

# Luxurious Luxembourg

A small country in central Europe, Luxembourg is a great mix of history, chic shopping and truly international experiences

-By Aruna Rathod



If you are looking for an unusual destination in Europe, try Luxembourg. A tiny country that is rich in history and experiences, not only does it offer amazing dining options, it has great shopping streets too with Gucci, Hermes, Prada, Dior and more. The people are helpful, speak English wherever you go and the sheer joie de vivre of the country, with its mix of European population, is contagious in the true sense.

After checking into Hotel Vauban, a very conveniently located hotel in Place Guillaume II, from where all the main sights are within 15 minutes of walking, I begin to explore. The staff at Hotel Vauban are extremely cheerful and very helpful.

I begin my walking tour and after reaching the main road in about 5 minutes, the first thing that I see is the "Golden Lady" (Gëlle Fra) on Constitution Square, a memorial set up in 1923 to commemorate the Luxembourgers who perished in the First World War. A beautifully sculpted woman, who is gold plated, is perched high up in the air, placed on a stone obelisk which towers into the sky. On October, 20th, 1940 the Nazis pulled the monument down. It was only in 1984 that it was put up again after extensive restoration. Today the memorial symbolizes freedom and resistance for the Luxembourg people. I walk around and stand on the viewing gallery, below which lies a huge gorge. In the background one can see the majestic building which is the national bank of Luxembourg, an old structure and in contrast there are some new buildings with glass facades that dot the

landscape. Later I am told – this is the fast developing new business district part of Luxembourg called Kirchberg. It is also the best place to get a glimpse into the city's contemporary architecture and houses the (Place de l'Europe), concert hall Philharmonie (exterior) created by architect Christian de Portzemparc.

The city square Place Guillaume II is the town square with the Town Hall in front of it, and the statue of King – Grand Duke William II of Orange-Nassau just a few steps away. The town residence of the Grand Duke is the grand-ducal palace in the heart of the city. It is the most photographed spot in the city with its beautiful façade (Flemish Renaissance, 16th century). The palace was built in the 16th century by the Spanish who then used it as a city hall. A statue of the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg, a much-loved queen Charlotte, is situated close to the palace. She was involved in a lot of public activity which contributed to raising Luxembourg's profile on the international stage, as she was actively involved in hosting visits from foreign heads of state and other dignitaries like Eleanor Roosevelt, the King of Norway, and the Queen of Netherlands, and she herself visited Charles de Gaulle and John F Kennedy.





Not to be missed is the cathedral “Notre-Dame” of Luxembourg, built between 1613 and 1621 by the Jesuits to serve as a church to their college (now the National Library).

### Chic Shopping

The evening is the best time for some retail therapy. The city square has plenty of lanes devoted to fancy stores – right from designer stores to tiny cafes, the shopping district has uber chic restaurants that offer an amazing range of cuisines, Lebanese, Turkish, European, Chinese and more. Dinner at Restaurant Essenza Ristorente at 12 rue de la Boucherie, is an amazing experience. I began my meal with a glass of white wine, followed by a complimentary appetiser and Tagliolini with beef and wine sauce that was heavenly.

### A slice of history

On day two, a must visit are the ancient quarters and fortifications of the city of Luxembourg. A walking tour takes visitors to the site from the road, and walking down the steps takes me into the fortress within minutes. After validating my Luxembourg card, which allows free entrance to all the museums and including public transport, I proceed to the tunnels. It seems that there were 22 kilometres of tunnels dug out of which 17 kilometres exist till date. As I go inside, it's a maze of tunnels with large holes on the side of the fortress that look out into the city. The holes were created to house cannons to fire attackers. These tunnels

are the world's longest underground tunnel system called “Casemates”.

You can spend hours in the fortifications and then it's time to get to the city centre once again for a Mediterranean dinner. Fresh catch is displayed on a bed of ice at the Brasserie Guillaume at 12-14 Place Guillaume II. I had the Fritto Misto Royal that had a veritable feast of fried sea food including scampi, prawns and calamari served with fries, tartare sauce and salad. The oysters and crabs, I could see around me, were presented in style. A must visit restaurant.

As I left this beautiful country, I was sure that I would re-visit and explore the outskirts soon.

**HOW TO REACH:** You can fly into Germany and take a train or connecting flights to Luxembourg from Mumbai or Bangalore/Delhi.

**WHERE TO STAY:** Hotel Vauban, [www.hotelvauban.lu](http://www.hotelvauban.lu)  
10 Place Guillaume II, L-1648 Luxembourg,

**WHERE TO EAT: Chocolate House** 20 rue du Marché-aux-Herbes, L-1728 Luxembourg, Phone +352/26 26 20 06

**Restaurant Essenza Ristorente**, 12 rue de la Boucherie, L-1247 Luxembourg. An amazing Italian fine dine restaurant with a range of wines, pastas, spaghetti and great options.

**Ca(fé)sino** in the Casino - Forum of Contemporary Art 41 rue Notre-Dame, L-2240 Luxembourg, Phone: +352/26 27 02 79.

**Brasserie Guillaume** 12-14 Place Guillaume II, L-1648 Luxembourg, is a haven for sea food lovers. Presented in style, indulge in oysters and fish – all served in style !! A must visit restaurant.

**EVENING OUT:** Bar ‘L’Observatoire’ at the Hotel Sofitel Grand-Ducal

40 bd d’Avranches, L-1160 Luxembourg [www.sofitel.com](http://www.sofitel.com) (bar lounge on the last floor with a unique view on the city)

**Nightlife & bars** in the neighbourhood of the grand-ducal palace: Urban Bar, Café Le Palais, Café Go Ten, Downtown Café, Konrad Café & Bar

**Michelin Star Restaurants** – for the tiny country that it is there are enough fine dine options to choose from:

**La Christallerie** 8 Place d’Armes, L-1136 Luxembourg. Phone +352 27 47 37 42-1 [www.hotel-leplacedarmes.com](http://www.hotel-leplacedarmes.com)

**Mosconi** 13 rue Münster, L-2160 Luxembourg. [www.mosconi.lu](http://www.mosconi.lu)

**Clairefontaine** 9 Place Clairefontaine, L-1341 Luxembourg. Phone +352 46 22 11 [www.restaurantclairefontaine.lu](http://www.restaurantclairefontaine.lu)

**Le Patin d’Or** 40 route de Bettembourg, L-1899 Luxembourg. Phone +352 22 64 99 [www.patin-dor.lu](http://www.patin-dor.lu)

