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Brussels Celebrates 10 Years of Belgian Beer Culture on UNESCO Heritage List

Citywide events highlight brewing traditions, innovation, and the enduring social role of beer in Belgian life

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Brussels is marking a significant milestone this March as it celebrates the 10th anniversary of Belgian beer culture's inclusion on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In 2016, UNESCO recognized not just the quality of Belgian beer, but also the social practices, craftsmanship, and diversity that make up a living ecosystem around brewing in Belgium. Over the past decade, Brussels has strengthened its position as a global center for beer heritage, blending tradition with innovation and sustainability.

Beer in Belgium is more than a beverage. It is a social language and a technical craft passed down through generations. The UNESCO distinction highlighted how beer culture is woven into daily life and festive moments for Belgians. Today, Brussels stands as a showcase for this heritage, offering more than 1,500 varieties of beer. Visitors and locals alike can experience everything from classic pilsners to abbey ales and spontaneously fermented beers unique to the region.

One of Brussels' most distinctive contributions is Lambic, a beer style that relies on wild yeasts found in the air of the Senne Valley. This traditional method produces beers like Gueuze—often called the "champagne of beers"—and Kriek, both considered regional treasures protected by UNESCO's recognition. The preservation and transmission of brewing knowledge are supported by guilds, brewers' associations, and institutions that promote responsible consumption and environmental respect.

To commemorate this decade of recognition, Brussels is offering a range of experiences that combine historical depth with modern technology. The Belgian Beer World, located in the restored Bourse de Bruxelles, provides an interactive journey through Belgian brewing history. The experience ends at a skybar where visitors can sample over 100 different beers while enjoying panoramic views of the city.

The Belgian Brewers Museum on Grand-Place allows guests to explore tools and processes from 18th-century guild houses, connecting today's industry with its historical roots. Meanwhile, new urban microbreweries in neighborhoods like Marolles and Saint-Gilles are responding to changing market demands with gluten-free and alcohol-free options while maintaining traditional Belgian standards.

Brussels’ celebration extends beyond museums and breweries. Historic taverns, centuries-old breweries, and innovative microbreweries invite visitors to explore the city through its flavors. Restaurants are increasingly pairing beer with fine dining menus, while guided routes offer insights into how beer culture shapes daily life in Belgium.

Ten years after UNESCO’s recognition, Belgian beer culture continues to evolve without losing its roots. Innovation and sustainability now go hand-in-hand with artisanal techniques passed down over centuries. This balance has helped establish Brussels as an international destination for those seeking to understand how tradition, creativity, and hospitality can come together in a single glass.

As Brussels marks this anniversary, it reaffirms its role as guardian of a living heritage that continues to inspire brewers and travelers worldwide. The city’s commitment to preserving its brewing legacy ensures that Belgian beer culture remains vibrant for future generations.