

# A short introduction to Belgian culture and languages

Erasmus Exchange

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Compiled by the hosting team

# Introduction

\* Welcome!



\* Welcome to Belgium!

\* Welcome to Sankt Vith!



\* Welcome to Maria Goretti School!



# Belgium – België – Belgique – Belgien



# Three official languages

- \* Welcome! Good morning, everybody. My name is ...



- \* Welkom! Goeie morgen, allemaal. Ik heet...
- \* Bienvenu! Bonjours tout le monde. Je m'appelle...
- \* Willkommen! Guten Morgen. Mein Name ist...

# Three official languages

- \* Three official languages: French, Dutch and German
- \* French: Wallonia in southern Belgium
- \* Dutch: Flanders in northern Belgium
- \* German: small minority of people in eastern Belgium
- \* Brussels is bilingual
- \* Belgian Dutch is slightly different to the Netherlands Dutch and referred to as *Flemish*
- \* Belgian French is today similar to standard French
- \* Belgian French *Walloon* spoken only by some people

# Things you should know about Belgium

- \* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_sLDCo89qpl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sLDCo89qpl)
- \* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00PT6bOwfFM>

# General information

- \* **Population:** 11.8 million people live in the country
- \* **Capital:** Brussels, with 2 million inhabitants
- \* **Motto:** Unity gives power
- \* **Form of government:** Constitutional parliamentary monarchy
- \* **Federal state:**
  - \* territorially consisting of three regions: Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels-Capital
  - \* three language communities: Flemish, French and German-speaking
- \* **Head of State:** Philippe, King of the Belgians, since 21 July 2013
- \* **Head of Government:** Alexander De Croo since 01.10.2020 (Flemish Liberals)

# Royal family – Prime Minister





# A little bit of history

- \* Belgium was part of Gaul and occupied by the Romans
- \* 14th century: Flanders one of the richest centres in Europe
- \* 1815: Napoleon's final defeat in Waterloo
- \* The Vienna Congress in 1815: Beginning for Belgium
  - \* Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia met in Vienna -> redistribution after Napoleon's defeat
  - \* Creation of the **United Kingdom of Netherlands**: buffer territory against any future French intervention

# A little bit of history

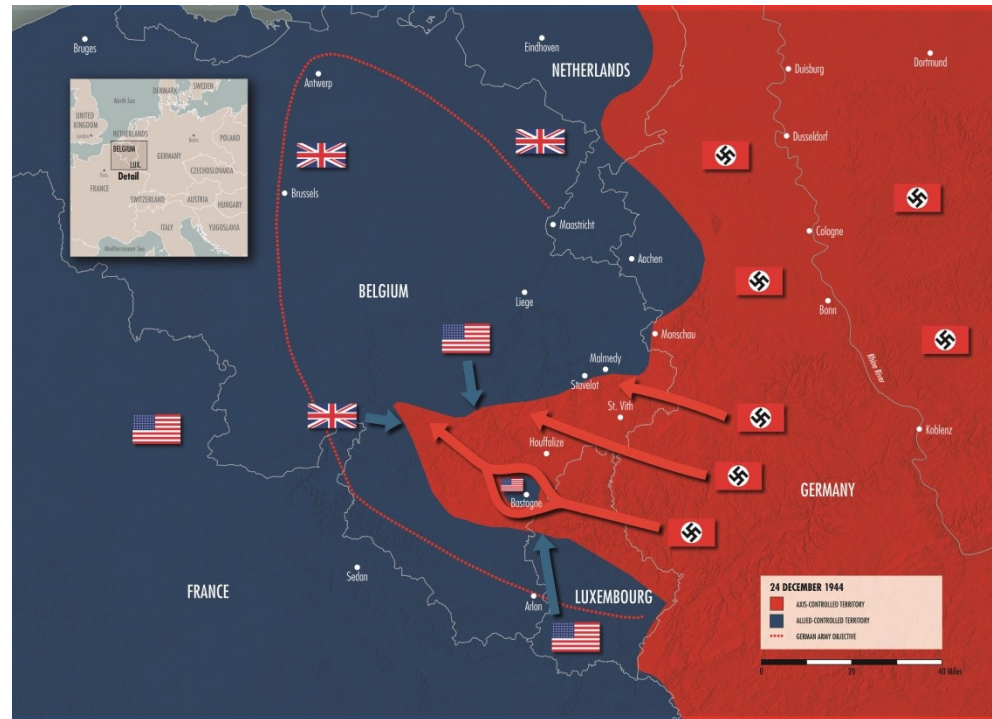
- \* Period of unrest
- \* United Kingdom of Netherlands = divided
- \* North mainly Protestant, south Catholic
- \* Linguistic division:
  - \* the Walloons, French >< the Flemish, Dutch
- \* Dutch king tried to make Dutch the universal language
- \* Serious opposition from French-speaking communities
- \* Belgian revolution

# A little bit of history

- \* Revolution: 25 August 1830 uprising began in the opera and later on the streets of Brussels
- \* Demands: independence and an end to the Dutch dominance
- \* **Creation of Belgium:**
  - \* Vienna Congress gathered once again in London on 20 December 1830.
  - \* success of the Belgian revolution and to guarantee its independence
  - \* Future king: Leopold I of Saxe-Coburg first King of Belgium
  - \* Inauguration on 21 July 1831 = national day of Belgium
  - \* Since then Dutch and French speaking communities have their own country and king
  - \* 1831: beginning for modern day Belgium

# Why do we speak German?

- \* Belgium was occupied by Germany in 1914
- \* Again between 1940 and 1944 until Belgium was liberated by the Allied Forces.



# A little bit of geography

- \* Belgium is a small country
- \* Belgium shares land borders with France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands
- \* Brussels capital city of Belgium
- \* Antwerp in northern Belgium is the second largest city
- \* Other big cities are Ghent, Charleroi and Liège

# Coastal plains of Flanders – Ardennes highlands



# High Fens National Park



# Famous Belgian people

- \* **Peter Paul Rubens** (1577-1640): painter and most well known Flemish artist
- \* **René Magritte** (1898-1967): surrealist painter
- \* **Adolphe Sax** (1814-1894) invented the saxophone in 1840
- \* **Jacques Brel** (1929-1978): singer and songwriter who is known for his French songs
- \* **Hergé** (1907-1983): His real name was Georges Prosper Remi: cartoonist and creator of the story Adventures of Tintin and his dog Snowy



# Tintin – Magritte – Rubens – Sax



# Belgian economy

- \* Co-founder of the European Union
- \* Headquarters of the European Union Commission
- \* Belgium's main trading partners are France, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK.
- \* Main export products are chemicals, machinery and finished diamonds.
- \* About 84% of the world's most precious gems are cut and polished in Antwerp diamond factories.
- \* Over 1,200 diamond cutters work in Antwerp.

# Diamonds – European Union



# Belgian food

- \* **Frites or Frietjes:** thicker and crunchier, served with mayonnaise
- \* **Crevettes/Garnalen:** tiny grey shrimps from the Atlantic are popular snacks along the coast
- \* **Carbonnade a la Flamande/Stoofvlees:** Flemish-style beef stew cooked with beer and served with potato fries or mashed potatoes
- \* **Gaufres/Wafels:** the Belgian waffles are less doughy and more crispy and are usually topped with cream, chocolate or fresh fruits
- \* **Chocolates:**  
Belgian chocolate is a treat, it comes in many forms. In Belgium chocolate pralines must consist of minimum 35% of cocoa. In Antwerp you can visit the world's largest chocolate museum.

# Belgian food



Gaufre de Bruxelles



Gaufre de Liège



# Tourist Attractions

- \* **Brussels:** main landmark called Atomium, the Royal Palace, the EU parliament buildings and *Grand Place*, also called *Grote Markt*
- \* **Ghent:** picturesque, medieval buildings, castle
- \* **Bruges:** many canals. One of the canals lead out of town to the port of Zeebrugge, which is Belgium's main port
- \* **Antwerp:** second largest city, best known for its Flemish Renaissance architecture and its diamond district

# Brussels



# Ghent – Antwerp – Bruges





# Fun facts

- \* **Belgium holds the world record for longest time without a government**
  - \* After 541 days: new government after elections of 2010.
  - \* Self-irony: Belgians made a whole celebration out of this, offering free beer and fries.
- \* **Belgians love to party**
  - \* Tomorrowland is the biggest electronic festival in the world. It takes place in the town of Boom, near Antwerp.
  - \* Some other popular festivals include Rock Werchter, Pukkelpop, and Couleur Café.

# Famous festivals



# Fun facts

## The longest tramway in the world

- \* It is called 'The Belgian Coast Tram' and stretches 68 km between Knokke-Heist and De Panne, from the Dutch border to the French border.
- \* This tram makes 69 stops and usually runs every ten minutes during peak hours.



# Fun facts

## Liberal thinkers

- \* Belgians are very open-minded and tend to be liberal thinkers.
- \* They legalized euthanasia in 2002 and gay marriage in 2003, well before other European countries did so.



# Fun facts

## Out of this world

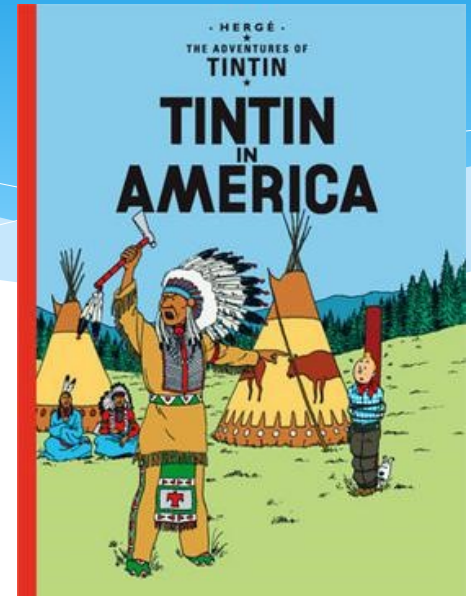
- \* The highway system in Belgium has so many lights, its structure visible from the moon



# Fun facts

## Home to the ninth art = Comics

- \* Belgium has more comic book makers per square kilometer than any other country.
- \* The *Tintin In America* comic book cover was sold for more than \$ 1.5 million, making it the most valuable comic book ever.



# Ostbelgien – Sankt Vith



# So much more to discover...





Thank you

*Dank je wel!*

*Merci!*

*Danke schön!*