

Travel the Benelux

Kortrijk attracts history, architecture buffs

by **Tim Clark**

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Famous in Flanders for the Battle of Golden Spurs, Kortrijk has much to offer visitors: well-preserved medieval architecture, Gothic churches with famous paintings and a large pedestrian shopping area.

Through the cloth trade, Kortrijk rose to prominence in medieval times, and textiles still play an important role in its economy. The bell tower on the main square, dating from the 13th century, used to be the main tower of the cloth hall. The belfry, now freestanding, is all that remains of the original hall. On the very top of the belfry's spire, one can see a golden statue of Mercury, the Roman

god of trade.

A short walk from the main square, the Broeltorens — twin towers protecting a bridge over the Leie river — stand as the symbol of the city. The towers look identical but were built 30 years apart: the southern tower in 1385 and the northern one in 1415.

A statue of John of Nepomuk, patron saint of the drowning, stands in the middle of the bridge. Ironically, it has fallen in the river on several occasions — but always recovered.

The visually striking city hall on the main square was erected in 1520 with a mix of Gothic and Renaissance

elements. Inside the city hall, you can see wall murals showing Kortrijk's history as well as Gothic arches and stained-glass windows showing the city's coat of arms.

The interior of the Church of Our Lady, located in central Kortrijk, shows off Baroque style. Anthony van Dyck's 1631 painting "Raising of the Cross" and an alabaster statue of St. Catherine from 1380 are two notable treasures of the church.

Home of the first pedestrian shopping street in Belgium, much of the city center is car free with lots of shops and restaurants as well as a covered shopping mall called K.



Battle of the Golden Spurs

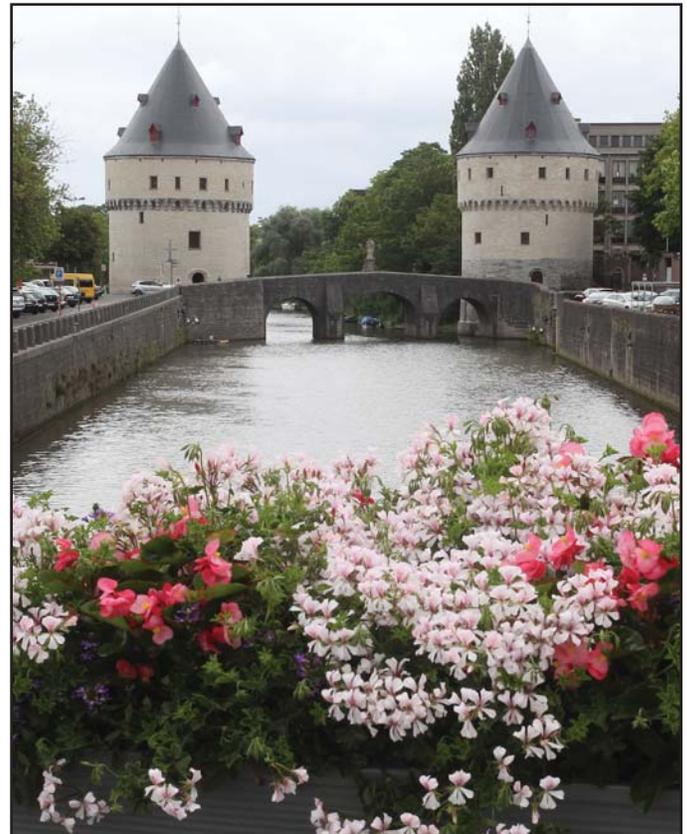
In 1302, the people of Flanders revolted against French rule. Flemish troops armed only with lances and spears defeated the French cavalry near Kortrijk July 11, 1302.

The victory became known as the Battle of the Golden Spurs, after the golden spurs from dead French knights were collected from the battlefield and put on display in the Church of Our Lady.

The French took back the

spurs 80 years later after the Battle of Westrozebeke. Today replicas of the spurs hang in the church.

In 1973, the date of the battle, July 11, became an official Flemish holiday.



For your GPS:
Kortrijk 8051
Belgium

From:
Mons: 95 km
Brussels: 92 km
Schinnen: 214 km

