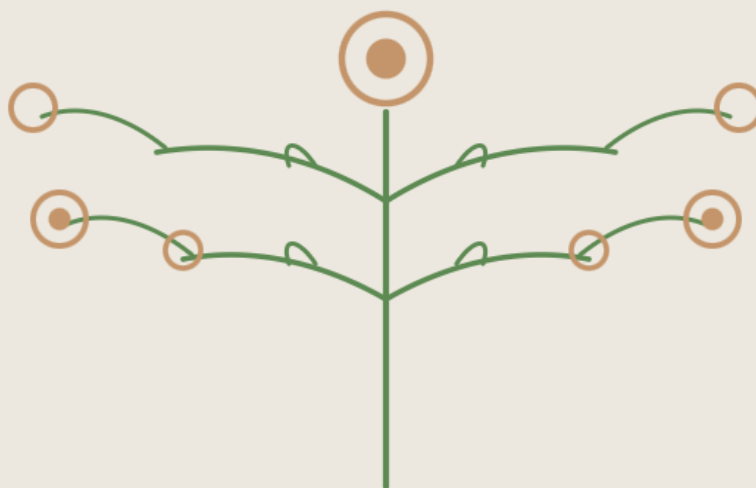




48 HOURS IN

Ghent

BLOOM WHERE YOU WANDER

48 Hours in Ghent

Ghent gets bypassed by most Belgium itineraries in favor of Bruges and Brussels, and that's precisely what makes it worth the detour: the same canals, gabled guild houses, and Gothic towers, with a fraction of the crowds and a genuinely lived-in, youthful energy from the city's large student population. It's a walkable, safe, café-dense city that rewards exactly the kind of unplanned wandering solo travel is best suited for — Belgium's most underrated city, by wide local consensus.

DAY ONE — GRASLEI, GRAVENSTEEN CASTLE & THE HISTORIC CENTER

9:00 AM

Graslei & Korenlei

Twin medieval quaysides facing each other across the Leie river, lined with guild houses whose stepped gabled facades make this one of the most photographed views in Belgium.

Cross to the Korenlei side for the classic postcard shot back across the water at the Graslei facades.

10:30 AM

Gravensteen Castle

A genuinely intact medieval castle in the middle of the city, complete with a moat, murder holes, and a small museum of medieval weaponry and instruments of justice.

The rooftop walk around the battlements gives the best views over Ghent's historic core.

12:30 PM

Lunch: A Canal-Side Café

Ghent's café terraces along the Leie and Lys canals are made for an unhurried solo lunch with the guild houses as a backdrop.

Order a Belgian waffle alongside your lunch, not just as dessert — it's a normal midday order here, not only an evening treat.

2:00 PM

Saint Bavo's Cathedral

Home to the Ghent Altarpiece, one of the most significant and frequently stolen artworks in history — a Gothic cathedral genuinely worth the entry fee for this piece alone.

The Altarpiece has its own dedicated viewing room with timed entry — book ahead in peak season to avoid a long wait.

4:00 PM

Belfry of Ghent

A UNESCO-listed medieval bell tower offering panoramic views over the city's three great towers — cathedral, belfry, and St. Nicholas' Church — in one skyline.

A glass lift covers most of the climb, making this one of the more accessible tower views in the historic center.

7:00 PM

Dinner: Patershol Quarter

A dense, atmospheric medieval neighborhood of narrow streets packed with small independent restaurants — Ghent's best dinner district by a wide margin.

Wander a block or two off the main restaurant row — the quieter side streets often hide the better, less touristed kitchens.

DAY TWO — DESIGN MUSEUM, STAM & AN EVENING CANAL WALK

9:30 AM

Vrijdagmarkt

Ghent's historic market square, lined with guild houses and statues, still hosting a genuine Friday and Saturday market — a good early-morning orientation to the city.

Come on market day if your visit allows it — the square functions completely differently with stalls in full swing.

11:00 AM

Design Museum Gent

A design museum spanning historic and contemporary furniture and decorative arts, housed partly in a preserved 18th-century mansion.

The contrast between the historic mansion rooms and the modern extension is itself part of the exhibit.

1:00 PM

Lunch: Student Quarter Café

Ghent's large student population keeps a whole cluster of cafés near the university busy, casual, and budget-friendly for a solo lunch.

This is where to find the city's best-value lunch menus — genuinely cheaper than the canal-side tourist cafés.

3:00 PM

STAM (Ghent City Museum)

Housed in a former abbey, STAM traces the city's full history through interactive exhibits — a thorough, well-designed counterpoint to the older-style museums in the center.

The abbey's original cloister is preserved inside the museum building and worth a slow pass on its own.

5:30 PM

Rozenhoedkaai... Graslei by Golden Hour

Return to the Graslei quayside as the light turns gold and the guild house facades light up — the same view as day one, transformed by the hour.

This is when the postcard photo actually happens — daytime light is fine, but golden hour is when the facades glow.

8:00 PM

Dinner & a Final Canal Walk

Close the trip with dinner in Patershol or along the water, followed by an evening walk along the illuminated canals — Ghent lit at night is a genuinely different, quieter city.

The city's official illumination plan lights over 300 buildings after dark — the walk itself is a free, worthwhile activity.

WHERE TO EAT

ANYTIME TREAT

Belgian Waffles

A normal midday order in Ghent, not just an evening dessert — best from a canal-side café rather than a tourist cart.

DINNER DISTRICT

Patershol Quarter

A dense medieval neighborhood packed with independent restaurants — Ghent's best dinner area, with quieter side streets rewarding a short wander.

LOCAL SPECIALTY

Ghent Waterzooi

A creamy chicken or fish stew, a genuine Ghent original rather than a generic Belgian dish — worth seeking out over standard mussels-and-fries.

BUDGET SOLO LUNCH

Student Quarter Cafés

Casual, affordable lunch spots near the university — better value than the canal-side tourist cafés.

WHEN TO VISIT

Apr – Jun

Spring Bloom

Mild weather and the city's canal-side terraces reopening in full — the season the series name is built around.

Jul

Gentse Feesten

A ten-day city-wide festival filling the streets with music and events — lively and social, if considerably busier than usual.

GoingSolo.Life

European Series · Spring Capitals



SCAN FOR THE INTERACTIVE MAP