

## BBT Online readers favorites

**Anja De Haen – BCD Travel**

**Nicolas Le Brun – Destree Organisation & EFAPCO**

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### **Anja De Haen**

After her studies in Tourism and in Marketing, Anja moved to Florida for a few years, where she worked for DMC's such as AmericanTours International and Travalco. She started her career as a local hostess, became a tour guide on multilingual trips through the Sunshine State and ended her American Adventure by organizing incentives in the Southern States of the US.

In 1995 she moved back to Belgium and got a job with Belgium International Travel, now BCD Travel, where she started within the DMC department and later on moved to the outbound Incentive Department. In January 2009, she became Head of MICE Benelux.

Anja lives close to Antwerp, a melting pot of different cultures... and different tastes. In her opinion, there simply is no better place than Antwerp when it comes to wining and dining!

### **Anja De Haen's favorites:**

#### **A real Quick Bite:**

Call me a betrayer, but I simply love the fries of Bram Ladage in the Netherlands. (watch the YouTube clip, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6vNr3YRZOc&NR=1> ) Definitely when they are served as "Patatje Oorlog": a paper cone, fries, mayonnaise and... peanut sauce! Simply delicious!

#### **A Quick Bite:**

I am a big fan of oriental food! Lucy Chang (Antwerp, Brasschaat & Knokke) - <http://www.lucychang.com/> - offers traditional and less traditional dishes from Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Laos and China at very reasonable prices. The restaurant guarantees a professional and quick service, ideal for a quick bite! Another tasteful "quickie" is a "Spaghetti Bolognaise" at Den Trol (a nice brown café) in Schoten. <http://www.dentrol.be/>

#### **A Serious Tête à Tête:**

An Antwerp Classic: Huis de Colvenier, - <http://www.colvenier.be/> - located in a beautiful Patrician House in the St-Antoniussstraat. Patrick, the chef, only works with fresh products and the menu changes almost daily, depending on what's on the market! An absolute must is a glass of champagne in the wine cellar to start with, while putting together your menu with the chef himself! I also like "Off Course" (on

the left bank of the river Scheldt), Bitterpeeën - <http://www.bitterpeeën.be/> - at the IJzerlaan and Magma - <http://www.resto.be/ware/sendto.jsp?businessid=11642&lg=EN> - on the Vlaamse Kaai. Only to name a few, there are so many more!

### **Business, Business, Business:**

Since our offices are located in Mechelen, most business lunches take place in the City of the Maneblussers (moon extinguishers). Depending on the occasion, I either go to Brasserie Passade - <http://www.passade.be/> - , Brasserie Maroon or Brasserie L'Infini. Nice drinks, good quality food and not too expensive!

### **When I travel abroad:**

If travels take me to the Netherlands, I always fancy a nice "Indonesian Rijsttafel" (rice table). My preferred Indonesian restaurant is Raden Mas - <http://www.amsterdam-eating.com/13753.htm> -, with locations in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Scheveningen.

When in Paris, I have to have dinner at the Grand Café Capucines - <http://www.legrandcafe.com/> . Rather touristic, I know, but to my recollection, it's the first restaurant my parents took me to in the City of Lights, and it brings back nice memories. Furthermore, I simply adore its Art Déco interior and its fantastic seafood platters. Brasserie Bofinger - <http://www.bofingerparis.com/> - near the Place de la Bastille is another favorite. The restaurant just breathes history. If only its walls could speak...

And when I am on vacation in more exotic places, I always look for small restaurants filled with locals. If they eat there, it has to be good!

### **Some other favorites:**

#### **Hotel:**

In a previous life, I spent my honeymoon in French Polynesia. Le Méridien Bora Bora - <http://www.starwoodhotels.com/lemeridien/property/overview/index.html?propertyID=1905> - was truly awesome, and our over-water bungalow with its glass-bottomed floor was the absolute summit of luxury!

Since then, my job has allowed me to travel extensively and I have had the opportunity to stay in a variety of interesting hotels. As far as luxury goes, I much enjoyed staying at the Delano on Miami Beach - <http://www.delano-hotel.com/#/ho> - , the Al Bustan Palace in Oman - <http://www.ichotelsgroup.com/intercontinental/en/gb/locations/overview/muscat-albustanpalace> -, the Sossusvlei Lodge in Namibia - <http://www.sossusvlei-namibia.com/> -, the Oberoi Amar Villas in Agra - <http://www.amarvilas.com/Hotel/Hotel-Overview.aspx> -, the Alila Ubud on Bali - <http://www.alilahotels.com/Ubud/> -, the Ivory Tree Lodge in South-Africa - <http://www.ivorytreegamelodge.com/> and the W Times Square in New York - <http://w-new-york-timesquare.hotel-rv.com/index.htm?l=ny> .

However, the best sleeping experience I ever had was in an ice room at the Ice Hotel in Jukkasjärvi (Sweden) - [http://www.scantours.com/ice\\_hotel.htm](http://www.scantours.com/ice_hotel.htm) -. Never slept better! And no, it was not the ABSOLUTE VODKA... (but probably the combination of the sound-proofing snow walls of the room and the exhaustion after a day of snow and ice activities!)

**Cities:**

New York and Paris.

**Countries:**

Spring in Namibia, summer in France, fall in India, winter in Lapland.

**Venue:**

Let's go back to Antwerp: La Riva - <http://www.lariva.be/> -, a multifunctional venue in a renovated historical building in the fashionable quarter of "Het Eilandje" (the small island).

**Best kept MICE secret:**

There are so many... Let's keep them secret!

**MICE personality:**

I am a big fan of Hilmar Tonnemacher of 'Abenteuer Afrika Safari' in Namibia - [http://www.dmc.travel/dmc\\_news.php?xdmc=69&xregion=2](http://www.dmc.travel/dmc_news.php?xdmc=69&xregion=2) -. His enthusiasm about the country, his knowledge about its possibilities, his hunger to create new adventures... To me, Hilmar is the personification of the country. Namibia could simply not wish for a better Ambassador!

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**5 likes, 5 dislikes****Likes:**

Motown & Disco Music from the '70 and '80  
Family & friends  
Caiperinhas & Mojitos  
Humor & Optimism  
... If you combine those, you get a hell of a party!

**And as a bonus: high heels... 😊**

**Dislikes:**

Negativism  
Hate  
Quarrels & fights  
Ironing – Thank you for those service checks!  
Red cabbage, when served warm.

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**Top 10 People I would Like to Meet or have Dinner with...**

**(and discuss their following quotes):**

1. Grace Kelly: *"As an unmarried woman, I was thought to be a danger."*
2. Jimmy Choo; *"It doesn't matter what you are wearing – if you have good shoes and a good bag, you'll look right."*
3. Cleopatra; *"I will not be triumphed over!"*
4. Walt Disney; *"If you can dream it, you can do it!"*
5. Donna Summer; *"God had to create disco music so I could be born and be successful."*
6. Catharina Zeta Jones; *"I like women who look like women. I hated grunge. No one's more feminist than me, but you don't have to look as if you don't give a - you know. You can be smart, bright, and attractive aesthetically to others - and to yourself."*
7. Walter Cronkite; *"And that's the way it is."*
8. Coco Chanel: *"The most courageous act is still to think for yourself. Aloud."*
9. Barack Obama, *"You can put lipstick on a pig. It's still a pig."*
10. And... Dominic Purcell, ***just because he's a nice bit of stuff !***

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**Nicolas Le Brun**  
Director Destree Organisation & President EFAPCO

**BBT Online's favorites - Nicolas' Words**

**Restaurants**

**A Quick Bite:**

I'm not one for fast food and quick bites. I prefer to take my time and enjoy. If I don't have the

time, I'm fortunate enough to be able to go home, disconnect from work for a few minutes and prepare myself a simple dish.

Another good option is a Vietnamese or some sushi.

### **A Serious Tete a Tete:**

A great favourite: "De la Vigne à l'assiette" -

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/belgium/brussels/restaurants/404840> -. I'm lucky to be close by one of the best quality/price restaurants in Brussels ... and we are spoilt for choice. Eric the chef prepares some exquisite (but not ostentatious) French cuisine and Eddy the sommelier always has a bottle of wine to discover.

### **Business, Business, Business:**

See above. Another option would be "Rouge Tomate" -

<http://www.rougetomate.com/restaurants/brussels/brussels.php> -, especially if accompanied by a lady or "Notos" - <http://www.notos.be/> -, one of the best Mediterranean restaurants of ... not only Brussels.

### **Good Value for Groups:**

Unfortunately, practical reasons will often be a priority. You need to look at capacity, exclusivity of space, location, ...

There are plenty in Brussels, but I'll go for a venue in Ghent, where we were kindly welcomed, well served, and the group was very satisfied with the meal: "Pakhuis" -

<http://www.pakhuis.be/Index.aspx>

### **When I travel abroad:**

First reflex, is to ask local friends or business partners. Every city has its cafés, restaurants and brasseries that deserve to be discovered. One of the greatest pleasures of travelling in fact!

### **Some other favorites:**

British hotels and B&B for their huge breakfasts, “Le train bleu” (another great place for groups) - <http://www.bestrestaurantparis.com/en/restaurant-paris/detail/le-train-bleu.html> - and “Au Pied de Cochon” - <http://www.pieddecochon.com/> both in Paris and finally, in Brussels, but restricted to meat offal amateurs “Viva M'boma” - <http://www.brusselslife.be/E/detail/id/3934> -.

### **Hotel:**

a few, in no order whatsoever: Hilton Athens - [http://www1.hilton.com/en\\_US/hi/hotel/ATHHITW-Hilton-Athens/index.do](http://www1.hilton.com/en_US/hi/hotel/ATHHITW-Hilton-Athens/index.do) - ,

Tiara Park Lisbon - <http://www.tiara-hotels.com/lisboa/luxury-lisbon-hotel-,default-en.html> -,  
Damai Lovina Bali - <http://www.damai.com/> .

### **City:**

London, but I might be a little bit biased.

### **Country:**

Impossible to single one out but it would be France for the sheer variety. Indonesia for the beauty of the landscapes and the kindness of people.

### **Incentive Destination:**

You'll understand I change that to Meeting Destination. A couple of years ago, we organized a conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Everything went perfectly and the next year we handled a smaller meeting. Each time we were impressed with the quality of service and the attention to details from every supplier. The city is not big but has a lot of charm.

*Editor's note: read more on the destination, [click here](#)*

[http://www.bbtonline.eu/newsletter/slovenia\\_052009/index.html](http://www.bbtonline.eu/newsletter/slovenia_052009/index.html)

**Airline:** I could give you a couple of my least favorite! Unfortunately flying is not nearly as much fun as before. Security hassle, lack of service from most companies, reduced legroom all mean that unless you spend quite a lot of money to upgrade, you are just flying to get from one point on the globe to another. I was on an A380 last year and was rather disappointed.

**Best kept MICE secret:** It's not a real MICE venue – although you can accommodate ten to 15 guests: “le Pas de l’Ane” - <http://www.pasdelane.com/> -, my mum's B&B in the South of France, close to Avignon. A true haven, un ‘petit coin de paradis’ in the middle of the vineyards. Several Belgian MICE personalities also love going there: ask Milo, Sam, Werner or Hugo. The whole of our team (Destrée Organisation) is going for a long week-end ‘mise au vert’ at the beginning of September.

### **MICE personality:**

Another tricky one. I'll go for two. First, my Belgian MICE personality: Sam van de Kerckhof, Managing Partner of Meeting Time and President of Bapco - <http://www.bbtonline.eu/Library/interviews/interview112006.php> -. A true friend. A great professional, devoted, with a real sense of duty. Those who don't know him well are not aware of how funny he can be.

And, second, my European MICE personality, Julio Abreu, retired owner of PAP Congresos in Madrid and Honorary President of EFAPCO. One of the shrewdest minds I have met in our industry. Very determined, speaks perfectly in a number of languages, and with an incomparable knowledge of the business. Always a pleasure to spend an evening in his company, too.

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### **5 Likes, 5 Dislikes**

#### **Likes:**

- an evening of wine and dining with friends and family
- globetrotting with my wife
- playing games with my sons
- all sorts of sports, and golf in particular
- Brussels and Ixelles in particular

#### **Dislikes:**

- intolerance
  - people with hidden agendas
  - queues
  - slow computers
  - cold frites!
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### **Top 5 People I would Like to Meet or have Dinner with...**

Five guests for dinner? I would want to invite my five best mates for a guaranteed fun evening.

Otherwise:

- Leonardo da Vinci, we'd speak about art and his inventions.
  - Albert Einstein, to discuss humankind, and he would explain physics in a simple and humble way, as he was. We'd also discuss family, as he was my Great-Grandmother's cousin!
  - Jean-Anthelme Brillat Savarin, epicurean, author of 'The Physiology of Taste' who wrote some amusing quotes such as: "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are" and "A meal without some cheese is like a beautiful woman with only one eye". One of my favourite cheeses was named after him.
  - Philip Roth, the American novelist or Iris Murdoch, to have a lady at the table. She would bring her wit and lyricism to the evening.
- And for a bit of fun - André Franquin, the Belgian Comic Strip artist, father of Gaston Lagaffe and author of "Les Idées Noires (Dark Thoughts)"
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To read more about Nicolas, <http://www.bbtonline.eu/Library/interviews/interview062008.php>

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