



The fairytale castle with a difference

TEXT: EDDI FIEGEL | PHOTOS: OOIDONK CASTLE

Think of a grand château and you will probably imagine the lavish castles of France's Loire Valley. However, the magnificent Ooidonk Castle, a quarter of an hour's drive southwest of the historic Belgian city of Ghent, can easily rival any château in the Loire for splendour.

With its spectacular, fairytale turrets and grand moat, Ooidonk Castle is a unique example of the Hispanic-Flemish style of architecture which emerged during the Renaissance and is renowned as one of Belgium's finest castles.

The castle, which is often called 'the Chambord of Flanders' thanks to his similarities to the famous French château of Chambord, is home to Count and Countess Henry t'Kint de Roodenbeke and their three young sons and, over recent years, the Countess has taken charge of a complete renovation and refurbishment of the interiors.

The elegant rooms, which include grand salons and majestic bedrooms, are filled with outstanding original paintings, engravings and antiques – including 17th century cabinets, 18th century Beauvais tapestries and Delft porcelain. The dé-

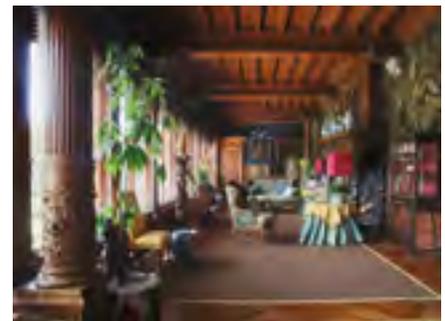
cor, meanwhile, has been sensitively and tastefully restored with period-style curtains, carpets and soft furnishings.

The Count is the sixth generation of his family to live in the castle and feels passionately about not only preserving its splendour but making the experience of visiting equally special for everyone. "There are many châteaux which have fine architecture and beautiful interiors," says the Count, "but what is different for me about Ooidonk Castle, is that it's not a museum. It's a living home, and I think that visitors can sense that. We have magnificent paintings and antiques but they're not frozen in time."

The castle is surrounded by nearly four acres of magical landscaped gardens in the French style, and the grounds are wonderful for a family day out or a leisurely stroll. Ooidonk Castle also has a state of the art meeting room in the grounds, offering a 360-degree view of the castle and the gardens, which can be hired for business meetings and conferences, board meetings and product presentations.

Ooidonk Castle is open to visitors from 1 April until 15 September on Sundays and holidays, and group visits can be or-

ganised on request every day between 1 March and 15 October. The gardens are open throughout the year from Tuesday afternoon to Sunday.



Web: www.ooidonk.be
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