

Here is the last iteration of the itinerary for the tour beginning this weekend, Sunday August 28<sup>th</sup>. Some unexpected issues have presented themselves, necessitating some minor changes. I will have printed copies of this itinerary for you when we meet on Sunday.

I'm sending a PDF copy so that you can download to a phone or tablet for viewing.

Generally speaking, each day will start at 9:00 AM. We're generally finished and back at the hotel by 5:00. Any changes to this standard will be announced the evening before.

### **Sunday, August 28**

This tour will begin at Brussels Midi Station at 1:00 PM on the 28th. We'll meet our motor coach there for the start of the tour and the drive south to the little village of Anhee.

In my first draft I mentioned the train to Dinant. Please disregard. We are meeting to start the tour at Midi Station, Brussels at 1:00 PM. **Main Entrance, north side of the station, next to the Pullman Hotel.** I am currently hoping to get on a train from Amsterdam that arrives at Midi Station at 12:08. Ideally, we can leave before 1:00 if we are all in place early.

If you are significantly delayed, please use the Whatsapp app to text me to advise your situation. My mobile number to use there is 425 417 3322. Canceled and delayed flights have become a common occurrence the past year.

Once we have our guests gathered, we'll meet our driver and travel the very short distance to the Meise Botanical Garden. Because we're likely to be ready for lunch and stretch our legs, we'll begin our day here with lunch in the Orangerie followed by an orientation tour of one of the largest botanic gardens in the world. Our guided tour starts at 3:00 PM.

Later that afternoon, we'll begin the 75-minute drive to the southeast to the picturesque town of [Anhee](#), located on the banks of the River Meuse, and our home base for the next three nights. You'll have some time to relax and freshen

up a bit before we travel the short distance to dinner, scheduled for 7:00 PM.\*  
Overnight Anhee (LD)

\*I have only recently discovered that our hotel does not currently operate a restaurant. While they sometimes offer catered options, their caterer is off on holiday. I have been scrambling the past few days to find quality options for dinners the three nights we are in Anhee. Since I can't verify the hours and services of the two restaurants near the hotel, we'll be dining together off-site for the three nights we are in town. On the plus side, there is one more group dinner included in your tour.

### **Monday, August 29**

We'll have two gardens and free time for lunch and to explore the medieval city of [Durbuy](#). Our first visit is to the sprawling [Topiary Garden](#) situated on the banks of the River Ourthe. After free time in town and lunch on your own, we'll journey back toward Dinant with a tour of the grounds and castle of [Château de Vêves](#). We'll end the day with a refreshment stop at [Maison Leffe](#), because it wouldn't be a tour of Belgium without a visit to one of the better-known Belgian brewers. Dinner is on your own this evening. Overnight Anhee. (BD)

### **Tuesday, August 30**

We'll start the day with a tour at 9:30 of the premier garden in the region, [Jardins d'eau d'Annevoie](#), just a short drive from Dinant. These water gardens were first established in 1758, enchanting visitors for over 250 years. After lunch on your own at the gardens and a little free time to explore, we'll journey back toward Dinant with a visit and guided tour at 3:00 PM of [Freyr Castle](#) and Gardens. We'll have dinner this evening near the hotel. Overnight Anhee. (BD)

### **Wednesday, August 31**

This morning we leave our hotel for the idyllic village of Bruges. The silting up of its harbor, thereby losing any sort of strategic significance, saved Bruges from destruction in the many wars that raged around it. The result is a nearly intact medieval center that has been on the Unesco Heritage list since 2000.

On the way west, we'll make a mid-morning stop at perhaps the best-known garden in the country, the [Van Buuren Garden and Museum](#). The garden and Art Deco house are located in the outskirts of Brussels. We'll spend the lunch hour in

Brussels' version of Central Park, the [Bois de la Cambre](#). You're free to sit at one of the outdoor restaurants, grab a sandwich from a kiosk, or skip lunch altogether. There are walking trails, pony rides, boat rentals, and even a brewery.

We'll gather again at a time to be determined to journey to the second visit the day, the garden at [Gaasbeek Castle](#). Bruges is a little more than an hour away from this garden. Once we arrive, we'll check in, then gather for a cruise through the canals that bisect the town. Dinner is planned near the hotel at 7 PM. Overnight Bruges. (BD)

### **Thursday, September 1**

A mix of history and gardens on the itinerary today. We'll begin the day at the private garden of designer [Chris Ghyselen](#), located near Bruges. We'll then travel south to tour some of the notable WWI historic sites and the dressing station where [Canadian John McCrae](#), penned the poem "In Flanders Fields." We'll break for lunch in the city of [Ypres](#), painstakingly rebuilt from the ravages of WWI.

Dinner tonight is on your own. If you like Mussels, walk to one of the outdoor cafés that front the main square (Markt) which face the Belfort Tower. Order ½ kilo of Mussels and Frites, or an entire kilo if you think you can handle it. Overnight Bruges. (B)

### **Friday, September 2**

In my original letter, I indicated that there were quite a few gardens in the area. Unfortunately, the two gardens that were on my list to view today have decided not to open to the public. The hot summer has taken its toll on green spaces.

Instead of the original gardens on my list, we'll visit a local garden designer and landscape architect. This is actually the son of one of the gardeners originally slated to visit today.

There is an abundance of private gardens in the Bruges Area. We're keeping the day on the light side to allow more free time to spend on and around the canals of the town. [Cottage Tuin Loppem](#) is a small private garden just 20 minutes from Bruges. We'll enjoy a tour with the owner. A ploughman's lunch will be served at the garden, then we'll visit another privately held garden, [Rientjes Hoveke](#), in the area with a tour by the owner. Overnight Bruges. (BLD)

### **Saturday, September 3**

I had to change the day around due to a castle that stopped responding to my requests. More importantly, our guide at [Rubens House](#) needs to leave town and could no longer host our afternoon visit there. What I've done is change the morning visit to the Rubens House.

After lunch on our own in Antwerp, we'll travel the short distance to the [Middleheim Sculpture Garden](#) just outside town. I believe a stroll through the many acres of wood and grassland with this incredible collection of art was a good substitute for Castle Oostkerke. Overnight Breda (BD)

We'll continue to our hotel in the fortified village of [Breda](#) to meet a guide for a 4:00 PM walking tour of the town after check in. Dinner will be at a restaurant near the hotel this evening.

### **Sunday, September 4**

Your morning is free to catch your breath and walk the town on your own. Later this morning, we will travel 30 minutes to the south to attend the [Bloemencorso](#) (Flower parade) in nearby Zundert. Founded in 1936, this event is heralded as the largest flower parade in the world made entirely by volunteers. The parade floats are powered by humans only, no engines are allowed.

There is a market and street performances in town in the morning. Lunch is on your own from one of the stalls and food trucks at the fair. At 1:30, you'll need to be in your seat for the start of the parade. We are in Tribune Section Y. I've got some maps printed that I will distribute on our way there. We'll set a meeting point and time to join up after the parade. It's a short ride back to Breda and our hotel. Dinner is planned for early evening. Overnight Breda. (BD)

### **Monday, September 5**

Today we check out of the hotel in Breda and travel to the UNESCO world heritage site of [Kinderdijk](#), known for its iconic 18th-century windmills. Its water-management network features 19 mills and three pumping stations, plus dikes and reservoirs that control flooding in the polder (low-lying land). Waterways,

footpaths and bike trails crisscross the area, leading to the main visitor's center and museums in preserved working windmills.

We'll continue on to Delft with a break for lunch on your own, then visit the [Royal Delft Museum](#) and learn about this beautiful hand-painted pottery, tableware and artwork. Enjoy a walk through this charming town where Johannes Vermeer painted the famous "Girl with a Pearl Earring." We'll continue on to [Amsterdam](#) and check in to our hotel.

**A change to the previous letter.** We're taking a private 2-hour cruise on the canals with a pick up at our hotel. We're traveling on a 120-year old Salon Boat called the Jean Schmitz. We'll have a selection of heavy appetizers and drinks that will double as our dinner for this evening. Overnight Amsterdam. (BD) Amsterdam Transportation. I will pick up a transit pass when we arrive in the city. This ticket is good for all GVB transit in the city and will be used to get us to Floriade on Wednesday. More instruction will be given when the pass is distributed to you early Tuesday at breakfast.

### **Tuesday, September 6**

A local day today with a morning visit and then free time in the afternoon. We'll start this day with a guided tour of [Hortus Botanicus](#), founded in 1682 as a resource for medicinal herbs. The garden has a large collection of Cycads, including a specimen of Eastern Cape Giant that is over 300 years old. Your afternoon and evening are free to experience Amsterdam

Tired of gardens? Amsterdam is a world class museum city. There's the National Museum of The Netherlands, the [Rijksmuseum](#). You'll find many works by Van Gogh, the Dutch Masters and historic and cultural artifacts. Spend as much time as you like at the museum. You may also consider a visit to the [Van Gogh Museum](#) or to the [Anne Frank House](#). Dinner is on your own this evening. Overnight Amsterdam. (B)

### **Wednesday, September 7**

The day is devoted to attending the [Floriade](#). Held every 10 years, this European garden festival takes place in land reclaimed from the sea just outside Amsterdam.

I have the tickets, and they'll be handed out that morning. We'll plan to take to train to the event to be there when the doors open at 9:30.

You're free to enjoy this festival on your own with a return time established as we arrive. There are many options available for lunch and English is widely spoken. Dinner is on your own this evening. Overnight Amsterdam. (B)

### **Thursday, September 8**

We mixed things up again today, moving Jacqueline van de Kloet to the morning slot. Their restaurant is only open Thursday-Sunday, precipitating the change. Yesterday was public transit day. Today we'll have a mini-coach at our disposal.

Her garden is located in the town of [Weesp](#). Her [Tea Garden](#) was created over 30 years ago behind the fortified walls of this reclaimed island.

After a tour of the garden and light lunch in the café, we'll journey north a bit for a stop at the two gardens mentioned below.

We'll wrap up the tour with a visit to two private gardens north of Amsterdam in The Netherland's newest province (1986) of Flevoland. This region of 400,000 residents is almost entirely reclaimed from the sea with a network of dikes.

At 2:00 PM we are expected for a tour of the garden at [de Stekkentuin](#). Our next garden, just a few kilometers away, is called [de Pegasushof](#). We return to the hotel about 5:30 and will have our farewell dinner later this evening.

We'll have our farewell dinner near the hotel at 6 PM this evening. Overnight Amsterdam. (BD)

### **Friday, September 9**

Early morning transfer to Schiphol Airport for the 10:15 AM nonstop Seattle departure. Exact time will be announced. Breakfast will be arranged before we go. (B)

**Our Hotels are all deluxe properties with climate control. Each of these hotels was chosen because of their convenient location and unique properties.**

Anhée [Hôtel Les Jardins de la Molignée](#)

Bruges

Breda

Amsterdam

[Grand Hotel Casselbergh](#)

[Hotel Nassau Breda](#)

[Grand Hotel Amrath](#)