

FEDECRAIL “BELGIUM 2017” CONFERENCE
THURSDAY(Evening) 04 May–TUESDAY(Afternoon) 09 May 2017
(Add-on Visits to Germany and The Netherlands - Wednesday 10+Thursday 11 May 2017)
Organised in collaboration with Febelrail

(1) - PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Foreword - The 2017 conference will mark our return to Belgium, the country of our inaugural conference in 1994 and our registered ‘legal base’. For logistical reasons, our conference will now be based in the Diamond City of Antwerp, located north of Brussels in the region of Flanders and close to the Dutch border. There are excellent public transport services and extra days before or after the conference for further private exploration are recommended. At the end of the main conference programme, we offer our traditional add-on tour to both Germany and the Netherlands.

Thu 04 May -The conference programme starts with our usual Opening Reception in the early evening at the Hotel Leopold, Antwerp. The various Fedecrail Working Groups will meet earlier in the day. The Hotel Leopold, together with the Hotel Astoria and the Hotel Antwerp City are this year’s conference Hotels located near to each other on the edge of the Diamond District. All are about 10 minutes walk from the Centraal Station with nearby public transport connections.

Fri 05 May - Our main working day with the Business Sessions. This year the core themes are “Working with External Bodies” and “Coal and the Environment” (more details below). Details of the alternative Partners Programme are shown below.

Sat 06 May - The General Assembly will be held in the morning, with an Antwerp tour for partners. In the afternoon all participants will travel to the Stoomtrein Dendermonde-Puurs(SDP) for a visit and a ride in their vintage steam train.

Sun 07 May - We will make a tram tour of Antwerp with vintage trams from the Vlaams Tram and Bus Museum. We then travel by scheduled train to Ghent where we are collected by preserved buses of Nostalbus for a transfer to the Stoomcentrum Maldegem(SCM) for a visit and special steam train ride.

Mon 08 May – We travel south by train to Charleroi in the region of Wallonia. Here we transfer to the Vicinal Tram Museum created by the Association pour la Sauvegarde du Vicinal(ASVi) for a visit and rides on their two tram lines. After our visit we continue to Mariembourg to visit the Chemin de Fer à Vapeur des Trois Vallées (CFV3V) for a special steam train. Returning to Charleroi we travel back to Antwerp by scheduled train.

Tue 09 May - This programme brings us by train direct to the SNCB TrainWorld Museum in Brussels to experience this new generation national railway museum. We will be collected from the Museum by Vintage Trams from the extensive Brussels Tram Museum collection which will bring us to their Museum for a visit followed by a continuation of the tour. In the early evening we return to Antwerp by scheduled train. The programme will allow delegates returning home early to leave during the afternoon.

Post-Conference Tour - In accordance with Fedecrail tradition, our final two days provide an opportunity to visit member railways in countries adjacent to the conference venue. For 2017 we have planned interesting programmes to Germany and The Netherlands.

Wed 10 May - Visit to Germany and the Dutch Province of Limburg. Travel from Antwerp by scheduled train to Hasselt and Genk where we transfer to road to cross the border. Arriving in Germany we visit the Selfkantbahn which is the last narrow gauge railway in Nordrhein-Westfalen and have a special steam train from Schierwaldenrath to Gillrath and return. Crossing the border back into The Netherlands, we plan to arrive at Kerkrade for a special train on the South Limburg Steam Railway(ZLSM) to their depot and workshops at Simpelveld before continuing to Valkenburg for transfer to road for the crossing back into Belgium. We return from Hasselt by scheduled train to Antwerp to be ready to go north into The Netherlands on the next day.

Thu 11 May - We travel from Antwerp by train across the border to Rotterdam. We will visit the SSN main line steam depot and workshops before transferring to historic trams for a tour through Rotterdam to the city depot and workshop of the Rotterdam Tram Museum. From the museum we travel by road to Ouddorp

to visit the RTM Museum and ride to its southern terminus near Scharendijke. For our final visit we continue south to the Stoomtrein Goes-Borsele (SGB) for a special steam train before returning to Antwerp in the evening.

It will be possible for delegates to leave the programme in Rotterdam in the middle of the day to start their journeys home.

Business Sessions - The venue for our business sessions will be Antwerp University in the centre of the Old City. The venue is within about 15 minutes walk from the conference hotels and tram routes 10 and 11 that pass the front of the Centraal Station stop nearby.

Business Session Speakers – There are several themes for our Business Sessions this year reflecting the number of significant issues that are presently important for our industry:-

- 1) Working with External Bodies
- 2) Protection of Mobile Heritage
- 3) Coal and the Environment
- 4) European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018

(2) – PRE-CONFERENCE MEETINGS

Fedecrail Council will meet on the afternoon of Wednesday 03 May and the morning of Thursday 04 May. In addition meetings of Working Groups (Heritage Operating Group, Strategy Working Group, Tramway Operating Group and Environment Working Group) will take place on the afternoon of Thursday 04 May and participants will receive details direct. Official representatives attending these groups must indicate this on their Conference Booking Forms so that adequate facilities can be provided.

(3) – PARTNERS' PROGRAMME

On Friday 05 May a full day guided visit programme will be arranged to the UNESCO World Heritage City Centre of Bruges in West Flanders. The visit is planned to include a boat trip and lunch.

For Saturday morning there will be a guided visit to the historic city centre of Antwerp before joining the delegates for lunch at Antwerp University.

(4) - HOTEL ACCOMMODATION

Hotel Leopold (Local ** rating), Hotel Astoria and Hotel Antwerp City (both local *** rating).** We have selected three hotels in the same Prem Group all about 10 minutes walk from the Centraal Station and convenient for public transport. The hotels are within about 5 minutes walk of each other. All have comfortable en-suite facilities. The *** hotels are close to bar and restaurant facilities. The **** hotel has a bar and restaurant (limited menu).

(5) TRAVEL INFORMATION

OUTWARD JOURNEY—Antwerp is easily reached by air, rail or road.

AIR-

Antwerp Airport has limited regional air services. Frequent local buses link the airport to the City. (NOTE: the Airport Express buses that stop at the front of the Centraal Station are to Brussels (Zaventem) Airport and NOT Antwerp Airport!!).

Brussels (Zaventem) Airport has two direct trains each hour direct to Antwerp Centraal Station taking about 30 minutes. An express bus also operates from the airport to Antwerp and stops in front of the Centraal Station.

Brussels South (Charleroi) Airport has a bus service to Charleroi Sud Station from which two direct trains each hour run to Antwerp Centraal with a journey time of about 100 minutes.

Rotterdam Airport has a bus service to the Main Station. Thalys (30 minutes travel) and InterCity (60 minutes travel) trains provide direct services to Antwerp Centraal.

Amsterdam (Schiphol) Airport has direct Thalys (about 1 hour travel) and InterCity (about 2 hours travel) trains to Antwerp Centraal.

RAIL –Frequent SNCB trains from all parts of Belgium as well as Thalys and NS/SNCB trains from Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Paris. Eurostar trains to Brussels Midi offer an “All Belgian Stations” add-on fare that can be used to travel onward from Brussels up to 24 hours after arrival. The return to Brussels

can be up to 24 hours before the departure of the Eurostar service. These tickets are not valid on Thalys or ICE trains.

ROAD – From 1st February 2017 Antwerp becomes a Low Emissions Zone (LEZ) and all cars must be registered before entering the zone (Belgian and Dutch cars are automatically registered). Only cars that meet Euro3 levels or better will be permitted in the city.

Parking in Antwerp is difficult. The hotels have access to a nearby car park but a charge of €19 per day is made and no pre-booking or guaranteed space is offered.

HOMEWARD JOURNEY –

From Antwerp – As for outward journey.

From Brussels on Tuesday 09 May afternoon – Independent Public Transport Tram/Metro transfer after lunch from Tram Museum to Brussels Midi/Central/Nord for trains to Airport or National and International destinations.

From Rotterdam on Thursday 11 May afternoon – Public Transport to Central Station or Rotterdam Airport. Trains to Amsterdam, Antwerp or Brussels.

It will be possible during some of the days to leave the programme to start return journeys. Please consult the Conference Team for detailed advice.

(6) CONFERENCE FEES + BOOKING CONDITIONS + USEFUL ADVICE

Main Programme - Our most popular option in recent years is the Business Sessions + Study Visits Programme for the week (Thursday 04 to Tuesday 09 May this year). A Partners' Programme option will be provided for the business session periods on Friday 05 May (daytime) and Saturday 06 May (morning).

Mindful of heavy demands on both diaries and wallets, quotations will also be given willingly for various shorter periods in addition to the full Main Programme.

Please return completed booking forms **as soon as possible** to John and Liz Fuller by Email / Fax / First Class Post / Air Mail Post. Please note that closing dates for **All Bookings is Friday 17 March 2017**. Later bookings may be accepted if space is available but this cannot be guaranteed.

Insurance - As always, you are advised to take out appropriate travel insurance to cover your travel and accommodation and your participation in both the conference and related activities. EU citizens should also bring their EHIC health card. You should be aware that in 2010 a reimbursement claim was refused to a participant by an insurer as the insurance company maintained that the conference constituted a "Business Activity" rather than a "Holiday" that would have been covered by their holiday travel insurance

(7) ENQUIRIES / FURTHER INFORMATION - Please contact the Conference Team:-

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