



Week 3 Celebration: The Turning Point

ExpatsatHome Essential Guide

Week 3 Celebration: Reflect, Recharge, and Re-launch

Hello and congratulations!

Take a deep breath and think back to Day 1 of your journey with ExpatsatHome.be. Do you remember the mix of excitement, anxiety, and the sheer length of the to-do list ahead of you? Settling into a new country can feel like climbing a mountain shrouded in fog.

Today, the fog lifts. You've reached Day 21, the official halfway point of this foundational course. This is a significant milestone, and it deserves more than just a passing glance. It deserves a celebration.

This guide is your dedicated space to pause, look back at the incredible distance you've traveled, and set a clear, intentional course for the exciting path ahead. We'll celebrate your wins, reflect on the challenges, and help you shift your mindset from "surviving" to truly "thriving" in Belgium.

Why This Moment Matters: The Three-Week Turning Point

In the rush of administrative tasks and daily discoveries, it's easy to focus only on what's next. However, pausing at the halfway mark is a psychologically powerful tool for a successful integration.

- **It Prevents Burnout:** The first few weeks in a new country are a sprint. You're running on adrenaline, processing new information constantly. Acknowledging your progress recharges your mental and emotional batteries, preventing the dreaded expat fatigue.
- **It Builds Confidence:** By consciously listing your achievements, you replace feelings of being overwhelmed with concrete evidence of your own capability and resilience. You've done hard things, and you can see it on paper.
- **It Allows for a Strategic Shift:** The skills that got you through the initial "survival" phase—tackling bureaucracy, setting up your home—are different from the skills you'll need for the next phase: building a community and a sense of belonging. This pause allows you to consciously shift your focus.

The first half of our journey was about **settling in**. The second half is about **belonging**. This guide is the bridge between the two.

Your Week 3 Reflection Guide

This is the most important part of your celebration. It's a private tool for you to take stock of your journey. Find a quiet 15-20 minutes, perhaps with a coffee or tea at your favourite new café, and be honest with yourself. This isn't a test; it's a compass.

My Week 3 Reflection

Part 1: Celebrating Your Wins**My single biggest success so far was...**

(Think of a moment that made you feel truly proud or capable. Describe what happened and how it felt. Maybe it was successfully navigating a government office on your own, or having your first real conversation with a neighbour.)

Three smaller, daily victories I'm proud of are:

(e.g., Ordering my bread entirely in French/Dutch, understanding the public transport announcements, finding my favourite brand of milk at the supermarket.)

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The practical task I am most relieved to have completed is:

(e.g., Registering at the commune, opening my bank account, getting the internet installed.)

Part 2: Acknowledging the Challenges**My biggest challenge or frustration right now is...**

(What still feels difficult? Is it the language, making friends, understanding a specific cultural norm, or something else?)

A moment I felt overwhelmed, and what I learned from it, was...

(Expat life is full of these moments. Acknowledging them robs them of their power. What did the experience teach you about yourself or about life in Belgium?)

If I could give my “Day 1 Self” one piece of advice, it would be:**Part 3: Setting Your Intentions for the Next Half****My number one goal for the next 21 days is to:**

(Be specific. Instead of “make friends,” try “Introduce myself to one new person at a local club or event.”)

The area of my life I want to focus on most is:

(You can't do everything at once. Choose one primary focus for the next phase.)

- Building a Social Life & Community
- Deepening my Language Skills
- Exploring my Hobbies & Interests
- Discovering more of Belgium (Travel)
- Establishing Healthy Routines (Fitness, etc.)

One small, concrete action I will take this week to move toward my new goal is:
(e.g., Research local running clubs online, download a language app and commit to 10 minutes a day, visit the local library.)

Acknowledging Your Progress: The “Settling In” Checklist

Look at what you’ve done! The following list covers some of the biggest hurdles for any new arrival in Belgium. As you read through it, take a moment to check off everything you’ve accomplished. It’s probably more than you think.

- Commune/Gemeentehuis Registration:** I have started or completed the process of registering my address with the local authorities.
- Belgian Bank Account:** I have successfully opened a local bank account.
- Utilities Setup:** I have contracts for essential services like electricity, gas, and water.
- Connectivity:** I have set up my home internet and have a Belgian mobile phone number.
- Public Transport Navigation:** I have used the public transport system (bus, tram, or train) and understand the basics of how to pay for it (e.g., bank card tapping, Floya app, MOBIB card).
- First Belgian Grocery Shop:** I have navigated a local supermarket (like Delhaize, Colruyt, or Carrefour) and bought my first round of groceries.
- Waste & Recycling:** I understand the basics of the coloured-bag recycling system in my area.
- Healthcare Basics:** I have a basic understanding of how to find a doctor (*médecin généraliste / huisarts*).
- Local Discovery:** I have found at least one local spot that I like, such as a bakery, park, or café.

 **Tip:** Even if you’ve only completed a few of these, you are well on your way. Each checked box represents hours of research, courage, and effort. Be proud of every single one.

You’re Not Alone: Real Wins from the Expat Community

Every expat journey is unique, but the feelings are universal. The small victories are often the most meaningful because they signal a shift from feeling like a visitor to feeling like a resident. Here are some real stories shared in our community forum:

- **Maria's Bakery Triumph:** “I successfully ordered my bread and pastries at a local bakery entirely in French for the first time. My accent wasn’t perfect, but the baker understood, and it felt like a massive victory. I walked out with a smile and the best croissant I’ve ever had.”
- **David’s Supermarket Savvy:** “It might sound silly, but I finally understood the unspoken rules of the checkout line at Delhaize—knowing when to put the divider down, and that you have to bag your own groceries at lightning speed. It’s a small thing, but it helped me move from feeling like a tourist to feeling like I fit in.”
- **Chen’s Recycling Rite of Passage:** “After two weeks of confusion, I finally figured out the right coloured bags for the right day. Seeing my bags on the curb next to my neighbours—all correct—was a surprisingly proud moment. It felt like I’d unlocked a secret level of Belgian life.”

Your wins are just as important. We encourage you to share one in the community forum. Your story could be the motivation another member needs to see today.

The Road Ahead: Shifting From Surviving to Thriving

The first 21 days were the foundation. You’ve built the essential administrative and practical structure for your life in Belgium. Now, it’s time to start decorating.

The second half of this course is dedicated to something deeper: **belonging**.

Starting next lesson, we kick off “**Belong Week**”, where our focus shifts entirely to building a rich and rewarding social life. We will move beyond the paperwork and dive into the human side of expat life. We’ll cover essential topics like:

- **How do you meet people outside of work?** We’ll explore strategies from joining clubs (verenigingen) to using apps and attending local events.
- **What are the cultural norms around friendship in Belgium?** We’ll discuss making plans, greetings, gift-giving, and the famous Belgian directness.
- **How can you find groups for your hobbies?** From hiking and photography to language exchanges and book clubs, we’ll show you where to look.
- **How do you combat loneliness?** We’ll provide practical, actionable strategies for building your support network from the ground up.

This is the part where you begin to weave your own life into the vibrant fabric of your new home.

Key Vocabulary for Your Journey

Adding a few key terms to your vocabulary can help you articulate your experience and set your goals.

English	French	Dutch
Halfway	Mi-parcours	Halverwege
Celebration	Célébration	Viering
Reflection	Réflexion	Reflectie
Success / Win	Réussite / Succès	Succes
Challenge	Défi	Uitdaging
Goal	Objectif	Doel
Belonging	Appartenance	Saamhorigheid / Erbij horen
Progress	Progrès	Vooruitgang

Insider Tips for the Journey Ahead

 **Tip: Celebrate Belgian-Style!** Reward yourself by indulging in a local treat. Go to a proper friterie/frietkot for fries with a dozen sauce options, visit a high-end chocolatier like Pierre Marcolini or Neuhaus for a single, perfect praline, or find a cozy “brown bar” and ask the bartender to recommend a local Trappist beer.

 **Important: Avoid the Comparison Trap.** It's easy to see other expats on social media who seem to have it all figured out. Remember that your journey is your own. Everyone settles in at a different pace and faces different challenges. Focus on your own progress as documented in your Reflection Guide.

 **Tip: Embrace “Good Enough.”** Especially with language. Don't wait for your French or Dutch to be perfect before you try to use it. A “good enough” attempt to order a coffee or ask for directions is infinitely better than staying silent. Belgians generally appreciate the effort. Communication is the goal, not perfection.

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Your action for today is simple but powerful: complete the **Halfway Reflection Guide**. Give yourself the gift of that quiet, focused time.

You have accomplished so much. The foundation is built, and it is strong. Now, let's get ready to build the life you dream of here in Belgium.

Thank you for your hard work and commitment. We'll see you in the next lesson.