

THRIVING IN



BELGIUM

Canada

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MFSP PSFM
MILITARY FAMILY PROGRAM
PROG. CANADIEN DES SERVICES
EUROPE AUX FAMILLES DES MILITAIRES
EUROPE



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Dear new Shapians,

We would like to welcome you to SHAPE! We hope that the enclosed information helps you make a smooth transition to your life in Belgium.

The MFS(E) is committed to enhancing the quality of life of its community members. As a newcomer, you may at times be overwhelmed with new information and experiences as you adapt to a new lifestyle. If you find that some of your concerns or questions have not been addressed with the information you have received in your Welcome Package, please do not hesitate to contact us at 065 44 5962 or by email at MFSE.SHAPE@cfmws.com.

We hope your stay in **Belgium** will be a rewarding one and that you will have the opportunity to make the most of your European experience. Finally, we encourage you to get involved in our many activities and programs that we organize for our members and to share your experiences with us. Perhaps you have a special talent that you can contribute to the community or perhaps you may be able to offer the youth the benefits of any particular sports, hobbies or other skills you have.

Please come and see us at the MFS(E), it will be our pleasure to meet you. The Centre's hours are Monday through Thursday from 8:30 to 16:30 and Friday from 8:30 to 15:30. We are looking forward to meeting you.

Sincerely yours,

The MFS(E) Team

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Working for you!

This guide is broken into three sections. We recognize that everyone adapts differently to moves. Some prefer to have access to all the information at once, while others like information only as needed. This guide accomplished both styles. You can read the entire package all at once or you can read the sections that are applicable to the stage you are at in the move process.

Section one. Prior to your move

Section two. Arriving

Section three. Thriving

Section One: Prior to your Move

Congratulations, you have completed your first step. You have a new home and an address.

There are some things that previous Shapians wish they would have known prior to moving.

The following section will discuss a variety of things to help you prepare for your move. Of course you can accept or reject any piece of advice, after all, this is your move.

Packing

Items to leave behind

- Toilet paper- it clogs up in Belgium Toilets
- Cleaning Products-some of the chemicals are not compatible with Belgium septic system
- Small Expensive Appliances that may not be compatible with 220 Volts. (Refer back to the HHT Guide regarding the transformers).
- Canadian Regulated Pet flea and tick preventative medications (different medicine available in Belgium) pet owner concerns are different in Belgium than in Canada. Fleas and ticks are much more prevalent (especially ticks), and dogs are at risk from a mosquito-borne disease that is both deadly and incurable. The type of flea and tick medicine is slightly different in Belgium than what is sold in Canada.
- Garbage bags, Specialty garbage bags are required and can only be purchased in Belgium

Items you might want to bring

- Prescription Medication (three months worth)
- Gravol (difficult to find on the economy)
- Children's Tylenol Chewable (difficult to find)
- Prescription glasses (often cost twice as much in Belgium)
- Make sure to bring at least one formal outfit. Ie New Years Ball
- Stock up on your Canadian T-shirts, hats, scarfs etc.- there are opportunities to show your Canadian Pride at SHAPE events. -.
- English Books
- Greeting Cards
- Automotive spare parts (see Auto info section for further details)

Auto Info

If you import a car, it is important to know that Uniquely Canadian specification parts are not available locally. Many items are not immediately available through Chièv res and North American automobile parts can be very expensive on the Belgian market.

It is a good idea to:

- arrange with your local car dealer or family members in Canada to mail-order parts if necessary.
- take note of your local parts supplier's name, mailing and E-mail addresses.
- include spare parts for your automobile in your household goods shipment.
 - It is suggested not to ship your extra parts in your car itself due to the risk of theft from your vehicle in transit.
 - All too often items shipped in the vehicle are missing by the time the vehicle arrives at destination.

Basic items you may wish to ship are: sets of spark plugs; air, oil and fuel filters, sets of brakes.

ONLINE SOURCES FOR AUTO PARTS

<http://www.autopartsway.ca>

The prices are good free shipping for purchases over \$75. Canadian \$\$\$

<http://www.autopartsonlinecanada.com>

Very comprehensive parts source for almost every make/model with competitive prices and reliable shipping. Count on 7-10 days to reach SHAPE. Because it is located in Canada, no customs to worry about!

How to Ship your pet

Bringing Pets into Belgium

Please take note that even the smallest mistake on one of the forms required for your pet could result in the Belgian authorities seizing them from you. Unfortunately, they have the authority to

destroy them if the pets do not meet the importation standards or you are not able to provide the proper documentation.

[Air Canada Traveling with your Pet](#)

[KLM Traveling with Pets](#)

- [Canadian Government Regulations for transporting your pets internationally](#)
- [Regulations for Belgium](#)

Tips from previous years

- Book pets on same flights as you
- Keep boarding passes to show pets were on same flights
- If pets have to fly cargo, they can still be on same flight (e.g. Air Canada direct flight from Montreal to Brussels)
- AirTransat is favoured by many people who fly with pets
- If pets are flying as checked baggage they will be dropped off by the baggage area in the Brussels airport
- If pets are flying as cargo (even if they are on the same flight) they will need to be picked up in the Cargo area that is outside of the airport complex
- If pets are flying as cargo, you will go where the animal is being held to have your paperwork checked, you will be sent to another building for paperwork to be stamped, and then sent back to the original building for more paperwork. You will need to pay a fee of about €60. The cargo building is not associated with a particular airline (eg will not say Air Canada Cargo on building)
- If you fly in on a weekend or outside normal working hours, your pets could be held in the cargo area until they are cleared by a vet and brokered into the country. You could be charged for this service as well as boarding of the pets (could be €500-1200!)
- Book flights so you arrive during normal working hours! (Monday to Friday)
- Freeze water in water dishes (the kind that attaches to the kennel)
- Attach single serving of kibble in ziplock bag with pet's name on it and any feeding instructions
- Photocopy pet paperwork and attach to kennel, carry originals (or get two original copies and attach one)
- Bring tools to take kennel apart in your luggage; they might be needed to get kennels in rental vehicles or in hotel room
- If your dog gets stressed easily, speak with your vet about a hormone collar to help with it. No side effects and it lasts about a month.

Reminders

In order to bring your pet into Belgium, they need:

- A microchip
- A rabies shot **AFTER the microchip is entered AND more than 21 days prior to entry** but before the expiration date of the manufacturer of the vaccine

- Health certificate:
 - A licensed veterinarian (with the CFIA) must complete the health form **WITHIN 20 days prior to the date of entry**
 - The form must be endorsed by the local CFIA
- Puppies and kittens under **15 weeks of age** cannot enter the country because they are too young to get the microchip and receive the necessary vaccines to be imported

Triple-check with your veterinarian and airline to make sure you have ALL of the necessary documents, vaccinations, signatures, etc. to assure a stress-free voyage with your pet.

Section Two: Arriving

Welcome back!

We are certain you are anxious to move into your new home. The following section will help guide you along the way. There will no doubt be some bumps along the way and hopefully this next section will help explain a few things to help ease the transition.

Free Wi-fi available on SHAPE:

- Rendezvous (Starbucks located next to the Carrefour on SHAPE)
- MFS (ask the front desk staff for the password)
- Library (building 307)

Building 210

Building 210 is where you go to obtain your SHAPE ID card and register your vehicles. It is notorious for long line ups and slow service. Don't be surprised if you are there the entire day. Some suggestions from "experienced" building 210 survivors.

- Arrive 15 minutes before opening hours to pull a number.
- Assess time between ticket numbers to see the approximate wait time before your number should be called, this may allow you to leave the building and return at the estimated time.
- If you leave and come back after your number is called, you will have to pull another number again.
- The 210 staff close for a lunch break; lunch hours should be posted, take note.
- Alternate waiting with your spouse; especially if you have children.
- The staff close promptly at end of day and if your number is not called you start over the next day
- Normally it is not possible to schedule appointments.

Total Petrol Fuel Card

Can be used at any Total Petrol Station throughout Belgium
 Can be purchased at the Rationed Item Store (RIS) on SHAPE

Requirements to purchase the Total Petrol fuel card;

- Need a permanent SHAPE ID Card (Blue card)
- Need to have a registered vehicle.

CLUB TOTAL

One fill up every 3 weeks covers you for a full month

<http://www.total.be>

Laundry Services

If you are in the hotel for an extended period of time you will likely need a laundry service.

- At Chièvres Located behind the Recreation Centre; is equipped with regular and oversize washers and dryers. Uses American coins available on site.
Open 24 hours.
- MFS(E) has laundry facilities for use while in transition. Must provide your own laundry detergent.

Shopping

Yes shopping malls do exist! Grand Pres is the closest mall to SHAPE which is located on the outskirts of Mons.

Ikea is located in the Grand Pres Mall along with a large Grocery store (Carrefour) that is similar to Super Store in Canada.

Many newcomers have stated that shopping is difficult to navigate at first, even if French is your first language. The following is a list of helpful information and some common observations;

- ‘On the economy’ is a term used for shopping outside of SHAPE & Chièvres Base.
- Shop hours can appear to be completely arbitrary.
- Some stores are open on Sunday mornings, but closed Monday morning, or all day Monday.
- Some stores will close for one or two weeks in the summer when the owners go on holiday.
- Many small shops close over the lunch hour and for the month of August, but that, too, is variable. In the Netherlands, stores are closed only in the mornings on Mondays.

Local Stores :

Clothing Stores: JBC, H&M, Zara, New Look, Esprit

Craft Store: Ava

Department Stores: Carrefour (like Superstore)

Cora (like Walmart),

Makro (like Costco)

Grocery Stores: Aldi, Carrefour, Cora, Champion, Delhaize, Colruyt
Hardware Stores: Brico, Hubo, Gamma

Rationed Item Store (RIS)

All Canadians have their duty-free privileges issued by SHAPE. Items are rationed, meaning each family is limited to amount of tobacco, alcohol and Fuel cards. Rationed items are available at the R.I.S. (Duty-free tobacco, alcohol, etc). You need to show your SHAPE ID every time you make a purchase.

Chièvres

CAF members and their dependants at SHAPE, under a special agreement, have access to various American support services such as PX (i.e. department store) privileges, schools, recreational facilities and to the commissary (i.e. grocery store). These are important privileges and require strict observance of US regulations. These privileges are not available to other NATO nations so do not flaunt it in front of them. **Please note: The Canadian Teachers do not have these privileges.**

Personnel knowingly providing unauthorised access (i.e. going shopping for others in the Commissary) could face loss of their privileges for the remainder of their tour, as well as disciplinary action. The Implementing Arrangement (IA) is an agreement; the Americans are not obliged to grant Canadians access to their facilities

US POST EXCHANGE (PX) AND COMMISSARY

CAF members and their dependants are permitted to enter and shop at the base using an American ID Card issued specifically for Canadians and a yellow commissary ID card. Your sponsor and the Orderly Room should be able to help you in the process of acquiring these identifications.

The Post Exchange (PX)

Located at the Chièvres American Air Base, which is about 20 minutes away from SHAPE. PX sells clothing, cosmetics, house-wares, audio-visual equipment, giftware, etc. Also offers a variety of hardware items, household and garden tools, some recreational furniture, power tools and children's toys. A special order service and layaway plan is available. There is also an auto parts section carrying *limited* North American parts, tires and accessories with possibility of special order services.

Commissary

Large facility with a selection of groceries, meats, and toiletries, similar to what we're used to in Canada. This is where you can purchase many items like peanut butter, cereal and snack foods

that you might be craving. The baggers are not store employees and work for tips only. They will pack your groceries and take them to your vehicle.

Other examples of services available at the Chièvres compound are: Laundromat/Dry Cleaning, Souvenir Store, Video Rental, Travel Agency, Auto Skills, Car Sales & Rental Office, Barber/Beauty Shop, Food Court Restaurants, Thrift Shop, Bank, Car wash, Library, etc.

NOTE: Payment is expected in US Dollars, not Euros. Canadian credit and debit cards are accepted but not Belgian credit and debit cards.

Garbage Services

Special Garbage Bags Required!

- Purchased at any grocery store including SHAPE.
- request at the cash register
- HYGEA white or beige bags
- A good idea is to buy them in your village that will ensure you that the bags include your area (read the list of villages written on the bag).
- You can purchase them in two different sizes: 60 and 30 liters.

Costs of both garbage bags and recycling bags are reimbursed through Canadian Housing. Original receipts required.

GARBAGE SERVICES AT YOUR HOUSE

Garbage and recyclables are picked up at your curb just like in Canada; however for your garbage and recyclables to be picked up, they need to be placed in the appropriate standardized bags. It is important to note that if your garbage men come knocking on your door within a couple of days of the Christmas holiday, they are looking for their holiday tip which is customary in Belgium. Normally a couple of euros does the trick.

GARBAGE FACILITIES

Only certain recyclable materials can be placed at your curb. Also recyclable materials may be picked up on alternating weeks (i.e. your plastics one week, paper the next).

For recycling, you use the blue bags. Again, you can request them at the cash register. You need to separate your recycle items in a specific way:

- Cans/ plastics (with a 1 or 2 on bottom)/ milk cartons (blue bag)
- Glass: clear and coloured glass (into the glass collection containers)
- Paper (in a box, as a bundle or in a paper bag)

If you are ever doubtful of what to do just look at what your neighbours have placed at their curb. To recycle heavier materials or if you need to get rid of grass clippings, leaves and things

of that nature, there are regional recycling facilities where you can drop off waste. These facilities are free and are open Monday – Saturday. Hours vary.

You can use this website to locate different recycling centre: www.hygea.be

Calcium in Belgian Water

Even if harmless to your health, the calcium build-up leaves white residue and certain products can be used to eliminate or prevent it. You should use liquid Calgon in the laundry machine with the European laundry soap. Some have used powder Calgon and soap only to have jammed pipes and a lot of water on their floors! An alcohol based, anti-calcium solution is also available at the Carrefour. This is especially good for the build-up on faucets.

COFFEE MAKER

Use a special product or one cup of vinegar to clean your machine each month. You can use bottle water to prevent calcium residue or build-up.

KETTLES

Calcium deposits in kettles can be dissolved with vinegar. Fill the kettle with vinegar or a powder available at the Carrefour and let it sit overnight and the calcium will dissolve. Rinse before use.

IRON

Only use distilled water found in the hardware store or certain grocery stores (Carrefour on Shape carries it) because the lime deposits will eventually block your iron.

BATHROOM

Regular use of products to eliminate calcium deposits is necessary, as build-up can be very hard to get rid of. Wiping down the shower after each use will help as well as the vinegar added to your water when cleaning. Make sure you check the compatibility of products when using on acrylic surface.

**Odour hints for bathrooms - try VANISH Super Strength Pine Scent. It hangs inside the toilet bowl (Not if you are on a septic tank)

Water Delivery

For those who like bottled water.

A home delivery service of Culligan water jugs for water coolers is possible for all Shape ID holders. You need to contact Felton Sanders at SandersFe@aafes.com for more information. Same cost as going to the PX minus the hassle.

Part Three: Thriving

Now that you are settled into your home, you will likely want to consider exploring this wonderful European location. Lots of opportunity for you to volunteer, travel and mix and mingle with the Shape community and the locals.

This section will explain in further detail what is available to you in the community and surrounding area. It will also highlight some tips and tricks about travel, safety and local laws and regulations.

MFS(E) Services

MFS Europe personnel are non-public funds staff hired by the Directorate of Military Family Services (MFS) in Ottawa and are here because of a CAF or Civilian DND component posted to SHAPE. Like you, we were once newcomers and collectively hold knowledge and information that can support your integration process.

What is Military Family Services?

Military Family Services helps military families manage the stress unique to life in the military by enhancing their overall quality of life by providing services such as:

- Second Language training (must be the host country's language)
- Rosetta Stone Licenses – self learning computer language program
- Visiting the local hospital and emergency
- Lunch and Learn (lunch time learning sessions)
 - Intro to local cleaning products
 - Safe Travel while in Europe.
 - Travel Tips
- Self Help Resource and Reference Materials
- Child & Youth Development opportunities
 - Babysitting course
 - Youth Conference
 - Book Club
- Business Centre –access to; internet, computer and printer for community use.
- Lending library including garden tools, baby equipment, small appliances, movies and games, travel books are just a few examples.
- Reimbursement for Emergency and Respite Child Care support during extended absences, TD, and deployments or other emergencies
- Welcome Baskets

Volunteer and Leadership

The MFS(E) supports volunteer leadership involvement through sound volunteer principles and practices incorporated into its services. When members of a community are actively engaged in

the life of their community, it benefits the community as a whole. Volunteering leads to personal growth and engagement, and to community development, both of which are key MFSE goals.

The SHAPE Canadian community relies very much on our volunteers to help us make our events even better for the community. We are actively seeking volunteers to assist with the events that are held each month for the community. We believe that everyone possesses gifts, talents and knowledge that can be shared with others. Come and show us through the volunteer program.

Here are some areas where you can be involved at the MFSE:

- Newcomers Welcome
- Delivery of Welcome and Farewell baskets (`Coffee Runs`)
- Sugar Bush TGIF
- Activities for Youth and Children
- Help during Halloween and Christmas parties for children
- Write articles for the quarterly MFSE Newsletter
- Community farewell
- Entertainment committee
- Canada Day celebration in July
- Unit fund committee
- Shape Canadian School Parent Council
- Terry Fox run organization and participation
- Moose milk production
- Canadian school Christmas market
- Maldegem Walk
- Army Run

There are also SHAPE events you can volunteer for:

- SHAPE Fest
- Make-A-Wish
- English conversation groups
- SHAPE International Women's Club

Please do not hesitate and contact us at the MFSE to learn about ongoing opportunities.

SHAPE 2 Day

SHAPE 2 Day is an informative website that provides information on community events, services, latest news, and useful information regarding Gate openings and closures.

[SHAPE 2 Day Link](#)

Community Services within the SHAPE 2 Day website:

[Health Care](#)

- SHAPE Healthcare Facility
- Hospitals in Mons

[Facilities Hours of Operation](#)

- Sport and Fitness Centre
- Outdoor Recreation and Rental Centre
- Events Centre
- B3's
- Continental Mess
- Silver Spoon
- Rendez-Vous
- SHAPE Club
- Pizza Bowl
- Alliance Auditorium
- Rationed Items Store
- SHAPE Inn
- Language Centre
- Library
- Performing Arts Centre
- Arts and Crafts
- Trips and Tours

[Education and Youth Programs](#)

SHAPE international School
School Liason Officer
Child and Youth Services
SHAPE Language Centre

[Transportation](#)

- Caravan/Trailer Parking
- Taxies Authorized to Enter SHAPE

[SHAPE Chapel](#)

- Service Schedules
- Reservations
- International Chapel Charity (IC3)

[Shops on Base](#)

- Optical Shop
- Beauty and Barber Shop
- Flower Shop
- Dry Cleaners
- Vintage Closet

- Petrol Station

Located in the Main Building (100)

- Barber shop
- Book Store
- Vacation Travel Info

Catalogue and Online Shopping

Most stores offer online shopping now. Ask your sponsor and other Canadians to share their catalogues and websites. Here are some examples:

www.walmart.ca

www.costco.ca

www.well.ca (Canadian over the counter medications)

www.amazon.ca (or .fr (France), .de (Germany), .co.uk (United Kingdom))

SHAPE Driver's License

A SHAPE driver's license is required for all permanent SHAPE residents (including military personnel). To obtain this license a test must be passed. The test is divided into two parts. One involves sign recognition and the other is scenario analysis. Both tests are administered during a daylong training seminar. The morning consists of lessons about the particulars of Belgian driving and the afternoon is when the two tests are taken. If you happen to fail one of the tests, you only need to re-do the test you failed and not the whole process. A study guide can be picked up when you register for the tests. Dependants that turn 18 while in Belgium and have never been issued a Canadian driver's license prior to posting to SHAPE can obtain a driver's license in Belgium however it is very expensive and complicated. Dependants that already have a permit prior to posting to SHAPE can drive in Belgium upon reaching the age of 18.

Value Added Tax (V.A.T.)

Purchases of goods and services in Belgium are subject to VAT. The amount of the tax depends on the item to be bought or the service rendered. Members of SHAPE pay VAT on the purchase of goods outside of the SHAPE stores.

It is possible to get the VAT reimbursed on certain items. Members may purchase VAT exempt items in Belgium. Ask the Detachment Orderly Room for details on the procedure. This exemption is limited to certain items, for example:

Furniture
 Radios and CD players (even for cars),
 Tablecloths
 Curtains (provided they do not become fixtures)
 Light fittings/Lamps
 Carpets (provided they do not become fixtures)

Personal Computers
 Refrigerator, Stove, dishwasher, washing machine
 Crockery, glassware, cutlery
 Bicycles and motorcycles (< 50 CC)
 Garden furniture
 Televisions, videos, hi-fi systems
 Vehicles

The exemption does not include clothing, telephone, faxes, tools, musical instruments, cameras, and other personal effects (e.g. jewellery). It does not include services either such as car repairs. Members may also buy tax free items from the Carrefour and the Rationed Item Store at SHAPE. Additional information and a thorough list of items that you can buy tax free are available on the link provided.

[V.A.T.](#)

Traveling In Europe

Travel insurance, similar to CAA, is available in Belgium. It is called EuropAssistance and is available at the Fortis Bank or Touring Secours or the Main Gate Insurance Company.

Written notification must be provided to these companies if you decide not to renew them each year, otherwise they will expect you to continue in accordance with Belgian law.

Airlines

NAME	WEB SITE	DESCRIPTION	DEPART FROM	WEBSITE LANGUAGE
Ryanair	www.ryanair.com	Cheap airline	Charleroi Brussels	English French Dutch
Brussels Airlines	www.brusselsairlines.com	More conventional airline (the equivalent of our Air Canada)	Brussels	French English Dutch

Wizzair	www.wizzair.com	Goes mostly to the eastern Europe countries (Prague, Krakow)	Charleroi	French English Dutch
Flybe	www.flybe.com	If you want to go to the UK	Brussels	English French
Turkish Airline	www.turkishairlines.com	Best to go to Turkey	Brussels	Multilingual
Easy Jet	www.easyjet.com	Goes mostly to Italy, France and Switzerland	Brussels	Multilingual
Jetairfly	www.jetairfly.com	Goes almost everywhere in Europe from April to October	Brussels Charleroi	Multilingual

RESERVATION WEB SITES

NAME	DESCRIPTION/ COMMENTS	LANGUAGE WEB
www.toreserve.com	Never had problems using this site. I arrived at the airport and hotel and everything was reserved properly. I recommend it.	English
www.jereserve.com	Never had problems using this site. I arrived at the airport and hotel and everything was reserved properly. I recommend it.	French
www.libertytv.com	Has been used by Canadians and it belongs to a Belgian Flemish company	French English Dutch
www.vacationstogo.com	From the US. Has been used by Canadians with success. Especially good for discounted cruises.	English
www.tripadvisor.ca	Good for hotel reviews and also for reservations of hotels They will direct you to reservation sites like Booking.com or hotel.com that are very useful.	French English
www.expedia.be or www.expedia.ca	I have used them. They are reliable but I find them a bit expensive. I did not have that much success for direct flights.	English French Dutch
www.booking.com	Use it most of the time	French/Eng
www.skyscanner.com	Compares prices of airlines companies	Multilingual
www.hotel.com	Good for hotel reservations.	Multilingual
www.militarycruisedeals.com	Gives you military discounts on cruises.	English

Train Reservations:

WEB SITE	DESTINATIONS AND DESCRIPTION	LANGUAGE
www.b-rail.be	Local and international trains (SNCB) To be used to go everywhere in Belgium and also in conjunction with Thalys and Eurostar...	French and English
www.thalys.com	To go to Paris, Amsterdam and many other destinations. Very good option. 1 ½ hrs to go to Paris. As low as 50 € return when on special sale.	French English
www.eurostar.com	To go to London it is perfect.	English French
www.b-europe.com	To go from one country to an other	French English

You can find great “last minutes” deals at Neckermann (<http://www.neckermann.be>)

Feedback

We trust your time in Belgium will be very eventful and rewarding. Once you are settled, you might be willing to provide us with your move and travel experience. We welcome your expertise and feedback at any time. The more helpful information that is shared within the community the more rewarding and enriching everyone’s experience will be. The positive result is that everyone benefits when our community is thriving.

