

Explore Leuven

OUT AND ABOUT
IN LEUVEN

4KM • +/- 1H30M



GROTE MARKT

Here you stand at one of the most historical locations in Leuven, and at the same time, one of the busiest. It is not as if you will run into many cars here, though, since the Grote Markt has been a pedestrian-only zone for many years now. Only buses from the Flemish public transport agency are permitted to drive here. The Grote Markt has existed in its current form since the 14th century. Evidence of this can be found in the many buildings here that were built in the renowned Brabantine Gothic style. Just as in the rest of Leuven, there is no shortage of cafés and taverns. In addition to all this, the Grote Markt is also a regular host to cultural and other events.

SINT-PIETERSKERK

GROTE MARKT

In the 15th century, the people of Leuven started building this Gothic church. You can clearly see that the towers were in fact never completed. The reason for this is the unstable ground beneath the building. Inside, the Treasury of Saint Peter is the big attraction. There you will find 'The Last Supper' by Dirk Bouts, the last painting by a Flemish Primitive that is still hanging in the place for which it was intended. And the crypt of the previous Roman church, the Gothic tabernacle by Mathieu de Layens and the baptismal font from 1490 are also treasures worth visiting. The Belfry has been recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

TAFELROND

GROTE MARKT

This building on the Grote Markt has had a turbulent history of construction and demolition. Originally it was a meeting place for the local chambers of rhetoric and other societies. After WW I it housed the National Bank. The niches were filled with the directors of the bank and were adorned in the Gothic style. Today the building is the property of the Leuven entrepreneur, Jan Callewaert.

STADHUIS

02

GROTE MARKT

This town hall, one of the most famous Gothic town halls in the world, is the pride of Leuven. Its first stone was laid in 1439 on the cellars of the houses that were present then. They have been restored and are accessible via the small door on the bottom left side of the building. But, in fact, the 236 statues in the niches of the town hall are what really steal the show. They form the pantheon of Leuven, and each figure is dressed in the style of the period in which he or she lived.

The foyer on the ground floor is a covered extension of the Grote Markt and has existed like this since the Middle Ages. All of the town services could be reached from this foyer. And from the tower, you can go to the upper halls and attics. What immediately catches the eye are the head beams at the ends of the supporting beams. These treasures were carved in 1448 and 1449 by the wood carver Willem Ards from Brussels and depict scenes from the Old Testament. Through the years they must have certainly inspired the town magistrates to make fair judgements.

01

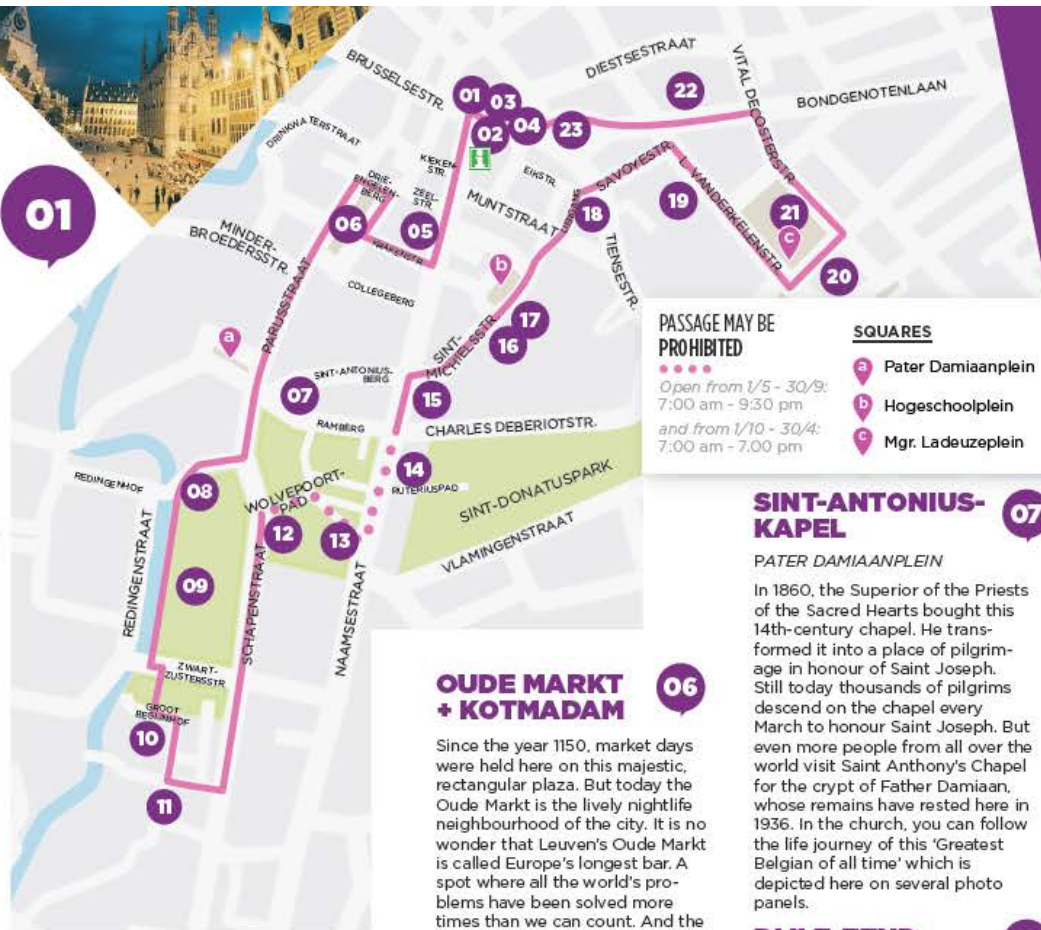
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PASSAGE MAY BE
PROHIBITED

Open from 1/5 - 30/9:
7:00 am - 9:30 pm
and from 1/10 - 30/4:
7:00 am - 7:00 pm

SQUARES

- a Pater Damiaanplein
- b Hogeschoolplein
- c Mgr. Ladeuzeplein

SINT-ANTONIUSKAPEL

PATER DAMIAANPLEIN

In 1860, the Superior of the Priests of the Sacred Hearts bought this 14th-century chapel. He transformed it into a place of pilgrimage in honour of Saint Joseph. Still today thousands of pilgrims descend on the chapel every March to honour Saint Joseph. But even more people from all over the world visit Saint Anthony's Chapel for the crypt of Father Damiaan, whose remains have rested here in 1936. In the church, you can follow the life journey of this 'Greatest Belgian of all time' which is depicted here on several photo panels.

DIJLE-EEND

REDINGENHOF

To beautify the street, the local neighbourhood association here decided to install a drinking fountain. An artistic resident of the neighbourhood designed the fountain in the shape of a duck: the Dijle Duck!

DID YOU KNOW...

that the Dijle Duck is a real good luck charm? You can activate its powers like this: Rub your hand over the duck's back three times, grab a hold of its tail with your little finger and then walk around the fountain until you reach the black button on the ground. Press this button, take a drink and make a wish. But don't share your wish with anyone, otherwise it won't come true!

UNIVERSITEITS- HAL

NAAMSESTRAAT 22

Originally this Gothic building dating from 1317 had only one storey and was used as a clothmaker's hall. Then in 1432 the newly founded university found accommodation in the wing of this building situated on the Krakenstraat. In 1679 the city sold the entire building to the university at which time it was extended upward in the Baroque style. The Rega Wing, a façade made of sand stone in the Classical style, was added in 1723. In 1914 a fire destroyed the building, and in 1922 it was restored. The Office of the Rector is now housed here.

OUDE MARKT + KOTMADAM

Since the year 1150, market days were held here on this majestic, rectangular plaza. But today the Oude Markt is the lively nightlife neighbourhood of the city. It is no wonder that Leuven's Oude Markt is called Europe's longest bar. A spot where all the world's problems have been solved more times than we can count. And the figure whose ears have burned with all of these serious discussions and with the bustle of these nights is the Kotmadam, who sits nestled on a bench in the middle of the square. This statue from the hand of artist Fred Bellefroid is an homage to the landladies of yore. It was unveiled in 1985 in the presence of Maria Swerts, who at that time was the oldest landlady in Leuven. Thousands of people give in to the temptation to take a seat on the lap of the Kotmadam, which makes the sculpture an absolute crowd pleaser.

DID YOU KNOW...

that there are more catering establishments together in one place here than anywhere else? Except for a school and two chemists' shops, all of the properties here are either cafés or restaurants.

DIJLEPARK 09

REDINGENSTRAAT

This little park between the small and large arms of the Dijle was designed by municipal architect Renilde d'Haese. It is a part of the island that lies between the Zwartzustersstraat and the Redingenpoort. Here, in the Middle Ages, you could find the greatest concentration of water mills.

And at one time, it was the mooring place of the ships that supplied the village of Hove and the various mills. Be sure to notice the sophisticated bridge and the bower when you walk past.

GROOT BEGIJNHOF 10

SCHAPENSTRAAT

When you enter the Great Beguinage of Leuven, which it is believed was founded in 1205, you literally step from a lively city into an oasis of rest. It is one of the largest beguinages still in existence in Flanders, with a developed surface area of approximately three hectares.

During its heyday in the 17th century, hundreds of unmarried, devout women lived there together in individual or communal houses. The last beguine passed away in 1988. Today, this completely restored historical quarter is the place of residence of students and visiting professors.

If you like a taste of days gone by during your walk, then the Great Beguinage is the right address. The domain is a succession of picturesque little streets, squares, gardens and parks, with dozens of houses and convents in the traditional brick and sandstone. Since 1998, the Great Beguinage, together with another 12 Flemish Beguinages, has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

SINT-JAN-DE-DOPERKERK 11

GROOT BEGIJNHOF

The construction of the current Early Gothic church was started in 1305 and was completed between 1421 and 1468. The church is built in the local Rural Gothic style of Leuven but also has several Roman characteristics, such as the heavy buttresses, small upper windows and a terraced tower. The lack of spires is reminiscent of the mendicant orders and the convents. During recent restorations, numerous frescos from the 14th, 15th and 17th centuries were uncovered.

WOLVENPOORT 12

SCHAPENSTRAAT

The two half-relief figures of wolves above the gateway are the only remainders of this edifice. The right-hand wall runs steeply up toward the Naamsestraat to a ruin that is accessible via an outside staircase. The gateway appears to be an archway, but it was probably a wall tower in which a passageway to the outside was later added. According to the history writer Edward Van Even, the figures of the wolves may be remainders of a Viking altar.

VAN DALE-COLLEGE 13

NAAMSESTRAAT 80

This beautiful college is the oldest authentic Renaissance building in the city of Leuven. In 1569, Canon Pieter van Dale from Antwerp, a former student of the university, founded the college for poor students from Antwerp and Aalst who were studying theology, philosophy or canonical law. From the inner courtyard, you have an amazing view of the private chapel where Pieter Van Dale was buried.

ATRECHT-COLLEGE 14

NAAMSESTRAAT 63

This building was the home of Nicolas Ruterius, provost of the Saint Peter's Collegiate Church and later bishop of Atrrecht. In 1508 he founded a college for poor students here. From 1921 until 1977, the building was a residence hall for the first generation of female students. In the courtyard, you will find 'the tree of great sorrow'. Under this honey tree dating from the 18th century, many young girls would bid farewell to their sweethearts when they had to return to their rooms at 7 o'clock each evening.

SINT-MICHIELSKERK 15

NAAMSESTRAAT 63

Saint Michael's Church is considered one of the most important Jesuit churches in Belgium. In 1650, priest-architect van Hees from Leuven, who was one of the group responsible for the construction of the Carolus Borromeus Church in Antwerp, designed the elegant façade of Saint Michael's in the pure Baroque style. It is as if the actual altar was erected outside the church, and it is for that reason that the Saint Michael's Church is considered one of the seven wonders of Leuven. Inside there are several works of art to be admired, including paintings from Erasmus II Quellinus. First Quellinus was an assistant of Rubens - just as Antoon Van Dyck was - and then he later succeeded his master as the artist laureate of the City of Antwerp. In addition to the paintings in this church, the communion rails and the rocaille pulpit are unique examples of their kind.

MARIA-THERESIA-COLLEGE 16

SINT-MICHIELSSSTRAAT 2

In this Jesuit college, Maria Theresia provided accommodation for the Seminary of Theology. The Theology Faculty is still housed here to this day. King Willem I had the Large and the Small Auditoriums built in the courtyard. They are now used as auditoriums for conferences, lectures and concerts. The Large Auditorium was conceived as a semicircular temple with a groin vault ceiling. The rotunda makes all who enter think of the Pantheon in Rome.

PAUSCOLLEGE 17

HOGESCHOOLPLEIN 3

In 1523, Pope Adrianus VI, then still Adriaen Floriszoon Boeyens, a former professor at the university, set up this college in his home for poor theology students. In 1775, part of the building collapsed and a new classical building, designed by court architect Louis Montoyer, was erected in its place. From 1830 until 1835 the college was used as a warehouse and barracks. After that, it was used as a residence hall for students of the Faculty of Arts.

HUISBROUWERIJ DOMUS 18

TIENSESTRAAT 8

Domus is a small brewery located directly adjacent to its own café. Using small-scale machinery, Domus brews a good, old-fashioned beer here, without any added flavourings or colourings. Several naturally pure beers are the delicious result. They are tapped directly from the brewery at the café's bar, so you can taste them there under the perfect conditions. At Domus, you can enjoy three different beers. The Con Domus and Nostra Domus are served throughout the year. In addition to those, a flavourful seasonal beer is also occasionally on tap.

M-MUSEUM LEUVEN 19

LEOPOLD VANDERKELEN-STRAAT 28

In the M-Museum Leuven, old and contemporary artworks are not only displayed next to one another, they enhance one another. That is obvious even from the outside of the building. The impressive museum building, the creation of Belgian top architect Stéphane Beel, is a surprising interplay of historical surroundings and contemporary architecture. Inside, you will find a historical collection next to 19th century works of art. For instance, in the M-Museum Leuven you can admire rare 15th century and early 16th century paintings and sculptures, together with works from Constantin Meunier, Jef Lambeaux and Georges Minne. In addition to the permanent collection, M-Museum Leuven also presents temporary exhibitions of old masters as well as contemporary artists. A variable exhibition schedule which includes painting and sculpture, photography, video and film and design and architecture make each and every visit to the M-Museum Leuven a fascinating experience.

UNIVERSITEITS-BIBLIOTHEEK 20

MGR. LADEUZEPLEIN 21

During WW I the Germans set the University Hall ablaze. The centuries-old library, which held hundreds of thousands of often rare books, went up in flames. With support from the Americans, a new library was built in the 1920's in the Flemish Renaissance style. Impressive about this building are the many natural stones engraved with inscriptions from the hundreds of American technical and engineering schools that contributed to its reconstruction. The carillon in the tower, with its 63 bells - one of the largest in the country - was a gift from 16 American engineering societies.

TOTEM 21

MGR. LADEUZEPLEIN

High atop a 23-metre high needle, just across from the University Library, a gigantic jewelled beetle is displayed like a specimen for all to see. Jan Fabre created this artwork as a commission for the KU Leuven. It symbolizes the alliance and cooperation between the city and the university in celebration of the university's 575-year anniversary.

30CC/SCHOUWBURG 22

BONDGENOTENLAAN 12

After its destruction in WW I, the Leuven Theatre was reconstructed and officially reopened in 1938. At that time, the infrastructure and technical installation of the theatre was one of the most modern in the entire country. Throughout the years, though, intensive use of the building left its marks and in 1994, a complete renovation had become imperative. Every year, some 65,000 people visit the theatre, which is a part of the 30CC Cultural Centre.

RECTOR DE SOMERPLEIN + FONTS SAPIENTIAE 23

This square in the centre of Leuven was named after the first rector of the Dutch-language KU Leuven, Professor Pieter De Somer. It joins the Bondgenotenlaan, the Tiensestraat, the Grote Markt and the Margarethaplein and is dominated by the chancel of Saint Peter's Church. In the square, you can see 'Fonske', a statue which symbolizes the Leuven student and was a gift to the city from the university on its 550th birthday. The name Fonske comes from the Latin 'Fons Sapientiae', which means 'Source of Wisdom'.

