

Support Material

Women in Mons, past and present



Co-funded by
the European Union

Tour Title: Women in Mons, past and present

General Information



Primary Themes: Women, Representation in Public Space



Target Audience: From 16 years old, for a group of 3 to 25 people.
No prior knowledge necessary.



Languages: English, French, German, Serbian, Hungarian, Polish



City / Country: Mons, Belgium



Starting location: Square Franklin Delano Roosevelt



Distance: 2,4 km



Estimated Duration

Pre-tour activity: 15-20 minutes

The tour: 2h00

Post-tour activity: 15 minutes (main debriefing) + additional activities



Material needed: At least one phone with internet connection for 2 people, headphones, a piece of paper for each participant (with something solid to write on it), some felt-tip pens or colored pencils.



Accessibility Level: Easy

Support Material

Learning Objectives

This tour explores the role of women in shaping Mons, from the Middle Ages to today. As participants walk through the city, they discover the stories of individual women who influenced religion, education, activism, culture... often quietly or in ways that were overlooked. These personal stories reveal how women have been represented or made invisible in the city's history, highlighting the links between gender, memory, recognition, and participation.

Objectives

Civic Knowledge

- Understand how women have been (and are) represented in Mons' history and public spaces.

Critical Thinking

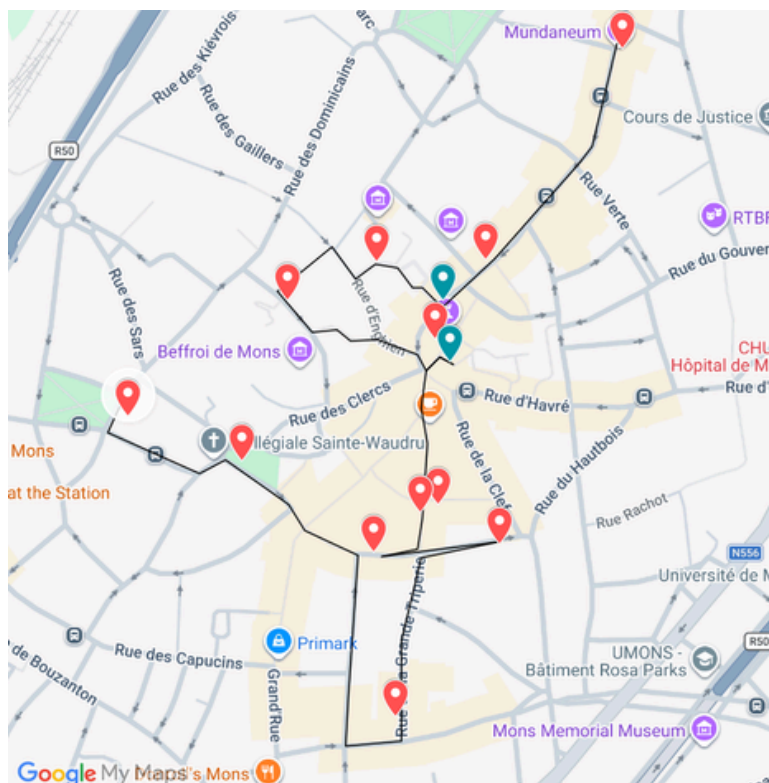
- Examine cultural heritage from different perspectives, emphasizing the perspective of women, but also underlining the diversity of perspectives within this group.
- Connect historical events and figures to contemporary issues of gender representation.
- Question assumptions and biases about gender roles in public spaces and society.

Civic Engagement

- Recognize the role of citizens in influencing cultural and public spaces.
- Raise awareness of the responsibilities of citizens to promote inclusive cultural heritage.
- Identify opportunities to make cultural heritage and public spaces more inclusive.
- Encourage active participation in community initiatives that highlight women's contributions.

Support Material

Practical Information



Stop	Location	Type of Activity	Estimated Time
1.Saint Waltrude, the founder of the city	The Collegiate Church of Saint Waltrude	Non digital puzzle - knowledge based and observation	4 minutes
2.Two important communities of women	At the top of Ramp Saint Waltrude	Genially to explore content and final digital quiz	5 minutes
3.Redefining the link between women and heritage	Picardie Laique, 44 rue de la Grande Triperie	Canva Digital written content and podcast. No puzzle.	6 minutes
4.Women and Education	Polytechnic Faculty, 9 rue de Houdain	Digital quiz (true/false, ranking, multiple choices, fill the blank)	5 minutes (7 with discussion)

Support Material

Stop	Location	Type of Activity	Estimated Time
5.Female Representations in Street Art	Street Art rue des Fripiers, rue de Coupe, Marché aux Herbes	Observation challenge. Critical thinking challenge. Creative challenge. No digital component	12 minutes (depends on the number of participants)
6.The Artefacto Store	Artefacto Store, 38 rue de la Coupe	No challenge, no digital component	2 minutes
7.The Grand Place: Folklore and inclusion	Grand Place	Video with text to explore content. Observation challenge.	10 minutes (5' video, 5' challenge)
8.Historical figures and street names	Rue Marguerite Bervoets	Genially activity: put yourself in the shoes of Marguerite.	5 minutes
9.Witches and prejudice	La Chapelle du condamné (50°27'19.0"N 3°57'04.3"E)	Audio document to discover the story of Marguerite Tiste	5 minutes
10.Art and recognition with Cécile Douard	ARTS ² , 4 rue de Nimy	Creative challenge (with material to draw)	5 minutes
11. An institution reinterpreting its heritage	The Mundaneum	No digital content, no challenge	3 minutes

Remark: The estimated time doesn't include the reflection questions suggested in this document.

Support Material

Accessibility

The tour route is generally accessible, with no stairs along the way. However, Mons is a medieval city, so the streets are not entirely flat and are mostly paved, which can make the route challenging for wheelchair users or people with visual impairments. Sidewalks can be narrow in some places, which might require to walk on the road. The city center is mostly pedestrian, but it can become crowded during peak hours, which may affect movement. While all sites can be viewed from the outside, the tour generally does not involve entering buildings, so most participants can enjoy the route without additional obstacles. If you choose to enter the collegiate church, the door on the left side provides access for people with reduced mobility but it is not always open.

The tour combines written materials, audio, videos, and interactive activities, using both digital and non-digital content to engage a variety of learning styles.

All content (including fonts, contrast, text size, and interactive elements) has been designed to accommodate people with Specific Learning Disorders.

More sensitive content: feminism (all tour), LGBTQIA+ inclusion (stop 6) and witch trials (stop 9) are topics that are tackled in this tour. Pay extra attention to creating a safe environment for discussion on these topics. See specific facilitation notes in this document.

Safety

Overall, there are no major safety concerns. However, narrow sidewalks in some areas may require walking on the road, so participants should pay close attention to traffic.

Support Material



Before the Tour

Total duration: 15–20 minutes

Objective: Activate prior knowledge about representation in public space, encourage reflection on unequal representation, and place participants in an investigative mindset before the tour.

Group Management: Works with any group size. For large groups (15+): use sticky notes. For small groups: oral brainstorming is sufficient.

Material needed: A board to write the answers, pen and paper (and sticky notes with a big group)

1. Warm-Up, “Who Comes to your Mind?” (5 minutes)

1. Ask participants “Can you name a famous person related to [name of the city of your school] ?”. Let participants freely suggest names.
2. Write all answers on a board or flipchart. Separate men and women in two columns without explicitly saying or writing it.
3. Ask follow-up questions:
 - How do you know this person?
 - Where have you seen or heard about them? (school, street names, monuments, media, family knowledge, etc.)

If an imbalance appears between men and women, do not comment or interpret it during the collection of ideas.

If participants lack ideas, you can first give general suggestions (politicians, artists, athletes, historical figures...) and if it is still not working, you can ask instead: “Do you know a statue, a building or a street named after someone?”

You can then ask them:

- Was it easy or difficult to find names?
- What does this tell us about how we remember people in a city?

Do not provide conclusions. The aim is to raise curiosity.

Support Material

2. Group Reflection : "Is Public Space Neutral?" (10 minutes)

Group Management: Divide participants into small groups of 2-4 people.

Main question: Ask them to reflect on the question "Is a city a neutral space?"
Give them some sub-questions to guide them:

- Who seems represented in public spaces?
- What kinds of achievements are usually celebrated?
- What elements of a city communicate interest, values or priorities? (statues street names, buildings, advertising, lighting, public art...)

Plan around 5 minutes of group discussion and 5 minutes of collective sharing (depending on the size of the group). Come back on the first exercise in this discussion too.

Underlying Assumptions Being Questioned (do not present them explicitly.)

- Cities are objective or neutral.
- Public space represents everyone equally.
- History is fixed rather than constructed.

3. Transition Into the Tour: Narrative Introduction (5 minutes)

If you want, you can already present the letter of the introduction of the tour to raise curiosity and put the participants in an exploratory mindset. Present Victoria and her finding and let the participants read and/or listen to the content of the letter.

While walking in the city, encourage them to observe and keep notes of:

- who appears in the city's narratives, even for elements that are not mentioned in the content of the tour
- what surprises them

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During the Tour



General facilitation: In the booklet, the narrative part around each stop is in a different color.

For each stop, you will find a series of reflection questions. You can choose the ones you like and discuss them with the participants at the stop, between two stops in a more informal way or later on, after the tour.

Stop 1 : The Collegiate Church of Saint Waltrude



Facilitation tips: For the final game, you can share the hint with the participants if they couldn't find the words after 2 minutes or if relevant (for people with dyslexia for example).



Cultural Heritage Support Notes

- Waltrude was born in 620-625 and lived around 70 years
- Five miracles have been attributed to her since her death:
 - The rescue of a child who had been thrown into a sewer by a servant (1491).
 - The healing of a sick woman who had made a pilgrimage to Saint Waltrude (1512)
 - The end of the plague epidemic of 1349.
 - The control of a fire in the Grand-Rue (1574).
 - The release of four brewers accused of a capital crime without formal evidence (16th century)
- Basic presentation of the "Ducasse", also called Doudou, can be found on the website of the "Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles"



Solutions

Hint:

PROCESSION
MIRACLE
RELICS



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Reflection Questions

- 1) Waltrude had influence without ruling, without violence, without wealth.
 - What kinds of power are valued today?
 - Why are “quiet” forms of power often forgotten?
- 2) Waltrude’s life is partly historical, partly invented.
 - Does a story need to be true to be meaningful?
 - Are national or local myths dangerous or necessary?
- 3) Many people follow the Ducasse without being religious.
 - Why do secular societies still keep rituals?
 - What other rituals do we still have today?

Stop 2 : Communities of Women – Top of Ramp Saint Waltrude



Facilitation tips: After the introduction of the stop, invite the participants to scan the QR code and give them around 5 minutes to explore the content and do the quiz at the end. You can choose to have one phone per person or you can make groups of 2 people.



Cultural Heritage Support Notes

- The Canonesses had to prove four, then eight, and finally (1769) sixteen quarters of nobility. One important Canoness was Louise de Stolberg-Gedern.
- Originally religious, the Chapter of Saint Waltrude became secularised around the 10th-11th centuries.
- Canonesses could marry, but marriage normally meant leaving the chapter. They would then resign or renounce their prebend (income linked to the chapter) and keep honorary prestige linked to their former position. They were actually very courted due to their status.
- Some former Beguines wished to enter religious life and left the beguinages to form two congregations: the Poor Sisters and the Black Sisters. They were known for their work in hospitals and for visiting sick people in their homes



Reflection Questions

- What does economic independence mean today? How important is it for shaping your own life, identity, or influence in your community?
- Today, what responsibility do individuals or communities have to contribute to society? How do we decide which jobs or roles are “valuable”? Why are some still seen as masculine or feminine?
- Via their status or their actions, both groups had influence in a male-dominated world. Today, how do women exercise power and influence in social, political, or professional life? (You can give examples). Are there still “hidden rules” they have to navigate?

Support Material

Stop 3 : Picardie Laïque, 44 rue de la Grande Triperie



Facilitation tips: When walking there, let the participants point out the “Soeurs Noires” street and give a short explanation if you want. At the stop, participants discover the first digital page on their phone. Then share the transition sentence out loud and invite them to have a look at the second page. Finally, make sure they check the podcast suggestion at the end. If the group is small and the street quiet (which is often the case), you can play the podcast for everyone. Otherwise, participants can listen to it in small groups or even individually with headphones.

Moreover, this stop includes a feminist vision of patrimony (the one of Mélanie André). Give the participants the chance to share their views on the matter. Leave room for different opinions and perceptions but facilitate the conversation to avoid disrespectful behaviours or comments.



Cultural Heritage Support Notes

- “Les Soeurs Noires”: Beguines who got the right from the bishop to enter religion, but who got driven out by the Canonesses. More information on the [website of the Maison de la Mémoire from Mons.](#)



Reflection Questions

- Do you think expectations for boys and girls are still different today?
- What do you think of the idea of having women as a topic for the “Journées du Patrimoine”? And what about the “Journées du Matrimoine”? Good or bad idea?
- Do you think words really matter? Can changing a word change the way we see history?

Stop 4: Polytechnic Faculty, 9 rue de Houdain



Facilitation tips: This stop is built around a timed quiz with 4 questions and a final conclusion to fill in. The idea is to get a better idea of the evolution of the rights and achievements of women in education, at a national and local level. This helps put local history into perspective. The participants can do the quiz on their own or you can decide to make teams (maximum 4 people with one phone).

After the quiz, do not hesitate to ask the participants about the most surprising or interesting facts they have discovered. You can also discuss the conclusion with the participants.

Support Material



Cultural Heritage Support Notes

- Keep in mind that Marie Popelin will be mentioned later on (at the Mundaneum stop). You can find more information about her [on the RTBF website.](#)



Reflection Questions

- Is having access to education the same as having equal opportunities?
- Do you think institutions change when the people leading them change? Why or why not?

Between 1837 (creation of the engineering school) and 1945 (first woman engineer in Mons), more than 100 years passed.

- What does this long delay tell us about how social change happens?
- What kinds of invisible barriers might still exist today in relation to education?

Stop 5: Street Art rue des Fripiers, rue de Coupe, Marché aux Herbes



Facilitation tips: Come back on your steps and let the participants find the first piece of art (El Dorado) thanks to the clue. In big group, ask them to answer the questions of step 1 from the activity. Add complementary information that you can find below (2').

Then continue walking up the street. Invite the participants to pay attention to all murals along the way, including the ones on both sides of the "Place du Marché aux Herbes". In a big group, ask them to answer once more the questions of step 1 from the activity. Add complementary information that you can find below for the piece of art on Place du Marché aux Herbes (5').

Participants answer the questions of step 3 in big group or in small groups of 3-4 people if they are too many (2').

In groups of 3-4 people, participants get 1 minute to complete the creative challenge of step 4. Each group gets 20 seconds to present their idea(s).



Cultural Heritage Support Notes

Mural 1 – Eldorado By Duek Glez (2019)

Inspired by Mexican culture:

- Women are seen as nurturers of the family
- Linked to nature and spirituality with the sacred quetzal bird
- The woman is the connection point between all natural elements
- The woman appears as beautiful, symbolic, life-giving.

Support Material

Mural 2: "True Story" by Calvin Dussart and Charles Myncke (2015)

See description in the booklet

Stop 6: Artefacto Store



Facilitation tips: Try to spot the shop beforehand and make sure the participants identify which logo we are talking about.

This stop tackles the topic of the inclusion of the LGBTQI+ community. It is probably the most sensitive stop. This topic may evoke different opinions or personal experiences. Encourage respectful listening and remind participants that the aim is to understand diverse perspectives, not to debate anyone's identity or rights. Avoid assumptions about participants' identities or experiences, and gently redirect any disrespectful or discriminatory comments. Allow people to pass if they prefer not to contribute.

If you want to go further and if it is adapted to your group, this stop can be the occasion to introduce the idea of "intersectionality".



Cultural Heritage Support Notes

To further develop the concept of intersectionality, you can use examples such as Eliane Morissens (a local Belgian teacher and activist who lost her job at school after having publicly stated that she had been denied a promotion because of her lesbianism) or Joëlle Kapompole (Belgium's first Black female senator who was from Mons and raised in the region of the Borinage). See more information in the references.

Stop 7: Grand Place



Facilitation tips: In groups of 2-3 people, participants watch a video of the "Doudou" and press a button each time the video stops in order to progressively discover the place of women in the local folklore.

For the challenge, tell the participants to remain visible from the Grand Place. You can also decide to walk all together around and give them clues.



Cultural Heritage Support Notes

See stop 1 for more information about the "Doudou". Here, we focus more especially on the "Combat du Lumeçon".

Support Material



Solutions

One street art painting is hidden between "La Maison des Brasseurs" and "Le Verde", in the small alley. There you can see the Chinchins (1), a White Man (2) and a Devil (3).



The other one is composed of the two handrails in front of the Municipality Building. They represent Saint Georges (4) and the Dragon (5).



Total: 5



Reflection Questions

- Tradition has evolved many times. Why is gender balance such a difficult change? If it's a role, why should gender matter?
- Why are some roles celebrated and others kept invisible?
- Can tradition evolve without losing its identity?
- Who should decide the future of traditions: the community, the youth, local institutions, international institutions...?

Stop 8: Marguerite Bervoets Street



Facilitation tips: In groups of 3-4 people, participants explore Marguerite Bervoets' story by putting themselves in her shoes thanks to a digital activity. At each step, encourage them to discuss what they would do before checking what really happened.

If you want, you can read out loud the excerpts from her letters presented in Chapter 4 of the activity.

Support Material



Cultural Heritage Support Notes

For more details about the life of Marguerite Bervoets, have a look at the website of [Belgium WW2](#). You can also watch the [documentary "Résistantes" available on Youtube](#).



Reflection Questions

- What does "resistance" look like today?
- Are there challenges that women face today that require a form of resistance?
- How can society better recognize and remember the women making a difference today, just as Marguerite Bervoets is remembered now?

Stop 9: Chapel of the Condemned, Mayor's Garden



Facilitation tips: Participants are invited to discover an audio document with the story of Marguerite Tiste. For the immersive experience, we recommend for each participant to listen to it with headphones (1 or 2 participants per phone). You can first stop at the Chapel before walking towards the Grand Place while listening. Start walking 2-3 minutes after the beginning of the audio.

This story may resonate with participants in different ways, including those familiar with historical or present-day persecution based on beliefs or stereotypes. Encourage respectful discussion focused on the historical context and the mechanisms of fear, prejudice, and exclusion. Avoid sensationalising violence, and allow participants to choose whether or not to share personal reflections.



Cultural Heritage Support Notes

This audio recording was inspired by the podcast "Marguerite Tiste - L'Heure H" from RTBF that you can [find here](#).



Reflection Questions

- Why have women been particularly vulnerable to accusations of witchcraft throughout history?
- If you had lived during the witch trials in Mons, would you have dared to defend Marguerite Tiste?
- How can social fear create injustice towards certain groups?
- How can we protect people from injustices caused by fear or prejudice in today's society?

Support Material

Stop 10: ARTS², 7 rue de Nimy



Facilitation tips: Let participants discover the story of Cecile Douard first. Then for the activity, make sure every person has a piece of paper, something solid to put behind and felt-tip pens or colored pencils. If the group is small, you can use one phone to play the audio-description for all participants. Otherwise, you can ask participants to make smaller groups with one phone per group. Tell them to reveal the painting only at the end, after having listened to the whole description. Invite them to compare their drawings, it can turn quite funny.



Cultural Heritage Support Notes

- Some famous paintings from Cécile Douard: La Hiercheuse (1896), Femme du Borinage (1890s), Le Terril (1898), Les Glaneuses (1895)
- Cecile Douard also painted the Grand Place
- You can find a short video summarising the life of Cecile Douard on telemb.be
- There is also a [video from l'Artothèque](#) that offers a description of the painting "Les Glaneuses".



Reflection Questions

- Today, women represent the majority of arts students, but the minority of artists in museums. Why do you think that gap still exists?
- Cécile Douard painted the Borinage women at a time when no one else did. Who are the "invisible people" in our society today that art and media still fail to represent?

Support Material

Stop 11: The Mundaneum



Facilitation tips: After the tour, you can take some time to visit the main floor of the Mundaneum (for free).



Cultural Heritage Support Notes

- The Main information about the Mundaneum and its history can be found [on its website, in the timeline section](#)
- Léonie came from a bourgeois family. That gave her something most women simply didn't have at the time: freedom. She had time to read, to write, to fight for her ideals.
- Her main focus was equality. She fought for the "Mixed universal suffrage". It got voted in 1948 and applied in 1949, just a few months after she died. Hence she never voted herself.
- 1921: Creation of a political party "Parti des femmes Belges" that was focused on women but also on general social purposes.
- The people who were writing the information sheets were volunteers and most of them were women.



Reflection Questions

- If knowledge and information shape society, who should be responsible for creating and sharing it today?
- Do you think contributing online knowledge can be a form of civic engagement? Why or why not?
- If you would write the Wikipedia page of a woman from Mons or from your own city, who would it be and why?

Support Material



After the Tour

Total duration: 15 minutes for the main debriefing

Objectives: Help participants reflect on what they discovered during the tour and connect Mons' history to present-day urban and civic challenges. Encourage critical thinking about cultural heritage, representation in public space, and citizens' collective responsibility in shaping inclusive cities.

1) Collective Debriefing (15 min)

Participants gather in a circle or in small groups to debrief about the tour.

You can ask the following questions:

- What did you discover today that you didn't know before?
- Which woman or story stayed with you the most? Why?
- Did anything surprise you during the tour?
- Did this experience change how you look at the city?
- Whose stories are still missing from public space today?
- What stop made you think the most?

Encourage participants to connect past struggles with current debates (visibility, equality, memory, representation).

2) Reflection Task (variable time)

If you want, you can come back on some of the reflection questions shared in this support document. Depending on the size of the group, you can

- Discuss them in big group
- Discuss them in small groups
- Do a "gallery-style" activity: place one question per sheet of paper. In small groups, participants add their answers, then rotate to the next sheet to build on others' ideas. Finish with a collective debriefing in the full group.

3) Creative Task (variable time)

Make small groups of participants (3-4). Ask them to find an important woman from one of their cities, to do some research on her and to create or improve her Wikipedia biography.

This activity can be a first step into research, before inviting the participants to create their own cultural heritage tour.

Support Material

To go further: To explore the connection between women and urban spaces, check out the work of “L’architecture qui dégenre” in Brussels. Their projects encourage us to observe public spaces from a gender perspective, asking who feels represented, who feels excluded, and why. Their website also offers a [rich bibliography](#) for further reading.

For example, you could go to Place du Parc and invite participants to observe carefully: How is this space experienced differently by men and women? Consider elements such as: the statues (two of them depicting bare-chested women figures), the basketball court (more gendered than other sports facilities), lighting, the feeling of safety and the limited presence of women in the evening, the absence of public toilets... Then, ask participants to imagine how this space could be redesigned to be more inclusive and welcoming for everyone.



References

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- Interview with Joëlle Kapompole. Link to be added.
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