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Premier Guy Verhofstadt: Ghent, my kind of town

What makes Ghent your favourite city in Belgium and why did you choose it as your home?

"I may not have been born in Ghent but I did grow up and attended school there. I began my career as a young lawyer in the city and I first entered the political arena there. Some claim that the urban environment gives us freedom 'Stadsluft macht frei', Ghent was the birthplace of my intellectual and political awakening, the city with which I have such a close affiliation."

What does Ghent mean to the modern world?

"The St Bavo's abbey and the St Peter's abbey were built as early as the 8th century and these were followed later on by the Gravensteen (Castle of the Counts), the Belfry and St Bavo's Cathedral, whose medieval shadows still dominate the city skyline. For centuries Ghent was the capital of what was then the county of Flanders, one of the wealthiest, and one of the largest, cities north of the Alps. Under the leadership of Jacob van Artevelde, in the 14th century, Ghent was a pace-setter in terms of city rights and civic freedom, the medieval birthplace of our modern democracy."

What role does Ghent's history have in shaping its future?

"Ghent became the jewel of the Burgundian crown, the birthplace of Emperor Charles V and the city that was to house the adoration of the Mystic Lamb by the Van Eyck brothers. It is a less well-known fact that Ghent was the most Calvinist city in the Netherlands in the 16th century before the southern Netherlands were recaptured by the Spanish crown. In recent centuries the city has in turn been the most catholic, the most socialist and the most liberal city in Flanders. This is because throughout centuries of upheavals Ghent has continued to be a key economic, industrial and commercial



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hub, one of the largest cities in Belgium and one of our most important inland ports. Today, that port provides work for nigh-on 30,000 people and produces an added value of about 13 billion to the economy. Spread over an area of 32 square kilometres the port also plays its part in guaranteeing the region's attractiveness to industry."

What was the most crucial era in the city's history?

"City of counts and countesses, kings and emperors, the bourgeoisie and citizens, Ghent was in the early years of the 19th century, during the time of Lieven Bauwens (a famous textile manufacturer who became the mayor of Ghent) the anvil of the still fledgling industrialisation of our regions. During a time when the English industrial revolution was still in its infancy, the city was acknowledged as 'the Manchester of the continent'. Once again able to reconcile the 'old and new' via the textile industry, the city of the 'Schelde and Leie' rivers was even reborn as an inland port via the Ghent-Terneuzen Canal."

Certainly it is not just about business. What else makes Ghent a world class city?

"Ghent certainly continues to cherish its artists and scientists. Its museums show the finest examples of the artistic works produced in our regions, from the Van Eyck Adoration of the Mystic Lamb in the St Bavo's Cathedral to Jan Hoet's Municipal Museum of Modern Art, better known as SMAK. Not forgetting its university, which is one of the leading four academic establishments in Flanders and is a world leader in several fields. Ghent brings all these various strands together in a showcase of the region's talents and its modernity has been achieved without destroying its historical heritage. A city should continue to be a crossroads, not only for our contemporaries but also for our predecessors and successors."

What best sums up your feelings about the city?

"As President Mitterand of France once said, 'Ghent is one of the five most beautiful cities in the world'. And who am I to contradict such a distinguished visitor?"

The changing of the guard

Mr Milo Vergucht, who has been in charge of Gent Congres for three years, has left the convention bureau mid-August, for a new challenge in the hotel industry.

As of now, the continuity and the management will be in the hands of his successor, a real professional, Mrs Annick Debels.

Annick began her career in the tourism industry and is one of the leading ladies within the meeting industry, for more than 15 years!

She started working for a Belgian Conference Organisator, and became then Assistant Manager (and later Manager) of the Belgian Convention & Incentive Bureau. After that, she has been Executive Officer of the Flanders-Brussels Convention Bureau, and finally Project Manager Associations & Institutions for a Belgian DMC/PCO.

Together with her colleagues Sybille Vandersmissen and Iris Parisis, she will put her expertise at your disposal for advice and support for the organisation of your future events in Ghent and in the province of East Flanders. Do not hesitate to contact them at your best convenience.

Looking forward to meeting you soon in the most enjoyable city of Flanders, in Ghent.



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OdeGand 2005



Full steam ahead for the Festival Happening

This year, the opening of Ghent's cultural season not only puts water and music together, but also confirms their love for each other. Using 'marriage' as its main theme, the Festival is working closely with a number of Ghent's culture houses.

On Saturday 17th September, 2005, you can sail in one of the many boats prepared for OdeGand, taking a trip among the beautiful façades and intriguing sounds en route to a number of concert locations.

OdeGand 2005 brings together the musical elements of other cultures' wedding ceremonies. Together with the renewed NTGent, it looks at impressive, living tableaux, and presents, among other offerings, a musical reconstruction of Cosimo de Medici and Leonora da Tolletto's wedding party, performed by Weser Renaissance. Love and music from all over the world are dropping their anchors in the Ghent docks. Let yourself be submerged in the folk singing, heart-rending flamenco, rapid tango, wonderful classical music, intimate Baroque and much, much more! Don't plan on getting home early because you won't want to miss the evening spectacle.



EPMA chooses for Ghent

The European Powder Metallurgy Association (EPMA) is planning a three-day congress in October 2006.

We asked Frances Holland, responsible for Conference and Meetings Management, why they have chosen for Ghent.

Which elements have convinced your association to choose for Ghent amongst other European cities?

Most important are the central location and the suitable venue. The Congress centre is large enough to hold an exhibition alongside technical sessions, but is not too large. Besides that we were charmed with the attractiveness and historic interest of the city, and the good support from the convention bureau.

How did the approach of Gent Congress influence your decision process?

Their policy has a very positive effect: when organising an event from outside an area, it is essential to have good back-up on site. Their objective advice and assistance in solving our specific transportation needs were key factors in the decision making.

Have you had other good (or bad) experiences during your investigation?

Everything was all right.

Could you indicate the most important advantages Ghent had to offer you as a congress city?

The accessibility and central location of Ghent in Belgium, and the perfect match of the congress centre with our needs were of crucial importance.

What was your first impression of Ghent when you went out exploring our city?

Regretfully, we have had no opportunity to explore the city very thoroughly yet. Our first visit was very brief and we only had the time to discover the conference centre, a city centre hotel and a nice restaurant nearby the St Bavo's Cathedral. However, we are looking forward to our next visit.



The Chinese are coming to Ghent!

For the 60th edition of the Ghent Annual Fair, from now on to be known as Accenta, no better guest country could be chosen than China. The economic expansion of the Chinese People's Republic is impressive and the modern, high-tech side of China in particular will be shown at the annual fair.



In 1988, the provincial government of East-Flanders made a 'friendship agreement' with the province of Hebei in north China, with a mutual goal of taking advantage of the economic opportunities for corporate life. According to Brian De Ruyver, Executive Chief of External Affairs for

the province of East Flanders, the Chinese presence at Accenta will not go unnoticed. "In co-operation with the authorities, it has been agreed that the important Chinese representation at the annual fair will be realized with an imposing 1500 m2 stand on two floors. Other big attractions – the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing and the 2010 World Fair in Shanghai – are already being announced."

In addition to their prominent presence at Accenta, the Chinese delega-

tion of about 150 business people has been invited to take part in an economic event in Ghent. That's why a specific programme has been set up in co-operation with (among others) Export Flanders, the cabinet of the Flemish minister of Economics Fientje Moerman, the Flemish-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and VOKA, the Flemish network of businesses. Brian De Ruyver: "On September 20th and 21st we are holding two seminars in Flanders Expo. The theme on the first day will be 'Investing in China', and on the second, 'Investing in Flanders'. We've also set up an individual matchmaking for companies, with a series of partial seminars, focusing on the harbour, the chemical industry, the food industry and bio-technology, for example."

Third, the organisation committee has added an important piece of city marketing to the Chinese delegation's visit. In the first instance, the intention is to awaken a Chinese feeling in the citizens of Ghent, with all manner of cultural activities set out in a special brochure. On the other hand, away from the 'island' of Flanders Expo, the Chinese can become acquainted with the attractions of Ghent's historical city centre. As well as attending a show at the Flanders Festival, they can also watch a film during the Chinese film week in Studio Skoop or enjoy a performance by a Chinese pianist in the Rode Pomp.

We're also offering the Chinese the option of being kept informed in their own language. In mid-September the City of Ghent's tourist guide will be translated into Chinese and the publishers of the student guide Guido will launch a portal site for all Chinese people who want to invest in Europe.

SITE seminar in a relaxing atmosphere

At the beginning of July, SITE (Society of Incentive & Travel Executives) met up in Ghent with a group of 28 members for a seminar on professional liability and the applicable insurance rules for incentive houses.

In the Sofitel, a number of Belgian and Dutch Incentive Organisers took part in a panel discussion about this fascinating subject. Given their practical experiences, they were the best people to indicate the European rules which should be kept in mind when factors such as transport, accommodation and a social programme are involved in the organisation of incentive travels.

That the Belgian chapter of this international union chose Ghent was no coincidence. The programme itself was held in a relaxed and informal atmosphere and the ambience was both pleasant and stylish. After the panel discussion it was time for the so-called 'eat and greet'. First there was an idyllic boat trip with champagne on Ghent's inner waterways, after which the participants had their starter, main course and dessert in three different restaurants – Excelsior, the Acht Zaligheden (the Eight Pleasures) and Belga Queen – each one being a culinary delight. While walking between the three restaurants the company

enjoyed some lovely anecdotes and historical information about Ghent.



Meeting in the Tour of Flanders Centre

The Tour of Flanders Centre is a multi-functional complex with an interactive experience museum about the Tour of Flanders at its core. In addition, the Centre offers companies three spaces for the organisation of seminars, lectures, meetings, product presentations, personnel parties, ...

The visit to the interactive museum starts with an atmospheric film, a multi-projection that immediately puts the visitor in the mood of Flanders' high day. After that, the visitor can get to know what it is like to be Briek Schotte, Van Looy, Merckx or another cycling hero and go looking for different themes in the museum.

This visit gives your event an original feel and is an ideal extra in your programme.

The exhibition space is a 225 m² multi-functional room with a stage, sound amplification, lighting, air-conditioning and space for a maximum of 150 people in a theatre or reception set-up.

The seminar space is a large 75 m² meeting-room with projection facilities and space for a maximum of 50 people.

The auditorium is a film projection room with three projectors. It has a 70-person capacity and can only be used outside the museum's opening times. You can also catch up with people and enjoy the gastronomy of the Flemish Ardennes in the atmospheric theme brasserie 'De Flandrien'.

You can find all information at www.crvv.be under the heading 'meetingpoint', or you can call +32 55 33 99 33. Tour of Flanders Centre, Markt 43, Oudenaarde.



Hotel capacity in Ghent has been expanded

In recent months the hotel capacity in Ghent has risen considerably:

Holiday Inn Ghent Expo (4*) added 36 rooms and now has 170 in total.
Sofitel Ghent Belfort (4*) furnished 47 new rooms and now has 174.
Ghent River Hotel (4*) opened its doors last year with 75 rooms.
Hotel de Flandre (4*) is a recent newcomer, with 45 rooms.
Hotel Harmony (4*) opens September 9th, with 24 rooms.

The total number of hotel rooms in Ghent now amounts to 1,584.

As soon as the luxury hotel at the Korenlei opens in 2006, Ghent will have a total of 1,734 hotel rooms, which is more than sufficient for the organisation of large national and international congresses.

In addition, there are roughly 150 guest rooms available in the local Bed & Breakfasts.





32nd Flanders Film Festival focuses on Russia

From October 11 to 22 inclusive, all spotlights will once again be on Ghent. On these dates, the 32nd edition of the Flanders International Film Festival - Ghent will be taking place. This year, special attention is being paid to recent Russian cinema, in the framework of Europalia 2005. In view of previous success, the festival is extending its collaboration with Art Centre Vooruit.

The main theme of the 32nd festival will be activism in cinema, a program that is being compiled by experimental artist Jem Cohen of New York. This cinematic, literary and musical event is a co-production with Art Centre Vooruit.

And the nominees are...

Once again, the Flanders Film Festival - Ghent will be a festival which pays special attention to the 'Impact of Music on Film'. On Saturday, October 15, the World Soundtrack Awards will be presented in the city concert hall De Bijloke for the fifth time. This ceremony will be followed by a film music concert featuring names such as Gustavo Santaolalla (WSA Discovery 2004 for *21 Grams*), Raymond van het Groenewoud, Rachel Portman (Academy Award for *Emma*), Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, the legendary composers and songwriters from the early years of rock & roll. Leiber and Stoller wrote several hits, especially for Elvis Presley. The Flemish Radio Orchestra will be conducted by Dirk Brossé.

Not to be missed are the various films in competition. As in previous years, the very diverse group of a maximum of 15 feature films for the International Competition will be presented in the Capitole. Arthur Lappin, the Irish producer of among others *In America* (Grand Prize 2003 for Best Film) and *In the Name of the*

Father, and Carter Burwell, the American composer of various soundtracks for films by the Coen brothers, will be members of the international jury. Others members will be announced later.

Naturally, in addition to all the above, there will be a great deal more to experience at this thrilling festival in Ghent. For more information about the program, the festival itself, the guests and much more besides, please direct your browser to the festival's official website at www.filmfestival.be.

What does the Film festival have to offer you?

The prestige of a unique cultural event with an international feel
Visibility with a select audience
Attractive customised sponsorship or partnership deals
Unique, warm atmosphere
For more information or for a customised proposal, please contact Machteld Van Vlaenderen
Tel +32 9 242 80 60;
e-mail: machteld.vanvlaenderen@filmfestival.be

Win 10 VIP-cards

Attending the official opening of the Festival is a unique experience in every way. First the film: always surprising, sometimes controversial, and in every case unforgettable. Then, there are the numerous prominent people and international guests (actors, directors, soundtrack composers, ...) who ensure a special atmosphere. And finally there is the highly sought-after reception afterwards. Gent Congres is giving away five sets of two tickets for the prestigious opening of the Film Festival. Anyone who wishes to be considered should send an e-mail with name, company / organisation, function and address to info@gentcongres.be. Five winners will be picked out of all the entries that reach us before 30 September, 2005.



Upcoming conferences

Dates	Conference	N° participants
5-9 September 2005	LARVI 2005: 4th International Symposium on larviculture	350
12-16 September 2005	MRS 2005: 29th International Symposium on nuclear waste management	250
14-17 September 2005	7th International Research Symposium on the Marfan Syndrome	200
19-21 September 2005	International Conference on renewable resources and Biofineries	200
23-25 September 2005	Zonta International District Conference	200
25-27 September 2005	Annual Conference of DEAN (Deans European Academic Network)	120
28 Sept-1 October 2005	9th Belgian Congress on Rheumatology	250
25 November 2005	23rd Congress Intensive Care Flanders	1200
2-3 December 2005	24th International Marketing Congress (Stichting Marketing)	1100



Ophthalmology congress with a gastronomic tint

From June 8th - 11th, the eighth Michaelson Symposium took place in Ghent. Prompted by professor Jean-Jacques De Laey, Department President of Ophthalmology at the University of Ghent, this congress for opticians was organised by Marlène Verlaeck of the UZ KULeuven.

Pêcheur in Sint-Martens-Latem; for the Speakers' dinner they went to the pleasant Quartier Sauvage where chef Frank De Wilde prepared an exquisite meal."

What was the main thing the international participants took away with them?

"We received nothing but positive reactions. The opticians were extremely satisfied with the good organisation and the excellent locations. On top of that, the three-day programme gave them sufficient free time to go walking through Ghent on their own so they were able to discover the local restaurants themselves. For most of the participants this was an ideal formula, as they find it too oppressive when every minute of an event is planned in advance."

Will the congress for ophthalmology return to Ghent?

"Next year, with the support of Gent Congres, we will be organising EUPO - a symposium for European professors of ophthalmology - at the same location, from June 15th to 17th. We are convinced that it will be just as successful."



Asked about her experiences with this medical congress, she spoke highly of the co-operation with Gent Congres, the Convention Bureau for Ghent and East-Flanders.

What, in the opinion of the opticians, was positive about the organisation of this symposium?

"The participants came from all over Europe, the United States and Japan. The symposium itself was held in 'Het Pand', the University of Ghent's congress centre. A beautiful location, equipped with the necessary audio-visual equipment. As with most congresses this was a successful blend of science and social contact, something at which the city of Ghent excels. The participants were invited at the city hall for an academic meeting and a reception. For the traditional Congress dinner everyone was taken by boat to the prestigious Auberge du