



Castle of Groot Bijgaarden



Man Culture War Ypres



Hop-Shoot festival



Dear Readers,

A belated Happy New Year to you all and in the spirit of all things renewed, we bring news of what's new in Flanders. Also included, is our updated events page which has everything needed to start the year off.

If you're planning a winter or early spring visit to our region, there are plenty of attractions to keep you enthralled. The new exhibition Man Culture War is due to open later in the year and we feature some interesting information about this temporary show in this edition.

Gastronomy and food also feature heavily this year so it's fitting that we start the year with a celebration of all things Chocolate in Bruges. So, ditch the January diet and indulge in some comfort food with our Brussels speciality, Bouchée à la Reine!



Tintin – The Film

We are all familiar with the cartoon version of this famous Belgian cartoon character, but it was only a matter of time before Tintin was re-created in a more human form. That eventuality is now about to become reality with a new Hollywood film production.

Peter Jackson, director of the Lord of the Rings-trilogy will be working with actor Andy Serkis in the Tintin Trilogy of the DreamWorks studios. In addition to this, DreamWorks have announced that Steven Spielberg will also direct three more Tintin movies.

Andy Serkis has already worked a few times with Jackson. He delivered the human facial expressions and movements for computer creations such as Gollum in the Lord of the Ring trilogy and in King Kong. For the Tintin Trilogy, he will play the role of Captain Haddock. The stories of Hergé have been adapted for screen by British script writer Steven Moffat and should re-ignite our love of all things Belgian!



Choc in Bruges – Winter in Bruges

The concept of chocolate is being taken to the edge this winter when the city of Bruges starts a new campaign celebrating all things chocolate.

Apart from its conventional use as a favourite desert, innovative recipes incorporating chocolate into gastronomic main courses have been created. Now, ten restaurants in Bruges have come up with unique menus which use chocolate in a creative way. Chocolate is combined into lip-smacking sauces and served as part of a main course.

If you thought the use of chocolate in such an innovative way was far-fetched, Bruges has taken it one step further by offering a range of chocolate based beauty treatments. Facials and massage products have been developed into a special programme of chocolate wellness.

A special Chocolate market on 9-10 February will be held at the Stadshallen Markt as the city gets ready for an influx of visitors over Valentine's Weekend!

www.winterinbrugge.be



Castle of Groot Bijgaarden

Last year over a million bulbs were planted within the grounds and by April, flower enthusiasts can gaze at the results of the latest bulb fusions as well as a few of the more classical varieties. Landscape designers have created seven theme gardens in the park which were created by designer Louis Fuchs. This year, the castle chapel will be opened and adorned by a variety of orchids and other exotic blooms. For the first time the rhododendrons from Southwest England's Exbury Gardens are on display after being planted in 2005. Entrance fees are €10 per adult with concessions for children and senior citizens

The Castle of Groot Bijgaarden is situated at the

Brussels exit of the Ghent-Ostend motorway.

www.kasteelgrootbijgaarden.be

Attractions:

Blue Note Indoor Festival

28 February & 2 March 2008

Muziekcentrum De Bijloke Ghent

For the first time this year, the Blue Note Festival introduces a new early Spring programme. Traditionally celebrated during the Ghent Festivities, this highly acclaimed jazz festival will now feature twice in the year. It is hoped that the new festival will start the party atmosphere that Ghent already enjoys a little earlier in the year. The summer event will still take place as usual during the July Festivities.

A programme of music is planned for the evening of the 28th and continues on the following Sunday 2 March. The new infrastructure of the Ghent "De Bijloke" is an ideal place for such an intimate festival. Day tickets cost €20 and a 2-day pass costs €35, available from tickets@debijloke.be

Paintings from the British Royal Collection

Royal Museums of Fine Arts Belgium

Museum of Ancient and Modern Art

16 May – 21 September 2008, Brussels

The Royal Museums of Arts of Belgium will be hosting some 50 paintings from the collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II later this year. Having already been exhibited at Holyroodhouse and Buckingham Palace, the collection comprises of Belgian masterpieces such as Brugel the Elder, Rubens, Van Dyck and Memling. Rubens and Van Dyck both spent time in Britain and the paintings will be displayed along side relevant masterpieces from the collection of the Royal Museum of Art in Brussels. The collection is a rare opportunity to see paintings renowned for their excellence and unique qualities, all displayed in Belgium from where they first originated. www.fine-arts-museum.be
Special package deals are available with Kirker Holidays www.kirkerholidays.co.uk

Castle of Groot Bijgaarden

Flower Show

10 April – 4 May 2008, Brussels

The recently restored Groot Bijgaarden castle sits in 14 hectares of land and is host to a major spring flower exhibition in April this year.

Star Wars - The Exhibition

Tour and Taxi's

16 February - 1 June 2008, Brussels

In Paris, London and Lisbon, STAR WARS, THE EXHIBITION has already attracted more than one million enthusiastic visitors! The public will now be able to experience this when the exhibition moves to Brussels. Visitors can view more than 280 original objects: costumes, elements of decoration, models, spaceships, all having been used in six films of the double trilogy STAR WARS. Discover the adventures of Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, Yoda and Princess Leia.

For more information see www.starwarstheexhibition.com

Special package deals are available with VFB Holidays

www.vfbholidays.co.uk

Brussels Atomium

Happiness Brussels

1958 - 2008

In 1958, the Brussels Atomium was built as part of Expo '58. Time had taken its toll and it was necessary to completely renovate this unique structure so that it would look as splendid as it did for the Expo in 1958. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the renovated Atomium, a number of activities have been scheduled.

A temporary pavilion is due to be constructed in the spirit of 1958 but within the modern building guidelines of 2008. It will be primarily used to house film shows and exhibitions for the general public. A firework display on 17 April 2008 will take place to highlight the temporary exhibitions and the pavilion opening which coincides with the start of Art Brussels, the major contemporary Art Fair held nearby.

www.atomium.be

Heli-Tours in Ypres

For a view of the Ypres Salient from a completely different perspective, Heli Tours are offering aerial tours by helicopter for groups. The tour offers spectacular views of the battlegrounds and surrounding areas of Ypres and the Westhoek region of Flanders.

Heli-Promotions are based in the nearby city of Diksmuide and can be contacted on

Helihaven - Kleine Dries 17 - 8600 Diksmuide

Tel. 00 32 51 50 56 56 www.helipromotions.be



**“Man Culture War”
In Flanders Field Museum
01 May – 07 Sept 2008, Ypres**

A new exhibition opens in Ypres this year, which focuses on the true impact of the First World War on the brave soldiers of the Commonwealth and colonies during the early 20th Century.

Over 50 different cultures and races were involved in fighting and assisting in WW1 and the true meaning of a World War was confirmed in the widest sense. Britain and France called in the help of their, then, wide ranging colonies and Commonwealth partners to help bolster the war effort during a time when fatalities and casualty were high. Efforts to recruit young soldiers were made in the form of posters in all languages and men who hadn't even ventured beyond their own villages were sent to Europe, many never returning but to meet their fateful end on a cold, unfamiliar land. For many, the experience of setting foot outside their own country may have sounded exciting but the reality was quite the opposite.

The first of the forces to arrive on the battlefields of Flanders were the Tirailleurs from West Africa and North African cavalry soldiers who fought near Diksmuide. At the same time, the British deployed Indian troops near Ypres, later joined by Caribbean soldiers. Eskimos, Aborigines and Maoris took part in the fighting and behind the scenes, workers from Madagascar, Vietnam, Egypt

and Fiji all assisted with the war effort. The Chinese in particular had a large role. They made up the majority of the workforce who were deployed to clean up the battlefields. It was a particularly gruesome job as they had to remove the remains of the dead, even after the war was over and up until 1919.

The exhibition goes into detail about the insight of race and culture at the time. In particular, the Germans were fascinated by the plethora of cultures among their enemies. They even studied the various “types of people” in their prisoner of war camps. Recordings of their music and voices were taken and audio tapes are replayed at the exhibition to offer a broad and moving selection of forgotten voices.

Letters and memoirs written by foreign soldiers bear witness to the culture shock that they experienced being in a country where the locals hadn't even seen a different race or culture. The winter conditions meant that it was often raining, cold and the ground was soggy and wet. Despite the conditions, the resilient soldiers risked life and limb to be counterattacked in the name of their colonial masters.

The temporary exhibition in the In Flanders Field Museum will display a varied selection of photos, films, military-historic items, graves and witness statements as part of its collection. It promises to be a poignant and insightful guide to attitudes and feelings during the war at the time. Perhaps all the more relevant, in the multi-cultural society we live in today.



Gastronomy News



A Brussels speciality:

Bouchée à la Reine

What you need:

300g lean veal rump steak
2 fillets of chicken
200g tinned mushrooms
45g butter
3 level spoonfuls of flour
75ml chicken stock
3 egg yolks
10ml of thick sour cream
1 glass of white wine
pepper & nutmeg
6 pre-cooked pastry cases

What you do:

Slice the mushrooms.

Chop the chicken and veal into small pieces, fry quickly until pink. Set to one side.

Melt the butter in a pan, add the flour and cook while stirring for 3 min.

Pour in the stock slowly, mix with the roux and bring to the boil.

Add the meat, mushrooms, white wine, pepper and nutmeg and continue to heat while stirring all the time.

Mix the egg yolks with the cream in a bowl, then stir it into the mixture and simmer for 5 mins.

Heat the pastry cases in the oven at 180°C. When they are heated through and completely dry, take them out and remove the tops.

Place them on individual plates and fill with the mixture before replacing the tops.

Serve with rice or pasta.

The Hop-Shoot festival

13- 19 March

Poperinge

Beer isn't only derivative of the famous Belgian hop. Every year, the first hop plant shoots are eaten as a seasonal delicacy and is celebrated with it's own festival. Now into it's 10th year, Poperinge is getting ready to hold another popular festival.

Visitors can travel by bus to various locations accompanied by a guided visit to a hop farm and to the Saint Sixtus Abbey for a special gastronomic lunch



(drinks included) in the renowned Hommelhof restaurant. Don't forget to try the local speciality with the sampling of several hop shoot dishes. The day includes a short tour of the area, followed by a visit to the Hop Museum, a guided walk of Poperinge and ending with an official reception at the Poperinge Town Hall. Reservations available from the tourist office at Poperinge.toerisme@poperinge.be
00 32 57 34 66 76

"In Bruges" – The Movie

Hollywood stars including Colin Farrell and Brendon Gleeson converged on Bruges for the filming of the soon to be released black comedy "In Bruges".

The film was shot (as the name suggests) on location in the streets of Bruges and shows Bruges in all its medieval glory.

The film is on general release in cinema's from 11 April and recently premiered at the Sundance Film Festival. So look out for the trailers, we'll be featuring more information about the film in our next edition.

Horticultural News

Opening of the Royal Greenhouses at Laken **19 April to 12 May 2008**

Don't forget the opening of the famous Belgian royal family gardens at Laken. Every year, the Royal Greenhouses are temporarily open to the public to see in full splendour.

Some of the plants in the prestigious 19th Century greenhouses date back to the reign of King Leopold II. Any subsequently planted collections are very much in keeping with the original planting, some of which are extremely rare and valuable.

The Greenhouses are open daily except Monday 12 May. A special day is reserved for disabled visitors on the 22 April. Adults entrance fee €2.50 Under 18's € free
www.monarchie.be

New Hotels

Kempinski Hotel

Dukes Palace, Bruges

In February, Kempinski is opening the first five star hotel in Bruges. The former 15th Century Prinsenhof, which was built on the occasion of the wedding of Philip the Good and Isabelle of Portugal, has now been restored and will open its doors as the Kempinski Hotel Dukes'

Palace in February 2008.

The hotel will have 93 rooms including suites and junior suites. Many rooms are historic listed rooms and have been carefully restored and furnished with paintings and various antiques from the period.

Special offers from €165 per room are being offered on their website
www.kempinski.com

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