

# Country Information

## BELGIUM

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## About the country

### General

**Name of the country:** Belgium

**Area:** 30,528 sq km

**Population:** 10.6 million (2007 estimate)

**Capital:** Brussels. Population: 1.98 million

**Government:** Constitutional monarchy. The Kingdom of Belgium was established in 1830. In 1993, Belgium became a federal state comprising three autonomous regions.

**Geography:** Belgium is situated in northwestern Europe and is bordered by France, Germany, Luxembourg and The Netherlands. The landscape is varied, the rivers and gorges of the Ardennes in the southeast contrasting sharply with the rolling plains which make up much of the northern and western countryside. Notable features are the great forest of Ardennes near the frontier with Germany and Luxembourg and the wide, sandy beaches of the northern coast, which run for over 60km. The landscape is liberally dotted with historic cities, castles and churches.

**Language:** The Flemish, in the north, speak Dutch (60% of the population); the Walloons in the south speak French (40%). Brussels is bilingual, the majority of citizens speaking French. In the east there is a small German-speaking community. English is also spoken.

**Time:** GMT +1 (GMT +2 from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October).

**Religion:** Mainly Roman Catholic (75%), with small Protestant and Jewish communities.

**Electricity:** 230 volts, 50Hz. European-style two-pin plugs with receptacle and male grounding pin can be used.

### Money

**Currency:** Euro (EUR; symbol €) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

**Exchange Rates:**

Currency Exchange Rates*			
€1.00 =	US\$ 1. 34746	£ 0. 88431	CHF 1. 51257

\* Date's rate: 18 May 09

**Credit cards:** American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted. ATMs are widespread.

**Banking hours:** Mon-Fri 0900-1600.

**Tipping:** Service charges are included in bills and tipping is not necessary, unless for exceptional service. Porters, coatroom and bathroom attendants are generally tipped.

## International travel

### International airports

- [Brussels International Airport \(BRU\)](#)

The airport is located 13km northeast of the city centre.

Getting to the city: The train station is located on the lower level (1st Floor). There is a train shuttle service from the airport to the North, South and Central stations of Brussels. The shuttle runs every 15-20 minutes and the journey takes approximately 20 minutes. It operates between 5.30am and 12.20am from the airport and costs €2.60. A bus station is below the Arrivals hall. The #12 bus on weekdays before 8pm and the #21 at all other times takes passengers to the European Quarter of the city and costs €3. There are also buses that serve Brussels Airport to Antwerp; an airport bus link also operates between the Brussels railway lines and the airport (Tel. +32 70 22 02 00). There are licensed metered taxis available outside the Arrivals hall; the 30-minute journey to Brussels costs around €35 (Tel: +32 2 752 98 00).

- [Antwerpen International Airport \(ANR\)](#)

The airport is located 2km east of Antwerp.

Getting to the city: Bus 14 leaves for Antwerp Central Station regularly. Taxis are available outside arrivals.

### Passport/Visas

Belgium is a signatory to the 1995 Schengen Agreement. The Schengen visa is valid for the following 15 European countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. A Schengen visa issued by an Embassy or Consulate of the above countries allows the holder to travel freely in all of these countries.

If you intend to visit only one Schengen country, apply at the Embassy or Consulate of that particular country. You apply at the Embassy or Consulate in whose jurisdiction you are a resident.

2. If you intend to visit several Schengen countries, apply for a visa at the Embassy or Consulate of the country which is your main destination.

3. If you intend to visit several Schengen countries but do not have a main destination, apply for a visa at the Embassy or Consulate of the country which is your first point of entry.

To view Visa requirements for a different country, visit Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation website at: <http://www.diplomatie.be/en/travel/visa/default.asp>

### Venue

Please check the IB website.

### Hotel Booking Form

Please check the IB website.

Participants are responsible for their own travel to and from the event.

## Health & Safety

If suddenly taken ill or involved in an accident during a visit to an EEA country or Switzerland, free or reduced-cost necessary treatment is available for European travelers - in most cases on production of a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). Comprehensive insurance is advised for all other nationals.

## Climate

Seasonal, with warm weather from May to September and snow likely during winter months.

Required Clothing: Waterproofs are advisable at all times of the year.

## Communications

The international access code for Belgium is +32. The outgoing code is 00 followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 0044 for the United Kingdom). City codes are required for all calls within Belgium; the area code for Brussels is (0)2.

Emergencies: 112

## Useful links

- Visa and Passport Information  
<http://www.visahq.com>
- Visit Belgium
- <http://www.visitbelgium.com/>
- Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation
- <http://www.diplomatie.be/en/travel/visa/default.asp>
- World Travel Guide  
<http://www.wordtravels.com/Travelguide/Countries/belgium>