

Gent AWARDED BRONZE BY National Geographic

Ghent's historic city centre has been named the third most authentic historic destination worldwide in the November/December issue of National Geographic Traveler magazine. This nomination as the only Belgian city in a list drawn up by one of the leading travel magazines world-wide proves that Ghent's tourism and cultural policy is a success.

For the fifth successive year, National Geographic Traveler Magazine carried out a survey among a select panel of renowned travel experts. The magazine's editors also drew up a shortlist of destinations and the criteria for evaluation.

This year's survey was conducted by the Society's Center for Sustainable Destinations and looked at 'how well historic destinations are withstanding mass tourism, neglect and wrecking balls, as well as the more subtle threat of overplaying the past, where a place ends up embalmed as a lifeless museum or a parody of its true heritage'. The survey assesses the qualities which make a destination unique and also looks into a destination's integrity. The names on the list are not the classic tourist attractions, but destinations that succeed in striking a durable balance between a respectful attitude to historic heritage and a lively local community.

The panel of 280 international experts based its evaluation of 109 destinations on six criteria: the quality of tourism management, social and cultural integrity, the condition of historic buildings and archaeological sites, aesthetic appeal, ecological quality and the city's outlook for the future.

Austria's Wachau Valley and Ontario in Canada, with its Rideau Canal Corridor, precede Ghent in the ratings. In Ghent's wake are the relatively well-known historic city centres of Stockholm, Potsdam, Aix-en-Provence, Lyon, Edinburgh and York, as well as a number of lesser-known cities from all over the world. Further down the list are the historic city centres of San Gimignano, Dresden, Bologna, Tallinn, Aachen, Vilnius, Budapest, Dublin, Istanbul, Damascus, Verona and Cape Town.

Contact:

Cabinet of Alderman Lieven Decaluwe
Tourist Information Office

More info at <http://traveler.nationalgeographic.com>