

A photograph of a highly ornate, multi-story building facade in a Gothic style, likely in Belgium. The facade is covered in intricate carvings, statues, and golden accents. A central window features a statue of a figure. The year '1691' is visible on the left side. The building is set against a clear blue sky.

Belgium long weekend city break

– what to see and do
& itinerary

By Jo Explores

4 days. 4 cities. 1 country. If you only have a few days of holidays but would like to fit in as many cities and places as you can – I have a perfect itinerary for you.

Yes, it is totally possible to visit 4 cities in 4 days in Belgium! As long as you are willing to travel (short distance) and change hotels every day – give it a go!

Just FYI – I travelled around Belgium by train, they proved to be cheap and quick and convenient 😊 But this itinerary would fit a car trip too!

Quick links:

- [Day 1. Brussels](#)
- [Day 2. Antwerp](#)
- [Day 3. Ghent](#)
- [Day 4. Bruges](#)



Day 1. Brussels

The best option to start with in my opinion is the capital city of Brussels, as it's got many connections to other European cities either by plane, train or even bus. Arrive in the early morning, check in to your hotel or drop the luggage off and go exploring!

[Brussels Google Walking Map](#) - link [HERE](#).

1. GRAND PLACE (GROTE MARKT)

It is the central place of Brussels and it's simply stunning. Just stand in the middle and look around – the intricate architecture and gold facades left me speechless!

Spot the standing tall City Hall, King's House (Maison du Roi) – now the City Museum, Maison Grand-Place (Grote Markt Huis) and all the guildhalls and (some private) houses around.



2. TOUCH THE EVERARD 'T SERCLAES STATUE (Brussels' hero).



The legend has it that it brings luck to those who touch it!

Or another legend has it that rubbing the arm will ensure one's return to Brussels.

It is located just off Grand Place on Rue Charles Buls.

3. STOP AT THE FAMOUS MAISON DANDOY FOR WAFFLES

It is a must-do in Belgium! And this shop is serving what it is said to be THE BEST waffles in the country. It is located just a short walk from Grand Place and you will probably spot it by a long queue outside.

You can choose from 2 types:

- Brussels-style (typical rectangle-shaped)
- Liège-style (more oval, irregular shape)

But it doesn't matter which type you go for, both are light, fluffy and delicious and worth the wait 😊

Maison Dandoy has many locations, the oldest is on Rue au Beurre.

The one I visited was on Rue Charles Buls 14.



4. SEE FAMOUS PEEING STATUES: MANNEKEN PIS, JEANNEKE PIS AND ZINNEKE PIS

Manneken Pis – probably the most famous sculpture in Belgium and a symbol of Brussels! It shows a naked little boy peeing into the fountain. And it literally means “little man pee” 😊



It represents the independence of the spirit of the Belgians and the Belgian sense of humour 😊

Manneken Pis received gifts from lords and kings over the years and has been abducted and saved several times!

It's also a tradition in Brussels to dress the little bronze statue on special occasions.

Location: Between the rue de L'Étuve and rue Chene, on the south side of the Grand Place.

Jeanneke Pis – little sister of a peeing boy, it's a peeing girl!

Her statue can be found in the small cul-de-sac Impasse de la Fidélité, near the Rue des Bouchers.

It is a lot more modern and doesn't have the history, legends or popularity surrounding it like the boy's one.



Het Zinneke or Zinneke Pis – a statue of a dog peeing up the side of a bollard on the corner of Rue des Chartreux and Rue du Vieux Marché aux Grains.



This sweet little bronze dog was created by a local sculptor called Tom Frantzen as a likeness of his own dog and it was installed in 1998. Unlike the other 2 peeing sculptures, this one is not a fountain 😊

5. LOOK AROUND FOR THE FAMOUS MURALS

You might not even know that, but Belgium is home to many comic book series, including ‘The Smurfs’, ‘The Adventures of Tintin’, and ‘The Adventures of Astérix’. And Brussels celebrates them and the authors in a unique way – there are **over 50** murals located across the city, some smaller, some covering the whole side of a building. It is known as the ‘Comic Strip Route’.

This is the official website: <https://www.brussels.be/comic-book-route>.

Here are a few of the most famous and interesting ones:



Olivier Rameau's Wall



Astérix & Obélix



Broussaille



Ric Hochet



Nero



Victor Sackville



Tintin



Manneken Pis



Lucky Luke



Les Reves De Nic



Billy The Cat



Bob & Bobette

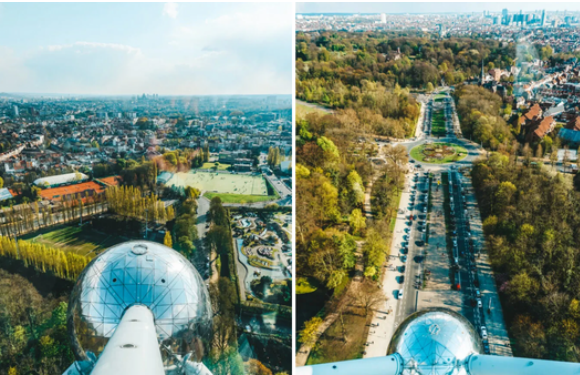
6. VISIT THE ATOMIUM – BRUSSELS' ICONIC GIANT STAINLESS-STEEL ATOM

It was constructed for the World's Fair in 1958 only as a temporary feature. But because it was so popular it was never taken down! It is located a bit further out from the city centre, so you should either take a tram or metro – the journey of 30–40 minutes one way.



For the best photos, I recommend walking a bit further away from it to get the full view. You can also go inside the Atomium and admire the views from the **panorama level** located in the top sphere. There are some temporary or permanent exhibitions on other levels too if you're interested.

The best way to check what's on is by visiting the [official website](#).



You can pre-book [tickets](#) online for a chosen date and time of entry; or you can buy them at the entrance of the Atomium:

- adult tickets cost EUR 16.00
- child EUR 8,50 (as of September 2024).

If you buy the Brussels Card with the Atomium supplement you will get a discount on Atomium ticket. Then choose the "Brussels Card holder" option when purchasing on the Atomium website.

Prepare for a queue – the entry is managed by staff as only a certain number of people is allowed into the lift, on the escalators and stairways at the same time.

7. TRY BELGIAN THICK-CUT CHIPS FROM FRITLAND

[Fritland](#) is one of the most famous places to eat Belgian chips.

Prepare for a wait to be served, chips are delish and you have a choice of 13 sauces (!) to choose from.

Location: Henri Maus Straat 49.



Day 2. Antwerp

A direct train from Brussels takes 40 minutes up to 1 hour and runs quite frequently throughout the day.

[Antwerp Google Walking Map](#) - link [HERE](#).

I. START OFF AT THE CENTRAL TRAIN STATION

It is considered to be one of the world's most beautiful railway stations. Its majestic waiting room hall with gorgeous 20 types of marble on the floors and the 75-metre-high dome, is sometimes used to host events and concerts.



2. GO SHOPPING AT STADSFEESTZAAL



It is a beautiful shopping centre located on [Meir](#) – Antwerp’s most popular shopping street.

Its spacious interior and luxurious decor makes it a shopping hot spot and meeting place in the Antwerp city centre with four levels of fashion, leisure and gastronomy.

Originally, the building served as a large event and exhibition hall, hosting countless exhibitions, fairs, balls, school celebrations and Sinterklaas visits.

3. SEE THE RUBENS HOME (THE RUBENSHUIS).

“The brilliant and versatile artist Rubens lived in this palazzo with his family. Here he also painted with his colleagues and assistants. He created many of his paintings in this house, in the centre of Antwerp. The museum has an interesting collection but also shows visitors how the master lived and worked.”

- Adult tickets cost EUR 12.00
- 18 to 25-year-old EUR 8.00
- under 18 free of charge (as of September 2024)

Visit the [official website](#) for more information.



4. VISIT THE SMALLEST WAFFLE SHOP IN THE WORLD ON YOUR WAY TO THE CITY



Yes, it is really in the name - The Smallest Waffle Shop in The World!

It is a ‘hole in the wall one-person made-to-order’ kind of waffle shop.

Simple and delicious. Location: Meirbrug 1.

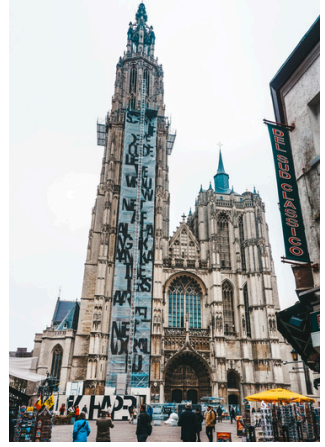
5. CATHEDRAL OF OUR LADY ANTWERP

The largest Gothic church with the tallest spire in the Low Countries or Benelux countries.

It also contains a number of significant works by the Baroque painter Peter Paul Rubens.

Admission costs EUR 12.00, kids under 18 y.o. go free of charge.

The Cathedral's reception group offers free guided tours in various languages at regular times. You can join on the spot. For the current schedule, check [their website](#).



6. NELLO & PATRASCHÉ STATUE

You can't miss this lovely statue located in the middle of Handschoenmarkt and right by the Cathedral.



It is that of the poor Flemish farmer boy Nello and his faithful dog Patrasche.

They both are heroes of the novel "A Dog of Flanders", written by Ouida, thought to take place in Antwerp.

7. SEE THE OLDEST HOUSE OF ANTWERP

Hidden in the side street of Staelstraat 11, was built in the 1500s and it is the only wooden house in the city that stood the test of time and survived 6 wars!



7. ANTWERP GROTE MARKT

A town square situated in the heart of the old city quarter.



The buildings worth paying attention to are the **City Hall**, a row of beautiful 16th and 17th-century guildhalls (only houses number **24, 38 and 40** are authentic, the other houses are replicas of houses that were there before) and **Brabo's Fountain** in the middle (shows the young Roman soldier Brabo throwing the cut-off hand of the mythical giant Druon Antigoon).

9. WALK TOWARDS THE RIVER SCHELDT

See **Het Steen** – a medieval fortress and Antwerp's oldest building dating back to the 1200s. Now it's home to a Visitor's Centre, The Antwerp Story – an interactive multimedia trail, cruise terminal and a rooftop terrace with panoramic views of the city.

The Visitor Centre, the roof terrace and select rooms of The Antwerp Story can be visited for free – for some, there is an entry fee. You can book your tickets online on this website.

Walk along the Steenplein Antwerpen
– a lovely pier and “**The View**”
Antwerp Ferris wheel.

It is located at the Place Poelaert and rises to 55 meters, which totals a panorama of Brussels of more than 100 meters.

- Adults € 10
- Children € 6



10. TAKE THE WOODEN ESCALATOR DOWN ST. ANNA'S TUNNEL/UNDERPASS (SINT-ANNATUNNEL)



This tunnel built in 1933 stretches beneath the **Scheldt River** and can be accessed on both sides by the original one-of-a-kind art deco escalators or lifts.
It is quite popular with the local pedestrians and cyclists!

11. VISIT THE ROOFTOP OF THE MUSEUM AAN DE STROOM (MAS).



MAS is an iconic red-ish square-shaped building and a ground-breaking museum. It tells the story of the people, the past, present and future of the city of Antwerp and the world.

Located in Eilandje, Antwerp's oldest docklands, around a 15-minute walk from the centre.

But I do recommend it for its **viewing deck** on the top offering a 360-degree view of the city, which is free to visit!



And if you're around the docks you can also take a look at the **Port Authority (Havenhuis)** – it is a government building with a VERY interesting look!

12. WALK AROUND THE DIAMOND DISTRICT OR DIAMOND QUARTER

Located around a 10-minute walk from the Central Station.

It is the home of diamond workers, jewellers and diamond merchants. With 84% of the world's rough diamonds and 50% of cut diamonds passing through, the city attracts international traders seeking the highest quality diamonds.



Day 3. Ghent

A direct train from Antwerp takes roughly 1 hour and leaves more or less every 15 minutes.

Ghent Google Walking Map - link [HERE](#).

1. CLIMB THE BELFORT VAN GENT – THE BELFRY TOWER

It is an absolute must-see and do! This bell tower is the tallest in Belgium at a whopping 91-metre tall.

Located in the middle of Ghent's old city centre, views from the top take in the two neighbouring churches as well as the rest of the medieval city.

Climb the stairs, listen to the chiming sound of the carillon and enjoy the views.

There is a lift from the first floor only.

Adult tickets cost EUR 11.00, discounts available, please check the [website](#) for details.



2. SAINT NICHOLAS' CHURCH

It is one of the oldest and most prominent landmarks in Ghent, and you can visit the church **for free!**



“This church was built in Tournai bluestone and is one of the finest examples of the Scheldt Gothic style.

St Nicholas' Church is not just any church; it is a dynamic tribute to the bustling city that surrounds it.”

3. WALK ALONG KORENMARKT, THEN SEE THE RIVER LEIE FROM GRASLEI AND KORENLEI(RIVERBANKS).

The Korenmarkt is right in the heart of the historic centre of Ghent, beside the imposing St Nicholas Church. Take a good look at this magnificent example of Scheldt Gothic architecture!

Along the side of this beautiful building, you will find the pubs and bars of **Klein Turkije**.



On the other side of the Korenmarkt is Donkersteeg. The name means ‘dark alley’, but it is actually a vibrant shopping street boasting everything from jewellery, leather goods and fashion to handmade chocolates.

Be sure to stop for coffee at **Mokabon - Ghent's first coffee bar**. And famous for its for mocha!

A stone's throw away, you have the Graslei, and the Korenlei just across the water. This is the place where beautiful façades are reflected in the River Lys.



4. WALK ACROSS THE SINT-MICHIELSBRUG

The most picturesque arched stone bridge in Ghent.



It is famous for the scenic views of the Graslei and Korenlei with the Old Fish Market, the Castle of the Counts in the distance, St Michael's Church, the back of Het Pand and, of course, all three of Ghent's famous towers in a row.

5. SEE THE GRAFFITI ALLEY



Werregarenstraatje in Ghent is a public canvas for young street artists, who create amazing spray-can art every day.

This means that Graffiti Street in Ghent never looks the same from one week to the next.

6. SWEETEN YOUR DAY IN CHOCOLATE SHOPS

Belgium is a sweet-tooth favourite, as the chocolate here is one of the best in the world. And Ghent especially is home to some fantastic chocolatiers. You can even go on an organised chocolate walking tour in the city, like the one from Charlie Tours.

Try Chocolaterie Luc van Hoorebeke, Hilde Devolder Chocolatier, Sophie's Sweets & Chocolates or The Chocolate Home.

7. SEE GRAVENSTEEN OR THE CASTLE OF THE COUNTS

A medieval castle that dates from 1180 and was the residence of the Counts of Flanders until 1353 and through the years served as a court, prison, mint, and even a cotton factory.

Entry ticket costs EUR 13.00 for adults, discounts available - details and purchases on [the website](#)
(prices correct as of 09.2024)



Day 4. Bruges

A direct train from Ghent takes from 25 to 35 minutes, depending on the train, they run very often, every 15 minutes or so.

[Bruges Google Walking Map](#) - link [HERE](#).

1. CLIMB TO THE TOP OF THE BELFRY OF BRUGES

It is a medieval bell tower in the centre of Bruges and one of the city's most prominent symbols.



You can walk up 366 steps up to the top of the tower to enjoy the 360-degree views of Bruges and its surroundings.

Tickets cost EUR 15.00 for adults and discounts are available for kids and seniors.

More info on the [website](#).

2. BRUGES GROTE MARKT

The Market Square is the largest square in Brugge and it is home to various banks and restaurants. You can also go for a ride on a horse-drawn carriage around the square.



And if you like to buy some fresh produce – Wednesday is Market Day!

And while at the Market Square look around and find the [House Bouchoute](#) – the oldest house on Brugge’s main square.

On its front facade, just beneath the roof, you’ll see a massive compass that was installed in 1682.

But this isn’t your typical compass, as instead of showing the magnetic North, it actually depicts the direction of the wind.



3. VISIT BURG SQUARE



One of the earliest inhabited places of the city and includes what is perhaps the most beautiful building in Bruges, the Gothic Town Hall or Stadhuis, dating from 1376 and the Basilica of the Holy Blood.

4. PASS THROUGH THE COLOURFULLY NAMED BLIND DONKEY ALLEY (Blinde Ezelstraat)



A narrow pedestrian passageway linking the square with the old fish market – the Vismarkt and one of the city’s many canals.

You can access it between the Town Hall and The Palace of the Liberty of Bruges (Brugse Vrije).

5. HUIDENVETTERSPLEIN (TANNERS SQUARE)

Tucked away between the Fish Market, it is one of the intimate little squares in Bruges.

In the Middle Ages, this was where the tanners worked their leather, now it is a bustling spot full of cafes and restaurants.



6. ROZENHOEDKAAI – (ROSARY QUAY)

It is definitely the city’s most popular site for photography. Back in the day, the rosaries were sold here; hence the name. Now it is the most Instagrammable spot!

I recommend visiting during the day, maybe grabbing a beer and watching people pass by. Then come back in the evening – it is a beautiful sight after sunset.



7. TAKE A BOAT TOUR

A visit to Bruges is not complete without a boat trip on the Bruges canals, the arteries of the city. You can embark on one of the five landing stages in the heart of Bruges.

For half an hour, the captain will take you on a tour of the most beautiful spots on the water between Jan van Eyck Square and the Beguinage. Along the way, you will be able to admire some of Bruges' highlights from a completely different angle with an explanation of what you see.



Boat trips run from early March to mid-November and at other times, the shipping companies can decide for themselves whether to open or not. Reservations for individual visits are not possible. You can buy your ticket on the spot from one of the shipping companies. Visit [this website](#) to find out more.

8. STOP BY THE BONIFACIUS BRIDGE

One of the most photogenic bridges in Bruges, a stunning spot for a photo of the canal and old houses with tourist boats passing under.



Discover [Groenerei 'green canal'](#) – claimed to be the prettiest canal spot in Bruges! You get the best view from Peerdenbrug, (the Horse Bridge) looking towards the Meebrug.

The canal is lined with trees and creepers, elegant 17th-century mansions and almshouses and is topped by the cathedral tower.

See other options for walks [here](#).

9. THE PRINCELY BEGUINAGE TEN WIJNGAERDE

It is the only preserved **beguinage** (a community of nuns, called “Beguines”), separated from the rest of the city by a large wall and moats, making it feel like a small village inside history.

Behind the walls, charming white buildings are smartly arranged around a wooded park carpeted with daffodils.

You can find it just next to the Lake of Love in Minnewaterpark, don't be surprised if you see many swans here!



The Beguinage is open daily from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm. Admission is free, but you'll have to pay 2€ to visit the small museum onsite (1,50€ for visitors over 65, 1€ for children under 12 and students).

(prices correct as of July 2022)

11. WALK TO MINNEWATERPARK AND THE NEARBY LAKE OF LOVE (MINNEWATER)

This place is something of an oasis in the city of Bruges. They offer an excellent retreat from the hustle and bustle of the city's sights and streets.

And a perfect one to finish your long tour of Belgium with! 😊