

## KORTRIJK

Kortrijk is located on the river Leie, the lifeline of the entire South-West Flemish region, adjoining the French border. While Lille is within cycling distance of the centre of Kortrijk, Ghent and Bruges, too, are only a 40-minute drive away. Kortrijk is often described as a metropolis on the scale of a village. With its 80,000 residents and small but inviting city centre, Kortrijk is very compact. Everything is within walking distance. A striking historical centre is brought into balance by progressive urban renewal projects. Be prepared to be amazed.

### Creative city on the Leie

Kortrijk's creativity is ingrained in the city's DNA and its residents. Since 2017, Kortrijk has been part of UNESCO's prestigious **network of 'Creative Cities'**. This network consists of cities that use creativity to develop in a sustainable way. Kortrijk belongs to the select group of cities that stand out in terms of design and, by extension, design thinking. This is also reflected in the city. The seven new bridges all excel in their design and give the city that extra pzazz. But also the world-renowned Interieur trade fair springs to mind, as does the history behind the De Coene art studios or the flax industry that left a string of internationally renowned manufacturing companies in its wake.

The **Buda Island** is an expression of this. This island in the middle of the Leie is home to all creative organisations. There is a hive of creative energy in and around it. **Broelkaai 6** can, in this light, be seen as *the* perfect gateway to the neighbourhood. This bustling meeting place is a showcase for creativity. Be sure to drop by for one of the exhibitions, small events, the beautiful garden or just to relax with a bite to eat and a drink.

But creative initiatives also pop up in many other places in the city. These are connected by a 6.5 km **walking trail**. The **Kortrijk Creative City Tour** leads you along 6 creative neighbourhoods. Discover unique landmarks, shops, restaurants and events in the city centre along the way. The walking map is available from Tourism Kortrijk free of charge.

### Unesco World Heritage

Typical of Kortrijk is that all that modern architecture is combined with exceptional **historical heritage**. The iconic Broel Towers on the Leie, remnants of the city's medieval defence belt, dominate its cityscape. But the recently restored 13<sup>th</sup>-century Béguinage (Unesco World Heritage) is undoubtedly the most exquisite example in Flanders. Stroll along authentic whitewashed houses and take a step back in time in the accompanying experience centre. Take a break from all that beauty in a coffeeshop and eatery. Soon, the Béguinage will also be home to the tourist office, which will make this enchanting site even more accessible.

Even the **Belfry** is included in the list of Unesco World Heritage Sites. The Belfry is the showpiece of the lively **Grote Markt** square and is surrounded by a large number of pavement cafés. You can also admire the **historic City Hall** in late Gothic Renaissance style. Next to the Market Square is **St Martin's Church**, which boasts a wealth of works of art and a fully-fledged 19th-century carillon. The 83-metre high tower is visible from afar and defines the city skyline. From the summer of 2021 onwards, this tower will be permanently open to the public. A new way to discover Kortrijk at a high level.

### In step with the river Leie

The city's creativity is also echoed in its architecture. A visit to Kortrijk is not complete without a drink on the **lowered banks of the Leie**. This spot, with a view of the stately **Broel Towers**, can proudly call itself the 'most beautiful public space in Flanders'. You can relax at a wide range of catering establishments. Whether you like Asian street food, refined gastronomy or just a good draught beer from Kortrijk, you are bound to find

something to your liking here. The location along the Leie also makes for a great experience. Meanwhile, you can watch one of the many pleasure boats glide by. **Boat hire** is available from a number of Kortrijk boat companies.

A little further downstream along the Leie, you will find **Buda Beach**. During the summer months, this is *the* place to be for every Kortrijk resident who loves the good life. Do you want to feel like one of them? Pick a beach chair and enjoy the beautiful view of the **Collegebrug** from the bar. This striking S-shaped bridge marks the skyline at Buda Beach. The 203-metre bridge brings pedestrians and cyclists to the trendy Buda Island in the blink of an eye. Not before marvelling at the breakneck feats of roller skaters, roller bladers and BMXers on the **skate bowl**, once the largest in the Benelux.

On the other side of the city, the Leie flows into Kortrijk at **Texture**. This museum tells the story of the linen and flax industry. A story about strong roots that bears witness to top-level professionalism and entrepreneurship, of daring innovation and agility and of constantly reinventing oneself. The striking golden façade is a real eye-catcher and is a nod to the Leie's nickname of 'Golden River'.

## Dynamic city in full development

Just like the Leie, the city's artery, Kortrijk never stands still. The new district of **Kortrijk Weide** is certainly a case in point. The main attraction here is the **Lago Kortrijk Weide swimming pool**. With 5 breathtaking slides, the longest wild water course in the Benelux, indoor and outdoor pools, wellness facilities and a brasserie, you can have a day of fun in this place alone. In addition to the swimming pool, you will find the Depart events hall, an Urban Sports Park, the Hangar K co-creation hub and the Nelson Mandela Square, a meeting place that lends itself to large events.

## Always something to do

When you think of events, you also think of **music** in Kortrijk. The overhauled music site promotes itself as the city's musical heart. It accommodates, inter alia, the city café Pand.A (where there is always a performance) and the concert hall De Kreun. This is also the home base of concert organiser 'Wilde Westen', a creative gang that organises not only performances but also festivals.

Another strong player in the cultural offering can be found a little further on: Schouwburg Kortrijk. This is one of the best preserved city theatres in Europe. The Schouwburg has just celebrated its 100th anniversary, but its offerings, from contemporary theatre productions, poetry, projections to performances, feel anything but dated.

## Paradise for culture vultures

So let there be no doubt: Kortrijk is a top destination for culture lovers. Even 2021 looks promising in that respect. The second Kortrijk **Art Triennial** is set to be held between **26 June to 24 October 2021**. In the international art project **Paradise**, the utopian dream of paradise takes centre stage, with a whole range of interpretations of this concept. The project draws inspiration from our zeitgeist. It is a reaction to our current living environment, which sometimes seems a million miles removed from a hopeful, positive and utopian environment. Paradise Kortrijk will be a dynamic and free urban exhibition, featuring an ambitious list of Belgian and international artists.

The reactions to its predecessor 'Play' were extremely favourable without fail. In 2018, the city festival attracted some 175,000 visitors to Kortrijk. That bodes well for Paradise. Once again, the Triennial aims to reach a large and diverse audience: families, art lovers and people of all ages and backgrounds who want to experience contemporary art in a different, personal way.

## Trendy shopping addresses

The creative vibe that characterises Kortrijk is also reflected in the trendy **shopping addresses** that pop up here and there. The creative entrepreneurship hits you first-hand when you step into one of the many hip stores. K in Kortrijk is an indoor shopping centre spanning 34,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The complex adjoins the city's shopping precinct and boasts a mix of all kinds of stores, from large chains to unique boutiques. Whatever the weather, Kortrijk is always a good place for a shopper. And the best news: all that beauty is within walking distance. Kortrijk is a compact city on a human scale, with the appeal of a big city.

## A city full of taste

Has all that shopping left you a little peckish or thirsty? In Kortrijk, there are plenty of nice **places to take a break**, put your feet up and enjoy yourself. There is something for everyone, from homemade drinks to delectable sweets and tasty vegan dishes. Want something a little more substantial? Then there is also a refined range of gastronomic restaurants on offer. The culinary guides have become very familiar with Kortrijk and this has translated into several top restaurants in the Gault&Millau guide and an entry in the Michelin guide.

The **breweries** of Kortrijk make sure that what's in the glass does not pale in comparison. Brewery Omer Vanderghinste gets nothing but praise for its most famous beer, Omer. Traditional Blond. The brewery has also opened the doors to a modern visitor centre. A number of smaller, craft breweries complete the range. You can taste their brews in bustling nightlife neighbourhoods such as Vlasmarkt or Burgemeester Reynaertstraat.

For more information, please visit: [www.toerismekortrijk.be](http://www.toerismekortrijk.be)