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**Mechelen Tourist Information**

**By Meredith Booney**

Mechelen is very nearby Brussels, another popular city in Belgium. Mechelen possesses a rich

history that can be understood and enjoyed by its existing architecture—Mechelen is a city full of historical cathedrals, towers, parks and site seeing opportunities. Lakenhalle and St. Rombouts Cathedral are noted World Heritage Sites and the museums in Mechelen are sure to please the cultural enthusiast.

Mechelen has been the former home of many famous inhabitants. Famous individuals once heralding from this remarkable city include Michiel van Coxcie and Bernard van Orley, well-known Renaissance painters; Margarete of Austria the daughter of Maximillian I; and Rembert Dodoens, a famous Renaissance physician. Additionally, the famous composer, Philippe de Monte is also a native of Mechelen.

Mechelen is accessible by car, coach, train, plane or boat. It is a city that provides fine vacationing opportunities year round, travellers can feel comfortable visiting the city any time of year. Peak tourist times are summer and autumn, so for travellers desiring fewer crowds while site seeing, the winter months are more suitable to visit Mechelen. When visiting Mechelen it is important to be prepared for all sorts of weather conditions, rain or shine, as the weather can change within an instant.

Places of interest:

The Grote Market Square in Mechelen is situated right in the heart of the city, and much of its surrounding architecture are remnants from the medieval era. The St. Rumbold's Cathedral, the Town Hall and the Tower are all from the fifteenth century, while the monument of Margaret of Austria is dated to the sixteenth century. A number of cafes are easily accessible in the Grote Market Square, and on Saturdays, travelers can enjoy a day of shopping in the outdoor market.

The St Rumbold's Tower and Cathedral in Mechelen is also a popular tourist spot. The Tower is an astounding 97 metres tall and site seers have the opportunity to walk up the tower's 500+ steps to the top of the building. Once at the top of the St Rumbold's Tower, site seers will be spellbound by the breath-taking view of Mechelen city.

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When travelers finally tire of exploring Mechelen, they can stop over at De Nekker Park for a relaxing getaway from the overwhelming site seeing opportunities all through Mechelen. Travellers can relax at lakeside and watch others engage in myriad watersport offerings. Or, if they prefer, tourists can partake in some of the watersport offerings themselves—scuba diving, wind surfing, and sailing can be enjoyed at De Nekker Park.

### Things to do:

A popular attraction in Mechelen is the Plankendael Park and Zoo at 582 Leuvensesteenweg. The Plankendael Park the Zoo is both a zoo and petting farm, offering children the opportunity to enjoy seeing and touching some of the animals on exhibit. Further, when the children tire of viewing the animals, a playground is available for them to access and to work off some of that extra energy they keep bottled up inside! At the Plankendael Park, parents can also take their children on an adventure

trail, and the cost of admission is more than reasonable: admission for adults is 11 Euro; for children ages 3 to 11, 7.3 Euro; and children ages 3 and under get free entry into the park. The Plankendael Zoo is open every day, from 9 am to 5:00 pm.

Travellers looking to entertain their children will find excellent entertainment at the Toy Museum in Mechelen. Everything from antique toy trains, cars, teddy bears, and other toys dating from the sixteenth century can be viewed at the Toy Museum. In contrast, if travelers are looking for a more sophisticated exploration of culture, they may find the Tapestry Museum the perfect site to visit. Tapestry weavings are on display at the museum, and the city of Mechelen has been and remains famous for its tapestries, ever since the medieval era.

### Food & Drink:

The Gasthof Kwaadmechelen at Sluisstraat, 2 offers fine Belgian cuisine, and is open every day except Saturdays and Sundays. Public parking is available to travellers choosing to dine at the Gasthof Kwaadmechelen and the restaurant accepts both MasterCard and Visa. Alternatively, the Theatrum Mechelen at Onder den Toren, 9 provides both French and Belgian dining opportunities, is handicapped accessible; offers meal pricing at an a la carte rate; and also accepts a variety of credit cards for payment.

The Atlas, at 4 Nauwstraat offers universal cuisine to its guests, allowing them to find something to satiate their appetites. Wines and beers are available at most cafes, bistros and restaurants throughout Belgium and Belgium is especially famous for its variety of beer. Travellers can enjoy mussels, chips, Belgian waffles for breakfast and for dessert they can partake and indulge in the finest Belgian chocolate treats imaginable.

Travellers may also choose to visit the Hanekeef, Mechelen's oldest existing pub. Or, after a day enjoying the medieval harbour, tourists can stop in at any one of the numerous cafes strewn all around the Grote Market.

### Hotels & Accommodation:

Hotel Egmont Best Western Gulden Anker Carolus Entertainment:

Mechelen houses many things to see and do. Places like the Technopolis offer entertainment that the entire family can enjoy. The Technopolis is a science centre with interactive displays and exhibits pertaining to aircrafts, rockets, and more. Dining is never far from any attraction, and after a long day of site seeing, travellers can partake in all the Belgium has to offer in the way of food. Soupe a la biere, payiesvlees, flamiche, tomate aux crevettes, waterzooi, anguille au vert, carbonnades flamandes, boudin rouge, boudin blanc, potato puree, apple compote or lapin a la flamande are some of the local favourites. Speculoos are a favourite breakfast in Belgium and an excellent way to start the day before shopping in the market square.

Opportunities to shop are in abundance in the historic city of Mechelen. Fine Belgium chocolates, Belgian cuisine, cafes and bistros are easily accessible from the city square. Travellers can walk from booth to booth, purchasing food, housewares, clothing and souvenirs when they shop all day at the outdoor market. In the end, the city of Mechelen offers tourists everything they need to make their vacation complete—fine dining, excellent attractions, gorgeous and friendly accommodations—there truly is nothing more that a traveller can ask for!

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## **Become a Tourist in Your Own City**

**By OttawaInformationGuide**

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Have you ever been a tourist in the city that you call home? If you are wondering what to do this weekend, why not become a tourist in your own city? It is amazing what you will learn about its history and what it has to offer. So many of us go about our daily routine and never take the time to explore or enjoy our surroundings. It is not that we take our cities for granted it is just that we all get busy with our jobs and our families that we just don't find the time. We don't make it a priority.

So, how about we all spare some time and start exploring!

If you were a tourist coming to your city for the first time, what would you want to do? Where would you go? Do you know what is so special about your city? To begin with, you may

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want to go to your local Tourist Information Office or Visitors Bureau to get some ideas. Is there a special exhibit at one of the museums? Is there a bus or boat tour that you can participate in? Is there an event or a festival that is taking place that you would like to attend? Is there a celebration coming up that sounds like fun?

As you research the endless possibilities you will notice that a lot of activities don't even require a lot of money. Some museums are free on certain days of the week. Some other attractions offer discounts during the weekdays and when it is not the typical tourist season.

We have been making a point of visiting the local attractions and participating in events in our city for years. We have toured around our city by boat and by double decker bus. Both tours offered something different but both were highly enjoyable. We have also visited the local museums when special exhibits are on display. Not only did we learn about our country's history but we also learned a lot more about the world. We regularly attend the festivals that are taking place here. Some of the festivals have us trying out new wines, some have us viewing millions of tulips and others have us up on our feet dancing to the music of a live band. And do you know what? We are having an absolute blast.

With all this touring around, we have also grown to love our city even more. We have always been proud to call it our home and we love telling people all about it. But now that we have spent some serious time exploring it firsthand, we have seen what it has to offer. We have found new activities that we didn't even know existed here and we have become well informed of the history of our city. As a result of this we even decided to create a website giving tourists and residents information about this great city that we call

home.

So, we ask you again. What are you doing this weekend? Why not take some time to explore your surroundings? Have a great time and enjoy!

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