BELGIUM

Two greatly contrasting cultures lie within the Belgian borders: that of the Flemish *(Dutch)* dialect in the north, and that of the Walloon *(French)* in the south. The central part of the country has experienced a colorful history as it rose to great prominence in the Middle Ages, and past prosperity is still evident in the historic and well-preserved architecture.



AREA: 11,787 sq. miles **POPULATION:** 11,700,000 **CAPITAL:** Brussels *(population: 1,199,000)*
GOVERNMENT: Constitutional Monarchy **LANGUAGE:** Dutch, French & German

FOOD & DRINK A Belgian's world revolves around food, and with good reason! From the butter-drizzled white asparagus sprinkled with hard boiled eggs, golden shrimp croquettes, Waterzooi (creamed chicken stew with vegetables) and 400 varieties of beer, to huge pots of mussels cooked in white wine and served with crispy fries and real mayonnaise, Belgium wholly embraces the concept of comfort food. Waffles are served just about everywhere and there are over 2,000 chocolate shops serving Belgium's finest pralines. The ideal place to go for lunch in Belgium is a café, or outside on a terrace in good weather. Take time to relax and enjoy one of the unique varieties of beer including white, red, amber, herb-infused, raspberry-flavored or brewed by Trappist monks.

CLIMATE Belgium's climate is temperate, with mild winters and cool summers, which are often rainy, humid and cloudy.

BANKING HOURS Banks are generally open Monday through Friday, 9:00AM - 4:00PM.

SHOPPING Be sure to buy some of the exquisite lace for which Belgium is so well known, along with linens, glass, fine crystal and diamonds. A sampling of the delicious, mouth-watering chocolates is a must and a perfect gift to bring back home for friends and relatives. Shops are open Monday through Saturday, 10:00AM - 6:00PM. Some shops close from noon to 2:00PM. On Fridays, many stores stay open until 9:00PM.

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