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### Picturesque Bruges Belgium and Brouwerij De Halve Maan



If you have never been to Bruges you are truly missing one of the most picturesque cities in the world. It is over 1000 years old. The center has been preserved through the centuries despite the numerous wars that have rolled through Belgium. The popularity of the automobile as a main method of transportation resulted in roads built that now cover canals in many of the lowlands.

The beautiful canals make for romantic boat rides and wonderful settings for dining. The small cobblestone streets are fun to explore and the great medieval architecture is a marvel in craftsmanship. Bruges is a great place to visit, relax, enjoy great food and of course have world-class beer. It is the capital of West Flanders and Dutch is the native language. You will be hard pressed to find natives that do not speak English.

Known as "Venice of the North," wander into the center of Bruges called the Grote Markt (Market Place) and see the Town Hall with all its statues and the Belfry of Bruges.

Take a walk and check out St. John's Hospital, the medieval hospital, Notre Dame Cathedral and the Beguinage. A beguine is a lay person that belonged to this religious movement.

Over the centuries Bruges housed many breweries but there is now only one left, De Halve Maan or The Half Moon. It is located in between Notre Dame Cathedral and the Beguinage off a small square called Walplein (Address: Walplein 26 ). If it is a brewing day you will smell the sweet malt wafting from the brewery and know you are in the right place. The owner and brew master, Xavier Vanneste's family has been brewing beer here since 1546.

The flagship product is the Brugse Zot (Bruges Fool) Blond, a top fermented ale (6.0% ABV) and winner of the last 2 consecutive World Beer Cup Gold awards (2006 Seattle and 2008 San Diego). The Brugse Zot Blond is the most awarded Belgian beer we know having also won gold medals in Europe and other competitions. Every pub in Bruges serves the beer and the brewery has a restaurant serving a simple traditional Belgium menu. Most of the dishes are made with beer plus you can taste the unfiltered beer right from the brewery's tanks.

The brewery operated under the Henri Maes name for many years. Xavier's mother is a Maes and the former brew master. The yeast used in the Brugse Zot Blond is from the family yeast used by the brewery for many years and guarded like the family jewel it is.



Photo by Johnny Fincioen Bruges, Belgium

The brewery also produces the Brugse Zot Dubbel, a dark, rich, top fermented ale (7.5% ABV) that Global Beer Network has recently begun to import in draught and will soon be available in the U.S. in bottles.

The brewery seems more like a museum than a brewery. Brewery tours last about 45 minutes and start every hour 7 days per week.

If you visit Bruges there are over 75 family owned boutique hotels for a romantic getaway but you can also find houses to rent for a week at a time and bring the family. Rent some bicycles and go exploring the rich history and culture of Bruges. The Grote Markt is closed to traffic and many other streets are too narrow. There are many fun pubs, quaint restaurants and delicious chocolate shops in Bruges but if you are a beer lover the three places you should not miss are: Brugs Beertje- It has a very large selection of Belgian beers (opens 4 PM Kemelstraat 5) De Garre-It is located in a small alley between the Belfry and City Hall-it looks more like a house. Go up a small set of stairs and try their house Triple ale at 11 % ABV and snack on some of great cheeses. If you can't find it ask a local (De Garre 1)

Cambrinus- It also has a very large selection of Belgian beers (Philip Stockstraat 19)

If you would like to take something back to your hotel visit our friend and expert Belgian beer tour guide Regnier at: Bier Temple (Philip Stockstraat 7)

Please visit [www.globalbeer.com](http://www.globalbeer.com) for more information on Bruges, De Halve Maan and Brugse Zot Beer

**ALWAYS DO SOBER WHAT YOU SAID YOU'D DO DRUNK.  
THAT WILL TEACH YOU TO KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT.**

-ERNEST HEMINGWAY

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# Belgium Beers of Summer

## Wittekerke

Brewed by Brouwerij Bavik this beer captures the essence of what a true family brewed Belgian Wit should be. Wittekerke is extremely light (white) in color and easy to drink with hints of lemon and coriander on the nose and on the palette. No need to add citrus to this wonderful 5.0% Alcohol by Volume (ABV) gem. The brewer uses more than the minimum of 25% wheat along with barley malt required to be noted as a Wit beer. Bavik also uses oats in the brew to lighten the color and add to easy drinking nature of the ale.

Wittekerke, meaning white church, is often found in the hands of the chef when making seafood stews, cream sauces and especially mussels. This beer pairs very well with light meals such as salads or shellfish where the citrus flavors match well with the meal. Wittekerke can be found in a can as well for those wanting to enjoy a world-class beer by the pool, on the golf course or while enjoying a hot summer day on the boat. The can used by the brewery is made of steel not aluminum. This high quality can make the taste consistent with the bottle. Wittekerke boasts a beautiful frosted glass to help hold the stark white head while allowing the pleasant citrus aromas to show through.

## Petrus Aged Pale

This is a special Belgian Sour Ale at 7.3% ABV brewed by Brouwerij Bavik. Petrus Aged Pale is the mother beer, brewed in a traditional format then aged in oak casks for between 24 and 30 months. The brew master has the envious job of continuously sampling the brew during its aging process. When just right, the brew master blends the product from one cask with those of others to create the finished product.

This beer is made with only pale malts giving it a light bronze color. The wood gives it a dry oaky flavor that would make many wines envious. The beer has a depth of other flavors including hints of sherry on the nose, dry nuttiness up-front with a classic sour finish.

Belgian Sour Ales are an unorthodox yet rapidly growing segment in the beer industry. These beers match very well with many different types of foods including spicy Asian dishes, shellfish and fruity deserts.

Very few Belgian Brewers still use traditional oak casks to age these beers due to the cost associated with the task. The Bavik brewery made the decision to keep this process alive when they invested heavily to have six new 25,000 Liter casks erected in their Petrus aging cellar in 2007.

This is Bavik brew master, Yves Benoit's, beer of choice after finishing his weekend yard work on a hot summer day for its great refreshing qualities

## Bavik Pilsner

Bavik Pils is a bottom-fermented lager boasting 5.0% ABV and stands-up with the best Belgian, German or American Pilsner Beers. You can find Bavik in bottle, draft as well as in a can for you to enjoy by the pool, golf course or at the beach! The can used is also made of steel so there is never the "aluminum" taste to the beer.

The difference between Bavik and many other pilsners produced by brewing conglomerates is that Bavik does NOT pasteurize the beer. Pasteurization flash kills the yeast in the liquid therefore stunting the full flavors of the beer. Big brewers pasteurize in order to keep the flavor of their beer consistent because their breweries are in multiple facilities, cities or states. Bavik is a 115 year old, family owned, brewery with one facility based just outside Kortrijk in West Flanders.



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Bavik is a Pilsner beer that starts off fruity and finishes clean. The beer is aged for 40 days in lagering tanks. This is a very expensive process as time certainly equates to money, but the brewer believes that the lagering time helps keep the product stable, therefore no need to pasteurize.

Test~Aankoop, a Belgian national non-profit consumer organization, named Bavik Premium Belgian Pilsner, Belgium's best Pilsner beer a few years ago. The beer beat out over 60 other Belgian beers including the famous Belgian export Stella Artois and popular Jupiler beers.

Recently, Het Nieuwsblad, a leading newspaper in Flanders brought together a panel of 20 respected beer connoisseurs in a blind taste test of 20 Belgian Pilsners. The panel consisted of beer writers and well-known pub owners. Again Bavik Pils was selected the winner.

Pilsner beers grew in popularity at the turn of the 20th century along with the perfection of glass as a drinking vessel. Before then beer was consumed using ceramic, stone or wood which hid the true color of the beer. The contemporaries at the time loved the color, the easy drinking characteristics and the low alcohol of the Pilsner, which allowed them to consume more beer per sitting.

#### Monk's Café

As Belgian beer lovers, you certainly know about the famous restaurant-bar in Philadelphia with the name Monk's Café. This restaurant is known all over the USA as one of the best places to find an extensive selection of Belgian beers, and also great food cooked in Belgian beer. Tom Peters, the owner of the famous pub is one of the many people who fell in love with Belgian beer, and one of the few who had the passion and tenacity to learn all about it.

In 2002, Tom convinced the Van Steenberge brewery to bottle its famous 'Vlaamse Bourgogne' under private label for him.

Van Steenberge ages the mother beer in oak for two years producing true sour ale. They then blend the old/sour brew with a dark/fresh/sweet beer to produce Monk's Café.

Monk's Café boasts 5.5% ABV and really hits the spot on a hot summer day. This beer is complex, the perfect blend of sweet and sour. The vinegar nose makes the drinker expect an immensely sour taste, but fools the tongue with a beautifully balanced sweet/sour flavor. Many first time Monk's drinkers debate as to whether this beer is sweet or sour... They are both right!

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**Heeere's Johnny Part II:** Johnny's Belgian Beer Fun Facts. Our founder and Belgian Beer Evangelist, Johnny Fincioen, will soon be behind the camera's again to do more of his funny and informative video vignettes on other Global Beer brands. Stay tune as we will start posting the new videos each week to our You Tube Global Beer TV Channel: [www.youtube.com/user/GlobalBeerTV](http://www.youtube.com/user/GlobalBeerTV)

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