

EN



visit **TOURNAI**



TOURIST GUIDE

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Welcome to Tournai !

If what you most enjoy is history and heritage, art, folklore and traditions, conviviality, ambiance and delicious food,...don't look any further. You'll find all of that and much more in Tournai!

Tournai is not only Belgium's oldest town. It is also the birthplace of France, thanks to Childéric and Clovis.

Boasting a history of more than 2000 years, its origins can be traced back to Ancient Rome. Important witnesses remain from this long past; they have been carefully restored and Tournai is proud to share them with you.

A city of art, Tournai is best discovered on foot: listed façades, historical districts, picturesque streets and two buildings listed as UNESCO world heritage sites: the country's oldest belfry and the immense cathedral with five bell towers.

Tournai also invites you to experience its unique conviviality and atmosphere. Don't miss out on the opportunity to drink a local beer, to savour a typically Belgian dish or to sample the culinary diversity in one of the many cafés and restaurants in the Grand-Place or along the quays. Or to take part in one of the numerous folkloric attractions and events that are a predominant feature of life in Tournai.

Would you rather seek out fresh air and green areas? The City of the Five Bell Towers is set in the countryside and abounds in wooded areas, parks, gardens and squares. Comprising 29 villages which can be accessed by venturing up and down the greenways along the banks of the Scheldt River, the nearby countryside is the ideal backdrop for the most spectacular cycles.



Time line

-5000 to 406	Gallo-Roman period
431 to 843	Merovingian period
Around 500	Creation of the diocese of Tournai
843	Treaty of Verdun: the River Scheldt acts as a border between Francia and Lotharingia
1171	Consecration of the Romanesque cathedral
12 th , 13 th c.	Construction of the first surrounding wall
1188	The right to a bell granted to the commune
13 th	Construction of the Gothic part of the Cathedral
13 th -14 th c.	Construction of the second surrounding wall
15 th c.	Tournai, important artistic centre
1513-1518	English period (Henry VIII)
1518	François I buys the city from Henry VIII
1521	Spanish Netherlands (Charles-Quint) – protestant Tournai
1566	The churches are sacked by iconoclasts
1667	French period (Louis XIV)
1713	Austrian period
1745	French period (Louis XV wins the battle of Fontenoy)
1748	Austrian period (Maria-Theresa of Austria)
1801	French period (Napoleon's empire)
1815	Dutch period (William I) (orange colour)
1830	Belgian independence
1863	Dismantling of the ramparts and constructions of new districts
1914 - 1918	German occupation
1940 - 1944	German occupation (Tournai, liberated 3 September 1944)
2006	Renovation of quai Notre-Dame
2011	Renovation of quai des Salines
2012-2016	Renovation of the cathedral district

TOURNAI, through the centuries

With some 2000 years of history, Tournai is one of the oldest towns in Belgium.

Its origins can be traced back to the first century before Christ. A royal city under Childéric, it became the first capital of what would become France, under the rule of Clovis.

The appointment of Bishop Eleutherius to represent Clovis in Tournai marked the beginning of a government of Bishops which would retain civil and religious powers for several centuries, during which Tournai suffered the Norman invasions and the plague.



TOURNAI, BELGIUM

From 1830, Tournai opened up to progress. The Second World War hit the city terribly. But Tournai picked itself up, and was rebuilt respecting the past.

THE GOLDEN AGE

In the 12th and 13th centuries, the population increased, trade prospered, new city walls were built, the construction of the cathedral began, followed by that of the belfry and the Pont des Trou.

The city, as a result of the privileges obtained, gained freedom from the religious power, and from that moment on came under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of France.

The arts began to develop.

DECLINE AND PERIODS OF TROUBLE

From the 16th century onwards, Tournai, key and entrance to the Kingdom of France, arouses the greed of the large powers: it would become English, French on several occasions, Spanish, Austrian, Dutch. The "new Geneva of the north" would undergo a repression under the Inquisition.



The Notre-Dame Cathedral



A listed monument since 1936, then recognised as exceptional heritage of Wallonia, the cathedral has been included since the end of 2000 on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The building's vast proportions, the subtle and harmonious juxtaposition of Romanesque (nave) and Gothic (choir) styles, make the cathedral an architectural masterpiece.

Excavation

Whereas its construction, in its current architecture, began around 1140, the archaeological excavations reveal elements of previous constructions, the first of which was a paleo-Christian construction from the Gallo-Roman period.

During the digs, archaeologists brought to light the burial places of two bishops from the 11th century, Baudouin I and Radbod II, the latter of whom was at the origin of the great procession held in September.

The romanesque nave

It is characterised by its elevation on four levels: ground floor, galleries, blind-storey, clerestory, and by the decorated capitals of its columns: plants, animals, representations of humans.

Its imposing rose window measuring seven meters in diameter hangs over the great organ.

The Saint-Louis chapel forms part of the nave. Its roof has been recovered by coloured tiles as part of the restoration works.

The transept

Its sheer size is impressive. The keystone of its lantern tower reaches a height of almost fifty metres.

Its crossing is crowned by five bell-towers which afford the cathedral an incomparable grandeur (and give Tournai the name "City of the Five Bell Towers").

There are two sets of murals from the 12th century, which will be visible after the restoration works.

The gothic choir

A rood screen designed by Corneille ("Floris") De Vriendt, and inspired by the Romanesque triumphal arches, separates the Gothic choir from the Romanesque part. Measuring 58 metres long, the choir has three levels.

It is surrounded by a deambulatory that opens out onto several chapels.

A large tapestry, known as the "tapisserie d'Arras", considered to be the oldest preserved choir hanging in the West, can be seen in the Saint-Esprit chapel.

The stained-glass windows

They are a history book in themselves: the struggle against the Merovingian kings Sigebert and Chilpéric, the origin of the diocese of Tournai and its separation from that of Noyon, privileges of the chapters,...

The main façade

The main façade (place de l'Evêché) is behind a 14th-century porch decorated with sculptures from different periods, among which appear the figures created by the hands of sculptors from Tournai in the 14th century.

The sculpture of the Virgin (14th century), patron saint of the cathedral, can be found between the two doors.

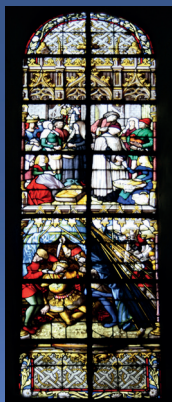
The side portals, the "Mantille" door (towards the River Scheldt) and the "Capitole" door (towards the belfry) are decorated with 12th-century Romanesque sculptures..

The treasury

It is made up of Mosan silver work from the 13th century including major works such as the two great shrines of Our Lady and Saint-Elleuthère.

It also contains precious pieces of ivory, liturgical clothes and objects, a 14th-century tapestry, the chasuble of Thomas Becket (12th century), Archbishop of Canterbury, and the coat worn by Charles Quint when he held the chapter of Toison d'Or in 1531.





- ▶ Length: 134 m
- ▶ Width: 66 m
- ▶ Towers : 83 m
- ▶ Choir: 58 m
- ▶ Transept: 67 m
- ▶ Nave: 48 m

The towers

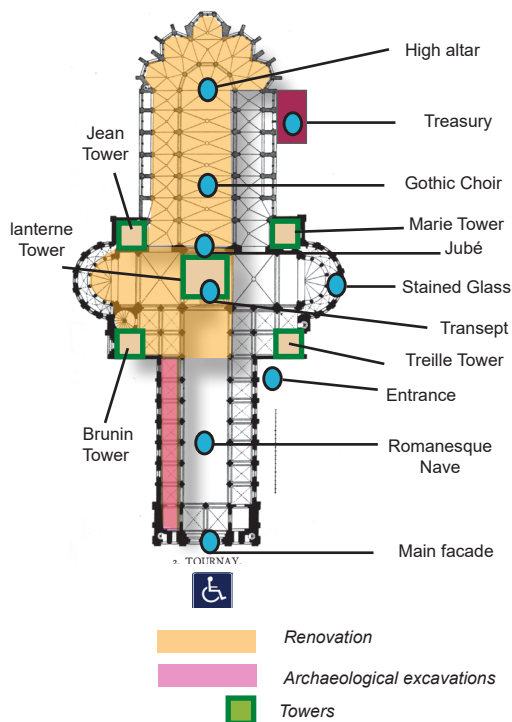
- ▶ The Lantern tower
- ▶ **The Saint-Jean tower**
- ▶ The Marie tower
- ▶ The Brunin tower
- ▶ The Treille tower





Restoration

1996-2010	Archaeological excavations in the nave.
1999	A tornado in Tournai: the Brunin tower moves 80 centimetres.
2000	Cathedral recognized World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Beginning of the shoring works in the Gothic part.
2003	Stabilisation of the Brunin tower.
2008-2013	Renovation of the external part of the Romanesque section. Laying of a new lead roof. Laying of varnished tiles on the St Louis chapel.
2013-2018	Renovation of the transept and the five towers. Renovation of the internal part of the Romanesque section. Exterior and interior lighting.
	Studies on the restoration of the Gothic choir.





The belfry

The municipal belfry of Tournai is the oldest in Belgium. It was built in 1188 when the town was granted the charter of municipal liberties by the King of France Philippe Auguste. One of the articles in the charter granted the bourgeois of Tournai the right to "ring the bell", until then reserved for the clergy. The documents to provide an exact date for the beginning of the construction are missing, but we know that since 1217 two bells are rung.

The original tower was made higher in 1294. In 1392, a fire partially destroyed the belfry, forcing the magistrate to undertake its restoration.

In 1397, a large party was organised to mark the end of the works, during which the magistrate threw loaves of bread to children from the belfry (the throwing of "pichous" from the belfry on the Saturday of the Tournai Carnival is a reminder). New bells were cast to replace those that were destroyed in the fire.

The belfry did not display its current exterior appearance until after the modifications made by the Tournai architect Bruno Renard towards the middle of the 19th century.

In 1940, German incendiary bombs destroyed the centre of Tournai. The belfry, isolated and barely affected by the bombs, was one of the rare buildings to be left standing.

Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999, between 1992 and 2002 it underwent restoration and tourist development works.

At present we can discover the rooms open for visiting as we climb the 257 steps leading to the upper terrace.

The information panels in the rooms add to the geographic discovery of the town and the surrounding areas facilitated by the orientation tables situated on the two terraces.

The bells and the carillon

It was not until the 16th century (1535) when the magistrates of the town equipped the Tournai belfry with a carillon. Unlike the bells, this had a festive purpose. The carillon underwent restorative works in 2003. Certain bells were recast, and others were added.

At present, the belfry in Tournai has two bells, the Bancloque and the Timbre, and a carillon of 55 bells, of which 30 came from the Tournai foundries Barbieux and Michiels, which are no longer there today.

Proud of its new voice, it rings out joyful notes during the concerts held from Easter to the end of September, and in December. Don't miss out on an opportunity to join the bell ringers.





- ▶ XII^e c.
- ▶ 257 steps
- ▶ 72 m high
- ▶ 55 bells
- ▶ Bancloque bell:
5000 kg
- ▶ Timbre bell:
2060 kg

Museums

7 - Museum of Fine Art

The Tournai Museum of Fine Art is an exceptional patrimonial collection, both on account of its architecture and the importance of its art collections. The only museum designed as such by the architect Victor Horta contains the collection of modern art works from the Brussels patron Henri Van Cutsem and the only two works of Manet exhibited in Belgium. As regards the impressionists, you can admire the works of Manet, Monet, Seurat and Van Gogh.

3 - Folklore and Imagination Museum (Tournai House)

In the intimist and felted ambiance of the 23 exhibition rooms (1100 m²), the museum, nestled in a 17th century building, recreates what life was like in the past in Tournai and in the countryside between 1800 and 1950. To know what Tournai looked like during the period of Louis XIV, venture up to the top floor and discover the large plan-relief.



2 - Military History Museum

Just a stone's throw from the Grand-Place, the museum invites its visitors to embark on a voyage through the military history of Tournai and the Tournaisis from 1188 to 1945. On the ground floor, a vast collection of weapons, uniforms and equipment illustrate the revolution, the empire, the Dutch period and the Belgian period. On the next floor, you will discover the notable events of the two world wars.

5 - Natural History Museum Vivarium and Butterfly Greenhouse


Founded in 1828 during the Dutch period, the country's first museum was set up in 1839 in a gallery and a square room designed by the architect Bruno Renard in its current location. During its refitting, the design ensured the preservation of the "cabinet of curiosities" which immerses the visitor in the ambiance of the natural history cabinets of the 19th century, as well as a gallery of rare and extraordinary stuffed animals. In particular, you can discover the first elephant that arrived in Belgium in 1839. The museum is characterised by the presence of a vivarium where living fish, tarantulas, amphibians and reptiles evolve in reproduced habitats.





4 - TAMAT

Located in a former neo-classical house, this museum houses permanent collections of prestigious ancient tapestries from the 15th and 16th centuries, one of the jewels of the museum and of the tapestry art in Tournai at this time.

There are also more modern works namely from Dubrunfaut, Somville and Deltour, members of the group "Forces Murales", which breathed new life into the art of tapestry. The top floor allows the visitor to explore the audacious and surprising steps taken by some contemporary creators. 

1 - Archaeology Museum

Set up in the former pawnshop, the archaeology museum houses exceptional local and regional collections covering prehistory to the Middle Ages. Prestigious pieces from recent digs are exhibited, such as those of the Gallo-Roman necropolis of rue Perdue in Tournai, which reveals a lead sarcophagus, or the Merovingian cemeteries of the Saint-Brice district, where the tomb known as that of "the Saxon Princess" lies. Both are classified as "Treasure of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation". The museum also displays reproductions of gold and garnet bees that were found in Childeric's tomb

8 - Puppet Art Museum

Located a stone's throw from the Grand-Place, Hôtel Peeters houses an unusual museum devoted to puppetry in all its forms. The Puppet Art Museum takes you on a journey to discover its hidden treasures, from all four corners of the world.

In addition to the heritage of the museum, the Puppet Centre also offers the visitor diverse temporary exhibitions, pedagogical activities, creative workshops as well as numerous shows, internships and training courses for children and adults.



Tour of the historical centre - 2 km

The best way to explore the city is on foot. By ambling along its narrow picturesque streets, it feels like we have taken a leap into the past. The tour of the historical centre is a fun way of discovering the city, its heritage and its history.

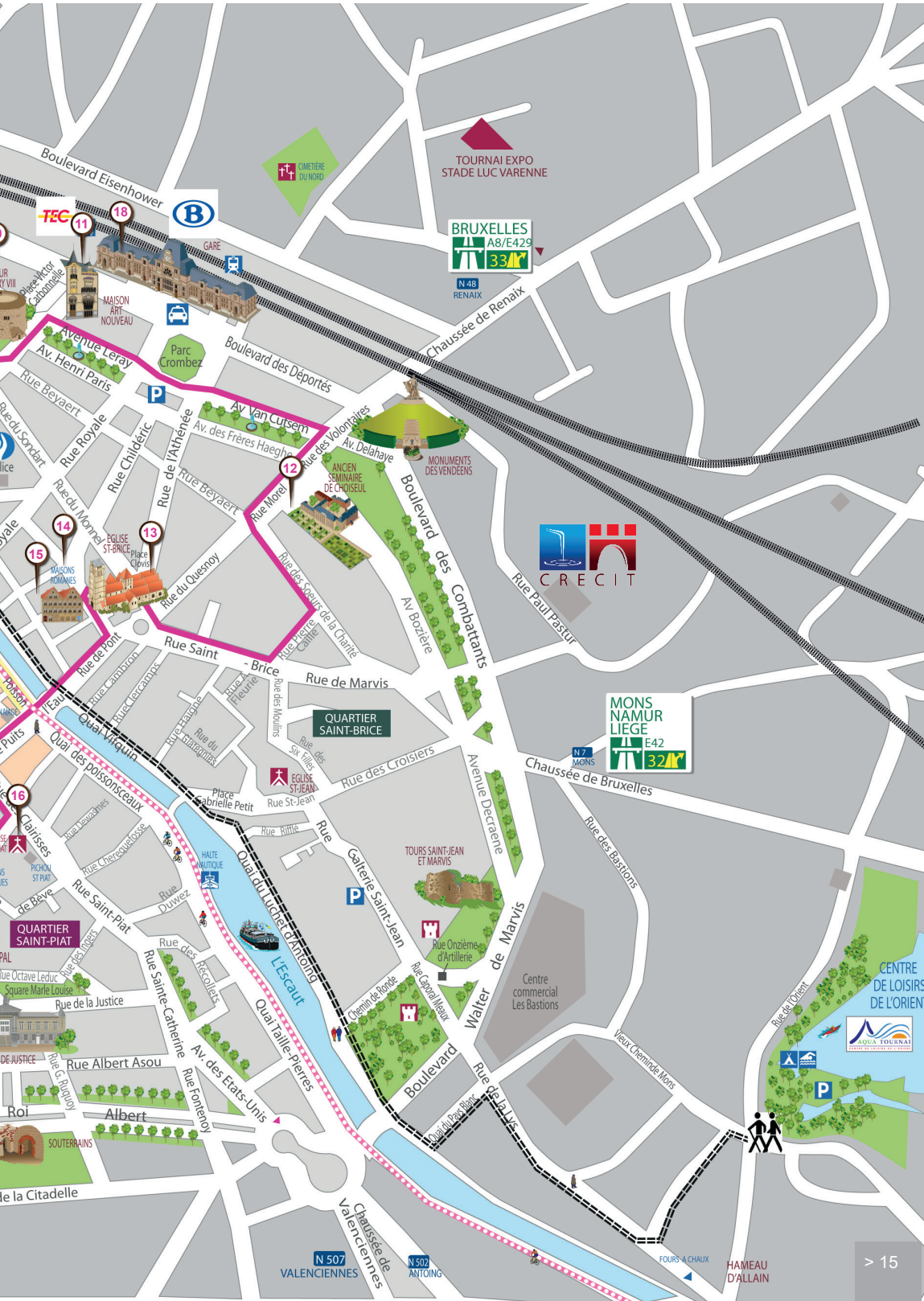
After watching the film «Le Couloir du

Temps» screened in the tourist office, which retraces 2000 years of the city's history in just 20 minutes, this tour guides your steps towards the seven crucial points in the city: the Belfry, the Grand-Place, the Saint-George Tower, the Fort Rouge, the Cathedral, the River Scheldt and the Place Saint-Pierre.

These different sites are brought to life by totems and lecterns which mix photos, ancient engravings and texts with anecdotes. There are also statues representing the historical characters who narrate the history of Tournai.

ly, the belfry: a climb of 237 steps which will take you to the top of this UNESCO World Heritage Site where you can enjoy a breathtaking view of Tournai and the surrounding area. Following this, weather permitting, take a pause on one of the many terraces on the Grand-Place to experience the conviviality and way of life in Tournai...





BRUXELLES
A8/E429
33M
N 48
RENAIX

CRECIT

MONS NAMUR
LIEGE
E42
32M

CENTRE
DE LOISIRS
DE L'ORION

Discovery tour - 5 km

1 - Tourist Office (See p.27)

2 - Notre-Dame Cathedral (See p.4)

3 - Belfry (See p.8)

4 - Saint-Quentin Church

Its Romanesque nave dates from the end of the 12th century. The transept and the choir with ogive vaults mark the transition between the Romanesque and the Gothic periods. A 12th-century marble balustrade closes the choir. The central tower dates from the 13th century and is decorated by a double triforium. Two circular chapels are housed in the angles formed by the nave and the transept. One of them contains the tomb of Jacques Castaigne (1327). Pasquier Grenier, who contributed to the repute of tapestry from Tournai, is buried in the chapel that he funded. The organ was created by the organ builder Delmotte from Tournai in 1986.

5 - Fort Rouge

With a diameter of twelve metres, this imposing medieval vestige owes its name [Red Fort] to the colour of its tiles. Restored and equipped in 2003, groups can watch a ten-minute-long film called «A l'ombre des remparts» as part of a guided tour.

6 - Saint-Jacques Church

The Saint-Jacques parish was born between 1163 and 1167 when a small Romanesque church was built. The central nave, the aisles and the transept date from the first quarter of the 13th century. They are typical examples of the Gothic style in Tournai. The vaults of the chapel on the right side, painted in 1405 and restored in 1895 by Jules Helbig, feature a choir of musical angels.

The choir houses an eagle-lectern dating from 1411, made in the workshops of the Tournai brass casters. Listed as a real estate asset of Wallonia, it has undergone several restorations, the last of which was in 2011 and 2012.

When taking a stroll around the city-centre, you will notice Saint James scallop shells on the ground. These mark out a Saint James route which you can go on to walk in the steps of Saint James. Tournai is located on the path that take pilgrims from Flanders and the North of Europe to Compostela

7 - Saint Marie-Madeleine Church

This desacralized Gothic church was built in 1252 on request of the Tournai bishop Walter de Marvis who was behind the Gothic choir of the Notre-Dame Cathedral. This church has been closed for several years and is awaiting its change of use.

8 - Pont des Trouis

This bridge is one of the most impressive vestiges of the country's medieval military architecture. The enormous bars of this former water gate from the second surrounding wall prevented access to the city via the River Scheldt.

9 - Place Verte

This square, which in the past bore the name of the livestock market on account of the markets held there, is today part of a regeneration project in the framework of the European "Lively Cities" project which affords residents the opportunity to reclaim public space, mainly through the installation of a playground, urban gardens and an outdoor library. Occasionally there are exchanges of plants, grains and seeds.

From the Place Verte, we can make out the sloping bell tower of St Nicolas Church (12th century). It is now closed, awaiting its change of use, like the Madeleine church.



10 - Henri VIII Tower

Tournai is the only Belgian town that was ruled by the English (1513-1518). In 1513, King Henry VIII had a citadel built on the right bank of the Scheldt. This tower is all that remains of this citadel ; its dimensions are impressive: 25-metre external diameter and 6-metre-thick walls.

11 - New Art

In addition to the Fine Arts Museum, one of the architect Victor Horta's main works in Tournai, the city has kept some remarkable witnesses of private constructions. There we can find the stamp of the architects Gustave Strauven, Georges De Porre and Paul Clerbaux.

Some beautiful examples, decorated with sgraffito, can be seen in the district around the station (avenue Van Cutsem, place Victor Carbonnelle,...) and on boulevard du Roi





12- Former seminary of Choiseul

It was Tournai's first seminary, built between 1683 and 1692 on the initiative of the bishop of Tournai, Gilbert de Choiseul de Plessis Praslin, when the Council of Trent obliged bishops to establish training colleges for future priests in their diocese. Seized during the revolution, the buildings provided shelter for the orphans of Tournai, and eventually became a hospice for the terminally ill. This former seminar is currently the Julien Wlomainck Centre, devoted to social housing, and is the property of the CPAS [Public Centre for Social Welfare].

13 - Saint-Brice Church

The choir, commenced in the 13th century and lasting until the 14th century, comprises three naves of equal height. It is one of the first examples of this type of construction, known as "hallekerke". The current tower was formerly a belfry for the right bank of the River Scheldt. Archaeologists discovered a Romanesque crypt from the 12th century there. The high altar is the work of a contemporary sculptor, Georges Grard (1970).

14 - Childéric's tomb

It was in 1653 that a worker accidentally discovered the tomb of Childéric when digging the foundations for the new parish hospice. In addition to a coin treasury, a ceremonial sword, a torso bracelet, gold jewellery and cloisonné enamelwork with garnets, a gold bulls head and a ring bearing the inscription "Childerici Regis" ("King Childéric") were discovered. During the last archaeological digs carried out in the 1980's, the discovery of three graves containing the skeletons of twenty horses bore witness to the sacrifice of horses during burials and revealed the strong Germanic tradition of the sovereign. Today there are only two original samples of the gold bees. They are preserved in the Medal Cabinet of the Bibliothèque Nationale [National Library] in Paris. The archaeology museum of Tournai contains reproductions of the bees and of a horse skeleton.

15 - Romanesque and Gothic houses

In rue Barre Saint-Brice, two remarkable Romanesque-style houses reveal their gable façades (1175-1200). The windows, held between two horizontal rows of stone, are cut by a monolithic colonnette. Prototypes of the architecture of Flemish "stenen" [stones], they feature among the first specimens of this type of abode in Western Europe. On the same street, the Gothic manor (15th century) reveals a façade bearing the architectural principles innovated in Romanesque houses. The decoration of continuous rows has a more refined finish and more regularity can be observed in the size of the stones.

16 - Saint Piat Church

The current building was erected on a 6th-century Merovingian basilica. It probably owes its name to Saint Piat, a missionary from the 3rd century sent by the Pope to evangelize the region of Tournai. The nave is Romanesque and dates back to the 12th century. The choir is Gothic and was constructed in the 14th century. Two chapels were added, and another was added to the nave in the 17th century. The chapel to the south east is dedicated to Saint Hubert, and that to the north of the nave is dedicated to Our Lady of Alseberg. In front of the church, at the corner of rue Saint-Piat and rue des Jésuites stands the "Pichou Saint-Piat" fountain. Inaugurated in 1931, this monument is dedicated to Walloon literature and song.

17 - Gothic houses

At numbers 12 to 16 in rue des Jésuites, there is a range of buildings with a Gothic façade which formerly housed an institution devoted to the education of young girls. It is said that Charlotte and Henriette Robespierre, the sisters of Maximilien de Robespierre, attended the institution.

18 - The station

The building for the Tournai train station was built in the neo-Renaissance style and according to the drawings of the architect Henri Beyaert. Inaugurated in August 1879 in the presence of King Leopold II, this beautiful 120-metre-long building impresses with its sheer size. At nightfall Tournai station is lit up with enchanting lights.

19 - Episcopal seminary

The seminary, installed since 1808 in rue des Jésuites on the initiative of Mgr François-Joseph Hirn, houses buildings and gardens built and set up in different periods. The Jesuit church is the last example of a triple nave hall church in Tournai.

The library, boasting a collection of more than one hundred thousand volumes, is today Tournai's most important library. In its Réserve Précieuse several tens of incunabula and manuscripts are preserved, the oldest of which dates back to 1084 (Lobbes Bible). In terms of art, the museum is not outdone, with a collection of seventeen 16th-century paintings on wood, painted by François Pourbus the Elder, which have recently been restored.

20 - Town hall

Located in a pleasant park decorated with water fountains and planted with rare species that are in some cases more than one hundred years old, the town hall is a building brimming with history, since it was erected on the site of the former and imposing Benedictine abbey of Saint-Martin (11th century).

It is in fact the former abbot's residence of this abbey. Gravely damaged by the bombings in May 1940, the town hall was rebuilt respecting the neo-classical architectural style of the second palace, built on the location of the first in 1763. The 12th-century Romanesque crypt is worth the detour.

7 21 - Museum of Fine Art

(see p.10)

22 - Cloth Hall

A wooden construction built in the 13th century was knocked down by a storm in 1606. Its reconstruction in 1610 and 1611 featured a composite style: the pointed arches on the ground floor of the façade are reminiscent of the Gothic style, the first floor is Renaissance-style and the gables are Baroque. The courtyard with interior galleries, built in 1616, imitates Italian courtyards. It is in this space that the fabric merchants set up. Following its collapse in 1881, the building was rebuilt in an identical manner. It was to be a local museum. The bombs of 1940 did not spare it.

The Cloth Hall had to be restored again. Finally, as part of urban renovation works, its façade was restored again in 1998. At present, this building hosts exhibitions and other activities. Adjacent to the building is the beautiful conciergerie.



TOURNAI, a festive city

Lundi Perdu - Lost Monday

On the Monday after the Epiphany (6th January) Tournai residents celebrate Lundi Parjuré [Perjury Monday], also known as Lundi Perdu. This tradition is so longstanding that we do not know which perjury it refers to; the oldest written trace dates back to the 13th century. The other name, Lundi Perdu, comes from the fact that to celebrate the day, work had to stop, and as a result, the day was lost. Today, the tradition lives on and the typical dish eaten that day is rabbit. At the beginning of the meal, the "king's notes" are drawn, so as to give each guest a certain role, one of which is the king. An important detail is that each time the king drinks, the guests must drink too...

The Flower Market: Good Friday

Every year, a huge flower market sets up on rue Royale and along the quays of the River Scheldt. This district becomes a gigantic floral carpet, made up of the stalls of several hundred horticulturalists. This tradition dates back to 1825 when ham and flowers were sold to celebrate the end of Lent and Easter. The market always takes place on Easter Friday.



Carnival: Laetare Saturday

There is a different theme each year and the participants adapt their costumes according to the theme. The celebrations begin on Friday with the Night of Intrigue, an interactive show designed by local artists. The festivities continue on Saturday around the king and queen of the carnival. Then, in the afternoon, it's the masquerade. The different processions made up of confraternities (more than 200) leave from the four corners of the city to come together in the city-centre: homage to the Naiad, rubber duck fishing, balloon release, the throwing of the pichous, the funeral march. The Tournai carnival encourages participation by everyone.



Stick walk

Easter Monday

Every Easter Monday, Tournai residents walk up to Mont Saint Aubert, each at their own rhythm. The origin of this tradition dates back to the 14th century, when religious people climbed to the summit of the hill by way of an expiatory pilgrimage. 147 metres high, the mountain affords the walkers a wonderful reward, with its magnificent panorama of the whole Scheldt valley and of the city amid which the cathedral and its five bell towers stand proud.

«L'Accordéon, moi j'aime»

Ascension Friday

Embark on a musical voyage revolving around the accordion at each new edition of "L'Accordéon, moi j'aime!": the meeting of accordianists in the Saint-Pierre district of Tournai. Take a stroll and let yourself be carried away by the tuneful streets, the musicians and the performers. In total, 85 groups and 450 musicians will fill the streets of the City of the Five Bell Towers, imbuing it with the atmosphere of a true open-air guinguette. There will be rhythms of music from all periods and all lands! Come to Place Saint-Pierre for 8 pm. You're guaranteed to find a true festive atmosphere!

TOURNAI and its processions

2nd Sunday of September

The city's most popular event has been organised by the «Amis de Tournai» association since 1951. The giants, the elaborately flowered floats and widely diverse and distant groups with embellished costumes give rhythm to the processions that parade around the city to the applause of a large audience. The confraternity «Chevaliers de la Tour», in regalia, enhance the events with their presence.



Great Procession for Our Lady of the Ill

2nd Sunday of September

For nine centuries, an astonishing procession drifts along the streets of Tournai, one of the oldest cities in the West. In it shrines and statues, true treasures of religious art, can be seen, carried by innumerable believers. Year after year they repeat a procession that began in 1092 to thank Our Lady for freeing the city from the plague. Leaving the prestigious cathedral with five bell towers, the pilgrims return to it at the end of a walk that reveals, to the eyes of all, an outstanding human and Christian heritage.





Annual events

Tournai en Fête : Pentecost weekend
 Les Chiffonnades : May and August
 Garden Party : 21 July
 Braderie annuelle: 2nd Monday of September
 Antique fair : weekend of 15th August
 Heritage days : septembre
 Tournai Gourmande : octobre
 Tournai La Page : november
 Tournai Toys : november
 Tournai d'Hiver : two last weekends before Christmas

Cultural events

Festival of the Unexpected:
 end of August, beginning of September

The originality of this festival lies in the blending of philosophy on the one hand an increasingly popular discipline in these days of questioning in the face of deep uncertainties and change, and music on the other, in an outstanding heritage that dominates the Notre-Dame Cathedral of Tournai, in a spirit of meeting, tolerance and openness towards other cultures.

RAMDAM Festival,

The disturbing film festival: January

Ramdram is a festival with international charisma. On the programme, films from today, but also films from the past, reflect the world of here and elsewhere and tell, in all languages, something about the course of humanity which appeals to us to listen, to watch,...and to not forget.

La Naïde is the trophy awarded to the winning film at the festival: a miniature of the statue of the naked woman created by Georges Grard which has "disturbed" a predominantly Catholic city for some time now.



Treat yourself to our regional specialities

Les ballons de Tournai

Two young ladies are behind the creation of this small black and hard sweet in 1834. Three different types of sugar make up its composition. At present, only one artisan confectioner still makes the sweets using an old family-owned machine dating from the beginning of the 20th century. It is recommended to protect against the harshness of winter.

La ruche de Thimougies

Honey sweets from the beehives of Thimougies, one of the most beautiful villages in the region: visit Hurtebise to buy honey-, pollen- and propolis-based sweets and products and a new elderberry syrup.

Gâteau Clovis

In homage to the Merovingian king, the Clovis cake is a frangipane cake with an apricot and pineapple compote.



Couque "Abeille"

Bee-shaped brioche, a reference to Childeric's bees.

Faluche

The faluche is a small, dense and spongy white bread. A real treat at breakfast with butter and/or light brown sugar.

Pichou

This small brioche-type bread with candied fruits is only baked for carnival. The jet de pichous is an important moment of the carnival when the crowd comes together to try to catch one of the precious pichous thrown from the belfry.

Galettes «succès du jour»

Waffles filled with vanilla or light brown sugar (and now with Speculoos and Grand Marnier). Original recipe from a biscuit factory founded in Tournai more than a century ago.

Biscuiterie Desobry

Available in magnificent decorated metal boxes, part-chocolate biscuits to accompany your coffee.

Louis Legrand specialties

Duck, pâté, foie gras, duck breast and confit specialties.

Master chocolate-maker « Délices et chocolats »

A chocolate-maker which, in addition to a collection of classic chocolates, offers "5 clochers" pralines with coffee and Tournai beer in the shape of bees, a reminder of Childéric's bees.

"5 Clochers" coffees

Based in Tournai since 1950, the Fretin company is an artisan business where the coffee is still roasted in the traditional style.



Breweries

Dubuisson :

Wallonia's most authentic brewery

Founded in 1769, the Dubuisson brewery has been passed down through eight generations, and is still 100% independent. The Dubuisson brewers have remained loyal to the traditional production principles. Every Dubuisson beer has a "character" that the person tasting it will remember.

There is a tavern where you can taste Bush or Cuvée des Trolls, or taste regional specialities. *Visits to the brewery take place on Saturday afternoons (3 pm).*

New – « Beerstorium » interactive museum.

Dupont : Saison Dupont, elected "best beer in the world" in 2005.

The site of the Dupont brewery also contains a cheese shop and a bakery. The stated goal of the family is to return to traditional flavours and to the production of organic beers. You will find this flavour in their flagship beer, the Moinette On the morning of the first Saturday of every month: visits in French (10.30 am), Dutch (11 am) and English (11 am).

Cazeau: family brewery since 1753

The Cazeau brewery dates back to 1753. After the 2nd World War, the public's taste turned to the low fermentation "pils" produced by large industrial breweries, and their production came to a complete stop in 1969. In 2004, Laurent Agache relaunched the brewery after 35 years of no activity and currently offers five beers with character—one of which is the Tournay—which are not filtered or pasteurised and are bottle-refermented.

Brunehaut : Saint Martin, the abbey beer.

Founded in 1890 under the name Brasserie St Joseph, the brewery took on a new lease of life in 1991 when it relocated into modern buildings, while conserving its artisanal nature. It produces abbey beers such as St Martin, after the name of the former abbey which brew its own beer at the time in the location of the current natural history museum. It also focuses on organic beers such as the Brunehaut Bio. In order to ensure attachment to the region, the barley used is grown in a nearby farm. Several Brunehaut beers have been awarded prizes in international competitions and are today present in 25 different countries.



Spending the night

Site for motorhomes

Boulevard des Frères Rimbaut

The motorhome welcome point on the Esplanade du Conseil de l'Europe is located less than 500 metres from the historical centre of Tournai, close to shops and services.

The discharge point and drinking water filling point are in the rear part of a large car park, located beside the «Maison de la Culture». Possibility of spending the night there free of charge.

Please note that this site is used for funfairs in May and September. If the access for motorhomes is still available behind the sports hall, your peace and quiet may be disturbed at these times.

Mont Saint-Aubert

Just five kilometres from Tournai, the highest point in the region stands at 147 metres ! A breath-taking view over the whole Scheldt Valley and the City of the Five Bell Towers.

Mont Saint Aubert is also called «Mont de la Trinité» on account of the pilgrimage of the same name, known since the 14th century.

This peaceful place near the city brings a smile to walkers and their families. It is the starting point of several routes and a place to relax with a playground, restaurants and bistros that are buzzing in the summer.

Relax in the surrounding areas

Aqua Tournai on the Orient site

Numerous relaxing options await you at the Aqua Tournai site: indoor and outdoor swimming pools with four slides, a café with a terrace, pedal-boats, a barbeque point, games for children and canopy tours! An ideal place for a day out with the family, beside the water and in the heart of a natural reserve that you can visit on nature-walks.

Camping de l'Orient campsite

Rue Jean-Baptiste Moens

Located four kilometres from the historical centre of Tournai, this campsite** is open year-round and has 50 marked out pitches with water and electricity. It is part of the Aqua Tournai site.





Tournai: cycling destination

WAPI cycling network


With its 1,600 kilometres of signposted cycling network, connected to Flemish and French networks, its two natural parks, its greenways (RAVeL), its waterways and its small country roads, the Tournai region is an inescapable destination for cycling trips. Via the network, you create your route as you wish and you can even modify it on-route !

Download a route on visittournai.be or obtain a map of the network to be prepared for your cycle !

Tournai and its 29 villages invite you to a total disconnection !

Tourist Office


Since 2013, the Tourist Office has been located in Place Paul-Emile Janson in a building displaying striking Louis XVI-style façades and which stands above medieval caves of the 12th century, today an exhibition space. Whether you are a passing tourist or a resident of Tournai, push the door of this new establishment to pick up the best information about Tournai and the rest of Picardy Wallonia. After crossing the threshold of the tourist office, admire the immense and magnificent mirror that stands before you. This work of art with changing reflections reveals the sides of the five bell towers of the Notre-Dame Cathedral in golden pixels.

In the projection room, come and discover the two films «Le couloir du temps» and «De la pierre au ciel». 

« Mad stories of Tournai » (20')

This multimedia show retraces 2000 years of history of the city of Tournai. Through this animated film, you discover the important characters who have left their trace on the City of the Five Bell Towers, from the Gallo-Roman period to the present day.

« De la pierre au ciel » (20')

Frédéric Gersal, history and heritage chronicler on France 2 TV, uses images  to relate the history of the UNESCO cathedral, from its birth to the current building. He presents a building that is unique in Europe in terms of its extraordinary design, size and architecture. As the cathedral has been undergoing renovation works, this film allows the spectator to see the most discreet and intimate parts of the monument by going behind and to the very top of the scaffoldings. The aerial views of this medieval architectural jewel and the 3D techniques used in the film enable the spectator to complete the visit to the site.



Services

A dynamic team is at your disposal providing several services:

- Guided visits
- Tourist train ride
- City pass
- Walking, cycling and horse-riding
- Shop
- Free Wi-Fi
- Temporary exhibitions

Tourist train ride

Discover the city aboard the small tourist train. Daily departures in July and August from Place Paul-Emile Janson (Except on Monday and Friday). Duration : approximately half an hour. The small train can also be hired year-round for groups, with or without a guide.



Le sac Aventure-Jeux® :

« Les Magiciens de la Forêt Perdue »

Did you know that there is a magic forest hidden somewhere in the city of Tournai? Are you ready to help Lakass and Brisakk, two brothers who are crazy about magic and alchemy, to lift the curse forbidding access to this forest? To take part in this challenge, get your hands on the Aventure-Jeux® bag containing all the elements needed for players to carry out their mission successfully. You will need an hour and a half to participate in the game.

Ready to play, jump, dream, run and climb? Then go to the Tournai Tourist Office to buy the «Aventure-Jeux®» bag for €10 and guarantee yourselves an afternoon of family fun and complicity. **(Available in French only)**

Gourmet walking tour in the city

A brand new guide to discover sweet and salty specialities, popular traditions, local producers, food shops and restaurants, in Tournai and its 29 villages.

Free



Unusual discovery route

The tourist office of Tournai has developed an unusual map of the city for an amazing discovery with friends, family or as a couple. This map combines fun and originality in every way.

Free



City pass



In the event of an emergency

- Medical assistance: 100
- Police: 101
- Fire brigade: 100
- General: 112 Zone de Police du Tournaisis
Rue du Becquerelle 24 - 7500 Tournai
00 32 69 25 02 50



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#visittournai