

# Ten things to do in Ghent

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## 1. It's got the most listed buildings in Belgium

Ghent boasts that it has more listed buildings than the rest of Belgium put together, and that's just for starters.

This claim to architectural fame is backed up by beautiful waterways, quaint cobbled streets, and speciality restaurants tucked away in back streets in this wonderful medieval town.

It's a compact traffic-free area where you feast your eyes on ancient architecture – the landmark three towers (St Nicholas' Church, Belfry and St Bavo's Cathedral), the Castle of the Counts and many more impressive buildings.

Similar sights can be found throughout the city. St Bavo's Cathedral is home to the world-famous work of art, The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb.

## 2. Try a bowl of fish soup

One of the specialities is 'gentse waterzooi', a delicious creamy fish and vegetable stew. You'll be asking for more.

And don't forget those traditional mussels and chips.

Chips, or frites to give them their real name, are served everywhere on street stalls, often served in a paper cone with a dollop of mayonnaise, the traditional Belgian way.

## 3. Take in a work of art

If you're a traditionalist, head to the impressive Museum of Fine Arts.

It recently staged an extraordinary exhibition, British Vision, covering two centuries of British art from 1750 to 1950. Museums in Britain, Europe and the United States lent works to the city, which prides itself on its cultural elegance.

## 4. Ride around in a carriage

One of the more elegant ways of getting around the traffic-free city centre is to take a carriage ride.

Alternatively you can take to the boats.

The city is on the confluence of the Rivers Scheldt and Leie, and you get splendid views on guided boat tours.

## 5. Follow the town crier

Being a compact city, there are plenty of easy walking tours around Ghent. One of the most popular, the Town Crier's tour, which runs from May until September, takes you on a guided walk around the markets or the bars.

Other guided walking tours stop off to sample local delicacies, such as pates, cheeses and, of course, chocolates.

And, if you are feeling a bit more peckish, how about a dinner tour, with each course in a different restaurant?

#### 6. Even the public transport is fun

This is one of the many things that Ghent seems to have got off to a fine art.

There are buses, trolley buses and trams, wonderful trams that are a far cry from the rattling juggernauts of old.

These are sleek, smooth-running machines operating in areas with limited access for private cars. The single trams, double trams and triple trams are great fun to ride on as well as practical.

But be careful not to stand on the joins or you'll find yourself moving in several different directions at once. The buses and trolley buses come in various articulated shapes and sizes too.

#### 7. The shopping is great

When you've had your fill of history, architecture and monuments, there's more, much more – trendy clothes shops, and plenty of speciality delis offering Belgium's most famous exports – chocolate, beer and lace to take home.

And being in the home country of Tintin, you may even find some souvenirs of the boy detective too.

Get up early on a Sunday morning to hike around the city's five markets and pick up a bargain, an antique, some bric a brac or even fruit and flowers.

#### 8. And the nightlife's not bad

Being a student city, Ghent has a bustling nightlife ranging from antique drinking dens to modern high-tech places.

Bars are dotted all over the city but in particular there are some distinctive ones, in particular with long beer lists, near Het Gravensteen.

#### 9. It's the place for beer drinkers

With around 100 breweries, producing more than 500 varieties, you'll never get bored.

Stouts, to fruit beers, wheat beers and brown ales, Ghent's got the lot. The most common brands are Stella Artois, Jupiler and Maes.

The most famous are the strong ales brewed by the country's five Trappist monasteries, of which the most widely available is Chimay. Many of the beers also have their own distinct glasses.

Jenever (gin) is another popular drink, served in tiny glasses.

The Belgian jenever distilleries produce some 270 varieties, some flavoured with juniper, coriander, or other herbs and spices.

## 10. Relax in the park

In the south of the city Citadelpark is a haven of peace and tranquility.

With its waterfalls, rockeries, flowerbeds and statues it's like an English country garden.

It's also home to the Museum voor Schone Kunsten ( Museum of Fine Art) and Stedelijk Museum voor Aktuele Kunst (The Museum of Contemporary Art). In the centre is the Kuipe, which is used for concerts.