

Waregem 'city in galop'

Waregem has a surface area of 4 494 hectares and a population of about 36.000 people. Waregem was proclaimed a town January 1, 2000. Waregem is known in its region for its ambiance and its cosy atmosphere, but also for its race courses and festivities.

The city slogan "City in gallop" (direct translation) is a mirror of the city identity. 'Galop' is 'the natural fast movement of horses'. The first part is a typical feature of the city and its inhabitants: they want to move forward. But 'galop' is not only a fast movement, but also a movement of horses. Waregem organises since more than 160 years 'Waregem Koerse', an equestrian topsports event, and above that, every week from may till september there are trotting races. Racing takes place at the 'Hippodroom' (Fig. 1).

Euro Equus

The European Network of Horses Cities EURO EQUUS is a non-profit association that was established on May 3, 2005 by four European cities – Waregem (Belgium), Pardubice (Czech Republic), Jerez de la Frontera (Spain) and Golega (Portugal). The Association intends to create a cultural, social and economic identity by collaboration among different European territories that are linked by the equestrian sector. It wants to protect, develop and promote the "horse regions", and by doing so, assure the preservation of the European equestrian patrimony, support the enterprise by cooperating with the training management and with professionals in the equestrian field.

Economy

Waregem is located on the outskirts of the predominantly industrialised city region of Kortrijk (Courtrai). This area together with the industrial sites of Bruges, form the backbone of industrial activity in West Flanders. Waregem has very little primary activity compared to the rest of West Flanders. Industry however, especially in Waregem itself, is relatively more important than in the rest of the province particularly concerning the amount of enterprises and the employment rate in the area.

Facilities

Waregem has been noted in several scientific publications as being a centre concerned with the surrounding area which is populated by approximately 65 000 to 100 000 people. Culture, recreation and sports play an important role for the vicinity of Waregem. The cultural centre known as 'De Schakel' is a multifunctional building in which a library, a CD library, a fivehundred-seat theatre, an exhibition foyer and several other multifunctional rooms are located (Fig. 2, 3). It possesses one of the leading sports infrastructures too, not only in the entire district, but also in the province and in the country itself. As well as having an indoor swimming pool, it also features several sport centres (public and private), it



Fig. 1 Sportscentre the "Hippodroom".



Fig. 2 Cultural centre "de schakel"



Fig. 3 Cultural centre "de schakel"



Fig. 4 Bloso centre

houses a first division soccer team, an indoor shooting range for rifles and revolvers, and a jogging track. It also has an 18-hole golf course, tennis courts and last but not least the Bloso centre for equestrian sports complete with racing horse track.

Traffic

Waregem is located along the E17 motorway and has both an approach and an exit on this motorway. The local road between Kortrijk and Ghent is also an important travel route to Waregem and the railway line between Kortrijk and Ghent, stops over in Waregem station as well. The IC train provides a frequent connection between Ghent and Kortrijk.

Commercial and service centre

The oldest shopping streets are Stormestraat and Stationstraat which together with the Pand, Holstraat, the Keukeldam and the Market Square form the commercial centre of Waregem. The Pand is a shopping centre with extensive shopping facilities, retail businesses, restaurants, pubs and service industries (Fig 6). Worth noting are the Town Hall of Waregem, the post office, the police station and the ministry of finance. There is sufficient parking both around and under the complex for around 850 cars. Waregem also has a public market every Saturday from 8 till 12 in the market square (Fig. 5).

Places of interest

Both Waregem and its dependent municipalities feature a number of scenic places, important buildings and an extended infrastructure worth visiting. These include, the town centre of Waregem, The Pand, the cultural centre 'De Schakel', the Baron Casier park, the Rainbow stadium (Regenboogstadion), the Gaverbeek hippodrome and Bloso centre, the American cemetery in 'Flanders Field', Goed te Nieuwenhove and many others.



Fig. 5 Market square

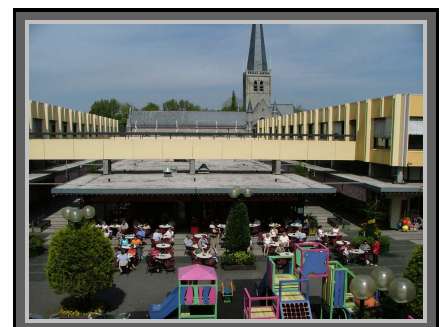


Fig. 6 Shopping centre