

Anne De Smet

Anne was born in Bruges (°1959) and studied Art History and Archaeology at Ghent University. She moved with her partner to Leuven, where she worked at the university for 13 years. This was her first experience in organising courses and workshops in an international framework (UNCHS Training Programme). Afterwards she became the general coordinator of a fast growing non-profit organisation in the educational sector.

Anne founded Momentum in 1998 and is now mainly organising scientific conferences in various disciplines (medicine, chemistry, physics, nanotechnology, etc..).

Anne has two sons and a daughter, as well as a grandson. She is Vice President of BAPCO.

anne@momentum-pco.be

Restaurants

A Quick Bite:

Fortunately I am not often confronted with situations in which I barely find the time to eat. If it does occur, I usually snack on fruit. A banana, an apple and a pear can keep you going. My office is located right next door to my home, so I can quickly pop over to get a quick bite.

A Serious Tete a Tete:

Since I live and work in Leuven, I will focus on the nice places in my hometown. If it does not have to be fancy or elaborate, I always go for the “brasserie” cuisine. Close to where we live, there is a place called Kaminsky where they serve delicious dishes with an international touch. They also have a terrace to enjoy the sunny days.

For something more elaborate, I would recommend Improvisio (www.brasserieimprovisio.be) in Brusselsestraat, a charming renovated restaurant located on the inner court of the cultural centre “De Romaanse poort”. They also have a separate room that can be rented for seminars or meetings!

If you have more time to spare, then I would go for Castello Lucano (www.castellolucano.be). The chef, Gianfranco Avantaggiato, will take you on a culinary trip through his Southern Italian birth region. The authentic Italian cuisine is one of my absolute favourites. Do not pay attention to the interior design of the restaurant -which is a bit over the top in my opinion- but enjoy the fantastic flavours on your plate.

Last but not least, there is De Klimop (www.deklimopleuven.be), a restaurant on the renovated Martelaren Square opposite Leuven station, which I only recently discovered. Here they serve simple but quality Belgian food, made from fresh regional products.

Business, Business, Business:

Two addresses in Leuven (again!): the Boardroom in Heverlee (www.boardroom.be) and Couvert Couvert (www.couvertcouvert.be) in Egenhoven just outside Leuven. Both places combine a trendy tasteful interior with innovative dishes. Both have an excellent wine list, and in the summer you can eat outside. The Boardroom has a beautiful terrace, and in Couvert Couvert you have a fantastic view on the surrounding fields.

Good Value for Groups:

Here I would also like to recommend a place in my hometown: the Faculty Club (www.facultyclub.be), the restaurant that formerly belonged to Leuven University and that was frequently used for business lunches and dinners by the university professors. Since a few years it has become an independent seminar, conference and meeting centre of very high standing. For the meetings that we organise in Leuven, this is the perfect location for a classic conference dinner. The imposing Infirmerie Hall is bound to leave an impression on foreign delegates, and last but not least, the kitchen is managed by the Leuven Restaurant Arenberg, which boasts 1 Michelin star.

When I travel abroad:

Contrary to many of my fellow PCOs, my business travel is rather limited as we organise most of our conferences in Belgium. When I am abroad for personal or professional reasons, I always try to avoid the typical tourist places. Since some of the good addresses are not that easy to find, I always make sure to pack a quality travel guide, like the Guide du Routard, Trotter or Lonely Planet. The evaluations they list are usually spot on, but often we also seek advice from the locals.

Some other favorites:

Years ago we visited Lamu, a small island off the Kenyan coast, a kind of mini Zanzibar. It looks like time stood still here. The city has many narrow streets, in which you can easily get lost. In these streets you come across lots of old, characteristic doors that were a reflection of the house owner's status. Cars are prohibited on Lamu and all transport is done by mule. We stayed with locals and we had the best fresh tuna I ever tasted.

Hotel:

When I have a choice, I try to avoid the luxury or chain hotels. I prefer a quality Bed & Breakfast or Chambres d'Hôtes. The welcome you receive in these places is usually very personal and warm, and often you end up staying in beautifully and carefully renovated places – with a quiet and idyllic setting as an added bonus.

When I have no choice but to go for a hotel, I prefer those in nicely renovated buildings. We have the perfect example in Leuven: the Kloosterhotel (www.martinshotels.com), a true gem!

City:

Within Belgium I am completely infatuated with Ghent. I studied there 30 years ago, and since then the city has gone through an amazing evolution. It simply has everything.

As for Europe, I have a soft spot for Paris. During my studies I visited many exhibitions there, and later on I went over often because my husband was doing an internship there. When I go back now, it immediately feels like home.

Further away we discovered an enchanting place in Morocco, Essaouira, a fortified small town at the seaside that has survived the ages in pristine condition. We stayed in an authentic riad, managed by a French couple, during a week and enjoyed it immensely.

Country:

France is one of our all-time favourite holiday destinations. Its nature, as well as its beautiful villages and towns never cease to amaze.

We went to Jordany during the autumn of last year and were pleasantly surprised by the country and the people. The archaeological site of Petra is sublime and the Wadi Rum desert is simply breathtaking.

Incentive Destination:

Since I am a PCO, I translate this to Meeting Destination. I will limit myself to Belgium, as this is the main location of my assignments. I really have it in for Ghent, where we are actually organised an international conference at the end of last month (www.mne09.org) .

Airline:

I do not fly that often, so I am definitely not a good reference for judging the current quality of airlines. I did enjoy the excellent service offered by British Airways when flying to the US, as well as the one of Singapore Airlines when flying to Thailand.

Unfortunately, I have also had my share of scary experiences: once on a flight with Algerian Airlines where one of the engines was losing oil and the cabin crew were clearly getting nervous. On another occasion we were flying from Java to Bali in a plane with bits and pieces welded together like a patchwork quilt, making ominous noises. And last but not least, we once ended up in an overloaded, tiny aeroplane, on a flight from Lamu to Mombassa. The pilot hardly managed to control the aircraft, looked deadly pale and was sweating profusely – not exactly a reassuring sight.

Best kept MICE secret:

Hidden away in the fruit region of Flemish Brabant, you can find the Heerlijckyt van Elsmeren (www.heerlijckyt.be). Their own website states: “The Heerlijckyt does not aspire to be one of the many beautifully located conference or business centres, but an inspiring place where nothing is obligatory”. If anything, it is a place worth discovering for meetings with relatively small groups. You can also spend the night and have a delicious meal.

MICE personality:

I would like to select two, a man and a woman:

Annick Debels of Gent Congres: a great lady and a warm personality. I greatly admire her experience and professionalism.

I also take my hat off to Nicolas Le Brun of Destrée Organisation, a fellow PCO. From a two-person company that he ran together with his mother, I have seen Destrée evolve into a PCO with 6 employees, who do not only organise meetings in Belgium, but everywhere in Europe. Nicolas became BAPCO chairman at a young age (www.bapco.be), and is now President of EFAPCO, the European Federation of Associations of PCOs (www.efapco.eu).

5 Likes, 5 Dislikes

Likes:

1. I absolutely love to go hiking in the mountains, to enjoy nature, as well the peace and quiet – it

is the perfect relaxation holiday, in the ever-pleasant company of my partner of course!

2. Humour! Especially British humour and comedy are my favourites.
3. Literature: I am always reading a book – it is not always easy to find the time, but I try to steal the moments I can to read.
4. I can really enjoy a good glass of wine. I also like to match the right wine with the dishes when I am cooking. The flavours of the food and the wine should really enhance each other to create a heavenly combination.
5. I have been taking Taiji classes for the past two years and I could not live without it anymore. It is beneficial for body and mind and I am convinced it helps you to age in a healthy way.

Dislikes:

1. Some reality shows on TV, I really dislike the into-your-face exhibitionism. I cannot understand why some people want to participate in such programmes and why others are fascinated to watch them.
 2. Being forced to have fun in group, like with carnival celebrations or on New Year's Eve.
 3. Being stuck in a seemingly endless traffic jam on the motorway, with no clue on when it will ever end.
 4. Loud people, especially during the night, who wake me up with their shouting or music.
 5. People who take themselves extremely seriously.
-

Top 5 People I would Like to Meet or have Dinner with...

I have always been fascinated by history and how people lived in ancient times and how they perceived the world. Therefore I enjoy reading historical novels. I am especially fascinated by the way in which women used to live and I realise very well that I am very lucky as a woman to live in this place in the world and in the current era. I have selected 5 women, from different times, whom I would like to ask some questions about their way of life and their view on the world.

1. **Nefertiti**, the Egyptian queen who lived in the 14th century B.C. and who was the wife of farao Achnaton. It is believed that she survived her husband and took over his rule for some time. Fascinating!
2. **Xanthippe**, the wife of Socrates, the Greek philosopher. According to legend, she was a moody and difficult woman who made life impossible for her husband. In reality Xanthippe was probably an intelligent and self-confident woman who grudgingly watched her husband wander around Athens without caring about the material wellbeing of his family. Her portrayal in the novel by Paul Lebeau is a highly recommended read.
3. **Eleanor of Aquitane** (12th century A.D.) was known as one of the most intelligent and beautiful women in Europe of that time. She was queen of France as well as England through her marriages. She is the mother of the legendary Richard the Lionheart. She accompanied her first husband on one of his crusades. It is a fact that she had a great influence on government affairs. She died at the age of 82, which was exceptionally old in those times.
4. **Anne Boleyn**, the second wife of the infamous Henry VIII (16th century A.D.), who beheaded her on a charge of infidelity and incest, as he had set his eye on another woman and Anne had failed to give him a male heir. Historical evidence shows that she was a very intelligent and self-assured woman. It was she who was interested in religious reform and who sparked this interest

in her husband, which ultimately changed the course of English history.

5. And last but not least, **Camille Claudel**, the French sculptress and mistress of Auguste Rodin. Many books and films have already been dedicated to her, from which you cannot help but wonder whether she was not more talented than her lover – but since she was a woman, she was never given the same opportunities.