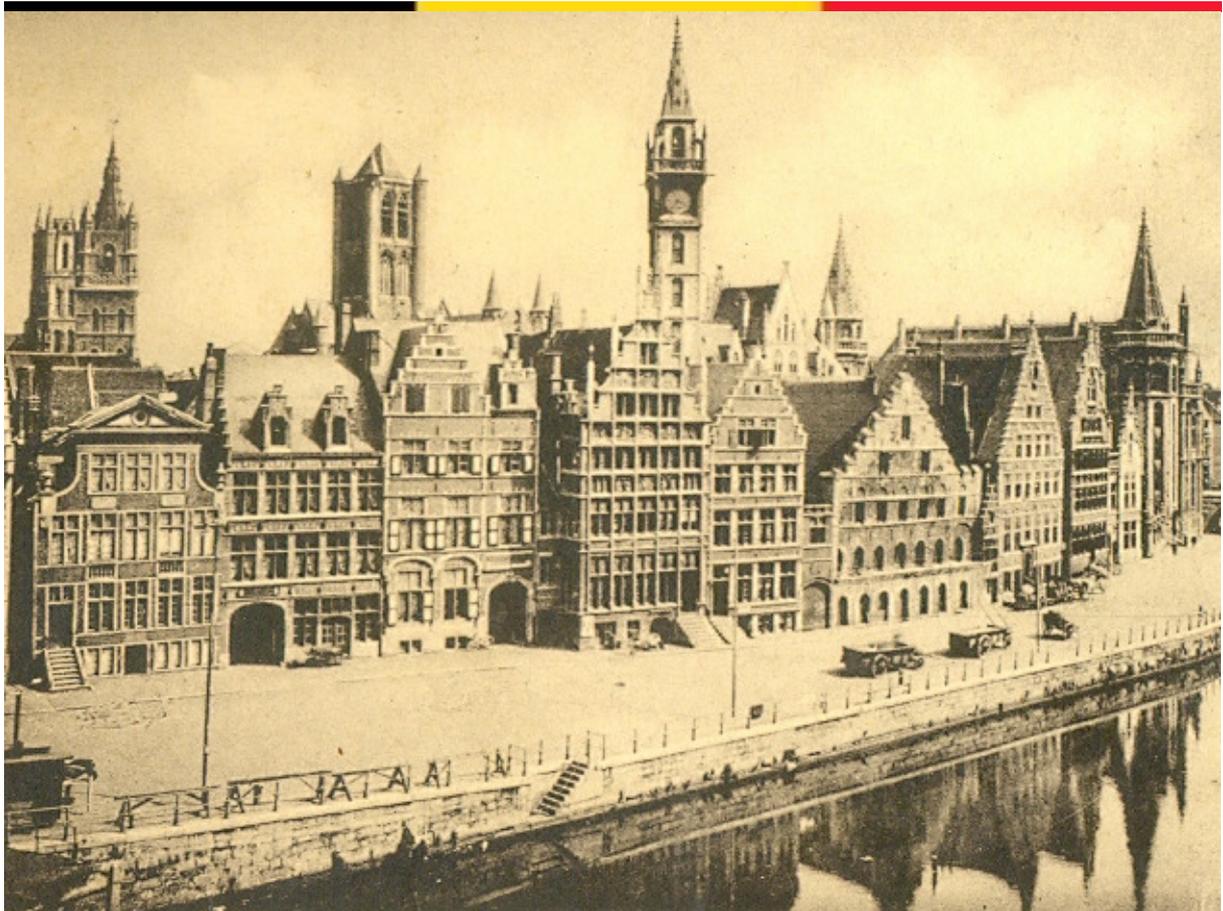


## 9. Ghent: our most playful city from café to café



I've studied in Ghent for three years, and maybe that's why I've taken it for granted. I can honestly say I was amazed at the beauty of this very playful city when I was walking through it for the creation of this city walk. I even think it's a shame to put it in with the extras. If any of the "obligatory" chapters seem only mildly interesting to you, go to Ghent instead. You won't be disappointed.

Of course, choices will have to be made. Most of the museums and attractions are listed at the end of this chapter – you can probably visit one or two of them. In fact, you could spend a week in Ghent without getting tired of it.

But, this being Belgium, I've tried it from a different perspective. I think Ghent has the most diverse and interesting cafés – although that could be because I know them best from studying here. That's why I've constructed this leisurely city walk around the most famous sights, but also around some famous cafés in Ghent. If you just do the walk, you could probably get it done in 6 hours, but that's not the point. You should be here an entire day, and have a pause in the cafés I recommend, or any other café that appeals to you. Bear in mind that some cafés are closed on Sundays and Mondays!

You can't get to know Ghent in one day. You can get acquainted with it though, if you don't rush through it like a fool. That's why this should be a fun walk through our most playful city. The inhabitants of Ghent are more down-to-earth than their Antwerp "friends" and more open than their Brussels compatriots. It's hard to describe – once you get to know the people and the city you'd call it a cheeky or playful city. It's a student city, so that makes it more youthful and interesting than Bruges. It's a well-preserved medieval city so that makes it more beautiful than Brussels. And still, it remains more provincial than Antwerp, and that makes it more accessible and open. Enjoy Ghent, relax, and if the beer or the jenever gets to you, "nie pleujen": don't fold!

Ghent is well-served by trains. Of the two stations, Sint-Pieters is the biggest. Dampoort is the other one. From either one, you can start this city walk. Sint-Pieters is recommended as a starting point if you want to visit the botanical garden or the fine or modern arts museums. Otherwise, Dampoort is a little closer to the walk and to Sintt-Amundsberg – you can read about that in the museums section. By car, Ghent is also easy to reach. Except on sunny summer's Sundays when everybody is heading for the coast, traffic jams around Ghent are rare. Parking is a different thing. Space is ample but it's never free – except on Sundays and holidays, and even then the free parking spaces are rather far from the centre. There are park&ride parkings as well but I've chosen to start this city walk from the guarded Sintt-Pietersplein car park where you park 24h for 2,5€. That's cheaper than taking a bus from a park&ride. In the other underground car parks you pay 10€ for a day, and on the streets parking is often limited to a maximum of 2 hours.



Six famous towers, seen from the Gravensteen. Left to Right: St-Jacob's cathedral, belfry, Sint-Niklaas church, (in the distance) the book tower, tower of the old post office, Sint Michiels church.

## The city walk in Ghent

First, two words of warning. One: trams always have the right of way. Look out for them. Two: this is a playful walk in a playful city. You'll sometimes see something you'd rather take a closer look at further down the road, but don't: we'll be getting there!

### From the St-Pieters station to the Sint-Pietersplein

*If you've come by car, skip this chapter.*

*If you've come by train to the Sint-Pieters station, take the exit to the Koningin Maria-Hendrikaplein. On the square, on your right, you see a former hotel, a large building. Go to the left of this building, the Koningin Astridlaan. Follow this road until you reach the Citadelpark. As you might imagine, this is*

where the Ghent citadel used to be. The citadel was built by the Dutch between 1819 and 1831.

In the long monotonous wall around it, there were only two gates. In 1845 it was deemed strategically useless by high command but it was still kept. In 1849, an artillery lieutenant wanted to commit suicide because he had to answer for some thefts he'd committed. He did so by blowing up the gun powder magazine with himself in it. He killed himself

and some other soldiers. The citizens of Ghent urged the city council and the government to take down the citadel.

Finally, the city of Ghent could acquire the grounds for one million franks – a bargain, apparently. At first, the city council was reluctant to tear down the so hated wall. There were taxes on food and drink that were brought to the city, the octrooi. The wall was an easy way to make smuggling difficult – at least on the south side of the city. After the octrooi was abolished by the government, the citadel didn't last long. By the end of the 1870s most of it was demolished. The park now houses amongst others a congress hall, the museum for fine arts, the museum for modern arts (S.M.A.K.), and Het Kuipke, a velodroom.

*Go in the park and walk to the right, keeping as close to the outside as possible. You reach the ICC, the congress centre. Keep on going straight ahead. On the right is the wall of the botanical garden of the university. Further, opposite the entrance of the botanical garden, is a monument for painter Emiel Claus.*

*Continue along this road until you reach the S.M.A.K. and the museum for fine arts.*

*Walk to the right side of the S.M.A.K. (E.Felixdreef) and go right at the next intersection (G. Vanaisedreef). You pass an old gate of the citadel. Cross the Charles de Kerckhovelaan into the Kunstlaan, with the trees in the middle. The large buildings on the left are former military barracks, now part of the higher institute for fine arts. Follow the Kunstlaan to the end. Cross the large intersection and go straight ahead. You arrive at the Sint-Pietersplein.*

### **From the Sint-Pietersplein to the belfry**

If you've come by car, you park under the Sint-Pietersplein. This large square (80x200m) was part of the Sint-Pieters abbey. The abbey church, built from 1629 to 1651, is still there and some of the counts of Flanders are buried in it. There used to be a second, older church on this square but it was demolished in 1799 because of the French Revolution. The street next to the church is named

Tweekerkenstraat, which means Two Churches street.

The building to the right is the former abbey, now a museum. Or two, actually: an art hall (Kunsthall) and a museum about nature. See the museum information about this. It's worth going into the gate where you see the banners for De Wereld Van Kina - it's past the Kunsthall. On this secluded square you'll not only find that museum and a tavern, but also a gate that leads you to the abbey garden, a tranquil oasis in the middle of the city, with even a vineyard. It's open from Tuesday to Sunday, 10-18h, and it's free.

On the Sint-Pieters square, have another look around. The building on the left of the church belongs to the university. Don't forget to look at the pharmacy at number 26: the neo-classical building dates from 1848 but the interior is authentic art nouveau, from 1929.



**The garden of the Sint-Pieters abbey**

If you've come by car and you want to visit the Citadelpark or any of the museums, turn your back to the church entrance and walk to the opposite left exit of the square. At this intersection you see the Kunstlaan with the trees in the middle. Just follow this, cross the big De Kerckhovelaan, and you arrive at the museums. Take the same way back.

*With your back to the church, go straight ahead and go up the steps. Cross the little square. Take the Sint-Amandstraat (no street sign) to the right. The Oxfam book shop at number 16 is always worth a quick glance, they have second-hand books in English as well.*

*Continue along this street (the name changes to Sint-Kwintensberg). In this street is Vynilla, a new and second-hand lp and cd store. They have some rarities but expect to pay top prices for them. On the other hand, not-so-rare albums are correctly priced. They have lots of rare albums from Belgian bands here as well, and new albums too.*

*At the bottom of this street you reach a busy intersection. If your second-hand lust isn't satisfied yet, take a sharp left into the Kortrijksepoortstraat where you immediately see De Kaft. It has books, cds and some vinyl. After your visit, return to that intersection.*

*If you want to visit the STAM – the museum about the city's history on the site of the former Bijloke abbey – or if you want to hire a boat you can navigate yourself without a license, you should go left (Verlorenkost). You must come back to this intersection to continue the walk afterwards.*

*You'll see a draw bridge – that's where the boats are (details are on <http://www.minervaboten.be> – you're not allowed to navigate in the city centre). For the STAM, take the first street on the left, just over the river, and follow the water for some 500 meter. At the end of this street, on a big road, turn right for the entrance to the STAM. After your visits return the way you came.*

*If you don't want to visit the STAM or hire a boat, or if you've done so and come back to the the intersection, follow the tram tracks to the Nederkouter. There's no street sign but*

just past this intersection is a comic book shop, De Poort. The Belgian comic book writers are among the best in the world.

*Follow the Nederkouter.*

As you cross the bridge over the water, you'll notice the stately building on your left. It's the palace of justice. The large plaque on the side commemorates friar Peter of Ghent, who left for Mexico from this spot in 1522.

*Walk past the palace of justice.* You may notice that, if you were to continue straight ahead, you would end up in a very crowded street – except maybe on Sundays. That would be the Veldstraat, the biggest shopping street in Ghent. With the same shops you can find anywhere else. So don't go there.

*Walk to the square in front of the palace of justice so you can have a look at it.* It's less interesting a building than you might think, but you probably would have wanted to see it anyway. The statue on the square is Hippolyte Metdepenningen, lawyer and first graduate of the rights faculty of the Ghent university.

*Turn back where you came from and take the street on the left (Schouwburgstraat).* The building on the right is the opera. Admire the magnificent doors. *This street leads you to the Kouter.* The Kouter square is a square where festivities and public meetings were held. There's a cast iron music kiosk, stately 19<sup>th</sup> century houses, a flower market on Sunday mornings, and above all: the most beautiful urinals in Belgium. They are, unfortunately, only accessible to men.

To find them, go to the Handelsbeurs building. It's on the right hand side of the square and they often have a banner for a concert on display. This former trades building/party hall/telephone and telegraph exchange is now a small concert hall with a good programming. On the right is the brasserie (bar/restaurant) that's open at noon and in the evenings (after 6pm) from Monday to Saturday. If you're lucky enough to be there at opening times, you can go down to the toilets. The old urinals are now behind a glass wall with the new ones in front of it, so it still feels like you're peeing in these wonderful old urinals.

*You cross the square diagonally so you end up in the corner furthest opposite where you entered the square. Now, between two KBC bank buildings, between OC Vastgoed and*

*Chrisofelli, go into the narrow Koutersteeg. At the end, go left (Koestraat). Look at the Butcher's shop at number 40 – beautiful, isn't it? This street takes you to the Kalandeborg square.*

*Go right, towards the fountain. If you look in the Oranjeberg street you'll see a building of the provincial government. It looks more interesting from here than it really is. Go left of the fountain (Kalandestraat) and then left again (Volderstraat).*

In the Volderstraat you will find a couple of interesting buildings. At number 3 is a building of the rights faculty of the Ghent university. A couple of steps further is one of the De Slegte second hand and antiquary book shops. The window above the shop is wonderful. Opposite is the Aula butcher's shop – high quality meat and the like. Mondays to Fridays at noon, it's a sort of restaurant as well – the food is prepared in front of you. There's a fish shop to the left of it.

Next to De Slegte is the Aula Academica – a university building that's used for special academic congresses and official ceremonies. The building was in the news in 2000 when artist Jan Fabre had the pillars wrapped in smoked ham (Ganda ham?) for Jan Hoet's art project 'Over The Edges'. This "work of art" was called 'The legs of reason skinned'. It made a statement about death and the perishableness of life. The ham was meant to stay on for the entire three months of the art exhibit but it started rotting and had to be removed after six weeks because of the stench.

*Past the Aula, go right on the second intersection. There's no street sign but it's the street with the tram tracks. This is the Veldstraat – "the" shopping street of Ghent. All right, if you can't control your shopping urges, go left instead of right. At the end you'll see the palace of justice again – just turn around there and come back through the same street. Do look up at the wonderful facades of the buildings.*

*Coming out of the Veldstraat, you see the Korenmarkt and the Sint-Niklaaskerk. If you*

*want to visit it, now is the time, but don't go further to the Korenmarkt yet. Go right first (Cataloniëstraat). The tower of the Sint-Niklaaskerk is one of the "three towers" of Ghent, along with the belfry and the Sint-Baafs cathedral you see further down the street. The house on the right hand side at the next intersection is particularly interesting, you might want to cross the road to the side of the tram stops. It's an office of the East-Flanders tourist board – it used to be the guild house of the masons. The original facade was obscured by subsequent building. A copy of it was recreated on the Graslei – the original one was rediscovered in 1976. The statues on top are made by the Ghent sculptor and singer Walter de Buck – they're called De Moriskesdansers and they can turn with the wind. The old houses on the square between the church and the belfry were demolished to make the buildings more visible – demolition started around 1910 for the world exposition and was finished in the 1960s. Afterwards, it was thought that the square was a bit too empty and after many considerations now a sort of hall will be constructed there. There was some public outcry about the construction, but only long after the plans and the scale models had been open for discussions, and actual construction had begun.*



**View of the Sint-Niklaas church from the belfry tower**

### From the belfry to the Vrijdagmarkt

*Walk along the street and the square to the Sint-Baafs cathedral.*

You pass the 90m high belfry (belfort in Dutch). As you may remember from the Bruges chapter, belfries are towers with bells. Only wealthy and free cities were financially able to build them – before, only royalty and the Church could do so. Therefore, belfries are a symbol of the freedom and power of citizens. The Ghent belfry originates from the early 1300s and had a cloth hall built next to it in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Only part



The cathedral, seen from the belfry tower

of the planned building was constructed – the rest of it was constructed according to the original plans in 1903. The cloth hall served as a city prison later – but more about that later on. Don't walk to the back of the belfry yet.

For a splendid view of the city, you can climb the two hundred and something steps to the top, or take the elevator – it's open every day from 10-18h.

Opposite the belfry, you can find the Glengarry, a pub/whiskeybar with a lot of choice.

Past the belfry, on the square, is the Royal Dutch Theatre – de Koninklijke Nederlandse Schouwburg. On the facade of the 1898 building is a depiction of Apollo and the muses of the Parnassus. It's the home of the NTGent (Nederlands Toneel Gent, Dutch Playhouse Ghent) since 1965. Before it is the statue of

Jan-Frans Willems, a writer and an important figure for the Flemish movement and one of the key figures in the development of a common spelling for Flanders and Holland.

The Sint-Baafs cathedral dates from the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century – the crypt is even older. The most famous piece of art inside is Het Lam Gods (The Lamb of God, also known as the Ghent Altarpiece) by Hubert and Jan Van Eyck. It's famous for its detail and lifelikeness. It was moved and brought to safety several times. In 1816, the side panels were sold and they ended up in Germany. They were returned to Belgium after the first world war, as part of

the repair payments demanded by the Versailles treaty. The most famous episode in the life of this work of art was the theft by Arsène Goedertier, who stole two panels in 1934. He returned one, for the other he demanded a large ransom. On his death bed, he confessed to the theft but he didn't reveal where the other panel was hidden. Every now and then, people think they know where it might be – there is a 20000€ reward for whomever finds it. Meanwhile, the stolen panel was replaced by a copy that took

six months to finish.

The altarpiece will be restored from 2012 to 2017. Two thirds of the altarpiece will stay in the cathedral at any time – the restoration can be followed in the Museum for Fine Arts.

In all honesty, seeing the altarpiece is a bit like seeing the Mona Lisa in the Louvre: it's behind glass, in a small crowded room. The audioguide, included in the price, is quite interesting though.

Photography of the artwork in the cathedral is forbidden – the copyright was owned by the clergy and has been sold to a private company. There is good news though: the Ghent Altarpiece can be seen in extreme detail on <http://closertovaneyck.kikirpa.be/>

*Follow the right hand side of the cathedral.* You pass a large group of statues, depicting the Van Eyck brothers – the painters of Het Lam Gods – who are being thanked by the people. This group of statues was ordered in 1912 and inaugurated by the king in 1913 for

the world exhibition in Ghent – so getting it ready in time was difficult, but not impossible. Then you'll see the Geeraard de Duivelsteen, the 13<sup>th</sup> century house of a nobleman that served as an arsenal, cloister, school, mental institution, prison, and now as an administrative archive.

*Follow the tram tracks until you cross the bridge over the water. Go left after the bridge (the street is called Reep).*

As you are standing on the bridge, you see the statue of Lieven Bauwens on the right. He was a tradesman but first and foremost an industrial spy. He smuggled parts and personnel for a spinning mule out of the UK – something highly risky because the British were very protective about their industrialisation of cotton processing. Bauwens was sentenced to death by the British but he'd already escaped. They even followed him overseas but he managed to bribe his way back to Belgium. His brother started producing the spinning mules on an industrial scale and Bauwens sold and exploited lots of them. It brought him wealth and he even became mayor of Ghent for one year. Unfortunately, due to economical and political circumstances, Bauwens went bankrupt and retreated to Paris for the last eleven years of his life.

One example of the "mule jenny", his spinning machine, is on display at the MIAT.

*So, you've gone left after the bridge – now walk up to the next bridge – pedestrians only – and cross that. The white building in front of you is the bishop's palace. On the left is a building of the National Bank. Walk through the street on the right of the bishop's palace (Hoofdkerkstraat) and turn left at the end (Kapittelstraat). Notice the small door in the tower of the cathedral. Just as you enter the square, take the street on the right (Biezekapelstraat). The wooden construction at the end of the Biezekapelstraat (look up!) is not a bridge but a stiffening construction. Turn left (Hoogpoort) at the end. You might hear some music here, some of the buildings you've passed belong to the conservatory (music school).*



**The three towers at night**

*At the next intersection, go left (Botermarkt). You'd think you're looking at two buildings but they're really one: the city hall. The part on the right is late gothic (designed in 1519) but the statues were added in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The left wing (along the Botermarkt) is renaissance from around 1600. There are even older and some newer parts – but if you really want to know everything about that, I suggest you buy a book about it. Visits are possible but only with a guide – contact the Ghent tourist office for details.*

Just one more thing: the blue and white drain pipe (you can't miss it) was painted in these colours when the city hall was renovated in 2001. They are the original 16<sup>th</sup> century colours that indicate the function of the drain pipe – it's a bit like the Pompidou centre, really...

If you are reading all these things out loud to your friends, you'll probably be thirsty. Opposite the city hall is café Den Turk, a typical "brown" café that has been a café since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Have your friends buy you a beer there. This café is reputedly named after one of its first owners who went east for the crusades. The people back east were all called "Turks", so the owner was also called Turk after his return.

On the wall, you will see a savings box. People can "rent" a box and put a minimum amount of money in it each month. The money is put on a savings account and the resulting interests are used for activities or dinners with the group.

The building next to it (“Cour St-Georges”) used to be the guild’s house for the archers. It serves no function right now.

*Continue along the Botermarkt in the direction of the belfry. On this side of the belfry, above the green door, you see a relief of a man being breast-fed. This statue depicts a popular legend in Ghent (based on a Roman saga) of a woman who breast-fed her father who was sentenced to death by starvation. Because of the sacrifice of the daughter, the man was pardoned. This building is called “de Mammelokker”, Ghent dialect for “the breast sucker”. It was the warden’s house when the belfry was a prison in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. Now it’s the office of the Ghent ombudsman.*

*Turn your back to the Mammelokker and walk right of the Kobra hall. Notice the Amadeus restaurant – all-you-can-eat spare ribs, and a beautiful art-nouveau interior. Straight ahead into the Donkersteeg, and finally you arrive at the Korenmarkt. As the name (“grain market”) indicates, the grains that arrived by boat were sold here. Unfortunately, there are some ghastly purely functional buildings from recent years that diminish the overall charm of this square.*

The little tower with the clock is part of the old post office. It was built between 1898 and 1910 for the world exhibition of 1913. Since 1998 it became a (now partly abandoned) mall and apartments.

*Have a look around the square. With your back to the Donkersteeg, go right and then left as soon as possible (Hooiaard).*

This little square is the Pensmarkt. “Pensen” are now a kind of sausage, but it used to mean “intestines”. You will see the place where the (good) meat was sold a bit further – the intestines were sold here, mostly to poor people. Café “Het Spijker” used to be a grains warehouse, and before that was a hospital for lepers and plagued. It probably dates from the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, because the ground floor is lower than the street level – the street level was elevated in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This building is called “kleine spijker” – the big “spijker” is on the Korenlei as we shall see later on. Spijker means nail in Dutch (the carpenter’s kind) but it also meant grains warehouse in the olden days – that name comes from the

Latin “spicarium”. Spica is grain. If you are thirsty again you may visit the café.

To the right of Het Spijker is a public restroom. Even if you don’t have to go, go in and up the metal staircase. Here awaits a splendid view: Het Groot Vleeshuis (“the big meat house” – there was a smaller one too). Obviously, it was used to sell meat – selling meat at home was forbidden for a long time. Now, it’s a promotion centre for local specialties. Some of those specialties can be seen hanging from the cross beams: the famous Ganda hams. These are made by Ganda of Destelbergen, near Ghent. Only pork meat and sea salt are used, no conservation additives. The hams have to ripen for at least nine months. Of course, the Vleeshuis isn’t the place where they are dried, but you can buy them here.

*During the opening hours of the Vleeshuis you can go back down the staircase and go in the Vleeshuis. Take the gate on the right to leave. If it’s closed, go back out of the public restroom and walk past the Vleeshuis.*

This brings you to another attractive square, the Groentemarkt (vegetable market). It used to be the fish market until the new fish market was opened nearby. Notice the little café called “Galgenhuisje”, meaning gallows’ house. Reputedly, it’s the smallest café in Ghent. Intestines were sold here, but it also served as waiting place for criminals that were to be hung or chained to the pillory. On the side of the Vleeshuis you’ll see metal anchorages for the scaffold. The cellar (where you can take your drink) consists of two of the three passageways where ships could go through to reach the fish market. They are closed on the river side but you can still see them from the outside, as we will see later as we cross this square a second time.

*Now cross the square to the right and go in the Langemunt street. Walk through this rather uninteresting shopping street. You reach the little square with the big cannon. Go right. This wonderful square is the Vrijdagmarkt.*

The cannon is called “Dulle Griet”, a heavy piece of artillery from 1431. It was brought to Ghent in 1578. Stories about its use and history vary from source to source. The colour is the original “oxen red” and the grille is there

to prevent students and children from climbing in.

The Vrijdagsmarkt ("Friday market" – there has been a market on Friday here since 1199) is one of the most beautiful squares in Ghent. The statue in the middle is Jacob Van Artevelde, a 14<sup>th</sup> century nobleman. During the 100 year war he managed to keep trade relations with England so that Ghent could flourish because of the import of English wool. He was murdered with an axe in his residence at the Kalandberg during a people's revolt. The reasons were both jealousy by a political adversary and an economical crisis.



The Vrijdagsmarkt with the Van Artevelde statue

This square is one of the oldest in Ghent. Festivities, uprisings and executions took place here – the last execution, by guillotine, was in 1822. The man was guilty of murdering his father.

There are some beautiful guild's houses around the square. The most prominent buildings are separated by some 400 years. Straight ahead is Het Toreken (the little tower). It was built as the tanners' guild house in the 1500s. After serving several purposes, it's now a poetry centre.

The other noteworthy building, from the early 1900s, is the building of the Bond Moyson, the socialist health insurance and trades union. It has always served this purpose.

Another important building in our walk around the bars of Ghent is De Dulle Griet (like the cannon). You'll find this café on the side

where you came on the square. They have a large choice of beers, but the most interesting one is their "max of the house" (brown or blonde). It's served in a very special large glass, and you have to give the waiter one of your shoes – you get it back when the glass is returned.

### From the Vrijdagsmarkt to the Gravensteen

*With your back to the Dulle Griet café (and both your shoes on your feet) walk straight across the square. Go into the Baudelostraat*

*and then right into the Wolfstraat. The houses in the bend of the Wolfstraat has several "interesting" sentences hacked in the stone of the facade. I'll just quote a couple: "the sowing pillow is women's school desk". "Leave water in casks for 100 years, it still won't have turned into wine". I don't know whether these have anything to do with the fact that a lot of these houses were inhabited by people of the socialist movement. Coming out of*

*the Wolfstraat you see the birth house of Edward Anseele, a socialist politician, minister and co-founder of the socialist workers' party. At the T intersection at the end of the Wolfstraat, go right (Penitentenstraat). This brings you to a little square near the St-Jacobs church. Go right and walk to the entrance of the church.*

On this square – aptly named "near St-Jacobs", there's a flea market every Friday, Saturday and Sunday morning. You may also have noticed a totem pole. Ghent folk singer and artist Walter De Buck made it to honour Karel Waeri (another Ghent folk singer of a previous generation) and to commemorate the first Gentse Feesten. It was indeed Walter De Buck who (re)started the now famous Gentse Feesten around 1970. This was the first square where they took place. Nowadays, practically every square in Ghent has its own

stage and the streets of the city are always crowded and full of music, beer, arts and joy during 10 days. Walter De Buck still sings his songs in the Ghent dialect on stage – he will be turning 80 soon.

The church itself is from the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century but it has had many an expansion and restoration.

On the little square to the right of the church (when facing the entrance) are some fun cafés. The Trollekelder (Troll's cave) is probably the most famous. Across the street is the "Spitburger" snack bar. If you feel a little hunger coming, their grilled ham sandwiches sure beat any hamburger. Maybe you're a bit suspicious about the name spitburger, but "spit" means rotisserie.

If you want to visit the Campo Santo cemetery (see the museums descriptions), this is the place where you should take a bus. The stop for lines 38 and 39 – the one you need – is a bit further on the Vlasmarkt street, so you have to walk past the bus stops you see at first sight from the Sint-Jacobs square. The bus itinerary is described in the museums section.

*So, as said, walk to the square to the right of the church. Then, go right. You probably recognise the city hall and the tower of the belfry in the distance, but you have to take the first street on the right (Kammerstraat). You arrive back at the Vrijdagmarkt. Take the first street on the left (just before the square), the Serpentstraat. In this street, you'll find some very peculiar shops where you can buy Borat swimming pants, Mick Jagger and Sigmund Freud action figures, "alternative" books and other assorted rarities.*

*Go right at the intersection – or, if you're a fan of kitsch interiors, go left first and visit Pink Flamingo's – a bar with a special interior – but do turn back. Just past number 12, Onderstraat, there's a small passage filled with graffiti. Walk through it. The Werregarenstraat is one of the only places in Ghent where you're allowed to spray graffiti, and it shows. This is no ghetto or anything, so don't be afraid to walk through it. Abandoned spray cans against a graffiti background are the perfect still-life for the discerning photographer.*

*At the end of the graffiti street go right (on the left you can see the side facade of the city hall). You arrive at the Groentemarkt again.*



**Graffiti artist in the Werregarenstraat**

If you like mustard, go left – you'll see a shop with "Wwe. Tierenteyn-Verlent" above the door. This is a mustard factory where you can buy the product very fresh. This shop dates back to the early 1800s. Founder Pertrus Tierenteyn had seven sons. One of them took over the Ghent factory and shop with his wife Adelaide Verlent. Another son, Ferdinand Tierenteyn, started a more industrial production – this company too is still in existence. There was a gentlemen's agreement between the two Tierenteyn companies that Tierenteyn-Verlent sold their mustard in Ghent and Ferdinand Tierenteyn sold his mustard elsewhere, but not in Ghent. The Tierenteyn-Verlent shop was taken over by the family accountant in 1947 and sold to the Caesens family in 1958. This family still owns the company.

A couple of houses to the right of Tierenteyn-Verlent is Timmermans 1845, a shop with

paper and pens, classic shaving equipment and the like.

*Now, walk to the right hand side of the Galgenhuisje café and turn your back to it.* You'll see a small passage with a painted portrait of a man. This man is Pol, owner of Het Dreupelkot. You can reach it through this passage: take the second door on the left, it's normally open. You'll also find jazz café Hot Club De Gand at the end.

If you can't find the door, go towards the water and go right just in front of it. There, on the right, is the front entrance of Het Dreupelkot. According to the painted slogan, you'll find "100 Flemish jenevers and 1 North-French" here. Pol makes some of them himself – the impressive list is at <http://www.dreupelkot.be/dreupelkot-dranken/>. Choose whichever you like. Jenever, also known as Dutch Gin (because it was invented in Holland) is made from grains and pure jenever is quite strong and malty in flavour. The mixed jenevers have about half the alcohol percentage and they're often mixed with sweet juices. You can try walnut jenever, vanilla jenever, tiramisu jenever and whatnot. A "dreupel" ("drop") is Flemish dialect for a jenever.

If you're more into beer, Het Waterhuis aan de Bierkant is recommended. It's just a couple of meters away from the front entrance of Het Dreupelkot. It's no mistake that this house is called "the water house on



The Graslei

the beer side". The house is actually in the water, and on this side the beer and wine was delivered by boat.

*After you've had your heartwarming drink, leave Het Dreupelkot through the door on the waterside and go left, facing the water. If you haven't gone in, just go left before the bridge over the water. Take the steps down and notice the closed passages under the Vleeshuis where the fisherman's boats used to pass. Continue along the water (you have to go up a couple of steps again, and then continue on this side of the water).*

You've come to one of the most beautiful and well-known parts of Ghent: the Graslei (this side) and the Korenlei (the other side of the water). On this side, number 8 is a copy of the house with the Moriskesdansers (opposite the belfry), made for the 1913 world exhibition. It isn't the only house that got a facelift or was built specially for that world fair. Number 10 is probably the oldest building here, and reputedly the oldest stepped gable in existence. It's Het Spijker, so this too was a warehouse for grains, and it was built around 1200. It's not falling over, the facade was constructed at an angle to facilitate the hoisting of the grains.

Now it's a restaurant called Belga Queen (there's another one in Brussels) – the owner



The entrance to the Dreupelkot

doesn't only have a keen eye for good food, but also for great interior decoration. Personally, I think it's a bit overpriced for what you get. If you do insist on eating here, ask for the tables on the top floor. These tables are almost in the kitchen – you see and hear the chefs calling out orders and see the waiters picking them up.

Number 11 used to be the toll house, number 12 the guild house for the “cooremeters”, the “measurers of grain”, and number 13 the guild house for the free skippers.

*Go under the first bridge – don't go up yet, you'll get there in a couple of minutes. Cross the water at the next bridge and take the first street on the right (Onderbergen).*

The long cloister building along the water is called “het Pand”. It's a former cloister of the Dominican order. Even after the French revolution it remained a cloister – the friars bought it back incognito and didn't wear their habits. The university bought it in 1963 and made it into a prestigious cultural centre.

You also pass the St-Michiels church. Building for this church started in 1440 and ended as late as 1835. The tower was meant to have a high spire and it was to be 134 meters high. Because of lack of funding and a weak foundation these plans weren't carried out. The interior of the church is worth a visit.

*Walk around the church to the bridge where you see the three towers. This is the St-Michielselling, and from here you see – once again – the famous three towers. This is the classic photo spot.*

*Don't cross the water, go down the stairs on the left and go back in the direction of the Vleeshuis.*

Now, you're on the Korenlei. Most of these houses date back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century but most of them were renovated or refurbished for the 1913 exhibition. You might want to go in the Marriott hotel – the old facade is hiding a very modern building. You can just look around and then go out without having a drink.

The light pink house past the Marriott is the guilds' house of the “unfree skippers”. These weren't allowed to navigate the waters of Ghent. When this restriction was withdrawn they built this magnificent house to impress their opponents, the “free skippers”.

*Continue straight ahead, into the Jan Breydelstraat. In this street you'll find the Design museum on the left and the Appelburgparkje on the right. It's a park in name but it's just a small dab of green. It offers a splendid view of the old fish market and the river.*

*At the end of the Breydelstraat, either go straight ahead for an optional detour, or right if you want to skip that detour.*

Coming out of the Breydelstraat, you are facing De Gekroonde Hoofden (“the crowned heads”), a spare-rib restaurant. The building dates from around 1560 and busts of 14 counts of Flanders (with their initials) are to be found on the façade.



the Vismijn (left) and Vleeshuis (right), seen from the Appelburgparkje

### An optional detour

This walk brings you to some quieter parts of the city – it's about half an hour to an hour extra. If you don't want to do it, just skip to the next chapter.

*For this detour you walk in the street on the right of De Gekroonde Hoofden (Gewad). Take the first street on the right (Sint-Widostraat). In the bend to the left, you have a wonderful view of the Gravensteen. You'll also see the Arca theatre – formerly a car repair workshop, now part of the NTGent theatre group. Past the bend is youth hostel De Draecke.*

*You arrive at the Lievekaai with the weeping willows. The big buildings on the other bank are of a convent, and further down the street is another convent (but we won't pass it) – none of them can be visited. Follow the*

*Lievekaai and go left just after the bridge over the river (Sint-Antoniusskaai). Cross the next bridge. This pedestrian bridge is the Brug van de Keizerlijke Geneugten ("the bridge of the emperor's pleasures") – the four statues were made by Walter de Buck (him again) and his collective of artists. They each depict a legend surrounding emperor Charles V (Charles Quint in French, Keizer Karel in Dutch).*

These are the four depicted legends in brief, based on a compilation by Peter Depoorter at [Gentblogt.be](http://Gentblogt.be):

- Charles V as a boat puller: as Charles was walking along the river, he bumped into a skipper pulling his boat. The ship sailed into the embankment. The skipper urged Charles to pull the boat. After the boat was freed, Charles was invited for a slice of bread, but the skipper told him off for using two kinds of bread spread (butter and cheese) on one sandwich – “you rich lot may use two kinds of spread, but us poor folk don't have the money for such indulgences”. Later, as the ship was moored in Ghent, the skipper was summoned to the palace. He discovered that the young man he had told off was none other than the emperor. To his surprise, instead of being punished, the emperor gave him a whole new ship.
- Charles V and Veerle: Charles fell in love with Veerle, the daughter of a butcher who delivered meat to the court. When Veerle's father learned about their secret relationship, he sent his daughter away. Charles and Veerle married secretly in Dendermonde and had a son. The pope, however, declared the marriage unlawful. The child was taken away from Veerle and it was educated in



The bridge of imperial joys

Brussels. Only on her dying bed, she saw her son again.

- Mad Beth: Mad Beth, a young widow, had an inn in Ypres. When Charles V arrived alone there, he demanded the best oats for his horse. She started calling him names because he had such high demands. Her help, Tone, whispered to the emperor not to listen to her, because she'd always say the opposite of what she thought. Beth seemed very cross with Tone as well. Later, when Charles V arrived at

the same inn with his court, Mad Beth realised who she'd been telling off. She feared for her life and asked for forgiveness. Charles V didn't punish her but demanded she'd marry Tone. It turned out Tone was right: Mad Beth did love him but was afraid to show it, that's why she always seemed cross with him.

- Charles V and Johanna. During the siege of Doornik, when Charles stayed in Oudenaarde, he was given a lady companion for the lonely nights. She was called Johanna, a weaver's daughter. Nine

months later, Margaretha was born. Charles V acknowledged she was his lawful daughter, on the condition that Johanna could never see him or her daughter again. Johanna married two years later, and Margaretha grew up to be Margaret of Parma, governor of the Netherlands.

*Walk through the small garden and go right past the gate (Zilverhof). You arrive at a square with a statue of Charles V – the square is called Prinsenhof. This is the site of the castle where Charles V was born. You won't find many remnants of the castle though. Only the gate on your right dates from this era.*

*Go right and walk through the gate. Inside the gate you'll see the names of people that were*

beheaded, burnt or buried alive for protestant sympathies or rebellion against the emperor. Charles V liked Ghent, but couldn't stand protests by its headstrong and proud inhabitants. At one instance, a major rebellion broke out because Charles demanded more money for his wars. To end the protest, he came with a large army. The protesters surrendered. Some of them were killed, others were forced to walk through the city barefoot, in their night gown, with a noose around their neck. Ever since, the noose is a symbol of the pride and stubbornness of Ghent. A statue of a stropendrager ("bearer of the noose") is on the little square where you arrive now. The hand gesture behind his back says "sod all"...

*Follow the path along the water. You need to walk to the towers you see in the distance.* The ruins of the wall on the other bank are the remains of the UCO cotton factory. The buildings on this site now are social apartments.

The towers you are walking towards are the Rabot, a reinforced lock on the Lieve river. It was built at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and it made it possible to inundate an area of 15km<sup>2</sup> in case of a siege.

*When you've seen the Rabot, turn back and go into the Rabotstraat (where the tram tracks are). Take the first street on the right (Basseveldestraat) and then a sharp left to the Gravin Johannastraat. This brings you to the Groot Begijnhof Sint-Elisabeth, a former béguinage.* As you may remember from the Bruges chapter, a béguinage is a sort of convent where lay sisters could lead a life of devotion without taking vows. This béguinage now has a residential function. The 600 women were moved to the newly built Sint-Amandsberg béguinage in 1874 for several reasons: the industrial revolution, the French revolution, and a liberal city council. The first made cheap housing for workers necessary, the second made it possible because church buildings now belonged to the state, and the third had the will to move the beguines out. This place is apparently also known as "holy corner", because there are four churches: a catholic, an orthodox, a protestant and an Anglican church.

*Walk to the opposite left most corner of the béguinage. This rather wide pedestrian's passage brings you to the intersection of the Begijnengracht, Peperstraat and Burgstraat. Take the latter – it's the one with the tram tracks. Follow it all the way until you get to the Gravensteen.*

### **The Gravensteen and the Patershol**

*Follow the Burgstraat until you reach the mighty Gravensteen.* The Gravensteen – or at least these buildings – were built around 1180. It served as residence to the counts of Flanders, later as a prison, from 1807 on as a cloth factory, and it was on the brink of demolition by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was



**The Gravensteen**

restored, but some romantic liberties were taken. In the 1950s, new restorations were undertaken and now another restoration and stabilization round is at hand. The Gravensteen was occupied by students once in 1949, as a joke and as a protest against higher beer prices. This is still remembered with the Gravensteenfeesten. You can – and

should – visit the Gravensteen, not only for the “justice museum” with torture instruments, but also for the splendid views from the tower.

*Walk around the castle, visit it and then return to the square and walk in the old Vismijn, formerly a covered fish market. It's easily recognisable by its monumental gate. The tourist service is housed here, as well as a tavern. You can go to the water for another number of nice sights but you have to return at the end of the waterside promenade. Coming out of the Vismijn, go right and go between the two red houses, in the Kraanlei.*

A couple of things to look for in this street: the Ghent Manneke Pis above the door at number 17. The Beer and Gin House where you can buy lots of beers and the jenevers of Het Dreupelkot. The designer ashtray on hotel Harmony. The windows at number 35A. The Huis van Alijn, a museum about daily life in the olden days, in a former 14<sup>th</sup> century hospital. The very classic wallpaper shop Priem and candy shop Temmerman next to it. On the façade of the candy shop the seven works of mercy are depicted – you'll only count six, the seventh (burying the dead) is symbolized by the urn on top – or so it's said. Another explanation is that in Matthew's Gospel, only six works of mercy were named – burying the dead comes from the book of Tobit. The house next to it is also highly ornamented. The senses are depicted in terra cotta reliefs, and there are statues that depict faith, hope and love.

*You're standing at an intersection. If you're curious about the bridge on the right at the next intersection: it takes you to the Vrijdagsmarkt again, but don't go there, go left in the Rodekoningstraat. This brings you to the Patershol. The medieval streets' pattern has been kept and it's full of restaurants in the “affordable, but not cheap” price range.*

*Go left in the Corduwaniestraat. You'll see a Thai restaurant – after 10pm the Rococo café is open, accessible through the same door. Further, you'll pass a tapas bar and another Amadeus spare rib restaurant on the right and the entrance to Indian restaurant and sauna Raj on the left.*

*Go right (Plotersgracht). Here are De Wijzen en de Zot (“the wise man and the fool”) and De Vier Tafels (“the four tables”). The latter used to be in a different house and they did, in fact, only have four long tables. Once they moved to this house, they were able to have more tables but the name stayed. They have kangaroo and alligator and a very good vegetarian snack.*

*Take the third street on the left, the Vrouwebroedersstraat. The restaurant on the corner, De Blauwe Zalm (“the blue salmon”), has octopus-shaped lights above the tables and it's reputedly a very good fish restaurant. At the end of the street is the Caermersklooster, a former convent and now an exposition hall. Entrance is free – if you're not pressed for time, have a look. Expositions change every now and then.*

*Turn around at the end of the Vrouwebroedersstraat and return to the Plotersgracht. Go left, and left again at the end. Take the first street on the right (Kalversteeg). Here is a must-see: Het Velootje. This is a very special café with a very dark interior full of old bicycles, lamps, crucifixes, lanterns and so on; there's hardly any place left to sit. The owner will sometimes tell you what's on tap or what he recommends – but it's always beer. Sometimes your beer will come in a plastic cup, sometimes in a glass, sometimes in the bottle. It's not cheap, but you won't regret a single euro spent here. One of the weirdest things here though, is a computer.*



The interior of 't Velootje

*Continue along the Kalversteeg until you reach Oudburg. Turn left and quickly left again (Zwaanstraat), right (Kaatspelplein) and then left (Drongenhof). There are few restaurants here so you can enjoy the silence for a minute. At the end of the Drongenhof, go right. You'll pass a small industrial looking building – this used to be a brewery and later a distillery – it was sold recently and it will be a restaurant or café soon.*

*The little park on the right used to be a quay – until the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a lock nearby as well.*

*Don't go into the park, just continue along this street, Grauwpoort. You'll be at an intersection soon, go right.*

*You arrive at a rather unattractive square with a hardware shop in a beautiful building. Follow the main road (Sluizekenstraat and then Krommewal).*

*To return to the car park or the Sint-Pieters station, you have two choices: through the city or alongside the water. The first walk will reveal some more shops and streets but not the most interesting ones at that, and the second will give you the time to process all the views and sights, because it's really a calm stroll along the waterside. They're both about the same in length and time. To get back to the Dampoort station, take the walk through the city.*

### **Returning along the waterside – and if you've come from Dampoort station**

*Take the first street on the left (Goudstraat). At number 27 you can see how high the fine is if you let your dog take a crap and you don't clean it up. On the waterside the street takes a right turn. Follow the street and the water – the street name changes to Minnemeers, Baudelokaai, Sint-Joriskaai, Nieuwbrugkaai. Don't cross the water anywhere.*

*At the first bridge (where Minnemeers changes to Baudelokaai) you see the MIAT, a museum about the textile industry in a former cotton spinning factory. On the other side, in the water (of course) is the restaurant boat African Queen. They're closed on Saturday noon, Sunday and Monday.*

*You'll also pass the Baudelopark. This little park is mostly noteworthy during the Gentse Feesten, when there's a stage here as well. Keep following the water.*

*If you want to start the walk at the Dampoort station: just outside the station is a big roundabout – great fun in a dented car but not really aimed towards pedestrians. Nevertheless, you should try to get to the diagonally opposite side. There, look for a small one-way street called Dampoortstraat. Go straight ahead, and over the bridge directly left – and follow the water. This is how you connect to the walk.*

*When you arrive at a pedestrian bridge just after a sharp right hand turn in the Nieuwbrugkaai, cross that bridge.*

*If you are in the mood for some trendy club or café, don't cross the bridge yet but follow the Nieuwbrugkaai for some 200 meters – you arrive at the Oude Beestenmarkt, where you'll find places like Café Video, Suite 16 and the Roerkuip. Do remember that it's still a bit of a walk back to the car though. Turn back to the water after your drinks and dancing and cross the pedestrian bridge.*

*Keep on following the water. The large building is the Van Eyck Badhuis, a swimming pool and bath house. There are copper bath tubs and showers for those without washing facilities at home, open on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday afternoon. The water used to be heated in a textile factory and transported through long underground tubes. The swimming pool has an art deco interior.*

*Again, keep following the water – it's getting boring but it's almost at an end. Follow the main road that leads away from the water and to a large roundabout with a church next to it, the Sint-Annalein. See the common way back description on how to get back to the car or the Sint-Pieters station.*

### **Returning through the city**

*Follow the Krommewal and continue along the Ottogracht. After a while you reach the St-Jacob's church – the square where the flea market is on weekends.*

*If you've come from the Dampoort train station, go left (Steendam) – follow the main street, over the bridge, then the Dampoortstraat until you get back to the big roundabout where you'll see the station. If you've come to Sint-Pieters but you're tired of the walk, you can go to the Dampoort station as well. You won't miss all that much – except for the red light district and a couple of mildly interesting buildings and squares and the street with all the student's cafés.*

*If you've come by car or the Sint-Pietersstation: at the St-Jacobs roundabout, go straight ahead to a large intersection. There's a street on the left just before a (former) church, a street on the right just after the St-Jacob's church, and then two main streets that form a Y intersection. Take the left one of these main roads (Vlasmarkt and later Sint-Jacobsnieuwstraat). When walking through the St-Jacobsnieuwstraat you'll see a rather large square with trees and a public urinal. This is the Oude Beestenmarkt where you'll find some trendy cafés and clubs.*

*Continue along the Sint-Jacobsnieuwstraat – the name changes to Keizer Karelstraat, and this rather uninteresting stretch of shops and buildings brings you to the Sint-Annaplein.*

### **The common part back**

You are at the Sint-Annaplein. The Sint-Anna church was inaugurated in 1862. Probably the only other interesting building on this square is the Studio Skoop, a small but cosy cinema that specializes in “the better film” – not the major Hollywood productions. There is a béguinage nearby. If you want to visit it, take the Lange Violettestraat, the street that comes on the square at the Studio Skoop. Some 500m further is the béguinage, on your left hand side. You can't miss the entrance.

*With your back to the Sint-Anna church entrance, go to the left opposite corner of the square and go in the Brabantdam street (between a wok café and a hearing aids specialist). On the left is a café called Trappistenhuis, and of course you'll find a huge selection of beers here. They might be on the expensive side though – but if you*

really want to taste an Orval trappist that's more than 2 years old, this is the place to be.

*There's a protestant church on your right hand side a bit further, just opposite the Schepenenvijverstraat. Walk past that street and notice the restaurant at number 134 – fourth house on the left - called “de Vitrine”. It's a former butcher's shop that's now a restaurant. The name means “the shop window”, but a vitrine is something else as well – as we'll soon discover.*

*A bit further on your left, between numbers 98 and 100, is a small passage called the Vanderdoncktdoorgang. Go in.*

Here is the red light district of Ghent. The girls' windows are also called “vitrine”. This district is very small compared to the Amsterdam one, so don't expect too much of it. It's a bit shabby as well, but it's safe. Don't take pictures of the girls though.



**The book tower**

The Vanderdoncktdoorgang is also called “glazen straatje” (glass street) – although this description is used to describe any red light district in Flemish. Apparently, the term “glazen straatje” originates here – not

because of the windows but because of the glass roof. It used to be a shopping street, built in 1860 by Pieter Vanderdonck.

If you are having trouble convincing your girlfriend to walk through this street, tell her there's a public urinal at the end of it and that you really really have to go.

*At the intersection, just past the public toilet, go right (Schepenvijverstraat). At the next intersection (with a very busy street) cross the street and walk to the left of the building with "OV" on it. This building is an administrative centre for the province. On the square, officially the Woodrow Wilsonplein but commonly known as Het Zuid, there's the city library. The buildings it's housed in were formerly of the Ghent water, gas and electric company.*

*Stay on this side of the square and walk past the Zuid Shopping Centre. This rather classical looking building was built from 1991 to 1994 – it houses the same kind of shops as any shopping centre and street.*

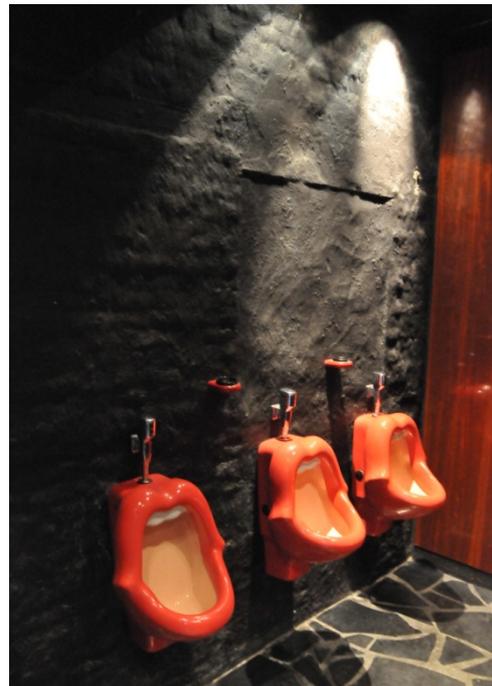
*Past the shopping centre, cross the street and cross the bridge over the water (Lammerstraat). At the T-intersection, you can go right if you still have time for a small detour, or left if you want to take the shortest route.*

*For the detour, go right at the T-intersection (Walpoortstraat) and follow the road down. You pass the Minard theatre, a Flemish theatre. There's a statue of comedian Romain De Coninck, who played here a lot. Take the Grote Huidenvettershoek, the first street on the right before the water. At the end, you'll see the Gruut brewery. This small brewery has six different beers, brewed without hops but with a herbs mix. Of course, the beers are good, and the urinals alone are worth a stop. After the brewery, turn right and follow this street and go up the steps at the end. This way you arrive back at the Lammerstraat. Go right; this way you arrive back at the T intersection where you just went right. Now you go left in the Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat.*

On your left is the arts centre Vooruit – it used to be the socialist movement's party hall and it was built in an eclectic style around 1910. Now it's a centre for the performing arts. Continue along this street for quite a while.

A bit further on your right, opposite the rather ugly UFO (the largest university auditorium) is another impressive building of the socialist movement. It also says "vooruit" on the doors and it used to be the socialists' newspaper until it ceased to exist in 1991. Then, it became an arts centre called "Backstage". It was sold to a developer and will be turned into student's houses.

Further down this otherwise rather uninteresting street is the book tower, on your right. This 1930s building by Henry Van de Velde – who was in his seventies when he



**The Gruut urinals**

designed it – is the university library. It's undergoing a major restoration that will take a couple of years: read all about it on [http://www.boekentoren.be/default\\_EN.aspx?lang=EN](http://www.boekentoren.be/default_EN.aspx?lang=EN) BOEK

Even further, on the left, is the Quetzal chocolate bar. You can get chocolate milk in many varieties here – see <http://www.chocoladebar.be/> for opening hours.

*At the end of this street you arrive back at the Sint-Pietersplein where your car is – if you've come by car, of course.*

*If you've come from the Dampoort station, go to the From the Sint-Pietersplein to the belfry part of the walk, and upon returning, take the "through the city" way back.*

*If you've come by train to the St-Pietersstation, or if you're still thirsty, continue straight along. Here's the Overpoortstraat, where the students come to drink – especially on a Wednesday and Thursday night. You'll also see the big building of the former student's restaurant. It was built in the seventies when student numbers were ever increasing. As it's a tad worn out and the university campuses are spread all over the city, it was closed. Some campuses have their own restaurant. To get back to the train station, go to the end of*

*the Overpoortstraat and then to the right at the big intersection. You'll see the citadel park again – go through or around it, as you like. Maybe this is a good time to point out that after dark this park is a meeting point for gay prostitutes and their customers – it's illegal, of course.*

*Just past the park go left (Leopold II-laan), straight across the next intersection (Koningin Astridlaan) and follow this street until you get back to the St-Pietersstation.*

### **The Ghent Museums...**

All right, so I promised you this book wouldn't be a summing up of museums and opening times. But a lot of these museums are on the trajectory of the city walk, so you can pick what you want to see in advance. Most museums are closed on Monday. See the websites for their opening hours.

The tourist office has a booklet on the Ghent museums, I've put it on my website. Here's a short overview – and some museums that aren't mentioned in the Tourist office's booklet. This list isn't complete either. Some museums are open by appointment only, especially some of the university museums.

The botanical garden. <http://www.ugent.be/we/en/services/garden>. Near the citadel park. Free. Open from 9 to 12 on weekends and holidays and 9 to 16h30 on weekdays.

S.M.A.K. <http://www.smak.be>. In the citadel park. Museum for modern art, founded and definitely inspired by Jan Hoet, our Flemish "art pope". This very driven man was the artistic director for the MARTa museum in Herford, Germany from 2003 to 2008 as well. Jan Hoet was born in 1936 and his health isn't always that good, but he remains as driven as ever.

Museum voor Schone Kunsten. <http://www.mskgent.be>. In the citadel park. The museum for fine arts is one of the oldest museums in Belgium. the collection spans from the middle ages to the 19th and early 20th century.

Kunsthal Sint-Pietersabdij. [http://www2.gent.be/spa/nederlands/monument/monument\\_nl.htm](http://www2.gent.be/spa/nederlands/monument/monument_nl.htm). On the Sint-Pietersplein. Diverse art expositions and a discovery of the abbey with a "digital monk".

De Wereld van Kina. <http://www.dewereldvankina.be/homepage.aspx>. On the Sint-Pietersplein. A nature museum aimed at school groups, with fossils, stones, birds, a scale model of Ghent in the times of Charles V... A second part of the museum (The garden) is on the Berouw.

Design museum. <http://www.designmuseumgent.be>. Near het Gravensteen (Jan Breydelstraat). Art nouveau, art deco and other design styles are found here in a variety of objects.

MIAT. <http://www.miat.gent.be>. On the way back along the waterside (Minnemeers 9). A museum about textile factories and technology. With a splendid view from the top floor.

STAM. <http://www.stamgent.be>. Godshuizenlaan (Bijlokesite). A museum about the history of Ghent.

Het huis van Alijn. <http://www.huisvanalijn.be> (in Dutch). Near het Patershol (Kraanlei 65). A museum about life as it was in the early 20th century.

Museum Arnold Vander Haeghen. Veldstraat (the shopping street). An 18th century house with the library of the Ghent born Nobel prize winner Maurice Maeterlinck, and a Chinese parlor.

Museum dr. Guislain. <http://www.museumdrguislain.be>. Jozef Guislainstraat (not on the trajectory of the walk). A museum about mental illness and art made by mentally ill.

Museum about the history of science. <http://www.sciencemuseum.ugent.be> (in Dutch). In building S30 on campus "De Sterre", Krijgslaan (not on the walk). Open from Monday to Friday from 10-12 and from 14-17h. Scientific instruments from the olden days.

Volkssterrenwacht Armand Pien. <http://www.rug-a-pien.be/> (in Dutch). Gezusters Lovelingstraat, Gent (near the book tower). This planetarium is open on Wednesday evenings from 20h on and free to visit. Ring the bell to enter. It's named after the most famous weather man in Belgium, Armand Pien. He lived and died in Ghent and was famous for his funny way of presenting the weather reports on national TV. He once said "my weather reports are always correct, unfortunately the weather doesn't always stick to them". He died aged 83 in 2003, and until his death he was active at the royal meteorological institute.

### **Sint-Amandsberg: cemetery, beguinage, and optical illusions**



The béguinage church

Sint-Amandsberg is a part of Ghent. This town of about 20000 people has three points of interest that merit a detour if you have the time - that is, if you're staying in Ghent longer than a day. There's the Campo Santo cemetery that will take about an hour of your time, the béguinage - half an hour to an hour - and a museum about optical illusions that will keep you amused for about two hours.

By car, you're bound to find a parking space in Sint-Amandsberg so set the sat nav for the addresses indicated below.

If you haven't come by car, there are two ways to get to Sint-Amandsberg: either on foot from the Dampoort train station, or by bus.

*On foot: coming out of the Dampoort train station, walk under the railway bridge. Cross the first pedestrian crossing, then follow the bicycle lane to the right (this isn't the most pedestrian friendly square in Ghent). Continue straight ahead, this is the Land van Waaslaan (N70).*

*If you want to visit the béguinage, take the second street on the right, just past a car wash: the Van Arenbergstraat. The entrance to the béguinage is a bit further on the left. Walk through it (follow the white and red GR signs) and take the other gate to go out. This is the Jan Roomsstraat. Go right at the T intersection. The Schoolstraat leads back to the N70.*

*If you want to visit the Illuseum, continue along the N70. It's on your left, and the road is called Victor Braeckmanlaan.*

*If you want to visit Campo Santo after the Illuseum, turn back and take the second on the right. If you've come from the béguinage, just cross the N70 and continue to follow the Schoolstraat. At the end of the Schoolstraat, go right (N70a) to a square with a monument for the war victims and a remarkable town hall. Here, you go left (Visitatiestraat). Soon, you pass the cemetery wall where you'll find the entrance.*

*To return to Ghent you can take the N70a back (so you turn left at the town hall) until you arrive at the Dampoort roundabout. If you haven't visited Campo Santo, you just take the N70 back the way you came.*

By bus: Line 38 and 39 take you near the points of interest. The stop Dienstencentrum is nearest to Campo Santo (it's by the town hall). Take the Schoolstraat for the N70 with the Illuseum and the béguinage. Both lines stop near Dampoort station and the St-Jacob's church. You could also take lines 17 or 18. They pass (among others) the Korenmarkt, Zuid and Dampoort and follow the N70. Take the stop Rozebroekstraat - nearest to the Illuseum - or Schoolstraat, nearest to the back entrance of the béguinage.

Groot Begijnhof (béguinage). <http://www.grootbegijnhof.be>. Groot Begijnhof, Sint-Amansberg. This béguinage was founded in the 1870s for the béguines that had to leave the Sint-Elisabethbegijnhof in Ghent. The last béguines died in 2003, but there's still an atmosphere of tranquility and thought.

Het Illuseum. <http://www.illuseum.be>. Victor Braeckmanlaan 123, Sint-Amansberg. A surprising private museum about optical illusions. Probably the only one of its kind in Belgium. Always open on Sunday afternoons, and open by appointment for groups on other dates.

Campo Santo Cemetery. Campo Santoplein, Sint-Amansberg. This isn't actually a museum, it's a cemetery that's still in use. Keep that in mind if you want to visit it. Although it's called "Flanders' Père Lachaise", the famous dead here are of a lesser stature than the ones in Paris – but what would you expect. The main interest are the old sculptured gravestones. Normally, a grave lease runs out after fifty or thirty years unless it's prolonged (and paid for) by your heirs. Even if a grave says "eternal concession" ("eeuwigdurende concessie" or "concession a perpetueté") the 50 years rule applies. It was enforced on all graves in 1973. On some cemeteries – like this one – you can "adopt" a grave, keep it in good nick and use it for yourself when your time has come. This is a way of preserving valuable grave monuments. And that's also why you'll sometimes see an old grave with a relatively new name and date on it.

There was a competition for monuments in 2006 - people could vote which monument would get substantial financial support for preservation or conversion. Campo Santo came in second. However, the informative cards and the website with information about the cemetery and its inhabitants seem to have vanished since and it's not in the best of states. Some information about the famous people buried here can be found on the Dutch language Wikipedia - but there's hardly a world-famous body resting here.

