

Belgium Flanders and Beer 7 Nights / 8 Days Cycling Tour



General Itinerary :

- Day 1:** Arrive Bruges. Orientation at hotel with free time to explore.
- Day 2:** Loop tour: Maerlant Route (52 km—options)
- Day 3:** Ride from Bruges to Ghent (50 km)
- Day 4:** Ride from Ghent to Oudenaarde through the Scheldt River countryside (40 km)
- Day 5:** Loop tour: The Eddy Merckx-route (46 km—options)
- Day 6:** Ride from Oudenaarde to Ieper (73 km)
- Day 7:** Return to Bruges (60 km)
- Day 8:** Departure after breakfast

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Belgium—Flanders and Beer Cycling Tour

General Information



Belgium

This “self-guided” tour offers you the opportunity to discover the western part of North Belgium at your own pace. We welcome you in our cyclist friendly, comfortable hotel in Bruges, “the Venice of the North” and one of Europe’s most visited historical cities. This mainly flat 260 km long bike loop connects famous and authentic Flemish towns. Additionally we propose you to cycle two 50 km long extra bike loops: one through the scenic polder landscape and one through the more challenging Flemish Ardennes. Quiet, paved country roads and a combination of former tow/dike paths and train beds allow you to enjoy varied landscapes in a safe way. Signposts make maps unnecessary; however we provide you with clear road descriptions and maps. Charming taverns will welcome you with a cool local beer, typical farm dishes or pancake.



Weather...

It's never very cold or hot, never very dry either. There is a lot of rainfall, and in spring/autumn there might be rain for days. Average day temperatures in Dec-Feb is between 5 and 10 C, Feb-May 10-20C, in Jun-Sep 15-25C, in Oct 10-20C, in Nov 5-10C

Note: Because of steep energy prices, the mild climate, and the fact that it is often considered an "unneeded luxury," air conditioning is NOT widely available.



Belgium—a little history

Beginning in 57 BC, Julius Caesar extended the power of Rome into the region of Europe that is now Belgium. The people he encountered there were the Belgae, one of the various Celtic tribes of early Gaul, and the Romans dubbed their new province Gallia Belgica. Skipping to the middle ages, there arose the powerful Counts of Flanders. The first of these was Baldwin Iron Arm, who amply demonstrated his independence from the French by carrying off and marrying one of the daughters of Charles the Bold. Baldwin also began the process of creating fortified towns in Flanders in order to curtail the depredations of the Norsemen. The first of these was Ghent (c.867), and the process was continued by Baldwin's heir (Baldwin II) with the fortification of Bruges and Ypres. Much later on and after much ‘foreign’ rule, by 1830 the Belgians' patience had run out. Revolution erupted in Brussels and quickly spread across the country. On 20 January, 1831, after centuries of external rule, Belgium was recognized as an independent nation. Today Belgium is known as a federal parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarch.

What good “stuff” can you eat?

Belgian Cuisine

Belgium has been called a nation of *gourmands* rather than *gourmets*: a country, in other words, where "big cuisine" comes before "fine cuisine". It has been said that Belgium serves food of French quality in German quantities! Some typical Belgian cuisine includes the following:

- *Moules-frites* or *Mosselen-friet*: mussels and chips.
- *Konijn in geuze/lapin à la gueuze*: rabbit in geuze, which is a spontaneously fermented, sour beer from the area around Brussels.
- *Stoemp*: potato mashed with other vegetables, often served with sausages.
- *Salade Liégeoise* / Luikse salade: a salad with green beans, pieces of bacon, onions and vinegar, associated with Liège.
- *Vlaamse stoofkarbonaden*: a Flemish beef stew, similar to the French Beef Bourguignon, but made with beer instead of red wine.
- *Waterzooi*: a rich stew/soup of chicken (or sometimes fish), vegetables, cream and eggs, associated with Ghent.
- *Paling in 't groen/anguilles au vert*: Eel in a green sauce of mixed herbs.
- *Gegratineerd witloof/chicons au gratin*: a gratin of chicory in béchamel sauce with cheese.
- *Boterhammen/Tartines*: Slices of rustic bread and an uncovered spread, often pâté or soft cheese, served on a board and eaten with knife and fork. A typical variety is a slice of bread with quark and sliced radishes, typically accompanied by a glass of gueuze.
- *Tomate-crevette* / tomaat-garnaal: a snack or starter of grey shrimp in mayonnaise stuffed into a hollowed-out raw tomato



Frites or Frieten



Made with Belgian Bintje potatoes, cooked twice and served in a paper cone with a side of mayonnaise, these Belgian treats embody potato perfection. A favorite place to sample fries is at frietkots or fritures, which are outdoor vendors who sell – you guessed it – Belgian fries. There are more than 4000 frietkots throughout Belgium and many carry a selection of over 50 dipping sauces to choose from. One of the most visited frietkots in Brussels is a local favorite, Antoine's, a landmark stand on the Place Jourdan. Whether enjoyed at a three star Michelin restaurant or right off the street, this Belgian specialty is not to be missed.

Belgian Fries are part of Belgian culinary and cultural heritage. Even if they are sometimes referred to as French Fries there is nothing French about them. Apparently the name originated due to a linguistic misunderstanding, because in old English 'to French' meant 'cut into sticks'. According to the Belgian historian Jo Gerard, chips appeared on the dining tables in Namur, Ardenne and Dinant in the latter half of the 17th century. Poorer inhabitants in these towns used to fry tiny fish. When the river froze in the winter the fish were replaced by sticks of potatoes cut to the same small size of the fish.

What about a drink?

Belgian Beer

TRAPPIST ALE

There are six Trappist breweries in the world, Belgium. They are Westmalle, Westvleteren, Chimay, Rochefort, Orval and Achel. No other breweries are entitled by law to apply that name to their product. Between the six abbeys about 20 different beers are brewed. All are top-fermenting, relatively to



all in Belgium. They brew their beers very

strong, bottle conditioned ales. Orval is the oldest of the brewing monasteries, founded in the 11th century by Benedictine monks. Interruptions to the monastic way of life (the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period) caused a religious exodus from France and the establishment of several Belgian abbeys in addition to those that already existed. The term "trappist" fell into use in the years between WWI and WWII, popularized by Chimay (1850). It was there that Father Theodore and the famed brewing scientist Jean De Clerck developed much of the brewing theory that makes Trappist beers what they are.

ORVAL: The Notre-Dame d'Orval has a long history of destruction and reconstruction. The single beer they produce is probably the driest of the Trappist ales. They began brewing prior to the French Revolution, but that conflict was among the destructive events of the monastery's history.

CHIMAY: The most commercial of the Trappist brewing entities, this monastery has a history of taking beer production very seriously. After World War II the legendary brewing scientist Jean De Clerck was a major factor in re-establishing the brewery. Their 3 beers are available in a variety of sizes, including magnum bottles of Grand Reserve.

WESTMALLE: The originator of the widely imitated triple style. The abbey's full name is Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Founded in 1794 it began making beer in the early 19th century. Beer production became commercial in 1920.

WESTVLETEREN: The smallest producer of the brewing abbeys. Their beer is very expensive because if you want it you have to go there - they don't ship! This is a rare example of a beer with both Trappist and abbey affiliations. St. Bernardus - formerly known as St. Sixtus - is made by a secular brewer under the license of the Abbey of St. Sixtus in the town of Westvleteren. Confusingly, the abbey of St. Sixtus makes the Westvleteren ales in a Trappist capacity, but not St. Sixtus ales!

ROCHFORT: Actually known as Notre-Dame de Saint-Remy (located near the southern town of Rochefort), this monastery began brewing in 1595 - that's quite a heritage! Their 3 beers are all dark and fairly sweet ales.

Beer in Belgium is a source of national pride and an important part of the culture!

Even if you aren't much into beer, there is much to know about Belgian beer.

ACHEL: This newest Trappist brewery resembles a brewpub. It has a cafeteria line where you get your food and beer and tables both inside and on the outdoor patio. Father Thomas of Westmalle started the brewery, the current brewer is Brother Jules. When Achel first became available the general buzz was that it was clearly the inferior Trappist ale. But it did not take long for that to change, for this one has been steadily increasing. Now-a-days there is no shortage of praise for Achel.

Belgian Chocolate

According to the International Cocoa Organization, Belgium ranks number two in per capita consumption of chocolate, with Belgians enjoying an average of 11.03 kilograms per year.

Belgian pralines are the most popular Belgian chocolates. Prices match quality and reputation — anywhere between €30 and €58 per kilogram.

There are some 300 different Belgium chocolate companies. Belgium produces 172,000 tons of chocolate per year sold in over 2,130 Belgian chocolate shops.

Bruges is home to at least 40 different chocolate shops. All year round the rich aroma of chocolate wafts through the World Heritage city and countless creative confectioners make hundreds of kilograms of the city's most famous chocolate, 'the Brugsch Swaentje' (Bruges Swan). The exact recipe remains a secret, but amongst the key ingredients are almond paste, 'gruut' (a local type of spiced flour) and 'kletsoppen' (a local Bruges biscuit).

Top Belgian Chocolate Shops in Bruges

One of the most renowned Belgium chocolate shops in Bruges is Dumon. It's not uncommon to find a small crowd gathered around the chocolate display case. To indulge in one-of-a-kind concoctions, head over to the Chocolate Line near Market Square. Eighty unique varieties, such as a Buddha-shaped ginger chocolate and a white elephant saffron curry will tempt your taste buds. If you're looking for marzipan along with an assortment of liquor filled chocolates, Verheecke offers a grand selection. Another top Belgian chocolate producer is Godiva, which is also based in Brugge. Other top Belgian chocolate brands include Hans Burie, Guylian, Neuhaus, and Galler. However, the Belgian government regulates chocolate production,



Frans Hals

Frans Hals was born in 1580 in Antwerp, Belgium, but his family moved to Haarlem in 1591. He was twice married, had at least ten children, and was constantly in financial trouble. No works painted before Frans Hals was thirty are known.

His paintings radiated spontaneity and showed dashing brush strokes, but he spent hours on each painting and planned everything very exact. No drawings by him are known so it is presumed that he worked straight on to the canvas. He created a technique that was close to impressionism, and painters such as Édouard Manet and Vincent van Gogh were influenced by him.

The period between the 1630's to 1650's was his most productive and he was very popular in the middle class of Haarlem. The portraits of Hals's last 16 years are seen as his masterpieces. He died in Haarlem on the 1st of September 1666 in what is now the Frans Hals Museum. In total he made about 300

Paintings—the most well-known are *The Banquet of the Officers of the St George Militia Company* (1616), *The Laughing Cavalier* (1624), *Gypsy Girl* (1630) and *Regentesses of the Old Men's Alms House* (1664).



Did you know?

Flemish painting flourished from the early 15th century until the 17th century. Flanders delivered many of the leading painters in northern Europe and attracted other promising young painters from neighboring countries. The most well-known Flemish painters often include the following individuals:

- *Dieric Bouts 1410–1475, The Netherlands, Early Netherlandish*
- *Pieter Bruegel the Elder 1525–1569, Netherlands, Northern Renaissance*
- *Frans Hals 1580–1666, Antwerp Dutch Golden Age*
- *Quentin Metsys 1466–1530 Antwerp, Early Netherlandish*
- *Jan van Eyck 1390-1441, Early Netherlandish*
- *Hans Memling 1434-1494 Gothic Painter and member of the Bruges school*
- *Rogier van der Weyden 1400–1464, Early Netherlandish*
- *Peter Paul Rubens 1577-1640, Flemish Painter, Baroque*
- *Sir Anthony Van Dyck 1599-1641, Flemish Baroque*

Belgium—Flanders and Beer Cycling Tour

Day 1 Arrival Day. Arrive Bruges and installation in your hotel - orientation with Willy who will deliver the rental bikes, give an explanation of the road book, map material, bike routes info. With free time, you can visit the medieval historical city center of Bruges: a short city walk will show you the Markt (Market square) with Belfry and Halles, Oude Burg (Burg Square) with Basilica of the Holy Blood and City Hall, Church of Our Lady (Notre Dame) and Cathedral. During a roundtrip by boat on the city canals (preferably at night), a horse-drawn cab or mini-coach you will discover a rich architecture. Superior 3 star hotel Center Brugge, dinner on your own.

Bruges

Over the years the medieval canal city of Bruges has gone by many names: City of Romance, Venice of the North, the City That Time Forgot, and Cultural Capital of Europe back in 2002. However, none of these monikers accurately capture the enchanting city of Bruges.

With the city center closed off to cars, all the stunning beauty and culture of this unforgettable city can be easily explored on foot, by boat ride along quiet canals, or by horse-drawn carriage among cobblestone streets. Although Bruges is a small city it will take more than one day to explore all the architectural and artistic treasures, folklore, chocolate shops, lace boutiques, and ambient restaurants on offer.

The historic center of Bruges is on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites and is teeming with places of interest.

The fortunes of Bruges rose and fell with the strength of the Zwin, the river on which the city is built. The Dunkerque Floods of the twelfth century made the Zwin into an ideal trade river, and Bruges soon prospered. Between the 13th and 15th centuries, the city became one of the richest in the world, its trade supplemented by fine cloth manufacturers and excellent banking services.

By the middle of the 16th century, all this had changed. The Zwin had begun to silt up, discouraging the passage of commercial shipping. Trade routes shifted and the cloth industry declined. After suffering a series of sieges and attacks over the next few centuries, Bruges had by the 18th century become a ghost of its former self.

At its city center, Bruges remains a medieval city of stunning beauty and charm. It is rich in architectural and artistic treasures, graced by quiet canals and waterways.



Beguine's House (Beguinage) UNESCO World Heritage List (1998)

The *Béguines* were women who dedicated their lives to God without retiring from the world. In the 13th century they founded the *béguinages*, enclosed communities designed to meet their spiritual and material needs. The Flemish *béguinages* are architectural ensembles composed of houses, churches, ancillary buildings and green spaces, with a layout of either urban or rural origin and built in styles specific to the Flemish cultural region. They are a fascinating reminder of the tradition of the *Béguines* that developed in north-western Europe in the Middle Ages.

The *Béguinages* formed miniature towns, enclosed by walls or surrounded by ditches, with gates opening to the 'world' during the day. They were organized according to one of two models: one, the city type, reflecting on a smaller scale the model of a medieval city, with a plot set aside for the cemetery, or the square where the church is built; the other, the courtyard type, with a central area, varying in shape and often consisting of a lawn planted with trees, where the church is located, and around which the houses are aligned. A third or mixed type, the result of certain extensions in the 17th and 18th centuries, combines both layouts.

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/855>



Groeninge Museum

This museum offers a rich and fascinating survey into the world-famous collection of 'Flemish Primitive' art, works by a wide range of Renaissance and Baroque masters, a selection of paintings from the 18th and 19th-century Neo-classical and Realist periods, milestones of Symbolism and Modernism, masterpieces of Flemish Expressionism and a rotating selection from the city's collection of post-war modern art.



Dining recommendations Bruges

Park Restaurant

Minderbroederstraat 1
32 497 801 872
www.parkrestaurant.be

Pergola Kaffee

Meestraat
32 050 447 650
www.pergolakaffee.be



De Proeverie

Katelijnstraat 5-6
32 050 330 887

Staminee De Garre (beer café)

De Garre 1
32 050 341 029

DE KARMELIET

Tél. : 050.33.82.59
Langestraat 19
8000 BRUGES

Formal, a 3 star Michelin Opportunity

French cuisine. Closed Sundays/Monday and from June 28-July 19, August 30-8 Sept and Sundays, Mondays. Plus 80 euros/person. Reservations required.

Museum of Folklore

Located in a series of 17th-century almshouses, it houses a collection of historic objects, arranged thematically in many settings such as a classroom, a cobbler's workshop, a pharmacy, a tailor's workshop etc. Traditional chocolate-making demonstrations on Thu. afternoons. Open daily except Mon.

Touring Bruges

Bruges by boat Top: During a roundtrip on the picturesque city canals, you will discover Bruges from quite a different and surprising point of view! Tours last half an hour. 5 Starting points: at the back of the Belfry Tower, City Hall and near the Church of Our Lady.

Open: tours are run every day, from 10 am through 6 pm (March - November)

Bruges by horse-drawn cab Top

Horse-drawn cabs leave from the Market square. Tours last half an hour, including a short stop at the Beguinage. More info : <http://www.hippo.be/koets>

Memling Museum

This museum is one of the oldest surviving medieval hospitals in Europe, evoking everyday life at the hospital in former times. The chapel, with its brilliant 15th-century panels by Hans Memling and the world-famous St Ursula shrine, is the treasure-house of the complex. The old hospital pharmacy with its physic garden is also worth a visit.



Additional sites to visit:

- **Belfry tower:** 83 meters high with breath-taking view of Bruges and its surrounding countryside
- **Church of Our Lady:** tallest spire in Belgium

- **The Straffe Hendrik Brewery/ De Halve Maan—museum/brewery**
Walplein 26
- **Lace Center**
Peperstraat 3/A
- **Chocolatier Dumon**
Eiermarkt 6
- **The Chocolate Line**
Simon Stevinplein 19
- **The Old Chocolate House**
Mariastraat 1C

Belgium—Flanders and Beer Cycling Tour

Day 2 Loop Tour (52 km) Maerlant Route. The countryside between Bruges, the North Sea and Dutch Zeeland is a flat polderlandscape. Dike routes, former tow-paths and bicycle tracks along the sea side will take you from charming Damme to the Belgian coast (worldly Knokke) and the small Dutch historic places Sluis and Sint-Anna ter Muiden (former outports of Bruges). Damme is also well-known thanks to the Legend of Tijl Uilenspiegel (Thyl Owlglass) - the Flemish national hero - and to the 13th century author Jacob van Maerlant, who lived in Damme and gave his name to this bike route. Return to Bruges, same hotel, dinner on your own.

Jacob van Maerlant

Jacob van Maerlant (born between 1230-1240 in Franc de Bruges - tradition says at Damme; died ~1300) was perhaps the greatest Flemish poet of the Middle Ages.

He was sacristan of Maerlant, in the island of Oostvoorne, where he lived for some time employed as a sexton, whence his surname "de Coster". Later he resided at Damme, near Bruges, where, according to tradition, he held the position of town-clerk.

His early works are Middle Dutch translations of French romances. Jacob's most serious work in the field of romance was his *Historie van Troyen* (c. 1264), a poem of some forty thousand lines, translated and amplified from the *Roman de Troie* of Benoît de Sainte-Maure.

Damme

In the 13th century Damme was the port for Bruges, to which it is linked by the long, straight, treelined and picturesque Damse Vaart, which continues across the Dutch border to Sluis and the Zwin. The line of the town's star-shaped fortifications can still be traced by lines of tall poplar trees and in places by a moat. It was the site of the Battle of Damme, fought on 30 and 31 May 1213. If you're on the Market square of Damme, you can't miss the town hall. This building was initially constructed in 1241 and was rebuilt in 1464. Count Thomas de Savoie and countess Joanna from Constantinople gave permission to the town to build this hall. The present town hall was built in 1464 on the place where the hall stood before. That hall was believed to be about twice as large as the present-day town hall.

Bruges Beer History— Museum and Breweries

De Gouden Boom Brewery Museum: Beer has been brewed in this very location as early as 1455. Gouden Boom now brews Brugge Tripel, Brugge Blond and 2 abbey beers: Steenbrugge Dubbel and Steenbrugge Tripel.

De Halve Maan

Founded in 1856, this home brewery is the only family brewery that is still active in the center of Bruges. Recently renovated, it is open for lunch, dinner & guided visits. Beer: 'Brugse Zot' (Bruges Lunatic).

National Hops Museum (Poperinge)

This newly renovated museum is located at the Stadsschaal premises where hops were once weighed, inspected and stored. Hop tools, text panels, photos and film illustrate the story of hop and man. Open for groups & individuals.



Belgium—Flanders and Beer Cycling Tour

Day 3 Ride to Ghent (50 km) This route links Bruges with the historic center of Ghent (in Dutch: Gent). Leaving Bruges along its remparts you will join and follow the tow path of the canal Brugge-Gent and enter the historic centre of Ghent along the Coupure canal. This centre with the St Bavo Cathedral, Gravensteen (Castle of the count), Belfry Tower, Town Hall and civil gothic buildings will tell you about the rich commercial past of the city which hosts the Royal State University (28.000 students). 3 star hotel Center Gent, dinner open.

Ghent

If you ask a Belgian where they like to travel within their own country, many will tell you about the friendly city of Ghent. With most of the town center closed to cars, they will probably also tell you that Belgium's third largest city is best explored on two wheels or by boat along the elegant canals.

Ghent is an unassuming, un-touristy city filled with university students, linger-as-long-as-you-like cafes, well priced restaurants and vibrant energy. It's a city with great mustard, Stropke beer (which is Flemish for noose), and the ten day Ghent Celebrations held every year in July where the inhabitants go all out with theater performances, concerts, singing, dancing, and drinking.

Under the watchful eye of Gravensteen Castle or Castle of the Counts, the city boasts an Opera House, 18 museums, 100 churches and over 400 historical buildings. The most visited site in Ghent is the famous & beautiful polyptych, Adoration of the Mystic Lamb painted by the brothers Jan and Hubert van Eyck in 1432.

* Waaiersluis (Waaier Locks) - a historic lock on the Hollandse IJssel just east of Gouda.

* Museumhaven Gouda (Harbour Museum Gouda)

* Other museums: Museum Gouda (history museum), Museum De Verborgten Tijd (modern art), Museum De Moriaan (national pharmaceutical museum), and Verzets Museum (about the Dutch resistance during World War II).



Inclement Weather

Belgium can be hot one day and cold the next, wet one hour and sunny the next. If you find that the weather is not to your liking before departing on your ride you may contact our local support or have the hotel arrange for a taxi transfer to the next hotel. Transferring bicycles by taxi may require excess fees! If you are out on the road and the weather changes you can either wait it out or continue riding. While out on the road it is very difficult to have a taxi come find you and it likely to be very expensive. However, it can be arranged in when absolutely necessary. Do not count on being able to transfer with your luggage to the next hotel. These contractors are not insured to carry passengers and are likely to refuse you on such grounds.

Ghent Sites/Info:

Gravensteen Castle

Also known as the Castle of the Counts, this forbidding, gray fortress was built by the count of Flanders, Philip of Alsace, in 1180. The castle contains a crypt, a dungeon a court museum and an exhibition of historical weapons and armor.

Stadhuis (City Hall)

Built partly in flamboyant Gothic style and partly in Renaissance style, it is a witness of the architectural development in Ghent during the 16th century. Each of the magnificent halls has its own identity.

Ghent Festival - Ghent

Every year in July the inhabitants of Ghent go out of their mind during the medieval Ghent festivities, a ten-day popular event with no equal. People sing, dance, eat and drink, get together and watch theater. Free feasts take place on several squares where the lovely inner-city turns into a whirlpool of cultural high tech and atmosphere.

<http://www.gentsefeesten.be/english/>

Belgium—Flanders and Beer Cycling Tour

Day 4 Ride to Oudenaarde (50 km) Today you'll leave the busy city of Ghent for the Scheldt River (in Dutch: Schelde) countryside. This route brings you to Oudenaarde, a town which became famous thanks to tapestry weaving activities in the Middle Ages. The Town Hall (one of the most impressive medieval town halls of Belgium), Market square, churches in Scheldt Gothic style and wall tapestries are examples of a rich historic past. You'll have the opportunity to visit the Tour of Flanders Centre (near the Market Square). Oudenaarde is the gateway to the slopes and cobble stone routes of the Spring Classic Tour of Flanders: our route will bring you to Wortegem-Petegem and Kluisbergen, typical Flemish Ardennes villages. 3 star hotel Oudenaarde with open dinner.

Oudenaarde

During the Middle Ages Oudenaarde was repeatedly attacked by the people of Ghent who were their great rivals in the cloth weaving business. Emperor Charles V seduced a local beauty and their daughter, Margareth, became the governess of the Low Lands under Philips II.



The Saint Walburga church

The building history reads that the church was rebuilt in 1150 after the fire of 1126. This new church had a big choir with a crossing tower, but without an apsis. The present choir is a remnant of this early Gothic monument. In 1406 Jan Zonder Vrees stayed in Oudenaarde and the apsis was added on for the Duke.

Church of Our Lady of Pamele

Around 1100, the Lord of Pamele founded the small medieval town of Pamele on the right bank of the Scheldt. In 1593 it was absorbed by its big neighbour Oudenaarde, but four centuries of autonomy have left remarkable traces, the most beautiful remnant being the church of Our Lady of Pamele. The present church replaced the first church of Pamele in the 13th century and has great art-historical value.

Town Hall and Clothmaker's Hall

Since 1538 Hanske de Krijger has been looking out over the Flemish Ardennes from the belfry of the town hall. The gilded brass statue was made by a local silversmith, Willem Blansterins. The building of the town hall started in 1526.

Liefmans Brewery (Oudenaarde)

The Liefmans brewery is a treasure of industrial archeology and one of the rare breweries which still produce entirely natural beer where fermentation is done in open tanks. The beers brewed are: Liefmans Oud Bruin, Jan van Gent, Liefmans Goudenband, Liefmans Kriek (cherry), Fruitesse Kriek and Abdis, an abbey beer. Liefman's Brewery won the World Beer Cup GOLD Award in 2006 for Straffe Hendrik Blond. Open to the public.



Belgium—Flanders and Beer Cycling Tour

Day 5 Loop tour (46 km) - The Eddy Merckx-route. Starting from Kluisbergen, this route combines some highlights of the Flanders Classics such as Oude Kwaremont, Patersberg and Kluisberg. Especially strong cyclists will be happy to let themselves go. However, panoramic views and a superb peaceful nature also may be appreciated while walking beside your bike over cobblestone sections. Return to Oudenaarde, dinner open on your own.

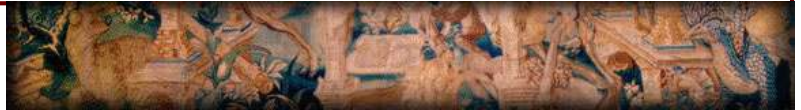
Tapestries

An international exhibition of tapestries from Oudenaarde was organized from 19 June till 3 October 1999 in four historic buildings in Oudenaarde (East-Flanders). 95 tapestries were returned to their birthplace, Oudenaarde. The tapestries came from Belgium, Great-Britain, France, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Denmark, Hungary and Rumania and also the United States. One third of these 95 tapestries was never exhibited before, nor discussed in publications.

Oudenaarde had a flourishing tapestry-weaving industry between the 15th and the 18th century. The exhibition 'Beyond verdures' gave a survey of what was produced in Oudenaarde and revealed that the industry did not only produce the so-called 'verdures', but also many colourful tapestries of high quality, depicting themes and stories that were popular at the time.

Beside beautiful verdures with trees, flowers and animals, the visitor discovered lots of scenes from the Old and New Testament. Scenes from the life of Moses, Abraham, David, Saul, Josef, Jacob and the Apostles were woven into touching images.

Roman and Greek history, myths and legends were also grateful subjects: admire the fight between Hannibal and Scipio, Diana's hunt, the tours de force of Hercules, Venus and Adonis. But also popular novels, such as Don Quichotte by Cervantes, were depicted in series of tapestries.



Meals

Most dining establishments are moderately casual, although shorts are usually not appropriate. Polo shirts, slacks, loafers, or other closed toe shoes are good. Sport jackets, dresses, and blazers are good all purpose items for those slightly more elegant occasions.

Please remember that you are in a foreign country and that the "etiquette" might not be like in your home country! For example, bringing your own wine to a restaurant is not appropriate in most restaurants in Europe.

As far as mealtimes are concerned, people have lunch between 1.30 and 3.00 p.m. and dinner between 8.30 and 10.00 p.m. At weekends the mealtimes are a little later. Most restaurants adapt to the habits of tourists.

Oudenaarde Silver

Only few insiders know that the town was a relatively important centre of the silversmith's trade between the 15th and the 18th century. At the moment, about ten silversmiths (two or three per generation) are known from the 15th century, and also from the 16th. Until 1700 they were members of the guild of Saint-Lucas, together with the painters, woodcutters, glaziers and engravers: all craftsmen who often combined their skills with artistic aspirations. For the period 1400 -1800, the names of about a hundred gold- and silversmiths were discovered, but in every century the trade was in fact linked to two or three families: Blansterins and van den Apostelrye (de Kuers) in the 16th century; de Gimbersie, de Pape, van den Dorpe and Maille in the 17th century; van den Hende en van der Meersch in the 18th century.



Belgium—Flanders and Beer Cycling Tour

Day 6 Ride to Ieper (73 km) More tow and dike paths will take you along canals and the Leie River through the towns of Kortrijk and Wervik to Ypres (in Dutch: Ieper). Since the beginning of our era this area was subject to invasions and wars by several European hordes and countries. In Wervik you can visit the National Tobacco Museum. Ypres is a rebuilt beautiful medieval town famous for cloth production and trading in the Middle Ages. You will be impressed by the Cloth Hall, Cathedral and other monuments of this Town. The Menin Gate, with the names of 54.896 British and Commonwealth soldiers, is the most important monument of this Flanders Fields' area and its numerous World War I cemeteries. 4 star hotel center Ieper, dinner on your own.

YPRES (IEPER)

Ypres and cloth

The cloth industry was the major factor in the sudden and rapid growth of the town in the 12th century. Around the 10th century this industry was located in the region of the Somme. There was considerable demand for cloth and this resulted in a rapid growth in the number of production centers. The shift occurred in a northerly direction thereby involving Ypres in this industrial circuit.



Ypres and Vauban

Ypres Ramparts—Under the terms of the Treaty of Nijmegen signed between Spain and France in 1678, Ypres was placed under French rule until 1713. Louis XIV entrusted the renovation of the ramparts to his renowned expert Sebastien le Prestre, Margrave of Vauban. They became so vast that they covered more surface than the town they had to protect.



Ypres and WWI

Ypres was one of the main martyr towns of the First World War. A few months after the German invasion of Belgium on 4 August 1914 the front came to a standstill near the small, mediaeval town. From October 1914 to October 1918 the battlefield was barely a few kilometres away from the centre. The trenches ran from north to south in an arc around Ypres. In this famous Ypres Salient no fewer than five bloody battles were fought.

Museums—War Sites

In Flanders Field Ieper

Flanders has many museums remembering the times of the Great War. Instructive, objective and often poignant, they render an accurate picture of the magnitude and harshness of the battles. This museum offers an insight in how life was at and behind the trenches and offers detailed historic facts and statistics. Opening hours vary by season.

Sanctuary Wood Trench Museum Ieper

Also called Hill 62, here original British trenches have been preserved as they were found after the war. In the 1980s a tunnel was discovered. The museum collection contains equipment removed from the battlefield in the vicinity and many photographs, as well as a rare collection of three dimensional photo images in viewing boxes.



Last Post

Do not miss this deeply moving ceremony which takes place under the vast arch of the Menin Gate in Ypres. Every evening at 8:00 pm the traffic stops and the buglers from the local fire brigade play "The Last Post".

Belgium—Flanders and Beer Cycling Tour

Day 7 Return to Bruges (60 km) A sequence of various landscapes, Flemish countryside villages and picturesque farms will be the scenery on your way back to Bruges. Take advantage of this itinerary to enjoy your last local artisanal beer with a slice of farm bread with home made ham and cheese... 3 star hotel center Brugge, dinner on your own with plenty of options nearby.

Did you know?

Belgium has an area of 33 990 square kilometers and three main geographical regions: the coastal plain in the north-west, the central plateau, and the Ardennes uplands in the south-east. The coastal plain consists mainly of sand dunes and polders. Polders are areas of land, close to or below sea level that have been reclaimed from the sea, from which they are protected by dikes or, further inland, by fields that have been drained with canals.



Luggage transfers

Our hoteliers or their contractors transfer bags for you daily. Bags can be delivered any time during the day, so confirm with the hotel host each day when they would prefer to have your bags the following morning. You are not required to leave early or before the bags have been collected, nor are you required to be at the next hotel before your bags arrive. Take your time and enjoy, but keep day gear such as sunscreen and your camera with you. Your bike will be equipped with a bag of some kind (handlebar, pannier, etc.) to help transport any personal items. We suggest you keep all directions and information with you, and that you store them in a Ziploc bag to protect against moisture damage. **Make sure that your bags are clearly tagged and identifiable!**

Belgium public holidays:

Holiday	Date
New Year's Day	January 1
Easter Monday	Monday after Easter
Labor Day	May 1
Ascension	39 days after Easter
Pentecost Monday	Monday after Pentecost
Belgian National Day	July 21
Assumption of Mary	August 15
All Saints' Day	November 1
Armistice Day	November 11
Christmas	December 25



Did you know?

The Belgian waffle is a type of waffle identified by its larger size, lighter batter and higher grid pattern which forms deep pockets and has larger squares. In Belgium, there are a number of different types of waffle, including the Brussels waffle, the Liège waffle and the stroopwafel; what is known in North America as the "Belgian waffle" is most similar to the Brussels waffle. As opposed to a traditional waffle, the Belgian waffle attributes its height to the use of yeast batter instead of a pancake batter.

Belgium—Flanders and Beer Cycling Tour

Day 8 Departure Day. Depart after breakfast at your leisure.



Keep in Touch!

We would love to hear from you before, during and after your trip!

While you're getting ready and excited about your trip, check our social network pages to see pictures from other travelers, and interesting facts regarding the countries we offer.

During your tour, please feel free to post pictures and comments on our pages, that way other travelers can get a preview of what they'll see on their tour from your point of view (and others may dream about going on that trip someday!).

After your tour, if you could share some pictures and videos with us, we would really be grateful! Your snapshots and short films are always appreciated, and we love seeing our clients have fun on tour since we rarely get to see you in person!

Please don't be shy and feel free to gloat about your great vacation!



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