



LA VIE EN BELGIQUE
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Bienvenue

Welcome

Welkom

Welcome to the heart of Europe, everyone! *If you're still considering where to go exchange this year, you shouldn't miss this small but interesting country.*

Most of people and also tourists usually underestimate Belgium to be not interesting enough to visit. In contrast, after spending my life there for 6 months, I realize that this thought is not true and I will tell you why.

If you like to learn new different cultures, therefore, this country can fit your enthusiastic very well. Since this country has two main linguistic groups; French-speaking part which is in the southern region of the country called "Walloon" and the latter is Dutch-speaking or "Flanders" in the northern part. Furthermore, there's also a small group of German-speakers. As you can see, this country comprises of multi-cultural population where you can discover many fascinating ways of life diversely. *So which part are you going if you choose to exchange at **Universite Catholique de Louvain (UCL)**?* Please don't be confused with *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* (and do not take the wrong train as well).

You will study at Louvain-la-neuve (LLN), known as 'student city', which is in the French-speaking part far from Brussels only 30 Kilometers. This modern town has almost everything you want such as a shopping mall, a shopping street, a large cinema complex, abundant favorable restaurants and so on. Besides, you shouldn't miss it if you are a fan of 'Tin Tin' comic character because the LLN has a huge Tin Tin museum for you to enjoy!

Now, I'm going to give you some reviews and advise in each aspect about living in Louvain-la-neuve and as well as in Belgium, in case this can help you making decision. 😊

Academic



Louvain School of Management, or LSM, offers master degree courses both in French and English to all international exchange students. If you are fluent in French, you can register courses in French along side in English as well. On the other hand, if you want to learn basic French to be compatible with locals, the school also offers you a French language course for free. The quality of academic is considerably impressive. Most of courses are organized expertly and offered quite broadly, especially in marketing field.

Moreover, the communication between the school and students is conveyed very efficiently seeing that UCL will provide your own student account and UCL email. As a consequence, you don't have to be worried about lacking of connection with the school.

Accommodation

There are 2 choices for student housing. The first one is from private landlords which contribute both a single apartment and a shared apartment with locals. An advantage of this choice is privacy but it costs high expense. In addition, most of exchange students find it difficult since most of agencies require the occupants to rent at least in one year contract.



The other choice is UCL housing called "KOT". This option suits for students who need to save their budget since its rent cost is a lot cheaper and more reasonable. The price range is € 243 to € 340 per month (electricity excluded) and students can lease only one semester agreement. Apart from inexpensive price, exchange students also have a chance to get in touch with Belgian students while sharing apartment with them. Therefore, I would recommend the second choice if you live there just only in short term and it would be better to know some more local friends.

Foods

Nothing is better than **Belgian fries, chocolates, waffle, and beers!!** You will never be disappointed by all foods here in Belgium (but please prepare for gaining some weights :D). There are numerous chocolate and beer brands on shelf. I will recommend the famous one (and good price) of Belgian chocolate brand called "Cote d'or". And for beers, I have nothing to say but *just try them all!*



Furthermore, I suggest you to learn cooking before departure because cooking at home can save a lot of money since every shared apartment has its own kitchen. You will be able to find asian food recipes quite easily in Delhaize supermarket at the L'esplanade mall in LLN, or, at asian supermarket in Brussels. In case you want to enjoy a meal outside, LLN has many restaurants for both western and oriental foods but remember that all are rather pricey for eating outside everyday. The last advice for foodstuffs is to remind that grocery shops and restaurants in Europe closed very early and also closed on Sunday. Accordingly, cooking skill is a must because of inconvenience.

Student life

Living here as an exchange student is really fun. At the beginning of semester, you should get in touch with ESN (Erasmus Student Network) group. They will help you while living in Louvain-la-neuve and they also set up many interesting activities for exchange students to get to know other exchange students from every corner of the world in LLN. All I can say that it's a pleased community to live with other international friends. They are so warm and I am more opened-mind after coming back from Belgium.



Travelling

This is a topic that why I love Belgium the most. I come back to Thailand as a “travelling-addicted” young student after backpacking in Europe. Belgium is an important route hub in Western Europe. Thus, you can take train to other famous cities such as London, Paris, Amsterdam, or Cologne in a few hours. Besides, you can take a low-cost flight to other famous destinations since RyanAir and Easyjet airline offer more routes from Belgium to other European countries. Then, you should take this advantage as much as possible while living in Belgium.

On the grounds of Belgium's convenience for wandering, I, my Thai friends and my international friends had many unforgettable backpacking experiences together and I believe that you will have too.

For my last recommendation,

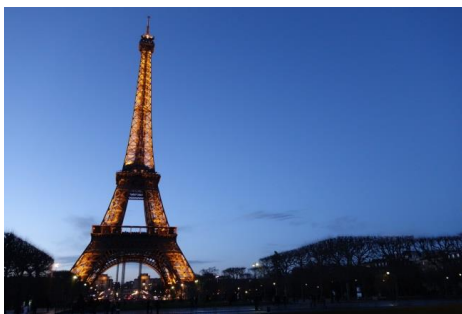
Whether you like Belgium or not after all I mentioned above, getting out of comfort zone is what you should try once in your lifetime. Not only boosting your education, but it also lead you to some extraordinary things that you would have never expected to see.

From my eyes, the world used to seem like it had boundaries between each country but now it has not anymore.

Love,

Jaratdao Duangjai

(Thai program student, year 53)



Europe by me