

THE Revised GRANDE BELGIAN TOUR

(A FIVE-DAY TOUR BY LARGE EURO-COACH)

Wednesday 20th to Sunday 24th February 2019



All Inclusive Fare - Only £398.53

Unchanged from last year

Hotel Single Room Supplement £99.50 (optional)

A minimum deposit of £100.00 will secure your seat, and the balance must be paid by 4th January, 2019.

In the past, our “Grande Belgian” has become a firm annual favourite despite being varied year on year. However, with the opening of the new depots in Liege and Gent, this year will lead to the need for more variation and a little flexibility on our part. Fear not - we are up for it!

This time we include the East of the country, venturing close to the Dutch and German borders. Our 2019 tour can cover nearly all of the major depots with the exception of Arlon (which you can visit with us on the “Luxembourg Rapide” later in the year). This is the perfect opportunity for you to get to grips with those type AM08s, and filling in the gaps in your Class 18 & 19 locos, not to forget your SNCB coaching stock.

The popularity of this tour is largely due to our successes at the main depots where we are very rarely turned down. At two overnight locations members who book quickly can secure hotel rooms where trains can be observed from bedroom windows. It's also a firm favourite with the Tram Enthusiasts. There are Tram systems (and a Metro) in two of our overnight locations, plus the Oostende to Zeebrugge coastal tramway.

ITINERARY

Days One & Two - Wednesday 20th / Thursday 21st February

It's a familiar start to a Belgian tour, but one we simply cannot change. **Kortrijk depot** is first up followed by **Tournai Station**. From here we head to **St Ghislain Station SP**, followed by **Mons Station SP** (where major rebuilding continues) and **Mons Infra**. Progressing east we then tackle the yards around the site of **Monceau Depot** (now completely closed and all the stored locos removed but we should capture the stabled Class 77s). Next will be **Charleroi Station SP**. The **Infrabel** site is no more and so we continue to **Charleroi Sud Quai Depot**, followed by **Chatelet CS**. A long run follows to view **Haren Infra Yd** and then we tour **Schaerbeek depot and yards**. Now there is time to relax as we lineside at **Schaerbeek Station**. Alternatively, you are at liberty to pay a visit to the new **Train World Museum** at the side of Schaerbeek Station. At the earliest opportunity we will check into our hotel which faces Bruxelles Midi station and, as soon as you are checked-in, you can be straight back into the action. There will be an evening ‘peak’ to observe or you may have your own excursion planned. Even if the weather is not conducive with platform ending, you can view the comings and goings from your bedroom window if you are allocated a station-facing room (with the co-operation of the hotel, these rooms are allocated on a ‘first to book’ basis). A selection of meals is served in the hotel bar, but there is no shortage of restaurants nearby.

Overnight - Hotel Ibis Brussels Centre Gare Midi

Day Three - Friday 22nd February

A delayed departure will enable you to observe the morning peak at Midi station. We begin the day proper with **Leuven Yard** and **Leuven Station SP**. We continue to a view of **Salzannes Works** and a visit to **Ronet Depot**. Our arrival in Liège will be followed by much variation to our itinerary. The first call must be the new ‘combined’ **Liège depot**, followed by a ‘sweep’ of the yards. All locomotives have been removed and lines lifted in and around the old Kinkempois Depot bringing an era to an end. We finish at our hotel which is situated directly opposite Liege Guillemins Station. As with our Brussels hotel, many of the rooms overlook the lines into the station and such rooms will be allocated on a first to book basis. The hotel has a restaurant making it possible for you to ‘spot as you eat!’

Overnight - Best Western Univers Hotel, Liège

Day Four - Saturday 23rd February

Today more variations are likely. We begin today with **Bressoux Infra** and **Yard** where we will find privateers stabled. We now know that the new **Angleur Infra depot** will be operational and we will, of course, investigate. There follows **Montzen Yard** where, despite the closure of the depot and run down of the yard, a few locos (including foreign visitors and privateers) may be found. Next comes **Liers CS** which was scheduled to close once the new depot at Liege became operational - again, we will investigate whether anything remains. Back we go to more familiar ground at Hasselt where we spend time at the **Hasselt depot, Hasselt Infra Yard, and Hasselt Carriage Sidings**. From here, we travel West towards Antwerp, but will pay a call on route at **Mol** where you may secure that last Hasselt Class 41, or perhaps the sole Class 77 may be the one you want. We conclude with the big one, **Antwerpen Noord depot and yards**.

Overnight - Hotel Leonardo Antwerpen (facing Antwerp Centraal station)

Day Five - Sunday 24th February

Time to head home, but a packed itinerary will keep you interested during the journey. We start by checking out **Merelbeke depot**. Closure is on the horizon but only after the new depot in the nearby **Melle Yard** becomes operational. Needless to say, we will thoroughly cover the area. There then follows a drive through **Dampoort Yard**, where up to 20 locomotives can be found. Next up is **Gent St Pieters Stabling Point**. A run down the motorway brings us to **Brugge Station** and **SP**, followed by **Zwankendamme SP, Kust SP, and Zeebrugge SP**. We check out **Blankenberge station** as we make our way to Oostende. After concluding visits to **Oostende depot, Oostende Carriage Sidings** and **Oostende station**, we make our final call at **De Panne** (for the stabling point and cravings of the smokers), before heading to the port and home.

We remind you that the *Preferred Seat Scheme* applies to all tours such as this, operated in a **Large Euro Coach**.