

# TRAVEL TO *tomorrow ...*

## Sustainable Heritage Development

Heritage as a catalyst for  
flourishing destinations

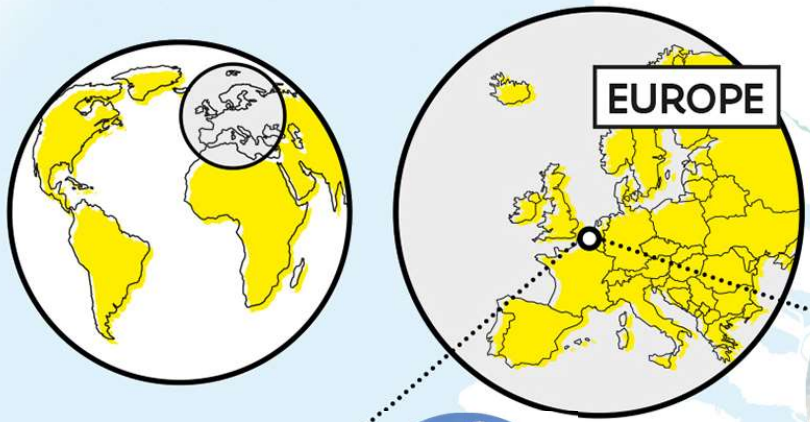
Leen Gysen  
administrateur-generaal VISITFLANDERS  
08/06/26 DIEST

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**Flanders**  
State of the Art





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France

Wallonie  
(Belgium)

Germany

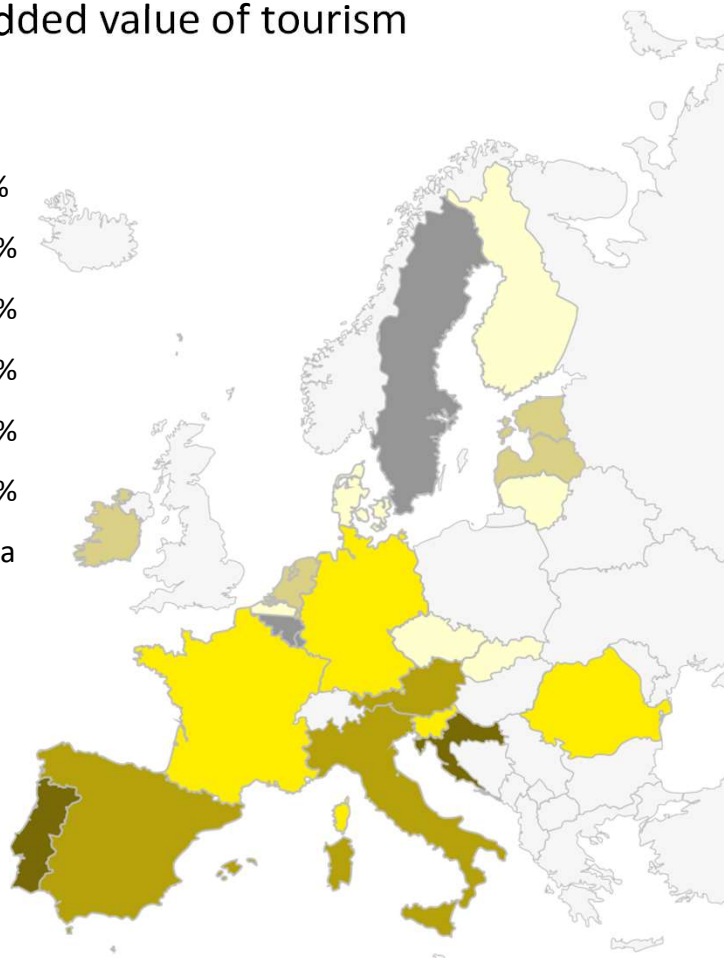
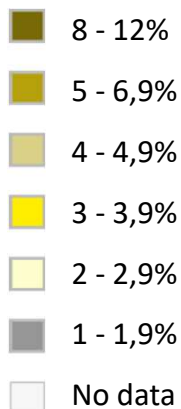


1. TOURISM VISION:  
'Travel to tomorrow'
2. HERITAGE VISION:  
'Devotion in motion'
3. GOAL:  
'Flourishing destinations'
4. EXAMPLES

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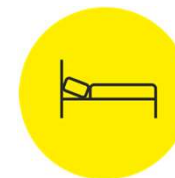
## Gross added value of tourism



## TOURISM IN OUR ECONOMY?



36,3 million  
overnights



54%  
foreign

Volumes are back to pre-covid level since 2023

Expenditures  
152 euro pp/night  
in art cities



+300.000  
jobs

## Gross added value of tourism in Flanders?

Flemish region 2,7%

Brussels 2,4%

Together: 9,5 miljard euro

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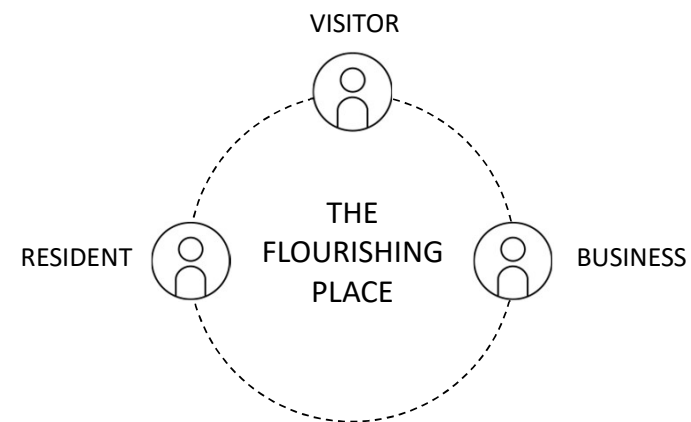
Sources: Visit Flanders, FOD Economy, VSA



TRAVEL TO  
*tomorrow* ...

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## Our vision

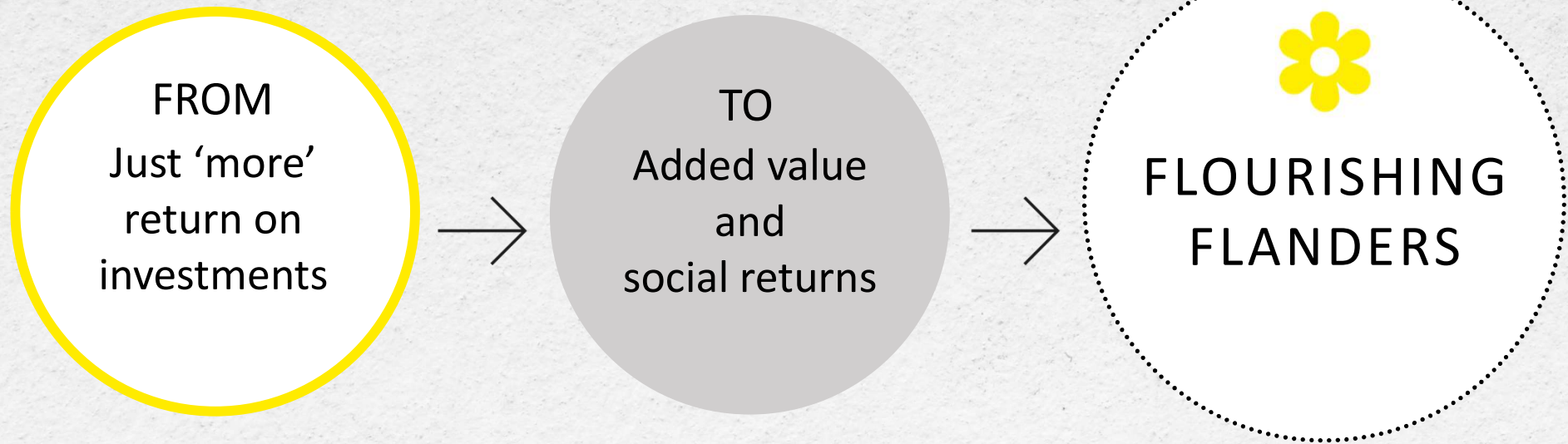


Tourism is a means, rather than an end.  
It can help to bring balance.

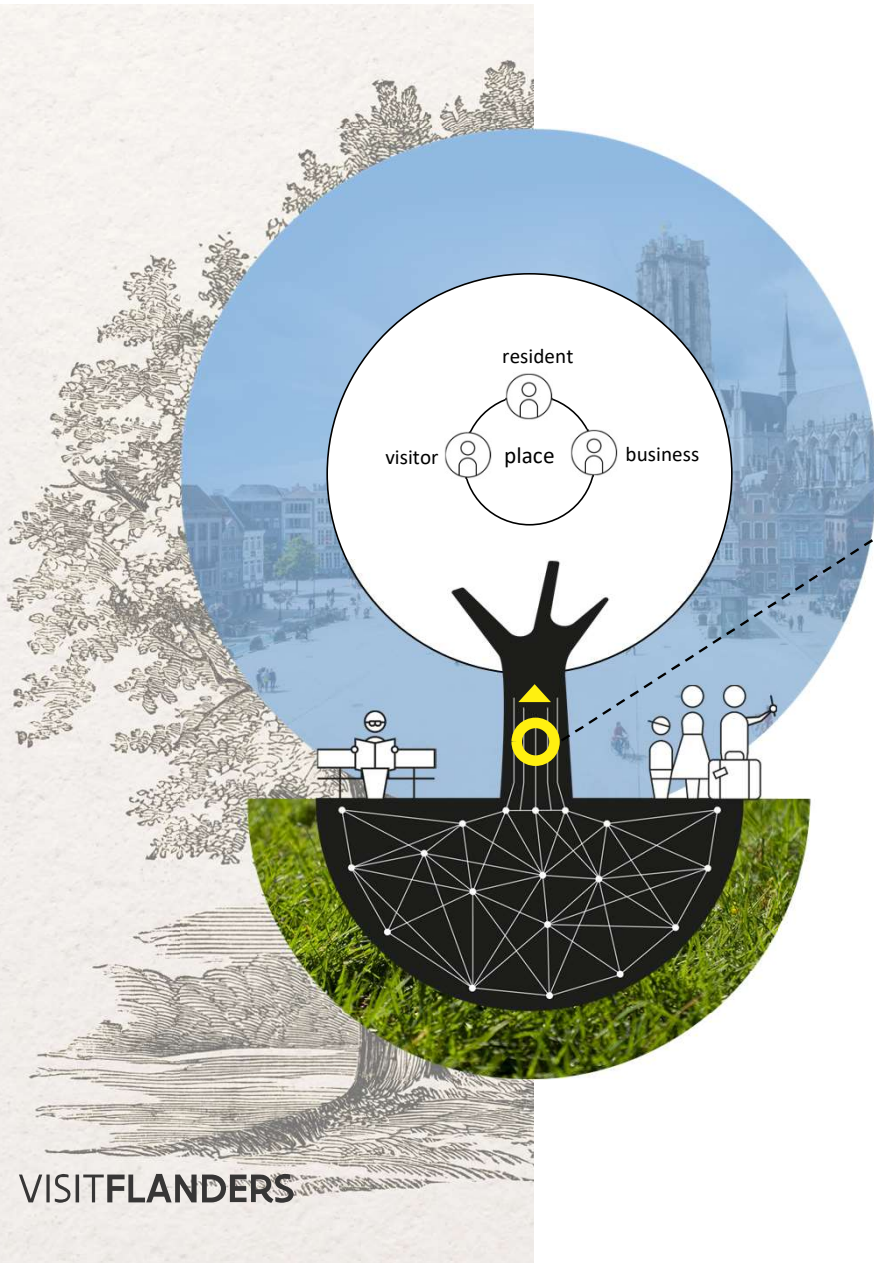
We want to strengthen the role of tourism as a positive force, ensuring Flanders can flourish as an innovative, inspiring and qualitative travel destination, for the benefit of its inhabitants, entrepreneurs and visitors.

# The positive power of tourism

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## Our strategy based on five key principles



- 1 Creating added value for all stakeholders in a balanced manner.
- 2 Generating connections between people, places and activities within a unique story.
- 3 Stimulating participation.
- 4 Prioritising quality, with room for innovation and creativity.
- 5 Working on the basis of strategy and knowledge.

# 6 themes

.... that tap into the DNA of Flanders

... and the demand of our valuable potential target groups

+

“Everyone deserves a holiday”

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1

FLEMISH  
MASTERS



2

CASTLES  
AND GARDENS



3

RELIGIOUS  
HERITAGE



4

THE GREAT  
WAR



# Heritage experience

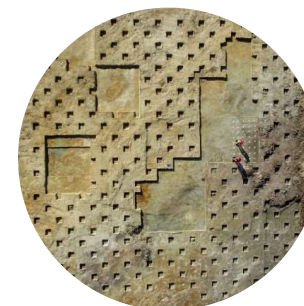
# Immovable heritage in Flanders



> **11.000** protected monuments



> **1.500** protected town and village landscapes



> **50** protected archaeological sites



> **30** protected vessels



> **670** protected cultural-historical landscapes



Vlaanderen  
is erfgoed

# Heritage vision:

‘devotion in motion’ – ‘zorgen voor begeestering’

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“

Key idea: Heritage as a catalyst for societal value creation and no longer as an endpoint.





# Heritage under pressure today

## **Structural challenges in heritage**

Heritage sites struggle with high renovation costs and limited public budgets, which threatens their sustainable existence.

## **Tension between authenticity and revenue**

Managers-owners seek a balance between preserving historical authenticity and generating new revenue.

## **Complex governance**

Regulations and governance structures hinder quick decision-making, leading to inactivity at heritage sites.

## **Managing visitor flows**

Cultural cities are under pressure with rising visitor numbers and unbalanced tourist distribution.

## **New opportunities through collaboration**

Public-private partnerships create innovative financing models and usage possibilities for heritage.

# Pilot projects

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Rubenskasteel



Sint-Godelieveabdij



Smaakhaven



Commanderie  
Sint-Pieters-Voeren



Kasteel  
van Leut



Kasteel  
van Poeke



Graventoren en  
getijdenmolen

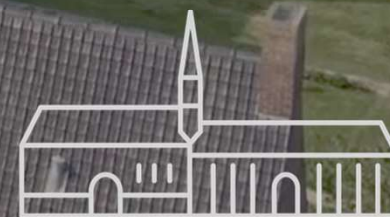


Cycling hub

# ST. GODELIEVE ABBEY

2 hectares of history in the center of Bruges

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# VIDEO

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# Loodswezen & Boeienloods ANTWERP

becomes 'SMAAKHAVEN'



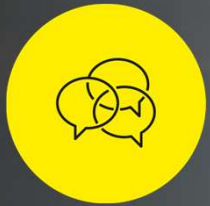
TOERISMEVLAANDEREN

# Pilot projects – Why?

## REINFORCE POLICY CHOICES & TO LEARN

- Develop within our themes + cross overs
- Experiment & inspire + get inspired
- Apply ‘Travel to Tomorrow’ principles
  - › Participative approach
  - › Connect people, places, activities
  - › Balance
  - › Quality
  - › Strategy and knowledge driven
- Large potential group, also international, now underused
- Opportunities for distribution in time and space
- Impulse for sites in problematic context or for themes in inspiring sites
- Create better transversal cooperation withi(n) Flemish government
- **Develop** policy





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# Thank you

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