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THE WEEK RECOMMENDS

# 1898 Porter's House: an intimate hotel in historic Ghent

Feel at home in this cosy hotel in the heart of Belgium's third-biggest city

By Adrienne Wyper, The Week UK | Published 4 weeks ago

The neo-Gothic exterior of 1898 Porter's House was designed by Louis Cloquet, the architect of Ghent's main railway station
(Image credit: Tunart / Getty Images)

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Ghent is a little overshadowed in the Belgian city break stakes by Bruges.

But as well as great bars, restaurants, sights and shops, Ghent, too, has canals, medieval buildings, cobbled streets, a belfry and castle. It isn't swamped by tourists, as Bruges can be. And at three hours by Eurostar it's half an hour closer to London St Pancras.

Through a discreet glass door on the cobbled Graslei quay by St Michael's Bridge, a spot in almost every shot of Ghent, is 1898 Porter's House. With three suites and one room, it opened in September 2026 after refurbishment by Geraldine Dohogne, who also transformed the adjoining hotel, 1898 The Post.

## Why stay here?

Deep, rich colours in the rooms create a cosy, cocooning environment

(Image credit: 1898 Porter's House)

All the rooms are different shapes, sizes and layouts, but all share inviting textures and deep, rich colours – cocooning décor that feels profoundly welcoming. Mine is dark blue, with solid wooden beams.

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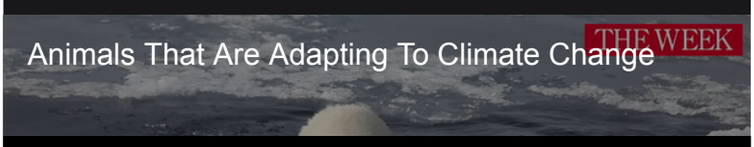


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Above the vast bed, with impeccable white linen and tweedy headboard, is the TV, almost as vast, although you can watch it only from the bed, not from the velvet armchair – just one in a room undeniably designed for two. That comfy seat is a perfect perch for a cup of tea from the in-room supplies, which also include ready-mixed in-house cocktails – just add ice. The kettle and coffee machine are tidily housed in a drawer, plugged in invisibly.

Thoughtful touches abound, such as a warm throw, books – including a bespoke "500 Hidden Secrets of Ghent" guidebook, yoga mat and blocks, umbrella and flip flops. Just inside the entryway, there's ample hanging storage – although not long enough for my midi dress.


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The marble bathroom with underfloor heating is equipped with bath, twin sinks and a rainfall shower with overhead roses and handheld attachments too, stocked with citrussy Guerlain Impériale toiletries. The loo, classily, is separate.

Sink back and relax in the al fresco bath tub on the terrace

(Image credit: 1898 Porter's House)

Two of the suites have a plant-filled roof terrace. As well as sunloungers, a table and chairs, mine has a copper bathtub. At night this is lit by strung lights and lanterns, perfect for an al fresco dip above the urban buzz, while inside lamps cast a soft glow, and thick Roman blinds and bedroom curtains block out all light.


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## Eating and drinking

Take a window seat in The Kitchen to plan where you'll go next

(Image credit: 1898 Porter's House)

A short stroll along Graslei takes you to breakfast in The Post's breakfast room, The Kitchen, which becomes The Cobbler bar by night. Although the buffet size is small, it's densely packed with desirable ways to start the day: mini croissants, mini pains au chocolat, cheeses and meats, yogurt, granola, seeds, an impressive array of fruit, plus eggs cooked to order and power shots of ginger, turmeric, and lemon, orange and pineapple juice.

It's easy to find more great food in Ghent. For elevated dining, head to Sensum, housed in a Louis XVI mansion – which won its Michelin star in 2023 – and try its simply described four- or five-course experience menu. As a vegetarian, it was strange to choose dishes with names like Gobetto prawn and French pigeon, but staff reassured me that my food would be meat- and fish-free yet focused on the component flavours. Service was relaxed, attentive and informative, each course explained on arrival.

Apricot sorbet, vanilla cream, meringue sticks on a dish at Sensum, Ghent, Belgium

Dessert at Sensum: marinated apricots, apricot and saffron sorbet, meringue sticks, almond brittle and vanilla cream

(Image credit: Adrienne Wyper)

The food was exquisite, inventively prepared and impeccably presented. Memorable mouthfuls include an amuse bouche of panna cotta made with smoked milk; beetroot roasted for 72 hours then rehydrated, served with sour cream mousse, and gooseberry granita, which appeared on the menu as royal Belgian caviar.

Near the Museum of Industry is the cool, contemporary interior and vine-shaded courtyard of Edgar Kaasbar, whose short menu focuses on cheese (kaas), from raclette and fondue to croquettes and platters, with suggested wine and beer pairings. My pungent plateful grew in strength from tomme to Shropshire blue, accompanied by crusty bread, fruit and nuts.

Don't miss out on Belgian specialities, such as chips and mayonnaise, a classic now with heritage status (although here beef stew is the preferred topping).

There are plenty of fine chocolate shops; I took home a tempting trayful from Deduytschaever near the Belfort. At the other end of the taste spectrum: excellent Tierenteyn mustard. This Ghent condiment's quality apparently results from a family feud.

Boasting Ghent's biggest beer selection, at over 500, is Café de Dulle Griet (which translates as 'mad Meg', taking its name from a nearby cannon). To sample the house beer, Max, served in a long glass on a wooden stand, you must surrender one shoe to a wire cage on the ceiling, returned when you return the glass.

Café den Turk, popular with locals, is the city's oldest bar, dating from the 13th century, but its simple approach doesn't trade on that.

Sample jenever, Belgian juniper-flavoured spirit, at t'Dreupelkot, by the river at Groentenmarkt 12, which dispenses shots of over 200 flavours, including coconut, cactus, vanilla and chilli.

For a nightcap, stay close to home with a cocktail in The Cobbler, a cool hangout for both residents and non-residents. My Kintsugi, with gin, kaffir lime and ginger, was fragrant and floral.

## Things to do

Get yourself a Visit Gent CityCard – at just €49 for 48 hours, with free entry to sights, plus free tram, bus, bike and boat travel. Orient yourself with an overview of the city – literally – at the STAM, or Museum of Ghent, with a vast aerial photo to walk across, among varied exhibits including 13th-century frescos. Turn left out of the hotel and walk along the river. To return, board the hop-on, hop-off boat with your CityCard for a 90-minute city tour (hopping off not obligatory).

Gain a bird's-eye view atop the 12th-century Belfort (belfry), with an array of bells and clock mechanisms within the tower.

The fairytale 12th-century castle, Gravensteen (Castle of the Counts) has enough battlements, turrets and crenellations to satisfy history buffs and small children. Inside, as well as the good city views, there's a torture museum.

Fusing architectural styles is St Bavo's (or Sint Baaf's), the not-to-be-missed cathedral, boasting 22 altars, plus the world-famous "Adoration of the Mystic Lamb" altarpiece by Hubert and Jan van Eyck, the world's first work using oil paints, in around 1432. Book the VR tour to better appreciate the glowing, vibrant figures and scenes in detail, and to learn its history, including multiple thefts – its return was part of the Treaty of Versailles after the First World War. The Museum of Fine Arts is carrying out restoration work on some of the original panels, which you can watch until 31 December. (Van Eyck portraits are on show at London's National Gallery from 21 November.)

## The verdict

A truly welcoming environment, from the decor to the historic artefacts in the myrrh and vetiver-scented public spaces that encourage you to slow down, to the endlessly good-humoured and patient staff. As the hotel's interior designer Dohogne said: "it's a sophisticated space that respects the guests' needs and builds a world around them." Feeling completely at home, I was happy to inhabit this world, if only for a short time.

*Adrienne Wyper was a guest of 1898 Porter's House, 1898portershouse.com*

**Adrienne Wyper, The Week UK**

Adrienne Wyper has been a freelance sub-editor and writer for The Week's website and magazine since 2015. As a travel and lifestyle journalist, she has also written and edited for other titles including BBC Countryfile, British Travel Journal, Coast, Country Living, Country Walking, Good Housekeeping, The Independent, The Lady and Woman's Own.

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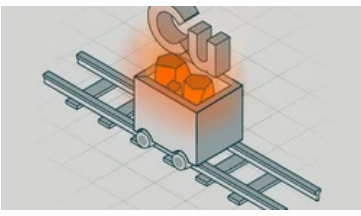

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