

Brussels, Beer Capital of the World



An ambitious project for Brussels and the Belle-Vue site of InBev, located at the Henegouwenkaai/Quai du Hainaut, next to the canal, designed after the example of The Guinness Storehouse in the City of Dublin.

1) The Guinness Experience.

The City of Dublin offers not only its writers, folkmusic and its turbulent history to the countless visitors, but also the famous beer called Guinness as one of its most important assets. The visitors centre "The Guinness Storehouse" ranks in the top-three most popular locations, thanks to the sheer attractiveness and wide range of activities the centre has to offer, and to the advertising by various Dublin tourist offices. The Guinness Storehouse has welcomed some four million visitors in the years 2000 to 2006.

The Guinness Storehouse is an old factory building, part of the vast Guinness factory complex, the St. James's Gate Brewery, located in the centre of Dublin.

Originally built to house the Guinness fermentation process, this building was abandoned in 1988. In 2000 however, the building reopened its doors as the new addition to the Dublin tourism possibilities. In 2006 this visitors centre was expanded.

The Guinness Storehouse stands out in Dublin, also on the architectural level: the massive steel beams providing the support for the structure of the building were left in place. Inside the building, a giant impression of a pint of Guinness has been created, stretching through the seven floors of the visitors centre, topped by The Gravity Bar.

This bar, hovering over the building, above roof level and 40 meters from the ground, provides a unique panoramic 360-degree view over the city of Dublin and has become an architectural landmark.



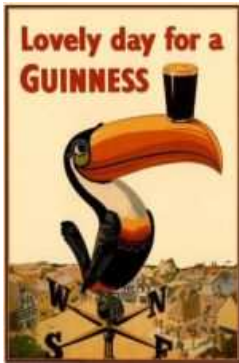
The visit of The Guinness Storehouse is a unique experience:

On the ground floor, the massive exhibit introduces you to the four ingredients of Guinness, to the history of the brewing and to its founder, Arthur Guinness. You can also visit the Guinness Flagship Retail Store, packed full of merchandise and memorabilia, Guinness gadgets and must-haves.



On the first floor, a hypermodern and spectacular evocation is being brought: the brewing process, the quality control and the means of storage and transportation of the Guinness beer. A Tasting Laboratory learns the visitor how a professional distinguishes the different variants of Guinness beer.

The second floor harbours an exhibition of the world-famous Guinness advertising, containing branded memorabilia and the stories of the popular icons, throughout the history of the brewery and that of the British Empire.



The Choice Zone on the third floor is an interactive exhibit which challenges visitors to look at their own drinking habits and recognise the fine line between enjoying yourself and drinking to excess.

The fourth floor exhibit charts the history of the building. One can leave a message and the Guinness Abroad – theme suggests a link with visitors from all over the world.

On the fifth and sixth floor one can learn to pour his or her own pint of Guinness and receive a certificate. On these floors there is The Source Bar as well, an artistically designed bar and beside this, The Brewery Bar, an informal and relaxing place to dine on traditional Irish cuisine.

The My Goodness My Gilroy section is an exhibition of John Gilroy's work, the artist responsible for the famous Guinness advertising from the 1930s to 1960s.



Finally, there is The Gravity Bar, located on the seventh floor. This is where you will receive your complimentary pint of Guinness. As you relax you can enjoy the uninterrupted panoramic view across Dublin City - it really is one of the most spectacular places to visit in Dublin.

Offering such a wide range of experiences, the visitors centre can even entice non-beer lovers.

The symbiosis between the City of Dublin and Guinness is perfect: Where as Dublin has the ambition to become a top class international city with multiple highlights, the Guinness brewery is eager to stress its Irish roots.



The City of Dublin promotes The Guinness Storehouse as one of the top tourist assets. With websites and flyers of the city services and the tourist office, billboards throughout the town, on-line ticket sale and marketing via travel agencies, tourists are invited to visit the Guinness visitors centre and to live the Guinness Experience.

The Guinness Storehouse is only a fifteen minutes walk from the historic centre of Dublin, tourist hop-on-hop-off tour bus lines have a stop in front of this centre and a tramway runs nearby.

On top of that, The Guinness Storehouse offers conference halls and dining rooms of all dimensions. A Learning Centre provides all the necessary for companies to deploy their team development activities. This makes The Guinness Storehouse the most suited location in Dublin to organise congresses, team-building activities, seminars, private parties, workshops, etc... in an extraordinary, inspiring surrounding. In total, some 1300 guest can be received and catered for.



The Guinness Storehouse has its own website, including links to merchandising and company policy. Other websites of the City of Dublin, the Tourist Office of Dublin and many other refer to The Guinness Storehouse website.

Conclusion :

With The Guinness Storehouse, the Guinness company and the City of Dublin have created a win-win situation: Visitors from all over the world become acquainted with this authentic beer, while the City of Dublin is proud to present to the tourists another world-famous place of interest.

2) The Guinness Story in Brussels : The Belle-Vue brewery and its potentials.

The Belle-Vue brewery of InBev is located in Molenbeek, on the banks of the canal Antwerp-Brussels-Charleroi, a few minutes walk from the city-centre. For the moment, part of the brewery complex is being used as a storage for beer casks, while other parts have lost their initial functions. InBev, world's largest brewer, is planning to put a complete halt to the brewing activities on the Belle-Vue site. Putting the buildings up for sale is one of the possible scenarios.



However, this Belle-Vue site has an enormous potential as an international visitors centre for the Brussels and Belgian tradition of beer. For Brussels does not only stand for chocolate and Manneke Pis, Brussels is also the beer capital of the world !

Brussels, the capital of a country with a rich tradition of brewing many different types of beer, should be able to play this winning card. The idea of Brussels, Beer Capital of the World is a surplus value of the city that can be put forward: a visitors centre located in the old Belle-Vue brewery can be the eye-catcher. This centre can become one of the top tourist events in Brussels, on the same level as the Atomium or the Grand Place/Grote Markt.

Not so surprisingly, there are a few parallels with the successful The Guinness Storehouse:



First of all, the Belle-Vue brewery is a site with a rich past and its brews are part of a glorious and famous tradition. Just as the Guinness brewery and its beer upholds its link with Irish tradition and the history of the City of Dublin, so is the Belle-Vue brewery and its beers – Lambik, Kriek and other fruitbeers – interwoven with the City of Brussels and the valley of the Zenne/Senne. And there is more. The brewing group InBev produces many other, authentic Belgian beers, and is therefore able to tell a far greater story, a story of a land with a beer-culture, a story of Brussels, Beer Capital of the World.

Without exaggeration, we can state that the city of Brussels is the best place in the world to discover all aspects of beers. Compared with other countries, Belgium is by far and wide the outspoken beer-country, with its diversity beers and its vivid beer culture and brewing tradition.

Hence is the slogan: "Brussels, Beer Capital of the World" no less than an accurate description of our capital.

The brand Guinness is known throughout the world as is InBev, biggest brewer of the world, producing beers all over the world, offering the most diverse range of beers. Belgian Beer has become a renowned quality label and no year goes by without a Belgian beer being proclaimed as "best beer of the world".

The Belle-View site is the ideal location in Brussels to embody and to communicate this message. This site has to become that centre that gives the visitor a tremendous first impression of the vastness and diversity of the beer culture of our country. Being a brewery with its own distinguished history, the message will be clear.

This visitors centre could be organised in three different levels: Brussels/Local, Belgium and International:

On a first level, Brussels beers are represented: the rich tradition of Lambik, Gueuze and Kriek, originating from the valley of the Senne/Zenne. The ingredients and the different brewing processes are laid out. On this level, the basic facts of beer are explained to the visitor.



On a second level, Belgian beers make their introduction. For example, various different beers from InBev's basket can give a good impression of the beer landscape in Belgium. The visitor learns about the various types of brewing processes and beers. Again, Brussels, being Beer Capital of the World, plays the first role.

Finally, on a third level, the international scene of beers is shown. Again, InBev can provide a world-wide overview. For Belgian visitors, this section offers something new, while a foreign visitor can discover his own old favourite.

As it is the case in The Guinness Storehouse, the Belgian culture of the beer should be brought in a very accessible way: Guided tasting of beers in a “typical Belgian” café, “The Belgian Tap University” where visitors can learn to tap different types of beer and obtain a “tap-certificate”, the evocation of the different brewing methods, the social history of beer in the Low Countries, a restaurant with a menu based on beer, the history of the InBev company,...

The main objective is this: the Belle-Vue site must become a must-see in Brussels.

The Belle-Vue site has many other strong qualities to transmit the message of Brussels, Beer Capital of the World and to become one of the top three tourist locations in Brussels:

The Belle-Vue brewery is located on the edge of the Brussels pentagon, a few minutes walk from the historic centre of Brussels. As is the case in the City of Dublin, hop-on-hop-off tourist busses can provide an easy and cheap link with the city centre.



InBev is an evident choice to make this project work and prosper. The company derives all its experience and knowledge from a rich tradition of brewing. The biggest brewer in the world, holding two Belgian beers in its international offer, Stella Artois and Leffe, has more than enough weight to support this project. InBev is the owner of the Belle-Vue site and using this location as the visitors centre of Brussels, Beer Capital of the World, it can position itself

more firmly on the beer scene.

Stella Artois and Leffe are Belgian beers who are known throughout the world. This fame can entice the curiosity of the tourists even more.

Moreover, InBev has almost all the different types of Belgian beers on its production shelf. Pilsner, White bier, Amber beer, Fruit beers, Abbey beers,... all of them can have their place in the visitors centre.



The brewery's buildings offer a range of opportunities as well. One might choose to start a daring architectural construction – with a view on Brussels? Or to recreate the setting of the brewery as it was in previous centuries. Or to stress the three levels (Brussels & Local, Belgium and International) with a similar reorganising of the buildings.

The current brewing activities in these buildings, the storage of beer casks, can be preserved, although this is not required. Similar with The Guinness Storehouse, the brewing activities can be evocated.

Today, a part of the complex is being rent on a short term contract to a number of cultural and social organisations. Taking into account the vast size of the complex, these activities may remain. Of course, a more professional use of these floors can be considered and – as it is the case in the City of Dublin – a number of them can be transformed into congress halls, areas of exhibition, food and beverage services, etc... with a high potential, as this exceptional location is near the city centre.

A visitors centre needs a competent management and staff. Brussels and Molenbeek can easily provide the personnel to keep the shops, restaurants, guided tours and taps, running.



The cooperation with the different administrations and tourist offices in Brussels is crucial. Extra bus lines and hop-on-hop-off tour busses are necessary to bring the tourist from the other highlights to this location. If the city's tourist offices invest time and money in promoting this visitors centre and encourage other tourist agencies to do the same, the Belle-Vue site will become a great success.

How can this ambitious project kick off?

The realisation of this visitors centre can be done in two ways:

The brewing company InBev could launch this project by its own means, thus creating a marketing opportunity, as it has been done by the Guinness Company.

Or – if InBev chooses not to invest in this project and sells the site – a public private partnership can be negotiated. The project will be shaped and run by, for example, Brussels International, tourist offices, some economic partners in the public sector and the city counsel of Brussels and Molenbeek.

Brussels, Beer Capital of the World

My ambitions with the Belle-Vue visitors centre have two aspects:

“Brussels, Beer Capital of the World”. Brussels must become renowned as the capital of beers. Brussels and Belgian beers must have their own tourist monument, making Brussels a place to visit, a must see, together with the Atomium, Manneken Pis and the Grand Place. The concept “Brussels, Beer Capital of the World” widens and deepens the international fame of Brussels.

Our second ambition aims at making the tourist familiar with the immense diversity of beers and the beer tradition in Belgium. A whole culture of the beer can be brought to life, not only the local beers from Brussels, but beers from all over Belgium can be presented as well. Even the international brewing activities of Belgian brewers can enforce that image.

In the future, a tourist leaving Brussels will have had its first impression of the richness and diversity of beers and traditions in our country and will definitely be convinced: “Brussels is the Beer Capital of the World, well indeed !”

Sven Gatz, MP for the Flemish Parliament

Brussels, February 25th 2008