



YOU CAN BANK ON LUXEMBOURG

Known mainly for its financial institutions and EU offices, Luxembourg is also an ideal city break destination for art-lovers

ABOVE: THE GRAND HALL OF THE MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE, OR MUDAM, FEATURING SU-MEI TSE'S 'STONE COLLECTION' (2017). THE LUXEMBOURG-BORN ARTIST WAS THE 2003 GOLDEN LION WINNER AT THE VENICE BIENNALE. PHOTO: © AURÉLIEN MOLE/MUDAM LUXEMBOURG



FROM: LUXEMBOURG STREET PHOTOGRAPHY, 1950-2017 (CITY HISTORY MUSEUM)

Luxembourg is a city of two halves. The modern bustle of the Kirchberg district, home to gleaming office buildings housing banks, businesses and European Union institutions, standing in stark contrast to the old world charm of the UNESCO-listed Old Town, with its grand squares, heritage buildings and winding, cobbled streets. The two are separated by a picturesque valley, the 'Grund', carved out by the Alzette river.

Capital of the world's only Grand Duchy, the largely pedestrianised city centre (it can be almost eerily quiet, especially in the evening) is built on and around a sandstone

promontory, which with its enormous ramparts made it one of Europe's best defended cities in earlier days.

Overlooked by many tourists in favour of more famous European cities, Luxembourg city is so compact that most of the main museums and galleries are no more than a few hundred metres apart.

The exception is **Musée d'Art Moderne**, or Mudam in the Kirchberg district. Designed by the Pulitzer Prize-winning "starchitect" I.M. Pei, it is Luxembourg's premier public art museum. Like most of the city, the museum rests on a craggy plateau and is built on the original foundations of the 18th century



WIM DELVOYE (BELGIUM, B.1965), 'CHAPELLE', A METALLIC, GOTHIC-INSPIRED CHAPEL WITH STAINED GLASS WINDOWS DECORATED WITH KISSING SKELETONS, BONES AND INTESTINES. (MUDAM)



FROM: FABIEN GIRAUD & RAPHAËL SIBONI - A HISTORY OF COMPUTATION (CASINO LUXEMBOURG)

Fort Thüngen by the great fortress builder Vauban, whose original plan Pei used in his design. The result resembles a gleaming white, modern fortress.

Upon entering the building, visitors are greeted by German sculptor Stephan Balkenhol's carved portraits of Their Royal Highnesses Grand Duke Jean and Grand Duchess Joséphine-Charlotte, while you are invited to dip into Bill Woodrow's 'Pond Life', a 'pool' full of coin-like tokens (with a map of Luxembourg on one side and a pair of mating frogs on the other) which can be used in the storage lockers and kept as souvenirs.

The "Wow!" moment comes upon entering the pyramid-like Grand Hall (echoing Pei's pyramid in front of the Louvre in Paris), which is used as a sculpture court. Glass-encased and flooded with light, its

contemplative atmosphere invites you to take your time viewing the pieces and enjoying the outside views.

There is no prescribed route through the building, so from here visitors are free to head off in all directions. Six galleries over three levels are devoted to modern, installation and experiential art in temporary exhibitions as well as selections from the permanent collection of works by over a hundred artists. www.mudam.lu

In its neo-Baroque building, the **Casino Luxembourg** (the name is a clue to its former use) holds contemporary art exhibitions with an international programme of mainly younger generation artists. The ground floor has a Black Box projection room showing artists' videos, while the expansive first floor is used for temporary

exhibitions. With a programme which also includes conferences, contemporary music and artists in residence, the Casino likes to think of itself as an experimental 'think tank' for new art trends. The elegant cafe-restaurant is a popular hang-out, especially for Sunday brunch.

www.casino-luxembourg.lu

Behind its stark, pinkish facade, the **Musée Nationale d'Histoire et d'Art**, or MNHA, is a modern structure with galleries arrayed around a central, multi-storey 'well'. Its collections are displayed in four sections: Fine Arts, Decorative and Popular Arts, Archaeology and the Medals Cabinet.

The Fine Arts section comprises masterworks from the national collection spanning the 13th to 21st centuries and including Old Masters (Cranach the Elder, Canova, Brueghel the Younger), Modern and

Contemporary (Picasso, Magritte, Cézanne), Art in Luxembourg (one room is dedicated to the Expressionist Joseph Kutter, including the wonderful 'Luxembourg', one of two paintings he was commissioned to paint for the 1937 World Exhibition in Paris) and a roomful of work by the legendary, Luxembourg-born photographer Edward Steichen (1879-1973), who served as Director of the Department of Photography at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Considered a leading figure in the history of the medium, his work marked the evolution from pictorialism to 'straight photography'.

Special exhibitions have included Art Deco in Luxembourg and Drama and Tenderness: Flemish, Spanish and Italian Art of the Baroque, featuring paintings on loan from the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp (currently closed for restoration) by masters such as Rubens, Van Dyck and Murillo. The Decorative and Popular Arts section reveals living styles and applied arts in Luxembourg from the Renaissance to the early 21st century. www.mnha.lu

Evoking a calm and relaxing atmosphere, the city's most picturesque art museum sits in the middle of a park designed by the French architect Edouard André (1840-1911), who was also one of the most famous landscape painters of his time.

Named after Luxembourg's fortress-builder, the **Villa Vauban** houses art collections brought together by three ►►►



BERNARD RANCILLAC
(FRANCE, B.1931),
'GHOST', 1993 (MUSÉE
NATIONALE D'HISTOIRE
ET D'ART)

wealthy individuals in the 18th and 19th centuries and donated to the city. The collections consist largely of Dutch works from the 17th century 'Golden Age' and 19th century historical paintings and French landscapes. These are complemented by paintings, sculptures and engravings by European artists of the 17th to 19th century.

A modern extension seems to wrap itself around the beautiful 1873 villa.

www.villavauban.lu



VILLA VAUBAN

on art, craft and design, most recently an exhibition of Luxembourg street photography recording daily life in the city from the 1950s to the present day. Six levels are open to the public and on one of them a captivating series of moving images charting the seasons is projected onto the bare rock wall.

The building itself is worth a visit. The slow-moving, glass-sided lift seems to time-travel through the sheer rock foundations, while outside there are panoramic views from the terrace, with a vertical drop from its rear side to the 'Grund' below capturing the city's contrast between its upper and lower levels. www.citymuseum.lu

While dedicated mainly to The Luxembourg Story, a permanent exhibition tracing 1,000 years of urban history, the **Luxembourg City History Museum** also has presentations



RATSKELLER. PHOTO: PATRICK MULLER



A Luxembourg art tour begins on the way in from the airport, as the drive along Avenue John F. Kennedy through the Kirchberg business district passes Richard Serra's monolithic steel sculpture 'Exchange' and 'The Tall Banker', a gigantic, elongated figure by a group of German artists. With his smart suit, umbrella and newspaper, he is a comical wink to the area's bankers and corporate types.

WHERE TO STAY

A short walk from all major art museums, the **Hotel Simoncini** is owned by an art collector, whose paintings, engravings and sculptures are displayed throughout the property.

He also owns the adjacent **Galerie Simoncini**, where he has been showing contemporary, international artwork for 35 years.

www.hotelsimoncini.lu,
www.galeriesimoncini.lu



RECEPTION OF THE HOTEL SIMONCINI

FURTHER INFO

www.visitluxembourg.com