



Uitkerkse Polder

A wide open world full of birds

The largest nature reserve in West Flanders (1400 ha) is situated between Blankenberge, Wenduine and Zuienkerke. It is one of the last open spaces on the Flemish coast and presents a pretty good picture of what the coastal polders looked like a hundred years (or more) ago. The Uitkerkse polder is a cultural landscape consisting of lush pastures, lots and lots of water (ponds, creeks, ditches), beautiful reed beds and salt water meadows. The wide, vast polder landscapes uninterrupted by trees or hedges inspire a feeling of freedom.

A natural treasure on the coast

The open and marshy nature of the polder is of great importance for many bird species. In springtime, it is an ideal breeding place for **meadow birds** such as the black-tailed godwit, the northern lapwing or the pied avocet. In winter, the Uitkerkse polder is a haven to thousands of **wild geese**, Eurasian wigeons, common teals and other **overwintering guests** from the far North. All through the year there is a coming and going of all kinds of birds.

The European Commission has marked off a network of important nature sites in the European Union (**the Natura 2000 network**), among them the Uitkerkse polder. This acknowledgement as well as the support by the LIFE foundation has made it possible for us to protect and restore nature. In cooperation with local farmers, Natuurpunt ensures a nature-friendly management.

De Fonteintjes

Next to the Uitkerkse Polder, Natuurpunt Blankenberge also manages the nature site De Fonteintjes (The small fountains), which is a narrow dune belt situated between Blankenberge and Zeebrugge. This little gem of nature is accessible free of charge and can be reached by following the walking junctions. We recommend outdoor footwear. Dogs are allowed on leash. Please observe that the path is not wheelchair accessible.

Visitor centre Uitkerkse Polder

You are welcome to relax in and around the visitor centre, the **cafeteria** and the **picnic terrace** by the pond, or to taste our delicious organic and regional products. All through the year, Natuurpunt volunteers are ready to welcome you. Why not borrow a pair of binoculars and start on your hike? After your visit you can browse in the **ecological shop** or in the **nature library**, the archive of Natuurpunt Brugs Ommeland. Children will enjoy the **natural playground** and the Path of the Northern Lapwing, a one kilometer long **nature experience trail**. (More tips can be found on the backside!).



experience the Uitkerkse polder

The pleasures of walking and cycling

After a picnic at the visitor centre, you can start your adventure in the nature reserve on foot or on a bike. Follow one of the **four outlined paths** past bird hides and a watchtower and experience a wonderful day outdoors! **Ask for your free walking map.**

Fun with children

Come into the visitor centre and discover the world of the polders: push the buttons, listen to the meadow birds and look through the binoculars by the windows.

Play to your heart's content on the **natural playground** full of logs and ropes to climb, a tree nest and a willow igloo. Discover the silhouette of a flying Northern lapwing. You will have lots of fun romping! Don't forget to visit the **bee hotel**. Especially in the spring you will be able to observe the busy bees.

Then imitate the young Northern lapwing and follow the nature experience trail. Ten challenging tasks are posted at stations along the way. Start at the totem pole and follow the blue walking path (1 km). You can **download the walking brochure on our website by scanning the QR-code**. Our volunteers at the visitor centre can lend you a pair of binoculars or you can bring your own.



**Do you want to book a guided activity?
Please contact us to check the activities on offer, cost price and conditions.**

Contact

Bezoekerscentrum Uitkerkse Polder
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Opening hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 13:30 to 17:30. Sunday, 10:00 to 17:30.
In addition, on school holidays, Monday 13:30 to 17:30.
Free admission. Dogs allowed on leash. No credit cards, only cash.

BIRD SILHOUETS: © Arlette Mestdagh

