

## INFO KIT

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### Greeters of Brussels



# CHARTER

Brussels Greeters is an associative movement providing an alternative form of tourism. Its intention is to enable authentic meetings between Brussels' visitors and inhabitants. It is based on the principle of mutual respect, with an emphasis on hospitality, accessibility and multicultural exchange. It fosters the discovery of Brussels region, through the eyes, habits and knowledge of the inhabitants, who, for a few hours, become volunteer hosts.

## *Article 1. Greeters*

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The Greeters network is based on the work of volunteer hosts. Living in Brussels, they come from all backgrounds. Speaking different languages or not, they have a true passion for Brussels, which they have a strong desire to share through hospitable way.

## *Article 2. Visitors*

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All visitors to Brussels are catered for: whether alone, with a family or a group of friends, young or elderly, people of reduced mobility.... The number of visitors per greeting is however limited to six. What they have in common: the desire to discover Brussels region through the eyes of its inhabitants, to exchange, to share and to live a personalized greeting. They are responsible for their own expenses- for example drinks or travelling expenses in the city. Visitors should not give any remuneration or tips to the Greeter under any circumstances.

## *Article 3. Meetings*

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Meetings are booked via *Tourisme autrement* website ([www.tourisme-autrement.be](http://www.tourisme-autrement.be)) and take place off the beaten track. They are not guided tours such as tour of the city, museums or exhibitions. They last 2 to 4 hours maximum.

A timetable is established according to the request of the visitors and the availability of the Greeters, every day of the week (including weekends), from 8am until 10pm. The use of public transportation, bikes and walking is favoured.

## *Article 4. Greeters network*

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Greeters are volunteers but the Greeters organisation is a professional one under the umbrella of the activities of association *Tourisme autrement*. Subscriptions should be sent at least two weeks prior your arrival in Brussels. Visitors are invited to fill in a questionnaire of satisfaction after their greeting. The network is not pursuing a commercial aim and is supported by public institutions and private sponsors. It is developed in harmony and collaboration with touristic operators.

All meetings are held under the full and entire responsibility of each participant: Greeters and visitors. With their subscription, the latter acknowledge they have read and accepted conditions of participation.

Under no circumstances can the association *Tourisme autrement* be considered responsible for any incident or accident. *Tourisme autrement* will not to disclose the address and telephone number or any other information about visitors and greeters without their consent.

## History

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The first association of Greeters, **Big Apple Greeters**, was founded by Lynn Brooks in New York in 1992. She wanted to fight the daunting image of this huge city and enable visitors to enjoy it through the eyes and habits of its inhabitants. She initiated the project giving priority to direct exchanges between hosts and guests and giving value to a different view of tourism. Convinced that inhabitants are valuable touristic agents with precious and original knowledge of their city, she asked a few of them to become « volunteer ambassadors » of New York City.

This concept progressively gained other American cities like Houston and Chicago. In France Nantes first rallied the movement in June 2007, shortly followed by Paris and Lyon, then joined by Marseille and Nord Pas de Calais region.

The international Greeters network, the Global Greeter Network, was created in 2005 and counts 16 members:

- Adelaide, Australia
- Belgrade, Serbia
- Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Brighton, England
- Chicago, USA
- Houston, USA
- Kent, England
- Lyon, France
- Marseille, France
- Melbourne, Australia
- Nantes, France
- New York, USA
- Paris, France
- Pas-de-Calais, France
- The Hague, Netherlands
- Toronto, Canada

This network meets once per year to share experiences, practices and to plan common activities. Each association keeps a complete independence.

Besides these named associations, a great deal of other Greeters grew up spontaneously almost everywhere in the world without being listed in the Global Network: the name and Greeter label is not registered as a trademark.

## Concept

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Exchanges with Greeters from different horizons, common **key words** came up:

- human adventure
- actors of the city
- social solidarity
- connection
- multiculturalism
- passion
- authentic/genuine meeting
- local immersion
- accessibility to everyone

These key words result in different aspects of the concept.

Greeters belong to an innovative touristic approach that encourages the reinvestment of a place by its inhabitants. A conference organized by UNESCO underlined the feeling of exclusion of people living in UNESCO-listed places and the urging need to involve them in a new touristic approach, so as to avoid negative reactions.

Greeters address this issue by giving the city inhabitants the opportunity to become protagonists of their own city.

With the variety of Greeters profiles, this form of tourism opens itself to the discovery of different places, outside the traditional tours. The experience surprisingly shows that Greeters attracts also people from neighbouring cities.

**Greeters are open to everyone, without discrimination.** Neither guided groups nor tourist guided tours (museums, organized sightseeing, etc.) are concerned. Direct contact and sharing are fostered, thanks to individual meetings (alone or with a group not exceeding 6 people). People with a handicap are also welcomed: a few practical issues still need to be resolved to offer a fully reliable service on this matter.

The visitor can choose his/her own program and schedule, most of the time outside the regular timetable of guided tours. The Greeting has a limited duration (from 2 to 4 hours).

The concept is entirely based on volunteering Greeters. Greetings are completely free of charge and confirm our wish to make it accessible to anyone. Each party pays for its expenses (drinks, transportation...) and as said before tips are not allowed.

#### Greeters profile

Just like tourists, Greeters come from every background. Young, old, active or retired, they choose to spend a bit of their time to meet tourists. They have a deep knowledge of their city, of unusual places and special features and they have a strong sense of hospitality. They participate voluntarily.

Greeters may not be tourism professionals; however they show a great sense of professionalism, with a careful organisation (Internet booking two weeks in advance), high quality greetings and a deep knowledge of their city.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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The network Greeters Bruxelles / Brussel Greeters is situated within the office of the non-profit organisation Tourisme autrement.

**Contact person :**

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[www.greeters.be](http://www.greeters.be) (in progress)

[www.tourisme-autrement.be](http://www.tourisme-autrement.be)

**Social networks:**

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# Meet a Local : Meet a Brussels Greeter !

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## Dreaming of experiencing life in Brussels?

Brussels Greeters voluntarily host you in their town for a cordial and warm greeting. For the next stop in Brussels, spend a few moments with a Brussels inhabitant who will share with you his/her passion for this cosmopolitan city! Deep into Brussels atmosphere, you will be walked through his/her favorite spots (streets, parcs, bars...). Let yourself be surprised by Brussels hidden treasures!

## Hungry for surprises, discoveries and multicultural exchanges?

Each Brussels Greeter is genuine. Each greeting is tailor-made according to taste and expectations from both parties. However you can be sure you are in for a ride off the beaten track! More importantly, it is all about amazing and rich multicultural exchanges between the visitor and the greeter.

## Willing to share the customs and habits of Brussels inhabitants?

The Brussels Greeters network provides you with an original experience of participative tourism. Thanks to a direct contact with the local population, we intend to promote the respect of its environment, culture and traditions. What we offer is a different perspective on Brussels.

**Discover Brussels and meet one of our Greeters !**