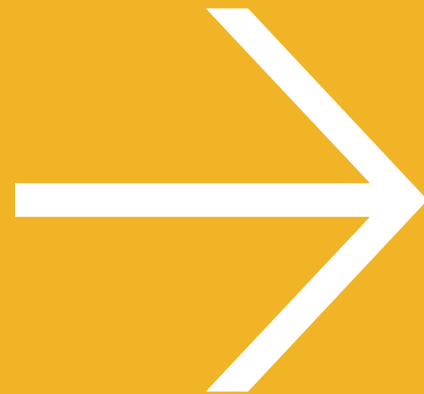


BELGIUM

2019-20



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BELGIUM 2019-20

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The chaos inherent to Belgian club football was underlined during the summer of 2019 when **Mechelen**, champions of second-tier **First Division B**, were refused entry to top-flight **First Division A** due to a match-fixing scandal in 2018.

Runners-up behind Mechelen, **Beerschot** from **Antwerp**, prepared for a first promotion to the elite since... well, what with all the mergers and *matricules*, it's almost impossible to say. (A *matricule* is very Belgian concept, a historic registration system dating back to 1926, with numbers passed or sold on in mergers for a higher league status.)

But... then it was ruled that as Mechelen had fixed matches more than a season ago, the club should only be excluded from the Belgian Cup and the Europa League. Behind this decision was French-Iranian entrepreneur Mehdi Bayat, now Belgian FA president, a former players' agent and managing director of **Charleroi**. He was one of 23 individuals accused of involvement in the wide-ranging scandal of 2017-19.

And yet, Belgian football carries on in its own sweet, idiosyncratic way, as if nothing has happened. Which, unless you're a Beerschot fan, it hasn't.

Unlike in Holland, a wider pool of teams now win the Belgian League – even formerly dominant **Anderlecht**, the main team in **Brussels**, suffered a dreadful season in 2018-19. (Things

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look promising for 2019-20, though, with Vincent Kompany in charge.) **Genk**, **Gent** and **Standard Liège** have all lifted the league crown since 2009, along with record champions **Anderlecht** and **Club Brugge**, whose home gates invariably top the attendance table.

As well as Bruges, Club fly the flag for Flanders, always heavily represented in Belgium's 16-team top league compared to French-speaking Wallonia.



Average capacities are around 20,000, gates 10,000. Many, but not all, clubs have a membership scheme for admission.

Station to stadium

Belgium has two main airports, both serving the capital: **Brussels** itself, and budget hub **Charleroi**. Lesser ones, **Ostend-Bruges** and **Liège**, accommodate holiday charter flights. ➔



Standard Liège

BELGIUM 2019-20

4-6 Brussels	17 Charleroi	28 Standard Liège
7 Stade Roi Baudouin	18 Sporting Charleroi	29 Mechelen
8 Anderlecht	19 Eupen	30 KV Mechelen
9 Antwerp	20 KAS Eupen	31 Mouscron
10 Royal Antwerp	21 Genk	32 Royal Excel Mouscron
11 Beveren	22 KRC Genk	33 Ostend
12 Waasland-Beveren	23 Ghent	34 KV Oostende
13 Bruges	24 KAA Gent	35 Sint-Truiden
14 Jan Breydelstadion	25 Kortrijk	36 Sint-Truidense VV
15 Cercle Brugge	26 KV Kortrijk	37 Waregem
16 Club Brugge	27 Liège	38 Zulte Waregem

BELGIUM



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Trains (belgiantrain.be) are frequent and affordable – there's a terminal at Brussels Airport. **Brussels-Midi/Zuid** (everything is signposted in two languages, French and Flemish, even streets) station is where the **Eurostar** arrives direct from London. Buy train tickets online, from machines or at windows, foreign credit cards accepted.

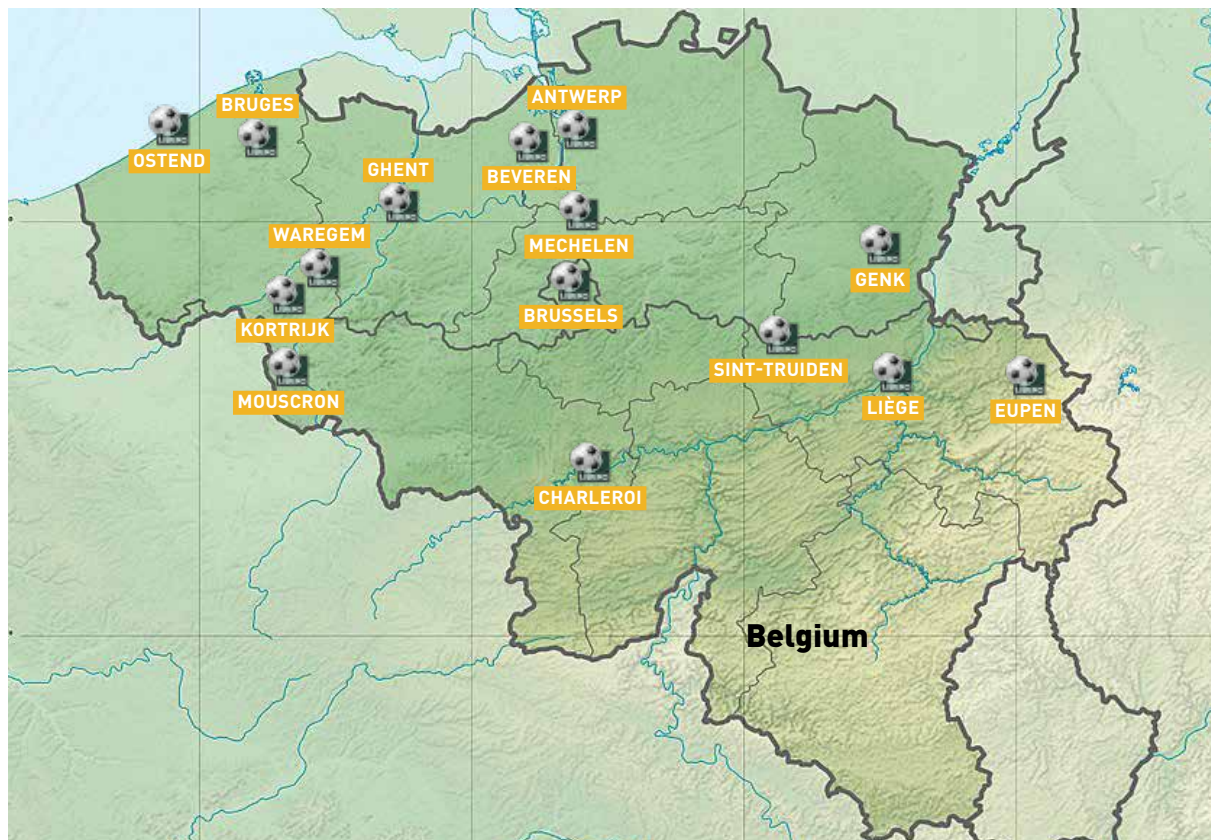
Around Flanders, city trams and buses are run by **De Lijn** (delijn.be), in Wallonia, **TEC** (infotec.be). Brussels has its own company, **STIB** (stib-mivb.be).

Major roads and motorways do not require toll payments. Many cities have blue zones for parking – applicable Mon-Fri 9am-6pm/8pm.

Tables & trophies

The **First Division A** consists of 16 teams who play each other home and away. After each club plays 30 games, the first six go into the championship play-offs for the title and European spots. Points already earned are halved and rounded-up to full numbers, ie a club on 50 points takes 26 with them. After ten more games, home and away, if a club is on equal points with another, that half-point counts against them.

The club finishing top of the play-off league win the Belgian title and enter the Champions League group stage.



The runners-up are in the third qualifying round, third-placed team, the Europa League group stage.

The Belgian Cup winners usually enter the second qualifying round of the Europa League but this berth gets passed down if the trophy holders have already qualified.

Now here's where it gets the kind of bonkers only Belgium can do. The Europa League play-offs involve all teams finishing 7-15 in the regular season, plus those qualifying 2-4 from the second-tier **First Division B**. Points do not carry across from the first two-thirds of the season – which means, in theory, that the club finishing 15th in March, or qualifying

fourth from the lower tier, can reach Europe.

Meanwhile, the sixth-placed club in the championships play-offs, in the case of 2019, Anderlecht, of all teams, get nowt.

The 12 teams in the EL play-offs divide into two mini-leagues, the top

two meet each other in a one-match semi (at the ground of the higher-placed club from the regular season), and the winner takes on the fourth-placed club from the championship play-offs. All this to enter the third qualifying round of the Europa League.

The team finishing bottom of the First Division A in March goes down automatically.

The First Division B comprises eight clubs. The season is divided, like Argentina's, into opening and closing rounds – the winners of each meet over two legs. The winner of that is automatically promoted. The play-off losers, and third and fourth best-placed overall after the opening and closing rounds, enter the Europa League play-offs as already outlined.

The bottom four teams in the First Division B carry half their points over (rounded-up) from the regular season and take part in a mini relegation play-off league. The club finishing bottom drops down to the Belgian First Amateur Division.

This relatively straightforward third tier involves 16 teams. The top four join a promotion play-off league (half the points, rounded-up, carried over from the regular season). The top team goes up. The bottom three in the main league season drop to the →

BELGIUM



BELGIUM 2019-20

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fourth-tier Second Amateur Division, the 13th-placed side play-off against promotion hopefuls from the fourth. That level comprises three divisions, two Flemish, one French, and the winners of each go up automatically.

There's also a Third Amateur Division (A-D), then four levels of provincial leagues.

As for the **cup**... all teams from these four provincial levels have the right to face those from the Third Amateur League in Round 1. How these lesser side enter depends on rules that vary from province to province – suffice to say that in late July, 224 teams play 112 single unseeded matches, penalties on 90 minutes if needed. The teams from the Second Amateur Division enter at Round 2 in early August, then First Amateur Division sides Round 3 in mid August.

First Division B sides arrive at Round 5 in late August, again one match, not seeded, but extra-time is played before any penalty shoot-out if needed. First Division A sides come in for Round 6 in late September. There are two rounds in December before the two-leg semi-finals in late January. The final takes place in May at the Stade Roi Baudouin in Brussels.

Season's dealings

The **First Division A** starts in late July/early August and runs up until



Stade Roi Baudouin

Christmas, with a league round on Boxing Day. It starts again in mid January and the regular season finishes in mid March. The championship/Europa League play-offs run from late March to mid May.

A typical **Division A** weekend would involve a Friday evening game at 8.30pm, Saturday ones at 6pm and 8pm, then Sunday ones at 2.30pm, 6pm and 8pm. Occasionally there's a Monday game at 8.30pm. Saturday afternoon and midweek games are rare. Match times are decided about a month or so ahead.

Division B starts at the same time, the opening league finishing in early November, the closing stage beginning a week later. This runs until late February, with a two-week break either side of New Year. The play-offs run from mid March.

Games are played at 8.30pm on Fridays, 5pm and 8.30pm on Saturdays, and 4pm on Sundays.



Anderlecht

Entry level

Bigger clubs have a membership card scheme and, in the case of Anderlecht, Liège and Club Bruges, the chances of getting a ticket for most league fixtures are low. For a smaller team, Cercle Bruges, say, pay-on-the-day is no problem.

Average prices are €20 behind the goal, €30 along the sideline. Prices increase by 20% for a visit by a big club and/or local rival. A stand in French and Flemish is a *tribune*. A sector in Flemish is a *vak*. *Uitvak* is the away sector for *bezoekers*, visitors.

LB



BELGIUM



BELGIUM 2019-20 Brussels

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Brussels

When **Brussels** was announced as one of 13 cities due to host Euro 2020, thoughts turned to **Heysel**, synonymous with the tragic European Cup Final of 1985. Both the name of the area and the stadium that centrepieced it, Heysel also refers to the disaster in which 39 mostly Juventus fans lost their lives when hooliganism, poor crowd control and a crumbling infrastructure combined to cause horrific scenes before the match.

After years of recriminations, legal processes and the long-term ban of English teams from playing in Europe, Belgium's national stadium was rebuilt a decade later as the **Stade Roi Baudouin**. It was welcomed back into the international fold with the staging of the opening match of Euro 2000.

The venue also formed part of Belgium's bid to co-host Euro 2020. But in 2016, when builders begin on the site, it wasn't to renovate or revamp the Stade Roi Baudouin, but to create an entirely new venue: **Eurostadium Brussels**. This would not only have created a 62,000-capacity national stadium but incorporated a shopping centre, conference hall and theatre. In the end, the project was cancelled and Brussels lost the right to stage matches for Euro 2020.

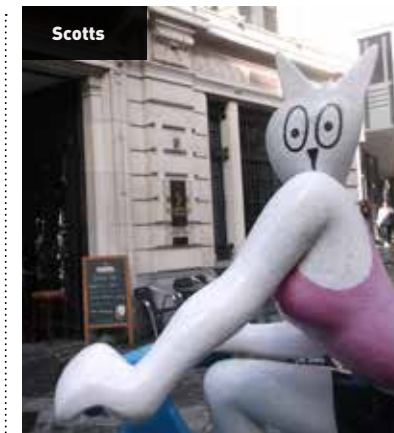


Other consequences of the new construction would have been the uprooting of the city's flagship football club, **Anderlecht**, after more than a century in the grimy district of the same name in south-west Brussels. Once dominant, les Mauves suffered

a worst-ever season in 2018-19 and didn't even qualify for Europe.

Across town, the city's second club, **FC Molenbeek Brussels Strombeek**, aka FC Brussels, folded, leaving **Royal White Star Brussels**, from Woluwe-


St-Lambert, to take over their stadium, the **Edmond Machtens**, for home fixtures. Consecutive seasons struggling with overbearing debt led to RWSB's demise in 2017. Formed in 2015, Molenbeek phoenix club **RWDM47** moved back into the



Edmond Machtens and now compete in Belgium's top amateur division.

Union St-Gilloise, one of the big names from the 1930s, gained promotion through the back door in 2015 to the Second. In 2019, bizarrely, Union even came close to a Europa League play-off. Union's bucolic ground sits amid urban forest south of Brussels city centre, an easy hop from the Eurostar terminus at Midi station.

Quaint local teams form the fabric of the lower leagues. Many disappear, some amalgamate. The names alone are worthy of a boy's comic – **Daring Club**, **Royal Racing White**, **Skill FC de Bruxelles**.

Later linked with Molenbeek, Racing Royal White could trace their roots back to the inaugural 

BRUSSELS



BELGIUM 2019-20 Brussels

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Belgian League of 1895. Formed as **Racing Football Club** in 1894, they joined the Belgian FA as **Racing Club de Bruxelles** and won the title six times between 1897 and 1908. Les Racingmen also won the first Belgian Cup in 1912. Originally based in Koekelberg, beside its towering Basilica, they moved to leafy Uccle, and the **Stade du Vivier d'Oie** in 1902. Two years later, the stadium made history on May Day 1904 when it hosted Belgium v France, the first international played by either side. A crowd of 1,500 watched Belgium in red, half their side made up of Union St Gilloise players, draw with France in white, 3-3.

Racing were later granted use of a Royal title in 1926. Moving out of Uccle for equally suburban Boitsfort, they christened their new **Stade des Trois-Tilleuls** by inviting Italian champions Torino to play the curtain-raiser. The date was also significant: November 11, 1948, exactly 30 years after the end of World War I. Six months later, the entire Torino team died in a plane crash.

By 1954, Racing could no longer afford to play at Stade des Trois-Tilleuls. Given the club's pedigree, the Belgian FA offered that they play at the national Heysel stadium, where they attracted a few hundred spectators every home game. By 1963, they had merged with White Star.



The Stade du Vivier d'Oie still exists, seat of Racing's tennis and hockey clubs. You'll find it at avenue des Chênes 125, a short walk from **Diesdelle/Vivier d'Oie train station**, 15 minutes from Bruxelles-Luxembourg. There's also a bar/restaurant on site, open seven days a week.

Similarly, a visit to St-Gilles, Molenbeek, even Anderlecht, is like a trip to another era. On the wall of bars by each ground will be a league ladder

in bright colours, the teams' positions faithfully moved after each weekend's action. Along with an enviable selection of Belgian beers, you can order Oxo, Ovaltine or Bovril, beneath mounted vintage scarves and badges. Knowledgeable football talk ensues.

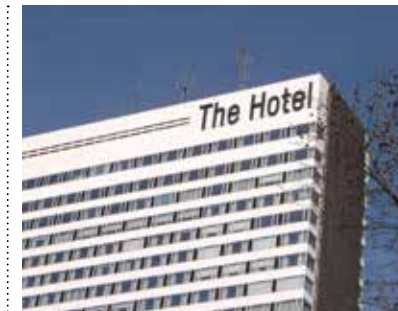
Belgians, supreme collectors of trivia and Anglophiles all, still appreciate the game at its grass roots, a world away from the executive boxes of Chelsea, Milan or Madrid.



Bearings

Brussels Airport is 11km (7 miles) north-east of the city. Four trains an hour (20-30mins, €7.60) link with the three main train stations in town, Midi, Centrale and Nord. A **taxi** should be about €40. The **Eurostar** from London St Pancras has its terminus at Brussels Midi.

Several budget airlines use **Charleroi**, an hour's bus journey to Brussels Midi (€13 single, €22 return). If you'd prefer to reach Brussels by **rail**, you'll have to catch local **bus A** (every 30min, 15min journey time) from the stand to the far left of the concourse as you leave Charleroi airport terminal. A single ticket (pay on board) is €6, or you can buy a combined bus/train



ticket to Brussels Midi for €15.50, from a machine between the terminal and the bus concourse.

Brussels city transport consists of a metro network, interlinking trams running underground known as the pré-metro, and buses. A single is €1.80, five rides €7.50, ten €11.80, a day pass €6. For a cab, call **Taxis Bleus** (+32 2 268 00 00).

Bed

You can book a hotel through **Visit Brussels** (visit.brussels/en).

Facing the main entrance of the Stade Baudouin on avenue Houba de Strooper, the **Hotel Expo** is a modern, functional three-star.

Of the many options near Midi Station, therefore convenient for Anderlecht, **Park Inn by Radisson Brussels Midi Hotel** offers reliable comfort, as does the hi-spec **Pullman Brussels Centre Midi Hotel**, with a pool, gym and 24-hour bar. ➔

BELGIUM 2019-20 Brussels

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In town close to the main square, the **Marriott** and the **Hotel Orts** on rue Auguste Orts are at opposite ends of the luxury scale. Also near Grand'Place, the **Matignon** on rue de la Bourse and **Aparthotels Brussels** on rue des Dominicains offer varying levels of luxury. For old-school grandeur, look no further than the venerable **Métropole**, right on the central transport hub of De Brouckère.

For convenience and comfort, the **Hotel NH Brussels Carrefour de l'Europe** on rue Marché aux Herbes exudes four-star elegance while the five-star **Amigo** on rue de l'Amigo marries history with contemporary design.

Slightly further out on boulevard de Waterloo, **The Hotel** provides panoramic luxury on the ring road that encloses the city centre. Nearby photo-themed **Zoom** on rue de la Concorde is a design-forward home



from home, chic yet comfortable. At the northern edge of the Petit Ring, now in the NH group, the **Bloom** at rue Royale 250 provides funky rooms done out with individual art, and a scented lobby, on the edge of the Turkish quarter.

If you're after real Brussels, overlooking the main square of earthy Les Marolles, with its regular flea market, the **Galia** on place du Jeu de Balle is a friendly, 20-room cheapie.

Beer

Brussels is justifiably famous for its range of beers, served in the bar hubs around **place St-Géry** and **rue du Marché-aux-Charbons**.

Opposite the Bourse, landmark **O'Reilly's** has long been the main pub for sport-watching. Over the boulevard, **The Big Game** (rue Henri Maus 5) is a more basic, with a huge screen for football and party atmosphere post-match. The **Celtica** (rue du Marché aux Poulets 55) is more intimate though no less rowdy.

Near St-Géry, the **Lava** at rue St Christoph 20 is a friendly spot for football games.

Also central, **Churchill's** (rue Ecuyer 29) sports images of classic Brit pop bands, has three large-screen TVs and keeps very late hours. In this same hub, party-minded **Rooster's**



(rue Grétry 79) has TV sports on eight TV screens and two projectors, plus 5am closure at weekends. Cocktail-focused but sport-friendly when occasion demands, downtown **Scott's** (rue Montagne aux Herbes-Potagères 2) can be located thanks to the unique cyclist statue outside.

Tucked away on tranquil place de Londres, between funky Ixelles and the business-like EU Quarter, **Public House 12** is a friendly football-focused bar/pub. Also close to the expat-centric concrete jungle of the

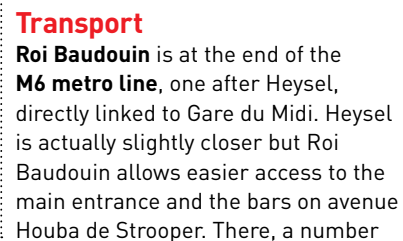
EU Quarter, **Fat Boy's** (avenue de Cortenbergh 36) is a long-established and popular sports bar.

For a real feel of the local scene, **Brasserie de l'Union**, a couple of tram stops from Midi on the parvis de St-Gilles, is the classic hang-out of Union fans, the city's flagship club of the pre-war era. At the other edge of the square, the **Brasserie Verschuere** puts food first during the day but features a gorgeous league ladder as its backdrop mural.



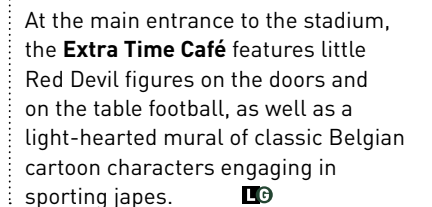
If it goes ahead, what should remain is the memorial to the 39 victims of the 1985 tragedy, a sundial and words

It took ten years for authorities to rebuild the ground, its current capacity 50,000, 45,000 for soccer. It officially opened as a football venue ten years after the tragedy, in 1995, and five years later staged the curtain-raiser for Euro 2000.



Tours

With or without a guide, stadium tours last for 60-90mins and take place Mon-Fri 10am-5pm (€6/€4





BELGIUM 2019-20 Anderlecht

www.lib eroguide.com/anderlecht

Anderlecht

The last time **Royal Sporting Club Anderlecht**, failed to qualify for Europe, it was 1963. In 2019, 56 years later, Les Mauves finished bottom of the Belgian Championship play-off. Now enter Vincent Kompany, who started out at the **Constant Vanden Stock Stadium** before a stellar career abroad.

Anderlecht represent the namesake sombre area of south-west Brussels. The club won its last and record 34th league title in 2017. Soon afterwards, brewing family the Vanden Stocks sold RSCA after 46 years at the helm, giving way to pharmaceutical billionaire Marc Coucke – and failure.

Kompany's surprise arrival in May 2019 attracted for Manchester City teammate Samir Nasri to join him as Anderlecht looked to reverse their recent decline, unprecedented in modern times.

Their stadium still carries the name of **Constant Vanden Stock**. Its capacity, a modest 28,000, includes 7,000 standing places, removed for Champions League nights.

Home fans gather behind each goal, particularly standing in tribune 4 (green), with the neutral best seated in red tribune 3. Away fans are



allocated places in tribune 1 (purple), accessed through gate 5, round the corner from the RSCA club shop. The main entrance is on avenue Théo Verbeeck.

Transport

The nearest metro is **St-Guidon**, on line 5 directly linked with Gare Centrale. Bus No.49 also runs from Gare du Midi to St-Guidon. From the metro station, turn right, then first right again up rue de la Procession – it's about ten minutes altogether to the stadium.

Alternatively, **bus No.46** calls at St-Guidon and, one stop later, De Linde, right alongside the ground. Note that away fans are sometimes requested



to use the Aumale metro stop for security purposes.

Tickets

Such is the modest capacity of the Constant Vanden Stock that tickets are not always available for each game – the **club website** (<https://www.rsca.be/en/playoffs>) will have



A year to regroup

information. Sometimes a limited number are on sale from the **Ticketing RSCA office** on avenue Théo Verbeeck, a short walk between the club shop and the main stadium entrance. For an average league game, these range €22-€29 in price, €11 for under 16s. ID has to be produced upon purchase.

Shop

The **club shop** (Tue-Fri 10am-6pm, Sat 10am-2pm, match days from 4hr before and 1hr after the game) is at the north-west corner of the stadium where place de Linde meets avenue Théo Verbeeck – which is to say pretty much the first thing you come to walking from St-Guidon metro. Latest accessory is a Vincent Kompany scarf.

Bars

Around place de Linde close to the stadium are standard bar **La Mi-Temps** (rue de la Procession 145) and **Le Penalty**, its large interior filled with RSCA flags – there's a terrace too.

Further along avenue Théo Verbeeck, competition has reduced a busy row of bars to **Le But**, **Green Park**, filled with signed and framed players' photos, and **Le Fair Play** (No.73).

Don't miss the incomparable **La Coupe** (No.55), a cornucopia of Anderlecht adoration in the form of a colourful league ladder, fading pennants and Mermans-era line-ups.





BELGIUM 2019-20 Antwerp

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Pelikaan



Paters Vaetje



ANTWERP

Antwerp

Hub of fashion, diamonds and art masterpieces, **Antwerp** is home to Belgium's oldest club and most venerable local derby.

Royal Antwerp, 'The Great Old', were formed by English students in 1880. In 1900, several Antwerp players left for newly formed **Beerschot**. Bitter city rivalries have been built on less. Based at the former **Olympisch Stadion** where the 1920 Games were held, Beerschot came close to promotion in 2019. Top-flight Antwerp play at the **Bosuilstadion**, opened in 1923.

Bearings

Brussels Airport is 42km (26 miles) away. A **direct train** runs every 30min to **Antwerpen-Centraal** (single €12), journey time 30mins.

Tickets for **Eurostar** from London St Pancras are sold as direct to Antwerp, though the journey requires a change at **Brussels-Midi**. Overall journey time is 3hrs.

From the Eurostar terminal at **Brussels-Midi**, a **direct train** runs every 30min to **Antwerpen-Centraal**, 45min journey time. A regular single ticket is €7.50.

Antwerpen-Centraal is by the Diamond Quarter, east of the city centre a 15min walk away. Public transport consists of buses, trams and the Premetro. A **single ticket** from the machine by the stop or the driver is €3, valid for 1hr. A **day pass** is €7, €9 on board, 3-day pass €14. Validate your ticket for each journey in the yellow machine.

The stadiums are too far to walk from the centre. A **Stadtaxi** can be contacted on +32 3 233 37 37.

Bed

Visit Antwerp (visitantwerpen.be/en) has a **hotel database and booking function**.

There are no hotels near either stadium. For easy access, a location near either tramline – Nos.2 or 5 – is the best bet. By **Astrid Premetro station**, the four-star **Radisson Blu Astrid Hotel Antwerp** has a pool while across Carnotstraat, the **Park Inn by Radisson Antwerp** is more affordable.

Opposite the train station stand the smart **Leonardo** and business-friendly **De Keyser**. On nearby De Keyserlei, four-star **De Hylitt** has a rooftop restaurant. **Billard Palace** on Koningen Astridplein is that rare combination of hotel and snooker hall.

Halfway between Centraal and the other main station of Berchem, **TRYP by**

Wyndham Antwerp is both fashionable and affordable.

By central Groenplaats, the **Hilton Antwerp Old Town** has roof terrace, while on Nationalestraat, the **Hotel National** is reliably mid-range.

On the tram 2 route near Lange Leemstraat, the four-star **Plaza Hotel** offers rooftop rooms.

Beer

On **Grote Markt**, **Den Engel** has been serving Antwerp's finest amber De Koninck for over a century. Across the square, the **Irish Times Pub** offers TV sport and live music.

Nearby on Blauwmoezelstraat, **Paters Vaetje** stocks many Belgian brews, as does beer sanctuary **De Elfde Gebod** one street over. Another street over on Melkmarkt, **De Pelikaan** is steeped in beer tradition.

Closer to the waterfront, you'll find 350 beers at the **Café Pardaf** on Suikerrui while overlooking the river, the **Café Beveren** houses a vintage jukebox.

On Nationalestraat in the Fashion Quarter, **An Sibhin** provides big-screen sport and all-day breakfasts, as does **Kelly's Irish Pub** near the station.

On Leopoldplaats, **Old Trafford** is filled with MU memorabilia. **LE**



BELGIUM 2019-20 Royal Antwerp

www.liberoguide.com/royal-antwerp

Royal Antwerp

In 2019, Belgium's oldest football club returned to Europe after more than two decades. **Royal Antwerp** reached a European final in 1993 but had long been in the doldrums.

RAFC have a simple badge bearing five important numbers: 1880, the date when local English students founded the Antwerp Athletic Club, and No.1, the prime *matricule* number, of the thousands registered with the Belgian FA since 1926.

Looking as venerable as the club it has served since opening in 1923, the **Bosuilstadion** has a capacity of 15,000. It was only as recently as 2017 (!) that the original pre-war Tribune 1 stand was demolished and replaced.

In 2018, with RAFC again a top-flight proposition, it was announced that the club would be staying at the Bosuilstadion, which will completely modernised from 2019 onwards. A 23,000-capacity stadium will be built, with three new stands, a roof and a high-tech security system.

For the time being, only three stands are in use: main Tribune 1 along one sideline, and so-called sfertribune 2 opposite, flares and noise bursting out of the nearest sectors to the north goal, where Tribune 3 also



accommodates home fans and around 800 visiting ones in the sector Z5 nearest Tribune 1.

Transport

The stadium has its own stop, **Deurne Antwerp Stadion**, on **tram line No.5**, ten stops/ten minutes from **Astrid** closest to Antwerp train station. Exit right out of the station building, cross Koningin Astridplein and head downstairs to the lower level. Trams run every 10min Mon-Sat, every 15min Sun.

Those downloading the **RAFC app** can arrange a free transport ticket on match days.

Tickets

With average gates around 13,000, and a capacity of 15,000, buying on the day is usually possible (take ID) but advance purchase is wise.

The **Ticket Corner** at the club shop is always open on Thursdays from noon to 6pm, and 3hrs before kick-off, 1hr after final whistle on match

days. In the run-up to a home game, it should be open Wed & Fri, noon-6pm as well.

Online purchase (antwerp.tickethour.be) is also possible, but you have to register first.

For all enquiries, **contact** ticketing@rafc.be.

Average **ticket prices** are €21, under-16s €6, also the same charged to away fans.




Shop

By entrance A near the main stand, the **Fanshop** offers red-and-white souvenirs a-plenty, current first kit being all red, away strip white, both with yellow trim, and third black with gold sleeves.

Bars

By the tram stop on the main road, **The Great Old** is traditional tavern that has upgraded its décor and kitchen since RAFC again became a top-flight proposition. On the menu you find beef stew, ribs and steaks but on match days the Cristal and De Koninck beers still flow out of the taps as singing rings around the place. It's still big enough to contain a table for Belgian billiards, with a large terrace open at either end of the season.

Around the ground, **beers and snacks** are sold with cashless payments – download the RAFC app to upload the right amount. 

ROYAL ANTWERP



BELGIUM 2019-20 Beveren

www.liberoguide.com/beveren

Beveren

Beveren has welcomed home more major silverware in modern times than Antwerp on the opposite bank of the River Scheldt.

The club that won those two league titles and two cups, however, no longer exist. **KSK Beveren** lost their professional status in 2010.

Afterwards, KSK merged with Sint-Niklaas-based **KV Red Star Waasland** to become **Waasland-Beveren**, inheritors of the **Freethiel Stadion** on Klapperstraat west of town.

Also in 2010, disgruntled KSK supporters **YB SK Beveren**, who compete in the 2nd Provincial C Division of East Flanders, on **Lindenlaan** behind the Freethiel Stadion.

Bearings

Brussels Airport is 56km (35 miles) south. A **train** runs every 30min from platform 1 at the airport rail terminal to **Antwerpen-Berchem**, where you change for **Beveren** (single €13), overall journey time just over 1hr.

From the Eurostar terminal at **Brussels-Midi**, a **train** runs every 30min to **Antwerpen-Berchem**, where you change for **Beveren** (single €9), overall journey time just over 1hr.



Beveren station is a 10min walk south of the town centre, along Stationstraat. **De Lijn buses** run along main road N70 between them, and to the stadium a 10min walk south of town. A **single ticket** from the machine by the stop or the driver is €3, valid for 1hr. Validate your ticket for each journey in the yellow machine.

Based near the stadium, **Taxi Waasland** (+32 35 00 09 71) also offers airport transfers.

Bed

Tourism Beveren (toerismewaasland.be) has a **hotel database**.

The only hotel is on main Gentseweg, 2.5km from town, a 15min walk from the stadium, the **Van der Valk Beveren** caters to business travellers and weekend visitors with two restaurants and a spa centre. There are three-for-two package deals over the weekend, and lazy Sunday offers until 5pm.

The only other lodging options are two upscale B&Bs. **Koetshuis Botsdam** stands on main Oude Zandstraat by the centre, offering suites and apartments at €100-plus, one with its own sauna. On Kloosterstraat, **Notarishuis Beveren** has seven



elegant rooms, singles for €90, doubles €105. There's an outdoor pool in summer.

Beer

Bars and restaurants line **Grote Markt** in town. The most outstanding, the **Café Sportief** lines one wall with old Beveren line-ups. All is lived-in, friendly and busy on market days. A terrace catches the late morning sun.

Over the square, **Café De Mart** has a footnote in local football history. This is a tasteful makeover of **De Graanmart**, depicted on the wall, whose regulars played for the first club in town, Standaard. After it

folded, they stayed together to form what would become SK Beveren. Locals still gather here in numbers, with TV games screened.

On the church side of the square, **Peacock's** has gone from standard corner bar to restaurant but remains a convivial spot for a beer.

Halfway between town and the station on Stationstraat, **'t Copke** is another dyed-in-the-wool Beveren bar, with a big TV for match-watching.

Opposite the station, the **Café Sirius** is where Beveren supporters meet. It's a classic, friendly Belgian bar, with a terrace.





BELGIUM 2019-20 Waasland-Beveren

www.liberoguide.com/waasland-beveren



Waasland-Beveren

A going concern since 2010, a top-flight club since 2012, **Waasland-Beveren** have ties to two immediate antecedents, one twice champions of Belgium and European semi-finalists.

Representing the city of **Beveren** in East Flanders from 1934 to their dissolution in 2010, **SK Beveren** rose from the provincial leagues to become a serious force in the Belgian game

by the 1970s. During most of this time, they were based at the **Freethiel Stadion** west of town, converted for football use in 1938 and home of Waasland-Beveren today.

Its real opening date was 1949, when workmen levelled the sand hillocks around it and erected a wooden stand. Before Beveren welcomed the likes of Internazionale and Barcelona, the capacity was raised to 22,000, floodlights and a stand around the home terrace also installed.

With more success came a new main stand in 2009, the introduction of business seats reducing capacity until today's 8,190. All is covered, the 3,515 seats, 3,000 standing places and nearly 1,200 business seats.

Three stands surround the pitch: standing home fans and visiting supporters seated behind the same goal in Tribune 2, divided into Staan Tribune E and Bezoekers D. A row of skyboxes occupies the upper level of main Tribune 1, sectors C1-C3



and A1-A3 nearest the corner flags at either end, B1-B4 the best seats, over the dug-out and halfway line. Opposite, sector G in Tribune 3 has an equally great view, with sectors F and H alongside.

Transport

The Freethiel stands west of town. From the city centre, walk up the main pedestrianised street, then at the 't Spinnewiel restaurant, turn left into **Donkvijverstraat**. It's a 10min walk from there. From the train station, it's a fair trek and buses are infrequent.

Tickets

Advance tickets are sold **online** (beveren.tickethour.be) usually for all sectors apart from the away one and prime B1-B4 in Tribune 1.

For all **information**, contact info@waasland-beveren.be.

On **match days**, the ticket windows open from 90 minutes before kick-off.

A standing place with the home fans is €15, nearly all other seats €20, the only discounts for under-16s, €5 to stand, €8 to sit.

Sideline sectors B1-B4 are occupied by those paying top whack: €65, €75 for 'topgames' against Anderlecht, Antwerp, Bruges, Genk and Gent.

Apart from the visits of Anderlecht and Antwerp, gates average 3,000-4,000, so availability is rarely a problem.

Shop

Beveren merchandise is available at **Sportline Beveren** (Vrasenstraat 42; Mon 1pm-6pm, Tue-Sat 9.30am-6pm) in town. Among the generic sports gear, you'll find replica shirts, jackets and scarves – there's also a personalised printing service for names and numbers.

Bars

The only bar near the stadium is the **Cafe Welkom** at Klapperstraat 88, on the corner of Donkvijverstraat. You'll find serious pre- and post-match drinking in this friendly corner spot, within sight of the floodlights five minutes away.

At the ground, the **Thema Café** opens on match days to offer €22 communal lunches, supporters then able to sit in sector E at a reduced rate of €15, €20 for top games.



BELGIUM 2019-20 Bruges

www.liberoguide.com/bruges

Bruges

Tourist-swamped **Bruges** is a jewel of Gothic architecture, Flemish Masters and two football teams: **Club** and **Cercle**, each in the top-flight for 2019-20. They share a stadium, the **Jan Breydel**, renovated for Euro 2000, in the Sint-Andries area south-west of the centre.

Bearings

Brussels Airport is 111km (69 miles) away. A **direct train** runs every hour from platform 1 at the airport rail terminal to **Bruges station** (single €20), journey time 1hr 30min.

From the Eurostar terminal at **Brussels-Midi**, a **frequent train** runs to **Bruges**, 1hr journey time, single tickets €14.

Bruges station is 2km south of the town centre, about a 15-minute walk away. **De Lijn buses** await in the forecourt. A **single ticket** from the machine by the stop or the driver is €3, valid for 1hr. Validate your ticket in the yellow machine on board.

Taxi Snel can be called at +32 50 36 36 49 or +32 50 33 44 55.

Bed

The **Bruges Tourist Office** (visitbruges.be/en) has a hotel database and room-booking service.



Some hotels insist on a two-night stay over the weekend, when rates shoot up.

Convenient for the Jan Breydelstadion, the three-star **Hostellerie Pannenhuis** is a lovely stand-alone house, garden and restaurant, where Zandstraat meets Gistelsesteenweg halfway between the station and the stadium.

As you approach the city centre from the station, on your left the mid-range **Hotel Albert I** is convenient

and comfortable while alongside, the Spanish chain **NH Brugge** fills a 17th-century monastery with smart guestrooms. Late Sunday check-out is offered with direct booking.

Across't Zand, a lovely little place tucked away round the corner is 37-room **'t Putje**.

Popular **Hostel 28** on nearby Dweerstraat has various types of affordable private rooms with or without their own bathroom while a few doors down, the two-star **Hotel**

Bla Bla was modernised in 2016.

Over the water and nearer to Markt, by the Belfry of *In Bruges* film fame, the **Hotel Koffieboontje** on Hallestraat offers small but affordable rooms.

On the other side of Markt, the **Hotel Marcel** comprises 20 funky rooms and a cosy café.

Beer

Main squares are lined with busy terraces, filled with tourists sat over multi-coloured beers. On **Vrijdag-**



markt and **'t Zand** opposite, the **Lindenhof**, **De Zandloper**, the **Bras Café** and **Ma Rica Rokk** are lively day and night. For football-watching, try late-opening **Muttley's** or head up to the **Eiermarkt** near Markt where **De Pub** is one of the best spots to see the game.

With Belgian bars everywhere, Irish pubs are thin on the ground – on Burg, **Delaney's** shows sport on five big screens, stages live music and serves fine food. Just over the water nearby, **Pub 't Volkshuis** is a handy corner spot to catch the game while just behind at the fish market, the **Hollandse Vismijn** has been serving classic Belgian beer and Flemish food for eons.

Also handy for watching the match, **The Monk** on Vlemingstraat doubles up as a pool bar while nearby **Le Trappiste** on Kuiperstraat specialises in monastic brews. **LG**

BRUGES



BELGIUM 2019-20 Jan Breydelstadion

www.liberoguide.com/jan-breydelstadion

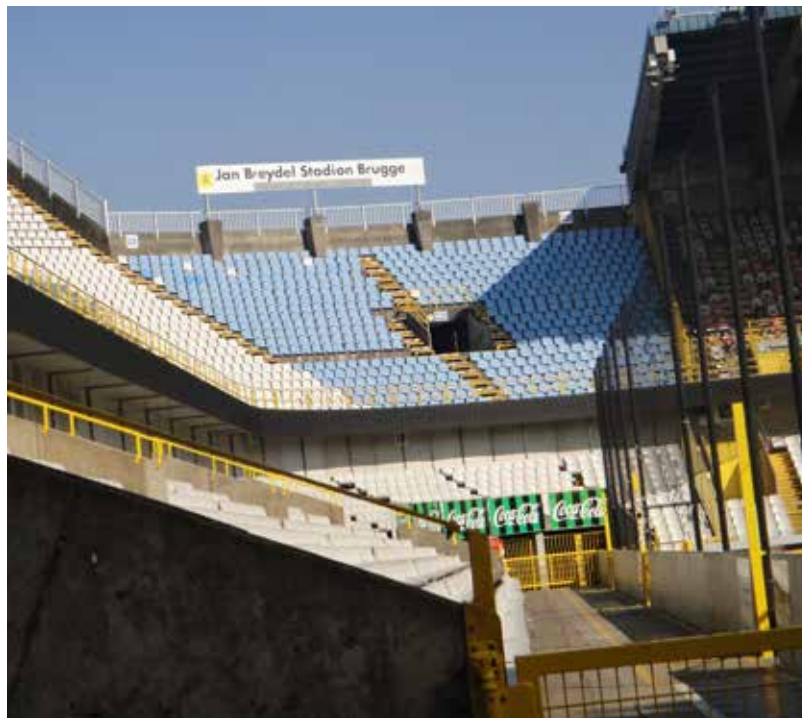
Jan Breydelstadion

Neat and compact, the **Jan Breydelstadion** is ideal for a town the size of Bruges. Shared by **Club** and **Cercle Bruges**, revamped for Euro 2000, the Jan Breydel will never match the business-class sheen of Anderlecht's Parc Astrid – and nor would any local ever wish it to.

For all that, plans are afoot for Club to build a 40,000-seater stadium outside town, on **Blankenbergse Steenweg** some 4km north of the city. With the red tape slowly lifting and mayoral backing, Cercle will be left to create their own blueprint to reduce capacity at the Jan Breydel from 29,000 to 12,000 and set aside other parts of the ground for commercial and corporate use.

Before the boom of the mid-1970s, when both Bruges clubs were facing financial difficulties, the mayor of Bruges hit upon the idea of having a municipal stadium built in which both could play. It would be the perfect stage for each to perform, and solve financial worries.

In 1975, the city council built the Olympiastadion, and it was opened that August. Within a year Club were in the UEFA Cup final. Built to a simple design, with two stands along the pitch and terracing behind the



goal, the Olympiastadion enjoyed a complete overhaul 25 years later in time to host Euro 2000.

As well as a thorough modernisation, the ground was renamed the Jan Breydel after a local war hero. All-covered and all-seated, the Jan Breydel provides a fierce atmosphere for games with Anderlecht, Liège and on European nights.

Blok 19 in the North, Kirk ('Church') End (Tribune 2, access on

Olympialaan) is favoured by Club fans – unless Club are playing Cercle, in which case Club fans take the South, Bad ('Swimming Pool') End (Tribune 4, access Doornstraat). Access for the East Stand, Tribune 3, is via Koning Leopold III-laan.

Transport

From Perron 1 at Bruges Sint-Pieters station, **bus Nos.5** (to Hermitage) and **15** (to De Prange) take about 10-15 minutes to reach the **Kerk** stop by St-Andries Church.



It drops you, conveniently, right by the row of pre-match bars and chip shops. Cut down Olympialaan further ahead (or the cemetery, immediately opposite) and the stadium is ahead of you.

Tickets & shop


Both Club and Cercle have their own outlets at the Jan Breydel. See **Club Bruges** and **Cercle Bruges** for ticket and shop information.

Bars

At the hub of bars on Gistelsesteenweg by the 5/15 bus stop, **De Chalet** (No.530) probably stands out, its menu including pasta

and 'seasonal' omelettes. Coffee comes with a cornucopia of treats: a thick slice of Swiss roll, a toffee and a shot glass of extra-thick eggnog. Adjoining **Den Comptoir** and the **Jan Breydel** have varying opening hours.

Here, too, **Frituur Carlos** is the finest pre-match chippie, in the same family since 1963. When poor Carlos passed away in his sleep 40 years later, Pascal took over, leaving aga-making in Wrexham to cook chips. But what chips they are!

Diagonally opposite, there's also the **'T Stadion Frituur** and Italian restaurant **Carlito's**. 



BELGIUM 2019-20 Cercle Bruges

www.liberoguide.com/cercle-bruges



Cercle Bruges

The second side in Belgium's second city of Bruges, **Cercle** were in their pomp during the inter-war years. The Groenen-Zwart ('Green-and-Blacks') are universally revered, not least for being the first club from Flanders to win the Belgian Championship, way back in 1911. The last league title came in 1930.

Cercle were founded by former students of the Sint-Franciscus Xavelus Instituut in 1899. An amiable rivalry with the more down-to-earth Club was soon established.

The star name of these early days was Florimond van Halme, a centre-half who led the Green and Blacks to the double in 1927, and title in 1930. He retired thereafter.

Much of the next four decades was spent

flitting between divisions before the club's move to the Olympiastadion in the 1970s attracted a better class of foreign player. Former Danish international captain Morten Olsen spent a couple of seasons here but the team's only modern-day honour has been the cup win over Beveren in 1985, decided on the penalty spot.

The man of the 1990s was Josip Weber, a Croat-born striker who ran out for Belgium at the 1994 World Cup. His 130 goals were notched in only six seasons before he left – inevitably – for Anderlecht.

Sadly, Cercle's luck ran out in 2015, which saw a cup semi-final defeat at the hands of local rivals Club, compounded by relegation from the Pro League.

With AS Monaco becoming the club's majority shareholder in 2017, Cercle have been able to raise their game. In



2018, the vital last-minute penalty that secured promotion to the top flight came from on-loan Frenchman Irvin Cardona, a member of Monaco's title-winning squad the season before.

As well as several loanees from Monaco, the current Cercle squad includes Kylian Hazard, younger brother of top Belgian international Eden.

Cercle share the **Jan Breydelstadion** with their better-known neighbours, Club. Cercle fans prefer the South, swimming-pool ('Bad') end.

Tickets, shop & bar

Attendances for Cercle games at the 30,000-capacity Jan Breydel hover around the 8,000 mark. The idea is to reduce the stadium size once Club move out to their new arena, probably around 2022.



Currently getting a Cercle ticket is rarely problematic. The **office** operates Mon-Fri 1.30pm-5.30pm, and Sat 10am-noon depending on when the game takes place. Match-day sales are also possible – you don't need a membership card.

Alternatively you can purchase **online** (cercle.tickethour.be).

Tickets start at a reasonable €15 in the North Stand and rise to €20-€35 in the West. For Topwedstrijden – for the visits of Antwerp, Genk and Liège – prices

rise by about €5. For Superwedstrijden (Club, Anderlecht and Gent), it's €20 in the North Stand, €25-€80 in the West. Under-18s receive a €5-€10 discount in the North Stand for all matches.

The ticket office, **Kring 99 Bar** and **club shop** are all clustered near each other at the South-West corner of the ground, blok 113/123.

The bar has a welcome terrace that overlooks the training pitch, the club shop and a monument to Cercle players who fell in global conflict. **LG**



BELGIUM 2019-20 Club Bruges

www.liberoguide.com/club-bruges



Club Bruges

'Club', as they are known to locals, approach with honest toil, as typified by all-time hero Jan Ceulemans. As the club motto says, 'No Sweat, No Glory'.

Recently, sweat has brought Club glory in the form of league titles in 2016 and 2018. This more recent win was since tainted by the winning coach, Croatian Ivan Leko, being taken into questioning later that year as part of the widespread match-fixing investigations across Belgium. Nothing, though, could take away the satisfaction of Club beating Anderlecht 5-0,

With Club back winning silverware and competing in the Champions

League, plans are in place to build a new stadium on **Blankenbergse Steenweg** outside town. The move, probably not due until at least 2022, would end a near half-century of groundsharing the **Jan Breydelstadion** with city rivals Cercle.

Until then, Club fans will gather in the North, Kirk ('Church') end of the Jan Breydel, where you'll find their rather excellent bar, shop and, somewhat poignantly, the club offices fashioned after revered old ground, **De Klokke**.

Tickets

For league matches one to four months ahead, tickets for several home games go on sale.

In order to buy **online** (tickets. clubbrugge.be) you will also need to purchase an annual card for the **1891**



Club, which entitles you to purchase for up to four tickets per game. Standard membership is €25 or there's a free **Digital 1891** option, for which match tickets are only available in the Zuid corner of the stadium.

The **ticket outlet** Mon 2pm-5pm, Tue-Fri 10am-5pm, plus 90mins before

kick-off) at the Jan Breydelstadion is next to the Club shop.

Prices start at €20 in the Nord or Zuid (No.4) Stands behind the goal, average at €25 on the sidelines and rise to €40 for the best seats over the halfway line in the Oost or West.

Shop

The main **store** (Mon 2pm-6pm, Tue-Fri 10am-6pm, Sat 9am-5pm, match days 2hrs before kick-off, 1hr after final whistle) at De Klokke, the Club offices nearest the church, stocks Club wallpaper, pillows and wall-clocks, but pride of place should go to the branded table-football table that dominates the centre of the room. For 2019-20, the Club shirt is a broad blue vertical band on black rather than classic stripes, the away shirt is maroon, third kit light blue. There's also a **little van** parked behind the store for a range of T-shirts.

Bars

Diagonally opposite De Klokke offices, at the north-west corner of the ground (blok 115-116, 125-126), the **FCB Kaffee** is a scarf-bedecked joy of a stadium bar. It's actually two rooms, one flight up, with two long bar counters dispensing Jupiler beer.

Visits here by some of Europe's most exotic names – Ružomberok, Dnipro Dnepropetrovsk, Debrecen, Lech Poznan – are evidenced in scarf form. There are tables outside, too, overlooking the training pitch and the **Blauw-Zwart** family bar, a cabin where parents can watch their sons being put through their paces below.

Club members are also allowed access to the **Zuid Lounge** bar at the South End of the stadium. **LB**



BELGIUM 2019-20 Charleroi

www.liberoguide.com/charleroi

Charleroi

Charleroi typifies the post-industrial gloom of Wallonia. A budget-air hub, this former centre of coal and steel is now a mish-mash of dilapidated façades and colourful street art.

When Charleroi was chosen as a co-host for Euro 2000, many couldn't have placed it on the map. Home of flagship club **Sporting**, the **Stade du Pays de Charleroi** staged a match sadly blighted by the ugly scenes of violence around the main square, England v Germany.

Bearings

Charleroi Airport – aka **Brussels South** – is 7.5km (4.5 miles) north of Charleroi.

For town, head left from the terminus and the far end of the parking area. From there, local **bus A** runs every half-hour to the main train station of **Charleroi-Sud** (€6 on board) 20min away.

Airport taxi drivers are notoriously rude – you'll part with a flat rate of €20 to the station/town. Around town, local **Taxi Express** (+32 484 588 710) is as good as any.

Charleroi-Sud is on the southern edge of town, the main square a



short walk away. If you're coming in from **Brussels-Midi**, a half-hourly **train** to Charleroi (€9.50) takes just under 1hr.

Charleroi's transport network comprises buses and a swift, four-line tram system that serves Charleroi-Sud. A single ticket is €2, a day pass €4 from machines, €2.50/€5 on board.

Bed

The nearest lodging to Sporting's stadium is **Le Mayence**, where rue du Parc meets boulevard Pierre Mayence, comprising three-star apartments and an Italian restaurant.



Gleaming new, the four-star **Novotel** atop the Rive Gauche mall is the finest hotel in town. Opposite the station, the **ibis Charleroi Centre Gare** is its cheaper stablemate. Nearby on rue Bastion d'Egmont, Charleroi now has a decent **youth**

hostel, with rooms for two, as well as manageably smallish dorms.

Beer

Place du Manège is a decent starting point for any bar crawl. Traditional **Café des Templiers** at No.7 has

been a rendezvous for Sporting fans since the 1920s. **Le Bastia** is a lovely little locals' bar with, as the name suggests, Corsicans leanings – and TV sport.

Nearby on boulevard Jacques Bertrand, **La Cuve à Bière** serves 150 types of beer, the brands lovingly represented with vintage ads around the walls. There's TV football at the back.

Near Parc tram stop, **Le Luxembourg** at 41 rue du Pont Neuf is a classic bar/restaurant, though not afraid to charge that little extra for its popularity.

On rue de Dampremy, **Le Piéton** is a popular spot for a beer and a bite, with a TV inside. A couple of doors down at No.8, **Brasserie Le Bistro** has been a favourite with local Carolos for generations.

On boulevard Joseph Tirou, the **Irish Times Pub** was opened in time for Euro 2000 and feels as artificial as it did then – although does provide a TV sport. Diagonally opposite, **Notre Maison** features striking murals depicting Charleroi's industrial past.

Tucked away on rue de Marcinelle and worth a look in, **La Quille** is a lovely old bar/restaurant done out in dark wood and historic photos, including old Sporting line-ups.

CHARLEROI



BELGIUM 2019-20 Sporting Charleroi

www.liberoguide.com/sporting-charleroi

Sporting Charleroi

In a country where mergers and name changes are often the norm, the Zebras of **Sporting Charleroi** have a strong tradition and identity. Les Zèbres came close to a European slot in 2019, four years after their first appearance in the Europa League.

Venue for three matches at Euro 2000, the **Stade du Pays de Charleroi** is the revamped version of the stadium reconfigured and expanded for the tournament, itself rebuilt from the original Stade du Mambourg opened in 1939.

Required to reach a capacity of 30,000 for Euro 2000, the stadium saw a reduction to 25,000 then, after still being barely half-full, 15,000. These reductions have gone hand in hand with modest improvements.

Season-ticket holders follow The Zebras from Tribune 4, away fans are allocated Tribune 2 behind the opposite goal, sectors N1-N2 and Q1-Q2. Tribune 1 is the main stand with the press and business seats, Tribune 3 facing it.

Transport

The stadium is a little too far to walk from **Charleroi-Sud station**. From voie 1 outside the station building, take **red tram line 1** or **blue 4** (direction Ander-



lues-Charleroi or Parc-Soleilment) to **Janson**, three stops/5min away. The M4 runs every 10-15min, the M1 every 30min Mon-Fri, every 1hr Sat-Sun.

From Janson, bear right out of the train, up two escalators – the stadium is signposted to your right, past the clinic, up **rue des Sports**.

Coming back to Charleroi-Sud, you need **green line 2** or **yellow line 3** for three stops – though bear in mind that services stop by around 9pm. To and from town, it's about a 15min walk between boulevard Joseph Tirou and the stadium.

Tickets

Tickets are sold at the **club shop** and at **Night and Day** (€2 supplement)



newsagents/ticket outlets in Charleroi – there's one in town at 15 boulevard Joseph Tirou.

There are also **online sales** through **TicketHour** (charleroi.tickethour.be), €1 supplement. Take your voucher, with ID to the main ticket office from 11am on the day of the match.

Advance rates are €20 in main Tribune 1, €18 in Tribune 3, pay on the day €23/€21. Unless you're a visiting



supporter (€19), you can't buy a ticket behind the goal – the home end is season-ticket only.

Rates increase by around €4 for *matches majorés* (Anderlecht, Standard Liège, Bruges and major cup games). Note that for these games, away supporters cannot buy on the day.

Shop

There's a reasonably sized **club shop** on boulevard Zoé Drion behind the main stand/Tribune 1. Everything is black and white, of course, except for away tops in striking light blue.

Bars

The main pre-match bar is the **Brasserie du Mambourg** at 10 rue de la Neuville. Operating weekday lunchtimes, Fri & Sat evenings and match nights, the Mambourg has been spiffed up, going for a contemporary look over sad Watney's ads and tatty Sporting pennants. This is also reflected in the menu – note the 100% beef house burger among other quality grilled meats.

Within the stadium, **Le Coin du Supporter** under the home stand dispenses drinks and basic snacks. **LG**



BELGIUM 2019-20 Eupen

www.liberoguide.com/eupen

Eupen

The story of football in German-speaking **Eupen**, just over the border from Aachen, involves three countries: Belgium, Germany and Qatar.

Until the end of World War I, Eupen was part of Germany and the first clubs were Football Club Fortuna Eupen 1908 and Eupener Ballspielverein.

After World War II, **Alliance Sportive Eupen** were formed, and a ground built on **Kehrweg**.

As the German-speaking community gained regional autonomy, so the flagship club of its capital became Königliche Allgemeine Sportvereinigung Eupen, aka **KAS Eupen**. Then, in 2012, along came the Qatari royal family.

Here, the Qataris saw the perfect opportunity to introduce young African talent from their Aspire Academy. KAS duly returned to the top flight in 2016.

Although attendances are low, the average 3,000 gate represents a German-speaking region that forms under 1% of the national total in Belgium.

Bearings

The nearest main airports of **Cologne Bonn** and **Düsseldorf** are around

110km (68 miles) away. Each has a rail terminal, with direct services to Aachen or to the city centre in order to change for Aachen. By **Aachen station**, half-hourly (hourly Sun) bus No.14 sets off for Eupen. Overall journey time is around 2hrs/2hrs 30min, advance online tickets €20.

Brussels Airport is 127km (79 miles) away. From the terminal, take the train to **Brussel-Noord** then change for Eupen, overall journey time just over 2hrs, single ticket €24.

Eupen station is north-west of the town centre a 10min walk away, but the stadium is way south-east. **Liège buses** serve the region, single tickets €2.50 purchased on board, valid for 1hr.

Local **Taxi Elegance** (+32 488 404 072) also offers airport transfers.

Bed

Ostbelgien tourist information (ostbelgien.eu/de) has a **hotel database**.

The nearest lodging to the stadium, the four-room **B&B Eupen Inn**, set in the greenery of Panorama across Kehrweg, is run by a friendly couple.

Also rustic, closer to town but still walking distance to the stadium, the rustic **Hotel Sleep Wood** on Neustraße has attractive half-board deals.



On focal Markt, homely **Hotel Zum Goldenen Anker** has a café/restaurant attached, in a building dating back to the 1700s. There's free parking for guests nearby.

Beer

Local **Eupener Bier** is brewed by Haacht. Eupen may be German-speaking but it supports Belgium whenever a screen is set up for big tournaments at **Am Clown**.

Hostelries cluster around little junctions in the town centre. At the corner of Bergstraße and Auf 'm Bach, the **Café Columbus** is a great little football bar, running youth and veterans teams, with a TV for match-watching. Round the corner, **Ratskeller** is a traditional restaurant in a building dating back to 1714 but is also used as a bar, with a TV for



sport. Further up Klötzerbahn, **Tam-Tam** also screens matches.

At Paveestraße and Hufengasse, the revered **Old Inn** reopened in 2019 under new management. Sadly, on Werthplatz, the lived-in **Marktschänke** has yet to find new owners. Nearby **Pigalle** is still the town's main music bar, while the **Bistro Am Werth** shows live games and serves homely meals.



EUPEN



BELGIUM 2019-20 KAS Eupen

www.liberoguide.com/kas-eupen

KAS Eupen

Based in German-speaking Belgium, **KAS Eupen** have always straddled borders but today's operation is very much a global one. In 2012, they were bought by the Qatar-based Aspire Academy.

Aiming to give African players experience in Europe before they fully develop in Qatar, Aspire also oversees two clubs in Spain, which means that Eupen's squad is mainly pooled from West Africa, Iberia and Belgium.

Opened in 1947, the **Kehrwegstadion** has been revamped three times, most notably in 2010. Three seated stands, a home standing end and a terrace (T1bis) tacked onto main Tribune 1 comprise an overall capacity of 8,363.

Away fans are allocated seats and standing places in Block B of Tribune 4, accessed through Gate E4 on Kehrweg. Pandas fans have the choice between sitting and standing in Tribune 2 at the opposite end. The best seats are in sectors D and E of Tribune 3, and C and D of Tribune 1.

Transport

The stadium is way south of town, a good 20min walk. **Bus No.725** runs every 30min from **Hookstraße**, a 5min stroll from Eupen station towards town, to **Kehrweg** every 30min,



journey time 5min. In between, it calls at **Werthplatz**, so you can catch it in town, too.

Tickets

The **stadium ticket office** usually opens on Thursdays (4pm-7pm) and Saturdays (11am-2pm). Take ID with you.

Online sales (shop.cmtickets.com/kas-eupen) for everywhere but Tribune 1 operate up to 3hrs before kick-off. Tickets for Tribune 1 can be bought at the stadium on match days only.



For all queries, contact ticketing@as-eupen.be.

Before kick-off, the ticket windows open 1.5-2hrs before kick-off.

Home and away fans in Tribunes 2 and 4 pay €15. In sideline Tribune 3, it's €25, in central sectors D/E, €20 in sectors C, F/G and €15 in outer sectors A/B. In the main stand, Tribune 1, you pay €30 for a seat over the halfway line in sectors C/D, €25 in sectors A & E. Standing in Tribune 1bis, the terrace attached to Tribune 1, costs €15.

Shop

Eupen home shirts in black, away ones in white and change tops in red are stocked at the **Chic Belgique** store



at Paveestraße 24 in the town centre.

On match days, these and other souvenirs are also available at the **Stadionfanshop** and the **Café Penalty** at the ground.

Bars

Just by the roundabout before you get to the stadium, **Macadam** at Kehrweg 2 is more upscale bistro than bar but you can still pull up a stool and order a drink at the counter – evenings only from 5.30pm, closed on Sundays.

The perfect match-day option for Pandas and neutrals is the **Café Penalty**, alongside the home end, Tribune 2. From 2hrs before kick-off, those with a ticket for Tribunes 1-3, ie not visiting supporters in Tribune 4, can access this standard but friendly bar where Eupener flows a-plenty. On warmer days, tables are set up on the terrace. The Penalty also opens either side of training sessions and for the screening of KAS away games. **LG**

KAS EUPEN

BELGIUM 2019-20 Genk

www.liberoguide.com/genk

Genk

An industrial hub in Limburg, close to the Dutch border in eastern Flanders, **Genk** made its money from coal, cars and canal transportation.

A more recent phenomenon has been **KRC Genk**, 2019 Belgian champions, based at the modern **Luminus Arena**, opened the same year as the club's first title in 1999.

KRC have been canny in business when so many Belgian clubs of longer vintage have fallen by the wayside or lost their character and fan base in far too many mergers. Genk's academy has produced the likes of Kevin De Bruyne, Thibaut Courtois and Christian Benteke, all sold for considerable profit to Premier League clubs. Companies are equally keen to be associated with such a high-achieving operation – in 2016, energy provider Luminus took over sponsorship of the stadium.

Bearings

Brussels Airport is 90km (56 miles) west of Genk. An hourly **train** takes 1hr 30min, with a change at Hasselt, single ticket €18. If you're coming into Brussels-Midi by **Eurostar** direct **trains** run to Genk every hour, journey time 1hr 40min, single ticket €15.

Public transport in Genk consists of



buses run by Flanders-wide **De Lijn**. A **single ticket** from the machine by the stop or the driver is €3, valid for 1hr. Validate your ticket in the yellow machine.

Taxi Peters (+32 475 30 62 91) is a reliable local service.

Bed

Visit Genk (visitgenk.be) has a **database** of local accommodation and a booking portal.

Three hotels line Europalaan opposite the station. First comes **Carbon**, with a roof garden, a spa and wine bar. Alongside, in the same family, the **Ecu** is equally high-design but with budget-chain prices – guests may pay to use the spa next door.

Further along, the **Green Hotel** offers affordable and modern lodging.

Also close by, the **Esplanada Studios** comprise contemporarily furnished



apartments with free access to the in-house spa, solarium, steam bath, sauna and gym. Contact reception (genk@esplanadastudios.be) for a shorter stay.

The most homely welcome is found at the **Hotel 't Hert** on Winterslagstraat off the main square. With an in-house football-friendly bar, 't Hert offers eight large twin rooms in the €65 range, most with balconies.

Beer

Limburg is the home of **Cristal Alken**, a golden, Pilsner-type lager. You'll see its red-edged pentagonal symbol everywhere.

Cafés and restaurants line focal **Grote Markt**, though no real pubs. The most modern of them, **Relaxy**, at least has

a TV to screen big matches.

A short walk away on Stationstraat, the **Café Camargue** is the friendly haunt of KRC fans and rockers, its bare-brick interior decked out in old Cristal beer signs and images of Jimi Hendrix.

Also on Stationstraat, the excellent **Reyski's Foot & Food** has been run by a father-and-daughter team since 2007. Done out in Art Deco style with tables outside in summer, it has a quality kitchen (house prawns the speciality) and two TV screens for matches.

Attached to an affordable hotel in the town centre, **Taverne 't Hert** is a friendly locals' spot with a KRC affinity.



BELGIUM 2019-20 KRC Genk

www.liberoguide.com/krc-genk



The seats

KRC Genk

A real modern-day Belgian success story, 2019 Belgian champions **KRC Genk** have won four league titles and reached the knock-out rounds of the Europa League three times in recent seasons. They also make serious money from producing major international stars to sell on to England's top clubs.

Genk's stadium, the **Luminus Arena**, stands way up north of town. Built on the site of Waterschei's André Dumontstadion shortly after KRC were created in 1988, it was first known as the Thyl Gheyselincxstadion then, after a rebuild a decade later, the Fenixstadion.

Further modernisation and completion of executive boxes came with a sponsorship deal with Limburg beer company Cristal in 2007. Naming rights changed to energy company Luminus in 2016.

Current capacity is 23,700, with 3,700 places for standing home fans. These configurations are altered for European fixtures – Belgium have played two international matches here, none since a crucial 4-2 defeat to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2009.

Home fans gather in the standing lower tier of the Zuidtribune, aka Staantribune, sectors Q-U, with the most colourful atmosphere generated in sectors R-S. Away fans are allocated sectors of the opposite



The shop

Noordtribune according to demand, usually at least sectors A and AA. The best seats for the neutral are in the Zittribune I-M, opposite the priciest (Z1-Z8) aimed at the business community.

Transport

The stadium is a good 5km north of the city centre. Out of Genk station, exit right and head for Perron 1, the furthest stop to the right. From here, **bus No.61** stops in the mid-point of its journey – for the stadium, take it in the direction of Zwartberg and alight at **Nieuw Texas** 25min away. Buy your ticket beforehand from the office at

the station and run it through the machine upon boarding.

On match days, special buses are laid on from various points around the region, including Hasselt – some may stop at Genk station. Return tickets are €3.

Tickets

The **Ticketshop** is by the main office at the stadium. There is also distribution **online** (krcgenk.be).

Prices vary on the opposition, with two match categories, A and B. Standing with the home fans in Q-U costs €16/€19, rising to €26/€29



The stadium

for the best seats in the main stand. Discounted admission is €6-€7/€11-€12.

Season-ticket holders fill the Staantribune and several other sectors of the ground – unless the visiting team is pretty modest, availability may be at a premium just turning up on spec before kick-off.

Shop

Rows of replica shirts fill the **Fanshop** by the reception doors, open Tue-Sat 10am-noon, 1pm-6pm, and 2hrs before and 1hr after home games.

Bars

Beside the main office, the **Themacafé** (Tue-Sat 9.30am-9pm, open home/away match days), decked out in images of KRC Genk action, comprises a large island bar with a restaurant area alongside and terrace. The Cup Final menu runs to items such as steak forestière as well as pastas and more standard mains in the €15 range. There's Cristal beer, of course, and all kinds of bottled varieties.





BELGIUM 2019-20 Ghent

www.lib eroguide.com/ghent

Ghent

Capital of East Flanders, **Ghent** recently eclipsed Brussels and Bruges when **KAA Gent** won the title in 2015 and reached the later rounds of the Champions League.

Gent play at the new-build **Ghelamco Arena**, near a tangle of motorways south-east of this historic Flemish town.

Bearings

From **Brussels Airport**, a train to **Gent-Sint-Pieters** (€15.50) takes 1hr 15min, direct or via **Brussels Midi**, site of the Eurostar terminal.

Sint-Pieters is a short tram ride south of the town centre. A single ticket (valid 1hr) is €3 from a machine, kiosk or on board. A day pass is €7, €9 on board.

For a local cab, call **Taxi Gent** on +32 9 333 3333.

Bed

Visit Ghent (visit.gent.be) has a **hotel database**.

Two affordable chain hotels are walking distance of the Ghelamco Arena: the **Holiday Inn Express Gent** and the **Hôtel Campanile Gand**.



With the stadium and station south of town, staying by Sint-Pieters makes sense. The family-run **Castel** opposite the station has its own brasserie while the mid-range **Carlton** round the corner is more business-like. Further up on Koningin Elisabethlaan, the **Best Western Chamade** is a standard three-star.

Near the cathedral, the **NH Belfort** on Hoogpoort offers four-star rooms. Next door, the **Novotel Gent Centrum** has its own courtyard restaurant and bar.

On the other side of the church, on Sint-Jacobsnieuwstraat, the **Hotel Cathedral** suits standard needs, with its own bar, too. Nearby on Barrestraat, the **Flandria** offers views of St Bavo's from its boutiquey rooms.

Between the historic centre and the Leie, the **Ghent River Hotel** on Walstraat occupies two historic buildings, one dating back to 1518. The roof terrace breakfast area encourages repeat custom. Just over the water, the **Erasmus** exudes character.



Further down on **Onderbergen**, the 24-room **hotel** of the same name contains Irish bar/restaurant **Patrick Foley's**.

Near Dampoort station, the floating **Boatel** provides an alternative stay on Voorhuutkaai.

Beer

Irish pub **Celtic Towers** facing the Korenmarkt has three big screens for sport plus live music. The other main Irish hostelry, **Patrick Foley's** on Recollettenlei, attached to the Hotel Onderbergen, has a terrace by the river and shows games in the party lounge.

Few visit Ghent without a drink at the historic **'t Galgenhuisje** on Groentenmarkt, a café since 1776. A



few steps away, **Het Waterhuis aan de Bierkant** offers 165 beers in a house that was a brothel 200 years ago.

In the quiet square of Sint-Veerleplein just across the Leie, friendly **'t Geduld** is another beer sanctuary, in the shadow of a tenth-century castle.

On Vrijdagmarkt, **De Dulle Griet** is Belgian beer heaven. Across the square, **The Cover** is done out in iconic album covers. It has a TV for football and runs a hostel. On the corner, K27 shows games and serves drinks on the terrace.

On the city side of Citadelpark, **Porter House** on Stalhof appeals to a student crowd while nearby **Speakers Corner** on Hofbouwlân is more party-oriented.

Opposite Sint-Pieters station, friendly **Baziel**, corner bar **Rambler** and lively **New Watson** all show matches.

G H E N T



BELGIUM 2019-20 KAA Gent

www.liberoguide.com/kaa-gent

KAA Gent

First-time Belgian title winners in 2015, **KAA Gent** surprised everyone by beating Tottenham in the Europa League two years later, stealing a 1-0 win in Ghent and gaining a 2-2 draw in front of 80,000 spectators at Wembley.

Nicknamed after a Buffalo Bill cowboy show that came to town in the early days, De Buffalo's are a major player in the Belgian game.

Home is the smart **Ghelamco Arena**, unveiled in 2013. The first Belgian new-build since 1974, the Ghelamco is set by the ring road south of the city.

With its Michelin-star restaurant, Horseele, the Ghelamco is a cut above any other stadium in Belgium.

At the home end (Spionkop/T2), accessed through main gates C and D, sectors 225, 227-229, and the back rows of 223-224 and 226, are for standing fans. Opposite is the Telenet/Familientribune/T4, gate H. Alongside, away fans ('Bezoekers') are allocated sectors 421 and 422, gate G, set next to the Officebox/VDK Tribune/T3. Opposite are the business seats of main Maes Pils Tribune/T1.

Transport

Until the free **shuttle buses** from **Gent Zuid station** start up again, for the



time being, you'll need to use regular public transport. **Bus No.8** leaves Gent Zuid perron 9 every 20min for the terminus at **Arteveldepark** by the stadium, journey time 15min.

From **Gent-St-Pieters**, on the concourse to the left of the station as you exit, **city bus Nos.19** sets off every 20min from **platform 11**. Journey time to **Arteveldepark** is 15min.

In both cases, there are services back after 10pm.

Tickets

With an average gate often close to the capacity of 20,000, availability is not a given. Tickets for league games go on sale six weeks in advance.

Online ticketing (kaagent.be/en/tickets/info-online-ticketing) requires registration.

Tickets are distributed from the **offices** (Mon-Fri noon-6pm, Sat 10am-1pm, midweek match days 10am-12.45pm, 2pm-kick-off, weekend match days 5hrs before kick-off) by

the club shop. Take ID to purchase.

A seat in the home end, Spionkop/Tribune 2, is €20. For away fans, it's €20/€25 and €10/€15 for under-16s. For neutrals, a seat in VDK/Tribune 3 is €25-€45. Prices are €30-€50 in main Tribune 1.

Shop

The **Fanshop** is accessed through the main entrance on non-match days and match-day entrance outside to the left when there's a game on.



Among the Native American headdresses, first-team shirts are blue and white, and change strip yellow and third kit white with sky-blue trim for 2019-20.

Bars

Outlets at the new stadium range from a snack bar, the **Buffalo Sandwich Club**, on the ground floor of the main stand, to the Michelin-starred **Restaurant Horseele**, with a perfect view of the pitch from four floors up. Both operate weekday lunchtimes. On match days, you should reserve for the Horseele, while the BSC doubles up as a modest bar.

Also open weekday lunchtimes and match days (you're advised to avoid the long queues by arriving 2hr 30min before kick-off), the **Buffalo Bistro** between Tribunes 1 and 2 (gate C) serves standard dishes, beers and hot drinks.

KAA GENT





BELGIUM 2019-20 Kortrijk

www.lib eroguide.com/kortrijk

Kortrijk

Few football stadiums are named after medieval warfare – but the **Guldensporenstadion** honours the Battle of the Golden Spurs in **Kortrijk** in 1302. This is the home of **KV Kortrijk**, consistent competitors in Belgium's top flight since 2008.

Bearings

The nearest airport is **Lille** over the border in France, 42km (26 miles) away.

A **shuttle bus** runs hourly to **Lille-Flandres** station (journey time 20min, €8 single, €10 return). **Lille Eurostar** terminal is a short walk away at **Lille Europe**. An hourly direct **train** from Lille Flandres to Courtrai/Kortrijk takes 40min (€8 advance single).

From Brussels Airport 105km (65 miles) away, an hourly direct **train** to Kortrijk (€20) takes 1hr 30min. Alternatively, change at **Brussels-Midi**, terminus for the Eurostar. If you're coming direct from Midi (€13), it's just over 1hr.

Kortrijk station is just south of town a 7-10min stroll away – the stadium is just the wrong side of a long walk.

Local buses are run by **De Lijn**. A **single ticket** (valid 1hr) is €3 from a machine, a Lijnwinkel kiosk or on



board. Pass it through the yellow machine by the driver.

Based at the station, **Cheaptaxi** can be called on +32 56 20 01 20.

Bed

Toerisme Kortrijk (toerismekortrijk.be) has a **hotel database** and **booking service**.

The nearest hotel to the stadium is a boat, **Ahoi** on Handelskaai, with breakfast taken on deck. The ground is 15 minutes away, over the water.

On the main square of Grote Markt, the swish **Damier** comprises 65 stylish rooms behind a 1769 façade. Just behind it, the three-star **Center Hotel** on Graanmarkt exudes the same contemporary style as stablemate **Parkhotel** opposite the

station, where a spa, bar and bistro complement the convenient location.

The local **ibis** is handily located on Doorniksestraat halfway between station and city centre.

Close to the water, the **Hotel Messeyne** on Groeningestraat is probably the loveliest lodging in town, with its own hammam and gourmet restaurant. Nearby is the business-focused, partner **Square Hotel**.

Beer

On the main square of Grote Markt, Belgian chain **Bar des Amis** sits next door to TV-themed bistro **allo allo**, and the cuisine-oriented **Café Leffe** and **Muze**.

Tucked in behind them, the **Café West-Vlaanderen** serves older locals



in homely bar-like surroundings.

For something more contemporary, head to Vlasmarkt, where an alternative crowd gathers at the late-opening **Gainsbar**, with its 100 beers and live agenda. Next door,

De Gouden Aap also attracts a savvy crowd.

For a change of scene, try convivial riverfront **Balthazar** on Handelskaai or upscale pub **Winstons**, attached to the Hotel Messeyne. On nearby Houtmarkt, **Cusco** is a high-design bar/café.

For lively bars, head for the station. On Burgemeester Reynaertstraat, adjoining party-focused **Café 56** and **De Geverfde Vogel** keep the party late, while honest **Den Bras** on the corner is a real KVK hangout.

Opposite the station, **De Max** is a bowling alley whose bar is used for sport-watching – similarly, nearby **Shooters** on Oude Vestingsstraat is a pool hall and a popular spot to see the match.



BELGIUM 2019-20 KV Kortrijk

www.liberoguide.com/kv-kortrijk

KV Kortrijk

Now entering a second decade of competing in Belgium's top flight, **KV Kortrijk** also came close to cup glory in 2012 but European football has eluded de Kerels from the **Guldensporenstadion**, the Boys from the Stadium of the Golden Spurs.

Created from a merger in 1971 and bought by Cardiff owner Vincent Tan for €5 million in 2015, KVK represent the proud Flemish town of Kortrijk, by the French border.

KV Kortrijk inherited the Guldensporenstadion from Kortrijk Sports, who had it built in 1947 on the same site as the ground they had played on since 1921.

Renovations were carried out in 1988, then again in 2008. Current capacity is just over 9,000, with nearly 6,000 seats.

Home fans stand behind the goal in Tribune 2, with seating for the KVK faithful opposite, in sectors P-R of Tribune 4. Visiting supporters are allocated sections M-O, the nearest half of sideline Tribune 3 to Tribune 4. Press and VIP occupy the bulk of Tribune 1.

Transport

To the right as you exit the train station, **bus No.4** leaves perron 11



every 30min (currently 13 and 53 past the hour) to the **Stadion** stop by the Guldensporenstadion, journey time under 10min.

To walk it, head straight down **Koning Albertlaan** past the Parkhotel, in the same direction until you reach the river. Cross over Nordbrug by the Balthazar restaurant, head up Noordstraat, before turning left onto Meensesteenweg. Allow 30min from the station.

A taxi shouldn't cost more than €12.

Tickets

Advance tickets are sold at the **club office** (Mon-Fri 2pm-5.30pm). Top-category games are specified as Anderlecht, Club Bruges, Standard Liège, Genk, KAA Gent and Zulte-Waregem.

Tickets are also sold online at a slighter cheaper rate. Internet sales are limited, and a 'sold out' notice doesn't necessarily mean that they won't be available on **match day** itself, from the windows on Moorseelsestraat, 90 minutes



before kick-off (or, for **away fans**, on Meensesteenweg). **Contact** the club at info@kvk.be to check.

Behind the goals (Tribunes 2 and 4), **prices** are set at €17-€20 (online €14-€17), and at €25 (€20) for sideline Tribune 3, and at €35 (€30) for Tribune 1. Under-12s are charged €10 (€8) across the board, even for top-category matches. Everyone else pays an extra €5.

Shop


The **KVK Fanshop** stocks a modest range of merchandise, first-team kits of white with red trim and second

choice outfits in turquoise. T-shirts bear the name 'Kerel', making you one of the Kortrijk boys.

Bars

Coming across the river from town, and up Noordstraat, you find popular pre-match bar/restaurant **Menenpoort** on the corner with Meensestraat, the main road that leads to the stadium. A little further up on Kortrijksestraat, **Estaminet** is a classic corner bar, as is **De Vlaskapel** on Moorseelsestraat, a revered KVK haunt.

Back on Meensesteenweg, on the corner with Doornstraat, **Concorde** should cover all modest pre-match needs.

At the stadium, near the club shop, match-day bar **De Kouter** (aka 'Kerels know why') is equipped with that essential accoutrement as kick-off approaches, a ping-pong table. 



BELGIUM 2019-20 Liège

www.liberoguide.com/liege

Liège

Industrial hub of Wallonia, pretty **Liège** is bisected by the Meuse river near the Dutch and German borders. Home to **Standard Liège**, the **Stade Maurice Dufrasne**, aka Stade de Sclessin, is still surrounded by slag heaps.

United in celebration, such as for the long-awaited Belgian title wins of 2008 and 2009, fans also stage mass protests over transfer policy or ticket prices. In Antwerp, football is a sideshow – not so here in Liège.

Bearings

Both **Charleroi** and **Brussels** are just over 90km (56 miles) away. From the Charleroi terminus, head to the stops at the far left upon exit for **TEC bus A** to **Charleroi-Sud** (every 30min, 20min journey time, €5). From there, an hourly direct **train** to Liège (€14) takes 1hr 30min.

From the station at Brussels airport, a **train** every 2hrs to Liège via **Leuven** (€19) takes 50min altogether.

From the **Eurostar** terminal at **Brussels Midi**, a half-hourly **train** takes 1hr to Liège. From Charleroi or Brussels, a Liège Zone Urbaine ticket is valid for public transport when you arrive.



Impressive **Liège-Guillemins** is the main station, 15min from the centre.

City transport consists of **local buses**. A ticket on board is €2.50, a day pass €5.

Taxis Bleus (+32 4 361 1161) is a reliable local service.

Bed

Visitez Liège (visitezliege.be) has a **hotel database**.

There are no hotels near the Stade Maurice Dufrasne. Opposite Guillemins station, **Hotel de la Couronne** is a neat three-star, with convenient, affordable **Hotel-Brasserie Univers** alongside.

Towards town, **Le Cygne d'Argent** on rue Beeckman is more a restaurant but an acceptable lodging. Closer to the centre, 16-room **Les Acteurs** on rue Urbanistes is in similar vein.



On place de la République Française in town, the 78-room **ibis Liège Centre Opéra** is reliably affordable.

On rue du Mont St Martin **Les Comtes de Méan** offers 125 classy rooms, a spa, gym and bistro. Nearby on main boulevard de la Sauvenière, the funky **pentahotel Liège** provides a pool room with TV sport and rooms with rain showers.

Beer

Behind the Cathedral, the criss-cross of streets known as **Le Carré** is the

city's main nightlife hub, with bars on and off **rue du Pot d'Or**. There, **Elmas** (No.48) is a popular corner North African football spot. Behind Le Carré on place Verte, **Le Britannique** is more a brasserie serving honest food than a pub.

For that, you need to head to the area of terrace bars and restaurants at the south-eastern edge of Le Carré, and **Temple Bar Liège** (boulevard de la Sauvenière 145), with its 300 beers and regular live music. Opposite, the **Taverne Royale** (boulevard

d'Avroy 2) goes big on football during tournament summers.

Further down the same avenue towards the station, **Huggy's** is the main sports bar in town, American in style and very American in cuisine.

Finally, you haven't been to Liège if you haven't been to **Le Lequet**, aka **Chez Stockis**, an age-old bar/resto on quai de la Meuse by the river, done out with vintage local football and beer memorabilia.



LIÈGE



BELGIUM 2019-20 Standard Liège

www.libero guide.com/standard-liege



Standard Liège

Ten times champions of Belgium, **Standard Liège** are a populist club revered in the industrial heartland of French-speaking Wallonia.

The **Stade Maurice Dufrasne** sits in a bend in the Meuse, surrounded by the bleak clutter of industrial Wallonia. This is **Sclessin**, south-west of central Liège – the stadium is still referred to after its surrounding locality.

Current capacity is 27,670. Home fans make a fire-red commotion in Tribunes 3 and 4 behind each goal, allowing for a constant call-and-response of chanting. Away fans are allocated 1,332 seats in four sectors – A4, B4 and C4 – of the Quai Vercour, the end nearest the Meuse.

Older Supporters du Standard are placed in Tribune 1 alongside rue de la Centrale, where you'll find the shop, the clubhouse and busy kiosks and bars.

Transport

Standard has its **own bus stop** on **rue Ernest Solvay**, diagonally opposite the stadium. On non-matchdays **Nos.2, 3, 9, 27** and **58** lines run directly from Liège-Guillemins station to **Sclessin Standard**, journey time 10min.

From 90min before kick-off, these lines are diverted away from rue Ernest Solvay and buses stop close to a bridge on the Meuse, where you follow the crowds to the stadium.

Tickets

The only way to buy a ticket for Standard is to obtain a **Member Card**. These



are free but only issued in person from the **billetterie** (Tue-Fri 10am-6pm, Sat 10am-4pm) behind Tribune 2. You can try and ask the club (membercard@standard.be) if it's possible to arrange one remotely before your visit. With an average gate of 23,000 in 2018-19 and a capacity of 27,600, including 1,300 visiting supporters, pay on the day is no way guaranteed.

Online (standard.tickethour.be), prices are set at €16-€20 in Tribunes 3 and 4 behind the goals, €20-€32 in 1 and 2 along the sidelines.

For top matches, Anderlecht, Bruges, Genk, Gent and Charleroi, prices rise by up to €11.

Shops

The stadium has two main outlets: the **store** (closed Mon) on rue Ernest Solvay and the spacious **match-day one** behind the main stand on rue de la Centrale.

Bars

Little surrounds the ground but busy bars. Some prefer quieter places such as **Le Château** and the **Café**



du Centre, set towards town where **rue Ernest Solvay** meets **rue de l'Avenir** and behind on **place Ferrer**.

Closer to the ground at rue Ernest Solvay 222, the **Bois d'Avroy** is a large standard bar/restaurant with a beer garden in summer and packed on match days.

Key spot is **The Cup** on the corner, with Standard iconography and booming music inside. **Frites** and beer kiosks line rue de la Centrale, where you'll also find the **Hell Side fans' bar**, generally friendly to neutrals.

Where Ernest Solvay meets rue de la Centrale by the stadium, kiosks and bars are mobbed pre-match. Payment is through your Member Card, top up from your phone via cashless. standard.be.

At the stadium itself, beside the club store on rue de la Centrale is a busy **clubhouse** with a terrace, beers and snacks also sold by the cashless system.

STANDARD LIÈGE



BELGIUM 2019-20 Mechelen

www.libero guide.com/mechelen

Mechelen

A historic textile town halfway between Brussels and Antwerp, close to Belgium's main airport, **Mechelen** was the last Belgian city to welcome home a European trophy. Mechelen last featured on the international stage in 1994 and has since been left behind by Flemish rivals such as Ghent, Genk and Bruges.

Mechelen's two clubs, **KV** and **KRC**, were formed within three months of each other in 1904.

While KRC, popularly referred to Racing, had their heyday in the early 1950s, KVM hit the heights in the late 1980s when they won the Belgian Cup, European Cup-Winners' Cup and Belgian league over the course of three seasons. KRC have sunk almost without trace, relegated to the Provincial Leagues in 2017.

Bearings

Half-hourly **trains** run directly from **Brussels Airport**, taking 10min to reach Mechelen (€8.50) 24km (15 miles) away.

From the **Eurostar** terminal at **Brussels-Midi**, a frequent **train** takes 30min to Mechelen (€4.50 single).

Mechelen's **main train station** is a 5-10min walk south of the city



centre. Both stadiums are north of town. **Mechelen-Nekkerspoel station** is walking distance from KV Mechelen's ground. Most trains from Brussels/Brussels Airport require change at Mechelen main station for Nekkerspoel.

The city's **bus terminus** is by the train station, services run by **De Lijn**. A **single ticket costs** €3 from any

platform machine or **on board** from the driver.

KM Taxi (+32 48 40 30 373) offers airport transfers for €50, with online booking.

Bed

Toerisme Mechelen (toerisme.mechelen.be) has an **English-language hotel database**.



The nearest lodging to the KV Mechelen ground is the **Value Stay City Residence** (Lange Heergracht 65, +32 499 51 68 29), a complex of 27 studios, each with a kitchenette. Reception hours are limited. For a more conventional stay, the **Holiday Inn Express** at Veemarkt is as close to Nekkerspoel as it is to the city centre.

In the same vicinity, the **Elisabeth Hotel** on Goswin de Stassartstraat offers contemporary urban comfort in a converted hospital an easy walk from the KV Mechelen stadium.

Right by the cathedral, pricier **Den Grooten Wolsack** fills a historic building with 22 funkily furnished guestrooms, a grand café and steakhouse. By the river on Vismarkt, the **Mercure Mechelen Vé** is an excellent find, with a pool, spa and decent restaurant.



Beer

Mechelen is the home of **Gouden Carolus beer**, whose sign you'll see all over town. Traditional bars dot the city centre. By the cathedral, the hub of Mechelen's football culture is **De Bovenstad** at Steenweg 14. Scarves of both local clubs decorate the brick walls.

Alongside, **Grote Markt** is lined with bars and restaurants, the most football-friendly being **O'Fiach** with quality bar food and a signed photo of Eden Hazard behind the bar.

Down at Vismarkt by the waterfront, **Bar Popular** is just that, with big matches broadcast.

There's a pub hub near the station, where **De Prof** brings in a student crowd with cheap drinks deals and 3am closing. Next door, you'll find live football at **Boesjammeree**. Round the corner, classic **Café De Olifant** puts on DJ nights.





BELGIUM 2019-20 KV Mechelen

www.liberoguide.com/kv-mechelen



KV Mechelen

The last Belgian club to lift a European trophy, **KV Mechelen** were tainted by the wide-reaching corruption scandal that swept across Belgian football in 2018-19. KVM were prevented from defending the Belgian Cup they won in 2019 and from entering the Europa League.

Based at **Achter de Kazerne** since 1911, the club added a new stand, Tribune 3, opposite the main one of Tribune 1, in 2016. Improvements have seen capacity shrink to just under 17,000.

Home fans remain in Tribune 2, aka Telenet, with standing places at the front. Visiting supporters are allocated two sectors, Z1 and Z2, at the furthest end of Tribune 3 from the KVM faithful.

Transport

The ground is a 10-15min walk from



Mechelen-Nekkerspoel station

– just follow the river along Frans Halsvest, turn right up Populieren-dreef, left at the end then first right up Kleine Nieuwdijkstraat. Nekkerspoel connects with mainline trains from Brussels – usually with one change at Mechelen's main station.

You can also take bus **Nos.550, 551 or 552** that set off at 15min intervals from Perron 1 by the main station, taking 10min to reach the nearest stop to the ground, **Caputsteenstraat**, via the city centre. From the bus

stop, turn right into Caputsteenstraat itself, then first left into Kleine Nieuwdijkstraat.

Tickets

Tickets usually go on sale two weeks in advance sales from the **Ticketshop** by the main entrance. There is also an **online option**.

Ticket windows open 90min before kick-off.

Average gates are around 10,000, so availability shouldn't be a problem

except for the visits of Anderlecht and Bruges.

For all ticket enquiries, contact ticketing@kvmechelen.be.

Games are categorised into **Verhoogde Wedstrijden**, higher-class, and **Niet-Verhoogde Wedstrijden**, all the rest.

Basic admission to stand in the home end, F1 in Tribune 2, is €17, €19 for top opposition. To sit behind the goal in sectors K1/K2 in Tribune 4

is €19/€24, and in sectors E1-E3 in Tribune 2, €19/€27.

The cheapest seats in sideline Tribune 3 are in sector H1 at the far end, €27/€32. All other tickets, around €35/€40, offer a quality view near the halfway line.


Shop

The **KVM Fanshop** is by the car park behind the new stand, Tribune 3. Amid the mass of red-and-yellow stripes (away kit is white and grey halves...), you'll find a range of gear with a 1904 theme. Note also the tops and T-shirts produced in celebration of the 2019 Belgian Cup victory.

Bars

Surprisingly, for a populist Belgian club in place at the same ground for over a century, the KVM ground has no hostelry near it.

The stadium bar behind the main stand, **De Nieuwe Kantine**, is now the smarter **Supporterscafé Grand Kavee**. Only open on match days, it is accessible by paying €10 admission.

Open lunchtimes during the week, the **Restaurant Kazerne** in home Tribune 2 offers three-course lunches at €37 and, if you reserve on match days, a three- or four-course meal at around €150/head. On the plus side, the restaurant does have a prime view overlooking the pitch. 



BELGIUM 2019-20 Mouscron

www.liberoguide.com/mouscron

Mouscron

Its stadium closer to the French border than it is to the centre of this former textile town, **Mouscron** has witnessed a century of local football. But the date of 1922 on the crest of **Royal Excel Mouscron** hides a multitude of mergers.

In all that time, the **Stade Le Canonnier**, unveiled in 1930, has been a mainstay.

Nicknamed Les Hurlus after Mouscron's Calvinist partisans – a statue of one stands outside the Town Hall – REM remain a top-flight proposition, though always on a financial knife-edge.

Bearings

The nearest airport is **Lille**, 40km (25 miles) away, just over the border in France. There's no direct transport links with Mouscron, so take the **hourly shuttle bus** (single €8, return €10) to the **Euralille** commercial centre in town, journey time 20 mins, by **Lille-Flandres station**. An hourly **train** to Mouscron takes 30min, singles €7.

Brussels Airport is 116km (72 miles) away. From there, **trains** take about 2hrs to Mouscron (€21.50), either changing once at Antwerp-Berchem or twice, at Brussels-Midi and Ghent.



Arriving by **Eurostar** to Brussels-Midi, the onward journey to Mouscron is 1hr 30min – just select the 'Any Belgian station' option when buying your ticket from London.

Mouscron/Moeskroen station is just east of the town centre a short walk away. The stadium is also walkable, south along the main road following the rail lines.

Local buses are run by **Infotec**, tickets €2 from machines, €2.50 on board.

For a cab, contact **Taxi Mouscron Centre** (+32 474 200 600), with transfer services from the three nearest airports.

Bed

Visit Mouscron (visitmouscron.be) lists the limited accommodation in town.



The main lodging by the main square, the upper mid-range **Hotel & Aparthotel Alizé Mouscron** is comfortable and convenient, with its own gym and sauna.

The only other central option is the **Elberg**, 11 rooms with private facilities and kitchenettes right on the main

square. Single rooms start at €75, doubles €75, with a shared terrace.

On rue des Brasseurs, halfway between town and the station, **La demeure du papillon** has three rooms, each booked for two nights minimum.

Beer

Bars and restaurants cluster around the main square, **Grand-Place**. Pride of place goes to **Georgy's**, where parties take over once the many televised matches end. Live games are also screened at lively **La Bodega**, open evenings only except for Sundays (noon til 4pm) and Mondays (closed).

Brasserie La Paix is a lovely, atmospheric local spot where Hurlus gather for beer and sustenance.

Nearby, on pedestrianised passage de la Poste, **Le Flore** is where to come for select Belgian brews on draught away from the crowd.

Behind the main square on rue de la Station, the **Enjoy Bar** also knows how to party, with DJs and drinks promotions.

Near the station on place de la Justice, **Themis** is a bar, fast-food restaurant, bowling alley and handy spot to watch the match. Opposite the station, **Le Zenith** and **L'Endroit** are both typical local Belgian bars, with a terrace for sunny imbibing and a TV for sport. **LE**



BELGIUM 2019-20 Royal Excel Mouscron

www.liberoguide.com/royal-excel-mouscron

Royal Excel Mouscron

Royal Excel Mouscron, conveniently abbreviated to REM, were officially created in 2016 but its immediate antecedents date back nearly a century.

Most notable were **Royal Excelsior Mouscron**, a 1964 merger of lower-league sides. Royal Excelsior had their heyday in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Bringing over the Mpenza sibling strike duo, Émile and Mbo, from Kortrijk, shortly after gaining promotion, the Mouscron side set Division 1 alight under later national manager Georges Leekens.

Mouscron's main stadium, **Stade Le Canonnier**, was unveiled in 1930. The nickname of Les Hurlus has also been a constant feature of football here, a reference to Mouscron's religious past.

For six decades, the ground witnessed a modest standard of football, the rise to Division 2 coinciding with the building of a new Tribune Est in 1991.

Five years later, with Division 1 status attained, the stadium gained a secure Tribune Nord for away supporters, extended Tribune Est and modernised changing facilities.



The current ground holds nearly 11,000, 3,550 of those standing places, 1,350 for away fans in the Tribune 2 Nord. There are also almost 300 seats for visiting supporters at the Nord end of Tribune Est. Home fans still occupy Le Kop in the Tribune 4 Sud.

Transport

Stade Le Canonnier is a 10-15min walk from **Mouscron station** – turn left onto the main road, avenue de Barry, until rue du Stade, then turn right.

Tickets

Advance tickets are sold from the **billetterie** and **online** (mouscron.tickethour.be). On match days, it opens before and after the game, and at half-time – €3 is added for buying on the day.

Tickets start at €12 to stand on Le Kop (Tribune 4), and €16-€20 to sit in Tribunes 1 and 3 along the sidelines. A match de gala, for Anderlecht, Antwerp, Bruges, Genk and Liège, is priced at €15 to stand, €20-€30 to sit.



300 metres along rue du Stade from the ground itself. Under manager Bernard Bourgeois for more than 30 years, this is a classic Belgian bar, with Belgian pinball, Belgian billiards and Belgian beer, Maes. Throw in a league ladder and the Tintin figures behind the counter, and a signed photograph of Jean-Marie Pfaff, and if any passing Martian points his zap gun at you and demands you take him to Belgium, this is where you should come. Diagonally opposite, the **Le Cannonier** is bigger and blander but with a huge screen for match broadcasts, and table football.

At the ground are two standard bars alongside each other under Tribune 1, **Le Stade** and **Le 3ieme Mi-Temps**, with **Le Sportif** upstairs for press and guests on match days.

Ostend

Most know **Ostend** for its coast – but its venerable football club has been enjoying its best spell in over a century.

KV Oostende, aka KVO or the Kustboys, were cup finalists and European debutants in 2017.

With the departure of billionaire owner Marc Coucke for Anderlecht that December, however, Ostend's fortunes took a dip for the worst, and the club came close to relegation in 2019.

A shame. Set halfway along the famous Kusttram that runs the length of Belgium – calling at the KVO's **Versluys Arena** as it does so – Ostend is part Belle-Époque, part Poirot and bags of fun. Bars and restaurants line the seafront, and any stadium visit can be combined with a day on the beach.

Bearings

Brussels Airport is 122km (75.5 miles) away. The hourly **train** from the airport runs direct to **Ostend** (€24, journey time 1hr 45min) or change at **Brussels Midi**. If you're arriving by Eurostar into Midi, Ostend (€17) is 1hr 15min.

Ostend station is on the waterfront, walking distance from the centre. The



Kusttram stops alongside, handy for both town and stadium and there are local buses too, all run by **De Lijn**. A single ticket with 1hr's unlimited changes is €3 – a day pass is €7, €9 from the driver. Simply run them through the yellow machines on board.

For a cab, call **Taxi Oostende** on +32 800 25 500.

Bed

Visit Oostende (visitoostende.be) has an **accommodation database** with a booking function.

Ostend specialises in old-school, spa and sea-view hotels – though none near the stadium.

Further up the seafront towards town, the four-star **Hotel Andromeda Oostende** just behind Albert I-promenade offers both spa and a sea view. Nearby, the **Imperial** is a comfortable, upper/mid-range lodging with a 24-hour bar.



If you're here with the family, the 110-room **Ostend Hotel** on Londenstraat has a play area as well as gym, sauna and solarium for grown-ups. For a seriously healthy stay, offering hot-stone and bamboo massages, the nearby **Glenmore Hotel** on Hofstraat has mid-range rooms and pricy paid extras.

By the central square of Marie-Joséplein – and the tram for the stadium – the **Hotel du Parc** echoes the Poirot days, with a sunny terrace.

Bars

Bars line the lower end of mainly pedestrianised **Langestraat**, parallel to the seafront. There you'll find



Taverne Koekoek (No.38), a classic pub/restaurant where signature chicken dinners, fine Belgian beers and a TV for major games.

For a real sports bar, **Cosy Corner** (No.76) is more pub-like.

If you're after late fun, **Hemingway** (No.15) on the same stretch does DJs and cocktails.

The seafront, Albert I-promenade, is sadly bereft of decent bars – it's mainly restaurants and ice-cream parlours. **Ocean** (No.64) is a more contemporary version of the genre.

Pub-like and firmly football-focused, the **Taverne Floride** (No.81) has a whole mess of beers, a sea-facing terrace and a serious soccer habit. Another football hang-out is **St Michel** at Jozef II-straat 58 by St Petrus Church, near the station – except that it flies the flag of Anderlecht rather than KV Oostende.



BELGIUM 2019-20 KV Oostende

www.lib eroguide.com/kv-oostende

KV Oostende

The surprise package of 2017, the Kustboys of **KV Oostende** have lost momentum since the departure of billionaire owner Marc Coucke for Anderlecht that December.

Average crowds at the **Versluys Arena**, renovated and renamed in 2016, have dipped below the 5,000 mark.

For all that, KV Oostende is one of Europe's most convivial groundhops – the tram from town skirts just inside the seafront a block away.

Opened in 1934, the original ground was home to AS Oostende, the more prominent of the two clubs who merged to form KVO in 1981.

Today's Versluys Arena has a capacity of 8,400. The building of the E-Tribune in the spring of 2016 created more seats in the away corner (Ingang 9, sectors E4-E6 behind the goal, D7-D9 attached to D-Tribune).

Home fans congregate in sectors C1-C3 on Leopold van Tyghmelaan, Ingang 1 and 2.

Neutrals, often holidaying visitors, are recommended to sit in the E-Tribune nearest the sea.



Transport

The stadium is an easy ride on the **Kusttram** from Ostend station. From the stop **Perron 1** alongside, take the tram heading towards De Panne for four stops to **Northlaan** (every 15min, journey time 14min). You'll see the stadium floodlights to your left as the tram arrives at the Northlaan stop.

Tickets

The **ticket office** behind C-Tribune at the stadium opens Mon 2-5pm, Tue, Wed, Fri 10am-5pm, Thur 10am-7pm, Sat of a home-game weekend 10am-noon. For major games, derbies

and championship play-offs, ID is required.

Online sales (kvo.tickethour.be/ kvoostende.be/) require a log-in process.

Prices hover around €25-€30 in most areas of the ground, €10-€15 for under-16s.

Shop

The **club shop** can be found in the same building as the **ticket office** (see above) and operates the same hours. The best souvenirs are €3 sunglasses, in red, yellow or green,



ideal for the beach. Current second kit is an all-red number.

Bars

On the sea side of the **Northlaan tram stop**, a row of upscale eateries includes the **Casa Del Mar**, **De Golf**, **Restaurant Den Artisjok** and the **Restaurant Boucquez**. All cater to people spending the day at the nearby golf course or beach a block away. Casa Del Mar is more suited to an informal crowd.

On the stadium side of the main road, **El Rey** serves beer, wine and €12 weekday lunches. Lobster is the speciality – there'll be a tank full of them. Erwin and Mireille have been running the place with a

friendly touch for nearly 30 years.

On the beach itself, the only nearby bar and best pre-match choice is **L'Empereur**, at the corner of Luxemburgstraat and Zeedijk. With TVs in each corner and decorative snatches of Anderlecht mauve, it's football-oriented, its Cristal beer best sipped on the sea-facing terrace.

At the ground, the spacious **Club 31** behind the main stand on Leopold van Tyghmelaan is a great stadium bar, decked out in atmospheric colour photos from KVO's history. The sticker on the door says 'No Sweat, No Beer', a local take on the 'No Sweat, No Glory' motto of Club Brugge down the road. **LD**



BELGIUM 2019-20 Sint-Truiden

www.liberoguide.com/sint-truiden

Sint-Truiden

The story of football in **Sint-Truiden** is one of longevity rather than success. Overshadowed in recent years by fellow Limburgers and four-time title winners Genk, **Sint-Truidense VV** approach their centenary year having notched up 40-plus seasons in the top flight out of 80-plus in the Belgian League.

Adopting the yellow and blue of the city it represented, the club moved into current ground **Stayen** in 1927.

For millionaire politician Roland Duchâtelet, Sint-Truiden represented his first step into the murky waters of club ownership – from here, he moved on to Standard Liège, then Charlton

In 2017, Duchâtelet sold Sint-Truiden to Tokyo-based digital commerce company DMM.com – a number of Japanese internationals now feature in the first-team squad as the club enter a fifth straight season in First Division A.

Bearings

Brussels Airport is 63km (39 miles) away. From the rail station at the air terminal, an hourly **train** via **Leuven** (€15) takes 50min altogether to reach Sint-Truiden.



From the **Eurostar** terminal at **Brussels Midi**, an hourly direct **train** takes 1hr. A single is €11.50 but you can book **St Pancras-Any Belgian Station** and get the onward train journey thrown in.

Sint-Truiden station is west of the town centre a short walk away. Stayen stadium is also west of town, about 15mins away from the station.

Flanders-wide **De Lijn** runs local buses. A **single ticket** from the machine by the stop or the driver is €3, valid for 1hr. Validate your ticket in the yellow machine.



For **St-Truidense Taxi Centrale**, call +32 478 32 68 68. They also offer airport transfers.

Bed

Visit Sint-Truiden (visitsinttruiden.be) has an **accommodation database**.

Built into the stadium of the same name, the **Hotel Stayen** is not only the most convenient lodging, it's also the best in town. Its Grand Café and some of the 77 rooms overlook the pitch while the Café du Soleil screen matches. Sint-Truidense souvenirs embellish the lobby area.

Near the station, the bright, friendly **Hotel Belle-Vie** offers late check-outs and breakfast in bed. You'll also find a sun terrace, garden and mini-bar on every floor.

On central Beekstraat, **De Beek Anno 1410** contains a mix of contemporary rooms, studios and apartments in a house dating back more than six centuries.

Beer

Bars and cafés line the main square, **Grote Markt**. **Pacific** at No.4 is more of a brasserie, while behind on



Heilig-Hartplein, bar/club **Cohibar** provides late-night revelry.

Back on the square, **De Klok** operates as a restaurant but has a TV for match-watching over drinks. Alongside, **Brasserie Royal** (No.14) has an encyclopaedic selection of Belgian beers by the bottle.

On the other side of the square, **De Kleine Bacchus** at No.34 screens matches, as does its more food-focused partner café, **De Bacchus**, by the church. In between, **Sportwereld ST** has football as its focus, although it's more café than pub. Alongside, **Brasserie De Bink** is the sleekest eatery on the square, with a great choice of beers.

Most bar crawls end at **'t Café** on Kazernestraat, open until 4am six nights a week.





BELGIUM 2019-20 Sint-Truidense VV

www.liberoguide.com/sint-truidense-vv

Sint-Truidense VV

The Canaries of **Sint-Truidense VV** have been a consistent presence in the top flight for over 30 years. Home since 1927 has been **Stayen**, located west of town.

Current capacity is 14,600, officially with 3,530 standing places but for 2019-20, the Tribune Noord aka Sfeertribune ('Sfeer' as in 'atmosphere') has also been designated entirely for standing fans. Sitting down wasn't really happening anyway, what with all the drums, megaphones and noise.

Away fans are allocated the Tribune Zuid, through gates Z1 and Z2.

The main Tribune West is a three-tiered affair with a row of sky boxes sandwiched in between. Opposite is the one-tiered, family-friendly Tribune Oost.

Transport

The bus service from **Sint-Truiden station** to the **Sint-Truiden STVV stop** by the stadium is pretty infrequent, especially at weekends.

Walking, head through the car park, then straight ahead, veer right and cross the railway bridge. From there, you see the floodlights ahead on the



left-hand side. Allow 15min from station to stadium.

Tickets

Availability is rarely a problem at Sint-Truiden, although there are usually special arrangements for the visit of Genk.

Tickets are sold two weeks before every home game, at the **STVV Fanshop** (Wed-Fri 2pm-6pm) and Dutch-only **online** (stvv.tickethour.be), usually available until lunchtimes on match day. **Ticket windows** then open 90 minutes before kick-off. For all enquiries, contact tickets@stvv.com.



For the home Tribune Noord, it's €15, €12 for under-24s and €7 for under-12s. For top games, including local rivals Genk, this rises to €20, €17 and €12. In the Tribune Oost, a seat in outer sectors A-C and I-K is €20/€25, €17/€20 for under-24s and €15/€17 for under-12s. For inner sectors D-G, it's €25/€32 and €30/€37, the pricier ones (sectors E-G) with an upper view over the halfway line.

In Tribune West opposite, only VIP seating is available, from the outer VIP 3 (€35/€50, under-12s €25/€30) to the prime VIP 1 (€85/€105, under-12s €60-€65). You can help yourself

to a glass of beer or sparkling cava, and join the post-match party at the Rvue bar.

Shop

To the right of reception at the Hotel Stayen, **STVV Fanshop** sells all things yellow and blue, the first kit being mainly yellow with blue shorts, the second-choice, the opposite.

Bars

Many fans prefer a *pintje* or two of Cristal in the homely **De Kanarie** to reserving a match-day at table at the **Grand Café** of the **Hotel Stayen** across the road. Those who book, though, can watch the match close to the touch-



line – a curtain is otherwise drawn across to prevent anyone else getting a free view of the action.

If you're here on a non-match day, it's worth having a drink in the hotel's back **dining room**, black-and-white images illustrating a history of the club and its supporters.

The hotel also runs the separate **Café du Soleil**, open to all though with few decorative references to STVV.

For pre-match chips, the **Kriekenclub** (formerly **Bart en Miet**) facing the stadium on the main road is a fans' favourite.

SINT-TRUIDENSE VV



BELGIUM 2019-20 Waregem

www.liberoguide.com/waregem

Waregem

A bustling town of 40,000 people between Ghent and Kortrijk, **Waregem** has prominently featured in the Belgian game since the local club reached the top tier just over a decade ago.

This club, **Zulte Waregem**, was created in 2001 to represent two communities. About a third of the size of its 21st-century partners, **Zulte** sits 6km away.

Waregem had by far the stronger football tradition – but its flagship club KSV, UEFA Cup semi-finalists in 1986, would have gone out of business had it not been for the merger with Zulte VV.

Based at KSV's old ground, the **Regenboogstadion** ('Rainbow Stadium'), a short walk from Waregem's main square of Markt – keeping the nickname of 'Essevee' from KSV but while having the club office in Zulte – this merged club have twice won the Belgian Cup, most recently in 2017.

Bearings

Waregem is 80km (50 miles) from **Brussels**, 90km (56 miles) from the **airport**. There is no direct **train** to Waregem – change at Brussels-Midi and/or Antwerp. Journey time 1hr



30min, single €19. From Brussels-Midi, terminus for the **Eurostar**, a single to Waregem is €12, journey time 1hr.

Waregem station is on the north-west side of the ring road that encircles the town centre, a 10min walk to the main square of Markt, a 15-20min walk to the stadium, amid parkland and lakes just inside the south side of the ring.

De Lijn run local buses (tickets €3 on board) though they're pretty infrequent. Waregem is walkable.

AB Drive (+32 56 60 57 00/+32 494 63 86 86) is a reliable local taxi firm.

Bed

Toerisme Waregem (toerisme-leiestreek.be) has a **hotel database for the Leiestreek region**.

As with many of Belgium's smaller provincial towns, Waregem has few accommodation options. In fact, there's only one in the centre: **Ambasade**, an independent, mid-range lodging tucked in its own little courtyard halfway down Stationstraat between the station and the town centre. Rooms are comfortable enough, the bar and sauna a bonus.

Outside town, near the junction of

Gentseweg and Vijfseweg that runs for 1.5km/two bus stops from Waregem station away from the centre, homely **Anna's Place** is an affordable option.

Also outside town but on the stadium side, 2km from the ground, **De Peracker** on Caseelstraat off Desselgemseweg has standard and loft rooms, set in a former factory and with its own restaurant (weekday evenings only). A lakeside setting is a plus – but public transport is scarce.

Beer

Bars cluster around the main square of **Markt**. At No.30, **Tommy's** has a

table-football table in Essevee colours and its own five-a-side team; **De Gilde** (No.26) is done out in old beer ads; and **Bridge** (No.24) has a TV showing football over the doorway.

De Klauwert at No.23 puts up a maxi-screen on its terrace for big match nights while on the corner, age-old **'t Labierint** also screens major games but is otherwise a popular meeting place decorated with black-and-white photos of vintage Waregem.

Facing the station, smart **Bar Hermanos** attracts a party-minded clientele.



BELGIUM 2019-20 Zulte Waregem

www.liberoguide.com/zulte-waregem

Zulte Waregem

Universally known as 'Essevee', **Zulte Waregem** were formed from a 2001 merger between KSV Waregem and Zultse VV.

Playing at the since rebuilt **Regenboogstadion**, Zulte Waregem needed four years to reach the top flight after the merger and have stayed there since, twice winning the Belgian Cup.

Present stadium capacity is 12,300. Stand 4 accommodates nearly 1,000 visiting fans in sectors 408 and 409, segregated as they arrive by a walkway over the water into an access tunnel. The away section usually displays the colours of the visiting team. Stand 2, the home end, remains a standing terrace.

Transport

The stadium is a 20min walk from Waregem station, bearing right along **Noorderlaan** immediately outside, and following the main road all the way round to **Zuiderlaan**. Cutting through town, via Stationstraat or Olmstraat to **Markt**, may be a little quicker. From Markt, it's an easy 5-10min walk, either through the Stadswinkel shopping centre or round it.

Tickets

For most matches, tickets go on



sale around 2-3 weeks before the game, up to the Saturday at noon in the case of a Saturday or Sunday game, or Friday late afternoon if a Friday evening game. Distribution is through the **ticket office** at the **club shop** and **online** (essevee.tickethour.be), after creating a user account. For all queries and information, contact ticketing@essevee.be.

From 90 minutes before kick-off on match days, availability willing, all remaining tickets go on sale – for stands 1 and 4, go to the windows by



the club shop, for stands 2 and 3, the stand by the pond. Take ID just in case.

Prices range from €25 in sectors 101-109 in the lower tier of the main



stand, to €30-€40 above and in the stand opposite. Standing places are usually taken by season-ticket holders and seats behind the goal opposite are also quickly snapped up.

Shop

Behind the main stand, the **Essevee shop** sells pennants, flags and sweatbands, all in red and green. There are also currently five (!) choices of replica top, in red, white, black, blue and yellow.

Bars

Hidden away in a quiet residential area about 1km from Zuiderlaan near the stadium, **De Karekiet** at Bessemstraat 20 is one of Belgium's best football hang-outs. Note the barstools created from seats from the old stadium.

Near the ground, the **Taverne Half Time** is a busy spot on match days, fans filling the terrace on the main road of Westerlaan, just across from the stadium.

On the other side of the park from the stadium, overlooking the lake, the **Boothuis** is an upscale brasserie that isn't shy about its Essevee support – a framed Z-W shirt dates from the time the venue opened in 2011.

Further round from the lake, the **Taverne Regenboog** at Meersstraat 72 is another classic fans' bar, Z-W scarves and a current league table ranged around a large room also containing a table for Belgian billiards. Just behind, older regulars meet in **De Treffer**, a bar attached to a swimming pool. There's a lakeside view from the terrace.

ZULTE WAREGEM