



Belgium Travel Guide

Description



The beautiful is less what ones sees than what one dreams

Belgium Proverb

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Top Five Destinations In Belgium

1. **Bruges** Is a magnificent medieval town with charm and a warm atmosphere that will sweep you away. Of course, the picturesque canals are what will have you fascinated and wandering for hours, snapping what feels like a million photos. The Old Town is a must. Bruges is the center of Flemish art. There are many excellent museums and beautiful old architecture.
2. **Ghent** We visited a castle and were left in awe of the city. The medieval Gravensteen Castle, built in the 1100s, is impressively preserved and makes for a fascinating visit. Give the city some time; it dates back to the middle ages with dramatic architecture, as it was once one of the wealthiest and most powerful cities in Europe.
3. **Antwerp** Is a modern bustling city that offers a rich history and wonders such as the Gothic Cathedral and St Paul's church. It is also known for its diamond district, where 70% of the world's diamonds are traded. There is quite the haute cuisine scene, nightlife, and top-notch shopping.
4. **Brussels** Is the capital of Belgium. This vibrant, dynamic city boasts a wide diversity of cultures as it is the headquarters for the European Union and its diplomat center. Known for its excellent restaurants, nightlife, and shopping, it also has stunning architecture and historical sites.
5. **Dinant** Sits on the brilliant Meuse River with its colorful picture-perfect buildings reflecting off the river. There is something magical and special here. It teems with natural beauty. The Cave of Han and the Grotto of Dinant are spectacular natural attractions. The landmark of the city is the dramatic Collegiate Church of Notre Dame.

Did you know?

Belgium Stats

- Population: 11.7 million
- Capital City: Brussels
- Currency: Euro (EUR)
- Government type: Federal Parliamentary Democracy under a Constitutional Monarchy
- Monarch: Phillippe
- Prime Minister: Alexander De Coro
- Ethnic groups: Belgian 75.2%, Italian 4.1%, Moroccan 3.7%, French 2.4%, Turkish 2%, Dutch 2%, other 10.6%
- Languages: Dutch (official) 60%, French (official) 40%, German (official) less than 1%
- Religions: Roman Catholic 50%, Protestant and other Christian 2.5%, Muslim 5%, atheist 9.2%, none 32.6%
- U.S. State Department Risk Level: 3 due to Covid and Terrorism threat.
- Terrorist groups: Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps/Qods Force; Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham
- Its official name is the "Kingdom of Belgium."
- The official symbol of Belgium is a coat of arms with an aggressive lion.

- Belgium's motto is "Unity Makes Strength."
- GDP is \$575,808 Billion, which ranks 36th in the world.
- Signal de Botrange, at 2,277 feet, is the highest point in Belgium.
- Belgium produces over 220,000 tons of chocolate a year.
- Belgium has 13 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- The capital of Brussels is home to NATO and the European Union.
- Belgium is one of the most urbanized and heavily industrialized countries in Europe.
- Major industries include engineering and metal products, transportation equipment, scientific instrument, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, base metals, textiles, glass, and processed food and beverages.
- Inventions attributed to Belgium: birth control pill, BMI, JPEG conversion, Pralines, Cricket, Inline skates, asphalt, internal combustion engine, Imodium, World Wide Web, and plastic.
- Belgium is one of the six founding members of the European Union.
- Belgium is the 5th smallest country in Europe. It is about the size of Maryland.
- Life expectancy is 81.4 years old.
- The literacy rate is 99%.

Funs facts

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- Belgium has the highest number of castles per square kilometer of any other country. There are reportedly over 3,000 castles.
- Antwerp is the world's diamond capital.
- Belgium has the lowest salary gap between men and women in the European Union.
- Brussels International Airport is the world's largest chocolate purchasing point.
- Belgium has the densest rail network in the world, with over 2500 miles of track.
- Napoleon was defeated in Waterloo, which is a city south of Brussels.
- The word spa comes from the Belgian city Spa.
- French fries originated in Belgium.
- Belgium is the sixth-largest importer of coffee in the world.
- Belgian has compulsory voting.
- Education is mandated until the age of 18.
- Anheuser-Busch, the largest beer brewer globally, is located in Leuven.
- Belgium is a country famous for its beer. It is said that it has over 1000 varieties of beer.
- Belgian households have the highest percentage of cable T.V. in the world at 97%.
- The Big Bang Theory, no, not the show, is believed to have originated in Belgium.
- Belgium was the second country in the world to legalize same-sex marriages.
- The highest divorce rate in Western Europe is in Belgium.
- Belgium is the world's leading exporter of billiard balls.
- They have the least number of fast-food restaurants compared to the rest of Europe.
- Business tourism is huge, and it also is home to more diplomats than any other country.
- Comics are huge in Belgium and a big part of the Belgian culture.
- The two most picturesque cities in Belgium are Bruges and Ghent.
- Chocolate bars and pralines are Belgian specialties.
- The national dish is Moules Frites, mussels, and fries.
- Belgium is an animal-loving country. The majority of households have pets.

Belgium Map

Good to know before you go

- Tipping is not standard practice in Belgium, as a service fee is typically in the final bill. This applies to restaurants, taxis, spas, and hotels. If you want to do so for exceptional service, you can leave a few euros. It is not an obligation.
- Belgium has excellent roads, and it is an easy country to drive in. We did not find drivers aggressive. Of course, there will be traffic near all the big cities. Though an International driver's license is not required, it never hurts to have one!
- There are traffic cameras everywhere. Pay attention to speed limits and sudden drops in speeds.
- Public transportation is excellent in Belgium. It can be pricey, though. The metro and train stations alone are worth visiting, so look around during your travels through these stations.
- Overall, clothing is stylish and fashionable. It has strong influences from France and Germany.

Since it has a vast diplomat and foreign population, it is worldly. In the end, smart casual clothes will get you by easily unless you are heading to a higher-end restaurant.

- Since there are three official languages, it can be challenging to be prepared and know when to use each. Know the basics as the Belgians appreciate efforts to speak their language, but most speak excellent English. Greet them in their local dialect if nothing more than out of respect and kindness. You will find they will be happy to speak English after your efforts.
- Belgium is a highly developed, urban country with the internet everywhere.
- The Belgians are an egalitarian society; women don't often change their names when they marry.
- Belgians value appearance. Cleanliness is something they take pride in. Homes are very well kept, and many residents and businesses will regularly wash and sweep the sidewalk in front of the building.
- Family is a core value in Belgians' life; it is their first priority. Many remain in the same town they grew up in.
- Greetings are more formal. A quick handshake is common if you don't know the person, but once more familiar cheek-to-cheek kisses are shared except among men.
- If you are lucky enough to be invited to someone's home, always come bearing a gift; flowers and chocolates are a perfect choice. Avoid white chrysanthemums, as they are usually meant for funerals.
- Belgians are careful and prudent; it takes time for trust to build.
- Belgians pride themselves on punctuality. Please arrive on time; it demonstrates respect.
- Beer is core to Belgian culture and history. The beer menu in bars and pubs is some of the most impressive you will ever see.
- For the most part, much of the country shuts down on Sundays. If you need anything, get it early on Sunday.
- Belgium is an expensive country to visit and live in.
- Being is a small country; you can cross it in a few hours. It is pretty diverse. If you can give it a few days of your time, it will reward you well.
- Gastronomy is core to Belgium culture, and they are pretty proud of that.
- When in Belgium, you can't say you have been if you haven't partaken in waffles, beer, fries, mussels, and of course, chocolate.
- Table etiquette is continental, with the fork held in the left hand and the knife in the right while eating and hands kept visible at all times.
- Christmas markets are spectacular in Belgium, with at least 16 excellent ones to choose from.
- There are lots of smokers in this country. Nevertheless, we rarely find it an issue as most restaurants and most tourist sites do not allow smoking.
- It is a very safe and peaceful country. We will always advise you to watch for pickpockets and not leave valuables in your vehicle.

Belgium Essential Info

U.S. Consular Emergency

The 24-hour number from a U.S. Phone is 1-888-407-4747

Outside of the U.S., 011-202-501-4444

U.S. Embassy Brussels

Regentlaan 27 Boulevard de Regent, B-1000 Brussels

Phone +32-0-2 811-4000

Fax +32-0-2 811-4500

UScitizenBrussels@state.gov

No Consulate offices in Belgium

Emergency Numbers

GENERAL 112

Medical and Fire 100 Police 101

Country Code

+32

Time Zone

UTC+1

Adaptors for Belgium

“Standard” Euro plug

Type C or F

Driving

Right side

Tourism Office

<https://visitbelgium.com>

When to Travel to Belgium

Belgium is a trendy destination for bordering E.U. countries and international tourists. It also has more diplomats than any other country in the world. Peak tourist season, June-August, can be crowded.

Summers stay mild, which draws many people there during those months. It does rain in the summer months, so plan rain gear accordingly. The Winter months are the low season, but the Christmas markets and festivals draw many visitors. The best time to visit is the shoulder season from April to June and September/October. You will find fewer crowds, lovely weather, and easy access to most sights. Belgium is known for its spectacular fall colors and its vibrant spring colors. Though their neighbor, the Netherlands is most known for the tulips, Belgium has some breathtaking tulip regions.

Belgium has moderate temperatures year-round, which makes it an ideal destination during any season. Spring and Fall can still be cool, but a simple jacket takes care of that. Belgium is an expensive country to visit, especially in peak travel months. Traveling during the non-peak months

when the weather is still mild, you will find much better pricing overall.

- Summer 54-74 °F (12-23 °C)
- Spring 42-70 °F (17-23 °C)
- Fall 41-67 °F (5-19 °C)
- Winter 35-45 °F (1-7 °C)

Our Favorite Belgium Resources

This resource section contains some Amazon affiliate links. If you use these links to buy something, we may earn a small commission at no additional cost to you. Thank you!

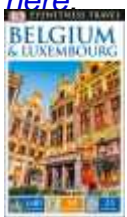
Belgium Travel Books/Guides

Our trip to Belgium was during a two-week trip to seven different countries. What we could bring was limited, and it had to be tiny for the required space.



Rick Steves Belgium: Bruges, Brussels, Antwerp, and Ghent by Rick Steves

Full disclosure: we are huge Rick Steve fans, it will be rare we do not recommend one of his wonderful guides, and his guidance was spot-on for Belgium. We love his travel style and perspective. His off-the-beaten-path approach and his independent travel philosophy match well with how we travel. The guides never disappoint. This book made the cut and was a fantastic resource. [Find this valuable guide here.](#)



D.K. Eyewitness Travel Guide Belgium and Luxembourg by D.K. Eyewitness

D.K. guides are reliable guides for trip planning though they can be heavy to travel with. The photography is lovely and captures the vibrancy of Belgium. It provides cutaway 3-D drawings of top sights and fabulous suggested itineraries. If you are into museums, you will find all the details to plan your visits. Due to the book's weight, we took sections of it with us vs. the entire book. [Find this guide here.](#)

Our Favorite Websites

1. [Belgium Tourism Office](#)

2. **U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs Belgium Country Info**

We cannot encourage you enough to visit this website as you plan and prepare for your trip. This is the U.S. Federal Government addressing the safety, security, travel risk, entry, exit, visa documents mandates, emergency U.S. and Embassy contacts, health, local laws, special circumstances, threats, traveler vulnerabilities, government warnings, and transportation in Belgium. This is your best and most reliable resource for all this important info. Check back often before you go, as things can change quickly. Being prepared is essential in all travel, but especially internationally.

[Belgium International Travel Information \(state.gov\)](#)

3. **The Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Travelers Health Resource**

This CDC travel resource provides essential health info for your specific destination. Using their tool, you can determine which vaccines, medications, and health advice recommendations are needed for Belgium.

[CDC's Travelers Health Page for Belgium](#)

Our favorite maps



Michelin Belgium Luxembourg Map 716

Easy to read the map with practical road and travel information. Castles were marked on the map, as well as all major destinations. Though we default to Google maps, this came in handy when service was poor or during construction detours. [Find this essential map here.](#)

Our favorite apps

Rome2rio: Trip Planner Trip and Holiday Organizer Enter any address, landmark, or city in the App will instantly display all your travel options, and booking info, along with accommodation providers and things to do. Find on your local App Store.

Rick Steves Audio Europe This App includes a vast library of Rick Steve's audio content. Get cultural and travel info. Includes self-guided tours of top attractions and historic walks. A must-have. Find on your local App Store.

iTranslate One of the most popular Translation apps, iTranslate can translate words, phrases, and text into French. You can listen to translations both in male and female voices. Find it in your App Store.

Google Translate We use this often to practice proper pronunciations for the three official languages of Belgium. As we always encourage, learning the basics of greeting and thanking people in the local language is essential. Google Translate was an easy app to use. If needed, you can enter text in English, which will speak back in the language desired to aid in communicating with locals. Furthermore, it came in very handy to translate text into images instantly.

Do you have a favorite Belgium travel resource? Share your favorites in the comments section at the bottom of this page or

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The Ultimate Ghent Visitor Guide and Photo Gallery 'Nie pleuje!' – Don't give up!...

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Our Belgium Travel Gallery





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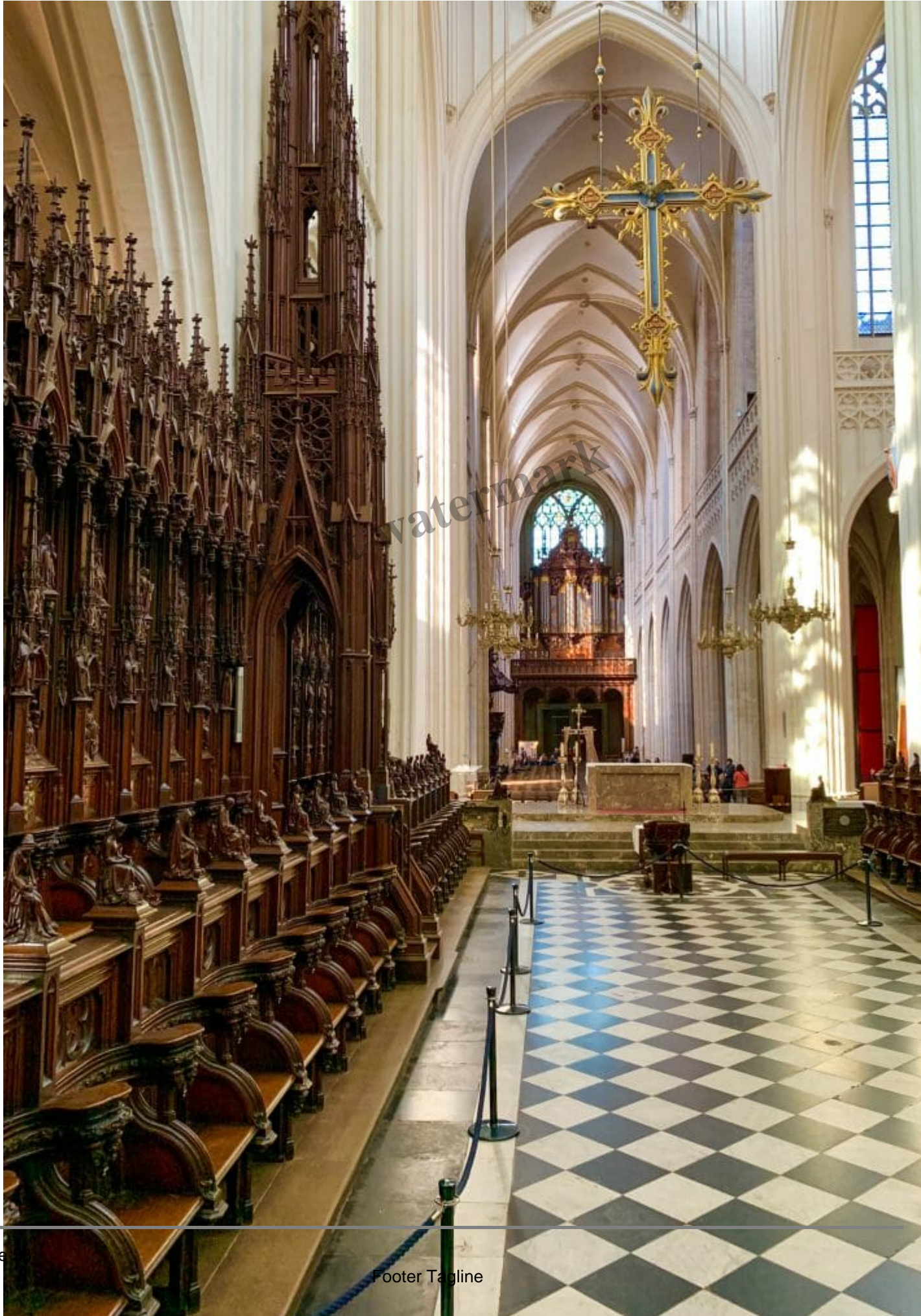




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Our Top Recommended [Travel Products and Resources](#)

[Squaremouth.com](#)

Our favorite travel insurance site!

If you book a trip, don't forget to get travel insurance within 14 days of your first booking. We could not be stronger advocates of being well-insured. Not just for the little stuff but the big things like medical emergencies. We never leave home without it. Over the years, we have used many sites but have now

found our go-to place. [Squaremouth.com](#) does a fantastic job; it has a user-friendly interface, uses top-rated and reputable insurance carriers, and most policies cover COVID-19 medical issues and cancellations. They also mediate on your behalf if you have problems with your policy.

To empower you as a consumer, we suggest you read our [blog post](#) on the importance of travel insurance and how to get the best coverage from top-rated companies for an affordable price.

[MedjetAssist](#)

Medical transport back home from anywhere in the world

They are the premier global air medical transport. One caveat to travel insurance is that medical evacuation usually gets you to the closest facility to care for you. Medjet gets you back to the U.S. to the hospital of your choice once you are stable enough to fly. They cover COVID-related transport as well.

[Medjet](#) carries its own policies. These policies are only for transport and do not cover other aspects of travel insurance. They have individual trip policies starting at \$99 and annual policies for around \$300. Most of their policies limit the age to 74 and younger. Prices are not based on age below that.

To learn more about how Medical Evacuation membership with Medjet Assist works, check out our [blog post](#) for a more detailed review.

[Expedia.com](#)

Hotels, home rentals, BNBs, flights, and other transportation & tours

[Expedia](#) is a US-based company whose mission is to power global travel for everyone and everywhere. Whether planning a family vacation, booking for business, or organizing the trip of a lifetime, they are a fantastic resource. Wanderers Compass focuses on independent travel, and using sites like [Expedia](#) makes that possible. Every aspect of travel you need, from airfare, accommodations, rental car, and cruises to activities to do at your destination, can be booked on [Expedia](#).

[Booking.com](#)

Hotels, Home rentals, BNBs, Flights, and other Transportation & Tours

[Booking.com](#) connects millions of travelers to memorable experiences, various transportation options, and incredible places to stay – from homes to hotels and much more. It is one of the world's largest travel marketplaces for established brands and entrepreneurs of all sizes.

We always check Expedia and Booking.com to verify prices. At times, one is sold out of rooms while another at the same place has rooms. We also often find some European hotels, especially smaller ones, on Booking.com but not on Expedia. It could be they are a Europe-based company. Try both before booking accommodations.

[Vacation Rental By Owner \(VRBO\)](#)

Are you traveling with a family or having an extended stay at your destination?

With over 2 million bookable vacation rentals, [VRBO](#) connects homeowners with families and vacationers looking for something more than a hotel for their trip. The [VRBO](#) community offers families or groups various rental property types such as condos, cabins, lake rentals, beach houses, etc.

[VRBO](#) is now under the Expedia group's ownership, which many were worried about, but it hasn't panned out to be a concern. It is a massive network with access to all lodging forms should issues arise. Joelle has used VRBO for many years with her family and has had no problems with it.

[Viator](#)

As the leading marketplace for travel experiences, [Viator](#) believes that making memories is what travel is all about. And with 300,000+ experiences to explore—everything from simple tours to extreme adventures (and all the niche, interesting stuff in between)—making memories that will last a lifetime has never been easier.

With industry-leading flexibility and last-minute availability, it's never too late to make any day extraordinary. This one site has it all and has experiences throughout the world. We use them often during our travels, especially for food tours. We especially take the time to read the reviews provided.

[Amazon.com](#)

An excellent source for travel essentials and guides

We now have our own Amazon Storefront with all our favorite travel accessories and gear in one place. Check out our travel store at the link below.

[Wanderers Compass Amazon Storefront](#)

Amazon is one of the most comprehensive online shopping sources in the world. Teams worldwide provide lower prices, better selection, and rapid delivery on behalf of customers. They offer a vast inventory, and their 1.7 million small and medium businesses worldwide selling on Amazon.com offer extensive options to customers.

We buy most of our travel books, accessories, and luggage from Amazon. We have ordered up to two days before travel and get what we need.

[HYDAWAY](#)

This is not your ordinary drinkware company. The **HYDAWAY** difference is what their products do when you're not using them. Practical and portable, HYDAWAY doesn't take up unnecessary space in

your already-packed life or pile up in landfills. We all know that trying to pack light while being environmentally conscious can be difficult. Having the right items can make a world of difference. [HYDAWAY](#) provides that.

We have used their collapsible water bottle, carrying case for the water bottle, and collapsible insulated drink tumbler. They are all lightweight and durable. A conservation-focused product you can be proud to buy.

Use our Promo Code. WANCOM15, at checkout for 15% off your Hydaway order

[Welcome Pick-ups](#) **(Airport and sightseeing service)**

A global leader in ground transportation for travelers. They help hundreds of companies worldwide enhance their services and boost their revenue with our 5-star ride experiences and hassle-free automation.

Founded in 2015 in Athens, Greece, [Welcome Pick-ups](#) goes above and beyond the standard transfer service as the first company to deliver a holistic, in-destination travel experience. From the moment a traveler arrives at a new destination until they return home, Welcome accommodates all their travel needs (transfers, travel products, things to do, information) as the easiest, friendliest, and most personalized solution.

[PhotoAiD](#)

Do you feel like you are wasting time visiting an on-site photographer only to be embarrassed by the photo? Would you like control of the final product? Get the perfect VISA or passport photo online with PhotoAID.

When traveling, you often need to apply for official documents such as a passport, ID, and different kinds of licenses or cards. Those applications require a picture that must meet specific conditions to be accepted, depending on the country. Now, it is possible to take this picture at home without the help of a professional photographer. PhotoAiD allows you to take the perfect biometric photo you approve without leaving home.

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contactwandererscompass-com

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