

THE SWEET LIFE

Brussels can be a foodie's delight, if you know where to go

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Brussels is a schizophrenic city — it's the capital of Flanders, Belgium and the European Union. It is French speaking though it's in Flemish-speaking Flanders! Besides the exquisite architecture and art that you can enjoy here, it's also a gourmand's paradise.

Snail, local delicacies!

Belgians linger over large, hearty, multi-course meals that combine northern heartiness with French style. We amble through Galeries Royale de Saint Hubert, one of the oldest shopping arcades of Europe with high vaulted glass ceilings and ornate iron work, which has up-market shops and restaurants. Our atmospheric lunch here is at Taverne Du Passage, with liveried waiters and Belgian-sized huge portions of escargots (snails) and risotto. This city sure knows its food.

There is the touristy Rue de Bouchers, which used to be home to the city's butchers. Today it's a maze of competing restaurants, spilling into the street offering seafood, with the fresh catch displayed attractively on mounds of ice.

Invented French fries?

Mussels is the most iconic dish here and is served in large pots, with a broth made from white wine or beer. The Belgians claim that they invented the 'French fries' and here they are called Frites.



Delirium Cafe with beers from all around the world!

Roadside stands sell them in large paper cones with a dollop of mayonnaise. Waffles dusted with powdered sugar are another Belgian favourite, which we enjoy with a variety of toppings ranging from Nutella and honey, to cream and fruits.

Go tipsy

Beer is the national drink and there are more than 700 beers with their own logos and every beer even has its own special glass. Beers can be dark, potent, Trappist brews (yes, the merry monks make them even today) or like the Framboise or Kriek be light tasting, with fruity flavours. Of particular interest is the Kwak — a glass shaped like a test tube placed in a wooden stand. We visit the Delirium Café, which had more than 2,000 varieties of beers from across the world (a Guinness Record). Copper vats, old wooden tables and a ceiling covered with vintage beer trays, this is Brussels that you shouldn't miss.

Chocoholic's paradise

Brussels, like every city in Belgium is a chocoholic's paradise. Leonidas and Godiva are Belgian brands and household names. Chocolates here are not mass-produced, but made by hand. There are



Chocolatier Laurent Gerbaud with his exotic creations

many exclusive, family-run chocolatiers who use no sugar, preservatives or artificial colours. Neuhaus, the inventor of the praline is the oldest chocolate shop in Belgium. We visit their flagship store. His wife was the one who is credited with inventing the ballotin, the cardboard box in which chocolates are layered even today. Grand sablon, is a small square, with the Notre Dame

Church at one end. The streets lining it, have some of the best chocolate shops in the city, like Marcolini and Wittamer, which look more like Parisian boutiques than chocolate shops. Chandeliers, chocolates in glass cases, this is classy!

But our true 'Willy Wonka moment' is at the chocolaterie of Laurent Gerbaud, who makes a delectable mélange of dried fruits, salted nuts, dark chocolate and spices, influenced by his stint in the Orient. His candied orange with dark chocolate gives us an instant high and my tryst with this city ends with some excess baggage!

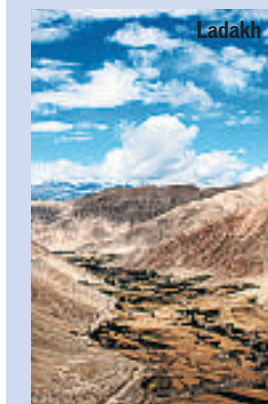
Escargots or snails are a local delicacy



Food Street- Rue de Bouchers

AROUNDTOWN

Go get your perfect picture



Ladakh is not just any destination. It's a place that is beyond fantastic landscapes or arduous journeys and has gathered much intrigue and inspired many photographers, leaving an imprint in their memories.

So what could be a more exciting than picking up your SLR cameras and starting on a photographic voyage? And with the Ladakh season on now, Getoffyourass is organising a Ladakh Photo Journey, 2011.

This journey is open to participants, who want to be part of a beginners level photography expedition to Ladakh's many offbeat trails.

The journey will begin on July 1 and will go on till July 11. For details, contact: supriya@getoffyourass.com or call 99806 55944.

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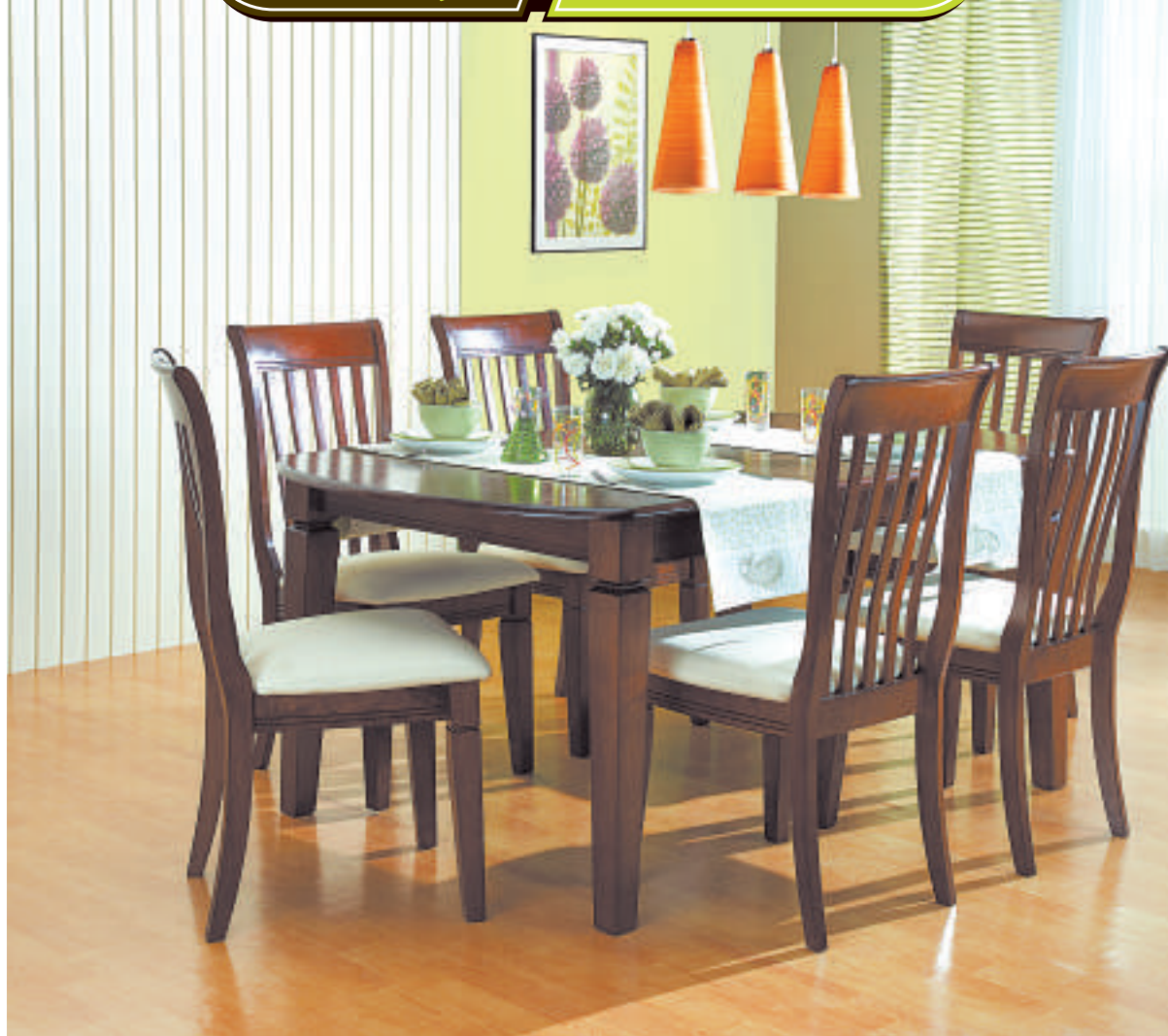
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