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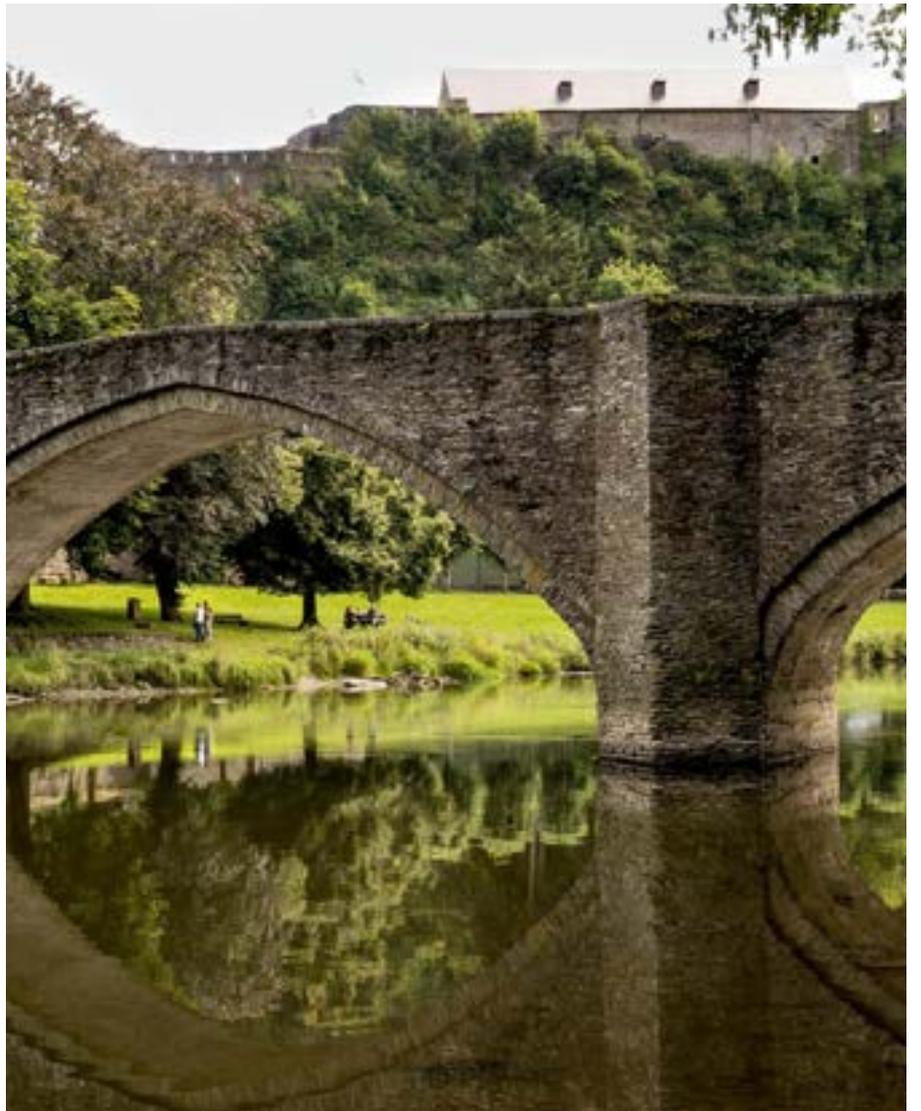
TEN REASONS TO INVEST IN WALLONIA

International art meets business
salon at Liege's Le Bocholtz

Flexible design: Mathias van de Walle

Learning a language in the Ardennes





Editorial

Luring global companies to the south of Belgium is all about economic potential, infrastructure, fiscal incentives, human capital and lifestyle. The region was placed 16th among the *Financial Times* European Cities and Regions of the Future report this year, and in our file, we outline 10 reasons why Wallonia has such great investment potential. While its strategic location gives it a geographic edge, there has also been a concerted effort to rejuvenate the economy and foster creative industries. Wallonia has long boasted a rich cultural heritage and now this sector is leading the way in transforming industrial regions. Examples of local talents are featured in this autumn issue. In the fields of design, gastronomy, film and music, they show how Wallonia is not only a viable and pleasurable place in which to live, it can support entrepreneurs and creative individuals.

Editor Sarah Crew

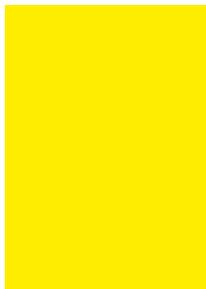
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Immerse yourself

Ceran language centre in Spa offers the perfect package for busy executives

BY OONAGH GANNON



Ceran has given me the confidence I need to express my ideas in English

GABRIEL BEHR

How often do we hear that if you want to be proficient in a language, you have to spend long periods abroad immersed in a culture? For busy executives, that's not a very time-effective solution.

Ceran language training centre in Spa offers an efficient alternative way of acquiring language skills without taking a sabbatical and without having to travel beyond Wallonia. The centre in the heart of the Ardennes is an idyllic retreat where language acquisition is as natural as the surrounding environment (pictured above).

Intensive residential courses using a pedagogical approach that combines unique interactive techniques and activities provide a context where

executives can live and breathe a language, building a skill set to fit their own needs. The centre offers programmes in 11 languages for executives, as well as for young adults and children.

Gabriel Behr (pictured right), sales manager at ThyssenKrupp KH Mineral, recently signed up for a week's residential course at Ceran to improve his English. We spoke shortly after he landed back at his desk in Sarreguemines, France, to get an insider's impression.

Why did you choose Ceran?

I was originally considering seeking out one of the many language schools in London for an immersion course when some colleagues who had followed the



With the dynamic way of working and interacting, there is never a dull moment

GABRIEL BEHR

programme at Ceran some 10 years ago – and still talk enthusiastically about their experience – recommended it. From a practical point of view, it seemed a good idea – not far from the north east of France where I am based and in a sumptuous setting with a full pedagogical programme. I did not want to have my head immersed in books all day; I was looking for a practical course where communication is the priority.

What was your objective?

German used to be spoken widely at ThyssenKrupp, but today it is a global company with a growing portfolio of international customers and the increasing interaction in English for internal meetings and telephone calls, so I have a real need to improve my level. Although I had no illusions about speaking perfect English after a week's immersion, I can say that my week in Spa was very productive and has given me the tools and confidence I need to express my ideas in English.

What differentiates Ceran from immersion in an English-speaking country?

A week's immersion with Ceran is extremely intensive, comprising 14 hours of language practice a day. With the dynamic way of working and interacting, there is never a dull moment and, for me, time flew past. I would get up in the morning and start conversing in English with other participants and

teachers, then embark on a day of one-to-one sessions with an instructor based on my own needs and field of interest, interact in group sessions and concentrate on my pronunciation in the centre's sophisticated language laboratory.

Daytime hours were full of repetition, correction, recording and exchange. In the evening, all the participants had dinner together followed by lively discussions led by the instructors. A typical programme in a conventional school does not cater for students beyond office hours. Having completed a week's immersion with Ceran, I have no regrets at not crossing the Channel to study.



What are the keys to a successful week at Ceran?

Being with a group of like-minded professionals and native-speaking teachers who really want you to make progress is half the battle. The teachers are present from breakfast time to when the group disperses following the after-dinner activity to keep the momentum and encourage conversation. I stuck to the rules of not speaking French throughout the day and the evening. At first this was quite a challenge, but as the week progressed and I started applying what I learned during the lessons, communication got easier and I could feel that I was making progress. As the saying goes, the more you put in, the more you get out.

How do you intend to keep up your progress?

I have come away with the urge to reap the benefits from my week of immersion. Beyond the Spa centre, Ceran is still there for me. One of the tangible things you take away is a tailor-made CD comprising the recordings of all the key sentences I created with the help of my instructor, which I will listen to as I drive from place to place, visiting customers. Ceran has also given me a year's online access to their laboratory to continue working on my pronunciation.

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