

# Belgium



Traveling by train in Belgium is easy, fun, and comparatively inexpensive. Belgium has lots of trains, dozens of routes to explore, and some of the finest railroad stations on the Continent.

The Belgian national railroad is commonly known by its abbreviations SNCB/NMBS, reflecting its name in French and Flemish (Belgium's two primary languages). The system offers some of the most efficient rail transport in Europe, while its reasonably priced tickets make it one of the most affordable countries to explore by train. The railroad also serves as an international high-speed railway hub, with fast trains running to Paris, London, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and various German cities.

## SNCB/NMBS

SNCB/NMBS is one of the densest railroad networks in the world and one of the busiest. The system's 3,500 miles consist of parallel mainline routes with two or more electrified main tracks. Weekdays, it handles an estimate 4,000 passenger and freight trains. Some 229 million ticketed passengers traveled the network in 2014. The top speed on high-speed lines is 186 mph, but domestic trains travel at more conservative speeds.

The network serves more than 540 stations, many of which have both French and Flemish names (which can be confusing to visitors, especially when these names are dissimilar). Liège is the French name for Belgium's eastern conurbation while it is known in Flemish as Guillemins. Matters are additionally confusing when the common English spelling matches neither of the two preferred Belgian names. You'll need to pay attention, or you might miss your stop!

Most SNCB/NMBS lines use a regular interval clock-face timetable in which trains operate at the same times every hour between 6 a.m. to at least 10 p.m. Many primary routes enjoy at least an hourly stopping service in addition to InterCity express trains. Some of the busiest routes host four InterCity trains each way every hour and more frequent service during peak periods.

Many Belgian towns are within a short walk of a railway station. SNCB/NMBS operates as a hub-and-spoke system. Lines radiate out from Brussels and Antwerp

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**Noted Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava has designed several modern railway buildings including SNCB/NMBS's stunning new station at Liège/Guillemins in eastern Belgium.**



**Charleroi Sud is the main station for this southern Belgian city. Trams connect the railway station with Charleroi's city center via a tram subway.**

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and smaller secondary hubs. Through express domestic InterCity trains connect Brussels with smaller Belgian cities.

Connections to change trains range between 8–20 minutes. Although for some travelers, changing trains may seem like an inconvenience, frequent schedules mean that if you miss your connection you rarely have to wait more than hour for the next scheduled service. Moreover, since Belgium's domestic trains are unreserved, there isn't a penalty for taking a later train. Changing trains allows passengers the opportunity to get some fresh air, purchase a snack, or take photos.

InterCity trains between Brussels Nord (north station) and Antwerp take 35–45 minutes and operate four times per hour (every second train runs via Brussels Airport at Zaventem). Brussels Nord-Brugge train takes less than 1 hour, 15 minutes with three InterCity trains hourly, Brussels Nord-Ghent is 41 minutes with four trains hourly, Brussels Nord-Liege/Guillemins is 52–54 minutes twice hourly (plus additional higher fare reserved international trains), and Brussels Nord-Mons and Brussels Nord-Namur runs both take about an hour with twice hourly trains.



**SNCB/NMBS makes it easy to buy tickets, as large stations have both manned ticket windows and automated machines. You may also buy tickets using a smart phone.**

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International runs include hourly services to Amsterdam and Luxembourg, plus SNCF's TGV high-speed services from Brussels Midi Station (south station) to various French cities; Eurostar trains via Lille and the Channel Tunnel to London; Thalys high-speed trains to Paris, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and Köln; and a handful of ICE trains to German cities.

The most intensive local passenger services are focused around the Brussels metropolitan area and, to a lesser extent, Antwerp. Brussels has been developing multiple-track lines to allow for even more frequent local and express suburban services modeled after the Parisian RER network.

## **TICKETS**

Except for international high-speed trains (including Eurostar services to London, and Thalys trains to Paris, Amsterdam, and Köln), Belgian passenger trains, including domestic InterCity trains, are unreserved. SNCB/NMBS's favorable ticketing policy encourages domestic travel by providing a variety of low-cost travel options for residents and visitors. Although SNCB/NMBS generally requires passengers to

purchase tickets prior to boarding a train, it is still possible and acceptable to purchase your ticket from the conductor after you board. However, this is not advised because it is unnecessarily expensive and requires a €7 (\$8.25) surcharge in addition to the ticket price. But if you board at a station without ticket facilities, the surcharge is waived.

Buying tickets is comparatively easy. Many stations have ticket machines, and larger stations are staffed with agents. Presently, traditional paper tickets are being phased out in favor of various electronic options, including travel cards and E-tickets. You may purchase tickets online or using the SNCB/NMBS app on your smart phone. (Download the SNCB/NMBS mobile app from iTunes Apple Store.)

In addition to ticket sales, SNCB/NMBS's electronic interfaces offer journey planning including up-to-the-minute scheduling, timetables, and information about station services, such as which stations offer luggage storage. (See SNCB/NMBS's website at [belgianrail.be/en](http://belgianrail.be/en). For international tickets, go to [b-europe.com/en](http://b-europe.com/en).)

One-way tickets are reasonably priced when purchased prior to boarding trains. Examples of ticket prices: Brussels to Brugge second class €14.70 and first class €22.60; Charleroi to Antwerp second class €15.40 and first class €23.60. Round-trip fares are typically double the one-way price.

Discounted fares are available for regular travelers, members of the military, families, and students. Pregnant women are allowed first class travel at no extra charge. One of the best bargains for visitors is the Railpass ticket: second class sells for €77 and first class for €118. Unlike a typical open pass with unlimited travel within a specified time frame, this really is a low-cost, flat-fare, multiple-journey ticket that allows the purchaser to make 10 individual one-way journeys between any two stations on the SNCB/NMBS network during the course of one year. This is especially useful if you are traveling without a fixed agenda and simply want to explore by rail. You are required to mark the end points of your journey and date the ticket before you board your train.

In general, SNCB/NMBS requires ticketed passengers to take the shortest or the fastest journey between end points. However, a break in the journey at a midpoint is permitted, provided it is on the accepted shortest/fastest route. Domestic travelers are allowed to carry up to three pieces of luggage, and most trains have ample luggage storage at the ends of the passenger cars.



**Brussels has one of the most extensive city streetcar systems in Europe. Brussels tram routes 92 and 93 work along cobblestone streets through the 18th century Place Royal (Royal Square).**

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## Brussels

Brussels is Belgium's capital, its largest city, and the center for European Union and European Commission bureaucratic functions. The administrative offices for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization are also located there. It hosts one of Europe's most extensive streetcar (tram) systems and has numerous museums and attractions for visitors.

### **BRUSSELS STATIONS**

Brussels is served by several principal railway stations. Unlike London and Paris, which are ringed by stub-end terminals that lack direct rail connections between them (except by underground transit), Brussels' main stations are linked directly via the SNCB/NMBS railway network using a north-south tunnel through the center of the city.



**Brussels Central Station is walking distance from popular tourist areas including the Mont des Arts, various museums near Place Royal, and the classic market areas around Brussels Grand Place.**

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**Brussels Midi/Zuid** (Brussels South) is the most important station for long-distance railway travelers because it is the terminus for high-speed international services including Eurostar, SNCF's TGV, and DB's ICE. It is also served by Thalys trains and long-distance services to the Netherlands, as well as a host of SNCB/NMBS domestic InterCity and local routes.

The station buildings are unimpressive architecturally but offer a variety of services, restaurants, and shopping located in the mezzanines below track level, as are domestic ticket desks (open 7 days a week, 6:15 a.m. to 10 p.m.) and international ticket desks (open 7 days a week, 5:45 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.).

The impressive multiple-track approaches to Brussels Midi/Zuid represent some of the most elaborate and intensively used railway infrastructure in central Europe, reflecting the unusually large volume of trains serving the Belgian capital. Station entrances are located at Avenue Fonsny (or Fonsnylaan), 47B 1060 Brussels. It is served by a variety of public transit routes including metro/underground tram lines 2, 3, 4, 6 and surface tram lines 32, 51, 81, and 82, plus city buses.



**A train consisting of SNCB/NMBS's modern Siemens-built Desiro electric railcars approaches Brussels Nord. As one of the city's busiest stations, this is a common place to change trains.**

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**Brussels Central Station** is the newest, busiest, and perhaps the most architecturally intriguing of the main stations in Brussels, but it is also the most useful for many visitors owing to its proximity to primary tourist attractions. Completed in the early 1950s in an art deco style, SNCB/NMBS's Brussels Central building is at street level, while its six tracks (served by three central island platforms) are entirely below ground. The station features several entrances.

At rush hour, it is a busy place, handling up to 90 trains an hour on more than 25 different routes. The great volume of passenger traffic makes for a continuous flow of trains, and it's especially important to pay attention not only to the platform or track your train is due to arrive on but also to the destination of the train since many trains serve the same platforms in rapid succession.

**Brussels Nord** (Brussels North) is another busy terminal with many tracks. Located on Rue du Progres/Vooruitgangstraat in Brussels' northern quarter, the station is surrounded by tall, austere office towers and is adjacent to some unsavory neighborhoods. This makes for a poor introduction to Brussels, but it's often a necessary place to make rail connections or transfer to ground transport. Most



**The Maison de Roi, or Kings House (left), is among the impressive ornate buildings lining Brussels Grand Place.**

## Brussels Grand Place

The famous Grand Place is less than a 10-minute walk west of Brussels Central. This opulent cobblestone, automobile-free space is one of Europe's finest city squares; it is ringed by ornately decorated buildings and dominated by Brussels' Gothic Hôtel de Ville (old City Hall) with an imposing 315-foot-tall (96 meters) tower. The square is popular and often crowded with visitors; consider an evening visit when the buildings are illuminated with lights that give the Grand Place a magical feel.

Among the attractions are highly decorated guild houses. Visit the Brewers House on the south side of the square. The Maison du Roi (opposite the Hôtel de Ville) looks older than it is—built in the 1870s but based on a Gothic design. It displays artifacts, paintings, and memorabilia relating to Belgium.

Take time to wander the narrow streets and alleys and explore and soak in Brussels' old-world charm surrounding Grand Place. On a

short walk, you'll find delightfully quirky neighborhoods, as well as dozens of shops, cafés, restaurants, and pubs. There are numerous outdoor restaurants and lots of places to sample widely diverse Belgian beers. The Galeries Royales-Saint Hubert is a brightly covered arcade dating to 1846 that today houses a variety of high-end shops and is bisected by the Rue des Bouchers. It is among the antecedents of the modern-day shopping mall and makes for a nice interlude to get out of blazing midday sun or the all too common North Sea wind and drizzle.

Walk for 3 minutes from the southwest corner of Grand Place along Rue Charles Buls to Rue de l'Etuve to reach the city's most enduring icon: the beloved Manneken Pils fountain that features the bronze statue of a young boy perpetually urinating into a basin. The original 17th century bronze was sadly destroyed, with the present statue being a replica recast in the 19th century.



**Located near its namesake square, SNCB/NMBS's Luxembourg Station in Brussels features a modern entrance at street level, while the tracks and platforms are below ground.**

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southward mainline trains stopping at Brussels Nord continue into the tunnel to Brussels Central and Brussels South.

Brussels Nord has a full range of services, including ticket offices (open 6:45 a.m. to 10 p.m.), luggage storage, and restaurants. Underground trams 3 and 4 continue south toward central Brussels. Rogier is one underground tram station to the south, and it is the interchange with metro lines 1 and 5. Continuing south on the tram to De Brouckère gives you easy access to tourist sites and shopping areas in the vicinity of Grand Place.

**Brussels Shuman Station** is a moderately busy station on the east side of the city with tracks and platforms below street level. It's near the Residence Palace complex that houses European Union offices and other bureaucratic institutions as well as the Berlaymont—headquarters for the European Commission.

**Brussels Luxembourg Station** is near Luxembourg Square and is also situated on the main line running south toward Luxembourg. Like Schuman, its tracks are situated below ground and just a short distance from European Parliament buildings. Nearby attractions are Parc Léopold (Leopold Park) that is southeast of the

## Tram experience—rolling gourmet restaurant

On of the most unusual ways to tour Brussels is over a six- or seven-course gourmet meal on a specially transformed tram advertised as the Tram Experience.

This articulated PCC (Presidents Conference Committee) car functions as a rolling restaurant with tables for two or four and serves

meals prepared by prestigious Belgian chefs or occasionally by foreign guest chefs.

Meals start at €210 for two people. Seating is limited, and midweek services are often given priority to corporate clients, so advance booking is required ([visit.brussels/en/sites/tramexperience](http://visit.brussels/en/sites/tramexperience)).

station; farther south is the acclaimed Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (entrance at Rue Vautier 29). Ideal for children of all ages, this natural sciences museum includes one of Europe's finest displays of dinosaur bones, and its Biodiversity Hall features a wide selection of taxidermic (stuffed) animals and fossilized remains. It is open 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday to Friday and 10–6 Saturday and Sunday but closed on Mondays. (See [naturalsciences.be/en/museum/practical-information](http://naturalsciences.be/en/museum/practical-information).)

## TRAIN WORLD

While Belgium's national railway museum has the English name Train World, it is so much more than a world of trains. It is ideally situated in suburban Brussels in the restored railway station buildings at Schaerbeek on the oldest railway route in Continental Europe (it commenced service between Brussels and Mechelen in 1835). Schaerbeek is a major junction that has been described as a crossroads of Europe.

Train World is among Europe's best interpretive railway displays, which tell the history of Belgian railways from their beginnings in the steam age right to the present day. Belgium, like the United States and Canada, has exceptional national ties to the development of the railway. Belgian independence from the Netherlands was granted in 1830, and diminished economic ties with its neighbor resulted in the unanticipated consequence of encouraging railroad transportation.

Wonderfully restored locomotives include *Le Belge*—the first new engine built in Belgium. Take a look at engine 12004, a sleekly streamlined 4-4-2 steam locomotive designed in the 1930s to whisk express passengers at speed, similar to Milwaukee Road's famous *Hiawatha*. There are an array of railway artifacts, photographs, and



**Train World is Belgium's national railway museum and is located in the old Schaerbeek Station. Among the exhibits is this streamlined Atlantic-type steam locomotive built in 1939.**

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memorabilia. Exhibits include a display of railway signals, mockups of modern European trains including the latest variety of Eurostar, and a demonstration focused on the importance of heeding grade crossing signals.

You can purchase a combined museum admission and domestic train ticket to Schaerbeek. SNCB's platforms are just a short walk from Train World with frequent service to Brussels and outlying areas. Alternative transport includes tram route 92 that terminates in front of the museum and offers frequent service to urban points and connections in Brussels. (For information and tickets, go to [trainworld.be/en](http://trainworld.be/en).)

## **ATOMIUM**

A prominent vestige of Brussels' 1958 World's Fair is an enormous silvery monument that rises 335 feet (102 meters) into the sky. The Atomium represents the structure of an iron atom, and this iconic freestanding building can be seen on the horizon for many miles. It is among the emblems of Brussels and a major tourist attraction. Originally, it was intended as a temporary World's Fair exhibit but was completely renovated between 2003 and 2005. The glistening metallic



**Located to the north of central Brussels, the Atomium towers above the trees and offers magnificent views of the city. This view is from Level 6.**

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surface is impressive on the outside, but while the interior appears dated, it conveys the sense of optimism prevalent in the late 1950s. Each sphere is 62 feet (19 meters) in diameter and offers different exhibitions, some permanent and others temporary.

Views from the Atomium are worth the price of admission although there can be long lines to enter. Check out Level 6, located at a height of 118 feet (36 meters) for a 150 degree view of Brussels, and even more impressive is the panoramic view on Level 7, which is 301 feet (92 meters) high.

At the top is a panoramic restaurant with the best views. The meals are expensive, even by Brussels' standards, but where else can you enjoy lunch or dinner with such a tremendous view? To reach the fairgrounds take metro line 6 northern terminus at Heysel, or ride tram line 51 toward Heysel (Esplande). The metro may be faster, but the tram ride is more interesting.

Atomium admission is €12 (\$14) for adults, €9 (\$11) for children 12–17 and seniors, and €6 (\$7) for children 6–11. Hours are 10–6 daily. (See [atomium.be](http://atomium.be) and [ticketing.visit.brussels/en/ato](http://ticketing.visit.brussels/en/ato).)



**The moated Beersel Castle is open to the public for a small charge. The castle features narrow spiral staircases that bring you to the tops of the towers, where you'll have some wonderful views of the surrounding countryside.**

### **KASTEEL VAN BEERSEL (BEERSEL CASTLE)**

The remarkably well-preserved, moated, medieval Kasteel van Beersel is a historic treasure of Belgian's Flanders region, located less than 10 miles from central Brussels. Despite the ravages of war and time, this castle has largely retained its 15th century structure and features three prominent semicircular towers. Visitors cross the moat on a bridge and enter the walls through a fortified castle gate.

Much of the structure is open for exploration, including steep, narrow, winding circular staircases with century-worn triangular steps. From the tops of the towers are views of the countryside and railway line. Under restoration since 2003, it is open to the public from March to November. (It is closed Mondays with variable seasonal hours.) Admission is €3 (\$3.60) for adults, €1 (\$1.20) for children, and € 1.50 (\$1.80) for those 65 and over. (See [en.visitbeersel.be/kasteel-van-beersel](https://en.visitbeersel.be/kasteel-van-beersel).)

The castle can be viewed from SNCB/NMBS's S5/S7 suburban trains (running from Mechelen south toward Halle-Merode)—one of the nonradial services avoiding central Brussels. To reach Beersel from one of Brussels' main stations, you will need to travel south to Halle and change for the S7 train running northeasterly

toward Mechelen. Running time from Brussels Midi/Zuid with the change is about 30 minutes. If you are traveling from Antwerp, take an InterCity train south and change to the S7 or S5 either at Mechelen or Vilvoorde and continue south toward Halle-Merode; journey time is just under 90 minutes. From Beersel Station, it is just a short walk to the castle.

## Antwerp

Antwerp developed around maritime trade. It is one of the three largest European ports, and the city enjoys an unusually dense railway network that accommodates heavy volumes of rail freight moving to and from destinations across Europe. Most rail passengers arrive at Antwerpen Centraal (Antwerp Central Station), the city's elegant main railway terminal. This late 19th century masterpiece has been substantially augmented in recent years with new lines and modern facilities.

Centraal's magnificent station building is credited to architect Louis de la Censerie. Today, it's seen as a palace with tracks behind it, but at the time of its opening in 1898, this elaborately and elegantly adorned building was decried by critics as being overly ostentatious for its utilitarian function. A capacious iron and glass balloon-style arched train shed spans the first of three levels of track. Historically, all the trains served tracks beneath the shed but to expand capacity and improve access, the station was remodeled and reopened in 2007 with two additional track levels located below the original lines under the shed. The lowest level provides direct access to points north of Antwerp via a long tunnel, which serves domestic local trains as well as high-speed services operating to the Netherlands.

Prior to these improvements, Dutch through trains serving Antwerp either had to change direction and reverse out of the station before continuing their journey or skip Antwerpen Centraal altogether.

Ticket offices are open from 5:45 a.m. to 10 p.m. The station offers luggage storage and other amenities, including a paid parking area and restaurant. It is well connected with local transit including trams and buses. De Lijn transit tickets and an information desk are located in the station arcade near the Pelikaanstraat entrance.

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**Architect Louis de la Censerie's elegant Antwerpen Centraal opened in 1898. Top-level platforms are up the stairs under the vast balloon-style train shed.**



Antwerp's well-developed transit system is operated by De Lijn. It includes a 50-mile (88km) narrow gauge tram network with 13 routes working a mix of traditional surface track, and a "pre-metro" underground that operates in city center tunnels (routes 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 15). Riding De Lijn trams offers a relaxing way of exploring the city (the most interesting neighborhoods are to the west and south of Central Station). Tram routes 11, 12, and 24 run due west of Antwerpen Centraal and make a loop through eclectic neighborhoods that are popular with visitors.

The city's world-renowned zoo is adjacent to Antwerpen Centraal's east side (if you come out the main entrance, turn right). It is among the finest zoos on the Continent, an ideal interlude for animal lovers and children of all ages. Highlights include an expansive aquarium with an excellent penguin habitat, where you can watch playful aquatic birds above and below water. It is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. 365 days a year, making for an ideal attraction on holidays when other popular places are closed. Tickets are cheaper purchased online in advance ([zooantwerpen.be/en](http://zooantwerpen.be/en)).

Immediately to the west of Antwerpen Centraal is the famous diamond district, roughly bordered by the thoroughfares De Keyserlei, Pelikaanstraat, and Herentalstraat. A diamond museum is located at Koningin Astridplein.

Antwerp's Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal is billed as Belgium's largest Gothic cathedral (located to the west of Antwerpen Centraal off Groenplaats). This amazing building was built between the 14th and 16th centuries, a contrast to other cavernous cathedrals because it's bright and open with the ceiling rising high above the floor. It houses a collection of paintings including by Dutch master Peter Paul Rubens.

## Liège Station

SNCB/NMBS's station at Liège/Guillemins opened in 2009. This magnificent new structure not only serves as a passenger station but as a bridge over the tracks connecting sections of the city divided by the railway line. This station exhibits creative use of space by presenting a towering shed-like arch that dwarfs the trains below. Explore the open sidewalks at the station's ends, which make for great viewing platforms. It is among several modern European stations designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, who is renowned for his open and organic style.



**Antwerp's trams use narrow gauge tracks. Using this well-developed streetcar network is an excellent way to explore the city's diverse neighborhoods.**

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## Belgian Coastal Tram

De Lijn's Coastal Tram counts among the most distinctive railway journeys in Belgium if not all of Europe. This is an interurban electric line that runs the length of Belgium's North Sea coast (55km) from the French border at De Panne via Koksijde, Oostende, and Zeebrugge to Knokke near the Dutch border. This light rail line blends street trackage through various popular North Sea resorts with long sections of private rights-of-way, including seaside running along dunes and beaches.

It benefits from excellent heavy rail connections with SNCB/NMBS at De Panne and Oostende (plus additional SNCB/NMBS stations at Blankenberge and Knokke), which make day trips to the coast possible from across Belgium and allow for convenient triangle trips (by traveling the tramway between two legs of an SNCB/NMBS trip). Trams run at a modest pace, and service is relatively frequent.



**De Lijn's Coastal Tram connects coastal resorts along the North Sea, such as Koksijde pictured here.**

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(Off-season half-hour intervals are common, while at peak times, there may be up to eight services an hour on a mix of long- and short-distance runs).

As expected, summer is the peak season when the beaches (and trams) are jammed with Belgians aiming to escape the heat of Brussels, Antwerp, and other cities. Off-season, the beaches are quiet but may be inhospitable when cold North Sea winds blow.

Explore the coastal towns. Koksijde-Bad is a popular resort about a 20-minute run north from De Panne. Typical of Belgian North Sea towns, it features high-rise holiday towers that line the beach for miles. In town are a variety of shops and pricey places to enjoy a leisurely lunch or a long dinner. If the prices shock you, consider traditional beach food: hot dogs, hamburgers, and a Belgian specialty: pommes frites (french fries) with mayonnaise.

Nieuwpoort is a lineside interlude that presents a contrast to the more modern resorts. If the beach overwhelms you, walk inland into the village, find a handy pub or restaurant, and relax over a refreshing Belgian beer. Maes Pils is a local favorite. North of Nieuwpoort toward Oostende, the line passes through beautiful



**One of the last classic interurban electric lines in Belgium is De Lijn's Coastal tramway that runs the length of the Flemish North Sea coast. Here, tram tracks reflect a rosy sunset at Blakenberge.**

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windswept dunes best enjoyed in the warmer months, although largely free of visitors in the winter. (You might want to carefully check the tram schedule before getting off if the weather looks inclement).

Oostende has long been a Belgian holiday destination. In the 19th century, it was developed as an easy-to-reach beach resort for British holiday-makers owing to the frequent ferry service between Oostende and the English port of Dover across the English Channel. The tramway works its way through Oostende streets, where it makes a variety of local stops, serving resort hotels, shops, and beaches. Oostende ferries are of diminished importance since the opening of the Channel Tunnel between Calais and Dover in 1994.

Blankenberge is another vacation hot spot where a broad sandy beach seems to stretch for miles, and the tram makes several stops to serve resort destinations. Get off at Belgium Pier where the long pier runs out into the North Sea, featuring the Storms Expo theme park and Pier Brasserie restaurant (with stunning views of the sea and coast). Additional restaurants can be found along the boardwalk, just a short walk from tramway stops. From the station, a 10-minute walk or a tram ride to



**Gent (Ghent) is a classic Flemish city featuring charming architecture and canals with lots of restaurants and pubs. Trams operated by De Lijn connect the Gent-Sint-Pieters Station located on the outskirts with the historic city center.**

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Sea Life-Floreal takes you to Sea Life aquarium, where you can enjoy watching a variety of underwater creatures.

## De Lijn tickets and travel

De Lijn operates various tram and bus systems across Belgium, including Antwerp and Ghent city trams and the Coastal Tram (but not the city trams in either Brussels or Charleroi). It offers a variety of different ticketing options. (For details, see [delijn.be/en](https://delijn.be/en).) If you buy day passes, they are valid on trams and buses across the De Lijn network, which will allow you to ride the Coastal Tram and city trams in Ghent and Antwerp on the same ticket during the validation period.

While tickets may be purchased from drivers on many transit vehicles, it is typically cheaper to buy them in advance of boarding. You must validate your ticket when boarding by inserting the ticket into the automated yellow validation machine (located near a vehicle entrance). Day passes need to be validated every time you get on and off a transit vehicle (except when you buy the pass from the

## Lijnwinkels (transit shops)

### **Antwerp Central Station**

Near Pelikaanstraat entrance  
Open Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and  
Saturday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

### **Antwerp Head Office**

Grote Hondstraat 58  
2018 Antwerp  
Open Monday-Friday 8:10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and  
1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

### **Antwerp Metrostation Groenplaats**

Open Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and  
Saturday 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

### **Gent-Sint-Pieters Station**

Open Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. and  
12:45 p.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to  
12:15 p.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

### **Gent Zuid** (Gent South)

Open Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 7p.m.

Additional Lijnwinkels are located at Brugge,  
Brussels Nord, Kortrijk Tikstraat, Leuven,  
Oostende (Ostend), Ypres, and other central  
locations.

bus/tram driver when the initial validation isn't required). The validation period for each day allows for travel up to 3:59 a.m. the following morning, so if you are out late you can continue to travel on the same pass.

Single tickets cost €3 and are valid for 60 minutes from the time of validation.

Electronic single tickets may be bought via SMS text using a mobile device (tablet or smart phone) at a reduced price (€2 plus a 15 cent processing fee). De Lijn has arrangements with two dozen European mobile phone operators. In addition to the 60-minute SMS ticket (SMS code DL), there is a 120-minute option (SMS code DL120). The Ljin Card is a reduced price ticket that provides 10 single 60-minute journeys for €15.

Day passes offer the best value if you plan to make wide use of De Lijn transit and will save you the hassle of procuring new tickets for each journey. Keep in mind that passes still require validation every time you get on and off a vehicle.

A single day pass advance purchase cost €6 for adults and €5 for children. A 3-day pass is €12 and a 5-day pass is €17. While valid on most De Ljin transport, day passes are not accepted on Limburg Express buses.

There is also a 7-day pass for travel on the Coastal Tram.

De Lijn tickets are sold at thousands of outlets across Belgium including select SNCB/NMBS railway stations, lineside automated ticket machines, newsagents, supermarkets, and at transit shops called Lijnwinkels.