

**LOCAL CUSTOMS Bargaining:** Shop prices are fixed and there is little opportunity to bargain here.

**Tipping:** Tipping is not necessarily expected in Belgium, however, if you receive good service it is customary to leave 5% – 10% at restaurants. For taxi drivers, it is customary to leave a few extra euros.

**Local Cuisine:** Much of Belgium’s cuisine is similar to that of its neighbors to the north and south. *Moules marinières* (marinated mussels), *lapin a la biere* (rabbit in beer), and *croque-monsieur* (ham and cheese toasted sandwich) are some of the local specialties. Belgian chocolates are considered some of the best in the world.

**Drink Specialties:** Belgium is a country of beer makers and beer drinkers. Some of the best beers in the world are thought to come from Belgium and each town, village and city has its own favorites. *Trappist* beer is usually brewed in one of the country’s Abbeys and is among the strongest. Fruit beers (cherry, raspberry, peach) are extremely popular.

**SHOPPING FACILITIES** There are very few shopping opportunities in the small village of Zeebrugge. Shops can be found in abundance in Bruges, Ghent, Antwerp, and Brussels. Typical shopping hours are from 9:00am – 6:00pm Monday through Saturday. Many shops close for lunch from Noon to 2:00pm and most shops are closed on Sunday.

Few stores will accept U.S. Dollars, although most accept major credit cards. Items of interest include lace, chocolate, local fashions, and diamonds from Antwerp.

A Value Added Tax (VAT) is added to most purchases. Visitors who spend over a certain amount may be entitled to re-claim some or all of the tax paid. Check with the individual shops for details. Regulations and conditions governing the refund of VAT are subject to change, and the cruise line cannot guarantee the cooperation of local authorities.

**LOCAL CURRENCY** The unit of currency in this port of call is the euro. There are 8 euro coins denominated in 2 and 1 euros, along with 50, 20, 10, 5, 2, and 1 cent pieces. Every euro coin carries a common European face. On the obverse, each Member State decorates the coins with their own motifs. No matter which motif is on the coins they can be used anywhere inside the Member States. There are 7 euro notes. In different colors and sizes, they are denominated in 500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10, and 5 euros. The notes are uniform throughout the euro area; unlike coins, they have no national side. All euro notes are legal tender in all countries of the euro area.

Banks, ATM machines, and exchange kiosks are available in Bruges, Brussels and Ghent. Exchange facilities are limited in Zeebrugge.

**POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES** The main post office in Zeebrugge is located in the town center at Brusselsstraat, 8. Bruges’ main post office is located along the southeast corner of Market Square **11**.

Telephones are located in Zeebrugge and throughout the country’s larger cities. Most phones are operated by calling cards only but there may be a few that will accept coins. Prepaid Belgian calling cards can be purchased at news stands and post offices. Some phones may require a coin to access the codes listed below.

AT&T: 0800-10010 / MCI: 0800-10012 / SPRINT: 0800-10014

**TOURIST INFORMATION** The main Tourist Information **12** office in Bruges can be found in the Burg, just across the square from the town hall.

**TRANSPORTATION** The Zeebrugge center is approximately 2.5 miles/4km. from the port. A limited number of taxis will be available at the port and in the center of Zeebrugge. Fares are usually metered unless other arrangements are agreed upon. Check with the individual drivers to ensure that they accept currencies other than Euros.

**USEFUL WORDS**

- Yes • Ja / Oui
- No – Nee / Non
- Good Day • Goede dag / Bonjour
- Thank you • Dank u Wel / Merci
- You’re welcome • Graag gedaan / De rien

**NOTES**

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**PORT EXPLORER & SHOPPING GUIDE**

**Zeebrugge (Brugge)**

**GENERAL INFORMATION** Situated at the end of an eight-mile long canal connecting the city of Bruges with the North Sea, the port of Zeebrugge is a purpose built harbor accepting goods and tourists attracted to the area’s many historic and architectural highlights. This area of Belgium, known as Flanders, is not only the country’s most populated region but also the center of Belgium’s commerce. The historic cities of Bruges, Ghent, and Antwerp host a variety of industries and high technology firms while retaining their original medieval atmosphere and charm. Although the region was the center of a number of military skirmishes over the centuries, current battles are more evident between the Flemish (Dutch) speaking Flanders region and the French speaking Wallonia region to the south.

From Zeebrugge the city of Bruges is closest and one of the most unique. Called the Venice of the North, Bruges’ medieval canal streets and bridges are more reminiscent of those found in Hamburg or Amsterdam. The heart of the city, the pedestrianized Market Square, combines both Gothic and Neo-Gothic styles while the Romanesque and French Gothic Our Lady’s Church is better known for housing Michelangelo’s marble Madonna and the 15th century tombs of the Dukes of Burgundy.

The exciting cities of Brussels and Antwerp are also within a day’s visit of Zeebrugge. The multicultural blending and international flair of Brussels competes with the appeal of Antwerp’s many art and architectural treasures, and the allure of its famed Diamond Quarter. Regardless of where you choose to spend your time the quality of Belgian chocolates and variety of beers can be tested on almost every street corner.

**HISTORY** Julius Caesar extended the ruling arm of the Roman Empire into what is now Belgium during the 1st century BC, but five centuries later this area, known as Gaul, was ceded to the Germanic Franks. During Charlemagne’s rule in the 8th century trade along Belgium’s seafront flourished. With his death came the division of his empire and the foundation of what is now France, Belgium and Germany. Shortly thereafter arose the powerful Counts of Flanders who began fortifying towns and built the foundation for the cities of Ghent, Brussels, and Bruges.

The 11th century saw the rapid growth of trade, leading to a golden age for Flanders, which became exceedingly wealthy and populous from the manufacture and export of textiles. By the 14th century Flanders came under the control of France and its aristocracy. The Hundred Years’ War ended when Philip the Bold of Burgundy, long allied with the English, became the ruler of Flanders in 1384.

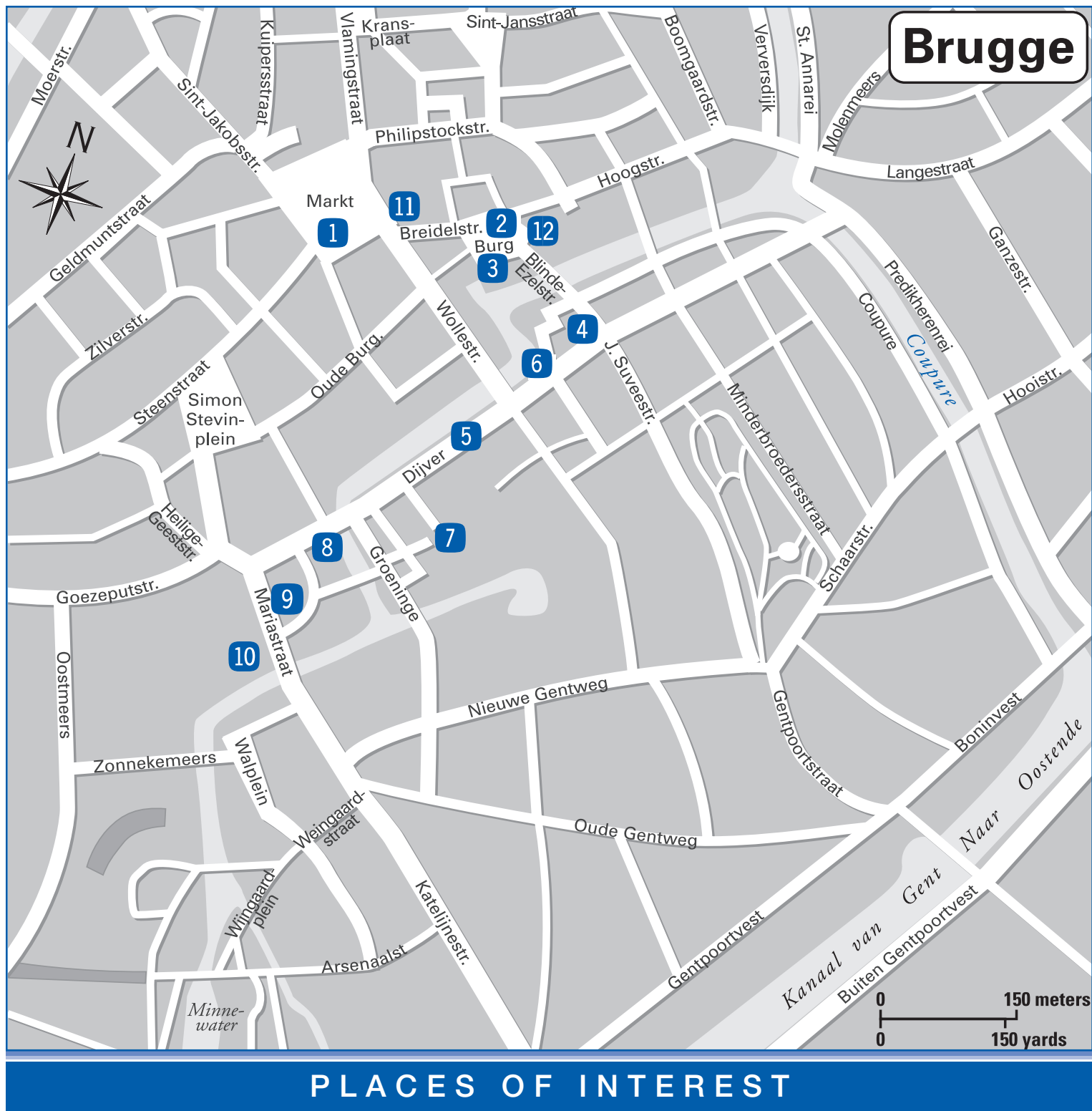
The Burgundian empire flourished under Philip the Good and Charles V as they centralized rule of Belgium’s cities from Brussels. The ascension of Philip II to the Spanish throne brought about a rash of religious, political and social strife pitting Protestants against Spanish Catholics. By the end of the 17th century the northern United Provinces were finally recognized as Protestant while the southern regions remained faithful to Spain as the Spanish Netherlands.

With Louis XIV leading the powerful French empire present-day Belgium became a battleground between the French and their Spanish, Dutch, English, and Austrian opponents during the War of the Spanish Succession. The Treaty of Utrecht ceded the Spanish

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## PLACES OF INTEREST

### HISTORY *continued*

Netherlands to the Habsburgs of Austria, but by the end of the 18th century Belgium was ready to assert its own identity.

The kingdom of Belgium was established on January 20, 1831, and was quickly recognized as an independent nation. The country flourished culturally and economically until the German occupation of Belgium during both World Wars. During the post-war period Brussels has become the headquarters of the European Community, NATO, and a center of international business in Europe.

### Places of Interest

**1 Markt (Market Square)** sits at the center of the ancient walled city of Bruges, lined with 17th century gabled houses and dominated by the 14th century **Belfort (Belfry)**. At a height of 270 feet/82 m. the tower is not only easily found, but visitors can climb the more than 350 steps to the top to enjoy panoramic views of the city. One of the Belfry's most outstanding characteristics is the renowned range of its 47 bells that ring out a variety of melodies. On the eastern side of the square stands the Gouvernement Provincial, the seat of the provincial administration, in a 19th century Gothic structure.

**The Burg** is another of the town's main squares, also known as the Fortress. This open square was the one time home to a fortress built for Count Baldwin I to protect the town from Norman invaders. Today visitors to the square can admire its nine centuries of architecture, including the 14th century sandstone **Stadhuis (Town Hall)** **2**. The building's elegant medieval turrets outline the six narrow windows bearing the coats of arms from neighboring towns and villages during the Middle Ages. Inside, at the top of a monumental stairway, is the Hall's famous Council Chamber, renowned for its ornate ceiling, murals, and the brass statue of the city's patron saint.

**3 The Heilig-Bloed Basiliek (Basilica of the Holy Blood)** sits next to the Town Hall and consists of a 12th century Romanesque lower chapel and a 15th century Gothic upper chapel. The Lower Chapel is the oldest in the city and was built to house the relics of St. Basil, for which the chapel gets its name. The Upper Chapel houses the basilica's best-known relic, that of the Holy Blood. The gold and crystal container from Constantinople is thought to contain sheep's wool impregnated with the blood of Christ. Each Ascension Day the relic is paraded through the town in the Procession of the Holy Blood, a tradition that has been in existence since the 15th century. The building is also home to the Heilig-Bloed Museum, which exhibits vestments, religious paintings and statuary.

**4 Vismarkt** is connected to the Burg by Blinde Ezel (Blind Donkey); the street that runs alongside the town hall and crosses one of the city's many canals. This small square is lined with a number of picturesque homes that make up Huidevettersplaats.

**5 Bruges' canals** can be followed along both Dijver and Groenerei streets, tracing the series of pretty canals, stone bridges and quays which give the city its medieval charm. The canals can be explored both on foot and by boat. **The Rozenhoedkaai** **6** is a scenic point favored by visiting painters and photographers.

**7 The Groeninge Museum** is accessed through a 13th century gateway and houses the city's best-known collection of Flemish paintings from the 14th century onward. The building is set along a park just a short walk from the Dijver and the city's canals. Works by Jan van Eyck, Gerard David, Hans Memling, Hieronymus Bosch, and Jan van Goyen are all on display.

**8 The Gruuthuse Museum** was originally the seat of the Lords of Gruuthuse but now houses the Museum of Antiquities and Fine Arts. The 15th century mansion displays a variety of fine and applied art including a 16th century tapestry entitled "The Triumph of Alexander the Great", and a solid silver chalice created by Antoine Kerckof of Bruges.

**9 Onze Lieve Vrouwekerk (Church of Our Lady)** is a 13th century Gothic monument exhibiting an eclectic mix of styles and dates due to several refurbishings and remodelings. The church tower stands at a height of nearly 400 feet/122m.,

making it the tallest spire tower in Belgium. Its interior houses the Renaissance mausoleum of Charles the Bold and the Gothic-style mausoleum of Mary of Burgundy, among numerous other artistic treasures. Isenbrandt's "Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows" and Michelangelo's marble "Our Lady and the Child Jesus" are also on display.

**10 The Memling Museum** pays tribute to one of Bruges' most famous painters, Hans Memling (1433-1494) and explores some of his best work. The museum is housed in the former St. Jans Hospitaal and its most notable displays include the "Mystical Marriage of St. Catherine" and the altarpiece "St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist".

### Beyond Zeebrugge/Bruges

**Brussels** is both Belgium's and Europe's capital, a collection of quiet squares and parks surrounded by the demands of a modern city supporting both the institutions of the European Union and NATO. The city is divided into the Lower and Upper Towns, the former being the town center since the Middle Ages and the home to the Grand Place, the best preserved city square in Europe. The Upper Town is the center of modern Brussels, home to many of its finest galleries and a center of European banking.

**Antwerp** was never a political capital but was one of the most economically influential cities in Northern Europe. In the 15th century Bruges' connection to the sea became laden with silt, shifting the center of trade to Antwerp. A renaissance of sorts followed producing many of the city's Renaissance and Gothic structures. Peter Paul Rubens, along with his contemporaries, built Antwerp into a center of the arts, and many of Rubens' finest work can be found in the city's religious buildings and museums. Over the centuries Antwerp has also emerged as the world's largest center of diamond cutting.

**Ghent** was a city of expansion during the Middle Ages, serving as the seat of the Counts of Flanders and the center of the textile trade. Modern Ghent is undergoing a great renovation, enlivening its Gothic and Renaissance architecture and enticing visitors to its mostly pedestrianized streets. Art also plays an important role in Ghent's atmosphere, especially in the city's St. Bavo's Cathedral where Jan van Eyck's 15th century "Adoration of the Mystic Lamb", and Rubens' "The Vocation of St. Bavo" are on display. Cobblestone streets give way to lace and chocolate shops while locals relax at one of the many bars and restaurants dominated by the city's three medieval steeples.

- Admission charges are generally in local currency.
- When going ashore, guests are advised to take with them only the items they need and to secure any valuables.

**SHORE EXCURSIONS** To make the most of your visit to Zeebrugge and its surrounding areas we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the Shore Excursion Desk.