

'Travel the Benelux'

Visit the boat elevators and sloping lock

Within half an hour driving distance from Mons, in the heart of Hainaut province, visit some unique boat elevators or sloping lock:

Historic canal du centre (Rue Tout-y-faut, 7110 Houdeng-Goegnies) has four boat lifts that are on the UNESCO World Heritage listing. Each of the lifts is able to compensate for a change in level of about 17 meters using energy from water. The lifts were built in the early 20th century and are the only ones still working in their original estate. You can book a round trip by touristic train, visit of a powerhouse and guided boat trip with crossing of one hydraulic lift Tuesdays to Sundays until October 31 with two departures a day from the boat lift at Strépy-Thieu (Rue Raymond Cordier 50 at 7070 Thieu) at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Presence is required 30 minutes before departure. Cost is €14.25 per adult, €12 for youth 13 to 18 years old and €9.50 for children 4 to 12 years old.

Sloping lock of Ronquières (Route de Baccara, 7090 Ronquières) was built more than 45 years ago and resembles a huge roll-on that compensates for a difference in level of 68 meters. Vessels of up to 1,350 tons can use this longest sloping lock in the world. At the visitors center, you can watch the boats on the sloping lock from the glass bridge. On Sundays during the period May 3 to August 30 (except from July 30 to August 2), you can get a combination ticket for the visit and a boat trip (three hours total) for €10 per adult, €8.25 for youth 13 to 18 years old and €7.25 for children 4 to 12 years old.

Boat lift in Strépy-Thieu (Rue Saint-Géry, 7070 Thieu) is the highest boatlift in the world and opened in 2002. The lift is 117 meter high, 130 meters long and 75 meter wide and can overcome a difference of level of a little more than 73 meters. Open every weekend from 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. until October 31. On Sundays during the period May 3 to August 30, you can get a combination ticket to visit the boat lift and experience the lift by boat for a total of three hours at €10.50 per adult, €9.50 for youth 13 to 18 years old and €6 for children 4 to 12 years old. Departure is at noon and 3:30 p.m. downstream and at 2 and 5 p.m. upstream but presence is required 30 minutes before departure.

For additional information on visits of the above sites, check <http://voiesdeau.hainaut.be> (in English). To book, call 064/671200 or email info.strepy_thieu@hainaut.be.



Good to know:

- You can also rent a bike at the boatlift #3 at €8 per day or €6 for half a day and ride on the path alongside the canal to see all four boatlifts on the historic canal du centre. Bikes can be rented April through October.

- Download free cycling routes from www.tourismegps.be. For more information, call 064-847831 or email info.canaldu-centre@hainaut.be.

Upcoming organized trips

SHAPE Trips and Tours

For information, call DSN 423-3884 or civilian 065-443884

- **Giverny, France: Monet's Home and Gardens, April 25**
- **Polish Pottery and Czech Crystal Shopping Trip, May 1 to 4**
- **Paris, May 2**
- **Thermes de Spain, Belgium, May 9**
- **Amsterdam, May 23**
- **Normandy Beaches, May 29-31**
- **London, June 6**
- **Stonehenge with Salisbury & Oxford, June 13,14**
- **Somme Battlefield and Peronne Museum, June 20**
- **Phantasia Land, Bruehl, Germany, June 27**
- **Pamplona Bulls Run, July 6-9**
- **Disney Paris, July 15**
- **Atlantic Wall Museum and Oostende, Belgium, Aug. 8**
- **Medieval Dinner in Bruges, Aug. 22**

SHAPE Travel Group

For information, call civilian 0470-876369.

- **Trier with Winery Tour, April 15**
- **Polish Pottery and Giethoorn, April 24**
- **Giverny, France: Monet's Home and Gardens, May 7**
- **London and Chelsea Flower Show, May 21**
- **Amiens and Les Hortillonages (Floating Gardens), June 2**
- **Provins Medieval Festival, June 13**
- **Paris, June 18**
- **Hampton Court Palace and Gardens, June 30**

Schinnen Trips & Tours

For information, call DSN 360-7561 or civilian 0032-(0)46-4437561

- **Family Day "Trout Fishing," April 11**
- **Keukenhof Gardens, April 25**
- **Day Trip to Delft, May 9**
- **D-Day landing beaches, memorials and battle monuments in Normandy, France, July 17 to 20 (register by May 15)**