

# Ghent

## Dazzlingly - Belgium



### Authentic

A dragon as city guard, a hangman's knot as a symbol. This is only possible in Ghent, because Ghent is inspiring and self-willed, and above all authentic. Nowhere else can you find so much history per square metre as in the beautifully renovated and fully pedestrianised historic city centre. Walking through Ghent is like travelling through time: you turn the corner and just like that, you go from the fourteenth century to the twenty-first (and back!). Nevertheless, everything seems to astonishingly belong together. Three grand medieval towers form the city's unique skyline. The Castle of the Counts' impressive walls and merlons let your imagination run wild. Find tranquility in the beguinages, classified as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO, before diving into the vibrant nightlife. Ghent also holds a unique position in the art world. Besides a breathtaking masterpiece, the 15th century 'The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb' is also the subject of many stories - people are still trying to establish the full facts of the biggest art theft of all time: the theft of the 'Just Judges'. And it's only a small step from the Flemish Primitives to the modern art of the world-renowned S.M.A.K. The brand new signposting will show you the way! The next pages will submerge you in the unique atmosphere of Ghent

### A city of festivities and events

Anyone who dares to visit Flanders' most agreeable city in the second half of July will land right in the middle of a sensually stimulating popular festival. Performances, street theatre, funfairs and children's entertainment, an opening parade and a closing concert until the early hours. During the Ghent Festivities the city explodes with life for ten whole days. But it still sparkles like a glass of Sunday-morning champagne for the rest of the year too. Music, theatre, exhibitions, events and an internationally renowned annual film festival: it's impossible to be bored in Ghent.

### The nights is young

The three Michelin stars Ghent received for its illuminations are living proof that if you don't stay at least one night, you haven't really visited Ghent at all. Because although the city is very beautiful during the day, when darkness falls it comes to life for a second time. The splendid, carefully planned illumination of the buildings and monuments in the city centre will ensure a fairytale snapshot. And another. And another. With the 'Light Plan Ghent' walking route, you'll be able to discover them all. And it's not just the lighting that is fantastic. The social and cultural nightlife dazzles as never before. You can stop off in one of the city's many small cafés. Have we already mentioned that in the average Ghent café you can (or must) choose from countless different types of Belgian beer?

### Sights

The whole city is 'worth seeing'. However, you cannot leave Ghent without at least having admired these 5 eye-catchers.

#### The Castle of the Counts Counts

An imposing medieval fortress in the heart of the city. Enjoy the incredible view from the very top of the keep. Inside, tremble at the sight of the impressive collection of weapons and instruments of torture, from thumbscrews to an authentic guillotine. Philip and Matilda will transport you back to the 12th century and tell you the compelling history of this unique building.

#### St Bavo's Cathedral

Ghent's oldest parish church, first known as Sint-Janskerk, today has no less than 22 altars. The most fervent sermons once thundered from its rococo pulpit, a wonderful marriage of marble and oak. Tombs of the Ghent bishops, Rubens' 'The Conversion of St Bavo' and the world-famous polypptych 'The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb' by the Van Eyck brothers are just a few of the many art treasures to wonder at in this cathedral.

#### The Belfry

Above Ghent, lonely and grey, rises the Old Belfry, a symbol of the past. The dragon at the top scans the horizon. If the enemy was approaching, the Klokke Roeland would notify the burghers of the city. Distinguished visitors, executions and, of course, the beginning of the Ghent Festivities were (and are still) also announced by the carillon. Recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

#### The Citadel Park

Hidden away amidst the greenery are two leading museums: the fully renovated Museum of Fine Arts (MSK) houses classic art and the Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art (S.M.A.K.) shows what the contemporary artist has to offer. In the nearby congress centre the business world holds meetings, while Het Kuipke is legendary for its six-day cycling spectacular.

### Beguinages

You won't find any more beguines in these oases of calm, but the hushed atmosphere of dedication and devotion remains forever hovering between the whitewashed walls. UNESCO declared these marvellous villages-within-the-city as World Heritage Sites.

### Panoramas

Suppose that during your visit to the city you were only allowed to take three photos. Then let it be the following three: one from St Michael's Bridge, the only place in Ghent where you can capture the three towers in a row. For the second photo, turn 90° to the left and focus the lens on the Graslei. The combination of youngsters socialising and the backdrop of an impressive row of historical houses creates a unique scene. For the third photo, you need to go a little higher. Climb the 386 steps of the Belfry and Ghent will be at your feet.

### The native of Ghent is a burgundian bon vivant

And that is something you'll certainly see for yourself: the number of cafés and restaurants is virtually endless. To pick out just a few here would do a disservice to the others. For further information, you can always apply to the inquiry office. If you want to try the typical specialities of the city and the province, you should head for the Great Butchers' Hall. There you can taste and buy everything.



### Did you know that...?

...Ghent is a very old, but at the same time also a very young city? For every classic theatre, there are five small, independent venues and for each commercial cinema complex, there is a cinema for better quality films. One can hear the latest dance hit or indie sensation resounding from the hip cafés. Posters scream for attention on walls reserved for the purpose. Graffiti is not sprayed indiscriminately but is artistically applied to specially provided walls. And if there are still some blank façades remaining, an artistic project will be selected and carried out for them.

...there is far more for youngsters to experience in Ghent than just the Castle of the Counts or the Mystic Lamb? The Map of Ghent for Young Travellers from Use-it shows sexy historical routes, party hotspots, specialist record shops, the greasiest chip shops, cash dispensers, peaceful sunbathing spots, local cafés, unique comic stores, palatable museums and a great deal more. Obtainable for free, at the Ghent tourist inquiry office or to be downloaded from [www.use-it.be](http://www.use-it.be).

...in Ghent you can consult the internet or send an e-mail home from the street? And it is completely free. You will find digital info posts at no less than 20 different locations throughout the city centre. You can also go on the internet or, rather more traditionally, read the newspapers (international ones too) in the public library at het Zuid.

...Ghent's city centre is Belgium's largest pedestrianised area? The car is taboo there and if you don't want to risk a fine, you had better follow the P-route. This will automatically lead you to one of the 6 underground car parks less than 300 metres from the city centre. You can also use the P&R car parks outside the city. You won't have to wait long: a scheduled bus or tram service will take you into the centre.

**More information is available free at:**  
Tourist Office / Inquiry desk / Belfry (Raadskelder)  
Botermarkt 17A - T. +32 9 266 56 60 - [visit@gent.be](mailto:visit@gent.be) - [www.visitgent.be](http://www.visitgent.be)