

3 TOWPATH

From the towpath you have a magnificent view of several former industrial buildings.

The imposing, three-storey building across the water used to be a cotton spinning mill. The Volksbelang cooperative took it over at the end of the 19th century. An industrial bakery there used to compete with the Vooruit socialist cooperative. Somewhat further on is a former linen weaving mill, where flax thread was woven into linen. This building was also taken over by the Volksbelang.

After the Second World War, the neighbourhood went into decline, but the industrial buildings started to be repurposed in the 1990s as modern offices and hotels.

4 ZUIVELBRUG

Across the water, just before the Zuivelbrug, is a large, square chimney dating from 1851. It originally belonged to the Goethals steam mill, where grain was ground into flour. Until the advent of the steam engine, people had relied largely on water and wind to mill their grain. From the second quarter of the 19th century, mechanical power was gradually introduced in the form of steam engines.

On the front façade of the building in Meersenersstraat is an attractive frieze depicting a horse mill and work in the mill and bakery. The last miller, Jacques Goethals, was still milling here until November 2008. Today the mill is a coffee house that also sells cakes.

5 STEPS LEADING TO THE WATER

Low-hulled ships and flat-bottomed boats known as 'schuiter' loaded and unloaded their cargoes at the 'watertrappen', the steps leading to the water, until well into the 19th century. You can still see a few such steps on the other side of the river, at the end of the narrow alleys between the backs of the houses on Langemunt.

6 CASTLE OF THE COUNTS

You can't miss this imposing fortress. The castle housed one of the city's first factories; several monasteries in the city had factories inside them as well. In the 19th century, there was a cotton spinning mill inside the Castle of the Counts. Later it housed a construction workshop as well, along with about 50 workers' cottages.

7 STRAPPING POST

For centuries the inland waterways that run through Ghent played a crucial role in transportation to and from the city. Once the Ghent-Terneuzen Canal had been dug in 1827, the port expanded to the north of the city, superseding the old trading port on the Graslei and Korenlei. The strapping post on the corner of Vleeshuistrael and Grasbrug is a final relic of the old port. You can see very clear traces of friction on it. Strapping posts were used when towing boats along the river with horses or manpower. Such posts stand at bends in the river. When taking the bend, the skipper would wind a rope around the post. By moving the rudder in the opposite direction, the skipper could prevent the boat from scraping the riverbank.



3. View of the industrial buildings on Waaistraat, 1942 © Ghent City Archive and © KIK-IRPA Brussels

10 VELDSTRAAT

Leading patrician families began to settle in the Veldstraat in the Middle Ages. They flaunted their power and prestige on this busy trade route by building imposing stone houses, sometimes known as 'stenen' (stones).

Later on, the street was dominated by fine mansions interspersed with luxurious shops. As time went by, industrialization also changed the way people spent their leisure time. The Veldstraat soon became synonymous with a vibrant social scene. The arrival of the large department stores changed the appearance of the Veldstraat yet again.

(Bershka, Veldstraat 56) Théâtre Pathé – later cinema Majestic – became a dance hall and cinema in 1910. The cinema was thoroughly renovated in 1938, when its impressive façade was added. It is a nice illustration of cinematic history in the Veldstraat.

(Kruidvat, Veldstraat 76) The Scala, later the Ancienne Belgique, staged circuses and variety shows as well as revues, operettas and orchestral concerts. Glance upwards as you go into the shop. The former interior is still partly visible.

(Uitbureau, Veldstraat 82) The Ghent cotton baron Judocus Clemmen built a neoclassical warehouse alongside his luxurious 'Hôtel de maître' in 1772. He used it to store textile products for his cotton printing works. The next owner of the buildings was the prominent printer Desiré-Jean Vander Haeghen (1798-1850). The 'Gazette van Gent' was printed here, one of the most widely read newspapers at the time. The last scion of the family of printers, Arnold Vander Haeghen, donated the Hotel Clemmen to the city.

(Galeria Inno, Veldstraat 86) This is the site of one of Ghent's first department stores: Grand Bazar. Look up for a moment. The stately façade dates from 1920.

11 KOUTER

In the 19th century, the Kouter was the ideal setting for the bourgeoisie to show off their wealth and splendour, with large mansions, stately linden trees and elegant benches.

The presence of the bourgeoisie also attracted a fancier class of hotels, restaurants and cafés to the square. They were joined by several societies and clubs of various political persuasions. Gradually the Kouter became a square where the bourgeoisie came to see and be seen, decked out in all their Sunday finery. The flower market is a popular attraction for visitors.

At the beginning of the 20th century, financial institutions started to make their mark on the Kouter. The imposing banks had spacious counter halls and prestigious reception areas on the ground floor. Now the financial institutions are gradually moving out of the city centre. The large buildings are being converted into residential accommodation.



6. The Castle of the Counts with houses and factories built onto it, early 20th century © Museum of Industry

8 GRASLEI AND KORENLEI

Today the Graslei and Korenlei are a magnet for tourists; a century ago, they were still a thriving inland harbour. Large boats and barges unloaded bales of cotton here. The cotton was transported to the city's warehouses and factories on two-wheeled trolleys.

9 ELECTRICAL SUBSTATION

Electricity began its inexorable rise in the early 1930s. The Ghent Electricity Department built dozens of electrical cabinets and substations.

This one was designed by the architect Jan-Albert De Bondt (1888-1969) in 1932, inspired by the expressionist brick architecture of the Amsterdam School. The substation is the first modernist building in the city's historic centre, with an appearance to suit the pioneering image of electricity. At the time, the building consisted of the substation itself, a payment department, offices and a foreman's house. The original design also featured another floor for radio broadcasting.

Substations are used to transform energy to a lower voltage, making it suitable for an underlying network.



8. The inner harbour between Graslei and Korenlei © Ghent City Archive



9. The modernist substation, 2019 © Corlazzoli



10. Veldstraat emerged as a nightlife district in the mid-20th century. Cinema Eldorado, Veldstraat 94. © State Archives Antwerp-Beveren



12 WAALSE KROOK

This peninsula at the Grote Huidvettershoek, partly surrounded by the River Scheldt and the Ketselvaart, was the ideal place for mediaeval tanners to set up their workshops. Later on several textile factories moved in, along with Louis Roelandt's gas factory (1824). Roelandt persuaded Ghent city council to switch to gas to light the streets and public buildings. The gas was distilled from oil and coal, in a process that released all kinds of hazardous substances. The ammonia fumes caused a very unpleasant smell. A nearby brewer regularly complained to the city council – probably with good reason – about noxious odours and the pollution of his well water.

More than 100 years after the closure of the gas factory (1881), the seriously polluted soil has now been decontaminated. Today De Krook houses laboratories, offices and the new city library.

1 MUSEUM OF INDUSTRY

Half a century ago, all you would have heard on this spot was the hellish racket of textile machines.

This place is first mentioned as a cotton spinning mill back in 1818. In 1905, the firm Desmet-Guequier built this factory here on the same lines as factories in Manchester. It was a solid brick building with a cast-iron structure, large windows and sawtooth roofs to allow in as much natural light as possible. The vaults and floors were made of stone to reduce the risk of fire.

Where you now see the garden with dye plants, there was originally a boiler house with boilers for the steam engine that drove the spinning machines.

The factory closed down in 1975. Today it houses the exciting Museum of Industry, where large and small stories from our turbulent industrial history come back to life. It's impressive and deafening!

Our tip: enjoy the very best view of Ghent city centre from the top floor of the museum.

2 HUIDEVETTERSKAAI

Strictly speaking, a 'huidenvetter' was someone whose job it was to rub fat into tanned animal skins. Later on the name took on the more general meaning of someone who turns skins into leather: in other words, a tanner.

In the 14th century, Huidvetterskaai was a hive of activity and the focal point of the tanning industry.



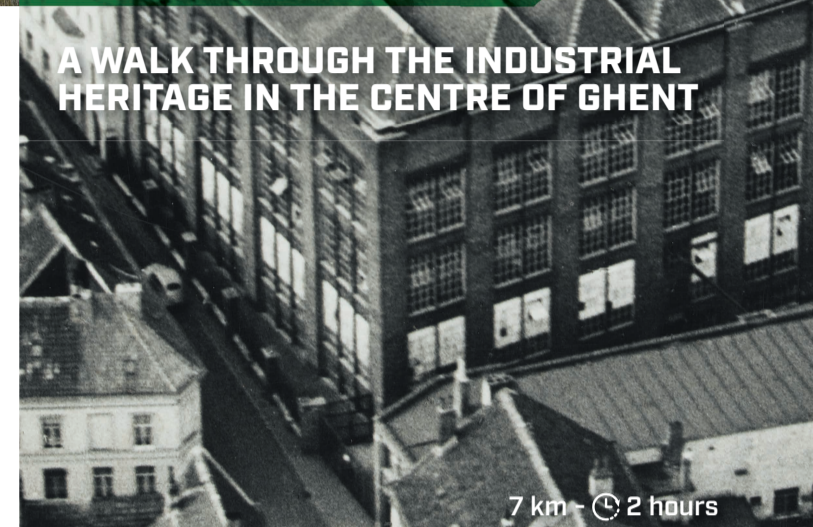
1. Formerly a textile factory, today the Museum of Industry, 2019 © Corlazzoli



7. Strapping post, 2019 © Corlazzoli



25. Detail of the bleachfields, Panoramic view of Ghent, 1534 © STAM



A WALK THROUGH THE INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE IN THE CENTRE OF GHENT

7 km - 2 hours

25 BLEKERIJSTRAAT

The name of this street refers to the numerous bleaching establishments based here from the 16th century onwards.

A 'blekerij' or bleaching establishment is a company or part of a company that brightens the colour of yarn, textiles and linen. For centuries this was done at bleach fields. Chemical processes were introduced in the 19th century. That meant that bleaching was responsible for considerable water and soil pollution.

The striking building adjacent to number 50 used to be a copper foundry. Today the Koperijetery is a centre for the performing arts.

FIND OUT MORE

Has the walk made you eager to learn more? That's great. There is so much to explore in Ghent's industrial history. Feel free to visit the library at the Museum of Industry, with its treasury of knowledge and expertise in the field of Belgian and international heritage. You can also approach the ETWIE centre of expertise with any questions you might have about technical, scientific and industrial heritage in a broad sense.

Discover the wide range of other activities, walks and workshops offered by the Museum of Industry at www.industriemuseum.be.

TRACES OF INDUSTRIAL GHENT

A WALK THROUGH THE INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE IN THE CENTRE OF GHENT

Few people can imagine Ghent the way it was a hundred years ago, full of smoking factory chimneys and densely populated tenements.

The flourishing industrial city of the time has left us a few gems of heritage that we can explore today. So why not take a walk to discover the amazing industrial history of the city?

You will also find a few great places along the way to stop for a snack and a drink, have a peaceful break or – why not? – take a selfie.

Have fun!



19 VAN EYCK BATHS

The Van Eyck baths opened on 1 August 1886, as the first indoor swimming pool in Flanders. The unique baths were hugely popular in the densely populated working-class neighbourhood. The Lousbergs textile factory a little further along provided the hot water. There are also individual bathtubs, and even today you can come here to take a bath.

The magnificent art deco interior was added in 1932. In 1995 the splendid bath house was given listed status. During renovation, the decision was made to preserve and repair the original 19th century outer façade and the 1930s interior.

The façade still bears the original inscriptions 'Bains' and 'Badhuis'. A new entrance building was added at the rear. You can get a glimpse of the swimming pool through the portholes in the hall.



19. Inside view of the Van Eyck swimming pool before the renovation to Art Deco style, 1927 © Ghent City Archive



24. De Centrale, 2019 © Corlazzoli

24 DE CENTRALE

In the 20th century, electricity became a part of daily life. In 1924 the City of Ghent decided to build a power station on the Ham, which generated electric power with two turbo-alternators from 1926 onwards. In 1958 the city's heating system came into use. The energy from the power station's residual steam heated several hospitals and other public buildings (and it still does today!). At the end of the 1960s, the first group of diesel alternators came into operation. At 25 megawatt, they were the most powerful in the world in their day. In the late 1980s the boiler rooms, unloading equipment for coal and the chimneys were dismantled.

The most recent part of the building has been turned into the SPE power station (*Samenwerkende Vereniging voor Productie van Electriciteit*). Since the end of 2011, EDF Luminus has operated a steam and gas power station here. The intercultural centre De Centrale occupies the remaining space. Step inside for a moment and admire the fine art deco interior.



23. The 'beluik' on Regattenlaan in the 1970s © AMSAB, Marcus Haenebolcke collection

INNER COURTYARD AT THE HOUSE OF ALIJN (KRAANLEI 65)

The House of Alijn, a museum of daily life, has a café and a large outdoor terrace in a delightful inner courtyard. It is the only almshouse to have been preserved in Ghent, a charity institution where the old and sick were cared for.

ESRA (SINT-JORISKAAL 17)

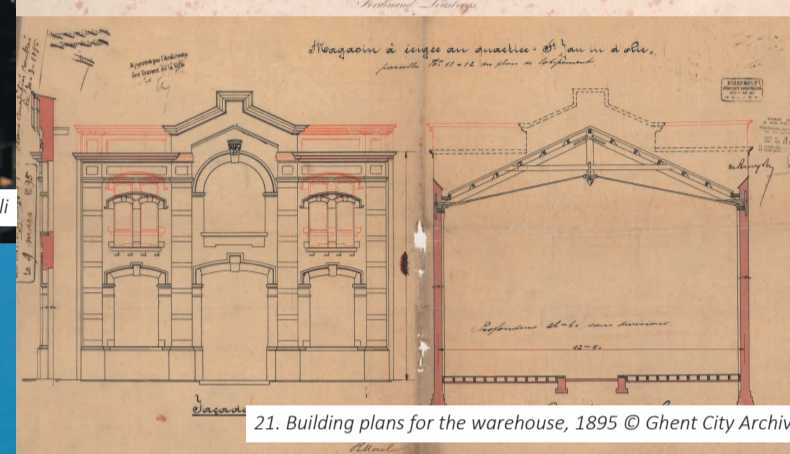
The best kebabs in Ghent! Tried and tested by the entire staff of the Museum of Industry.

18 LOUSBERGS COTTON SPINNING MILL

The Lousbergs family, originally from the Netherlands, built a veritable textile empire in the 19th century. The Lousbergs cotton spinning mill on the Reep was the largest in Ghent in the mid-19th century, employing some 1,500 workers.



18. Lithograph of the Lousbergs cotton spinning mill, 1840 © Ghent City Archive



21. Building plans for the warehouse, 1895 © Ghent City Archive

20 EXCELSIOR BREWERY

The blue and white stained-glass window on the corner of Ikmeesterstraat and Nieuwpoort is the very last vestige of the Excelsior brewery. Excelsior was one of the largest of Ghent's many breweries.

21 CAMPO NIEUWPOORT

The CAMPO arts centre building used to be a warehouse for La Lys flax factory. The factory itself was located just over a mile away, in the Brugse Poort district.

22 DIERMAN TEXTILE FACTORY

The Dierman-Seth cotton spinning mill on the Ham opened in the early 19th century. The oldest part of the building dates from 1828. In 1928 the company expanded along Keizer Leopoldstraat, adding a Manchester-type factory building. The skeleton is made of reinforced concrete. Relief carvings can be seen at certain places on the walls, decorated with stylized bobbins. They are a reference to the building's function. Originally it had four storeys, with a weaving mill and twisting department on the ground floor. The three upper storeys were used for storage. Today the textile company Milliken manufactures technical textiles here. Many of its products are ultra-specialised synthetics. They are used for all kinds of applications, from space suits to car tyres.

23 TENEMENT IN ZONDER-NAAMSTRAAT

In the 1960s there was still a dilapidated tenement in this park. A tenement, called a 'beluik' in Ghent, is a group of small workers' houses. In the 19th century, they were often built in the shadow of the factories. They were small, impoverished homes, grouped around a courtyard. They can only be reached through a narrow alley off the street.

Conditions were wretched, with the residents living at very close quarters and sharing the toilets. In the mid-1970s this tenement was declared uninhabitable. Hundreds of people – a melting pot of Ghent natives and newcomers – lived here until just before it was demolished. Ghent dialect, West Flemish, Berber and Turkish were all spoken in the same street. At the time Ghent still had about 200 tenements, housing more than 2,000 families altogether. Only in the 1980s did the city wake up to the severe housing problem that had plagued the lives of lower income groups in particular for decades.

On the other side of the park, you will see a renovated tenement.

BRASSERIE PAKHUIS (SCHUURKENSTRAAT 4)

This warehouse full of character was used for storage by the Dutry Colson store in the Veldstraat. Originally an ironmonger's, it later sold heating systems and household articles.

DEN HOEK AF (VLAANDERENSTRAAT 1)

Come to Den Hoek Af for breakfast, lunch, an aperitif or coffee. Admire the statue of Lieven Bauwens from the terrace.

17 LIEVEN BAUWENSPLEIN

Lieven Bauwens (1769-1822) smuggled a Mule Jenny spinning machine from England to Ghent.

Bauwens was the son of a prosperous tanner. He showed an interest in mechanics from an early age. He went to England as an industrial spy, finding out about technical innovations in the cotton industry. Besides smuggling parts of a mechanical cotton spinning mill out of the country, he also brought British technicians to Ghent. This meant that Ghent was quick to benefit from the technical innovations in the textile industry. Lieven Bauwens has been honoured and reviled throughout history. The entrepreneur and his 'Mule Jenny' won their place in the history books.

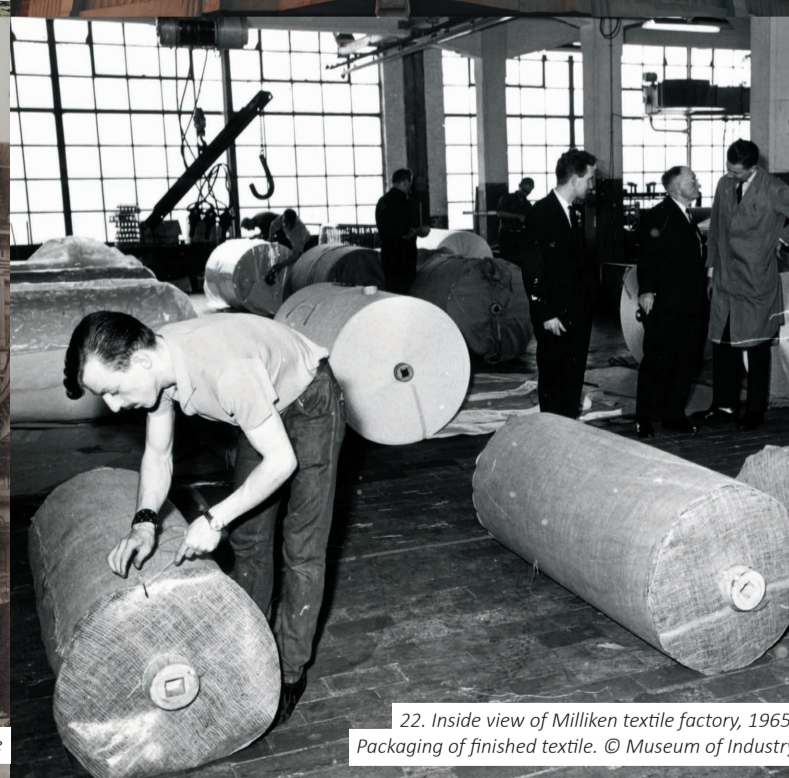
Despite the controversy surrounding him, Ghent city council erected a statue of Lieven Bauwens in 1885.



17. Mule Jenny, the pièce de résistance of the Museum of Industry © Corlazzoli



20. Stained glass window from former brewery Excelsior, 2019 © Corlazzoli



22. Inside view of Milliken textile factory, 1965. Packaging of finished textile. © Museum of Industry

VOORUIT CAFÉ & TERRACE (SINT-PIETERSNIEUWSTRAAT 23)

A large café that also serves light meals in the art deco surroundings of the arts centre: the perfect place for a cha! It is the original heart of Ghent's socialist movement. The terrace is open in nice weather!

PAARD VAN TROJE BOOKSHOP (KOUTER 113)

Coffee and a good book is what you will find here. It is inspired by bookshops in London and New York: you can browse through the enormous selection of books and enjoy a cup of coffee.

13 DE GANDT-VANDER SCHUEREN COTTON SPINNING MILL AND SCHULZE GAS MANTLE FACTORY

The De Gandt-Vander Schueren cotton spinning mill was built at Korlanderstraat 2 in 1839. It is one of the oldest textile factories in Ghent. Later, it became part of L'Association Linière as a steam mill for spinning flax and tow. It spun flax fibres into thread. The flax waste was spun into lower quality thread called tow. The factory occupied almost the entire block, with entrances in Lammerstraat and Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the business was turned into the Emile Schulze gas mantle factory. Gas mantles are woven or knitted nets for use in gas burners, hung around the flame that is directed upwards. Invented in 1885, the gas mantle enabled gas lamps to give off much brighter light.

Only the main factory building has been preserved. In the 1970s, the pioneers of industrial archaeology in Ghent campaigned to preserve the remaining building and prevent its demolition. This one building is all that remains of a fascinating textiles district with dozens of factories.



13. N.v. Schulze gas mantle © Museum of Industry

14 VOORUIT

In 1913 the socialist cooperative Vooruit built its own entertainment centre, the 'Feestlokaal'. This magnificent piece of architecture was designed to be an 'opera house for working people'. Under the motto 'Art Ennobles', the workers could enjoy facilities including a cinema, library and theatre. It also had a café and a restaurant, making it a veritable palace of entertainment, personal betterment and political struggle.

For decades the Feestlokaal was the cultural stronghold of Ghent's socialist movement. In 1982 it was re-launched as an independent social and cultural centre, and today it is the Vooruit arts centre. On the other side of the street, on the slope, you can see the imposing façade of the former Dagblad Vooruit newspaper.

15 ZUIDSTATION

In 1837 the first steam train chugged into the Zuidstation or South Station, where Woodrow Wilsonplein is today. The 'iron road' gave Ghent's various industries a boost. Tons of iron, wood and coal were brought in by rail.



15. View of the South Station with a picket with wires for telegraphy, late 19th century © Georges Rogge

16 HIPPOLIET LIPPENSPLEIN →

In the second half of the 19th century, industrialization and a population explosion made Ghent city centre overpopulated, unhygienic and unhealthy. This neighbourhood alone was home to some 3,000 textile workers. Working-class areas were rife with diseases like cholera, typhus and smallpox. The city council stepped in. Polluted canals and waterways were vaulted over or filled in. Stinking factories and squalid tenements known as 'beluikhuysjes' made way for wide avenues and elegant mansions. The bourgeoisie took over the city. After this wave of redevelopment, many working-class people settled near the new factories in the north, east and west of the city.

On this site a new boulevard was constructed, connecting the Zuidstation and the city centre.



16. View of Vlaanderenstraat, South Station side, 1905 © Ghent City Archive

FOOD AND DRINK

WANT MORE DELICIOUS TIPS? Take a look at visit.gent.be/en/eat-drink.

BAR MITTE (MINNEMEERS 10)

The Museum of Industry's funky museum café is a great place to take a break, either indoors or on the sunny terrace in the museum garden. Fancy a light lunch, coffee or homemade lemonade? We've got it all at Bar Mitte!

HET SPIJKER (PENSMAKT 3)

Experience the atmosphere of a real 'brown pub' in this former corn warehouse. Enjoy a magnificent view of the river Lys from the terrace behind the pub.