



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.



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 craftmanship 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 lambic producers. 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.

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 atmospheric heart of Antwerp. The festival takes place in the restored Handelsbeurs, an architectural gem in the heart of the city's trade and commerce since the 16th century. 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

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.

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.

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.

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.

Oud Bruin Fest

Oud Bruin Fest is a 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 Kafétaria 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

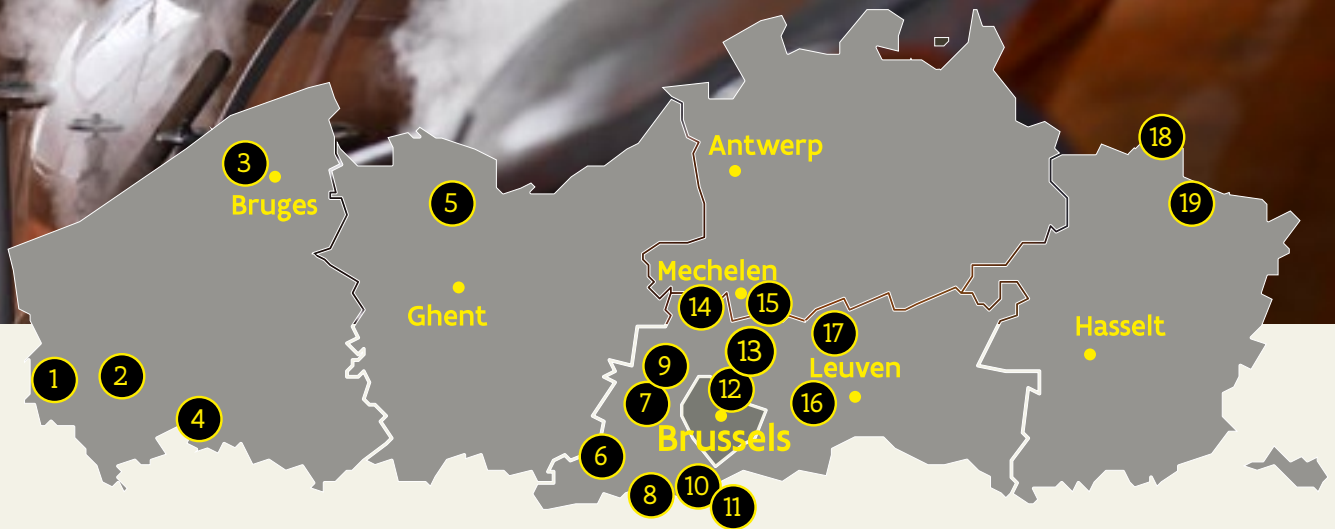
Christmas Beer Festival

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!





Whether you're a dedicated beer connoisseur or simply curious to explore Belgium's rich beer culture, Flanders boasts a broad range of beer experiences. Below we highlight some of the brewery tours, beer museums, and experiences which are either new, or have been refurbished in the last couple of years.



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 St.Bernardus Brewery \\ WATOU | 11 Oud Beersel Blendery \\ BEERSEL |
| 2 Rodenbach Brewery \\ ROESELARE | 12 Belgian Beer World Experience \\ BRUSSELS |
| 3 De Halve Maan Brewery \\ BRUGES | 13 Grimbergen Experience \\ GRIMBERGEN |
| 4 Omer Vander Ghinste Brewery \\ BELLELEM | 14 Batteliek \\ BATTEL |
| 5 Hopspot Brewery \\ ERTVELDE | 15 Het Anker Brewery \\ MECHELEN |
| 6 De Cort Brewery & Distillery \\ PEPINGEN | 16 Adept Brewery \\ WINKSELE |
| 7 Kestemont Brewery \\ DILBEEK | 17 Hof ten Dormaal Brewery \\ TILDONK |
| 8 Boon Brewery \\ LEMBEEK | 18 De Achelse Kluis Abbey \\ ACHEL |
| 9 Timmermans Brewery \\ ITTERBEEK | 19 Cornelissen Brewery \\ BREE |
| 10 3 Fonteynen Brewery \\ BEERSEL | |



St. Bernardus Brewery

Watou

Situated in the heart of the West Flemish hop region near the French border, St. Bernardus Brewery has been brewing high quality top-fermented beers since 1946. In the summer of 2023, the brewery opened its new visitor experience. At your own pace, expect a sensory audio-visual experience, with a beer tasting at the end in Bar Bernard, the brewery's rooftop bar which offers splendid views over the surrounding countryside and adjacent hop fields. The brewery has its own guesthouse (11 rooms) and bike rental, and is a great base from where to explore the Westhoek region.

1

Hopspot Brewery

Ertvelde

With a tradition dating back centuries, Van Steenberge family brewery is an established international reference point, brewing beers like Gulden Draak, Augustijn and Piraat. In 2024, the brewery opened Hopspot, a small and charming 'satellite brewery' in a listed farmstead in the countryside, just about one kilometer from the main brewery. This microbrewery has a tasting room, food options, and accommodations (rooms for up to 8 people). Next to the microbrewery is an educational hop field. It is possible to combine a visit to both breweries in one tour.

5

Rodenbach Brewery

Roeselare

Rodenbach is the benchmark as producer of redbrown beers in the traditional style of the region. With their distinctive crisp character and their notes of green apples and sour cherries, these beers bring refreshment during hot days. A tour of the brewery is an impressive experience, especially the visit to the 294 'foeders', the oak vats, which shape 'the Roeselare beer cathedral'. In 2024, Rodenbach revamped their whole tour, renewed the shop, established brasserie 'Het Foederhuis' for food and drinks, and developed a sensory workshop ('Blend your own Rodenbach') as an add-on to the tour.

2

De Cort Brewery & Distillery

Pepingen

In 2011, Manu De Cort bought a farmstead in a beautiful rural setting as the ideal place to realize his dream to establish an artisan farm distillery. He went back to the origins of distillation by using only home-grown raw materials such as wheat, barley, maize, potatoes, and fruits. A few years ago, De Cort Distillery extended its activities to lambic brewing, reviving the local, centuries-old tradition of combining brewing and distilling activities in 'alambics'. Tours comprise both the brewing and distilling part of the site.

6

De Halve Maan Brewery

Bruges

As the last remaining active brewery within Bruges' city walls, right in the picturesque historical heart of the city, this family brewery stands as a testament to centuries of brewing traditions. In 2024, the tour had a complete facelift, integrating lighting and video concepts. At the rooftop, you can enjoy a 360° view over the city centre. Special attention went to the famous beer pipeline, an ingenious solution to transport the beer to the bottling plant outside the centre. At the end of the tour, you can taste an unfiltered 'Brugse Zot' – a unique opportunity that is only possible at the brewery itself.

3

Kestemont Brewery

Dilbeek

In the heart of the lambic region, at the former Goossens brewery, the Kestemont family has recently resumed the brewing activities. With the kettles being stoked again and barrels filled once more, traditions have been restored. In 2024, the Kestemonts opened their premises to the public. It is an authentic and enchanting place to get acquainted with the heritage of lambic beers.

7

Omer Vander Ghinste Brewery

Bellegem

In the small village of Bellegem, where the church tower and the brewery set the skyline, family brewery Omer Vander Ghinste was founded in 1892. The brewery produces an exceptionally versatile range of beers. Combining historic wooden foeders, modern techniques, and a deep respect for local brewing culture, Vander Ghinste produces beers with character, depth, and a true taste of Flemish craftsmanship. A new visitor centre opened in 2020.

4

Boon Brewery

Lembeek

Boon Brewery is the life's work of Frank Boon. Back in the late 1970's, when lambic beers were at the verge of disappearing, Frank took over a geuze blendery in the Pajottenland and became one of the pivotal characters to revive the beer style. While Frank is still keeping an eye on things, the succession is now in the good hands of his sons Jos and Karel. Boon Brewery recently opened a bar and a shop, and is upgrading its brewery tour in different stages, the last of which will be finished by the end of 2025.

8

Timmermans Brewery

Itterbeek

With a brewing tradition dating back to 1702, Timmermans is the world's oldest lambic brewery. Walking through the brewery along the copper kettles, open coolship and wooden barrels is like stepping into a living brewing museum. Timmermans

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Brewery is making major investments in a new, state-of-the-art visitor experience, using digital technologies and imaginative scenography. The opening is foreseen by the end of 2025.

3 Fonteynen Brewery

Beersel

Nestled in the heart of Pajottenland, 3 Fonteynen is a guardian of authentic lambic brewing. Honoring the legacy of the legendary Armand Debelder, 3 Fonteynen continues to craft lambics with the same passion and dedication. The brewery is making major investments in a new infrastructure. While this project will still take several years to complete, visitors can already experience the place firsthand on tours and at their warm and welcoming 'Lambik-0-Droom' (tasting room).

Oud Beersel Blendery

Beersel

With a history dating back to 1882, Oud Beersel is one of Flanders' renowned lambic producers. The blendery produces a wide range of both traditional and innovative lambic beers. In 2022, after thorough restorations, Oud Beersel reopened its adjacent pub, named 'Bierhuis Oud Beersel', a great place to taste the beers and traditional dishes, all made with Oud Beersel beers. In 2025, the tours will be upgraded with projections and other visuals.

Belgian Beer World Experience

Brussels

Belgian Beer World Experience, the long-awaited visitor centre on Belgian beer culture, right in the heart of the capital, opened its doors in September 2023. Located in the splendid historic Brussels Stock Exchange building, it is the world's biggest interactive centre 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.

Grimbergen Experience

Grimbergen

In 2022, after 233 years of interruption, the monastery of Grimbergen resumed its brewery activities on the site of the original brewery. Along with the new microbrewery came a beer experience centre, a herb and hop garden, and a tasting room. Visitors are invited to step into the Fathers' shoes as they learn about the Norbertine Order, their charity work, and their daily life, both in the past and present.

Batteliek

Battel

'Batteliek' is a stylish microbrewery in a converted church, which opened in 2022. With this project, Het Anker Brewery gave a new purpose to the former Sint-Jozef church. The open-plan interior is dotted with cosy seats and quiet spots, inviting visitors to talk to each other, relax, or gaze around in wonder. Not only the beers, but also elixirs and lemonades are made on the site, to surprise and impress. Food options include finger food, street food, sandwiches, and desserts.

Het Anker Brewery

Mechelen

With brewing traditions stretching back to the late Middle Ages, Het Anker is one of Flanders' oldest breweries. It is a historic gem with beautifully preserved copper kettles and other ancient equipment, housed in a centuries-old complex, overlooking Mechelen's beguinage. Het Anker upgraded their tour in 2024. Combined with the brewery's own whisky distillery and hotel, the whole site offers an immersive experience, bringing the place's rich history to life.

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Adept Brewery

Winksele

In the village of Winksele (near Leuven), De Smederij is a cooperation of different entrepreneurs comprising various projects under the same roof: the Adept brewery (by Dimitri Staelens, who used to brew at Duvel-Moortgat), a bar/restaurant and meeting rooms. De Smederij is a great place of departure for walking and cycling routes, which will be developed by the summer of 2025 and will be supplemented by digital (audio) applications.

Hof ten Dormaal Brewery

Tildonk

Tucked away in an old farm estate in the countryside, Hof ten Dormaal applies a unique concept, where farming and brewing go hand in hand. All ingredients are homegrown on the farm and the production circle is fully closed, turning Hof ten Dormaal into one of the most ecological breweries in the world. The brewery is renovating another nearby farmstead and plans to offer tours of both sites by the end of 2025.

16

De Achelse Kluis Abbey

Achel

De Achelse Kluis was one of Belgium's six Trappist abbeys, until the last remaining monks of the community moved to Westmalle abbey in 2020. In 2023, the Trappist order sold the abbey buildings and its brewery. Now it is possible to visit these buildings, which have been off limits for centuries. The tours end with a tasting of the Achel abbey beers.

18

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Cornelissen Brewery

Bree

Established in 1859 in the very eastern part of Flanders, Cornelissen brewery boasts over 160 years of craftsmanship and family tradition. The brewery, which is known for its high-quality beers in classic Belgian beer styles, is upgrading its tour, with enhancements in different parts. The opening is scheduled for the summer of 2025.

19

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