



## A living heritage

TEXT: BETTINA GUIRKINGER | PHOTOS: OOIDONK CASTLE

**It was the World Expo 1968 in Brussels that led to the opening of Ooidonk's Castle to the general public, much to the delight of lovers of cultural heritage sites. Today, the family who lives on these splendid grounds welcomes visitors for six months of the year and is eager to share a world where history and family memories mix within the same walls.**

Located near Ghent, the first feature that stands out when visiting Ooidonk Castle is the impressive Hispanic-Flemish red-brick



architectural structure that truly makes the castle one of a kind in Belgium. Not to mention that very few castles across the country are both occupied and open to visitors.

Since last year, great efforts have been deployed by Count and Countess t'Kint de Roodenbeke to bring a touch of modernity to the interior, keeping the elegance of the furniture and complementing it with thick carpets and a new lighting system. One feels like they are entering a home as opposed to a site belonging to a distant past. Everything here has been done to keep alive the memory of a site made all the more beautiful by its surrounding waters, deep moat and the gentle bends of the nearby river Leie.

Featuring what can probably be considered the biggest collection of King Leopold I artifacts, visitors will be able to marvel at a whole spectrum of unique objects, from paintings, furniture, engravings and

busts of the King himself. A visit features rich and lively information on the tapestry, artwork displayed in the castle, the history of the site and the families that have occupied it since its construction in the 13th century.

Group visits can be organised on demand from 1 March until 15 October, while individual visitors are welcome from 1 April until 15 September on Sundays and holidays. The castle can also be hired for private events such as weddings, business conferences, team-building sessions, birthdays and more. The Countess herself adds: "Our family is eager to share this beautiful site with others who might also enjoy it."

So wait no more and make sure to kick-start your spring with a visit to the truly unique site that combines history and a family home in this one majestic castle.

[www.ooidonk.be](http://www.ooidonk.be)