

LABYRI

CITÉ MIROIR

PRESS RELEASE



A NEW IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

IN PRACTICE

Opening to the public on 6 June 2026

Permanent exhibition

Suitable for visitors aged 11 and over

Accessible to visitors with reduced mobility

75 minutes

FR | NL | DE | EN

TARIEVEN

€12 (€8.50 from 10 people)

€6.50 (under 26 / Senior / Fed+ Card / La Cité Miroir citizen / Job seeker / Person with disabilities)

Free admission with teacher card / one free

accompanying person per group of 10 people

EXHIBITION CAPACITY

30 people (2 groups of 15)

OPENING HOURS

Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (last entry)

Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (last entry)

Sunday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. (last entry)

Closed on public holidays

Summer holidays: from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. +

closed on Sundays

RESERVATIONS

citemiroir.be

reservation@citemiroir.be | 04 230 70 50

PRESS CONTACTS

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PROJECT TIMELINE

- Listed shelter: 4 May 2005
- First business plan for rehabilitation project: 2015
- Preliminary design and first budget: January 2016
- Opening of guided tours of the non-restored shelter: 2016
- Rehabilitation plan: 2020
- Application submitted to Heritage for the Walloon Recovery Plan: 2022
- Updated preliminary design and budget: 19 May 2022
- Urban planning permit for works approval: 28 March 2023
- Public procurement procedures: 2024/2025
- Start of works: 4 December 2024 (asbestos removal)
- Asbestos removal: December 2024 – January and February 2025
- Structural works + architectural and special technical works: February 2025 – May 2026
- Completion of architectural and technical works: May 2026
- Scenography development
 - Design: 2024/2025
 - Production: 2025/2026
- Public procurement lots:
 - Lot 1A – Asbestos removal
 - Lot 1B – Structural works, stability and finishing
 - Lot 1C – Metalwork
 - Lot 1D – Painting
 - Lot 1E – Decorative stucco elements
 - Lot 2 – HVAC and sanitary systems
 - Lot 3 – Electricity
 - Lot 4 – Audiovisual equipment
 - Scenography
- Public opening – 6 June 2026



L'ABRI

C I T É M I R O I R

Beneath the former Sauvenière Baths – now known as La Cité Miroir – lies a listed air raid shelter, the only one of its kind to benefit from such protection. This unusual site, composed of six interconnected circular alcoves, could accommodate up to 400 people during the Second World War. Following more than a year of restoration work, it will open to the public in June 2026. A spectacular heritage restoration project !

An immersive audiovisual experience plunges visitors into the daily reality of civilians living under the threat of bombardment. More than just a historical testimony, L'Abri becomes a space for reflection: how to protect civilians in times of war? What echoes can be found between past and present? Combining local memory with a critical perspective on armed conflicts around the world, the experience resonates powerfully with today's realities. Listed as part of Wallonia's heritage and nestled beneath a civic and cultural space, L'Abri invites visitors both to experience history and to reflect on the present.

This project aims both to bring renewed attention to a little-known historical site, inaccessible to the public for decades, and to further MNEMA's missions of awareness-raising, critical thinking and remembrance work. MNEMA is the organisation that manages La Cité Miroir and operates the MNEMA-CPTM (Multidisciplinary Centre for the Transmission of Memory). MNEMA-CPTM's mission is to foster remembrance work throughout the Wallonia-Brussels Federation.

A permanent exhibition by MNEMA-CPTM with the support of the Walloon Region – AWaP, the National Lottery and its players, the Province of Liège, the City of Liège, and the Museum.Expo. Tech grant, an initiative of the Government of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, operated by ST'ART, in collaboration with WBI. This project was notably made possible thanks to an exceptional grant awarded as part of the Walloon Recovery Plan.

BUDGET

The *L'Abri* project as a whole represents a budget of **€2,467,000**, supported by the following funding sources:

- AWaP – Walloon Region (heritage recovery plan): €1,327,000
- Museum Tech – ST'ART: €41,500
- National Lottery: €20,000
- Province of Liège (audiovisual equipment): €15,000
- Bank financing to be repaid (ING loan and ST'ART loan – Culture loan): €1,000,000

HISTORY

In 1935 in Belgium, the Ministry of National Defence created a "General Commissariat for Passive Air Defence" (which would later become Civil Protection), tasked with coordinating measures to protect the civilian population from aerial attacks. Air-raid shelters were planned throughout Belgium. As early as 1938, the designers of the Sauvenière Baths and Thermal Complex (today La Cité Miroir) had to include an underground shelter to protect against bombing and combat gas effects.

The specifications dated 31 January 1938, signed by the Baths' architect, Georges Dedoyard, and approved by Liège City Council on 14 February 1938, set out the following requirements for the construction of the shelter :

The shelter was to consist primarily of six interconnected circular alcoves, each measuring 5.70 metres in diameter, with capacity for up to 400 people.

It had to withstand combat gases, the impact of 50 kg bombs, the collapse of the seven-storey building above, blast waves and structural pressure.

To achieve this, the shelter was equipped with gas-tight doors and an internal overpressure system designed to prevent toxic gases from entering.

The anti-blast, anti-pressure and gas-proof metal doors were ultimately built to a thickness of 9.5 cm, with frames embedded directly into the concrete structure.

The shelter included six alcoves, a first-aid station with two showers and wastewater drainage into a soakaway pit, an infirmary, a central command post, sanitary facilities, storage spaces for provisions, tools, linen and medical supplies, a ventilation network, two entrance airlocks and an emergency exit.

The ceilings and walls were coated with a lightweight 15 mm asbestos-and-fossil-silica plaster - asbestos has since been banned and replaced.

The steel framework supporting the reinforced-concrete structure alone weighed nine tonnes.

On 2 May 1942, the Sauvenière Baths and Thermal Complex officially opened. A true 13,000 m² architectural "ocean liner" of steel, glass and reinforced concrete, the building incorporated 6,000 m² of reinforced concrete supported by 120 kg of steel per square metre. Despite wartime bombings and forced labour, the Sauvenière Baths proudly asserted their Bauhaus-inspired architecture - condemned by the Nazis as "degenerate" - at the heart of the city.

Bus station, Olympic swimming pool, training pool, sports complex, restaurant, hydrotherapy facilities and public baths: the Sauvenière Baths remained a central part of life in Liège until 2000, when the complex was closed for failing to meet safety standards.



■ A THREE-PART EXPERIENCE

1. **The Descent** : The siren sounds, and visitors discover life underground alongside fictional characters.

2. **The 360° Projection** : Inside one of the shelter's alcoves, visitors experience a short immersive film projected onto the dome above them. Combining historical, geopolitical and psychological perspectives, the film explores the evolution of armed conflicts and violence against civilian populations.

3. **Back to the Surface** : The air-raid alert has ended, and visitors return above ground.

Beyond the discovery of a space "beneath the city", the immersive tour is an experience that engages the senses and encourages reflection on the fate of civilians in wartime. The planned narrative combines factual and historical elements as well as reflections on remembrance, peace and freedom.

In the entrance and exit hall, an exhibition will allow curious visitors to learn more about the construction of the shelter and its historical context.



©François-Xavier Cardon

■ KEY FACTS

- The only air-raid shelter listed as protected heritage in Wallonia did not appear in the original 1936 plans and was incorporated during construction, as shown in the revised 1938 plans. It was originally designed to accommodate up to 400 people
- To the best of our knowledge, the round and conical alcoves of La Cité Miroir's air-raid shelter are unique in Belgium, and possibly even worldwide. Most known air-raid shelters are rectangular in form or consist of tunnels and corridors, sometimes vaulted. The shelter remained in use throughout the Second World War.

PROJECT TEAM

This permanent immersive experience is a project by the non-profit organisation MNEMA, the Multidisciplinary Centre for the Transmission of Memory. L'Abri was inaugurated on 20 May 2026.

MNEMA – Project owner

Jean-Pascal Labille, President

Axelle van Harten, Director

Technical, maintenance, administrative, scenography, educational, reception, operations and communication teams

Architectural design

Triangle Architectes SRL – Fabian Gérardy and Pascal Jacques

Heritage

Walloon Heritage Agency (AWaP)

Companies involved

Renotec (structural works, stability, finishing)

AG Scholl (painting)

ATS (acoustics)

BEC Cerfontaine (stability)

BICE (special technical systems)

Caro Maintenance (asbestos removal)

Dejeond-Delarge (metalwork)

Delbrassine (HVAC and sanitary systems)

Juffern (stucco decorative elements)

Servais (electrical systems)

Scenography and audiovisual production

Hovertone (design and implementation)

MNEMA (concept design)

Inytium (audiovisual)

Story Club (videos)

Delta Production (carpentry)

Archive images

Sonuma

Loans of objects and visual materials

Musée de la Vie wallonne – Province of Liège

EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS

For the development of the exhibition narrative and immersive experience, MNEMA collaborated with a panel of recognised specialists and academics.

- [Adélaïde Blavier](#) - Psychologist and Professor at the University of Liège, where she heads the Psycho-Trauma and Legal Psychology Unit
- [Vincent Bours](#) - Professor and Director of the Department of Medical Genetics at the CHU Liège (University Hospital of Liège), Professor at the University of Liège, and member of the Management Committee of the National Fund for Rare Diseases and Orphan Drugs.
- [Alain Colignon](#) - Historian specialising in the Second World War and former head librarian of the CegeSoma / State Archives library.
- [Kevin Gony](#) - Historian and scientific researcher at the War Heritage Institute.
- [Geoffrey Grandjean](#) - Professor at the Faculty of Law, Political Science and Criminology at the University of Liège, President of the Memory Transmission Council of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, and member of the Walloon Council for Gender Equality.
- [Philippe Raxhon](#) - Historian, Full Professor at the University of Liège and Honorary Qualified Researcher at the Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS). He heads the University's Contemporary History Unit and served as President of the Memory Transmission Council of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation from 2009 to 2019.
- [Philippe Vincent](#) - Professor of International Law at the University of Liège.
- [Olivier Van der Wilt](#) - Head of Museology at the War Heritage Institute.



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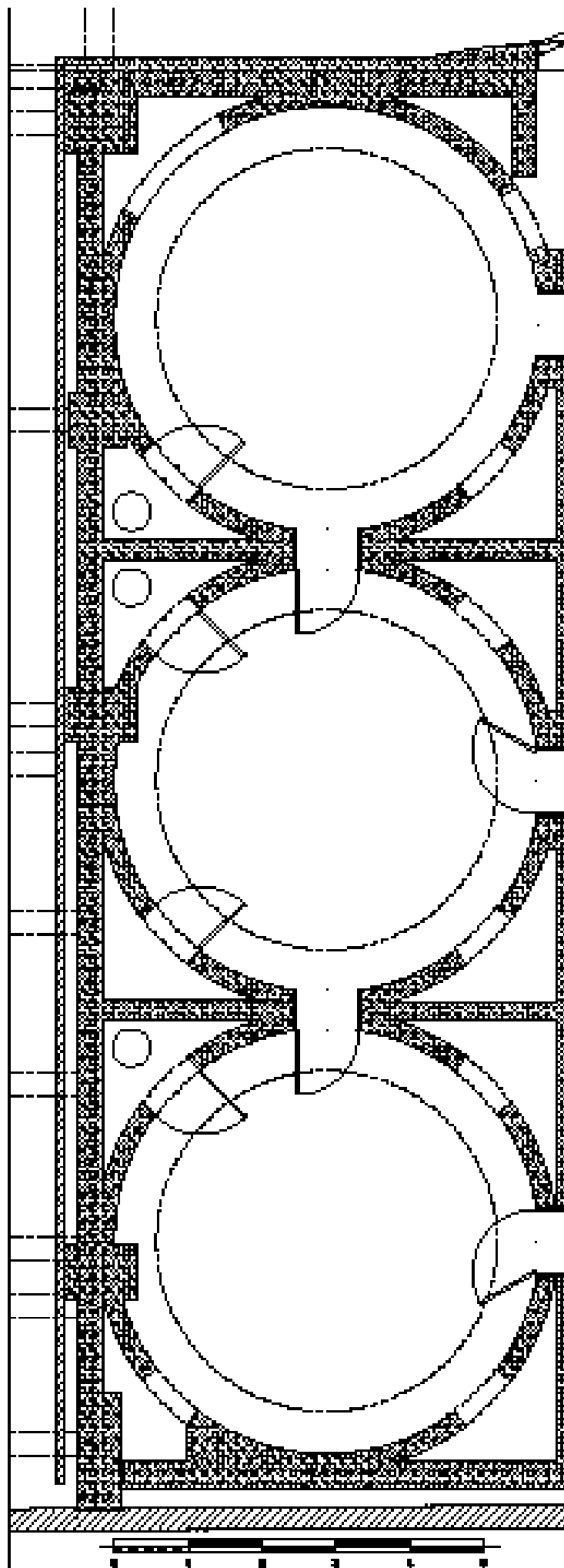
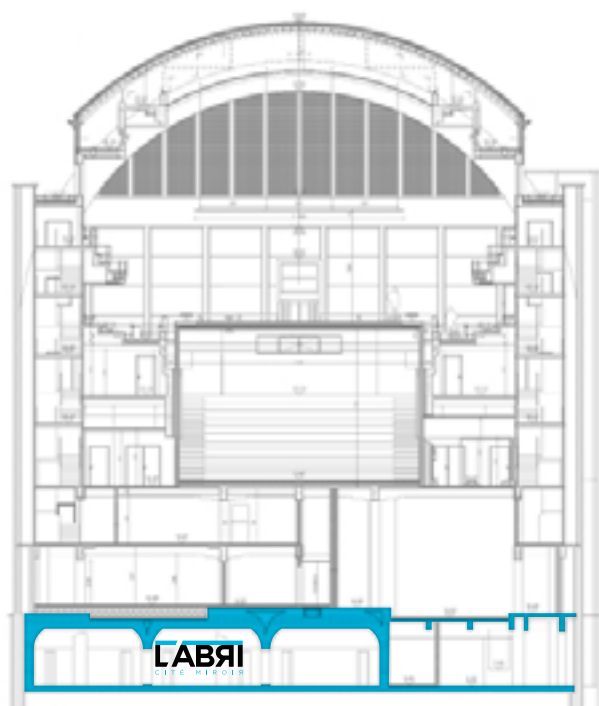
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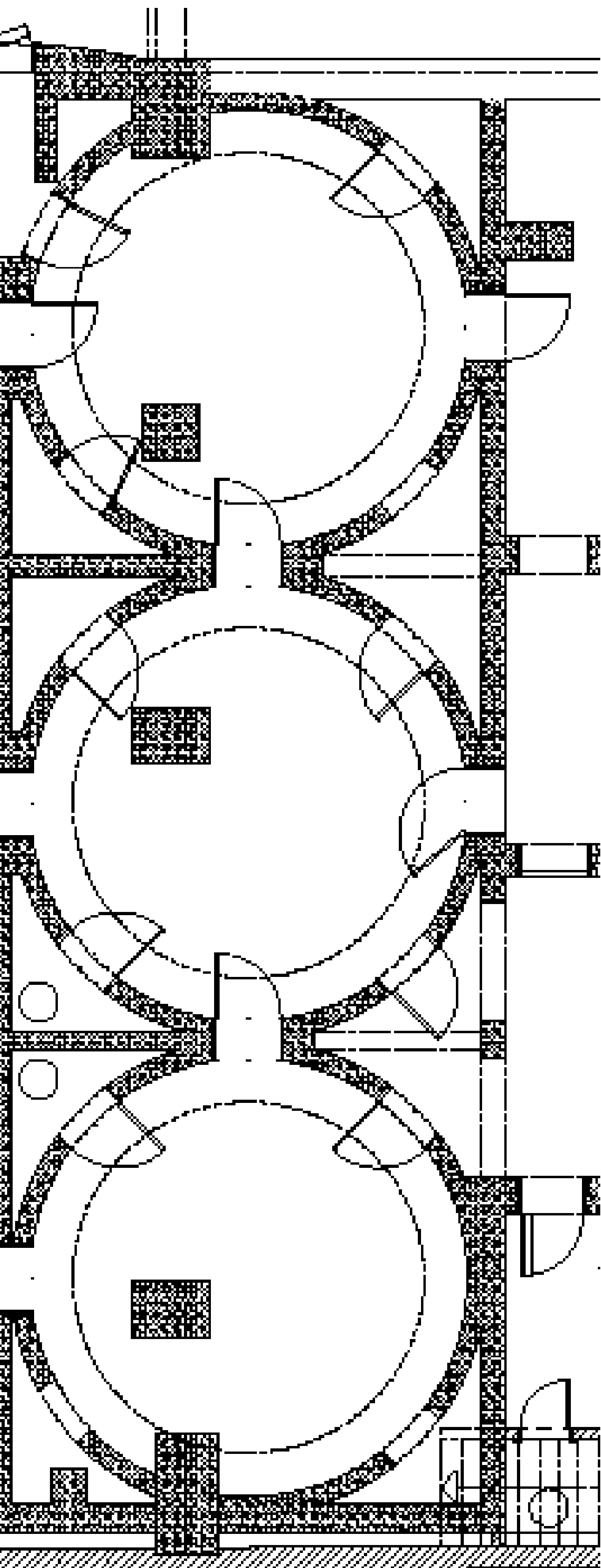
THE PROJECT

The project to bring the air-raid shelter back into public view carries a deeply meaningful memorial dimension. The fate of civilians in wartime is a historical reality whose gravity and significance remain painfully relevant today. It is a universal issue that transcends borders.

At a time when authoritarian and anti-democratic ideas are once again gaining ground, it is essential to examine the mechanisms of the past in order to better understand the dangers of the present. As the last direct witnesses of the Second World War disappear, the transmission of memory has become a collective responsibility and an urgent necessity.

With this exhibition, firmly focused on the future, MNEMA proposes an immersive, engaging and contemporary experience that transforms remembrance into a tool for awareness, civic vigilance and action. Its aim is to raise awareness, particularly among younger generations, of the human consequences of conflict and to restore the importance of solidarity and human connection.





HERITAGE

La Cité Miroir already attracts visitors through its remarkable architectural significance. Partially heritage-listed, the building is a landmark of the social, industrial and architectural history of both the city of Liège and the wider region. To this day, the Sauvenière shelter remains the only air-raid shelter listed as part of Wallonia's heritage.

This restoration project completes the rehabilitation of the former Baths and Thermal Complex: until now, the shelter was the last remaining space still inaccessible to the public. Over time, its structural safety could no longer be guaranteed, making extensive restoration work essential.

With L'Abri, the site gains an even stronger heritage and tourism dimension. Visitors immediately sense that they are about to enter a singular atmosphere within this silent witness to major historical upheavals. They are often struck both by the interconnected alcove architecture and by the exceptional state of preservation of the shelter.

By raising awareness of heritage and wartime memory through this unusual urban exhibition, the project offers visitors a new way of understanding the present through the lens of history. Its exploratory dimension is designed to attract a wide audience, who will leave not only with the memory of a unique experience, but also with a deeper reflection on the condition of civilians in times of war.



© Thierry Lechanteur

LA CITÉ MIROIR

The former Sauvenière swimming baths have been transformed into a space dedicated to culture, critical thinking and remembrance work.

With its striking architecture, La Cité Miroir has become one of Liège's landmark cultural venues. Exhibitions, performances, talks, immersive experiences, workshops and guided tours: its programme continues to grow year after year. More than 300 events are held there annually, all centred on citizenship, intercultural dialogue and resistance to authoritarian and anti-democratic ideas.

In January 2014, La Cité Miroir opened its doors within the renovated former Sauvenière Baths and Thermal Complex, located in the heart of Liège.

La Cité Miroir features exhibition spaces as well as a performance hall, a specialised library and bookshop, a restaurant area and meeting facilities. The spirit of the former Baths and Thermal Complex was carefully preserved during the renovation process, giving this emblematic 13,000 m² building a distinctive atmosphere unlike any other in the city.

Three non-profit organisations are based on site and develop their own cultural programmes there: MNEMA, Les Territoires de la Mémoire and the Centre d'Action Laïque of the Province of Liège.

A wide range of external cultural partners also organise events at La Cité Miroir, all connected to values of democracy, equality and individual as well as collective emancipation.

Deeply rooted in Liège's cultural landscape, La Cité Miroir has played an important role in the revitalisation of the Neujean district.

CULTURAL OFFER

The L'Abri tour is now part of the immersive exhibition offer of La Cité Miroir, which already attracts several thousand visitors per year (Never Again! Journey through Nazi camps to resist today and In Struggle. Stories of Emancipation). Many different audiences come together at La Cité Miroir depending on the activities offered (tours, temporary exhibitions, performances, workshops, lectures, etc.).

LA CITÉ MIROIR IN FIGURES

- Over 80,000 visitors per year
- Approximately 300 events annually



© SPW-AWap / V. Rocher

TOURISM

By raising awareness of heritage and wartime memory through this unusual urban exhibition, the project seeks to attract a wide and diverse audience drawn by the spirit of exploration, while encouraging deeper reflection on the condition of civilians in times of war.

For the City of Liège, the project also represents an opportunity to revive a forgotten heritage and memory, while strengthening its place within the field of remembrance tourism, which is particularly

PROFESSIONAL EVENTS

As part of the site's redevelopment, a dedicated space has been designed to host corporate events, conferences and professional gatherings. This unusual venue will broaden the range of spaces available for use by external organisations and partners.

HÉLÈNE

*We'll find your mum, don't worry.
There are many of us here.
Come on, we'll go and look for her.*

CHRISTIAN

No, she isn't here, I know it.

HÉLÈNE

Then she must be in another shelter, somewhere safe.

CHRISTIAN

Safe?

HÉLÈNE

*Oh yes! And so are you, by the way.
We are under the Sauvenière swimming pools.
It was designed to accommodate all the pool users. It's solid construction!
We're safe here. How did you end up here?*

CHRISTIAN

*I was coming back from school.
Then there was an alarm.
Older kids brought me here.*

LA CITÉ MIROIR
SAUVENIÈRE

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MNEMA CPTM **MNEMA**
asbl Cité Miroir

Boulevard de la Sauvenière 33-35 | 4000 Liège

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Editeur responsable MNEMA - Axelle van Harten - Boulevard de la Sauvenière 33-35 - 4000 Liège

