OFFICIAL CITY GUIDE
of Europe’s best kept secret

visitgent

Make sure to visit
visitgent.be
The historic heart of Flanders, ‘a city of all times’, ‘the medieval Manhattan’ and ‘Europe’s best-kept secret’: the nicknames Ghent has acquired over the years are as colourful as the city itself. Wander through the city centre and you will immediately understand the numerous tourist awards and international praise.

This guide will help you to explore our beautiful city. In the historical centre, you will find the Castle of the Counts, St Bavo’s Cathedral with its Mystic Lamb, the Graslei and Korenlei and our three towers, as well as modern architecture and street art.

In the Arts Quarter, the artistic highlights are all very close together. Visit Ghent’s well-known museums and the trendy cultural venues.

Ghent sparkles, day and night. When darkness falls, the city undergoes a genuine transformation. Until midnight, the city’s unique lighting plan makes it look truly magical. There’s so much to do and see in Ghent, come and discover it yourself!

Get your visit to Ghent off to a good start. The advantageous all-in CityCard Gent provides access to all of Ghent’s top attractions, including public transport, at a rebellious minimum price. You can buy the CityCard Gent in the Visit Gent Information Centre.
DISCOVER GHENT

Keen to enjoy Ghent to the full? There are plenty of interesting and fun ways to explore the city. Distances in the historical city centre (or Kuip as we like to call it) are not particularly great and the city’s many delights are just waiting to be explored.

ON FOOT
It is perfectly possible to visit Ghent on foot. The centre boasts an unbelievable wealth of sights, all within walking distance from one another. Incidentally, the city has the largest low-traffic pedestrian zone in Europe. So why not wander through the streets and experience Ghent at walking pace?

BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT
The city is also easy to explore by public transport. Buses and trams will take you to your destination from early morning till late at night. At the Gent-St.-Pieters railway station, Korenmarkt and Gent-Zuid (Woodrow Wilsonplein), you will find a Lijnwinkel where you can buy tickets. Tram lines no. 1, 2 and no. 4 will take you from one side of Ghent to the other, straight through the centre.

USING THE HOP ON HOP OFF WATER TRAM
Ghent is criss-crossed by waterways, which makes the hop on hop off water tram the ideal way to admire the city from a unique perspective. The water tram runs at weekends from 1 April to 1 November and has six stops.

BY TAXI
There are taxi ranks at strategic locations across the city. A taxi ride from the Gent-St.-Pieters railway station to Korenmarkt will cost at least 12 euros.

BY BICYCLE
We highly recommend exploring Ghent by bicycle. The city is crazy about bikes and the feeling is mutual! If you don’t have your own bicycle, bicycle hire is available at both train stations and in the city centre (see map).

GUIDED TOURS OF GHENT

Not too keen on exploring the city on your own? Book a walk, boat trip or carriage ride with a professional guide.

GUIDES
Keen on exploring Ghent from a different perspective? Then why not book a guide? You can join an organised tour or hire your very own private tourist guide.

VISITGENT.BE/GUIDE

CARRIAGES
Location: City Pavilion
+32 475 82 16 20 - www.koetsenvangent.be

BOAT TRIPS
You can choose from various boating companies to discover Ghent along its waterways:

VISITGENT.BE/SAILING

BOAT IN GENT
+32 478 63 36 30
www.boatingent.be

DE BOOTJES VAN GENT - REDERIJ DEWAELE
+32 9 228 62 63
www.debootjesvangent.be

GENT WATERTOERIST
+32 9 269 08 69 (Mon - Fri, 9.00 - 17.00)
+32 473 48 10 36 (Sat - Sun, 9.00 - 17.00)
www.gent-watertoerist.be

REDERIJ DE GENTENAER
+32 9 269 08 69 (Mon - Fri, 9.00 - 17.00)
+32 473 48 10 36 (Sat - Sun, 9.00 - 17.00)
www.rederijdegentenaer.be
HISTORY

A CITY OF TROUBLE MAKERS

The city of Ghent first saw the light of day in 630, when the missionary bishop St Amand chose the confluence of the rivers Scheldt and Lys as the perfect place to found St Bavo’s Abbey [29] (the older name of Ghent, Ganda, is derived from the Celtic word for ‘confluence’). What follows is the rich history of a proud and rebellious city that continues to attract visitors from all over the world. Here, culture is a festive experience and festivities are a form of culture.

In the Middle Ages, idiosyncratic Ghent grew into one of the most important cities in Western Europe. The marshy landscape was not suitable for traditional agriculture but lent itself very well to rearing sheep. Thanks to the wool trade, Ghent grew so much that it was second in size only to Paris.

Merchants ruled the country and until the 14th century, Ghent’s wealth lay in the hands of around forty rich merchant families. These merchants preferred the French king to the Count of Flanders, very much against the will of the headstrong trades and guilds, which demanded more and more rights and privileges. Cloth merchant Jacob van Artevelde (the ‘wise’ man) led the Ghent uprising against the French oppressor, who banned the city from trading with English weavers. Although he succeeded in his mission, Van Artevelde was murdered at his home by fellow citizens several years later during riots among the guilds.

Difficult times followed for Flanders, and Ghent lost its leading position in Europe. However, the people of Ghent continued to rebel against anyone who tried to oppress them, even against their very own Emperor Charles V (born in 1500). As they were unwilling to pay his taxes, the emperor himself returned to his city of birth to restore order (1540). Ghent lost all of its rights and privileges. The Roeland Bell [5], which symbolizes Ghent’s independence, was removed from the Belfry [4] and St Bavo’s Abbey [29] and the city gates were demolished. The punishment was harsh and the humiliation even worse, as dozens of the city’s dignitaries were forced to kneel before the emperor with nooses around their necks, barefooted and dressed in hair shirts.

Ghent bent under the strain, but never cracked: the term ‘noose bearers’ (stroppendragers) was adopted as a badge of pride and the residents steadfastly continued to rebel against their sovereigns and oppressors. In the 16th century, Calvinist insurgents established the Ghent Republic and the first Ghent University was also founded during the same period. The city lost its port (the lifeline connecting Ghent with the sea) several times over the years, first as it silted up and later (why else?) as a reprisal for its rebellious nature. Ghent always managed to regain contact with the sea, however, either by digging canals or by forging new alliances.

In the late 18th century, when the Industrial Revolution came across the Channel from En-
gland, it was this same courage and cunning which made Ghent the first industrialised city in Europe (‘the Manchester of the European mainland’). Entrepreneur Lieven Bauwens smuggled an English spinning mule into the city piece by piece, laying the foundations of the Industrial Revolution in Europe. Ghent reclaimed its leading position but remained a city of troublemakers: as a protest against the impoverished conditions in which labourers lived and worked in the 19th century, the first modern trade unions and socialist movements were founded in Ghent, with the Vooruit building [38] as their beating heart. The 1913 World Fair gave Ghent a facelift, demonstrating the city’s modernity and passionate belief in progress to the outside world. Ghent was ambitious. Its World Fair was to surpass those of Brussels and Antwerp: buildings were renovated, the new Gent-St.-Pieters railway station was constructed and squares were built or refurbished.

The rise of the city came to a halt during the two world wars and the Great Depression, and Ghent bent under the strain of the Allies’ final offensive. It soon regained its strength, however, as befits its status: it acquired a fourth tower in the form of the Boektower [39] and in the second half of the 20th century Ghent continued to develop into the compact, authentic city you are visiting today.
GHENT TODAY

Wander through the city centre and you will immediately understand the numerous tourist awards and international praise. Nowhere else can you switch so quickly from the 14th to the 21st century (and back!), without ever having the feeling that something isn’t quite right.

The Lys and the Scheldt, which made Ghent so powerful in the past, are still embraced today. Along Graslei and Korenlei, where barges docked and were unloaded in the Middle Ages, you can now enjoy the hustle and bustle and the many welcoming cafés with terraces. You can even moor your boat in the heart of the city, at Portus Ganda [28].

Ghent has the largest student population in Belgium, with over 70,000 students who help make the city lively and dynamic. In the historical city centre, the university and colleges are renovating buildings such as Pand [15] and the Book Tower [39] or constructing new campuses such as Kantienberg and Ufo.

Even today, the noose bearers are still rebellious provocateurs who remain passionate about love and art. Ghent has grown into an internationally renowned cultural centre with perspectives that are constantly being updated and expanded. The city has a fantastic infrastructure and splendid heritage, offering everything from bandstands, public stages and a wonderfully diverse network of cafés to prestigious, age-old art centres and concert halls. Ghent is the home of dozens of large and small festivals in all disciplines, from the Ghent Festivities and Film Fest Gent to the Gent Jazz Festival, the World Soundtrack Awards and the Ghent Festival of Flanders. It therefore comes as no surprise that UNESCO has recognised Ghent as a ‘Creative City of Music’.
Citadelpark, which was opened for the 1913 World Fair, now houses the world-famous Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art (S.M.A.K. [47]), the Museum of Fine Arts (MSK) [46] and the International Convention Center Ghent (ICC). The former cotton mill, which now houses the Museum of Industry [26], showcases a well-known spinning machine, Mule Jenny. In the 13th-century hospital that houses the Ghent City Museum (STAM) [49] you can see the history of Ghent come to life. In addition, Design Museum Gent provides a forum for functional design. Ghent led the way in Europe by switching to gas lighting as early as 1827, and the city was just as pioneering in 2011 with its first Light Festival.

All that beauty may have whetted your appetite, but there’s plenty more on offer than the historic Ghent waterzooi (stew), cuberdons (or neuzekes) and Tierenteyn mustard. You will always find something to your taste as Ghent is the veggie capital of Europe (of the world, according to local residents, of course) and its young rock-’n’-roll chefs are making waves on the international food scene.

Ghent easily combines its rich past with the future and continues to make quirky choices. Now it’s your turn to explore the city. Just grab this guide and off you go!
**ST BAVO’S CATHEDRAL, HOME OF THE MYSTIC LAMB**

St.-Baafsplein

1/4 > 31/10  Mon > Sat: 8.30 > 18.00  Sun: 13.00 > 18.00
1/11 > 31/3  Mon > Sat: 8.30 > 17.00  Sun: 13.00 > 17.00
Closed  1/1

This cathedral, the oldest parish church in Ghent, was built on the site of a previous church dating back to the 10th century and a Romanesque church from the 12th century, dedicated to St John the Baptist. Ghent’s rebellious history is still evident in the cathedral to this day, as the Roman nave can be seen in the crypt.

The cathedral has a rich history and therefore houses many art treasures: the Baroque high altar in flamed marble, the Rococo pulpit in marble and oak, a masterpiece by Rubens, the Calvary Triptych attributed to Justus van Gent, the tombs of the Ghent bishops and of course the world-famous Ghent Altarpiece. (You can read all about the Ghent Altarpiece from page 54 onwards).

Would you like to find out more about the Mystic Lamb?

visitgent.be/mysticlamb

**NTGENT**

St.-Baafsplein 17

Open  Mon > Fri: 10.00 > 18.00  Sat: 14.00 > 18.00
Closed  Sun

The Royal Dutch Theatre (KNS) on the majestic St.-Baafsplein is the home of NTGent, Ghent’s municipal theatre with international allure. KNS – nestled between the cathedral, the Belfry and the town hall – simply breathes tradition. In the early 20th century, Ghent had three large cultural venues: KNS, Vooruit [38] and Opera Gent [37]. At the time, the theatre at St.-Baafsplein was the place to be for the art-loving bourgeoisie.

**ACHTERSIKKEL**

Biezekapelstraat

A little gem, this oasis of peace at the heart of Ghent’s tourist epicentre is close to St.-Baafsplein. The name of this small square refers to the original owner, the wealthy Vander Zickelen family. The high, round tower (14th-15th century) was topped with an octagonal belvedere (vantage point) in Renaissance style; the building has also a plainer brick tower. On the small square, you can still see one of Ghent’s five privately-owned wells, further proof of the Vander Zickelen family’s wealth.

On summer days, your visit may have a musical accompaniment as the music academy has been located here since the beginning of the 20th century.

Tip

Take a look in the foyer and try to find a space on the outside terrace on the first floor. From here, you can enjoy the view over St.-Baafsplein: this spot breathes history and is also beautifully illuminated at dusk.
The belfries of Flanders and France were the ultimate symbols of freedom, power and urban prosperity. As these were the safest places in the city, they often housed the city’s archives and vaults, and sometimes also its prison. Ghent’s Belfry (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) symbolises the city’s independence and proudly holds aloft the alarm bell [5], which served to protect its citizens. It is well worth heading to the top of the Belfry (take the stairs or lift from the first floor) to admire the impressive carillon and the view. The top of the 14th-century base of the Belfry boasts the ‘Dragon of Ghent’, the city’s symbol.

Adjacent to the Belfry, you will find Ghent’s Cloth Hall. Although construction of this hall started in 1425, it only gained its definitive shape in 1907. Such cloth halls are reminders of the industry and economic prosperity of the medieval cities.

The Roeland Bell (Klokke Roeland) is the name of the alarm bells that have been hanging in Ghent’s Belfry [4] since the 14th century. The first large bell was melted down in 1659 to form a carillon of 40 new bells. The largest was given the name of ‘Roeland’ and got a large crack when the bells began to be operated electrically in 1914. It was moved to the square next to the Belfry and was repaired in 2002. During the renovation of the square and the construction of the City Pavilion [7], the bell was given a new, specially designed base next to St Nicholas’ Church [11].

Since 2014, the concrete base of the Roeland Bell [5] has been adorned with Michaël Borremans’ fresco of De Maagd (The Virgin). This is a portrait of a young woman with piercing beams of light projecting from her eyes. Borremans is an internationally acclaimed leading artist from Ghent. He often displays 18th century painting techniques but invariably adds a contemporary context, as he did here in De Maagd.

DE MAAGD BY MICHAËL BORREMAN

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A quirky fact about Ghent’s cloth hall is that the fencers from St Michael’s guild have practised on the top floor since 1613.

The facade of the small annex is adorned with a sculpture of the ‘mamelokker’: legend has it that this prisoner was condemned to starve to death but managed to deceive the prison guards and was saved by his daughter, who fed him daily from her breast (‘mamme’: breast - ‘lokken’: suck).
Opposite St Nicholas’ Church [11], you will find the original Masons’ Guild Hall. The only original, indeed, as a copy of the hall (which was thought to have been lost) was built along Graslei [14] for the 1913 World Fair. In 1976, the original was discovered behind a facade which had been added at a later stage and the Masons’ Guild Hall was restored to its former glory. On top of the stepped gable, the six dancers that turn merrily with the wind were created by the Ghent-born singer and city sculptor Walter De Buck (1934-2014).

At the end of the 20th century, the Masons’ Guild Hall was given a contrasting side wall which features large metal and glass panels. This caused a lot of commotion in Ghent, so you’ll have to decide for yourself whether it is a blessing or a curse.

This gem from the early 12th century looks out over Korenmarkt and has St Nicholas, the protector of merchants and sailors, as its patron saint. After all, they were the people who raised the money to build this impressive example of the Scheldt Gothic style. The splendour of the building highlights the wealth and power of the merchants.

The central tower is truly unique. It acts as a natural lantern, as the light shines directly into the transept.

While you are wandering down this narrow street, be sure to peer over the low walls of Hof van Ryhove: the wonderful courtyard garden was laid out in accordance with the original 16th century plans. The four parts of the garden represent the four seasons.

There are numerous explanations for the white and blue colour of this rain pipe; each one more fanciful than the next. Let’s keep it simple: white and blue just happen to be the colours of the local football club, AA Gent.

Crazy about street art?

visitgent.be/streetart
Be sure to marvel at ‘Christ on the cross’ (1628-1630), a painting by the old master Anthony van Dyck.

Construction of this late-Gothic church started in 1440, but remarkably it was not completed until 1825. A design from 1662 planned a 134-metre tower (by way of comparison, the tower of St Bavo’s Cathedral [1] is only 89 metres tall), but this ambitious plan was shelved due to a lack of funds. What should have been a triumphal monument with a majestic tower became after all a church with a flat-roofed tower of 24 metres. This turned out to be quite fortunate in the end, as major ground-stability problems were discovered at a later date. The location would never have been able to support a heavier weight, unless Ghent wanted its own version of the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

St Michael’s bridge is almost completely traffic-free these days, so take all the time you need to capture your own picture-perfect postcard and admire St Nicholas’ church [11], the Belfry [4] and St Bavo’s cathedral [1] neatly lined up in a row.

The brewers’ guild, which was the main sponsor of the church, offered the insurgents free beer during the iconoclastic riots in the hope of distracting them from their destructive activities and saving the interior of the church.
GRASLEI & KORENLEI

This is the beating heart of the historical city centre. From the 11th century onwards, the trading activities along these quays increased and the area became the city’s port. In those days, Ghent had a grain staple right: all grain imported into the County of Flanders had to pass through this inland port. All the boats had to leave behind a quarter of their grain in this harbour. As a result, Graslei and Korenlei, together with Korenmarkt, became the centre of the grain trade in Flanders. You will find several outstanding buildings on both sides of the river Lys: Korensteapelhuis, which dates back to 1200 and has the oldest stepped gable in the world (Graslei 11), Tolhuisje from 1682 (Graslei 12) and the old post office which was built between 1898 and 1909 (Korenmarkt 16).

As an extra bonus, both quays feature sailors’ guildhalls. The Guildhall of the Free Sailors from 1531 (Graslei 14) belonged to the sailors who had their own business and were able to sail freely over the Lys, the Scheldt and the Lieve into Ghent’s inland port. On the other side, along Korenlei, you can see the Guildhall of the Unfree Sailors: these sailors were employees and were obliged to transfer their loads to ‘free’ ships (which were guaranteed safe conduct) at the edge of the city. Look out for the anchors and dolphins on the facade and the gold ship which serves as a wind vane. Both Graslei and Korenlei are certainly worth a visit. You won’t be the only person to have the same idea: with a colourful mix of locals, students and tourists, it can get quite lively here. If there’s no room on one of the numerous terraces, you can simply sit by the edge of the water.

Don’t miss an evening stroll through the area. It is here that you can truly admire Ghent as a city of light with a fairytale setting – the height of romance. Enjoy the reflections of the buildings in the river, feel protected by the shadow of St Michael’s church [13] and St Nicholas’ church [11], which flank the two quays, and you will briefly feel as if you’ve been transported back to the middle ages.

Look closely and you will see that some of the facades seem to ‘lean’ forward quite a bit. This is not due to subsidence but was a deliberate choice to make it easier to hoist the sacks of grain up the front of the warehouses. On some of the houses you can still see the pulley system hanging from the tip of the stepped gable, just waiting to hoist up a new load.
The Castle of the Counts is about the only remaining medieval fortress in Flanders with its defence system still virtually intact. Its history dates back to the Roman occupation, when there was already an early settlement on the sandbank of the Lys.

With its military architecture, the impressive building clearly served to convey the power of the counts in turbulent Ghent. It formed a counterbalance to the tall stone houses of the wealthy patricians on the other side of the Lys.

In 1949, the castle was occupied by a large group of Ghent students who staged ‘the battle of the Castle of the Counts’ to protest against the increase in beer prices and the fact that the police were to replace their white helmets with blue caps. According to the students, this would make it harder to tell them apart from postmen and taxi drivers. The student prank ended peacefully and the Castle of the Counts was handed back to the authorities that same evening.

CASTLE OF THE COUNTS
St.-Veerleplein 11
Mon > Sun: 9.00 > 17.00
1/11 > 31/3
1/4 > 31/10
Mon > Sun: 10.00 > 18.00
Closed 1/1 + 24/12 + 25/12 + 31/12

In 1922, this impressive 18th-century city residence in Rococo style was purchased by the city of Ghent and used to house its design museum. Behind the splendid facade there is a truly authentic interior with an open, modern wing at the back. The temporary exhibitions supplement the outstanding permanent collection, which covers the period from Art Nouveau to the current design trends.

The former hospital (1201) ended up in the hands of the Dominicans, an order of monks who preached and made converts in the cities and were therefore known as ‘preachers’. However, the locals do not take kindly to being subjugated and grew tired of the sermons. As a result, this friary became one of the first victims of the iconoclastic riots. In the 19th century, the building became a ‘tenement’: almost every square metre was rented out to students, artists and tramps. Its nickname ‘Flea Palace’ also dates back to this time.

DESIGN MUSEUM GENT
Jan Breydelstraat 5
Mon + Tue + Thu + Fri: 9.30 > 17.30 & Sat > Sun + School holidays & public holidays: 10.00 > 18.00
Closed Wed + 1/1 + 25/12 + 31/12

The temporary exhibitions supplement the outstanding permanent collection, which covers the period from Art Nouveau to the current design trends.

Enjoy the academic peace and quiet in the beautiful courtyard of the complex. The collections inside ‘het Pand’ may be visited upon request.

Toilet roll: sticking it to the man. Even if you don’t need to go, the toilet enclosure at the museum is well worth a visit.

Dig deeper into the culture of the knights
visitgent.be/castle
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**PRINSENHOF**

In the 14th century, the Castle of the Counts[17] was no longer a suitable residence for the Count of Flanders, who moved to Hof ten Wal-le. Emperor Charles V was born here in 1500 and from then on, ten Walle became known as Prinsenhof. The residence fell into disrepair in the 17th century and was ultimately sold. In the late 18th century, Prinsenhof suffered the same fate as the Castle of the Counts. A sugar refinery, soap factory and later a steam-powered cotton mill arose from the ruins. In the late 19th century, Donkere Poort (the Dark Gate) was all that remained of the magnificent complex.

The entire area around Prinsenhof lives and breathes the legacy of Emperor Charles, who occupies a special place in the history of Ghent. It was this emperor who returned to his city of birth when the citizens of Ghent rebelled against his measures. He received the city’s governors at Prinsenhof on several occasions and in 1540 imposed the ‘Concessio Carolina’, which considerably restricted their freedom. Dozens of Ghent dignitaries were literally forced onto their knees, dressed in hair shirts with nooses around their necks. Seventeen were decapitated and one was burnt to death. These days, the local residents are proud of their nickname ‘noose bearers’, but back then that certainly wasn’t the case.

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**LIEVEKAAI & ST.-ANTONIUSKAAAI**

In the 13th century, the Lieve Canal was dug in order to establish a direct connection with the Zwin tidal inlet and the sea. After the port fell into disuse, part of the canal was filled in during the mid-19th century, hence the current wide quay. Lievekaai now presents a typical streetscape in which little has changed over the past 200 years. The street boasts splendid mansions and the willows grow in peace here.

St.-Antoniuskaai also provides relief from the hustle and bustle of the city. The highlights of this street include St.-Antoniushof (17th century), the home of the prestigious guild of arquebus shooters and cannoneers. You can still admire the symbols of the shooters which decorate the facade.

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**tip**

Stand in the middle of this remarkable bridge and enjoy a wonderful view of Rabot and the Augustinian monastery.

visitgent.be/overnight

Fancy staying in style, just like Charles V?
A museum in Belgium's oldest mental institution, which dates back to 1857. The visionary Ghent-born doctor Guislain was one of the very first doctors to regard the mentally ill as patients who were entitled to humane treatment.

In 1986, the embarrassment about the way in which psychiatric patients were treated in the past provided the impetus for the museum to examine this shameful history.

Alongside the permanent collection, the museum showcases a unique, international collection of ‘outsider art’ or ‘art brut’. The temporary exhibitions are always outstanding too.

In order to check the quality of the meat that was sold, every medieval city had a butchers’ hall where the sale of meat was centralised. Ghent’s version is a splendid, covered market hall with a guildhall that dates back to the 15th century. From the end of the 19th century onwards, meat could also be sold privately and from door to door, so the Butchers’ Hall fell into disuse.

Today, the impressive medieval covered Great Butchers’ Hall houses the centre for the promotion of regional products. Look out for the unique wooden truss roof, where the sight of hundreds of Ghent’s special cured Ganda hams will whet your appetite.

Next to the Butchers’ Halls, there were always ‘Tripe houses’, where the inferior products (innards, tripe and meat scraps) were sold separately from the ‘good’ meat. Right next to the Butchers’ Hall, you will find ‘Galgenuişje’, a former tripe house that now houses the smallest café in Ghent.

The fish market was given its definitive location at St.-Veerleplein in 1689, including the permanent open-air stalls and the monumental gatehouse (in the corner of the square). The statues on the facade of the gatehouse show the sea god Neptune keeping watch over the rivers Scheldt (man) and Lys (woman).

In the previous century, the neo-Gothic main building was put to various strange uses (such as a tyre centre, a car wash and a bowling alley) but recently underwent an extensive refurbishment.
This old neighbourhood in the shadow of the Castle of the Counts [17] has a street pattern of narrow alleys and winding lanes dating back to the Middle Ages. The neighbourhood’s image has changed in line with the function of the surrounding areas: originally it was the military property of the Counts of Flanders, but after the departure of the monks (13th century) it became a residential area for magistrates and lawyers when the Castle of the Counts housed the Council of Flanders (in the late 15th century). Patershol remained an affluent neighbourhood when craftsmen and merchants subsequently settled there. However, when it became a working-class district in the 19th century, the town houses were split up into smaller workers’ quarters. Patershol is now a trendy neighbourhood with lots of charming restaurants. During an evening walk through the narrow streets, you will not only encounter all kinds of different cuisines, but you will also meet a wide range of people. The old houses have been renovated and around 500 families now live in these low-traffic streets.

The House of Alijn museum puts the ordinary daily life of 20th century people in the spotlight. This was once the ‘Children of Alijn hospice’. It is the only almshouse—a charitable institution where the old and sick were cared for—to have been preserved in Ghent.

A must-see during your city trip to Ghent with the kids. Visit the House of Alijn with your children or grandchildren and discover or re-discover together how daily life has changed.

Dip into the dressing-up box, flick through photo albums from grandma’s time, revel in the nostalgia of old films, enjoy Play-Doh, hopscotch and knucklebones: rediscover your inner child!

Afterwards, why not reminisce in the beautiful courtyard in an equally typical café? Highly recommended!

Visitgent.be/family

Tips if you are visiting with kids

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Visitgent.be/family
As an important textile centre, Ghent was already in the late 18th century the operating base for the first Industrial Revolution on the European mainland. However, the city’s industrial past rapidly fell into decline from the 1970s onwards. Luckily, at the same time a decision was made to safeguard this heritage by creating a museum to house the symbols of the Industrial Revolution.

The Museum of Industry is based in a former cotton mill and provides a unique picture of the drastic technological changes which have taken place in our Western European society over the past 250 years. Although the building is an experience in itself, the exhibitions also reveal a great deal about industry, labour and textiles.

Walk all the way up to the top floor of this glazed building and enjoy a wonderful view over the city. Below, you can see how the industrial premises have been given a facelift.

**MUSEUM OF INDUSTRY***

Museum of Industry is home to an original ‘Mule Jenny’, a revolutionary spinning machine which was invented in England and was not supposed to have been exported. Nonetheless, Ghent-born entrepreneur Lieven Bauwens managed to smuggle a ‘Jenny’ across the English channel piece by piece, bringing the industrial revolution to the mainland as a result. This is how Ghent earned its nickname as the ‘Manchester of the European mainland’.

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**CAERMERSKLOOSTER**

Caermersklooster, the former Friary of the Calced Carmelites, lies at the heart of Patershol [24]. The site grew rapidly from 1272 onwards and included a church, two cloisters, a sacristy, a guesthouse, an infirmary and of course a brewery: we are in Belgium, after all.

The friary ended up in private hands after the French Revolution. Later, it was restored by the local authorities.

The idyllic residential centre, hidden behind the facades of the Plotersgracht, also forms part of the original monastery complex. Today, it is a creative platform for the visual arts.

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Immerse yourself in the art city of Ghent

Visitgent.be/art
This illustrious square has always played a prominent role in Ghent's history. Events both good and bad have played out here since 1199, when the weekly market already had to make way for formal receptions, parties and celebrations, not to mention popular uprisings and bloodbaths.

**BIG CANNON**

This cast-iron mammoth weighs 12,500 kg and dates back to 1431. As a result of its original ox red colour, the cannon was also referred to as the ‘Big Red Devil’, but it is known in popular parlance as Dulle Griet (Mad Meg).

**ONS HUIS**

The end of the 19th century saw the establishment of the first socialist health insurance fund in Ghent’s working-class circles. The symbolic building (1894) includes Ons Huis (the party headquarters) and Bond Moyson, which at that time was the warehouse of the cooperative association. Just like Vooruit [38], this complex points a challenging finger at the bourgeoisie and shows that even in its more recent history, Ghent has continued to live up to its unruly reputation.

**STATUE OF JACOB VAN ARTEVELDE**

An entrepreneur and politician (1290-1345), Jacob Van Artevelde was mainly known as the leader of Ghent’s insurgents. He managed to undo the boycott of English wool imports and became a true hero of the city. Not without good reason, Ghent is known as ‘the city of Artevelde’. It was also thanks to Van Artevelde that Edward III was crowned King of France at Vrijdagmarkt [27]. Later, Van Artevelde was murdered by the head of the rich weavers in the courtyard of his home on Kalandeberg.

Belgian cartoon icon Nero once wondered whether “Jacob was feeling for rain” and sometimes it looks like he is waving a rather odd hello from the past, but in reality Jacob is pointing towards his former ally England.

Vrijdagmarkt was also the setting of that other popular event: executions! The last beheading, that of a certain Van Butsel, dates back to 1822. He died under the blade of the guillotine, after his right hand had already been cut off.

**Take a look at the corner house on the Kamberstraat side, called Toreken. This 14th-century building is the oldest and most authentic property at Vrijdagmarkt and gives you a good impression of what the square might have looked like during the turbulent medieval period. The Toreken house still has the market clock which announced the start of the market, as well as a ring which served as a pillory and from which rejected cloths were hung. The building also houses Ghent’s Poëzicentrum (poetry centre). The poetry route starts from here.**

**Take a minute to admire the beautiful sculptures on the facade of Ons Huis.**

**Wander around the numerous markets**

visitgent.be/markets
Originally founded by St Amand, this abbey was rechristened St Bavo’s Abbey in the 9th century. The abbey had its heyday in the 11th century. In competition with the nearby St Peter’s Abbey,[42] its domain grew to include an abbey church in which the ‘oldest wall in Ghent’ is still standing.

Macharius, a pilgrim who died of the plague here, lent his name to the neighbourhood which sprang up around the former church and abbey. In 1540, to retaliate for the Ghent uprising, Charles V ordered the demolition of the splendid abbey church and the surrounding village. This harsh ruling (the ‘Concessio Carolina’) also specified that a Spanish fortress would be constructed to replace the abbey, thus ensuring total defeat.

Today, the outline of the original Romanesque church has been recreated with green shrubs to give you an idea of the former grandeur of the site.

The neighbours of the abbey, a colourful group of local residents, open the site on summer sundays, organise concerts and run the welcoming inn known as ‘Herberg Macharius’.
This 13th-century former Gothic steen (the stone house of a nobleman) is named after the knight Geeraard Vilain. He earned his nickname of Gerald the Devil as a result of his appearance, as he had very dark hair and dark skin. His status is clear from the fact that Gerald and his wife are buried in the crypt of St Bavo’s Cathedral [1].

Over the centuries, the building has served as a knight’s residence, arsenal, monastery, school, episcopal seminary, mental institution and prison. In 1830, it was even used as a fire station. At the end of the 19th century it was purchased by the Belgian government, which added a new wing and until recently used the building to house its archives.

CASTLE OF GERALD THE DEVIL

Geraard de Duivelstraat 1

The square keep on the corner of the building shows that the Castle of Gerald the Devil, nestled between the Scheldt and the moat which used to surround Ghent, served to defend the city and protect the former inland port, now Portus Ganda [28].

HOTEL D’HANE-STEENHUYSE

Veldstraat 55

This impressive ‘hotel’ (city residence) has a complex front facade in quite an ornate Rococo style. It has welcomed many famous guests during its history, but the most illustrious remains the French king Louis XVIII. He ‘governed’ from here while he was in exile, accompanied by a large royal household. In those days, he became notorious in Ghent for his dissolute lifestyle.

The city palace consisted of several old mansions, which is still evident from the projecting facade and the asymmetrical location of the main entrance. Inside, features such as the 18th- and 19th-century interior, and the wooden mosaic floor are well worth a visit. Another impressive sight is the Italian ballroom, which occupies two floors.

HOTEL CLEMMEN

Veldstraat 82

A beautifully restored 18th-century patrician’s house. The patrician in question was Judocus Clemmen, one of Ghent’s first textile barons, who purchased the half-finished ‘hotel’ (the former name for a city residence) to live in. He had the building decorated with lavish ornaments in Rococo and classical style, as is still evident from the facade: a pompous pediment, carved drapes beneath the windows and sculptures above the balcony doors.

Wellington stayed in this building in 1815 as it allowed him to keep an eye on Louis XVIII: the king, who was in exile from France, was staying at hotel D’Hane-Steenhuyse on the other side of Veldstraat.

The courtyard was given a contemporary look and is open to the public. The former warehouse now houses the city’s culture department.

TIP

[31] Hotel Clemmen can only be visited as part of a tour: every Friday and Saturday at 14.30.

TIP

[32] You’ll find the door open on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays between 14 and 18.00 hrs.
**BEGUINES**

Beguines were single women who lived together as a Catholic community in a ‘beguinage’. These beguinages were a success as many women were widowed (after several wars) and were forced to live together out of necessity. Although their name comes from their patron saint St Begga, they did not have to take any spiritual vows apart from that of chastity. This is why extremely pious women and old spinsters were sometimes mockingly referred to as ‘beguines’.

Because of their relatively independent status they were often persecuted as heretics or witches throughout the years. By the end of the 18th century, they were only found in the Netherlands. The last Ghent beguine died in 2008, just before reaching the ripe old age of 100.

The beguinages in Flanders and the Netherlands are still oases of peace and quiet, where you might expect to see a beguine praying at her door at any moment. Two of Ghent’s three beguinages have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List ([33] and [34]).

**SMALL BEGUINAGE**
**OUR LADY TER HOYEN**

- Lange Violettestraat 235
- Mon > Sun: 06.30 > 21.30

Judging from the modest facade on the street side of the Small Beguineage, along Lange Violettestraat, you would not think that it conceals a church, around a hundred homes and a meadow (the former churchyard). The beguineage was founded as early as 1234 by the Countess of Flanders, after the Old St Elizabeth Beguineage. These days, it is a residential site and the former infirmary houses exhibitions and art studios.

**OLD ST ELIZABETH BEGUINAGE**

- Groot Begijnhof 67
- Mon > Sun: 06.30 > 21.30

This beguineage was constructed between 1873 and 1874 and involved a herculean task: in less than two years, 18 builders and 600 labourers built a total of 80 houses, 14 convents, a communal house, an infirmary, a chapel and a church. Today, it is an exceptionally large beguineage which is located just outside the city in the borough of St-Amandsberg. This site is also an oasis of peace and quiet amidst the hustle and bustle of the city.

Today, the Old St Elizabeth beguinage is known as the ‘holy corner’ as there are four different churches in the area: the Roman Catholic St Elizabeth church (which was originally the beguineage church), the Orthodox Church of St Andrew (with a mainly Russian congregation), the protestant Rabot church (on the former bleach-field) and St John’s Anglican church.
OLD LAW COURTS
Koophandelsplein
This majestic Neoclassical building was constructed in the 19th century to replace the former Recollect Friary, which had been demolished. As the town hall was also used as a courtroom and the noisy sessions often disrupted the local authorities, a decision was made to build a completely new courthouse at Recollettenplein. Following a fire in 1926, which lasted two days and completely destroyed all the contents, the building underwent a thorough renovation. As new law courts have now been built outside the city, these days the old building only houses the Court of Appeal.

OPERА GENT
Schouwburgstraat 3
In the first half of the 19th century, rich Ghent industrialists commissioned a new and luxurious opera house. As it was intended to showcase their newly acquired wealth, the building also boasts a sumptuous interior. In the splendid horseshoe shaped theatre, ‘seeing’ was just as important as ‘being seen’. The impressive chandelier is an attraction in itself, just like the three adjoining salons, which together measure 90 metres in length. As well as opera, the venue is also a good place to attend recitals and (lunchtime) concerts.

During the First World War, the law courts were occupied by the German army and used as an arsenal and workshop. On the side wall facing Schouwburgstraat, you can still see the German inscription ‘етап-пенинспекция’ above the large window, even though it has been painted over.

Alongside the palace you will generally find the ‘Gentse Barge’, a reconstruction of an 18th-century historical boat and an original employment project which combines heritage with the creation of jobs and educational projects. This wooden tow barge travelled backwards and forwards between Ghent and Brugge and was renowned for its comfort and luxurious interior.
in order to improve the plight of the working classes, labour movements developed all over Europe in the second half of the 19th century. Ghent’s socialist consumer cooperative Vooruit was a classic example of its type and one of the first such establishments to be founded in Belgium, in 1880. 300 workers put together the starting capital by each saving half a franc. Around 1913, the Vooruit cooperative already had over 10,000 members.

After the bankruptcy of the Vooruit cooperative bank during the 1934 depression and the Nazi occupation, things quickly went downhill. By the early 1980s, when a group of volunteers set up Arts centre Vooruit in order to save the building, these splendid premises had literally become a dovecote. Like a phoenix, Vooruit arose from its ashes and today the arts centre forms the beating heart of Ghent’s cultural scene, offering dance, theatre, performing arts, literature and a generous portion of rock-’n’-roll.

The spacious café, a popular meeting place, gained an external sibling in the form of a fantastic green terrace on the side of the building. From here, you have a wonderful view of the ‘curtain wall’ of the former offices of ‘Dagblad Vooruit’, the building on the other side which is beautifully illuminated at night.

ARTS CENTRE VOORUIT
St.-Pietersnieuwstraat 23

This ‘fourth tower’ symbolises Ghent’s status as a university city. The building is 64 metres tall and has 24 floors, including 4 beneath ground level. It is a modernist masterpiece by the famous Belgian architect Henry van de Velde (1863-1957), with a monotone concrete exterior and a wonderful belvedere.

The library has over 3 million books (46 km of paper) which have been temporarily moved to make way for a major renovation project which will restore the Booktower to its original glory.

BOOKTOWER
Rozier 9

De Krook is a library and hub for know-how, culture & innovation. This architectural work of art is a unique meeting place for residents, students and visitors who are here to discover culture, enjoy a quiet drink or even try out innovations and technologies like 3D printing and virtual reality.

As well as connecting people, the building links the Historic Centre with the Art Quarter. The building also includes a multi-purpose room, a study room and a reading café.

DE KROOK
Miriam Makebaplein 1
Mon > Sat: 10.00 > 19.00 & Thu: 10.00 > 21.00
The first St Peter’s Church was a Romanesque building dating back to the 12th/13th century, which was converted into the current Baroque church in the 17th century. The Church of Our Lady, which did not survive the French Revolution, was not far away. Since then, this parish has been known as Our Lady of St Peter’s. In the church you can admire wonderful sculptures and woodcuts, as well as plenty of paintings from the 17th and 18th centuries.

At St.-Pietersplein look out for the pharmacy (no. 26). The 19th-century building was decorated by the socialist consumer cooperative Vooruit in 1923. The art deco interior is still intact, including the original stained-glass windows.

Be sure to wander through the gardens behind the abbey. In this green oasis, where monks once prayed and scribed with goose quills, you will now find Ghent students studying during the summer months. The monks grew grapes on the slope to the Scheldt behind the abbey and there are still vines here to this day.

A unique fossil of a prehistoric reptile, a splendid diorama room with native birds and a replica model of Ghent as it was in the 16th century, with sound and lighting effects. The House is a museum where you and your children will uncover one surprise after another.

With its educational garden, this location is not within walking distance of the House but can be reached by taking bus no. 5 from St.-Pietersplein (Tolhuislaan stop).

This project started in 1906, when the former city zoo was cleared to make way for workers’ houses. Since the turn of the century, the residential complex has offered a platform for young artists as well as many social and cultural activities. The numerous works of art are one of the striking features of the site. They include the bright yellow mesh structure on the roof and veil on the rear wall (both by Nick Ervinck), the mirrored wall and the giant nail in the courtyard.

Feel like relaxing in nature?

visitgent.be/walks
The strength of the Museum of Fine Arts (MSK) lies in the diversity of its collection. This is particularly striking as Ghent was under French rule at the end of the 18th century and many of the city’s art treasures were confiscated. Some of them are still in the Louvre to this day. However, Ghent did not lose heart. The city gradually acquired a comprehensive art collection and spent years searching for the right location to showcase it. This building at Citadelpark, designed by the architect Van Rysselberghe, is an art temple with a fantastic spacious feel and plenty of natural light, and proved to be the perfect solution.

After a period of austerity during the Second World War and alterations in the mid-20th century, MSK (one of the oldest museums in Belgium) recently underwent a complete and drastic renovation. The collection, which ranges from Jeroen Bosch and Rubens all the way to Magritte, has never been presented more effectively and includes a huge variety of paintings, sculptures, drawings, etchings and tapestries which date from the medieval period through to the 20th century.

An auditorium, library, children’s workshop and café/restaurant make MSK a contemporary and multifunctional complex where you can spend many happy hours surrounded by beauty.

The Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art, or S.M.A.K. for short, was established in 1999 and is located opposite MSK in a former casino.

Under the inspiring leadership of curator and art connoisseur Jan Hoet, the former ‘Contemporary Art’ department of MSK was given its own museum. The permanent collection includes outstanding national and international works by artists from the COBRA, pop art, minimal art, conceptual art and arte povera movements, who are all at the top of their field.

Look out for Jan Fabre’s sculpture on the roof: the body of ‘The man who measures the clouds’ was modelled on Fabre’s own body, while the face is that of his deceased brother.

Why not relax afterwards at the Mub’art restaurant at MSK, the S.M.A.K.-Cafe or enjoy a walk through Citadelpark?
The nuns of Mariahospitaal consecrated a new hospital here in 1228, with a ward which held forty beds. In those days the patients had to share beds, perhaps sharing their pain too... After the French Revolution, the Bijloke site became a civilian hospital, then a medical faculty and finally an internationally renowned music centre.

The former hospital infirmary with its splendid beamed apex ceiling was transformed into a concert hall where musicians fall in love with the unique acoustics. Attending a concert here is a treat for the ear and eye. The whole complex is well worth a visit as it is a perfect architectural symbiosis: buildings dating back to the medieval period, the 17th and 19th centuries are connected by a 21st-century walkway.

Like on many of Ghent’s other historical sites, you can relax here in the peaceful green spaces, parks and gardens that stretch out alongside these impressive buildings.

On the Bijloke site, the Ghent City Museum or STAM tells the story of Ghent from the Middle Ages to the present day. The museum’s highlights include the aerial photo of Ghent (measuring 300 sq. m!) visitors can walk on and the multimedia application which allows them to view Ghent in detail across four centuries.

‘Zichten op Gent’ shows a view of the city in 1534, maps from 1614 and 1912, and a current aerial photo. Here too, you can sense the digital future against a historical backdrop. Past, present and future are illustrated in a clear and interesting trail, detailing Ghent’s transformation from a medieval metropolis into a city of knowledge and culture. STAM is full of surprises, both in terms of its collection and presentation. In an unforgettable journey through time, you will discover what made Ghent the city it is today.
THE VAN EYCK BROTHERS

Hubert van Eyck began the Ghent Altarpiece and painted the majority of the work, but was unable to finish it. His younger brother Jan, a diplomat working for Philip the Good who was already recognized as a master painter during his lifetime, was said to have completed the spectacular work several years after Hubert’s death. However, the true facts remain a mystery and the speculations began after Emperor Charles had the archives of the painters’ guild destroyed. Hubert and Jan’s brother and sister are also said to have painted part of the work. The quatrains (a four-line poem, used here as a signature) on the work itself only mentions Hubert and Jan.

THE BOLD THEFT

On the morning of 11 April 1934, Ghent woke up to bad news. Two panels of the Ghent Altarpiece had been stolen from the cathedral during the night: ‘the just judges’ and ‘John the baptist’. This ‘bold theft’ became one of the most mysterious art thefts of the 20th century and remains unsolved to this day.

In the days following the theft, the diocese of Ghent received various ransom notes. ‘John the baptist’ was returned to lend weight to the demands, but no transfer of either the ransom or the second panel took place.

The chief suspect was a certain Arsène Goedertier, an exchange broker from Dendermonde and sacristan of the Wetteren parish church. Drafts of the ransom notes were discovered among his possessions after his death, together with the typewriter they had been written on. The only problem was that he never managed to reveal the location of ‘the just judges’, as he died two months after the diocese had received the last letter.

In the following 80 years, possible hiding places of the last panel have surfaced in Ghent and also far beyond the city. Official investigators and amateur detectives have tried to unravel the mystery in numerous ways, to no avail: the hiding place remains a mystery to this day. In turn, this has led to all kinds of theories and scenarios, from the involvement of a noble family or the banking sector, to a Nazi ploy and a solo act by a deranged sacristan… in a nutshell, the saga continues.

GHENT ALTARPIECE

‘The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb’ is regarded as an artistic masterpiece all over the world and is one of the most influential paintings of all time. The artist Hubert van Eyck was commissioned to paint the polyptych (panel painting) by the mayor and church benefactor Joos Vijd. It was intended as an altarpiece for Vijd’s chapel in the former church of St John the Baptist, now St Bavo’s Cathedral. A total of 20 panels evoke the stories of the Bible and include a portrait of Vijd and his wife Elisabeth Borluut.

The monumental work (4.4 m x 3.4 m) was painted on oak panels covered with an extremely fine layer of chalk, after which the figures were applied using several layers of oil paint. The combination of fine details and translucent paint provides an extra dimension: the painting almost seems to exude an inner glow. The Ghent Altarpiece also features a succession of microscopic details, together with various ‘mathematical’ and symbolic perspectives.

“The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb is arguably the most influential painting in history, and it is also the most frequently stolen artwork of all-time.” Noah Charney
IN DETAIL

The walls of the room at MSK where the Ghent Altarpiece is being restored have been painted grey, so as not to influence the colours of the retable.

The side panel that bears Vijd’s portrait includes a window showing a detailed view of Ghent’s Kortedagsteeg.

In 1861, a copy of the ‘Adam and Eve’ panels which showed them wearing bearskins was painted (this can be seen at the entrance to the cathedral [1]). During a visit to Ghent by the holy roman emperor Joseph II (1781), the panels had already been removed as they were considered offensive.

It took six months to reproduce ‘the Just Judges’ and one of the judges was given the face of the belgian king Leopold III. The copy needed restoring after just sixty years, as by then, it was in a far worse state than the ancient original panels.

The fruit in Eve’s devout hands is not the well-known biblical apple, but a now rare kind of citrus fruit (‘Pomum Adami’).

Research into the mouths of the angels has revealed that they are singing polyphonically. However, it was not possible to work out which song they are singing… one of them is wearing a sapphire which shows an almost microscopic reflection of one of the cathedral’s gothic windows.

Ghent’s three towers can be seen in the skyline on the central panel.

After the fire of 1822, the damaged central panel was restored. The Mystic Lamb itself was painted over at this time, but several details of the original remain visible. As a result, the Mystic Lamb now appears to have four ears.

• The fruit in Eve’s devout hands is not the well-known biblical apple, but a now rare kind of citrus fruit (‘Pomum Adami’).

• Research into the mouths of the angels has revealed that they are singing polyphonically. However, it was not possible to work out which song they are singing… one of them is wearing a sapphire which shows an almost microscopic reflection of one of the cathedral’s gothic windows.

• Ghent’s three towers can be seen in the skyline on the central panel.

The portrait of Vijd, who commissioned the work, is not exactly flattering: it is so detailed that pimpls are visible on his face and it is clear that he was poorly shaved that day.

On the right-hand side panel, the text the Virgin Mary is reading, is upside down for mere mortals but the right way up for god to see.

© www.lukasweb.be — Art in Flanders vzw, photo Hugo Maertens

In 1861, a copy of the ‘Adam and Eve’ panels which showed them wearing bearskins was painted (this can be seen at the entrance to the cathedral [1]). During a visit to Ghent by the holy roman emperor Joseph II (1781), the panels had already been removed as they were considered offensive.
RESTAURATION

Although the Ghent Altarpiece was already restored several times in the past, a thorough restoration is taking place since 2012. Over the course of its eventful history, the retable has survived relocations, fluctuating tempera-tures and moisture levels, the indignity of being sawn in half and fire damage. It was also given quite a few extra layers of varnish which have since yellowed and cracked. Once they have been removed, the original colours will be restored to their full glory.

For this restoration project, a team of international Flemish Primitive specialists has been put together to make sure that the works run smoothly. The story of the Ghent Altarpiece is told in three places in Ghent:

ST BAVO’S CATHEDRAL

During the restoration, the ‘home’ of the Ghent Altarpiece will still be displaying the panels that are not being restored.

MSK

At the Museum of Fine Arts, a special sound-proof and bulletproof room was built for the Ghent Altarpiece, where the restorers can be viewed live at work on weekdays. You can see them using minuscule brushes to remove the layers of varnish and later additions, and apply retouches.

STAM

The Ghent City Museum focuses on the search for the missing panel known as ‘The Just Judges’. Enjoy the conspiracy theories and hypotheses!
GHENT ON A PLATE

There’s always something to do in Ghent. Ghent is the historic heart of Flanders where you can shop, discover and taste to your heart’s content.

Do you love great food? You’re in luck: Ghent is the veggie capital of Europe (according to Ghent’s inhabitants, of course), and its young, rock-star chefs are causing a sensation on the international food scene.

Ghent is attracting more and more innovative gastronomic talents and bold concepts. In Ghent, young Michelin-starred chefs really pull out all the stops. Ghent is an organic haven for vegetarians: besides dozens of cool, trendy, quirky restaurants, you will find organic stores and an entire organic supermarket in the city.

In 2009, Ghent launched ‘Thursday Veggie Day’. Ghent encourages its citizens not to eat meat or fish on Thursdays. Cities like São Paulo in Brazil and Bremen in Germany have followed in Ghent’s footsteps. Ghent has been proclaimed the veggie capital of Europe.

Discover your favourite restaurant

visitgent.be/restaurant
You guessed it. The cultural city of Ghent is hot and happening! The city has an exciting mixture of rich history and funky events, exhibitions, festivals, theatre plays and concerts unrivalled anywhere else in the world.

Ghent is trendy, urban and loves the good life. You won’t have a dull moment on your holiday. Come and sample Ghent’s unique urban energy at the Ghent Festivities, book a ticket at one of the many theatres or view top-quality classic and contemporary exhibitions in Ghent.

**LIVELY GHENT**

The Ghent Festivities, held every year in July, are the top event in Ghent, taking over the entire city centre for ten days. Get ready for 765,000m² of party mayhem.

**Browse through our events**

visitgent.be/calendar

The entire city centre

Ten full festival days

Starts on the Friday preceding the Saturday before 21 July, Belgium’s national holiday
We will gladly help you on your way to enjoying everything Ghent has to offer on top of the more obvious attractions in this guide. Our promise: Ghent will enchant and continue to astound you with its amazing gastronomy, splendid cityscapes, charming pavement cafés and much, much more.

These great lists reveal just some of the city’s many delights. For nostalgics and adventurers, for sweet lovers and party animals, and for foodies and young talents. How many of them will you explore during your stay?

DEAR VISITOR
Eat & Drinks

Cocktails
- Jigger’s: Prohibition bar with spiritual secrets. Oudenburg 16
- Limonada: Bubbly lounge bar with an edge. Heiligegrachtstraat 7
- Polé Polé: African rhythms for a great night out. Lammenschans 8
- The Cobbler: Warm & stylish 19th-century grageur. Graslei 16
- Bar Móris: Bricks and a fireplace. What a hotspot! Klein Turkije 20
- The Mix: Colourful cocktails and sensual salsa. Hoogpoort 8
- The Drifter: Rum and palm trees. Tiki bar! Oudburg 47

Wine
- EVIN: Wine bar & shop... the best of both worlds! St.-Margaretstraat 16
- Baravins: The place to be for a hint of quirkiness. Steenstraat 8
- Parel: Cava and champagne for connoisseurs. Nieuwpoort 24
- Ona: Organic wine to sip or share. Nederkouter 71
- Proof: Try it all, the proof is in the pudding. Breydelstraat 34
- Win: Wine only. A wine-ant. Borsselestraat 8
- SOMM: Magic tricks at your table and in your mouth. Steenstraat 39
- Edelrot: Wine bar on wheels - no more whining! Steenstraat 64

Jazz
- Hot Club Gent: Seek and you will find (this hotspot). Schuddevelstraat 2
- Minor Swing: Tiny cafe, big jazz. Oostergate 86
- Misterioso: Slightly bigger cafe, equally good jazz. Krommewal 96
- Hot Lips: Literaty cafe, where words come to life. Hoogstraat 1
- Manteca: Piano till the wee hours. Kataloniestraat 2

Dancing
- Charlatan: Party hotspot for night owls, not charlatans. Vlaamsestraat 6
- Club 69: Hip and hop. Two clubs in one. Oude Beestenmarkt 5-6
- Decadence: Epic nightlife hotspot for students. (After)party! Overpoortstraat 76
- Kinky Star: From kinky to sweaty to stinky. Oude Beestenmarkt 5-6
- De Roerkuip: Mix it up on the raised dance floor. Oude Beestenmarkt 8
- Club Central: Latin, meringue, Bachata, salsa. Dance the night away! Hoogpoort 32

Local pubs
- De Deul Griet: 1 beer in a boot. 500 others in a glass. Vrijdagmarkt 50
- Café Den Turk: Have a drink with the Mayor. Boterstraat 3
- ’t Dreupelkot: Get sloshed, one drop at a time. Groentenmarkt 12
- ’t Kanon: Authentic Ghent for beginners. And connoisseurs. Meerseniersstraat 17
- Jan van Gent: Hip or dip? Either way, have a sip! Annonciadenstraat 1
- De Geus van Gent: Share liberal ideas, liberaly! Kantsenberg 9
- Afros: First drinks, then flea market. Bij St.-Jacobs 10
- Trolliekeider: Underground pub with mythcal flair. Bij St.-Jacobs 17
- De Alchemist: Turn water into gin... An alchemist’s dream! Reepstraat 17
- ’t Gouden Mandekan: Authentic pub, large terrace, golden team. Ponsenstraat 9

Terraces
- Dakterras Vooruit: Vertical garden, horizontal terrace. Arty! St.-Pietersnieuwstraat 23
- Bar Jan Cremer: Beach bar. No sand. Get tanned! Kramersplein 5
- ’t Galgenhuisje: Tiny cafe. Perfectly executed. Groentenmarkt 5
- Waterhuis aan de Bierkant: Water fights the post. Beer fights the rest! Groentenmarkt 5
- Mosquito Coast: Travel bar. Top destination! Hoogpoort 28
- Etencafe Multatuli: Along the Lys, in the sun. MAXimum fun! Huidevetterskaai 10
- Paard van Troje: From the horse’s mouth: great books, coffee & classics. Kouter 113

Coffee
- Folie à deux: Old-style hospitality. Feels like grandma’s house. Filip van Arteveldestraat 37
- Okt Coffee: Home-roasted coffee, great atmosphere brewing! Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 31
- Full Circle Coffee: Coffee with a dash of eat milk. Zuidasstraat 5
- Le Bal Infernal: Second-hand books. First-class coffee. Kammenstraat 6
- Labath: Coffee artists. Hotspot for art students. Oude Houtlei 1
- Barista: Panmpering by the coffee smmelier. Hippolytusplein 25
- Bar Bidon: Time for a drink. Set your bikes aside. Brugdijkstraat 25
- Mokabon: The first coffee bar. Comfort since 1937. Donkersteeg 35

Breakfast & Brunch
- Brando-huys: Reminiscent of a gingerbread house. Onderbergen 13
- Belle Histoire: Paresan baguette tables and French chansons. Korte Meir 4
- Huize Colette: Addictive like chocolate or a good book. Belfortstraat 6
- Maison Elza: Nostalgic interior, authentic flavours. Jan Breydelstraat 36
- Gust: Sandwiches with dust - a must! Annonciadenstraat 4
- Le Pain Perdu: Lose yourself with a delicious breakfast. Walpoortstraat 9
- Le Pain Quotidien: Long, long table. Endless food fun! Korenmotmarkt 16
- Alice: Cake and quiche in Wonderland. Onderbergen 6
- Hot Moment: Enjoy the moment in Gent. Brugstraat 20

Sweet temptations
- Julie’s House: Breakfast fit for a princess. Pink  icing and all. Kraanlei 13
- Madame Bakster: Sugar- and guilt-free cakes. Brabandam 42
- Yuzu: Tangy. Hot. Friliness with a passion. Walpoortstraat 11A
- Himschroot: Bakery of the century - the 17th that is. Groentenmarkt 1
- Hilde Devoiler: Beauty & chocolate in a box. Brugstraat 43
- Guenola: Bistro crepegeen. Ghent hospitality. Krommewal 96
- Mayana: Hot and cold in Chocola-la-land. St.-Pietersnieuwstraat 99
- Aux Merveilleux de Fred: Delicious merveilleux. Pick your flavour! Magleienstraat 38
- Max: Waffles & beignets, 4th generation and counting. Goedelelaan 33
- Chocolaterie Van Hoorebeke: A family-run chocolate shop. Sint-Baafskapel 15

Vegetarian
- Local: Deliciously fresh from the nearby fields. Brabandam 100
- Pius+: Vegetarian with a surplus. Aulnery 14
- Lekker Cee: Quirkiness for a cleaner planet and better life. Zuidstraat 7
- Le Botaniste: Healthy, for you and the planet. Hoornstraat 13
- Warempel: Flexitarian - the best of both worlds. Zandberg 8
- Pacha Mama: Mother Earth at her best... Jan-Baptist Guintardstraat 9
- BE O Versbar: Local, organic & affordable goodness. Heiligegrachtstraat 30
- Barbiet: Eat your beets, erm, veggies! Baudelairestraat 3
- Komkommertijd: Veggie heaven, cool as a cucumber! Reepstraat 9

Lunch
- Boon: Yummy lunch? Don’t spill the beans! Geldmunt 6
- Frank Gustav: Brunch bar with Berlin flair. Ham 163
- Bodo: The Counts’ neighbour welcomes you. Burgstraat 2
- Café Parti: Final destination for foodies. Ken. Mana Hendrikaplein 65a
- Hot Gouden Hoofd: Former meat shop. Eclectic and tasty. Slachthuisstraat 96
- Eat Love Pizza: La dolce vita on your plate. Aujilna 10
- Lousbergmarkt: Tasty local food – four peas in a pod. Ferdinand Leusbergkaai 33
- Holy Food Market: Holy Smokes, this food is good! Bierhoveplein 15
Traditional
Pho-Huis Spectacular setting. Equally spectacular food. Schouwenstraat 4
Café Théâtre Draw the curtains, standing out. Schoonhovensestraat 7
Belga Queen Royal Belgian dishes. Graslei 10
De Stekereij Pub serving up its own beer. Tichelaarstraat 24
Du Progres Progress, three centuries and counting. Korenmarkt 50
’t Vosken Chips, stew & other authentic local dishes. St.-Baafslaan 19
De Lieve Chips, stew & other authentic local dishes (+). St.-Margrieteplein 1
Foyer Brunch or dinner, with or without show. St.-Baafslaan 12
Brasserie HA’ Brunch or dinner, with or without concert. Kouter 29

Gastronomie
Chambre Séparée 20 courses, Kobe Desramaults style! Keizer Karelplein 1
Vijgimood Free spirit and daring. Two stars. Vlaanderenstraat 22
Publiek Rock ’n’ roll with a Michelín star. Ram 39
Horseoe Food heaven in a football temple. Ottergemsesteenweg Zuid 808
De Superette Bakery-brasserie with a wood-fired oven. Guldensporenstraat 29
Naturell Fresh vegetables, top chef. Jan Breydelstraat 1
OK Let the chef surprise you! Delectable! Hoogstraat 106/107
Roots Open kitchen, open menu. Vreewebroersstraat 5
Vos Sharing is caring. Zwaantjessluis 6
Cochon Deluxe Top-notch cuisine with a twist. Brabantdijk 113
Souvenir An explosion of unforgettable flavours. Brabantdijk 134
San Spoon restaurant... Ready to spoon? Brabantdijk 50

Surprising panoramas
De Krook Free access to books, education and life. Miriam Makebaflat 1
Belfort Sky-high world heritage. St.-Baafslaan
Gravensteen Where the Counts looked down on us. St.-Beiaard 11
Dakters HEMA Terrace overlooking terraces. Korenmarkt 3
Industriemuseum Museum of man and machines. Minnemee 10

Instagram Hits
Michielsbrug Three towers in a row. Graslei & Korenlei. St.-Michielsbruggen
Het Graffitistraatje Canvas for street artists. Werregarenstraat
Portus Ganda Idyllic yacht marina with Art Deco pool. Veermanplein 2
Patershol Medieval alleys for foodies. Haringsteeg 3
Graslei Great view of Korenlei. Graslei
Groet Vleeshuis Mecca for local products. 15th-century vaulted ceiling. Groentenstraat 1

Street art
‘Broche’ & ‘HD 400’ Pinpricks on the square. Korenmarkt
‘Al Nati Oggi’ A light for every newborn. St.-Baafslaan
‘De Passanten’ Putting heads together. Large artwork by Borremans. Miriam Makebaflat
‘De Maagd’ Small woman’s portrait by Borremans. Goudenleeuwplein
Lam Gods in graffiti A masterpiece reinvented yet never found. Predikherenlei
Mythic Leaves Artys leaves at the flower market. Kouter
Les oiseaux bleus Blue birds light up your evening walk. Predikherenlei
de M. Maeterlinck A masterpiece reinvented yet never found. Predikherenlei

Where time stands still
Prijm Retro wallpaper for castles, filmsets and... for you! Zuivelhofstraat 1
Temmerman Muilekrekken and tijpekjes. Untranslatable goodness. Knaanië 79
Café Folkloré So many stories, so much to discover since 1667. Lange Steenstraat 69
Brocantenmarkt St.-Jacobs Broc-à-brac market with a rich history. Bij St.-Jacobs
Boekhandel Limerick Literary bookshop and typewriter museum. Karel. Elisabethlaan 102
Chez Léontine Rabbit with prunes and other Flemish treats. Korenmarkt 10
De Gouden Klokk Tîte a bîte with Art Nouveau & maitre d’. Koning Albertlaan 31

Grooms
Amélie-Moi Café and shop for mums/babies-to-be. Steendom 74-76
Petit zsa zsa Colourful, retro must-haves. Serpentstraat 5
Honeer Janssen en Griet Trousers and dresses for mini trendsetters. Gouwstraat 7
Juffrouw Kaat A disaster. Not a catastrophe. Koning Albertpark
Skatepark A disaster. Not a catastrophe. Koning Albertpark

Giffts
PIET Mooishop Gifts for your house. Or housemates. Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 94
A’pril Spring in the land of fun, quirky stuff. Burgstraat 27
Mus in een plas A shop of wishes and wisdom. Serpentstraat 22
Axeswar Design gadgets, funny anxesses and topos. Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 12
Au Bon Marché The luxury of the perfect gift. Hoornstraat 4
BijHuis From trendy must-haves to design classics. Sint-Baafslaan 66
L’Amusette Drinks, nibbles, knick-knacks and more. Krommewa 2
Booq & Booze Wrap yourself in a world of boozy gifts. Hoogstraat 35

Fashion
Elle et Gand Mecca for young artists and designers. Jan Palfijnstraat 36
La Ville d’O Lingerie to bare the soul. Burgstraat 21
Nathalie Engels Original and Rambouillet (471). Serpentstraat 18
Paarl Hand-made handbags. Arm candy! Nieuwland 1
jodevischer Workshop & store on top. 100% Jo. Hoornstraat 6
Oorzussen Belgian top designs behind a 17th-century façade. Vrijmarkt 7
Jan Welvaert Cult label. Offbeat and pretty neat. Brabantdijk 61
Safiphene Fashion for youthful women of all ages. Hoogstraat 30

Worth a detour
Café Boteco Cosy, local cultural café. Feel right at home. Forestraat 114, 9040 St.-Amandsberg
STARK café Have a glass at this glass museum café. Godshuizenlaan 2
Clouds in my Coffee Dream of Carly Simon. Head in the clouds. Beldermondssteentweg 104
Grindbakken Post-war concrete meeting spot at the port. Handelsdokkelaar
De Appelier Veggie daily specials & budding artists. Citadellaan 47
Campo Santo Burial mound for VIPs and more. Martinikerkplein 7

Ghent style
Noo neute, nie plieue [nu: nətə, ni: pljoː] Don’t complain, don’t give up.
Tuupe tesoara [tpuː tɔːparɔ] All together now.
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