

Topic Page: [Louvain](#)

Definition: **Louvain** from *Collins English Dictionary*

n

1 a town in central Belgium, in Flemish Brabant province: capital of the duchy of Brabant (11th–15th centuries) and centre of the cloth trade; university (1426). Pop: 89 777 (2004 est) Flemish name: **Leuven**

Summary Article: **Louvain**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Industrial town, railway junction, and capital of Flemish Brabant province, central Belgium, 25 km/16 mi northeast of Brussels, on the River Dyle; population (2001 est) 88,200. Manufacturing includes fertilizers and food processing; brewing is also a major industry, and the headquarters of Stella Artois are in the town. Its university dates from 1425.

During World War I the Germans occupied the town, where they carried out one of many war-time atrocities: Shots were heard in the town and in panic the garrison began firing indiscriminately and burning houses. The town was cleared of its population – most were shipped to Germany as labourers, while others were shot – and the town was then systematically looted and burned.

Architecture Among its numerous historical buildings are the town hall (1448–59), one of the finest examples of the Gothic style in northwestern Europe, and the church of St Peter (1425–97).

History The town was a prosperous cloth-making centre in the 13th century, and became the capital of the duchy of Brabant in the 14th century, before the rise of Brussels. The University of Louvain was founded in 1426 and was designated the Catholic University in 1835. The greater part of the town, including the church of St Peter, the law courts, the theatre, the Academy for Fine Arts, and the old halls, with the famous university library, was razed by the Germans during the World War I on the pretext that the civilian population had joined in an attack on the German occupying troops. By the Treaty of Versailles Germany undertook to deliver manuscripts and prints equivalent in value to those destroyed. In 1940 the library, rebuilt with the help of US funds in 1928, and containing over 900,000 volumes, was again destroyed by the Germans.

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