

# Travel the Benelux

## De Panne offers beautiful beaches

by Tim Clark

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Historic De Panne has much to offer for a weekend getaway: On a sunny day, a wide beach with fine white sand is covered with colorful umbrellas. A broad boardwalk is lined with restaurants where you can choose to dine al fresco. An amusement park, Plopsaland, can keep children entertained.

On the North Sea near the Belgian-French border, De Panne offers beaches that are very clean. Sun worshippers can make their day at the beach more comfortable with boldly colored yellow and red beach huts, deck chairs, umbrellas and lounge chairs available for rental. For newcomers to Europe: Be aware that topless bathing is common on most European beaches.

If you wander onto a special section of the beach, you'll marvel at the wind filling the sails of three-wheeled vehicles and moving them across the sand. Known as sand yachting, or land sailing, this sport has been practiced here since the 1800s. Throughout its long history in this seaside town, land sailors have shared "the need for speed." De Panne hosted the 2010 World Championships of sand yachting.

Shops offering swimsuits, beach pails, sunglasses and other typical beach items share space with restau-

rants and bicycle-rental places along the boardwalk. The bike-rental stores offer more than your standard bikes: Six-seater bikes, pedal cars of all sizes and shapes, and other strange-looking vehicles race up and down the boardwalk.

King of the Belgians Albert I and Queen Elizabeth lived here during World War I. The headquarters of the Belgian army was also based here during WWI since De Panne is located in the tiny part of the country that wasn't conquered by the Germans.

In the early 20th century, architect Albert Dumont built a gem of architectural heritage here. Architecture in the Dumont Quarter can be classified as Belle Epoque, built around the time of America's Gilded Age. Downtown, the art deco buildings are worth a look.

With more than 1,000 hotel rooms, two resorts and many holiday apartments for rent, De Panne makes it easy to find a place to stay. The Ambassador Hotel located a block from the beach offers clean and spacious rooms with friendly, knowledgeable hosts who speak English. For those not on a budget, the Hotel Villa Select is right on the beach and noted for great views and an attentive staff. For other lodging, visit <http://www.depanne.be>.

### Benelux sign leads to good food

You never know what to expect at a restaurant in a tourist town. If you work for USAG Benelux, you can't help being drawn into this place, simply by the name on the sign.

Large portions, tasty food and a friendly staff await you inside. This place clearly makes use of fresh products. The food was well-prepared and presented. The owner stops by your table to make sure all is well. A specialty of the house, moules and frites (mussels and fries) is considered a national dish.



For your GPS:  
De Panne 8660  
Belgium  
From:  
Mons: 144 km  
Brussels: 140 km  
Schinnen: 263 km



Outside the gate