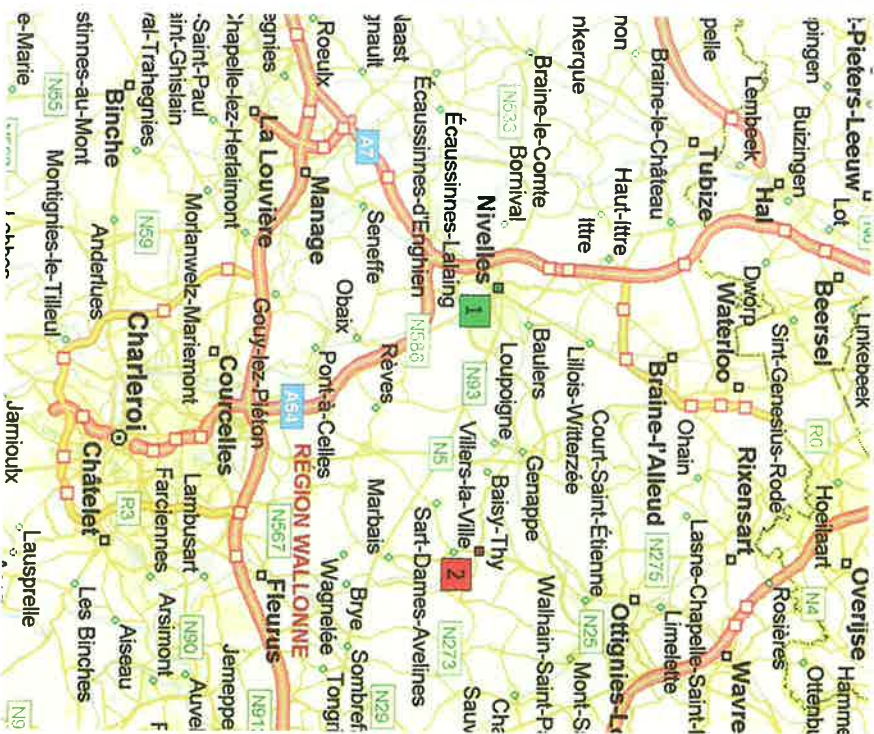


OFFICE DU TOURISME

Package N°5



St Gertrude's Collegiate Church and  
the Cistercian Abbey of Villers-la-Ville



### PRACTICAL INFORMATION :

**The price includes :** Reception (coffee), guided tour of the Collegiate Church, meal, visit to the Cistercian Abbey of Villers-la-Ville, services of guide(s).

**Meal :** Starter, main course, dessert - Drinks NOT included

**Languages :** Fr, Ni, En, De, It., Sp

Min. 25, max. 50 people.

Min. 25, max. 150 people for the Collegiate Church.

**Reservation essential :** 30% down-payment required at time of reservation . Balance to be paid no later than one week before visit.

No refund for cancellations made within the week preceding the visit.

**Contact :** Tél.: +32(0)67 84 08 64 - Fax.: +32(0)67 21 57 13

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Ville de  
Nivelles



## ST GERTRUDE'S COLLEGIATE CHURCH

The town sprang up around the noble abbey founded at the dawn of Christian evangelisation in this country, and, a rare thing in Europe, consisting of a double community, ruled by women.



The exceptional architectural record includes the romanesque church of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, an archaeological basement, crypt, cloister, westwork and treasures from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Under the Carolingians, it became an imperial abbey, and later, part of the pilgrim route to Compostella. The St Jacques district, at the feet of the church, is a witness to this pilgrimage. From 646 and the first Merovingian church, to the present, 1350 years of architectural history can be traced. The church is built in the Ottonian style of the great monuments of the Holy Roman Empire : Early Romanesque for the 11<sup>th</sup> century construction, and Late Romanesque for the exceptional westwork of the late 12<sup>th</sup>, which is complete and very rare. The ground-plan with a choir at each end is in the Carolingian tradition. The westwork features no less than 8 cupolas : this is unique in Belgium and emphasises the imperial nature of the foundation.



## THE CISTERCIAN ABBAY OF VILLERS-LA-VILLE

Tradition relates that in 1146, at the invitation of the Lord of Marbais, and under the impulsion of St Bernard, 13 monks and 5 lay-brothers arrived in Villers from Clairvaux to establish an abbey.



The monastery buildings were completely rebuilt during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the abbey was at the height of its spiritual and temporal influence. At this time, it is said, the abbey numbered about a hundred monks and three times as many lay-brothers, and its precinct covered almost 10,000 hectares. From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the abbey lived through periods of both trouble and calm, while the 18<sup>th</sup> was the century of its second golden age. The final blow came with the French Revolution. The extensive ruins of Villers are both strikingly beautiful and romantic.

