

Belgium - OVERVIEW

Updated: June 10, 2014



Country Name Long Form: Kingdom of Belgium

Government Type: Federal parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy

Languages Spoken: Dutch, French, German, English

National Flag



Belgium is a Tier III Country. Significant security measures are necessary.

	Overall Assessment	Political Violence	Crime	Terrorism	Travel Safety
Belgium	L	L	L	M	L

Key: (L) Low – (M) Medium – (H) High – (C)Critical

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Political Violence is rated at LOW in Belgium

Prior police approval is required for all public demonstrations, and police are present to ensure adequate security for participants and passers-by. Nonetheless, spontaneous demonstrations do take place in response to world events or local developments. Even demonstrations that are meant to be peaceful can become violent and unpredictable.

TERRORISM

Terrorism is assessed as MEDIUM

Belgium has been largely free of major terrorist incidents. Belgium maintains open borders with its neighbors, allowing the possibility of terrorist operatives entering/exiting the country with anonymity.

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RULE OF LAW / CORRUPTION

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2013 gave Belgium a score of 75, indicating that the country has low levels of corruption. The CPI rates countries by the perceived levels of corruption in the public sector, with the least corrupt countries receiving a maximum score of 100.

CRIME

Crime is assessed as **LOW**

Belgium is a highly developed and stable democracy with a modern economy. Tourist facilities are widely available. Belgium remains relatively free of violent crime, but low-level street crime is common. Muggings, purse snatchings, and pocket picking occur frequently, particularly in the major cities. Thieves loiter in transportation hubs like the metro (subway) and train stations.

KIDNAPPING

Kidnapping is a rarely an issue in Belgium, and few cases of Western travelers being abducted are known to exist.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Although uncommon, instances of assault involving Westerners have been reported. These crimes are typically committed by intoxicated individuals near establishments that serve alcohol and public transportation hubs.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Flooding is a threat along rivers and in areas of reclaimed coastal land, protected from the sea by concrete dikes.

STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

- Stay in groups, travel in a caravan consisting of two or more vehicles, and stay on the main roads.
- Ensure that someone not traveling with you is aware of your itinerary.
- Avoid hotels that do not have adequate security.
- It is preferable to stay in the main tourist destinations.
- Pay close attention to your surroundings, especially when walking or driving in Belgium
- Official taxis are a suitable means of travel in daylight hours in urban areas. It is highly recommended that taxis be arranged through your hotel, or program office. Negotiate the price in advance.
- Women should be especially careful when traveling alone and avoid staying out late without a trusted male escort.
- Make sensible security precautions to mitigate the risk of petty crime, particularly pick pocketing and bag snatching.

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- Carry a photocopy of your passport when traveling to avoid losing it in a robbery.
- Do not resist if you are being robbed and avoid eye contact and to not make any sudden movements.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times and keep a low profile.
- Never leave your belongings unattended.
- Carry bags close to your body and make sure the fasteners are secure.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash or wearing expensive jewelry or valuables.
- Leave all important documents in a safe or safe deposit box at your hotel and only carry certified copies.
- Trust your instincts. If someone or something makes you uneasy, avoid the situation.

Important Contact Details:

International Dialing Code: +32

International Dialing Prefix: 00

Victims of crime in Belgium should contact the following phone numbers for assistance:

POLICE: The local equivalent to the “911” emergency line in Belgium is 101

FIRE DEPARTMENT: 100

AMBULANCE: 100

Note: Police, ambulance or fire department response may be unreliable in some parts of the country.

TRAVEL & ROAD SAFETY

- The infrastructure of Belgium is well-developed across the country.
- In general, driving is fast and as a result, Belgium has a high accident rate.
- Due to their road network, Belgium has a high accident rate.
- The supply of basic amenities, such as power and water are reliable across all regions.

RECOMMENDED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

- No use of ATMs after dark.

HEALTH

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Medical facilities are generally excellent. Most medical personnel have a good knowledge of the English language, but travelers should not that staffs in French-speaking Wallonia are less likely to be fluent in English than those in Brussels or Dutch-speaking Flanders.

- Tap water in Belgium is generally safe to drink.
- Unpasteurized milk should be boiled before consumption, or powdered or tinned milk should be used as an alternative.

The following vaccinations are recommended or required if travelling to Belgium:

- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Rabies (recommended for travelers that might come into contact with bats)

It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are up to date for diseases including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

Significant Diseases –

None

HOSPITALS –

CHIREC – Basilique Clinic
Pangaert street 37 – 47
Brussels 1083
Tel: +32 2 422 4242
Website: <http://chirec.be/en/>

Hospital Eterbeek-Ixelles
Rue J Paquot 63
Brussels 1050
Tel: +32 2 641 4111
Fax: +32 2 641 4428
Website: <http://chirec.be/en/>

US EMBASSY – CONSULATE LOCATIONS

The US Embassy Brussels

Regentlaan 27 Boulevard du Regent
Brussels
Tel: +32 (0)2 508 2111
Fax: +32 (0)2 511 2725

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Email: uscitizenbrussels@state.gov

USF INTERNATIONAL HOTLINE

USF 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 813-317-5815

AXA Assistance 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 1-877-577-9504 / +1-203-399-5130 (Call collect from abroad)

ASSIST ID #: GLMN 04983932. <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/resources/>

* Information derived from CIA World Fact Book, US Department of State, OSAC, and Travel Guard. This travel overview summarizes some of the most important concerns; however, it does not negate the need for detailed trip planning.