

Fact sheet about Belgium

Passports and Visa Requirements

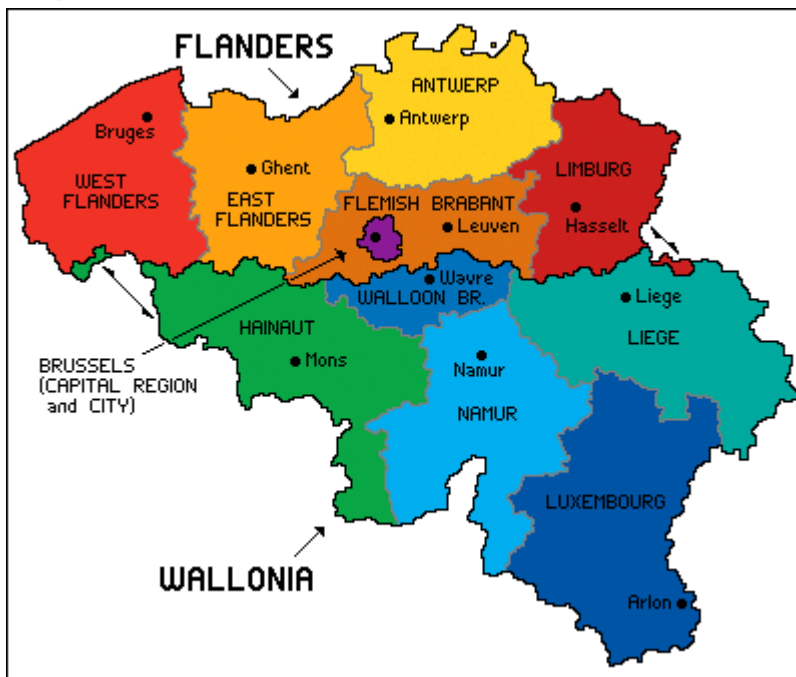
Entry requirements for UK nationals: UK nationals must possess a valid passport. A visa is not required for stays of up to three months. British Overseas Territories Citizens, and British Overseas Citizens require an endorsement on their passports guaranteeing re-admittance to the UK or the country that issued the passport.

Entry requirements for Irish nationals: Irish nationals require a valid passport. No visa is required for stays not exceeding three months.

EU-Schengen countries: The borderless region known as the Schengen area includes the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. All these countries issue a standard Schengen visa that, in principal, allows the holder to travel freely within the borders of all. All visitors require a passport that is valid for at least three months after leaving Belgium. Nationals of non-EU countries are recommended to hold return or onward tickets, sufficient funds and documents for their next destination.

Note: Passport and visa requirements are liable to change at short notice. Travellers are advised to check their entry requirements with their [embassy or consulate](#).

Map



Time: GMT +1 (GMT +2 from March to October). Belgium is six hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time and nine hours ahead of Pacific Standard Time.

Electricity: 220 volts, 50Hz. European-style two-pin plugs can be used.

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. A lot of Belgians speak English.

Health: No vaccinations are required. Medical facilities and care in Belgium are excellent but expensive so travellers are advised to take out medical insurance. UK citizens receive emergency medical care for a reduced cost, but should have a European Health Insurance

Card (EHIC), to qualify.

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

Safety: Most visits to Belgium are trouble-free, but travellers should be wary of street crime in the large cities, such as mugging and pickpocketing, particularly in Brussels at major railway stations and on public transport. Leuven is a safe and clean place. There's little crime. Most places are well lit in the evening and you'll rarely see groups of people loitering.

Customs: Belgium law requires everyone to carry some form of official identification at all times.

Business: Business hours are generally 9am to 5.30pm or 6pm Monday to Friday. Shops are open Monday to Saturday, 9 to 18 (supermarkets until 20), and closed on Sundays.

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 Leuven is (0)16. Mobile phones operate on GSM networks, and Belgian mobile numbers start with (0)47x. The three main mobile companies are Proximus (=Belgacom), Mobistar (=Orange), Base. Public phones take coins or phone cards. Internet cafes are widely available.

Money: Euro (EUR) divided into 100 cents. Most credit cards are accepted (Visa, Mastercard, American Express, Diners Club and Eurcard). ATMs are available in all major cities. Banks are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm, and are closed on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays (note that July 11th is a bank holiday). Some banks close for an hour during lunch. There are however some foreign exchange offices that trade on Sundays.

Weights & measures: Metric

Internet domain: .be

Weather: The weather, unfortunately, is highly unpredictable here - like in most places with a moderate sea climate. We do have an occasional heat wave during the summer, but not for extended periods. Most of the time, the weather here is cloudy but mild and enjoyable. However, keep in mind it does rain fairly often and it can get chilly in the evening, even during spring/summer. To be on the safe side, it's best to always take an extra sweater with you if you plan to spend several hours walking around the city. An umbrella might come in handy, as well - but when it rains it's usually not for hours on end - it's not *that* terrible :)

Emergency numbers



112 European Emergency number [SOS 112 FAQ](#)



100 Fire brigade and urgent medical assistance [Fire Brigade of the Brussels Capital District](#)



Politie

101 Federal Police [federale en lokale politie / police fédérale et locale](#)



110 Child focus [childfocus.be](#)

The police station in Leuven couldn't be easier to locate : it's to the left side of the town hall on the Grote Markt (Great Market Square). The station is open 24/7, the lost and found is also here (both reporting and picking up, between 07:00-22:00) the general phone number of the station is 016 / 21 09 00.