

THE ART & CULTURE OF NORTHERN EUROPE

A HANDCRAFTED, ESCORTED TRAVEL PROGRAM TO BELGIUM AND AMSTERDAM

18-25 April 2012 (8 days, 7 nights)

A similar program will be offered 17-24 April 2013

Your docent & co-host: art historian Sally Whitman Coleman, PhD

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Sally Whitman Coleman of Austin, Texas, will join us on this journey to Northern Europe. Dr. Coleman is a specialist in fifteenth-century art and was the recipient of a Fulbright grant to conduct research in Belgium. She earned her doctorate at the University of Texas at Austin and her undergraduate degree at Skidmore College, where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and graduated with highest honors. She has been teaching art history at universities in central Texas for more than fifteen years. In addition, she is the author of *The Art Minute* (www.the-art-minute.com), a blog with short lessons in art history for people new to the subject.



Royal Gardens, Laeken



The Grand Place, Brussels (photo by Amanito via Wikimedia Commons)



gaufre de Bruxelles

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Wednesday, April 18 ~ Brussels: Arrival and exploration of the Grand Place

We greet you in the arrivals hall of Brussels Airport and escort you to your vehicle for a private, 20-minute transfer to the Hotel Amigo. Widely considered the top hotel in Brussels, the Amigo is a Rocco Forte five-star property located just off the Grand Place. Take the afternoon to explore the wonderful, historic city center including the Grand Place, the city's proud cultural and historical heart that Victor Hugo called the most beautiful square in Europe. The splendid setting and rich combination of architectural styles have earned this space UNESCO World Heritage status. Don't miss the opportunity to sample a *gaufre de Bruxelles* (Brussels waffle) as you explore the Grand Place. If you like, shop the upscale boutiques of the Galeries Royales Saint-

Hubert, a spectacular glass-roofed shopping gallery built in 1847, or visit one of the museums that we will not visit as a group, such as the Magritte Museum, to view the works of the surrealist artist René Magritte. Another possibility is the Museum of Musical Instruments, where you can see and hear some of the more than 7,000 instruments housed in these impressive galleries. In the early evening, we will convene for the first time as a group for welcome cocktails at the hotel. Dinner is on your own tonight, and you might want to sample the typical Belgian dinner of *moules-frites* (mussels and French fries) to inaugurate your first night in Brussels.

Cocktails and light bites included

Thursday, April 19 ~ Brussels: Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium

Today is devoted to the exceptional Royal Museums of Fine Arts, which boasts a collection of more than 20,000 works of art. Our focus will be the two museums located in the main Beaux Arts building. In the morning, Dr. Coleman will lead us through the Museum of Ancient Art, which features fifteenth- to seventeenth-century works, including those by the early Netherlandish painters Rogier van der Weyden, Hans Memling, and Hieronymus Bosch; Belgian master Pieter Bruegel; and Flemish artists Pieter-Paul Rubens and Anthony van Dyck. The museum also includes a marvelous collection of terra cotta *modelli* from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Following a midday break for lunch at a smart brasserie located nearby on the lovely Place du Grand Sablon, we turn our attention to the Museum of Modern Art, where the first Cubist exhibition outside of France took place in 1911. Devoted to nineteenth- and twentieth-century works, the collection features paintings by Belgian masters as well as an impressive cast of European painters. The museum is closed until 2012 for renovation, but there is a highlight exhibition of some of the most important works. Dr. Coleman will guide us through works by Salvador Dalí, Jacques-Louis David, Giorgio de Chirico, Paul Delvaux, James Ensor, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Joan Miró, Henri Matisse, and Auguste Rodin, among others. Tonight, we enjoy our welcome dinner together at a classic French bistro featuring excellent cuisine and all the requisite patina and intimacy to make for a most enjoyable evening.

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner included



Friday, April 20 ~ Brussels

Royal Greenhouses, Horta and Hannon's Art Nouveau, and Belgian beer tasting

Today, we have a brush of sorts with Belgian royalty. We venture to the suburb of Laeken and the Royal Palace to visit the vast grounds of the Royal Greenhouses. This is a special treat as the greenhouses are only open each year for a single, three-week period. Commissioned by King Leopold II and completed in 1873, the Royal Greenhouses are a series of stunning iron and glass, palatial structures (*at left*) – an architectural masterpiece in its own right. Inside are a wide range of plants, some of which date to the time of Leopold II. Our self-guided tour takes us through the nearly six-acre site, including the Azalea House and rotunda, a colony of birds, orange trees, giant ferns, fruit-

bearing banana trees, grottoes, glades, and grassy vistas. The collection of fauna includes many rare and priceless plants. We then return to the historic center for lunch. Take the afternoon to explore on your own or join us as we focus on the turn of the twentieth century, when Brussels became a major player in the Art

Nouveau movement. One of the pioneers was Belgian architect and designer Victor Horta. We visit the house that Horta built for himself, notable for its swirling ironwork, elaborate masonry, and revolutionary use of natural light. We will walk through the Saint-Gilles district to see some of the art nouveau structures and visit the Hotel Hannon, an elegant town home from 1902 that houses contemporary photographic art exhibitions. This evening, we convene at an *estaminet*, one of Brussels' character-filled beer parlors, for a tasting of Belgian beers. As dinner is on your own tonight, we can suggest some art nouveau restaurants and cafes such as La Quincaillerie (designed by students of Horta), Le Falstaff, or the Hotel Metropole restaurant, so that you can continue to savor the dynamic aesthetics of this movement. *Breakfast included, plus Belgian beer tasting*



Bruges at sunset



Opulent detail from the *Ghent Altarpiece*



Virgin saints, detail from the *Ghent Altarpiece*

Saturday, April 21 ~ Ghent and Bruges

Grand Sablon antiques market, chocolate making, the *Ghent Altarpiece*, dinner at Hertog Jan

Before departing Brussels, we will avail ourselves of two wonderful experiences in the morning. If you like, join us at the antiques market on the Place du Grand Sablon, the centerpiece of the shops that radiate from the square. Considered one of the finest antiques markets in Europe, it features good quality wares including small oil paintings, clocks, boxes, as well as silver and porcelain items. Mid-morning, we will celebrate Belgium's love affair with chocolate with a private chocolate workshop where you will have a chance to make chocolate as you learn more about the history of this famous import from Mesoamerica. The setting for this, perhaps our most decadent experience, will be the boutique of Laurent Gerbaud, arguably the most innovative chocolatier in Belgium. After tasting some of his creations, we will depart Brussels by private, 45-min transfer to Ghent, a bustling university town that was one of Europe's richest and largest cities in the Middle Ages. You will have time on your own for lunch in Ghent before Dr. Coleman guides us on a visit to the well-preserved medieval core and St. Bavo's Cathedral. Our focus will be the celebrated *Ghent Altarpiece*, also known as *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, painted by Hubert and Jan van Eyck around 1432. It is a breathtaking altarpiece painted with astonishing realism and exacting detail. The history of the panels is as fascinating as the symbolism is rich and complex. Afterward, take advantage of some time on your own to visit the fourteenth-century belfry and adjacent fifteenth-century cloth hall where wool and cloth merchants met during Ghent's golden age. From Ghent, we take a 45-minute private transfer to Bruges, a splendid open-air museum-like city which was a wealthy trading center and exporter of luxury textiles from the fourteen to sixteenth centuries. The town's

many tranquil canals – prompting many to dub it the “Venice of the North” - its gilded architecture, and its inviting cafes are sure to charm you. Your accommodations for the next two nights will be the Hotel Heritage, a classic-styled property located in a restored mansion just off the main square. Dinner tonight is a very special treat at Hertog Jan, which just earned a third Michelin star. Chef Gert De Mangeleer grows his own vegetables, herbs, and flowers that infuse his modern European dishes with fresh vitality.

Breakfast and dinner included, plus chocolate tasting

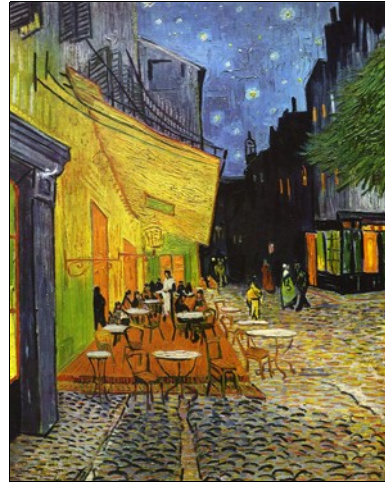


A picturesque canal in Bruges and a detail from the *Madonna with Canon van der Paele*, Groeningemuseum, Bruges

Sunday, April 22 ~ Bruges

Memling at St. John's Hospital, Groeninge Museum, Gruuthuse Museum

We start today with a short stroll to St. John's Hospital, which was in operation for over 800 years (from 1188 until 1978) as a refuge for travelers and a sanctuary for the sick. Now a museum, the hospital offers a unique opportunity to step back in time and admire four of Hans Memling's best paintings in their original context with Dr. Coleman's expert explanation. Our next stop is the Groeninge Museum, which boasts the world's finest collection of paintings from the fifteenth century, the era for which Bruges is best known. We will see gorgeous paintings by the leading artists from this time including Jan van Eyck, Rogier van der Weyden, and Gerard David. The small and comfortable museum also has works of art created from the sixteenth through the twentieth centuries, demonstrating the continued commitment to the arts in this beautiful city. Following lunch on your own, we venture to the Gruuthuse Museum, a luxurious palace that was formerly the home of Lodewijk van Gruuthuse, the Donald Trump of his day. We will see what vast wealth and power could buy in the fifteenth century. Our final visit of the day will be the Church of Our Lady. For centuries, this church was at the heart of religious as well as social and political life in Bruges. In this late Gothic church, we see the tombs of Mary of Burgundy and her father Charles the Bold. We also enjoy a rare experience in northern Europe when we admire an important sculpture by Michelangelo. The balance of the day will be on your own, and you might wish to visit the thirteenth-century belfry tower in Market Square, or perhaps you would like to experience the beauty of Bruges by boat or shop for lace. Enjoy dinner on your own tonight. *Breakfast included*



The Night Watch by Rembrandt van Rijn, Rijksmuseum, and *Café Terrace at Night in Arles* by Vincent Van Gogh, Kröller-Müller Museum

Monday, April 23 ~ Amsterdam

The Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh, and private canal cruise

We start early this morning for Amsterdam, located three hours from Bruges by private transfer. We make a brief stop at the stately, five-star Hotel de l'Europe, our home for the next two nights. Then we explore on our own for lunch before our afternoon of heavy-hitting masterpieces of art. We move forward in time to the Dutch Golden Age with a visit to the Rijksmuseum, one of the most important museums in Northern Europe. The museum has been under renovation since 2003; however, the essential paintings from the collection are on view in a small but significant exhibition, including favorites such as *The Kitchen Maid* and *The Little Street* by Jan Vermeer, and *The Jewish Bride* and *The Night Watch* by Rembrandt van Rijn. Next, Dr. Coleman will guide us through the nearby Van Gogh Museum, home to the largest single collection of works in the world by this emotionally expressive man, the original tortured artist. While Van Gogh's paintings fetch tens of millions at auction today, tragically he sold only one painting during his lifetime. This evening, we board our charming saloon boat at the dock of the l'Europe for a private canal cruise. Enjoy an aperitif on board while our captain points out notable sights along the way and describes how this city of waterways came to be. After our aperitif together discussing the wonderful works we experienced today, dinner will be on your own tonight.

Breakfast and aperitif (drinks and canapés) included

Tuesday, April 24 ~ Amsterdam

Kröller-Müller, Rembrandt House, and Anne Frank House

Today, we venture one hour outside Amsterdam to the town of Otterloo and a gem of a modern art museum, the Kröller-Müller. This special museum is located in the Hoge Veluwe National Park, whose moors, forests, and open fields inspired Van Gogh. The Kröller-Müller houses the largest private collection of Van Gogh paintings in the world, including his iconic *Café Terrace at Night in Arles*. The museum also houses exceptional works by Georges-Pierre Seurat, Claude Monet, Paul Gauguin, Pablo Picasso, Piet Mondrian, and others. In the fabulous sculpture garden – the first of its kind in Europe – are works by Auguste Rodin, Jacques Lipchitz, and Aristide Maillol. Upon return to Amsterdam, we visit the house of Rembrandt van Rijn, who was hugely successful early in his career, but died broke and unappreciated. We will have a unique vista into the private world of this brilliant artist and fascinating man who defined the Dutch Baroque style for the entire century.

Our last stop of the day is to the home of Anne Frank, a young Jewish girl who lived in the attic with her family for two years during the German occupation of the Netherlands in World War II and wrote the deeply moving diary that became one of the world's most widely read and cherished books. We end our trip with a festive dinner at an atmospheric and popular traditional Dutch restaurant – just the spot for a healthy bit of end-of-trip conviviality. *Breakfast and dinner included*



The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam



Sint Anthoniesluis Bridge, Amsterdam

Wednesday, April 25: Departures and onward travel

Private transfer to Amsterdam's Schipol International Airport for departure, or we would be happy to extend your stay in Amsterdam and Northern Europe. *Breakfast included*

PROGRAM COST:

This 8 day/7 night program costs \$6195 per person, double occupancy

Single occupancy is an additional \$1695

We have crafted this program for a minimum of eight and a maximum of twelve travelers

PROGRAM INCLUDES:

- ◆ Seven nights of luxury accommodation: three nights in a classic room at the five-star Hotel Amigo in Brussels, two nights in a superior room at the Relais & Chateaux Hotel Heritage in Bruges, and two nights in a deluxe room at the five-star Hotel de l'Europe in Amsterdam. Room upgrades are available for an extra charge
- ◆ Breakfast daily, one lunch, and three dinners, including a four-course menu at Hertog Jan, a three-star Michelin restaurant in Bruges. Welcome cocktails at the Hotel Amigo on arrival day and during the canal cruise in Amsterdam
- ◆ All museum and cultural site entrances specified in the itinerary

- ◆ All events specified in the itinerary, such as the beer tasting, chocolate workshop, and canal cruise in Amsterdam
- ◆ All transfers mentioned in the itinerary
- ◆ Services of your expert co-hosts, Dr. Sally Whitman Coleman and experienced tour leader Diana Dopson of **D*LUX TRAVEL**
- ◆ All fees, taxes, and gratuities for program elements specified
- ◆ **NOT INCLUDED:** airfare; alcoholic beverages other than wine at dinners; personal expenses; trip insurance; any other items not specifically mentioned as included.

YOUR ACCOMMODATIONS:

Hotel Amigo, Brussels Perfectly situated on a quiet street next to the Grand Place, the heart and soul of Brussels, Hotel Amigo is a splendid, five-star property that is within walking distance of all the major attractions in Brussels. The leading hotel in Brussels, the Amigo is a fitting base for our group as each of the 173 guest rooms is luxuriously furnished and features prints by surrealist artists René Magritte and Marcel Broodthaers. Rocco Forte Hotel Group, a name associated with cosmopolitan elegance and refined service, manages this recently-restored property. Guestrooms feature art deco and contemporary styling, while common areas include an eighteenth-century Flanders wall tapestry. Amenities include wi-fi internet in public areas, a fitness center, a restaurant serving contemporary Italian cuisine, and the Amigo Bar, which has an impressive list of whiskies and martini cocktails. Hotel Amigo is a member of the The Leading Hotels of the World. www.hotelamigo.com



Hotel Amigo, Brussels



Hotel Heritage, Bruges



Hotel de l'Europe, Amsterdam

Hotel Heritage, Bruges Affiliated with the Relais & Chateaux collection of exquisite properties, Bruges' twenty-four-room Hotel Heritage is a charmingly authentic property that will immerse you in the historic culture of Bruges. This boutique hotel dates to the nineteenth century, when it was built as a private mansion.

Located just steps from the Market Square at the very heart of the city, the Hotel Heritage boasts traditionally elegant guestrooms. Breakfast is served in a beautiful room dating from 1869. The comfortable lounge bar, Le Magnum, welcomes you after a day of touring with wines housed in the fourteenth-century wine cellar. As you might expect, service is highly personalized. Amenities include wi-fi internet in public areas, a fitness center, hamman, roof deck with views over the city, and solarium. www.relaischateaux.com

Hotel de l'Europe, Amsterdam Built in 1896, the five-star Hotel de l'Europe is situated in the ideal central location of Amsterdam overlooking the Amstel River and the flower market. The 111-room property commands its waterfront setting and has that air of yesteryear that is increasingly rare. The hotel was closed for renovation for more than a year and re-opened in the spring of 2011. The Hotel de l'Europe proudly displays original works by Dutch Masters from the private collection of Alfred Heineken, whose daughter now owns the hotel. The outdoor terrace overlooking the river is a treasured spot for hotel guests. Amenities include wi-fi internet, a fitness center with juice bar and indoor heated pool, and exceptional dining at the six restaurants and bars on the property. www.leurope.nl



Clockwise from top left:
Classic room, Hotel Amigo
Breakfast room, Hotel Heritage
Dining room, Hotel de l'Europe



For further information or to sign up, please contact Dr. Coleman at sallywcoleman@yahoo.com
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