

Wessel Nieuwenweg

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I was born in a small town up North in the Netherlands (Stadskanaal) and studied Hotel Management in the city of Groningen. Instead of finishing my degree I decided to participate in the International Exchange and Leadership Programme of Up with People (www.upwithpeople.org). Travelling and working around the world within different cultures proved to really be my thing and I ended up working with the organisation in a variety of different roles.

In 2000 I moved to Brussels and decided to finally anchor down. After a short unsuccessful experiment within the Front Office team of one of Brussels 5 star conference hotels I joined the association management world and became a conference coordinator at GIC Management. Further to the merge of GIC with MCI, I worked within their PCO department. In 2006 it was time for me to make a change and I switched from the 'agency side' to the 'client side' and joined the ECCO – the European CanCer Organisation as its Congress Unit Manager. In this role I am responsible for the operations of all our events and congresses.

I live with my partner in the beautiful and bustling community of Ixelles which we truly enjoy. Even though we both travel a lot for work we love globe trotting and visiting (far away) places for personal leisure as well. One of my favorite hobbies is cooking and throwing dinner parties for friends. Recently I've rekindled an 'old' flame of a hobby - competitive ballroom dancing - which keeps me in shape and provides a good outlet from the day to day job related stresses. With an aversion to anything gym, this is an ideal alternative for me.

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Restaurants

A Quick Bite:

For lunch I often have a sandwich or a salad that is ordered online and delivered directly to our office. Living in Ixelles there are lots of places that offer a good and quick take out service. One of my new favorite places for a quick bite to eat is a relatively new bagel place on Rue

Washington, **Sense** (they also do take away). During my time in the USA I would do anything for an Oriental Chicken Salad from the Apple Bees, I guess you could say that was my favorite for a while, I even think there were days that I had just that for lunch and dinner.

A Serious Tete a Tete:

Living in Brussels we sometimes forget how fortunate we are to have such an extraordinary choice of great restaurants to choose from. One of my old time favorites is the Basque restaurant **Fils de Jules** in rue Page www.filsdejules.be. A very small and cosy place I really like in downtown Brussels is **Le Petit Boxeur**. A completely different type of restaurant but certainly worth a visit to have dinner on their terrace on a nice summer's night after a long bicycle ride is **De Wiemel** www.restaurantdewiemel.nl in the Drentse countryside of the Netherlands.

Business, Business, Business:

My favorite place to go for a lunch meeting is **Sepia** (www.sepiarestuarant.be). I tend to go here a lot and must have tasted everything on their menu by now. Because of the friendly service, good quality of food and relaxed atmosphere I see no reason to change this and will definitely return there. Another great place close to our office that I regularly frequent is **Gou** (www.gou.be), it is particularly nice to have one of their excellent salads while enjoying their terrace in summer.

Good Value for Groups:

I do like to take our groups to the **BelgaQueen** (www.belgaqueen.be). It is a nice restaurant and our guests usually enjoy their visits very much. BQ serves great Belgian cuisine - sometimes with a funky twist. Most importantly the staff are used to handling groups which makes it easier on us as the organisers. Another restaurant in Brussels that I have often booked for group entertaining and never had reason to complain is **Scheltema** (www.scheltema.be) located in the historical centre which is particularly great for out of town guests.

When abroad:

Over the years I have been lucky in the sense that I have travelled a lot and consequently had the opportunity dine in some amazing

restaurants around the world. I'd like to share my short list of just some of the places that have made a lasting impression on me:

The Green Tea House in Beijing offers excellent food and service in a very creative, modern and interesting setting - as the name would suggest, green tea is the main ingredient used in their delicious offerings. (www.green-t-house.com) I have been there several times and each visit is a complete surprise and different experience!

Vertigo and **Moon Bar** is an absolute must when visiting Bangkok, this roof top bar & resto on top of the Banyan Tree Hotel serves great food, excellent cocktails and treats visitors to spectacularly unique views.

(<http://www.banyantree.com/bangkok/facilities/dining/vertigo.html>)

The Spice Route restaurant in the stunning Imperial Hotel in New Delhi is a fantastic place to enjoy a sumptuous Asian cuisine dinner. (<http://www.theimperialindia.com/html/dinspiceroute.htm>)

Other favorites:

I tend to struggle when it comes to selecting places since I have so many favorites. Under this section I highlight just a couple of other places or things that I consider to be up there at the top:

For a quick after work beer or late night meeting with friends it has to be the **Roxi** in Rue du Bailli (the food isn't bad either).

A long stroll on a fall afternoon along the beaches in Zeeland polished off with a coffee and apple pie in the quaint little village of **Veere**.

Chicken Satay or King Prawns and a cold beer from the hawker stalls in Singapore.

Eating a real Dutch Hollandse Nieuwe.

Dark and Stormies at the **Pickeled Onion** in Hamilton, Bermuda

Hotel:

One of the most amazing places I have ever stayed at was **Alamsari** (www.alamsari.com) just outside Ubud, Bali. This precious oasis provides all elements for total relaxation and it's a stone's throw away from Ubud, offering all kinds of activities and entertainment. The food served in the small restaurant is simply unforgettable.

Staying at the **Amarvilas** in Agra waking up with views of the Taj Mahal is a once in a life time experience (www.oberoihotels.com).

City:

Within Belgium I would say Brussels would definitely get my vote. As a non Belgian coming to Brussels I must admit I wasn't so impressed with the city at the beginning but the longer I live here the more interesting and attractive the city becomes.

As for Europe, I fell in love with Denmark many moons ago - especially Copenhagen. I guess I could put the love affair down to being from the North of the Netherlands and cultural closeness to the Danes. When visiting Copenhagen it feels like 'coming home' - unfortunate though that the winter days are so short. That said, the summers more than make up for that.

Internationally some of my favorite cities are Vancouver, Melbourne and Beijing.

Country:

I cannot say that I have one real favorite slice of countryside - different countries have different things to offer. As my partner and I both enjoy travelling throughout Asia it would be fair to say that Asia at large is my favorite (holiday) destination. Asia is so diverse and offers a great combination of adventurous travel and luxury pampering at (still) affordable budgets.

Airline:

I am really the type of person that looks for the cheapest and fastest routing possible and am not too picky as to which carrier I fly with. As I tend to sleep the very second the plane is being pushed back from the gate I'd rather fly cheap and spend money 'on the ground'. On a recent trip we decided that we wanted to experience flying on the Airbus A380 which was very nice and certainly comfortable however once taken off and sound asleep it really felt the same as any other

Boeing or regular Airbus.

On a trip to Melbourne a couple of years back I was travelling in business class on a Qantas flight and I must say it was the perfect trip and I still remember it. The personal service and attention provided by the cabin crew was top notch and even the food was A-grade. It must be the most pleasurable flight I've ever been on and would definitely book Qantas again based on this experience.

Best kept MICE secret:

In Brussels I have recently discovered a very nice meeting facility called Hof Termusschen www.hoftermusschen.be. This small scale venue offers a variety of nice and professionally equipped multi purpose meeting rooms and excellent value for money. The staff are a pleasure to work with and extremely flexible and service minded!

MICE personality:

There are many strong and important characters in our industry and I don't necessarily want to single out just one or two of them here. I do believe that the more our industry is maturing the more those involved are becoming true role models and examples to others on all different levels within the industry. This is a great thing for our industry that I hope will continue to prevail for many years to come.

5 Likes, 5 Dislikes

Likes:

I enjoy travelling and discovering new places very much and try to book trips and vacation as much as possible.

While at home I like to cook a nice dinner and invite friends over for a relaxing dinner.

I can also really appreciate a cold and rainy Sunday afternoon with nothing on the agenda but sofa time with a movie, a cup of tea or coffee and no place to go or nothing to do until the following Monday morning.

Simply spending time with friends, whether that be meeting up in a bar for drinks, a weekend trip together, a (dinner) party, going for walks, hanging on the couch for a catch up or reconnecting via facebook.

I am truly honoured that one of my best friends who recently became

a mother asked me to be the godfather for her daughter.

Dislikes:

1. Christmas and all the forced elements and commercialism surrounding it.
 2. People that double park on THE busiest roads and thus completely block traffic during (morning) peak traffic.
 3. Dishonesty and people that lie or deliberately take advantage of others.
 4. Taxi queues or more precisely queues in general and especially lining up for a buffet.
 5. People that take things for granted and who assume things.
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Top 5 People I would Like to Meet or have Dinner with...

That is a tricky question and even though not possible I would really like to have dinner together with both sets of grand parents and my partner. Unfortunately I didn't have the chance to get to know them very well as they passed away when I was relatively young, but think it would have been wonderful to have meet them now as an adult and get to know them better - equally for them to get to know us and the fortunate lives that we are leading.