

MEDITERRANEAN

SIGGY AND HEATHER | TRIP AROUND THE MEDITERRANEAN | TUESDAY, 25 JUNE 2013

Show Town

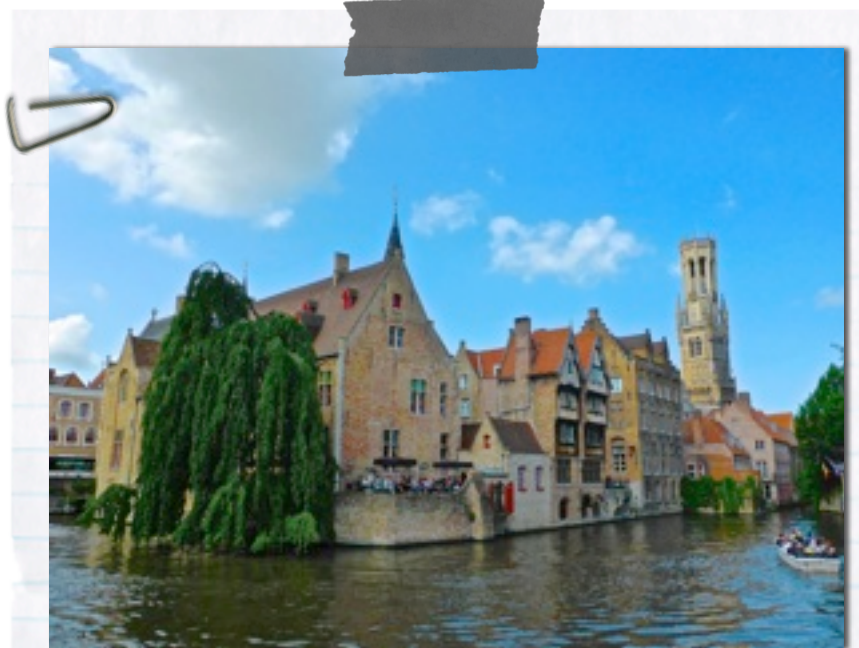
The sun came out this morning - a welcome visitor. The short one hour trip to Brugge (also called Bruges) - medieval showpiece of Belgium - was through green fields. On the way Heather read up about Belgium. It was interesting to note that there is apparently quite a divide here between the northern Flemish speakers (a kind of Dutch I think) and the southern French speakers - the Walloons. We know Belgium has great chocolate - we bought some in Ypres. We aren't into beer - another thing it is famous for. But Belgium's biggest icon is Brugge which we sampled today.

After settling into a lovely little caravan park in a leafy locale about 2 kms from the centre of the old town, we headed off on our bikes. The sun was still with us and we were feeling great. This place was bike heaven and I suppose that should not be so surprising considering that the culture is physically, and probably in other ways, very close to the Netherlands.

Brugge is described in our guide book as "the perfect tourist destination". A big wrap. It was apparently a prosperous clothing manufacturing town between the 12th and 15th centuries. When its river, the Zwin, silted up, it was deserted by many of the businessmen.



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Gorgeous Places

Its amazing how many gorgeous places we have seen on our journey. Not ones who like to sit and prop in the one place for long, sipping coffee and watching the world go by, we are more inclined to get our enjoyment from breathtaking views, grand and unusual geography, tranquil bike paths, pretty villages and medieval towns. Just when we think we have seen it all along comes another place that takes our breath away. Just when we think we have had enough of walled cities, castles on high, or views to die for, we are surprised by yet one more to rave about.

And so on to Brugge. Because our time was coming to a close we earmarked Brugge as our grand finale - the perfect "tourist" destination. And so it was. The chocolate box of chocolate boxes. Like so many "classics" that we have been lucky enough to experience, we will certainly remember Brugge. It's the place of tourists. Its impossible to take a photograph without at least a few tourists in the frame. People stop, prop and snap. Everywhere. In other locales we were able to wait a moment and grab that opportunity but that was virtually impossible in Brugge.



BIKE RACKS Just shove your wheel into this "grabber" and the bike stands upright - unless its a Brompton which as only 16inch wheels and will not reach so high.



CAR ON BOARD This extremely long barge came complete with vehicle on the top deck. Not sure how the car got there and how it was going to be taken off but at least the captain has transport.



WINDMILLS? We always associate Holland with windmills but we have seen more windmills in Brugge than we saw in the whole of our time in the Netherlands.

Lots of photos looking up in Bruges ... little wonder why.



Thus the town, did not “develop”, leaving it “suspended in time”, as one book describes it.

The cobbled streets and walkways left us almost brain damaged by the time we got to the centre. What a fancy, incredibly “messy” style of architecture!

Circular towers, next to triangular roofs with 90 degree “bits” all up the side. Lots of small red bricks making crazy patterns. Arched windows next to square ones. Huge numbers of these everywhere. However, there were also prodigious numbers of people gawking and taking photographs of people taking photographs!! Very little normal, everyday behaviour seemed to be in view. It was like being in a historical park.

The canals run all around the town and cut through it in a number of places. That was a very pleasant aspect.

Many, many people were taking little boat rides around the canals. You could hear the guide talking loudly as they put-putted quietly by, the sounds echoing under the bridges.

Heather enjoyed looking in the stores selling linen - a specialty of Brugge.

We decided to lash out and have a sit down two course lunch. Very nice it was too. Some beautiful tomato soup and lasagne.

After that we thought it was time to hit the back blocks. This proved more enjoyable. We actually found where the locals hang out. A trip around the circumference took us via some very pleasant paths. After consulting “Emily”, we managed to work out where we were. We came upon a large barge being allowed through a canal by the roadway being lifted up. Quite fascinating for us Aussies.

Back at the van finally, by mid afternoon. It was time for some leisure and even a little nap! Later in the evening we intend to go for a ride around our local area.

We have two more days in Belgium and then we go on to our last stop in the Netherlands. Our intention is to stay there for two days to clean up and have a rest. Then on to Beijing.

Our time in France has been fabulous. It was so easy to travel and really beautiful to see. France has been Heather’s choice spot.



PHOTOS

