



Here come the 2021 UCI Road World Championships!

There are barely five days left until the start of the 2021 UCI Road World Championships, the cycling world championships that are taking place in Flanders. As from Saturday, Flanders, the birthplace of cycling, will be immersed in racing fever for over a week. Here's another quick look at what's on the menu.

In 2018, during the Cycling World Championships in Innsbruck, the non-profit organisation **WK2021 vzw**, together with **Belgian Cycling** and the **Flemish Government**, succeeded in bringing the World Championships to Flanders. Exactly 100 years after the first World Championships, there could be no better time to have the honour of hosting one of the biggest sporting events of the year in our region, the birthplace of cycling.

“There’s nowhere better to celebrate a milestone birthday than at home,” says **Flemish Minister for Sport Ben Weyts**. “We are extremely proud to be able to welcome the 100th anniversary of the World Championships to Flanders. Road racing is coming home and we intend to share our love for cycling and cycling races with the rest of the world: with the World Championships and with all kinds of cycling-related fringe activities.”

“There is no better time to show off our beautiful region to the world in all its splendour and variety than during the world cycling championships. The love for racing is already present among the many spectators. The love for Flanders in all its facets that make us unique in the world will be just as great after these World Championships,” says **Flemish Minister of Tourism Zuhail Demir**.

Programme

The centenary of the UCI Road World Championships will be kicked off in **Knokke-Heist** on Saturday afternoon. 140 children aged between 12 and 18 (from 70 clubs affiliated with Cycling Flanders) will present a country participating in these World Championships on the stage at the casino and then cycle along the time trial circuit to **Bruges**. Flemish Minister of Sport Ben Weyts, **Johan Museeuw** (world champion in 1996) and **Patsy Maegerman** (the most recent female Belgian medal winner) will give the starting shot.

From Sunday to Wednesday inclusive, the time trials will be run, from coast to art, starting (literally) on the beach of Knokke-Heist and arriving in the heart of Bruges. The time trial racers will ride on a circuit that is as flat as a pancake with a great many long stretches where the wind may well also play a part. In other words, they will be time trials for the real specialists.

The road races (for most categories) will take place between **Antwerp** and **Leuven**. From the start on the Grote Markt in Antwerp, the race will proceed via Mechelen towards **Flemish Brabant**. In and around Leuven there are two loops with challenging hills which follow one another in quick succession and will make the race difficult. Especially the **Smeysberg** (Huldenberg) and the **Moskesstraat** (Overijse) will torture the riders' calves. And when it comes to a sprint, a slightly ascending last stretch of 800 metres awaits at the finish at the Parkpoort in Leuven.

All details about the circuit can be found at flanders2021.com/en/races.

Fans and fan zones

After a year and a half of events and races with no (or almost no) audience, everyone is eagerly looking forward to being able to support the racers once again in person. Fans can do so anywhere along the circuit, including at the start and the finish and also and above all in the various fan zones.

There are **official fan zones** in each of the four host cities and in the World Championships villages. In Knokke-Heist it is located at the casino, in Bruges at 't Zand. In Antwerp there is a fan zone at the presentation stage on the Groenplaats and in Leuven on the Ladeuzeplein (with the adjacent exhibition zone on the Hooverplein) and at the finish (on the central reservation between Naamsepoort and Parkpoort). There is also a fan zone on the Smeysberg, on the Flandrien loop.

Every fan zone is on the circuit, so everyone will see the racers pass by. Big screens have been installed to follow the race, and various food and drink stands, sanitary facilities and entertainment will be provided. The racers will be presented on the start stages before the start of each race. In the fan zone on Ladeuzeplein, there is a large stage where the world champions will receive an extra tribute and where there is entertainment all day with presenters and DJs from **MNM**.

For **visitors with specific needs and requirements**, the organisation, in cooperation with Inter, is providing accessible places in the start and finish zones in the four host cities. There are reserved parking spaces nearby, elevated platforms, Flemish Sign Language interpreters, screens, adapted sanitary facilities and Inter volunteers who will offer assistance to visitors with a disability. In this way, everyone can enjoy this cycling party to the full!

The circuit and fan zones are not closed off and are freely accessible to all supporters. As a result, the Covid Safe Ticket is not being used and there is no strict face mask obligation. But the organisation and the cities are counting on everyone's responsibility to wear a face mask in very busy places (fan zones, stages, etc.), for his or her own safety and that of others.

Great efforts are being made to reduce waste in the fan zones and all along the route. With the slogan "**A real champion keeps it green**", all fans and visitors of the World Championships are being encouraged to be a "green champion" themselves and to keep everything clean and tidy on and around the circuit. Indeed, only reusable cups will be used in the fan zones. Hundreds of green teams will be responsible on the various event sites for keeping them waste-free.

These World Championships are also the first smoke-free World Championships in history, something on which the organisation, together with charity partner Kom op tegen kanker, has placed a strong emphasis throughout the run-up to the World Championships and also at the various sites locally. For example, all official zones (fan zones, VIP zones, offices, etc.) will be kept smoke-free.

All details about the fan zones can be found at flanders2021.com/en/programs/18-september-26-september.

Mobility

In the area of mobility too, the organisation considers sustainability to be of paramount importance. It is doubtlessly going to be very busy in the four host cities, so **the train and the bicycle** are the preferred means of transport. Extra trains are being scheduled and there is a cheaper weekend fare on weekends. Many stations around the cities also offer spacious car parks for those who want to get to the station by car.

A total of 45 extra trains will be running, good for a total of 120,000 additional seats. On Sunday 26 September, 29 extra trains will be running and 75,000 extra seats will be added to the existing offer. Do not come to the circuit by car. If you can't get there by train, use the park-and-bike facilities on the outskirts of the cities and take the bicycle there. There are numerous additional bike parking facilities in the cities.

For people with a disability, there are reserved parking spaces in the car parks. Mobile homes and coaches can also park in specific areas, although reservation to do so is often necessary via the official website at flanders2021.com. If you nevertheless absolutely have to drive in one of the cities or near the circuit during World Championships week, use Waze or Google Maps, which will show the latest updates regarding the traffic situation.

All details about mobility and accessibility can be found at flanders2021.com/en/mobility and [the details of the access by train HERE](#).

On the fringes of the race

While the World Championships are of course aimed at cycling fans, they are also for everyone who wants to taste the atmosphere and just doesn't want to miss this event. On the

fringes of the race, dozens of activities will take place in the days before, during and after the event.

Already on the first Saturday in Knokke-Heist and Bruges, there is the Flanders 2021 Ride: cycling tours for cycling tourists and families over various distances starting from one of the two cities. On Sunday, just before the Elite Men run their time trial, the Flanders 2021 Paracycling Race will also be held between Knokke-Heist and Bruges.

In the finish city of the road races, Leuven, you can cycle the circuit yourself on Thursday in the Flanders 2021 Ride (here too there is a choice of various distances). If you want to learn more about the future of the bicycle and cycling, you can visit the Innovation Hub in M-Museum, and the nostalgic among us can look back on 100 years of World Championship cycling at the photo exhibition in the Cera building.

On Sunday, anyone who wants to do so can go to Antwerp to the Flanders 2021 Ride that is perfect for families. In all four host cities, many additional activities are being set up, as is the case in the five World Championships villages of Tervuren, Huldenberg, Overijse, Keerbergen and Damme.

All details about the fringe programme can be found at flanders2021.com/en/programs/world-cup-week.

All further information can be found on the official website at flanders2021.com.

The UCI 2021 Road World Championships Flanders-Belgium is an organisation of vzw WK2021, which is a collaboration between Flanders Classics and Golazo, two experienced organisers of cycling competitions and cycling events.

The Flemish government is extending a hand through EventFlanders to the participating cities and the Province of Flemish-Brabant to enable an event of this calibre to run smoothly. EventFlanders is supported by Tourism Flanders, but is part of cooperation between Tourism Flanders, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Culture, Youth and Media and Sport Flanders.

Press contact:

Gert Van Goolen (spokesman) - gert.vangoolen@flanders2021.com - +32 473 97 32 69



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