



## TIPS & INFORMATION TO FIND A ROOM IN BRUSSELS

This document will give you some information about what to pay attention to before visiting and signing a contract to rent a room in Brussels.

You'll find here a short description of the different areas where most of our students rent a room, information about rooms: what include the prices, how to find a room (ads, ...) and some tips to pay attention to before signature of the contract.

### **Note to Study Abroad students:**

*If you opt for independent housing, please note that housing cannot easily be arranged before your arrival in Belgium. Therefore, we recommend that you arrive in Brussels at least one week before orientation; the earlier you arrive, the easier it will be to find accommodation. It is recommended that you spend the first week or two in a youth hostel in order to have time to visit various housing options (see [appendix](#) with list).*

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## 1. AREAS

You might want to find a room close to campus. While there're some possibilities to do so, there may not be enough rooms available due to the increasing amount of requests. Also the rent might be more expensive than in other areas.

This section will give you a short description of the different areas in Brussels where you can find a room still not too far away from Campus. Note that some areas might be further than the other in terms of a distance, but it could be a better choice if you have a direct access to Vesalius Campus.

Brussels has 19 districts that are called “communes.” Vesalius College is located in the district called Ixelles, which is at the border of Etterbeek.

### a. The "Youth" Districts

#### **Ixelles (1050) - Saint-Gilles (1060) - Forest (1190)**

The number “one” district to live in is **Ixelles**. It has everything: shopping areas, cultural life, hundreds of restaurants, coffee shops, outdoors areas, University, offices and many very trendy spots....

Some parts of it are “multicultural,” some others are very wealthy (and there's even one of the richest areas of Belgium in its territory called “The Millionnaire's Square”).

It is close to the centre of the city, and it has part of the EU institutions, there is also the ULB, etc. Everyone from all ages, generation and lifestyle find good reasons to want to live in Ixelles.

It almost goes without saying that the housing in this district is more expensive than anywhere else. So finding a room in Ixelles is sometimes difficult.

**Saint-Gilles** tends to be popular too for young urban people, even though it is a little bit further to commute to campus. Students who already know Brussels do love it and recommend this area: it has a very rich and artistic lifestyle, beautiful architecture and is very close to the centre of the city. Saint-Gilles is very similar to Ixelles in many ways. Historically it is known as being the cradle of socialist movements and workers movements in Brussels, so it still has a feel of having intellectuals and political places.

**Forest**, which is next to Saint-Gilles, is getting more popular due to the high rent in Saint-Gilles, and a lot of young people and young couples are moving to this area. Although it takes a little longer time to commute to Vesalius College, it is still popular among the VeCo students because it is the green area, walking distance to Saint-Gilles and it has a direct commute to the centre.

## b. The Family-friendly Districts

### **Etterbeek (1040) - Watermael-Boitsfort (1170) - Auderghem (1160)**

Very popular among the “Euro Bubble” Community, **Etterbeek** is a quiet area at the heart of Europe, having several “EU” venues in the neighbourhood. It's also popular for families. It's a nice area to live in for people who want a balance between quiet and proximity to some of the highlights of the city. Most of the short term housing are expensive and targeted to EU professionals.

**Auderghem** and **Watermael-Boitsfort** are known for being green and quiet. They have an easy commute to the campus which makes them a perfect match for students who want to concentrate on their studies, enjoy outdoors activities and wish to live in a French speaking environment. Watermael-Boitsfort's centre is very charming and still has the look of the village it used to be. Both districts do have direct access to big parks, woods and forest.

## c. The Wealthy Districts

### **Woluwé-Saint-Lambert (1200) - Woluwé-Saint-Pierre (1150) - Uccle (1180)**

The two **Woluwé** are quite popular among comfortable Middle Class. Large buildings (build after the 1950's), large avenues, green areas and very easy to commute to the centre or to the campus by metro or tram. It attracts people willing to live in a modern architecture and quiet environment.

**Uccle** is “The” wealthy district of Brussels. It has the reputation to be less easy to commute to other parts of the city. Whilst this assumption is partially true due to the fact of the resistance to let the metro lines reaching that part of the city (much like Georgetown in DC), it actually depends on the area: some be very easy to reach Vesalius College with a city train, some other have a direct tram to ULB (close to VeCo) and are even at a walking distance of it, some parts are at a reasonable distance of Ixelles, Saint-Gilles or the Centre. Large mansions with big gardens, an old historical centre with few bars and restaurants, it might attract some students who prefer having a more cosy house in a quiet area.

## d. The Multicultural Districts

### **Saint-Josse (1210) - Schaerbeek (1030)**

**Saint-Josse** is known as the smallest district of Brussels, the poorest and the one with the most nationalities (more than hundred).

It is very well situated near the centre of the city with metro and bus for easy commute to nearly any other part of Brussels. It has a lot of different faces: the EU Bubble is also extending to this area, there are five stars hotels but also multicultural streets with colourful shops.

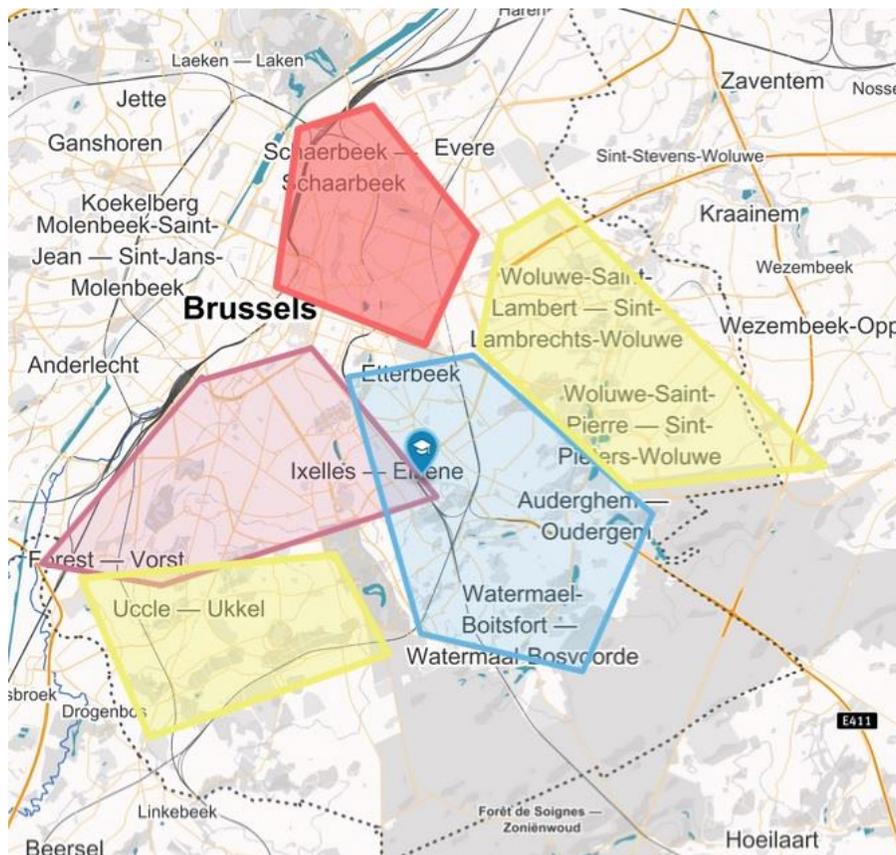
**Schaerbeek** might seem similar to Saint-Josse but it's bigger and was historically the home for numerous wealthy families, so the housing is bigger and takes place in some interesting architectural buildings. It's also now full of students, young families or expats who cannot

afford to live in Ixelles or Saint-Gilles but still want to have the feeling of an urban life with some nice bars, an interesting cultural life - even if it's not as busy as other parts of the city. Both districts didn't have a good reputation in the past in terms of safety, but these two districts have gone through a major social change in the past few years. It still has some areas we would not recommend as there are in many other neighbourhoods in other parts of the city. But the same goes even for Ixelles and some specific streets.

A lot of students dream of living in the centre of Brussels, but most of this area is full of tourists and other visitors and attracts a lot of different people, drunk ones at night and that doesn't make this area the safest and most quiet place to live.

In the area around the Grand Place, there are relatively few housing options as most buildings are shops, restaurants or hotels. Some other areas in downtown Brussels are relatively poor so they don't always have a good reputation in terms of safety and housing conditions. That said, some specific streets are really great with fantastic housing, in a quieter streets. Those options can be explored by someone who has already a good knowledge of the city, to make sure about the specific neighbourhood in question.

The other districts (for instance those to the West of downtown) are not easy to commute to Vesalius College and they do not offer much interesting highlights for our students.



## 2. ROOMS

### a. Budget

The monthly rent for a **furnished room** is around **maximum 450€/500€** depending on the size and level of comfort. It can go up to 700€ (for more luxury options).

Charges, such as phone, utilities, Internet, etc. are not always fully included and may result in additional monthly fees.

#### **Note to Study Abroad students**

*The rental price should include:*

- *rent for a furnished place*
- *services charges (utilities : water, heating system, wifi)*

*Those two conditions are essential if you are a **Study Abroad Student**. It is possible to find ads for cheaper rooms but usually the reasons are that the services charges (utilities) are not include or the room is not fully furnished, or because the contract is for a period of 12 months or longer.*

Contracts for a short-term lease tend to increase the price as the landlord has more to manage in order to avoid vacancy of the housing. If you are based in Brussels for a short amount of time, you might want to explore these options, but for the Study Abroad students, the rooms under the short-term contract are not recommended.

**Criteria** you should pay attention to before renting:

- **Commute:** Acceptable commuting time to campus (direct transport connection, or with maximum one change of lines, or, if possible, even places at walking distance)
- **Furniture:** a bed and bedding, a table to study, a wardrobe or place to store clothing and luggage
- **General state:** rooms in basement are not acceptable, check presence of humidity, state of the windows (double glazing is better), type of heating system (modern?), state and type of floor covering (carpets are not the cleanest), ....
- **Shared spaces:** access to a bathroom, cooking facilities and utensils.  
*Watch out!:* A living room might not be included, nor a washing machine.
- **Utilities:** if included this should be water, heating system, electricity and internet (preferably WIFI), and eventually a cleaning service for the shared spaces.

#### **Price per areas**

Housing close to campus are not easy to find so landlords tend to be less considerate about the general state of the housing set up, knowing that they will easily find tenants that are willing to pay a good price.

For a similar price, rooms that are located in busier and livelier areas are usually smaller than rooms that are located in the surrounding areas.

The market segment of housing at higher rental prices (i.e. above 500€ month) usually are furnished rooms and apartments for young professionals (lobbyists, journalists, interns,

temporary expats, etc.), often from the “Euro Bubble.” Students are usually not very welcome in that type of housing.

## b. Shared Houses

You might find a room in a shared house or an apartment with other tenants in a similar situation. It is also possible that you will be offered a room in the house where the landlord and his/her family lives. There, you might have to share some spaces - sometimes only the entrance but sometimes you may have to share the kitchen and bathroom.

This is very common in Brussels: when a couple has a big house, after their own children left the house, they want to rent the vacant rooms. This type of setting is usually more comfortable than in a shared house.

## c. Ads

### VOCABULARY

Many ads are in French, but this does not mean you cannot find a good apartment.

An online translator can help you be familiar with few key words, such as:

- "chambre" = room
- "à louer" = to rent
- "à sous-louer" = to sublet. It means that you are not renting from the landlord, but from the Tenant, usually because they leave for a short period of time.  
→ See more information about this situation on the Contract section tips.
- "meublé" : furnished
- "charges incluses" : all services charges included

### SOURCES

There're a lot of online resources: from specific websites to Facebook groups or VeCo Boards. There're also rooms available in International students houses.

The complete list with links is to be find in the [Appendix](#).

### 3. CONTRACT

Never pay anything *before* the contract is signed!

#### a. Length of the contract

Make sure that you can rent for the exact period you need the room!

Sometimes it is said that a room is free "as of XX" but doesn't mention the end day.

So make sure you ask the question before you spend time visiting (and even signing). It's possible that the renter has forgotten to put the information or that it's open to discussion or it's for a long term contract (12 months or even 3 years).

Also try to negotiate the dates (see below):

**START DATE:** if you don't rent from the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month, you should pay only for the real period of occupation. The rent for the first month should be calculated accordingly, with the "prorata temporis" formula:

Price of monthly Rent/number of days in the month x number of days of occupation

Note: some landlords may ask you to pay for a full month, starting the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month.

**This is not acceptable!**

**END DATE:** if you have to leave before the end of the month, try to have the date you are leaving on your contract in order to enable you to pay "prorata temporis" for the last month. Yet, it is possible that landlord tells you that the contract goes till the end of the month, but this request might be open to discussion. Remember that a short term rental contract is already more expensive than a long term contract specifically to cover the fact that tenants do not rent for a full month...

#### b. Who are you signing with (Avoid sublease contract)?

It is strongly recommended to sign a contract directly with a landlord.

The contract should contain information about the room you're using and the shared area.

Note that in case of damages in your room, you are personally liable for that. In case of damages in the shared areas, you'll be liable with the other tenants.

Be aware of some situations where you don't meet the landlord but meet someone else when you visit a place. When that happens, you may find yourself in a sublease contract situation.

The idea of being chosen by other flatmates can be appealing as it seems to increase the chances to bond and make friends with the flatmates. However, despite all that, we strongly advise our students to **only sign a contract directly with the landlord. On a sublease contract, we have** notice more issues such as:

- the rent is paid to the main tenant who's collecting the money from everyone but doesn't follow up properly to pay the landlord
- issues in the house are reported to the main tenant who cannot follow up : either by not reporting to the landlord or by not fixing the issues that law require the tenants to do
- tenant subletting without agreement from the landlord

## c. Deposit

Landlords request tenants to pay a deposit.

### 1. Purpose

The aim of this deposit is to cover any damages made by the tenant.

- At the beginning of your stay you'll do - together with landlord (or with an expert paid by the both of you) an **incoming inventory of fixture**.
- At the end of your stay you'll do the **outgoing inventory of fixture**. If there're some damages, part (or all) of the deposit will be used to reimburse the landlord. If there're big damages which cannot be covered by the deposit, you will be request to pay an extra amount of money.

The deposit cannot **cover the payment of the last month's rent!**

### 2. Amount

Landlords usually request **1 month of rent** as a deposit for a short term contract (i.e. up to 6-month rental period) and 2-month for a longer term contract (i.e. up to 12 months).

Apartments for 3 years and longer do have a rule of a 3-month deposit maximum.

### 3. Specific bank account

The deposit **shouldn't be paid to the landlord's bank account!** It is strictly forbidden by the law, in order to protect both parties.

You need to open a specific bank account for the rent deposit. Banks are very familiar with this service: you go to the agency with the money and the information about the landlord. You'll receive a document to be signed by both parties.

The bank account will be open at your name, but in order to receive the money back you will need the landlord signature at the end of your stay.

The aim of this deposit is to ensure that you keep the room (and housing) in a similar state than in the beginning of your stay and if not, that the landlord gets a reimbursement for it.

## APPENDIX

### a. Youth Hostel

Study Abroad students can arrange for temporary housing in advance of arrival with the following hostels:

#### [Auberge des 3 Fontaines](#)

Chaussée de Wavre 2057 - B - 1160 Brussels

Phone: +32-2-672 22 60

Email: [contact@auberge3fontaines.be](mailto:contact@auberge3fontaines.be)

#### [Hôtel de Jeunes \(Sleep Well\)](#)

Rue du Damier 23 - B - 1000 Brussels

Phone: +32-2-218 50 50

Email: [info@sleepwell.be](mailto:info@sleepwell.be)

#### [Auberge de Jeunesse \(Jacques Brel\)](#)

Rue de la Sablonnière 30 - B - 1000 Brussels

Phone: +32-2-218 01 87

Email: [brussels.brel@laj.be](mailto:brussels.brel@laj.be)

Auberge de Jeunesse (Bruegel)

Rue du Saint-Esprit 2 - B - 1000 Brussels

Phone: +32-2-511 04 36

Email: [brussel@vjh.be](mailto:brussel@vjh.be)

More information about youth hostels in Brussels is available at:

- [Les Auberges de Jeunesse](#)
- [Vlaamse Jeugdherbergen](#)

Information on other temporary housing facilities is available at:

- [www.besthotels.com](http://www.besthotels.com)
- [www.bnb-brussels.be](http://www.bnb-brussels.be)
- [www.brussels-hotels.com](http://www.brussels-hotels.com)

### Transfer from Brussels Airport

There're several options for student to transfer from the Brussels airport. They are all explained in the [Brussels Airport dedicated webpage](#) (train, bus, taxi, etc.)

There's also a **car service pick-up option**. You can arrange this in advance by contacting Taxi Bien - Morvan (the provider Vesalius College has used for many years).

Credit card payment is accepted. Cancellations and changes on the arrival time will need to be communicated directly to Morvan if this option is chosen (please note that additional fees may be applied). Students should contact Taxi Bien - Morvan at least 5 days prior to arrival at (note that Vesalius College is not organising any airport pickups and this will be the responsibility of the student).

Taxi Bien - Dispatching De Morvan - Taxi Service

Phone: +32-476-43-20-74

Email: [taxibien@gmail.com](mailto:taxibien@gmail.com)

## b. Rooms and apartments ads

### WEBSITES

You may consult the following websites:

One of the most efficient websites to find a room is [A Partager](#) but it's mostly in French.

You can also check the [Expatriate website](#) but it tends to show more expensive housings as it targets expats.

For typical student housing (rooms or flats in the area of the University), there's [BRIK](#).

Rooms and flats for students or interns in Brussels: [Brussels Destination](#) or [Immoweb](#).

When you arrive in Brussels, you may find off-campus housing by reading the VLAN (weekly newspaper) or on their [website](#).

**Note: Avoid by all means Craig list** as it's not popular at all in Belgium and many adds were scams: asking money to 'secure the availability of the room' before even giving an appointment for a visit!

### VESALIUS BULLETIN BOARDS

You may consult Vesalius College's bulletin boards, which are located at Pleinlaan 5 in the classroom hallway. You can also go on the [Vesalius College Facebook page](#) or on [Vesalius Student Government Facebook page](#) to see if any students are in need of a roommate or are looking to sublet their apartments.

You may also look out for 'orange' signs (kot, chambre, kamer TE HUUR/A LOUER) posted on buildings or houses.

### FACEBOOK GROUPS

There's a lot of online resources, and one of the most popular - because it's free - is groups on Facebook.

To join some of the groups, you'll need to be "accepted" as they are moderated. Those groups have a lot of offers to sublet rooms (if someone leaves on holidays, internships or Erasmus.. ):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/BXL.STUDIOS.A.LOUER/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/195527370457521/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/488313877916127/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/482068671840449/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/624316874256455/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/551842041574913/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/107585562620030/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/LocaBrux/>

Please note that some of those groups will include the same posts. As they are very popular, there're a lot of people in the same situation, so you need to be quick.

## c. Students residences

Please note that they are private providers not linked to Vesalius College. Students wishing to reserve a room should contact the provider directly.

### International Student House

You may also rent a room near campus at the 'Van Orley International Student House', located at Bischoffsheimlaan 38a, 1000 Brussels. Here, students can rent fully-equipped single and double rooms in downtown Brussels. Please refer to their [website](#).

### **U-Residence (Limited Availability)**

This is a brand new facility containing single and double rooms on the VUB campus, across the street from Vesalius: [www.u-residence.be](http://www.u-residence.be).

This residence takes students on a first-come, first-served basis and also offers hotel rooms for very short visits.

### **Jump Away**

Fully-furnished and equipped shared international student flats located near campus: <http://www.jumpaway.eu/> ([derek.ralet@jumpaway.eu](mailto:derek.ralet@jumpaway.eu))