



Dinant, Belgium
Photo by Hans van Rijnswoort

Great Drives Belgium

Belgium - A romantic weekend in an Avis hire car

Beautiful scenery, intimate restaurants – and chocolate. Lots of it. Even if you haven't got a sweet tooth, you'll be bowled over by the Ardennes region – and it's an incredibly compact and easy place to drive. Head south from Brussels for rolling hills, picture-postcard towns and grand country houses dripping with history.

Test drive this two-day tour for the best of Belgium.

Rent your Avis vehicle from our [car hire location in Brussels](#) (train station for Eurostar arrivals) or [Avis Brussels Airport](#) and head south on the E411 road to lush **Namur**, where the Sambre and Meuse rivers meet. Now life has slowed, cruise along to **Dinant**, and Round off the perfect day at **Habaye la Neuve**, with its romantic hilltop chateau. Late next morning, make your way via cobbled **Durbuy** to **Spa** (a favourite hang-out of King Henry VIII), before returning to Brussels airport or international railway station. If you are traveling from other destinations, check our [Belgium car hire location page](#).

High Points en route

Galler Chocolat-Thé, Namur – Three-piece sweet

The coffee and cream-coloured interior of this classic Belgian restaurant on Namur's rue des Fripiers will get your mouth watering as soon as you walk through the door. Of course, you don't have to have a sweet tooth to enjoy this place, but it would be rude not to try the three-course chocolate menu...

Annevoie Gardens – Flower power

Peace and quiet reign supreme in the gorgeous 18th-century **Annevoie Gardens**, near Wépion, just a short drive south of Namur. Designed by Charles Alexis de Montpellier in the late 1700s, there are over 20 beautiful lakes and ponds to stroll round, with nothing but the sound of birds and running water to interrupt you.

Dinant – Feeling fruity

Motor south down the N92 from Wepion, and if you're feeling guilty about the amount of chocolate you put away at lunch, park yourself outside one of the many cafés that line the streets of this cute little town and order some strawberries. It's famous for them. If that doesn't help you atone, a power-walk along the River Meuse will ease your conscience.

Habaye la Neuve – Belgian bolt-hole

After wooing your sweetheart with chocolate and flowers, top off it all off with a night in the **Château de Pont d'Oye**, just a short drive on from Dinant. There are 18 rooms and two different restaurants to choose from in this country house hotel. If the sun's out, take a picnic down to the lake.

Durbuy – Beer o'clock

This tiny little town with only 400 inhabitants claims to be the smallest in the world. Whether that's true is open to debate. What is for certain is that they brew some excellent beers here. One place you should definitely check out is the **Ferme au Chêne** pub on rue Comte d'Ursel. Careful, though: it has its own brewery, so you might be tempted to stay the night... Remember to appoint a designated driver.

AVIS

We try
harder.

High Points en route - Free time on your hands? Take your pick from the following gems:

1/ Francorchamps – Need for speed?

Along with the streets of Monte Carlo, the roads around this Ardennes town form one of the world's last-remaining road courses. Although the Belgian Grand Prix has always been the highlight on Spa's calendar, the hillsides echo to the sound of screaming engines at various points over the summer. A good race to catch is the **Spa Six Hours** meeting in September.

2/ Tournai – Forever England

Another fascinating fact: this is the only Belgian town to have been owned by the British. Back in the early 1500s, Henry VIII briefly took control of the city and built a tower to celebrate (as you do). There are quite a few buildings you should explore here, especially **Notre-Dame Cathedral**, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

3/ Mons – Tragic history

Another Belgian town intrinsically linked to British history. Lying close to the French border, Mons was the scene of the first engagement between British and German troops in the First World War, in which 1600 Brits died in the

first few days alone. Aside from military history, there's plenty more to see – not least the spectacular **Gothic town hall** in the main square.

4/ Waterloo – Long before Abba

Although Waterloo became famous as the venue of Napoleon's defeat, the actual battle of Waterloo took place down the road – in the area around **Braine-l'Alleud**. There are various monuments to the fighting that you can visit, not least the famous statue of the lion looking out towards France and the chapel where Wellington was supposed to have prayed before going into battle.

5/ Bruges – Beautifully understated

One of the most popular places for city breaks – and with good reason. Bruges was once a crucial trading centre for Northern Europe, and many medieval buildings still remain. Using the main square as your focal point, wander off into the cobbled streets leading away from it (don't worry, you won't get lost). At night, this place takes on a special atmosphere of its own, with swans swimming majestically by on the canals.

Avis Great Drives Route Map: Belgium



Need to know

Round circuit

236 miles (380 km); approx 4-5 hours driving time

Best time to come

To make the most of the countryside but miss the crowds, come in April-May.

Soundtrack

Pink Moon by Nick Drake

Essential item

Aquascutum umbrella

With offices in 4,000 locations in 114 countries, Avis can help with your car rental needs wherever you are in the world – and help turn a drive into an experience.

For car hire tips or to see other road trips in the Avis Great Drives series visit our blog www.wetryharder.co.uk

To book visit www.avis.co.uk or call **08445 818181**

Last updated August 2010.

