

## The Original Super Spa Experience in Belgium

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Luc Louette, CERAN teacher, Paul Goris, visiting speaker from Doctors without Borders, and Bart Rooyackers, CERAN students at an evening event in Spa, Belgium

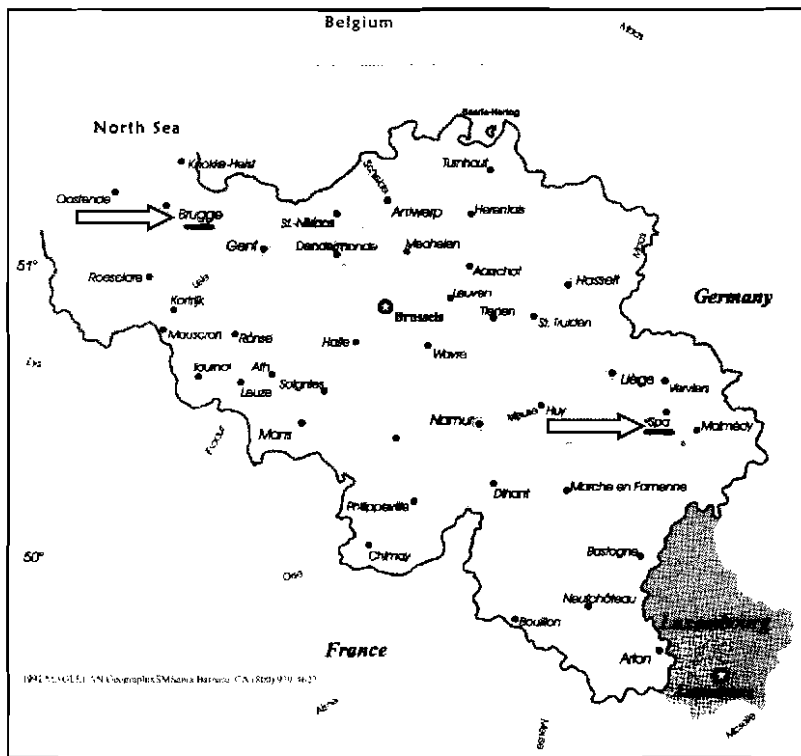
Along with the great honor of being named “Outstanding Officer” in the United States by the American Association Teachers of French, I was awarded a week of study at CERAN, a language institute with schools in Europe. I selected the site of Spa, in the eastern part of Belgium, near the German-Luxembourg border, for a number of reasons.

First, there is tremendous, but little-known history of the area. The name “Spa,” is now a worldwide term indicating therapeutic, refreshing treatments to invigorate and revive health.

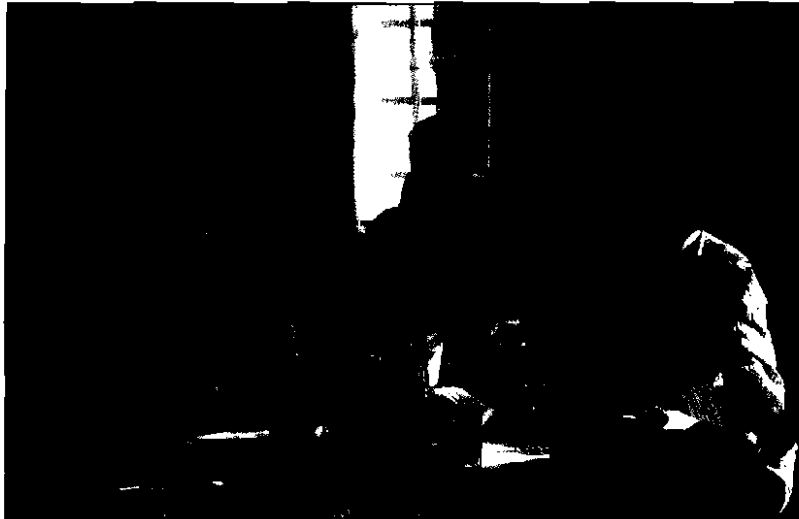
The town was actually the original “spa” and the location of the first modern type of casino to entertain the rich and/or royal patrons who came there. Famous names like Peter the Great, Leopold II and many other European aristocrats were frequent visitors. The chateau of Haut Neubois, just outside Spa, where CERAN classes are held, housed much of the German high command during World War I.

In addition to the historical location, the facilities are perfect for language study. The first floor of the chateau houses the reception and several separate dining rooms for different languages. All French students, for example, take meals together with teachers, to assure conversation is in French. The same applies to other languages. The second floor provides classrooms for small group work and private lessons. The language lab, equipped with the most up to date technology, is on the third level.

The town was actually the



Aside from the historical location and great facilities, there was a third criterion for success—the people. Students were from a wide variety of places such as the Netherlands, Singapore, and New Zealand. I was the only American and the only teacher. There were people from different government ministries and private industry, e.g., Air France/KLM. Complementing this diverse student body, the instructors were outstanding and dedicated to achieving maximum results for each student's specific goals.



Breakfast at CERAN School, including students Bart Rooyackers, Eunice Tsibu, Paul Goris, and CERAN teacher Brigitte Steils

Study was a minimum of one week, but several people stayed much longer. Work began early and continued late every evening. Breakfast was at 8:15 followed by "official" instruction in private or group classes at 9:00. There was lunch at 12:45 and the afternoon was a mix of lab work and guided study until 5:00. Dinner was at 7:00. Afterwards, the social schedule included guided tours of the town, trips to the thermal baths, birthday celebrations or conversations with outside

dinner guests. Each student schedule included a mix of these activities at different times during the day. Five days of this strenuous schedule provide excellent results and greatly enhance confidence.

After the week of classes, I headed for the resort town of Bruges, close to the Atlantic coast, to practice more French before returning home.

I can never express my gratitude to AATF and CERAN for providing this marvelous chance to study and to TFLA, which helped tremendously with the airfare.



Fergal Mythen with the Irish Ministry in Brussels speaks to Wanrong Tham from Singapore, a visiting Belgium teacher/artist and Luc Louette, teacher at the CERAN School in Spa, Belgium