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Oudenaarde is best known for the Tour of Flanders cycle race, the best preserved gothic Town Hall in Belgium, tapestries, silver and the Adriaan Brouwer beer festival (last weekend in July). This year it also celebrates the 300th anniversary of the great victory of the Duke of Marlborough on the occasion of the Battle of Oudenaarde with a programme of events including an exhibition entitled *Oudenaarde 1708 A Town, A King, A General*, an evocative historical re-enactment, fireworks and a military tattoo.

Situated in south east Flanders, 70 km from Ostend and Bruges, 55k from Ypres, Oudenaarde is easily accessible on the E40/E17 motorways. In 1708 Oudenaarde was a fortified walled town surrounded by fields and small villages. The town and land prospered because of the intense trade on the river Scheldt and many important traders, crafts, guilds, businesses and monks settled here. Today it has 10,000 inhabitants and receives 90,000 visitors a year. Only



Picture of the battle of Oudenaarde

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part of the city wall still exists.

The town has an interesting connection with regard to the production of textiles, which may initiate an interest for possible group visits. Visitors can enjoy rich tapestries in the lower cloth makers' hall in the Town Hall. The city slogan "Oudenaarde, the richness of a tapestry" shows just how important this craft was and still is today.

Restoration and weaving workshops at the House de Lalaing, a beautiful 16th century mansion, allows you to see how a tapestry is woven and how the restoration process progresses. This house is unique in Flanders and should be visited in combination with the collection of tapestries in the town hall.

Even today Oudenaarde keeps its textile history alive, with its three-yearly competition for cartoon design, which attracts renowned native and foreign artists.

Groups may also be fascinated by the special exhibition of outstanding silver from Oudenaarde and elsewhere in Europe. In fact, a large part of this collection is English and is housed at the town hall. The collection De Boever-Alligorièdes focuses on the tables from the 16th till the 19th century.

Oudenaarde is especially well-known for its rich brewing history and its many brown ales and cherry beers. Today only four of the 17 breweries now remain and include Liefmans brewery, Roman brewery, Cnudde brewery and Clarysse brewery.

The gin of distillery Braeckman

is also worth a try, and you should also taste one of the following regional delicacies: Lekkie and bierbollen (sweets) made by the confectioner Jan Van Gent, Rabbit with Oudenaards beer, Adriaan Brouwer pastry and Ename ham.

From 10 May until 26 October the Exhibition *Oudenaarde 1708, A Town, A King, A General* offers an insight into the many battles in Europe during the war of the Spanish Succession. Also the main figures, Louis XIV and the Duke of Marlborough, are highlighted. However, the showpiece of the exhibition is the scale model of Oudenaarde, made in 1747 and based on the original plans of the military engineer Vauban. Owned by the French state, it is on loan to Oudenaarde for this special occasion. 3D presentations of the scale model will be shown and a digital



1708 re-enactment

reconstruction of the landscape enables the visitor to re-live the battle, phase by phase. Location: Town Hall, A visit takes 2 hours and guided tours are €45 per guide with 25 persons.

Visitors can experience history

in the evocation of the battle and the vast encampments of the armies during 11, 12 & 13 July, when a unique re-enactment on a scale seldom seen in Flanders will take place.

The exhibition *Schoon Volk* (Beautiful People) will also take place from 10 May until 26 October at the House de Lalaing. The stately premises form the ideal setting to bring to life the fascinating 18th century housing culture. Salons have been transformed into elegant living rooms, with reconstructions of a dining room, a smoking salon, a coffee and tea corner, a boudoir and a nursery. Each room tells the story of "le gout francais" which greatly influenced the living culture in the southern Netherlands at the time.

A visit to the exhibition takes one hour and guided tours are €45 per guide with 25 persons.

The Battlefield Walk is another option for groups. The site is unique as it is more or less unspoilt amidst the rolling hills of the region. During a walk of 10km, the guide attempts to re-live the Battle of Oudenaarde whilst thoroughly enjoying the natural beauty of the "Flemish Ardennes". The walk takes 3 hours and a guide costs €67.50 for maximum of 20 persons.

Other notable events in the region include an international military tattoo which takes place on 9 May 2008. Fireworks also mark the arrival of the historical groups on 11th July itself.

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