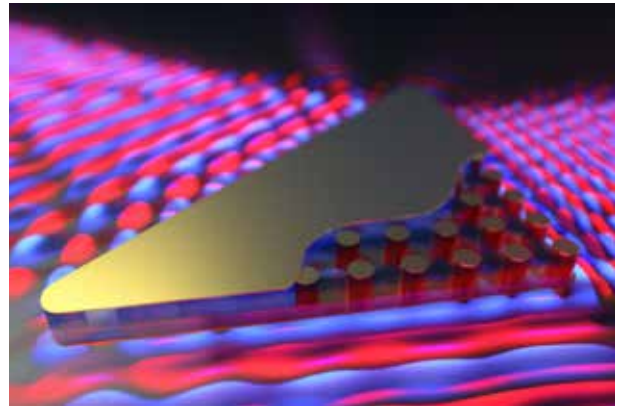
Artificial skin that can detect pressure

Engineers at Stanford have created an artificial plastic “skin” that can detect the amount of pressure applied to it, and that can generate and send an electric signal to a living brain cell. It works by a two layer plastic construct: the top layer acts as the sensing layer and the bottom layer acts as the circuit to transport electric signals and convert them into biochemically compatible signals for nerve cells.



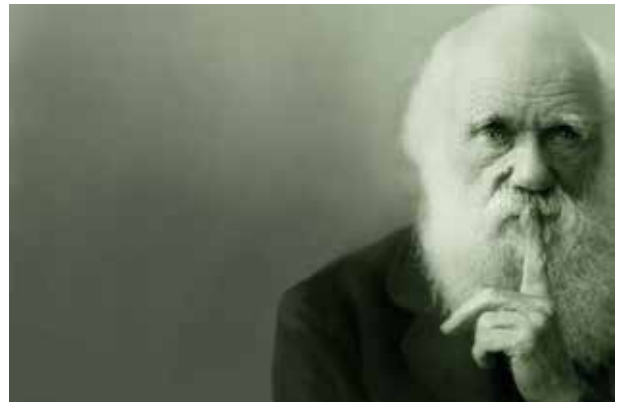
Infinitely fast light within new metamaterial

In the pursuit of developing photonic devices, which use photons instead of electrons as the information carrier, engineers at Harvard have designed a metamaterial with a refractive index of zero. Light that propagates through such a structure has an infinitely large phase velocity! No worries, it doesn't break special relativity (nothing can go faster than the speed of light), but it does allow exciting new ways to manipulate light.



New research suggests a revision of Darwin's Theory of Evolution

One of the key concepts in Darwin's Theory of Evolution, 'the fecundity selection', suggests that females, who can produce the largest offspring, are favoured by nature. In a ground-breaking publication, researchers argue this to be not the case, and suggest a reformulation. According to them, having too many results in less efficient nurturing of the offspring and, thus, less reproductive success.



Artificial system replaces 'human intuition' with algorithms

Crucial to the efficient analysis of big-data, is the search for the right buried patterns that allow you to make future predictions from this data. Choosing the best "features" of the data to analyse usually requires some human intuition. MIT researchers succeeded in creating a system that not only searches for patterns, but also designs them. It outperformed 615 of 906 human teams in a contest to find the best predictive patterns in unknown big-data sets.



Sights in Belgium

Circuit De Spa Francorchamps

“Circuit de Spa Francorchamps” is a circuit for car/motorcycle races. So if you really love (fast) cars and motorcycles, you should visit the place! It is possible to visit the Spa Francorchamps circuit as a real ‘visitor’ and to discover the inner workings of the circuit with a multilingual guide. They will show you race control, the press room, the commentators’ booth, the timing room, the pit lane, the paddocks, ... The price of the guided tour is €9.50/adult and €6.50/child (duration: about 1 1/2 hrs). For the real car-lovers, it is also possible to combine your exploration of the legendary track with a tour of the Stavelot Automobile Museum.



Toy Museum Mechelen

Do you like toys? Than would the toy museum definitely be something for you!

Here the creation and the most important milestones of the Toy Museum are given in a nutshell: April 23, 1982, the dream of 17 enthusiastic founders becomes reality: the Toy Museum officially opens its doors.

For the real beginning, we have to go back in time, until 1980.

An exhibition on games and toys of the Folklore Festival of Mechelen in 1980 led to the creation of the “Center for Toys and Folk Art”.

Autumn 1981 a space of 2400 m² is rented, the first floor of the present Museum. Hardly five months later, the place is ready to receive its first visitors. The Toy Museum grows. In 1984 also the second floor (again 2400 m²) became available to display toys. In 1992, at the occasion of the 10th anniversary, the name was changed into “Toy Museum Mechelen”.



Aalst Carnival

The Carnival in Aalst is very very famous. It's three days of partying with a lot of drinking, and everything is possible. Traditionally, it starts on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. The days are as follows:

Sunday:

The original Carnival procession parades through the centre streets of Aalst. More than seventy groups, all from Aalst (!), give their personal and humoristic view on figures and events of the past year.

Monday:

On Monday, there is the broom dance of the Gilles and the throwing of onions. After the act of the Gilles from Aalst thousands of onion-shaped pieces of candy are thrown to the crowd from the balcony of

the town hall, the first price being a golden onion.

Tuesday:

Tuesday is "voil Jeanetten" day, exuberantly painted men in women's clothes with oversized bras, old corsets, broken umbrellas, potties and prams flood across the centre streets.

On Tuesday evening, Carnival is nearing its end. Partygoers and spectators alike gather at the Grote Markt. The Shrove Tuesday doll is set afire by Prince Carnival. This is for many people from Aalst an emotional moment as it marks the official end of Carnival.

Optional: Wednesday:

Having a huge hangover!

You're not in Belgium anymore in Februari? No problem! You can experience "Aalst Carnaval" during the year!

The Tourist Information Office enables you with a digital carrier to experience all aspects of the frivolous, three-day carnival festival while taking a walk across town accompanied by audiovisual footage. During this walk, you go to the carnival workshops where the floats are being built and feel the tension rising, sniff up the unique atmosphere of "Aalst Carnival".

You can download this footage free! -Ideal for students! ;-)

You only have to surf to: www.storynations.com/AlleDagenCarnaval.



