



TOUR TOPOGRAPHY OF HUMAN RIGHTS

History

The 'Topography of Human Rights' trail focuses on places that either bear witness to human rights violations or symbolise their implementation and protection.

The focus is on the development of the Luxembourg people into an open, democratic and diverse society, whose values are firmly rooted in the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

At the same time, the aim is to emphasise that society is subject to constant change due to internal and external influences and is therefore fragile and at risk.

The aim of this route is to show visitors that democracy and respect for human rights cannot be taken for granted, even in modern states, and that it is important to remain vigilant in order to nip negative tendencies in the bud before they seriously jeopardise society.

The walk 'Topography of Human Rights' in Luxembourg City

Highlights

Places of violation and preservation of human rights

Tour

On foot

Duration and length

2 hours, 4 km

Audioguide

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More information

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TOPOGRAPHY OF
HUMAN RIGHTS



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1 Neumünster Abbey



2 The Courts Of Justice



3 National Monument of Solidarity



4 Shoah Memorial



5 Memorial to the Grand Duchess Charlotte

1 NEUMÜNSTER ABBEY

From 1869 to 1985, the abbey served as a prison. Although the prison was enlarged in several times, little changed in terms of the seemingly medieval conditions of the detainees. It was not until 1985, with the move to the new prison in Schrassig, that modern and humane conditions were finally created for Luxembourg offenders.

Neumünster Abbey had a particularly sad function during the Second World War. Many resistance fighters were temporarily brought to the prison in Stadtgrund before being transported to German concentration or labour camps. In total, around 3,700 Luxembourg patriots and resistance fighters passed through the 'interim camp' in Stadtgrund between 1940 and 1944.

Since 2004, the site has been used as the 'Centre Culturel de Rencontre Abbaye de Neumünster' for socio-cultural events, exhibitions and concerts.

Significance for Human Rights

The most basic human rights of prisoners were violated in Neumünster for over a century. The history of Neumünster makes us realise how important it is to protect and defend the dignity of all people.

Articles 1, 5, 9 and 25

2 THE COURTS OF JUSTICE

The new Courts of Justice, which houses the most important judicial institutions since 2008, is located on the Holy-Ghost-Plateau. The imposing complex, designed by the Luxembourg architects Rob and Léon Krier, stands on the vestiges of the Holy Ghost Convent.

Significance for Human Rights

The judiciary represents the third element of state or governmental authority for the rigorous application of the law and the absolute respect for human rights. The Courts of Justice stand for the rule of law in Luxembourg and therefore guarantee the protection and the rights of all people in a democratic community.

Articles 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11

3 NATIONAL MONUMENT OF SOLIDARITY

The National Monument of Solidarity reminds us of the sacrifices during the Second World War, the resistance movements against National Socialism and the solidarity of Luxembourgers during the occupation.

The perpetual flame burns in front of the building, symbolising the never-ending sense of solidarity. Inside the memorial is a chapel that contains an urn with bloodied earth from the Polish Sonnenburg concentration camp. It was in this camp that 91 Luxembourg prisoners were shot in January 1945.

A further two monuments are located on the rise beside the central monument, namely for the 'Force Armée' to commemorate the sacrifice of the Police Service, the Gendarmerie and the Voluntary Company, and the 'Corps Charlotte' in honour of the former Grand Duchess.

Significance for Human Rights

The National Monument of Solidarity is likewise a message inscribed in stone for peace, development and respect for human rights. It is meant to warn against authoritarianism and tyranny and represents a call for more solidarity with those oppressed and in need.

Articles 2, 3 and 15

4 SHOAH MEMORIAL

The Memorial for the victims of the Shoah was inaugurated on 17th of June 2018 to commemorate the persecution, deportation



6 The Chamber of Deputies



7 The Fish Market



8 Council of State



9 The Old Court of Justice



**10 Place d'Armes/
Parade Ground**



11 Gëlle Fra

and killing of Jews during the Second World War. Over 3,500 Jews lived in Luxembourg before the war. Only 36 survived the extermination camps.

The memorial is located near the site of the old synagogue from 1823.

The granite sculpture was designed and produced by the Franco-Israeli sculptor Shelomo SELINGER, who himself survived nine concentration camps and two death marches.

Significance for Human Rights

The memorial reminds us of the victims of antisemitism who suffered the cruelty of Nazi racial politics and at the same time serves as a reminder never to close our eyes to such atrocities committed in the name of political ideologies of any kind.

Articles 1, 2, 3, 5 and 18

5 MEMORIAL TO THE GRAND DUCHESS CHARLOTTE

The bronze statue designed by the French sculptor Jean CARDOT was officially inaugurated on 29th of April 1990.

Charlotte succeeded her sister Marie-Adelheid to the throne in January 1919. In contrast to her predecessor, she accepted the new political circumstances, which had greatly restricted the power of the Crown in favour of the people, and also agreed to the corresponding constitutional reform.

After the attack by Nazi troops on neutral Luxembourg in May 1940, Charlotte left the country and tried to gain allies in the fight against Hitler's Germany.

During her stays in London, Charlotte regularly used the BBC radio station to address her oppressed people with encouraging speeches that always began with 'Léif Lëtzebuurger'. In fact, she quickly became a symbolic figure for the Luxembourg resistance.

Significance for Human Rights

Grand Duchess Charlotte was and remains an example and a symbolic figure for all those committed to protecting freedom and national independence. At the same time, she represents democracy, because it is thanks to her that Luxembourg has become a modern state with a clear separation of powers.

Articles 15, 19 and 21

6 THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

Since 1860, the Luxembourg Parliament, the 'Chambre des Députés', has had its seat on the 'Krautmarkt' and exercises legislative power in the name of the people. The parliament building is therefore known as the 'Palais de la Nation' and symbolises the rights of the Luxembourg people.

In 1848, Luxembourg was given a constitution that laid the foundations for a modern, democratic state. From then on, members of parliament were elected by the people and the three powers were clearly separated. Since then, Luxembourg has been a constitutional, parliamentary monarchy.

Since 1988, 60 members compose the parliament, elected by the people every five years in free, general and secret elections.

Significance for Human Rights

As a law giving institution, the Chamber of Deputies has a fundamental function in the protection of human rights. The members of parliament are elected by the people to represent the interests of all inhabitants of the country. The continued mutual checks and control between the executive and legislative branches mean that inhuman dictatorship is no longer possible in Luxembourg.

Article 21

7 THE FISH MARKET

This square was once the political, economic, religious and cultural centre of the city.



12 The Old Synagogue



13 Villa Louvigny



14 Villa Pauly



15 Siechenhaff – Hospice of the Infirm



16 The Gallows of Luxembourg City



17 Hollerich Train Station

However, the Fish Market also functioned as a place of execution. In the Middle Ages and up to modern times, the execution of the often cruel punishments always took place in public and served both as a deterrent and for popular amusement. These inhumane punishments were legally abolished in 1879.

Significance for Human Rights

As the 'heart' of Luxembourg City, the Fish Market was always a meeting place for many people, but as a place of execution it also instilled fear.

Fortunately, the Fish Market has lost its terrifying reputation and is now exclusively a place of peaceful socialising and cultural exchange.

Articles 3, 5 and 20

8 COUNCIL OF STATE

Since 1959, the Council of State has had its official seat near the Fish Market in the heart of the Upper Town.

The Council of State shares legislative power with the Chamber of Deputies. Its 21 members are nominated by the Government and appointed by the Grand Duke.

The Council of State's main function is to advise the government and members of the Chamber of Deputies and to provide expert opinions on all proposed legal texts voted by Parliament. In addition, it screens changes of regulations and decrees to their constitutional legality. A law can only come into force with the Council of State's approval.

The Council of State is therefore an independent legislative organ that upholds the fundamental democratic principles of the Luxembourg state and protects citizens from political arbitrariness and despotism.

Significance for Human Rights

There is no equivalent political organ that has undergone similar fundamental changes to its political function. Initially conceived as an important instrument of power for the authoritarian king, it has become over the passage of time an numerous reforms an indispensable institution to protect democracy and the rule of law in Luxembourg.

Article 21

9 THE OLD COURT OF JUSTICE

The building was acquired by the Spanish crown in 1564 and served as the official residence of the respective governors until 1795.

With the conquest of Luxembourg by the French revolutionary troops, the courts of the estates, up to that point responsible for justicial power, disappeared. In accordance with the principles of 'Freedom, Equality, Fraternity', a standardised jurisdiction grounded on equal rights for everybody replaced the former system. The Governor's Palace became the seat of the newly created tribunal and retained this function from 1795 until 2008, the year in which the court moved to the new complex on the Holy Ghost Plateau.

Since 2017, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been located in the restored building.

Significance for Human Rights

As a result of the abolition of the 'Ancien Régime' and the estates system, all people were now equal before the law. The Palace of Justice symbolises this uniform jurisdiction.

Articles 1, 2 and 7

10 PLACE D'ARMES/PARADE GROUND

The 'Palce d'Armes' or 'Plëss' in Luxembourgish is one of the favourite meeting places for locals and tourists alike.

Created during the Spanish occupation in 1671, the Place d'Armes

initially served as a military parade ground. Up to the 18th century, executions were occasionally carried out here.

In 1867, the square became open to the public and developed into an important meeting place for citizens. Today, the 'Plëss' is still the location for political and trade union demonstrations. Above all, however, the 'Plëss' is a popular meeting point and stands for socialising and peaceful gatherings.

Significance for Human Rights

The history of this square is living proof that society is perfectly capable of developing in a positive direction and cultivating a respectful, tolerant and cosmopolitan contact.

[Articles 13, 20, 24 and 27](#)

11 GËLLE FRA

The monument on the 'Place de la Constitution', created by the Luxembourg artist Claus CITO, was originally erected in memory of the fallen soldiers of the First World War.

It was destroyed by the Nazis on the 21th of October 1940 as part of the forced Germanisation of Luxembourg.

After the war, the base and the two soldiers were restored as a national memorial and from then on also commemorated the fallen soldiers of 1940-1945 and the victims of the Korean War.

However, the 'Gëlle Fra' herself remained missing for 35 years until construction workers found her by chance under the stands of the city's football stadium. After extensive restoration work, it was rededicated on 23th of June 1985.

Significance for Human Rights

Today, the 'Gëlle Fra' is not just the symbol of the capital, but also a appeal for collective commitment to freedom, equality and justice.

[Articles 1, 3 and 15](#)

12 THE OLD SYNAGOGUE

As the first synagogue in the 'Rue de la Congrégation' had become too small, the community decided to build the so-called 'Old Synagogue'. It was built in 1894 in oriental style on what was then the outskirts of the city. During the Nazi occupation, there were several serious attacks on the synagogue. The German occupiers then decided to have the building demolished.

Nowadays, a memorial plaque indicates the location of the Old Synagogue in the 'Rue Notre Dame', where a large office building now stands. In 2018, an additional memorial plaque was inaugurated on the 80th anniversary of the November pogrom. A part of the masonry of the niche for the Torah shrine is still preserved in the inner courtyard.

Significance for Human Rights

The history of the 'Old Synagogue' reminds us that antisemitism, marginalisation and hatred of people who are not part of the 'mainstream' sadly continue to exist.

[Articles 2, 12 and 18](#)

13 VILLA LOUVIGNY

The bulwark was built in 1672 as part of the fortress and given the name of the Spanish fortress commander Louvigny.

In 1931, the first European private radio station, the 'Compagnie luxembourgeoise de Radiodiffusion', rented the building and installed its recording studios and broadcasting rooms there.

During the Second World War, the 'Wehrmacht' used the station for propaganda purposes. From September 1944, the station was used by the Allied Forces to broadcast news from the BBC and the 'Office of War Information'.

In November 1945, the Luxembourg Radio Company took over the radio transmitter again and began broadcasting national programmes once more. Following the decision to also produce television programmes, the company was renamed 'Radio-Télé-Luxembourg' (RTL) in 1955. Until the

move to Kirchberg, Villa Louvigny was the headquarters of the RTL Group, Europe's leading entertainment company.

Significance for Human Rights

For almost 50 years, the Villa Louvigny was the place where music and news were broadcast to many European countries. RTL not only served to entertain people, but also endeavoured to provide the most independent information possible on national and international events.

[Articles 19, 26 and 27](#)

14 VILLA PAULY

Villa Pauly belonged to the surgeon Dr Norbert Pauly, who built it on the Boulevard de la Pétrusse. When the Nazi troops occupied Luxembourg in May 1940, the Gestapo seized the building to make it its Luxembourg headquarters. All suspects were interrogated here using the most brutal methods of torture. Villa Pauly also housed the SS administration, which organised the deportation of Luxembourg Jewish population.

Due to its highly symbolic importance, the villa became the seat of the 'Conseil national de la Résistance' since May 2000. It also houses a documentation and research centre on the history of resistance in Luxembourg.

Significance for Human Rights

Shortly after the Second World War, Villa Pauly became one of the most important places of remembrance for all victims of Nazi terror in Luxembourg and is still a symbol of resistance against all forms of terror regimes, oppression and disregard for human rights.

[Articles 5, 9 and 17](#)

15 SIECHENHAFF – HOSPICE OF THE INFIRMED

'Siechenhaff' is today the local name for a quarter of Luxembourg city. At the time, the 'Siechenhaff' was the hospital for lepers, located in the Alzette Valley outside the city walls. In the Middle Ages, leprosy was a disease spread like an epidemic, due to the closed quarters within city walls and the catastrophic hygiene. For fear of infection, the sick were isolated as quickly as possible.

In 1289, the sovereign ordered a leprosarium to be built outside the city's gate, which included a hospital, a chapel and a cemetery. In the middle of the 18th century, leprosy disappeared from Luxembourg and the hospital was definitively closed in 1770. Only the cemetery and the Saint-Pierre-Martyr chapel remain today.

Significance for Human Rights

The 'Siechenhaff' was an institution meant to isolate people, but at the same time enabled the sick to end their lives in dignity.

[Articles 22 and 25](#)

16 THE GALLOWS OF LUXEMBOURG CITY

There are three locations in the city where gallows used to stand, as they were always set up on hills outside the city so that everyone could see them from afar. The intention of choosing such a location was deterrence. At the same time, the gallows symbolised highest jurisdiction. The location of the gallows was also used for alternative types of execution, such as burning at the stake, wheeling or quartering.

Since the end of the 18th century, the influence of Enlightenment thinking led to fewer death sentences. The highest jurisdiction of the city was finally abolished in the 19th century.

Significance for Human Rights

The repeal of capital punishment was a fundamental and significant step towards the protection and respect of human dignity in Luxembourg.

[Articles 3 and 5](#)

17 HOLLERICH TRAIN STATION

After the general strike of 1942, the Hollerich freight station served as a 'loading point' for families considered as 'hostile to the Germans' in order

to forcibly relocate them to the eastern border of the 'Reich'. From the 17th of September 1942 to the 31th of August 1944, a total of 4,187 people were deported to Silesia. 72 people did not survive transportation in the overfilled trains.

Around 700 Luxembourg Jews were also transported from Hollerich to the extermination camps.

In 1996, the now disused train station became a memorial for all victims of deportation. The ground floor houses a museum and the 'Centre de Documentation et de Recherche de l'enrôlement de force'.

Two commemorative plaques and a monument on the former railway platform commemorate the many victims.

Significance for Human Rights

Hollerich train station is an important symbolic reminder of an inhumane, totalitarian regime in which individuals and their fundamental rights had no meaning and were ruthlessly sacrificed for the realisation of an ideology.

Articles 3, 9 and 17



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Imprint

Editor: Luxembourg City Tourist Office a.s.b.l. | VAT no.: LU15621823 – R.C.S. Luxembourg |
Idea and concept: ACAT-Luxembourg ASBL | Text: Dr. Nicole Brix | Photo credits:
Dr. Nicole Brix, Pierre BK / LCTO | Layout: binstfeld | 02/2025 | ISBN 978-2-49672-191-1



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