

De Ruwenberg in Sint-Michielsgestel offers inspiring setting for business meetings

Clear your head to gather knowledge

After exiting the A2 highway a short ten-minute drive will bring you to a beautiful driveway that leads to an oasis of peace, green and ambience. The 14 hectare estate with the elegant castle provides an inspiring dimension to the role De Ruwenberg plays as modern business location for meetings, events and stayovers. And the service is different, too.

Original text Aart van der Haagen

Photography Aart van der Haagen, De Ruwenberg

Remarkable: as a location for seekers of knowledge, De Ruwenberg in the village of Sint-Michielsgestel, at stone's throw from the city of 's-Hertogenbosch, boasts an unequalled history dating back to 1852. "In that year it was purchased by friars from the city of Tilburg, who founded a preparatory training institute for the seminary in the complex, and later

also established a commercial college here," says general manager Richard Jouvenaar, pointing at the castle, built in 1337 and the 'white pearl' of the estate. "The present owner acquired it in 1989 and developed it into a venue for meetings and events, including the possibility of stayovers, with a strong focus on the business market." In total De Ruwenberg offers 196 hotel rooms and forty function rooms, spread across four separate units. "This enables us to provide our guests with some exclusivity: an organization can, for instance, rent an entire wing, with a perfect opportunity to divide the company into small groups with separate assignments."

SHEPHERDING

Looking at the area between the airports of Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Eindhoven, Brussels and Düsseldorf, the village of Sint-Michielsgestel takes a surprisingly central





position, and its location near the A2 highway provides this beautiful village with an excellent accessibility. Once arrived at the vast estate, however, you hear nothing of the busy traffic although that is quite close by. "Walking through the woods here, inspiration comes naturally", says Richard Jouvenaer. He speaks from experience. "For instance, when I have to come up with a marketing action and my mind is 'blocked', I take a stroll on the estate, and the ideas pop up automatically. That is why I can safely say that the inspiring location certainly contributes to the quality of the meetings." The estate offers excellent opportunities to organize recreational events, and the staff of De Ruwenberg makes good use of this. "A group session tai chi or yoga, wall climbing, crossbow shooting, it is all possible. Shepherding scores well as a team building activity. What a border collie does alone, is quite a challenge for five persons. Then, the real manager emerges. We also have a swimming pool, a sauna, a fitness room, a golf course, a squash and a tennis court, but also a jetty from which you can make a

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boating trip on the Dommel river to the city of 's-Hertogenbosch."

ENERGY-RICH

This means that the participants in business meetings and training sessions have more than enough activities to choose from to recharge their batteries and get down to business again fully energized. The kitchen also greatly contributes to this energizing: "We follow the trend that people want to be aware of what they eat, they want energy-rich food", says Richard Jouvenaer. "For instance, we serve business guests a

healthy snack with their coffee and buy all our food biological, preferably from the region here. We choose for day-fresh season products and present our guests with a menu that changes every day. This way, companies that stay here for longer periods can choose something different every day." This is consistent with the sustainability De Ruwenberg strives for, and which won them the Green Key 'gold' label, apart from meeting the environmental requirements set by the Green Meetings Industry Council (GMIC) and the standards of the International Association of Conference Centers (IACC). "For 2017 our goal is to be energy neutral, by which we further follow the trend of sustainable meetings."

TRANSPARENCY

An other example of the venue's distinguishing features is the service level. Richard Jouvenaer: "We work with a small team, and we believe in the personal approach. Our guests get one contact person assigned, a staff member who arranges everything for them. The short internal lines

and the fact that we are not bound by rules imposed upon us by a large chain give us flexibility. We do our utmost to prevent us having to say 'no'. To give an example: a client had the request to use white cloths for the bar tables. At the last moment, this had to be changed into brown cloths. Not easy to find, but we found them eventually." Apart from made-to-measure service, De Ruwenberg also offers an all-inclusive concept for meeting arrangements. "So there are never additional costs afterwards for room rent, an extra beamer or flipover. This way, the booking party knows what has to



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be paid before the event takes place, and is not confronted with unpleasant surprises afterwards. With our transparent way of working we prefer to focus on the unique buying reasons of our guests rather than on our own unique selling points."

FEEDBACK

According to Jouvenaar the compact team responds well to the feedback from the

visitors. "We always reply to the opinions people post on the TripAdvisor website, ask in evaluations how they liked their stay and actually act on the remarks. We have a rather flat organization, that makes a difference." The high service level is also apparent from factors like the omnipresent wifi and an app for groups that makes it possible to directly make requests for, for instance, additional water or an HDMI cable during meetings. "A message is received by all our departments and the person who follows up

on this request immediately reports this to the user." Following current trends, great traditions, business facilities and inspiring elements converge at De Ruwenberg, which is why the designation 'unique location' is fully deserved. Our sales team is happy to give a guided tour, free of engagement, to any interested party.

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