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Tiny Luxembourg = Big Vacation

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I was a little amused by the fact that the capital of Luxembourg was also named Luxembourg – *who does that?* – until my husband gently reminded me of New York, New York. Oh. OK. Not that strange after all. Luxembourg is truly a lovely little country and I don't use the word "little" lightly. Driving from Germany to France, you can almost miss this friendly and beautiful place if you are not careful.

Luxembourg, or technically "the duchy of Luxembourg" has an area of only 998 square miles or 2,586 square kilometers, with a population of barely half a million people. We spent a day in the beautiful city of Luxembourg City, Luxembourg last year and found it to be a very interesting and historical location filled with some of the friendliest people we met in Europe.

Luxembourg is the world's only grand duchy and is ruled by a grand duke, although they are a democratic country with a constitutional monarch. Sandwiched in between Belgium, France and Germany, you might hear German, French or Luxembourgish spoken as you traverse the lovely cobblestone streets of the capital since this country is trilingual. One of the best ways to see Luxembourg City is with a walking tour, which is what we did.

The city of Luxembourg was built on the Bock, a promontory surrounded on three sides by the River Alzette in what is now the old historical district of the city. Perched on an overlook, you can see how the city and a fort were built right against the huge rock walls. Remnants of the original fort remain as well, complete with places for the requisite cannons to fire from. In the late 1600's tunnels were built in the Bock, some of which originated in the dungeons of Siegried's Castle. It's

possible to tour these rather creepy, dank tunnels and learn their history, including the fact that they were used as bomb shelters during World War II.

You can also stroll across the two-story bridge which connects the Bock to town. Built in 1735, it has four ways of crossing between the cliffs: the road over the top, a passage by way of the four upper arches, a spiral staircase up through the main arch and a tunnel under the road at the bottom – handy to have so many escape routes in case of a battle – and provides a wonderful view of the area.

The Palace of the Grand Dukes is a gorgeous and rather imposing structure but, according to our guide, the royal family is very accessible and is often seen around town going to the market and taking a walk. Luxembourg City abounds with lovely, historical buildings and beautifully maintained private homes. Luxembourg is predominantly Roman Catholic so there are also lots of cathedrals, as you will find all throughout Europe. Take a tour of the Cathedral to the Blessed Virgin and you will marvel at the incredibly detailed stained glass windows and statues.

There are lots of quaint little squares, interesting shops and wonderful places to eat. Take a break from touring and make a little time to sit in one of the many coffee shops, order some of the pastries which rival those in Paris for decadence and do some people watching. After you are rested and refreshed, spend some time touring some of the museums and other historical sites of the city. Although Luxembourg is small, Luxembourg City is a fascinating place to spend a day.

The 4* Grand Hotel Cravat lives up to its name! History is evident in every area of this hotel, from the photographs and letters of thanks from famous guests in the lobby, to the art deco interior of the hotel's brasserie. The Cravat has possibly the best location in Luxembourg, on the border of the famous old town, and guests will not have to go far to find a wide selection of restaurants and bars. All of the hotels individual rooms are well equipped with minibar, safe, telephone, bathrobe, hairdryer, tea and coffee making facilities, satellite television and modem connection.

The Parc hotel is located in a pretty suburb of Luxembourg and was established in 1975. Many shops and entertainment venues are to be found in the city centre, just a few minutes away by car. Renovated in 2002, the modern hotel comprises a total of 221 rooms spread over 4 floors. In the welcoming lobby, a reception area, a hairdresser and a lift awaits guests. In addition, guests are offered a snug bar, 2 air-conditioned restaurants as well as 6 function rooms for conferences and banquets. The 221 rooms are equipped with hair dryer, TV.

This guest posts was written by Jan Ross. Jan is a freelance travel writer- why not visit her website, Wanderlust Wonder.