ANTWERP
Diamond capital since 1447
Antwerp and diamonds are inextricably linked, just as they have been for over 500 years. Today, the diamond trade is a flourishing business for the nearly 1,700 wholesalers, cutters and traders in the city. Diamonds spark creativity in the many independent designers and jewellers working in Antwerp and draw visitors from near and far.

Want to find out what diamonds and Antwerp have to offer? Don’t hesitate to keep on reading!
FACTS AND FIGURES

EACH DIAMOND TRAVELS THROUGH ANTWERP AT LEAST ONCE

DIAMONDS TRADED IN ANTWERP

84%
of rough diamonds

70
nationalities working in the Antwerp diamond trade

50%
of cut diamonds

IN ANTWERP WE SPEAK DIAMOND

DIAMOND BOURSES

out of 30 diamond bourses worldwide are in Antwerp, including the only rough diamond bourse

THE BRILLIANT SHAPE

90%
of colourless diamonds are cut in the "brilliant" shape, developed in Antwerp in 1919
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Clean-cut business
We speak Diamond
Popularity research

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Quality, certified
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Antwerp’s most brilliant
The Golden Streets
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ANTWERP: DIAMOND CAPITAL SINCE 1447

The City of Antwerp has had a distinct shine to it since 1447, when it first claimed its title of Diamond Capital. Here, in the oldest and largest diamond centre in the world, the industry has pushed—and keeps pushing—every boundary in diamond cutting, jewellery design and technology. Over five centuries of tradition have made the city the unrivalled crown jewel of rough and cut diamond trading and manufacturing.

DIAMOND SQUARE MILE

Together with the Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC), nearly 1,700 specialised companies work with the Diamond Office to ensure transparency and compliance throughout the industry. Although Antwerp’s diamond district is no bigger than a square mile in size, it is home to no less than four diamond exchanges and controls 84% of the global rough diamond trade and 50% of the trade in polished diamonds.

Every diamond in the world passes through Antwerp at least once. In 2017, more than 233.8 million carats of both rough and cut diamonds were traded here, making a total value of 46 billion dollars.

Antwerp central station, one of the world’s most beautiful railway stations in the heart of the diamond district.
Innovation in Polishing

Antwerp’s tradition with innovation goes back a long way. The round brilliant, the most popular cut worldwide, was created in Antwerp in 1919 by a diamond cutter named Tolkowsky. Today, Antwerp is home to diamond wholesalers, traders and cutters, to diamond training programs and start-ups inventing new technologies to make stones with an Antwerp Cut even brighter! Innovation is at the heart of the diamond industry as new technology is created to detect and screen lab grown diamonds and differentiate them from natural diamonds.

One of these innovations is, Fenix, a brand new, innovative way of cutting diamonds invented by the AWDC’s research centre and first launched during the Kimberley Process Intersessional in Antwerp in June 2018. This revolutionary, fully automated process is ten to twenty times faster than traditional methods. For the first time in the history of cutting diamonds, this technology allows diamonds to be cut automatically and independently of the grain of the crystal with extreme accuracy, efficiency and flexibility.

Furthermore there is the Antwerp’s Most Brilliant quality label, the city’s guarantee to consumers wishing to purchase from the very best and most trustworthy jewellers the city has to offer.

Clean-Cut Business

The Antwerp diamond business takes a firm stand against conflict diamonds, which are mined in war zones and sold to finance war and violence. Since the approval of the Kimberley Process, Antwerp has taken on the role of global moral leader, showing the way to transparency and compliance.

The Diamond Office works with the Belgian federal government to check every imported and exported diamond. This control mechanism means the Antwerp diamond industry is one of the most controlled and transparent in the world.
WE SPEAK DIAMOND

Centuries of global trade and multicultural exchange have turned Antwerp into the fascinating hub it is today. Here, Chinese, Indians, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Jews and others understand each other perfectly through the universal language of the diamond. Their cultures and eating habits have made a mark on the city. In and around the diamond district, for instance, food lovers can indulge in Indian and kosher cuisine.

Antwerp’s centuries-old diamond tradition and its leading role in today’s diamond trade mean the city and diamond trade are truly interconnected. This is unique in the world: other cities such as Amsterdam highlight the diamond business in their city marketing and tourism, but in reality it plays a minor role in the Dutch GNP. Cities like Dubai, Tel Aviv, London and New York do not promote their very active diamond trade as a tourist attraction. Diamond centres in South Africa, Brazil, Canada and Russia are well-known for their diamond mines, but only have a limited industry and trade. Antwerp’s authentic story sets the city apart, not only within the business but also amongst consumers and visitors to the city.

POPULARITY RESEARCH

Wanting to celebrate Antwerp as a diamond city, the City of Antwerp organised a themed period in the autumn of 2017 with several months of events and marketing about the city’s diamond culture. Research shows a positive evolution in the attitude of Antwerp residents to the diamond industry following this themed period.
ANTWERP, PIONEER IN COMPLIANCE

Antwerp takes a leading role in the world when it comes to transparency and compliance. Every diamond that is traded here, must be certifiably conflict-free. The Diamond office declares diamonds for import and export and ensures a triple control system, making the diamond business the most controlled industry in Belgium and the most transparent worldwide. Control instances are also in place for the quality of cut gemstones.

KIMBERLEY PROCESS

In January 2018, the EU took over the chairmanship of the Kimberley Process, an international partnership of 54 governments and other players connected to the global diamond sector. The EU’s chairmanship was kicked off by an Intersessional meeting, held in Antwerp in the week of 18 June 2018.

The Kimberley Process (KP) is a binding agreement between the participants to eliminate conflict diamonds. The partners agree to strict controls on the import and export of diamonds with certified shipments, anchored in national legislation. They only trade with other members to ensure control over certified conflict-free diamonds. Since the KP was put in place, the identifiable trade of conflict diamonds has decreased dramatically from 15% to less than 1%.

As the diamond capital, Antwerp recognises its own leadership role in the fight against conflict diamonds. The Belgian authority that issues and validates Kimberley Process certificates—the License Service of the Federal Public Service Economy—is based in Antwerp. It is one of six such authorities in the EU.

DIAMOND OFFICE

The actual processing of the import and export of all diamonds in Antwerp happens at the Diamond Office (DO). This is the hub of Antwerp’s unique trade infrastructure, acting as a supervisory body for the Belgian government. It is the only customs office in Belgium where all diamonds are declared for import and export outside the EU. The Antwerp World Diamond Centre, the FPS Economy (Licensing) and the FPS Finance (Customs) collaborate to implement a triple control system at the DO. This triple control ensures that the Belgian diamond industry is not only the most controlled industry in Belgium, but also the most transparent from a global perspective.
QUALITY, CERTIFIED

Rough diamonds must come with a Kimberley Process certificate, guaranteeing these rough stones are conflict-free. Polished diamonds, on the other hand, may have a polished diamond certificate, preferably from one of three reputable diamond grading labs: HRD Antwerp, IGI or GIA. These labs confirm the diamond’s authenticity, whether it is a natural, lab-grown or treated diamond and describe its characteristics—the four Cs: Carat, Clarity, Cut and Colour. When planning to purchase a polished diamond, it is always a good idea to ask for a certificate from a reputable grading lab.

The City of Antwerp and AWDC have introduced their own quality label for jewellers called Antwerp’s Most Brilliant. This label is given to jewellers who value craftsmanship and quality, and also acts as a flagship for Antwerp’s image as a centre for jewellery.

MY FAIR DIAMOND

This emphasis on conflict-free trade, quality and craftsmanship has also resulted in exemplary projects such as My Fair Diamond. In 2017, the sustainable development consultancy CAP Conseil introduced its collection ‘My Fair Diamond’. CAP Conseil worked with the AWDC to create a fully ethical and traceable diamond jewellery project. The diamonds in the My Fair Diamond collection meet stringent standards for ethical trade, transparency and external verification. They come from artisanal mines in the east of Sierra Leone, which were among the first to be certified as ethical. The miners and their community benefit directly from the sale of the diamonds mined here. The project even goes a step further and promotes the development and safeguarding of local traditional expertise. This way of working with local communities goes beyond the requirements of the Kimberley Process and sets a new benchmark for sustainability in the diamond and jewellery sector.

Once the diamonds are carefully packaged and sent to Antwerp, they are selected by Nicole Despiegelaere and cut by master cutter Pieter Bombeke. Once cut, each diamond over 0.10 carat is identified by the HRD Antwerp diamond lab and laser engraved with a unique number according to the MFD traceability system. The jewels are designed by Nedda El-Asmar and produced by Antwerp-based goldsmiths, making My Fair Diamond a collection that is global, yet unique to Antwerp.
EXPLORING THE WORLD OF DIAMONDS IN ANTWERP

Diamonds are truly alive on the streets of Antwerp. The city is a popular destination for tourists, whether they come for the diamonds and stay for the city’s many other charms or the other way around. At the very heart of Antwerp’s diamond culture is DIVA, the brand new diamond and silver museum.

DIVA, ANTWERP HOME OF DIAMONDS

DIVA | Antwerp Home of Diamonds is Antwerp’s brand new diamond, jewellery and silver museum, open to the public since May 2018. More than a traditional display of diamonds and jewellery, it is an immersive experience that draws the public into an enchanting, unknown world.

Visitors go on a tour of six themes: Diva’s Wunderkammer—designed by Gert Voorjans—, craftsmanship, trade, consumption, a real vault and even a jewellery boudoir where DIVA showcases her most precious treasures. Each theme brings its own unique atmosphere, thanks to staging, soundscapes, multimedia and interactive elements that engage visitors. DIVA’s collection has hundreds of precious artefacts which visitors discover as they peel away the layers to get to the heart of this exhibition.

DIVA’s goal is not only to showcase Antwerp’s rich history through diamonds, silver and silversmithing, but also to be a platform for high-tech expertise and innovative regional talent. DIVA’s knowledge centre is the heart of a national and international network of researchers, universities and associated institutions. This knowledge centre makes DIVA the authority in Flanders and the Benelux on diamonds, jewellery and silversmithing.

ANTWERP’S MOST BRILLIANT

Buying a diamond is not an everyday event for most consumers. Quality labels and certificates help them feel confident they are making the right choice. That is why the City of Antwerp and AWDC have introduced their own quality label that recognises the best jewellers in town. Jewellers who are awarded the “Antwerp’s Most Brilliant” label fulfil 30 criteria and are audited by an independent accredited auditing office. Both creative jewellers, for whom the design is central, and diamond jewellers, are eligible.

Labelled jewellers are recognisable from the sticker in the shop window ‘Antwerp’s Most Brilliant Officially Certified Jeweller’. When they see this label, consumers know they can shop with confidence. Antwerp’s Most Brilliant jewellers are also listed in a free flyer available in six languages from Visit Antwerp. And also in “Antwerp Loves Diamonds”, a brilliant map of Antwerp in four languages.”
Antwerp’s “The Golden streets” are all within one kilometre of DIVA and are home to no fewer than fifteen of Antwerp’s greatest jewellers, silversmiths and independent designers. They offer anything from affordable fashion jewellery to exclusive, custom-made designs with one shared, distinctive trait: craftsmanship of the very highest quality.

**DIAMOND TOURISM**

Culture, fashion, good food or beautiful architecture: whatever is on a traveller’s city trip checklist, Antwerp offers it. The best way to take it all in is to arrive by train at the Central Station, Antwerp’s “railway cathedral”. Right outside is the Diamond Square Mile, Antwerp’s main diamond district. It is no exaggeration to say that there are more diamonds within this square mile, than anywhere else in the world.

Venture a bit further into the city and Antwerp’s wonders soon become clear. From the diamond shaped port building of Zaha Hadid to the tower of the Cathedral of Our Lady, and the exceptional MAS museum on the bank of the river Scheldt, all of the city’s history is right on the surface, there to be discovered by tourists and visitors. Fashion and diamonds, culture and gastronomy; Antwerp has everything one might expect of a large city—all within walking distance.

Lonely Planet has put Antwerp in the top 10 amazing places to go and things to do in 2018 and Lonely Planet’s Best in Travel 2018 has high praise for the city: “Once northern Europe’s greatest city, today Antwerp is one of its best-kept secrets.”
The Antwerp World Diamond Centre (AWDC) is a public-private partnership, officially representing and coordinating the Antwerp diamond industry. The AWDC’s mission is to strengthen Antwerp’s position as the world’s leading diamond trading centre and to promote the image of diamonds to the public. One of its tasks is the certification of diamonds through the HRD Antwerp Diamond Lab, the commercial branch of the AWDC. This is where diamonds are graded according to the four Cs: Carat, Colour, Clarity and Cut. Each diamond that is thus graded, receives a certificate that serves as a kind of identity card for the stone.

The AWDC also offers services to Antwerp’s diamond professionals and anyone looking to join the business community. It is the place to be for information, business contacts, support, training and research related to diamonds.
CONTACT US

Couldn’t find what you were looking for? Need pictures, other press material or you prefer this information in Dutch? Don’t hesitate to contact us at press@businessinantwerp.eu.