

Rungis: the world's largest fresh centre

The Uitgeverij Boekhout team (FreshPlaza's parent company) celebrated its 20th anniversary last week with a trip to Paris. The trip also had an educational side, as in the early hours of Friday May 27, they visited Rungis.

There may be a larger flower auction in the Netherlands and a larger fish market in Japan, but Rungis is the largest fresh market in the world and the French are proud of it.

Over thirty years ago the famous Paris Halls (Les Halles), which had been in the centre of Paris since 1183, moved to trade area Rungis, around 6 kilometres south of the French capital.

With a direct connection to the road and railway and close to the airport, fish, meat, cheese, fruit, vegetables and flowers are now transported to and from this 254 ha market. Many fresh products change hands during the night at Rungis. On a total surface of 234 hectares in total, 1.5 million tonnes of meat, fish, fruit, vegetables and other fresh products are traded annually.

City within a city

Rungis has 1,200 companies with almost 12,000 employees. Every day 5,000 buyers cross the floor, and provide an annual turnover of over 7 billion Euro. Besides catering businesses, the supermarkets are also increasingly common in the customer base. This results in 25,000 trucks coming to this fresh market every day.

Rungis isn't an average fresh market, it is a city within a city, with its own hospital, hairdresser, post office, banks, police station, restaurants, childcare etc.

Fruits and vegetable form the bulk of the fresh supply at Rungis with ten halls. Last year a special organic hall was also opened, but it hasn't picked up yet. The meat sales were mostly finished on Friday, as they mainly take place at the start of the week. It was also still busy in the flower hall. "It's all about fresh here.

The French like fresh and take time to have a fresh meal," emphasises the French guide. "Potatoes and onions are stored for a week at most, meat five days, strawberries two days and fish twelve hours. We can sometimes store them for longer but that's not our business."

Dutch and Belgian greenhouse vegetables

18 million European consumers are foreseen of fresh food products from the halls, of which 12 million live in a radius of 150 km around Paris. One fifth of the French population buys products from Rungis.

The fruit and vegetables supply on the wholesale market was mostly of French origin, but you can also visit the market for Italian potatoes, Spanish stonefruit and countless

exotics. What was striking was the limited amount of citrus on the market. The greenhouse vegetables from the Netherlands and Belgian were particularly well represented. Rungis also offers countless specialities that many catering business or wholesalers would like. The manner of presentation, mostly with wooden and carton packaging certainly contributes to this..

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