

11

The Scheldt flowing through the heart of the city

In the Middle Ages, this smelly and sediment loaded river had many small islets with waterwheels providing power to workshops operating as tanneries, breweries, fisheries and tripe producers. On 21 June 1667, Louis XIV occupied the city and decided to transform it into a military stronghold and socio-economic hub. He commissioned the military engineer, Jean de Mesgrigny, to transform the city which included the construction of a new citadel, changes to the bed of the Scheldt to achieve a more organised configuration of the river banks, quays and embarkations, the installation of a new sewage system... Residential buildings were harmonised architecturally: Tournai brick and stone, slate roofs and exterior cornices. You can see much of this along the Notre-Dame and Marché du Poisson quays.



12

Rue Royale

This street joins place Crombez, in front of the railway station, with the left-bank and has incredible views of the five towers of the Notre-Dame cathedral. It owes its name to the visit of the Belgian King Léopold II for the inauguration of the railway station on 24 August 1879.



13

On the trail of the Merovingian kings



This monumental fresco by the artist Loraine Motti was inspired by one of the majestic tapestries on show in the Tournai city hall, *Les 4 roys de Tournai*.

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After the fall of the Roman Empire and the invasion of the Vandals, the Franks moved to the then deserted and abandoned northern regions of Gaulle. In 430 AD, King Clodion arrived in Tournai, attracted by its many advantages: harbour quays facilitating river trade and Roman roads leading both to the North and the South. His son, Merovée, made Tournai the capital of the Salian Frank kingdom, the future home of the Merovingian dynasty. An early Christian basilica was constructed during the reign of his heir, Childeric. Clovis, the heir of Childeric, would continue to expand his kingdom and unify the Romano-Barbarian lands.



14

Henry VIII tower



Tournai is the only Belgian city to have been under English domination (1513–1518). The Tudor King Henry VIII constructed a citadel in 1515 to house his garrison, protect the city and prevent local uprisings. Only the "Grosse tour" remains of this citadel, its dimensions are impressive: 27.5m in diameter, 21m high with walls 6.90m thick. It has been used consecutively as barracks, prison, arsenal, military museum and was listed as a historic monument in 1963 and included as an exceptional Walloon heritage landmark in 2016, a restoration and re-attribution project is currently pending.

17

The old Choiseul seminary

This was Tournai's first seminary, it was constructed between 1683 and 1692 on the initiative of the Bishop of Tournai, Gilbert de Choiseul de Plais Praslin. The Council of Trent obliged all bishops to establish colleges in their dioceses for the training of future priests. It was seized during the Revolution and used to shelter Tournai's orphans before becoming the *Hospice des Incurables*. Today the site is owned by the CPAS (Belgian Social Services), it provides council housing with views over its lovely formal gardens.



21

The Romanesque and Gothic houses

Near to the Saint-Brice church there are two Romanesque houses remarkable for their gable façades (1175–1200). The windows are set between two horizontal stonework uprights and divided in the middle with a column. These are pioneering examples of Flemish *stenen* architecture, amongst the first specimens of this kind of residence in western Europe. In the same street there is a 15th century gothic manor house with more refined decorations and more regular stone facing work.



Romanesque houses

Tour continues behind

15

Art nouveau



In addition to the Museum of Fine Arts, a major architectural work by Victor Horta, Tournai has maintained a number of wonderful examples of private constructions dating between 1903 and 1913. You can see the distinctive works of the architects Gustave Strauven and Georges De Porre, amongst others. Beautiful sgraffito decorated residences with fine woodwork and sculpted balconies can be found near the railway station, on the boulevards and near to the court-house.

16

The railway station



The Tournai railway station was constructed in a neo-renaissance style and designed by the architect Henri Beyaert, it was inaugurated in 1879 in the presence of King Léopold II. This magnificent 120m long structure originally had a splendid glass roof over the platforms. Unfortunately these were destroyed by the bombings of 1940. The station has been renovated on a number of occasions and now has a new and beautiful night-time lighting system.



Right bank tour

... quai Dumon > quai Saint-Brice > rue Royale > rue du Sondart > avenue Leray > avenue Van Custem > rue Morel > rue des Sœurs de Charité > rue Pierre Caille > rue Saint-Brice > place Clovis > rue Barre Saint-Brice > rue de Pont ...

18

Saint-Brice quarter

This quarter was originally home to the working classes of the textile mills and cement works, it is also the location of an old flax mill that operated up to 1935 and has now been converted into flats. The sheer importance of Tournai's textile industry can be seen here in the Château Boucher, a neo-classical townhouse built for the founder of one of the first steam-powered flax mills, and the Philippart townhouse, built for the founder of a textile mill and a tannery.



Château Boucher.

Saint-Brice's church

The choir is made up of three naves of equal height, construction work on it started in the 13th century and continued as late as the 15th century. This is one of the earliest examples of this type of construction, usually referred to as a *hallekerke*. The current tower was served as the belfry for the right bank of the Scheldt. This surprising church has a 12th century crypt and a modern altar by the sculptor George Grard (1970).

20

The tomb of Childeric



In 1653 a worker on the foundations of the parish hospice chanced upon the tomb of Childeric. The find included a treasure chest, a ceremonial sword, gold and garnet-encrusted enamel jewellery and above all, a ring bearing the inscription *Childerici Regis*. Much later, in the 1980s, the remains of around twenty horses sacrificed at the time of the monarch's burial were discovered in three separate mass-graves. Today, the two remaining originals of the famous golden bees are kept in the *Medal cabinet* of the French National Library (BNF) in Paris.



Tournai, a different point of view.

City discovery tour 6km

With over 2000 years of history to tell, Tournai is one of Belgium's oldest urban centres. It was the first capital of what would later become France under Clovis, and had a golden age during the 12th and 13th centuries when it was much coveted by all of the major European powers.

Tournai is a city of fine art and history where you can discover many churches and museums with precious collections and a wealth of diverse architecture.

The Notre-Dame cathedral has been listed as a heritage monument by UNESCO since 2000 (it is the only Belgian cathedral on the list) which gives it and the belfry, which has been listed since 1999, global exposure as prestigious heritage monuments.

The city will reveal its secrets as you explore its narrow streets with this map ! Along the left bank or right bank, you will be able to take in the sights and emotions.



1

Tourist Office

The Tourist Office occupies a building with magnificent Louis XIV façades that were constructed over 12th century cellars, now used as an exhibition space. Here both tourists and local residents can enter to find out all they need to know about the city and the region. As you enter you are confronted by an immense mirror. This artwork presents an ever-changing vista of the Notre-Dame cathedral's five towers transformed into golden pixels. A projection room proposes two films, *The amazing stories of Tournai* and *Heaven carved from stone* which tells the cathedral's story.



2

Carré Janson : an immersive sensory trail with unique views of the Notre-Dame towers!



3

The Notre-Dame cathedral



The cathedral and its five towers dominate the Tournai skyline, it has been listed as a world human heritage site since 2000. Notre-Dame is a genuine architectural masterpiece, it is a huge edifice with a very subtle harmony of styles including a Romanesque nave and a Gothic choir. It has much to draw your attention including decorated capitals, a majestic rood screen, ancient foundations and stained glass windows recanting historic events.

The treasury room is home to the two large shrines of Notre-Dame and Saint-Elutherius which are fine examples of 13th century Mosan metalwork. There is also a collection of precious ivory items, a 15th century tapestry from Arras and liturgical items such as Thomas Becket's chasuble and even the cloak worn by Charles V for the Chapter of the Gold Fleece in 1531.

4

The belfry

The Tournai Belfry was included in the UNESCO list of heritage sites in 1999 and is the oldest of its kind in Belgium. Philippe Auguste, King of France, assigned a municipal charter and secular bell rights in 1188. In other words, he gave the burghers of the city the right to build their own belfry. The structure was raised in 1200 and has been modified frequently over the years. It didn't take on its current aspect until the middle of the 19th century with the amendments brought by the Tournai architect Bruno Renard. It escaped the incendiary bombs of 1940 and was restored successively in 1992, 2002 and 2022. It has two enormous bells, the Bancloque and the Timbre as well as a carillon with 55 bells that sounds out joyfully during concerts held between April and September.



Beffrois de Belgique et de France

5

Halle aux Draps

The Halle aux Draps was originally a 13th century wooden construction, after a fire destroyed it in the 15th century it was rebuilt using a composite style. The building gets all of its class from the gothic style of the ground floor, the Renaissance styling and baroque gables of the first floor, and the interior galleries imitating Italian courtyards. It was destroyed by the bombings of 1940 and rebuilt identically at the end of the war. Over the years it has been the textile market, municipal museum, Tourist Office and is now used as an event space or exhibition hall.



6

Saint-Quentin's church

The church's origins are doubtless related to the large Gallo-Roman period cemetery that was located where the Grand-Place is now. The 12th century Romanesque nave was extended with a central tower and a double triforium a century later. Pasquier Grenier, a rich tapestry merchant, transformed the choir, surrounding it with an ambulatory and three chapels. He was laid to rest in one of these. The large organ, installed in the right-hand transept in 1987 was made by Delmotte in Tournai.



7

Fort Rouge

This 12m diameter defensive tower is an imposing medieval vestige of the first city wall, it gets its name from the colour of its roof tiles. It was restored and converted in 2003. Groups with a guide can enter to watch a 10 minutes film, *In the shadow of the ramparts*.



8

Saint-Jacques' church

The first Romanesque church was built here in 1163 when the parish of Saint-Jacques was first founded. The central nave, aisles and transept, all typical examples of the Tournai gothic style, were added in the 13th century. In the chapel, on the right side, there are superb paintings of a concert of angels in the celestial vault. The church was listed as a Walloon heritage monument and has been restored on a number of occasions, most recently in 2011 and 2012. In front of the porch and crossing the city centre there are golden scallop shells in the ground marking the way to Santiago de Compostela. Tournai is indeed located on this famous pilgrimage route receiving pilgrims from Flanders and the North of Europe on their way to Santiago de Compostela.



22

Saint-Piat's church

The current structure was raised on the site of a 6th century Merovingian basilica. It probably gets its name from Saint Piat, a 3rd century missionary sent by the Pope to convert the people of the Tournai region to Roman Catholicism. The Romanesque nave dates back to the 12th century whereas the gothic choir was built in the 14th century. Two chapels were added 300 years later. The chapel dedicated to Saint Hubert is located on the south side, the one on the north side of the Nave is dedicated to Our Lady of Alseberg. The *Pichou Saint-Piat* fountain sits in front of the church, it is dedicated to the Walloon folk song and was inaugurated in 1931.



23

The gothic houses

The Gothic façade houses, numbers 12 to 16, used to be the home of an institution for the education of young ladies. It is said that Charlotte and Henriette Robespierre, the sisters of Maximilien de Robespierre were students there.



24

The episcopal seminary

The diocese's seminary was set up in 1808 on the initiative of Monseigneur Hirn, the buildings and gardens were constructed over a number of different periods. The Jesuit church, which dates back to 1604, was extended at the same time. The library is home to over a hundred thousand volumes and is currently Tournai's largest. The reserves contain dozens of incunables and manuscripts including the *Lobbès Bible* which dates back to 1084. The museum also has a collection of 17 paintings on wood by François Pourbus the Elder in the 16th century which have been restored recently.

10

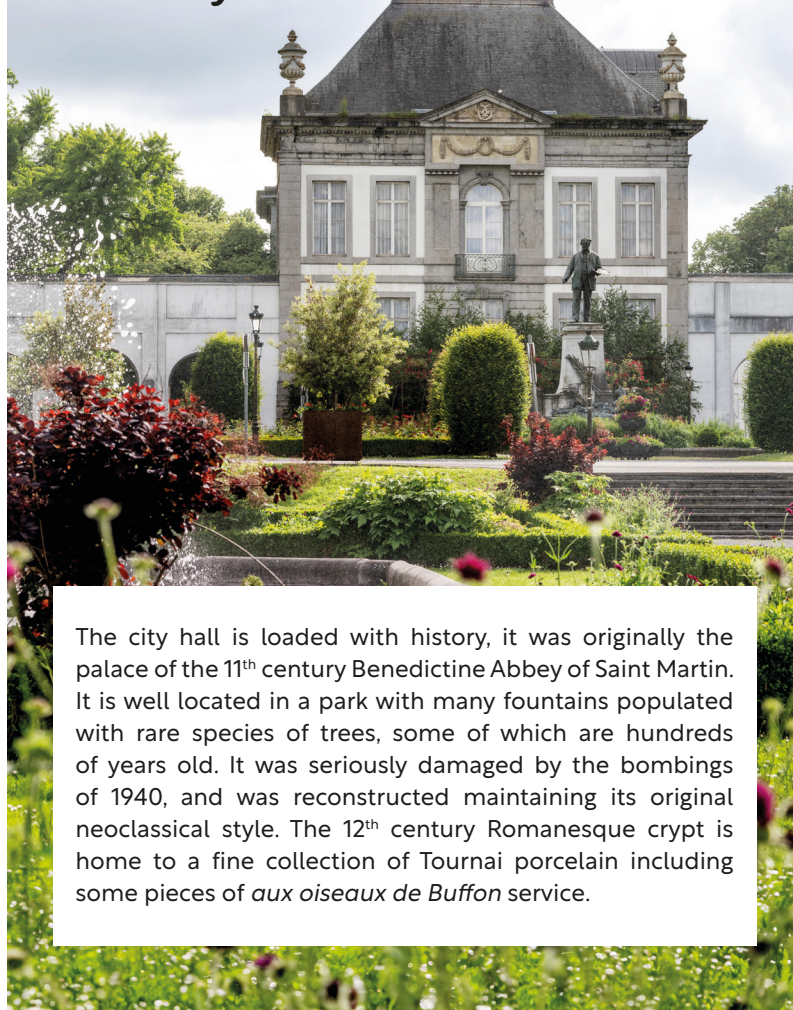
Pont des Trou

It was constructed at the end of the 13th century. This water gate protects the Scheldt river as part of Tournai's secondary defences and one of its 18 gates. It had enormous portcullises which could be lowered to block entry to the city via the river. It took 50 years to build (1281-1329). The central arch was dynamited at the start of the second world war. When it was reconstructed in 1948, the Pont des Trou was raised by 2.40 metres to facilitate navigation. The arches of the central section were later modified again to meet modern economic needs and allow 2000 tonne barges to enter the city. The whole project was inaugurated in 2023, after serious refection works to the towers and the modernisation of the nearby quays.



25

The city hall



The city hall is loaded with history, it was originally the palace of the 11th century Benedictine Abbey of Saint Martin. It is well located in a park with many fountains populated with rare species of trees, some of which are hundreds of years old. It was seriously damaged by the bombings of 1940, and was reconstructed maintaining its original neoclassical style. The 12th century Romanesque crypt is home to a fine collection of Tournai porcelain including some pieces of *aux oiseaux de Buffon* service.

31

Visit the museums of Tournai !

26 **TAMAT, Tapestry and Textile Arts museum**

> [tamat.be](#)

27 **Natural history museum and vivarium**

> [mhn.tournai.be](#)

28 **Fine arts museum**

> [mba.tournai.be](#)

29 **Puppetry Arts museum**

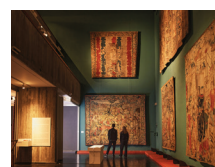
> [maisondelamarionnette.be](#)

30 **Military History museum**

> [mhm.tournai.be](#)

31 **Folklore and Imagination museum (MuFim)**

> [mufim.tournai.be](#)



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