



# Belgium Beer Tour

7 days / 6 nights

Public Tour: May 19-24, 2024

Price Per Person: \$4,650

## Daily Itinerary

**Day 1:** Welcome to Belgium! Home of delicious fries, waffles, and of course, beer!

Our adventure starts at in the early afternoon, allowing you to arrive in Brussels this morning or the day before (which we highly recommend). After a quick orientation, we head out to our first brewery of the tour, the legendary Brasserie Cantillon! Cantillon is known for using natural yeasts that are present in the air around us for fermentation and is one of only two lambic breweries still in operation that produces nothing but authentic, unsweetened, unfiltered, unpasteurized lambic.

This evening we'll enjoy a wonderful welcome dinner of Belgium's classic food specialties and beer cuisine at a local restaurant. To cap off the night, we'll check out a few of Brussel's world-famous beer cafes to raise a toast to the start of our beer adventure.

**Day 2:** After breakfast, we'll head on the road to one of our favorite cities in all of Europe - Ghent! (which also just so happens to be the home city of our trusty beer guide, Yannick.)

Before reaching Ghent, we'll stop in the town of Gooik for a tour and tasting at the renowned Gueuze and Lambic brewery, Oude Geuzestekerij De Cam. All of De Cam's offerings are strictly traditional, using traditional ingredients, methods, and techniques.

Back on the road, we'll stop for lunch at one of the best beer restaurants in the area, Heeren Van Liedekercke, before heading into the city. We'll then check into our hotel, drop off our luggage, and set out to take in the Ghent's history, architecture, culture, and of course, its beer heritage, all on a lively walking tour. We'll end our walk at one of the newest breweries in Ghent, Dok Brewing Co, where they love to try out new styles and flavors, all while keeping their proud Belgian beer tradition in mind. We'll take a tour of their brewery, enjoy a beer tasting, and sit down to enjoy a delicious dinner. For dessert, we'll indulge in some delectable Belgian chocolates, paired with beer, of course!

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**Day 3:** This morning we'll check out of our hotel and get on our way to the city of Bruges. Bruges is known for its rich history, impressive architecture, tasty food, and great beer cafés.

We start our exploration of Bruges by whetting everyone's whistle with a visit and tasting of Brouwerij Fort Lapin, a rather new brewery named after the fortress built in 1664 to protect Bruges' commercial hub. We'll chat with the brewer and founder, Kristof Vandenbussche, an outspoken entrepreneur from the area. Kristof had been brewing as a hobby for ten years before taking the final step from beer lover to professional.

You'll then have a chance to walk through the fairy tale streets of Bruges and enjoy lunch on your own. We recommend eating at one of the last remaining family-owned breweries in the Bruges city center: Brewery De Halve Maan. You may have heard about the new 2-mile beer pipeline they recently built leading from their brewery in the city center to their bottling plant in an industrial area. The pipeline carries 1,500 gallons of beer an hour at 12 mph, which has saved them hundreds of truck trips a year. When you see the narrow, historic streets of Bruges, you will wonder how the tankers ever made their way through originally!

After lunch, you have the option of exploring the beautiful streets of Bruges on your own - or head out for another wonderful brewery! If you chose the brewery, you'll experience a special brewery tour and blending session at Bourgogne des Flandres. Bourgogne des Flandres specializes in the Flemish beer blending tradition of mixing fresh beer with aged beer to create a perfect balance of flavors. It also happens to be the "home brewery" of our guide and brewer, Yannick. Tonight's dinner is at a local restaurant with a wide range of Belgian beers.

**Day 4:** After checking out of our hotel and loading up our luggage, we start our day with a tour and tasting at the Rodenbach Brewery, where they have world-renowned cask halls with 294 oak casks, some of which are 150 years old. Rodenbach has a rich history that extends back to 1821. We'll have a chance to taste their well-known barrel-aged sour beers that are brewed in the Flemish red style.

Our next stop is a sobering but powerful visit to sites of great importance memorializing the region's dark WWI history. These beautiful memorials are a solemn reminder of not only Belgium's but the world's history.

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We will then head to the city center where the WWI Battle of Ypres had reduced the town to rubble and was almost entirely destroyed. After the war, the citizens of Ypres meticulously reconstructed the town's most important buildings, which in turn give it modern-day medieval feel today. You'll have free time to walk around, grab lunch on your own, and even visit the Flanders Field Museum.

Later, we will reconvene and check out a newer brewery that opened in 2014 but is housed in a building with quite a bit of history. Kazematten's building was originally built as part of Louis XIV's fortress back in the 1680s and used for storing weapons into the 20th century. We'll get to taste their Grotten Sante, a spicy dark brown beer, and their Wiper Times 14, a highly fermented blond beer. We'll finish our visit with a delicious dinner at Kazematten's restaurant. To end our day, we will walk to Menin Gate to experience the Last Post Ceremony, a simple but moving tribute to the courage and self-sacrifice of those who fell in defense of their town.

**Day 5:** Today, we start our day by heading to the biggest beer store in Belgium - Dranken Vanuxeem! You'll be able to walk through aisle after aisle of wonderful beer, and perhaps purchase a few souvenirs to pack in your suitcase for the journey home.

We'll then head to the WWI experience at Plugstreet 14 - 18. The village of Ploegsteert played an important role in WWI. It seemed perpetually on the front line as territory was won, lost, and won again along the border between Belgium and France.

After, we'll have lunch on your own at Hollemeersch, known for its West Flemish specialties before a very special visit to De Moare Microbrewery, owned by our friend, Jan Courtens. We'll also stop by a small local hop farm to learn how this vital crop is grown in Belgium to produce their famous beers.

We'll continue making our way through fields of wheat, barley, and hops to arrive In de Vrede at St. Sixtus Abbey, a fully functioning abbey where the monks are world-famous for producing fantastic Westvletren Belgian-style beers. This used to be one of the only places in the world where you could buy these highly sought-after beers. Though the monks have made the beer available for sale online, it doesn't take away from experiencing the abbey firsthand. We'll have time to stop in for a beer (or two) before heading to a rousing game of Boltra (we'll explain the rules, don't worry!).

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After, we will head to St. Bernardus Brewery in Watou, where we will be staying overnight as they have a quaint B&B attached to the brewery. St. Bernardus historically brewed the beer for the Sint Sixtus Abbey but they parted ways in 1992. Since then they've retained the recipes, including the famous Westvleteren 12 (called St. Bernardus Abt 12), which RateBeer awarded "Best Beer in the World" in 2006, 2007, 2010, 2012, and 2013. Unfortunately, in 2022, we will not be able to tour their brewery as they are renovating but we will certainly be able to taste their delicious beers. We have some time to relax before enjoying dinner at Bar Bernard, St. Bernardus' new restaurant and roof top bar - making it easy to have a few beers and turn in for the night.

**Day 6:** This morning we'll enjoy a lovely breakfast in the conservatory at the St. Bernardus B&B before making our way to Struise Brouwers, which started in an old barn on an ostrich farm (hence their coat of arms on their labels). They are known for their Pannepot, a strong dark ale whose name references a traditional style of fishing boat in the De Panne area.

After, we'll visit Feysbook to learn all about an important piece of Belgium's brewing history. Brewery FEYS was one of Belgium's biggest breweries of its kind, especially before and around WWI. It was a unique concept because of the industrial scale at that time, and the combination of the brewing and malting process in the same location. The brewery stopped brewing in 1965 but has recently been renovating and modernizing the facility to relaunch in the near future.

We'll then head to Seizoensbrouwerij Van de Walle, a small-scale brewery with a family brewing tradition whose roots reach deep into the 18th century and focuses on using local hops and cherries. After, we'll make a stop at an iconic Belgian biscuit (cookie) factory, Jules Destrooper. For our farewell dinner tonight, we will enjoy a visit and tasting at Brouwerij Gulden Spoor, and finish with a delightful meal at their family restaurant, t'Rusteel.

**Day 7:** On our final morning, enjoy a leisurely breakfast before making our way back to Brussels. We'll start with a historical walk through the city with a stop at a brewpub, Brouwerij Ruimtegist, before heading to the train station where we will purchase your tickets and your guide, Yannick, will accompany you back to the city.

You may want to add on a few days in Brussels after our tour to enjoy the BXL Beer Fest which focuses only on independent breweries that produce nothing but quality craft beers. A great way to end your trip to Belgium!

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## ***What Is Included:***

All Local Transportation

Double Occupancy Lodging

Breakfasts and dinners, except one dinner on Day 4

All Scheduled Activities and Brewery Visits

Beers During Organized Tastings

Professional Tour Guide

• ***Not Included:*** Travel to and from destination, most lunches unless otherwise indicated, beer with meals, personal expenses, and optional gratuities to local staff and your guide. Travel insurance is also not included, though we highly recommend it.

## ***Belgium Beer Tour Highlights:***

Cantillon - Brussels

Oude Geuzestekerij De Cam - Gooik

Dok Brewing Co. - Ghent

Brouwerij Fort Lapin - Bruges

Bourgogne des Flandres - Bruges

Brewery De Halve Maan - Bruges

Rodenbach Brewery - Roeselare

Kazematten - Ypres

De Moare Microbrewery - Heuvelland

St Bernardus Brewery - Watou

In de Vrede at St. Sixtus Abbey (Westvelteren) - Watou

Struise Brouwers - Oostvleteren

Brewery FEYS - Alveringem

Seizoensbrouwerij Van de Walle - Lo Reninge

Brouwerij Gulden Spoor - Wevelgem

\*Please note updates to the outlined itinerary may occur due to changes in availability of breweries and to accommodate new opportunities that arise.