

## Country Profile

**Welcome  
To  
Belgium**

**ATOMIUM IN BRUSSELS**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**01** Belgium in short

---

**03** Brussels

---

**06** Cuisine

---

**07** Beer

---

**08** People and language

**10** Ethnic make up

---

**11** Religion

---

**12** Fun Facts

---

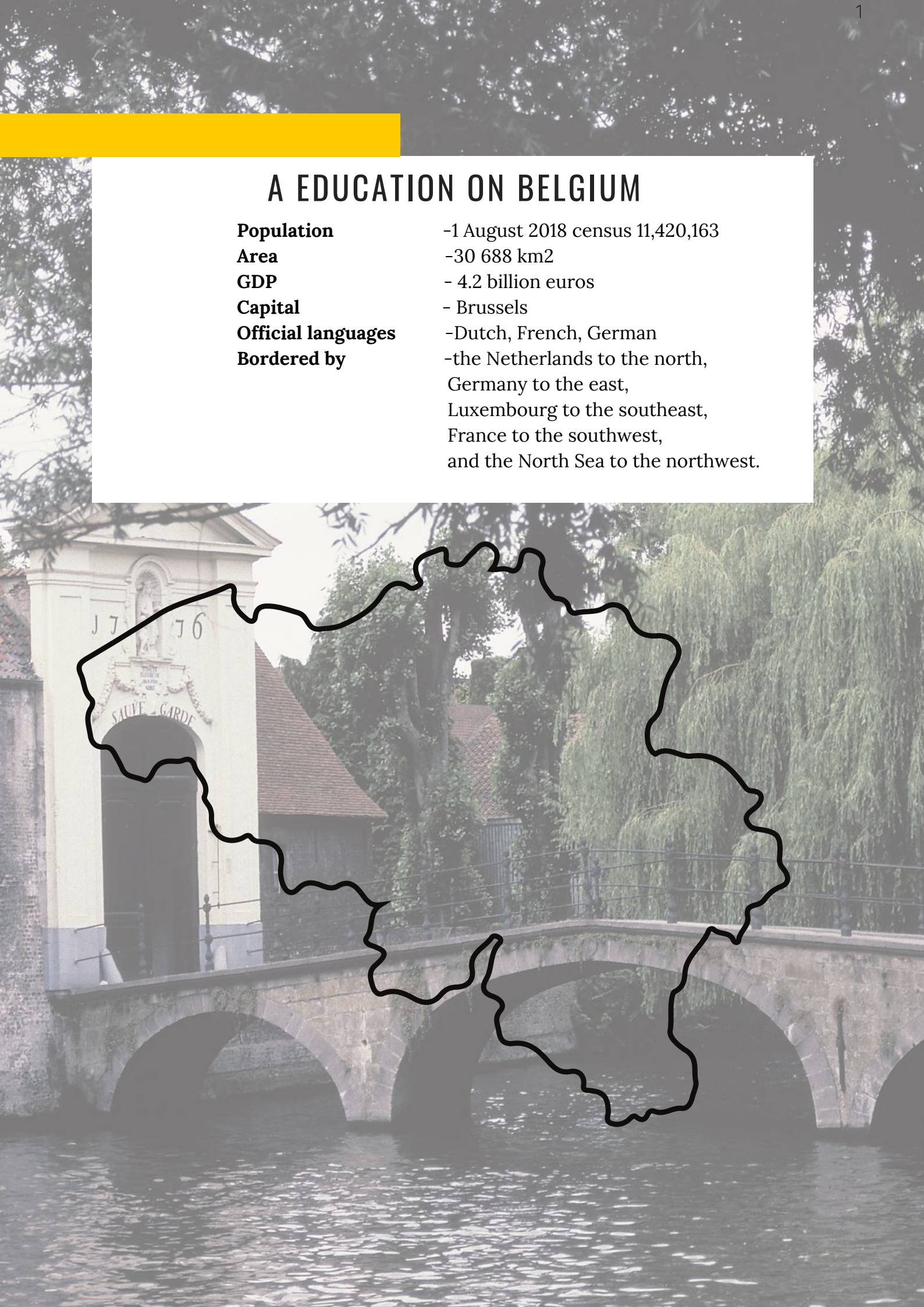
**14** Travel from Brussels

---

**16** Public Holidays

# A EDUCATION ON BELGIUM

<b>Population</b>	-1 August 2018 census 11,420,163
<b>Area</b>	-30 688 km2
<b>GDP</b>	- 4.2 billion euros
<b>Capital</b>	- Brussels
<b>Official languages</b>	-Dutch, French, German
<b>Bordered by</b>	-the Netherlands to the north, Germany to the east, Luxembourg to the southeast, France to the southwest, and the North Sea to the northwest.



# Background

---



Belgium is a federal constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system. Its institutional organisation is complex and is structured on both regional and linguistic grounds. It is divided into three highly autonomous regions:[8] Flanders in the north, Wallonia in the south, and the Brussels-Capital Region. Brussels is the smallest and most densely populated region, as well as the richest region in terms of GDP per capita.

Belgium is home to two main linguistic groups or Communities: the Dutch-speaking, mostly Flemish Community, which constitutes about 59 percent of the population, and the French-speaking Community, which comprises about 40 percent of all Belgians. A small German-speaking Community, numbering around one percent, exists in the East Cantons. The Brussels-Capital Region is officially bilingual (French and Dutch), although French is the dominant language.[9] Belgium's linguistic diversity and related political conflicts are reflected in its political history and complex system of governance, made up of six different governments.

Historically, Belgium was part of an area known as the Low Countries, a somewhat larger region than the current Benelux group of states that also included parts of northern France and western Germany. Its name is derived from the Latin word *Belgica*, after the Roman province of *Gallia Belgica*. From the end of the Middle Ages until the 17th century, the area of Belgium was a prosperous and cosmopolitan centre of commerce and culture. Between the 16th and early 19th centuries, Belgium served as the battleground between many European powers, earning the moniker the "Battlefield of Europe" a reputation strengthened by both world wars. The country emerged in 1830 following the Belgian Revolution when it seceded from the Netherlands.

---

# BRUSSELS

Brussels, officially the Brussels-Capital Region is a region of Belgium comprising 19 municipalities, including the City of Brussels, which is the capital of Belgium. The Brussels-Capital Region is located in the central portion of the country and is a part of both the French Community of Belgium and the Flemish Community, but is separate from the Flemish Region (in which it forms an enclave) and the Walloon Region. Brussels is the most densely populated and the richest region in Belgium in terms of GDP per capita. It covers 161 km<sup>2</sup> (62 sq mi), a relatively small area compared to the two other regions, and has a population of 1.2 million. The metropolitan area of Brussels counts over 2.1 million people, which makes it the largest in Belgium. It is also part of a large conurbation extending towards Ghent, Antwerp, Leuven and Walloon Brabant, home to over 5 million people.





## ATOMIUM

The Atomium is a landmark building in Brussels, originally constructed for the 1958 Brussels World's Fair (Expo 58). It is located on the Heysel Plateau, where the exhibition took place. It is now a museum.

Designed by the engineer André Waterkeyn and architects André and Jean Polak, it stands 102 m tall. Its nine 18 m diameter stainless steel clad spheres are connected, so that the whole forms the shape of a unit cell of an iron crystal magnified 165 billion times. Tubes of 3 m diameter connect the spheres along the 12 edges of the cube and all eight vertices to the centre. They enclose stairs, escalators and a lift (in the central, vertical tube) to allow access to the five habitable spheres, which contain exhibit halls and other public spaces. The top sphere includes a restaurant which has a panoramic view of Brussels.



## GRAND PLACE

**The Grand Place "Grand Square"; or Grote Markt is the central square of Brussels. It is surrounded by opulent guildhalls and two larger edifices, the city's Town Hall, and the King's House or Breadhouse (French: Maison du Roi, Dutch: Broodhuis) building containing the Museum of the City of Brussels. The square measures 68 by 110 metres (223 by 361 ft). The Grand Place is the most important tourist destination and most memorable landmark in Brussels. It is also considered as one of the most beautiful squares in Europe and has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1998.**

# Cuisine



Belgian cuisine is widely varied with significant regional variations while also reflecting the cuisines of neighbouring France, Germany and the Netherlands. It is sometimes said that Belgian food is served in the quantity of German cuisine but with the quality of French food. Outside the country, Belgium is best known for its chocolate, waffles, fries and beer.

Though Belgium has many distinctive national dishes, many internationally popular foods like hamburgers and spaghetti bolognese are also popular in Belgium, and most of what Belgians eat is also eaten in neighbouring countries. 'Belgian cuisine' therefore usually refers to dishes of Belgian origin, or those considered typically Belgian.

Belgian cuisine traditionally prizes regional and seasonal ingredients. Ingredients typical in Belgian dishes include potatoes, leeks, grey shrimp, white asparagus, Belgian endives and local beer, in addition to common European staples including meat, cheese and butter. Belgians typically eat three meals a day, with a light breakfast, medium lunch, a snack and large dinner.

Belgium has a plethora of dishes and products that are local to a specific area. Examples include waterzooi from Ghent, the couque biscuit from the town of Dinant, and tarte au riz from Verviers. While their local origins are acknowledged, most such dishes are enjoyed throughout Belgium.



Chicons au  
gratin



Pomfrites with  
mayonnaise



Filet américain  
(watch out it's raw)



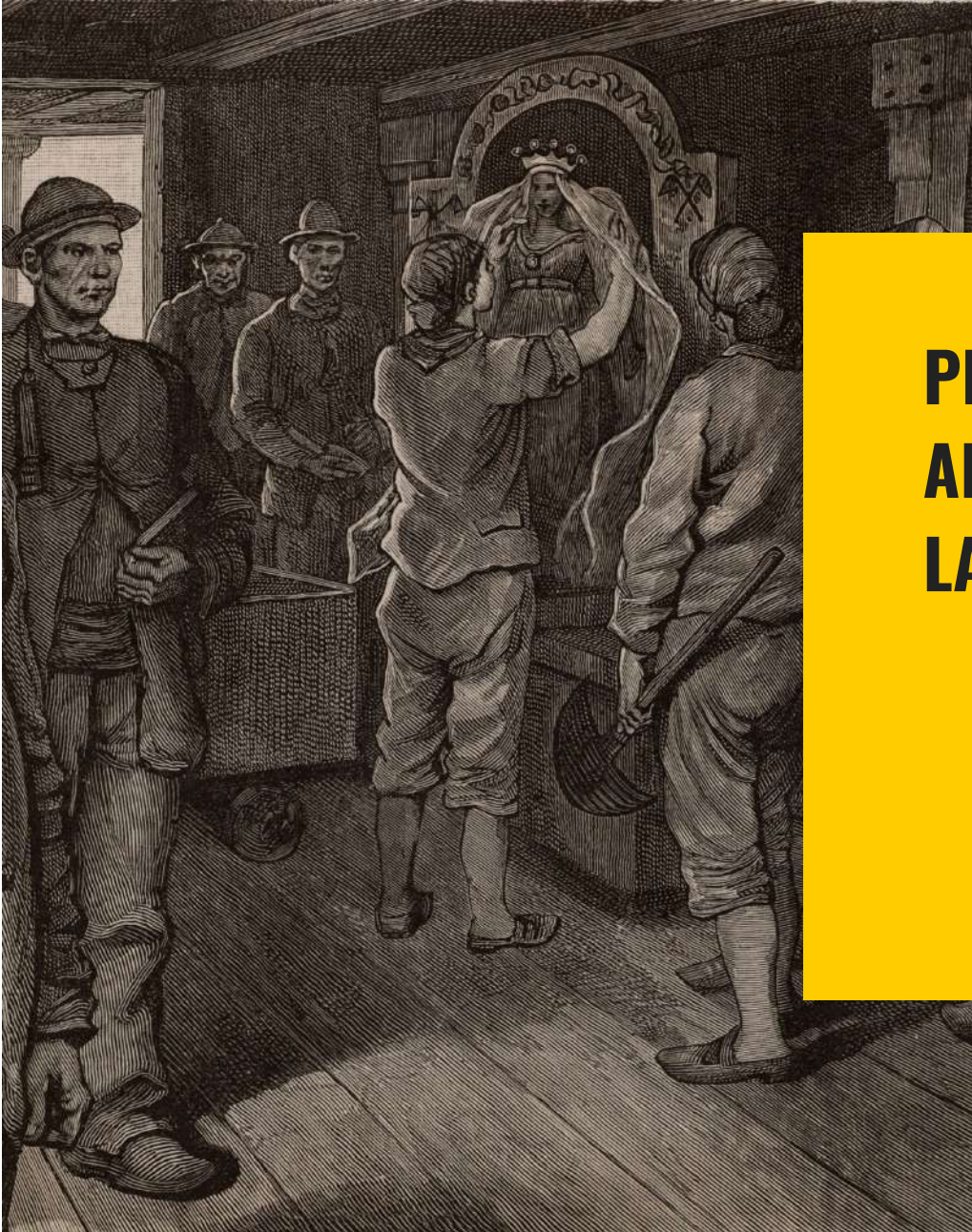
## The prize of Belgian Beer

Bush Beer (7.5% and 12%)  
 Brugse Straffe Hendrik (Blond 6.5%, Bruin 8.5%)  
**Chimay (red top 7%, blue top 9%)**  
**La Chouffe (8%)**  
 Gouden Carolus (8%)  
 Delirium Tremens (9%)  
 Corsendonk Pater Noster (5.6%)  
 Gouden Carolus (8%)  
 Delirium Tremens (9%)  
 De Koninck (5%)  
**Hoegaarden (5%)**  
 Kriek (Cantillon Kriek Lambic 5%, Belle Vue Kriek 5.2%, Mort Subite Kriek 4.3%)  
**Kwak (8%)**  
 Lambic (Cantillon Lambik 5%, Lindemans Lambik 4%)  
**Leffe (Leffe Brune 6.5%, Leffe Blond 6.6%)**  
**Orval (6.2%)**  
 Rochefort (Rochefort 6 7.5%, Rochefort 8 9.2%, Rochefort 10 11.3%)  
 Westmalle (Westmalle Dubbel 7%, Tripel 9%)

# Beer is to Belgians as wine is to the French

Even if you don't like beer, it is important to realise what an integral part of Belgian culture beer is. It is considered as fine as any wine and respect is shown to every beer type with its very own glass. Beer is used in a lot of cooking in Belgium including batters, sauces and stews. If you like beer, however, you will be in paradise. You can find any beer of your choosing from Belgium and around the world at Delerium, which has the Guinness book of records for the most beers in stock:





## PEOPLE AND LANGUAGE

Belgians are primarily a nationality or citizen group, by *jus soli* (Latin: right of the soil),<sup>[14]</sup> also known as birthright citizenship, and are not a homogeneous ethnic group.<sup>[15][16]</sup> <sup>[17]</sup> Belgians are made up of two main linguistic and ethnic groups; the Dutch-speakers (called the Flemish) and the French-speakers (mostly Walloons), as well as a third tiny but constitutionally recognized group from two small German-speaking areas. These sometimes competing ethnic and linguistic priorities are governed by constitutionally designated "regions or communities", depending on the constitutional realm of the topic, a complex and uniquely Belgian political construct. Since many Belgians are at least bilingual, or even trilingual, it is common for business, social and family networks to include members of the various ethnic groups composing Belgium.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

The Brussels-Capital Region occupies a unique political and cultural position since geographically and linguistically it is a bilingual enclave within the unilingual Flemish Region. Since the founding of the Kingdom of Belgium in 1830, the city of Brussels has transformed from being almost entirely Dutch-speaking into a multilingual city with French as the majority language and *lingua franca*, a process that has been labelled the Frenchification of Brussels".

Since the independence of Belgium in 1830, the constitutional title of the Belgian head of state is the "King of the Belgians" rather than the "King of Belgium".

# People and language

---

## **Flemish (Dutch-speaking)**

Map of the medieval County of Flanders.

Within Belgium the Flemish, about 60% of the population, form a clearly distinguishable group, set apart by their language and customs. However, when compared to the Netherlands most of these cultural and linguistic boundaries quickly fade, as the Flemish share the same language, similar or identical customs and (though only with the southern part of today's Netherlands) traditional religion with the Dutch.

However, the popular perception of being a single polity varies greatly, depending on subject matter, locality and personal background. Generally, Flemings will seldom identify themselves as being Dutch and vice versa, especially on a national level.

## **Walloon (French-speaking)**

Walloons are a French-speaking people who live in Belgium, principally in Wallonia. Walloons are a distinctive community within Belgium, important historical and anthropological criteria (religion, language, traditions, folklore) bind Walloons to the French people. More generally, the term also refers to the inhabitants of the Walloon Region. They may speak regional languages such as Walloon (with Picard in the West and Lorrain in the South).

Though roughly three-quarters of Belgium's French speakers live in Wallonia, it is important to note that French-speaking residents of Brussels tend not to identify as Walloons.

## **German-speaking community**

The German-speaking Community of Belgium is one of the three constitutionally recognized federal communities of Belgium. Covering an area of less than 1,000 km<sup>2</sup> within the province of Liège in Wallonia, it includes nine of the eleven municipalities of the so-called East Cantons and the local population numbers over 73,000 – less than 1% of the national total. Bordering the Netherlands, Germany and Luxembourg, the area has its own parliament and government at Eupen. The German-speaking community is composed of the German-speaking parts of the lands that were annexed in 1920 from Germany. In addition, in contemporary Belgium there are also some other German-speaking areas that belonged to Belgium even before 1920, but they are not currently considered officially part of the German-speaking community in Belgium: Bleiberg-Welkenraat-Baelen in Northeastern province of Liège and Arelerland (city of Arlon and some of its nearby villages in Southeastern province of Belgian Luxembourg). However, in these localities, the German language is highly endangered due to the adoption of French.

# Ethnic Make up



As of 2007, nearly 92% of the population had Belgian citizenship, and other European Union member citizens account for around 6%. The prevalent foreign nationals were Italian (171,918), French (125,061), Dutch (116,970), Moroccan (80,579), Portuguese (43,509), Spanish (42,765), Turkish (39,419) and German (37,621).[128][129] In 2007, there were 1.38 million foreign-born residents in Belgium, corresponding to 12.9% of the total population. Of these, 685,000 (6.4%) were born outside the EU and 695,000 (6.5%) were born in another EU Member State.

At the beginning of 2012, people of foreign background and their descendants were estimated to have formed around 25% of the total population i.e. 2.8 million new Belgians. Of these new Belgians, 1,200,000 are of European ancestry and 1,350,000 are from non-Western countries (most of them from Morocco, Turkey, and the DR Congo). Since the modification of the Belgian nationality law in 1984 more than 1.3 million migrants have acquired Belgian citizenship. The largest group of immigrants and their descendants in Belgium are Moroccans. 89.2% of inhabitants of Turkish origin have been naturalized, as have 88.4% of people of Moroccan background, 75.4% of Italians, 56.2% of the French and 47.8% of Dutch people.





# RELIGION

**Shown here:**  
Y7 Students

Since the country's independence, Roman Catholicism, counterbalanced by strong freethought movements, has had an important role in Belgium's politics. However, Belgium is largely a secular country as the laicist constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. During the reigns of Albert I and Baudouin, the monarchy had a reputation of deeply rooted Catholicism.

Roman Catholicism has traditionally been Belgium's majority religion; being especially strong in Flanders. However, by 2009 Sunday church attendance was 5% for Belgium in total; 3% in Brussels, and 5.4% in Flanders. Church attendance in 2009 in Belgium was roughly half of the Sunday church attendance in 1998 (11% for the total of Belgium in 1998). Despite the drop in church attendance, Catholic identity nevertheless remains an important part of Belgium's culture.

According to the Eurobarometer 2010, 37% of Belgian citizens responded that they believe there is a God. 31% answered that they believe there is some sort of spirit or life-force. 27% answered that they do not believe there is any sort of spirit, God, or life-force. 5% did not respond. According to the Eurobarometer 2015, 60.7% of the total population of Belgium adhered to Christianity, with Roman Catholicism being the largest denomination with 52.9%. Protestants comprised 2.1% and Orthodox Christians were the 1.6% of the total. Non-religious people comprised the 32.0% of the population and were divided between atheists (14.9%) and agnostics (17.1%). A further 5.2% of the population was Muslim and 2.1% were believers in other religions. The same survey held in 2012 found that Christianity was the largest religion in Belgium accounting 65% of Belgians.

Symbolically and materially, the Roman Catholic Church remains in a favourable position. Belgium officially recognises three religions: Christianity (Catholic, Protestantism, Orthodox churches and Anglicanism), Islam and Judaism.

# FUN FACTS



**The saxophone** family was invented by the Belgian instrument maker Adolphe Sax in 1840. Adolphe Sax wanted to create a group or series of instruments that would be the most powerful and vocal of the woodwinds, and the most adaptive of the brass instruments, that would fill the vacant middle ground between the two sections. Sax patented the saxophone on June 28.

**Audrey Hepburn**, born in Ixelles, Brussels, Hepburn spent her childhood between Belgium, England, and the Netherlands. In Amsterdam, she studied ballet with Sonia Gaskell, before moving to London in 1948

**Chocolate:** Belgium produces more than 220,000 tons of chocolate per annum.

**Robert Cailliau**, co-inventor of the World Wide Web, is a Belgian.



# "More Fun facts..."

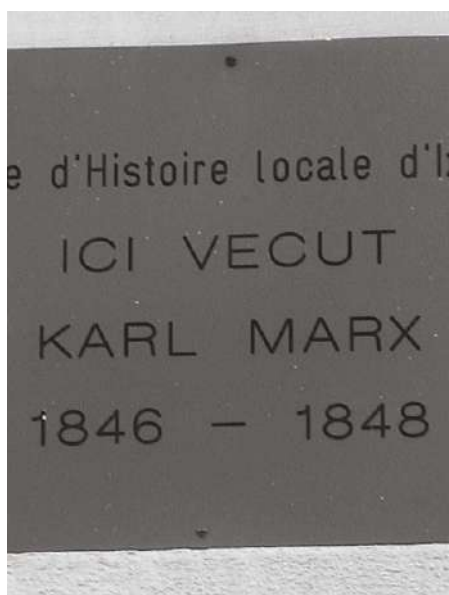
The "**Communist Manifesto**" by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels was written in Brussels. The (in)famous German philosopher Karl Marx lived in Brussels in 1845–1847, joined by his collaborator Engels. They drafted and published the Communist Manifesto almost entirely in Brussels. If you visit Brussels, you cannot miss the restaurant Le Cygne located in the Grand-Place where Marx wrote his famous work.

The French-Belgians are prolific **comic creators**. You have surely heard of, read or watched animated or film adaptations of the Smurfs, Spirou and Fantasio, Tintin, Asterix, Blake and Mortimer, Thorgal, Gaston... the list is endless. Perhaps more than half of your childhood came from Belgium!

In the 1970s, **light beer** was served during **school lunch**. We all know Belgians love their beers, so something like this shouldn't surprise us, right? In traditional Belgian culture, it was acceptable for everyone, including children, to drink a kind of light, 'table beer' as they drank their water and coffee.

Belgium holds the **world record for the longest period without a government**.

I'm sure this one will ring a bell if you follow the news. The world record for a democratic nation to be without an elected government is held by Belgium, which lasted for 589 days in 2010-11.



# Where can you travel to from Brussels

## By Car

### Antwerp

53min

Antwerp is a port city on Belgium's River Scheldt, with history dating to the Middle Ages. In its center, the centuries-old Diamond District houses thousands of diamond traders, cutters and polishers. Antwerp's Flemish Renaissance architecture is typified by the Grote Markt, a central square in the old town. At the 17th-century Rubens House, period rooms display works by the Flemish Baroque painter Peter Paul Rubens.

### Liege

1h 5min

Liège, a city along the Meuse River in Belgium's French-speaking Wallonia region, has long been a commercial and cultural hub. Its old town is filled with landmarks dating to the medieval era, including the Romanesque Church of St. Bartholomew. The Grand Curtius museum houses archaeological treasures and art within a 17th-century mansion, while Opéra Royal de Wallonie has staged operas since 1820.

### Bruges

1h 21min

Bruges, the capital of West Flanders in northwest Belgium, is distinguished by its canals, cobbled streets and medieval buildings. Its port, Zeebrugge, is an important center for fishing and European trade. In the city center's Burg square, the 14th-century Stadhuis (City Hall) has an ornate carved ceiling. Nearby, Markt square features a 13th-century belfry with a 47-bell carillon and 83m tower with panoramic views.

### Lille

1h 27

Lille is the capital of the Hauts-de-France region in northern France, near the border with Belgium. A cultural hub and bustling university city today, it was once an important merchant center of French Flanders, and many Flemish influences remain. The historic center, Vieux Lille, is characterized by 17th-century brick town houses, cobbled pedestrian streets and the large central square, Grand Place.

### Ghent

55min

Ghent is a port city in northwest Belgium, at the confluence of the Leie and Scheldt rivers. During the Middle Ages it was a prominent city-state. Today it's a university town and cultural hub. Its pedestrianized center is known for medieval architecture such as 12th-century Gravensteen castle and the Graslei, a row of guildhalls beside the Leie river harbor.

### Dinant

1h 4min

Dinant is a city in Belgium's Walloon Region. It's on the banks of the Meuse River and backed by steep cliffs. Perched on an outcrop above town is the centuries-old fortified Citadel. It's now a museum with sweeping views. Below it is the Gothic Collegiate Church of Our Lady. Nearby, on the site of saxophone inventor Adolphe Sax's birthplace, Mr. Sax's House has interactive exhibits on the instrument's development. Don't miss the limestone caves Grotte La Merveilleuse.

### De Haan

1h 23min

De Haan is a coastal municipality in northern Belgium. It's known for its long beach and restaurant-dotted promenade. The streets of the Concessie district are lined with belle époque buildings, such as the grand town hall, housed in a former luxury hotel. Nearby, Villa Savoyarde was home to Albert Einstein for several months in 1933. On the outskirts of town are expansive sand dunes crossed by paths.

### Amsterdam

2h 27min

Amsterdam is the Netherlands' capital, known for its artistic heritage, elaborate canal system and narrow houses with gabled facades, legacies of the city's 17th-century Golden Age. Its Museum District houses the Van Gogh Museum, works by Rembrandt and Vermeer at the Rijksmuseum, and modern art at the Stedelijk. Cycling is key to the city's character, and there are numerous bike paths.





# London

EuroStar

2h20min

Driving

5h

The capital of England and the United Kingdom, is a 21st-century city with history stretching back to Roman times. At its centre stand the imposing Houses of Parliament, the iconic 'Big Ben' clock tower and Westminster Abbey, site of British monarch coronations. Across the Thames River, the London Eye observation wheel provides panoramic views of the South Bank cultural complex, and the entire city.

## By Train

# Paris

Thalys

2h36min

Driving

3h35min

Paris, France's capital, is a major European city and a global center for art, fashion, gastronomy and culture. Its 19th-century cityscape is crisscrossed by wide boulevards and the River Seine. Beyond such landmarks as the Eiffel Tower and the 12th-century, Gothic Notre-Dame cathedral, the city is known for its cafe culture and designer boutiques along the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré.



# Barcelona

City of Brussels, Belgium—Barcelona,  
Spain

Nonstop (5–10 per day) 1 h 55 min

Connecting 3 h 45 min+

Round trip price, Feb 23 – 27 from 73 €

Ryanair

Vueling

SWISS AIRLINES

...

**BY  
PLANE**

# BERLIN

City of Brussels, Belgium—  
Berlin, Germany

Nonstop (3–7 per day) 1 h 20  
min

Connecting 2 h 50 min+

Round trip price, Feb 23 – 27  
from 85 €

Ryanair

Brussels Airlines

KLM

...

# LISBON

City of Brussels, Belgium—Lisbon, Portugal

Nonstop (6–8 per day) 2 h 45 min

Connecting 4 h 5 min+

Round trip price, Feb 23 – 27 from 83 €

Ryanair

Tap Air Portugal

Iberia

...

# ROME

City of Brussels, Belgium—  
Rome, Italy

Nonstop (6–9 per day) 2 h

Connecting 3 h 30 min+

Round trip price, Feb 23 – 27  
from 55 €

Ryanair

Brussels Airlines

SWISS AIRLINES

# Stockholm

City of Brussels, Belgium—  
Stockholm, Sweden

Nonstop (0–7 per day) 2 h 10 min

Connecting 3 h 25 min+

Round trip price, Feb 23 – 27 from  
145 €

SWISS

KLM

Lufthansa

...

**A TIME TO FLY**

# Belgian calendar

## Public holidays

Holiday	Date	Dutch	French	German
<u>New Year's Day</u>	January 1	Nieuwjaar	Nouvel An	Neujahr
<u>Easter Monday</u>	Monday after Easter	Paasmaandag	Lundi de Pâques	Ostermontag
<u>Labour Day</u>	May 1	Dag van de arbeid	Fête du Travail	Tag der Arbeit
<u>Ascension</u>	39 days after Easter	Onze Lieve Heer hemelvaart	Ascension	Christi Himmelfahrt
<u>Pentecost Monday</u>	Monday after Pentecost	Pinkstermaandag	Lundi de Pentecôte	Pfingstmontag
<u>Belgian National Day</u>	July 21	Nationale feestdag	Fête nationale	Nationalfeiertag
<u>Assumption of Mary</u>	August 15	Onze Lieve Vrouw hemelvaart	Assomption	Mariä Himmelfahrt
<u>All Saints' Day</u>	November 1	Allerheiligen	Toussaint	Allerheiligen
<u>Armistice Day</u>	November 11	Wapenstilstand	Jour de l'Armistice	Waffenstillstand
<u>Christmas</u>	December 25	Kerstmis	Noël	Weihnachten

## Particular days celebrated in Belgium that are not official public holidays

Holiday	Date	Dutch	French	German
<u>Epiphany</u>	January 6	Driekoningen	Épiphanie	Erscheinung des Herrn
<u>Valentine's Day</u>	February 14	Valentijnsdag	Saint-Valentin	Valentinstag
<u>Iris Day (in Brussels only)</u>	May 8	Irisfeest	Fête de l'Iris	—
<u>Day of the Flemish Community (in Flanders only)</u>	July 11	Feest van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap	Fête de la Communauté flamande	—
<u>French Community Holiday (in Wallonia only)</u>	September 27	Dag van de Franse Gemeenschap	Fête de la Communauté française	—
<u>Day of the Walloon Region (in Wallonia only)</u>	third Sunday of September	Feest van het Waalse Gewest	Fête de la Région wallonne	Festtag der Wallonischen Region
<u>Halloween</u>	October 31	Halloween	Halloween	Halloween
<u>All Souls' Day</u>	November 2	Allerzielen	Toussaint	Allerseelen
<u>Day of the German-speaking Community</u>	November 15	Dag van de Duitstalige Gemeenschap	Fête de la Communauté germanophone	Tag der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft
<u>King's Feast</u>		Koningsdag	Fête du Roi	Festtag des Königs
<u>Saint Nicholas</u>	December 6	Sinterklaas	Saint-Nicolas	Sankt Nikolaus
<u>Second Day of Christmas</u>	December 26	Tweede kerstdag	Lendemain de Noël	2. Weihnachtstag