

Brussels BELGIUM  HOT CITIES

Incorporating Liège and Mechelen

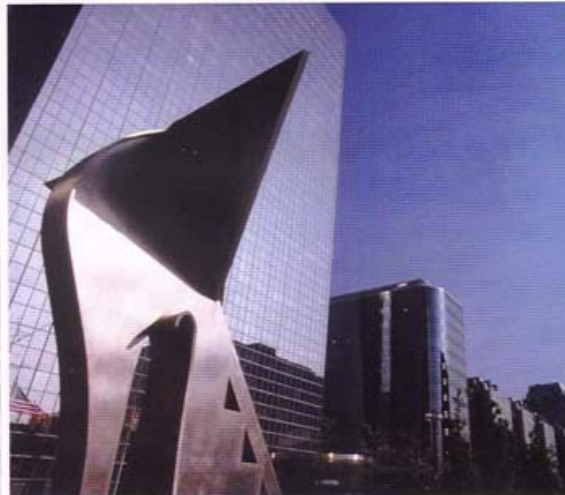
brussels

As Ouhes (place du Marche 19-21, 4000 Liège) on the main square. Foodies may want to splash out on one of **Mechelen's** two one-star Michelin restaurants. The more traditional and well-established of the two is **D'Hoogh** (Grote Markt 19, 2800 Mechelen). More modern is **Follez** (Korenmarkt 19, 2800 Mechelen), which only recently acquired its Michelin star. For good solid fare – and the town speciality cuckoo (a particularly succulent chicken) – try **De Kok & De Proever** (Adegmstraat 43, 2800 Mechelen), housed in a beautifully modernised old townhouse. For lunch, two grand cafés come recommended: **Toko Karachillio** (Jizerenleen 35, 2800 Mechelen) and **Den Beer** (Grote Markt 32-33, 2800 Mechelen).

:: After dark Winter really is the time to settle down in a traditional Belgian bar, complete with a log fire and a long list of Belgian beers to sample. In **Brussels** take your pick of the bars on the Grand Place, all have their own charms, but a favourite is **La Brouette** (Grand Place 2-3, 1000 Brussels) because it's so small you're never far from the log fire! Wander a little way from the main tourist trail and you'll find **La Fleur en Papier Dore** (rue des Alexiens 55, 1000 Brussels), popular with Magritte and his contemporaries, it doesn't appear to have changed in the intervening years. For a little bit of entertainment with your drink, head to **L'Archiduc** (rue Antoine Dansaert 6, 1000 Brussels), an art deco jazz bar that's played host to plenty of famous musicians, ranging from Nat King Cole to David Bowie. It's always smoky – what else would you expect from a jazz venue? – and inevitably packed to the rafters, but that only adds to the great atmosphere.

With its large student population, **Liège** is littered with great bars, particularly in the Le Carré area. One not to miss is the **Maison du Pékét** (rue de l'Épée 4, 4000 Liège), which serves the local spirit genever flavoured with freshly squeezed fruit juice – delicious but deadly! For a few drinks and snacks.

Le Baragan (rue Pont d'Avroy 50, 400 Liège) is a good place to go. But if you're into dancing the night away, then head for **Boulidou** (rue Tête-de-Boeuf 15, 4000 Liège), the perfect place to drink upstairs before heading downstairs for a bit of boogie-ing. **Mechelen** is fairly quiet as far as nightlife is



concerned – most residents head either to Antwerp or Brussels if they want to dance the night away, but there are some excellent bars in which to while away the hours until dawn. There are plenty of nondescript bars on or just off the Grote Markt. One with a little more (modern) charm is **Barramundo** (Steenweg 2, 2800 Mechelen), which plays lounge music into the early hours. Tucked away behind the Cathedral is a great little bar – 20 people means the place is packed! – called **De Borrel-Babbel** (Nieuwwerk 2, 2800 Mechelen). Just make sure you get there early to grab one of the few bar stools!

:: Shuteye The **Hyatt Barsey** (avenue Louise 381-383, 1050 Brussels, tel: +32 (0)2 649 9600) is a great winter hotel, thanks to its cosy boutique atmosphere and welcoming guest rooms – decorated in warm shades of red and blue by French designer Jacques Garcia. For some serious old world glamour, try the Belle Epoque **Hotel Astoria** (rue Royale 103, 1000 Brussels, tel: +32 (0)2 227 0505), which is conveniently located for both the Lower town (home to many of the city's tourist

sites) and the EU district. But a more contemporary choice of accommodation is the **Hotel Monty** (101 Brand Whitlock Boulevard, 1200 Brussels, tel: +32 (0)2 734 5636) which was created from a 19th-century townhouse in the residential district of Montgomery. At this three-star hotel, the emphasis is on chic, with 18 guest rooms all stylishly decorated and featuring accessories by designers such as Philippe Starck. Popping over to Brussels for a spot of sightseeing and shopping? A good place to stay is the reasonably priced **Novotel Grand-Place** (rue Marche aux Herbes 120, 1000 Brussels, tel: +32 (0)2 514 3333). One thing **Liège** is not famed for is its hotels – there are some perfectly adequate hotels, but there is none that stands out from the crowd. The **Holiday Inn** (esplanade de l'Europe 2, 4020 Liège, tel: +32 (0)4 349 2000) has a great location looking out over the river, also a fitness centre, complete with indoor swimming pool. The **Bedford** (quai Saint-Leonard 36, 4000 Liège, tel: +32 (0)4 228 8111), also on the river, is housed in an old monastery, although the only indication it's an old building is in the restaurant. The **Mercure** (boulevard de la

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