

Post



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Had a waffley good time in Bruges - August 31, 2023

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SUMMARY

Arrived in the Belgian port of Zeebrugge and took an excursion to the beautiful, old, charming city of Bruges. Our guide was a former Catholic school teacher of history and Catholicism. We got LOTS of info about both. Walked the picturesque streets, took a boat ride on the equally picturesque canals and had a waffle and hot chocolate with our group. During our free time we visited the last remaining brewery in the city and opted to drink the beer rather than tour the facility! Back to the ship for packing and one last dinner at the onboard steak house. - Karen

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DETAIL

We wake up on the ship after “two days” in Amsterdam. Our next stop, Bruges, is our last before we disembark in Southampton. Looking out the window it’s sunny with blue skies, but the high today isn’t expected to top 64 degrees.

Our big (only?) activity today is an off-ship excursion into town (Bruges). The ship actually docked in Zeebruges which is a short 30 minute drive into the actual city. We’re supposed to be doing a walking tour followed by a canal tour.

Getting off the ship and onto our coach we meet Mark our guide. He’s old, short, heavy, lots of white hair on top of (and all over) his head. He’s smart, erudite, opinionated, and funny. He doesn’t want to offend but he has no problem getting close to that line. He’s a professor, in his spare time, and my guess is that he’s a frustrated Shakespearian actor in reality.

Our drop point is in a big park, whose attractive claim to fame is a big parking lot, south of town. We’re dropped off and the group walks north, mostly together. Mark points things out and tells us their history and his opinion.

Bruges has always been popular, as it is now. As such it's chock-a-block full of tourists from all over. Many have bored kids, some have unwieldy strollers. We hear French, Spanish, German, and various Asian tongues.

To keep us in line Mark continually reminds us that we'll be sampling Belgian Waffles and hot chocolate. It's always just over the next hill. As we go along he points out where we might (or shouldn't) buy chocolate or embroidery. He points out a brewery which he likes very much and I make a note in my phone.

At the Waffle House we sit in groups of six. Eventually a waitress appears, balancing plates of very warm waffles on her arms. We each get one and right behind a caffeine-version of Johnny Scissor-hands appears, with a carafe of coffee in one hand and a carafe of hot chocolate in the other. Which would we prefer? Some chose one or the other. The two of us went full Joseph Conrad and got half-and-half. It was wonderful. The waffle? It's was OK. Could have used more melted butter and more powdered sugar.

For lunch we head back to the brewery Mark recommended and got beer, wine, and potato and cheese croquettes. All were delicious.

After our meet-up and more group walking we head back to the bus. Periodically Mark stops to do a pretend count to ensure we're all there. Given our height and his height he certainly couldn't see all of us. And in truth there were some wheezing octogenarians who obviously didn't read the excursion description that said there'd be two plus hours of walking, much of it on cobble stones. Harumph!

We drive back to the ship, just grazing the city of Ghent along the way. In our cabin I get online and arrange for a taxi ride to Gatwick. It's almost a two hour drive, depending on time of day (and on how many tourists forgot to drive on the left). Trains would have been cheaper (\$30 each) and quicker but they're on strike tomorrow. The ship has an arranged bus, but it's thrice the price and get's in too late. Our taxi is around 140£, which to me still feels like we're getting robbed, but this is a private, arranged drive, so maybe it's reasonable.

We pack our stuff, mostly, and tip our cabin attendant, Agus. He's always smiling and brightened every day and kept our room orderly and looking good.

For our final supper we got back to C-Prime Steakhouse (i.e. fancy restaurant). We'd bought a prepaid set of four such dinners. These were the days/times that worked. We had a great meal, being seated next to the fellow young Austinites we'd met on day one. We tipped our favorite servers.

We get a surprise extra hour to sleep tonight since we're traveling to the UK. Woo who!! No music tonight. Straight to bed, tomorrow's a big day!

Photos



Our walking tour begins. Mark is telling a story and assigns one of us as a character in his tale.



Walking along we see so many geese.
Karen tries to calculate if there is enough
feather floating around to make a pillow.



Geese, canals, boats, and bridges. We're
sensing a theme.



Quaint cobble stone streets, full of charm
and tourists.



And regular 'stepping aside' for the horse drawn carriages. The horses work one day and then get two days off. And undoubtedly all the oats they can eat. Not a bad gig.



King so-and-so, and beneath written in latin is something that sounds like it's from Winnie-the-Poo. "You're more able than you know"



So much Belgian chocolate. It all smells so good.



And tall buildings. Don't know how they smelled.



Canals. We'll be on one of those soon enough.



Happy vines everywhere



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So many figurines. They know who each of these are? Cray-cray.



And our guide, Mark, pointing out one we should know. It's a regular 'who slept with whom'.



So many  buildings



Poked our head into a pastry shop but didn't buy anything. Next trip.

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