

Belgian Cities Hold Something Special



Belgium, home to the EU headquarters, is famous for its delicious chocolate and its wide range of beers. Somewhat surprisingly, its beautiful medieval cities, particularly Bruges and Ghent, rarely receive the recognition or praise internationally that their attractions warrant. However, both cities are absolute musts on the sightseeing list of any visitor to Belgium.

Bruges is often described in travel literature as the Venice of the North. This description derives from Bruges' masses of winding cobblestone streets and romantic canals. Indeed, many of the city's historians have noted that Bruges has hardly changed since the middle ages, a rarity in today's Europe. Its exceptional beauty has led to Bruges being listed as one of UNESCO's heritage sites. Despite being relatively tiny, Bruges has over 150 hotels, a mark of its popularity. A further attraction, drawing beer lovers from all corners of the world, is the local beer, traditionally brewed over the centuries by local monks. For chocolate lovers, there is a chocolate shop on almost every street corner and, for culture seeking tourists, there is a wealth of architectural charms and religious art on show. Perhaps Bruges' most renowned landmark is the 'Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk', translated as the Church of Our Lady, Europe's tallest brick building.

To the south we find Ghent, similar in many ways to Bruges. Ghent earned its wealth in the middle ages through the storage and trading of wheat, and there are reminders of this period in modern day Ghent. Although not as popular as Bruges for sightseeing, Ghent tends to attract the culinary tourist wishing to try out the exceptional waffles with whipped cream and the wide range of local alcoholic drinks.

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