

ORGANIZING YOUR DAILY LIFE IN BELGIUM - Flanders

Opening Hours

Shops

Monday – Friday: 8.00 – 18.30/19.00 h - Saturday: 8.00 – 17.00 h.

Sunday: most shops are closed on Sundays, but a lot of bakeries and butcher's shops are open on Sunday morning till 12.00 h. Most shops are closed one day a week.

Banks

Usually open Mo - Fr from 8.00 - 16.00 h

Flemish radio and TV

VRT (Vlaamse Radio en Televisie): Flanders' official broadcasting station: <http://www.vrt.be/>

RVI (Radio Vlaanderen Internationaal): on <http://www.rvi.be/> is meant for Flemish people who live abroad and want to listen to the radio online.

StuBru (Studio Brussel) <http://www.stubru.be/> and **MNM** <http://www.mnm.be/> are popular hit radio channels among young people.

Newspapers

Flanders Today is a free weekly newspaper to inform foreigners about Flanders. A subscription form for the magazine can be found on: <http://www.flanderstoday.eu/>

You will find some English newspapers on newsstands at bigger railway stations or airports. There is also some selection of English books available in the bookshops of bigger cities.

Travelling

Travelling by train is a good way to get to know the country. Information about the connections (bus and train) you will find on the website of the Belgian Federal Railways.

<http://www.b-rail.be/main/E/index.php>

For young people (25 or younger) it is advisable to buy a **GO-pass**. With this card you get 10 single journeys by train for €50. Buy this pass at the station. People older than 25 can buy a similar Rail Pass for €73.

There is a similar '**Buzzy Pazz**' for trams and buses. It costs €20.90 for 1 month, €59 for 3 months and €162 for a year free travelling on all trams and buses.

Emergency numbers

Police: **101** – Ambulance: **100** - Fire brigade: **100**

Medical services

If you need a doctor you usually go there in the morning. Some doctors also offer their services in the afternoon, but especially in rural areas they then are out to see their patients at home if necessary. All hospitals have a "Dienst Spoedgevallen" where you can go – also best in the morning – and have your problems checked and examined.

Both doctors and hospitals require your "**e-card**" (social insurance card) as a grant for payment. If you need some medicine you only can get it at the pharmacy. Opening hours: closed on Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

There is a website http://www.apotheek.be/index.cfm?cat_id=4&lang=nl that shows the pharmacies in your area that are open in the weekend

Legal restrictions for young people

From your 16th birthday you can get beer or wine or spirits. Belgium is very (sometimes too) tolerant vs. alcohol consumption. Of course you do not 'drink and drive'. There's a well known publicity campaign in Belgium to persuade a 'Bob' to stay sober to drive the rest of the party friends home.

Communication with locals

If you have some command of Flemish (Dutch) and you don't understand what people are talking about – it might not be your fault. Flemish dialect can be very different from standard Dutch.

Second language in Flanders is French and the third language (but more popular among youngsters) is English.