OFFICIAL CITY GUIDE of Europe’s best kept secret

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 explore our beautiful city. The practical map shows the numbered sights which are explained in words and images in the guide. Explore Ghent’s history and discover what the Castle of the Counts, the Ghent Altarpiece, the three towers or the renowned Ghent museums have to offer. Do you like wandering leisurely through the city? The map features a basic walk as well as a few thematic exploratory walks tailored to all tastes. 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!

DEAR VISITOR

If you visit Ghent, don’t forget to bring an extra bag. Because you won’t be leaving empty-handed. Ghent is an Aladdin’s Cave for those craving sweet and salty. Sharp Tierenteyn mustard, Ganda ham, or the Ghentian classic dish ‘waterzooi’, ... Having a sweet tooth? Try the cuberdons or ‘neuzekes’, snowballs or the bun called ‘gestreken mastel’. Feeling thirsty? Plenty of options: Gruut, Roomer or the craft beer brews of Dok Brewing Company. At every streetcorner there is something to tempt you.

Get your visit to Ghent off to a good start. The advantageous 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 VisitGent Information Centre. The attractions with this logo are included in the CityCard.

citycardgent.be/advantage
PLAN YOUR TRIP TO GHENT

Ghent is a city on a human scale, where it doesn’t take long for people to feel at home. The top attractions are within walking distance of each other and the city is known for its conviviality and vibrant atmosphere. Discover Ghent at your own pace, in your own way.

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 BICYCLE
Discovering Ghent by bike is an absolute must: the city loves cyclists and the feeling is mutual. Don’t have your own bike? You can rent one at the train stations and in the city centre (see map).

BY CAR
Ghent is easy to reach by car. There are plenty of paid public parking spaces in the city as well as free P+R on the outskirts of the city. Don’t forget to register for the Low Emission Zone when you drive into the city by car.

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 and Korenmarkt, you will find a Lijnwinkel where you can buy tickets or at one of the many ticket machines at all major bus & tram stops. Tram lines no. 1, 2, 3 and no. 4 will take you from one side of Ghent to the other, straight through the centre.

USEFUL LOCATIONS
Looking for a place to store your luggage, have a sanitary pit stop, exchange money or send a postcard home? Here you will find all the useful locations.

ACCESSIBLE GHENT
Ghent is working on an integrally accessible city, also for visitors. Therefore the walking tour in the historic city centre has been adapted to visitors with reduced mobility. Even families with small children can benefit from this adaptation.

SUSTAINABLE GHENT
In Ghent, sustainability is not a fashion, but a do-word. From veggie capital since 2009 to the largest car-free city centre in Europe since 2017. Put together your own sustainable city trip from A to Z.

Discover even more practical tips

VISITGENT.BE/WALKING
VISITGENT.BE/CYCLING-GHENT
VISITGENT.BE/CAR
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VISITGENT.BE/USEFUL-LOCATIONS
VISITGENT.BE/ACCESSIBLE
VISITGENT.BE/SUSTAINABLE
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 [22], 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 [38].

Discover the history of Ghent

visitgent.be/history

GHENT, CENTURIES-OLD & VIBRANTLY POPULAR

Around the year 630, a bishop decided to establish an abbey at the confluence of the Lys and Scheldt rivers [40]. It was the people of Ghent who wrote the history of their town for centuries to come. A history of a proud and rebellious city, which holds a special attraction worldwide to this day. Where culture is a party and where partying is part of the culture.

Throughout the centuries, Ghent has faced many turbulent times. From great wealth to uprisings, to revival and industrial progress. Charles V even had the rebellious inhabitants of Ghent walk through the city with a noose around their necks as a punishment. To this day, the people of Ghent proudly bear the name ‘Stroppendragers’ (noose-bearers). Nothing could bring down the people of Ghent. The city has never lost its proud, rebellious and progressive nature.

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visitgent.be/history
CASTLE OF THE COUNTS
St.-Veerleplein 11
Open Mon > Sun: 10.00 > 18.00
Last entry at 16h40
Closed 1/1 + 24/12 + 25/12 + 31/12
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. To this day, the Battle of the Castle of the Counts is commemorated with a cantus song and the annual Castle of the Counts procession on November 16.

Dig deeper into the culture of the knights

OLD FISH MARKET
St.-Veerleplein 5
Open Mon > Sun: 10.00 > 17.00
Closed 1/1 and 25/12
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. Today, the Old Fish Market houses the Tourist Office of the City of Ghent as well as 4 unique event rooms.

Among other things, it now houses the Ghent Tourist Office. The glass side of the building looks out over the Lieve and the Lys and offers a good view of the Great Butchers’ Hall [3].

Fancy a treasure hunt with the whole family? Then join us in search of the glasses of Dragon Fosfor! Entertainment, exercise and a dash of culture: a wonderful combination, right?

visitgent.be/dragonfosfor
DESIGN MUSEUM GENT

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 HOUSE OF ALIJN

While Brussels has Manneken Pis, Ghent boasts Manneke Nestor: a little boy flanked by two girls, Lena and Luna, on a façade in Kraanlei. Don’t forget to look up and discover the three statuettes. Nestor is regularly dressed in a new outfit.

GREAT BUTCHERS’ HALL

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.

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 ‘Galgenhuisje’, a former tripe house that now houses the smallest café in Ghent.

The centre for regional products (Ooost) has moved to the Goudenleeuwplein 3, near the City Pavilion. You can buy regional products there and taste them on the terrace.

LENA, LUNA & NESTOR

The museum is getting a complete renovation including a new extension. By 2026, all the buildings will be seamlessly connected and there will be extra space for presentations, workshops, events, sanitary facilities and an elevator.

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 rediscover together how daily life has changed.

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

Tips if you are visiting with kids

visitgent.be/family

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Afterwards, why not reminisce in the beautiful courtyard in an equally typical café? Highly recommended!
This old neighbourhood in the shadow of the Castle of the Counts [2] 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 now largely covered canal known as the Plotersgracht, which runs right through the neighbourhood, gave the area its unusual name: the point where the canal disappears beneath a gate near the central friary was called the ‘paters-hol’ (the hollow of the fathers) by local residents.

KUNSTHAL GENT

ten: Lange Steenstraat 14
Open Sat > Sun: 11.00 > 18.00

The thirteenth-century walls Caermersklooster monastery at the heart of the Patershol neighbourhood now accommodates Kunsthal Gent. This is an international development and presentation platform for visual arts in Ghent.

Immerse yourself in the art city of Ghent
visitgent.be/art
In the 14th century, the Castle of the Counts 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.

‘Donkere Poort’ is all that remains of Prinsenhof. It is said to have earned this name as it became very polluted by the factories in the 19th century.

Fancy staying in style, just like Charles V?

visitgent.be/overnight

LIEVEKAAI & ST.-ANTONIUSKAAI

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 cannoniers. You can still admire the symbols of the shooters which decorate the facade.

Brug der Keizerlijke Geneugten (the Bridge of Imperial Pleasures) was built across the Lieve in the year 2000 and features sculptures by Walter De Buck (1934-2014, Ghent-born sculptor and musician). These refer to various legends relating to the life of Charles V.

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

Beguines were single women who lived together as a Catholic community in a ‘beguinage’. The beguines took no religious vows but had to live by the rules of the beguinage for as long as they lived there. The three main rules were obedience to their superiors, chastity and austerity.

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.

Two of Ghent’s three beguinages have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List ([39] and [52]).

OLD ST ELIZABETH BEGUINAGE

In the 13th century, this open beguinage (which is no longer surrounded by walls, like the other two) grew into what you might call a beguinage town and included a church, the home of the ‘mother superior’, an infirmary, a chapel, more than 100 beguinages, a bleachfield (a field which was used for bleaching cloth) and an orchard.

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 beguinage church), the Orthodox Church of St Andrew, the protestant Rabot church (on the former bleachfield) and St John’s Anglican Church.

DR. GUISLAIN MUSEUM

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.

CARMELITE CHURCH

On this monastic site, you can find the Carmelite Church, also known as the monastery church of the Discalced Carmelites. The friars of this Catholic mendicant order lived in the nearby Caermersklooster monastery in the Patershol neighbourhood, where Kunsthal Gent [8] is currently located.

Construction of the Carmelite Church began in 1651, when the monks established a community in Ghent, and was completed in 1712. Its remarkable architectural style combines elements from Baroque and Classicism. The monks had to abandon the church during the French Revolution. The building has been listed as a monument since 1961.
**BIG CANNON**

Grootkanonplein

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).

**VRIJDAGMARKT**

Vrijdagmarkt

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.

Vrijdagmarkt was also the location 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.

Belgian cartoon icon Nero once wondered whether “Jacob was feeling for rain” but in reality Jacob is pointing towards his former ally England.

Wander around the numerous markets

visitgent.be/markets

**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 [15]. Later, Van Artevelde was murdered by the head of the rich weavers in the courtyard of his home on Kalandeberg.

**ONS HUIS**

Vrijdagmarkt

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 the building Vooruit [51], 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.

**TOREKEN**

Vrijdagmarkt

Take a look at the corner house on the Kammerstraat 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 Poëziecentrum (poetry centre).
As an important textile centre, Ghent was already the operating base for the first Industrial Revolution on the European mainland in the late 18th century. 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.

As early as in 1093, a church stood on the site of what is now St James’ church. It was probably a wooden chapel that served pilgrims on their way to the shrine of Saint James the Great in Santiago de Compostela. This wooden chapel was replaced by a stone building in the 12th century. The current church still features two towers in Romanesque style, but having undergone numerous destructions and alterations, also includes elements of Early Gothic and Baroque architecture. Be sure to take a look inside the church, where you will discover a wonderful interior with beautiful paintings by artists such as Gaspar de Crayer and other treasures.

The 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’.

Museum of Industry is a great place to learn about the Industrial Revolution, but don’t miss the opportunity to explore St James’ Church or the Graffiti Street for some street art inspiration. Whether you’re interested in history or modern art, there’s something for everyone in Ghent.

Tip: If you’re feeling adventurous, you can also go to Kina: The Garden to learn about the world of Kina and get up close with some local wildlife. The educational garden is a great place to relax and learn about the natural world.

ST JAMES’ CHURCH
Bij Sint-Jacob
Open Mon + Tue + Thu + Fri: 9.00 > 17.00 & Sat > Sun + School holidays & public holidays: 10.00 > 18.00 Closed Wed + 1/1 + 2/1 + 25/12 + 31/12

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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: Korenstoepenhuis, 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.

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.

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 fairy tale setting – the height of romance. Enjoy the reflections of the buildings in the river, feel protected by the shadow of St Michael’s church [24] and St Nicholas’ church [25], which flank the two quays, and you will briefly feel as if you’ve been transported back to the middle ages.
ST MICHAEL’S BRIDGE AND ITS VIEW OF THE THREE TOWERS

Time for the perfect selfie! No matter which way you look, you will see picture-postcard views from this bridge over the Lys. Graslei and Korenlei with the Old Fish Market [1] and the Castle of the Counts [2] in the distance, St Michael’s Church [24], the rear of the building Pand [29] and of course the famous row of towers, which you can only capture neatly lined up in a row from this one spot. There used to be a flat swing bridge here, but it was replaced with the stone arched bridge in the early 20th century. At the highest point of the arch, there is a beautiful central lantern which features a bronze statue of St Michael.

ST MICHAEL’S CHURCH

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 [33] 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 NICHOLAS’ CHURCH

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.

Can’t get enough of Ghent heritage?

visitgent.be/heritage
The Roeland Bell (Klokke Roeland) is the name of the alarm bells that have been hanging in Ghent’s Belfry [30] 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 [27], the bell was given a new, specially designed base next to St Nicholas’ Church [25].

**DE MAAGD BY MICHAËL BORREMANS**

Since 2014, the concrete base of the Roeland Bell [26] 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.

**CITY PAVILION**

The City Pavilion (2012) is a large, open building in the shadow of the Belfry [30], the Town Hall [31] and St Nicholas’ Church [25].

The building is part of a larger urban development project by the Ghent-based architectural firm Robbrecht & Daem – Marie-José Van Hee. The pioneering design boasts a striking roof structure which spans 40 metres and contains 1,600 small windows. The city once again demonstrated its headstrong character with this design. Although the residents quickly took this striking building to heart, it was soon given the mocking nickname of ‘the sheep pen’.

**MASONS’ GUILD HALL**

Opposite St Nicholas’ Church [25], 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 [22] 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 dansers who seem to be turning 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.

**HET PAND**

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. Ghent’s first theological university saw the light of day in this friary in the 16th century. 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.
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 [26], 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.

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 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, Opera Gent [45] and Vooruit [51]. At the time, the theatre at St.-Baafsplein was the place to be for the art-loving bourgeoisie.

In the younger Renaissance wing (1559-1618), you can admire Doric, Ionic and Corinthian columns and pilasters inspired by Italian Renaissance palaces.

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, KAA Gent.
ST BAVO’S CATHEDRAL, HOME OF THE MYSTIC LAMB

- **Location**: St.-Baafsplein
- **Open**
  - Mon – Sat: 8.30 – 17.30
  - Sun: 13.00 – 17.30
- **Mystic Lamb**
  - Mon – Sat: 10.00 – 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 50 onwards.)

ACHTERSIKKEL

- **Location**: Biezekapelstraat
- **Open**
  - Mon – Sat: 8.30 – 17.30
  - Sun: 13.00 – 17.30

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.

CASTLE OF GERALD THE DEVIL

- **Location**: Geraard de Duivelstraat 1
- **Open**
  - Mon – Sat: 10.00 – 17.00
  - Sun: 13.00 – 17.00
- **Closed**: 1/1

This 13th-century former Romanesque 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 [33].

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 used the building to house its archives.

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 [38].
Flowing through the city centre, De Reep or Nederschelde is part of the river Scheldt. Its banks are ideally suited for walking, picnicking or simply enjoying the view. This waterway connects De Krook – the site of a library and meeting place – and Portus Ganda – the historic confluence of the Lys and Scheldt rivers.

In the 1960s it was filled in to create parking spaces in the city. This stretch of the river has now been restored to its former glory. With a bit of luck, you can spot pleasure boats and kayaks at this beautiful waterfront location.

This swimming pool may appear unremarkable on the outside, but appearances can be deceptive. It is the oldest indoor swimming pool still in existence in Belgium. Constructed in 1886, it boasts a wonderful Art Deco interior.

The building has been listed as a monument, not just for its artistic quality but also for its social and cultural value. In addition to a swimming pool, it served as public baths and thus contributed to the promotion of hygiene and public health in Ghent.

Ghent originally developed at the confluence (or Ganda) of the Lys and the Scheldt. On this site, there is now a marina known as Portus Ganda. Although this is meant to be a place for passing boat traffic, you will always be able to find a spot to moor your boat and go ashore, even in the high season. Portus Ganda is within walking distance of Ghent’s lively centre.

The Nederschelde arm of the river was covered over to make way for concrete and cars but is now being brought back into view. As a result, water is once again put in the spotlight in Ghent and you can happily spend hours relaxing by the waterfront.

A red naked girl is sitting on a wooden construction in the water near the Van Eyck swimming pool. The locals have dubbed her “the Ghent Lorelei”. The ‘girl with the headphone’ is a work by sculptor Johan Meirlaen, who used a small boat one night to put the sculpture on the wooden pier.

Musing along and on the water?
Ghent University is present throughout the city. Thanks to its numerous campuses, buildings and students, Ghent is a hive of activity day and night. The prestigious University Auditorium or Aula is the place where important events such as graduation ceremonies and the conferral of honorary doctorates are celebrated.

The entrance of this building in Neoclassical style features eight Corinthian columns topped by a triangular pediment. The auditorium was built circa 1820 and was designed by municipal architect Louis Roelandt (1786-1864).

ST BAVO’S ABBEY
Voorhoutkaai 43
Open 1/04 - 31/10: Fri > Sun: 14.00 > 18.00
Closed Mon > Thu

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 [57], 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’.

GREAT ST ELIZABETH BEGUINAGE
Groot Begijnhof 67
Mon > Sun: 06.00 > 21.30

This beguinage 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 beguinage which is located just outside the city in the borough of St-Amansberg. This site is also an oasis of peace and quiet amidst the hustle and bustle of the city.

Student + Ghent = one
visitgent.be/studentcity
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.

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.

Those interested in more background information would do well to join the guided tour which takes place every Sunday at 11 am (€7 pp). Everyone loves a good story and when it comes to the history of the house, the guide holds nothing back.

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.

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 ‘Etappeninspektion’ 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 Bruges and was renowned for its comfort and luxurious interior.
**ST BARBARA’S CHURCH**

This church in Baroque Revival style was commissioned by the Jesuits and completed in 1858. It served the students of the Sint-Barbaracollege school. The church has since been deconsecrated and is no longer used.

**HANDELSBEURS**

Handelsbeurs is one of the most prominent concert halls in Ghent. This 18th-century monument used to serve as a barracks for the imperial guard of Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa.

A prime example of Rococo architecture in Ghent, the building was designed by architect David ‘t Kindt (1699-1770), who also drew up the plans for Design Museum Gent [4]. Nowadays it is a centre of musical activity. Pop, rock, classical music, jazz and world music: every genre finds its place here for a memorable concert.

**HOTEL FALLIGAN**

This 18th-century townhouse located at Kouter square is another example of Rococo architecture in Ghent. French nobleman Hector Falligan had it constructed in 1755. The impressive façade is adorned with sculptures of Apollo and Diana on top of Corinthian columns and wrought-iron parapets.

**DE KROOK**

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 simply to enjoy the view.

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.

**SAINT ANNE’S CHURCH**

A chapel dedicated to Saint Anne was built on the site of Saint Anne’s parish church in 1644. The current church was consecrated in 1869 and is an imposing feature of the square off Keizer Karelstraat. Its architectural style is eclectic, combining Byzantine, Lombard Romanesque and Early Gothic elements.

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

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.

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.

A dog is perched on top of the Booktower. This bronze fox terrier is a work by Greta van Puyenbroeck based on an idea of Ghent photographer Michiel Hendryckx. The purpose of the sculpture is to put the lofty character of the monumental Booktower into perspective.
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.

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.

Ghent sounds like music to your ears!

visitgent.be/creativecityofmusic
OUR LADY OF ST PETER’S CHURCH
St.-Pietersplein
Tue > Sun: 10.00 > 17.00

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.

ST PETER’S ABBEY AND GARDEN
St.-Pietersplein 9
Open Tue > Sun: 10.00 > 18.00
Closed Mon + 1/1 + 24/12 + 25/12 + 31/12

This Benedictine abbey was founded by St Amand in the 7th century, simultaneously laying the foundations for the city of Ghent. In the 14th and 15th centuries, it grew into a genuine abbey village complete with farms, gardens, homes and plenty of land. The abbey’s prosperity stemmed from the privileges it had obtained and the taxes on its land, which ran all the way to Ghent’s inland port.

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 wrote 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.

THE WORLD OF KINA: THE HOUSE
St.-Pietersplein 14
Open Mon > Fri: 9.00 > 17.00 & Sun + Public holidays: 14.00 > 17.30
Closed Sat + 1/1 + 25/12 + 26/12

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.

visitgent.be/family

CHARLES DE KERCHOVE FOUNTAIN
Charles de Kerchovealaan

This boulevard was constructed in 1875 on the site of the old city ramparts. An imposing fountain has stood in the middle of Charles de Kerchovealaan since 1898. The monument commemorates Charles de Kerchove de Den- terghem, who was mayor of Ghent from 1867 to 1881.

Ever heard of a ‘smart’ fountain? This fountain is remote controlled. The water flow is adjusted to the wind strength, so that less water spills over the fountain’s edge. The city administration is automatically informed of any problems. Isn’t that smart?
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.

Tip

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 Wilde Weide at S.M.A.K. or enjoy a walk through Citadelpark?

MSK

Citadelpark, Fernand Scribedreef 1

Open Tue + Wed + Thu + Fri: 9.30 > 17.30 & Sat > Sun + School holidays & public holidays: 10.00 > 18.00
Closed Mon + 1/1 + 2/1 + 25/12 + 26/12

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 Rysselbergh, is an art temple with a fantastic spacious feel and plenty of natural light, and proved to be the perfect solution.

ZEBRASTRAAT

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.

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.
At the science museum, you can discover a highly valuable and exceptional collection covering various disciplines, ranging from Biology, Psychology to Medicine. The collection is where the history of science and contemporary research meet, while simultaneously offering a glimpse into the future.

With a surface area of 27,500m², the Ghent Botanical Garden offers a safe haven for more than 10,000 plant species from all over the world. From flowers to edible plants and medicinal herbs, you’ll find them all on this beautiful domain. In addition to a large outdoor garden including an arboretum, a rock garden and a Mediterranean garden, you will also find heated and unheated greenhouses.

From the Botanical Garden you can admire the enormous mural by Roa. The 290 square metre façade constitutes the canvas for his skeletons of an elephant, an grizzly bear, an okapi and a rhinoceros.

THE OLD DOCKS

A view of the water, beautiful sunsets, plenty of space. The Oude Dokken district has it all. Oude Dokken is the collective name for an urban regeneration project in the area surrounding the former docks Houtdok, Achterdok and Handelsdok, which used to be where the city’s port activities took place. For almost twenty years now, this part of the city has been evolving into a modern, lively district.

Want to learn more about the Old Docks?
Visitgent.be/the-old-docks
The Handelsdok is the largest of the three old docks. Along Dok Noord, new life has been breathed into the ACEC industrial site. This site is alive 24/7 thanks to the combination of modern businesses, flats and a wide range of leisure shops and restaurants. On the other side is Schipperskaai, where new jetties for – sometimes impressive – houseboats have been created, with a wide quay alongside them. It’s the perfect place to go for a walk, discover Ghent’s most eccentric school Melopee and browse a flea market now and then.

The Kapitein Zeppos park, the first park that was finished in Houtdok, is a great place to relax. It has a surface area of three hectares and features references to the maritime past of the site. The lowered quays, the beach area and the restored quay walls create a very distinct atmosphere. Everyone can have fun thanks to the two play areas, the sports grounds and the outdoor fitness area.

**Tip**

Want to explore the industrial heritage of the Old Docks on your own? Then follow the walking and cycling route along former quays, warehouses, harbour cranes and so much more.

Visitgent.be/visit-the-old-docks

The Achterdok is the lowest of the old docks, on the side of Dampoort. The Kleindokkaai has already been beautifully redeveloped and now creates a perfect connection with the other docks for pedestrians and cyclists. Green areas have been developed and the neighbouring streets have been turned into a low-traffic residential area. A delight!
When you say Ghent, you think Ghent Altarpiece. After all, the two are inextricably linked. Ghent is the city where Van Eyck painted his world-famous masterpiece and where for the past six centuries, millions of visitors have gathered from all over the world to admire the altarpiece. ‘The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb’ is therefor recognised as a great work of art, and one of the most influential paintings ever made.

Still not convinced you should admire the Ghent Altarpiece? We gladly give you 8 additional reasons.

3. FINALIST JAN VAN EYCK

Ghent alderman Joos Vijd and his wife Lysette Borluut commissioned Jan and Hubert Van Eyck to paint the Ghent Altarpiece. They had a chapel added to St Bavo’s Cathedral specially for this work. This chapel is called Vijdkapel or Vijd’s chapel. You are probably not aware of the fact that it was mostly Jan Van Eyck who painted the Ghent Altarpiece. Hubert Van Eyck started work on the altarpiece, but no-one knows exactly what his contribution was, since he died in the early stages on the artwork’s creation. His brother Jan finished the altarpiece in 1432.

4. A MICROSCOPIC EYE

Jan Van Eyck was a true genius! He was the first artist to perfect the oil painting technique. He did not just have great technical skills, his eye for detail was also phenomenal! Jan Van Eyck’s eye operated as a microscope and telescope. He was one of the first painters to depict a realistic moon with craters. Jan Van Eyck worked as court painter to Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, and undertook several diplomatic visits abroad. Thanks to his travels with Philip the Good, he discovered new landscapes and plants, which he depicted with effortless detail on the Ghent Altarpiece. Did you know that the rocks in the painting are probably based on rock masses in Liège or Dinant? He would never have been able to paint them without his incredible photographic memory! Jan portrayed Joos Vijd, the donor, not in an idealised but in a realistic manner, warts and all. The details in the work are phenomenal!

5. VAN EYCK’S COMET

Jan Van Eyck made his mark on art history like a ‘comet’. We have few sources at our disposal that inform us about his life or career, but he suddenly appeared as one of the greatest painters of his age. His style can be described as unique and revolutionary, unlike that of his predecessors or contemporaries. Numerous art lovers praise his best-known work, the Ghent Altarpiece. According to legend, Hugo Van der Goes went mad when he tried to equal the painting and eventually took his own life. Jan Van Eyck is said to have inspired numerous artists such as Hans Memling, Dieric Bouts and Gerard David.

The 15th century can, without exaggeration, be called Van Eyck’s century. Jan Van Eyck is held in even higher esteem than Da Vinci!
6. MYSTERIES AND RIDDLES

The Ghent Altarpiece is a unique work of art with lots of unsolved riddles and mysteries. It is said that on the panel with the townscape and the Erythraean Sibyl, human faces can be seen in the sky, but no-one knows whom they represent. The skyline on the central panel is said to be a collage of fictional and real buildings. During a restoration of the Ghent Altarpiece in 1951, the lamb appeared to have four ears. The animal’s ears had been painted over when modifications were made around 1550. The otherworldly, mysterious four-eared lamb was on display for a while during the restoration process in MSK. Who knows, you may even discover another mystery?

7. VAN EYCK’S DNA TRACES

The Ghent Altarpiece abounds in details, and restorers found some brush hairs during the recent restoration process. The hairs are stuck in the paint and have different lengths. Painters sometimes leave fingerprints on their work as they manipulate the paint with their fingers, making the fingerprints permanent. If you look closely, you may find a hair or a fingerprint.

8. BIGGEST VAN EYCK COLLECTION IN THE WORLD

Jan Van Eyck has left about twenty masterpieces scattered all over the world in museums and collections. The artist’s life is still largely a mystery, but his works have withstood the centuries! As far as we know, one work by Van Eyck is still privately owned. All other works are held in museums across the world. The Arnolfini Portrait and Portrait of a Man, for instance, are on display at the National Gallery in London. The Madonna of Chancellor Rolin is kept in the Musée du Louvre, Paris.

From 2023, the 7 top panels of the inner register will be restored in the MSK. This restoration phase runs until 2026. On weekdays you can even see the restorers of the Royal Institute of Cultural Heritage (KIK-IRPA) working live in the studio. The other panels remain on display in St. Bavo’s Cathedral.

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

visitgent.be/mysticlamb

Tips

Thanks to augmented reality glasses, you will be able to travel back to the distant past in the cathedral’s crypt and be witness to the tumultuous history of the Ghent Altarpiece and the cathedral as if you were there. Both the masterpiece and the imposing building are brought to life down to the smallest detail. Come and experience the supreme mystery!

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

visitgent.be/mysticlamb
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 foodie capital of Europe (according to Ghent’s inhabitants of the world, 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
LIVELY GHENT

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.

DEAR VISITOR

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?

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.

The entire city centre
Ten full festival days
Starts on the Friday preceding the Saturday before 21 July, Belgium’s national holiday

visitgent.be/calendar

Browse through our events

60
**Eat & Drinks**

### Beer
- **Gruut**
  - City brewery and beer based on herbs.
  - Rembert Doodensdreef 1
- **Dok Brewing Company**
  - Microbrewery and 30 beers on tap in Dok Noord.
  - Dok Noord 46
- **Artevelde**
  - Microbrewery in the beating heart of Ghent.
  - Botermarkt 5
- **Stroom**
  - Sustainable microbrewery with unique creations.
  - Foresterstraat 27

### Wine
- **Ona**
  - Organic wine to sip or share.
  - Belfortstraat 29
- **Win**
  - Wine only. A wine-wish.
  - Burgstraat 8
- **SOMM**
  - Matching picks at your table and in your mouth.
  - Steenstraat 39
- **Edelrot**
  - Wine bar on wheels - no more whining!
  - Belfortstraat 6

### Cocktails
- **Jigger's**
  - Prohibition bar with spiritual secrets.
  - Oudburg 16
- **Limonada**
  - Bubbly lounge bar with an edge.
  - Heilig Geeststraat 7
- **Polé Polé**
  - African rhythms for a great night out.
  - Lammerstraat 8
- **The Cobbler**
  - Warm & stylish 19th-century grandeur.
  - Graslei 16
- **Bar Mórís**
  - Bricks and a fireplace. What a hotspot!
  - Kleintje 20
- **The Mix**
  - Colourful cocktails and sensual salsa.
  - Hoogpoort 19

### Local pubs
- **De Dulle Griet**
  - 1 beer in a boot. 500 others in a glass.
  - Vrijdagmarkt 50
- **Café Den Turk**
  - Have a drink with the Mayor.
  - Botermarkt 3
- **'t Dreupelkot**
  - Get sloshed, one drop at a time.
  - Kleintje 20
- **Jan van Gent**
  - Hip or dip? Either way, have a sip!
  - Annoonziadenstraat 1
- **De Geus van Gent**
  - Share liberal ideas, liberally!
  - Kamerberg 9
- **Afsnins**
  - First drinks, then flea market.
  - Bij St.-Jacobs 10
- **De Cobbler**
  - Warm & stylish 19th-century grandeur.
  - Graslei 16
- **Vuurtoren**
  - Bricks and a fireplace. What a hotspot!
  - Kleintje 20
- **The Mix**
  - Colourful cocktails and sensual salsa.
  - Hoogpoort 19

### Music
- **Charlatan**
  - Party hotspot for night owls, not charlatans.
  - Vlaesmarkt 6
- **Club 69**
  - Hip. And Hop. Two clubs in one.
  - Oude Beestenmarkt 5-6
- **Kinky Star**
  - From kinky to sweaty to stinky. Over and over.
  - Vlaesmarkt 9
- **Missy Sippy**
  - New Orleans along the Lys. Blue, jazz, swing and roots.
  - Kleintje 20
- **Club Central**
  - Latin, merengue, bachata, salsa. Dance the night away!
  - Hoogpoort 32
- **Hot Club Gent**
  - Seek and you will find this hotspot.
  - Schuddevriesstraat 2
- **Minor Swing**
  - Tiny cafe, big jazz.
  - Olststraat 66
- **Misterioso**
  - Slightly bigger cafe, equally good jazz.
  - Krommewal 96
- **Hot5 Totsy**
  - Literary cafe, where words come to life.
  - Hoogpoort 32

### Terraces
- **Green terrace VIERNHUIVER**
  - Vertical garden, horizontal terrace. Artsy!
  - St.-Pietersnieuwstraat 23
- **De Bergen**
  - Relaxing in the park with some local goodies.
  - F. Leusbergstraat 33
- **'t Galgenhuysje**
  - Tiny cafe. Perfectly executed.
  - Groenemarkt 5
- **Waterhuizen aan de Bierkant**
  - Water fights the post. Beer fights the root!
  - Groenemarkt 5
- **Petit Grand Café 't Kanon**
  - Watching passer-by along the Lys.
  - Meerschaumstraat 17
- **Etz Café Multatuli**
  - Along the Lys, in the sun. MAXimum fun!
  - Huidvestersstraat 40
- **Geuzenhuis**
  - Eclectic cafe along the river next to St.-Peter's Abbey.
  - Kamerberg 9

### Breakfast & Brunch
- **Modest**
  - From the fields on your plate.
  - Brabantlaan 50
- **Belle Histoire**
  - Parisian bistro tables and French charmers.
  - Korte Meir 4
- **Maison Elza**
  - Nostalgic interior, authentic flavours.
  - Jan Breidelstraat 36
- **Gust**
  - Sandwiches with Gust - a must!
  - Papageiistraat 55
- **Le Pain Perdu**
  - Lose yourself with a delicious breakfast.
  - Walpoortstraat 8
- **Le Pain Quotidien**
  - Long, long table. Endless food fun!
  - Korenmarkt 16
- **Clouds in my coffee**
  - Start the day with a moment of zen.
  - Dondermondsesteenweg 104

### Lunch
- **Boon**
  - Yummy lunch! Don't spill the beans!
  - Geldemunt 6
- **Franz&Gustav**
  - Brunch bar with Berlin flair.
  - Ham 163
- **Soupbar Sorde**
  - Order your lunch in sign language.
  - Lange Steenstraat 2
- **Café Parti**
  - Final destination for foodies.
  - Kon. Maria Hendrikaplaats 6A
- **Estelée**
  - Have lunch in the Arts Quarter.
  - Kunstlaan 30
- **Leusbergmarkt**
  - Tasty local food - four peas in a pod.
  - Ferdinand Leusbergstraat 33

### Coffee & Sweets
- **Full Circle Coffee**
  - Coffee with a dash of oat milk.
  - Zuidstationstraat 5
- **Barista**
  - Rampynering by the coffee sommelier.
  - Hypoïsset Lopenplein 25
- **Bar Bidon**
  - Time for a drink. Set your bikes aside.
  - Brusselsestraat 25
- **Molabon**
  - The first coffee bar. Comfort since 1937.
  - Donkersteeg 35
- **Julie’s House**
  - Breakfast fit for a princess.
  - Krammel 13
- **Madam Bakster**
  - Sugar- and guilt-free cakes.
  - Brabantlaan 142
- **Yuzu**
  - Hot and cold in Chocola-la-land.
  - Blauwpoortstraat 17A
- **Mayana**
  - Hot and cold in Chocola-la-land.
  - St.-Pietersnieuwstraat 99
- **Aux Merveilleux de Fred**
  - Delicious melevnix. Pick your flavour!
  - Krammel 13
- **Chocolaterie Van Hoorebeke**
  - A family-run chocolate shop.
  - Sint-Baafskapel 15

### Gastronomy
- **Vrijmoed**
  - Free spirit and daredevil. Two stars!
  - Vlaanderenstraat 22
- **Publiek**
  - Rock ‘n roll with a Michelin star.
  - Ham 39
- **Horseseele**
  - Food heaven in a football temple.
  - Ottergemsesteenweg Zuid 808
- **OAK**
  - Let the chef surprise your Delightful.
  - Burgstraat 16
- **Roots**
  - Open kitchen, open menu.
  - Vlaeswegstraat 5
- **Souvenir**
  - An explosion of unforgettable flavours.
  - Brabantlaan 134

### Traditional
- **Pakhuis**
  - Spectacular setting. Equally spectacular food.
  - Schurenlaan 4
- **Café Théâtre**
  - Draw the curtains, standing ovation!
  - Schouwburgstraat 7
- **De Stokerij**
  - Pub serving its own beer.
  - Tichelaarstraat 24
- **Du Progrès**
  - Progress, three centuries and counting.
  - Korenmarkt 10
- **‘t Vosken**
  - Chips, stew & other authentic local dishes.
  - St.-Baafsplein 19
- **Meme Gusta**
  - Flemish cuisine with a touch of nostalgia.
  - Burgstraat 19
- **Brasserie HA’**
  - Brunch or dinner, with or without concert.
  - Kouter 29

### Vegetarian
- **Petit Grand Café ‘t Kanon**
  - Deliciously fresh from the nearby fields.
  - Brabantlaan 100
- **Plus+**
  - Vegetarian with a surplus.
  - Aaldaan 14
- **Lekker Gez**
  - Quirkiness for a cleaner planet and better life.
  - Kon. Maria Hendrikaplaats 6A
- **Le Botaniste**
  - Healthy, for you and for the planet.
  - Ham 163
- **Warempel**
  - Flexible – the best of both worlds.
  - Zandberg 8
- **Pacha Mama**
  - Mother Earth at her best.
  - Jan-Baptist Guinardstraat 9
- **Knot & Kool**
  - Exclusively vegan marketplace and foodcourt.
  - Heilig Geeststraat 30
**Belgian Fries**

Frituur Tartaar - The best tartar sauce in Ghent. Heilige Geeststraat 3
Bij Filip - Ghentian-style fries. Pensmarkt 8
Gouden Saté - Ask for a ‘Julienke’. Sint Pietersplein
Frietetel - Walhalia for veggies and vegans. Paapegaaistraat 49

**See & Do:**

VISITGENT.BE/SEE-DO

**Green**

VISITGENT.BE/walks

Ghent university - Green oasis with plants of all sizes. K.L. Ledeganckstraat 35
Bourgoeyn-Ossemeersen - Sanctuary for birds flying free. Driepikkelstraat 32, 9330 Marakerké
Gentbrugse Meersen - Nature reserve for barefoot hikes. Droebekstraat, 9505 Gentbrugge
Parkbos - Winding paths and castles in a green oasis. Kortrijksesteenweg 1177, 9051 St.-Denis-Westrem
Blaarmeersen sports and recreation - Leisure, sport and nature outside Ghent centre. Strandaal 24

**Surprising panoramas**

VISITGENT.BE/panorama

De Krook - Free access to books, education and life. Miriam Makebaplein 1
Belfry - Sky-high world heritage. St.-Baafsplein
Castle of the Counts - Where the Counts looked down on us. St.-Weerplein 11
Terrace HEMA - Terrace overlookering terraces. Korenmolk 3
Museum of industry - Museum of man and machines. Minnemee 10
Yalo Urban Boutique Hotel - Rooftopbar with a phenomenal view. Brabantdam 31

**Instagram Hits**

VISITGENT.BE/spots-instagram

St Michael's Bridge - Three towers in a row. Graslei & Korenlei. St.-Michielskerring
Graffiti Street - Canvas for street artists. Wervanplein
Portus Ganda - Idyllic yacht marna with Art Deco pool. Veeramplaat 2
Paterhols - Medieval alleys for foodies. Haringsteeg 3
Graslei - Great view of Korenlei. Graslei

**Street art**

VISITGENT.BE/art

‘Broche’ & ‘HD 400’ - Pinpricks on the square. Korenmarkt
‘Al Nati Ogg’ - A light for every newborn. St.-Weerplein
De Passanten - Putting heads together. Large artwork by Borremans, Miriam Makebaplein
De Maagd - Small woman’s portrait by Borremans. Goudenleeuwplein
The Ghent Altarpiece in graffiti - A masterpiece reinventedyet never found. Predikherenlei
Mystic Leaves - Arty leaves at the flower market. Kouter
Les oiseaux bleus - Blue birds light up your evening walk. Predikherenbrug
de M. Maeterlinck - Canvas for street artists. Werregarenstraat

**Where time stands still**

VISITGENT.BE/vintage

Priem - Retro wallpaper for castsles, filmsets and… for you! Zuivelbrugstraat 1
Temeraman - Muisentrakers and tpeepkes. Untranslatable goodness. Knaarlei 79
Café Folklore - So many stories, so much to discover since 1662. Lange Steenstraat 69
Bric-a-brac Bij St.-Jacobs - Bric-a-brac market with a rich history. Bij St.-Jacobs
Limerick - Literary bookshop and typewriter museum. Kon. Elisabethlaan 142

**When it rains**

VISITGENT.BE/tips-rainy-days

Visitator’s centre - Discover the Ghent Altarpiece and its history. St Bavo’s square
St Bavo’s Cathedral - O’Learys - American sportbar with bowling, pooltables, karaoke, etc. Dok Noord 4b
Studio Skoop - Sit back, relax and enjoy the film. Sint-Aannepelen 63
Comic Sans - Butter beer and boardgame ready? Set, play! Kleine Turfje 8

**For children**

VISITGENT.BE/family

Mister Jones and Miss Katie - Trousers and dresses for mini trendsetters. Gouvernementstraat 7
Skatepark - A disaster. Not a catastrophe. Zuideraan (Blaarmeersen)
The Fallen Angels - Knickknaack paradise with a very cool shoplady. Jan Breydelstraat 29-31
Lago Gent Rozebroeken - Skimming through the water. Victor Braeckelmanlaan 180
Jumpsky - Jump, fly, dive, fall, get up and move on. Dok Noord 4b
House of Aljin - A journey back through time. Knaarlei 65

**Gifts**

VISITGENT.BE/find-ideal-gift-ghent

PIET Moodshop - Gifts for your house. Or housemates. St.-Pietersnieuwstraat 94
A’pirl - Spring in the land of fun, quirky stuff. Burgstraat 27
Mus in een pias - A shop of wishes and wisdom. Serpentstraat 22
Aksesar - Design gadgets, funny accessories and topos. Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 12
Au Bon Marché - The luxury of the perfect gift. Hoornstraat 4
L’Amuzette - Drinks, nibbles, knock-knacks and more. Kremmowla 2
Bookz & Booze - Wrap yourself in a world of boozey gifts. Hoogpoort 35

**Fashion**

VISITGENT.BE/shopping

Ateliers Gasten - Pre-loved brand clothing with a Ghent twist. Korte Meer 6
La Fille d’O - Umbine to bare the soul. Bungstraat 21
Nathalie Engels - Original and flamboyant (M/F). Serpentstraat 1A
Paa - Hand-made handbags. Arm candyi. Nieuwland 1
Orcussen - Belgian top desins behind a 17th-century façade. Vrijdagmarkt 7
Jan Weivaer - Cult label. Offbeat and pretty neat. Brabantdam 61
Seraphine - Fashion for youthful women of all ages. Hoogpoort 30

**Worth a detour**

VISITGENT.BE/detour

Café Botóco - Cosy, local cultural café. Feel right at home! Foreeststraat 1%, 9004 St-Amandsberg
STAIR cafe - Have a glass at this glass museum café. Godshuizerlaan 2
Clouds in my coffee - Dream of Carly Simon. Head in the clouds. Dendermondsesteenweg 78
Dok Noord - Shopping, activities and good food in an old factory building. Dok Noord 7
De Appelier - Veggie daily specials & budding artists. Citadellaan 47
Alberte - Intimate tables and bars. Theousse by far! Dendermondsesteenweg 78
Campo Santo - Burial mound for VIPs and more. Verkortingsstraat / Visitatiestraat 13

**Ghent style**

VISITGENT.BE/ghentstyle

Vrie wijs - Really cool.
Nie neute, nie plieue - Don’t complain, don’t give up.
Toupe tsegare - All together now.
Negen duust - Really good.
Tseipmuile - Whiner. Wimp.
CityCard Gent
Experience Ghent to the fullest!

CityCard Gent is the special access card to the main historical buildings, museums and top attractions. You can use the CityCard Gent on the bus or tram and it even includes a boat trip and free bicycle rental for 1 day.

INCLUDED IN THE CARD

› The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb (discount)
› St Bavo's Cathedral
› Castle of the Counts
› Belfry
› MSK - Museum of Fine Arts
› S.M.A.K. - museum of contemporary art
› STAM - Ghent City museum
› Museum of Industry
› Design Museum Gent
› St Peter's Abbey
› The House of Alijn

› Dr. Guislain Museum
› GUM - Ghent University Museum
› The World of Kina: the House
› The World of Kina: the Garden
› Hotel D'Hane-Steenhuyse - city palace
› Arnold Vander Haeghen House - city palace
› Public transport
› Boat in Gent / De bootjes van Gent / Rederij Dewaele / Gent Watertoerist / Rederij De Gentenaer
› Hop on hop off watertram
› De Fietsambassade (bicycle rental)

48 hours / 72 hours

Do you have a recommendation or know an interesting fact about Ghent? Share it with us!

visitgent.be/feedback