

# The best MARCO POLO Insider Tips

## Our top 15 Insider Tips

### INSIDER TIP Secrets revealed

The freemasons are regarded as an allusive secret society. In the *Musée belge de la Franc-Maçonnerie* (Belgian Museum of Freemasonry) they offer a candid insight into their rituals, history and influence → p. 32

### INSIDER TIP Healthy tippie

In a cosy living room atmosphere, *De Haus* serves up dozens of different gin and tonics – not a bad idea if you are suffering from a cold → p. 77

### INSIDER TIP Green & sweet

You can buy seeds and plants, aromatic honeys and unusually flavoured jams in the *Jardin Botanique National de Belgique* shop – all products are from the Botanic Garden → p. 55

### INSIDER TIP Picturesque splendour

For some rural relief, take a trip out to the *Parc Tournay-Solvay*, where you can roam freely among over-

grown meadows, rare trees and a vegetable garden → p. 53

### INSIDER TIP Callar vault and garden

Both adults and children love the restaurant *Les Foudres* where food is served in the old wine cellar between the wine barrels and in the orchard → p. 61

### INSIDER TIP Tumblers but no tigers

Brussels' *École Supérieure des Arts du Cirque* is world-famous. Three times a year the students from *ESAC* demonstrate a colourful array of performing arts in a fine Art Nouveau building – but no clowns or performing animals → p. 81

### INSIDER TIP Fancy fragrances

Customers at *L'Antichambre* are guided through the various stages of personalised perfume and eaux de toilette preparation → p. 71

### INSIDER TIP Noble souvenirs

Souvenirs with an aristocratic touch: purveyors to the Royal Court *Hoyoit*

sell bed and table linen made from the finest Belgian linens and luxurious soaps (photo left) → p. 70

### INSIDER TIP Boutique hotel

If you like the décor at the hotel *The Vintage*, you can take the pieces home with you – armchairs, lamps or vases in styles from the 1950s to 1970s (photo below) → p. 86

### INSIDER TIP Rien ne va plus

*Le Bridgeur* shop sells everything for fans of poker and roulette, but it also has a good range of board games and children's games → p. 70

### INSIDER TIP Chameleon accessories

Pendants and bracelets, which react to temperature change, are the trademark of the traditional *Holemans* jewellery → p. 71

### INSIDER TIP Jägermeister-fuelled clubbing

Electronic beats combined with whiskey and Jägermeister attract

clubbers to this alternative club *London Calling* → p. 79

### INSIDER TIP Luxury with conscience

Are you looking for a really exclusive handbag? Then you are at the right place at *Eric Beauduin*. All his bags are hand-crafted and unique made from recycled leatherware → p. 71

### INSIDER TIP Underground Asian art

The *Paris-Beijing* gallery specialises in young avant-garde artists from China and South East Asia. Often working there underground, their works are on exhibition in the fabulous Art Nouveau palace of Victor Horta → p. 68

### INSIDER TIP Love nest

The *Le Berger* hotel is conventionally named after the road on which it is situated yet it was once a high-class brothel for the bourgeoisie. It has been lovingly renovated in its kitsch style, the excellent lounge wine bar is a special nightlife attraction for guests → p. 85



# BEST OF...

## GREAT PLACES FOR FREE

Discover new places and save money

FOR FREE

### ● *The panoramic view from the Palais de Justice*

When the sun is setting, there is a spectacular view over the Old Town from the *Palais de Justice*. The huge domed hall is open to the public with no charge on weekdays, but the view from the glass lift over the Marolles quarter is always free (photo) → p. 39, 40

### ● *The history of communication*

From the first written character to the touch screen – in the *Librarium* of the Royal Library, you can find out everything you could ever want to know about the history of the written word and communications. And admission is free → p. 36

### ● *Grand' Place: the finest theatre in the world*

The *Grand' Place* is regularly turned into an open-air arena for free chanson, jazz, rock and pop and classical music concerts. You can even save yourself the price of a ticket for a concert, as performances are occasionally broadcast simultaneously on large outdoor screens → p. 80

### ● *Beach life at Bruxelles les Bains*

Every year during July and August, the canal becomes a popular urban beach. When the sun is shining, you can lounge around on this artificial beach, play beach volleyball, join in pilates classes or dance

to live bands playing everything from electro to soul. And the best thing about it – everything except your Mojito is free → p. 104

### ● *Music students perform for free*

Instead of paying many euros for a concert ticket, you can enjoy professional-quality classical music for nothing. Accomplished students play free concerts from Renaissance music to jazz in the *Conservatoire Royal* → p. 80

### ● *Step inside the Royal Palace*

As soon as the king goes away at the end of July, you can be a fly on the wall in his palace without having to pay an admission charge. Make sure you include the Mirror Room in your tour of the *Palais du Roi*: A modern installation of beetle shells adds to the imperial splendour of the palace → p. 40

● ● ● ● Dots in guidebook refer to "Best of..." tips

## ONLY IN BRUSSELS

Unique experiences

### ● *Strip cartoons as art*

You can't get away from comics in Brussels. Many of the murals emblazoned on house facades are replicas of famous comic characters. A comic-inspired tour takes you to 41 famous heroes of the so-called "Ninth Art". Dozens of specialist shops offer rare editions and – like *Brüssel* – the latest comic trends → p. 23, 69

### ● *A foaming head of beer*

The Bruxellois love the slightly sour *gueuze beer* that matures like champagne. If you would like to be initiated into the secrets behind the brewing process, visit the *Brasserie Cantillon* that has been in the same family for more than a hundred years → p. 20, 52

### ● *Africa in Brussels*

Ten thousand exiles from Africa especially from the Democratic Republic of Congo are living in Brussels. They meet up in *Matongé*, a vibrant quarter with shops selling brightly coloured fabrics and food, jewellers, hairdressers, cafes and clubs → p. 46

### ● *The finest chocolates*

Friends and family will be expecting a gift of Belgian chocolates when you return home. Aficionados often choose *Marcolini* – they roast their own organic cocoa beans → p. 73

### ● *In true Art Nouveau style*

From the door handles to the balcony balustrades: The splendid interiors of the *Musée Horta* (photo) are characteristic of the revolutionary grandeur of the Brussels Art Nouveau → p. 46

### ● *Cheeky cherub*

Small but smart – the *Manneken Pis* is more than just a sculpture. The little boy blithely urinating symbolises the irreverence and the contempt for authority so typical of the ordinary Bruxellois → p. 31

### ● *The EU at work*

The political heart of the European Union beats here in the *Quartier Européen*. Watch the MEPs, senior officials, diplomats, lobbyists and journalists hurriedly pacing the streets between the towering glass palaces. Heads of state and ministers also drive up here → p. 42



ONLY IN

# DISCOVERY TOURS

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## BRUSSELS AT A GLANCE



**START:** ① Grand' Place  
**END:** ⑬ Atomium Restaurant

**Distance:** ➔ 16 km/10 miles (of which 5 km/3 miles on foot)

**1 day**  
Walking time  
(without stops)  
2 hours



**COSTS:** day ticket for trams/metro 7 euros

⑤ **Musée Magritte:** admission 8 euros

⑧ **Musée Horta:** admission 8 euros

### IMPORTANT TIPS:

⑤ **Musée Magritte:** closed Mondays, reserve tickets ahead online!

⑧ **Musée Horta:** closed Mondays

⑬ **Atomium Restaurant:** closed Sundays, reservations recommended

Cities have many faces. If you want to get behind the scenes to explore their unique charm and head off the beaten track or find your way to green oases, handicapped restaurants or the best local activities, then these tailored Discovery Tours are just the right thing. Choose the best route for the day and follow in the footsteps of the MARCO POLO authors – well-prepared to navigate your way to all the many highlights that await you along the tour.

Brussels is a city full of contrasts. Explore its many faces as you follow this route through the metropolis to impressive historic buildings, squares bustling with life and innovative creations of contemporary architecture. You'll also have plenty of time to enjoy the culinary delights that Belgium's capital is so famous for.

**08:00am** Start the day early at the ① **Grand' Place** → p. 29 to have the "most beautiful theatre in the world" basically to yourself. Walk across the square where the vendors are setting up their stalls for the flower market and take the time to truly appreciate the countless details on the fabulous town hall and the stately guild houses.

① Grand' Place

