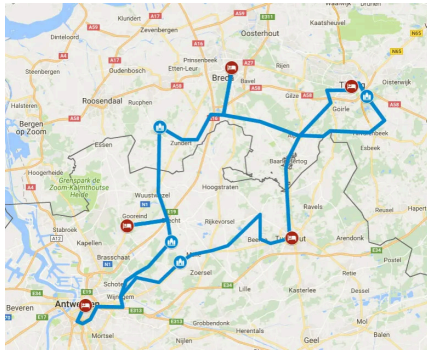


# Abbeys & Beers: Cycling in Brabant (NL) and Flanders (B)

7 days, € 766.5



## Introduction



Experience the taste of Trappist beers on this unique cycle route which takes you past four Trappist abbeys in Holland and Belgium. Trappist beer is not a type of beer. It is beer that is brewed by a Trappist order of catholic monks. Trappist abbeys are located in gorgeous pastoral countryside where connecting to the earth and to the divine almost comes naturally. Abbeys open their guest rooms to people in need of a short spiritual retreat. Passing cyclotourists, however, are not permitted to enter the abbeys or the breweries.

## Day to Day

### Day 1 Arrival in Turnhout (Flanders, Belgium)

In the heart of the Kempen region lies Turnhout, also known as the city of playing cards. In 1826 the world's first pack of cards to come off a printing press was manufactured here. Printing playing cards became a successful industry. The National Museum of Playing Cards can be found here in Turnhout. If you have time to explore, the Castle of the Dukes of Brabant is worth a visit, as is St. Peter's Church. You will find accommodation right in the lively centre of town at Best Western Plus Turnhout City.

### Day 2 Turnhout – Antwerpen

65 km

Your first stop of the day is in Merksplas. From 1822 to 1993 an agricultural labour colony for tramps and beggars was located here. Look around a former "tramp farm". Continue to Westmalle, where Benedictine monks brew beer within the walls of a Trappist abbey. The "Trappist order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance" originated in the monastery of La Trappe in France - hence the name. Trappist monks and nuns follow the Rule of St. Benedict. They do not go out into the community to serve the poor and the sick. Instead their number one business is continual prayer. But their monasteries must be self-sufficient. So they perform manual labour while they pray and live off the fruits of their labour (bread, cheese, beer, soap, candles etc.) which are sold in abbey shops. The proceeds feed the monks and nuns; go to the upkeep of the abbeys; or to charity. In Westmalle, pop in at the Trappist Café across the road to indulge in a beer and watch an informative documentary.



Day 3 **Antwerpen – Brasschaat** **53 km**

Antwerp has a long tradition of brewing and drinking beer as you can see by the many beer bars and breweries in the city. The historical centre is beautiful and very popular with shoppers. Your hotel is opposite the central train station. Set off in a north easterly direction past a string of typically Flemish villages until you reach Brecht and the Abbey of Our Lady of Nazareth. All Trappist monasteries are dedicated to St. Mary. These Trappistine nuns don't brew beer but they do make candles, soap and shampoo, on sale in the abbey shop.

Day 4 **Brasschaat – Breda** **59 km**

Set off for the Netherlands. Cross the border into Brabant province and make your way to Maria Toevlucht Trappist Abbey (Our Lady of Refuge) where monks brew Zundert Trappist. Have a beer in the village of Zundert. Trappist beers contain residual sugars and living yeast and are said to improve with age. They are considered to be among the finest in the world. Top off your day in Breda. If you feel like a night on the town, join in with the locals and savour the delights of the many quality bars and restaurants in this city loved for its nightlife and hospitality.

Day 5 **Breda – Tilburg** **56 km**

Staying in friendly Brabant, enjoy the lovely countryside marked by streams, woods and idyllic villages. Just before you arrive in Tilburg, you will spot the towers of the Koningshoeven Abbey of Our Lady. This is where the famous La Trappe label specialty beers are brewed. A long time ago these grounds belonged to King William II (Koningshoeven means the 'king's farms'). An order of Cistercian monks fleeing religious persecution in France made their home here. At first they tried to earn a living by farming the arid heathland to support themselves and their charities. When this proved too hard, they started a brewery. In the abbey shop, today, you can buy products manufactured here by the sixteen remaining monks. Tilburg is a university town, with a mix of historical and modern architecture.

Day 6 **Tilburg – Turnhout** **35 km**

On the last leg of the tour you will cycle from Tilburg back to Turnhout in Belgium, following a Rail Trail called 'Bels Lijntje' (Belgian Line). The railway, built in 1867, was 31 km long and was intended to open up the Belgian market to Tilburg industry. It became a cycle path in the 1990s. The 150th anniversary of Bels Lijntje will be celebrated with special events in 2017. On the banks of the Rail Trail a project is underway to save the honey bee by planting fields of bee plants such as buckwheat at intervals along the length of the trail, like stepping stones, to ensure sufficient quantities of pollen throughout the year. The Rail Trail takes you through Baarle, geographically one of the oddest villages in the world. It is divided into thirty enclaves, some in Dutch Baarle Nassau and others in Belgian Baarle Hertog. You can tell in which country you are by looking at the pavement tiles, signs in the road and the flag on the house number tiles. Look up Baarle Nassau on google maps and you'll see how higgledy piggledy the border is.

Day 7 **Return Home from Turnhout**

After breakfast, your holiday with Dutch Bike Tours will come to an end.



## Prices, Data, Booking

### Starting dates:

Saturdays from May 1th till September 19th.

Prices €	Euro
Per person in a double room 6 nights' accommodation, breakfast included	75,00

A supplement will be required for:	
Single room	300,00
Bike rental	90,00
E-Bike	180,00

Extra night Turnhout	75,00
Extra night Turnhout single room	100,00

### Starting point:

Turnhout

## Accommodation

The hotels and the B&B on this trip have been carefully selected for their location, atmosphere and/or unique services. All rooms are en-suite. A list of the accommodation we work with appears below. If a certain accommodation is unable to confirm due to lack of availability, we will try to request a comparable alternative if possible. When selecting the accommodation, we try to take into account as much as possible a safe and closed bicycle shed. However, we cannot do this with all of them guarantee and this partly depends on the number of bicycles of other guests.

**Turnhout** - Priorij Corsendonk\*\*\*

**Antwerpen** - Mercure Antwerp

City South\*\*\*

**Brasschaat** - Charme Hotel &

Restaurant Klokkenhof\*\*\*

**Breda** - Golden Tulip Keyser

Breda\*\*\*\*

**Tilburg** - Mercure Hotel Tilburg

Centrum\*\*\*\*



## Practical Info



6 Nights included



3/4 Star Hotels



Breakfast included, Halfboard optional



Detailed roadbooks with maps and tourist information



The possibility of renting our bikes



7-days a week service-hotline



Luggage transport to your next hotel



Turnhout



Parking possibilities at the hotel



GPS-tracks available



Any ferry crossings are not included

