

# Church and Co.

OUT AND ABOUT  
IN LEUVEN  
6KM • +/- 2H30M



## GROTE MARKT

Here you are 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, De Lijn, are permitted to drive here. The Grote Markt has existed in its current form since the 14th century. Evidence of this

## 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 actually 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.

## TAFELROND 04

GROTE MARKT

This building on the Grote Markt has had a turbulent history of construction and demolition. It was built based on a design from Mathieu de Layens and together with three houses forms an architectural whole next to the Town Hall. Originally it was a meeting place for the local chambers of rhetoric and other societies. After WWI it housed the National Bank. The niches were filled with figures of the directors of the bank and were adorned in the Gothic style. Today the building is the property of the Leuven entrepreneur, Jan Callewaert.



## SINT-GEERTRUIABDIJ 05

HALFMAARTSTRAAT

This abbey is the heart of Leuven's Small Beguinage. The buildings, erected between the 14th and the 17th centuries, have now been restored and remodelled into a residential complex. Canon Professor Thiery purchased and renovated the abbey in 1912. He also had the Thiery Wing built using fragments of façades from the stately town homes of Leuven that had been destroyed during WWI. The abbey itself was seriously damaged in 1944 at which time the two remaining Gothic wings of the cloister were destroyed, as were other parts of the abbey. What is also interesting here is the walled-in green oasis of old, valuable trees.

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can be found in the many buildings here that were built in the renowned Brabantine Gothic style. Several striking examples are the beautiful guild houses from the Middle Ages. Just as in the rest of Leuven, there is no shortage of cafés and taverns. In addition to all of this, the Grote Markt is also a regular host to cultural and other events.

## ALSO WORTH A STROLL

### SQUARES

- a Rector de Somerplein
- b Vismarkt
- c Oude Markt
- d Pater Damiaanplein
- e Hogeschoolplein



## SINT-PIETERSKERK 03

GROTE MARKT

In the 15th century, the people of Leuven started building Saint Peter's church. Before that, there was a Roman church on this site, but it was replaced in the 15th century by the current church, which is a paragon of Late Gothic architecture. Its construction continued on into the 17th century. 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's 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.

### DID YOU KNOW...

that the nickname of the inhabitants of Leuven, Peetermannen (Peter's men), can be attributed to the patron saint of this church?

## SINT-GEERTRUIKERK

HALFMAARTSTRAAT

In the middle of the 12th century, Saint Gertrude's Church was nothing more than a simple prayer room. The church was built between the 13th and the 15th centuries under the order of Hendrik I, who founded a chapter of the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine. The Late Gothic tower was constructed completely of stone, including its apex. That means that not one nail was used in the tower. It is for that reason that Saint Gertrude's Church is one of the seven wonders of Leuven.

## KLEIN BEGIJNHOF

HALFMAARTSTRAAT

A beguinage fellowship also arose at the Saint Gertrude Abbey. The first mention of the "Small Beguinage" occurred in 1272. This quarter consists of a street and two dead-end alleys where the women who served in the abbey lived. In its heyday, there were only 100 beguines and after the French Revolution that number decreased markedly. After that, the buildings here also quickly deteriorated. The church that was built in 1636 had already been dismantled by 1862, and in 1954 the infirmary had to move to make room for the Stella Artois brewery. In 2000, the little that remained of the Small Beguinage - some thirty houses - was restored and sold to private individuals.

## ABDIJ VAN KEIZERSBERG

MECHELSESTRAAT 202

This Benedictine abbey from the 19th century was built on the site of the old, ducal fortress by monks from the Abbey of Maredsous. The building was originally meant to be a centre of study. A long wall encircles the buildings and the surrounding terrain so that the entire complex is reminiscent of an old, reinforced fortress. In 1969 the west wing of the abbey was converted into a residence for university students. The abbey leased out the garden to the city on a long-term lease, and the city has developed it into a green lung for the area as well as a tourist attraction. Currently, the possibility of linking the Vaartkom to the abbey is being investigated.

## DIJLETERRASSEN

DIRK BOUTSLAAN

Leuven was born on the Dijle, the river that brought prosperity to the city through its connection to the Scheldt. But the effects of pollution and flooding cooled the city's love affair with the Dijle. More than half of the 10 km of waterways running through the centre of Leuven are now covered over. But the love for the river has since returned and terraces leading to the Dijle were excavated at the Dirk Boutsiaan Park, where visitors put their feet in the water. The extraordinary vegetation on the wall lends extra cachet to the Dijle terraces.

## HANDBOOGHOF

It was in around 1156 that Leuven started building a stone wall around the city. It was more than 2.700 metres long and contained 11 gateways and 31 towers. At the beginning of the 19th century, the wall was dismantled and the current ring around Leuven was built in its place. A 150-metre section of the original city wall still stands at the Handbooghof. From the 14th century onward, archers from the Guild of

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## SINT-JACOBSKERK

SINT-JACOBSPLEIN

All that is left of this originally Roman church dating from the beginning of the 13th century is the tower, another one of the seven wonders of Leuven. Matheus de Layens, master builder of the Leuven town hall, erected the transept between 1457 and 1488.

## ROMAANSE POORT

BRUSSELSESTRAAT 63

The chapel of the Romanesque gate, dating from the beginning of the 13th century, was also part of the earlier Cloister of the Augustinians. Today it is a part of 30CC. The Cultural Centre of Leuven. The organisation uses the Romanesque gate as a theatre for concerts and exhibitions.

## O.L.V. TEN PREDIKHERENKERK

QL VROUWSTRAAT

Our Blessed Lady of the Dominican Friars Church is the oldest Gothic church of Leuven and is also one of the first churches in Belgium built in this style. The construction of this convent church of the Dominicans, also known as the "preachers", was started in 1234. Hence, the name of the church. The Rhineland Early Gothic chancel was erected first and then a simpler building style was employed. Inside the church, be sure to visit the precious metal works from the 16th and 17th centuries as well as the remains of the tomb of Hendrik III, the Duke of Brabant. The Our Blessed Lady of the Dominican Friars Church was seriously damaged during WWII and its reconstruction was long delayed. It was only in 1961 that the repair works were started, but these repairs only included some renovation of the roofs and windows for the purpose of preventing further deterioration of the church building and the sacristy. In 2008 the restoration was completed, and the church now serves as an auditorium for 30CC. The Cultural Centre of Leuven.

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## 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. As a result of the popularity of the pilgrimages here, expansion and renovation of the chapel became a necessity in the 1960's. 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 Antony's Chapel for the crypt of Father Damiaan, whose remains have rested here since 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.

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## GROOT BEGIJNHOF

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 for students and visiting professors.

If you like to get a taste of days gone by during your walk, 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.

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## SINT-JAN-DE-DOPERKERK

GROOT BEGIJNHOF

The construction of the current Early Gothic church was started in 1305 and was completed between 1421 and 1468. The Saint John Baptist Church is built in the local Rural Gothic style of Leuven but also has several Roman characteristics, such as 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.

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## SINT-KWINTENSKERK

NAAMSESTRAAT

Justus Lipsius, a Southern Netherlands humanist, philologist and historiographer from the 16th century, described Saint Quentin's Church as the most beautiful of Leuven. The chapel, the original chapel of the Ten Hove quarter, was elevated to a parish church in 1252 and was converted to the Gothic style in the 15th century. The original tower remained unchanged into the 19th century when the new tower was built on the foundation of the old one. In 1937 Saint Quentin's Church was declared a protected monument by royal decree.

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## ABDIJ VAN PARK

ABDIJ VAN PARK 7, 3001 HEVERLEE

This Norbertine abbey, situated in an oasis of calm and quiet, lies just outside of the city. The open spaces with their estates, lush countryside, ponds and meadows invite all who pass to enjoy a beautiful walk. Throughout the centuries, Park Abbey grew to become one of the prominent abbeys in the Southern Netherlands. Today, the domain extends for approximately 42 hectares and is one of the best preserved abbeys in Belgium. Originally, the domain was a hunting park for Godfrey I the Bearded, Duke of Brabant. In 1129 he gifted it to the Norbertines of the Northern French Laon Abbey, with the express request that they found an abbey there. And because very little has been constructed or demolished here since the end of the 18th century, the complex still contains all of the elements of the Ancien Régime abbey. The interior of the cloister and the furnishings of the buildings also remain nearly intact. The plasterwork ceilings from the 17th century in the dining room and library, in particular, quicken the imagination. In addition to this, the domain also contains a museum with an enormous archive, a valuable print room and an extensive art collection.



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## SINT-MICHIELSKERK

NAAMSESTRAAT

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 this Jesuit church in the pure Baroque style. It is as if the actual altar was erected outside the church, and it is for that reason that 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. He was an assistant to Rubens and then later succeeded him as the artist laureate of Antwerp. In addition to the paintings in this church, the communion rails and the rocaille pulpit are unique examples of their kind.

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