

Dazzling Light Festivals

By Genevieve Northup

European cities are known for fantastic parks, gorgeous gardens, iconic landmarks and impressive buildings. In recent years, many of these must-see cities have become settings for illumination events, where choreographed lighting transforms structures and scenery into works of art. Escape from the doldrums of long, dark nights at Europe's spectacular light festivals.

BELGIUM

Brussels: The Belgian capital will celebrate the Christmas season with Winter Wonders (Plaisirs d'Hiver) from Nov. 29, 2013 to Jan. 5, 2014. Finish your holiday shopping at the mile-long Christmas market, burn off the decadent waffle you devoured with laps around the ice skating rink, and savor rich chocolates while you watch the Electrabel Nights program in the Grand Place. This spectacle synchronizes lights with music to accentuate the beautiful city hall and Museum of the City of Brussels in one of Europe's most famous squares. Find out more at <http://visitbrussels.be> or www.plaisirsdhiver.be.

Ghent: The historic quarter of Ghent will be basked in colorful static lighting and animation, from trees and tunnels to civic buildings, cathedrals and castles. Facades will continuously change from tie-dyed palettes to fields of flowers, flames and more. You'll also find oddities at every turn, such as an aquarium in a telephone booth or a street covered with desk lamps. If you'll be in Europe for a while longer, mark your calendar for the next light festival in 2015 – it's worth the wait. Find out what all the fuss is about at www.visitgent.be/en/festivals.

ENGLAND

Durham: From Nov. 14 to 17, 2013, this charming English town will receive a makeover with enchanting light displays for LUMIERE. In addition to old crowd-pleasers, including the "Crown of Light" display on the Durham Cathedral, you'll encounter new and quirky attractions. At this year's fest, old cars will be restored with lustrous stained glass windshields, modern bird houses will glow among the trees, and shopping bags will be repurposed to create a Christmas tree. If you can't make it to Durham, a LUMIERE festival will be held Nov. 28-Dec. 1, 2013 in Derry-Londonderry, Northern Ireland. For more information about both festivals, visit www.lumiere-festival.com.

FRANCE

Chartres: More than 20 stately buildings and monuments shine brilliantly every year during the Lights of Chartres (Chartres en Lumière), a luminous season that begins in spring and concludes as summer turns to autumn. For more eye-catching entertainment, attend the Fête de la Lumière, a flashy street party that commemorates the finale of the city's illumination. In past years the lighting event has been held from mid-April to Sept. 21, but 2014 dates have not been released. Check www.chartres-tourisme.com/en for further details.

Lyon: On Dec. 8, 1852, citizens lit candles to celebrate the dedication of Lyon's statue of the Virgin Mary. Nearly 150 years later, Lyon hosted its first Fête des Lumières, a modern take on this long-standing tradition. The festival has become one of the most talked about light events in Europe, with more than 60 brilliant projections and light art exhibits. Visit www.fetedeslumieres.lyon.fr to read more about this fest running Dec. 6-9, 2013.

Paris: You'll never wonder why Paris is called the "City of Lights" after a visit at Christmas. More than 100 Parisian boulevards and

plazas will be decked with elegant lighting displays. Munch on a crepe while you stroll under 200 trees strung with sparkling lights, photograph festive light décor, and shop at the famed Christmas market lining the Avenue des Champs-Élysées. The Christmas market (Village de Noël) will be open from Nov. 15, 2013 to Jan. 5, 2014, and Christmas illuminations (Illuminations de Noël) will light up the Champs-Élysées from Nov. 20, 2013 to Jan. 9, 2014. Go to <http://visitparis-cultureguide.parisinfo.com/en> for more information.

GERMANY

Bad Dürkheim: The vineyards of this town on the Deutsche Weinstraße will be bathed in a rainbow of light for Vineyard Night (Weinbergnacht). On March 14-15, 2014, sip local wine and watch the rows of grapevines change colors. When your glass is empty, stop for refills and hot food at igloo tents along the walking route. Find out more at www.weinbergnacht.de.

Berlin: Nearly 60 structures will be painted striking colors during the Festival of Lights. With so much to see, consider the various "lightseeing" tours. Behold the grandeur of the Brandenburg Gate, Berlin Cathedral, Fernsehturm and Reichstag by foot, bus, Segway, bicycle taxi, horse-drawn carriage, boat or limousine. For panoramic views, step aboard the WELT Balloon, a favorite fixture of Berlin's skyline. In years past, the festival has lasted for 12 days in October; 2014 dates should be available soon at <http://festival-of-lights.de/en>.

Nuremberg: This charming city will be immersed in azure light on May 3, 2014 for Blue Night (Blaue Nacht). More than 70 museums, theaters and galleries will stay open late to provide performances and activities that will entertain your entire family. Lights and video projections will envelop the castle walls and other facades in extravagant shapes and lively movements, adding to the electric atmosphere. For ticketing information, visit www.blauenacht.nuernberg.de.

IRELAND

Dublin: Beer isn't the only thing dyed green for St. Patrick's Day in Dublin. During the four-day festival, enjoy parades, live music, theme park rides and lots of Guinness. At night, more than 50 businesses, monuments and museums will turn shades of green to celebrate Ireland's patron saint. Book now for March 14-17, 2014 and review the detailed event guide available at www.stpatricksfestival.ie.

NETHERLANDS

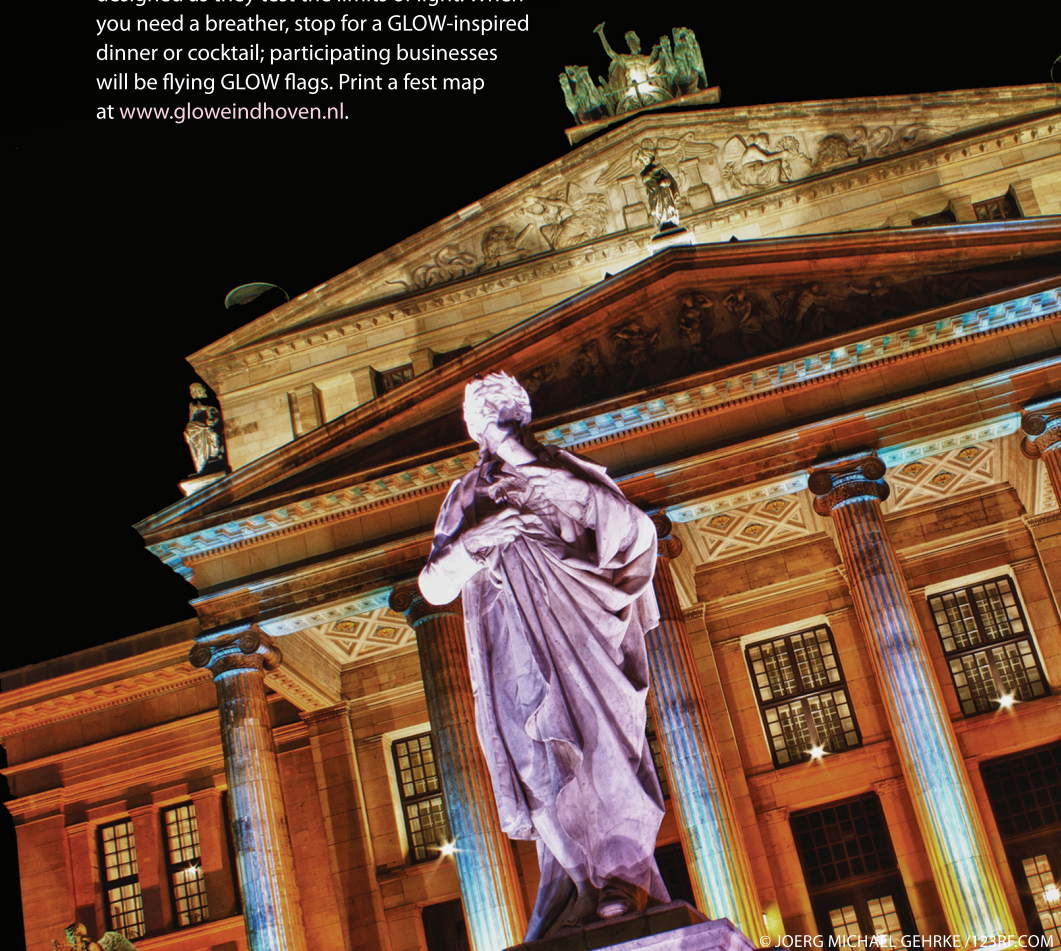
Amsterdam: From Dec. 6, 2013 to Jan. 19, 2014, you'll see far more than red lights at the Amsterdam Light Festival. Many edifices and bridges will be illuminated, and light art masterpieces will take center stage. Water Colors boat tours will let you drift through the canals to discover the splendor, which becomes even more captivating as the lights are reflected on the water's surface. Don't miss the vibrant Christmas Canal Parade on the evening of Dec. 21. For a complete event program, visit www.amsterdamlightfestival.com/en.

Eindhoven: In 2006 the hip city of Eindhoven launched GLOW, an annual festival that leverages cutting-edge light technology to create perplexing modern art. From Nov. 9 to 16, 2013, discover what industry experts have designed as they test the limits of light. When you need a breather, stop for a GLOW-inspired dinner or cocktail; participating businesses will be flying GLOW flags. Print a fest map at www.gloweindhoven.nl.

POLAND

Toruń: The Bella Skyway Festival aims to reproduce the radiance of the sky by assimilating astronomy, technology and culture. Projections will animate and illuminate historic buildings, while exhibits hidden around the medieval city will give you the chance to enjoy mesmerizing light art away from the crowds. Dates for 2014 have not been confirmed, but the event will likely occur during the third week of September. Check www.bellaskyway.pl/en for updates.

No matter which festival you choose to visit, you'll be amazed by how breathtaking Europe's cities can appear after darkness falls. ■



© JOERG MICHAEL GEHRKE / 123RF.COM

**EVERY FRI. & SAT.
THE BEST PARTY IS
IN THIS AREA WITH
DJS OR LIVE MUSIC**

**Every Wednesday
Hamburger special €5,99
incl fries and one small
beer from draft!**

**Every Thursday
Bring your own to grill
after Work BBQ**

**We have darts,
table soccer
and pool tables!**

Musikcafé

Weilerbach

**We accept dollar, no credit cards,
only regular giro card.**



**Open Wed thru Sat. from 7pm
Danzigerstr. 12 / Weilerbach**