

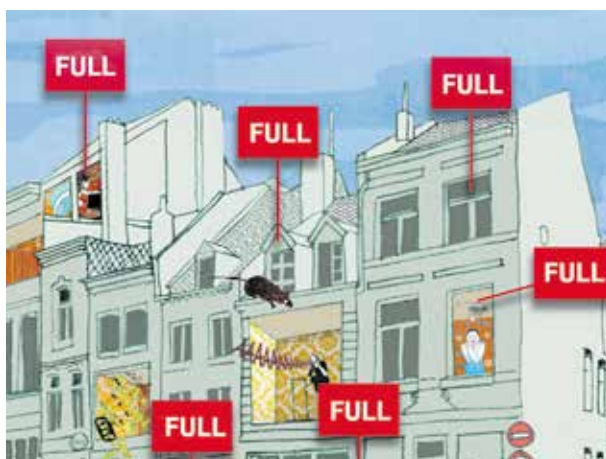


Photo: Joey Roberts

### P. 3

Looking for  
a room?  
**Eight things all  
students should  
know**

“We see a lot of red flags in  
rental contracts”



### P. 5

As seen on TV:  
**the Maastricht  
Student liaison  
officer**

“One time, I had just arrested a suspect, when someone asked if they could take a picture with me”



### P. 6-7

What are  
**must-dos**  
while studying  
in Maastricht?



Check out  
the bucket list





column

## The myth of the perfect study routine

“

I had a flawless idealised self, when I first started studying in the Netherlands: an early riser, cycling through a fresh morning breeze to the library, working hard and concentrating well, completing all the tasks on my activity list before dinner. It lasted no longer than a day or two at most.

What I hadn't expected was how difficult it would be to plan my time in such an independent study environment. In Japan, everything was routine-based. My life as a student was structured in terms of schedules, routines, and expectations. I lived in a dormitory on weekdays and went home on weekends. Even my "leisure time" was routine-based. But in the Netherlands, especially with problem-based learning, that structure fell apart. Suddenly, it was up to me to structure, manage, and inspire myself. No one would catch me if I missed a reading or got something wrong. The freedom was both liberating and terrifying.

The first few months were me alternating between working too hard and complete procrastination. Some days I was reading the same sentence over and over again; some days I was panicking and working till 3 a.m. attempting to get things done. My entire class seemed to be mellow and focused. I was eating discounted Jumbo cakes for dinner and looking up on the internet for "how to concentrate for three hours".

Exam weeks were like emotional roller-coasters. But then I started to let go of the expectation that productivity was going to look a certain way. I realised that learning well wasn't about cramming or being perfect—it was about understanding how I work best. That meant being honest: I need music, short interruptions, and the occasional messy desk. It also meant being brave enough to ask for help, even when I felt behind.

Studying overseas has taught me more than I ever could from a book. It taught me to trust my own rhythm. Productivity is not about working more – it's about working out what works. And as soon as I accepted that, I actually started learning more – not surviving, but thriving.

”

**Yuki Nakamura,**  
third year bachelor student Arts  
and Culture

“What is this? A newspaper?”

Ah, something like the school paper at my high school, made by students, for students?”



Photo: Joey Roberts

“OUR GOAL: MAKING RUNNING SEXY”

No financial compensation for student board members with study delays  
“Student board membership has become far less attractive”

“I can talk to my mother about anything, but I don't tell her everything”

Caps in the air, finally graduated

Not quite. *Observant* is an independent news medium for both students and staff, and it's produced by professional journalists. Of course, students also contribute; they write columns, film reviews, and other articles. If you're studying at Maastricht University, naturally you'll want to stay informed about what's going on — in student life, scientific

research, new exam regulations, issues with landlords, problems at the sports club, loneliness, decision-making stress, but also about debates and events. You'll find our stories on the bilingual website [[observantonline.nl/English](http://observantonline.nl/English)], in the weekly newsletter, on social media, and in our print newspaper. Every week we publish a new

issue, which you can find in all university buildings. Sometimes we also create special editions, like this first-year issue, especially for you as a newcomer. Have fun and good luck, and if you have a fun or exciting idea for a story, drop by! You'll find our editorial office at Lenculenstraat 14, right in the city centre.

# Found a room – or still looking? 8 tips every student should know

**Text:** Lena Reichel  
**Illustration:** Simone Golob

So, you've finally found a room in Maastricht – or maybe you're still looking for housing. Either way, if you've got your eye on a place, it's important to know your rights as a tenant in the Netherlands. According to Robin Janssen from Huurteam Zuid-Limburg, this is often where things go wrong. "We see a lot of red flags in rental contracts. Even students – especially international students – who've already secured accommodation are often unaware of what landlords in the Netherlands are and aren't legally allowed to do." Here are eight tips to help you stay out of trouble:

1

## WATCH OUT FOR SCAMS

If you're an international student new to the Netherlands, you might not know what a typical Dutch rental contract should look like. There are a lot of rental scams on Facebook. Warning signs include a foreign bank account number in the contract or a landlord saying, "You can transfer the money to my lawyer." While not illegal, this isn't standard practice in the Netherlands. Letting agents sometimes collect the rent, but always make sure everything checks out. Also, look at how the rent is broken down – Dutch contracts usually list *kale huur* ("basic rent") and *servicekosten* (service charges) separately. Poor English is another red flag.

2

## SHORT STAY – YAY OR NAY?

If you haven't found a place yet, short-term housing can be a temporary solution, but it's not ideal in the long run. These places fall more under hotel or holiday letting rules and regulations, which offer less tenant protection. That said, already being in Maastricht does put you in a

better position (literally) to find longer-term accommodation.

3

## WHO HANDLES REPAIRS?

In the Netherlands, tenants are responsible for some minor repairs. But structural issues, like leaks or holes in the walls, are your landlord's responsibility. When it comes to mould, it depends on the cause. If it's due to a leak, your landlord must sort it out. But if it's because you haven't been ventilating properly, it's on you. If you've got mice in your home, it's initially your problem to deal with.

4

## YOUR LANDLORD CAN'T JUST WALK IN WHENEVER THEY FEEL LIKE IT

If you've reported an issue and your landlord needs to make repairs, they must let you know when they plan to come over. This falls under what's known as "good landlordship". Under the new Good Landlordship Act, local authorities can take action against bad landlords by issuing warnings, penalties or fines for things like intimidation. For example,

a male landlord can't just let himself into a house shared by five female students. You can report these kinds of incidents to the municipality. They'll investigate and take action if there's enough evidence. So make sure to get as much proof as you can – witnesses, videos, anything that supports your case.

5

## GET INSURED – IT ONLY COSTS A FEW EUROS

You're liable for any damage you cause to the property, so liability insurance (*aansprakelijkheidsverzekering*) is a must. Some rental contracts even require it. It's also smart to take out contents insurance (*inboedelverzekering*) to protect your own belongings. Getting insured is quick and affordable, even for international students, and it could save you a lot of hassle.

6

## WANT YOUR DEPOSIT BACK? DOCUMENT EVERYTHING

Some landlords unfairly withhold deposits by claiming you didn't leave the room clean enough, for example. That's why you should take

lots of photos when you move in. Capture any existing damage – scratches on the floor, stains, marks, and so on. Dutch law says you must leave the property in the same condition as when you moved in, allowing for fair wear and tear. So before unpacking, take detailed photos of everything!

7

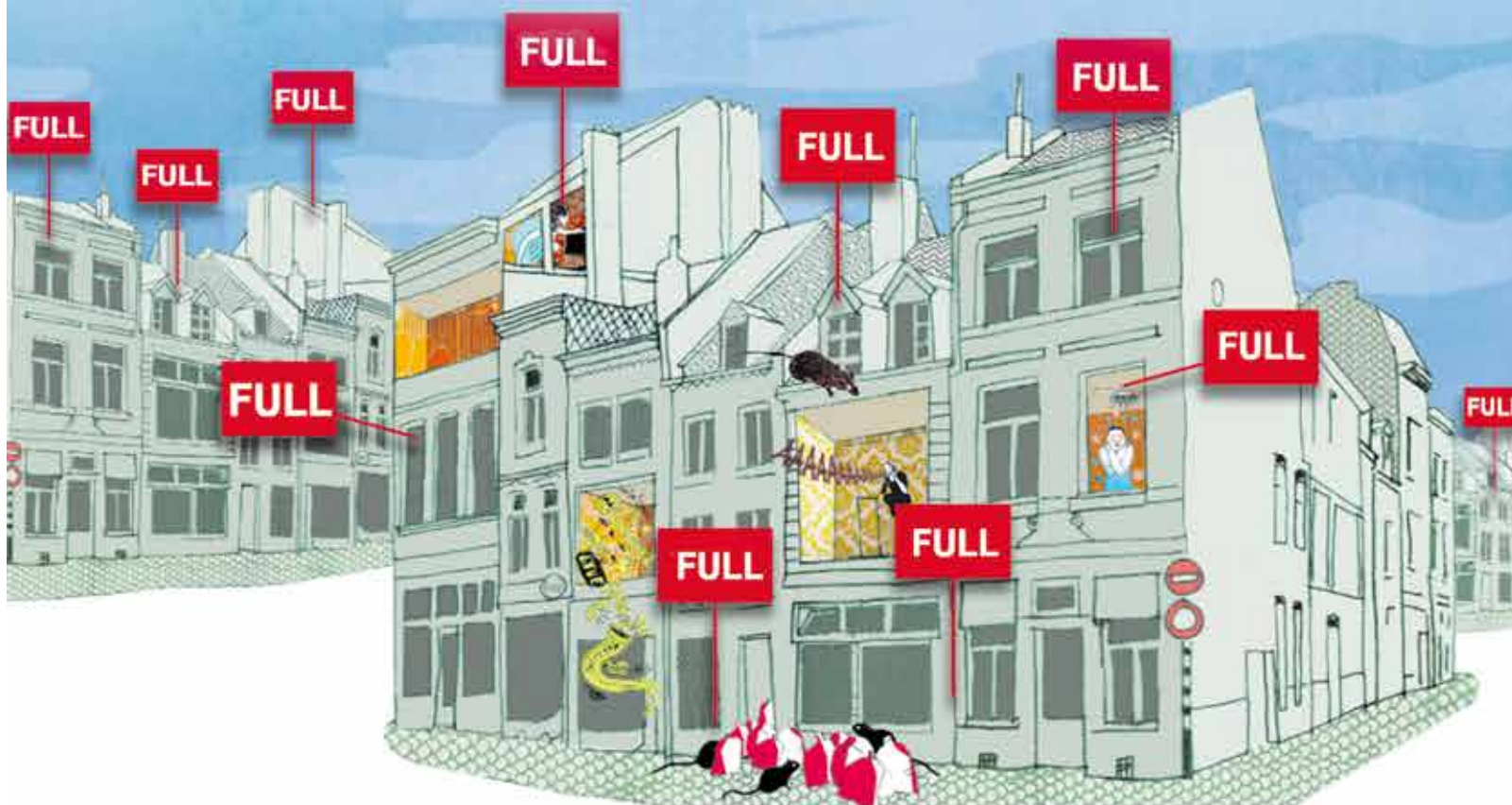
## NEVER GO TO A VIEWING ALONE

Always bring someone with you when viewing a room. Two pairs of eyes are better than one – and you'll likely feel more comfortable, too.

8

## YOU DON'T HAVE TO BUY THE PREVIOUS TENANT'S FURNITURE

Some students are eager to sell their furniture to the next tenant. That's all well and good if you both agree, but you're under no obligation to say yes. The previous tenant must leave the room clean, so you can just tell them, "No thanks – please take your stuff with you." Don't let yourself get stuck with dirty or damaged furniture you don't want!



**Got more questions?**

You can contact Huurteam Zuid-Limburg for any landlord issues. They also offer a useful checklist for spotting scams and can even review your rental contract free of charge – and often at very short notice – to see if everything seems in order. Book an appointment via [huurteam-zuidlimburg.nl](http://huurteam-zuidlimburg.nl).

## Everything you want to know about sex



Collage: Simone Golob

# “Instinctively knowing what the other person likes? That’s a myth”

Last year, *Observant* asked students: what do you still want to know about sex? We presented their questions to Marieke Dewitte, clinical psychologist and sexologist at Maastricht University. Here are the key takeaways.

Let’s start at the beginning: safe sex is a must. “Enjoyable sex happens in a safe context, and contraceptive use is part of that,” says Dewitte. “Condoms are the only way to prevent sexually transmitted infections. If someone tries to persuade you to have sex without one, they don’t respect you. That’s a huge red flag.

This is about your body and your health, so you’re the one who sets the terms. Make sure you’re prepared and always bring your own condoms.”

### Dynamic process

Also of great importance: checking whether

the other person actually wants to be intimate with you. That’s not something you can just assume after a bit of flirting, says Dewitte. “It is important to emphasize that silence is not the same as consent. Consent must be active, explicit, and come from both parties.” Remember, she continues, that someone can

always change their mind. “Consent is an ongoing, dynamic process. Check in at every new stage of intimacy, from touching under clothes to oral sex or penetration. Ask your partner if they’re still comfortable with what’s happening.”

### No strange noise

Okay, everything has worked out: you’re in bed with a nice and sweet person, and there’s mutual consent. It feels good, you’re enjoying yourself—but reaching orgasm? That’s not happening. “To enjoy sex, you need to be able to relax and let go,” says Dewitte. “That’s impossible if you’re constantly thinking about how your body looks, worrying about making strange noises or wondering whether your partner is enjoying themselves. This is called ‘spectatoring’, observing yourself as if you’re an outsider rather than actually being in the moment.”

Other thoughts might pop into your head as well – about the groceries you still need to buy, for example, or that looming essay deadline. “We all have an accelerator and a brake when it comes to sexual arousal. The right kind of stimulation presses the accelerator, but it’s just as important to figure out what presses on your brake. What are your mood killers?”

### Experiment

You could also be facing a psychological threshold. Luckily, says Dewitte, you can practice crossing that. “Masturbate. Experiment with using a toy. You’ll learn what you like, and your body will develop motor memory. As you have more orgasms, your body will become better at recognising the signs. Over time, this will make it easier for you to climax.”

### Talk about it

A good conversation can work wonders for your sex life. Say, for instance, that your partner doesn’t stimulate you in the right way. “There’s a myth that if you like each other, you’ll instinctively know what the other person wants during sex, but that’s just not true. You need to communicate, whether verbally or non-verbally. For example, moan a bit louder to indicate to your partner that they’re on the right track.”

### Not in the mood

Or: one of you has a much lower sex drive than the other. “Ask yourself why your partner isn’t in the mood, and talk about it. How can you rekindle desire in your relationship? You could each make a box of cards with intimate activities you’d like to try, such as ‘I’d like to take a bath together’ or ‘I’d like to use a sex toy.’ Twice a week, take turns picking a card from each other’s box. You don’t have to carry out the activity immediately, but at least talk about it for a bit. This way, you can get to know each other better in a playful way.” Couples can explore what sparks their erotic imagination. “Watch porn, listen to a sexy podcast or read an erotic story together. Afterwards, you can discuss it: what did it do for you? What did it do for me? Would you like to try this or that sometime?”

### Still a virgin

To end, what if all of this feels like a far-off reality? Because you’re still a virgin and never have had a relationship. Know you’re not alone, says Dewitte. “The average age of first sexual intercourse has been steadily increasing for years. Statistically speaking, when you start university, half of your peers haven’t had sex yet, so this taboo has to go.” Besides: “Waiting until you’re ready to have sex is a very powerful choice, actually.”

## Student liaison officer Can Gölpek is 'famous' thanks to *Bureau Maastricht*

# "Can't you see I'm in the middle of an arrest!"



Photo: Joey Roberts

The Maastricht police service has two 'student liaison officers', contact points for the thirty thousand or so students in the city. It doesn't exempt them from ordinary police work, and "what happens on the beat" always has priority. International students are the most trouble, says student liaison officer Can (pronounced 'Djan') Gölpek. Although it is mostly the Dutch students who recognise him now, after he appeared on *Bureau Maastricht*.

The reality tv show available on Videoland had already been to other cities like Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Eindhoven, before recording in Maastricht last summer. When Gölpek (32) was "approached by the Maastricht team lead", asking if he wanted to take part, he initially had doubts whether he should appear on television. "I don't really feel the need to be popular. And what if I make a mistake on tv? I already have a hard time with people recording in public on their mobiles; everything you do can be taken out of context. On the other hand, if, as a police officer, you follow all the rules, you should have nothing to fear."

In the end, he said yes to the tv shows and he doesn't regret it. "It's a fair representation. You see that we do make jokes and have fun; police work isn't always hard work. Of course, sometimes you have to be patient with the people you meet, but if you are open-minded towards them, they will be too. And yes, you do behave a little better when you're on camera," he laughs. "I don't want to become the butt of any jokes because of my television appearance."

The show has changed some things, though, as he does get recognised on the street and asked for a picture. "I like that, and especially when it's kids, you can't really say no." However,

for many people, especially young people, it means they are no longer afraid to approach him at all. "Those people see me as 'someone from the telly', rather than a police officer. There was one time, I had just arrested a suspect, when someone asked if they could take a picture with me. I said, No! Can't you see I'm in the middle of an arrest!"

### Zero time

He has been a student liaison officer for two years now. "It's good, and I know what it's like to be a student. I studied commercial management at the Zuyd University of Applied Sciences in Heerlen, before I decided halfway through that it wasn't for me. I wanted my work to have be more meaningful. I had to take some tests to move to the police, but they saw potential in me and gave me a chance." He gets "zero time" for his work as student liaison officer. There are a few fixed assignments, though. "During INKOM, we organise information sessions for students about safety and rules, and we organise meetings between students and other citizens. They use those

sessions to tell students what bothers them in the area, mostly excessive noise, or cigarette butts on the pavement. Some complaints are a recurring theme. Sometimes you hear people say that they shouldn't have chosen to live in the city centre, that these nuisances are part of the deal, but I don't agree. It's a question of values for me. Students have to behave as much as the next person.

"Twice a year, I tour the different student associations and ask, 'are there any students doing anything they shouldn't be?'" he says with a wink. Usually, it's all fine, student associations often have good relationships with their neighbours. For example, Amphytrion [actually currently in the news because of a hazing scandal, red.], the student association for the hotel school. They're in Limmel and they have a neighbourhood WhatsApp group. They use it to announce when there's going to be a party, so that everybody is aware of what's going on."

### Loneliness is a killer

When there are problems, it's more often the international students than the Dutch ones, notes Gölpek. "I get it, everything is different for them here. Take the traffic laws, for example, so much is *not allowed* in the Netherlands. Cycling on the wrong side of the road, using a mobile phone, cycling without a light, they're almost daily occurrences," he says. "So often, I hear 'oh, but that's not a problem where I'm from.' Some get really angry, call you 'those fucking cops'. But insults and aggressive behaviour towards officers just makes the situation worse. International students, especially from countries where the police are very different, often think we're all just soft here, but we do take that very seriously. It can lead to higher fines or even arrests. And fines in the Netherlands are already ridiculously high: holding you phone while on the bike, that'll cost you €169. Bad lights: €79. If you're unemployed, that's a big hit."

And of course, there are the parties and the nuisance they bring. In October, there was a party on Bredestraat that got completely out of hand: speakers on the street playing music until the small hours, upsetting the neighbours. International students – it's said, mostly Germans – clashed with police officers who had been sent to deal with the situation en masse. One German student even had his wrist broken when he was hit with a baton. Gölpek: "I wasn't there myself, but parties like that happen more often. And the more students involved, the more police officers are sent. Large groups of international students are particularly prone to causing problems." Alcohol and drugs are also often a problem with that group. "They're far away from their parents and want to experiment, I get it. A hundred points if you come all this way and have the time of your life. But if, for example, you combine alcohol and weed – not everyone is ready to deal with the consequences of that." What's the worst thing he's ever had to deal with as a student liaison officer? He sighs. "All sorts of things happen, even at UM. Destruction of property, sexual assault, rape. We handle all the reports, investigate facts and circumstances that could help us solve cases. The worst ones are the suicides; they happen frequently. It's loneliness, isn't it, it's a killer. Recently, this kid – I'd spoken to him over the phone just three minutes before and then moments later, there he is; he'd thrown himself off a block of flats. That is tough, you never get used to it." Thankfully, there are always colleagues. "They support you, you can talk to them."

### ACCESSIBILITY

If you want to contact the student liaison officer, you can call 09008844 and ask for Can Gölpek or his colleague, Sander Alberts. If you are a student experiencing an emergency, call 112 or 0900. If necessary, the report will be forwarded to Gölpek or Alberts, who may contact you afterwards. Gölpek is unwilling to share his email address. "If I did that, I'd have 10,000 students emailing me, and I don't need that."



# Must-dos while studying in Maastricht

**Text:** Dennis Vaendel

**Illustrations:** Bas van der Schot



## FOOD & DRINK

- Try *zuurvlees*, the regional meat dish.
- Get your 3AM fast-food fix – have you ever had kapsalon or broodje kebab? – at Musti.
- Complain about the lack of eateries in Randwyck. Or, alternatively, get overwhelmed by the sheer number of great lunch places in the city centre.
- Smoke a joint aboard one of the cannabis-selling coffeeshop boats on the Meuse River.
- Enjoy a slice of real Limburg *vlaai*, e.g. at Bisschopsmolen.
- Picnic and chill at the Stadspark (City Park) or Sint Pietersberg (Mount Saint Peter).
- Order chips (that's *frietten* – don't let anyone tell you chips are called *patat* in Dutch; it means they're not from around here!) with mayonnaise (trust us) at Reitz on Market Square, the Netherlands' first and oldest snack bar (that's *frituur*, but you may hear people refer to it as *snackbar*, depending on where in the Netherlands they're from).
- Just one time, go out for an overly expensive meal at Vrijthof, the main gathering spot for tourists and the Maastricht elite.
- Buy fresh fruit from the Friday market.
- Have lunch at the MUMC+ staff cafeteria. You can get in with your student card!
- Sample one of the many locally produced beers or wines.

## ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS

- Catch a film in the Sphinxkwartier area, whether it's a blockbuster at Pathé or an art-house film at Lumière.
- Waltz along with André Rieu during his Vrijthof concerts in summer (for free, through the big screens at the outdoor cafes outside the fence).
- During those same Vrijthof concerts, don't forget to gripe about the busloads of tourists, Vrijthof Square being closed off and hearing the same music every day for weeks.



- Go see a play at Theater aan het Vrijthof (or join Alles is Drama, the international student theatre association).
- Visit one of the many museums and dive into contemporary art or the city's rich history. During Museum Night, you can visit several in one evening!
- Sing along with Beppie Kraft.
- Dress like an elitist and go to TEFAF, the annual European fine art fair at MECC Maastricht.
- Attend a cultural event at Kaleido, the international student community.
- Climb the tower of Sint-Janskerk (Saint John Church).
- Meet some true-blue, born-and-bred Sjen-gen at a traditional Dutch pub.
- Spot an *oehoe* (Eurasian eagle owl) at the ENCI quarry.
- Explore Maastricht Underground by taking a tour of the caves of Sint Pietersberg (including the fort), the casemates or the former NATO headquarters on Can-nerberg.
- Take a walk through Frontenpark or along the Groene Loper.
- Do voluntary work (e.g. at Oma's Soep, Maas Cleanup, Match Maastricht, Refugee Project Maastricht).

## MAASTRICHT

## GOING OUT

- Tell yourself you'll spend "an hour at most" at an outdoor café, only to blink and find yourself in a Market Square pub at six in the morning.
- *Vasteloavend!* Dress in your finest pekske and throw yourself headfirst into Maastricht Street Carnival.
- Lose yourself in epic guitar solos at Muziek gieterij, booming beats at Complex or electrifying dance music at Cavo.
- Hook up with someone from a different nationality.
- Spend an evening at a real student bar, ran by and for students – De Uni, De Beurs or De Boschpoort.
- Experience the INKOM as a mentor or crew member.
- Go to an open party at one of the "Big Four" student associations: Saurus, Tragos, Circumflex and Koko.
- Celebrate St Patrick's Day at one of the Irish pubs: Shamrock, Peter's or John Mullins.

## STUDYING

- Join your study association and become part of a committee.
- Participate in the "German Run" by queuing for the University Library early in the morning during busy exam weeks and literally running inside to secure a study spot when the doors open.
- Attend a Studium Generale lecture, simultaneously lowering the average age in the room.
- Win a debate with your tutor during a tutorial group meeting.
- Take a break sitting in the sun on the city wall next to the Inner City Library or on the Tapijn lawns. Or, if you're in Randwyck, take a stroll through one of the many wonderful car parks.
- Get lost in MECC Maastricht on your way to your first exam.
- Take a Dutch language course (and practise your Dutch by reading *Observant* – the whole newspaper is bilingual).
- Go to class hungover. Bonus points if you have to give a presentation that day.
- Experiment with not using ChatGPT for an assignment.
- Create or share memes with fellow students that are incomprehensible to outsiders.
- Relieve stress from studying by practising meditation or yoga at The InnBetween.
- Pull an all-nighter to finish an assignment.
- ✓ Read *Observant*.

## SPORTS

- Try a new sport at UM SPORTS.
- Cheer on the world's best pro cyclists during the Amstel Gold Race. And cycle up the famous Cauberg yourself.
- Sign up for running event Maastrichts Mooiste, a charity run like the annual Run to Fight Cancer, or one of the social running clubs for students.
- Take a dip in the Geusseltbad swimming pool.
- Compete in, or cheer on the rowers competing in, the annual Saurus International Regatta.
- Go ice skating on Vrijthof Square (powered by mulled wine) during Magisch Maastricht.
- Join in a game of spikeball (also called roundnet) in the Stadspark.
- Explore the beautiful Heuvelland area on foot or by bike.
- Play some field hockey and have a beer or two at the student field hockey tournament Us Leef Vruike on Ascension Day.
- Go sailing, kayaking, surfing, standup paddleboarding or pedal boating on Pietersplas or Grindgat Oost-Maarland.
- Climb to the highest point in the European Netherlands, Vaalserberg, and visit the Drielandenpunt (Three-Country Point) right next to the summit.

## AND FINALLY

- Get your degree!



## “This tree became ‘our’ tree during INKOM”

Ties Goris, a University College Maastricht graduate and now a full-time board member of the student organisation AIESEC Maastricht, shares his favourite spot in Maastricht: **a tree in Monseigneur Nolenspark.**

“I started studying here in 2021, when some Covid restrictions were still in place. I often met up outside with the friends I’d made

during INKOM – people I’m still close to today. This tree in Monseigneur Nolenspark quickly became ‘our’ tree. When the weather’s nice, we like to meet up here to hang out, toss a ball around or play football. We come back every summer.

“I settled into life in Maastricht faster than I’d expected. I thought I’d be going back to my parents in Hilversum more often, but before long, I was staying here at weekends to spend time with my friends. Maastricht is such an easy city to get to know, as everything’s close by.

“Now that some of us have graduated, a few friends have moved away, which feels strange. We still see each other – we recently went on a weekend trip to Budapest together – but our

Maastricht era is behind us. Because of that, we don’t meet up by the tree as often, and I don’t really go and sit there on my own. But I often walk past it on breaks; it’s close to both UCM and the Student Services Centre, where I now work with the rest of the AIESEC board. It’s still a special spot for me.

“I’ll be moving soon too, after the summer – probably to Rotterdam for my master’s. I really enjoy living in a place I know so well, where I run into familiar faces in the supermarket, but at the same time, I’m looking forward to the energy of a bigger city. Somewhere a bit livelier, where the shops don’t close at 6 PM on Sundays. I do miss that sometimes.”

*Cleo Freriks*



## “This was the first place where I felt at home in Maastricht”

Anneke Müller, a second-year European Studies student, shares her favourite spot in Maastricht: **Café Rosé, Limburg’s oldest LGBTQIA+ bar, run by volunteers from COC Netherlands.**

“The first time I visited Maastricht, I thought it was a beautiful city, but also a bit uptight. All those fancy, expensive shops... I wasn’t sure

it was really my kind of place. The first time I truly felt at home here was when a friend took me to Café Rosé – which is funny, as I’m not much of a party person. But that’s when I saw a different side of the city. I immediately felt comfortable; it’s a place where people can just be themselves.

“I realised I was queer a bit later than most people, just after finishing high school. I grew up in a small town near Hamburg in Germany. The people there are very accepting, but there’s nothing for the queer community. There’s only one pub in town, and it burned down. So I never really got to explore that side of myself. Here, I can, and it makes my student life feel more complete. Café Rosé is also one of the few alternative bars in Maastricht, and I really vibe with the music they play. My friends, including those who aren’t queer, are always

happy to go there with me.

“For a long time, I wasn’t sure what I wanted to study, but I knew I wanted to move to a bigger city. Hamburg seemed like the obvious choice, but the university didn’t offer the kind of international programme I was looking for. It took me a while to get used to Maastricht and living on my own, adjusting to everything new, but I’ve come to really like it here. I’ve joined the UM Choir, made a group of friends, and I find my study programme interesting. At weekends, I love wandering around the city among the tourists and day trippers; hearing all those different languages makes it feel like being on holiday. The only thing Maastricht is missing is a spot to sit by the Meuse and dip your feet in the water.”

*Cleo Freriks*



## “Watching a film at the cinema is very different from watching one at home”

Giulia Ghiglione, a University College Maastricht graduate with a focus on humanities and theatre, shares her favourite spot in Maastricht: **arthouse cinema Lumière.**

“Lumière is a bit outside the city centre, so it has a more relaxed atmosphere. You can go there to watch films or just sit and enjoy a cup of coffee. There’s a really nice terrace by

the water, where you can watch the swans. It feels much calmer than a mainstream cinema, where you’d go to see blockbusters. I think that’s what made me feel at home there.

“I’m from Genoa, Italy, but I’ve lived in Maastricht for several years now. I love all things cinema and theatre. When I’m in Genoa, I go to the cinema at least once a week. My grandma loves films too, so we go together. I like horror and romantic comedies.

“Watching a film at the cinema is so different from watching one at home. At the cinema, you’re in a dark room with no distractions. For a little while, the only thing you have to do is watch the film – nothing else. You’re fully immersed in the story. It makes watching a film feel like an experience, like an event – something different from everyday student life. It even feels a bit fancy.

“The first time I went to Lumière was during

Museum Night with a friend. I’d seen the place before but never really knew what it was. That night, they had a few interactive exhibitions, and they were showing short films. Afterwards, my friend and I went out onto the terrace and danced to the soundtrack of *The Breakfast Club*. It was a great night, and it’s still my favourite memory of this cinema. “People should definitely go there, but at the same time, I wouldn’t want it to get too busy. One of the best things about Lumière is how peaceful it is. They also make the cinema experience special. For example, before a film starts, they often provide a brief introduction or an excerpt that sets the tone. They also remind you of cinema etiquette, like switching off your phone, which helps you get ready to watch the film.”

*Line-Marie Eichhorst*

