

Travel the Benelux

Enjoy autumn color in the Benelux

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The air turns crisp, morning mist rises along rivers, and markets fill with squash in various shapes and colors. Autumn sneaks gently into the Benelux, slowly turning trees shades of yellow, orange and red.

The Semois River cuts a serpentine path through a dramatic landscape of steep and forested hills in the Belgian provinces of Luxembourg and Namur. The roads that wind through the hills and valleys offer places to admire the spectacular scenery and panoramic views.

Dominated by a medieval fortress Bouillon straddles the Semois river and makes a good base for exploring the area. Overlooking Bouillon, which is the largest town in the Semois valley, Château-Fort de Bouillon stands on a rocky cliff overlooking the town. The château was once owned by the crusader knight Godefroid of Bouillon. This knight, one of the leaders of First Crusade, sold the château to the prince of Liège to finance the First Crusade.

In nearby Botassart, Le Tombeau du Géant (Giant's Tomb) so named because one of the bends in the Semois River seems to surround a coffin of gigantic proportions, a magnificent view of the river and hills awaits you.

Just outside of Brussels are two fantastic places to

enjoy the fall season: The National Botanic Garden of Belgium, located in Meise, has an extensive collection of living plants. The Hallerbos Forest in Halle, famous for its bluebells in the spring, has many hiking trails that take you through a beech forest.

Hoge Veluwe National Park in the province of Gelderland, the Netherlands has an 11-mile forest walk starting at the Hoenderloo entrance. If you look carefully, you might spot one of the 350 deer that inhabit the park.

You don't have to venture out to the countryside to see the splendor of autumn. Amsterdam's tree-lined canals, with the crimson and golden colors of the leaves reflecting in the water create a feeling of tranquility and enchantment in a city often crowded with tourists.

Leaves appear green due to chlorophyll, a pigment that allows plants to absorb energy from light. The arrival of cooler temperatures and shorter days signal trees to stop producing it. When this happens we can see the other colors in the leaves. The peak of fall-color change varies from place to place. It's still two to three weeks away in most places. It may be best to check with the tourism office in the area you want to visit for the current fall-color conditions.

Outside the gate



At the Giants Tomb, near Botassart, Belgium, the fall colors are just beginning their autumn show. (U.S. Army photo by Tim Clark)