TAKE A DEEP BREATH OF FLANDERS
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Visit Romantic Flanders!

You may still find the love of your life in our beautiful cities. Every year visitors from around the world fall in love with more than our chocolate, beer, architecture or fairytale landscapes. With chocolate stores on every street corner and the sweet smell of warm waffles filling the air, a visit to Flanders feels like a match made in heaven. Situated in the north of Belgium, Flanders boasts six beautifully preserved historic cities: Antwerp, Bruges, Brussels, Ghent, Leuven and Mechelen. From medieval splendor to mouthwatering dishes, it is hard to find fault with this pint-sized destination in the center of Europe.

Flanders is the combination of the people, their environment and their history. A mixture of knowledge, no-nonsense behavior and non-conformity tempered with ingenuity and innovation. Flanders has always been at the crossroads of northern and southern Europe, in between East and West, breathing in influences and creativity from all over the world. It offers century’s worth of cultural heritage gems in the fine arts and architecture as well as cutting edge art, fashion, design and contemporary gastronomy.

Flanders takes prides in its excellent cuisine and fearless chefs, transcending the usual/internationally known sprouts, mussels, fries, mayonnaise, chocolate desserts and —eight hundred different brands and counting— beer.

Flanders is also all about art and exhilarating music festivals, centuries of oil on canvas, intricate lacework and hi-tech design. A place where ‘cycling’ is pretty much everyone’s middle name.

See you soon!

WWW.VISITFLANDERS.COM
Bonjour! Goedendag! French and Dutch are widely spoken throughout Brussels, and English is all-around. It is the political heart of Flanders and Belgium, the capital of five hundred million EU-citizens, home to NATO and countless European Institutions. Brussels is an exciting city of one million inhabitants. It is a microcosm of the people of Europe, a vast metropolitan city, and one of the decision-making centers in the world – but on a human scale!

In fact, Forbes even called it one of the most unexpectedly romantic cities in the world: “The 17th-century cobblestoned Grand Place is particularly romantic with its border of gilded buildings and gothic towers —so a tour here is a must– and no trip to Brussels would be complete without indulging in (a lot of) its famous beer and chocolate.”

Grand Place
This remarkable UNESCO world heritage site is a memorable landmark in Brussels, and one of the most beautiful squares in the world. It will leave you speechless.

The Atomium
“Europe’s most bizarre building”, according to CNN, was built for the 1958 World Fair in Brussels. The structure was built in the shape of a unit cell of an iron crystal – magnified 165 billion times! It contains exhibition halls, which are always open to the public, and a terrific restaurant in the upper sphere.

Manneken Pis
Admire the crown jewel of the city: Manneken Pis, a cheeky little fellow with a well-stocked wardrobe, who has been charming hearts since 1618.

Comic Strip Center
Belgium has given birth to Tintin, The Smurfs and many others. Many comic strip murals throughout the inner city celebrate our most famous strip heroes. The Comic Strip Center –housed in a stunning old Art Nouveau warehouse– is their temple.

Horta Museum
Immerse yourself in the organic building of the private home and studio of the master himself: Victor Horta – Belgian architect and leading exponent of Art Nouveau in Europe.

BOZAR
Or the Center for Fine Arts. This art deco palace, created by Victor Horta, is home to the national orchestra of Belgium, and houses some of the most avant-garde exhibitions, movies, theater performances and dance recitals around.

Magritte Museum
Only one museum in the world, the Magritte Museum, can be summarized by the word: “surreal!” René Magritte’s heritage is in safe hands.

MIM
Even if you don’t like musical instruments – you will love the architecture of The Musical Instruments Museum building, and its welcoming rooftop brasserie.

Antique Markets
Visit the daily flea market at the Marolles, the working-class heart of the city. Or find a weekend bargain at the Sunday Antique Market at Place Sablon, an elegant town square connecting uptown and downtown.

Place Jourdan
Crunchy, salty, tasty fried sticks of potato (otherwise known as frites) are Belgium’s national dish and pride. Supposedly, the best ones can be found at the quaint Place Jourdan in the middle of the energetic European district of Brussels.
Meet in Flanders!

Flanders is the place to be for conferences & meetcentives! This region has everything any association, corporate, or incentive planner could ever wish for: beautiful historic cities with lots of art and culture, excellent seafood and the peace and quiet of the Flemish countryside.

Everywhere - yes absolutely everywhere – you can find high quality hotels, restaurants and meeting venues. And when we say special venues, we really do mean special! How about catching the riverboat from your hotel to the conference centre? Or hop on a horse carriage? Wouldn’t you like to organise a cocktail reception in a medieval fortress? Or perhaps you prefer having a dinner party in one of Napoleon’s former residences?

Let’s not forget our great accessibility, the short distances between cities and our worldwide reputation for high standards and customer care! Thanks to these qualities, organizing any event in Flanders is just a walk in the park!

We offer advice and guidance free of charge, provide tailor-made proposals, organize site inspections and FAMS and put you in contact with all the right suppliers in the market.
For centuries, Europe’s second-largest port city has been the diamond capital of the world and at the forefront of cutting-edge design, turning it into a veritable hub of some of the biggest names in fashion. “From vintage reproductions made just for you to avant-garde designs,” writes The New York Times, “this city can be a shopper’s dream.” Not to mention a food lover’s paradise, an art connoisseur’s nirvana and a clubber’s utopia.

“THIS IS ANTWERP”
Get a copy of this brochure to find out about all the cool stuff that is happening around town. Art, music, fashion, nightlife, it’s all here.
Fashion and Design

With its artistic legacy and history of trading in cloth, Belgium was destined to storm the European and international catwalks. And so it did in the ’80s with the “Antwerp Six”. This fashion collective took over the city’s oldfashioned trademark and turned it into the piece of couture heaven it is nowadays.

In 2013, the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp celebrated its 350th anniversary – making it one of the oldest art academies in the world, along with those of Paris and Rome. Famous students include Jacob Jordens, Panamarenko and Luc Tuymans.

The academy’s prestigious Fashion Department was founded fifty years ago and quickly gained an international reputation through six of its students: Dirk Bikkembergs, Ann Demeulemeester, Walter Van Beirendonck, Dries Van Noten, Dirk Van Saene and Marina Yee. Together, they took the fashion world by storm in the ’80s, with dozens more Belgian fashion designers rising to prominence ever since – like Martin Margiela, Kris Van Assche, Haider Ackermann and, of course, also Dior’s creative director Raf Simons.

Antwerp has a unique story to tell. The city prides itself on small stores run by young designers. Add to this a number of trendy flagship stores and exclusive store concepts, and you pretty much get a complete picture of fashion in Antwerp.

There’s more! While the Antwerp style is often described as avant-garde and dark, Brussels is well known for its strong artistic and surreal fashion. Each year new talent graduates from the Brussels fashion institute La Cambre, and many famous fashion designers have a flagship or concept store. The Brussels fashion scene – where musicians, fashion designers and visual artists meet – bursts with creativity. Recently the city of Ghent has also joined that party – with lingerie designer La Fille d’O and the playful duo Black Balloon leading the pack.
Ghent has been called the Manhattan of the Middle Ages, which is really only slightly exaggerated. Hailed by Lonely Planet as “Europe’s best-kept secret,” you’ll find both medieval architecture and an exciting arts scene. Or as The Guardian put it: “The overwhelming architecture of the city center can make you feel like you are in a museum or on a film noir set.”

But the irreverent spirit of the locals leads to a defiance of any attempts at Disneyfication, and the large student population really makes the city come alive.” It is here that the Treaty of Ghent was signed on December 24, 1814, the peace treaty that ended the War of 1812 between the United States and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

The Ghent Altarpiece
Saint Bavo Cathedral in Ghent is home to “the world’s most coveted painting” – the Adoration of the Mystic Lamb by the Van Eyck Brothers.

Castle of the Counts
How many other cities can boast a 12th-century fortress in their center, with a huge collection of armor, medieval weapons like crossbows, maces, daggers and rapiers?

Patershol
Ghent’s restaurant scene has never been livelier and more widespread – especially since the Flemish Foodies, a posse of ferocious young chefs, came to town. With Thursdays as their official veggie day, Ghent is even an organic heaven for vegetarians. But Patershol is still the most pretty culinary neighborhood of them all.

’t Dreupelkot
Do not try to pronounce it. Just enter and try some of the two hundred genevers on the menu. Gin originated from this century-old liquor.

Red Noses
They’re actually called Cuberdons, but if you ask the people about the all-too-cute candy shop Temmerman for Red Noses, they will know you need a fix of raspberry sweets.

Tierenteyn Mustard
You haven’t lived a fulfilling life if you haven’t tasted this shop’s over-200-years-old mustard recipe.

Gentse Feesten
Every July, for ten consecutive days, some two million people flock to the city center for a non-stop festival of music and theater. Expect to end most of your days at 6 am – drinking your last drink at a large square called Vlasmarkt.

S.M.A.K.
With its huge collection of works by Andy Warhol, David Hockney, Francis Bacon, and Belgian luminaries like Panamarenko, this modern art institution leads the pack of excellent Ghent museums.

Graffiti Wall
The appearance of the Werregarenstraat changes constantly. This entire alley was designated by the local government as a legal spot for graffiti in order to try and keep the rest of the city free from spray paint. The streets of Ghent hide other splashes of paint and some iconic street-art, all which can be discovered with the Concrete Canvas Tour.

Ghent by Light
When the sun sets, the city comes to life. The Ghent lighting plan kicks in as thousands of lights are switched on. With a 3-yearly light festival and the Ghent Illuminated walk you’re in for a magical play of light and shadow.
Gastronomy

Beer

With delightful chocolates and divine Belgian beers, a visit to Flanders feels like you are in culinary heaven. From medieval splendor to mouthwatering dishes, it is hard to find fault with this pint-sized destination in the center of Europe.

Thanks to its location at the crossroads of northern and southern Europe, between Latin, Germanic and Anglo-Saxon cultures, Flanders has developed a unique culinary identity. The historic combination of bitter, sweet and sour flavors, which can be found in many Flemish dishes, originates from the Middle Ages. Each region in Flanders has its own local dishes, whether it is fresh grey shrimp from the North Sea, white asparagus, or meat stews simmered in Belgian beer sauce.

In Flanders, good food is second nature and the Flemish people are connoisseurs when it comes to dining and crafting new culinary experiences. In fact, Flanders’ restaurants have the highest number of Michelin stars per capita in Europe. Over time, Flemish chefs have developed a distinct style, suffusing traditional dishes with modern techniques. Food movements by young chefs like The Flemish Foodies ensure that Flemish food stays true to its roots while appealing to new generations of epicureans.

And with good food comes, of course, great beer. Belgium is a genuine beer lover’s paradise with over 1,500 original beers – many with their own personalized glasses in which that beer, and only that beer, may be served. The shape of each glass is made to enhance the flavor of the beer for which it’s designed, turning this strict beer tradition into a special culinary art. Flanders has a good reason to take its beer seriously. The country has enjoyed an unparalleled reputation for its specialty beers since the Middle Ages. Flanders also has the world’s highest number of micro-breweries per capita.
With Bruges it is love at first sight! Bruges is mysteriously medieval and unashamedly ebullient. Though a city of human proportions, it takes a while to explore its wealth of treasures.

The city owes its greatness to history and had developed into an international center of refined craftsmanship. It now wears its UNESCO World Heritage Site label with great pride.

The Beguina ge
Beguinages may have been the earliest examples of emancipation in the Low Countries. Groups of single women banded together to live in these Catholic communities. The Bruges beguina ge, founded in 1245, features whitewashed house fronts and a tranquil garden. And the complex is still in use, though by Benedictine nuns rather than beguines.

Saint John’s Hospital
Get a look at the instruments of this 800-year old hospital museum and be glad for modern medical care. The Saint John’s complex comprises a centuries-old pharmacy and artwork from the hospital’s history, including six works by the famous Flemish Primitive, Hans Memling.

The Flemish Primitives
In the wake of the Burgundian dynasty the great Flemish Primitives including Jan Van Eyck and Hans Memling found their creative niches in Bruges. Their world famous masterpieces and other top collections can be seen today in one of the 27 Bruges Museums.

Groeninge Museum
Many museums are overwhelmingly large, but the 11 rooms in the Groeninge comprise a world-class collection without the confusion, presenting a comprehensive survey of six centuries of Flemish and Belgian painting. You can find pieces from artists such as Jan van Eyck, Hieronymus Bosch, and René Magritte.

The Belfry
Climbing the 366 steps to the top of this belfry is worth the view of the city and its environs. And you can say you have been on part of the set of the movie ‘In Bruges’. While you probably won’t see any actors on the stairs, you can view the old city treasury, enormous clock gears, a 47-bell carillon, and the main square below.

Canal Boat Ride
As if the cobblestone streets and picturesque buildings weren’t enough, this former port city is criss-crossed with canals. Open-air boat tours regularly give visitors a water-level view of Bruges.

Chocolate
More than 50 passionate chocolatiers make the city act as a genuine chocolate laboratory. It is the place to sample the traditional chocolate craft and boundary-pushing chocolate creations.

’t Brugs Beertje
This specialty beer café is housed in a building dating back to 1632. The owner is a beer expert who has been serving customers here for over 30 years. With a cozy atmosphere and over 300 brews on the menu, it is a popular place to get a drink. Make sure to sample the local Brugse Zot, the one and only city-brewed beer.

Concert Hall
Concertgebouw is a new addition. It has hosted concerts, exhibitions, festivals, opera, and dance performances since 2002. A sound factory sits on the top floor. If you are looking for some modern culture while in Bruges, this is the place to go.

Windmills
Over 30 windmills once turned in the city. Today, you can take a walk or rent a bike to see the four remaining on the city’s edge. Two of these are open to tourists – Sint-Janshuis Mill and Koelewei Mill. The Vesten, or the city ramparts, is a ring of green encompassing most of the city and bordering a canal. It is also a great place to stroll on your way to or from the windmills.
Arts & Heritage

Flanders is truly a place where history is so clearly present that it is palpable in everything in everyday life. Each generation adds a new layer of reality and prepares Flanders for what tomorrow may bring.

Many prominent artists in Flanders have had a lasting impact over the centuries – inspiring their colleagues from around the world. One only has to think of people like Jan van Eyck, Hans Memling, Pieter Bruegel I, Peter Paul Rubens, Sir Anthony van Dyck, Jacob Jordaens, and more recently James Ensor, Constant Permeke and Magritte to realize the tremendous contribution of Flanders to the arts.

Artists such as Luc Tuymans and Jan Fabre have paved the way for the contemporary visual art scene in Flanders, while many Flemish curators and museum directors are omnipresent in museums and art centers all around the world. The contemporary performing arts scene in Flanders is a dynamic landscape of numerous, high-quality artists and venues creating and presenting all forms of theater and dance.

The architectural scene of Flanders and Brussels has become one of the most vital in Europe. Antwerp, Ghent and Brussels are now tourist destinations, drawing international attention for contemporary architecture.

Since the Middle Ages, Flanders has been a chessboard of closely linked, monumental cities. From the three medieval towers in Ghent (St. Bavo’s Cathedral, The Belfry and Saint Nicholas’ Church) to the ultra-modern MAS in Antwerp, Flanders is an eclectic mix of old and new. The Grand Place in Brussels is arguably one of the most beautiful squares in Europe. The entire center of Bruges is a UNESCO world heritage site.

There is also plenty of architecture to see in Ghent. Gravensteen or the Castle of the Counts, which is the only medieval fortress in Flanders, is a great place to start. You can also wander round the Patershol and you will find yourself following the original 15th century street patterns. Though, truth be told, most of the current buildings date to the 17th century, when inhabitants were given grants to replace the original wooden structures with stone ones.

World renowned for its architecture, the Antwerp train station has been selected by Newsweek as one of the most beautiful in the world. The largest Gothic church in the Low Countries, the Antwerp Cathedral, is a must-see too, and right next to the Grote Markt you will find yourself surrounded by 16th century architecture.
Whether you are looking to quench your thirst for knowledge, or just your thirst, Leuven is the ideal place. This youthful town, just outside Brussels, is home to one of Europe’s oldest universities – and history is present on every street corner. The university, its 28,000 students and professors have a special tie with Leuven. And of course where there are students, there is beer! Famous for Stella Artois, Leuven is Belgium’s reigning brewing capital – no small feat in a country that produces hundreds of delicious beer varieties. Centuries of Flemish tradition and craftsmanship lie behind its premium brews, so you want to take your time and relish their flavors.

The Beguinage
Originally a community for unmarried, semi-religious women, this beguinage originated in the early 13th century. Wander through this tranquil town-within-a-town, which is on the UNESCO World Heritage list. A few lucky students even have the distinct privilege of living here!

Brewery Tour
The Stella Artois brewery is open for visits on Saturdays and Sundays from April through October. During this 90-minute tour you will learn about the brewing process, and see the lightning-fast bottling of bottles and cans. The visit concludes with a refreshing tasting.

City Hall
Leuven’s Town Hall is one of the best-known Gothic buildings in the world, and the city’s pride and joy. It took three architects and thirty years to build it. Guided tours are held daily at 3pm.

Museum M
Visit the impressive Gothic and 19th century collection of Museum M, and enjoy a splendid view of the city from its rooftop.

University Library
In 1914, during World War I, German troops set fire to a large part of the city. The university library and the 300,000 books were lost. After the war, a new library was constructed – designed by New York architect Whitney Warren, with donations from American schools, universities and libraries.
Mechelen is a small and picturesque city that is big on charm and history, and is probably best known for its carillon school. Here, students from all over the world come to learn to play carillon bells. The city is also thriving with quaint shops, car-free areas, eight Gothic and Baroque churches, and amazingly pleasant little squares. One of the most pleasant experiences is to sit outside on the terrace of a cafe sipping a local beer while listening to the delightful carillon music.

The Palace of Margaret of Austria

Poor Margaret of Austria. She was given in marriage no fewer than three times. The French crown prince sent her back because he found a better match. Then the Spanish heir to the throne died a few months after they were married; and Philibert of Savoy, the love of her life, died after only three years of wedded bliss. The 26 year old widow was given the reign of the Low Countries. Visit her residential palace, Court of Savoy, the first renaissance building in the Low Countries.

Royal Manufacturers De Wit

The Royal Manufacturers De Wit is world-famous for cleaning and restoring valuable tapestries by hand. De Wit also has a prestigious collection of antique and modern tapestries. Clients include the great museums of the world like the Art Institute of Chicago, Detroit Institute of Arts and Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Kazerne Dossin

Kazerne Dossin is no ordinary museum, but a place of remembrance. During WWII, the Nazis used the barracks as an assembly camp, transporting 25,484 Jews and 352 gypsies to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Today, the museum built on the opposite side of the barracks tells the story of the persecution of Jews and Gypsies, and it explores themes of discrimination, mass violence and genocide.

Martin’s Patershof

More than a hotel room, it is an experience. The guest rooms in Martin’s Patershof have been wonderfully incorporated into a former church – offering you the comfort of a 4-star hotel in a breathtaking setting created by the arched ceilings, the imposing pillars, the stained-glass windows and the many religious details.

St. Rumbolds Tower & Carillon

Climb up the 536 steps of the St. Rumbolds Tower and catch your breath on several levels. Explore two carillons, the clockworks, a crane and more relics of medieval top architecture. Unique in Europe, the skywalk on top of the tower offers a panoramic view of the city and surrounding area all the way to Antwerp and Brussels.
Cycling

Flanders is an international cycling region par excellence. Given Flanders’ compact cities—filled with castles, churches, and other historic sites—and its green meadows and meandering tree-lined canals, bikers can experience the best of Europe within a short time while sharing the region’s passion for what can definitely be considered its national sport.

It is not easy to describe the steep, cobbled hills of Flanders. In any other country it would be considered “insane” to introduce them today as part of a professional cycling race, but in Belgium they are a basic part of the sport and of classic races like De Ronde van Vlaanderen (Tour of Flanders). Considered both spiritual and demonic, the cobbled hills are unique places where racing champions are discovered and leisure cyclists try to relive history without falling over. As common as beer and frites, these story climbs are part of life in Flanders.

Flanders has many marked routes, of which the Tour of Flanders route and the Eddy Merckx route are the most popular. The former consists of three cycling paths on the renovated cycling network of the Flemish Ardennes— including hills and cobbled sections from the actual Tour of Flanders. Each path has a timing system, and you can record your personal time while cycling up the Paddestraat, the Kruisberg, the Koppenberg and the Muur of Geraardsbergen. You will even be able to compare your time to that of professional cyclists like Fabian Cancellara, three-time winner of the Tour of Flanders.

The Eddy Merckx route is named after the cycling legend who is still considered the greatest cyclist of all-time—after having won both the Tour de France and the Giro d’Italia five times each. The Eddy Merckx Route starts at the place where the “Cannibal” celebrated his last triumph, and the circuit is very much a Tour of Flanders experience that includes climbs up the Oude Kwaremont, Paterberg, Kluisberg and Hotondberg.

While you are riding through the Flemish countryside, have a beer! Wait, wouldn’t cycling and beer be a dangerous combination? In any other country: yes. But they go well together in Flanders. Even sportive cyclists often finish their cycling tour with a couple of beers on a sunny terrace, if they haven’t already stopped for some mid-tour, as well. In fact, the stories about cyclists, in the good old days, mixing a raw egg in their Rodenbach (a traditional sour red ale) as an ideal breakfast before a race are legendary. So it should come as no surprise that the names of several Flemish beers are related to cycling or a famous cycling slope. Enjoy!
Flanders Remembers

Between 1914-1918, Flanders Fields was the dramatic scene of some of the bloodiest battles of the First World War. Over fifty different countries fought in the war in Flanders Fields. A million soldiers were wounded, killed or went missing in action, whilst thousands of citizens were made homeless. The war devastated entire cities and villages and destroyed them beyond recognition.

Today, the landscape of the region still tells the story of the war. It contains hundreds of monuments and cemeteries, which have great historical significance for people from all over the world. Visitors can explore a variety of interactive museums in the area, all bringing different aspects of the conflict to life.

Ceremonies like the Last Post and ANZAC Day Ceremonies bring homage to the fallen heroes.

Between 2014 to 2018, Flanders will commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the Great War to remember the victims and reflect on peace and understanding.

WHAT NOT TO MISS:
- the Flanders Fields Museum in Ieper
- the Memorial Museum of Passchendaele in Zonnebeke
- the Military Cemetery in Lijssenthoek
- the US Cemetery in Waregem

© Collection In Flanders Fields Museum
Brussels International Airport

Brussels International Airport is located 8 miles northeast of the city center. The train shuttle to Brussels runs every 20 minutes and takes about 20 minutes. The train station is located on the lower (-1) level of Brussels International Airport. Taxis, buses and car rental services are available on the ground level.

Domestic Train Travel

Trains run frequently between all major cities. Lower rates for children and senior citizens are available. Lockers and luggage services are available in major train stations as well as the airport.

TRAIN TRAVEL TIMES BETWEEN SELECTED CITIES:

- Bruges to Ieper: 1 hr 45 min
- Brussels to Antwerp: 45 min
- Brussels to Bruges: 1 hr
- Brussels to Ghent: 35 min
- Brussels to Ieper: 1 hr 45 min
- Brussels to Leuven: 25 min
- Brussels to Mechelen: 20 min
- Ghent to Ieper: 1 hr 10 min

At the crossroads of Europe

Brussels is situated in the center of Europe. Train travel from London to Brussels is 1 hr 50 min, Paris is only 1 hr 20 minutes away and your journey from Amsterdam to Brussels is 1 hr 50 min.

Good to know

- U.S. and Canadian citizens need a valid passport (with a min. validity of three months on departure date); no visa is required for stays of less than 90 days.
- Time Zone: GMT + 1 hour
- Language: Dutch, but English is widely spoken. In Brussels, Dutch and French are spoken.
- The currency is the Euro.
- Electricity A.C. 220 volts using round 2-pin plugs.
- Temperatures vary in the summer from 54° to 72°F (12°C to 22°C) and range from 32° to 43°F (0°C to 6°C) during winter.
- To call Belgium from the US/CA, dial 011 +32 + area code (without 0) + telephone number. To call the US/CA from Belgium: you dial 001 + area code + telephone number. Within Belgium dial 0 + area code and telephone number.