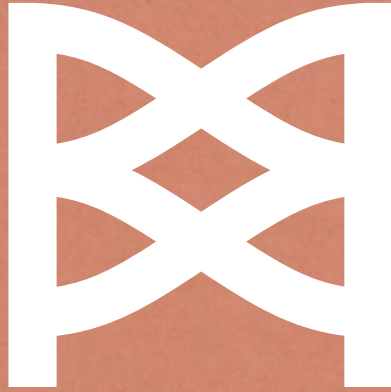


UNESCO
Man &
Biosphere



Maasheggen

Unique man-made landscape
in the Netherlands

Your personal guide
through an ancient
cultural landscape



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Biosphere

UNESCO Man & Biosphere

Since 2018, the Maasheggen is the only UNESCO Man & Biosphere reserve in the Netherlands.

In biosphere reserves, the relationship between people and their living environment is the central focus. The Maasheggen received the UNESCO Man & Biosphere status because its inhabitants have used the powerful growth characteristics of the hawthorn and blackthorn hedges for centuries. This interplay resulted in a unique cultural landscape.

The Maasheggen UNESCO biosphere reserve stretches along the Maas river in the Land van Cuijk. This area is rich in history and has a natural landscape that goes back centuries.

LAND
VAN
CUIJK

Maasheggen UNESCO Man & Biosphere

*Tip! The last
pages of this
passport contain
some great
promotions*

51°37'48.0"N 5°59'55.0"E

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The oldest cultural landscape in the Netherlands!

51°37'48.0"N 5°59'55.0"E



Hawthorn blossoms



Hawthorn berries

Just under Nijmegen, on the border between North-Brabant and Limburg, in the Land van Cuijk, woven hedges have been to demarcate fields for thousands of years. This resulted in a landscape so unique it cannot be found anywhere else: the Maasheggen. It is the oldest cultural landscape in the Netherlands and was even granted the UNESCO Man & Biosphere status.

Walk along natural borders

The mosaic of hedges, fields, watering holes and old pollard trees is a marvellous sight to behold, and is home to an exceptional variety of flora and fauna. The hedges are still in use: they keep the cattle in and predators out.



Julius?

Barriers for cattle and against wild animals, and against... a very famous emperor! In his book, *De Bello Gallico*, Julius Caesar speaks of the impenetrable woven hedges in the Northern part of the Roman Empire. There is no proof, but it is very possible that he visited the Maasheggen two thousand years ago. Or at least tried to.

The centuries-old interwovenness of culture and nature at this scale through the woven hedges is a rare sight in the Netherlands.

-  www.maasheggenunesco.com
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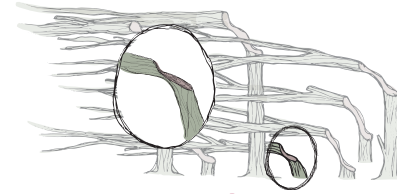
Weaving hedges, a thousand-year-old technique

No barbed wire, but hedges

The technique used to turn bushes into an impenetrable barrier has barely changed over the past centuries.

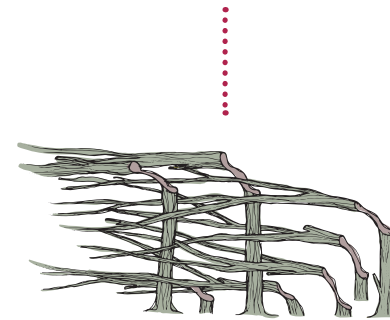
Farmers weave the hedges using a special technique. The hawthorn and blackthorn bushes intertwine and turn into an impenetrable, 'living' barrier.

Thanks to the thorns on their branches, they not only form a rock-solid barrier for cattle but also provide protection against unwanted intruders, such as predators. Moreover, the hedges are so sturdy that they stay upright during floods and retain fertile river clay. The hedges also provide shelter against rain, wind and sun. This makes the grass grow more quickly, meaning the cattle can stay out in the fields for a month longer. Better and far more versatile than barbed wire!



1

In early spring, the bare wood of the hedges is manually sawn and bent using an ancient technique



2

The sawn trunks and branches are then woven together



3

This weaving technique results in an impenetrable, growing and flourishing natural fence



The Maas as a source of sustenance

The Maas played a large role in the creation of this landscape. This rain-fed river is the main source of sustenance for the Maasheggen. Before the Maas was canalised, it meandered through the region. The Maas was wide, could be forded in several places and regularly flooded. The clay that was retained by the hedges made the soil extra fertile.

Flora and Fauna

Thanks to the shelter and protection offered by the kilometres of woven hawthorn and blackthorn bushes, exceptional and sometimes even endangered flora and fauna appear in the Maasheggen.

Both beavers and badgers thrive in the area. Just like the large flocks of fieldfares and redwings that come from the chilly north to grace the hawthorn branches in autumn. Those branches are bent under the weight of the many red berries at that point. The black redstart is also a common sight in the Maasheggen. The old knots of the

hawthorn trunks and pollard trees make ideal nesting spots for this bird, as well as for the snowy owl.

Life in the Maasheggen!

The monumental hawthorn and blackthorn bushes can live for several centuries, partly thanks to the high resistance against disease of the varieties in the area. There are over forty varieties of the bushes here. In March and April, an imposing mass of blossoms appears on the bare branches,



Woodland tulip



Spindle tree



Redwing



Crested salamander



Fieldfare



Orange tip

Photo: Brabant's Landschap



the colours ranging from pure white to dark pink. Another magnificent colour that is very common in the area is the red of the fruits of the wild spindle tree.

The ponds in the fields are not just important sources of water for the cattle, but they also support a wide diversity of toad, frog and salamander species. These amphibians, which live in the hedges, lay their eggs in the ponds in spring. The rare crested newt is the most notable of these species. In spring, they have a barbed crest. This somewhat fearsome appearance contrasts with the many beautiful butterflies that appear in the Maasheggen. The orange tip, for example, which finds its nectar in cuckoo flowers.

Maasheggen, source for the Global Seed Vault in Norway

Because the natural landscape in the Maasheggen has barely changed for thousands of years, it is an important source of seeds. Of the over one hundred authentic Dutch seeds that are kept in the Global Seed Vault on the Norwegian island of Spitsbergen, over sixty are from this reserve.



To the Maasheggen!

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How to get there?

Maasheggen UNESCO Man & Biosphere is situated in the Land van Cuijk, on the border of the provinces of Brabant and Limburg and in the triangle between Nijmegen, Venlo and the German town of Kleve. There are many ways to reach the nature reserve. The A73 and A77 highways (A57 in Germany) are nearby, just like the train stations of Cuijk, Boxmeer and Vierlingsbeek. The nearest international airport is Weeze Airport, just over the border near Goch.

The Maasheggen is also easy to reach by water. The ferries of Vierlingsbeek, Sambeek and Cuijk sail multiple times daily and are a great connection between the Maasheggen of Brabant and

Limburg. The marinas of Cuijk and Boxmeer are directly adjacent to the reserve. The wide Kraaijenbergse Plassen are also an excellent starting point.

Parking

- 1 Kraaijenbergse Plassen
- 2 Maaskade Cuijk
- 3 St Agatha Convent
- 4 Het Veerhuis Oeffelt
- 5 Cultural history monument De Vilt
- 6 De Meerstoel and Locks and sluices complex Sambeek
- 7 De Schutkooi
- 8 Groeningse Bergjes Groeningen



Experience the Maasheggen!

*Every tree,
every bush,
every field in
the Maasheggen
has a story
to tell*

The ancient Maasheggen

It sometimes seems like time stood still for hundreds of years. That does not mean there is nothing to experience now, however. On the contrary! The Maasheggen have a surface of 2000 hectares and feature a total of 275 kilometres of woven hedges. Many paths meander through the reserve, many of them unpaved. They form an excellent way of exploring this exceptional cultural and natural landscape.

Hiking

There are various signposted hiking trails through the Maasheggen. They

will take you to the most beautiful places in the landscape, to fields for an extensive picknick or cosy pubs for a (local) bite and drink. For those who really want to experience the Maasheggen and who want to learn about the variety in nature and culture, there are even more options. You could opt for a guided walking tour to search for local herbs, or join a shepherd and their flock, or you could spot exceptional flora and fauna with the forester. If you want to experience the real deal, you can participate in one of the hedge-weaving workshops.

Cycling

The possibilities for cycling in the Maasheggen are endless. You can plan a route using the ANWB junction system or choose for the Via Valentiniana. This old Roman road between Cuijk and Vierlingsbeek runs right through the reserve (see map). Whichever route you pick, you will be cycling through 'tunnels' of flourishing hedges the one moment, and have a kilometres-wide view the other. The peaceful roads run inland past the banks of the Maas and back again. They lead you past lovely hubs on the way.

For the latest tips, go to our websites:



www.maasheggenunesco.com

www.visitlandvancuijk.com



*Via Valentiniana,
The Roman
cycling route*



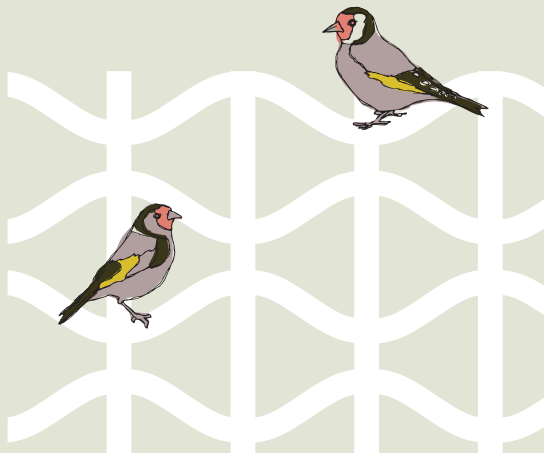
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Horse riding, sailing, running and the and the Hawthorn Blossom Tour

For enthusiasts of horse riding or a covered wagon ride, the unpaved paths in the Maasheggen reserve are ideal. The Maas river runs along the entire reserve and offers plenty of options for water sports enthusiasts to moor. Mooring and spending the night with a boat is possible in the marinas of Cuijk and Boxmeer and on the Kraaijenbergse Plassen near Cuijk. For the athletes, there is the Maasheggenloop: an annual footrace straight through the UNESCO reserve! Or join in the annual Hawthorn Blossom Tour. The blossoming of the

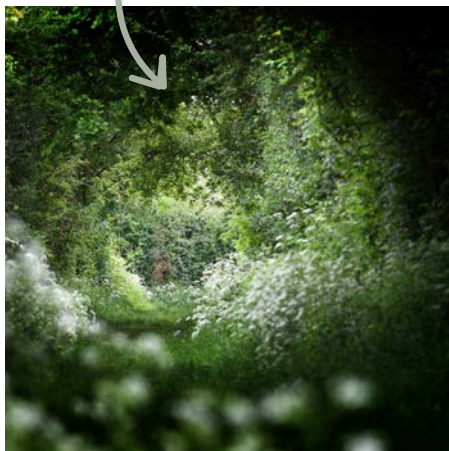
hedges in May is simply spectacular. Kilometres of fragrant blossom to welcome the spring season.



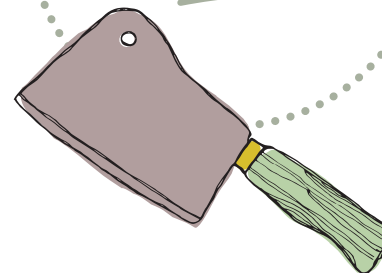
NK Maasheggenvlechten (Dutch Hedge-Weaving Championship)

Each spring, on the second Sunday of March, the NK Maasheggenvlechten takes place. Teams from within the Netherlands and abroad each take a hedge of about 10 metres, and fight for the 'Gouden Hiep' (Golden Billhook). Of course, this all happens using the same technique that was used thousands of years ago. The teams are judged for their speed, but also for their knowledge of cutting and weaving the hedges. This ensures the old craft is safeguarded and the existing hedge landscape is maintained. Anyone can participate, and simply watching is definitely worth your while as well.

Join an expedition with the forester



Woven into the past



For the latest updates, go to:

✉ www.maasheggenvlechten.nl

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Enjoying the Maasheggen



Stepping into a cosy restaurant feeling tired, fulfilled, and pleasantly refreshed. Restore your strength with local (organic) specialties, such as cheese, meat or a refreshing ice cream cone from local farmers. Toast to a wonderful day with a freshly-poured, local craft beer, a glass of rosé from a nearby vineyard or a thirst-quenching iced tea made of freshly-picked herbs.

Enjoy and be surprised!

Waking up the next morning in a bed and breakfast in the middle of nature. Or in your own tent or caravan, with a view of the Maas. Whatever your type of enjoyment is, it is all possible in the Maasheggen!

And there's more: the Land van Cuijk has lots to do for young and old. You can visit the historical fortress town of Grave, for example, and the Overloon War Museum, the only museum in the world that you can cycle right through.



It is wonderful here...



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For the latest tips, go to our websites:



www.maasheggenunesco.com



www.visitlandvancuijk.com

Collect stamps for your passport and fun extras on the way

Let yourself be surprised!

When showing this Maasheggen passport, you will receive fun extras or a discount in various locations. Keep this passport safe and bring it during your visit to the Maasheggen UNESCO Man & Biosphere reserve.



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Herberghe de Pannecoecke
Free hiking map with 4 routes
through the Kraaijenbergse
Plassen.

(with purchase of a pancake
or consumption)

Kerkstraat 11, 5439NC Linden



Herberg Thijssen
Maasheggen package for
€12.50 instead of €18.50.
(including coffee/tea with
cake, hike and lunch)
(for over 8 persons, please reserve)
Sporstraat 5, 5821 BB Vierlingsbeek



**Pancake restaurant
De 7 Dweren**
10% discount on the entire bill.
(not in combination with other
promotions and discounts)
Odiliadijk 6, 5435 XA Sint Agatha



Het Veerhuis
Free glass of homemade
syrup from the Aanmakerij.
(when spending a lunch)
Veerweg 2, 5441 PL Oeffelt



De Meerstoel
Free set of limited edition
Maasheggen Postcards
(with order of at least 2 cups of coffee)
Maasstraat 12, 5836 BB Sambeek



De Schutkooi
Free candle for the unique
butterfly chapel.
Veerweg 3, 5827 AD Vortum-Mullem



De Weijer
Free 2nd cup of coffee.
De Raetsingel 1, 5831 KC Boxmeer



St Agatha Convent
2nd cup of coffee 50% off
(for coffee and cake)
Kloosterlaan 24, 5435 XD Sint Agatha



De Zoete Geest
Free cup of organic
Maasheggen herbal tea from
own food forest.
(when spending Maasheggen
cake with honey)
De Geest 4, 5439 NJ Linden



Het Posthuis
10% discount for your lunch.
Kerkplein 1, 5835 AT Beugen



Van der Valk Cuijk
Free drink (soft drinks,
house wine and draught beer)
per person with buffet.
Max. 10 persons. Valid in 2020
(not in combination with other
promotions and holidays)
Raamweg 10, 5431 NH Cuijk



Maasheggen

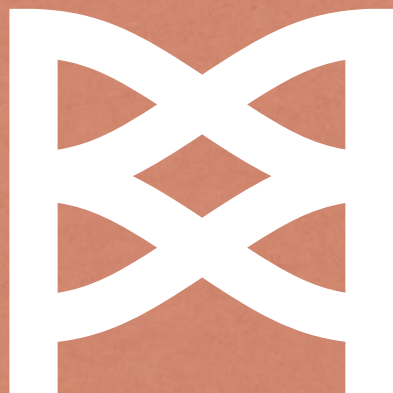
Partners Maasheggen UNESCO Man & Biosphere

Provincie Noord-Brabant, Gemeente Boxmeer, Gemeente Cuijk,
Staatsbosbeheer, Vereniging Nederlands Cultuurlandschap,
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Maasheggen

Unique man-made landscape
in the Netherlands



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Maasheggen
• Biosphere Reserve since 2018
• Man and the Biosphere Programme