

Press Kit

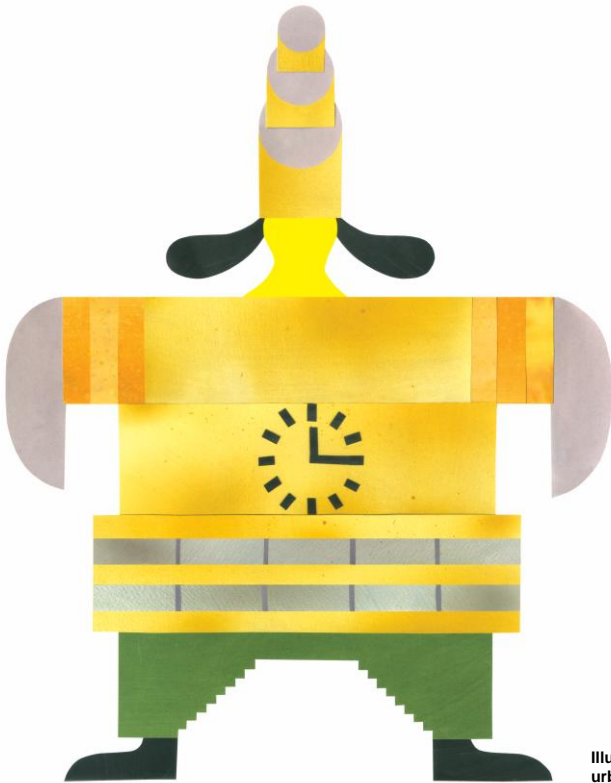
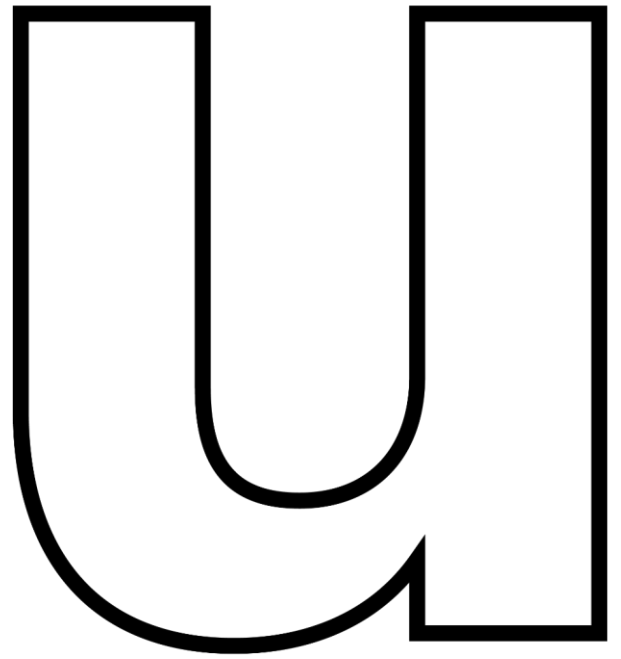
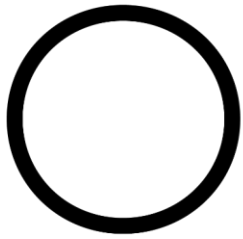


Illustration: Anne Brugni ©
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Heritage Days 2025

ART DECO, Roaring Twenties, Crash Years



Event

Heritage Days 2025 –
37th edition

Organiser

Urban

When

20 and 21 September

Where

Throughout the Brussels region

Website

Heritedays.urban.brussels

Contact

jdp-omd@urban.brussels

Introduction

For 37 years, Urban has offered visitors the chance to rediscover and appreciate the cultural heritage of Brussels during the Heritage Days weekend. Due to its enormous success, what began in France in 1984 as 'Les Journées Portes Ouvertes' has grown into an annual event in which 49 countries now participate. Belgium joined the initiative in 1989 and, along with the Netherlands, Sweden and Malta, has been among the pioneers of this event ever since.



Heritage Days 2024
Jonathan Ortegat © urban.brussels

Heritage Days has now become the biggest cultural event in the country.

Although the three regions each organise this event in their own way, the principle is always the same: introducing the greatest possible number of people to our rich cultural heritage, which often opens its doors to the public especially for the occasion. The great crowds year after year are proof of its popularity.

Last year, more than 25,000 people from Belgium and abroad visited over 190 activities during Heritage Days in Brussels, which undoubtedly contributed to the general awareness of historic preservation in the broadest sense of the word.

Ans Persoons, Secretary of State for the Brussels-Capital Region, responsible for Urban Planning and Heritage:

“Heritage only has meaning when it is shared. With these Heritage Days 2025 dedicated to Art Deco, we are celebrating our heritage and confirming that it is a common good, accessible to all, across walls and across different periods. It is a living thing, something we are proud of, and which contributes to our Brussels identity. Rediscovering Art Deco means more than just admiring its aesthetics. It is about understanding the dreams, hopes and challenges of a difficult period, which still resonate today.”



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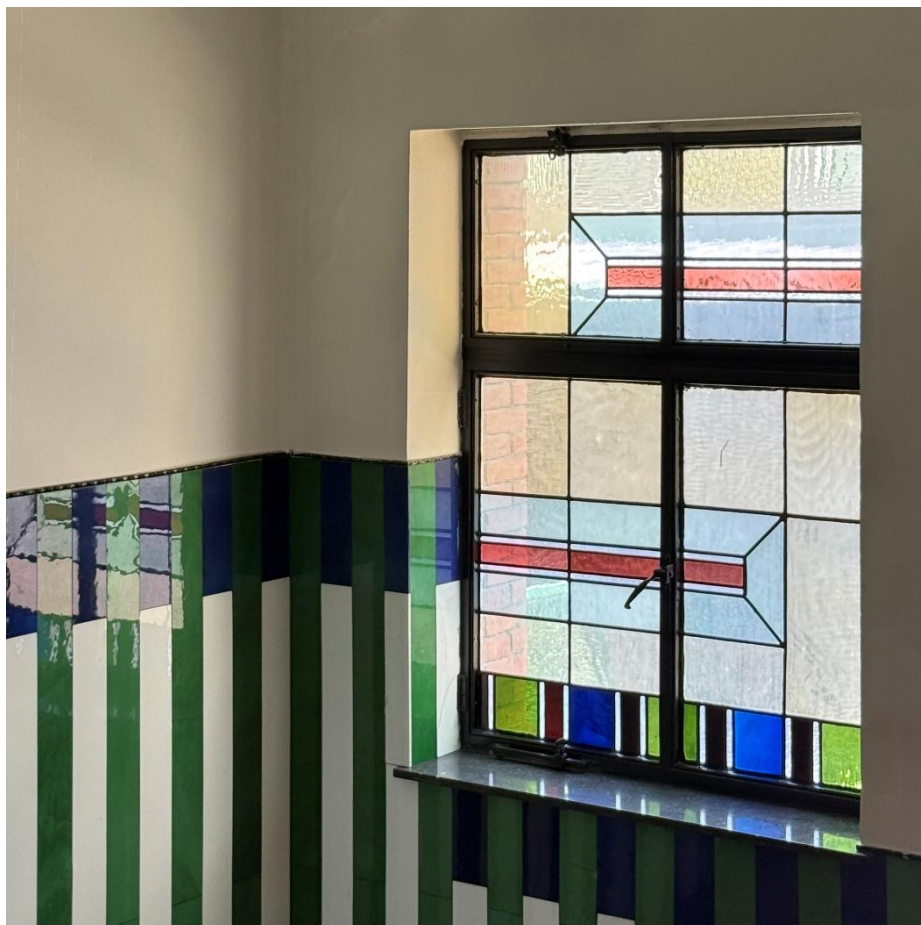
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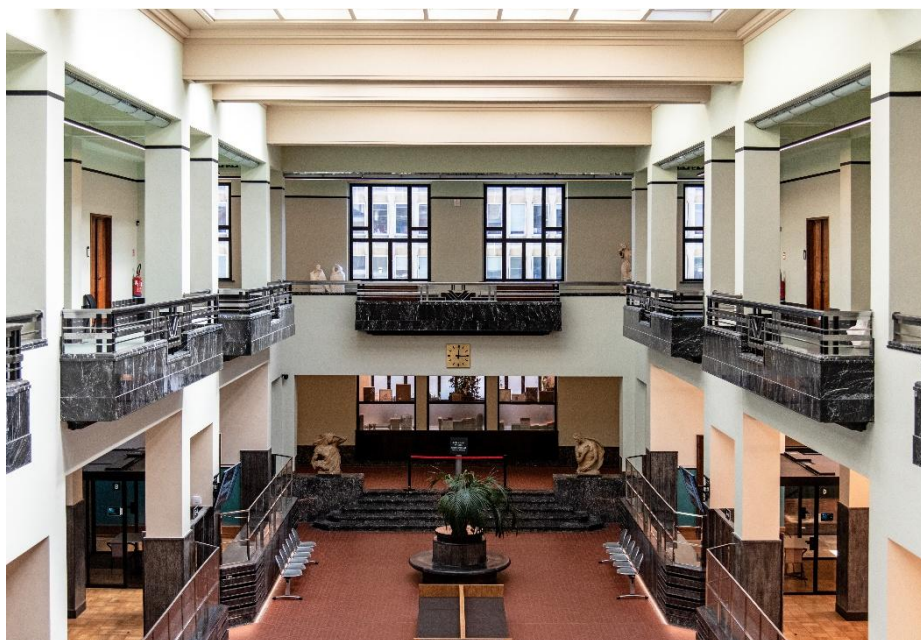
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Queen Elisabeth
Medical Foundation
D. Serati © urban.brussels



Local administration Forest
A. de Ville de Goyet ©
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The theme

As part of the *Art Deco Year 2025*, Urban takes a new look at this artistic movement during the 37th edition. It explores not only the familiar aesthetics and luxury but also the urban planning, architectural, sociological and human dimensions of Art Deco.

Under the theme **ART DECO, Roaring Twenties, Crash Years**, the event highlights a broad spectrum of heritage: from buildings, facades and interiors to furniture, collections, intangible heritage and public spaces.

Sarah Lagrillière, Deputy General Manager of Urban:

“Art Deco was progressive, yet simultaneously adhered to craftsmanship and human scale. It combined modern comfort with classical influences and monumental beauty. That duality between past and future is what makes Art Deco still relevant today. Modernity, a key concept in this style, is therefore the common thread in our 2025 programming.”

Modernity: the annual theme of Urban's cultural programme

The concept of modernity, inextricably linked to Art Deco, was ubiquitous during that period, when a wave of innovation swept across all aspects of society. From the euphoria of liberation in 1919 to the declaration of war in 1939, the period had two faces. On the one hand, there were the Roaring Twenties, characterised by the liberation of morality, increased democratisation of society and the emergence of new art movements in fashion, music and entertainment. On the other hand, the challenges of reconstruction and demographic growth, with the rise of garden cities and apartment buildings, and the first major capitalist crisis period after the 1929 stock market crash, led to austerity, new inequalities and the political rise of the far right.

Find out more about urban.brussels' annual cultural programme theme here: <https://urban.brussels/en/articles/2025-in-het-teken-van-moderniteit>



Palais de la Folle Chanson
A. de Ville de Goyet ©
urban.brussels



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'Europe, a common heritage'

Heritage Days is organised as part of the European Heritage Days, an initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Commission.

Every year on weekends in September, numerous sites and monuments throughout Europe, many of which are not usually accessible, are opened to the public free of charge. This is a great opportunity for European citizens to discover and learn more about their shared cultural heritage. They are also encouraged to actively protect and add value to this heritage for present and future generations under the motto *'Europe, a common heritage'*.

Activities centered around the theme

This year's programme includes more than 200 diverse activities across all 19 Brussels municipalities. Visitors can enjoy exhibitions, performances, films, lectures and tours of special buildings.

Access to exclusive sites

Brussels boasts a wealth of iconic buildings that played an important role in the development of Art Deco and Modernism. Belgian Art Deco from the interwar years is special: a style that combines elegance, ambition and technological progress. These characteristics are reflected in the Heritage Days programme.

This event offers visitors the unique opportunity to look inside special buildings, such as the former Flagey radio house, once the headquarters of the National Institute of Radio Broadcasting (NIR) and a symbol of modernity and cultural democratisation through radio.



Queen Elisabeth
Medical Foundation
D. Serati © urban.brussels



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Other Brussels Art Deco gems are also highlighted: the refined Royal Salon in the Central Station, the University Foundation, the Palais de la Folle Chanson, the imposing Forest Town Hall, the Queen Elisabeth Medical Foundation, the National Basilica of the Sacred Heart and the gardens of the Villa Empain - now a valued part of the Brussels cultural scene.

Together, these sites form an impressive route through the versatility and richness of Brussels Art Deco.

You can also explore the Van Buuren Gardens - a private artistic world where art and life blend in harmony.

BOZAR, designed by Art Nouveau pioneer Victor Horta, testifies to a bold transition to the Art Deco style. This building focuses on technical mastery and functionality, with architecture that renounces excessive ornamentation. It's not a temple of elite art but a place that makes art accessible to all.

Finally, there is the Résidence Palace: originally a progressive residential complex for the Brussels bourgeoisie, now an office building that still charms with luxurious materials such as marble, exotic wood and fine ironwork.

This edition is made extra special by the exclusive access to buildings normally closed to the public. Visitors can take special tours that offer a unique behind-the-scenes look at some of Brussels' best-kept architectural secrets.

Marvel at the opulent Hotel Riez, a 1920s gem where wood, marble, wrought iron, stained glass and ceramics combine to form a spectacular, almost untouched setting. The chamfered corner with its rare pointed gable is just one of the building's striking features. Thanks to careful preservation, both the interior and facade have remained in exceptionally authentic condition.



Hotel Riez
S. Voituren ©



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Also explore the extraordinary home of architect Henry Lacoste, which has been a listed monument since 2012. Lacoste created a unique style by combining Art Deco with influences from classical antiquity and regional traditions. The result is a colourful villa, rich in decorative bas-reliefs and refined wrought ironwork - a nod to his origins as the son of an artistic blacksmith.

Don't forget to visit the enchanting Pelgrims House, where art and community converge in harmony. The blue dome, mosaic fountain and star-shaped floors create a light, symbolic interior that perfectly embodies the essence of Art Deco. The transition from private garden to public park reflects the city's evolution as well as the continued accessible nature of this valuable heritage. Its listed status emphasises the architectural and historical significance of this special building.



Pelgrims House
A. de Ville de Goyet ©
urban.brussels

Visits to exceptional private homes are also available for those interested in even more special, unique experiences. Examples include the Maison de Verre, the Vandeveld House, the Homem de Macédo House, Herrero House, Dotremont House and several houses designed by architect Louis Tenaerts. Each one is a unique place rarely accessible to the public and an exceptional part of the programme.



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One of this year's absolute highlights is the unique opportunity to get a peek inside the workshops of La Monnaie, one of Europe's most prestigious opera houses. The building covers some 20,000 square meters and was completely designed to meet the specific needs of each craft. The various outbuildings - including an impressive three-story auditorium - house workshops for carpentry, metalwork, sculpture and prop making.

These areas are normally only accessible to employees but they have opened their doors exclusively for this event. La Monnaie is not a static building but a living entity in which art, technology and architecture come together.



La Monnaie Workshops
P. Claes ©

The iconic Maison de Verre is considered one of the most important examples of modernism in Belgium. Sleek, progressive and visionary - it's a paragon of architectural innovation.

And then there's Louis Tenaerts. Who hasn't heard of him? Some sources attribute more than 200 buildings in Brussels to him, while others put the number closer to 1,500!

His work covers an impressive spectrum: from modest family homes to stylish mansions, always with an eye for comfort and aesthetics. The houses on Avenue Coghien that can be visited during this year's Heritage Days all bear his signature style of asymmetrical facades, geometric stained glass and playful turrets. By shaping entire neighbourhoods in his style, Tenaerts gave Brussels a distinctive modernist identity.

Fans of minimalism with a decorative touch will love Herrero House, where Spanish elegance meets Art Deco. This home was designed in 1924 as a private retreat for a Spanish lady, and you can feel it in every detail. Behind the austere facade is an intimate courtyard with a colourful glass dome surrounded by ceramic wall and floor tiles, with an ornate fountain at the centre - an oasis of tranquillity and sophistication.



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Even more Art Deco and Mediterranean influences can be found in the Homem de Macédo House. Every detail exudes craftsmanship - from the door handles to the radiator covers. The highlight is the nautically inspired salon, which feels like the interior of a ship's cabin. Stained glass windows depict famous Portuguese explorers, such as Vasco da Gama and Diogo Cão - a subtle but meaningful reference to the client, Homem de Macédo, then the Portuguese ambassador to Belgium.

New this year is the focus on more than just architecture. The iconic Cinema Galeries will host a special film screening: Quartier Nomade, an immersive film by Alexandra Rice, offers a unique insight into daily life within Belgian fairground culture.

This vibrant and often hidden world impressively comes to life on the big screen. Quartier Nomade sheds an intimate and visually powerful light on the communities behind the attractions, caravans and traditions.

The screening takes on added significance with the fact that Belgian fairground culture was officially recognised as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in late 2024 - in recognition of its rich history, identity and social value.



Françoise and Caroline
from the film "Quartier Nomade"
by Alexandra Rice, 2018

Mythical locations, exciting encounters and freedom of expression

After the dark, dreary war years, the desire to live, dance and enjoy life was rekindled. A vibrant scene emerged in Brussels, in which freedom and self-expression were central and made tangible via dance, music, fashion and nightlife. The city lived, breathed and celebrated life like never before.

Immerse yourself in a richly illustrated lecture on the legendary fashion house Norine Couture, where the concept of 'Belgian fashion' was born. This progressive fashion studio created designs that were far ahead of their time: bold, innovative and with an indelible mark on fashion history.



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Then head out into the city and follow the trail of secrets, jazz and Art Deco flair from the 1920s and 1930s. In addition to well-known favourite L'Archiduc, discover a series of mythical cafés, bars and restaurants that brought colour to interwar Brussels — places where freedom, seduction, and lust for life collided in a frenzy of music and night-time adventure.

Do you have any energy left? Then end the day with a dance! Apollo Swing leads a lively workshop where you can relive the rousing atmosphere of the Roaring Twenties. Lindy Hop and Solo Jazz, inspired by Charleston and African-American dance traditions, bring the playful elegance of that era back to life with joyful dancing and guaranteed smiles.

Key female figures in Belgian Art Deco

The interwar period marked not only Art Deco's golden age but also a turning point in women's emancipation. This programme therefore rightly shines a spotlight on the women who left their mark on this era, both artistically and socially.

Learn about Céline Dangotte, an intriguing but often overlooked figure in Belgian Art Deco. From 1912 until the outbreak of the Second World War, she ran her own decorative design business, L'Art Décoratif C. Dangotte (AD/CD), a rarity in what was a male-dominated field. Her work reflects not only an exceptional artistic talent but also an outspoken feminist conviction.

The story of Lina Cauchie also deserves special attention. One of the first women at the Académie des Beaux-Arts, she distinguished herself as a painter and designer. Her oeuvre and close association with the iconic Maison Cauchie testify to her creativity, determination and social boldness.

Elisabeth Gérard's lecture is a must for anyone who really wants to understand the role of women in Belgian Art Deco. Through inspiring portraits of decorators, designers, architects and craftswomen, she sheds light on the fundamental contribution of women to the artistic landscape of the interwar period.



Lina Cauchie's house
with Alice Graas
© V. Jamis



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Unmissable culinary delights

When we think of the Roaring Twenties, images of swinging jazz bands and stylishly served cocktails immediately come to mind. What is less known is that it was also the era when Brussels residents first encountered something that seems quite ordinary today - the sandwich. Consider Au Suisse's first sandwich vending machine, where modern technology and fast service went hand in hand.

The non-profit organisation De Brigade takes you on a delicious journey of discovery to the kitchens of the interwar period. Through dishes, anecdotes and innovations, you will discover how technological and social changes have permanently transformed Brussels' food culture.

But it wasn't just cuisine that flourished - Belgian beer culture also underwent a genuine revolution. One of the highlights is Brasseries Atlas in Anderlecht, an iconic piece of industrial heritage that revives the former grandeur of Brussels breweries. Under the title ATLAS OF ATLAS, this rich past is unlocked through an exhibition in the historic buildings, as well as a book that is in preparation.



Atlas Brewery
D. Serati © urban.brussels

History is best tasted in person. Beer experts H  l  ne (Hoppyz) and Carien (Hoppiness) guide you through the flavours of the past. Attend their interactive tasting workshops and be introduced to authentic beer styles from the 1920s and 1930s - and discover how they formed the foundation of Belgian beer diversity as we know it today.



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Matrimony Days

The 7th edition of [Matrimony Days](#) will take place throughout Brussels and its base in the Bruegel Cultural Centre from 26 - 28 September.

'Matrimony' refers to tangible or intangible assets of historic or artistic significance that have been created by women.

As always, Matrimony Days offers some 30 free activities: conferences, workshops, guided tours and activities for children and families.

This year, the 7th edition of Matrimony Days (held since 2019) turns the spotlight on the women who have never stepped out of the shadows: lace-makers, labourers, archivists, curators and artists erased from the history books. In short, all those women who shaped our heritage without ever being recognised for it. Highlights of this edition include the special programme celebrating the Art Deco year, the exceptional public opening of two private residences, inclusive events with bilingual activities and LSFB interpreters, and activities for the whole family.





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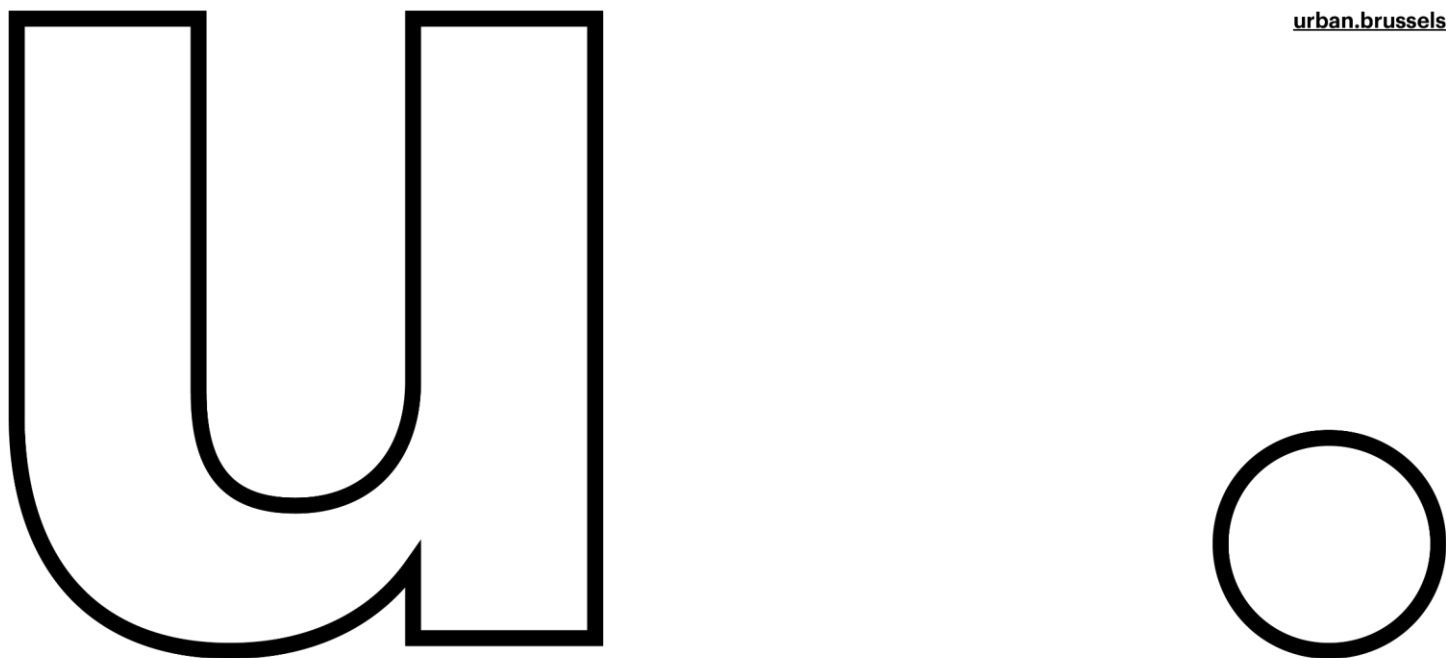
This year, a leaflet with a summary of the programme has been drawn up in Dutch, French and English and can be obtained at numerous locations (urban.brussels, Saint-Géry Market Halls, local authorities, tourism services, libraries and participating venues).

The full programme is available on the heritedays.urban.brussels website, along with the opening date for bookings.

The complete press kit, including photographs and visuals, is available here: <https://publication.urban.brussels/heritedays/press/>



Heritage Days – the map
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architecture and culture for the city.