

> [SlowTrav](#) > [Rest of the World](#) > [Travel Notes](#)

## Bruges, Belgium - a delightful journey awaits you

Paula G. Cullison

With frequent flyer ticket on US Air in hand, I flew to Brussels.

I know that mentioning Belgium to anyone evokes visions of delicate fine lace, decadent yet delicious chocolate, delightful waffles with whipped cream and strawberries (first introduced at the 1964-65 World's Fair in NYC), an extensive variety of great beer, and charming cities.



Lace Maker

Part of my plan was to discover the town of Bruges (Brugge). The connection from the Brussels airport to Bruges or any city within the country (or to Paris 1 hour and 20 minutes) couldn't be easier. I learned that the trains are the best way to travel through Belgium.



St. Gillis Church

I am now convinced that when visiting Belgium, one must take a few days to enjoy Bruges. Known as the Venice of Northern Europe, Bruges is a charming and well-preserved medieval city. With its cobblestone streets, small canals and foot bridges.

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Hotel Bruggia

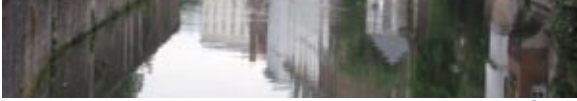
All buses pass through Market Square (Markt), the town center which is filled with restaurants - a popular area for residents and tourists alike. To avoid traffic congestion, city officials have seen to it that the major parking garage was built outside of the town center ... just a short bus ride or 20-minute walk away. Bicycles are very popular here and are available for daily rentals. So clever!



Market Square

I took an informative walking tour which gave me an historic perspective of Bruges, an economic powerhouse and important trading center during the 14th century. Additionally, I found the scenic boat ride on the canal both relaxing and enjoyable, especially since the boats can hold only 25 people.





Canal

One learns quickly that two commodities are central to Belgian life; namely fine chocolate and a wide variety of beer. Life is good! If you are interested in beer, then this is the place for you. Belgium has over 500 beers, as almost every village has its own label. During WWII, beer and bread were the staples for many in this region of Europe. Since beer is made from oats, barley, or wheat, it is very nutritious. Who knew that the kiss of the hops was so beneficial to one's health!

Michelangelo's sculpture of Virgin and Child, in the Church of Our Lady, is the only one of his works outside of Italy. Apparently, Michelangelo's apprentice was from Bruges (Brugge) and knew of a wealthy family willing to purchase and ship the then-controversial work (something about nudity and the Pope). Like many European cities, the cathedral and churches of Bruges host numerous classical music concerts, like the heavenly baroque concert at St. Gillis Church which I attended. I stayed in a small hotel which was one of the numerous family-owned and newly restored 15th-century buildings overlooking a picturesque canal. Too cool!



Michelangelo

If this is your final destination, you can catch an early morning train from Bruges to the Brussels airport for your return flight home and have time to reflect on your wonderful experiences – memories to last a life-time.



Public Art

However, if you have time, visit Brussels, Ghent and [Antwerp](#). Remember that Belgium is also a gateway to several of Europe's main cities: Amsterdam, Paris and Cologne.

Bon Voyage, as a most interesting trip awaits you! Don't forget the chocolate ... Go-diva!

Cologne.

Bon Voyage, as a most interesting trip awaits you! Don't forget the chocolate ... Godiva!

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