



6th European Interdistrict Zonta Seminar EMPOWERING WOMEN in DECISION-MAKING

February 6-8, 2015 in Brugge, Belgium

Good to know in Brugge...

Addresses

- Congress Center Oud Sint-Jan : Mariastraat, 38, Brugge. Parking entrance: Zonnekemeers. www.oudsintjan.be, info@oudsintjan.be
 - Provincial Court: Markt 3, Brugge
 - City Hall: Burg 12, Brugge
 - Interesting websites: www.brugge.be ; www.visitbruges.be ; www.infotourism.be
 - Tourist info: Markt 1, Brugge, toerisme@brugge.be
 - Restaurants: <http://www.pocketresto.be/brugge/restaurants>
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- Walking in Brugge: comfortable shoes are recommended, avoid stiletto's!
 - Weather: don't forget your umbrella. All kinds of weather are possible in February.

Travel

Brugge is easily accessible.

Brussels International Airport hosts many flight companies and it has a good railway connection to Brugge and the Belgian coast.

The railway station in Brugge is at walking distance from the Congress Center, the city center and most hotels. Busses will drive you from the station to the center of the city.

When you come by car, Brugge is located near the E40 highway.

Highlights of Bruges



The white facades of the Begijnhof

Markt and Burg

The energy of Bruges comes from its two central squares, the Markt and the Burg, representing the historic city's dual strengths: trade and nobility. The Burg is older and grander: a fortified castle was built here in the 9th century and the city grew up around it. It remained the seat of the Counts of Flanders until the dukes of Burgundy decamped to Prinsenhof palace in the 15th century, and the square is still full of architectural treasures. The Markt was the heart of commercial activity: goods were traded in the Hallen; and the trades' guildhouses – now busy pavement cafés – surround the square. There is a food market here every Wednesday.

Groeningemuseum

Dijver 12

tel: 050 44 87 11

www.brugge.be/musea

The Municipal Fine Arts Museum (Stedelijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten), more commonly known as the Groeningemuseum, is relatively small, yet in terms of quality, it deserves to be ranked among the world's great museums. Visitors who are limited for time could restrict their visit to the first four rooms, which are arranged chronologically.

The collection spans the artistic development of the Low Countries over six centuries and includes works by the so-called 'Flemish Primitives' of the 15th century. Far from being primitive, these painters were responsible for a revolutionary step forward in art, moving away from rigidly religious medieval themes towards portraying real people. Their realism can be observed in such masterpieces as Jan van Eyck's *Madonna and Child with Canon Joris van der Paele*, and the same artist's *Portrait of Margareta van Eyck* (his wife); Hans Memling's *Moreel Triptych*; Hugo van der Goes' *Death of the Virgin*; the fascinating *Martyrdom of St Hippolytus*, a triptych by Dirk Bouts with a side panel by Hugo van der Goes, and works by Rogier van der Weyden, Pieter Pourbus and Gerard David.

A nonchalantly gruesome work is the *Judgement of Cambyses* by Gerard David, showing a corrupt Persian judge being flayed alive by torturers. Another wonderful painting is *The Last Judgement* by Hieronymous Bosch, a grim but complicated account of the trials that await sinners in the afterlife. Do not ignore less advertised paintings such as *The Town Docks at Bruges* by Hendrik van Minderhout, which gives an idea of the size of the merchant ships that routinely called at Bruges.

In later rooms, there are works by Belgian Symbolists including Fernand Khnopff, Flemish Expressionists Constant Permeke, Gustave De Smet, Jan Brusselmans and Gustave van de Woestyne, and Surrealists René Magritte and Paul Delvaux.

Begijnhof

Flanders is famous for the number of its surviving enclosed residences for Beguines, unmarried or widowed women who adopted a life of religious devotion but without taking the full vows of a nun. The Beguinage of Bruges is a well-preserved example of this form of residence, and is one of the best loved and most photographed sights in the city.

The Beguinage was founded in 1245. At its height, in the 17th century, it numbered up to 300 houses, stretching as far as today's railway station, and was a self-governing community, with a hospice, farm and brewery, as well as a church. Carved bunches of grapes on the bridge handrail and over the doorway by the entrance (1776) recall its earlier surroundings: a vineyard where grapes were cultivated for vinegar-making, hence the name: Princely Beguinage of the Vineyard (Prinselijk Begijnhof De Wijngaard). The word 'sauvegarde' above the door attests to the royal protection granted by the Duke of Burgundy, assuring the Beguinage's independent status.

The last Beguines left in 1927. The Beguinage is now occupied in part by a community of Benedictine nuns, who wear the traditional clothes of the Beguines and maintain some of their predecessors' customs. Other houses are occupied by lay people.

Memling in St-Jan

Mariastraat 38

tel: 050 44 87 11

www.brugge.be/musea

A small but priceless collection of paintings by German-born painter Hans Memling (c.1440–1494) are displayed in the 15th century chapel of the Sint-Janshospitaal (St John's hospital), the main draw of this museum.

Memling lived in Bruges from 1465 until his death, and four of the six works here were commissioned especially for this chapel. Each work testifies to his captivating attention to detail and mastery of realism. They include the *Mystic Triptych of St John*, part of an altarpiece that has side-panel images of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist; the *Adoration of the Magi*, notable for its serene image of the Virgin Mary; and the exquisite *Shrine of St Ursula*, a wooden reliquary in the shape of a Gothic church, on whose panels Memling painted several scenes from the life of St Ursula, including her martyrdom by the Huns at Cologne. One of the greatest art treasures in the country, the shrine was commissioned by two sisters who worked in the church.

The rest of the former hospital, which was founded in the 12th century and is one of the oldest surviving in Europe, contains objects telling the story of medical care in medieval times. In what were

once the wards, there is an exhibition of historical documents and rather alarming surgical instruments. The 17th-century pharmacy has a carved relief showing patients sleeping two to a bed. There is a strong sense of tradition in the place, enhanced by the informative visitor centre.

Canals

The canals – *reien* – of Bruges give the city its almost impossible prettiness. The red-brick architecture is duplicated in reflection to create picture-perfect views of a bygone age. But what delights us today once came with an ugly smell: sewage was dumped into the canals right up until 1980. A boat tour is an excellent way to view the city, but to best appreciate the canals, wander on foot or cycle around this fascinating network.

Source :

<http://www.insightguides.com/destinations/europe/belgium/bruges/highlights>