

# brussels belgium

business, communications and culture / fall 2011



cīee

program handbook

# CIEE Study Center at Vesalius College, VUB Brussels, Belgium

<b>Part I: CIEE Study Center in Brussels .....</b>	<b>4</b>
WELCOME TO YOUR ADVENTURE IN BELGIUM .....	4
YOUR HOST: VESALIUS COLLEGE, ASSOCIATED WITH VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL (VUB) .....	4
Academic Program .....	4
Classes .....	5
Local Variations on CIEE Academic Policies .....	6
Internship Opportunity .....	6
Cultural Activities & Field Trips .....	6
Continued Study .....	6
Meeting Other Students .....	6
Student ID .....	6
THE CIEE STUDY CENTER .....	7
Discount on Airfare .....	7
Departure and Arrival .....	7
CIEE Program Staff .....	7
ORIENTATION .....	7
Online Pre-Departure Orientation .....	7
Onsite Orientation in Brussels .....	7
HOUSING AND MEALS .....	8
Homestay .....	8
Shared Housing .....	8
<b>Part II: Before You Leave Home .....</b>	<b>10</b>
A LOT TO LEARN .....	10
Check Travel Advisories .....	11
ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS .....	11
Passports .....	11
Visas .....	12
Documents for non-U.S. Citizens .....	12
Immunization Records .....	13
HEALTH .....	13
INSURANCE .....	14
Accident and Sickness Insurance .....	14
PERSONAL FINANCES .....	14
Cost of Living .....	14
CIEE Program Cost and Billing .....	15
Financial Arrangements .....	15
PACKING AND BAGGAGE .....	15
PREPARING FOR CULTURAL ADAPTATION .....	16
<b>Part III: Living in Brussels .....</b>	<b>16</b>
MEETING BELGIANS .....	17
Special Note to Women .....	17
Special Note to Minorities .....	17
SAFETY PRECAUTIONS .....	17
MONEY AND BANKING .....	18
Money .....	18
Cash .....	19
COMMUNICATIONS AND MAIL .....	19
Telephone and Cell phones .....	19
Computer Labs and E-mail .....	20
Post Office and Mailing Procedures .....	20

GETTING AROUND .....	20
Local Transportation.....	20
Independent Travel .....	20
Modes of Travel for Long Distance .....	20
Hotels and Hostels .....	20
ILLEGAL DRUGS .....	21
VOTING WHILE ABROAD.....	21
EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION .....	21
<b>Part IV: Policies and Procedures .....</b>	<b>21</b>
A NOTE FROM CIEE.....	22
Credits and Grades .....	22
CONCLUSION: THE CHALLENGE IS UP TO YOU.....	23
<b>Part V: Additional Resources .....</b>	<b>25</b>
SUGGESTED READING LIST .....	25
Books on Belgium .....	25
Films .....	25
Books On Cultural Adaptation .....	26
Belgian Literature .....	26
SUGGESTED PACKING CHECKLIST .....	28
Important Items .....	28
Clothing .....	28
General.....	28

---

## Part I: CIEE Study Center in Brussels

### WELCOME TO YOUR ADVENTURE IN BELGIUM

Situated at the convergence of Germanic and Latin cultures, the kingdom of Belgium came into existence when it seceded from the Netherlands in 1830. First to industrialize after England, the country prospered in the 19th century, escaping revolutions and wars that shook Europe. Its neutral status, however, did not protect it in the 20th century from two world wars that exacerbated underlying social, political, and linguistic tensions. This resulted in a complex state, still in the making, that essentially consists of four distinct regions: Flanders in the north (58% of the population), Wallonia in the south (33% of the population), a small German-speaking region in the east, and the bilingual capital of Brussels (9.4% of the population) where Flemish (or Dutch) and French are spoken.



Brussels is the capital of the European Union and is host to most of the EU offices and institutions. It is also the headquarters of NATO. Approximately one million of Belgium's 10 million citizens live in greater Brussels, and about 85% of them speak French.

#### Participants say...

I have learned so much about Europe in general and no longer think in terms of mental maps or 'us' and 'them.' I have grown more independent and feel I have learned a lot about myself.

I developed an appreciation for all varieties of people across Europe. I was able to utilize languages, art, culture, etc., and enjoy it all thoroughly.

### YOUR HOST: VESALIUS COLLEGE, ASSOCIATED WITH VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL (VUB)

Vesalius College, a unique institution structured and administered like a U.S. undergraduate college, is composed of an international student body and is associated with the Dutch-speaking Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB).

The VUB split in 1970 from the original Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) founded in 1834 by a Flemish lawyer. The ULB is still considered the premier French-speaking university in Belgium and enrolls over 17,000 students, whereas approximately 9,000 students attend the Dutch-speaking VUB. Thus, the two universities mirror Belgium's unique linguistic and cultural situation.

Vesalius College is located on the VUB campus and is situated within walking distance of ULB in an area south of central Brussels. Of the 300 or so students who attend Vesalius, approximately 30% are Belgian nationals, 10% are from the United States and the remainder is from more than 70 other countries. Therefore, you will truly be in an international setting in the classroom and on campus!

#### Participants say...

I was surprised by how much smaller Vesalius is than my home university. The small class sizes allow for a more informal environment.

### Academic Program

The program is especially geared for students majoring in international relations, politics, and economics who have a special interest in the European Union. However, the program is also suitable to students who wish to take courses in International Affairs, Business and Communications taught in English at Vesalius College. The program also offers students the opportunity to either begin or continue study of French. With the exception of foreign language, all courses are taught in English at Vesalius College.

A typical course load for CIEE students is five courses, including a required core course entitled, "Contemporary Europe: The Belgian Experience", a required French (or Dutch) class and three area studies courses taught in English. Those students with sufficient level of French language (roughly equivalent to five to six semesters of college-level French) may choose to enroll in a French-taught course at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. However, students who wish to take ULB courses are required to take at least two courses at Vesalius College as well as French language and must also obtain permission from the Resident Director and the professor at the ULB.

#### Participants say...

(The CIEE Core Course) definitely kept me well informed about the country and understanding the culture. It provided an in depth look at the culture to make connections when getting around Brussels

#### Classes

**Vesalius Courses:** Participants select their courses from among the offerings at Vesalius College. Course offerings include business, international affairs, communications, French and Dutch. As in the U.S., courses are numbered according to level: 100-level courses are introductory and geared to first-year students; 200-level are sophomore level; and 300-level are designed for juniors and seniors with some background knowledge of the discipline.

Vesalius courses are taught in English in an interactive format familiar to U.S. students, but most of the professors are European and may have different teaching styles from what you are used to. Most courses meet once a week for a three-hour period (with a break), which is also common in Europe and similar to graduate level seminars in the U.S.

**French language:** Language classes are taught in French at all levels. Students are placed in the appropriate level on the basis of a placement test administered during the orientation week. French classes are held at least twice a week for a total of 3 hours per week.

**ULB courses:** Depending on the results of students' French Placement test during the orientation period, students may enroll in any of the ULB courses offered by the Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres, or Faculté des Sciences sociales, politiques et économiques, with the professor's permission. Some yearlong classes may not be open to spring semester students,

however. Samples of courses offered in the past are listed online, but this list is not comprehensive and some courses may not be available in a given semester. ULB classes generally start two or three weeks after orientation and typically meet once a week for two hours or a total of 24 semester hours. For more information on the ULB and the most recent course listings, consult their website at: [www.ulb.ac.be](http://www.ulb.ac.be).

The Resident Director provides an introductory letter to the ULB professors once students have attended a class and decided they would like to take the course. Note that if you take ULB courses, you will have to complete exams in order to receive credit. Final exams at ULB may take place up to two weeks after the CIEE program officially ends. Fall semester students will have to seek the professor's permission at the start of the semester to take final exams in December, as the ULB's official exam period is in January. Spring semester students will take their ULB exams in June, after the CIEE program ends. CIEE students taking ULB courses must therefore arrange their stay after the CIEE end date in order to take exams.

As in many European universities, ULB classes are quite traditional, i.e., the professor lectures, students take notes and there is little class discussion. Class size may range from 20 to 400 students. At the end of the semester, there is either a written final (1-4 hours), or an oral exam that lasts about 20 minutes. Belgian students who fail final exams may retake them during a make-up period or "*deuxième session*" (late August to early September). Since CIEE students returning to the U.S. do not have this option, it is important to pass the exam in the "*première session*". In any case, students who take ULB courses should expect to stay after the CIEE program ends and complete exams at the scheduled time in order to receive credit. It is sometimes possible to arrange early exams. It is the students' responsibility to speak to both the Resident Director and the ULB professor at the start of the semester to clarify all expectations and negotiate any special arrangements.

**VUB Courses:** Courses at the VUB will not be an option for most students, simply because there are very few native or advanced Dutch speakers in the United States. However, any student with advanced Dutch language skills is strongly encouraged to participate in VUB classes.

## Local Variations on CIEE Academic Policies

This section supplements information on CIEE's general academic policies contained in Part IV.

Note these course-related requirements:

- Without prior approval of CIEE and your home institution, you may not audit courses or take them pass/fail; in other words, you must take all courses for credit and for a letter grade.
- You may not drop French (or Dutch) language or the CIEE core course.
- Students may not take more than one area course at the 101 level.

## Internship Opportunity

Vesalius College offers non-paid internship opportunities for its students that are eligible for credit. As a CIEE participant enrolled at Vesalius College, you will be able to apply for any available slots. However, because internships are competitive, there is no guarantee that you will be assigned an internship. It can be an advantage to have a working knowledge of French when applying for an internship in Brussels, however a lack of second language capability should not be an obstacle to applying for the internships on offer. Interested students should follow the instructions on their Course Pre-Registration form to apply. All internships will require interviews. You need to check with your study abroad advisor under what conditions internships could be credit bearing.

### Participant's say...

The internship was a great experience. I interned at a law firm, and it really gave me a good insight into European and International law, something that cannot be matched in the states. It was a lot more time consuming than I thought it would be (because of the commute time), but it was a really good experience, and looks fantastic on my resume.

The internship experience was very valuable. It was really the highlight of my time here.

The internship was a big strength of studying abroad in Brussels. Having the opportunity to work for a company in Brussels definitely expands my horizons while gaining experience. I wish I could have taken more related courses before starting the internship in order to contribute more to the work. But overall, it is highly recommended to participate in an internship regardless of the fact that compromises need to be made between working and traveling.

## Cultural Activities & Field Trips

Extracurricular activities and occasional group excursions are organized throughout the semester. In previous semesters the Resident Director organized visits to the cinema, theatre and museums. In addition, many courses incorporate field trips to EU institutions or museums. In previous years, field trips were organized to EU institutions like the European Parliament and the Commission in Brussels, the European Court of Justice and the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg, and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague. Day trips were furthermore organized to Bruges, Ypres, Bastogne or Aix-la-Chapelle in Germany as well as a three day long weekend in either Normandy or Alsace in France. Students taking the ART 361 class will be visiting a number of cities including Paris and Amsterdam.

## Continued Study

If you wish to continue your studies in Brussels or enroll in a program at another CIEE Study Center, remember that the deadline is November 1 for most spring semester programs and April 1 for most summer, fall and academic year programs. See the Resident Director for the appropriate enrollment extension form and to discuss visa extensions.

## Meeting Other Students

At Vesalius College, you will be in classes with students from all over the world. Taking part in student activities and eating in student cafeterias is a great way to meet people. Signs announcing student events and activities (films, sports, discussion groups, etc.) are posted throughout university buildings.

Participants also have access to sports facilities at the VUB and may participate in student activities at Vesalius as well as at the ULB and VUB.

## Student ID

You will receive a student ID from Vesalius College with your picture on it. Benefits of a student ID can range from access to the library to reductions in museum fees, cinema tickets, concerts, trains, etc.

### Participants say...

I should have made a bigger effort to learn French and meet more people. My trade-off was traveling every weekend. I got to see a lot.

You really have to be a No-one-gets-lost-you-just-discover-new-places type of person. It's normal to miss home but that shouldn't be a preoccupation.

## THE CIEE STUDY CENTER

### Discount on Airfare

As a part of your program fees you will receive an iNext ([www.iNext.com](http://www.iNext.com)) insurance card/student ID that allows a \$15.00 discount on flights costing \$100.01 to \$249.99 and a \$25.00 discount on flights costing \$250.00 or more when you purchase your airfare through Student Universe ([www.studentuniverse.com](http://www.studentuniverse.com)). To take advantage of the discount, type "iNext" in the Promo Code text box when you finalize your reservation. Student Universe is a travel agency that offers plane tickets at a reduced student rate. Aside from Student Universe's already discounted student fares and the iNext discount, most Student Universe tickets allow changes to the ticket for as little as \$50. If you have one of these tickets, you can make your plans to travel independently even after you have already arrived on-site. Your iNext card is valid for 365 days and the code can be applied towards any two airfares purchased while you are covered by iNext.

### Departure and Arrival

#### *How do I get there?*

Directions to the orientation site will be included in the final details email, sent out within a month of departure.

#### *What happens when I arrive?*

Details regarding the group airport pickup can be found on your "Dates, Details and Updates" page on your MY CIEE online checklist. For those students arriving independently, the following transportation is available from the airport:

**Taxi:** The cost of a taxi from the airport to the orientation is approximately 50 Euros. Do not accept rides offered by people inside the airport looking for passengers, it will cost you more. Ask about the approximate cost of the ride before you get in the taxi - the driver should know the approximate cost to downtown Brussels. When you take a cab always ask for a receipt (*reçu*).

**Train:** You can take an inexpensive airport train to the Gare Centrale (Central Station) from the

airport. All trains from the airport stop there. From there, you can either walk, take a subway or a taxi to the orientation site.

### **Tip: Phone home**

Upon your arrival, it is a good idea to call your parents. A brief phone call telling them that you have arrived and are fine will relieve them of any worries.

## CIEE Program Staff

The Resident Director, appointed by CIEE in consultation with the academic consortium, supervises and administers the program. The Resident Director can assist you with academic, administrative, and personal matters.

Bring problems to the Resident Director's attention as soon as they arise, preferably during the Director's office hours. In an emergency, you should contact the Director immediately. You will be given all contact information during orientation.

## ORIENTATION

### Online Pre-Departure Orientation

You will begin your study abroad experience in Brussels before even leaving home—by participating in a CIEE Online Pre-Departure Orientation. Meeting with students online, the Resident Director shares information about the program and site, highlighting issues that alumni have said is important, and giving students time to ask any questions before leaving home. The online orientation allows you to connect with others in the group, reflect on what you want to get out of the program, and learn what others in the group would like to accomplish. The CIEE goal for the pre-departure orientation is simple: to help students understand more about the program and site, as well as their goals for the program, so that they arrive to the program well-informed and return home having made significant progress toward their goals.

### Onsite Orientation in Brussels

All students must attend the onsite orientation in Brussels. If you are delayed en route to the orientation site, you must leave a message with the CIEE Resident Director in Brussels as soon as you realize you will be late.

During orientation, the Resident Staff provides an introduction to the country, the culture, the academic program and lots of practical information and documents on living in Brussels, including:



- Information on health, well-being, and safety issues.
- Academic information relating to the program and Vesalius College.
- A tour of the city, the VUB campus, the EU area and other guided walking tours.
- Housing information.
- Maps and lists of restaurants, sports facilities, etc.
- A transportation pass for the first week.

During the orientation and prior to moving into your permanent housing, CIEE students will be placed in shared rooms at a youth hostel.

Additional information will be available during the first week of classes, and individual help is available throughout the program.

## HOUSING AND MEALS

As in most capital cities in Europe, housing in Brussels can be quite expensive, and it is very unusual for students to live in downtown Brussels. Vesalius College does not have dorms.

Belgian students generally live at home or in rented rooms (called *kots*) in someone's home. They rarely live in apartments on their own or with other students because of the expense involved. Nor do they expect such amenities as washers and dryers on the premises, cable TV or a DVD player, a fixed phone line, microwave ovens, large refrigerator, etc. Given these realities of student life in Brussels, it is important to be flexible and realistic where housing is concerned.

All housing is included in the program fee, including temporary accommodations in a youth hostel during orientation. Final housing placements will be given during your orientation in Brussels.

There are two types of permanent housing available: shared housing with a landlord or a family, and a homestay.

**CIEE participants must complete the CIEE Housing questionnaire on their MY CIEE online checklist.**

### Homestay

Students who opt for a homestay with a local family, which includes breakfast and dinner during the week, should expect to pay a supplemental meal fee. This will be billed once you have arrived

on site. Each living arrangement includes a single room, shared bathroom, and kitchen privileges or access to cooking facilities. It is possible that two students may be placed in the same homestay.

### Shared Housing

Students who wish more independence will be offered a room in someone's home or apartment. In some cases two separate rooms or a large studio in the same home may be available.

In many cases our students share the living area and kitchen of their house/apartment with their landlords. While this may not be as independent as an off-campus apartment at your home university, it allows you much better facilities than you would get in a student apartment, and can be a major advantage as it gives you regular contact with Europeans. In some cases, more than one student may be placed with the same host. In other cases students will be housed in apartments shared with other program participants or European students, but this is less common.

The hosts/owners may be a retired person, an older couple, a young couple, a single person, or a family. The Resident Coordinator visits all accommodations and many hosts have either rented to CIEE or other international students in the past and genuinely wish to have a student from the U.S. living in their home and to be a resource person.

### Housing Location

Students should expect, on average, a 30-45 minute commute to Vesalius College via public transportation (i.e., bus, tram or subway) and at least one transfer along the way. In fact, this is normal. The trip may take slightly longer outside of peak hours when transportation may be less frequent. You'll get used to it, and it is part of becoming a true Bruxellois(e)!

#### Participants say...

At first I was disappointed because the housing in Brussels did not fit with my ideal image. However, after I realized how difficult it is to obtain housing in Brussels, I became more flexible and adjusted quickly to my housing assignment.

You should expect to use public transportation every day. Public transportation is easy and your housing will most likely be located outside of the City Center!

#### What will my housing be like?

Whether you rent a room in someone's home or live with a family, you will share bathroom and



kitchen facilities. You will need to discuss with your family/landlord the rules of the house in regards to utilities, appliances, etc. It is essential to do this in the beginning of your stay: it will save you confusion or misunderstandings later on.

Houses and apartments are generally comfortable, but do not expect them to be luxurious or identical to what you may be accustomed to in the U.S. Some homes or rooms may be smaller or more crowded than in the U.S. and there may be fewer appliances and "gadgets" in the kitchen, but all necessities (pots, pans, etc) will be provided with your housing.

### ***May I have guests?***

If you are planning to have guests during your stay in Brussels, do not assume that they may stay with you in your housing. In most cases it is preferable and most comfortable for everybody if friends and family stay in a hotel. If you would very much like for them to stay with you, please ask your host in advance and be prepared to compensate them for the extra expenses.

Ask your host upon arrival about bringing friends over, until what time they can stay, and if they permit friends of the opposite sex coming over. Do not abuse their home by having a constant parade of friends come through. Always ask your host's permission before bringing a friend over to eat dinner.

### ***What about meals?***

You are responsible for your own meals while on the program. Balanced, inexpensive meals are available for purchase in the student cafeteria, and there are also sandwich stands and cafés on or near campus.

As noted above, students choosing the homestay will receive both breakfast and dinner, Monday through Friday, for a supplemental meal fee. As in the United States, meal times and variety of dishes may vary from household to household. Please communicate to your hosts and others if you have eating restrictions such as being a vegetarian or having food allergies. Be willing to taste something new or unfamiliar before refusing it. Hosts can be flexible and adapt meals to some extent, but you shouldn't expect them to change their habits or to purchase special items for you. Also, contributing something occasionally, such as fresh fruit or bread or a dessert, is something most hosts greatly appreciate.

### ***What if I follow a special diet?***

CIEE cannot guarantee that a host will provide a vegetarian, macrobiotic, or other special diet. If you have a medically certified diet, please notify CIEE immediately. The resident staff will make every effort to find a suitable situation, and this information is important when planning occasional group meals in restaurants.

#### ***Tip: Try it!***

Have an open mind and taste everything you are offered before you decide whether you like it. Belgian cuisine is quite delicious, and you may miss out on a wonderful culinary experience if you reject something because you've never had it before.

### ***Why should I choose a homestay?***

Living with Belgians or other Europeans can be one of the most rewarding aspects of your experience in Belgium. It is challenging yet stimulating to have to adapt to another way of looking at things, of making decisions, of interacting with people from another culture. And chances are that if you are happy in your living situation, your adjustment to life in Brussels will be easier and you will have a more positive outlook on other things as well. Finally, your French skills and knowledge of Belgium will certainly be enhanced if you interact daily with Belgians.

### ***How can I best get along with my hosts?***

Of course you want to be well received by your hosts. It is important to remember that although you will most likely be treated as another member of the family, you will also be treated to some extent as a guest in their home. It is important to take some time in the beginning to get to know your host family and to let them get to know you. Be considerate of your host family and respect their concerns, which may include the following:

- Inform hosts in advance about plans - e.g. absences, inviting friends, return times. Phone ahead or leave a note if you will be late coming home for a meal or if you will be coming home late at night. Families usually expect you to be home at a reasonable hour, especially on weeknights, so be respectful of their concerns.
- Respect your host family's belongings. Remember to ask permission to use household electronics or to go into the rooms of members of your host families.
- Do not leave things in the bathroom unless advised to do so. You can ask where to store different belongings.

- If you smoke, ask if and where it is permissible.
- To feel secure in your new home, put your valuables (money, travelers' checks, passport, etc.) in a safe place. Your host cannot be held responsible for theft and neither can CIEE. You can lock valuables in your suitcase or your closet, or lock the door to your room when you go out.
- Do not develop the habit of lending money to or borrowing money from your hosts.
- Be good ambassadors and make an effort to create a positive cross-cultural experience.
- Telephone costs can be three times higher in Belgium than in the United States. Keep landline phone calls to a maximum of 10 minutes, allowing for occasional long distance calls from home. Phone bills need to be paid to host families on time.
- Keep bathroom and bedroom tidy.
- Integrate into the household as much as possible and try eating Belgian food.

Moving in will involve some adjustments that may be hard at first. Imagine yourself moving back with your own family to live, particularly after having had independence to do things without your family's immediate influence. Your hosts may not intuitively understand your needs, so communicate your concerns and work things out with them. For example, you may have trouble finding space to store all you bring with you. Only after attempting to resolve any problems by yourself, should you ask help of the resident staff.

**Tip: Try it!**

One discussion that is difficult to have, but which students have said helps a lot, is to talk about the hosts' expectations in having you stay with them, and yours in wanting to stay there. Watch out for a tendency to immediately criticize what is different from your own standards. You may find some things you have trouble accepting, but at least try to understand and interpret in terms of societal and cultural differences.

**What if I'm not happy with my housing?**

It is not unusual to feel uncomfortable in your new housing at first, and it often takes a couple of weeks to adjust. Should this feeling persist, please make an appointment with the CIEE Resident Staff to discuss the situation. They will do their best to help you, but you must also make

an effort to adapt to your new surroundings. Requests for a housing change must be based on reasonable expectations and legitimate reasons, and if the rent has already been paid to a host, you should expect to use some of your own funds to pay a deposit or higher rent on a new place.

## Part II: Before You Leave Home

### A LOT TO LEARN

Preparing for study abroad entails a lot more than just packing a suitcase. In fact, the thought and effort you put into preparing yourself in advance will largely determine the success of the program you are embarking upon. At CIEE, we will do everything we can to provide you with the information you require prior to departure.

But there is only so much we can do, and it is important for you to recognize your own responsibilities, which include:

- Thoroughly discussing your study and travel plans with your financial aid office, study abroad office, academic advisor, and parents and/or legal guardian.
- Making any necessary arrangements for the following academic year, including housing, registration, and graduate school application. If you are a senior, be sure to make necessary arrangements for graduation.
- Reading all of the materials that CIEE has made available to you, including this handbook. Many of the questions that students ask are answered in this handbook.
- Doing additional reading about the region/country you will be visiting and the customs of the host culture. While you cannot be fully prepared for every new experience that awaits you, reading about the host country will give you a base of knowledge that will serve you well in the early weeks of the program. (Refer to the Reading List at the end of this handbook for recommended reading.)
- Arriving at the program site with an open mind, a sense of adventure, and a sense of humor. Think positive!

In addition to these required steps, there is a lot more we recommend you do to inform yourself before you go.

**Get a Good Guidebook:** Past participants recommend that you purchase a good guidebook and read it before you go! Options include *Time Out Brussels* guide, the *Lonely Planet* series, the *Let's Go* and *Routard*. *The Eyewitness Travel Guide to Brussels* will let you see some of the sites of Brussels before you arrive. Insight guides also provide useful background and cultural information, as do the famous Michelin "green guides" for Brussels and Belgium. Pay particular attention to maps and sections on obtaining information from tourist offices, national customs and holidays, currency exchange, safety, transportation, and general advice.

### Tap Other Resources

Other good ways to learn about your new home:

- Check your college or university study abroad office for useful services and information.
- Seek out Belgians through cultural organizations, international student organizations, and Belgian, French, or European area studies departments or centers at your college or university.
- Surf the Web. Many websites, such as [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com), offer travel information, slide shows, and tips from other travelers.
- Check libraries for detailed information and keep yourself informed of current events through the news media.
- Consult the list of past program participants on the "Dates, Details and Updates" page of your online checklist. They have agreed to be contacted about their experience. Some of their comments are interspersed throughout this book.

### Brush Up Your French

It is a good idea to work on your French language skills before departing. Listening to French tapes, watching films, reading newspapers, and talking to native speakers or fellow students are excellent strategies.

Frequently, students who have studied French for several years are surprised to find that they have difficulty understanding the language as spoken by native speakers. This is normal. In your foreign language classes in the U.S., you got accustomed to one instructor's accent and other speech habits. Once in the country, however, you will be exposed to different accents and other speech

patterns from a wider variety of native speakers. Do not worry: it gets easier.

### Check Travel Advisories

The U.S. government issues travel advisories and consular information sheets for most countries. To receive updated information or advisories for other countries you may be traveling to, check the state department's website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

#### Participants say...

The Belgian people know a lot about current events in the world and the United States. I felt embarrassed not to be as knowledgeable about Belgian and European history or to be as informed of current events. Anything you can learn before you go will make it THAT much easier to meet and talk with the people in Belgium...even if it is just reading the international news every day.

### Be Informed about Home, too

It is important that you be well informed about your own country, region, and hometown. New friends and acquaintances in your host country will be just as curious about you as you are about them. Be prepared to discuss your home political system, culture, traditions, history, holidays, geography, and social structures.

#### Participants say...

Most of the students were foreigners in most all of my classes. I found that Europeans are much more active in how much time they talk about the world as a whole.

## ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS

When preparing to travel and live abroad, it is essential that you obtain all the proper documents prior to your departure. CIEE cannot accept responsibility, financial or otherwise, for a student who travels without the proper documents.

### Passports

Participants are responsible for obtaining a passport prior to the start of their program, and in the case where a visa must be secured, prior to the visa application deadline. You must have a signed passport, valid for a minimum of six months after the date you enter Belgium or for the duration of your program plus any travel, whichever is longer. If you do not have a passport, apply for one immediately as the process can take several months. CIEE highly recommends that you pay for expedited passport processing. If you already have a passport, be sure that it is valid for the required period.

U.S. citizens applying for their first passports must apply in person at a passport agency or at one of the several thousand federal or state courts or U.S. post offices authorized to accept passport applications.

Applicants should research the requirements through the US Department of State website at [http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\_1738.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html).

**Trap: Passport pitfalls**

Under no circumstances should your passport be altered. Guard it carefully against loss or theft. Do not forget to sign your passport. Never pack your passport in luggage while traveling; it should be easily accessible at all times.

**Tip: Take a lost passport kit**

Save yourself a major headache and make a "lost passport kit". Take with you two U.S.-produced passport photos, a certified copy of your birth certificate (which you can shrink to wallet size), and the face page of your passport. Keep this "lost passport kit" separate from your actual passport. Also leave one copy of the passport face page with your parents or guardian and give another copy to CIEE staff at the host site.

## Visas

A visa is an endorsement or stamp placed in your passport by a foreign government allowing you to enter and stay in that country for a specified period of time. U.S. citizens who will be staying in Belgium for longer than 90 days require a visa; thus you will need a student visa. **Start now.** The process for securing a visa for study in Belgium is lengthy and complicated. Refer to your MY CIEE online checklist for more information.

**\*\*Note that all students over the age of 21 are required to obtain an FBI background check in order to apply for a visa. The FBI currently lists processing time as 12 weeks, but in our experience it can take significantly longer. This process must be completed BEFORE you apply for your visa, so it is crucial that you apply early if you will be 21 when you apply for your visa. More information is available at: <http://www.fbi.gov/hq/cjisd/fprequest.htm>\*\***

Your student visa will indicate that you must go to the administrative offices of the Brussels commune (or district) where you will be living within a week of your arrival. However, since you will need your student card and a letter from Vesalius College, you will only be able to do this after the first week of classes. Past students have

found that registering in Brussels was time consuming. The procedure can be long and involve multiple visits to the administrative office and one to three months to get a Belgian ID card, however, it is important to take care of this. It might take longer if you do not have the proper papers. However, it is very important that you register at your town hall.

Generally this requires your passport, a document you get from Vesalius, 4 passport photos and a letter from your landlord/lady stating you actually live there. Normally you will then get a provisional document of registration. Though it will take a long time before you will actually get a final document, this provisional one will facilitate traveling especially if you intend to leave the Schengen area. The entire registration process can be lengthy and frustrating. Belgian bureaucracy is hardly unique in this regard; most countries (including the U.S.) have similar regulations when it comes to visas and residence cards.

**Trap: Applying from outside the United States**

A U.S. student applying for a visa from outside of the United States may not be able to obtain one. Please check with the appropriate consulate.

## Documents for non-U.S. Citizens

If you are not a U.S. citizen, check with your consulate for regulations regarding your stay in Belgium and reentry into the United States. Because visa procedures may vary, you should also check with the Belgian consulate that has jurisdiction over your place of residence immediately for their specific procedures. Failure to do this may result in your being refused permission to enter the country or not even being allowed to board the aircraft at the point of departure. Also, you should call the nearest district office of the INS, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, for information on the documents necessary for you to leave and re-enter the United States.

Before departure from the United States, non-U.S. citizens must also obtain a Certificate of Compliance-often referred to as a Tax Clearance or a Sailing Permit-from the local IRS (Internal Revenue Service) office. This will certify that you do not owe taxes to the U.S. government. Contact your local IRS office for information on documents required to procure this permit.

***What documents do I need as a permanent resident?***

Permanent residents need to apply for a Re-entry Permit that serves as a passport while overseas. Being out of the United States for more than one year may jeopardize your permanent resident status. Check with the nearest INS office for information regarding documentation and procedures for return to the United States.

### ***What documents do I need as a stateless person?***

If you do not have a country of citizenship, contact the nearest INS office and the appropriate consulate or embassy to determine the procedures you must follow to obtain the proper travel documents and visas. In addition, be sure to check with the consulate of any country where you may be spending a night or more in transit to the country of your study program. Failure to do this may result in refusal of permission to enter that country or even to board the aircraft at the point of departure.

### **Immunization Records**

You are not required to get any vaccinations for travel in Belgium unless you are a citizen of, or arriving from, one of a number of less-developed countries or sites of disease outbreak.

### **Hostelling International Card**

If you plan to travel on your own while you are abroad, you may want to purchase a Hostelling International card at <http://www.hiayh.org/>. The card allows you to stay at hostels in many countries around the world at a discount rate.

## **HEALTH**

### ***What health-related steps should I take before I leave?***

You are required to submit a medical report in order to participate in the program; please be sure it indicates any allergies you have, in particular to medications. This information is confidential and has no bearing on your participation in the program. If you have a chronic illness that needs medical attention, have your doctor write a clinical report that can be given to a specialist in Belgium if necessary. You will also need a medical exam done in order to get your visa, so it is always a good idea to make your doctor's appointment early and make photocopies of the forms. In addition, we strongly urge you to have a complete physical and dental checkup before departing. Any required dental work should be done at home. Women should also have a checkup by a gynecologist.

Although vaccinations are not required, if you have not done so recently, make sure you are current on your tetanus-diphtheria booster and ask your doctor about a gamma globulin (IG) shot for hepatitis-A. You may also wish to get a flu shot.

### ***What medical supplies should I take with me?***

If you take prescription drugs, take a sufficient supply with you for your time abroad. (Be sure to take these in their original packages and with the original prescription.) **You cannot send prescription drugs through the mail.** It is a good idea to bring the brand and generic names of your prescription drugs so you can try find them in Belgium if you need them. However, be aware that not all medications are available overseas. Students who wear glasses or contact lenses should be sure to take an extra pair as well as a copy of their prescription. If you use contraceptives, please take an adequate supply with you.

Be prepared for the common cold and for stomach and intestinal disorders often caused by changes in diet. It might be wise to take along small amounts of medications in case these problems arise. Discuss with your doctor the cold and damp weather conditions in the winter, and the hectic pace of the program; he or she may suggest specific treatments. Remember, however, to be careful about treating yourself, and be sure to seek professional help when necessary. In Brussels, you should go to a pharmacy first to seek advice for minor physical problems; pharmacists can often recommend effective non-prescription medication for common ailments, like cold or flu symptoms, headaches, sore throats, constipation, etc.

You can buy everything you need in Brussels, but you may wish to pack medication for stomachaches, surface cuts, sore throat, coughs or colds, especially if you have a preferred brand. We also recommend that you bring your own supply of multivitamins. Be sure to take medication for any recent or chronic ailment that might recur in Belgium. Over-the-counter medications are available, but brand names differ, so you may want to bring extra supplies of any medications that you use regularly. Past participants have sometimes underestimated the amount of medication they will need.

### ***What other precautions should I take?***

Inform the resident staff of any existing health problems, including mental health, or any



potential problems you anticipate arising throughout the course of the program. This includes allergies to any medications. CIEE staff will use this information to ensure that appropriate accommodations are made. Please inform the resident staff if you become ill during the program.

**AIDS:** The HIV virus is now pandemic, meaning it is present everywhere, including Europe. Take the appropriate precautions. Should you need an injection while in Belgium, make sure the needle comes sealed in a special package and is torn open in front of you. This is normally done in the clinics you would go to in Brussels.

**Smoking:** Note that smoking is much more common in Europe, in general, than in the United States. The anti-smoking regulations that are common in the United States are not always enforced in Belgium. Therefore, if you are allergic to or easily bothered by smoke, be aware that it can be more difficult to avoid in Belgium than it is in the United States.

**CDC Recommendations:** If you plan to travel after the program to other countries, you may want to consult the CDC information specific to these countries. The CDC website is [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

## INSURANCE

If you are covered by a personal or parental insurance plan, CIEE recommends that you continue this coverage while abroad. Prior to departure, you should contact your current insurance carrier concerning coverage for accidents, illnesses, and liability cases that occur outside the United States. Check your policy's limitations before making any assumptions about coverage. Most U.S. based insurance companies will not cover property lost or stolen overseas.

### Accident and Sickness Insurance

Each participant is covered by an Accident and Sickness Insurance policy designed to help cover the cost of accidents and/or routine sickness while abroad. Additionally, the policy offers Emergency Evacuation and Emergency Medical Transportation coverage, together with a 24-hour Travel and Medical Assistance Service. The policy also offers travel document replacement and limited travel delay and lost/stolen baggage coverage. Coverage begins two weeks before the program start date and continues for 364 days.

A complete description of the Accident and Sickness Insurance policy is found in your MY CIEE online checklist. It is important that you read

the policy carefully and note exactly what coverage it provides, and note items that are excluded from coverage.

The Sickness Insurance is designed as an additional or top-up policy only, and does not cover liability. It also does not include routine physical, dental examinations or preventive medicine. Students are not covered for injuries resulting from acts of war or other political unrest such as riots and demonstrations.

Please note that CIEE does not cover medical expenses on-site. Students pay for any medical costs incurred and then file a claim directly with the insurance company for reimbursement. CIEE does not act as an intermediary between participants and the insurance company.

## PERSONAL FINANCES

### Cost of Living

The exchange rate is not constant. The *New York Times* and similar publications publish exchange rates daily. You may also reference [www.x-rates.com](http://www.x-rates.com) or [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com) for up to the minute exchange rates. You should keep abreast of how a rate fluctuates leading up to departure.

### What costs are covered by my fee?

CIEE Study Center fees include pre-departure information and services, on-site support services, tuition, orientation, housing, cultural activities and group excursions and accident and medical insurance. The cost of food, school supplies, course textbooks, and local transportation to and from classes are not included in the Brussels program fee.

### What expenses should I budget for?

You will need money for food, books, entertainment, toiletries, cosmetics, gifts, local transportation (including a daily commute), school supplies, laundry, and independent travel. Please consult the CIEE Europe catalog or website for a list of estimated expenses.

Besides inflation and currency exchange, another variable that will affect your spending abroad is your individual life style. When estimating a budget, it may be helpful to consider how much you normally spend in a semester, and then inflate it by at least one-third. Not only is the cost of living in Brussels higher than that of many cities in the United States, but also the added cost of independent travel along with the impulse to splurge makes careful budgeting imperative.

Former students have saved considerably by preparing their own meals and limiting vacation travel to the general area around Brussels. We suggest you take extra money, if possible, for unforeseeable expenses.

Wait until the end of the program before buying gifts. You'll have a better idea of what is available and for how much, and most important, you'll know how much you have left to spend.

### **CIEE Program Cost and Billing**

For general FAQ about CIEE fees and billing, see our website at

<http://www.ciee.org/study/apply/faq.aspx>. Also, information on CIEE billing procedures can be found at <http://www.ciee.org/study/apply/billing-procedures.aspx>. For more specific billing inquiries, contact CIEE Customer Service at 1-800-40-STUDY or [studyinfo@ciee.org](mailto:studyinfo@ciee.org).

### **Financial Arrangements**

You will need to make arrangements regarding personal finances before leaving home.

#### ***Tip: Forget "Hey Mom, send money"***

It is important that you make arrangements to receive enough money to cover your personal expenses for the time you are in Brussels **prior to your departure from the United States.**

### **PACKING AND BAGGAGE**

Try to organize and pack a day or two prior to departure so that you can judge if you'll be able to carry your bags (you must be able to do this). Some students have even practiced by carrying their bags around the block! Also, by packing early you'll have time to rest before the long trip.

#### ***What are the baggage limits?***

Limits vary. Read the weight limitation and baggage allowance information provided by your international airline carrier. Generally flights overseas permit two pieces of checked baggage and one carry-on piece. Each checked bag must weigh less than 70 pounds. Total dimensions (length + width + height) of the first piece must be less than 62 inches, and the second piece less than 52 inches. Total dimensions of the carry-on must not exceed 45 inches and fit below the seat in front of you or in the overhead compartment. If your baggage exceeds any of these standards you may be charged for excess baggage. Check with your airline regarding any items that are oversized.

### ***What should I pack?***

For a complete list of what to take, please see the Suggested Packing Checklist at the end of this handbook. Experienced travelers agree: take as little as possible.

**Climate and clothing:** Much of your time during the semester is spent out of doors walking rather long distances. Choose comfortable, practical clothing that wears well and bring good walking shoes. Belgium's climate is moderate, with temperatures ranging from the 80s and 90s in the summer to just below freezing in the winter. Although winter temperatures do not often drop very low, the dampness in the air makes it feel colder. Buildings are not heated as well as in the United States.

#### **Participants say...**

Tell people to bring fairly warm clothes, returning students said it didn't get too cold but it was a mild winter last year.

Bring clothes suitable for all conditions. Choose each type of clothing carefully. Versatility is the key, and a layered approach works well. You'll be surprised at how little is really necessary. It rains frequently in Belgium, so an umbrella and waterproof shoes are essential.

U.S. students have often said they have taken too much clothing. Do not forget that nothing ruins traveling abroad more than having too much luggage, especially when you have to carry it yourself. You can save packing space by coordinating your clothing so that shirts and sweaters can be worn with different skirts and pants. Bring comfortable walking shoes. Peg the weight of your clothing to the season you go. Take wools and heavy cottons for winter and lightweight clothing for the summer.

**Jewelry:** Do not take expensive or elaborate jewelry with you to Belgium. Not only is there a very good possibility of loss or theft but fine jewelry will rarely be appropriate.

**Toilet Articles:** For both men and women, most common toiletries are readily available in Brussels, if slightly more expensive than in the United States. Bring your own supply only if you are particular about a brand that you use.

**Prescriptions:** If you take prescription drugs, ask your doctor to give you a copy of the prescription with the name of the generic drug, not a brand name. When possible, we strongly recommend that you take with you to Belgium a sufficient



supply of prescription medication to last for your full time abroad, since not all prescriptions can be filled overseas.

**Linens:** Linens will be provided in your housing. We recommend that you bring a towel if you have space. Of course, you can also buy your own linens in Brussels if you want something specific.

**Electrical Appliances:** The current in Belgium, as in nearly all of Europe, is 220 volts, 50 cycle AC, and the Belgian plug is a standard European size with two round prongs.

Electric converters and adapter plugs must be used to connect North American equipment. Most laptops have a built in converter (check with your manufacturer), but you will still need an adapter. Travel supply shops and some hardware and electronics stores in the United States carry them. If you plan to bring any electrical appliances from home, you should also bring a converter and adapter with you because they may be difficult to find on site.

If you are buying any new electrical items to bring with you, try to get dual-voltage models so you will not need a converter at all-though you will still need the adapter plug.

If you prefer to buy small electrical items such as hair dryers on site, you will find options readily available.

**Laptop:** A laptop is not required, but if you do have one, you will find it very handy to have with you.

As mentioned above, if you plan to take a laptop, be sure you have the appropriate electrical adapter. Additionally, we recommend that any students taking a laptop consider installing security/theft recovery software. One example of this software is Computrace LoJack for laptops, made by Absolute software.

**Mementos from home:** Bring things from home that you can share with your Belgian hosts and friends. This includes pictures of yourself and your family in the United States, recipes you like to cook, typical items from your community, college, or region of the United States, and items related to talents you might have and wish to share.

**Gifts:** While not expected, it is nice to bring gifts for your new friends or for your host. You will not know them before arriving, but various small generic gifts such as picture books of the United

States, and other memorabilia from your university and hometown are always appreciated.

### ***What if I want to have things mailed to me abroad?***

You should encounter few problems as long as you take normal precautions: insurance, reputable carrier, etc. Clothes from home should be labeled "used clothing" or "used goods". However, it is best if you bring laptops, cameras, etc. with you rather than mail them, as they would be open to large customs duties. Expect shipments from home by normal mail to take as much as three weeks to arrive.

## **PREPARING FOR CULTURAL ADAPTATION**

Although cultural adaptation is highly individual, research indicates that most people go through similar stages in adapting to a new environment. Any travel you've done abroad, and perhaps even within your own country, have exposed you to culture shock. But if you've never had to overcome culture shock, you might want to read about it before you depart. You'll find books relating to cultural adaptation and culture shock on the recommended reading list at the back of this handbook.

During your on-site orientation, the resident staff will discuss culture shock and suggest strategies for adapting to your new surroundings. Near the end of the program, they will also provide information on reverse culture shock and suggest ways of coping with returning home.

## **Part III: Living in Brussels**

---

Sometimes living in a university environment abroad makes it easy to forget you're not in your home country. Remember, you are in another country with its own laws and customs, and they are different from the ones you're used to. Be aware of this and conduct yourself accordingly. Also, be sure to attend classes regularly and participate in program activities. Like it or not, you will be viewed as a representative of U.S. culture and people will often draw conclusions and generalize about Americans based on your behavior.

The orientation described in Part I will also cover practical aspects of living in a new place, Belgian laws, proper social conduct, and cultural differences, including race, gender, and class. For example, some past participants have found that many Belgian nationals had a distorted and

stereotyped image of U.S. women, often acquired through advertising, television, and movies. The resident staff will provide insights into the local culture's view of women and suggest ways to reduce anxiety and to ensure personal safety.

## MEETING BELGIANS

Just as it is impossible to define a typical American, it is equally impossible to define a typical Belgian. You will meet many types of people in Belgium who have different opinions, attitudes, and habits. The more you interact with Belgian people, the better chance you'll have of forming relationships and understanding the culture. During these interactions, use common sense, intelligence and a sense of objectivity. Be prepared to discuss your views freely and openly, and try to listen with an open mind.

You may arrive in Belgium with some preconceived notions of Belgians and other Europeans. At the same time you may encounter Belgians with preconceptions about people from the United States. Try to put aside stereotypes and make judgments based on real experiences. If you are confronted with what you feel is a false stereotype about the United States, be frank and truthful, yet tactful in your response. Avoid refuting arguments by criticizing Belgium. This type of response will only create hard feelings. A thoughtful and serious response from you will help dispel myths about the United States.

### Special Note to Women

Even though Brussels is a large and increasingly ethnically diverse city, it is usually easy to spot Americans, and women may be even more subject to unwanted attention than men. You will notice people from different cultures, including women of Islamic faith in traditional dress and men out together in small groups. Observe and try to imitate the behavior of women on public transportation even if it strikes you as cold and unfriendly. Smiling and nodding or talking to strangers in public is not the norm in Belgium, and what many Americans consider to be merely a friendly gesture may be interpreted quite differently by the person on the receiving end, particularly males. This does not mean you will be harassed or are in any danger, but do not feel bad about ignoring someone or, if necessary, stating firmly that you wish to be left alone. It is usually best to just ignore the person even if this seems rude or unnatural to you.

### Participants say...

(As a woman,) you do receive a lot more attention on the streets here than at home, however when you become more familiar with the area and culture, you start to blend more and you get less attention. But it never completely goes away and you eventually just get used to it.

### Special Note to Minorities

European cities, including Brussels, are increasingly diverse, multi-ethnic and attract immigrants from many different countries. In an international, cosmopolitan city like Brussels, people of color do not stand out in the crowd, and African-Americans, as well as gay and lesbian students, may actually feel more comfortable than in some places in the U.S.

## SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

The health and safety of program participants abroad is understandably an important issue for all concerned. CIEE was a founding member of the Inter-Organization Task Force on Safety and Responsibility in Study Abroad. The following website contains information about the Task Force and study abroad safety issues – [http://www.nafsa.org/knowledge\\_community\\_network.s ec/education\\_abroad\\_1/developing\\_and\\_managing/practice\\_resources\\_36/policies/guidelines\\_for\\_health](http://www.nafsa.org/knowledge_community_network.s ec/education_abroad_1/developing_and_managing/practice_resources_36/policies/guidelines_for_health)

CIEE's approach to safety is fourfold. First, we conduct a careful safety evaluation of every program we run. Next we provide comprehensive and realistic information to prospective applicants so that they may make informed decisions as to participation. Then, when the students arrive on site, we conduct a thorough orientation that includes tips on reducing risk and handling difficult situations should they arise. Finally, program staff continuously monitors local conditions in order to provide guidance to participants throughout their stay.

### *What can I do to be safer?*

Experience has shown that the single most important factor in assuring a safe study abroad experience is the sensible and cautious behavior of the participants themselves. When traveling abroad, you should exercise additional caution until you become familiar with your new surroundings. Always remain alert to what is going on around you, especially in crowded tourist areas and on public transportation.

**Trap: Letting down your guard**

When visiting a foreign country, you may well be enchanted by your surroundings and engage in behavior that is not typical of you. This may cause you to let your guard down and be susceptible to crime. Practice common sense and exercise good judgment. **Remember that you are more likely to be a victim of crime if you have been drinking alcohol.**

Although Brussels is safe and violent crime infrequent, you must be careful about what you do and where you go, just as you would in any major city in the world. Follow these general rules:

- Tourists are common targets for pickpockets. Always be aware of your backpacks and cameras especially on crowded buses. Do not carry large amounts of cash with you. Never leave belongings in a parked car.
- Keep a suitcase that can be locked under your bed and leave your money, passport, camera, and other valuables secured in it.
- You will have to carry either your passport or your student ID as identification throughout your time in Belgium. When you carry your passport, wear it around your neck in a thin pouch inside your shirt. If you must carry it in a bag, use one that can be slung diagonally across your chest and that has a sturdy strap that cannot be easily ripped.
- Never carry valuables in the pockets of your pants.
- At night, do not take shortcuts and always walk on main streets. Take a cab if it is late, especially if you're going home alone.
- Do not accept rides with anybody you do not know.
- As noted earlier, keep passport photos and a photocopy of your passport in a separate place. This will speed up the process of replacing your documents should they be lost or stolen.
- Be especially cautious in areas frequented by tourists, such as airports, train stations, museums, and U.S.-style restaurants such as McDonald's.
- Be aware of the heating situation provided by your host institution and host residence. For locations where carbon monoxide producing appliances may be present – i.e., any appliance that burns fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood, or charcoal – detailed information on the possible dangers

associated with such appliances, along with safe operating instructions, will be provided in the on-site program orientation. For further information, please visit the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website at [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov). You may wish to take a small battery-operated carbon monoxide detector to have in your housing.

If you are the victim of a pickpocket, or if something is stolen, inform the Resident Director who will help you make a report.

**Medical Facilities**

If you need medical assistance, use the university medical service on campus. If you need X-rays or a specialist, the university doctors will refer you. Bills are usually sent to your local address. Many doctors speak some English. If you need help, contact the Resident Director.

During orientation, you will receive information on which clinics to use.

**MONEY AND BANKING****Money**

The national currency is the Euro, broken down into 100 cents.

Several options for handling money while in Belgium are described below. Whatever you decide, the best advice is to come with at least two ways to obtain money, so that in the event that one method fails or is inconvenient, a back-up option is available.

Our recommended approach is to plan to use your ATM card as your primary source of money. It is good to bring some cash or travelers checks as back up.

**Participants say...**

Follow the exchange rate fluctuations closely, and learn how to budget your money.

**ATM/Bank Cards**

ATMs in Europe do not provide your available balance, but if you are able to keep track independently of your funds in your account, past participants say that ATMs are the best way to access money. Please note that an ATM overseas accesses only checking, not savings accounts. There are ATMs throughout Brussels including one on the VUB campus. Depending on your bank, you may find it is difficult to find an ATM which will accept your card. However, in our

experience, students eventually find that one of the banks will work.

Before you leave, be sure to inform your bank that you will be out of the country. Also, you may want to inquire in advance what the ATM and foreign transaction fees will be so that you can budget appropriately.

Since few places in Brussels accept credit/debit cards for payment, an ATM card is typically handy more for cash withdrawals than for actual purchases.

**Trap: PIN numbers**

For both credit cards and bank cards, inquire with the issuer to verify that the card is valid for an international banking system. And memorize your PIN in numbers not letters; Foreign ATM number pads are often configured differently.

**Cash**

If you bring cash for cases when it is difficult to get to a bank, we recommend bringing \$20 bills. We do not recommend that participants travel with large amounts of cash.

**Credit Cards**

Bring a credit card; it can come in handy for travel, cash advances, and the occasional larger purchase (be sure you know your pin number!). Keep in mind, however, that many places in Brussels still do not accept credit cards. You will probably do most of your purchasing with cash.

**Traveler's Checks**

Traveler's checks are one of the most secure means of carrying money. They can be readily converted into Euros or other currencies at any bank, in any country you may visit. As long as you have a record of your traveler's check numbers, you can recover stolen or lost amounts. Be sure to buy your traveler's checks before you depart the United States. You will need your passport to cash them. Money exchange booths located throughout the city will cash traveler's checks, but the best rates are at banks. You can, of course, exchange dollars for Euros too; the exchange rate is slightly better, but the risk is higher.

**Participants say...**

Use credit cards and debit cards because you get the best exchange rate. Exchange places charge a fee or give a poor exchange rate on traveler's checks.

If you plan on buying clothes, etc., bring tons of money! Money in Europe just disappears! You need to remember that you cannot compare prices with the U.S.

**Tip: Credit card and traveler's check numbers**

Remember to keep a list of your credit card numbers and traveler's check numbers separate from the cards and checks.

**COMMUNICATIONS AND MAIL**

**Telephone and Cell phones**

Public telephones in Brussels are similar to those in other parts of Western Europe. Most require a phone card that you purchase at newspaper stores. A digital display shows the number of units used.

You'll find that cell phones, called GSM in Belgium, are essential in Brussels. All program participants are required to have a cell phone. You should plan to purchase a phone when you arrive either from the program or on your own. Purchasing an international SIM card for your American tri-band phone is not recommended. Often you will be given a non-Belgian international number, and your friends will not call you because it will be an expensive international call for them. If bringing your phone from home, we strongly recommend purchasing a Belgian SIM card after arrival.

The program offers a limited number of used cell phones from past students at a low cost. Past participants on the CIEE Brussels program have also purchased new cell phones at very reasonable prices and recommend this option as well. Because of relatively high prices and long required subscription periods, setting up fixed lines of Internet access in most cases won't be possible.

For international calls, especially transatlantic calls, it is best to use an international calling card. Students have found the cheapest way of calling is to use Belgian international phone cards available at newspaper stores. Calls from friends or family to your cell phone are free but not if they are received as collect calls. These are extremely expensive and should be avoided.

Brussels lies in the Central European time zone, 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time. When it is

6 p.m. in New York, it is midnight in Brussels. Daylight Savings Time runs from the last Sunday in March through the last Saturday in September, when the time moves forward 1 hour, that is, 7 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

**Tip: Short phone calls**

Phone service in Belgium remains expensive compared to the U.S. so calls tend to be brief. Please be considerate and limit your time on the phone if you live with a Belgian host or are using a phone booth.

## Computer Labs and E-mail

Participants have access to three computer centers at the VUB and a computer room at Vesalius. There are also numerous cyber cafés in Brussels. **Students who own laptops are strongly advised to bring them but must be sure to bring the necessary adaptors to use them in Belgium.** Consult the manufacturer or a computer specialist for any special instructions or questions regarding a specific model or modem.

Students have access to the VUB computer laboratories and computers located in the university library. Students must open an e-mail account upon receipt of their VUB student card. You can expect to receive numerous updates throughout the semester via the Internet.

## Post Office and Mailing Procedures

Mail service in Belgium is similar to that in the United States. Regular mail and packages arrive in reasonable time. Please be aware that packages containing electronics may be liable to substantial import duties.

**Trap: Do not mail cigarettes or alcohol**

It is illegal to send cigarettes or alcohol through the mail.

**Trap: Do not mail your laptop** Computers are taxed at an extremely high rate; sometimes as much as the value of the computer.

## GETTING AROUND

### Local Transportation

The metro, trams, and buses are the easiest way to get around the city. Single tickets can be purchased on buses and trams, weekly passes in subway stations or from certain newspaper stands, and monthly passes in an official STIB (Brussels public transport) office. Student should expect to use public transportation on a daily basis to commute to class.

### Participants say...

Brussels is a lot of fun if you're willing to make the effort to know people and look (search!) for places. Go to Theatre Toone and Tavernier!

## Independent Travel

You will no doubt want to explore this city, particularly on weekends. You can also plan longer vacations exploring other regions of Belgium on breaks or after the program. Before leaving the United States, gather as much information as possible about places you may want to visit. Of course, this will require additional funds.

Look online for locations of National Tourism Board of Belgium offices. Other sources that may be helpful are the various Michelin Guides and the Lonely Planet series. Also, be sure to contact the consulates or embassies of countries you wish to visit to find out what documents are required for entry or exit.

**Trap: Wherever you go...**

You must inform the Resident Director of any travel involving an overnight stay outside Brussels. Failure to do this may result in your dismissal from the program.

## Modes of Travel for Long Distance

**Low Budget Flights:** In the past few years, low budget flights have been very popular with students. These flights, leaving from a local airport to the south of Brussels that can be reached by a shuttle, provide a good alternative for destinations in Western Europe.

**Railroad:** For long-distance travel within Belgium, consider the GO-pass, a 6-month, 10-trip railway ticket for those under 26, and the discount on weekend return tickets. It is a cheap way to see the country.

**Bus:** Eurolines, the main European bus carrier is also an option for shorter journeys. It is less expensive, but takes much longer than the train.

### Participants say...

I learned a lot of French, met a lot of amazing people, and have good Belgian friends. Exactly what I wanted to do.

## Hotels and Hostels

Many hostels are not considered official and therefore do not require Hostelling International Membership Cards. Many are listed in travel books and offer comfortable and clean

accommodations. For information on Hostelling International, see [www.hiusa.org](http://www.hiusa.org).

## ILLEGAL DRUGS

Penalties for drug violations in Belgium are often harsher than in the United States. If you use illegal drugs, you may be expelled from the study program, and the local police may prosecute you as a criminal. Remember that you are subject to Belgian laws. Your own country's laws do not protect you. The United States and other governments can only seek to ensure that their citizens are not discriminated against; that is, that they receive the same treatment as do citizens of the country in which they are arrested who are charged with the same offense.

### Dismissal from the Program

You must comply with any regulations established by your home university as well as those of Vesalius College. The Resident Staff may establish additional requirements that they consider essential either to achieving your educational goals or to continuing good relations with the university or community. Resident Staff may dismiss from the program any student who does not comply with the regulations and requirements as outlined in the Participant Contract, which all students must sign before being allowed to participate in the program.

If your Resident Director warns you that you are not complying with program regulations, you must take responsibility for changing your behavior as requested, or risk early dismissal and consequent loss of time, money, and academic credit. CIEE does not refund program fees to students who are dismissed from their programs.

## VOTING WHILE ABROAD

U.S. citizens who expect to be away from home on Election Day may request absentee ballots in person or by mail from their local election offices. Procedures vary by state but are usually quite simple if you have already registered to vote.

If you have not arranged this before leaving home, you may use the provisions of the Overseas Voting Rights Act of 1975 that requires states to establish a means for citizens residing overseas to apply for voter registration. Some states permit you to use an FPCA (Federal Post Card Application) to register. Others use an SF76, which serves as both an application for registration and as an absentee ballot. You can

get a list of states' voting requirements from a U.S. Embassy or consular office.

### **Tip: Notarize your ballot**

FPCA forms used to register or obtain a ballot must be notarized. If you believe you have been wrongfully denied the right to vote, you may write to the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Washington, D.C. 20530.

If you are a citizen of another country, consult the authorities governing elections in your own country for similar instructions before you leave.

### Income Tax

Most U.S. citizens and residents must file U.S. income tax returns even if their earned income is exempt from taxes. State requirements vary; call or write to the appropriate state office.

Internal Revenue Service income tax information and forms are available at U.S. Embassies and Consulates. Since tax laws change from year to year, direct any questions to the U.S. Consulate. Non-U.S. citizens should contact the appropriate authorities in their own countries for taxation information.

## EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

In case of an emergency, parents or family can reach you by calling CIEE.

Contact information for the CIEE home office will be included in the final details email which will be sent to both you and the emergency contact designated in your application materials within one month prior to the program start date.

## Part IV: Policies and Procedures

Please click on the following link to view CIEE's Policies and Procedures:  
<http://ciee.org/study/terms.aspx>.

This website includes:

### General Policies

- Admissions
- Late Arrival and Early Departure
- Exceptions
- Drug and Alcohol Violations
- Alcohol Policy
- Dismissal from the Program

### Academic Policies

- Student Academic Orientation

Course Loads, Credits, Equivalencies and Grades  
Academic Records  
Attendance  
Pass/Fail and Audit  
Drop/Add Period  
Incompletes  
Withdrawal from a Course  
Academic Honesty  
Appeals

#### **Program Fees and Payment Policies**

Confirmation of Participation  
Payment of CIEE Program Fees  
Due Dates, Late Fees and Interest  
Exclusion from Participation  
Late Fees and Interest  
Withdrawal and Deferral Policy  
Program Cancellation

Please make sure to review this website. Your signature on the “Program Participant Contract” indicates that you have read and agree to comply with all of the policies provided to you on that website.

## **A NOTE FROM CIEE**

### **Credits and Grades**

Most students who choose to go abroad for a term or a year report that the experience is one of the most powerful and enjoyable parts of their undergraduate education. We hope that when you return home, you will have had an equally memorable experience.

Many students report that study abroad is also challenging, and that coming to terms with the challenges is one of the things that make it so powerful and memorable. Some students, however, report that the challenges of dealing with another country’s academic culture are sometimes more frustrating than enjoyable.

The academic programs that CIEE provides are to varying degrees integrated into another culture’s academic framework, and are often governed by rules that are unfamiliar to U.S. students. At CIEE we want you to experience the challenges of adapting to a new culture, of accepting different teaching styles, and embracing forms of learning that may be different from what you are used to.

But we are sure you will agree that problems associated with your credits and your grades should be avoided—that these should not turn out to be “opportunities for growth.” We want to help

you avoid these problems, and with some careful planning and attention to detail, you can:

### **1. Managing Your Registration.**

You are probably going to sign up for five classes during your session overseas. Although it’s surprising, one problem faced by some students when they return home is that the Course Registration Record we have for them doesn’t match what the student actually took. You can avoid this. Read on.

#### **Make it your responsibility to keep your Course Registration Record accurate and up to date.**

Students select a preliminary course schedule, either in the U.S. before going abroad or after arrival at the Center. The courses selected constitute your Preliminary Registration, which will be sent to your home or sending school. There will be an opportunity to change courses during the first days of the regular semester (the “drop-add” period). Once this add-drop period ends, all courses for which you are registered will remain final, and will be permanently listed on your Course Registration Record. These will be the courses that will appear on the credit and grades report that we will send to your home or sending school after the session ends (called the “CIEE Academic Record”).

Although CIEE staff, both in the U.S. and at your site, will make every effort to ensure that your Course Registration Record is accurate, we cannot do this unless you correctly follow all the formal procedures for making changes. **You must fill out a form to drop or add a course.** It is not sufficient to tell your professor, the CIEE Resident Director, or another staff person that you are changing courses—you must complete all required paperwork or the change is not official. In some cases you will also be required to obtain permission from your home institution.

To sum up, **make it your responsibility** to ensure that your Course Registration Record is accurate. If at any time you are not sure, ask to see a copy of it.

#### **There’s a difference between DROPPING a course and WITHDRAWING from one.**

As noted above, once the drop-add period is over, all the courses for which you are registered will remain permanently on your record. However, if you realize, *after the end of the drop-add period but before the middle of the session*, that special circumstances will prevent you from completing a



course successfully, it may be possible to “Withdraw” from the course. Please also be aware that it is not possible to add a course after the add-drop period. If you do withdraw from a course, it will remain on your CIEE Academic Record with a “W” grade. Permission to Withdraw from a course is not automatically granted just because a student is not doing well; it is only granted when there are circumstances that the Resident Director believes *prevented* a student from doing well, and *only before the program’s withdrawal deadline*. There is also required paperwork to complete if you are withdrawing from a course.

After the withdrawal deadline, all courses that remain on your Course Registration Record will be posted on your CIEE Academic Record with a letter grade. If you stop going to a course, fail to take the final examination, or fail to turn in required coursework, you will receive an F.

## **2. Getting Good Grades.**

**The time to think about your grades is at the beginning of each course, not at the end.**

Make sure you understand the basis on which the professor will be assessing your work. Practices vary from country to country. Often a single final paper or examination will be the most important (perhaps the only) opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned and/or achieved in the course. In some courses, the basis for grades may have been explained during orientation or during the registration process. An explanation may appear on the course syllabus, and/or the professor may announce grading policies. In some cases, you may not be sure how the professor will be calculating the grade. In this case as well, **make it your responsibility to be sure you understand the basis for grading in each course**. If you’re not sure, ask the professor or the Resident Director.

### **How am I doing?**

Although grading differs from country to country, there are general guidelines that we can offer.

In the U.S., a student usually forms an idea of how he/she is doing as the semester progresses based on a self-appraisal of participation in class and a general sense of what the professor cares about. In most overseas situations, it is much more difficult, and often not possible at all, for a student to determine this. Although we ask our teachers to give students ongoing feedback, their own academic cultures are often very different in

this regard, and many teachers do not always offer feedback in a way that enables a student to form a reliable opinion of his/her progress. We strongly recommend that you ask your professor how you are doing, perhaps two weeks after the semester has started and again two or three times during the session. Don’t wait until mid-term time to do this.

**“Demanding” doesn’t mean the same thing in most overseas academic cultures.**

U.S. students are accustomed to forming an idea of how demanding a teacher is based on the pressure that is applied on a day-to-day basis. In the U.S., if a professor repeatedly challenges students to show they have read and understood the assignments, and then chastises those who can’t answer, students will conclude that this is a demanding teacher. This doesn’t always happen overseas. “*Demanding*” in an overseas context may mean simply that the grades awarded at the end of the course are lower than those awarded by other professors.

Because of these differences, you need to take stock of your situation early and often. If the regular clues are not present, you should ask, “How am I doing?” If there isn’t yet any basis for the professor to answer that question, you should ask, “What is important in this class? What should I be doing in order to succeed?” Make it your responsibility to actively seek confirmation of how well you are doing in each course.

All the CIEE staff, both in the U.S. and at your program site, want you to have an enjoyable and successful session overseas. We are committed to offering top-quality assistance to help you understand the host culture and its constraints. Please do not hesitate to contact any staff member if we can advise you on how best to manage your overseas experience.

Have a great year, learn all that you can about your temporary home, and try to bring back an excellent and accurate academic record.

## **CONCLUSION: THE CHALLENGE IS UP TO YOU**

Your stay abroad may be one of the most vital and rewarding times of your life. Don’t worry about what you are going to miss at school by going overseas. You will learn so much abroad! The people you meet and the situations you experience may be invaluable in the years to come.

We hope you will arrive prepared to adjust to a way of living that is different from your own; to a way of thinking that may be, in some cases, more traditional, more conventional, and more conservative than your own. You will also most likely encounter new and different views about the U.S. and its people. Take the opportunity to learn from these and to clarify misconceptions about the U.S. when you can.

Remember that each person you meet will see you as a representative of the United States. If you can accept differences cheerfully and with an open mind rather than attempting to alter the environment around you, you can contribute to a positive relationship between the country and the United States.

**CIEE wishes you every success during the coming months.**

#### **Participants say...**

Overall my experience abroad is something that I would not trade for anything. Being abroad gave me the opportunity to push myself beyond my comfort zone thus increasing my abilities to deal with more confidence. My only advice to those coming abroad is to constantly push yourself. Venture out on your own and don't let your fears deprive you of the opportunity to try something new.

## Part V: Additional Resources

---

### SUGGESTED READING LIST

We urge you to read several of these publications to expand your knowledge of Belgium and ease your adjustment to Belgian culture. Many of these books can be purchased at your local bookstore or may be available for reference at your campus study abroad office or local library.

#### Books on Belgium

Blom, J.C.H., Emiel Lamberts, *History of the Low Countries*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2006.

Boudart, Marina & Michel, Rene Bryssinck, eds. *Modern Belgium*. Palo Alto, CA: The Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 1990.

Claus, Hugo. *The Sorrow of Belgium*. London: Penguin, 1991. (novel)

De Ridder, Paul. *Brussels. History of a Brabant City*, Ghent: Stichting Mens en Cultuur, 2002.

Deschouwer, Kris. *The Politics of Belgium. Governing a Divided Society*, Houndmills, Palgrave MacMillan, 2009.

De Vries, André. *Cities of the Imagination. Brussels, a Cultural and Literary History*. Oxford: Signal Books, 2003.

De Witte, Ludo. *The Assassination of Lumumba*. Verso Books, 2001.

Groom, Winston. *A Storm in Flanders. Triumph and Tragedy on the Western Front*. London: Cassell, 2002

Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost*. New York: First Mariner Books, 1998.

Labio, Catherine (ed). *Yale French Studies Number 102: Belgian Memories*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.

Meijer, Reinder P. *Literature of the Low Countries: A Short History of Dutch Literature in the Netherlands and Belgium*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1971.

Mosly, Philip. *Split Screen. Belgian Cinema and Cultural Identity*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Mouton, Olivier and others. *Belgium, a State of Mind*, Tielt: Lannoo and Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2001.

Pavy, Didier. *Les Belges*. Paris : Grasset, 1999.

Warmbrun, Werner. *The German Occupation of Belgium, 1940-1944*. New York: Peter Lang, 1993.

Witte, Els and Van Velthoven, Harry. *Language and Politics. The Situation in Belgium in and Art Historical Perspective*. Brussels: VUB Brussels University Press, 1999.

Witte, Els, Craeybeckx, Jan, and Meynen, Alain. *Political History of Belgium from 1830 Onwards*. Brussels: VUB Brussels University Press, 2000

#### Films

*Toto le Hero*, Jaco van Dormael, 1991.

*Mister Nobody*, Jaco van Dormael, 2009

*Man Bites Dog*, Benoit Poelvoorde, 1992.

*Rosetta*, Dardenne & Dardenne, 1999. (Best film at Cannes Film Festival)

*Loft*, Erik Van Looy, 2009

*L'Enfant*, Dardenne & Dardenne, 2005 (Best film at Cannes Film Festival)

### **Books On Cultural Adaptation**

Adaptation to a new culture can be difficult. The following reading list contains publications that deal specifically with issues of culture shock and the difficulties associated with living overseas. Many of these books can be purchased at your local bookstore or may be available for reference at your campus study abroad office or local library.

Citron, James. *Short-Term Study Abroad: Integration, Third Culture Formation and Reentry*, NAFSA: Association for International Educators, 1996.

Kepets, Dawn. *Back in the USA: Reflecting on Your Study Abroad Experience*, NAFSA: Association for International Educators, 1999.

Kohls, Robert. *Survival Kit for Overseas Living: For Americans Planning to Live and Work Abroad*, Intercultural Press, 2001.

Pearson, Mark and Westerman, Martin, ed. *Europe from a Backpack: Real Stories from Young Travelers Abroad*, Pearson Venture Group, 2004.

Storti, Craig. *The Art of Crossing Cultures (Second Edition)*, Intercultural Press, 2001.

Storti, Craig. *The Art of Coming Home*, Intercultural Press, 2001.

Wolfgang, Aaron. *Everybody's Guide to People Watching*, Intercultural Press, 1995.

### **Belgian Literature**

Look for authors like Hugo Claus (*The Sorrow of Belgium*), Amelie Nothomb (*Fear and Trembling, Loving Sabotage, Antéchrista*), Kristien Hemmerechts (*The Garden of Innocence*), Tom Lanoye (*A Perfect Murder*), George Simenon (*Inspector Maigret*).

## WEBSITES

For those students with access to the Internet, we also encourage you to look at the many sites on student travel as well as on Belgium and Brussels including the following:

[www.ciee.org](http://www.ciee.org)

CIEE's website. If you haven't already, take a look and find out about other CIEE activities around the world.

[www.lesoir.be](http://www.lesoir.be)

Website of the main Belgian-French speaking newspaper.

[www.vub.ac.be](http://www.vub.ac.be)

Website of the Dutch speaking University of Brussels (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

[travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov)

The U.S. State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs home page providing Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings, U.S. Passport Information and Application Procedures, U.S. Consulate and Embassy Addresses Abroad, and U.S. Customs Information.

[www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com)

Current exchange rates.

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Provides updated information on required immunization and regional health advisories for travelers.

[www.brussels-online.be](http://www.brussels-online.be)

Brussels on-line for information on living, working and vacationing in Brussels

[www.ulb.ac.be](http://www.ulb.ac.be)

Université Libre de Bruxelles

[www.lonelyplanet.com/dest/eur/bel.htm](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/dest/eur/bel.htm)

On-line travel guide to Belgium from the well respected *Lonely Planet* series of travel guides.

<http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/Belgcul.html>

General site on all things Belgian including maps and links to many other Belgian related sites.

[www.visitbelgium.com](http://www.visitbelgium.com)

Official website for the Belgian Tourist Office

[www.vesalius.edu](http://www.vesalius.edu)

Vesalius College

## SUGGESTED PACKING CHECKLIST

Naturally you'll want to pack what best reflects your own life style and taste, but CIEE recommends the following:

### Important Items

- Airline ticket (including return ticket)
- Passport with Belgian student visa
- Printed copy of the CIEE "final details" email which will be sent to you 3-4 weeks prior to the program start date
- Credit card/ATM card with pin numbers
- Home Advisor's (both academic and study abroad) address, fax, email
- Photocopy of passport (keep separate from passport)
- Traveler's checks (optional) and list of numbers

### Clothing

- Boots, sturdy, water-resistant, good for walking
- Bras
- Pajamas/nightgown
- Pants including one dressy pair (men)
- Raincoat or parka
- Robe/shower sandals
- Shirts
- Shoes (including a dress pair)
- Skirts or dresses, (one should be dressy for the opera/ball) and pantyhose/slip if necessary
- Sneakers
- Socks
- Sports coat/blazer and tie
- Sweaters/sweatshirts
- Swimsuit
- Underwear
- Winter coat/gloves/hat/scarf

### General

- Address book, including email
- Backpack/Overnight bag for traveling
- Batteries
- Battery operated CO detector
- Bottle/can opener
- Camera, memory cards, batteries
- Contact lens solution
- Flashlight
- French grammar book/phrase book
- Gifts/Photos from home
- Glasses or contact lenses, extra pair, prescription
- Guidebook
- Hair dryer (dual voltage)
- Journal
- Laptop (optional) with electrical adapter and security/theft recovery software
- Medication you are taking and a copy of the prescriptions
- Medicine kit, small: antacid/anti-diarrhea medicine/aspirin/band-aids/cold medicine
- Money belt or neck pouch
- Nail clippers
- Music/MP3 Player
- Reading material: books, magazines
- Recipes
- Sewing kit
- Sunglasses
- Toiletries: brush, comb, deodorants, toothbrush, toothpaste, feminine supplies etc.
- Umbrella (essential as it does tend to rain in Brussels)
- Washcloth and towel