

Title:

An Overview of Belgium for Travelers

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Summary:

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Article Body:

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An Overview of Belgium for Travelers

Belgium is located on the coast of the North Sea between Holland, German and France. The name comes from the Belgae, a celtic tribe.

Belgium's geographic location places it at the crossroads of much of Europe, particular in relation to the United Kingdom and mainland Europe. As a result, the country has been heavily influenced by the powers that be in Europe during certain periods of times. You can find aspects of Romans, Celts, Germanic, French and Spanish influences.

Ruled by various European empires, the cities of Bruges, Brussels and Antwerp were major commercial trading posts. They also produced some of the more spectacular artists in Europe, including Eyck and Rubens.

In modern times, the country is really three separate states with significant autonomy. The country is divided up into Flemish, Walloon and a smaller Germanic area. The Flemish are Dutch speaking while the Walloon are oriented to French. The divisions between these areas are significant and they have significant autonomy from the federal government. One might argue they are countries unto themselves.

The official name of Belgium is the Kingdom of Belgium. The country is located

in Western Europe and covers approximately 12,566 square miles. Brussels is the capital of the country and has a population of approximately 922,000 people. The second largest city is Antwerp with 452,000 residents.

The people of Belgium are known as Belgians. Total population for the country is 10.4 million with a paltry annual growth rate of less than one half of one percent. The country is divided into three linguistic regions, Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels. French is the dominant language in Wallonia, Dutch in Flanders and German in the Brussels area. Most people of Belgium claim Roman Catholic as their faith, but Protestant, Jewish, Muslim and Anglican communities exist. The literacy rate is 95 percent.

Belgium is an odd hodgepodge of influences. That being said, everyone seems to get along in these modern times and Brussels is a major financial center in the Europe.