

ABOUT ANTWERP

Antwerp is a vibrant port city with a long and rich history located right in the centre of Europe. The city is perhaps best characterised as Janus faced. Due to its long history as a port city and international commercial centre, it has always been a destination or transit place for migration, resulting in the super-diverse city it is today. At the same time, it is historically a bulwark of the extreme right and the city has up until today a rather troubled relation with ethnic and cultural diversity. As Europe's 2nd biggest port, Antwerp is a major logistical gateway into Europe and lies at the crossroads of four international motorways. On the other hand, traffic in and around the city is a heavily congested, with knock-on effects on the environmental quality in the city and leading to a strongly politicized debate on sustainable urban mobility.

Due to its industrial port, Antwerp is the economic powerhouse of the Flemish economy. Still, unemployment, especially amongst low skilled youngsters often of a migrant background, is pretty high, leading to poverty and feelings of marginalisation. Finally, Antwerp was one of the most important art cities of Western Europe (and perhaps still is given its international reputation in fashion), home to both rich art collectors and artist living in precarious circumstances. All this makes Antwerp a great laboratory for contemporary urban sociology.

