FLAG FACTS

- The National Flag of Belgium was officially adopted on January 23, 1831. The flag was designed to signify Belgium's recognition as an independent nation.

- The tricolor flag consists of three equal vertical bands of black (hoist side), yellow, and red. The vertical design of the flag is taken from the French Tricolor. The black, gold and red colors are symbolic of the country's coat of arms and were taken from the arms of the Duchy of Brabant. The colors are symbolic of the different provinces within Belgium. The red color represents the red lion of Hainaut, Limburg and Luxembourg; the yellow color represents the yellow lion of Brabant, and the black color represents the black lion of Namur and Flanders. The flag has an unusual height: width proportions of 13:15.

- Until the 19th century, the territories of present-day Belgium were controlled by French, Dutch and Spanish and would remain until a series of events which would lead to the creation of the Belgian state.

- The Belgian constitution dictates the colors of the flag to be red, yellow and black, but the current flag doesn't actually follow that pattern: it goes black, yellow and red instead. This layout would mean Belgians have been accidentally turning their flag upside down for over 180 years. Lawmakers firmly decided that for aesthetic and heraldic reasons the black part should sit next to the flagpole. Lawmakers decided against formally amending the Constitution to reflect this change.

- When the Constitution was ratified, article 193 specified that the official colors of Belgium were to be red, yellow, and black. The horizontal and vertical stripes coexisted for some years, until eventually the vertical stripes prevailed. Legend even has it that Belgian troops accidentally fired at their own because, due to a lot of smoke, they confused their flag with the red band on top for the Dutch one.

- During parades, special flags with yellow fringe on three sides are often brought out to celebrate the occasion.

- Burning, trampling, or otherwise tarnishing of the Belgian flag is any citizen's right, as there are no laws in place forbidding it. There have been a couple of recorded instances of partition supporters (who advocated for the split of Belgium into Flanders and Wallonia) in the 90s, but in general, flag-burning hasn't been an issue in contemporary Belgium.