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**Namur Tourist Information**

**By Meredith Booney**

Namur is the capital of Wallonia, the French speaking southern part of Belgium. It is also the most important town in the province of Namur. This place of historic interest is situated 60 km south-east of Brussels, Belgium's capital city.

Over the past hundreds of years, Namur has acquired the status of being one of the most strategic places in Belgium because of its geographical location. Namur dwells at the confluence of the Sambre River and the Meuse River which are the two major waterways. The very fact that the town is located at the union of these two rivers bears a lot in terms of historical and military significance.

The foundation of Namur goes back to the age old Roman era. Namur played a major role due to its strategic location and the place witnessed a lot of wars and subsequent destruction of monuments and buildings right from Roman aggression through the Second World War. The city has undergone a lot of makeover with changing times. You may not find a lot of archaeological remains or artifacts because most of them have been destroyed in historical conquests. However the city is rich enough to offer the visitor a lot of pleasant diversions which may leave him or her asking for more.

The city has a population of more than 100,000. The terrain is largely hilly and agricultural. You will find a lot of extensive granite, marble and limestone quarries here. Also found are glass and cutlery factories. A resort industry is steadily taking shape along the southern stretch of the Meuse.

French is vastly spoken widely and mostly no one but a true Belgian may be able to discern the difference between the Belgian and French accents here. Namur is a beautiful locale replete with hotels and restaurants that promise to keep visitors mesmerized and natives proud.

Places of interest:

The greatest monument and the proud landmark of Namur is the Citadel. The place echoes with historical significance. It served as a strategic fortress and was witness to many aggressions, sieges and numerous wars. The Citadel also underwent many reconstructions in the course of time. You cannot afford to miss out on this beautiful piece of history in Namur. The Citadel is open through out

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the day for visitors to partake in the rich past of the historic wonder.

The Meat Hall is another monument which can hold visitor interest. Built on the banks of the Sambre, it is one of the most significant archaeological museums of Wallonia. Constructed in the later half of the sixteenth century, the structure made of blue stones and brick is another irresistible attraction.

Namur's only belfry tower (bell tower) is the St. James tower built in the later half of the fourteenth century. Situated on the Place des Armes, the tower overlooks the city and was used quite strategically in the olden times to look out for any kind of impending attack on the province. The St. Alban's Cathedral with its Italian influence is another traffic stopper.

Things to do:

Besides being a popular tourist center with an attractive landscape, Namur has a casino in the

southern part of the left bank of the Meuse. Namur is also quite famous for the beer festival at Easter. If you are visiting Namur in September, you can watch a peculiar Namurois custom called the Combat de l'Echasse d'Or (Fight for the Golden Stilt). Held annually on the third Sunday in September, you can witness two teams known as the Avresses and the Mélans, dressing up in traditional outfits while standing on stilts and performing a battle–skit in one of the town's main areas.

The place is famous for churches and cathedrals, prominent among being them being the St. Albans Cathedral. You can walk through the narrow streets of Namur and visit some of the interesting museums Namur has to offer. If you have less time, then you can visit Trésor d'Hugo d'Oignies at the Jue Billiard Street 17. You can witness some beautiful gold and silver artifacts and reliquaries belonging to the early 13th century.

One should visit the historical places of interest including the demilitarized Citadel. Here you can visit the Guy Delforge Parfumerie. The workshop open to public participation shows you the step by step process involved in producing some of the best perfumes in the world.

Food and Drink:

Namur is famous for food which has a mixture of German quantity and French quality. People in Belgium follow a strict etiquette when it comes to food and drinks. The local dishes in Namur are palatable to say the least. Meat and red wine are the favourites here and Burgundy sells like, well chilled beer.

Flamiche is another favorite. The rich chest flamiche cooked over a wood fire is relished with a lot of interest here. So much is the public love for flamiche that there is a flamiche festival which is held every September in Dinant, a town near Namur. The flamiche is complimented well with the drink amber ale. The flamiche–amber ale combination is akin to the pizza–wine combination that you have in the US. People in Namur also love their beer and there are some who like to have beer along with the flamiche instead of the amber ale. The prominent beer names are Sara (bittersweet in taste) and Joseph (fruity to taste).

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Among meat, venison, Ardennes sausage, smoked ham, veal, pork and the famous Ardennes paté is favored. The health conscious folks of Wallonia and Namur are quite particular about their salads. In fact, the salade liégeoise, rich with warm bacon pieces and green beans, is predominantly indulged in throughout the region. The dessert consists of tarts topped with rhubarb or sugar.

Hotel and accommodation:

Best Western New Hotel De Lives \* \* \* – Namur – Belgium Hôtel Beauregard Entertainment:

Namur has plenty of restaurants, cafes and boutiques. It is a shopping haven for books, stationery, CDs and DVDs. There are two popular cinema halls the Cameo in Rue de Carmes and the Elderado in Rue de Fer. The former can be accessed when you take a two minute walk down the narrow street from the Elderado through the shopping arcade.

The Royal Theatre of Namur is a cute and attractive looking theatre which underwent renovation few years ago. Visitors have a free entry although the main hall may not be accessible during rehearsals. The Theatre of Namur plays about 100 different shows and concerts every year, of which about half of them take place in the magnificent Royal Theatre of Namur.

The Royal Theatre is an Italian style theatre prepared with state of the art acoustic technology. The stage operation is computerized to a certain extent. Thanks to the fibre optic technology the theatre is connected directly to the Belgian radio and TV channels. The main auditorium or the Royal hall has 950 seats while there are other halls with lesser seats and a foyer. The Theatre of Namur also arranges for shows at the Grand Manège of Namur, concerts in some of the prominent churches of the city and also holds some prominent events at the Citadel.

Meredith Booney is a freelance travel writer with over 20 years of experience writing for travel journals, newspapers and magazines. Belgium Tourist Information. Website:

<http://www.belgiumcities.info>

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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

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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 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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