

BRUGGE LACE CITY

BRUGGE

Monumental and Medieval City

Presented by

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Brugge etymology :

The name Brugge is derived from old Norwegian word BRYGGJA which means jetty and has nothing to do with bridges. The old medieval Dutch for “connection over water” was however Brugghe. Meanwhile the city of Brugge existed already.

Brugge history :

Everything started with Boudewijn I ,count of Flanders, who in 862 jumped the wall of a Monastery in Senlis (in France) to kidnap Judith daughter of Charles The Bolt in order to marry her. Charles exiled the undesirable son in law to the most Northern part of Gale, which was to become Flanders. At a certain moment they were travelling in region of Brugge, which in those days was only a forest. The young couple was accompanied by their parade of horses and carriages and they had not met a single soul. Suddenly a treating bear blocked their road. This was the first inhabitant of the Brugge area. Boudewijn, called “the iron arm”, took his lance and nailed the bear to a tree. Later on the bear came out of his skin and climbed into the coat of arms of Brugge. Since long time ago the bear has his statue in a niche in the citizens lodge at the corner of the Academiestraat.

De Burg etymology :

The origin is both English “BURH” (old word for borough) or even Danish and can be found back in other city names such as Middelburg (NL), Edingborough (GB), St Peterburg (Russia), Cherbourg (F) and Gothenborg (S).

De Burg history :

The history of the Burg goes back to the 9th century when the first count of Flanders, Boudewyn built his fortress to protect himself against the Normans. Around the Burg a city grew. Until the 18th century the Burg was a enclosed area which could only be entered trough gates.

As the place transformed during time one can find 9 centuries of historical architecture. The oldest buildings have however disappeared. One of them

is the **St Donasius Church**. A small statue reminds the visitor of the original form and location of the church. Parts of the dungeons of the church can still be found under the



Crowne Plaza hotel.

The Burg became the administrative center of the town, whereas the Market was the commercial center.

On the Burg we can find several of these historical administrative buildings.



The Administrative Headquarters of the St Donasius Church is baroque and was built in 1662.

It was also the ecclesiastical court of justice. One can still see on top of

the building Lady Justice accompanied of Leto (charity) and Gorgo (hate).

It was the provost who lived here. The position of the provost was very important as he also became Flanders Chancellor since 1089 or chief of the count's administration. In 1559 Brugge became also the Episcopal center and the title was changed to First Bishop. Soon this administrative chair (18th C) was incorporated into the Episcopal Palace, which is situated more in the back and where for the moment the governor of West-Flanders housing.

Governors house : The building adjacent to it is newly constructed (in 1968) in 19th century style.

In this building is the administration of the province of West-Flanders.





The Holly Blood Basilica is Roman style (12th C) and has 2 floors.

The top floor is a rather rich looking chapel whereas the ground floor is a normal church.

The front has some Renaissance influence (16th C).

The entrances to both churches are situated in the small building with the golden statues. The statues represent the rulers of Flanders, whereas the emblems in the niches represent corporations or Flemish cities.



The ground floor was for ordinary people and is very primitive. The first floor is rich and houses the Holly Blood which was brought from Constantinopel after 2nd crusades by Thierry of Alsace, count of Flanders in 1150. The style was also Roman but transformed in the 15th C in Gothic style. This church was for the nobles of the city.



Town Hall :

The Town Hall was constructed in 1376 and is Gothic (one of the oldest monumental town halls of Flanders). Under the 6 high

windows one will remark emblems of villages who used to be controlled by Brugge.

During the French Revolution the **48 statues along the windows** were destroyed. They represented the Sovereigns of Flanders as well as Bible figures. They have been replaced one by one over the past century.



The small balcony on the RH side at the ground floor was used by the counts for declarations to the people. Inside the building is a small staircase. On the first floor there is a beautiful Gothic room (14th C) with at the walls representations of the 12 months and the 4 elements. (Water, fire, earth and air) A small balcony in the room was used by musicians during festivities. Today this room is used for marriages and official receptions.



House of the Free Brugge :

(1722) The building is of neo-classical style and houses today the tourist information office.

Up to 1976 the present tourist center was the courthouse. Under the windows of the ground floor one can still see the iron rings on which, not the horses, but the convicted were chained as an example for the public. By the way the Burg was also the place of execution until the 19th century. When we walk through the gate we enter the court. In the corner we see the entrance to the city archives. In that building is the beautiful a beautiful Renaissance room with a Charles the 5th chimney.

Old Register of Court of Justice.

This is classical building apart from the hall where the files (jury cases) are kept. This building is Flemish Renaissance (1530) with some Gothic



influence (pillars and arabesque inside the court). The building was first a courthouse then a police station, later on (1883) the court of peace. The top of the front wall at the side of the Burg (presently restored) shows an old

Persian legend whereby a corrupt judge was skinned alive by the king of Persia.

We are now walking away from the Burg via the Blind Donkey Street. The name is taken from an old inn, which used to be in this street. On your left hand on the wall you can still see the lower hinge of the Southgate which was used to protect the Burg.



We are now at the **Fishmarket** which was built in 1821 and is still partly used.

On the left side behind our back along the canal one sees a series of very harmonious old houses built in 1523.



We walk right to the Huidenvettersplaats or the place where hides were



transformed into leather. In the corner we see the restaurant “**Duc De Bourgogne**” previously called “at the cow”.

Before Napoleon, houses had a name or a statue on the front rather than a number. In the façade of this house we can see the history of the leather preparation with first the salting of the hides, removing the hides from the tub, beating of the hides, stretching over barrels, cutting in pieces and finally decorating and carving.

Left of the restaurant is the **old guilt house of the tanners**, which today is a permanent exhibition of modern art.



In the middle of the square is a **column with 2 lions**. This used to be a balance in which the hides were weighed.

Leaving this place we are at the Rozenhoed quay where many painters and photographers are coming.

Rozenhoed is a praying chain made of small amber marbles which were imported mainly from the Baltic coast.

Across the water where the flag of Brugge hangs is the **private jetty**



of the major of Brugge. He uses this when he makes a tour on the canals with official guests.

On the corner at the side of the bridge is a **patrician house** dated 1480.



The building on our left hand at the opposite corner shows the 7 works of charity :

- Refresh the thirsty
- Feed the hungry
- Clothe the naked
- Shelter the homeless
- Heal the wounded
- Free the prisoners
- Bury the death

On the St Nepomucenus bridge one sees the statue of Johannes Nepomucenus. He is the Patron Saint of the drowns of Brugge.



Apparently Nepomucenus was the

Archbishop of Prague and was thrown in the Moldau river in 1393 where he drowned. This because he refused to give up the confession secret. As testimony of his innocence his tong kept floating miraculously in the water.

Walking along the Dijver we see many houses of masters.



N° 7 used to be the Economical council of Flanders, 18th C with, still original, Venesian Chrystal glass windows (today hotel **De Tuileriën**).

N° 9-11 is today the European College. The school was founded at the time of the EEC foundation and is specialized in an education program for diplomats. At the opposite side is he hotel Orangerie (18th C) N° 12 is the 18th C Groeninghe Museum (Museum of Fine Arts).

We walk left in to the Arentshof (Eagle square). Entering the Arentshof we see left a collection of carriages belonging to the Gruuthuse museum and on our right hand side **Brangwyn museum**. It contains on the ground floor a lace museum. The lace of the museum is all handmade. We can still buy handmade lace but quite some (in tourist shops) is industrially manufactured. On the first floor there are old views of Brugge and about 300 paintings of the painter Brangwyn, who was born in Brugge and donated his collection to the city when he died in 1936.

In the middle of the square one sees 2 pillars originating from the **Waterhall**, which used to be on the market place. At the left hand side, there are modern sculptures representing the 4 horsemen of the apocalypse.



We cross the beautiful small **St Bonifacius bridge** with at the left a bust of the Spanish humanist J.L. Vivés.

Look left, backwards to **the wooden wall** of some ancient houses.



On our RH side is the **Gruuthuse** (15th C) or the house of gruten.

Gruten was the base to brew beer before hop was used. The feudal masters had the monopoly to sell gruten and for Brugge and

surroundings this was in the hands of a noble family living here. The last descendant built the statue on top of the entrance door.

The Gruuthuse Family was so powerful that they were able to change the current of the Reie and connect it with their backyard to enable direct access and to make sure that their house was situated within the perimeter of the city center. They also build a small tower from which they could watch the various manifestation without having to mingle with the people.

Today this house is museum of antiques.

We continue to walk along the **Her lady Church** and see on our left hand side a bridge which links the Gruuthuse with the church. Inside is a balcony with window and chairs to host the nobles of the Gruuthuse. This bridge made it possible to assist the mass without having to mix with other people.



The origin of the church goes back to the 9th century when it was a chapel at the outskirts of Brugge along the river Reie. When the chapel became a roman style church the city moved the river to the other side in order to have the church on its territory. Today's church dates from the 13th century

and is mainly Gothic. The Gothic tower is 122 m high and is the tallest brick tower (not stone) of the Benelux. The church contains a statue (a Pietta) of Her Lady from Michelangelo in white marble. It was bought in 1506 by a merchant from Brugge who had settled down in Italy.

In front of the church we see the **St Jan Hospital** one of the oldest hospitals in Europe. Its history goes back to the 12th century and until 1976 it was used as a city hospital. It not only treated the sick but also housed the voyagers. The tower is of the 13th century and the sick halls on



the left were built during the 13th & 14th century. On top of the entrance one sees **an arch** of 1290. It represents at the right the death of Her Lady and her burying. At the

left one sees the ascension of Her Lady to heaven where Jesus Christ is sitting on his throne. The top medallion was added in 1912.

Inside one will find the Memling Museum and the old hospital pharmacy as well as a brother convent.



The floor of the inner court is the original street level. Looking back one can see how the city has constantly increased the height of the mainstreet by re-paving.

Back on the street we walk to the right and cross the bridge. Look to the



right to see the other side of the hospital. This is the oldest part and contains a Roman tower as well as **the sickbays** of the 13th century.

We cross the street and enter on our left the Kastanjeboomstraat. As already mentioned many fires have constantly threatened the medieval city. Wherever there was a row of houses close to the water **a small gangway** was kept between houses in order to be able to run to the water with buckets and extinguish the fire.



At the end of this street we arrive which at the Groeninge a small street with **low-roof houses**.



We arrive in the Nieuwe Gentweg where we turn right we will see 2 Godshuizen. **St Joseph (1634) and De Meulenaere (1613).**

Godshuizen or houses of God are a number of small houses built by rich families or city organisations to house elder and poor people. Some are longing a street, others are built



around a garden. They often are named after the donor. The oldest is dating from 1337, the youngest is from 1958. The tenants had to pray for their landlords to make sure that they would go to heaven.

All of them had a chapel and a small garden to grow vegetables. Today one usually combines 2 houses for 1 person.

We walk back to our right in the St Katelijnestraat and cross the street to



enter at our left the Walstraat and **Walsquare**. We see a statue of Greek gods symbolizing Brugge as a historical and tourist city.

At the bottom of the statues one reads “Zeus, Leda, Prometheus and Pegasus visit Brugge. At N° 27 we discover a brewery museum where today a beer “De Straffe Hendrik” is being served.

We cross the Wyngaardstraat to look at another Godshouse complex called **De Vos** (1715) in the Noordstraat.



We walk back, to the left direction Wijngaardplaats and find across the bridge the **Beguinie**. It was built in 1245. When we look at the concept we can consider the Beguinie as a

mini city with its own organization. It used to have a sickbay, a farm and a brewery. Today one can only see the church which was built in 14th C and rebuilt after a fire in the 16th C in Renaissance style.

The word Beghina was first used in the beginning of the 13th C. It is derived from the French word “Bégayer” which means murmur. The word is also connected to the French “Bègue” stammerer and also the English “to beg” which also means to ask for and in a way to pray. Although St Begga is the Patron Saint of the Beguins there is no

relationship with the origin of the name. Beguines can be compared with nuns who did not made their vows. They spent the days by praying and some manual works such as working in the linen industry and teaching. Their chief is called Grand Mother or Grand Miss. The end of the organization was in 1928. In 1930 however the Benedictine nuns installed themselves in the neighboring monastery as well as in the Beguinie and used the same cloths.



Today only the monastery houses the nuns and the old houses are occupied by older and less fortunate people. The rule to close the doors at 18.30 hrs remained.

Back to the square we walk to the right and we see in front of the



Minnewater (lake of love) where many swans can be seen.

The legend of the swans goes back to 1488 when the people imprisoned their archduke, count Maximillian

of Austria and beheaded his advisor. The archduke was liberated after having promised to fulfill the demands of the people (which he did not).

He did however not look for the murderers of his advisor Lanchals (Long Neck) to punish them, but he forced the people from Brugge to keep forever and ever swans along the canals of Brugge. Lanchals had in his “coat of arms” a swan. Brugge has kept its promise now for more than 500 years.

The swans belong to the city and are marked with a small B and the year of birth in their bill.

The Minnewater was wrongly translated by Victor Hugo into “le lac d’amour” (lake of love) which was probably derived from the medieval word “Minne” which means love. In reality “Minne” is a horrifying waterghost which made the surroundings unsafe. The dock behind the sluice valve links the Brugge river with the canal to Ghent. Before the train era tourists and travelers came by boat from Ghent and moored at the Minnedock.

We walk along the dock and see in the far end next to the bridge at your leftside the **Powder House** (15th C) where the munitions were kept to defend the ramparts (or fortress).

We walk along the Begijnenvest and turn to the right at the end.

We walk on the Oostmeers which is the lowest part of Brugge.

At the end we continue almost straight into the Oranjeboomstraat. We turn right at the first corner into the Korte Vulderstraat and are at the highest point of Brugge (+ 10.24 m).

At the end we see the **St Salvator Cathedral**. It goes back to the 9th C. The church knew 4 fires over the centuries and the iconoclastic fury (beeldenstorm). It became a cathedral in 1834.



We walk around the church which inside is a real museum and has a lot of original pieces of art.

From the church we walk through the Heilige Geeststraat where we have



the **Palace of the Archbishop** on our RH-side. It was built 1549 as a Patriciershouse (Hof van Pittem) and is of Renaissance style.

Transformation took place in the 18th C when the Bishops moved in. On top of the gate the emblem of the Archbishop was added.

We walk to the street in front of the gate (Pijpersstraat) and at the end we turn left into the Mariastraat.

At the end of the Mariastraat we see the **Simon Stevin** square. SS was a well known mathematician, engineer and architect from the 2nd half of the 16th C.

We continue into the **Oude Burg** where we can see a series of old houses.



The first house on the right (number 33) has a nice Renaissance façade from 1571.

The house on our left (number 24) was built in 1564 and has a

remarkable decorated front.

Number 27 was built in 1525 and is called “**Hof van Watervliet**”

This is the house where amongst others Charles II and Marcus Laurinus (humanist from Brugge) lived here. The later received many visits from the Dutch humanist Erasmus and the Spanish Juan Luis Vivés.

Number 25 is the house where probably **Mr Lanchals**, the beheaded advisor of Maximilian of Austria lived.

Number 19 is consisting out of 2 guild houses which are completely restored but originate from 1560 and 1612.



A little bit further we see on our right a small street **with a triumphal arch at the entrance.**

On the corner we have 2 houses which belong to the monastery of

the Karthuiser nuns. In the street we see on the wall of the church the names of the Belgium prisoners who died in the concentration camp of Dachau. At the end we arrive in the Wollestraat.

The right hand corner house (N° 28) is called “**Grote Mortier**” (big gun) and dates from 1634. It contains a half buried gun. At the



side of the Wollestraat we see painted sculptures representing the battle of Brugge against the Count of Nassau.

We cross the street and enter a small



square from which we can admire the Rozenhoedkaai and the Steenhouwersdijk.

Back to the Wollestraat we turn right to the market square.

On our left we see the side wall of the **Lakenhalle** (textile hall). This is the place where in the 13th Century the town officials and the representatives of the tissue trade resided. As of the 16th Century this place served as a covered market place. The front of the Lakenhalle is the Belfort.



We walk to the market square and see in the middle a statue representing Pieter de Koninck and Jan Breydel, 2 fore-fighters who started the battle from the Flemish farmers against the French Army on July 11th 1302.

The fight took place close to the French border and the French cavalry was slaughtered by the Flemish farmers who did not have so many horses and just used their farmers tools. After the battle the golden spurs from the horsemen were collected and they are shown in a museum in Kortrijk as prove of our independence. Today 11 of July is the Flemish Holiday. In order to avoid that French occupiers would be able to mingle with Flemish fighters during the preparations a password was agreed upon. This password never changed and was ‘Voor Schild en Vriend’. French speaking people just can not pronounce the sounds “Sch” and “Vr”.



We now see in the front of the textile hall the **Belfort**. This were the quarters of the officials of the city as well as the place where all official documents were kept which gave the city a certain freedom. The building started in 1240 and was part of the new Halle. The square brick tower with 4 small towers on the corners was

built between 1280 and 1350. Originally it had a wooden tower. The wooden tower was however destroyed by a fire and replaced in the late 15th century by a white stone covered octagonal tower. In Brugge people call this 2nd tower “the lantern”. The tower is 83 m high (366 steps) and over the last centuries it started to shift to the left. Today it is listing 1.20 m. On **the balcony** just on top of the entrance, the officials declared the new laws and regulations. This principle stopped somewhere in the 18th century.



On the corner of the East side of the square we have the **Post Office**. It was only built in 1887 but the Neo-gothic style was respected.



Also the **Headquarters of the Province of West Flanders** on the left was only built in 1887 and is also Neo-Gothic.

Till 1787 there was a Waterhall on this location. It covered the Reie river which today still fleets under the building. In the 12th Century vessels became too big for the Reie and Brugge built a canal connecting the city with Damme and Sluis the natural sea entrance to Brugge. Bigger vessels went as far as Damme where the cargo was transhipped on flat-bottom vessels. The vessels where then discharged at the Waterhall which was for those days a big building (100x25m) with a span of 22 m.

We turn further to the left (northside) of the square and see several remarkable houses. On top of one of the houses built in 1662 we can see a basket. It used to house the **rooffitters cooperation**. The sculpture in on the top represent believe, hope and love. On the right hand side we see 2 houses from the same period which were owned by **the free fish vendors**, which had till 1745 a



fishmarket in front of the house. The front of the left house represents St Andreas and on the right hand side Petrus' vocation.

We turn to the west side and see on the corner of the St Amandsstraat one of the oldest houses of the square. It was built at the end of 15th C and the front is decorated with a windvane as well as a golden globe and anemoscopic indicator.

In 1836 Leopold I signed the decree whereby all big cities had to install a meridian indicator. An exact meridian line had to be worked out. In Brugge, the Noon line was fixed with copper nails into the ground of the market. In 1884 all West-European countries accepted the Greenwich meridian as base for the chronology and the nails were removed. In Bruges however they can still be seen from the house with the windvane.

We walk back to the Burg via the Breydelstraat (Look in the alley at your right side).



Brugge has through the centuries been nominated for its lace. Brugge lace is made with bobbins. There is still a reputable school in Brugge where anyone can learn this artisan old profession.

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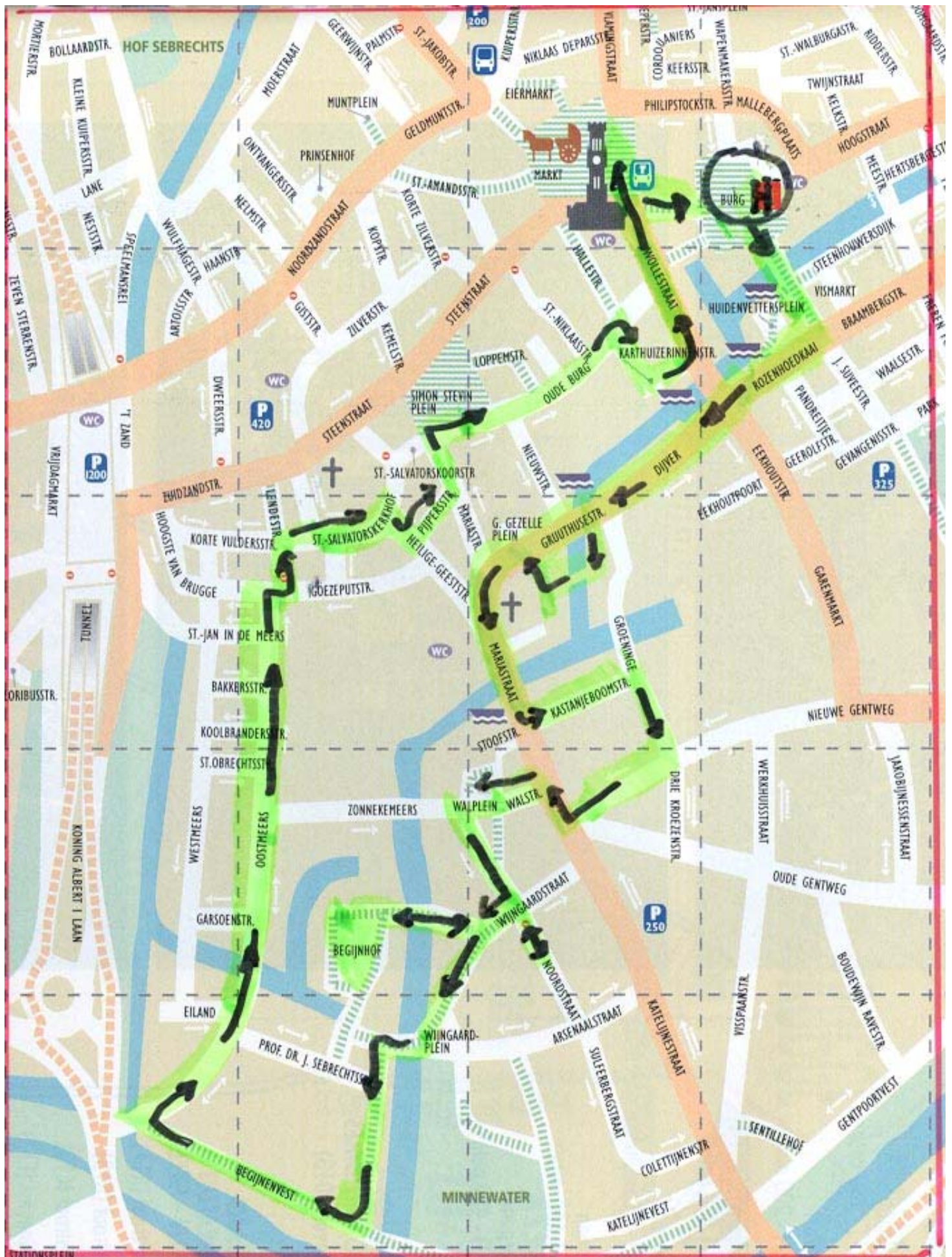
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WALKING ITINARY

Name of street	Direction to follow
Start at the Burg	⇒ Left of townhall under Air-bridge
Blinde Ezelstraat	Straight forward
Vismarkt	Immy right
Huidenvettersplein	Right at the end
Rozenhoedkaai	Straight forward
Dijver	2 nd Left into gate
Arendshof	Right at the end
O.L.V. Kerkhofstraat	Right under passage
Gruuthuusestraat	Left around church
Katelijnestraat	2 nd left
Kastanjeboomstraat	Right at the end
Groeninge	Right at the end
Nieuwe Gentweg	Right at the end
Katelijnestraat	First to the left
Walstraat	First to the left
Walplein	Cross the Wijngaardstraat
Noordstraat	Return after 50 m
Wijngaardstraat	Immy left
Wijngaardplaats	Right
Begijnenhof	Turn back and go right
Wijngaardplaats	Right
Arsenaalstraat	Left
Begijnenvest	Right
Oostmeers	Right at the end and immy left
Oranjeboomstraat	Right
Korte Vulderstraat	Left
St Salvatorkerkhof	Turn left around church
Heilige Geeststraat	First left
Pijpersstraat	Left
Mariastraat	Right
Simon Stevinplein	Straight ahead
Oude Burg	2 nd right under arch
Kartuizerinnenstraat	Left at the end
Wollestraat	Straight ahead
Markt	Right
Breydelstraat	Straight ahead



Hope you had fun !