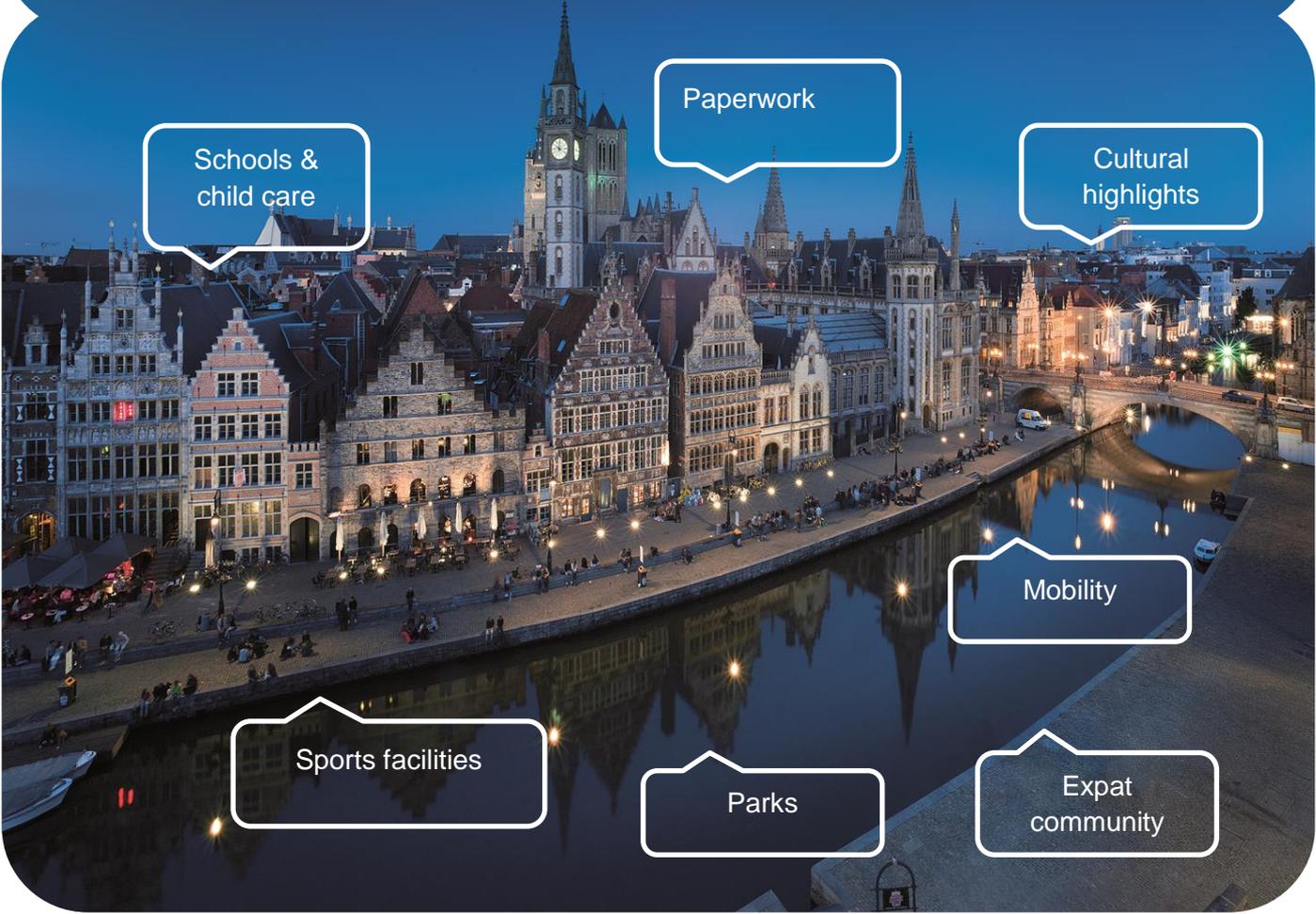




WELCOME TO GHENT

Expat guide



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WELCOME TO GHENT!

As an expat, you are moving to Ghent shortly or have recently arrived in our city. We are pleased that you have chosen Ghent. Your presence and that of other expats not only adds to our strong reputation as a 'city of knowledge', it gives a boost to our local economy and an international flair to the city as well.

In recent years, the City of Ghent has done its utmost to set up initiatives for expats. The Civil Affairs Office boasts an expat counter where employers or relocation offices can swiftly register expats. The city administration is also one of the co-founders of the 'International School Ghent' that recently moved to its brand new building near the University Hospital. Since September 2016, we also welcome newly arrived expats at the City Hall, twice a year.

This guide is made especially for you. It was based on the input we got from several expats that relocated to Ghent before you. It contains all kinds of useful information on topics relevant to your new life in our city and refers to useful websites. We provide practical information as well as a brief survey of all our city's assets.

This is a 'living document'. Do you notice things that are incorrect? Are you missing essential information on a certain topic? Please do not hesitate to contact us and we will adapt the text as soon as possible. Mail to internationaal@stad.gent.

We look forward to meeting you in Ghent!

Paul Teerlinck
City Manager

Sofie Bracke
Deputy Mayor Civil Affairs

Daniel Termont
Mayor

PRIOR TO ARRIVAL

Formalities

There are certain formalities you need to go through before leaving for Belgium.

Depending on your country of nationality, some may not be necessary.

- You must have a valid passport or ID card issued by your country of nationality (for citizens of some countries, an identity card will suffice). Make sure that your passport is valid for the length of your stay or at least for a reasonable time after your arrival. This will save you any additional inconvenience.
- You must have a visa if you require one to enter Belgium due to your nationality. You can get one from the Belgian embassy or the consulate responsible for your place of residence.
- In some cases, in some cases, employees must also have a work permit in Belgium; self-employed a professional card.

Visa requirements

Depending on your nationality and the length of your stay, you may require a visa.

Declaration of arrival

Once you are in Ghent, depending on the length of your stay, you have to complete certain formalities and go to the authorities, taking your visa with you (if you require one). You should also apply for a residence permit at the local town hall.

Work permits

Depending on your nationality, length of stay and your professional status a work permit (employee) or professional card (self-employed) may be required for carrying out professional activities in Belgium.

You can consult a comprehensive document of the Civil Affairs Departement on registration and paperwork via (URL to follow)



SURF

http://www.belgium.be/en/work/coming_to_work_in_belgium/necessary_formalities

<https://www.justlanded.com/english/Belgium>

<http://www.kruispuntmi.be/thema/vreemdelingenrecht-internationaal-privaatrecht/verblijfsrecht-uitwijzing-reizen> (Dutch)

http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/index_en.htm

http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/services/travel_to_belgium/visa_for_belgium

http://www.belgium.be/en/family/residence_documents_for_belgium

http://www.belgium.be/en/work/coming_to_work_in_belgium/work_permit



DURING YOUR STAY

Need to know telephone numbers

Gentinfo

Gentinfo is THE central point of contact for information about the city council and the city. You can reach them via: Tel: 09 210 10 10 or e-mail: gentinfo@stad.gent

First aid

European emergency number: 112

Ambulance: 100

Info Belgium (directory assistance service): 1207

Fire brigade: 100

Burn Centre Brussels: 02 268 62 00

Police: 101

Child Focus (centre for missing children): 110

Drug line: 078 15 10 20

Aids line: 078 15 15 15

Utility failures

Problems with water: 078 35 35 88

Faulty streetlights: 0800 6 35 35

Electricity/gas faults: 078 35 35 00

Medical care – weekends and night duty

Every day after 7 pm, weekends and holidays:

Doctors: 09 236 50 00

Dentists: 0900 10 500

Pharmacists: 0903 36 996

Vets: 09 217 00 62

Living and working

Accommodation

Renting

A lease contract comes into existence as soon as one person (the lessor, who is usually also the owner) allows another person the use of a property. In return, the tenant pays rent to the lessor. A lease normally has a fixed duration of 9 years though short term leases are also possible. If a tenant or landlord want to terminate the lease 3 months' notice is required with a short term lease; 6 months in other cases. Once the tenant moves into the accommodation, he or she should draw up an inventory of the fixtures and fittings.

Purchasing

In order to be able to buy a house, you need to be well prepared. In general, a purchase is carried out in two stages: first, a provisional sales agreement is signed between the buyer and seller and a fixed deposit is paid. This step is binding. After max. 4 months the final sale takes place: a notarial act is signed and the outstanding amount is paid. Notary fees and registration fees will also be due.



SURF

http://www.belgium.be/en/housing/renting_a_home
http://www.belgium.be/en/housing/buying_or_selling_a_home

Moving in

Relocation agents or organisations can assist you in your move Ghent. They make your personal life and that of your family easier, know their way around Ghent and are familiar with procedures.

Once you move in, make sure that there is a water and electricity supply. Water is provided Farys; you can choose from different suppliers for gas and electricity.

You can move yourself or use a specialized company. If you want a temporary parking ban for other vehicles so the moving van can park in front of your house, you can apply via insi@stad.gent. You have to rent the signs yourself via a private company. If you work with a moving company check out if they do not have this permission or signs already.



SURF

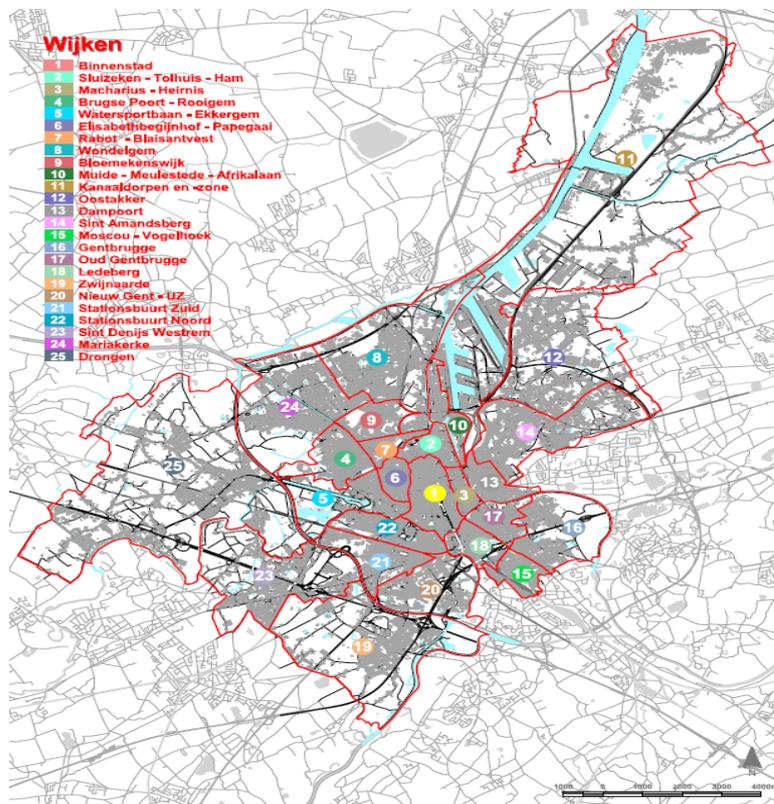
<http://abra-relocation.com/>
<http://www.farys.be> (Dutch)

Neighbourhoods

If you choose Ghent as your new hometown, you may have a difficult job deciding where exactly you want to live. Ghent consists of different boroughs, each with its own postal code:

- 9000 = Ghent
- 9030 = Mariakerke
- 9031 = Drongen
- 9032 = Wondelgem
- 9040 = Sint-Amandsberg
- 9041 = Oostakker
- 9042 = Desteldonk, Mendonk and Sint-Kruis-Winkel 9050 = Gentbrugge, Ledeborg
- 9051 = Afsnee, Sint-Denijs-Westrem
- 9052 = Zwijnaarde

In total there are 25 neighbourhoods, each with its own features and facilities.



Within the city administration there is a contact person ('wijkregisseurs') for each neighbourhood.



SURF

https://stad.gent/sites/default/files/page/documents/A0%2025wijken%20overzicht%20voor%20publicatie_0.pdf (Dutch)

[https://stad.gent/zoeken?zoekterm=wijkregisseurs&f\[0\]=gentbe_type%3Alocation](https://stad.gent/zoeken?zoekterm=wijkregisseurs&f[0]=gentbe_type%3Alocation) (Dutch)

Waste management

Ivago is the waste management company in Ghent, they collect the waste and also manage several recycling centers where you can dispose of larger items or dangerous waste (electrical appliances and paints etc.).



There is different kind of garbage, each collected in its own way:

- Normal garbage ('restafval'): is collected in yellow waste bins (urban areas) or grey containers (more rural areas) every week/biweekly.
- PMD: plastic bottles, metal packaging and drink cartons are collected in light blue bags.
- GFT: vegetables, fruits and garden waste are collected in green waste containers.
- Glass: transparent empty bottles, bowls and flasks should be put in a box. You can buy one from Ivago.
- Paper and cardboard: newspapers, magazines, books and cardboard boxes, etc. should be tied together with a rope or put in a closed cardboard box.

If you do not want to receive free marketing leaflets in your letterbox you can use this sticker:



You can buy the waste bags at most supermarkets.



SURF

<https://www.ivago.be/thuisafval> (Dutch)

[https://www.ivago.be/thuisafval/ophaling/ophalkalender_\(Dutch\)](https://www.ivago.be/thuisafval/ophaling/ophalkalender_(Dutch))

Education

The school system

Belgium has free public education. Children are obliged to follow education between 6 and 18 years. However, most children start attending school from the age of two and a half. Education

is offered in the language native to the particular region. This means that in Ghent the language used is Flemish (=Dutch). The school system in Belgium has a wide array of childcare and education facilities for expat families to consider.

Preschool and primary schools

Public schools in Ghent teach in Dutch, with some schools also offering extra English lessons after normal school hours. Registration for all preschools and primary schools follows the same timing:

- October: for children who already have siblings at the school or whose parents work at the school;
- February: for children who do not have siblings or parents at the school and who register online via <https://meldjeaan.gent.be>
- After the Easter holidays: for children that do not have siblings or parents at the school and did not register online.

When you register online, the advice is to enrol in at least five schools. There is a system that will select a school for you. In this selection, pupils with parents or siblings at a school are given priority as well as what are termed 'indicator pupils' (children who get a scholarship or whose mother does not have a high school certificate). The system also looks at who lives closest to the school or the distance between the parents' workplace and the school.

There is one international school in Ghent, suitable for the children of expatriates living in Ghent and the surrounding region.

Higher education



Higher education in Flanders is organised at universities and university colleges ('hogescholen'). The standard of education in Flanders is one of the highest in Europe and steadily continues to improve. In Ghent (international) students have a choice of studying at 2 universities and 4 university colleges. Some but not all courses are taught in English.

Learning languages

Belgium has three official languages: Dutch (also called Flemish in Belgium / Flanders), French and German. Dutch is spoken in Flanders, French in Wallonia and German in the East Cantons. Our capital Brussels is bilingual in French and Dutch. Dutch is a Germanic language, sharing its roots with English, German and Scandinavian languages.

There are various language schools in Ghent. For example, the University Language Centre offers excellent Dutch courses at various levels. Other possibilities are Het Perspectief, D-Teach (distance learning), etc. In-Gent can help you in making the right choice of language course (according to your own educational background or learning speed).



SURF

http://www.expatica.com/be/education/Education-in-Belgium_100088.html
[http://www.belgium.be/en/education/coming to study in belgium/](http://www.belgium.be/en/education/coming_to_study_in_belgium/)
<http://english-schools.org/belgium/>
<http://www.isg-ghent.org/>
<https://stad.gent/international-students/studying/higher-education-flanders>
<http://www.uct.ugent.be/en>
<http://in-gent.be/>
<http://www.hetperspectief.net/>
<http://www.d-teach.com>

Child care

If you want to register for child care, make sure you register as soon as possible: there may be (long) waiting lists, particularly for babies. In other words: do not wait to register until your child is born.

You can use child care for children between the age of 8 months and 3 years. Children sometimes stay at home with their parents or grandparents take care of them; however, most Belgian children attend child care. There are different child care systems.

- A childminder takes care of children (max. 8 per adult) in his or her own home.
- You can also choose a day care centre. They can be owned by a private organisation / person or by the government:
- If you choose to register for a kindergarten of centre owned by the City of Ghent you can go to the website <https://tinkelbel.gent.be> (Dutch).



SURF

<https://stad.gent/onderwijs-kinderopvang/kinderopvang/opvang-van-babys-en-peuters/onthaalouders> (Dutch)

<https://stad.gent/onderwijs-kinderopvang/kinderopvang> (Dutch)

https://stad.gent/sites/default/files/page/documents/20160301_LIJ_POI%20.pdf (Dutch)

Working in Ghent

Perhaps you are looking for a job or want to start your own business?

If you are looking for a job you can visit one of the many temporary job agencies ('interimkantoren') or consult the VDAB, the public employment service of the Flemish government, that also has one of the largest job sites in Belgium. Dutch is still the most common language used on the work floor. Depending on the job, other language skills (English and/or French, etc.) are often required.

As an employee, you can become a member of a trade union ('vakbond') to defend your rights. The unions in Belgium are organised along politico-denominational lines, following the pillarization in Belgian society. Therefore, the three major trade unions are all confederations, each adhering to a particular religion or ideology, namely Christian (Catholic), Socialist and Liberal.

If you want to start your own business, the city council can help you.



SURF

<https://www.vdab.be/english>

<https://stad.gent/werken-ondernemen/ondernemen/investeren-gent/invest-ghent-english/doing-business-ghent>

<http://www.business.belgium.be/en>

Financial matters and insurance

Income tax

In Belgium the national registration number ('Rijksregisternummer') that is assigned to you when you register at the town hall is also your tax number. You do not need to request a tax number separately.

If you are working and living in Belgium the rule is that you have to pay income taxes here, depending on the length of your stay. Your gross salary will be taxed. Sums will be deducted from the gross amount. Apart from income tax you will also need to pay regional tax (by province) per household (in East Flanders this amounts to about 32 euros per year). You will receive a separate bill for this.

Note that officials of the European Union are not subject to Belgian taxation, and expats working for foreign companies established in Belgium are entitled to a favourable taxation scheme for a limited period. Consult a tax adviser or a tax lawyer, or ask your employer if it is a foreign company.

Social security

Belgium has a well-developed social security system. Social security agreements exist between Belgium and many other nations, including all EU countries and the USA, whereby expatriates may remain under their home country's social security scheme for a specific period. Everyone living in Flanders also needs to pay an annual contribution to the Health Care Fund ('Zorgkas'). Your yearly contribution is 50 euros (or 25 euros with a reduction).

Banking

There are numerous branches. Most banks are open from 9 am until 4 or 4.30 pm on Mondays to Fridays. Some are open on certain evenings or Saturdays. Smaller branches close at lunchtime. The larger banks in Belgium also offer special services to expats. Please be aware that in Belgium not all companies or shops accept credit card payments. This can be the case in (small) restaurants and pubs etc.

Insurance

Unfortunately, accidents can happen. Despite not taking away the distress brought about by unexpected accidents, having adequate insurance cover does at least mean that you won't be financially overburdened. Most larger banks offer insurance services, but there are also a lot of private insurance companies. Insurance for driving motor vehicles in the public space is compulsory. Other insurance, e.g. for "fire", "life" and "accident" are strongly advised.



SURF

http://www.belgium.be/en/taxes/income_tax/
http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/work/taxes/income-taxes-abroad/belgium/index_en.ht
http://www.belgium.be/en/family/social_security_in_belgium/
<http://www.flanders.be/en/care-and-family/flemish-care-insurance>
https://www.socialsecurity.be/CMS/en/coming_to_belgium/binaries/coming_to_belgium/s_pfssfodsz/brochure_en.pdf
http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/work/unemployment-and-benefits/index_en.htm
<https://www.justlanded.com/english/Belgium/Belgium-Guide/Money/Banks>

Health

Belgium has a very extensive social security system. Foreigners also are entitled to certain allowances and to social services. The Belgian social security system is based on the payment of social contributions on your income from work. These social contributions serve to finance the social security system. Each month the employer pays between 30 and 40% on top of your

salary into the social security fund. The employee also pays a proportion of his gross salary in social security contributions. This fund is then used to pay allowances in the event of sickness (but also in other cases, e.g. unemployment benefits, in the event of accidents at work, pensions, ...)

In case of health care the costs will be both covered by the social security system but also by a health care insurance. If you're living in Belgium, you need to apply for such an insurance as it's compulsory for all residents in our country. You therefore need to become a member of one of the insurance organizations. With this compulsory insurance you get various allowances like refunds for certain types of medication or for consultations with various healthcare providers (doctors and dentists, etc.), fixed allowances for hospitalisation and an allowance if you are unable to work due to sickness, for pregnancy or maternity leave. On top of the compulsory insurance, you can also choose to get additional private insurance with various insurance companies to cover more expensive or delicate treatments.

The fees charged by doctors can vary. Factors that have an impact on the price are, among others, difference between a general practitioner and specialist, area of specialisation and the time and place of the consultation, for example. A general practitioner ('huisarts') normally refers you to a specialist. Please also be aware that in Belgium, you pay for a doctor's visit up front and then request reimbursement from your health insurance.

There are various hospitals in Ghent, all offering most treatments:

- AZ Jan Palfijn Gent, Watersportbaan 5, 9000 Gent
- AZ Maria Middelaers, Buitenring Sint-Denijs 30, 9000 Gent
- AZ Sint-Lucas, Groenebriel 1, 9000 Gent
- UZ Gent – Universitair Ziekenhuis Gent, De Pintelaan 195, 9000 Gent



SURF

http://www.belgium.be/en/health/healthcare_costs

http://www.expatica.com/be/healthcare/Health-insurance-in-Belgium_445867.html

http://www.belgium.be/en/health/european_health_insurance_card

http://www.belgium.be/en/family/social_security_in_belgium

Food, drink en shopping

Ghent is a great place to eat out or go to the pub or a coffee bar. No wonder a lot of creative chefs are drawn to the city.

For groceries you can go to one of the many supermarkets. Or why not go to one of the many markets? There is one every day and on Sunday morning you can visit no less than six!

But there is much more... Visit the shopping areas, gift and souvenir shops, fashion stores and much more. Ghent has the largest pedestrian shopping area in Flanders.

Most shops are closed on Sundays (unless it is a special Sunday Shopping Day). Hairdressers are closed on Mondays.



SURF

<https://visit.gent.be/en/food-drink>

https://visit.gent.be/en/markets?from_category=3353&context=tourist

<https://visit.gent.be/en/shopping>



Culture



Ghent harbours many cultural treasures. The old part of the city is home to two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the Flemish Béguinages and the Belfry of Ghent, as well as many historic buildings and fine examples of medieval architecture, like the Saint Bavo Cathedral and the old Graslei harbour. For centuries, Ghent was the commercial centre of The Low Countries. Its strong, even stubborn will

had much to do with that. To this day, the historical centre of the city steadfastly retains its solid character.

Monuments and heritage

Ghent is a city with a small-town feel: all the top attractions are within walking distance from one another. Therefore, walking is the most efficient – and the healthiest! – way to discover the city. Ghent looks after its precious heritage. The city counts the highest number of heritage buildings in Belgium. Yet its past does not stop the city from living in the present and looking towards the future as well. The city encourages visionary architectural projects that show character. There is for example the City Pavilion ('Stadshal'). Located in the historical centre, this futuristic monument allows its thousand-year-old neighbours to stand out to their full advantage.

Museums

Ghent has a lot of museums. There are a wide variety of museums, so everyone can find something to his or her liking.

Libraries

The main City Library is located at the Woodrow Wilson Square, but every neighbourhood has its own (smaller) branch library. Apart from a large collection of fiction and non-fiction books, you can also borrow movies, music, comics and magazines. You can easily find whatever you need and where you can find it using the online catalogue. The University Library provides access to a wide range of scientific information and supports users in finding it. The catalogue includes the faculty libraries of all departments of the University of Ghent.

Music

Ghent is an inspiration to artists of all kinds. Many musical talents such as Trixie Whitley, 2 Many DJ's, Dirk Brossé and the Collegium Vocale Ghent have taken up residence in the city. There are various concert halls in Ghent. Make sure to go and see concert there.

Festivals and festivities

From the Film Fest Gent to the Festival of Flanders or Gent Jazz Festival, there is always something to celebrate in Ghent. The high point, of course, is the Ghent Festivities ('Gentse Feesten'). Ten days of fun, culture and performances. A lot of activities are free and more than 1 million festivalgoers come to the celebrations every year. In search of other festivities? Check out the calendar [uitingent](#).



SURF

<https://visit.gent.be/en/monuments-architecture>

<https://visit.gent.be/en/museums>

<https://stad.gent/bibliotheek> (Dutch)

<https://stad.gent/openingsuren-adressen/bibliotheken> (Dutch)

<http://www.ugent.be/en/facilities/library/university-library.htm>

<https://uitin.gent.be>



Sport

Looking for a sports facility in Ghent or in your neighbourhood? Via the links below you can find out more about sport facilities, opening hours, prices, and contact details, etc.

Sports connect people. That is why the City of Ghent has decided to invest in sustainable sports infrastructure. Some examples of what is on offer in Ghent:

- The Blaarmeersen Sports and Recreation Park – the green lung at de Blaarmeersen – is a large area boasting sport infrastructure and facilities for all tastes.
- The Flanders Sports Arena is the place for sporting events at national, European and international level. This state-of-the-art multicultural hall has a capacity of over 5,000 people.
- BIOVER is one of the world's largest climbing gyms, boasting two indoor halls, with climbing walls of 16.5 m and 14.5 m.
- The city is investing in athletics and jogging through a wide range of facilities and events for all ages.
- The Six Days of Ghent, with its spectacular sprints at the legendary 't Kuipke indoor cycling track, attracts over 40,000 visitors, making it the highlight of Belgian track cycling. A tradition that dates back to 1922.



SURF

<https://stad.gent/international-students/culture-sports-leisure/sports/sports-city-ghent>

https://visit.gent.be/en/swimming-pools?from_category=3367&context=tourist

Greenery areas

A breath of fresh air, a stroll in the park? Go green in Ghent. The city's plants are flourishing without the use of pesticides. The people of Ghent like to meet in the parks for a picnic or barbecue with family, friends or neighbours. There are a lot of parks and greenery areas. Here are some of the most important ones:

Parks

There are many green oases in and around the city. You can choose from small, cosy parks and slightly hidden green spots to large landscaped parks such as the Citadel park.

Public BBQs

Barbecues are permitted in a number of Ghent parks. All zones are marked with an information post. Barbecues are allowed from 1 April to 1 October.

Blaarmeersen

Sports and Recreation Park Blaarmeersen is a green jewel at the Ghent Watersportbaan. Near the historic city centre of Ghent and easily accessible, this park is a haven of peace and a beacon of sportsmanship. With its large sports and leisure opportunities, the Blaarmeersen guarantees pure enjoyment.



Bourgoyen

Just outside Ghent's ring-road is 'De Bourgoyen-Ossemeersen', a marvellous nature reserve. This unique open landscape comprises more than 210 ha of wet grasslands full of ditches and streams. The visitor centre is a model of sustainability.

Gentbrugse Meersen

The main entrance of the Gentbrugse Meersen is surrounded by residential areas and extends to the River Scheldt. In the near future it will cover about 240 hectares. The emphasis is on recreation but you can also practice sports, games, gardening, picnicking and you can also chat with the neighbours as well.

Ghent University Botanical Garden

Yet more flora and fauna on the other side of the Citadel park. Together with the garden, the tropical and sub-tropical greenhouses belong to the University of Ghent. Student botanists have an enormous variety of living material at their disposal. As a visitor, you can just enjoy the beauty of the many flowers and plants.



SURF

https://visit.gent.be/en/parks?from_category=3338&context=tourist
<https://stad.gent/natuur-milieu/groen-de-stad/grote-parken-en-natuurgebieden> (Dutch)
<https://stad.gent/natuur-milieu/groen-de-stad/barbecue%C3%ABn-het-park> (Dutch)
<https://stad.gent/blaarmeersen> (Dutch)
<https://stad.gent/natuur-milieu/groen-de-stad/grote-parken-en-natuurgebieden/bourgoyen-ossemeersen/natuur-en-milieucentrum-de-bourgoyen> (Dutch)
<https://stad.gent/gentbrugse-meersen> (Dutch)
<http://www.ugent.be/we/en/services/garden>



Mobility

By foot, bike, (own or shared) car, tram, bus... You can choose from different modes of transport to get about.

In Belgium it is common for employers to subsidise (part of) the commuting costs for their employees. Enquire at your company for more details.

By foot

Sometimes it's easier to walk to your destination than to use public transport. A great part of the historical city centre (35 hectares!) is car-free, giving you the opportunity to go shopping or to get lunch without having to be concerned about busy traffic.

Shops, bars, restaurants, museums and markets ... everything is just a stone's throw away, making it very easy to discover the city by foot. The city consciously invests in better and broader footpaths, safe crossroads and the general road safety of its citizens.

The city of Ghent has over 35 hectares of car-free or low-traffic areas. This pedestrian area is lovely for walking, shopping or enjoying an outdoor cafe. Cycling is permitted in most streets of the pedestrian area as long as pedestrians are not impeded.



Bike

Ghent is crazy about bikes. Consult all sorts of practical information on, for instance, existing bike routes, parking, route planner, free bicycle registration, bike storage and (info on how to avoid) bicycle theft. The city and the police sometimes organise a sale of second hand bikes. At Max Mobiel you can rent and park a bike or get a bike repaired. The city is building guarded bicycle parking facilities and is trying out new forms of enclosed garages, such as bicycle lockers, bicycle drums and neighbourhood parks.

Public Transport

Ghent is easily accessible by train. You can buy tickets online (see links). Public transport in the city is well-organized by De Lijn. Buses and trams ride from early in the morning till late at night. Count on De Lijn to quickly and safely reach your destination. Browse a list of all the stops, routes and schedules of the day network ('dagnet') in Ghent (every day between 6 am and 11.30 pm). There are also night buses that run 7 days a week. They run from 11.30 pm until 1 o'clock at night. The buses are indicated with N+number of the regular line. Tickets and day passes are the cheapest solution for those traveling occasionally. For trips and group travel there are the: Single journey, Lijnkaart, Day ticket and Omnipas.

Taxi

Ghent has many taxi companies. Taxis operate with a base rate and a social tariff. In addition, fixed prices are also lower for long rides from airports or other cities.

Car

Ghent is currently (mid-2016) in the middle of a large-scale mobility plan reshuffle, so some streets might become one-way or pedestrian.

Driving license

Anyone who drives a motor vehicle on public roads must possess a driving licence and have this on them. If you are a citizen of an EU member country, you do not need to obtain a Belgian license. Other foreigners permanently residing in Belgium and driving in this country may initially use an International Driving license, but should apply for a valid Belgian driving license on being issued an identity card.

Vehicle registration and import

If you live in Belgium and you drive a car or vehicle it should be registered. Exceptions are if you hire a car or work for a foreign employer and the car is registered abroad. You can also register your car temporarily.

If you wish to import your car, it must be registered under temporary or standard license plates. Duty-free and tax-free status can be granted if the car has been owned and used before arrival and is not resold within two years of importation.

Buying

Since both the new and second-hand car markets in Belgium are well-regulated, they offer good protection to consumers and the prices are competitive compared with neighbouring countries.

Renting

There are a lot of rental car companies. Surf online to find out where you can hire a car in Ghent.

Car sharing

Car sharing literally means that you share a car with other people. Several people use the same vehicle, so alternate their use of one or several (joint) cars. You use the car when you need it, at other times someone else drives it. You use the car but you do not own it.

For occasional car sharing/ride sharing, you can check specialised websites such as blablacar.be. Uber is not operational in Ghent.



SURF

<https://mobiliteit.stad.gent/te-voet> (Dutch)

<https://mobiliteit.stad.gent/sites/default/files/media/Plan%20voetgangerszones%20in%20Gent.pdf> (Dutch)

<https://mobiliteit.stad.gent/gekopdefiets> (Dutch)

<http://www.max-mobiel.be/index.html>

http://fietsrouteplanner.gentfiets.be/index.html?language=en_US

<https://mobiliteit.stad.gent/met-de-fiets/fiets-parkeren> (Dutch)

<http://www.belgianrail.be/en/customer-service/where-to-buy-my-tickets.aspx>

<https://www.delijn.be/en/>

<http://gent.delijn.be/> (Dutch)

<https://mobiliteit.stad.gent/met-de-taxi/taxibedrijven-gent> (Dutch)

<https://stad.gent/mobiliteitsplan/het-circulatieplan/kaarten-circulatieplan> (Dutch)

http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/vehicles/driving-licence/driving-licence-recognition-validity/index_en.htm

http://www.belgium.be/en/mobility/vehicle_registration_service

<http://www.xpats.com/buying-car-belgium>

<https://mobiliteit.stad.gent/met-de-auto/autodelen> (Dutch)



Stay informed and connected

Gentinfo is the central contact point for information about the city council and the city. If you have a question, a complaint, a suggestion or you want to report something, then please contact Gentinfo: tel. 32 (0)9 210 10 10 (Monday to Saturday, 8 am to 7 pm), e-mail gentinfo@stad.gent. You can also check out the websites of the City of Ghent (in English) and Visit Ghent.

Online and offline expat community Gent

When you arrive in Ghent, you can rest assured: the expat community will welcome you with open arms. With their experiences, they can provide answers to all your questions and help you with any issues you may be struggling with. Joining the expat community will facilitate your stay. There are organisations like 'Internations' that you can contact.

The website [square.gent](http://thesquare.gent) interesting articles on the expatlife in Ghent. A portal initiated and written by expats living in Ghent themselves. Using social media is another easy way to connect to your fellow expats and new city neighbours. There is a general group on facebook 'Expats in Ghent', but also more specialised groups for expats, for example on parenting in Ghent, volunteering or rooms and flats.

'Taalcafé Macharius' is an international exchange mart, held regularly at de Centrale, where you can go, meet expats and Ghent natives, practise and share languages.

Last but not least the city council and network organisation Community Gent organise regular meetings for expats in Ghent. Interested? Mail to international@stad.gent and you will get an invitation to the next event!

Embassy and consulates

When you need more formal assistance, the embassies and consulates can help you:



SURF

<https://stad.gent/ghent-international>
<https://visit.gent.be/en/home>
<https://www.internations.org/gent-expats>
<http://thesquare.gent>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/10386390365/?fref=ts>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/GentseSpruiten/?fref=ts>
<https://www.facebook.com/thesquaregent/?fref=ts>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1702795393337182/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/138730886190381/?fref=ts>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/roomsforexpatsingent/?fref=ts>
<http://www.taalcafemacharius.gent/basics.html>
<http://visumcentrale.be/embassy-list>
[http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/services/embassies and consulates/foreign embassies and consulates in Belgium](http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/services/embassies_and_consulates/foreign_embassies_and_consulates_in_Belgium)

AFTER

Declaration of departure

When you are leaving Ghent as an expat make sure to make a declaration of departure and take care of the necessary formalities. Check out the document of the Civil Affairs Departement (URL to follow) for more info.

Keep in touch

Off course the city of Ghent will be sad to see you go, but if you really must, don't leave us behind. Follow, for instance, the different social media accounts of Ghent. When you post yourself use #expatghent. Or keep up with the local news through our international newsletter. Sign up by surfing to <https://stad.gent/ghent-international>. Then scroll to the bottom of the page and register.



SURF

<https://www.facebook.com/stadsbestuurgent>

<https://twitter.com/stadgent>

<https://twitter.com/ghentinternatio>

<https://www.instagram.com/stadgent/>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmJLf8SFG0D0GTd6LSSTQLw>



