

# BRUSSELS, BRUGES, ANTWERP & GHENT

**ENCOUNTER**

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Brussels, Bruges, Antwerp & Ghent Encounter

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### Colour-Coding & Maps

Colour-coding is used for symbols on maps and in the text that they relate to (eg all eating venues on the maps and in the text are given a green knife and fork symbol). Each neighbourhood and city also gets its own colour, and this is used down the edge of the page and throughout that section.

Shaded yellow areas on the maps denote 'areas of interest' – for their historical significance, their attractive architecture or their great bars and restaurants. We encourage you to head to these areas and just start exploring!

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## CATHERINE LE NEVEZ

Catherine first roadtripped throughout Europe aged four, including her first Belgian foray, and she's been hitting the road here at every opportunity since, completing her Doctorate of Creative Arts in Writing, her Masters in Professional Writing, and post-grad qualifications in editing and publishing along the way.

Catherine's previous writing on Belgium includes Brussels coverage for Lonely Planet's anthology, *The Perfect Day*, and reviews for Lonely Planet's Hotels & Hostels online guide. Elsewhere in Europe, Catherine's authored Lonely Planet's *Paris Encounter* guidebook, and co-authored Lonely Planet's *France, Provence & the Côte d'Azur, Italy, Munich, Bavaria & the Black Forest* and *Ireland* guidebooks.

Belgium – and especially these four cities – remains one of Catherine's favourite places on the planet for its irreverent spirit and its diversity, not to mention its Gandavum Dry Hopping (p152).



## CATHERINE'S THANKS

*Dank u wel/un grand merci* to the wonderful locals and travellers in Brussels, Bruges, Antwerp and Ghent who offered insights and inspiration, including Lucy, 'Dutch Michiel', Koen, Martine, Bridget, Stijn, Bart, Sven and Yam among many (many!) others. At Lonely Planet, cheers to Caroline Sieg for entrusting me with this gig, and to Mark Griffiths and Laura Crawford. As ever, thanks above all to my family.

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A rooftop view – Bruges cafés

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Our authors are independent, dedicated travellers. They don't research using just the internet or phone, and they don't take freebies, so you can rely on their advice being well researched and impartial. They travel widely visiting thousands of places, taking great pride in getting all the details right and telling it how it is.



# THIS IS BRUSSELS, BRUGES, ANTWERP & GHENT

The proximity of Belgium's fab four – the buzzing multinational European capital, Brussels; romantic, canal-woven Bruges; effortlessly cool Antwerp; and laidback, student-filled Ghent – means there's no need to limit your trip to just one of these cities.

Visiting diplomats and coachloads of 'if-it's-Tuesday-this-must-be-Belgium' tourists aren't the only people flitting between these four destinations. Transport between all four cities is frequent and rapid, meaning locals commonly live in Ghent and work in Bruges, for example, or live in Antwerp and commute to Brussels.

Each of the cities has its own unique style, sights and alluring quarters and backstreets. Size also sets them apart: Ghent has roughly double Bruges' population, while in turn Antwerp's population is twice that of Ghent. And Brussels' population, just over twice the size of Antwerp's, doubles again to two million during business hours.

Of course, the four cities have plenty in common too: boats plying the waterways; serene parks; a web of cycling trails; jumbled market stalls; forward-looking fashions; and museums and galleries packed with home-grown art, from the mastery of Rubens to Hergé's Tintin – not to mention beer and chocolate that's lauded as the finest in the world.

This is an especially fascinating time to visit Brussels, Bruges, Antwerp and Ghent, given the peaceful but profound shifting political landscape. At the same time as the country takes an increasingly regional focus, Brussels' outlook is broader than ever before, as the headquarters of an expanding and dynamic EU. Not only are all four of these cities historical treasures whose centuries-old character will endure alongside contemporary innovations, but history is being made here right now.

**Top left** 99 bottles of beer on the wall . . . and hundreds more waiting to be emptied (p12) **Top right** Quaint gabled buildings encircle the Markt, Bruges (p99) **Bottom** Brussels' bustling eat street, Rue des Bouchers (p50)