

## **Anne-Marie De Vos**

With a grandmother who decided to start her working life in a stately home in Eastbourne, my taste for the English language and British culture was fostered from an early age. After my degree of Germanic Philology at the 'Vrije Universiteit' in Brussels, I worked as an assistant and teacher trainer in the English department at the university as well as a language instructor at a college of higher education in Brussels. After 11 years, I left the world of education to join the private sector and went to work for Christian Salvesen PLC, who were taken over by the French Group Norbert Dentressangle two years ago. Since 1993 I have worked as a PA to the Managing Director and since the takeover I also co-ordinate PR matters for Norbert Dentressangle in Belgium. I was lucky I was often given 'carte blanche' as far as choices of meeting venues, incentive destinations and choice of events were concerned, as long as they reflected the values of the Group and were within the – often tight – budgets. This gave me the opportunity to go scouting for some value-for-money locations, within a reasonable distance from the company's offices in Zellik.

---

### **A quick bite**

Two Italians: *Al Peperone* in Wemmel: excellent food, friendly waiters and good old-fashioned reservations by phone only: 02/460 75 20 and *Made in Italy* In Dilbeek, right next to exit 13 (equally no website; tel. 02/463 44 51).

*Brasserie De 3 Fonteynen* in Koningslo, a converted orangerie: offers excellent food within a great atmosphere ([www.dedriefonteynen.be](http://www.dedriefonteynen.be)). In summer meals are served on a huge terrace with a view on the English garden.

*In den Appelboom* in Anderlecht is only 3 minutes from the ring, but gives the impression to be in the middle of the country. The food is excellent and offers something to everyone's taste, even home cuisine such as 'stoemp'. ([www.indenappelboom.be](http://www.indenappelboom.be)).

### **A serious tête à tête**

For their combination of excellent food and meticulous service:

Herbert Robbrecht in Vrasene ([www.herbertrobbrecht.be](http://www.herbertrobbrecht.be)): true craftsmanship.

Restaurant La Provence in Temse ([www.restaurantlaprovence.be](http://www.restaurantlaprovence.be)).

La Butte aux Bois: just exquisite ([www.labutteauxbois.be](http://www.labutteauxbois.be)) and this is enhanced by the extremely friendly welcome of the host.

## **Business and pleasure**

Auberge Napoleon in Meise and Michel in Groot-Bijgaarden are regularly in demand.

## **Groups**

Restaurant: for small groups (up to 10 people) *Belga Queen* in Ghent has definitely a high X-factor ([www.belgaqueen.be](http://www.belgaqueen.be)). I did not try the Brussels version of the restaurant (yet). Truly excellent food and interesting décor.

Seminars/meetings: I can definitely recommend *Kobbegem Hof* in Kobbegem (Asse) 5 mins from the Zellik exit on the Brussels ring ([www.europconcept.be](http://www.europconcept.be)). Excellent service by the host and his wife for a correct price. The building is a renovated farmhouse with a classy interior giving a 'home' feeling.

## **Hotel**

As long as the place has a luxury feel, I am happy. This could be a small B&B, where the background music for evening dinner is soft live harp music (*Pentbontren* in Cardigan, Wales, tel. +44 (0)1239810248, no website) or the more breathtaking *Hotel Capo d'Orso* in Sardinia where breakfast is served under the olive trees with angelic harp music to slowly bring you to the brightness of the day after the most luscious dinners the previous evening ([www.hotelcapodorso.com](http://www.hotelcapodorso.com)).

A most surprising experience is an opera dinner at *Château Altembrouck*. The place is an absolute gem, hidden in magnificent surroundings ([www.altembrouck.nl](http://www.altembrouck.nl)). Open fireplaces, exquisite food and warm hospitality and.... opera singers with a serious track record! The best kept secret in Belgium.

*La Residencia* in Deià, Mallorca is a secluded place in a small paradise. When they say candlelit dinner in the restaurant El Olivo, they mean candlelight from huge chandeliers dripping on the wooden floor.... The place gives a true feeling of being in a film set, where Zorro would suddenly sweep from one side of the room to the other....([www.hotel-laresidencia.com](http://www.hotel-laresidencia.com)).

Château St. Gerlach ([www.chateauhotels.nl](http://www.chateauhotels.nl)) is one of those addresses offering excellent value for money. Extremely friendly service, super food and great meeting facilities as well as free use of the spa!

### **City**

Antwerp: for its lovely shops and numerous interesting little restaurants.

Barcelona and London for their buzz, atmosphere, culture, food and history.

Granada: for its Alhambra which mesmerized me.

Edinburgh and Prague, for everything worth visiting being within walking distance.

Funchal, surprisingly small scale beautiful.

Next on the list to be discovered: Valencia.

### **Country**

Spain, no doubt.....– somewhere la movida still hangs around everywhere

My dream is to live part-time in Belgium and part-time in Andalucía, where I want to go back again and again. ...

For temporary seduction only: Bali and Japan.

### **Incentive destination**

The success of an incentive is the formula, the concept, the right coaches, not the destination. However, I found Mallorca a surprising incentive destination offering lots of possibilities. I now understand why Chopin lost his heart to the island and hid away in the beautiful Valdemossa....

---

## 5 Likes

1. My son, who found his way in the wonderful world of multi-media design.
2. My mother, who is 80 and who after a full day's trotting along in the city of Maastricht ([www.vvv-maastricht.eu](http://www.vvv-maastricht.eu)), asks whether we are already going home (nowhere else have I found such an excellent tea blend as that of Blanche Dael, 'Droum vaan Mestreech').
3. My friends
4. Rollerblading along the river Scheldt on hot summer days, with pitstops at *Restaurant 't Scheldehoofd* on their terrace on the water in Branst ([www.scheldehoofd.be](http://www.scheldehoofd.be)) or drinking an 'Eskimo' at Paviljoen De Notelaer in Hingene.
5. My job

## 5 Dislikes

Waste: Congratulations to the brains behind the idea of 'The Promise'! ([www.dontspoiltheparty.org](http://www.dontspoiltheparty.org)); arrogance; noise; non-authenticity; manipulation

---

## MICE personality

One lady immediately springs to mind: Myriam Winnepenninckx of the Switzerland Convention & Incentive Bureau, who, through her great infectious positive personality, succeeded to pass on her enthusiasm for Switzerland ([www.MySwitzerland.com/mice](http://www.MySwitzerland.com/mice)). I will never forget the 'Ode to Aude' in the Château de Grandson.... ([www.chateau-grandson.ch](http://www.chateau-grandson.ch))

---

## **10 People I would like to invite at my dinner table**

Herman van Veen: for tempting with his poetry & mesmerizing voice.

Karel De Gucht, for his brains, wit and wonderful stubbornness.

Tessa Vermeiren: for her straightforward ideas.

Alain de Botton: for his easily digestible philosophy.

Sébastien Parotte: for filling the area with his impressive personality and voice, and to sing opera in between the courses.

Dani Klein: a lady with a story and unforgettable voice.

Martine Tanghe: for remaining her true self and not succumbing to the madness of plastic surgery under media pressure.

Dixie Dansercoer: for telling me how it really feels on the ice all alone.

Joanna Lumley: for convincing me in her documentary to go and see the northern lights.

Stijn Meuris: for the timbre in his voice and his fascination and enthusiasm for understanding space.