

# MAASTRICHT\*\*

Limburg

Population 118 933

Michelin map 908 and 211 T 17

Plan of the conurbation in the current Michelin Red Guide Benelux

Once prized for its strategic location at the confines of Belgium and Germany, Maastricht is now the bustling cosmopolitan provincial capital of Limburg. The city has developed on the banks of the great River Maas from which it takes its name. The town is quite distinct from the rest of the country with its bustling pedestrian precincts, its squares with sprawling café terraces and an almost Mediterranean atmosphere, its Mosan-type stone houses and its very un-Dutch hilly hinterland. A university town since 1976, Maastricht has five faculties, attended by a student population of around 7 000 (in 1991).

## HISTORICAL NOTES

The original settlement grew around a fortified bridge built by the Romans on the Roman road from Bavay (in northern France) to Cologne, hence its name which means the Maas crossing (*Mosae Trajectum*).

St Servatius finding it safer than Tongeren (Belgium) transferred his bishopric here in 382. In 722 Sint-Hubert moved it to Liège. The town already belonged to the Frank kings. In 1204 it passed into the trusteeship of the Duke of Brabant who, in 1283, shared his power with the Prince-Bishop of Liège. It was given its first defensive walls in 1229.

**The sieges of Maastricht** - Maastricht having rallied to the Revolt of the Netherlands, the Spanish led by the Duke of Parma, besieged the town in 1579, took it by surprise, devastated it and left only 4 000 people alive.

The United Provinces annexed the town in 1632.

In 1673, 40 000 French, commanded by Louis XVI appeared in front of Maastricht. The siege was terrible, the Dutch defense fierce. England contributed some 6 000 troops under the command of the Duke of Monmouth. But Vauban, who was directing the operations, won a victory for the French who lost 8 000 men on the battlefield, among them D'Artagnan, officer of the musketeers.

The French captured Maastricht again in 1748, due to a clever move by Maurice de Saxe, Marshal of Saxony.

Taken by Kleber in 1794, Maastricht was annexed to France, as was Breda.

In 1814 the town became part of the Netherlands kingdom.

In 1830 the garrison resisted against the Belgians, thus obtaining the right to remain part of the Netherlands, but this was only confirmed by the Treaty of London in 1839. The fortifications were partly demolished in 1867.

During the occupation, Maastricht was an important German army communications centre in the west. One of the first towns liberated, in September 1944, only its bridges were damaged.

**The Maastricht Treaty** - On 10 December 1991, the governments of the 12 EC members reached agreement in Maastricht on political, monetary and economic union. The Treaty on European Union was signed by the heads of government involved in February 1992, again in Maastricht.

**Maastricht today** - Continuing its tradition of a busy medieval centre on an important trading route, Maastricht is an active industrial centre specialising in ceramics, paper making and cement.

The annual **carnival\*** (see *Calendar of events*) is a highly popular event which draws large crowds of townspeople and visitors to the general merrymaking. The town is also known for its male voice choir, the **Mastreechter Staar**, founded in 1883.

## Accommodation

Maastricht has an excellent choice of distinctive hotels and restaurants.

### YOUTH HOSTEL

City Hostel De Dousberg - Dousbergweg 4, 6216 GC Maastricht, ☎ (043) 346 67 77, Fax (043) 346 67 55. 250 beds. On bus routes 55 and 56. It has its own café.

### OUR SELECTION

Botticelli - Papenstraat 11, 6211 LG Maastricht, ☎ (043) 352 63 00, Fax (043) 352 63 36. 18 rooms. As its name suggests, the atmosphere in this quiet hotel a stone's throw from the Vrijthof is very much an Italian one. The panelled walls of this 18C house are decorated with trompe-l'œil paintings, and some of the rooms have fresco-style wall decorations. The furnishings are modern, and the spacious rooms are tastefully decorated. There is a beautiful courtyard garden between the front and back of the building.