



## ANTWERP

### BELGIUM

**T**hought to have started as a garrison town to a Roman fortification, Antwerp has grown steadily along the banks of the Schelde River. Over the millennia the city and the region has been conquered or controlled by Celtic tribes, Roman legions, Frank tribes, Viking raiders, Spanish monarchs Austrian empires, French dynasties and German invaders.

The city has seen great periods of prosperity only to be followed by destruction and great loss of life and property. By the mid 1500s the port of Antwerp was one of the great cities of Europe. During the 1st World War Antwerp was besieged and finally captured by the German Army in October of 1914. The city fell to the Germans a second time in May, 1940 and was occupied up until September of 1944. Antwerp became a vital port for supplying Allied forces pushing east towards Germany. The city paid a very heavy price in terms of lives and property when the German V-bombs targeted Antwerp after its liberation.

The city is Europe's second largest port following Rotterdam, Holland. The diamond industry was first established over 5 centuries ago by Jews expelled from Catholic Portugal and Spain. The community has been bolstered by subsequent waves of East European and Russian Jews escaping the pogroms. Today Antwerp's diamond trade is a world leader.

Though Antwerp is a modern city it has done much to retain, restore and rebuild many of the buildings from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries.

### HISTORY

In the Basque region of northern Spain just over the Pyrenees Mountains from Nazi occupied France, in August of 1941 a petite, seemingly frail yet lovely young lady from Belgium sat across the desk from the Vice-Consul assigned to the English consulate in the town of Bilbao. Though her story and proposal were fascinating, the Vice-Consul neither believed nor trusted her. The British did not know whether to laugh or suspect a German trap. The young lady, looking more like a teenager, was politely shown the door. A few weeks later she would return to the British consulate. In so doing, but more importantly...by what she brought with her, she would change the face of the war in Western Europe.

A year and a half earlier, on the morning of January 10, 1940 a transport plane of the German Luftwaffe unexpectedly and mistakenly landed just across the border in Belgium. The pilot had over-shot his intended destination, the Wehrmacht Head Quarters, 40 miles to the east in Cologne. The single passenger on board, a major assigned to the German General Staff, was promptly arrested. In the major's briefcase were found the Wehrmacht's complete battle plans for the invasion of Belgium, Holland and France. Upon hasty consideration the Belgians promptly released the major along with Hitler's detailed documents. The Belgians even refused sharing their information with the British. Belgium had declared neutrality and believed the German invasion plans to be sophisticated deception. At dawn, May 10, four months later to the day, the mighty Wehrmacht unleashed hitherto unimaginable Blitzkrieg war upon Belgium, Holland and France ... exactly as the German battle plans had shown they would. The Belgian army fought valiantly and honorably, even sacrificing themselves to protect the British withdrawal and historic escape from Dunkirk. However their King Léopold III, counter to the civilian government's wishes, surrendered the Belgian army to the Germans 18 days later.

Though she had earlier been shown the door the English consulate immediately contacted their embassy in Madrid with her story. Cautious, but acting on the information, the Embassy did not delay in contacting British Military Intelligence Section 9 in London. When and if the girl returned to the consul-



ate officers from MI9 would be waiting for her. Her name was Andrée de Jongh and she did return to the consulate and with her she brought a number of downed British pilots and air crew that she had smuggled out of Belgium, across Nazi held France, over the mountains to Spain and right to the front door of the consulate.

The officers of MI9, resolute men of war, were stunned as she described her plan to rescue more, many more downed English flyers. The British government and military were amazed and immediately offered Miss de Jongh their gratitude, full support...and respect. Over the next four years "Le Réseau Comète" (The Comet Line) would grow to include countless Belgians who, with utter disregard for their own safety, rescued downed English and Allied air crews. The story of their incredible bravery and sacrifice in the face of overwhelming Nazi terror is the stuff of legends. The flyers were hidden in homes, apartments and farm houses. Their wounds were cared for, civilian clothes and false identity papers were provided, then ... hunted every minute and every step of the way ... they were secreted out of Nazi occupied Belgium and France and, with the help of Basque shepherds, across the mountains into Spain. From there the men of MI9 took the air crews south to Gibraltar and back to England from where they

would fly to fight the Nazis another day.

The danger met by the Belgians of the Comet Line and the "Réseau de Résistance" (Resistance Network) is unimaginable and matched only by their heroic courage. Many were captured and faced immediate execution, among them Miss de Jongh's own father. And, as was the fate of Miss de Jongh, many were often betrayed by Nazi collaborators. They were imprisoned and interrogated at the hands of the Gestapo undergoing unspeakable torture only to be summarily deported to the concentration camps. Yet in the midst of such hardship and adversity, over 800 Allied flyers were rescued and returned safely to England. The frightful price in lives was high...nearly one for one...a Belgian Comet Line or résistance fighter died for every Allied flyer saved. Today and forever Andrée de Jongh and the Belgian men and women that shared her love of freedom are remembered with high honor in the annals of the British RAF and the United States Air Force. Eternally grateful must be the present and future generations of descendants of those flyers that were shot out of European skies...flyers whose lives and thus their progeny, were saved through the valor, sheer audacity and steely nerves of petite and unassuming Andrée de Jongh and the Belgians, French and Basque of "Le Réseau Comète".



## ANTWERP PLACES OF INTEREST

**1 Rubenshuis** (The Rubens House) was the home and studio of the famed artist Pieter Paul Rubens. The 17th century master moved into this house with his wife and children in 1611. It was here that Rubens created a number of his best works. Today the palatial building is a museum dedi-

cated to his life and career.

**2 St. Jacobskerk** (The Church of Saint Jacob) is a gothic style building. It has many beautiful wood and marble carvings. Its most famous artwork is "Our Lady Surrounded by Saints" by Rubens. The church is located close to the Rubens House and is the final resting place of the great painter.

**3 Onze Lieve Vrouwe Kathedraal** (Our Lady's Cathedral) was designed and built in the classic gothic style. It is the largest church in Belgium and a prominent symbol of the city. Two Rubens master works are on display; the three paneled "Elevation of the Cross" (1610) and "Descent of the Cross" (1612). These paintings are deemed by many art critics to be among the greatest art works of the ages.

**4 De Steen Castle** is part of the original fortifications that once encircled and protected the city. Construction began early in the 1200s. Today the castle is home to Antwerp's National Maritime Museum that tells the story of the city's long maritime history.

**5 The Plantin Museum** is home to the famous, and now priceless, printings presses and archives of Christoffle Plantin and his descendants. Mr. Plantin was a tremendously influential and successful printer and publisher in the late 1500s and his family carried on the work for generations. Many of the books that he and his family published are now literary treasures. In addition to the printing workshop guests can visit the family residence. The prominence of the Plantins is attested to by the family portraits in the home that were painted by none other than Antwerp's great master, Peter Paul Rubens.

**6 The Diamond Museum** relates the 500 year history of the relationship between Antwerp and the diamond industry...a trade that thrives to this day. Visitors have the opportunity to see how the process of mining, sorting, grading, cutting and polishing the stones has evolved. An amazing collection of jewelry is on display.

## SHORE EXCURSIONS

To make the most of your visit to Antwerp and surrounding areas we suggest you take one of the organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Order Form or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

## LOCAL CUSTOMS

**Bargaining:** Prices are generally fixed.

**Tipping:** A service charge is usually added to most bills. For exceptional service a Euro or two might be offered. Many people simply leave some change.

## LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES

In the Middle Ages Belgium became a thriving center for the importation of spices into Northern Europe. Close proximity to France and Germany have also influenced Belgian cuisine. Some traditional favorites include: Cream of Endive Soup, combines garlic, onions, potatoes, butter, chives, endives, chicken stock and cream. Anguille au Vert, is eel smothered in a rich sauce that combines lemon juice, fresh herbs, eggs, butter and white wine. Wild Boar Carbonnade, is a hearty stew made with cubed boar meat, onions, fresh herbs, juniper berries and dark beer. Brussels Sprouts in Beer are ... well... Brussels sprouts sautéed in beer. Belgian Chocolate, 350,000,000 pounds (yes that is million) a year, is famously some of the best in the world. For the most part Belgians still make their chocolate by hand, the old fashion, in thousand of little shops and stores all over the country. Belgian Waffles ... there is something confusing about Belgian Waffles ... Belgians don't eat them. Mr. Maurice Vermersch (a Belgian) introduced his wife's recipe to America in the 1964 New York World's Fair.

Belgium is famous for its beer. As with many parts of northern Europe, beer has been brewed here since far back in the middle ages. There are many different Belgian beers ... among them, Trappist and Abbey.

## SHOPPING

Meir Street is Antwerp's primary shopping district. Many of the beautiful buildings date back to the 1700s. There are numerous shops of all kinds and wonderful cafes in which visitors can relax and refresh.

Of course, among the most popular items to buy in Antwerp are those shiny little hand carved bits of pure carbon that, at a temperature around 2,500°F, 120 miles deep into the earth's lithospheric mantle for the past 1-3 billion years, have been under 450 tons of pressure per square inch (think of a fully loaded 747 tipped on its nose with all its weight on a single BBQ briquette). To phrase it simply ... from the Greek word meaning "indestructible" ... "adámas" ... diamond. In Antwerp generations of highly skilled professionals do wondrous things with two carbon atoms that, under the conditions described above, have covalently bonded to four other carbon atoms into a tetrahedral lattice arrangement to form a 3-dimensional network ring of atoms that share pairs of electrons. And these carbon atoms, true star dust, the very foundation of the universe, when joined with hydrogen and oxygen form the basic element of life on earth. So amazing is pure carbon, the nuclear icing on the molecular cake...so to speak...that it has the power to join hearts and destinies, so that when slipped upon a lover's finger the probability is high that they will laugh or cry and say "I do"... and all will be right in their universe.

## LOCAL CURRENCY

Belgium's currency is the Euro (€, EUR). Major credit cards are widely accepted.

## POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES

The Post Office is located in the city centre #43 Groenplaats.

## TRANSPORTATION

Rental cars and taxis are widely available. Antwerp has an inexpensive, clean, safe and user-friendly public transportation system that includes buses, trains and the underground metro system. To get to the train station passengers will need to take a taxi. Public transportation near the cruise terminal is not very convenient. It is best to walk to the Groenplaats, where the tram and bus are operating.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

The Tourist Information Center located at the Market Square, at #13 Grote Markt, within easy walking distance from the ship. Usually there is a desk with tourist information inside the terminal building.

## USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

There are 3 major languages spoken in Belgium: French, Dutch and German. In general, English is well understood and spoken. North of Brussels people speak Dutch. South of Brussels people speak French and close to the German border, people speak German.

*English - Dutch - French*

hello - goeiedag - bonjour

I don't know - ik weet het niet - je ne sais pas

how are you - hoe gaat het? - comment ça va

please - alstublieft - s'il vous plaît

thank you - bedankt - merci

good bye - vaarwel - au revoir

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---