

VAN OYS MAASTRICHT RETREAT | EXPERIENCE LIFE AT A SLOWER PACE

HEART OF SLOW
THE NEW ART OF LIVING WELL



How a historic castle estate in the south of the Netherlands is redefining luxury travel through the principles of Cittaslow emphasising local, conscious and sustainable hospitality. Recognised as a *Leading Hotels of the World Sustainable Leader*, the property focuses on protecting nature and tradition through the art of slow living. Following its successful opening, Van Oys Maastricht Retreat continues its journey with the inauguration of the *Atelier du Terroir*, reinforcing its commitment to the region's rich flavours, craftsmanship and cultural heritage.

As travellers increasingly seek experiences that prioritise wellbeing, authenticity and meaningful connection over fast-paced tourism, a new movement is quietly emerging in the south of the Netherlands. At Van Oys Maastricht Retreat, the principles of the international Cittaslow philosophy have been transformed into what the destination calls *Heart of Slow* – a contemporary approach to travel centred around nature, gastronomy, culture and regeneration.

Located in the rolling hills of South Limburg, the 5-star superior hotel Van Oys Maastricht Retreat draws inspiration from a region where many of the values now associated with longevity, healthspan, slow living and the world's Blue Zones have been part of everyday life for generations. Here, regional food culture, strong communities, cultural identity, movement and a close connection to nature are not trends, but a way of life.

At Van Oys' core lies the philosophy of Cittaslow that promotes sustainability, regional identity, cultural heritage, social connection and quality of life. These values are not simply explained – they are experienced. *"Heart of Slow is not a marketing concept for us; it is a mindset,"* says Marc Alofs, Managing Director of Van Oys Maastricht Retreat. *"The region, its history, its producers, its landscapes and its culture form the foundation of the entire experience. Our task was not to preserve these qualities in a museum-like way, but to translate them into a contemporary form of travel."*

A CASTLE ESTATE REIMAGINED

The story begins at Kasteel Oost, a historic estate whose origins date back to the early 13th century. Over the centuries, it served as a noble residence, agricultural centre and cultural gathering place. Rather than creating a new luxury hotel, the vision behind Van Oys was to carefully restore and reimagine this historic landmark for a new generation of travellers. Original materials including Limburg marlstone, natural stone and oak timber have been preserved wherever possible, while the contemporary Carré building respectfully interprets the estate's architectural heritage through modern design. Surrounded by historic gardens, waterways and centuries-old trees, the estate creates a seamless connection between architecture and landscape. The surrounding region is not merely a backdrop but an integral part of the experience, with local producers, artisans and creatives actively shaping the guest journey.

A NEW GOURMET DESTINATION IN THE BENELUX

Few aspects of Heart of Slow are expressed as powerfully as gastronomy. Within a remarkably short time, Van Oys Maastricht Retreat has established itself as one of the most exciting culinary destinations in the Benelux region through its two distinctive restaurant concepts: the two Michelin-starred Create by Guido Braeken and Maes, Cuisine du Terroir. At Create, Guido Braeken combines international influences with exceptional craftsmanship and precision, creating a contemporary interpretation of fine dining built on respect for ingredients, technique and time. Create has been honoured for its outstanding wine programme in Wine Spectator's 2026 Restaurant Awards, which celebrate the world's best restaurants for wine.

The retreat's acclaimed Four Hands Dinners further elevate the experience, bringing together some of Europe's most respected chefs. Recent guest appearances by Michelin-starred chefs Christoph Rainer and Silvio Germann created a culinary dialogue between regions, traditions and perspectives. At Maes, the focus turns to the region itself. Guided by the philosophy of Cuisine du Terroir, menus celebrate local ingredients sourced from Limburg and the wider Euregio region. The seasons dictate the menu, while each dish tells the story of the landscape from which it originates.

The New Atelier du Terroir

Further strengthening this connection, the new opening of the Atelier du Terroir marks the next chapter for Van Oys. Located within the estate's historic vaulted cellars, the Atelier introduces a range of new culinary experiences, from a Chef's Table and hands-on cookery courses to masterclasses, lectures and workshops inspired by South Limburg's rich gastronomic heritage.

"With Atelier du Terroir, we are taking the next step," says Marc Alofs. "Food becomes a connection between people, producers, landscapes and culture."

RECONNECTING WITH NATURAL RHYTHMS

Another pillar of Heart of Slow is regeneration. Opened in early 2026, Oysana Spa & Sports combines modern insights from sleep science, stress management and longevity research with the restorative qualities of the Maas region. Guided by the philosophy *The Art of LifeFulness*, Oysana integrates movement, recovery, nature and wellbeing into a holistic approach to vitality. Guests can explore a fine concept spa with personalised programmes, outdoor experiences, cycling and hiking routes through the South Limburg hills, while regenerative therapies including infrared heat, floating, sound and vibration treatments support sleep quality, resilience and mental clarity.

CULTURE AS A WAY OF LIFE

Alongside gastronomy and wellbeing, culture forms a central part of the Van Oys experience. Located just minutes from Maastricht, a city renowned for its rich cultural heritage and the world-famous André Rieu concerts on the Vrijthof, the retreat actively embraces the region's artistic traditions. Building on Kasteel Oost's history as a gathering place for artists and creatives, Van Oys is developing a cultural programme featuring exhibitions, literary events, concerts and academic gatherings. Among the first highlights is an exclusive performance by Anneleen Lenaerts, principal harpist of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

HEART OF SLOW

The estate's historic architecture preserves the spirit and identity of the place. The surrounding region shapes everyday experiences. Its culinary offerings bring provenance to life through flavour. The Atelier du Terroir creates meaningful connections, while Oysana guides guests back to their natural rhythm. Art and culture open new perspectives and inspire discovery.



Together, these elements form the Heart of Slow – a contemporary vision of living well that brings sustainability, gastronomy, community and nature together in one holistic experience.

The future of travel lies not in experiencing more, but in experiencing more consciously. Van Oys Maastricht Retreat is therefore more than a destination; it is an invitation to rediscover time, nature, culture, and community as the true luxuries of modern life – treasures that become ever more valuable in an increasingly fast-paced world.



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