



Flanders Discovery:
Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent & Bruges

Discover the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium with a tour of four of its distinctive cities. What's not to like about a region that boasts chocolate, waffles, frites, mussels, and beer? You'll explore traditional Brussels, the capital of Belgium and the European Union, and Antwerp, the world's diamond capital and former home of the artist Paul Rubens. Finish in the lively university town of Ghent with its world famous Altarpiece, and take a walking tour through the fairy tale town of Bruges, a medieval pearl on the coast of the North Sea.

ACCOMMODATIONS

- 2 Nights Brussels
- 2 Nights Antwerp

- 2 Nights Ghent

- 2 Nights Bruges

INCLUSIONS

- Brussels City Tour
- Private Bruges Walking Tour

- 1st Class Rail Between Cities

- Daily Breakfast



ARRIVE BRUSSELS:

After arriving in Brussels and checking into your hotel, the remainder of the day is at your leisure. Stroll around the Grand Place (Grote Markt), surrounded by the City Hall and several guildhalls. The UNESCO World Heritage Site hosts annual festivals, light and sound shows, and every two years visitors have the chance to see the colorful Flower Carpet. Not far away is a 17th-century fountain with a bronze statue of small boy, the famous Manneken-Pis. While opinions vary, it draws hordes of tourists and remains one of Brussels trademark attractions. Attention comic book lovers! The Belgium Center for Comic Book Art is the home of Tin-Tin, and his creator, Hergé. Housed in a historic Art Nouveau building, you can see firsthand how a comic strip is formed.

(Accommodations, Brussels)



BRUSSELS:

After breakfast, meet your guide at 10am at the appointed location for your Shared Grand City Tour. You'll start with a short walk to the Grand Place and hear about the history of the remarkable city hall and its quaint guild houses. Then, continue by air-conditioned coach to see the beautiful St. Michael's Cathedral, the Congress column and the Heysel District with the world famous Atomium. Passing the Royal Residence, you'll return to the city center to see the Sablon district with its countless antique shops. The tour continues with a drive to the magnificent Palace of Justice and fashionable Louise Square. After viewing the stately Royal Square, the Royal Palace and the Houses of Parliament, you'll arrive in the Cinquantenaire district, with its Triumphal Arch, exceptional museums, and splendid Art Nouveau houses. At the end of the tour, you'll find yourself at the very heart of the European Union, passing in front of three of their most important departments: the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers.

After the tour, stop for lunch at one of Brussels many famed restaurants, for mussels, waffles, and frites. Continue exploring on your own in the afternoon. The Magritte Museum is a major cultural attraction, located right in the heart of the city. Another Brussels institution is the Museum of Cocoa and Chocolate: 2 floors, free samples, demonstrations on how chocolates are made; located right around the corner from Grand Place. Authentic Belgian chocolates are made with 100% cocoa butter and devoid of any vegetable oil. And, unlike many chocolates that you buy locally, their handmade chocolates contain a very limited amount of preservatives. Thus, they need to be stored carefully away from extreme heat and consumed within approximately 21 days.

(Breakfast & Accommodations, Brussels)



ANTWERP - BRUSSELS:

After breakfast, take the less than one hour train ride to Antwerp. Often overlooked, Belgium's 2nd largest city is more than its diamond industry and trade. After checking into your hotel, you'll find it easy to explore on your own. Antwerp, also Belgium's fashion capital, retains an intriguing medieval heart with plenty of café-filled cobbled lanes and a riverside fortress.

(Breakfast Brussels; Accommodations, Antwerp)



ANTWERP:

After breakfast, any visit to Antwerp starts with a visit of the Cathedral of Our Lady. The Cathedral is an iconic treasury, with an impressive collection of major art works, including a series of paintings by Peter Paul Rubens. Fascinating features include Rubens' 'Elevation of the Cross' and 'Descent from the Cross'. The Royal Museum of Fine Arts holds over 2500 paintings, including the largest Rubens collection in the world. You can also tour the Rubens house (Rubenhuys), a 1611 mansion which he converted into his studio. It was rescued from ruins in 1937 and has been very sensitively restored with furniture from that era.

How to connect from one side of the river to the other? St Anna's Tunnel which opened in 1933. From both sides of the bank, you can access the tunnel using the authentic wooden escalators which were ground-breaking at that time.

(Breakfast & Accommodations, Antwerp)



ANTWERP - GHENT:

Take the leisurely one-hour train to Ghent. Trains depart almost every 45 minutes allowing you the flexibility of arriving in Ghent on your schedule. After checking into your hotel, relax or explore on your own. Sitting in the heart of this historic city, is the 300 feet tall medieval Belfort Tower. If you decide to climb it, you're rewarded with amazing views of the city. As you stroll through the streets, you'll discover a traditional Flemish treat; "Ghent Noses"; a cone-shaped raspberry flavored candy sold in stalls throughout the city. Ghent is also a university town, featuring many quaint bars, such as Die Dulle Griet, which offers a beer menu of over 500 types of beer. One of their specialties, a blonde ale called Max of the House, is served in a 1.2 liter tube held in a wooden rack. As per custom, the server will ask for your right shoe as a safety deposit for the unique glass, and will only return it once the beer is finished.

(Breakfast, Antwerp; Accommodations, Ghent)



GHENT:

Ghent is another hidden gem that is often bypassed by tourists. "Europe's best kept secret" - an architectural gem comprised of castles, cathedrals and museums. A good place to start is St Bavo's Cathedral. Just opposite is where you will find the famous Ghent Altarpiece, also known as "The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb" by the Van Eyck brothers. Completed in 1432, it is recognized worldwide as masterpiece of art, and one of the most influential paintings ever made - an absolute must-see during your stay in Ghent. With panels depicting scenes from the Bible, this altarpiece was the subject in George Clooney's film "The Monuments Men".

For children and adults alike, the 12th century Castle of the Counts (Gravensteen) is a must. A mysterious fortress with a turbulent past. Gravensteen and the surrounding moat, offers a magnificent view and many secrets to be explore inside.

(Breakfast & Accommodations, Ghent)



GHENT - BRUGES:

The travel time by train from Ghent to Bruges averages about 35 minutes, so there is plenty of time for a leisurely breakfast. With its numerous canals and cobblestone streets, Bruges is widely considered a medieval outdoor museum. If the weather is nice, take a boat trip through the canals. You'll see some of the city's most popular sites from a completely different view. If you're feeling energetic, climb to the top of the Belfry, a medieval bell tower and one of the most prominent symbols of the city, for a panoramic view of the town; the 365 steps are worth it. (You will see this tower on your tour from outside, but with not enough time to climb it.) As a popular destination, there are a wealth of dining options with a good mix of Belgian and European fare. And for the record, Bruges has one 3* Michelin restaurant; De Karmeliet.

(Breakfast, Ghent; Accommodations, Bruges)



BRUGES:

After breakfast, the local guide will meet you at your hotel for a relaxed private two hour walking tour of this charming town. Along the way, your guide will acquaint you with the history of Bruges, as well as share stories and interesting facts that only locals know. Just a few of the highlights include the Belfry, Burg Square, with its diverse display of architecture, and the Basilica of the Holy Blood. Originally constructed in the 12th century, the Roman Catholic Basilica houses a relic said to contain some of Jesus' blood brought back from the Holy Land by one of the Counts of Flanders. Also on the agenda is Gruuthuse Palace and Museum. This impressive palace now houses a huge collection of typical arts and crafts including tapestries and silverware, as well as an authentic guillotine from the 18th century. You'll cross the Dijver Canal and stop at the Church of Our Lady, famous for Michelangelo's famous Madonna and Child painting, among other works. And since this is a private tour, if there is a particular square or site you would like to include, your guide will try to accommodate your request.

(Breakfast & Accommodations, Bruges)



BRUGES:

After breakfast, make your way to the rail station for your return home or onward to your next Avanti Destination!

(Breakfast, Bruges)

** Itinerary and inclusions are subject to change