

West Flanders – Bruges, the Coast and 'Flanders Fields'

8 days, € 956.5



Introduction



In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

This is the first stanza of the famous poem written by John McCrae in 1915, in name of those who had died in the Great War on the West Front. However, the poem was a call to arms; and the worst was yet to come. Battlefields, museums, cemeteries and memorials can be visited on Days 06 and 07 of this tour.

Most WWI-related places of interest are situated within the Bruges – Panne – Ypres triangle. If you want to stay longer, just book an extra night.

The happy highlight of this holiday is the wonderful town of Bruges. Preserved, renovated and added to in just the right medieval look, it is a harmonious and satisfying whole – cobbles and all. It feels like a fairytale village, complete with swan lake. Ypres, too, is lovely. After the devastation of WWI, it was restored to its former glory and recalls the days when the town was a proud commercial centre for quality cloth – woven fabric made from wool – in the 13th and 14th centuries.

Our route is signposted according to the cycling-by-numbers system. You will cycle along country lanes, tow paths, forest paths and cycling paths; past meandering brooks and dead-straight canals; behind the dunes and along the sea; through rolling meadows and endless cropfields.

Day to Day

Day 1 **Arrival Ypres**

Make your own way to Ypres. Explore the lovely town centre and admire the Lakenhalle, the Cloth Markte Hall. Discover 'In Flanders Fields', a museum with a mission. When evening falls, make your way to the 'Menen gate' to join the ceremony to remember the fallen soldiers. Buglers sound the 'Last Post' every evening at 20.00 hrs which is followed by a minute of silence.

Day 2 **Ypres – Veurne**

58 km

History buffs will have a field day at Lijssenthoek, former location of huge wartime hospitals and nowadays the final resting place for 11.000 soldiers of thirty different nationalities. Pause at the excellent visitors' centre, a true work in progress. Cycling onward to Poperinge, art buffs will get a veritable master class in the Gothic style and gourmets can hang out at the Hops Museum, where colourful characters present Belgian beer and the culture of cultivating hops. At St Sixtus Abbey in Westvleteren, the Cistercians monks pray, read



and work... in the brewery! Coming full circle, the winding roads of West Flanders find glistening streams, scattered villages and vast farmed fields on the way back to Veurne.

Day 3 Veurne - Ostend

42 km

Sail out on your bike, heading up the North Sea coast. Art lovers might like to pause at the museum dedicated to painter Paul Delvaux (1897-1994). The popular beach resort of Koksijde boasts the highest dune around, formerly a "beacon" for sailors at sea. Next is Nieuwpoort, which recalls the Dutch-Spanish battle of 1600 and the years 1914-1918 on the West Front. Top off your day with a rest in the resort town of Oostende (Ostend) and marvel as the sun sinks into the sea.

Day 4 Ostend - Bruges

40 km

Set off on a short cycling route, which ensures ample time to explore beautiful Bruges. Stop in Stalville at a workshop beneath the church tower, where master Antonie Demonie displays his many trades as a glass-blower, basket weaver, beekeeper. Relax a bit and 'ponder the polder', while savouring a cup of honey tea or glass of honey beer. Wander through the peaceful nature reserve of Meetkerkse Moeren, open wetlands with flower-filled meadows and a habitat of poplars for bats and birds. Last but not least, the captivating town of Bruges absolutely must be admired both by day and by night. Picture-perfect!

Day 5 Bruges - Roeselaere

58 km

Strike out on a delightful longer ride through the wooded terrain of Houtland, dotted with country estates and castles with exotic names. Stop off to see those found near Oostkamp -Pecsteen, Raepenburgh and Lakebos- and make time for a visit of Torhout, Gitsberg and Hoogdele. At the end of the day, set your course for Roeselaere.

Day 6 Roeselaere - Kortrijk

35 km

In 1995, work got underway to transform farmland into the Rhodesgoed Woods, first by planting of poplars and willows, later with slow-growing oak, ash, cherry and beech. 25 years later, the area provides habitat for a great number of plant and animal species, thanks in part to numerous ponds and the meandering Rhodebeek stream. For a change of pace, feed your fetish at the shoe capital of Izegem, wander the halls of Eperon d'Or Museum and learn about the town's industrial heritage. Later, move into a country scene on slightly rolling terrain and take in the wide-open landscapes of West Flanders. Cycle to Kortrijk along the River Leie (Lys) and leave time to stroll the streets around the town hall. Whip out your camera for a shot of the belfry, beguinage, medieval Broel towers and the Gravenkapel. And entertain your fascination with colour at St. Anthony's church, painted by the Passionist Fathers in green, brown and gold.

Day 7 Kortrijk - Ieper

42 km

Let the River Leie lead you to the border town of Menen (Menin), where thousands of German soldiers lie buried at the War Cemetery. Then proceed to the Passchendaele 1917 Memorial in Beselare/Zonnebeke and stretch your legs on a 3-km walk to Tyne Cot Cemetery. See Polygon Wood, formerly the scene of fighting and home to two British war cemeteries and memorials to soldiers from Australia and New Zealand, and the Canadian Hill 62, one of the few places where trenches have been preserved. A free app aids in exploring the sites around Ypres and the town's magnificent Lakenhalle houses an intriguing museum called "In Flanders Fields", where every evening buglers play the 'Last Post'.

Day 8 Departure from Ypres

Your cycling holiday comes to an end this morning after breakfast and it's time to return home!

Prices, Data, Booking



Fridays and Saturdays from April 4th till September 20th

Accommodation



Flanders Lodge* (Ieper)**
www.flanderslodgehotel.be



Amaryllis Hotel Veurne* (Furnes)**
<https://veurne.hotelamaryllis.be/nl/>



Hotel Prado (Oostende)
<https://hotelprado.be/nl/p/home>



NH Brugge** (Bruges)**
<https://www.nh-hotels.com/nl/hotel/nh-brugge>



Parkhotel Roeselare* (Roeselare)**
<https://www.phr.be/>



Hotel Messeyne** (Courtrai)**
www.hotelmesseyne.be/nl

Practical Info



7 nights included



3/4 star hotels



Breakfast included



Tourist information on all the places of interest





Rental bikes available



7-days a week service hotline



Luggage transport to your next hotel



Ypres



Parking available at the hotel



GPS-tracks available



Ferry crossings are not included

