The best places to eat, sleep and play in Brussels this spring and summer

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INTRODUCTION

TripAdvisor, the most trusted source for where to eat, sleep and play in thousands of destinations around the world, has collected the best insider tips from its 50 million monthly visitors to produce a unique series of travel guides. In addition to the best hotels, restaurants and attractions for every type of traveler, you’ll get great advice about what to pack, how to get around and where to find the best views. Be sure to check out the guides at www.tripadvisor.com.

Inside

BRUSSELS

Brussels, the capital of Belgium and center of the European Union, is more than just bureaucrats and businesspeople. It’s a vibrant city, famous for luxurious shopping malls, royal museums and bustling squares. Explore the medieval streets winding through the city center, and you might come upon the Manneken Pis, Brussels’ most famous ambassador, wearing one of his hundreds of quirky costumes.

Visitors to Belgium often crave chocolate, beer and waffles, items that Brussels has in abundance. Head to a bar and you’ll be presented with an imposing menu listing choices in the thousands. Ask a local, and you’ll receive a detailed description of a tiny storefront selling the best sweets in town.

Just a hop, skip and a river cruise away from romantic Bruges, and separated from Paris, London and Amsterdam by only a short train ride, Brussels is an excellent destination for a weekend getaway. But don’t forget your umbrella! Brussels’ temperatures may be moderate, but high humidity is constant throughout the year.

TRAVEL TIPS

1. Bring your raincoat and waterproof shoes! Brussels is notoriously wet. “On rainy days, you can still stroll and shop in the Galeries St. Hubert, Galerie Louise, and Woluwe Shopping Center.”—TripAdvisor Member, Brussels

2. Get a discount on your hotel stay: Since the government workers clear out of Brussels at the end of the workweek, “weekend specials can be a steal!”—TripAdvisor Member, San Francisco, Calif.

3. Make sure to schedule your activities: In general, "shops are closed on Sundays and open on Mondays, and museums are closed on Mondays and open on Sundays.”—TripAdvisor Member, Brussels.

4. Don’t miss out on the local delicacies: “Many of the world’s best beers are available in Brussels. The local specialty is lambic, a sour beer” hard to find outside of Belgium.—TripAdvisor Member, Minneapolis, Minn.
BRUSSELS' BEST VIEWS

“I highly recommend the roof-top café at the Musical Instruments Museum—it has a great view of Brussels.”—TripAdvisor Member, Brussels

Musical Instruments Museum (Musée des Instruments de Musique), Montagne de la Cour Hofberg 2, 2 545 0130

“If you’re an early riser, have breakfast at La Brouette between 8 and 9. It’s the only café open on the Grand-Place at that time. You’ll have the Place to yourself before the hordes arrive.”—TripAdvisor Member, New York

La Brouette, Grande-Place 2/3, 2 511 5494

“When in the Marollen, take the free elevator. It brings you right up to a fantastic view over the city.” You’ll be left standing at the foot of the Palace of Justice, which will “overwhelm you with its vast size and the height of its cupola.”—TripAdvisor Member, Utrecht, Netherlands

Palace of Justice (Palais de Justice), Place Poelaert 1, 2 508 6578

Where to PLAY

TOP 10 Attractions

1. Grand-Place
2. Horta Museum (Musée Horta), Rue Americaine 25, 2 543 0490
3. Le Tapis de Fleurs - Flower Carpet, Hôtel de Ville - Grand-Place, 2 513 8940
4. Parliamentarium, Rue Wiertz 60, Bâtiment Willy Brandt
5. Museum des Sciences Naturelles, Chaussee de Wavre 260, 2 627 4238
6. Royal Museum for Central Africa (Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale), Leuvensesteenweg 13, Tervuren, 2 769 5211
7. Musée Rene Magritte, 135 rue Esseghem, 2 428 2626
8. Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and of Military History, Parc du Cinquantenaire - Jubelpark, 2 737 7811
9. Musical Instruments Museum (Musée des Instruments de Musique), Rue Montagne de la Cour 2, 02 545 0130
10. St. Michael and St. Gudula Cathedral (Cathédrale St-Michel et Ste-Gudule), Parvis Sainte-Gudule, Treurenberg Hill, 2 217 8345

FAMILIES

Near the Atomium is “Mini-Europe, a miniature display of famous buildings and landmarks across Europe. Several of the models were interactive, such as the bullfight in Seville with crowds yelling ‘tore’ and Mount Vesuvius, which smoked and steamed while the platform shook.”—TripAdvisor Member, Australia

Mini-Europe, Bruparck, 2 478 0550

“The Museum des Sciences Naturelles is an excellent museum to visit. It’s very large and the display of dinosaurs is very professional. There is a skeleton of a blue whale on the ceiling of one room, which is an amazing view as you can nearly touch it. Our kids also had a good time in the hands-on workshop.”—TripAdvisor Member, Westerlo, Belgium

Museum des Sciences Naturelles, Rue Vautier 29, 2 627 4238

ROMANCE

Belgium is a small country, and Brussels is connected to many other cities by high-speed rail lines, including medieval Bruges, “a romantic town with endless cobblestone lanes, horse drawn carriages, colorful street markets” and winding canals that have earned it the nickname "Venice of the North.”—TripAdvisor Member, Sydney, Australia

Bruges, About 100 kilometers northwest of Brussels

“If you want something you won’t find in just any brand name store, you have to go to the Dansaert. From the latest over-the-top creations to luxury second-hand shops, it’s difficult to resist temptation. This area is also the place to find a nice terrace or a trendy café.”—TripAdvisor Member

Rue Antoine Dansaert

The Atomium, a massive silver atom left over from the 1958 Expo, is Brussels’ most distinctive building. “Using the futuristic elevator made me feel like I was part of a Star Trek set. There is a range of kids’ activities, a cleverly designed café and a viewing area overlooking the city.”—TripAdvisor Member, Newport, U.K.

Atomium, Boulevard de Centenaire, 2 475 4775

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Rue Antoine Dansaert

“Walk to the Grand Sablon and the Petit Sablon for a little antique browsing” and a sweet treat from the local purveyors of fine candy. “Buy some chocolates at Pierre Marcolini for a taste of some of the best Belgium has to offer.”—TripAdvisor Member, Brussels

Pierre Marcolini Chocolatier, Rue des Minimes, 2 514 1206
“The Cathedral is beautiful inside and out. I enjoyed seeing the stained glass windows, statues and artwork. What I enjoyed the most, however, was how uncrowded it was! I was able to walk through at a slow pace and really enjoy it without feeling rushed.”—TripAdvisor Member, Tualatin, Oregon

St. Michael and St. Gudula Cathedral (Cathédrale des Saints Michel et Gudule), Parvis Sainte-Gudule, 2 217 8345

“We were fortunate that we arrived at the Grand-Place in the middle of a beautiful sunny afternoon, with the light glinting off the gilded halls. Hitting the chocolate shops is a great way to enjoy the square, but mostly you just want to spend time here, appreciating the majesty of artistic accomplishment.”—TripAdvisor Member, New Jersey

Grand-Place

“We rode all over Brussels on streets, sidewalks and park lawns, stopping every so often to get a history lesson or a bit of trivia. We eventually stopped for lunch and had beer and fries. Brussels Bike Tour was so much fun, and it made the beer taste even better.”—TripAdvisor Member, Los Angeles, Calif.

Brussels Bike Tours, Grand Place, 48 489 8936

“The beer at Cantillon is like nothing you’ve had before. Since 1900, the brewery has made traditional lambic beer. The tour is self-guided, and the entire building is open for exploration. There are hundreds of oak barrels and thousands of bottles.” The admission fee includes samples of the gueuze or kriek beers.—TripAdvisor Member, Minneapolis, Minn.

Cantillon Brewery, Rue Gheude 56, 2 521 4928

“Musée Horta was an unexpected delight. The interior of this four-story home is an Art Nouveau masterpiece. We walked around awestruck by the sheer beauty. Not a single detail had been overlooked. The top level is the icing on the cake, with an amazing glass roof.”—TripAdvisor Member, United States

Horta Museum (Musée Horta), Rue de la Régence 3, 2 508 3211

“Whilst agreeing that the Manneken Pis is much smaller than you’d expect of such a well-known tourist sight, this famous statue of a urinating boy is worth a short walk from the Grand-Place. Don’t miss the hundreds of his costumes on display on the top floor of the Maison du Roi.”—TripAdvisor Member, Grandtham, U.K.

Manneken Pis, Corner of Rue du Chene and Rue de l’Etuve Maison du Roi, Grand-Place, 2 279 4350

“Set in a lovely Art Nouveau building, the MIM contains almost every musical instrument imaginable. When you stand in front of certain instruments, you will automatically hear a recording of that instrument. The displays are interesting and informative, and our children enjoyed the hands-on acoustic activities.”—Edmonton, Alberta

Musical Instruments Museum (Musée des Instruments de Musique), Montagne de la Cour Hofberg 2, 2 545 0130

“Explore the extensive royal lands at the Park of Laeken. In inclement weather “you can visit the Japanese Tower and the Chinese Pavilion,” intricate structures constructed by King Leopold II and housing collections of rare porcelain and Asian art.—TripAdvisor Member, Cambridge, Mass.

Japanese Tower and Chinese Pavilion (Musées d’Extrême-Orient), Park of Laeken, Avenue Van Praet 44, 2 268 1608

“If you feel like a walk, go to Stockel and take the steps at the back of the metro station. These will bring you out onto the Promenade du Chemin de Fer, a converted rail line that runs behind Parc Malou, over the Avenue de Tervueren and into the Park de la Woluwe.”—TripAdvisor Member, Brussels

Promenade du Chemin de Fer
“Public transportation, consisting of the metro, trams and buses, is fast, frequent, efficient and cheap. At any metro station, you can get a complete map of the network and buy fare cards” good for use on any of the three types of transit.—TripAdvisor Member

“If you plan to drive, avoid rush hour and note that traffic is restricted during some weekends when special events take place. Driving in the city center is not recommended, as streets are narrow, parking is not easy and traffic can be hectic.”—TripAdvisor Member

“If you’re staying in the city center and don’t mind walking, most tourist attractions are accessible by foot. You will definitely need a map to find your way among the streets, which are not arranged or named in an easy to remember or logical way.”—TripAdvisor Member

“You can cruise the rivers and canals around Brussels with a variety of companies. Cruises depart for destinations such as Amsterdam, Antwerp and Rotterdam and provide a unique view of the Belgian countryside.”—TripAdvisor Member, London, England

WHERE to eat

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WHERE to eat

FAMILIES
“I went to Houtsiplou with my one-year-old, husband and parents, and it was a good choice for all. A gigantic burger for me and lamb kebabs and steak for the others. The staff entertained my son, and if he dropped a fork, someone was there with a clean one immediately.”—TripAdvisor Member, Gloucester, U.K.

Houtsiplou, 9 Place Rouppe, 2 511 3816

ROMANCE
“In a city full of inns and bistros, L'Ecailler du Palais Royal shines like a beacon. High quality food, nice presentation and professional staff” have made this restaurant an institution.”—TripAdvisor Member, Cremona, Italy

L’Ecailler du Palais Royal, Rue Bodenbroek 18, 2 512 8751

At Mamma Roma, “the pizza is made in huge squares and weighed and cut according to your hunger” and taste. So everyone can get exactly what they want. “Your mouth will water like it has never watered before. YUM!”—TripAdvisor Member, Wellington, New Zealand

Mamma Roma, Chaussée de Vleurgat 5, 2 640 4280

BUDGET
At Au Bon Bol, a funky noodle bar off the beaten path, “the noodles are handmade to order, and if you sit at the bar in front of the kitchen, you can watch. I’m still amazed how much strength you need to make noodles!”—TripAdvisor Member, Kettering, U.K.

Au Bon Bol, Rue Paul Devaux 9, 2 513 1688

“Restaurant Sainte-Catherine is a small basic restaurant, but the food is very fresh and very well prepared. I would recommend it without hesitation for anyone looking for a good dinner at a reasonable price.”—TripAdvisor Member, Colchester, U.K.

Restaurant Sainte-Catherine, Place du Samedi 15, 2 219 4567

La Clef des Champs "is a little gem. The restaurant knew it was a special occasion, and we were greeted with a glass of champagne each and another glass of champagne with a little box of chocolates after our wonderful meal.”—TripAdvisor Member, Oxford, U.K.

La Clef des Champs, Rue de Rollebeek 23, 2 512 1193

At Restaurant Sainte-Catherine, Place du Samedi 15, 2 219 4567

“Toscana 21 is on a lovely, picturesque road leading down the hill from the Place du Sablon. We tried the daily special, Spaghetti Frutti di Mare—it came in a paper bag in which the seafood had been steamed. It was the best bowl of pasta I've ever had!”—TripAdvisor Member, Edinburgh, Scotland

Toscana 21, Rue de Rollebeek 21, 2 502 3621

“There are friet-kots or chip shops, all over Brussels. One of the most famous is Maison Antoine in Place Jourdan. You can take your fries to one of the cafes surrounding the square” and enjoy them with a refreshing Belgian beer.—TripAdvisor Member, Brussels

Maison Antoine, Place Jourdan, 2 230 5456

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WHERE to eat

HIDDEN GEMS

"Where were all the big beer lists, where were all the unusual beers? Then we found Delirium. It’s a bit tricky to find, but we loved the atmosphere and the menu listing more than 2,000 beers.”—TripAdvisor Member, Fontainebleau, France

Delirium Café, Impasse de la Fidélité 4A, 2 514 4434

Café des Spores is "something different, but delightful," with an entire menu built around the humble mushroom. "I finished dinner with the mushroom ice cream, which was very delicious, and I’ve been craving ever since."—TripAdvisor Member, Birmingham, U.K.

Café des Spores, Chaussee d’Alsemberg 103-108, 2 534 1303

"If you’re looking for a great place to eat, you have to try Kokob! It’s an Ethiopian restaurant with great ambiance and superb food. Try the combination menu for two, it’s not expensive and you can try several dishes!"—TripAdvisor Member, The Hague, The Netherlands

Kokob, Rue des Grands Carmes 10, 2 511 1950

HEALTH-CONSCIOUS

"La Tsampa is THE best vegetarian restaurant in Brussels, no doubt. Fine food, great decor, even a garden in summertime! The menu-of-the-day is truly delicious and can convince even meat-lovers to try veggie food.”—TripAdvisor Member

La Tsampa, Rue de Livourne 109, 2 647 0367

"I love the food at Tan. You feel light and healthy after a meal. Vegan and vegetarians can have a lovely meal here, without feeling punished. Their omnivore friends will be happy too.”—TripAdvisor Member, Antwerp, Belgium

Tan, Rue de l’aqueduc 95, 2 537 8787

"Dolma is the best vegan/vegetarian buffet style restaurant I’ve ever experienced! Lots of options, welcoming staff and, of course I don’t have to tell you, lots of customers!”—TripAdvisor Member, Dublin, Ireland

Dolma, 329 Chaussee d’Ixelles, 2 649 8991

SPECIAL EVENTS

Kick off the Pride season at Brussels Gay Pride. Tens of thousands of revelers flood the city each spring, celebrating diversity with parties, street fairs, outdoor concerts and the colorful parade. (May 12)


Brussels can be an expensive place to visit. Luckily, the city makes up for it with a summer full of free events like the Jazz Marathon. For fifteen years in a row, the main squares and local clubs have hosted concerts and jams by musicians from all over the world. (May 25 - 27)

Brussels Jazz Marathon, Various venues, http://www.brusselsjazzmarathon.be

The Brussels European Film Festival isn’t just for industry insiders. In addition to the standard set of film premieres and juried competitions, there are eight days of free screenings and concerts under the stars. (June 8 - 16)

Brussels European Film Festival, 2 762 0898, http://www.brff.be

For twenty-five years, Brussels has celebrated the first day of summer with free concerts as part of the Festival of Music. Held in honor of the French-speaking communities of Wallonia, the festival spreads from the Grand-Place to communities around the south of Belgium. (June 21)

Fête de la Musique (Festival of Music), Various venues, http://www.fetedelamusique.be

Book your spot early if you would like to attend the Ommegang, a traditional Renaissance pageant. The original parade of horses, knights and noblemen welcomed Emperor Charles V to the city in 1549. The Belgians were so proud of their accomplishment that they have recreated the event every year since. (July 3 - 5)

Ommegang, Grand-Place, 2 512 1961, http://www.ommegang.be

With a name like Beer Weekend, not much explanation is required. Belgian brewers set up their tents in the Grande-Place and invite the public to try their wares. It’s a thirst-quenching way to end the summer! (August 31 - September 2)

Beer Weekend, Grande-Place, http://www.belgianbeerweekend.be

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Where to STAY

FAMILIES

“The Renaissance is a lovely hotel with a fabulous pool and gym facilities and wonderful customer service. Our two-year-old was treated so kindly by all the staff. Breakfast quality and variety was first-class. No need to eat again until supper time!”—TripAdvisor Member, Paris, France

Renaissance Brussels Hotel, Rue du Parnasse 19, 2 505 2929

“The Novotel is a nice, modern family hotel. The location was excellent and the room was fine - very modern. The boys were given a dinosaur 3D jigsaw each when we checked in which was a nice touch. Breakfast for the kids was free and there was everything they could possibly want to eat on offer.”—TripAdvisor Member, County Wicklow, Ireland

Novotel Brussels Centre, Rue de la Vierge Noire 32, 2 620 0428

“The best thing about Bridie’s is Bridie herself. We have stayed in a large number of B&Bs and have never had a nicer welcome. When we wanted to wash some clothes, she walked us over to a laundromat and stayed to show us how to use it.”—TripAdvisor Member, California

Bridie’s Bed and Breakfast, 275 Boulevard Leopold II, 2 428 6757

Aqua Hotel is “modern, clean and a good value. The room was basic but had all the essentials. It’s decorated in a minimalist style. The most striking thing about the decor is a blue sculptural installation that runs throughout the hotel.”—TripAdvisor Member, Dublin, Ireland

Aqua Hotel, Rue De Stassart 43, 2 213 0101

Chambres d’hotes Du Bois is “the best option for a large family. We were 9 family members and this was by far the best solution. The kids could enjoy themselves, while the adults could sit comfortably and chat. The house is well located and the host gave us lovely advice concerning the city.”—TripAdvisor Member, Grenoble, France

Chambres d’hotes Du Bois, Square Larousse 22, 2 344 4649

ROMANCE

“The rooms at The Dominican are lavishly decorated, and the location is great. The Grand Place is only a short walk away. One morning, we ordered the fantastically indulgent champagne breakfast and weren’t charged anything extra.”—TripAdvisor Member, Belfast, Northern Island

The Dominican, Rue Léopold/Leopoldstraat 9, 2 203 0808

“I was looking for the plushest hotel experience possible, so I booked a deluxe room at Le Meridien. The view from our first-rate room was toward the illuminated tower of the Grand Place: instantly romantic.”—TripAdvisor Member, Surrey, U.K

Le Meridien Brussels, Carrefour de l’Europe 3, 2 546 4211

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Le Meridien Brussels, Carrefour de l’Europe 3, 2 546 4211

LULUXURY

“The room at the Sofitel was huge and very stylish. The bathroom was gorgeous—I wanted to pack it up and take it home with me. The turndown service comes complete with Belgian chocolate, slippers and robes. When we left, my boyfriend said ‘Bye room, I love you!’”—TripAdvisor Member, San Francisco, Calif.

Sofitel Brussels Europe, Place Jourdan 1, 2 235 5100

“Have questions about Brussels? Get insider advice from local experts in our forums. The majority of questions are answered within 24 hours.

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Chambres d’hotes Du Bois, Square Larousse 22, 2 344 4649

“Luli is truly superb. The owners are incredibly welcoming and accommodating, and the rooms are beautifully restored, fitted and furnished. It’s conveniently located about fifty meters from a metro station. What a wonderful place from which to explore Brussels.”—TripAdvisor Member, Johannesburg, South Africa

Luli Bed & Breakfast, Place Bockstael, 2 503 1286

Upon arrival at the Rocco, “we were warmly greeted at the impressive entrance. That set the tone for our stay—courteous staff in a beautifully appointed hotel. We were able to take advantage of the hotel’s other virtue, its location, when a local festival paraded by our window.”—TripAdvisor Member, Japan

Rocco Forte Hotel Amigo, Rue de l’Amigo 1-3, 2 547 4747

TripAdvisor Member, Paris, France

Call an Expedia Travel Specialist now 877 633 3716
Where to **STAY**

### HIDDEN GEMS

"We cannot say enough about our stay at **Maison Noble**. Our host was very kind, extremely knowledgeable and very generous with his time. We stayed in the spacious top floor of this beautifully restored house, and through the many skylights, we had views of Brussels and the stars."—TripAdvisor Member, Brooklyn, New York

**Maison Noble**, 10 Rue Marcq, 2 219 2339

"I wanted to stay in a B&B for my birthday, so I thought it best to try the top-rated B&B in Belgium. **Chez Dominique** is in a great location at the center of the city. Dominique is a wonderful woman! She even waited with me in the rain until my taxi came."—TripAdvisor Member, Munich, Germany

**Chez Dominique**, Rue de la Montagne 27, 2 511 5727

"**Hotel Bloom** is a design hotel for half the price of equivalent accommodations. The room decor was unique, with artwork and interesting furniture, and the lobby is beautiful. Soods bar, with every seat showing off a different mood and taste, will blow your mind."—TripAdvisor Member, Düsseldorf, Germany

**Hotel Bloom**, Rue Royale 250, 2 220 6611

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