

WORLD WAR II CIRCULAR WALK

OCCUPATION
LIBERATION
MEMORIAL PLACES



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UNCOVERING THE PAST: WORLD WAR II

On the 10th of May 1940, the German armed forces swept into Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Grand Duchess Charlotte, her husband and their children went into exile along with government ministers. After travelling through France, Portugal and the USA, they eventually arrived in Canada and Great Britain; the government in exile establishing itself in Montreal and in London. One minister, however, was unable to evacuate in time. The decision to leave Luxembourg ensured that the Head of State could not be brought under the control of the occupying forces and that Luxembourg could remain an independent political entity aligned with the allied powers in the fight against Hitler. The country remained under German military administration until the 31st of July 1940.

We begin our walk outside the Luxembourg City Tourist Office on Place Guillaume II (known locally as the Knuedler).



1 Town Hall: Nazi rally, 1941

2 Place d'Armes

1 **“Hôtel de Ville” (Town Hall)** | Located on the Knuedler, the Town Hall is the former seat of the German-appointed Mayor. After the liberation of Luxembourg in September 1944, the Town Hall served as the meeting place of the “Unio’n vun de Letzebuenger Freihétsorganisatio’nen” (Union of Luxembourgish Freedom Organisations). The “Unio’n” was formed on the 23rd of March 1944 through the merger of three large Luxembourgish resistance groups: the LPL (“Lëtzebuenger Patriote-Liga” or Luxembourgish Patriot League); the LVL (“Lëtzebuenger Volleks Legio’n” or Luxembourgish People’s Legion) and the LRL (“Lëtzebuenger Ro’de Le’w” or Luxembourgish Red Lion). In the great hall on the first floor, on the 10th of September 1952, the Federal Republic of Germany and the new state of Israel signed the first international agreement on reparations for victims of the Nazi regime (known in German as the “Wiedergutmachungsabkommen”).

We now proceed through the Passage de l’Hôtel de Ville, opposite the Town Hall, and onto Place d’Armes.

2 **Place d’Armes** | On the 6th of August 1940, this square was the setting for the first public appearance of Gauleiter Gustav Simon, the German head of the new civil administration. He was accompanied by 800 members of the German “Schutzpolizei” (municipal police). On the same day, the new administration issued a language



1: "Reichsarbeitsdienst", 1942



2 Place d'Armes: Liberation, September 1944

decreed: "Luxembourg gibberish" was to be stamped out and the country "re-Germanised". French place names, street names, company names, signs and even family names and given names were translated into German. Use of the familiar "merci", "bonjour" and "pardon" was forbidden and even wearing a beret was prohibited by law.

Four years later, on the 10th of September 1944, the city's inhabitants joyfully welcomed the U.S. 5th Armored Division here as it liberated Luxembourg. Prince Félix, the husband of Grand Duchess Charlotte, was also present and was joined shortly afterwards by Crown Prince Jean. On the left of the Cercle Municipal building's main facade, a plaque commemorates the city's liberation. On the first floor of the building, to the right, a round bronze plaque in honour of the two princes bears their contemporary likenesses.

Next, we follow Rue du Curé and take the 2nd turn on our right, onto Rue du Marché-aux-Herbes, which leads to the Palace of the Grand Dukes.

3 Palace of the Grand Dukes | During the Occupation, the Palace was seized and ownership of it was transferred to the City of Luxembourg. It was misused by the National Socialist regime as a concert venue, inn and military social centre; it was even planned that it should house an



3 Palace of the Grand Dukes during the Occupation

art gallery. While in exile, Grand Duchess Charlotte benefited from the full support of U.S. President F. D. Roosevelt, who told the sovereign: "You have to put Luxembourg on the map". She was to pursue this objective with vigour in the months that followed.

We continue on past the Palace and turn right onto Rue de l'Eau, which brings us onto Place Clairefontaine.

4 Place Clairefontaine | In the centre of Place Clairefontaine stands the statue of Grand Duchess Charlotte (1896-1985), who ruled from 1919 to 1964 and who became a symbol of Luxembourg's independence during the war. In August 1940, Luxembourgers displayed their unwillingness to cooperate with the Germans through a protest action that became known as the "Spéngelskrich" (War of the Badges): they ostentatiously wore badges, pinned to their coats or jackets, which bore nationalistic emblems such as the Red Lion (symbolising the hundredth anniversary in 1939 of Luxembourg's independence) or the head of Grand Duchess Charlotte, cut from a coin. Throughout the Occupation, the Grand Duchess addressed her subjugated people a total of 14 times from abroad over the forbidden "enemy broadcaster", the BBC. With an initial airtime of just 2 minutes, the BBC was able to broadcast a Luxembourg bulletin daily from October 1943 onwards. On the 14th of April 1945, Charlotte returned home to a rapturous welcome from her people.



4 Place Clairefontaine and the sculpture of Grand Duchess Charlotte

Proceeding along Rue Notre-Dame, we reach the main doorway of the Cathedral.

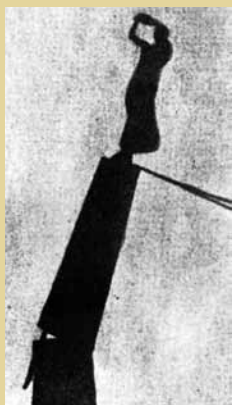
5 Cathedral to the Blessed Virgin | Inside the church, to the left of the main entrance, is a memorial plaque that bears witness to the suffering of the Luxembourgish people during the Second World War. It is an indication of how great a source of moral strength “*Maria Consolatrix Afflictorum*” (Mary Comforter of the Afflicted) was to many Luxembourgers both at home and abroad during this terrible time. A further indication is the consistently high popularity, throughout the occupation years, of the “Octave” pilgrimage in her honour. The occupying forces restricted the traditional Marian pilgrimage to the inside of the cathedral; in 1943, all pilgrimages were prohibited. Despite these restrictions, Luxembourgers were determined to maintain their traditions. Even after liberation in September 1944, the cathedral came under fire from German V3 “*Vergeltungswaffe*” (vengeance weapon) long-range artillery.

At the next junction, we turn left onto Rue de l’Ancien Athénée in the direction of Place de la Constitution.

6 “Gëlle Fra” | On Place de la Constitution stands the “*Monument du Souvenir*” (Remembrance Monument) known as the “*Gëlle Fra*” (Golden Lady), which was erected in honour of the Luxembourgish volunteers who fell while



5 Cathedral to the Blessed Virgin



6 "Gëlle Fra": destruction
October 1940

fighting alongside the allied forces in the First World War. In October 1940, the occupation authorities decided to tear down this monument. Its eventual destruction on the 21st of October was preceded by three days of vocal protest by numerous Luxembourgers, among them many students of the nearby "Athenaeum". A task force of the "Sicherheitspolizei" (security police) and "Sicherheitsdienst" (security service) responded with brutality: over 60 people, many of them adolescents, were arrested. The "Gëlle Fra" was restored to her rightful place between 1984 and 1985. On the base of the monument, four small plaques in Luxembourgish, English, French and German commemorate its destruction. As a military monument, it now serves also as a memorial to the Luxembourgish volunteers who fought with the Allies in WWII and the volunteers who took part in UN missions.

From Place de la Constitution, our walk continues along Boulevard Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the Plateau du Saint-Esprit and the "Kanounenhiwwel".

7 "Kanounenhiwwel" | Since 1971, the "Monument National de la Solidarité Luxembourgeoise" (National Monument of Luxembourg Solidarity) has stood on the mound known as the "Kanounenhiwwel" (Canon Hill). This monument, at which most national commemorations of the Second World War are held, is a tribute to the solidarity



on by the Nazis,

7 "Kanounenhiwwel": National Monument of Luxembourg Solidarity

of the Luxembourgish people during the war, as well as a memorial for all the victims of the war. For such a small country of around 300,000 people, the human toll on Luxembourg was horrifying. Approximately 2% of the entire population perished. 3,963 Luxembourgers were arrested and imprisoned in Nazi jails or concentration camps, conditions under which 791 of them were to die. Around 4,200 inhabitants of the country were forcibly "resettled" to areas in the East of the Reich. More than 13,000 young Luxembourgers, male and female, were forcibly conscripted into the German army and the "Reichsarbeitsdienst" (labour service). Of these, 2,906 did not live to see the end of the war or are still listed as missing. 3,512 young people became conscientious objectors or deserters. Before the war, the Luxembourgish Company of Volunteers (numbering 463 men) was garrisoned on the Plateau du Saint-Esprit. In December 1940, many of these men were compulsorily transferred to Weimar, there to be trained for duties in the German police force. Other members of the Company deserted during the occupation or became conscientious objectors or freedom fighters. In all, 77 men of this Company died during the war. At the lower right of the "Kanounenhiwwel" are two further memorials: the "Force Armée" memorial is dedicated to the Police, Gendarmerie and the Company of Volunteers; the Corps Charlotte memorial to the Grand Ducal Guard

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Monument
Hinzen Cross

Pfaffenthal

Museum Drei Eichen

Centre

CCRN Abbaye de
Neumünster

Luxembourg City
History Museum

Grund

American and
German Military
Cemetery

Gare

- 1 Town Hall
- 2 Place d'Armes
- 3 Palace of the Grand Dukes
- 4 Place Clairefontaine
- 5 Cathedral "To the Blessed Virgin"
- 6 "Gëlle Fra"
- 7 "Kanounenhiwwel"
- 8 Avenue de la Liberté "Nol Avenue"
- 9 Place des Martyrs "Rousegärtchen"
- 10 Villa Pauly
- 11 Place de Bruxelles
- 12 Ministry of Education

Mémorial de la
Déportation



8 Avenue de la Liberté: column of German soldiers

(1945–1966). The latter has no direct connection to the Second World War.

Proceeding over the viaduct (known informally as the “Passerelle” or “Al Bréck”), we arrive at the Avenue de la Gare, which we follow in the direction of the railway station. We take the 3rd turn on the right, onto Rue Jean Origer.

This street was named after Jean Origer, cathedral Provost, President of the Party of the Right and Member of the Luxembourgish Parliament, who died in Dachau concentration camp. He was also Director of the Saint-Paul Press, which printed amongst other titles the daily newspaper *Luxemburger Wort* founded on the 23rd of March 1848.

8 Avenue de la Liberté (“Nei Avenue”) | Following Rue Jean Origer, we arrive at Avenue de la Liberté and turn right.

The registration office (M 194) of the paramilitary labour service “Reichsarbeitsdienst” (RAD) occupied No. 38, Avenue de la Liberté (a new building now stands in its place). Compulsory RAD service for Luxembourgish boys and girls was introduced on the 23rd of May 1941. All those born in the years 1920-1927 were successively called up. On the 10th of February 1943, “Kriegshilfsdienst” (war effort service) was introduced for girls born from 1924 to 1927. Of the 3,614 young women to serve in the two organisations, 58 died. Avenue de la Liberté was renamed Adolf-Hitler-



9 "Rousegärtchen": Place des Martyrs

Straße on the 7th of August 1940. Extravagant parades were held here by the National Socialists and their Luxembourgish sympathisers, celebrating their vision of a rigidly organised militaristic state. Also located on this street was Section IV A of the civil administration, which dealt with "Jewish and emigrant property".

We continue on up Avenue de la Liberté in the direction of the old town.

9 "Rousegärtchen" | Officially named Place des Martyrs, the small "Rousegärtchen" (rose garden) park commemorates the 5,703 war dead of Luxembourg, among them 437 foreigners. Rue de la Grève, which runs alongside the park, is named for the "general strike" that took place on the 31st of August 1942: all across the country, protests broke out at Gauleiter Gustav Simon's announcement the previous day of compulsory German military service for all young Luxembourgers. Those born between 1920 and 1924 were called up immediately; followed by those born from 1925 to 1927. In connection with this unrest, which lasted until the 2nd of September, 21 people were sentenced to death and a further 45 were given over to the "Gestapo" (German secret police), which inevitably meant transfer to a concentration camp. The name of the street on the opposite side of the park, Rue du Plébiscite, refers to the population census ("Person-



9 Hollerich railway station: departure of Luxembourgish conscripts

enstandsaufnahme”) carried out in Luxembourg on the 10th of October 1941. Before the census, the Resistance launched a widespread campaign under the slogan “Dräimol Lëtzebuerg!” (“Three times Luxembourg!”), aimed at strengthening nationalist sentiment. Sample polls showed that, despite massive pressure from the Nazi authorities, around 93% of respondents answered the crucial questions on nationality, native language and ethnicity with Luxembourgish and not German, as the Gauleiter had surely expected. On the opposite side of Avenue de la Liberté stand the imposing head offices of the ArcelorMittal steel giant, formerly ARBED. This building became the seat of the German civil administration under Gauleiter Gustav Simon when it assumed power on the 2nd of August 1940. Rue Heine, to its right, was renamed Haydnstraße.

From the “Rousegärtchen” we now follow Rue Sainte-Zithe to the right. We turn left at the corner with Rue Goethe and then take the next right turn onto Rue C. M. Spoo, which leads to Boulevard de la Pétrusse.

10 **Villa Pauly** | No.57, Boulevard de la Pétrusse, with its four round corner turrets, is better known as Villa Pauly after its first owner, Dr Norbert Pauly. It now houses the “Centre de Documentation et de Recherche sur la Résistance”, as well as the “Comité directeur pour le souvenir de la Résistance”.

STANDRECHT in LUXEMBURG

Nachdem auch in Luxemburg-Stadt Fälle von Streiks und Arbeitsverweigerung eingetreten sind, wird der zivile Ausnahmezustand für den Gesamtbereich des Chefs der Zivilverwaltung in Luxemburg verhängt. Die Zuständigkeit des Standrechts wird entscheidend erweitert.
Todesurteile gegen Streikende werden sofort durch Erschossen vollstreckt

Luxemburg, den 21. August 1942.



Der Chef der Zivilverwaltung in Luxemburg:

gen. Gustav SIMON



9 Poster proclaiming the martial law, end of August 1942

10 Villa Pauly, now a research ce

As the headquarters and torture facility for the Gestapo during the occupation, however, it became the embodiment of brutal Nazi rule in Luxembourg. It is estimated that at least 2,000 people were “questioned” here. A bronze memorial plaque on the villa’s left gatepost reads: “Villa Pauly, siège de la Gestapo 1940-1944. Passant, souviens-toi des résistants torturés en ces lieux sous l’occupation nazie” (Villa Pauly, headquarters of the Gestapo 1940–1945. As you pass by, remember the resistance campaigners tortured within these walls under the Nazi occupation).

We continue on in the direction of Place de Metz, where the Spuerkeess bank building stands, and cross over Pont Adolphe (“Nei Bréck”) to the left.

11 **Place de Bruxelles** | The bridge is named after the first Grand Duke of the house of Nassau-Weilburg but was renamed Adolf-Hitler-Brücke by the German occupiers. On the right-hand side of Place de Bruxelles, in a small green area, you will notice a memorial milestone. This is the first marker placed on Luxembourgish soil as part of the Voie de la Liberté (Liberty Road), which follows the long and arduous route of General Patton’s U.S. 3rd Army as it fought its way from the beaches of Normandy to Bastogne in the Ardennes and the Battle of the Bulge.

Continuing up Boulevard Royal, we take the 2nd turn on the right after Pont Adolphe, into Rue Notre-Dame.



ntre



11 Liberty Road marker

12 **Ministry of Education** | On the corner of Rue Notre-Dame and Rue Aldringen stands the Ministry of Education building, which occupies the site of a synagogue destroyed by the Nazis in autumn 1943. A discreet plaque on the Rue Notre-Dame facade commemorates this, an example of the suffering of Luxembourg's Jewish community. Of approximately 4,000 Jews then living in Luxembourg, around 1,500 did not survive the war.

In connection with the theme of this walk, the following sites are also well worth a visit:

the Monument national de la Résistance et de la Déportation – the Hinzert Cross – in Notre-Dame Cemetery on Limpertsberg; the Centre Culturel de Rencontre Abbaye de Neumünster, formerly the Grund prison; the Mémorial de la Déportation in the old Hollerich railway station (3A, Rue de la Déportation), housing the Centre de Documentation et de Recherche sur l'Enrôlement forcé, the Comité directeur pour le souvenir de l'Enrôlement forcé and the Fondation du Mémorial de la Déportation; the American military cemetery in Hamm; the German military cemetery in Sandweiler; the Luxembourg City History Museum, 14, Rue du Saint-Esprit; the Museum Dräi Eechelen (Three Acorns), Park Dräi Eechelen (Fort Thüngen), Kirchberg plateau.

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WORLD WAR II WALK AT A GLANCE

Highlights	Luxembourg City's history during the Nazi Occupation.
Tour	on foot
Duration and length	1 hour and 2.5 km
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