

BLACK KAAAT



A legend from the Brabant Kempen region



Black Kaat forms part of the Myths & Legends routes

Exciting cycling and walking routes in Brabant

— 36-kilometre cycling route near Bladel —

BLACK KAAT

In the past she was a menace to the Kempen region, now she lies hidden away in the Kempen countryside. If you look carefully you will see traces of her past. Track them down, discover her history and come face to face with her greed for wealth, prosperity, happiness and glory.



Myths and legends live on in Brabant. Cycling and walking routes take you past the most impressive places where tales come to life. The Black Kaat cycle route is a 36-kilometre route in the vicinity of the town of Bladel.





BLACK KAAT



A legend from the Brabant Kempen region

Black Kaat, 'the witch of Hell's End', plundered farms and churches with her accomplices at the end of the sixteenth century. Her gang also ambushed travelling salesmen. Nobody was safe in these parts. With hair as black as a raven and an ugly crooked nose, she left behind her a trail of destruction.

Anything she captured she devoured, helped by her husband Bruno and the members of her gang. It gave them the strength each time to go on yet another successful night-time raid. Often the plans for the raid were hatched in the deepest secrecy at the watermill (4), close to Ten Vorsel farm (5). The historic avenue lined with beech trees close to the farm is a silent witness to these raids.

One day Black Kaat crept along the beech avenue to Ten Vorsel farmhouse in the middle of the woods in order to steal an unusual newborn. Baby Thomas had been born with a veil; the boy was brought into this world with the caul membrane, or helmet, covering his head. That was supposed to mean that Thomas could see into the future and bring good luck. Anyone who baptised him within one day would acquire that luck. So Black Kaat stole the charmed Thomas and took him away. That night she baptised the child as her own son in Postel Abbey (1).

Thomas Ten Vorsel proved to be a blessing. Black Kaat was rewarded with two periods of seven holy years. Then the tide turned and brought with it an end to her salvation. She didn't need Thomas anymore as he no longer brought her any luck. Thankfully, Thomas was able to escape to Postel Abbey, just in time to warn the friendly monks of the brutal robbery his 'mother' was planning.

Meanwhile Black Kaat visited the abbey, supposedly to drink a pint of beer, unaware that an army had been warned and were on their way. She was trapped. The planned theft of valuable gold coins failed and all the members of the gang were hanged from the abbey gates. Miraculously Black Kaat was able to escape and took refuge under a fallen tree. As though the devil had played his part, the surrounding trees were struck by lightning.

What remained was a large circle with Black Kaat in the middle. Betrayed by the fire, the villain was caught, beheaded, and buried well away from the consecrated ground in the village; without a cross, on the heath and under a branch. The barley beer then flowed freely; finally, everyone was rid of the black evil. At least, that's what they thought.

— Black Kaat lives! —

Black Kaat is alive! Her former headquarters on the Helleneind (2) in Bladel bear witness to this. The witch of Hell's End never went away. She is deeply rooted in the Kempen woods. It seems she is buried under the craggy Witch Tree (6) that was once that small branch, on the Ten Vorsel Estate (5).

Allow yourself to be ambushed by Black Kaat (3) and enjoy the legends that have been told in the Kempen for generations. But be wary of her sweet seduction. After all she is, and always will be, merciless and she has many faces. You need to have known her history; rough and without a shadow of remorse. According to some insiders, her influence ranged wider than many think. Take a moment, listen, and feel her presence. Feel her breath in the wind, hear her squeaky voice in the woods, get to know her character and immerse yourself in her conquests!



ROUTE DETAILS

Total route: 36 kilometres

S Start and finish point:
'De Achterste Hoef' Recreation Park
Troprijt 10, 5531 NA Bladel
www.achterstehoef.nl

JUNCTIONS

02 – 16 – 18 – 22 – 77 – 17 – 92 – 15 – 14
– 91 – 78 – 97 – 70 – 71 – 13 – 02

LEGEND SIGHTS

- 1 Postel Abbey
- 2 Helleneind
- 3 Black Kaat figurine
- 4 Watermill
- 5 Ten Vorsel farm
- 6 Witch Tree





— In search of the Witch's Tree —

Black Kaat is buried under an old beech tree deep in the Kempen woods. You'll need to search hard to find this Witch's Tree. Follow the directions if you dare, but be warned: Black Kaat's spirit is still around!

- Cycle from junction 02 towards junction 15;
- After about one kilometre you will see three benches together, turn right here;
- Continue on the unpaved cycle path and after about 500 metres cross over the wide path;
- Continue cycling until you reach a crossing. Take note: you cannot cycle beyond this point so you must continue on foot;
- Turn right into the wide woodland path (walk past the 'dead end' sign);
- About 300 metres further on, keep left and follow the narrow path;
- Go through the fence;
- You will see the Witch's Tree on the left after about 100 metres.

Need to recover from the shock?

After all this excitement you can relax with the delicious Black Kaat treats that have been developed by various local entrepreneurs. How about some Black Kaat beer, cheese, ice cream or chocolates?

For more information about these mysterious products, consult routesinbrabant.nl.



CYCLE ROUTE NETWORK

Follow the route from one junction to the next using the clear cycle route network signs.



visitbrabant.com

**VISIT
BRABANT**