



Kempinski –
Dukes Palace
Hotel



300th
Anniversary
Oudenaarde



Festival
Hex Park and
Gardens, Heel

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our very last printed version of the Flanders Bulletin. From now on, editions will come to you via email, so let us know if you think we may not have your current email address.

March brings some exciting events in the Tourism Flanders calendar, look out for Flanders in the press. Earlier this month we produced a 16 page gastronomic guide to Flanders in association with the Daily Telegraph. You can view the microsite by clicking on www.telegraph.co.uk/flanders. We have also produced a guide to what's Cool in Flanders in the Sunday Times Travel Magazine, which is due for publication in early April. You might also have spotted our features this month in Olive and BBC Good Food Magazine

We have also launched our new website, still with the URL www.visitflanders.co.uk. The new version went live in early March and if you haven't already taken a look, spare a moment to take a glance.

With Kind Regards

Dawn Page

Director, Tourism Flanders – UK

Flanders Travel Forum

On 24-26 February 2008 Tourism Flanders hosted some 70 UK travel companies in Antwerp for the Flanders & Brussels Travel Forum. In all, more than 400 buyers from 15 countries attended the event and it was noted to be one of the best yet.

The Forum enabled visitors to get better acquainted with Flanders and Antwerp before, during and after the workshop. The event started for our UK guests with a welcome party at Antwerp Zoo's Marble Halls in a relaxing get together on the Sunday night.

On 25th February 2008 more than 100 Flemish product providers met with Tour Operators, Coach and Group Operators in Antwerp at the workshop for some productive business and contact making.

Guided tours on offer included beer tasting, a perfume workshop and a "Smikel Smakel" tour which offered a taste of Antwerp delicacies. More music, dancing and eating took place on the Monday evening.

Before leaving on Tuesday, those who had time, enjoyed a Highlight of Antwerp tour visiting Rubens House and the beautiful Cathedral before an enjoyable lunch and farewells.

Tourism Flanders would like to thank our sponsors which included the transport

partners, Brussels Airlines, Eurostar, Eurotunnel, P&O Ferries, Norfolkline, SeaFrance, and Stena Line. We'd also like to thank The Guardian/Observer, Travel Weekly, Coach Touring Magazine and Group Leisure Magazine.



UK Agents enjoy a night of
Antwerp entertainment

Eating your way around Flanders:

The Coast and Hinterland

We're proud of our food heritage and reputation for high standards. So much so, that we have featured a few regional specialities that you may come across at the Flemish coast and its hinterland.

Look out for: Fresh seafood, especially grey shrimps, oysters and caracollen (shellfish), and Cod - Dishes: Shrimp croquettes, tomato filled with grey shrimps, mussels and fresh Mayonnaise Butter and Abbey cheese from Affligem
Locally brewed Beers: Rodenbach (with or without grenadine to make it sweeter), St Sixtus (Trappist beer from Westvleteren, winner of the Best Beer of the world award)

Sweets: Babelutten (a kind of hard caramel toffee)





The Frietmuseum

May 2008

Bruges

For a city already with its own Chocolate Museum, it was only fitting that Bruges should have its own Museum dedicated to the history of the Belgian Friet!

The museum will be located in the Saaihalle, one of Bruges' oldest and best preserved historical buildings dating back to 1399. Unique in the world, it is the first museum that shows the entire history, from the origin of the potato to the first friet. Visitors will be able to see an interesting collection of machines used for the cultivation, harvesting, peeling, sorting and frying of potatoes. The museum will also focus on the Belgian friet in art, in music and on film. After the museum tour, visitors will be able to taste the real Belgian friet, with delicious sauces in the medieval basement. Due to open at the beginning of May 2008 - the year of the potato!

Eurantica

Brussels Fine Art and Antiques Fair

16-19 April

Eurantica Brussels is the largest fine art and antiques fair in Belgium. 150 leading antiques dealers and art galleries from Belgium, Luxembourg, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy exhibit at the Brussels Expo. The exhibitors will be showing a broad range of collectables including furniture, paintings, sculptures, tapestries, glassware, icons, silver, jewellery, bronzes, textiles, clocks, ancient weapons, engravings, coins and notes, tools and instruments, Art Nouveau, Art Deco, ethnography, archeology, Oriental art, porcelain and ceramics, primitive art, Pre-Columbian art.

Entry costs €15 per person and more details can be found on www.eurantica.be

Art Brussels

Brussels Expo

18-20 April 2008

The contemporary art fair Art Brussels opens for the 26th time on April 18 2008. The fair will take place against the striking backdrop of the Atomium at the Heysel in Brussels.

Lasting for five days, 180 galleries from 23 countries are participating in the event. Works of more than 2000 artists will be presented in the form of paintings,

sculptures, drawings, installations, photos and videos. Over 30,000 visitors are expected.

Entrance to the fair costs €15 for a day ticket and €25 for a two day ticket.

www.artbrussels.be

Brussels Jazz Marathon

23rd-25th May 2008

This huge, free annual event has the whole of Brussels buzzing with excitement and a party atmosphere. This year, a number of world-renowned performers will be appearing at over 50 different venues across the city. Public concerts take place at the Grand' Place, Place du grand Sablon and Place Sainte Catherine. Other concerts will be held in bars and concert halls. The theme this year is European Jazz @ Brussels, so expect to see over 450 international artists performing all over the city.

www.brusselsjazzmarathon.be

Oudenaarde anniversary re-enactment





Oudenaarde 1708 - 2008 300th Anniversary of the Battle of Oudenaarde

In the 18th century, Oudenaarde was a fortified walled town surrounded by trees, fields and small villages. Unfortunately the peace that prevailed in this affluent region became subject to one of the bloodiest battles in the Spanish Wars of Succession in 1708 as thousands of soldiers were killed.

In 1701 the Spanish king died without an heir to the throne and his realm fell into the hands of Philip of Anjou, grandson of the French King Louis XIV. This caused a political crisis throughout Europe. The other powers, such as England, feared the rise of a French – Spanish European superpower and waged war against

France. This conflict is known as the War of the Spanish Succession, lasted from 1701 till 1714. Many battles were fought, among them the Battle of Oudenaarde in 1708. About 6,000 were killed and 7,000 were wounded.

This year, the city of Oudenaarde has chosen to mark the occasion of this major historical event with a series of events which include a live re-enactment, an exhibition and a military Tattoo. The re-enactment will take place on 12-13 July 2008 and the town will swell with visitors transforming Oudenaarde into a 18th century town. A live camp will be recreated and the re-enactment promises to be one of the biggest in Europe.

For more information about the activities see www.oudenaarde1708.be



Gastronomy

Rijstpudding met saffraan (Rice Pudding with Saffron). A traditional Flemish dessert.

This dish was actually “discovered” by the Flemish soldiers of Karel V (1500-1555) during the campaign against the Turks in North Africa. The Flemish soldiers loved these dishes so much, that they brought home the recipes. Soon every Flemish woman had mastered how to prepare them and a few years later, these arab dishes (which actually originated from Bagdad) were depicted in Pieter Breughel’s (1525-1569) famous painting “Farmers’ Wedding” (“Boerenbruiloft”), painted in 1566.

Ingredients:

75cl of milk
125gr pudding rice
50gr white sugar
1 vanilla pod, cut open with seeds removed
pinch of saffron
15cl of single cream

Preparation:

Rinse the rice briefly in a strainer and let drip dry.
Bring the milk to a boil, together with the vanilla and saffron. Add the rice and boil until soft while stirring continuously.
When the rice is soft, add cream and sugar and pour the mixture in individual bowls to cool down.
Serve with brown sugar.

Fashion

Sien: A New Antwerp boutique

Sien is a beautifully decorated store, dedicated to upmarket clientele with a selection of intelligent, luxury fashion. Sien stocks the works of the latest hot designers, as well as some of their most exclusive pieces. Customers are greeted with tea or champagne, they may book private store time outside the opening hours and models show the dresses on a mini catwalk.

Sien, Nationalestraat 92-95, 2000

Antwerp

www.sien-antwerp.be

Hotels News



Kempinski – Dukes Palace Hotel

Kempinski – Dukes Palace Hotel Bruges

Last month we mentioned the opening of the new Kempinski hotel in Bruges. The hotel opening has now been postponed until late March 2008 but will be well worth the wait! Special opening offers are being promoted by the hotel.

Ibis Kortijk Centrum Kortijk

Ideally located in the historic heart of the city of Kortrijk, next to the train station, the brand new 3 star hotel Ibis Kortrijk Centrum is the first Ibis hotel to offer 82 rooms decorated with the new Ibis concept in mind. All rooms offer aircon, Wifi, phone and flatscreen TV. www.ibishotel.com

World War 1 Trenches Uncovered Zonnebeke, West Flanders

One of the best preserved underground tunnel networks of WW1 has recently been uncovered. Originally constructed in 1918, the Vampire Dugout has been found 13 metres under the villages of Zonnebeke.

Used to shelter senior officials and up to 50 men, the Dugout is in excellent condition and has survived the ravages of time. The Germans occupied the tunnels

Steenhuysse Oudenaarde

Located in the Flemish Ardennes, it is a protected 16th century mansion where history and design meet. This stylish and most luxurious guesthouse offers 5 large design rooms with a bath. Local beers can be tasted at the lounge, while you can enjoy breakfast on the terrace with view on the garden. The mansion is owned by a Flemish-Danish couple that also offer bike rental facilities. www.steenhuysse.info

Progress Hotel Brussels

This is a new four star boutique hotel with 57 double rooms and suites. As an added bonus, the hotel displays artworks from national and international artists which changes every 60 days. Conveniently located between the Grand' Place and Brussels Midi station, the hotel offers all the latest mod-cons expected of a premier hotel. www.hotelprogress.be

Toots Bar in the Crown Plaza Antwerp

The legendary Belgian jazz musician Toots Thielemans has recently opened his own jazz restaurant in Antwerp. The official opening at the Crowne Plaza Antwerp, took place on the occasion of his 85th birthday. Bar Restaurant Toots offers Toots' favourite meals with good jazz music in the background. www.crowneplaza.com/cpantwerp www.toots.be

after the allied forces retreated during WW1, possession of the tunnels was only regained at the end of the war. They were then sealed up, flooded with water and forgotten in time. Early in 2007, work began to reclaim the tunnels and in January this year, the 13 metre shaft was finally opened.

Excavation of the tunnels progress and what remains buried will soon be revealed to the world!

Horticultural News

Festival of Rare Plants, Roses and Kitchen Gardens

6-8 June 2008

Hex Park and Gardens, Heel

Amateurs and professionals alike marvel at this prestigious garden festival held annually in the town of Heers, in the province of Limburg. The gardens and chateau in Hex were built around the end of the 18th century. Its formal gardens were set out with a vegetable plot and one of the continent's first English style gardens.



Nowadays, Hex is one of the most beautiful estates in Belgium. It survived the wars of the 19th and 20th centuries and is known internationally for its collection of wild and old fashioned roses. The gardens together with the park and its centuries old trees and beautiful vistas are open each year in June and in September. www.hex.be

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