

Welcome to the World Heritage City of Bruges

There are places that somehow manage to get under your skin, even though you don't really know them all that well.

Bruges is that kind of place. A warm and friendly place, a place made for people.

A city whose history made it great, resulting in a well-deserved classification as a Unesco World Heritage site.

In this guide you will discover Bruges' different facets. There are five separate chapters.

In **chapter 1**, you will learn everything you need to know to prepare for your visit to Bruges. There is a list of the ten 'must-see' sights, a brief summary of the city's rich past, and a mass of practical information, including a clear explanation about how best to use the 'Bruges City Card'. This card will allow you to visit many of Bruges' most important sites of interest for free or at a significantly reduced price. This chapter also has plenty of useful eating-out suggestions for the lovers of fine food and drink and shopaholics can discover the best and most authentic retail addresses in town.

The three inspiring walking routes included in **chapter 2** will take you to all the most beautiful spots in town. The detailed map of the city – which you can simply fold out of the back cover of this guide – will make sure that you don't lose your way. The map also shows the licensed places to stay in Bruges, offering a range of accommodation options that runs from charming guest rooms and holiday homes right through to star-rated hotels.

Chapter 3 tells you all about the different options for getting around Bruges and gives an overview of the city's vibrant cultural life, with a summary of annual events and a full list of the city's museums, attractions and sites of interest, including all its historic, cultural and religious buildings. Bruges' beautiful squares and enchanting canals are the regular backdrop for topclass cultural events. And few cities have such a rich and diverse variety of museums, which contain gems ranging from the Flemish primitives and beautiful lace work to the finest modern art of today. Put simply, Bruges is always an experience – whether your interest is art, chocolate, diamonds or chips!

In Bruges you can dine at a different star-rated restaurant each day or perhaps you would prefer lunch at a trendy bistro before wandering through the winding cobbled streets of the city? Or maybe you just want to take in a pleasant pub or one of the many magnificent terraces with a view? These are the places, full of charm and character, which you can read about in **chapter 4**. Five 'new arrivals' to the city will also tell you about their favourite places in town.

You are staying a bit longer in the region? **Chapter 5** suggests a number of excursions to the other Flemish art towns, the Bruges Wetlands and Woodlands, the coast, the Westhoek, the Meetjesland (Creek Country) and the Flemish Ardennes. The choice is yours!

The highlights of Bruges

The 10 classic places
that no one should miss!



Rozenhoedkaai, a living picture postcard

The Rozenhoedkaai links the Belfry to the city's network of canals ('reien'). So perhaps it was inevitable that the quay should become one of the most photogenic locations in all of Bruges. In fact, this spot is so special that it is almost impossible not to take a photograph: a living postcard that you can be a part of!

A quiet moment in the Beguinage



Some places are just too pretty for words. The Beguinage is one such a place. It really leaves you speechless. All you can do is wander around and admire its beauty. This walled oasis of religious calm, with its impressive courtyard garden, its wind-bent trees, its white painted gables and its limitless silence, will charm even the greatest cynic. All year round. *[Also see page 74]*



Burg and City Hall: medieval opulence

09 43

The Burg is one of the city's most beautiful squares. For more than six centuries, Bruges has been governed from its 14th-century City Hall, one of the oldest and most venerable in the Low Countries. All this time this remarkable historic building has dominated this majestic square. Nowhere else will you be able to experience the city's wealth and affluence so strongly. *(Also see page 90)*



The Flemish primitives: timeless beauty

25 38

In the 15th century – Bruges' golden century – the fine arts reached their highest form of expression. Famous names such as Jan van Eyck and Hans Memling came to live and work in the city. Today, you can still admire the magnificent paintings of these world-famous Flemish primitives, standing face to face with masterpieces that were created more than 500 years ago in the very heart of Bruges. *(Also see pages 81-82, 87)*



Wandering through the old Hansa Quarter

From the 13th to the 15th century, Bruges was an important trading centre at the crossroads between the Hansa cities of Scandinavia, England and Germany (known collectively in those days as the 'Easterners') and the most important commercial regions in France, Spain and Italy. The Spanish traders established themselves at Spaanse Loskaai (Spanish Unloading Quay), while the Easterners set up shops on the Oosterlingenplein (Easterners' Square). Places where you can still feel the atmosphere of days long gone by.



From early settlement to international trade centre (...-1200)

- 851** Earliest record of the city
- 863** Baldwin I takes up residence at Burg
- 1127** Charles the Good, Count of Flanders, is murdered in the Church of Saint Donatian; first town rampart; first Bruges city charter
- 1134** Creation of the Zwin – evolving from the Sincfal marshes – that links Damme with the sea



851

1200

1300

1500

Bruges as the economic capital of Northwest Europe (1200-1400)

- 1245** Foundation of the Beguinage
- 1280** Reconstruction in stone of the Belfry after the destruction of its wooden predecessor
- 1297** Second town rampart
- 1302** Bruges Matins and Battle of the Golden Spurs
- 1304** First Procession of the Holy Blood
- 1376-1420** Construction of the City Hall

Bruges' Golden Age (1369-1500)

- 1369** Margaret of Dampierre marries Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. Beginning of the Burgundian period
- 1384** Margaret succeeds her father Louis of Male
- 1430** Marriage of Duke Philip the Good with Isabella of Portugal; establishment of the Order of the Golden Fleece
- 1436** Jan van Eyck paints the panel *Madonna with Canon Joris van der Paele*
- 1482** Mary of Burgundy dies as a result of a fall with her horse
- 1488** Maximilian of Austria is locked up in Craenenburg House on Markt for a few weeks

The city gets her second wind (1500-1578)

- 1506** The cloth merchant Jan Mouscron acquires Michelangelo's *Madonna and Child*
- 1528** Lancelot Blondeel designs the mantelpiece of the Liberty of Bruges
- 1548** Birth of the scientist Simon Stevin
- 1562** Marcus Gerards engraves the first printed town map of Bruges
- 1578** Bruges joins the rebellion against the Spanish king

An impoverished town in a pauperised Flanders (1584-1885)

- 1584** Bruges becomes reconciled with the Spanish king
- 1604** The Zwin is closed off
- 1713-1795** Austrian period
- 1717** Foundation of the Academy of Fine Arts, which formed the basis for the collection of the Groeninge Museum.
- 1795-1814** French period
- 1799** Demolition of Saint Donatian's Cathedral and renovation of Burg
- 1815-1830** United Kingdom of the Netherlands
- 1830** Independence of Belgium; birth of the poet Guido Gezelle
- 1838** First railway station



1600

1700

1800

1900

2000



Provincial town with revived ambitions (1885-1970)

- 1887** Unveiling of the statue of Jan Breydel and Pieter de Coninck (Markt)
- 1892** Publication of *Bruges la Morte* by Georges Rodenbach
- 1896** Start of the construction of the seaport
- 1897** Dutch becomes the official language
- 1902** First important exhibition of the Flemish primitives
- 1914-1918** The Great War; Bruges is a German naval base
- 1940-1945** The historic city centre survives Second World War almost unscathed
- 1958** First Pageant of the Golden Tree

Practical information

Brugge City Card



Get to know the city in all its many facets and save money at the same time! With the **Brugge City Card** you can visit 27 museums and attractions in Bruges for free. The trips on the canals or 'reien' (sailings only guaranteed during the period 1/3 to 15/11) are also

free of charge. In addition, the Bruges City Card also guarantees a discount of at least 25% on a three-day pass for De Lijn (bus service), on numerous concerts, dance and theatre productions, on rental bikes, on underground parking and on various museums, attractions and other places of interest in the area around Bruges.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

You choose the validity period of your **Brugge City Card**:


48 hours or 72 hours. In the chapters *Exploring Bruges*, *Finding your way around Bruges* and *Excursions from Bruges* you will find a detailed overview of all the guided tours, attractions, museums and places of interest in and around the city. If you see a , you will get in **for free** with your Bruges City Card; a  means that you will **receive at least a 25% discount** on the individual price. What's more, in the free monthly event calendar you can find a helpful list of all the events that you can visit at reduced costs using your Bruges City Card. When you use your Bruges City Card for the first time, it is automatically activated. Once the validity period has elapsed, the card automatically stops working. You can only visit each attraction once. Bear in mind that many of the city's museums are closed on Monday.

WHAT DOES IT COST?

 € 46.00

 € 49.00

HOW TO ORDER?

Just drop by the tourist offices on the  Markt (Market Square - Historium), 't Zand (Zand Square - Concert Hall) or the Stationsplein (Station Square - station) or order your Bruges City Card online via www.bruggecitycard.be

Bicycle rental points



Bauhaus Bike Rental

LOCATION > Langestraat 145

PRICE > 3 hours: € 6.00; full day: € 9.00

(Brugge City Card: € 6.00)

OPENING TIMES > Daily, 8.00 a.m.-8.00 p.m. (bikes must be returned by 8.00 p.m.)

INFORMATION > Tel. +32 (0)50 34 10 93,
www.bauhaus.be/services/bike-rental



B-Bike Concertgebouw

LOCATION > 't Zand

PRICE > 1 hour: € 4.00; 4 hours: € 8.00; full day: € 12.00 (Brugge City Card: € 9.00)

OPENING TIMES > During the period 1/4 to 15/10: daily, 10.00 a.m.-7.00 p.m.; during the period 16/10 to 31/3: weekends only 10.00 a.m.-12.00 a.m. and 1.00 p.m.-7.00 p.m.

INFO > Tel. +32 (0)479 97 12 80,
info@b-bike.be



Bruges Bike Rental

LOCATION > Niklaas Desparsstraat 17

PRICE > 1 hour: € 3.50; 2 hours: € 5.00; 4 hours: € 7.00; full day: € 10.00; students (on display of a valid student card): € 8.00. Price tandem 1 hour: € 8.00; 2 hours: € 12.00; 4 hours: € 15.00; full day: € 20.00; students (on display of a valid student card): € 17.00

OPENING TIMES > During the period 1/2 to 28/12: daily: 10.00 a.m.-8.00 p.m.

INFO > Tel. +32 (0)50 61 61 08,
www.brugesbikereental.be



De Ketting

LOCATION > Gentpoortstraat 23

PRICE > € 6.00/day. Price electric bike: € 20.00/day

OPENING TIMES > During the period 1/4 to 1/10: Monday to Saturday, 10.00 a.m.-6.30 p.m., Sunday, 10.30 a.m.-6.30 p.m.; during the period 2/10 to 31/3: Monday to Saturday, 10.00 a.m.-6.30 p.m.

INFO > Tel. +32 (0)50 34 41 96,
www.deketting.be



Electric Scooters

Hire of electric bikes.

LOCATION > Gentpoortstraat 55 and 62

PRICE > 2 hours: € 10.00; 4 hours: € 18.00 and 8 hours: € 30.00

OPENING TIMES > During the period 1/4 to 30/09: Tuesday to Sunday, 10.00 a.m.-6.00 p.m.; during the period 1/10 to 31/3: Tuesday to Saturday, 1.00 p.m.-6.00 p.m. (from 10.00 a.m. on appointment and with a reservation)

EXTRA > Electric scooters (See page 71)

INFO > Tel. +32 (0)474 09 19 18,
info@electric-scooters.be,
www.electric-scooters.be



Eric Popelier

LOCATION > Mariastraat 26

PRICE > 1 hour: € 4.00; 4 hours: € 8.00; full day: € 12.00 (Brugge City Card: € 9.00). Price electric bike 1 hour: € 10.00; 4 hours: € 17.00; full day: € 30.00. Price tandem 1 hour: € 10.00; 4 hours: € 17.00; full day: € 25.00 (Brugge City Card: € 18,75); price reduction for students

OPENING TIMES > During the period 1/3 to 31/10: daily, 10.00 a.m.-7.00 p.m.; during the period 1/11 to 28/2: Tuesday to Saturday, 10.00 a.m.-6.00 p.m.

INFO > Tel. +32 (0)50 34 32 62,
www.fietsenpopelier.be



Fietspunt Station

LOCATION > Hendrik Brugmansstraat 3 (Stationsplein, Railway station Square)

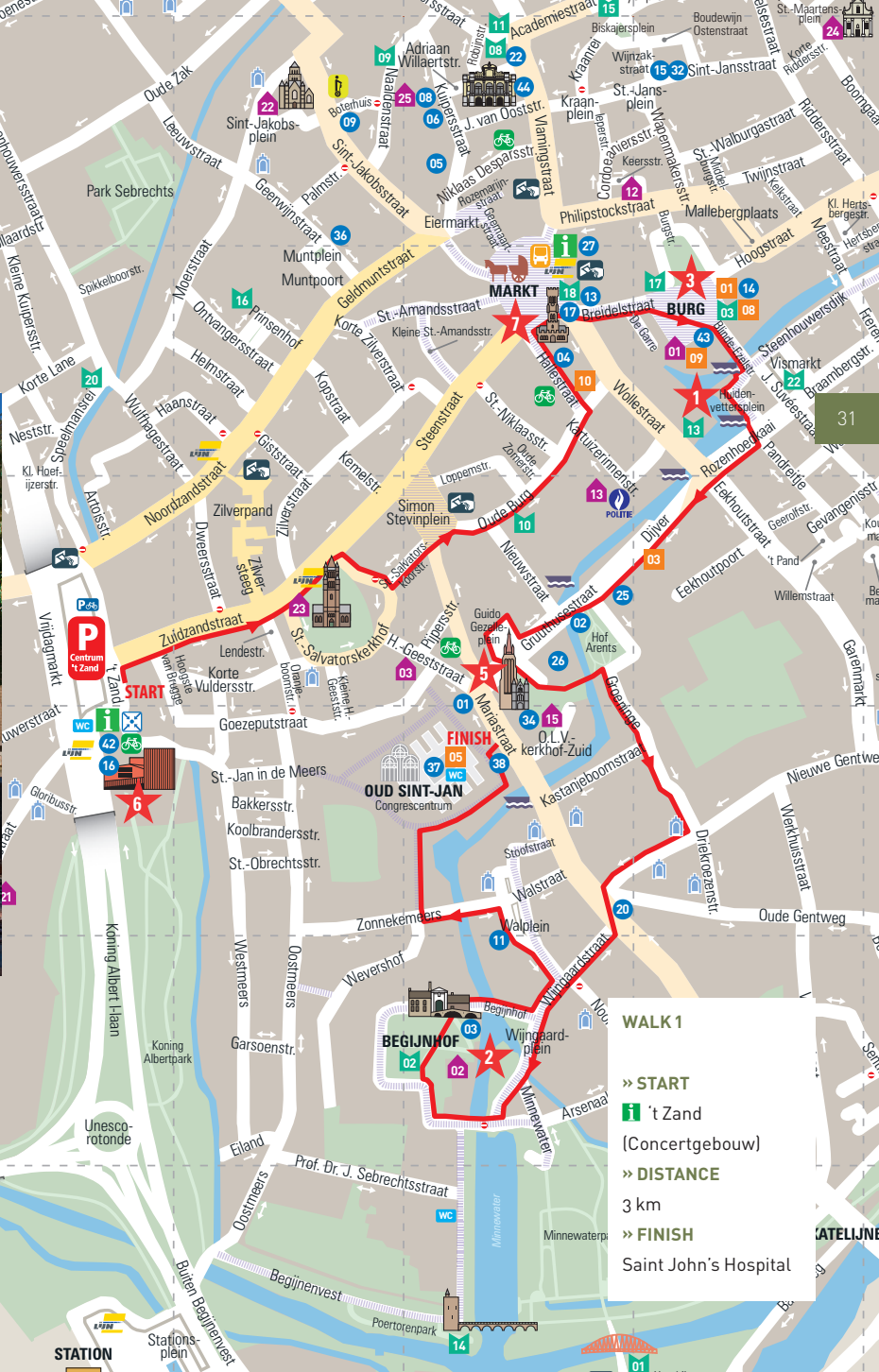
PRICE > City bike, 1 hour: € 4.00; 4 hours: € 8.00; full day: € 12.00 (Brugge City Card: € 9.00). Electric bike, full day: € 30.00

Walk 1

Bruges, proud World Heritage City



Bruges may be, quite rightly, very proud of her World Heritage status, but the city is happily embracing the future too! This walk takes you along world-famous panoramic views, sky-high monuments and centuries-old squares invigorated by contemporary constructions. One foot planted in the Middle Ages, the other one firmly planted in the present. This walk is an absolute must for first-time visitors who would like to explore the very heart of the city straight away. Keep your camera at the ready!



WALK 1

- » **START**
i 't Zand
(Concertgebouw)
- » **DISTANCE**
3 km
- » **FINISH**
Saint John's Hospital

From 't Zand to Simon Stevinplein

This walk starts at the Tourist office

i 't Zand (Concertgebouw).

't Zand is dominated by the concert hall **16**, one of Bruges' most talked-about buildings. Clear-cut proof that this World Heritage city isn't afraid of the future. On the very top floor of this modern cube-shaped building you can find the Sound Factory **42**. Don't forget to drop in at **i** 't Zand (Concertgebouw) on the ground floor: here you will find all the necessary tourist information as well as expert advice on all cultural events.

Leave **i** 't Zand (Concertgebouw) behind you, walk along the square and turn into Zuidzandstraat, the first street on the right. Saint Saviour's Cathedral **23** looms up ahead on your right after three hundred metres. Bruges' oldest parish church is located on a lower level than the present Zuidzandstraat, which is situated on an old sand ridge. What's more, in the Middle Ages people simply threw their refuse out onto the street where it was then flattened by passing carts and coaches. This raised the street level still further. Inside Saint Saviour's, the church tower's wooden rafters can be lit. The cathedral treasury displays, amongst others, interesting copper memorial plaques, fine examples of gold and silver and paintings by Dieric Bouts, Hugo van der Goes and Pieter Pourbus.

TIP

Why not call in at the Sound Factory and let those Bruges bells ring! And because the Sound Factory is located at the very top of the Concert Hall, you can enjoy a superb panorama over the city while the bells play your very own carillon composition.

Continue past the cathedral and walk down Sint-Salvatorskerkhof immediately on the right. Turn left into Sint-Salvatorskoorstraat. The Simon Stevinplein opens up at the end of this street. This attractive square, lined with cosy restaurant terraces in summertime, is named after Simon Stevin, a well-



known Flemish-Dutch scientist. His gracious statue naturally takes centre stage.

Markt and Burg

Continue down Oude Burg, a street in the right-hand corner of the square. Before long you will see the Cloth Halls **10** on your left. These belong to the Belfry **04**. You're allowed to cross the halls' imposing inner court between 8.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. during the week, and between 9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. on Saturday. The Markt is at the other end of the yard. If the gate is closed, turn back and walk down Hallestraat, which runs parallel to the Halls.

Walk 2 (see page 43, 44 and 45) comments extensively on Markt.

Return to the Belfry **04** and walk down Breidelstraat, a traffic-free alley on the corner. Continue to Burg.

Along the way on your right you will notice De Garre, a narrow alley. This may be the narrowest street in Bruges (try walking side by side here!), it nevertheless boasts a fair number of cosy cafés. Burg is the most majestic square in the city, so take your time to admire its grandeur. The main character in this medieval story is the City Hall **09** **43** (1376-1420), one of the oldest city halls in the Netherlands and a Gothic example for all its brothers and sisters that were built later, from Louvain to Aude-narde and Brussels. Having admired its exterior, enter the impressive Gothic Hall and gaze in admiration at the polychrome floating ribs of the vaulted ceiling. Hiding on the right-hand side of this Gothic monument is the Basilica of the Holy Blood **01**. It was originally dedi-

BURG: AN ARCHITECTURAL SYNOPSIS

Art lovers have already noticed that Burg projects a wonderful cross-section of stunning architectural styles. It is, indeed, a summing-up in one place of all the styles that have caught our imagination throughout the various centuries. From Romanesque (Saint Basil's Church) and Gothic (City Hall) by way of Renaissance (Civil Registry) and Baroque (Deanery) to Classicism (Mansion of the Liberty of Bruges). There's no need to go and dash all around Bruges to see it all!



Exploring Bruges



You might want to stroll, amble and saunter down the streets of Bruges all day long. However, why not try to see the city from a different perspective? During a walking or bicycle tour, a guide will show you numerous secret places. Maybe you would prefer a boat trip on the mysterious canals – an unforgettable experience! And a ride in a horse-drawn carriage must surely be the perfect romantic outing. Sport-lovers can even do a guided run around the city. Or perhaps you simply want to tour all the highlights as quickly and as comfortably as possible? Then a minibus with expert commentary is what you need. And what about a balloon ride or a daytrip on a Vespa, or an electric Segway? The choice is yours!



Bruges by boat

A visit to Bruges isn't complete without a boat trip on its canals. Go aboard at any of the five landing stages (consult city map) for a half-hour trip that allows you to appreciate the most noteworthy delights of the city from a completely different angle.

OPEN > March to mid-November, daily, 10.00 a.m.-6.00 p.m. (last departure at 5.30 p.m.)

PRICE > € 8.00; children aged 4 to 11 (accompanied by an adult): € 4.00; children under 4: free; Brugge City Card (during the period 1/3 to 15/11): free

Lamme Goedzak (steam wheeler) Damme

The nostalgic river boat 'Lamme Goedzak', with room for 170 passengers, sails back and forth between the Noorweegse Kaai (Norwegian Quay) in Bruges and the centre of Damme, the town of the legendary character Tijl Uilenspiegel (Owlglass), whose friend was called ... Lamme Goedzak!

OPEN > During the period 1/4 to 30/9: departures from Bruges to Damme, daily at 10.00 a.m., 12.00 a.m., 2.00 p.m.

and 4.00 p.m.; departures from

Damme to Bruges, daily at 11.00 a.m., 1.00 p.m., 3.00 p.m. and 5.20 p.m.

PRICE > € 7.50 (one-way ticket) or € 10.50 (return ticket); 65+: € 7.00 (one-way ticket) or € 9.50 (return ticket); children aged 3 to 11: € 6.00 (one-way ticket) or € 8.50 (return ticket); Brugge City Card: € 8.00 (return ticket)



INFORMATION > Tel. +32 (0)50 28 86 10, www.bootdamme-brugge.be; public transport: bus no. 4 or no. 14, stop: Sasplein near the Dampoort (Damme Gate); from there it is a 5-10 minute walk to the landing stage at the Noorweegse Kaai 31 (Norwegian Quay – City map: J1).

Port Cruise Zeebrugge

The port cruise departs from the old fishing port on board of the 'Zephira', a passenger ship. The tour takes in the naval base, the Pierre Vandamme Lock (one of the largest locks in the world), the gas terminal, the wind turbine park, the 'tern' island, the cruise ships and the dredging vessels. You will also see how the massive container ships are unloaded at the quay. Each visitor is given an easy-to-use

Museums, places of interest and attractions



Some places are so special, so breathtaking or so unique that you simply have to see them. Bruges is filled to the brim with wonderful witnesses of a prosperous past. Although the Flemish primitives are undoubtedly Bruges' showpiece attraction, museum devotees in search of much more will not be disappointed. Indeed, the Bruges range of attractions is truly magnificent. From modern plastic art by way of Michelangelo's world-famous *Madonna and Child* to the brand new Lace Centre. It's all there for you to discover! With the Bruges City Card, you can visit numerous museums, places of interest and attractions for free  or with a good discount .

& **01 Archeologiemuseum (Archaeological Museum)**

This museum presents the unwritten history of Bruges. Its motto: feel your past beneath your feet. Discover the history of the city through different kinds of search and hands-on activities. A fascinating mix of archaeological finds, riddles, replicas and reconstructions shed light on daily life in times gone by, from the home to the workplace and from birth till death.

OPEN > Tuesday to Sunday, 9.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m. and 1.30 p.m. - 5.00 p.m.; last admission: 12.00 p.m. and 4.30 p.m. (open on Easter Monday and Whit Monday)

ADDITIONAL CLOSING DATES >

1/1, 14/5 (1.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m.) and 25/12

PRICE > € 4.00; 65+ and youngsters aged 12 to 25: € 3.00; children under 12: free; Brugge City Card: free

INFORMATION > Mariastraat 36A, tel. +32 (0)50 44 87 43, www.museabrugge.be

02 Arentshuis

In this elegant 18th-century town house with its picturesque garden the work of the versatile British artist Frank Brangwyn (1867-1956) is on display on the top floor. Brangwyn was both a graphic artist and a painter, as well as a designer of carpets, furniture and ceramics. The ground floor is the setting for temporary plastic art exhibitions.

OPEN > Tuesday to Sunday, 9.30 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.; last admission: 4.30 p.m. (open on Easter Monday and Whit Monday)



ADDITIONAL CLOSING DATES >

1/1, 14/5 (1.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m.) and 25/12

PRICE > € 4.00; 65+ and youngsters aged 12 to 25: € 3.00; children under 12: free; Brugge City Card: free; combination ticket with Groeninge Museum possible (*See page 91*)

INFORMATION > Dijver 16, www.museabrugge.be



01 Basiliek van het Heilig Bloed (Basilica of the Holy Blood)

The double church, dedicated to Our Lady and Saint Basil in the 12th century and a basilica since 1923, consists of a lower church that has maintained its Romanesque character and a neo-Gothic upper church, in which the relic



The art of bobbins and pins

Kumiko Nakazaki hopes
to gain immortality through lace



It is now over a quarter-century since Kumiko Nakazaki from Japan set foot in Bruges for the very first time. In the meantime, she has blossomed into a true lace expert, who understands like no one else how important lace is for Bruges.



IDENTIKIT

Name: Kumiko Nakazaki

Nationality: Japanese

Date of birth: 8 January 1956

Has lived in Bruges part-time since 1989.

Kumiko is affiliated to the Lace Centre and publishes books about lace.



At university, Kumiko Nakazaki specialised in French literature, more specifically the 19th century symbolic poets. But she felt nothing for an academic career. That is why she decided to go on vacation for a year; to try and figure out what direction she wanted to take with her life. It was in the middle of this 'career crisis' that she by chance attended a Belgian exhibition about ... lace.

'I learned that lace can grow very old, can survive a very long time, and decided that I wanted to do something that would live on for many years after my death.' Straight away, Kumiko booked a tour through Belgium, stopped for a day in Bruges and ended up at the Lace Centre, where she immediately made clear that she would love to learn more about lace-making. 'I returned to Japan with the idea of living in Bruges and immediately applied for a student visa.'

At first, Kumiko found the change of continents very difficult. 'During the



first years, you focus on the differences, but after a while you start to notice similarities.' As a result, she extended her visa nine times! After almost a decade, she had mastered the intricacies of lace-making and designing. She had even published a number of books about

'As long as skilled and passionate people want to make lace and are prepared to continually learn, Bruges will remain the world's undisputed lace capital.'

Kumiko Nakazaki

Best addresses

FAVORITE SPOT

» Prinselijk Begijnhof Ten

Wijngaarde (Beguinage), tel. +32

(0)50 33 00 11, www.monasteria.org

'Obviously I am not the only one who loves the **Beguinage**, with its white-painted houses and sober garden. It is a serene oasis in the middle of the city, a place in which you can find peace and contentment.'



RESTAURANTS

» 't Oud Handboghof, Baliaestraat 6,

tel. +32 (0)50 33 71 18, www.hoteldepauw.be, closed during the day

(until 6.00 p.m., on Sunday until 12.00

p.m.), closed on Wednesday and

Thursday

'People have been eating at this site since the 15th century. And nothing much has changed. It is still the same atmospheric restaurant, where you can enjoy typical local cooking and seasonal dishes.'



» Poules Moules, Simon Stevinplein 9, tel. +32 (0)50 34 61 19, www.poulesmoules.be, closed on Monday (except in July, August and December)

'I only recently discovered this place: it is the address in Bruges for mussels, which is the specialty of the house. And if the weather permits, you can sit on the delightful terrace with its view of the Simon Stevinplein.'

- » **Sint-Barbe**, Sint-Annaplein 29, tel. +32 (0)50 33 09 99, www.sintbarbe.be, closed on Tuesday and Wednesday

'This cosy restaurant, where you can order home-made shrimp croquettes, steak or veal kidneys, is located in the shadow of the charming Saint Anna's Church.'

- » **De Pepermolen**, Langestraat 16, tel. +32 (0)50 49 02 25, www.depepermolen.com, closed on Wednesday and Thursday

'In this restaurant in the always bubbling Langestraat you can enjoy one of their seasonal dishes or try their monthly discovery menu. King crab, carpaccio of beef, fresh soused herrings... Need I say more?'

- » **De Middenstand**, 't Zand 20, tel. +32 (0)50 34 17 50, www.demiddenstand.com, closed on Wednesday

'It's great to sit on the terrace overlooking the square 't Zand and just watch the world go by. This address is famous for its fresh home-made dishes. The owner of the restaurant is also the chef – which is always a good sign!'

CAFÉS AND TEAROOMS

- » **Li O Lait**, Dweersstraat 30, tel. +32 (0)50 70 85 70, www.liolait.be, closed on Sunday and Monday

'A good breakfast, a filter coffee made grandma's way, a *mocha latte*, an ice coffee, a glass of cava, a bagel or a piece of cake... At any time of the day, you can enjoy yourself at Li O Lait.'



- » **Tearoom Carpe Diem**, Wijngaardstraat 8, tel. +32 (0)50 33 54 47, www.tearoom-carpediem.be, closed on Tuesday

'Located in a fabulous 17th century building near the Beguinage, you can enjoy the delights of the Detavernier Bakery and its attractive adjoining tearoom, where you can choose from their great selection of home-made cakes and other delicacies. It's a place where I enjoy coming to relax.'

- » **Café Vlissinghe**, Blekersstraat 2, tel. +32 (0)50 34 37 37, www.cafevlissinghe.be, closed on Monday and Tuesday

The other Flemish art cities

Antwerp (Antwerpen) 82 km

It is hard to describe Antwerp in a single word. This historic city has so much to offer: a beautiful cathedral and numerous imposing churches, a magnificent Central Station, the ground-breaking Museum on the River (MAS), the tranquil Rubens House, a delightful sculpture garden (Middelheim), a unique zoo and so much more. Antwerp is also Belgium's fashion capital, home to many internationally renowned designers. That is why in the Scheldt city you will find dozens of exclusive boutiques, rubbing shoulders with fun bric-a-brac shops where you can browse for hours: it's every fashionista's dream! Not surprisingly, the local 'Antwerpenaars' – who are fairly loud by nature – are extremely proud of their city. Welcome to Antwerp, the most self-confident city in Belgium.

INFO > www.antwerpen.be; there is a direct train connection between Bruges and Antwerp (journey time: 1 hour and 28 minutes; www.belgianrail.be)

Brussels (Brussel) 88 km

The whole world comes together in Brussels, with a different continent around every corner. It is a city bursting with life, from the exotic Matonge quarter to the stately elegance of the European institutions. The capital of Belgium has a vibrancy like no other and the formality of its 'hard' metropolitan structure is softened by the authentic, working-class ambiance of its more popular districts. On his platform not far from the majestic Market Square, *Manneke Pis* – the unfortunate symbol of Belgium – is permanently peeing. And this diverse city even knows how to rec-

