



Belgium

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HISTORY



Around the 3rd century BC, the area that is now Belgium was a part of Gaul, and the Belgae tribes inhabited it. Many believe the name Belgium originates from the name of these tribes. One of the things most hotly debated about these tribes of people is whether they were Germanic, Celtic, or a mix of the two. The Belgae people were considered the bravest of all the tribes in Gaul. This bravery was exemplified to Julius Caesar, as it took him four years to conquer them. He finally did in 53 BC.

This area of Europe would be part of the Holy Roman Empire until about the 12th century. Once the Holy Roman Empire fell, this land would become feudal states for hundreds of years. During this time, it became a major trade hub on the European continent, and this led the region into great wealth.

This land would pass through many hands, including the French, Spanish, and Dutch. It would become the United Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1815 following Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo (along with what would later become the Netherlands and other countries of this region). It wouldn't last long as the Belgian Revolt of 1830 led to their independence and the creation of Belgium.

Belgium would go on to be a European powerhouse as it is considered the center of the European Union. Belgium would go on to become the founding member of NATO in 1949 and the site of the NATO headquarters. Belgium, to this day, has a powerful influence in the European Union and has solidified itself as a valuable player on the continent of Europe.



MONEY

MONEY



Belgium is the founding member of the European Union and, thus, they converted from the Belgian Franc to the Euro in January of 1999. You are likely going to need to exchange your money into Euros. Avoid doing this at the airports or hotels. You should only exchange what you need there and then find a currency exchange location to exchange your cash. These exchange locations will offer you a much better rate than any other place.

Credit Cards and ATMs

Many of the major providers like Visa, Cirrus, Maestro, Mastercard, and American Express are accepted in most places. You will always want to carry some cash on you, because many of the smaller shops and stores are going to only deal in cash.

ATMs are not hard to find in most of the medium to large size cities throughout the country. Be aware that you will face the option of being charged withdrawal fees in your home currency or Euros. It is best to choose to be charged in Euros because you will face smaller transaction fees when you are charged in Euros.



HELPFUL INFO

Climate

The climate of Belgium is considered a temperate maritime climate. The weather of this small country is dictated mainly by the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea. The summers tend to be on the cooler side, and the winters are considered moderate, but they can get freezing.

The average high temperatures in the summers are around 72-degrees Fahrenheit. Belgium is not going to be the type of place that is going to lend itself to swimming excursions in the ocean. The average highs in the winters are around 32-degrees, and snow is a regular occurrence.

Electricity

Belgium adheres to the European standard 230-volt outlets. Plugs will be two-pronged, round plugs, standard across Europe.



Technology & Communication

Belgium is a well-connected country when it comes to WIFI and internet service. There are hotspots to be used all over the cities of Belgium.

The major hotels will also offer internet services for their guests.

If you are going to need to use your cell, you need to contact your provider to make sure that your phone can work on the GSM 1800MHz.

They will easily be able to give you this information. If your phone does work, be aware of the crazy roaming fees that they are going to charge for calls made and received.

Infrastructure & Transport

They have great rail lines throughout the country. Due to its central location, it is easy to hop a train to nearby France, the Netherlands, Germany, and other countries throughout Europe. Buses are also available for long-distance trips as well, but the trains are the best way to travel and see the region.

Within the cities, there is excellent public transportation. Buses can quickly get you around town, but if you are traveling for leisure, by foot will allow you to enjoy Belgium more intimately.



In Case Of An Emergency

The emergency number in Belgium is 112. It is the emergency number across all of the European Union.

Language

Dutch, French, and German are the three official languages of Belgium. Dutch is the most widely spoken as about 60% of the population speaks Dutch. French is the next most commonly spoken, about 40% of the population. There are pockets of the people along the German border that speak German as their primary language.



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Religion

Christianity is considered the main religion of Belgium, specifically Roman Catholicism (about 58% of the population). Some practice the Eastern Orthodox and Protestant sects of Christianity (7% combined).



Getting There

The two of the largest airports in Belgium are the Brussels airport and the Charleroi airport. Both airports service international flights from all over the world. Several different major and budget airlines run flights into both airports, including Brussels Airlines, Delta, American, United, Wizz Air, and Ryanair.

There is a shuttle available from the Brussels Airport right into the heart of Brussels. Taxis are also available as well.

Driving

Buses and trains can quickly get you where you need to go. The only reason that a visitor would need a car is if they plan on extensively exploring the outlying countryside. If you are staying in one city or simply traveling from one town to another, trains and buses are the easiest and most convenient.

If you need to rent a car, a valid US driver's license will suffice to allow a traveler to rent a vehicle.

THE EXPERIENCE

Culture

The geographic location at the center of the European Union and the small size of Belgium, it can be difficult to put a formal description or definition onto the culture. The culture can vary from neighborhood to neighborhood, region to region. Belgium is a melting pot, and this is evident in the lack of a centralized or definable Belgian culture.

Bucket List

Burges

Ghent

Durbury

Brussels

Antwerp

Ypres

Each of the cities on the list is going to have remarkable things to do and see. Each place is going to have great things to do with the family or if you are on a romantic getaway. There is so much to see in this beautiful country that there was too much to name. We decided to make a list of some of the most fun and beautiful cities in Belgium to explore.

Tourism Authority

<http://www.visitflanders.com>

<http://www.eastbelgium.com>

www.brussels.info



Foods To Try

Belgian Chocolate

Moules-Frites

Speculaas

Dutch Donuts

Waterzooi

Belgian Waffles

Grey Shrimp Croquettes

Drinks To Try

Craft beers and Microbrews (this is plenty as there are more than 400 beers that are brewed throughout Belgium)

Belgian Whiskey



Souvenirs

Comics

Life-size Mannequin-Pis

Belgian Lace (lace umbrellas, tablecloths, or fans are some great ideas)

Christmas Ornaments

Crystal

Sweets, snacks, Chocolate

Visit the local shops and stores for great inspiration on what to bring home to remind you of your time in Belgium.

