



Flanders
State of the Art

BELGIAN BEER CULTURE

The combination of a beer tradition stretching back over centuries and the passion displayed by today's brewers have made Belgium the home of exceptional beers. Beer has always been a vital part of Belgium's history, gastronomy and social life.

Famous for its extensive range of beer styles, Belgium boasts a brewing heritage dating back to the Middle Ages. Many of its top brewmasters still use the same recipes and brewing methods that have been passed down from one generation to the other. Westmalle, Duvel, Rodenbach, Rochefort, Delirium Tremens, Hoegaarden, La Chouffe, Orval, Karmeliet, Chimay, Boon, Westvleteren: these are just some of the world-renowned brands that became household names across the globe.

At the same time, a new wave of innovative craft brewers stood up. These brewers have been exploring new ingredients, recipes and brewing methods. They are adding new exciting vibes, keeping Belgium's beer scene alive, kicking and future-proof.

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WHAT MAKES BELGIAN BEER SO UNIQUE?

1 THE RICH TRADITION

With a brewing heritage dating back for centuries, many aficionados view Belgium as the fatherland of beer. Long before today's popularity of craft beer, monasteries and family breweries handed down their craftsmanship from generation to generation.

2 THE BROAD VARIETY

Diversity in brewing processes and ingredients resulted in an exceptionally broad range of beer styles and taste profiles. Saisons, wheat beers, lambics and gueuzes, Flemish Old Brown beers, dubbels, tripels and other abbey beers, Brut de Flandres, Spéciale Belge, ...: the variety of Belgium's indigenous beer styles is impressive. It inspires modern-day brewers all over the world.

3 THE EXCELLENT QUALITY

However broad the variety in beers may be, Belgian beers are characterized by complexity, refinement and balance. In every glass, you'll taste the ground-breaking craftsmanship and creativity of passionate brewers. Belgian beers are made for savouring.

4 THE RIGHT SERVING

Belgian brewers care about how their beers are served. Every beer has its unique branded glass. It is considered as absolutely inappropriate to serve a beer in the wrong glass, or at the wrong temperature. Equally important is that most Belgian beers need to be topped with a rich layer of foam.

5 THE GLOBAL INFLUENCE

Belgian beers seduce increasingly more Belgian and international beer lovers alike. They are also increasingly imitated abroad, although the authentic Belgian beers are widely considered to be the beer reference par excellence.

6 THE BEER GASTRONOMY

Belgian cuisine boasts many traditional dishes in which beer is used as an ingredient. Besides, beer is often presented as the best pairing option for gourmet meals. For adventurous foodies, a beer and chocolate pairing session is the ultimate Belgian experience!

7 THE CAFÉ CULTURE

To international standards, pubs in Belgium have extensive beer list. Many specialized beer cafés even have hundreds of options. Look out for the ubiquitous 'brown cafés': old, cosy and atmospheric places. There's no better place for tasting specialty beers ... and to connect and share good moments with the locals!

8 THE HOPS REGION

For centuries, Flanders has been a major producer of hops in continental Europe. This tradition mainly lives on in the Westhoek region around Poperinge, an essential stop on any Belgian beer itinerary. When going to local restaurants in February and March, look out for hop shoots, a true Belgian delicacy!

9 THE UNESCO RECOGNITION

In 2016, UNESCO inscribed the Belgian Beer Culture on its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. 'Culture' reflects the importance and the value attributed by Belgians to their beer, and how intensely it is intertwined with their social life. In Belgium, beer is much more than a beverage. It is in the DNA of the Belgians, who consider it as a part of their pride and identity.

10 THE EXCITING FUTURE

Belgium's centuries-old beer history had an enormous influence on its own contemporary beer industry. Innovative brewers redefine and reinvent Belgium's rich beer heritage in today's and tomorrow's vibrant craft beer scene.



BELGIAN BEER FESTIVALS:

THE CALENDAR

APRIL

Zythos Beer Festival

Zythos Beer Festival is the world's largest beer festival which is exclusively dedicated to Belgian beer. About 100 breweries pour more than 600 beers. Beer aficionados travel to Flanders from all corners of the planet to explore a wide range of beers in any Belgian style: saisons, Belgian wheat beers, lambics and geuzes, Flemish Old (Red) Brown beers, dubbels, tripels and other abbey beers, Brut de Flandres, Spéciale Belge, ... just like Belgian takes on porter, stout, IPA and other international beer styles. Many people visit the festival with friends, which results in a festive atmosphere – a true celebration of Belgian beer!

MAY

Toer de Geuze

The Toer de Geuze is a biennial event, which has been organized since 1997 by HORAL, the organisation which unites most. For a whole weekend, the lambic breweries and gueuze blenderies of the Pajottenland and Senne Valley open their doors to the public. On the premises of each brewery and blendery, there are free tours and chances to sample (sometimes exclusive) lambic, gueuze, kriek and other lambic beers. The producers can be visited at leisure by car or bike, or a seat can be reserved on a tour bus, that takes in 4-5 different places per day.

MAY

Leuven Innovation Beer Festival

The Leuven Innovation Beer Festival

is a small-scale two-day festival for innovative craft breweries from all over the world. It's a platform where brewers meet in a setting where new ideas can grow, where collaborations can spring and where visitors can meet the brewers in person. The event is organized by local craft brewery Hof ten Dormaal.

JUNE

Bierpassie Weekend

The 'Bierpassie Weekend' (Beer Passion Weekend) is an ideal occasion for beer connoisseurs to taste a wide array of Belgian beers in the beautiful, atmospheric heart of Antwerp. The open-air festival takes place on the Groenplaats, one of Antwerp's most stunning squares, next to the impressive Cathedral of Our Lady. More than 40 breweries present over 200 beers, with all Belgian beer styles represented: Trappists and abbey ales, Saison beers, Spéciale Belge beers, Belgian white beers, strong blonde beers, spontaneously fermented beers (gueuze, lambic and kriek), beers of mixed fermentation (Flemish Red/Brown), Champagne beers (bière brut), ...

AUGUST

Belgium Beer Week

Belgium Beer Week is an annual international showcase for Belgian Beer Culture. In the course of one week, the participating partners (craft beer bars, bottle shops, beer clubs, beer guides, beer sommeliers, brewers, event organisers, ... from anywhere in the world) organize

one or more beer events with a connection to the Belgian beer culture. They offer a large menu of activities in which beer lovers can participate. Possible events include beer tastings, food pairings, tap takeovers, blind tastings, bottle shares, beer brunches, etc.

SEPTEMBER

Belgian Beer Weekend

The Grote Markt (Grand-Place) in Brussels, which is registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List and simply is one of the most beautiful town squares in the world, serves as a unique backdrop for the Belgian Beer Weekend. About 50 small, mid-sized and large Belgian breweries serve up around 350 different Belgian beers. A great opportunity to explore the various beer styles that give Belgium its well-deserved reputation as one of the world's premium beer destinations.

SEPTEMBER

Bruges Beer Festival

Bruges has a renowned reputation as a beer city, due to its breweries and rich brewing traditions, its atmospheric 'brown' beer pubs and its beer festival. Every year, some 80 Belgian breweries present more than 500 beers at the Bruges Beer Festival. The attending breweries represent a mix of long-established names and interesting newbies in the craft beer scene. A variety of food trucks provide hot and cold meals on the spot.

SEPTEMBER

BXLBeerFest

Since its first edition in 2017, BXLBeerFest gives Brussels the place it deserves at the top of the list of the best beer cities on the planet. Beer lovers and enthusiasts from all over the world get together to discover a wide selection of beers from Brussels, from the rest of Belgium, as well as from other places around the world. With about 60 breweries from about 10 different countries, the festival proves that beer has no boundaries. BXLBeerFest is known for its international character and convivial, easy-going atmosphere. Only independent breweries producing craft beers of an exceptional quality are invited. Also gastronomy is in the scope, with a diverse range of food trucks and some exclusive food pairing sessions, hosted by top chefs.

OCTOBER

Modeste Bierfestival

The cosy Modeste Beer Festival pays a tribute to Modeste Van den Bogaert, who led the De Koninck brewery (which is the location of the festival) for more than 50 years. But there's also a second reason why the festival bears his name: Modeste also stands for 'modest'. The purpose of

the festival is to introduce beer lovers to breweries which are modest in size and production. Therefore, this is perfect festival to discover some gems among Belgium's smaller breweries. Additional events, like foodpairing sessions, spice up the festival programme.

OCTOBER

Oud Bruin Fest

Oud Bruin Fest is a new beer festival which puts the spotlight on the Oud Bruin (Old Brown) beer style, which is sometimes also referred to as Flemish Red (Sour) ale. It's one of Belgium's classic beer styles. It may have grown a bit out of fashion in the last decades, but today it is more alive than ever! Traditional brewers, who have perfected this style and set a high standard, are joined today by new brewers, who like to experiment with different ingredients and new techniques. Oud Bruin Fest is the ultimate place to taste and compare classic Oud Bruin beers with surprising new takes on the style.

NOVEMBER

Billie's Craft Beer Fest

Since 2017, the Antwerp craft beer pub Billie's Bier Kaf taria organises Billie's Craft Beer

Fest, applying an all-in formula with over 50 of the very best craft breweries from Belgium and beyond. It quickly acquired a high international reputation as one of Europe's leading craft beer festivals. Billie's Craft Beer Fest is an international celebration of friendship and a shared passion for craft beer. A must-visit for beer geeks!

DECEMBER

Christmas Beer Festival

The annual Christmas Beer Festival is organized every year by the local beer club O.B.E.R. (Objective Beer tasters Essen Region). For two days, visitors can sample about 200 Belgian Christmas and winter beers. The beer list is regarded as one of the best in the world, with several scoops and interesting gems combined with world classics. It's a small festival, with an attendance of around 3000 beer lovers. The festival gets sold out months in advance, so plan well ahead!

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



BELGIAN BEER WORLD

BRUSSELS



Belgian Beer World, the long-awaited visitors' centre on Belgian beer culture, opened its doors in September 2023.

Located in the splendid historic Brussels Stock Exchange building, it is the world's biggest interactive center about beer. Visitors learn about the history of Belgian beer, explore a multitude of aromas and flavours and discover their personal taste profile. The visit ends with a beer tasting in the stunning rooftop bar, with breathtaking views of Brussels!

CONTACT VISITFLANDERS.COM

For all questions on Belgian beer (tourism), don't hesitate to get in touch with Stijn Van Houdt stijn.vanhoudt@visitflanders.com.