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Ressort: Lokale Nachrichten

Ghent Festivities: Success Comes at a Price.

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From 17 to 26 July 2026, the Ghent Festivities will once again transform the Belgian city into one of Europe's largest urban festivals. While its unique atmosphere continues to attract huge crowds, its growing scale also raises questions about sustainability and quality of life.

For ten days, Ghent's historic centre becomes a stage for concerts, street theatre, markets and cultural events, attracting more than 1.5 million visitors. Initiatives such as Miramiro and its internationally acclaimed street theatre programme preserve the festival's original spirit of creativity, accessibility and spontaneous encounters. Yet the audience has changed. Visitors now come from far beyond Ghent, turning what was once primarily a local celebration into a major international event. The result is a vibrant atmosphere, but also unprecedented pressure on the city's public spaces and infrastructure.

The festival's success also brings growing challenges. Residents face almost continuous noise, while more than 300 tons of waste must be collected after the event. Authorities also report increasing security concerns, as some groups deliberately target large gatherings to cause disturbances. At the same time, critics argue that commercial headliners and large open-air concerts increasingly overshadow smaller community initiatives and local artists. The evolution reflects the broader challenge of balancing international appeal with the authentic character that made the Ghent Festivities famous in the first place.

As the 2026 edition approaches, the Ghent Festivities remain one of Europe's most distinctive city festivals. The challenge for the years ahead will be preserving their unique identity while ensuring that residents, visitors and the historic city centre can continue to thrive together.

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