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VZW MONUMENTALE KERKEN GENT





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MONUMENTAL CHURCHES IN GENT

Ghent is a city of churches, whose towers help to define the city's skyline.

All these churches bear witness to an especially rich history and impressive heritage.

The non-profit organisation Monumentale Kerken Gent ('Monumental Churches in Ghent') brings together nine churches in Ghent to reveal more of their heritage and make it accessible to a wide audience.

Each individual church is a treasure trove of architectural and religious history and the home of world-class works of art such as the Ghent Altarpiece (Adoration of the Mystic Lamb) by the Van Eyck brothers and paintings by Rubens and Van Dyck. Here in Ghent, the churches have an ongoing impact on the vibrant life of the city around them. Each of them invites you to explore.

Welcome to a world of surprises!



St Bavo's Cathedral is the most majestic church in Ghent. It is the main church of the Diocese of Ghent and also the seat of the chapter of canons. Furthermore, St Bavo's is the oldest parish church in Ghent. The earliest sources that mention this church date back to the 10th century. The current building dates from the 13th to 16th century.

As the settlement of Ghent expanded steadily into an urban centre, the original Romanesque church was converted into Gothic style. St Bavo's Cathedral also possesses a remarkable interior and an impressive collection of religious art.

As early as the 10th century, Ghent was a flourishing trade settlement that spanned the area between the River Scheldt and the River Lys. Several parishes were established here, including **the parish of St Nicholas**.

St Nicholas' Church, which is located in the vicinity of Korenmarkt and the old harbour along Gras-en Korenlei, has always been the church of the merchants and traders, since its foundation in the thirteenth century. The building also reflects the vibrant and rich city life around it.



Besides work by Joos van Wassenhove, Pieter Paul Rubens and Hieronymus Duquesnoy the Younger, it is also home to one of the greatest masterpieces of Flemish painting: the Ghent Altarpiece (Adoration of the Mystic Lamb) by the Van Eyck brothers.



The rich interior came about thanks to the different guilds that had a chapel in the church. Work by Nicolas De Liemacker and Jean-Baptiste Capronnier can be seen in the church. It is also home to a prestigious Cavallé-Coll-organ and a stained glass window by the Ghent glass artist **Herman Blondeel**.



The construction of **St Michael's Church** is a long and unusual story. A chapel was built on the spot by **St Bavo's Abbey** back in the 11th century.

The construction of today's church probably began in the Early Gothic period. After many interruptions, the work was finally completed in 1672, but the tower remained unfinished. Although it took more than 200 years to build the church, it displays a remarkable unity of form and style. That is why St Michael's Church is considered a textbook example of the perpetuation of Gothic style in the Renaissance and Baroque periods.



Its exceptional **homogeneity** makes it a serene church and a haven of calm in Ghent city centre. Several notable works of art can be seen at St Michael's, including a statue by **Rombaut Pauwels** and paintings by **Otto van Vee**, **Jan Boeckhorst** and **Antoon Van Dyck**.

St James' Church is a place with a rich history to display. Local people referred to the church as '**St James**' in the Marshes', after the swampy area in which the first parish church was built in 1093.

St James was probably chosen because of the growing interest in pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostella. But as the patron saint of shipping, St James may also have responded to the needs of an urban population that was growing increasingly quickly around the nearby port. The oldest material traces of the building date back to the 12th century. The building has a striking variety of features, marking the various changes the church has undergone since then.



The interior is also characterised by great variety. This heterogeneity makes St James' Church a unique witness to almost 900 years of ecclesiastical architecture in Ghent. As well as paintings by **Jan Boeckhorst** and **Michiel Coxcie**, St James' Church houses a remarkable sacrament tower and two funerary monuments in honour of **Jan Palfijn**.

SINT-SALVATORKERK OLV PRESENTATIEKERK



St Salvator's Church, the church of Christ the Redeemer, is often called Heilig-Kerst Church in Dutch. Kerst means Christmas, the birthday of Christ the Saviour.

The sober, early 19th-century façade reveals little of the long history of the building and the richness of its interior.

Newly built in the 16th century, it was designed as a Late Gothic building with a three-aisled nave and six bays. The length of the church was extended in the 18th century. The current, neo-Gothic interior dates from the second half of the 19th century.

The church houses many religious and cultural gems, such as the pietà statue 'God's Sweet Suffering', the Stations of the Cross by Théophile Lybaert and paintings by Nicolas De Liemacker.

The polychrome murals (1857-1862) in the choir, after a design by Théodore Canneel for 'The Procession of the Saints', are notable for the historical precision with which the saints' clothing, attributes and characteristics are depicted.



The Church of the Presentation of Our Lady is part of the beguinage Our Lady ter Hoyen, which is recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

The history of the beguinage dates back to the 13th century, when it was still outside the city walls, among the fields or 'Hoyen'. The construction of the church in Late Renaissance style began in 1658. However, it was not until 1720 that the wooden façade was replaced by sandstone in pure Baroque style.

There is a statue of the Virgin Mary and child in the centre of the façade. It is flanked on either side by statues of St Aya and St Godelieve of Gistel. Around them, the different Stations of the Cross decorate the parapets under the windows. There is also an unusual Calvary on the southern wall.

Inside, the church has been plastered with decorative white stucco and decorated with mainly 17th-century paintings, with the exception of the polyptych 'Fountain of Life' by Lucas Horenbout, which dates from 1596. The furnishings are predominantly in Renaissance and Early Baroque style.





Our Lady St Peter's Church is a place that has radiated calm and spirituality for many centuries. As a purely Baroque church, its architecture contributes strongly to this sense of peace.

The old, medieval church attached to St Peter's Abbey suffered greatly during the iconoclasm of the 16th century, and so it was decided to build a new church at the beginning of the 17th century, entirely in the spirit of the Counter-Reformation.

Our Lady St Peter's Church is considered one of architect Pieter Huysens' masterpieces, and is a highlight of Baroque architecture in the Southern Netherlands.

Although much of the interior was lost during the **French Revolution** when the abbey was disbanded, Our Lady St Peter's Church still holds a wealth of art treasures, including paintings by Jan Janssens and Gaspar de Craeyer, an organ by Pierre Van Peteghem and a handful of remarkable little miracle paintings linked to **Our Lady ter Rive**.



St Martin's Church is one of the oldest parish churches in Ghent, founded in 941 at the crossroads of Einde Were, Antonius Triestlaan and Ekkergerstraat.

In the Late Middle Ages, it was also the first church in Ghent to be situated outside the city walls. In fact, 'Einde Were' means at the outermost edge (the 'einde', or end) of the defensive city wall (the 'were').

In 1625, Archduchess Isabella laid the first stone of a new choir with a high altar, which was completed in 1645 and consecrated in 1655 by Bishop Triest. St Martin's Church is well known for its crooked spire.

Much has been preserved of the Baroque interior, which underwent significant alterations in the Neo-Gothic period, such as the seven 17th-century portico altars and important paintings by artists including Gaspar de Craeyer and François Pilsen.





In 937 there was already a small Romanesque church on this highest point of Mariakerke. In the second half of the 13th century, this **Church of the Birth of Our Lady** underwent a major renovation in Scheldt Gothic style.

The full restoration and refurbishment of the church in Neo-Gothic style began in 1870, overseen by Jean-Baptiste Bethune, a pioneer of the Neo-Gothic style in Flanders. The church was thoroughly restored and extended between 1887 and 1892, according to a design by the Ghent-based architect and restorer Auguste Van Assche. He created the interior and fixed furnishings in partnership with Jean-Baptiste Bethune, a prominent figure in the Neo-Gothic period.

The church and its surroundings, with its cemetery and bishops' gallery dating from 1873 (designed by Jean-Baptiste Bethune) form a unique site in Ghent.





A magnificent shrine holding relics of St Cornelius, the patron saint of the church, was created by Leopold Firlefyn.

Mariakerke used to be an important place of pilgrimage. The procession around the church is an echo of this.

DISCOVER MORE WITH THE ERFGOEDAPP!

You can take a digital tour of a number of churches in Ghent with your smartphone.



- 1 Download the app
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- 3 Start the guided tour!

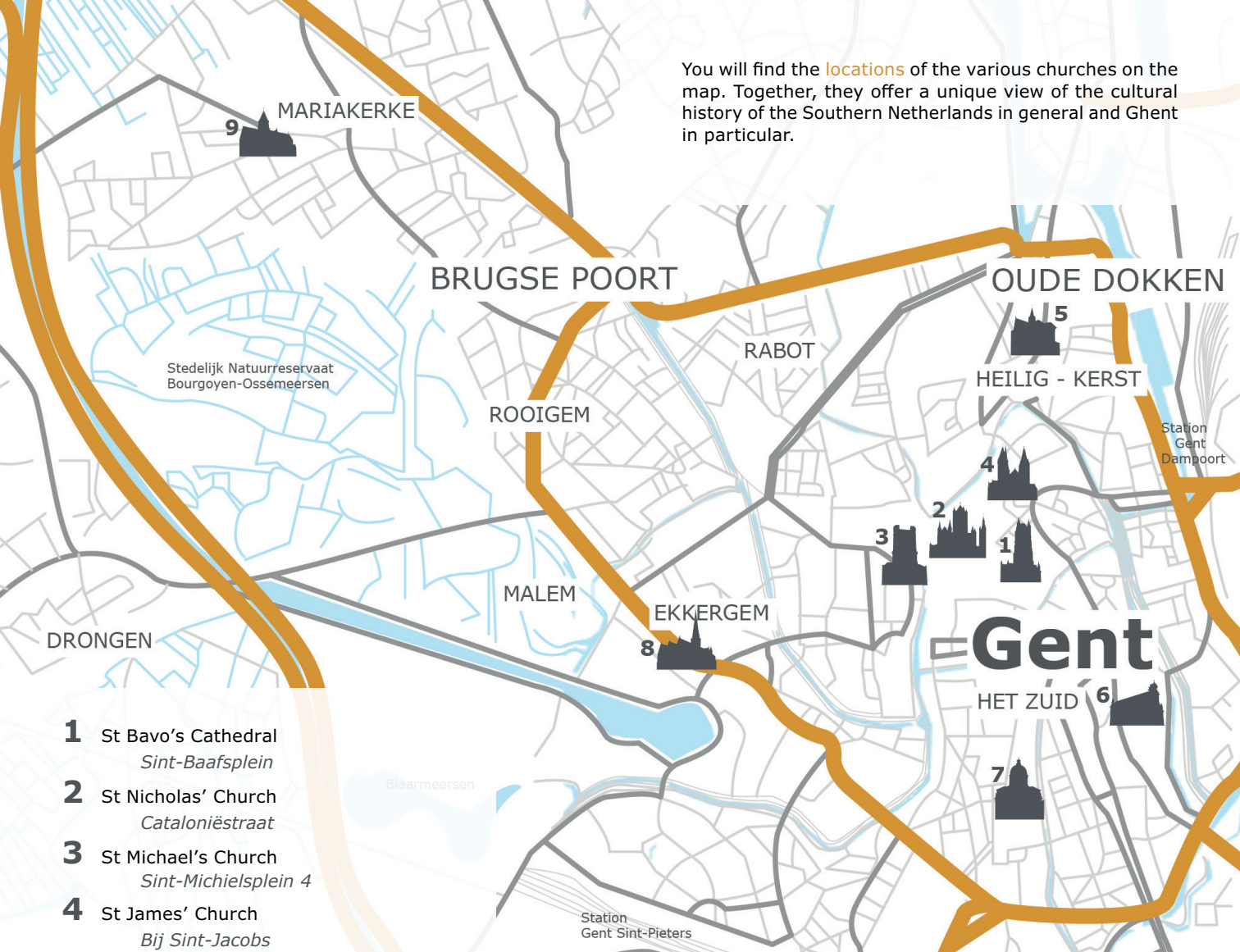


How does it work?

Install the ErfgoedApp on your smartphone. When you enter the church, there is a QR code that you can scan. As you walk around the church, when you approach an interesting item, you can read about it in the app.

Find out more at <https://en.erfgoed.app/>.

You will find the **locations** of the various churches on the map. Together, they offer a unique view of the cultural history of the Southern Netherlands in general and Ghent in particular.



- 1** St Bavo's Cathedral
Sint-Baafsplein
- 2** St Nicholas' Church
Cataloniëstraat
- 3** St Michael's Church
Sint-Michielsplein 4
- 4** St James' Church
Bij Sint-Jacobs
- 5** St Salvator's Church
Sleepstraat 216
- 6** The Church of the Presentation of Our Lady
Lange Violettestraat 77-273
- 7** Our Lady St Peter's Church
Sint-Pietersplein
- 8** St Martin's Church
Einde Were
- 9** Church of the Birth of Our Lady
Mariakerkeplein, 9030 Mariakerke

For **practical information and opening hours**, please use the QR code below:



www.mkgent.be



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