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TOUR DE FRANCE

100 ANS DU MAILLOT JAUNE

—

100 JAAR GELE TRUI

BRUSSELS GRAND DÉPART 2019

PRESS KIT

BELGIUM: A HISTORIC BIKE AND TOUR LOVING TERRITORY

Belgium and bicycles, bicycles and Belgians: a love affair that has lasted for generations.

The 2019 Grand Départ will once more cast the spotlight on Brussels and the nation, its sense of hospitality, its cultural and gastronomic assets, its legends and all its great cyclists who inspire cycling enthusiasts and perpetuate the legend.

In all, the Grande Boucle has included the Belgian territory no less than 47 times and has been won 18 times by a Belgian racer.

Facts and figures for the 2019 Grand Départ:

- 106th Tour de France
- 100th anniversary of the Yellow Jersey, worn 111 times by Eddy Merckx (the record still stands)
- 50th anniversary of Eddy Merckx's first victory

- The Tour has passed through Brussels 10 times, with the 11th scheduled for 2019
- The previous Grand Départ in Brussels was in 1958, coinciding with the Exhibition Universelle and the inauguration of the Atomium
- The last time the Tour passed through Belgium was in 2017, in Liège and Verviers
- The last time the Tour passed through Brussels was in 2010

So it's only natural to nurture a sense of pride and infinite endearment towards the Tour de France which has so often captured the imagination of bicycle racing enthusiasts!

BRUSSELS GRAND DÉPART 2019

www.brusselsgranddepart.com

THE CENTENARY OF THE YELLOW JERSEY

On 19 July 1919, during a stage of the 11th Tour de France, the founder and director of the Tour that year, Henri Desgrange, created the legendary “Yellow Jersey” to match the colours of the newspaper L’Auto, the Tour’s main sponsor at the time. It soon gained in popularity among both racers and the public, sparking buzz and becoming a major source of attraction to the race. Ever since, the top-ranking racer has easily been spotted on the Grande Boucle among all the other racers.

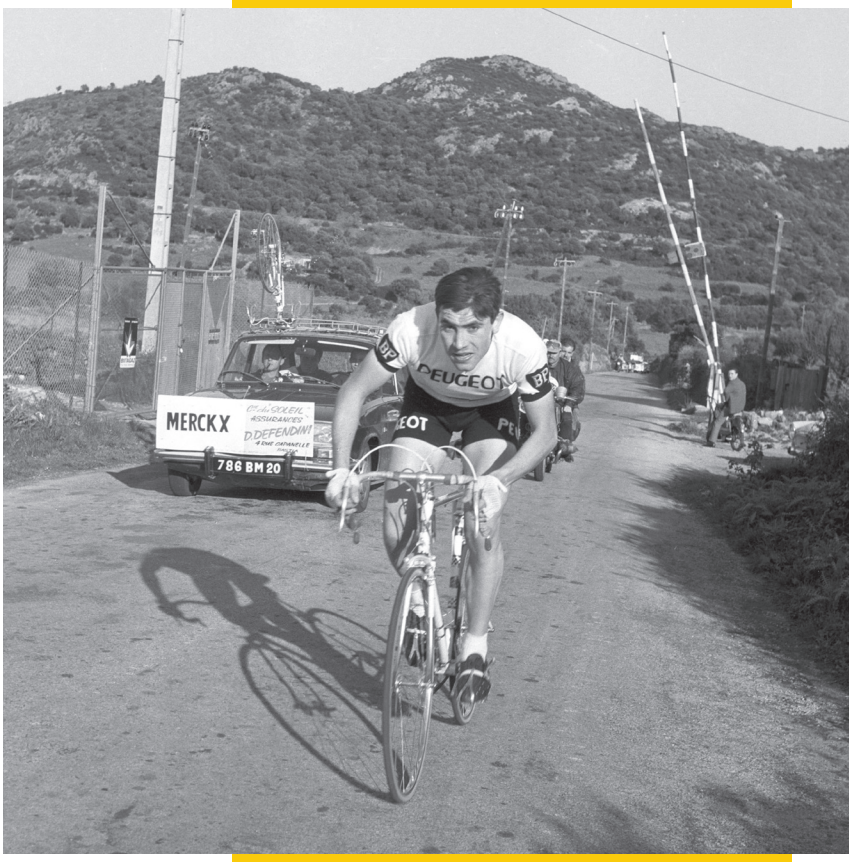
since its inception, 57 Belgian racers have worn it, no less than 403 times!

All those who have had the privilege of wearing it, demonstrate respect and emotion, the sign of unconditional love for this trophy that the all-time cycling champion Eddy Merckx donned 111 times in the course of his career, setting a record that he still holds today.

In 2019, the bright yellow jersey will be celebrating its centenary! A legendary fabric from which dreams are woven, be they youngsters, amateurs or racers, an allegory for success...

One of the greatest Belgian champions of all time, Eddy Merckx was born in 1945 in the small town Meensel-Kiezegem.

THE BIRTHPLACE OF A GREAT CHAMPION



Eddy Merckx topped the Tour de France podium five times, each time deploying considerable flair and garnering respect from the spectators, organisers and other racers.

The 34 stages won in the races of the seven times he participated in the Tour speak for themselves. A particularly moving moment was when he won his first Yellow Jersey, in 1969 in Woluwe-Saint-Pierre near the family grocery shop.

The 2019 Grand Départ will thus be highly memorable: as well as the centenary of the famous jersey, cycling amateurs and others will also be celebrating the 50th anniversary of Eddy Merckx's first Grande Boucle victory.

Over the course of his career, the "Cannibal" as he was nicknamed imposed his talent on all terrains and in all seasons, in a spirit of honesty and passion, the best of his temperament.

BRUSSELS GRAND DÉPART 2019

THE GRAND DÉPART IS GEARING UP

"100 DAYS" TO THE GRAND DÉPART

To celebrate not only racing but also everyday cycling, **a host of sporting, cultural, artistic and educational activities and events will be organised over the 100-day run-up to the Grand Départ in various parts of Brussels.**

Our great capital will be decked out in Tour colours to celebrate this huge popular event!

A festive weekend D-DAY – 100 !

THURSDAY 28 MARCH

> Commencing countdown!

The run-up to 6 July, date of the first stage of the Tour de France, kicks off on 28 March. Several symbolic moments will highlight this important day to which the general public has been invited to mark the start of the countdown. Eddy Merckx, Christian Prudhomme and several other champions having donned the Yellow Jersey will be participating in several events.

> Arrival of the French delegation at the Gare du Midi

At 9.17 am, the Thalys bringing the French delegation from Amaury Sport Organisation (A.S.O.) and the international press will be arriving at the Brussels-Midi railway station.
Eddy Merckx and Christian Prudhomme will be there to greet them.

The kick-off for this festive day will be a photo shoot with various personalities by the Thalys train wagon decked out in Grand Départ and Tour de France colours, as great ambassadors of this grand event.

> Inauguration of the Square Eddy Merckx

At 12.30 pm, this special convoy featuring vintage cars will make its first halt at Place des Bouvreuils, in the Chant d'Oiseau neighbourhood of Woluwe-Saint-Pierre, to be renamed "*Square Eddy Merckx*".

This green, peaceful neighbourhood was where the great cyclist spent his childhood, from 1945 to 1973. Eddy was given his first bike at the age of four and bought his first racing bike at 11. Jules, his father and first fan, ran a grocery shop, for which the young Merckx handled deliveries on his bike after school for pocket money, building up some muscle in the process. Locals nicknamed him "*Eddy Tour de France*".

Exactly 50 years ago in 1969, Eddy Merckx won the Yellow Jersey for the first time in Woluwe-Saint-Pierre! "*We have strong historic ties with Eddy Merckx!*", commented Benoît Cerexhe, mayor of Woluwe-Saint-Pierre.

The Square Eddy Merckx will be fitted out by the town council. A reproduction of the "*Tribute to Eddy Merckx*" by Belgian artist Stefaan De Croock, will be placed on a stele in blue stone.

"*The Cannibal*" won 525 races, with the corresponding trophies being concealed in this work. Cobble stones ringing the stele have been engraved with the list.

> Other highlights

From 2.00 and 6.00 pm, the vintage cars will be exhibited on Place des Palais like a Guard of Honour. Then at 7.30 pm they will head for the central boulevards to give a splendid vintage touch to Place De Brouckère.

At 6.00 pm, two UGC venues will simultaneously screen an avant-première of the film "La Grand-Messe" directed by Valéry Rosier, an amusing, benevolent documentary on assiduous Grande Boucle spectators.

Directors : Valéry Rosier & Méryl Fortunat-Rossi.

This moment heralds the start for Place De Brouckère as the scene of festivities on a cycling theme, celebrating sport and sharing with a concert, events for the young and young-at-heart, tight-rope walking, food bikes etc. This friendly “opening” ceremony will be attended by members of local cycling associations, their friends and families.

At 7.15 pm, , a festive procession will leave from Grand-Place and head for Place De Brouckère.

At 7.30 pm, the “100 days” run-up to the Tour de France will be officially celebrated with a symbolic moment attended by Christian Prudhomme, Eddy Merckx and other great champions in Belgian cycling. Emotions are bound to run high!

Afterward the Maison du Tour will officially be designated as the official Grand Départ information office and the third tourist information office in the city centre.

> Also on 28 March, two official exhibitions on the Tour de France will be inaugurated in Brussels

These modern, interactive exhibitions take visitors on a ride through the history of the Grande Boucle, reliving the exploits of our champion Eddy Merckx and admiring the many collection items on display.

True to Tour spirit, both special exhibitions will be admission free.

Opening times to be communicated at a later date.

Le Tour, L’EXPO 28 March to 14 July 2019

This itinerant exhibition is updated yearly, retracing the history of the third biggest sporting event worldwide with short texts, pictures and emblematic footage, examining various themes and harnessing interactivity with the introduction of a touch table.

In French, with translations in Dutch and English.

Venue : RWDM stadium (rue Charles Malis 61, 1080 Molenbeek-Saint-Jean), a stone’s throw from the actual starting point for the first stage of the Tour de France (06.07).

Maillot Jaune, L’EXPO 28 March to 14 July 2019

This year is the Yellow Jersey’s centenary! This exhibition pays tribute to the 15,059 racers having participated in the Tour and the 3,228 “Giants”.

In French, with translations in Dutch and English.

Venue : Espace Wallonie (rue du Marché aux Herbes, 25-27, 1000 Brussels).

Launch of a commemorative coin

On the same day, the Belgian Dutch and Royal Mints will officially launch a new Belgian coin worth €2.5, specially minted in honour of the 2019 Grand Départ. It is decorated with an athletic-looking coincard with the Tour de France official logo. This unique coin will be available and legal tender in Belgium as from 28 March through www.herdenkingsmunten.be

FRIDAY 29 MARCH

the Tour dictation

9-12 year-olds in schools in Brussels, the Region and all the towns that the Tour will pass through, will take dictation of a press article excerpt on the theme “The Tour in Belgium”. The winners will win a backstage invitation to the Grand Départ.

SATURDAY 30 MARCH

The 33rd “Grande Boucle des 24h vélo”

The Bois de la Cambre will be the setting for a stupefying 24-hr bike race. Scouts, guides and pioneers from Belgium and elsewhere take part in a 24-hr relay race on bikes customised for the occasion.

This year the theme for this crazy competition will be “*La Grande Boucle des 24h vélo (The Great Loop 24-hr bike race)*”.

6,000 participants will meet up at 10.30 am, in time for Eddy Merckx to fire the starting gun one hour later.

On your marks, get set, and on your bike!

The party continues on Place De Brouckère from 12.00 noon to 6.00 pm

Throughout the weekend, the Tour de France celebrations will continue on Place De Brouckère, the smart new section of the central boulevards. A 50m circuit will be staked out for handbike, slow bike and wheeling races.

Daredevils can also try their hands at extreme biking with introductory sessions on a pumptrack. There’ll also be pedal carrousels, roaming musicians, street artists, and a vintage market selling retro cycling articles. And if you fancy a snack, food bikes will be serving treats all day in a picnic zone.

SUNDAY 31 MARCH

Loads more activities for the “D Day – 100” weekend

Starting at 10.00 am, all the activities of the previous day will continue on Place De Brouckère.

Those with more stamina can arrive at 8.00 am for a hearty breakfast then set out on bikes as from 9.00 am, for 2-hr guided cycling tours with Pro Bike, Cactus or Once in Brussels.

The friendly sports atmosphere will continue through to 3.30 pm.

FRIDAY 17 MAY

D-DAY – 50 TO GO

Only 50 days to go before the first stage of the Grand Départ!

The Manneken-Pis will get in on the act!

Through to 19 May, this little statue symbolic of Brussels will be wearing the Yellow Jersey from 1958 that he wore at the Exhibition Universelle! He’ll wear it again from 4 to 7 July.

On the same day, the results of the Tour Dictation will be announced: suspense for all the children who took part!

An evening celebration will be organised on Place De Brouckère in honour of the anniversary of Eddy Merckx’s first victory 50 years ago. A retrospective set to music will retrace the highlights of our champion’s career from 1969 to the present. With “*The Magician*” as DJ to finish the evening, there’s bound to be a magical atmosphere!

SUNDAY 2 JUNE

International World Bicycle Day

Sunday 2 June is actually the day before International World Bicycle Day. Still we’ll be celebrating biking on the Sunday, with a programme featuring participatory, entertaining activities run

by various associations, conferences and accounts of “sustainable travel”, “Kidz On Wheelz” with initiations and demonstrations for littluns.

This fun day will take place at the Cinquantenaire park and will be organised in collaboration with the Environment Festival scheduled for 31 May to 2 June.

SUNDAY 16 JUNE

The BXL TOUR

Brussels City Council will be organising the third BXL TOUR, a cycle race through the streets of the capital. Since 2017, this event has been a can’t-miss in the diaries of several thousand cyclists who meet up every year, eager to take up the challenge with brio, sending out a clear message that Brussels City Council encourages the use of this gentle form of transport.

The BXL TOUR 2019 looks set to be a very special one! Not only will it retrace part of the same circuit as the Tour de France race against the clock, it will also host the Belgian Master Championship! With only a few days to go to the Grand Départ, the BXL TOUR will pass through several suburbs of Brussels, giving participants a chance to explore or rediscover our magnificent capital + Parcours As befits tradition, after effort comes comfort at BIKECITY, which will welcome racers, inhabitants of Brussels and other visitors wishing to share this friendly moment: there will be a host of activities geared around cycling, with music and festive performances, all in a relaxed atmosphere!

You can sign up as of Wednesday 13 March, on the event website via www.bxltour.be/inscription

More info will be available in upcoming weeks.

www.bxltour.be

The Grand-Départ : special guest for several events you mustn't miss!

FROM THURSDAY 25 APRIL TO SUNDAY 5 MAY
Brussels Short Film Festival

26-28 APRIL
I Love Science Festival Brussels Expo

There are several advantages to bikes over cars, especially the environmental benefits of using your muscles to turn those pedals. Come and find out just how much impact cycling has on CO2 emissions at this edutaining fun festival organised by visit.brussels. Admission free. www.ilovesciencefestival.brussels

5 MAI – Fête de l'Iris
Fête de l'Iris (Iris Festival)

To celebrate the Brussels-Capital Region, come to Parc Royal for this festival aiming to attract all locals. A host of activities and events on the programme including a Grand-Départ stand where visitors can defy the laws of gravity!

FRIDAY 26 APRIL
"Tous à Bord" and the Grande Boucle

With the association "Tous à Bord", a rather special foot race will take place between Grand-Place, Brussels and that of Binche, where the 3rd stage of the Tour is due to start on 8 July. This race will include participants of varying levels of mobility, running for 70 km together.

WEDNESDAY 24 APRIL
Flèche Wallonne

SUNDAY 28 APRIL
Liège – Bastogne – Liège

The Grand Départ will feature in the advertising caravans with goodies being handed out.

SATURDAY 18 MAY
La Belgian Pride

Cyclists will open the parade, with the winner of the Cycling World Championship decked out in rainbow colours like the LGBT+ community flag.

SUNDAY 19 MAY
20 km de Bruxelles

There's nothing like the Grand Départ festivities to celebrate the 40th anniversary of this legendary race! For this special edition, Eddy Merckx will be at the starting line and several events geared around bicycles will be organised at the Cinquantenaire park.

FROM FRIDAY 24 TO SUNDAY 26 MAY
Retrorama

At this magnificent vintage festival, the Grand Départ gets a look-in with a retro corner featuring jerseys and other cycling treasures.

SATURDAY 7 JUNE
launch of the Roller Bike Parade season

To open this rollerblading and biking season through the streets of Brussels, a Grand Départ team will be decorating the streets. Followed by a DJ set, special events and the distribution of goodies.

SATURDAY 15 JUNE
Cyclonudista

For the past 15 years, a few hundred nudist cyclists have met up for a nude or nearly nude ride through the Capital. This festive and eco-friendly demonstration aims to raise awareness of the importance of protecting cyclists in the city and the quality of city life.

Participants will get an opportunity to try out body painting in the Tour de France jersey colours.

SATURDAY 22 JUNE Le Porteur d'Eau (The Water Carrier)

The Tour de France gets a little tribute in this play performed at the Théâtre de Poche. It highlights the role played by these discreet athletes, especially cyclists, serving their leader as they provide refreshments, perform emergency repairs, helping them on to victory often in the role of scapegoat or punching-ball.

SUNDAY 23 JUNE Fête de la Musique

The rock group with a cycling bent, Les Chasse-Patates, will be performing during this annual music festival. This offbeat set of champions will perform a hilarious race against the clock singing various hits.

SATURDAY 29 JUNE Prostate Cancer UK

This benefit race is organised every year in the town hosting the Grand Départ. The circuit is open, and all 260 participants can have fun pedalling at their own pace. It starts at Grand-Place, with the finishing line near the Château de Laeken.

Funds raised will be donated to prostate cancer research.

Find out more:
www.prostatecanceruk.org/get-involved/grand-depart-classic

SATURDAY 29 AND SUNDAY 30 JUNE European Cycle Messenger Championships

This championship comprises a set of orienteering tasks. Based at the Mont des Arts, the Grand Départ will be present with installations in the event's colours.

Other festive activities will be organised in several suburbs of Brussels.

The programme will be available shortly.

BRUSSELS GRAND DÉPART 2019

THE WEEK OF THE GRAND DÉPART

Cphoto - A.S.O. / A. BROADWAY

WEDNESDAY 3 JULY

Inauguration of the press centre

Brussels Expo, on the Heysel plateau will be housing the press centre and premises for the Tour de France organisers, A.S.O. The official inauguration will be at 2.00 pm, a symbolic moment.

THURSDAY 4 JULY

> The FAN PARK

From 4 to 7 July, an area focussing exclusively on the Tour de France will be opened up on Place De Brouckère at 4.00 pm.
For four days, through to the final stage of the Grand Départ, A.S.O. and various partners will organise events, games and workshops.

CPhoto - A.S.O. - T. MAHEUX

- Thursday 4 July, from 2.00 to 8.00 pm
- Friday 5 and Saturday 6 July, from 10.00 am to 7.00 pm
- Sunday 7 July, from 11.00 am to 6.00 pm

> Introducing the teams

Clearly a highlight of the Tour de France! Crowds will gather from 4.00 to 8.00 pm to see the line-up of the 22 teams of 8 racers who'll be capturing the imagination of spectators for three weeks. There will be various shows to entertain the crowds.

The champions will leave the Place des Palais and ride along the superb Saint-Hubert galleries, giving spectators from all over the world some fantastic views.
The teams will be announced one by one at Grand-Place, with the event broadcast to 190 different countries.

FRIDAY 5 JULY

final of the Belgian Championship of the Eddy Merckx game

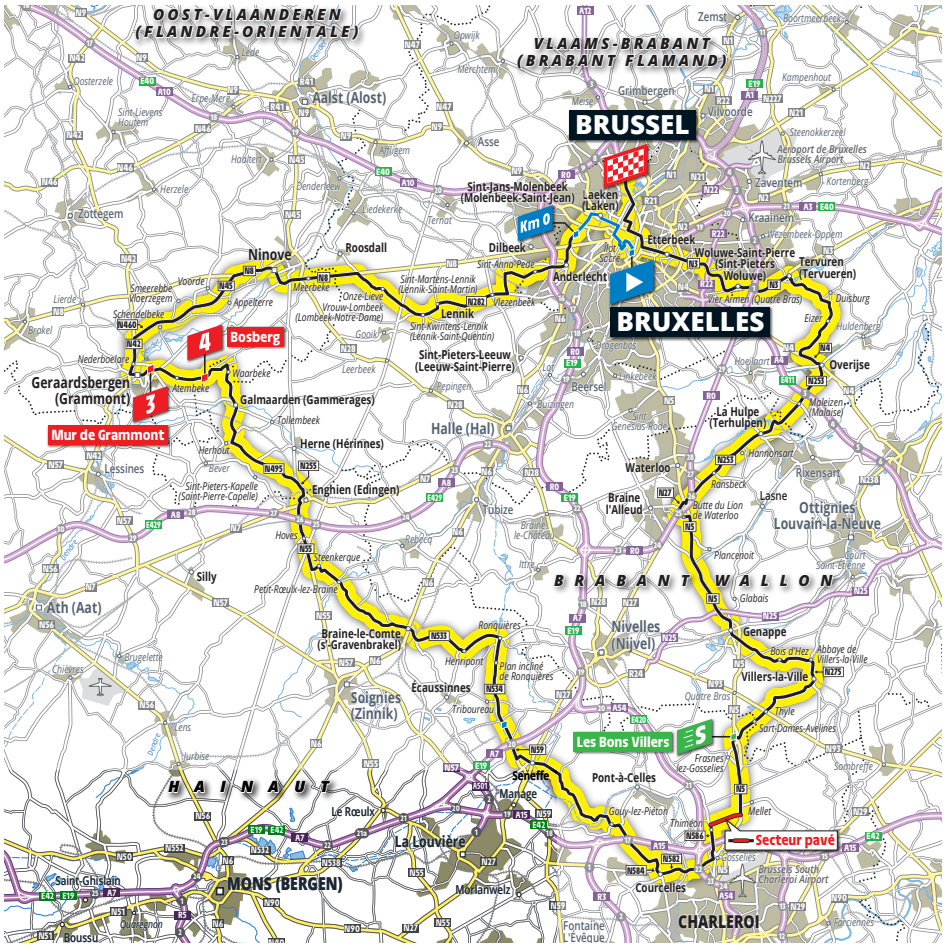
Like the first ever victory of our champion in the Tour de France, this famous game named after him is celebrating its half-centenary. The final of the Belgian Championship will be taking place in Brussels!

More information will be available at a later date.

SATURDAY 6 JULY
ROAD STAGE
BRUSSELS–CHARLEROI–BRUSSELS > 192 KM

During this first stage of the 2019 Tour de France, the scene will soon be set with the pack leaving Molenbeek then Anderlecht, thinking of the view at km 43, of the Mur de Grammont, which was on the circuit for the first Tour de France in which Eddy Merckx took part in 1969. The racers then head for Charleroi, taking in a cobblestone section on their way back to Brussels. They skirt the Butte du Lion, Waterloo where Napoleon famously met his downfall. In the final, a double reference to the “l’Ogre de Tervuren”, (another of Merckx’s nicknames), in the town just 10 km from the finishing line.

The racers will be passing through the street in Woluwe-Saint-Pierre, where Eddy started cycling as a young boy… and where he donned his first Yellow Jersey.



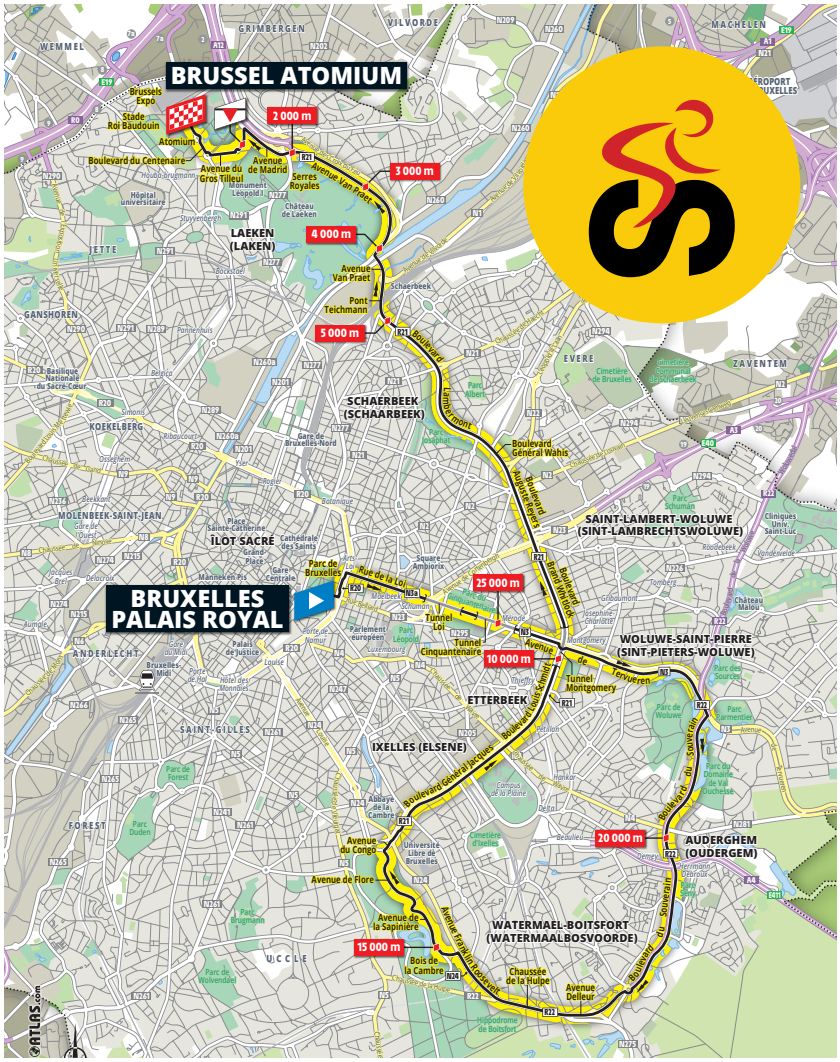
Towns the Tour will pass through:

Brussels, Molenbeek, Ganshoren, Koekelberg, Anderlecht, Etterbeek, Woluwe-Saint-Pierre and Etterbeek.

SUNDAY 7 JULY
RACE AGAINST THE CLOCK STAGE
IN BRUSSELS > 28 KM

BRUSSELS GRAND DÉPART 2019

Look out for the first 2019 Tour plot twists, starting with a change of leader, provided the sprinter who'll probably have taken over doesn't have team players with him. The wide avenues in Brussels are well suited to a demonstration of force involving the best prepared teams, with few hairpin bends and plenty of flat stretches where you can assess the riding skills of highly powerful cyclists.



The home stretch will give the teams a magnificent view with the Atomium in the background. Those whose team spirit is as strong as the edifice built for l'Exhibition universelle in 1958 will have fond memories of Brussels. (Source A.S.O.)

Towns the Tour will pass through

Brussels, Etterbeek, Woluwe-Saint-Pierre, Auderghem, Watermael-Boitsfort, Ixelles, Woluwe-Saint-Lambert, Schaerbeek.

CONTACTS

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Organisation

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The Tour Makers: 3.000 volunteers motivated for a successful Grand Départ!

From 28 March to 7 July, Brussels City Council and the organisers will be calling on 3,000 eager, determined volunteers, aged 16 or 18 up depending on their responsibilities.
Their main task will be to inform the inhabitants and any other inquirers, welcome the supporters, and facilitate signage all along the circuit.

The festivities get going on 28 March with the celebration of the 100 day run-up to the Grand Départ and continue through to the stages on 6 and 7 July, with a host of events organised over these months.

The volunteers will also be part of the big Tour de France family, the third biggest event worldwide in terms of spectators! This will be an incredible adventure!
With our partner Adecco, we'll make it an exciting time in Brussels!

Sign up at www.brusselsgranddepart.com/letour/tour-makers

TRANSPORT

Transport will be an important issue during the Grand Départ week in the capital

Brussels City Council and the organisers, in close collaboration with the Brussels-Capital Region, Bruxelles Mobilité and the Police, will take all necessary measures and pull out all the stops to reduce any inconvenience caused by the Tour de France as much as possible.

Motorists are advised to use alternative transport: bicycles, of course, or public transport, carpooling, scooters etc.

Useful information will feature in press releases during the run-up to the event.
The various websites and social media will also be a precious source of information.

VIP

Various VIP packages will be available at both starting and finishing lines for each stage.
Find out more : www.brusselsgranddepart.com

BRUSSELS GRAND DÉPART | 2019

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