



Casteau Handbook

Military Family Services Europe (MFS(E))

cfmws.ca



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This guide is an ongoing work in progress, and we need your help:

- Please let us know of any errors or omissions and we will update them in the next edition.
- If there is a topic you'd like added to the next edition, do not hesitate to let us know.

DISCLAIMER: As rules and regulations frequently change, please ensure you do your own research and consult the resources provided for the most up-to-date information before making any assumptions or relying solely on information provided here. This document is a guide rather than your definitive source for the most up-to-date policies and procedures.

Thank you for your cooperation and attention in this matter.

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Greetings from your MFS Team

The Military Family Services (MFS) Casteau team wishes to congratulate you and your family on your posting to Belgium. Welcome to Casteau/SHAPE! We support the more than 200 CAF members and their dependants posted here.

Our goal is to help you settle and thrive in this new posting, whatever your family composition might be. MFS(E) programs differ from those of MFRCs in Canada. Our clients are everyone from single members to empty nesters, and we adapt our programming accordingly.

This "Casteau Handbook" is a living and dynamic document. We welcome your input to keep it relevant and current. We would like to extend our sincerest THANK YOU to families for sharing their experiences and suggestions on how to make the guide as complete as possible.

Our website (<https://cfmws.ca/europe/locations>) can be a helpful resource for your transition overseas, as it provides location and country-specific information and provides links to current MFS(E) newsletters, programming, and even overseas job postings for spouses.

Once you have arrived and settled at your new location, we will provide a welcome package containing location-specific information. You can pick it up at our local centre. Also, please keep your contact information updated. A valid telephone number and e-mail address ensure you have the information you need for your OUTCAN posting.

If you have any questions about living in Belgium or wish to know what we can do to help you and your family, connect with us.

We look forward to hearing about your adventures and new experiences soon. Let us serve you better, don't be a stranger!

Best Regards,

- Your MFS Casteau Team

Local MFS Services

MFS Casteau supports your transition from one community to another. Some of our programs and services include, but are not limited to:

- Welcome briefs
- Community Coffee mornings
- Coffee basket delivery (upon request, for move-in and move-out)
- Youth Employment Preparation (YEP) Program
- Family Separation & Reunion Support
- Emergency and Respite Child Care support and reimbursement
- Getting Settled Series for members and/dependants: Hospital Tour, Cleaning Supplies, Let's Take the Train, Travel Safety, Culture Shock
- A variety of workshops based on community interests and needs such as: Paint Night, Embroidery, Wellness Journals, Walk and Talks, Chocolate-making Workshop, etc.
- Referrals to other MFS(E) or local resources

Child and Youth Programs

This programming evolves and changes depending on community demographics. Currently we offer:

- Busy Beavers (ages 0-5, monthly)
- Maple Squad (grades 1-4; monthly)
- Tweens and Teens (grades 5-8, quarterly)
- Teen Hangout (grades 9 and up, quarterly)
- Friends on a Journey (ongoing)
- PD Day and Early Dismissal Day Activities (as needed)
- Youth Employment Preparation Program (Fall intake; our centre employs some of the students during summer work term)
- Home Alone Program (10+; yearly)
- Babysitting Course (at least 12+ by the end of the calendar year; yearly)
- Birthday cards
- Halloween Parade (yearly; in collaboration with the Canadian School)

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OVERVIEW OF BELGIUM

SHAPE is located in Casteau, a commune within the City of Mons



Fast Facts

Government style: Constitutional Monarchy

Head of State: King Philippe the 7th

Regions: Wallonia (French and German), Flanders (Dutch) and Brussels Capital Region (Bilingual)

Official languages: French, Dutch and German

Date of Independence: October 4, 1830

Population (2023): 11.7 million

Religions: Christianity (majority Catholic) 49%, Atheism or Agnosticism 41%, Islam 2% (Wikipedia, 2024)

Climate: Maritime temperate

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Cultural Nuances, Etiquette and Traditions

Family plays a central role in most Belgians' lives. The obligation to the family is a person's priority. Many people remain in the town in which they were raised, which creates close extended families.

Greetings in Belgium can be quite formal. A handshake is the common greeting among people who do not know each other. Once a relationship is developed, Belgians often greet one another with one kiss on the left side, regardless of gender or age. The 'kiss' is more a kissing of the air near the person's cheek.

When you enter and exit a business, it is customary to say 'bonjour' and 'au revoir' to the employees.

More on language

While the official language of SHAPE is English, in Wallonia, the region where the base is located, the main language spoken is French. Younger people are more likely to speak some English, but you will likely have difficulty finding someone who speaks English when out in the community. A note for Canadian francophones: as Belgians are sometimes unfamiliar with franco-Canadian accents and expressions, they may not understand you and switch to English when you are trying to have a conversation with them. Try not to be too frustrated and be persistent in trying to communicate in French.

In Flanders, while the official language is Dutch, most Belgians in this area can speak English (usually quite well!). In fact, Belgians in the Flanders region typically prefer to speak English rather than French to non-Dutch speakers. In Brussels, the bilingual capital region, people are likely to be multi-lingual!

Public Holidays

For a list of Belgian public and school holidays, visit: <https://publicholidays.be/>. Note, Canadian school vacation and statutory holidays are often different than those of Belgium.

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Before You Arrive/Upon Arrival

USEFUL FACEBOOK GROUPS

- Canadian Families at SHAPE (CFAS)- ask your sponsor to add you
- SHAPE Families
- SHAPE For Sale
- SHAPE Motors
- Chievres FMWR
- Benelux Children Youth Services (CYS) -for those with children
- OUTCAN Spouses of Canadian Military Europe
- SHAPE Base Support Group
- SHAPE Travel Group
- SHAPE Trips and Tours 2.0
- Expats in Mons

****Multi-Factor Authentication/MFA****

Many different types of accounts (email, insurance, banking, etc.) now require multi-factor authentication to access. In recent times, families have run into difficulties accessing their accounts once coming OUTCAN, as they switch over to a European phone number or even change devices, and forget to change log-in settings.

Before you leave Canada or switch over your phone number, remember to modify the the settings on your accounts. Alternatively, you can download a VoIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) app, such as Fongo, that allows you to keep your Canadian phone number for calling (free) and texting (paid). It can even allow you to port over your original phone number as long as you don't have a government-rate phone account. The number port must be completed before you leave the country.

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Administration

European Bank Accounts

Bank accounts in Europe have an "IBAN" (International Bank Account Number) and a "BIC" (Bank Identifier Code). You will use these for making payments and receiving money. If you are paying a bill, you will typically find their IBAN on the bill and you can use that in your online banking to make the payment. You will also provide your IBAN to companies to pay your bills (insurance, gym payments, cell phone, etc). The orderly room and claims section at CFSU(E) will use your IBAN to deposit pay and claims into your bank account.

International Money Transfers

You will likely need to move money between Canadian and European accounts at some point. Popular money transfer services include www.wise.com and www.XE.com.

SHAPE ID

This ID card allows you to enter SHAPE and the Chièvres Air Base. Your sponsor will make an appointment for you to apply for this card as soon as they know your arrival date. It is also required for dependants aged 12 and older.

Protocol ID

The Protocol ID is a card specific to those posted to Belgium. It is a card that proves you have permission to reside in the country, without according you the full rights of citizenship. **Each person accompanying the member on their posting must also have one.** You may be asked for it at customs or if you are stopped by the police. Your sponsor will assist you in making an appointment to apply for this card. The Protocol ID can take up to three months to be generated, but in the interim, you may ask for a letter proving that you have applied for it. It can be used to go through the EU passport line at the airport, combined with your Canadian passport.

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PETS

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.

Guidelines for exporting your pet from Canada:

- <https://inspection.canada.ca/animal-health/terrestrial-animals/exports/pets/eng/1321265624789/1321281361100>

Importing a pet into Belgium:

- <https://www.health.belgium.be/en/animals-and-plants/animals/animal-keeping-and-transporting/travelling-pets#Travelling%20from%20third%20countries%20to%20Belgium>
<https://www.pettravel.com/immigration/Belgium.cfm>

Air Canada Travelling with Your Pet:

- <https://www.aircanada.com/ca/en/aco/home/plan/special-assistance/pets.html#/>

Tips for traveling with pets:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACHcgDbQWvI>

Tips from previous years

- Book pets on same flights as you and keep your boarding passes
- If pets must fly cargo, they can still be on same flight (e.g. Air Canada direct flight from Montreal to Brussels)
- 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.
- Book flights so you arrive during normal working hours (Monday to Friday)
- Bring tools to take the kennel apart in your luggage; they might be needed to get kennels in rental vehicles or in hotel room

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ON THE ROAD

You must be 18 or over to drive a private motor vehicle in Belgium. It is essential that you sufficiently familiarize yourself with Belgian and EU regulations (including the standard traffic control signs) before you drive. You are subject to Belgian law for traffic violations and in the case of accidents.

Dependants who turn 18 while in Belgium and have never been issued a Canadian driver's license prior to posting to SHAPE can acquire a driver's license in Belgium, however, it is expensive and complicated. Dependants who already have a permit prior to posting to SHAPE can drive in Belgium upon reaching the age of 18.

Driver's Licenses

Ensure that you have a valid Canadian driver's license before your departure. More information about renewing your license while OUTCAN can be found in the MFSE Europe-wide guide. Keeping a current driver's license will assist you in acquiring one if you change provinces when you return to Canada, and ensure you have a driving record that Canadian car insurance companies will recognize when determining your years of driving experience.

SHAPE Driver's License

A SHAPE driver's license is required for all long-term SHAPE residents (including military personnel). It is essentially a translation of your provincial driver's license from Canada, and is also needed for the obtention of a Belgian driver's license.

To obtain the SHAPE driver's 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 3-hour training seminar on SHAPE. The first part consists of lessons about the particulars of Belgian driving and the second part 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.

This license is valid in Belgium only.

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Belgian Driver's License

To obtain a Belgian driver's license you must first be in possession of a Belgian Protocol ID card in addition to a valid Canadian driver's license and a SHAPE driver's license. There is no examination process required to obtain this card. There is a small registration fee associated with it and the exact amount depends on the commune in which you live. The permit is valid for 10 years. First you must go to the SHAPE transport office for help with the paperwork, then get ID pictures taken, and finally go to your commune with the pictures and documents to apply for it. It usually does not take long for your commune to print one out.

This driver's license is beneficial as it is valid in all EU countries. In some of these countries, such as Spain, you are required to have either an EU license or an International driver's license in order to legally drive on the roads. Some people have had issues renting a vehicle without an EU or international driver's license.

Car Insurance

Insurance is compulsory for all vehicles. The minimum level of coverage required is third party, but comprehensive coverage is common. The car, and not the driver, is insured, so many people have additional insurance for themselves in the event of personal injury.

Vehicle Registration, Buying/Selling and other facts

- <https://www.shape2day.com/arrivingleaving/vehicles>

In order for a North-American spec vehicle to pass the inspection required to register your vehicle, you will likely need to install a rear fog light and have your headlights adjusted. This is a reimbursable expense and can be done at a local garage. Families with a second vehicle will have to pay road tax on this vehicle if the spouse does not work full-time on SHAPE. Winter tires are not mandatory in Belgium, but are in some other countries such as Germany. Unmarried couples need to complete a form to permit the spouse to drive the sponsor/member's vehicle. Ask Det Casteau Transport for this form.

Contact +DetCasteauTransport@forces.gc.ca for additional information.

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Green Zones

Refer to this website for information about Green Zones throughout Europe and how to purchase their corresponding stickers if you are planning on driving in these zones with your personal vehicle.

- <https://www.green-zones.eu/en.html>

Fuel Card

SHAPE members are eligible for a tax-free fuel allowance that is provided in the form of a pre-paid fuel card that is only valid at TOTAL gas stations within Belgium. It can be purchased at the Rationed Items Store (RIS) on SHAPE. Your vehicle must be registered on SHAPE for you to be eligible for this ration.

Items in your vehicle

In addition to the documents that are mandatory to have in your car in Canada, these are also required:

- Protocol ID/proof of identity
- Proof of payment of road tax (if applicable)
- Accident form
- Valid CT (contrôle technique) form

All vehicles must also carry:

- A warning triangle; in the event of an accident or breakdown the triangle must be placed 30 metres behind the vehicle on ordinary roads and 100 metres on motorways to warn following traffic. It must be visible from 50 metres away
- A first aid kit
- A fire extinguisher, which must be accessible from the driver's seat
- A reflective vest (one for each passenger of the vehicle). The vest must be put on before getting out of the car in the event of an accident.

Unspoken Rules of the Road

As roads are busy and narrow, Belgians have a few things that they do to be courteous to other drivers. Local residents may flash their lights at other drivers in certain situations, such as when they are allowing you to either turn left in front of them (even when they have right-of-way) or to pass an obstacle narrowing the road (e.g., parked cars; traffic calming obstacles). A flash of lights can also be done as a thank you to other drivers. Use your best judgement in these situations, this advice is only meant to help you understand why someone might be flashing their headlights at you!



Travel and Transportation

Transportation in Mons can be challenging for members and their family. The local public transportation network in Mons is not as comprehensive and reliable as other areas of Europe or Canada. Cycling can be challenging due to a lack of infrastructure; taxis tend to be unreliable; and there is no ride-share service (e.g., Uber). It is a very car-based transportation system.

LOCAL TRANSPORT OPTIONS

Buses

Depending on where you live, bus services may be infrequent or absent. Areas closer to SHAPE are more likely to have a viable bus route to SHAPE. There is a bus stop right outside of the main gate of the base that is a 10-15 minute walk from the 100 Building, or a 20-minute walk from the base shopping centre.

- <https://www.letec.be/> - Local public transit network

Taxis

While many cities in Europe are served by ride-sharing apps (e.g., Uber) , this service is currently unavailable in Mons (as of Spring 2024). Be aware that local taxi companies may charge you for the distance/time they travelled to come and pick you up in addition to the fare for taking you to your destination. It is best to book in advance and request a price estimate when possible. These are the companies authorized to access SHAPE:

- Taxis Willy: 0497.49.6000 (English speaking dispatcher) or 065.31.9808 (French speaking dispatcher)
- Taxi Top: 065.84.2406 (English or French speaking dispatchers)
- Taxi Philippe: 0473/79.89.23 (St-Ghislain) or 0474/69.22.72 (Mons)

Trains

The train is a reliable and convenient option for regional travel in Belgium. Most trains do not have reserved seats. Use this website to book tickets ahead or to check out train schedules. The SNCB app is also very useful.

- <https://www.belgiantrain.be/en>



LOCAL TRAVEL OPTIONS

The closest airports are:

Brussels Zaventem (BRU)

Easily accessible by train (there is a train station on the lowest floor!), this airport has a variety of low- and mid-cost flights. Many people park for free at a local Jurbise train station and take the train to the airport for their flight. It is possible to park at the airport, however the costs can be high and reservations are typically required.

Brussels Charleroi (CRL)

This low-cost airport is located north of the city of Charleroi. It is possible to drive and park at the airport for a fee or take the Flibco shuttle bus from near the Grands Près Mall in downtown Mons.

- <https://www.flibco.com/en> - Shuttle bus

International Trains

Eurostar

This train company has routes from Brussels Midi Station to London or Paris.

SNCB International

This is a website that you can use to book international train trips.

Travel Websites/Resources

TUI - Vacation package website

American Forces Vacation Club - CAF members can use this to book discounted resort stays across Europe.

Union Jack Club - CAF members and veterans can become members of this London-based social club and hotel. NCMs welcome.

Victory Services Club - CAF members and veterans can become members of this London-based social club and hotel. All ranks welcome.

Cercle national des armées - Currently serving CAF officers can have access to accommodations at 3 different hotels in the Paris area.

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Health Services

Military members and their family have access to both on- and off-base medical and dental services. Non-military members (e.g., teachers and their family) have access to dental services on- and off-base, and can access medical services on the economy (see below).

SHAPE Healthcare Facility (SHF)

The SHAPE Healthcare Facility on base provides medical and dental services to SHAPIans and their families (entitlement-dependent). There is a medical laboratory that performs routine testing, as well as an X-Ray machine. Importantly, there is also a pharmacy. The facility also offers pediatric and physiotherapy services. Routine immunizations, such as influenza and COVID-19, are offered periodically throughout the year.

****Medical or dental services provided at SHF are direct-billed to the member's insurance.****

Making an appointment (SHF)

- Main appointment line: 065-44-5886
- Canadian Clinic appointment line: 065-44-5959

You can call the main line at 8am to try to request a same-day appointment. Canadians are not restricted to seeing the Canadian medical staff.

SHAPE Pharmacy

<https://mhs-europe.tricare.mil/Clinics/SHAPE-Healthcare-Facility/Pharmacy>

Phone Number: 065-32-5240 - Select the option to speak to the pharmacist

****Prescriptions given by a doctor on SHAPE must be filled at the pharmacy at the SHAPE Healthcare Facility unless otherwise instructed.****

Canadian Dental Clinic

There are a Canadian dentist and dental assistant at SHAPE who provide regular check-ups and dental treatments to Canadian members well as their dependants.

- Phone: 065.44.5885

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HEALTHCARE ON THE ECONOMY

Local (i.e. off-base) healthcare services in Belgium are accessible to Canadians with a Protocol ID, including family medicine and specialists. Like Canada, a referral from a family doctor is required to access specialized medical services. Appointments can be made directly with a service provider, or through online tools such as:

- [DoctorAnytime](#)
- [Doctena](#)

Some Belgian doctors and support staff in the Mons area have the ability to communicate in English, however it should not be assumed. SHAPE does provide medical translation services if required.

Local Hospitals with Emergency Departments

- Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Ambroise Paré - CHU Helora Site Kennedy
 - Boulevard John Fitzgerald Kennedy 2, 7000 Mons
- Centre Hospitalier Régional de la Haute Senne- Saint-Vincent
 - Boulevard Roosevelt 17, 7060 Soignies
- Centre Hospitalier Régional de la Haute Senne- Le Tilleriau
 - Chaussée de Braine 49, 7060 Soignies
- Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Le Tivoli
 - Avenue Max Buset 34, 7100 La Louvière

Pharmacies

Pharmacies can typically found throughout the region. For services after hours or on a Sunday or stat holiday, find a duty pharmacist (pharmacie de garde) by selecting the “de garde” option when searching on the following website.

- <https://www.pharmacie.be/PharmacySearch>

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MEDICATION AND PAYMENT

Medication

In Belgium, some medications that you can find on the shelf in Canada are sold over-the-counter or require a prescription. Conversely, some medicines that require a prescription in Canada can be bought over the counter. It is possible to purchase certain medications online and have them shipped, or to buy them from the Commissary or PX at Chièvres. The SHF Pharmacy also has a selection of over-the-counter medications.

Payment and Reimbursement

Hospital and clinics use a variety of different methods to collect payment for their services. Family doctors typically require full payment at time of service, often in cash (around 30 euros). Other specialized medical service providers (e.g., allergist, ear/nose/throat doctor, etc.) typically require partial payment at the time of service, payable by cash, credit card or Bancontact. A separate bill for the residual amount is sent through Belgian Post to your home address, anywhere from 1 to 6 months after the service.

For larger medical interventions (e.g., day procedures, x-rays, etc.), the service provider will send the bill for the full amount through the Belgian Post to your home address, anywhere from 1 to 6 months after the service. The bill can be paid online (via Bancontact) or in-person at the service provider by cash, credit card, or Bancontact.

Request and keep all receipts for medical services and prescription drugs. All medical receipts should include information on the type of services provided, name of service provider, date of service and location. If you do not receive a receipt, be sure to ask for one. Local pharmacies often retain the original prescription when they fill the order; make sure to request the original copy back when picking up your prescription.



Around the House

WATER QUALITY

Calcium in Belgian Water

Even if harmless to your health, calcium build-up can leave an unsightly white residue on your dishes, appliances, and clothing. Certain products can be used to eliminate or prevent calcium build-up, such as liquid Calgon. It is recommended that new members attend the MFS's cleaning products briefing in the fall to learn more about how to manage calcium and other essential products for a European house.

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. Contact Felton Sanders at SandersFe@aafes.com for more information. You can also buy these water jugs at the PX or Commissary.

GARBAGE AND RECYCLING

Curbside Pickup

Garbage and recyclables are picked up at your curb just like in Canada, however you must use specially designated bags. Depending on your commune, these bags can be purchased at the Carrefour on SHAPE, at local grocery stores, or at the Parc à Conteneurs in your village. Incurred expenses for these specially-designated bags can be reimbursed to members by the Housing Office. Be sure to keep all receipts and contact Housing for information about the reimbursement process. To know which day your garbage/ recycling is being picked up, type your address into the searchbar:

<https://www.hygea.be/collectes/collectes-en-porte-porte/calendrier>

- During Christmas holiday, it is possible for waste collectors to seek a holiday tip.



Garbage and Recycling Facilities

In order to dispose of specialized recycling (glass, batteries, hazardous waste) or bulky items, you may need to research where to go. Depending on your commune, you may have access to dumpsters for household garbage, glass recycling, and Récyparcs. You can look this up here: <https://www.hygea.be/collectes/points-d-apport-volontaire>

There is also a recycling centre on the base which does not accept normal household garbage, but can accommodate many other items such as cooking oil, appliances, textiles, bulky household items, and much more. <https://www.shape2day.com/community/recycling-centre/recycling-center>

HOUSE CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE

Titres-services (House Cleaning Service)

Titres-services is a regulated system that allows you to pay for certain services, such as house-cleaning, at a Belgian government-subsidized price (11 euro per hour in 2024). You can register for this program once you have received your Protocol ID, typically 2-3 months after arrival. The MFS will provide more information on this program at the cleaning products briefing in the fall.

House Maintenance

Depending on your lease, you may be responsible for maintaining or repairing certain things in your home. These responsibilities will likely differ from those you may have had as a tenant in Canada. The Canadian housing office will explain responsibilities and modalities of reimbursement to you and provide you with a list of local service providers that Canadians have used in the past.



Education

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

We strongly encourage you to do your own research regarding educational institutions for your children, based on their abilities and needs. The following is a list of options on base and on the economy. If you have questions regarding the curriculum, entitlements or other important questions, please contact the school directly or contact Children's Education Management (CEM) Europe: CEMGEE@forces.gc.ca

SHAPE International School

The SHAPE International School provides for approximately 2600 pupils from various NATO countries represented at SHAPE. School facilities include a cafeteria, infirmary, gymnasium, SHAPE sports field and swimming pool. The SHAPE School system is divided into several sections by nationality, including:

- Canadian (elementary - Grades 1 to 8) EN/FR
- Belgian (elementary and secondary) FR
- American (elementary, middle school and high school) EN
- British (elementary) EN

Local Belgian schools

Children may attend Belgian schools (École communale) beginning at 2.5 years of age. All classroom instruction is in French. To register, visit your local school or contact them online. You may have few options for local schools, depending where you live. Some have waiting lists, so it is advised to have a plan B. Depending on enrollment, schools do accept children part-way through the school year. They often provide before/after school care as well as hot lunch for very reasonable fees. They may even offer activities during early dismissal (noon) on Wednesdays and camps during school holidays.



International Kindergarten

Canadian children may attend the International Kindergarten on SHAPE. Those under 5 years may attend mornings only, but all-day attendance becomes mandatory at 5 years of age. All teaching is in French. There is bussing available for those 5 years and older except Wednesday at noon (Belgian school) when a caregiver must pick up the child when school finishes. If children are 5 years of age by October, they may also attend the American kindergarten, which provides instruction in English and follows the American school calendar.

Websites

SHAPE American Schools:

- <https://www.shape2day.com/community/education/shape-intl-school/enrollment-/united-states-section>

SHAPE Belgian Section:

- <https://www.shape2day.com/community/education/shape-intl-school/enrollment-/belgian-section>

SHAPE Canadian Section:

- <https://www.shape-is.com/>

SHAPE International Kindergarten:

- <https://www.shape2day.com/community/education/shape-intl-school/enrollment-/kindergarten>

School Bus

Canadian students attending a SHAPE school are eligible to use the SHAPE-provided school buses, often including children who live far from the base. The caregivers of children requiring school bus transport must register in-person at the International School Bus office. The minimum age for children to travel on SHAPE school buses is 5 years or turning 5 years old the following month.

- <https://www.shape2day.com/community/education/shape-intl-school/school-bus>

***The Belgian, Canadian and American schools all have different calendars & holidays



LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Online Learning: Rosetta Stone software codes available from MFSE (email MFSE.EmploymentEducationTraining@cfmws.com for more details).

In-person: Language centres can be found throughout the region. The following are the most commonly accessed by Canadian members:

1 - SHAPE Language Centre

The SHAPE Language Centre offers a variety of language classes to SHAPIans, including French, English and Spanish. These classes are available during the work day only:

<https://www.shape2day.com/community/education/language-centre>

2 - EAFC Colfontaine- Jurbise

This school is located in the commune of Jurbise. French classes are offered for a variety of levels and at various times of the week, including evenings. They are used to SHAPIans and have a straightforward application process which includes a pre-assessment in order to place you in the correct course. You must register in-person: <https://www.iepscol.be/>

3 - Informal Discussion Groups

If you keep an eye out on the SHAPE Families Facebook group or check in with the SHAPE International Library, you may also come across an assortment of informal discussion groups in a variety of languages. This can be a great way to get out of the house, meet people and make friends, all while practicing the language of your choice.

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Employment

Spousal employment opportunities

While posted at SHAPE, the employment opportunities for spouses can be limited. Due to the SOFA agreement that Canada holds with Belgium it does not allow for spouses/dependants to work on the economy (i.e. off the base).

That said, there are some employment opportunities. Examples include working at the Canadian School, Military Family Services (MFS), Personnel Support Programs (PSP), the Detachment Office, the Post Office, the comptroller's office, the NMR's office and the Health Clinic. Jobs in these different sectors have differing hours and pay scales. Note, you have to receive your posting message before you can start applying for jobs.

Active job postings can be found here: <https://cfmws.ca/europe/civilian-employment-in-europe> (under Belgium, SHAPE, Casteau).

More information about employment and the application process can be found here: <https://cfmws.ca/europe/employment-opportunities-in-europe>

Youth Employment Preparation Program

The Youth Employment Preparation (YEP) Program provides real-life workplace training and employment opportunities to the youth of the CAF members and Canadian Forces support personnel posted in Europe. YEP aims to assist youth - between the age of 16 and 18 who are pursuing full-time studies – gain the knowledge, skills and experience to make a successful transition into the labour market. For more information on this program, see:

<https://cfmws.ca/europe/youth-employment-preparation-program>

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Shopping and Local Services

While we will provide you with a more complete list of recommendations when you arrive, here is some information about local shopping and services.

GENERAL SHOPPING TIPS

- 'On the economy' is a term used for shopping outside of SHAPE & Chièvres Air Base.
- Shopping malls, pharmacies and most stores are closed on Sundays.
- Very few 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 (usually in August).
- Many small shops close over the lunch hour and for the month of August, but that, too, is variable.
- You will often have to pay to use public washrooms, usually around €0.80-1.00. Most locations allow you to use your bank card to pay, but we recommend that you still have change on hand.
- It is recommended to always have reusable bags with you when shopping, or you may have to buy a reusable or paper bag.

Groceries

On SHAPE, there is a tax-free grocery store that is a member of the Carrefour chain. Other grocery store chains in this area are Delhaize, Intermarché, Spar, Lidl, Colruyt, and Cora. The closest stores to a Walmart is Cora or Carrefour Hypermarché, which offer groceries and an assortment of household items and clothes.

Some options for organic or bulk shopping:

- Bio-Planet <https://www.bioplanet.be/fr/magasins/bioplanet-mons>
- Eki-vrac <https://www.ekivrac.com/>
- Colruyt

One of the best places to buy fresh and local produce is at your local Market. Click [here](#) to see the different markets around Mons. Items bought at the market are usually cheaper than the same item would be in the grocery store. Payments are usually made in cash.

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GENERAL SHOPPING

Some popular local stores:

- Books: Club, Belgique Loisirs
- Clothing: JBC, H&M, Zara, Esprit, Vero Moda
- Craft Supplies: Ava, Arpaca
- Department Stores: Carrefour Hypermarché (like Superstore), Cora
- Pet Supplies: Tom&Co, Jardiland (also a gardening Centre)
- Hardware: Brico, Hubo, Brico Plan-it

“Brocantes” / Second-Hand Sales

If you are a bargain or antique-hunter, there is a type of market called a “brocante”, which would be called an antique, second-hand or rummage sale in English. These are held all the time in the area, whether on a small or large scale. In Belgium, this term seems to designate everything from professional sellers to people selling items in front of their house.

VAT-Free Shopping

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. Additional information and a list of items that you can buy tax free are available here : <https://www.shape2day.com/arrivingleaving/vat-in-belgium>

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LOCAL SERVICES

Refer to these websites for a complete list of services available on SHAPE and Chièvres:

<https://www.shape2day.com/community/commercial-activities/shops-on-base>

<https://www.shopmyexchange.com/exchange-stores/Belgium/BEL/Chievres/Chièvres-1366125>

Barber and Beauty

- Barber Shop Bldg. 102 (SHAPE Headquarters), Room 201, tel 065.44.5498
- Ladies & Barber Shop (SHAPE), Bldg. 504 tel 065.44.2614
- Beauty Shop (SHAPE), Bldg 504 tel 065.44.5983
- Stylique Salon (Chièvres) Bldg. 4, tel 068.25.6327
- Barber Shop (Chièvres), Bldg 4 tel 068.25.6330

Many options are available on the economy as well, but they will likely be only in French. Be prepared to pay more than what you are used to for the same service in Canada.

Dry-cleaning and Laundromats

- Dry Cleaning Shop and Laundromat (SHAPE), Bldg 505 tel 065.44.7058
- Cleaner with Alterations (Chièvres), Bldg 20005 tel 068.25.6321

Washers and dryers can sometimes be found outdoors at grocery stores to allow people to wash large, bulky items.

Pet Care

- Chièvres Air Base Kennel tel. 068.25.5242

This facility for boarding dogs and cats is located in the building close to the PX (Chièvres US air base). Appointments are on a first-come, first-served basis. Strongly recommended to book early for summer and school vacations: <https://chievres.armymwr.com/programs/kennel>

Veterinary care is widely available in this area. Vet offices can be identified by a lit blue cross located in front of the building. We can provide more detailed recommendations when you arrive.

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LOCAL SERVICES

Postal Services

Canadians posted to SHAPE are entitled to CAF postal services, which means that you pay the price of shipping within Canada to have items shipped here to Belgium through a special PO Box in Belleville, or to send items from here to Canada. Shipments are duty-free. It can take from 1-4 weeks to receive letters and packages from Canada, depending on when they are received at the final postal facility that ships the items to Europe. *****You must clear in with the Canadian Post Office here before you are able to receive mail through the CAF postal system.*****

The Canadian Post Office (CFPO 5048) is located in the 100 building on SHAPE. This is where you will be able to pick up the mail and packages sent to your PO Box. The Postal Sgt is also the medals, clothing and Supply rep for Casteau. There are a few different procedures and rules you need to know about mail services here, so please contact +P-SHP.76ECFPO5048@forces.gc.ca for additional information.

Hours of Operation:

- Monday-Thursday: 10 a.m. - 1 p.m, 1:30 p.m - 4 p.m.
- Friday: 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., 1:30 p.m. - 3 p.m.

Religious services

SHAPE International Chapel services and weekly schedule:
<https://www.shape2day.com/community/shape-chapel>

Other Local English-language religious services

International Bible Church - Jurbise
<http://www.ibr-jurbise.org/>

Calvary Baptist Church - Jurbise
<http://calvarybaptistbelgium.weebly.com/>

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CHILDCARE

On-base Childcare

Open to all SHAPIANS with MWR entitlements. Registration is through Parent Central Services of Children and Youth Services (CYS), +32 65 75 79 93, *Appointment only* <https://chievres.armymwr.com/programs/cysreg>

- Priority 1: dual-service families and/or single working parents
- Priority 2: families with one parent working full-time and one part-time (or enrolled full-time at a post-secondary institution)
- Priority 3: everyone else, including families with one parent looking for work

Child Development Centre (CDC)- Ages 0-5

- Hourly and full-time care spots available. There may be a waitlist for full-time care and priority is given to Priority 1 families.
- For hourly care a parent must call in advance, entitled to fourteen hours a week, limited spots available

School-Age Centre (SAC) - Grades 1-6

- Dependent on spots available, a variety of plans can be put in place (certain days of the week, occasional use, etc.)
- Families can access a maximum of five hours of hourly care per week
- Summer camps/holiday weeks also available

Teen Centre/Youth Services - Ages 11-18

- Registered teens may sign themselves in and out
- Drop-in centre, not structured care
- During the Summer and other school holidays, supervised structured programs for youth run from 7:00 - 13:00. These cost a nominal fee and must be booked by the previous Monday. The drop-in centre is then available from 13:00-18:00.

Outside the base

- Ages 0-2.5 may be enrolled in daycare services through their commune. These are called a "crèche". Spaces are on a first come, first served basis. You may have to go outside of your commune to find a crèche with available space.
- Easy access to a variety of local summer and holiday week camps (called stages); most are entirely French speaking. *Ask us for a list!*

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Entertainment and Leisure

How to Know What's On

To know what is going on in the local community, keep your ear to the ground....or your eyes on social media! Lots of events get posted to Facebook on groups such as CFAS and SHAPE Families. Here is an assortment of websites and apps that can help to keep you in the loop:

<https://www.mons.be/>

<https://feverup.com/en>

Local Attractions

- Pairi Daiza - An internationally-recognized zoo just north of Mons
<https://www.pairidaiza.eu/en>
- SPARKOH - A science centre for kids of all ages <https://sparkoh.be/>

To find out about these and other local attractions, please visit:

<https://www.365.be/en/>

Recreation Centres, Parks and Pools

- ImagiPark -Mons: <https://www.imagipark.be/>
- Goolfy Mons : <https://www.goolfymons.be/>
- New Jump - Mons: <https://www.newjumpmons.be/>
- Lago Piscine du Grand Large - Mons : <https://www.lago.be/mons>
- Piscine communale - Soignies:
<https://www.soignies.be/fr/loisirs/sports/piscine-communale.html>
- Le Point d'eau - La Louvière: <https://www.pointdeau.be/>
- Le Belvédère - Dour: <https://www.belvederedour.be/>
- Dock 79 - Saint Ghislain: <https://dock79.be/>

Hobbies and Clubs

Refer to this site for information about clubs for children and adults active on SHAPE: <https://www.shape2day.com/community/leisure/group-ii-activities>

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Cinemas

SHAPE ALLIANCE AUDITORIUM (movies in EN)

Bldg 501, Telephone 065.44.5696

Recent American films are shown. Films start promptly as scheduled. The cinema schedule can be found here:

<https://www.shape2day.com/community/leisure/cinema>

IMAGIX MONS (movies in FR, some in original language with FR subtitles (Look for the VOSTFR designation on movies that you know are EN))

Boulevard André Delvaux 1, 7000 Mons 065.35.7373

<https://tickets.imagix.be/>

Playgrounds

- Waux Hall - Mons
- Chièvres Air Base (next to the gym and library) - Brugelette
- Château des ducs de Havré - Havré
- Maison Communale - Jurbise
- Parc de Jemappes - Ghlin

Local Sports Teams

Basketball

Belfius Mons-Hainaut <https://monshainaut.be/>

Spirou Basket Charleroi <https://www.spiroubasket.be/>

Soccer/Football

Renaissance Mons 44 <https://www.raecmons44.be/>

RSC Anderlecht (Male and Female teams) <https://www.rsca.be/en>

Club Bruges (Male and Female teams) <https://www.clubbrugge.be/en>

Amusement Parks... a little further out

- Walibi Belgium- an hour away <https://www.walibi.be/>
- Plopsaland De Panne- two hours away
<https://www.plopsalanddepanne.be/en>
- Bellewaerde- just over an hour away <https://www.bellewaerde.be/en>

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Sports & Athletics

- SHAPE Sports & Fitness Centre / Fitness Annex Bldg 313 Telephone 065.44.5325

The Sports Office is located in this facility. There are 3 squash and 2 racquetball courts, a 6-lane pool, saunas, and gym facilities for basketball, volleyball, and badminton. There is also a climbing wall. Aerobic classes for all levels by qualified instructors are held upstairs and water aerobics classes are held at the pool. The Fitness Annex is adjacent to the main SHAPE gym and includes additional fitness machines and weights.

Entrance is free to all SHAPE ID holders; some organized activities may require a fee. More info on the Sport & Fitness Centre:

<https://www.shape2day.com/community/sports-fitness/sports-fitness-centre>

- Tennis Courts

There are 8 outdoor courts and two indoor courts located at SHAPE. Reserve by calling the main gym line.

DINING OUT

One of the adjustments Canadians face in moving to Belgium has been the experience of dining at a restaurant. Belgians tend to dine at a more leisurely pace than North Americans. Service is often slow-paced and generally less attentive than what you would experience in Canadian restaurants. Be prepared for your visit to take upwards of 2-3 hours and don't be shy if you need your server's attention. Sometimes you pay your server directly, other times you have to pay at the cashier near the entrance. Tipping is not expected.

Most restaurants do not open for dinner until 6:30-7pm and are often closed Monday and/or Tuesday. Restaurants at the Grand Prés shopping centre and the Grand Place (downtown Mons), as well as a few others, are open throughout the day and evening.