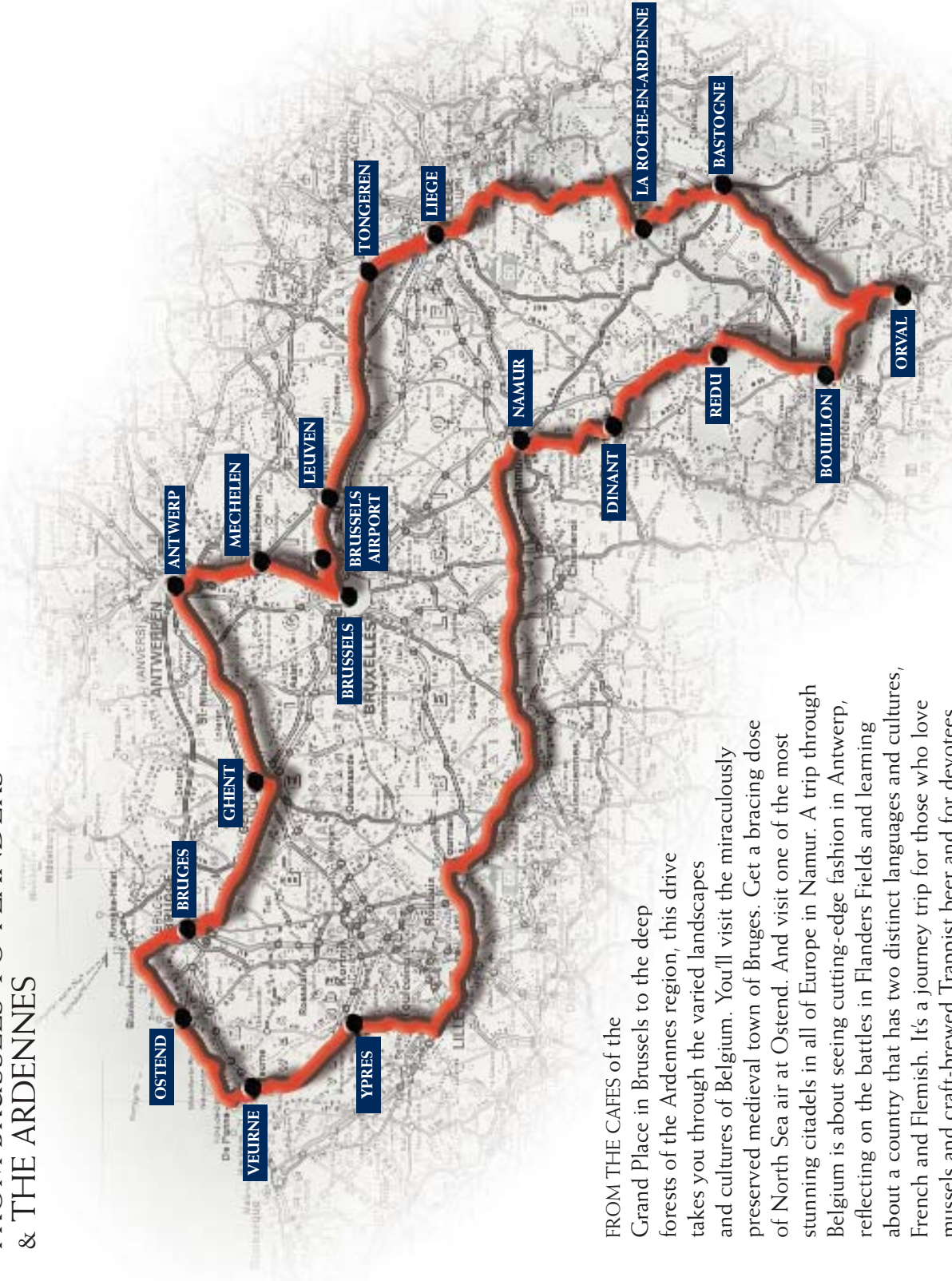


# BELGIUM:

GOTHIC CATHEDRALS & BATTLEFIELDS:  
FROM BRUSSELS TO FLANDERS  
& THE ARDENNES

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FROM THE CAFES of the Grand Place in Brussels to the deep forests of the Ardennes region, this drive takes you through the varied landscapes and cultures of Belgium. You'll visit the miraculously preserved medieval town of Bruges. Get a bracing dose of North Sea air at Ostend. And visit one of the most stunning citadels in all of Europe in Namur. A trip through Belgium is about seeing cutting-edge fashion in Antwerp, reflecting on the battles in Flanders Fields and learning about a country that has two distinct languages and cultures, French and Flemish. It's a journey trip for those who love mussels and craft-brewed Trappist beer and for devotees of artists such as Rubens, Magritte and Ensor. Belgium may be small but it offers something to engage most every visitor.

## GOTHIC CATHEDRALS & BATTLEFIELDS

*(Mileage is estimated from each preceding city or site. Before you begin your trip, please note: For space reasons, we could not provide the most detailed map with this brochure. We recommend the use of Michelin Map # 716 Belgium-Luxembourg in conjunction with this guide. To order Michelin maps, call 1-800-223-0987.)*

**BRUSSELS AIRPORT** – Begin your journey by flying into Brussels Airport, which is about 20 minutes from the city center.

**BRUSSELS** – Brussels is home to legions of diplomats, lobbyists and politicians associated with the European Union and NATO. But that seems beside the point when you're in Grand Place in the heart of the city, eating mussels and frites and enjoying a Duvel or another of the dozens of craft-brewed Belgian beers. Do visit the Musée Horta, the home of architect Victor Horta, and The Centre Belge de la Bande Dessinée, another Horta building. This one is dedicated to Belgian comics, most famously those of Hergé, who created Tintin. Don't overlook some of the best chocolate shops in the world and do visit the arcaded shopping galleries.



Make the obligatory stop at the Mannekin Pis, the statue of the little boy who, according to legend, saved Brussels by urinating to extinguish a fire. The Musée d'Art Moderne is worth exploring, as is the Musée Magritte, dedicated to surrealist Belgian artist René Magritte. Then return to a Grand Place café for a nightcap.

**MECHELEN** – Arguably the best place in Europe to eat prized white asparagus, which are harvested locally in spring. Mechelen is the heart of Catholic Belgium. In 1506, Margaret of Austria, daughter of Maximilian I, was made governor of Mechelen and her court was one of the most glamorous of the 16th century. That heyday ended in 1530 with her death and the capitals move to glory with a visit to St. Romboutskathedraal on Grote Markt, the main square, with its 97-meter tower. Keep your ears peeled for bell ringers, as Mechelen has Belgium's most famous school of campanology (bell ringing). On a more somber note, the Joods Museum van Deportatie en Verzet is dedicated to the history of Belgian Jewish persecution under the Nazis.

**ANTWERP** – With its cobblestone streets, lively Grote Markt overlooked by the Renaissance-style Stadhuis or town hall, and its artsy demeanor, Antwerp may well be Belgium's best kept secret. It harbors great cafes and innovative design shops. Names of local fashion designers such as Dries Van Noten and Ann Demeulemeester are heard as often as the city's most famous son, Pieter Paul Rubens. By all means visit the Rubenshuis, the former home and studio of the painter. And stop at the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, which has masterpieces by Van Eyck, Rubens and Ensor. Antwerp is Europe's second-largest port, its seafaring

19 miles

**OSTEND** – Home to the artist James Ensor, Ostend was a seaside playground for European royalty in the mid 19th century. But the royals departed, and after years of a lackluster existence Ostend has more recently spruced itself up. Walk along the beach, visit Ensorhuis, where the painter once lived, and then enjoy Ostend's seafood restaurants, bars, cafes and casino.

21 miles

**VEURNE** – Veurne has impressive medieval buildings but if you're here on the last Sunday in July, you'll be absorbed with the Middle Ages during the Boetprocessie or Penitents Procession. Hundreds of people dress up in brown cowls and carry large wooden crosses through the streets in a parade that dates back to the Crusades.

20 miles

**YPRES** – The site of some of the fiercest battles of World War I, Ypres sits amid the storied Flanders fields. Go into the Lakenhalle on the Grote Markt and you'll discover the Flanders Field Museum, with references to the famous poem written in 1915 by Canadian medical officer John McCrae.

142 miles

**NAMUR** – A gateway to the Ardennes, Namur is known for its citadel that overlooks this town at the confluence of the Meuse and Sambre Rivers. The Celts, the Romans and, most famously, Vauban, Louis XIV's military engineer, had a hand in these fortifications. Gothic treasures by Brother Hugo d'Oignies, a 12th-century metal smith, can be found at the Musée du Prieuré d'Oignies.

36 miles

**GHEENT** – Outside of Paris, Ghent was medieval Europe's largest city. It still has plenty of charm plus an infusion of lively university students. St Baafskathedraal is where you'll find Ghent's most famous sight, the "Adoration of the Mystic Lamb" by Jan Van Eyck. Painted in 1432 as an altarpiece, it's an allegory of Christ's death and one of the earliest oil paintings extant. Check out Gravensteen, a 12th-century castle, and sightsee on a canal cruise.

29 miles

**BRUGES** – One of Europe's best-preserved medieval cities, Bruges is laced with canals. In Markt square, you'll find the Belfort, a 13th-century belfry that is on UNESCO's World Heritage List. At the Burg square, you'll discover the most famous site in Bruges, the Heilig-Bloedbasiliek or the Basilica of the Holy Blood. The name derives from a vessel containing what is said to be Christ's blood, brought to Bruges after the Crusades in the 12th century. Pause to look at the Stadhuis in the Burg, which may well be Belgium's most architecturally pleasing town hall. Save time for a visit to the masterworks of the Groeningemuseum and the lacework in the Arenshuis. Be sure and explore the Begijnhof, a cluster of small houses where the begijnen lived, an order of unmarried and widowed Catholic women in the 12th century. And reserve time to simply wander through Bruges' impossibly picturesque streets.



18 miles

**DINANT** – The onion-domed Église Notre Dame and the citadel are worth visiting. But Dinant may be best known as the birthplace of Adolphe Sax, the man who invented the saxophone. Take a boat cruise on the Meuse River or go kayaking on the Lesse River with a local outfitter.

34 miles

**REDU** – A Mecca for booklovers, Redu is the continental counterpart to Hay-on-Wye in Wales. There are more than 20 bookshops, enough to keep the most ardent bibliophile busy for a day.

19 miles

**BOUILLON** – Located on a loop in the Semois River, the Château de Bouillon is arguably the best feudal castle in Belgium. Dating back to the 10th century, this was the castle of Godofroid de Bouillon, who sold the castle to finance a crusade to the Holy Land.

23 miles

**ORVAL** – The Abbaye Notre Dame d'Orval is home to about 25 Trappist Cistercian monks who produce bread, cheese and some of the best Trappist beer in Belgium.

39 miles

**BASTOGNE** – In this town close to the Luxembourg border, thousands of soldiers died during the Battle of the Bulge in the winter of 1944-1945, when the Germans made an ill-fated push through Allied lines. The town is filled with stark reminders, including a star-shaped American Memorial.

18 miles

**LA ROCHE-EN-ARDENNE** – On a bend in the Ourthe River, La Roche is located in a deep valley, with green hills and a ruined castle, Le Château, overlooking the town. The town is heaven for kayakers, hikers and mountain bikers.



## HOTELS

**Stanhope.** Located in a prestigious, turn-of-the-century Brussels residence and an adjacent new wing, the Stanhope's 96 rooms exude sophistication and charm. History and culture mingle with modern facilities, with high ceilings, marble bathrooms, and luxurious furniture. Rue du Commerce 9. Brussels B1000. Tel: 32 (0)25 06 91 11 Fax: 32 (0)25 12 17 08

**De Witte Lelie.** In stylish Antwerp, "the White Lily" is where to be seen. Three gabled 16th-century houses have been combined to make this 10-room hotel that has brightly colored carpets and modern art. Keizerstraat 16-18, Antwerp 2000. Tel: 32 (0)32 26 19 66 Fax: 32 (0)32 34 00 19.

## Romantik Hotel Pandhotel.

Located in an 18th-century carriage house, in one of the most delightful areas of Bruges. The 23-room hotel has been artfully furnished with many antiques and objets d'art. Pandreite 16, B-8000, Bruges. Tel: 32 (0)50 34 06 66 Fax: 32 (0)50 34 05 56

## Le Moulin des Ramiers.

Midway between Namur and Dinant, this 18th-century mill run by the Fieuv family has six elaborately decorated guest-rooms filled with baroque furniture. The restaurant is justifiably famous as well, run by the owners' son, Basse, B-5332 Crupet. Tel: 32 (0)83 699 070 Fax: 32 (0)83 699 868 For reservations in the USA: 800-735-2478



## Auberge du Moulin Hideux.

Nestled in the Semois valley near Bouillon, this 18th century mill house with 12 guestrooms has been an idyllic country inn for more than 50 years. There are tennis courts, an indoor heated pool and fine regional cuisine in its restaurant. Rue du Moulin Hideux, B-6831 Noirefontaine. Tel: 32 (0)61 46 70 15 Fax: 32 (0)61 46 72 81 For reservations in the USA: 800-735-2478

## Hostellerie Lafarque.

Located south-east of Liège, this 1920's residence boasts eight rooms and has a restaurant on the veranda. Much of the produce comes from the hotel's own garden. Chemin des Douys 20, B-4860 Pepinster-Goffontaine. Tel: 32 (0)87 46 06 51 Fax: 32 (0)87 46 97 28 For reservations in the USA: 800-735-2478

## DINING

**Comme Chez Soi.** This is Belgium's premier temple to gastronomy.

Chef-owner Pierre Wynants gives fresh meaning to the term "perfectionist" and his son-in-law, Lionel Rigolet, is following in his footsteps at this lavish art nouveau-style restaurant. Expect impeccable and inventive cuisine, a vast wine list, and discreet service. Pl. Rouppe 23, Brussels. Tel: 32 (0)25 12 29 21 Fax: 32 (0)25 12 36 74



46 miles

**LIEGE** – Georges Simenon, who penned the "Inspector Maigret" series of crime novels, was born here in the Ardennes' largest city. Marvel at the Palais des Prince Evêques, one of the largest Gothic buildings in Europe, and go to The Musée de la Vie Wallonne, a museum of Walloon life since the Middle Ages. Collectors should note La Batte, a Sunday morning flea market along the river quays.

15 miles

**TONGEREN** – Belgium's oldest town is best-known for its Gallo-Roman Museum, with artifacts from the Roman occupation that began in 54 BC. But Tongeren is also heaven for those who come for the Sunday antiques fair at the Veemarkt. Take a moment to tour the Onze Lieve Vrouwebasiliek, or the Basilica of Our Lady. Tongeren also has a Begijnhof, similar to the one found in Bruges.

44 miles

**LEUVEN** – The home to the Dukes of Brabant since the year 1200, and the beer capital of Belgium, Leuven has one of the most ornate town halls, the Stadhuis, to be found anywhere in the country. St. Pieterskerk, in the Grote Mart, has two triptychs by Dirk Bouts, a Flemish primitive artist. Both "The Martyrdom of St. Erasmus" and "The Last Supper" are compelling works. Leuven is a student town as well, home to the Katholieke Universiteit van Leuven, which was founded in 1425. The cartographer Mercator and the scholar Erasmus are counted as past graduates. The adjacent Oude Markt is a fine place to sample local Belgian brews like Nostra Domus or the famous Stella Artois at one of the many open air cafes. Brussels Airport is about 20 minutes drive from here.