

Travel the Benelux

Past comes to life in Dutch city of Thorn

by Rita Hoefnagels

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About 12 km south west of Roermond in the Netherlands, close to the Belgian border, you will find Thorn, known as the little white town because of its whitewashed houses in the historic center.

In Thorn it is still possible to experience the rural peacefulness and authentic atmosphere of days gone by. It is a mixture of clean whitewashed houses, farms roughly plastered, picturesque courts, aristocratic houses where once the ladies of Thorn resided, winding and sloping small streets and an impressive Abbey Church which majestically dominates the little town.

Thorn has a rich history dating back to the late 10th century, when Count Ansfried and his wife Hilsondis founded a convent. In the course of time, it developed into a miniature convent ruled by an abbess and 20 ladies of noble birth. The convent had its own jurisdiction and its own currency until 1794 when this came to an end with the arrival of the French revolutionary armies. Thorn's glow faded and faded into an increasingly forgotten past, only to step out again in the present with almost old luster.

If in Thorn, visit the beautiful church, a Gothic cross basilica with a Roman west building. If you didn't know that Thorn has been governed 800 years long by females, you will definitely know when entering the church.

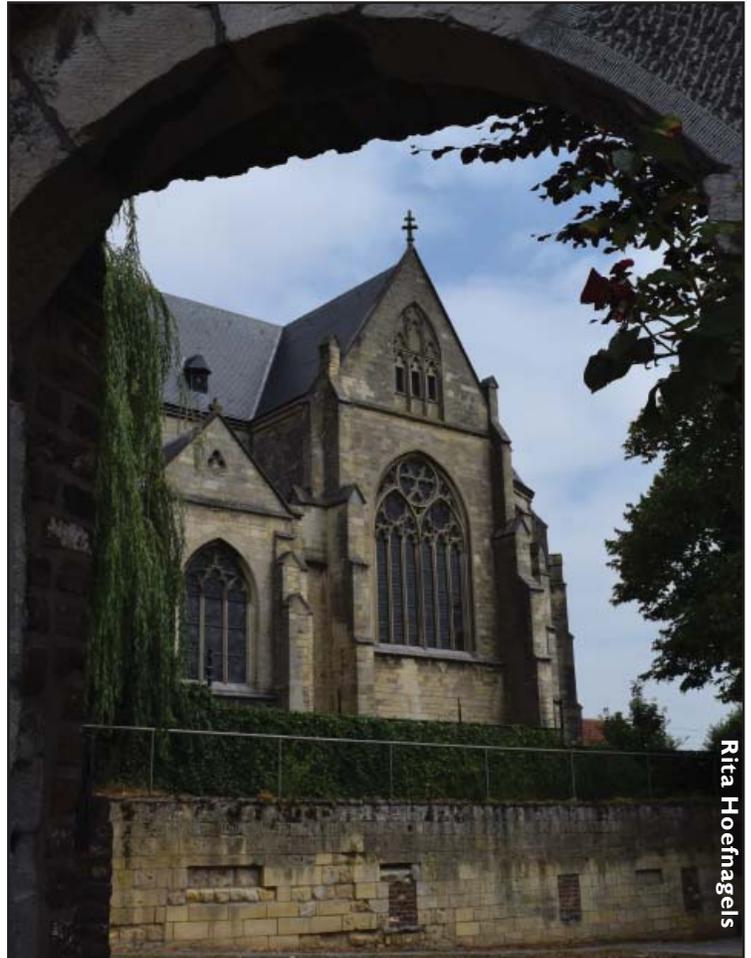
Sights, besides the beautiful Abbey Church, include many more authentic historical buildings in the old center, the traditional cobbled streets laid in mosaics, a chapel with beautiful 18th century baroque interior in the fields outside of Thorn and the municipal museum "Land van Thorn."

Near the entrance of the Abbey Church you will see a memorial for several young Belgian military, all members of the Piron Brigade, who gave their live during the Battle of Thorn in September 1944. The Belgian 1st Infantry Brigade, also known as the "Brigade Piron", after its

commander, Jean-Baptiste Piron, was a Belgian and Luxembourgish military unit during World War II which participated in the Battle of Normandy and, later, the liberation of Belgium and the Netherlands and was part of the Free Belgian Forces.

Guided tours for groups are available by appointment throughout the year. More information at www.vvwmiddenlimburg.nl/over-midden-limburg/thorn.

For your GPS:
Thorn 6017
the Netherlands
From:
Mons: 200 km
Brussels: 140 km
Schinnen: 37 km



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Outside the gate