# 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 place made for people. A city whose history made it great. Cultural, artistic, cosmopolitan, unashamedly Burgundian, mysteriously medieval and a UNESCO world heritage city.



### The highlights of Bruges

# The classic places that no one should miss!



## Rozenhoedkaai and the Bruges canals, a typical city view

The Rozenhoedkaai (Rosary Quay) links the Belfry with the city's network of canals, the true 'veins' of Bruges, and offers a unique and picturesque panoramic view. Hardly surprising, then, that the Rozenhoedkaai is the most popular photographic hotspot in town! You can discover

many more special places and hidden gems during a boat trip on the canals. From the water, Bruges is even more enchanting. A classic that you really don't want to miss.

#### Markt, an absolute must

The vibrant centre of the city has been dominated for centuries by the 83-metre high Belfry. Today, you can climb right to the top of this impressive tower. You will be rewarded with a spectacular view of Bruges and the surrounding countryside. The Markt [Market Square] is also home to the Historium, a top attraction that takes you back in time to the city's medieval past. Surrounded by colourful houses, the Market Square is also the regular standing place for the famous horse-drawn carriages. (Read more on pages 62 and 72-73.)



## Medieval splendour on the Burg

The Burg is the beating heart of the city. From the 14th century town hall, which is the oldest in the Low Countries, Bruges has been governed for more than 600 years. This majestic architectural square also contains the Palace of the Liberty of Bruges, the former Civil Registry and the Basilica of the Holy Blood.



No other location in Bruges bears greater testimony to the city's former wealth. *(Read more on pages 61, 65-66 and 82-83.)* 

#### Strolling through the old Hansa Quarter

From the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Bruges was the most important trading centre in northwestern Europe. Spanish merchants settled along the Spaanse Loskaai (Spanish Quay) and in the Spanjaardstraat. The Germans or Easterners – 'oosterlingen' in Dutch – took up residence in the Oosterlingenplein. In this old Hansa Quarter, you can admire the mansions of the wealthy international merchants and the great trading



nations of the day. You can almost still smell the atmosphere of the Middle Ages.

#### The Flemish primitives: timeless beauty

In Bruges' golden century – the  $15^{\rm th}$  century – art was a big deal. Leading artists of the day, like Jan van Eyck and Hans Memling, came to live and work in the city. To-

day, you can marvel at the masterpieces of the world-famous Flemish primitives in the Groeninge Museum and the St. John's Hospital. And in the treasury of Bruges' oldest parish church, Saint Saviour's Cathedral, you can also come face to face with other priceless paintings that were created in the city in centuries gone by.

(Read more on pages 70-71, 80-81 and 89.)





#### Burgundian splendour

Discover Burgundian splendour at the site of the Gruuthuse Museum. In this luxurious 15th century city palace you can discover 500 years of Bruges history through a rich and varied collection. Particularly eye-catching is the intimate private chapel that connects the palace with the Church of Our Lady. In this way, the lords of Gruuthuse were able to follow the religious services in comfort and privacy. The church's showpiece is the beautiful white marble statue of the Madonna and Child by Michelangelo, which leaves no visitor unmoved.

(Read more on pages 71 and 75.)

#### Quiet contemplation in the Beguinage

Some places are so beautiful that they leave you speechless. The Bequinage is just such a place. This is where the beguines - emancipated women who lived pious and chaste lives without taking holy orders – once lived together in harmony. This walled oasis of religious peace, with its delightful inner garden, wind-twisted trees and white-painted gables, can charm even the most cynical of souls with its deafening silence.

(Read more on pages 61-62.)





## Minnewater: romance all the way

This small rectangular lake was once the mooring place for the barges that sailed the inland waterways between Bruges and Ghent. Nowadays, together with the Minnewater Park, this stretch of water – whose name means 'Lake of love' – is the most romantic spot in the city. The Minnewater Bridge

offers magical views over one of the most idyllic places in Bruges.

#### Concert Hall, or Culture with a capital C

This tall and stately culture temple on 't Zand gives the largest square of Bruges its own unique dynamism. In the soberly decorated auditorium, visitors can enjoy classical music and contemporary dance in the best possible setting. During the day, you can explore this remarkable building by following the Concertgebouw Circuit, an original and entertaining experience route that ends with a fantastic view of Bruges from the roof terrace.

(Read more on pages 66-67, 87 and 94.)



#### Almshouses: charity embodied in stone

Villages within the city. That's how you can best describe these residential centres, which originated in medieval times and are still occupied today by senior citizens.



The almshouses were first founded centuries ago for charitable purposes. Today, with their picturesque gardens, their white-painted gables and their perfect peace and quiet, they are amongst the most tranquil places in Bruges.

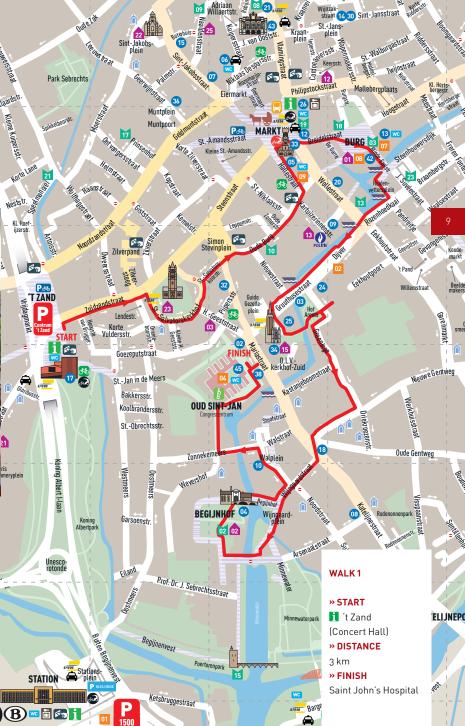
(Read more on page 16.)

#### 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!



## From 't Zand to Simon Stevinplein

## This walk starts at the it tourist office 't Zand (Concert Hall).

't Zand, Bruges' largest square, is dominated by the Concert Hall 17, one of Bruges' most talked-about, contemporary buildings. Clear-cut proof that this world heritage city isn't afraid of the future But the Concert Hall is more than just a magnificent music temple, and the interactive experience of the Concertgebouw Circuit 17 grants you a fascinating look behind the scenes. You will learn about the building's famous acoustics, discover unique installations and explore its remarkable architecture. Along the way you will encounter amazing art, before finally arriving at the roof terrace where you can enjoy the wonderful view over the Bruges skyline. Don't forget to drop in at the tourist office 't Zand (Concert Hall) on the ground floor: here you will find all the necessary tourist information as well as expert advice on all cultural

events, and you can buy your tickets on the spot.

On pages 118-119, you can learn more about the Concert Hall in an interview with Ayako Ito.

Leave i 't Zand (Concert Hall) behind you, walk along the square and turn into Zuidzandstraat, the first street on the right. Saint Saviour's Cathedral 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 from which the adjacent 't Zand takes its name. 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 even further. If you enter the cathedral via the tower, you can light up its wooden ceiling from the ground floor, allowing you to admire the tower's interior. Here you can also find a number of





well-preserved and painted crypts from the 14th century, typical for Bruges and the County of Flanders. In the treasury you can marvel at the oldest painting of Bruges (ca 1400), as well as works by painters from the school of the Flemish primitives, such as Dieric Bouts, Hugo van der Goes and Pieter Pourbus.

Turn right before the cathedral towards Sint-Salvatorskerkhof. Walk around the cathedral and take the fourth street on the right, the Sint-Salvatorskoorstraat. This will take you to the Simon Stevinplein.

This attractive square, lined with cosy restaurant terraces in summertime, is named after Simon Stevin, who was born in Bruges. His gracious statue naturally takes centre stage. This Flemish-Dutch scientist moved to the present-day Netherlands in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, because it was safer for him at that time, him being a Protestant. Stevin was a great scientist

but is also famous for his invention of numerous Dutch words – like 'wiskunde' (mathematics) – to denote scientific terms for which there had previously been no Dutch translation. In autumn, an exposition will illustrate how Simon Stevin's ideas still influence our daily life. You can read more on this on page 92.

#### **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 on your left. These belong to the Belfry 5. You're allowed to cross the halls' imposing inner courtyard between 8.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. during the week, and between 9.00 a.m. and 6.00 p.m. on Saturday. Markt is at the other end of the courtyard. If the gate is closed, turn back and walk down Hallestraat, which runs parallel to the Halls.

Walk 2 (see pages 26-27) comments more extensively on Markt.

#### BURG SQUARE: AN ARCHITECTURAL SYNOPSIS

Art lovers have already noticed that the Burg projects a wonderful cross-section of stunning architectural styles. It is, indeed, a summary of all the styles that have caught our imagination throughout the centuries in one place. From Romanesque (Saint Basil's Chapel) 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!



Return to the Belfry 05 and walk down Breidelstraat, a traffic-free alley on the corner to the left. Continue to the Burg square.

Along the road to your right you will notice De Garre, a narrow alley. While this may be the narrowest street in Bruges (try walking side by side here!), it nevertheless boasts a fair number of cosy cafés. The 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 08 42 (1376-1421), 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 Audenarde and Brussels. These cities were fascinated by Bruges' use of statues in niches to emphasise verticality, which was an innovation at that time. What's more, these statues were originally polychromed.

After admiring its exterior, you should certainly pop inside to enjoy the lavishly decorated Gothic Hall, with its impressive vaulted ceiling. Bruges couples still say 'I do' in this hall, which is

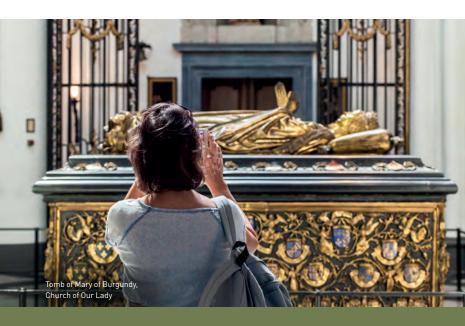


also the meeting place for the city council. Hiding on the right-hand side of this Gothic monument is the Basilica of the Holy Blood 11. It was originally dedicated to both Our Lady and Saint Basil, and was built as a fortress church on two levels between 1139 and 1157. The lower chapel has retained its Romanesque character. The upper chapel, which was originally little more than a kind of balcony, was gradually extended over the years to become a chapel in its own right. It was only during the 19th century that it was renovated in the neo-Gothic style that can be seen today. The sacred relic of the Holy Blood has been kept here since the 13th century. In a tradition dating back to at least 1304, each year on Ascension Day the relic is carried in the Holy Blood Procession, a popular event that captures the imagination of the entire city and which in 2009 was classified by UNESCO as part of the

world's Intangible Cultural Heritage. Facing the basilica is the gleaming Renaissance façade of the old Civil Registry 03 (1534-1537, which now houses the City Archive 77 adjacent to the Liberty of Bruges 13. Its showpiece is a splendid oak mantelpiece with an alabaster frieze (1529). From the adjoining Palace of the Liberty of Bruges (the front part of which dates from 1722), the countryside in a wide area around the city was once governed. After 1795, the building became a courtroom and since 1988 it has housed various branches of the city administration. Once upon a time. the impressive Saint Donatian's Cathedral graced the spot directly in front of the City Hall. The church was torn down in 1799 during the French occupation. The adjacent Deanery 18 [1655-1666] was once the seat of the dean or spiritual leader of Saint Donatian's (where, among others, the paint-



# Museums, places of interest and attractions



Bruges has many unique places that you simply must see, each one an atmospheric testimony to the city's rich history. The Flemish primitives are undoubtedly Bruges' showpiece attraction, including Hans Memling's Shrine of Saint Ursula and Jan van Eyck's Madonna with Canon Joris van der Paele. Even so, 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 Lace Centre. It's all there for you to discover!

SPOTLIGHT

#### CHURCHES SHINE LIKE NEVER BEFORE

Church of Our Lady and Saint Saviour's Cathedral restored to their full glory



Bruges' two most important churches are situated within a stone's throw of each other. After long periods of renovation, you can now once again marvel at these religious monuments in all their splendour.

After nineteen years of work, the Gothic Church of Our Lady, with the

Madonna and Child by Michelangelo, shines as brightly as it ever did. The restoration of the tower, which is the highest of the Bruges skyline, was started in 2000, to be followed by the careful renovation of the facades, roofs and interior, revealing age-old multi-coloured murals that still depict how richly decorated the church used to be.

After more than 30 years of renovating, Saint Saviour's Cathedral. Bruges' oldest parish church, whose history dates back to the 9th century, is as beautiful as it has ever been. The restoration of the exterior dates back to 1987, followed by renovation of the interior since 2010. The naves, aisles, tapestries, stained glass windows, floors, paintings: literally everything has been refurbished, but the undoubted highlight is the renewed painting of the walls and pillars. These two ecclesiastical jewels in the Bruges crown are now more than ever a delight to the eve.

(Read more on pages 75 and 81.)





#### ♠ 01 08 Adornesdomein – Jeruzalemkapel (Adornes Estate – Jerusalem Chapel)

The Adornes domain consists of the mansion of the rich Adornes family of merchants, the 15th-century Jerusalem Chapel (built by this family) and a series of adjacent almshouses. In the multimedia museum, you step back in time to explore the life of Anselm Adornes and the Burgundian world in which he lived. Also enjoy a pleasant break in the elegant and familial atmosphere of the Scottish Lounge.

**OPEN** > 1/10 to 31/3: Monday to Saturday, 10.00 a.m.-5.00 p.m.; 1/4 to 30/9: Monday to Friday, 10.00 a.m.-5.00 p.m. and Saturday, 10.00 a.m.-6.00 p.m.

#### ADDITIONAL CLOSING DATES >

All (Belgian) public holidays

PRICE > €8; 65+: €6; youngsters aged
7 to 25: €4; children under 7: free; family discount: free entrance from the
third child onwards

INFO > Peperstraat 3A, tel. +32 (0)50 33 88 83, www.adornes.org

## 02 Archeologiemuseum (Archaeological Museum)

Locally found archaeological treasures and interactive 'seek-and-do' elements tell the story of how the Bruges ancestors used to live, work, cook, and bury their loved ones, from prehistory to the present day. Also suitable for children. OPEN > Tuesday to Sunday, 9.30 a.m.-12.30 p.m. and 1.30 p.m.-5.00 p.m. (open on Easter Monday and Whit Monday; 24/12 and 31/12 until 4.00 p.m.); last admission: 30 min. before closing time

#### ADDITIONAL CLOSING DATES >

1/1, 21/5 (1.00 p.m.-5.00 p.m.) and 25/12

PRICE > €4; 65+ and youngsters aged
18 to 25: €3; children under 18: free

INFO > Mariastraat 36A, tel. +32 (0)50

44 87 11, www.museabrugge.be

#### 03 Arentshuis

On the upper floor of this elegant 18th century city mansion with its picturesque garden the oeuvre of the versatile British artist Frank Brangwyn (1867-1956) is on display. Brangwyn was both a leading graphic artist and a painter, as well as a designer of carpets, furniture, stained glass windows, ceramics and jewellery. Even the glass cabinets were made to his design. The ground floor is the main setting in Bruges for temporary presentations of graphic works from the collections of the Groeninge Museum and the Print Room of Musea Brugge.



OPEN > Tuesday to Sunday, 9.30 a.m.-5.00 p.m. (open on Easter Monday and Whit Monday; 24/12 and 31/12 until 4.00 p.m.); last admission: 30 min. before closing time

#### ADDITIONAL CLOSING DATES >

1/1, 21/5 (1.00 p.m.-5.00 p.m.) and 25/12

PRICE > €6; 65+ and youngsters aged
18 to 25: €5; children under 18: free;
combination ticket with Groeninge

Museum possible (see page 70-71)

INFO > Dijver 16, tel. +32 (0)50 44 87 11,
www.museabrugge.be

#### © Dasiliek van het Heilig Bloed (Basilica of the Holy Blood)

This double church was dedicated to Our Lady and Saint Basil in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and consists of a lower and an upper chapel. The lower chapel has preserved its original character and is therefore a rare example of Romanesque architecture in the coastal region. The neo-Gothic interior of the upper chapel is home to the relic of the Holy Blood and boasts a treasury with numerous valuable works of art. Due to the special veneration attached to the relic, the church was elevated to the status of a basilica in 1923.

OPEN > Daily, 9.30 a.m.-12.30 p.m. and 2.00 p.m.-5.30 p.m.; last admission: 15 min. before closing time. Veneration of the relic: daily, 11.30 a.m.-12.00 p.m. and 2.00 p.m.-4.00 p.m.

#### **ADDITIONAL CLOSING DATE > 1/1**

PRICE > Double church: free; treasury: €2.50; children under 13: free INFO > Burg 13, tel. +32 (0)50 33 67 92, www.holyblood.com



The 'Princely Beguinage Ten Wijngaarde' with its white-coloured house fronts and





tranquil convent garden was founded in 1245. This little piece of world heritage was once the home of the beguines, emancipated lay-women who nevertheless led a pious and celibate life. Today the beguinage is inhabited by some nuns of the Order of St. Benedict and several Bruges women who have decided to remain single. In the Beguine's house, you can get a good idea of what day-to-day life was like in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. OPEN > Beguine's house: daily, 10.00 a.m.-5.00 p.m.; Beguinage: daily, 6.30 a.m.-6.30 p.m. PRICE > Beguine's house: €2; 65+: €1.50; students and children aged 8 to 12: €1. Beguinage: free INFO > Begijnhof 24-28-30, tel. +32 (0)50 33 00 11, www.monasteria.org





#### 05 09 Belfort (Belfry)

The most striking tower in Bruges dates back to the 13th century, is 83 me-



tres high and is protected as a world heritage site. Anyone who climbs all 366 steps will be rewarded with a stunning view over the city and its surroundings. On your way up, you can stop off at the treasury, which held the city's charters, seals and coffers during the Middle Ages. A few steps further on you will see the impressive music drum that operates the carillon and the keyboard used by the city carilloneur to play the tower's 47 carillon bells. **OPEN >** Daily, 9.30 a.m.-6.00 p.m. (24/12 and 31/12 until 4.00 p.m.); last admission: 1 hour before closing time. For safety reasons, only a limited number of people will be allowed to visit the tower at the same time. Reservations. are not possible. Please consider a certain waiting period.

#### ADDITIONAL CLOSING DATES >

1/1, 21/5 (1.00 p.m.-6.00 p.m.) and 25/12 PRICE > €12; 65+ and youngsters aged 6 to 25: €10; children under 6: free INFO > Markt 7, tel. +32 (0)50 44 87 11. www.museabrugge.be

#### Bezoekerscentrum Lissewege - Heiligenmuseum (Visitors' Centre Lissewege -Saints' Museum)

The Visitors' Centre tells the story of 'the white village', which dates back through more than a thousand years of history. In the Saints' Museum, you can admire a remarkable collection of at least 130 antique statues of patron saints.

OPEN > On weekends in May and June, including during the long weekend of 1 May (1/5 to 3/5), during Ascension weekend (21/5 to 24/5), during Whit



weekend (30/5 to 1/6), daily from 1/7 to 15/9 and in the last two weekends of September (19/9-20/9 and 26/9-27/9): 2.00 p.m.-5.30 p.m.

PRICE > Visitors' Centre: free. Saints' Museum: €2; children under 12: €1

INFO > Oude Pastoriestraat 5,

Lissewege, tel. +32 (0)495 38 70 95,

www.lissewege.be

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In the Boudewijn Seapark you can enjoy the magical new dolphin show and watch the seals and sea lions perform the craziest tricks. But it is not only the sea mammals in this family park that will charm you, but also the twenty outdoor park attractions that offer guaranteed fun for young and old alike. Finally, Bobo's Indoor has ten great indoor attractions, and Bobo's Aqua

*Splash* provides hours of wonderful water fun outdoors.

OPEN > During the Easter holidays (4/4 to 19/4): 10.00 a.m.-5.00 p.m.; in May and June: daily, except on Wednesday, 10.00 a.m.-5.00 p.m.; in July and August: daily, 10.00 a.m.-6.00 p.m.; September: Saturday and Sunday, 10.00 a.m.-6.00 p.m.; during autumn school holiday (31/10 to 8/11): 10.00 a.m.-5.00 p.m. Consult the website for details of the program during the winter period. PRICE > €27; 65+ and children taller than 1 metre and under 12 years old: €23; children between 85 cm and 99 cm: €9.50 INFO > Alfons De Baeckestraat 12. Sint-Michiels, tel. +32 (0)50 38 38 38,

## ♠ 09 Brouwerij Bourgogne des Flandres (Brewery)

www.boudewijnseapark.be.

After an absence of 60 years, Bourgogne des Flandres is once again being brewed in Bruges. You can learn from the brewer himself how the beer is made, as well as tapping a digital glass in the interactive space. Or perhaps you can have a bottle of the delicious brew personalized with your photo? The kids can amuse themselves with a fun treasure hunt. After





## What's on the programme in 2020?

The following list summarizes the most important events in Bruges. Do you want to find out what's going on in Bruges during your stay in the city? Visit www.visit bruges.be and print off your own selection or drop by at one of the itourist offices Markt (Historium), Railway station (passageway to platforms, on the city centre side) and 't Zand (Concert Hall). The last office also sells tickets for events (and lots of other activities).

#### **January**

#### **Bach Academie Brugge**

15/1/2020 - 19/1/2020

The tenth Bach Academie Brugge turns the spotlight on the private life of Bach and his family. With this edition, the Concert Hall also wishes to pay tribute to main guest Philippe Herreweghe, whose Collegium Vocale Gent celebrates its fiftieth birthday in 2020.

INFO > www.concertgebouw.be (You can read more about early music in the interview with Ayako Ito on page 118-119.)

#### **February**

#### Brugs Bierfestival (Bruges Beer Festival)

1/2/2020 and 2/2/2020

For a whole weekend long, Bruges is the place-to-beer, with a selection of some four hundred top beers from eighty Belgian brewers. A delicious delight for your taste buds! INFO > www.brugsbierfestival.be

#### Kamermuziekfestival Têtes-à-Têtes (Chamber Music Festival Têtes-à-Têtes)

1/2/2020 - 29/2/2020

No huge and overwhelming orchestras, but 17 intense musical experiences in the Chamber Music Hall of the Concert Hall. The contact between the musicians and the audience adds an extra dimension. As will the refreshing glass you enjoy afterwards in the pop-up sky bar, with its spectacular view over the city.

INFO > www.concertgebouw.be

#### (B)its of Dance

26/2/2020 - 29/2/2020

During this festival, three of the partners of Dance in Bruges – the Concert Hall, the Bruges Cultural Centre and KAAP – join forces to provide a stage for new artistic initiatives.

INFO > www.ccbrugge.be

#### April

#### Pianofestival Too many keys

10/4/2020 and 11/4/2020

Six pianists perform works by pioneers like Steve Reich and Philip Glass, as well as pieces by Kate Moore and the unrecognised genius that is Julius Eastman, all in a way that you have never experienced before. On the second day, the music of Erik Satie takes centre stage.

INFO > www.concertgebouw.be

## BRUGES, CRADLE OF THE FLEMISH MASTERS

- » Jan van Eyck in Bruges, 12/3/2020 to 12/7/2020
- » Memling Now: Hans Memling in contemporary art, 4/4/2020 to 6/9/2020
- » Heaven in a nutshell. Art and devotion in the age of Burgundy, 1/10/2020 to 1/2/2021

During the Late Middle Ages, comfortably installed in the palatial Princes' Court in Bruges, the dukes of Burgundy commissioned numerous works from the most renowned Flemish artists of the day, such as



Jan van Eyck. 2020 is the 'Year of van Eyck', in which Bruges will host no less than three exhibitions, allowing visitors to experience the high-standard Burgundian society and the painting genius of the Flemish primitives. The exhibition 'Jan van Eyck in Bruges' in the Groeninge Museum focuses primarily on two of his masterpieces: the *Madonna with Canon Joris van der Paele* and the *Portrait of Margaretha van Eyck*. Among the artists influenced by van Eyck was Hans Memling. You can discover how Memling in turn has inspired many modern artists during 'Memling Now: Hans Memling in contemporary art', in Saint John's Hospital. Later this year at the same location, the remarkable devotional objects on display in the 'Heaven in a nutshell' exhibition will illustrate how and why the wealthy Burgundians became increasingly pious in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

INFO > www.museabrugge.be

#### M000V Filmfestival

21/4/2020 - 1/5/2020

M000V once again offers the very best films from around the world in Cinema Lumière. From Argentine thrillers to South Korean humour: discover it at the M000V Filmfestival!

#### May

#### Meifoor (May Fair)

1/5/2020 - 24/5/2020

Some ninety fun fair attractions fill 't Zand, the Koning Albertpark, Beursplein, Hauwerstraat and the Simon Stevinplein for three fun-filled weeks.

#### Airbag Festival

10/5/2020 - 2/6/2020

This international biennial accordion festival is already into its ninth edition, this time with accordion virtuoso Philippe Thuriot as the curator.

INFO > www.ccbrugge.be/airbag

#### GOLD

20/5/2020 - 24/5/2020

A polyphony festival that brings together all the beauty of Bruges in the Golden Age: the fascinating history, immovable heritage, art treasures and, above all, music. This second edition revolves around the *Lucca Choirbook*.

INFO > www.concertgebouw.be

## Flemish primitives in the spotlight

# Age-old masterpieces still move Till-Holger Borchert



He was born in Hamburg and relocated from Brussels to Bruges a couple of years ago, where he has been working for the past nineteen years. Surrounded by six centuries of fine art, he is still enchanted by the sheer brilliance of the Flemish primitives. In 2002, Till-Holger Borchert was one of the curators of Bruges, Cultural Capital of Europe. Nowadays, he is the general director of Musea Brugge and curator of the Bruges Groeninge Museum and the Arentshuis.



**IDENTIKIT** 

Flemish primitives.

Name: Till-Holger Borchert
Nationality: German
Date of Birth: 4 January 1967
Lives in Bruges, is the general director of Musea
Brugge, chief curator of the Groeninge Museum
and author of countless publications on the

'Bruges is breathtakingly beautiful', says Till-Holger Borchert. 'What's more, it is also very liveable, thanks to the clever way in which the city's medieval character has been preserved in a modern setting. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the city grew to become the largest commercial centre in north-west Europe. The position of the city and its population was further strengthened during the 15<sup>th</sup> century period of Burgundian rule. Later, during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it largely escaped the worst excesses of iconoclasm. This same spirit of tolerance and respect still thrives today.'

#### Madonnas from next door

'Almost every day I say good morning to two very special works of art: the Madonna and Maarten van Nieuwenhove diptych by Hans Memling in the St. John's Hospital and the Madonna with Canon Joris van der Paele by Jan van Eyck in the Groeninge Museum.'

In my opinion, the Flemish primitives continue to fascinate because they were the first artists to depict people and things from their own everyday environment. Even a madonna looks like the woman next door! These master painters provided the basis for an artistic

concept that can also easily be grasped by contemporary viewers because of its realism. In short, they discovered the individual. Moreover, they were not only master artists but also master problemsolvers. They made use of space in the most inventive ways; for example, by incorporating a mirror into the interior, as in the Memling diptych. Brilliant.'

'In my opinion, the Flemish primitives continue to fascinate because they were the first artists to depict people and things from their own everyday environment.'

'Do these works still move me? Absolutely. But I find pure emotion more readily in the work of a painter like Rogier van der Weyden. Memling and van Eyck in particular affect me more for their intellectual and conceptual approach. Van der Weyden and van Eyck: the pleasure of viewing the work of these two geniuses alone is reason enough to visit the treasure house that is Bruges.'

(This year there will be a number of exhibitions about the Flemish primitives; more info on page 89.)

#### Till-Holger Borchert's best addresses

#### **FAVOURITE SPOT**

#### » The churches of Bruges

The great churches of Bruges possess wonderful art collections, containing pieces that wouldn't disgrace any top museum. Look up at the sheer breathtaking height of the Church of Our Lady, whose 115.5-metre high tower is the second tallest brick-built tower in the world. When in Saint Saviour's, do go and marvel at the frescoes in the baptistery. And Saint-James's Church is worth its while for the impressive **mausoleum of the de Gros family**, because this sculptural masterpiece reveals par excellence the self-confidence and power of the Burgundian elite.'



#### RESTAURANTS

>> **Kok au Vin**, Ezelstraat 21, tel. +32

'In this pleasant bistro you can enjoy great cooking with local and superfresh products. Chef Jürgen Aerts is a master of combining flavors, simply but deliciously. What's more, eating here is very affordable.'



**» Den Gouden Harynck**, Groeninge 25, tel. +32 (0)50 33 76 37, www.goudenharynck.be

'Den Gouden Harynck is a household name in Bruges, known and loved by foodies of all kinds. It is also one of the most pleasant star-rated restaurants in the city – as anyone who has ever been there will tell you.'

» Den Amand, Sint-Amandsstraat 4, tel. +32 (0)50 34 01 22, www.denamand.be

In Den Amand, I once saw a German restaurant critic copy out the entire menu. You can't get higher praise than that! A small and elegant bistro, where you will find both visitors and local people enjoying the excellent food.

- \* 't Schrijverke, Gruuthusestraat 4, tel. +32 (0)50 33 29 08, www.tschrijverke.be

  This homely restaurant is named after a poem by Guido Gezelle, which hangs in
  a place of honour next to the door. But 't Schrijverke is above all rightly famed for
  its delicious regional dishes and its *Karmeliet* beer on tap.'
- **» Tanuki**, Oude Gentweg 1, tel. +32 (0)50 34 75 12, www.tanuki.be
  'A true temple of food where you immediately drop your voice to the level of a whisper so that you don't disturb the silent enjoyment of the other diners. In the open kitchen the chef does magical things with sushi and sashimi, and prepares his

#### CAFÉS

» Café 't Klein Venetië, Braambergstraat 1, tel. +32 (0)50 33 10 37, www.kleinvenetie.be

seven course menus with true oriental serenity.'

'Every Bruges local knows that if you want to enjoy the sun, the terrace of Café 't Klein Venetië is the best place to go. I like to sit here on the front row, enjoying the busy crowds on the Huidenvettersplein and the magnificent



view over the Rozenhoedkaai, the most photographed spot in Bruges. In short, when you are on this super-popular terrace, you never know where to look first."

» Delaney's Irish Pub & Restaurant, Burg 8, tel. +32 (0)50 34 91 45, www.delaneys.he

'It's always party time in this Irish pub, with its distinctive international atmosphere. Delaney's is the kind of place where you can rub shoulders with the whole world at the bar.'