

WHY SHOULD I GO TO BRUSSELS



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THE CITY YOU DEFINITELY NEED TO
VISIT BEFORE YOU TURN 30 (OR 130)





THIS IS WHY!

Brussels, the capital of Europe, is one of those cities that continues to surprise. You may not always be able to put your finger on it, but that's exactly part of its charm. Made up of nineteen municipalities, no neighbourhood is the same. Take a walk, and the look and feel can change dramatically along the way: one end of a street might feel chic, with elegant houses and parks, while the other has a more student-like vibe. People from all backgrounds and nationalities mingle, making Brussels one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world, where it truly feels like everyone can be themselves.

Although it isn't as big as London or Paris, Brussels has a festive energy, with lively bars and restaurants across the city. Its compact size makes it easy to explore on foot – stroll through the streets, take in the highlights, relax in one of its many parks, visit fascinating museums, and enjoy a good local beer or a glass of natural wine along the way. In recent years, trendy cafés, wine bars, and restaurants have been popping up across the city, especially in neighbourhoods like Dansaert, Ixelles, Saint-Gilles, and Forest.

Brussels is still quite affordable. Hostels and hotels are reasonably priced, food and drinks won't break the bank, and for those travelling on a budget, the city is perfect for some serious vintage shopping. If you're willing to embrace the city's somewhat unpolished side, you can have a fantastic and unforgettable time – and you'll likely want to come back for more.

CONTENTS

MUNICIPALITIES 8 PRACTICAL INFO 12



FOOD AND DRINKS 104 GOING OUT 128



WHEN TO TRAVEL 30 LIFE IN BRUSSELS 40



GREEN BRUSSELS 172 OUTSIDE OF BRUSSELS 184



SHOPPING 142



Index 188 Who made this book? 191-192

MUNICIPALITIES

Officially known as the Brussels-Capital Region, Brussels is made up of 19 different municipalities, or *communes*. Each commune has its own core personality and feeling. Here, we focus on the areas you're most likely to explore.

Historical Centre

Brussels' centre may be busy, but it's not to be missed. Home to the stunning Grand Place, the Town Hall, Manneken Pis, and the Royal Gallery of Saint Hubert, it's filled with narrow streets, shops, cafés, traditional Belgian restaurants, and great nightlife.

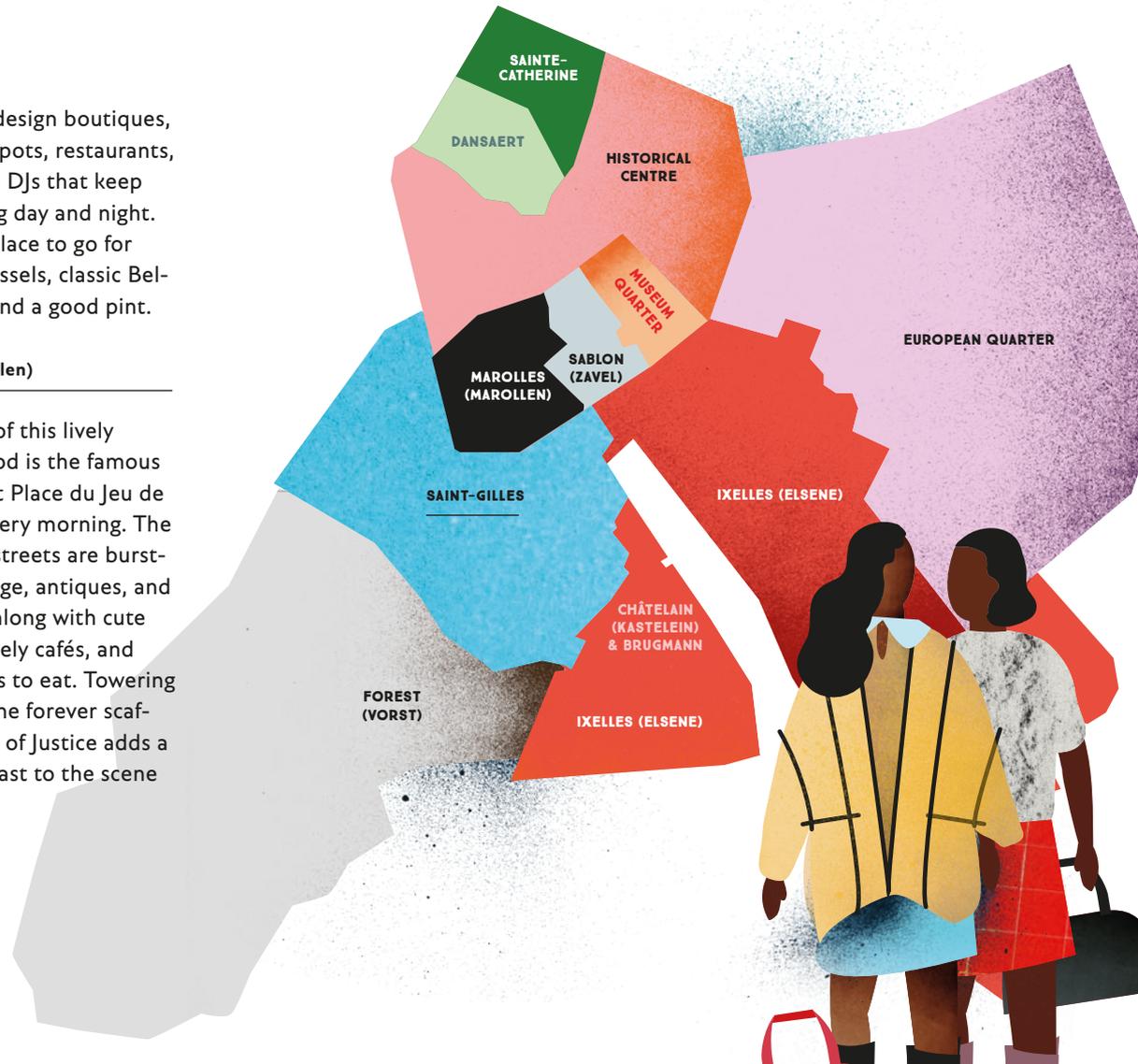
Dansaert & Sainte-Catherine

Creative and full of energy, these neighbouring districts are packed with fashion,

vintage, and design boutiques, great coffee spots, restaurants, and bars with DJs that keep things buzzing day and night. It's also the place to go for fresh fish, mussels, classic Belgian dishes, and a good pint.

Marolles (Marollen)

At the heart of this lively neighbourhood is the famous flea market at Place du Jeu de Balle, held every morning. The surrounding streets are bursting with vintage, antiques, and thrift shops, along with cute boutiques, lively cafés, and relaxed places to eat. Towering above it all, the forever scaffolded Palace of Justice adds a striking contrast to the scene below.



Sablon (Zavel)

One of Brussels' most upscale neighbourhoods, known for elegant galleries, restaurants, and shops. But don't be put off, there's plenty to enjoy on a modest budget, from sights and friendly cafés to affordable places to eat and drink.

Museum Quarter

Dedicated to art in all its forms, from Old Masters to modern and contemporary works, and from Belgian history to musical instruments and rare books, this area is also home to Brussels Park. The park is bordered by two major landmarks: the Royal Palace and the Palais de la Nation, seat of the Belgian Federal Parliament.

European Quarter

The heart of the EU, home to the European Parliament and the Berlaymont Building. Beyond offices, you'll find interesting museums, lush parks, and a lively after-work scene, especially on Thursday evenings at Place du Luxembourg.

Ixelles (Elsene)

Young professionals flock here, creating a lively atmosphere with cool bars and modern dining spots. Much of the action centres around Place Flagey, home to the iconic Art Deco Radio House and the always-busy Café Belga. Often called Brussels' 'second centre', the area offers a great mix of shops, from big fashion names to charming independent boutiques.

Châtelain (Kastelein) & Brugmann

These are some of Brussels' more well-to-do neighbourhoods. Châtelain is best known for its lively Wednesday food market at Place Châtelain, as well as Horta Museum. In the nearby, more residential, Brugmann area, you'll find the elegant Avenue Lepoutre, along with great restaurants, bars, bookshops, and high-end fashion boutiques.

Saint-Gilles

A lively, eclectic neighbourhood where students, artists, migrants, and locals mingle. People gather on the terraces at Saint-Gilles Square, while the area also offers flea markets and impressive Art Nouveau buildings.

Forest (Vorst)

Next to Saint-Gilles and Châtelain, this residential area includes Brussels' highest point, Altitude 100, and offers plenty of places to eat and drink. Forest Park and nearby Duden Park are perfect for strolls or picnics with scenic views.



**PRACTICAL
INFO**

TRAVEL

Travelling by train

Brussels has several train stations served by both domestic and international lines. Brussels Midi is the largest and acts as a major hub, with Eurostar and other international trains to Paris, Amsterdam, London, Berlin, and Luxembourg stopping there. The station is quite large and has several shops. It can feel a bit chaotic, so make sure to arrive well ahead to catch your train.

Travelling by bus

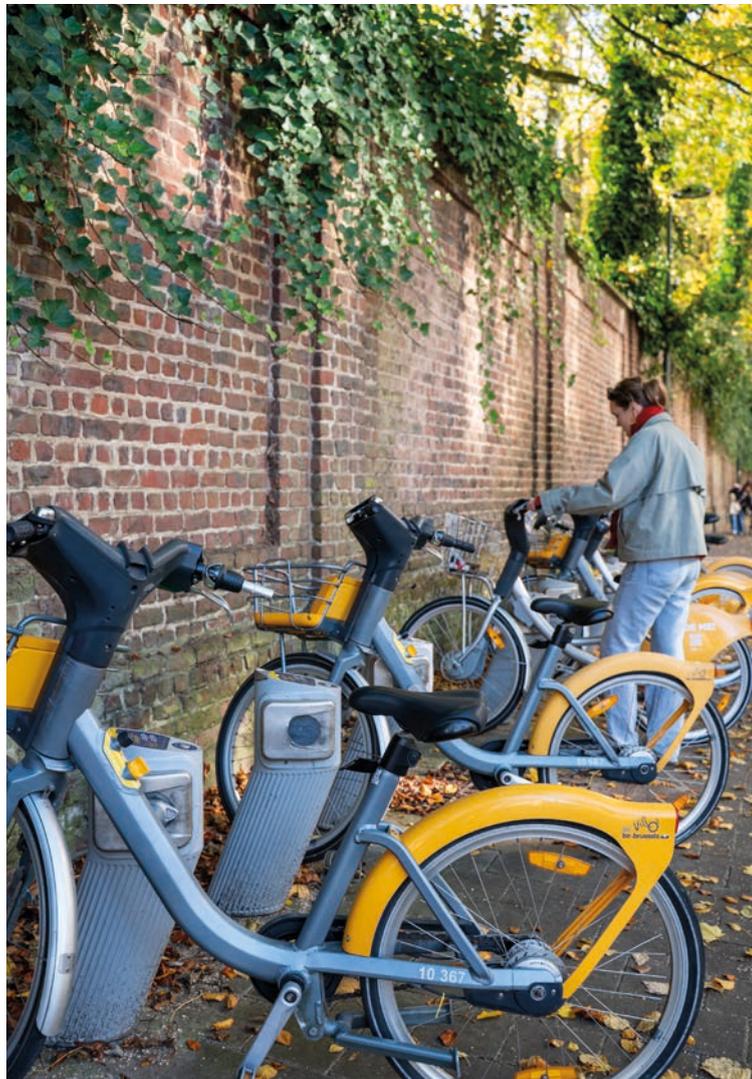
Several bus companies offer affordable connections to and from Brussels from nearby cities and neighbouring countries, such as FlixBus. Visit [flixbus.com](https://www.flixbus.com) to plan your trip.

Travelling by car

Driving in Brussels can be quite challenging. The ring road around the city is frequently congested, even outside peak hours, largely due to the seemingly endless roadworks. Navigating the city's notorious tunnels isn't much fun either. Parking, particularly in the city centre, is both limited and expensive. A practical alternative is to use one of the Park & Ride (P+R) facilities on the outskirts of Brussels. You can find locations and more details at parking.brussels.

From and to the airport

Many travellers arrive in Brussels via its international airport, Zaventem, located about 12 km northwest of the city centre. From the airport, you can reach the city by train, bus, or taxi.



The train is often the fastest option, as traffic in and around Brussels can be notoriously heavy, especially during rush hour. Visit brusselsairport.be to compare transport options and choose the one that suits you best.

Public transport

Brussels has a reliable public transport network with plenty of options for getting around the city. You can travel by metro, tram, or bus, and between May and October, a waterbus also operates along the Senne canal. To easily plan your journeys and avoid missing connections, download the free Floya app, which brings together all mobility providers and allows you to purchase tickets directly. You can even unlock e-scooters and e-bikes or book taxis through the app. Visit floya.brussels for more information. The metro, tram, and bus services (STIB/MIVB) run

from about 5am until around midnight. On Friday and Saturday nights, Noctis night buses are also available to get you home safely after a night out. More information can be found at stib-mivb.be.

If you're planning to spend a few days in Brussels, one of the most affordable ways to get around is by using a MOBIB card and loading it with 10-journey tickets. As a tourist, you might also consider the Brussels Card, which includes free access to public transport, free entry to many museums, and discounts on numerous attractions. If you'll be staying longer, a Monthly Pass of Brupass could be the most cost-effective option. Students aged 12 to 24 can enjoy significant discounts on public transport. For more details, visit stib-mivb.be.

Contactless payment is also available on trams, metros,

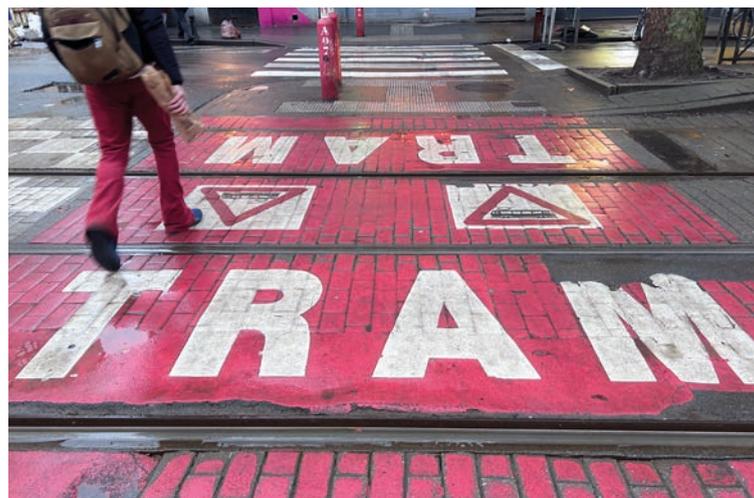
and buses. Just use your debit card, credit card or phone when you enter.

Cycling and e-scooters

Brussels isn't naturally bike-friendly due to its traffic and hilly terrain, but in recent years, many cycle lanes have been added, and more cyclists are starting to take advantage of them. Several bike-sharing schemes offer both regular and electric bikes at numerous docking stations across the city. Villo! provides various

plans and attractive offers (villo.be).

For more flexibility, you can turn to mobility companies like Lime, Dott, and Bolt, which offer e-bikes and e-scooters that aren't tied to docking stations. Simply download the app and follow the instructions. Be sure to park your vehicle at a designated location. For your safety, it's recommended that you wear a helmet when cycling or riding an e-scooter.





WHERE TO STAY

Brussels offers many affordable hostels and hotels, but the surrounding areas are not always ideal. We recommend avoiding accommodation near the Brussels-Midi railway station. You should also not focus solely on the city centre, as hip and lively neighbourhoods Ixelles and Saint-Gilles offer good, affordable places to stay too. Our suggestions are centrally located and in good neighbourhoods.

Latroupe Grand Place Hostel

*Boulevard Anspach/
Anspachlaan 165,
Historical Centre,
latroupe.com*

On a pedestrian shopping street and close to Manneken Pis, this clean hostel offers both private and shared rooms, many with private bathrooms. They often put on fun activities and events, such as karaoke, beer pong, and musical performances. They have a small outdoor space too.

Sleep Well Youth Hostel

*Rue de Damier Dam-
bordstraat 23, Historical
Centre, sleepwell.be*

This basic but spacious hostel is not far from the Grand Place. It offers private rooms as well as larger six-bed shared dorms. Be aware that larger rooms are mixed-gender.

2Go4 Hostels: The Classic & The Legacy

Historical Centre, 2go4.be

The public spaces of these small hostels feel like cosy living rooms. The Classic, located just around the corner from the Grand Place, has a more formal look and feel than The Legacy,

which is situated just north of the city centre. There are private bedrooms, as well as mixed and female-only dorms. There is also a kitchen for preparing simple meals.

The Usual

*Boulevard Adolphe
Max/Aldolphe Maxlaan
107, Historical Centre,
theusual.com*

Powered by green energy and committed to supporting good causes, this is a hotel with a clear and meaningful mission. So, if you want to treat yourself while staying in an eco-responsible way, this is the place. Rooms are stylish and comfortable, equipped with everything you need, while the atmosphere is effortlessly cool. Add great food and drinks at the welcoming U Bar, and heading back to your hotel is a pleasure.

BX. Downtown Hostel

*Rue du Vieux Marché
aux Grains/Oude
Graanmarktstraat 10,
Dansaert &
Sainte-Catherine,
bxdowntown.be*

This recently opened hostel is located right in the heart of fun and lively Dansaert and Sainte-Catherine. Rooms are clean, beds are comfortable, and breakfast is good. With plenty of restaurants and bars just around the corner, what more could you ask for?

Meininger Hotel

*Quai de Hainaut/
Henegouwenkaai 33,
Molenbeek Saint-Jean
(near Dansaert &
Sainte-Catherine)
meininger-hotels.com*

The slightly raw location along the Brussels Canal perfectly matches the character of this former brewery. In this hotel with a hostel look and feel, you can book rooms for up to six people, all equipped with private bathrooms. Across the canal lies the Dansaert & Sainte-Catherine district, full of shops, bars, and restaurants, while the Historical Centre is also nearby.

**B&B Hotel Centre
Louise**

*Rue Paul Spaak/Paul
Spaaklaan 15, Ixelles,
hotel-bb.com*

With large comics on the walls, yellow bathrooms, and colourful furniture, you immediately feel a festive Brussels vibe at Louise. Add to that the fact that it's in a safe neighbourhood with plenty of great places to eat and drink, and your stay can't go wrong. Really good value for money!

Hygge Hotel

*Rue des Drapiers/
Lakenweversstraat 31-33,
Ixelles, hyggehôtel.be*

A beautiful hotel that's also affordable: Hygge Hotel is designed by Scandinavian designers, featuring soft colours, simple wooden furniture, and the Danish concept of *hygge* (cosiness). It is close to the elegant shopping street Avenue Louise and not far from the hip and happening Place Fernand Cocq.

Jam Hotel

*Chaussée de Charleroi/
Charleroisesteenweg 132,
Saint-Gilles, jamhotels.eu
Lakenweversstraat 31-33,
Ixelles, hyggehôtel.be*

A cosy and affordable hotel in a great neighbourhood, with the added bonus of a small rooftop swimming pool and a rooftop bar offering wonderful views. There's also a Japanese-style spa where they serve Japanese spirits and teas, as well as an Asian-inspired restaurant. Rooms range from double to the mega six-person bedroom.

Vintage Hotel

*Rue Dejoncker/
Dejonckerstraat 45, Saint-
Gilles, vintagehotel.be*

Seventies-style wallpaper and carpets, quirky furniture, and the chance to sleep in a retro caravan in the hotel's courtyard set the tone at this unconventional hotel. It's tucked away in a small alley behind Place Stéphanie, an area full of shops, bars, and restaurants.

↓ VINTAGE HOTEL



A&O Brussels

*Boulevard du Roi
Albert II/Koning Albert
II-laan 44, North of
Historical Centre,
aohostels.com*

This modern hotel-hostel in the financial district just north of the city centre offers affordable private and shared rooms. A bit off the beaten path, but you're still just moments away from the cool Tour & Taxis area, with a lively food court, shops, and green spaces. The Historical Centre is also close by.



GOOD TO KNOW

Money

Belgium, including Brussels, uses the euro. Credit and debit cards are widely accepted throughout the city, and contactless payments are common. However, it's still useful to carry some cash, as small purchases may only be payable in cash. It's also a good idea to keep a few coins at hand for street performers.

Language

Belgium is a multilingual country where Dutch, French, and – on a much smaller scale – German are spoken. Brussels is officially bilingual in French and Dutch, but in everyday life French clearly dominates. Younger people often speak English as well, frequently even better than Dutch, which

is quite remarkable given that two-thirds of Belgium's population speaks Flemish Dutch and that Brussels is geographically situated in the Flemish region.

Charging

Belgium uses a 230-volt power supply and a type E plug, which features two round pins and a hole for the grounding pin.

Exploring

Brussels is a surprisingly hilly city. Its compact centre, with charming cobblestone streets, is best explored on foot. To reach the other districts, however, it's easiest to hop on a tram or metro, or use an electric scooter or bike. Great restaurants, shops, and sights are spread throughout the city.

Just be cautious in traffic – Brussels is very car-dominated, and bike lanes aren't always clearly marked.

Weather

Brussels has a temperate maritime climate, with cool, often wet winters and pleasantly mild summers. In recent years, however, summer temperatures have occasionally climbed to around 30°C or more. Don't think Brussels isn't worth visiting in winter – locals enjoy cafés, bars, and restaurants all year round.

Museums

Many museums in Brussels require an admission fee, but several welcome visitors free of charge. In addition, some museums offer free entry on the first Sunday or Wednesday of each month. Visit brusselmuseums.be to see which museums are included. Under 26s often enjoy reduced rates.

Brussels Card

The Brussels Card is a convenient option if you plan to visit the city's major attractions and museums or explore Brussels with a hop-on hop-off bus tour. It provides free or discounted entry to many museums and sights, along with savings at selected shops, restaurants, tours, and workshops. It includes free access to public transport, helping you cut down on travel costs during your stay. You can purchase the card online (brussels-city-cards.com & visit.brussels).

Restaurants

Brussels residents love to brunch, lunch, or dine out. To guarantee a table, it's best to make a reservation. Tipping varies by venue, but around 10% is standard.



Food

Locals, expats, and tourists all love traditional Belgian dishes and delicacies such as fries, mussels, waffles, and chocolate. Belgians – and Brussels residents – are very proud of their fries, which are traditionally eaten at a *fritkot*, *friterie*, or *frituur*: kiosks where you queue to order. There are many places to enjoy traditional Belgian fare like *moules-frites* (mussels with fries), *stoemp* (mashed potatoes with vegetables and meat), or shrimp croquettes. Classic Belgian cuisine is largely inspired by French cooking. Of course, there are also many modern restaurants serving food from around the world, ranging from simple and traditional to very elegant.

Beer and wine

When you think of Brussels (or Belgium), you think of beer. Belgium is one of the

most famous beer countries, and Brussels is often called the beer capital of the world. It's no surprise, then, that you can enjoy a good pint almost anywhere in the city. Brussels is also home to quite a few breweries, and over the past decade, more and more modern microbreweries have been opening. But it's not just beer; the Bruxellois have also become fans of natural wine, which is made without added sulphites. Many cool natural wine bars have opened, often serving excellent small plates alongside their carefully selected wines.

Shopping

Brussels has two main shopping areas: the city centre and Ixelles. Downtown you'll find a mix of popular chain stores and plenty of vintage shops. Over in Ixelles, particularly around Avenue Louise, the vibe is more upscale, with stylish boutiques

and high-end brands. For something a bit more unique, head to the Dansaert quarter or the area around Rue Bailli in Châtelain, home to independent shops, small boutiques, and some vintage. If you're a true vintage lover, you'll love the Marolles, home to the famous flea market and countless vintage shops.

Opening hours

Most shops open from 10am to 6 or 7pm, and most supermarkets operate between 8am and 8pm, but it's always best to confirm hours in advance. Brussels observes both Catholic and national holidays, so be sure to check opening hours on

Sundays and public holidays when planning your visit. In August, many locals and expats head off on holiday. As a result, some independent shops and restaurants may be closed, especially in neighbourhoods outside the city centre.

Nightlife

Brussels has a vibrant party and nightlife scene. The European capital offers something for everyone – from bars with DJs and late-night hours to clubs, dance festivals, and raves. Keep in mind that the legal drinking age is 16 for beer and wine and 18 for spirits. Always carry photo ID when going out.

WHEN TO TRAVEL

