

Bruges & Amsterdam Itinerary

November 11-14

I took this 4-day/3-night trip with my father over the November 11/Veterans' Day **long weekend**. We were looking for a **city destination** so if the weather was not so good, we'd have more indoor activity options. As it turned out, we did have some rain, but both hotels had enormous wind-proof umbrellas for guests' use so the rain didn't stop us!

Trains

Paris-Bruges 7h58-10h33 Thursday
Bruges-Amsterdam 15h31-18h43 Friday
Amsterdam-Paris 18h54-23h35 Sunday

Between conductors' bad instructions, flooding, the over-bookings during the long weekend, and some human error* on our part, we missed two of the connecting trains and nearly missed the other (such that we had to maneuver a bit to actually get seats) but the good news is that the conductors are relatively understanding. If your train is late and you miss the connection, they'll usually let you jump on the next train. Unfortunately, that train may not be a direct train. I recommend booking **direct train trips** whenever possible on long weekends, and get **reserved seats** if possible, even if it means paying a little extra.

*There are two "main" train stations in Brussels and most trains stop at both: Brussels Central and Brussels Midi (which is the same as Brussels Zuid). Brussels Central is the better stop for visiting the city center, but any connecting trains will likely be through Brussels Midi/Zuid. There are frequent trains from one to the other, it's only about a 7-minute trip, and no one checks tickets between the two stops, but if you're looking for a connecting train in Midi, make sure you're paying attention!

Hotels

Bruges: Hotel Prinsenhof Bruges
Ontvangersstraat 9 • 8000 Bruges • Belgium
tel: +32 (0)50 342690
e-mail: info@prinsenhof.com
<http://www.prinsenhof.com/page.asp?iTaalID=3>

Amsterdam: Ambassade Hotel
Herengracht 341 ~ 1016 AZ Amsterdam
Telefoon: +31 20 5550222
info@ambassade-hotel.nl
<http://www.ambassade-hotel.nl/en>

Neither of these hotels is cheap but both were excellent; I would highly recommend them. Both are elegant establishments with extremely **friendly and professional service**, high **quality rooms** and bathrooms, fantastic **central locations**. Aside from taxis to and from the train stations in both cities, we walked everywhere (though if you haven't noticed by now, I'm a big fan of walking). Overall, **excellent value for the price**.

Date	To	Flight/Hotel/Car Details	Cost	Comments
Thurs, Nov 11	Bruges	<i>Train</i> Paris (Gare du Nord)-Bruges 7h58-10h33 <i>Hotel:</i> Hotel Prinsenhof Bruges Excellent location, just a 5 minute walk from the main Market Square <i>Dinner:</i> De Vlaamsche Pot Helmstraat 3 8000 Brugge Tel. 050 34 00 86 http://www.devlaamshepot.be We had not planned to eat here, but it was recommended by the hotel and right next door. The decor is charming and cozy (although the angel theme is a bit overdone) and they do a great job with the local specialities. Make sure you have a lot of room in your stomach—the local fare is not lite!	Train: €3.30 per person Hotel: €165.00 (total, taxes not included)	Map to get from train station to hotel: http://www.prinsenhof.com/page.asp?iTaalID=3&iPageID=211!718! Taxi (around €10) or bus n°12 to Zilverpand. Keep going in the direction the bus was coming from. At about 200m on the left hand side, you arrive at Ontvangersstraat St. One of the big pluses to staying at Hotel Prinsenhof (aside from the umbrellas!) was that guests staying mid-week can take a free walking tour that leaves from the city museum at 3pm each afternoon Monday – Thursday. We took advantage and ended up with a semi-private 3-hour tour!

Fri, Nov 12	Bruges/ Amsterdam	<p><i>Train</i> Bruges-Amsterdam 15h31-18h43</p> <p><i>Hotel:</i> Ambassade Hotel Location could not be better—on a quite canal in Jordaan by the 9 famous shopping streets</p> <p><i>Dinner:</i> Tempo Doeloe (Indonesian) Utrechtsestraat 75 http://www.tempodoeloerestaurant.nl/en1.htm</p> <p>This place was recommended by a friend living in Amsterdam and I am thankful for the recommendation! As advised, we chose the rijstafel or rice table—we went for the top of the line one and got about 32 different small dishes to share, ranging from mild to spicy to “where is the nearest cold shower, NOW!?” Reserve ahead.</p>	<p>Train: €80.60 per person</p> <p>Hotel: €195/night total</p>	<p>General tourist information: http://www.ambassade-hotel.nl/en/amsterdam-general-information</p> <p>Van Gogh Museum open Fridays til 10pm: http://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/vgm/index.jsp?page=240&lang=en</p> <p>We unfortunately ran out of time, but on my next visit, I'd check out the World War II walking tour offered by Historywalks.eu/Amsterdam (Contact Peter Schaaapman at info@historywalks.eu or +31(0)64-0983208). It's 2 hours and departs at 13h15 each day from the Boathouse near the Anne Frank House (call ahead to be sure the time hasn't changed!) The Boathouse (Leliegracht 51, Tel. +31(0)20-3379733) also organizes canal tours and walking tours of Jordaan.</p>
Sat, Nov 13	Amsterdam	<p><i>Hotel:</i> Ambassade Hotel</p> <p><i>Dinner:</i> Lieve Belgian Restaurant (Belgian, smaller dishes) Herengracht 88 http://www.restaurantlieve.nl/</p> <p>Lieve was recommended by my mother who had been in Amsterdam the year before. It's an interesting concept: when you reserve, you choose the style of your dinner (gourmet 5-course, somewhat more casual 3-course or a variety of small plates). Having to make such a crucial decision before you even see the place can be a bit overwhelming (it sure stressed me out) but in hindsight I don't think you can go wrong. Check out the menu just for kicks. It's not the most amazing food I've ever had (though my father says his dessert was one of the best desserts he has ever had) but it's solid and the overall experience makes it a place I'd definitely go back to. Remember, it's a Belgian restaurant, so don't make the same mistake I did and ask for a local Dutch beer.</p>	<p>Hotel: €195/night</p>	<p>Can rent bikes—reserve with front desk (€15/day). The threat of rain prevented us from renting bikes, though we did take a canal boat tour recommended by the hotel. The canal tours are a good place to start, orienting you to the city.</p> <p><i>Amsterdam Museums:</i></p> <p>Anne Frank House (9am-7pm, can buy ticket for specific time online) Prinsengracht 263-267 http://www.annefrankhuis.nl/</p> <p>We bought our tickets for the Anne Frank House online 4 days in advance and there were very few time slots still available. The tours were already sold out. I'd reserve weeks ahead if you can. You can just show up but expect to stand in line for a good hour. When you arrive with a pre-printed ticket, it isn't quite clear where to go. Don't stand in the line. Knock on the door/ring the bell on the glass door to the left of the door with the long line and you can pass through on the left-hand side of the ticket booth inside.</p> <p>The Rembrandt House Museum (10am-5pm) Jodenbreestraat 4 http://www.rembrandthuis.nl/cms_pages/index_main.html</p> <p>Rijksmuseum (9am-6pm)—might not be worth it though because most of it's under renovation til 2013 Jan Luijkenstraat 1 http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/</p> <p>Van Gogh Museum (10am-6pm, til 10pm Fridays) Paulus Potterstraat 7 http://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/vgm/index.jsp</p> <p>One big advantage of the Ambassade Hotel—you can buy tickets for the Van Gogh Museum and several other museums (but <i>not</i> the Anne Frank House) from the front desk and skip the line when you arrive.</p>
Sun, Nov 14	Amsterdam/ Paris	<p><i>Train</i> Amsterdam-Paris (Gare du Nord) 18h54-23h35</p>	<p>Train: €117.40 pp</p>	

Restaurant recommendations

These are restaurants I looked up online or that were suggested to me before we left. I didn't try all of them so I can't say whether those I didn't visit are really worth trying!

Bruges

Den Dyver (Belgian, more expensive but Lonely Planet rates it the #1 thing to do in Bruges): <http://www.dyver.be> (Did not try)

Het Strijdershuis (Belgian brasserie): http://www.hotel-koffieboontje.be/SH/index_SH.htm (Did not try)

www.resto.be (*Another resource for restaurants in Belgium*)

Amsterdam

**Tempo Doeloe (Indonesian) Utrechtsestraat 75 : <http://www.tempodoeloerestaurant.nl/en1.htm>. Order the "rijsttafels". See above—highly recommended

**Lieve Belgian Restaurant (Belgian, smaller dishes) Herengracht 88. <http://www.restaurantlieve.nl/> See above—highly recommended

Indrapura (Indonesian): <http://www.indrapura.nl/> (Did not try)

De Knijp (Dutch/Continental): <http://www.diningcity.com/amsterdam/deknijp/en/index.html> (Did not try)

Tomaz Café (Dutch): <http://www.tomaz.nl> (Did not try)