

# UNCOVERING THE PAST: WORLD WAR II

OCCUPATION  
LIBERATION  
MEMORIAL PLACES

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On 10 May 1940, the German armed forces swept into the neutral Netherlands, Belgium 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, while the government exiled 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. By joining the allies, Luxembourg could maintain its independence. The country remained under German military administration until the 31 July 1940.

## UNCOVERING THE PAST: WORLD WAR II

Highlights	Luxembourg City's history during the Nazi Occupation.
Tour	On foot
Duration & Length	1 hour / 2.5 km
On your own	See this leaflet and on-site signage.
Guided tours with your personal guide	See this leaflet.
More information	<a href="http://secondeguerremondiale.public.lu">secondeguerremondiale.public.lu</a> <a href="http://luxembourg-city.com">luxembourg-city.com</a>



1 Place d'Armes



2 Grand Ducal Palace



3 Chamber of Deputies



4 Place de Clairefontaine



5 Cathedral "Notre-Dame de Luxembourg"



6 "Gëlle Fra"



7 Shoah Memorial

We begin our walk outside the Cercle Cité.

**1 Place d'Armes**

On 6 August 1940, this square was the setting for the first public appearance of Gauleiter Gustav Simon, the German head of the new civil administration. (CdZ). He was accompanied by 800 members of the German "Schutzpolizei" ("Schupos", municipal police). On the same day, the CdZ issued a language decree: "Luxembourg gibberish" was to be stamped out and the country to be "re-Germanised". French place names, street names, company names, signs, family names and given names were translated into German. Using the familiar words "merci", "bonjour" and "pardon" was forbidden and even wearing a beret was prohibited by law.

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

**2 Grand Ducal Palace**

During the Occupation, the Palace was seized and signed over to the City of Luxembourg as the new owner. The National Socialists regime misused it as a concert venue, inn and military social centre. Even an art gallery was planned. 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.

**3 Chamber of Deputies**

The head of the civil administration dissolved the democratic institutions of the Grand Duchy by decree in October 1940. The NSDAP's "Gaupropagandaamt" occupied the building that now houses the Chamber of Deputies.

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

**4 Place de Clairefontaine**

In the centre of Place de 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 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1939 of Luxembourg's independence) or the head of Grand Duchess Charlotte, cut from a coin. Throughout the Occupation, the exiled 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 daily Luxembourg bulletin from October 1943 onwards. On 14 April 1945, Charlotte returned home to a rapturous welcome from her people.

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

**5 Cathedral "Notre-Dame de Luxembourg"**

The Catholic Church remained the only "national" institution and became a refuge for many Luxembourgers during the Second World War. "Maria Consolatrix Afflictorum" (Mary Comforter of the Afflicted) was considered by many, along with the



8 "Kanounenhiwwel"



9 Avenue de la Liberté ("Nei Avenue")



10 "Rousegärtchen"



11 Villa Pauly



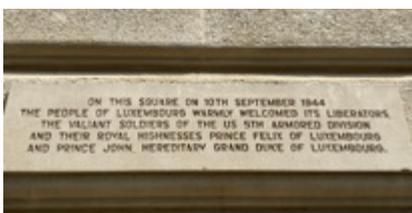
12 Place de Bruxelles



13 Ministry of Education



14 Hôtel de Ville (town hall)



15 10 September 1944

Grand Duchess, to be Luxembourg's protective mother figure. During the four years of occupation, despite numerous restrictions imposed by the German civil administration, the "Octave of Our Lady" remained highly popular among the population. In 1943, all pilgrimages were prohibited in the streets. Despite all the restrictions and bans, the Luxembourgers stubbornly held on to their traditions. After the liberation by the American in September 1944, the cathedral was targeted by the German "Vergeltungswaffe" V3, a new type of long-range artillery.

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

6 "Gëlle Fra"

On Place de la Constitution stands the "Monument du Souvenir" (memorial) known as the "Gëlle Fra" (Golden Lady), designed by the Luxembourgish sculptor Claus Cito. It was erected in honour of the Luxembourgish volunteers who fell while 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 21 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" (SIPO, security police) and "Sicherheitsdienst" (SD, 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 also serves as a memorial to the Luxembourgish volunteers who fought with the Allies in WWII and the volunteers who took part in UN missions. Today it symbolises freedom and resistance of Luxembourg people.

From Place de la Constitution, our walk continues along Boulevard Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the Shoah Memorial.

7 Shoah Memorial

In 2009, representatives of the Jewish community and historians, having conducted extensive research on the confiscation of Jewish property, petitioned the government to erect a monument in commemoration of the victims of the Shoah in Luxembourg City. On 17 June 2018, a monument to the victims of the Shoah was inaugurated on Boulevard Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in a location which marks the site of the country's first synagogue. The monument was created by the Franco-Israeli sculptor Schlomo Selinger.

We continue on Boulevard Franklin Delano Roosevelt all the way to the "Kanounenhiwwel".

8 "Kanounenhiwwel"

Since 1971, the "Monument National de la Solidarité Luxembourgeoise" 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 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 death toll in Luxembourg was horrifying. Approximately 2 % of the population perished. 3,963 Luxembourgers were arrested and imprisoned in Nazi jails or concentration camps. 791 of

them did not survive the war. Around 4,200 of Luxembourg's inhabitants were forcibly "resettled" to areas in the East of the Reich. 11,168 young Luxembourgers were forcibly conscripted into the Reich Labour Service (RAD), the War Relief Service (KHD) and the Wehrmacht. Of these, 2,752 were killed in action or reported missing. 3,614 young women were conscripted into the RAD and KHD. 58 of them were killed. Before the war, the Luxembourgish Company of Volunteers (463 men) was garrisoned on the Plateau du Saint-Esprit. On 4 December 1940, many of these men were compulsorily transferred to Weimar to be trained for duties in the German police force. 264 ended up in German prisons and concentration camps. 77 died or were killed in German uniform. 91 deserted, fought in the Maquis or joined the Allies. 14 were assigned to the Reserve Police Battalion 101 and thus became accomplices in the deportation and massacres of the Jewish population in the Lublin district. 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 (1945–1966).

Proceeding over the viaduct (known informally as the "Passerelle" or "Al Bréck"/"old bridge"), we arrive at Avenue de la Gare ("Al Avenue"/"old avenue"), which we follow in the direction of the railway station. We take the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 23 March 1848.

#### 09 Avenue de la Liberté ("Nei Avenue"/"new avenue")

Following Rue Jean Origer, we arrive at Avenue de la Liberté and turn right.

Build at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the boulevard leading from the old town to the railway station was named "Avenue de la Liberté" (Freedom Avenue). On 7 August 1940, the avenue was renamed "Adolf-Hitler-Straße" (Adolf Hitler Street). The Nazis and their Luxembourgish sympathisers held extravagant parades, 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 up Avenue de la Liberté in the direction of the Upper town.

#### 10 "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 after the "general strike" that took place on 31 August 1942. All across the country, protests broke out, after Gauleiter Gustav Simon announced the day before that German military service would be compulsory for all young Luxembourgers. Those born between 1920 and 1924 were called up immediately; followed by those born between 1925 and 1927. In connection with the riots that lasted until 2 September, the Gauleiter created an exceptional court ("Standgericht") where 21 people were sentenced to death and a further 45 were handed 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 ("Personenstandsaufnahme") carried out in Luxembourg on 10 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 commanded. On the opposite side of Avenue de la Liberté are the imposing head offices of the former central administration of the ARBED, today part of the State Savings Bank. The northern part of the building was occupied by the German civil administration created on 2 August 1940.

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

#### 11 Villa Pauly

The house no. 57 with its four round corner turrets is better known as Villa Pauly after its first owner Dr Norbert Pauly. It now houses the Luxembourg Resistance Foundation and the Foundation for the Memory of the Victims of the Shoah. From 1940 to 1944, the villa was used as the headquarters of the Einsatzkommando of the Security Police and the SD. The villa's basement was transformed into prisoner cells where numerous "Resistenzler" (Resistance members) were tortured. The Villa Pauly thus became the embodiment of brutal Nazi rule in Luxembourg. A bronze plaque in French and Luxembourgish on the villa's left gatepost commemorates all those tortured within its walls during the Nazi occupation. As the Gestapo's Jewish Commissioner also had his offices in the building, a plaque also commemorates the 1,300 killed Jewish inhabitants in Luxembourg.

We continue in the direction of Place de Metz, past the building of the State Savings Bank ("Spuerkeess"), and cross the Pont Adolphe ("Nei Bréck") to the left.

#### 12 Place de Bruxelles

The bridge is named after the first Grand Duke of the house of Nassau-Weilburg. 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 George S. Patton's U.S. 3<sup>rd</sup> Army as it fought its way from the beaches of Normandy to Bastogne in the Ardennes and the Battle of the Bulge. 32 of these stones were placed in Luxembourg. The first stone, standing on Place de Bruxelles, has been inaugurated by Hereditary Grand Duke Jean on 12 October 1947.

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

**Battle of the Bulge:** On 16 December 1944, German troops attacked in the Luxembourg and Belgian Ardennes for a final counter-offensive in the west. They succeeded in pushing back the American troops for three days. The final objective, the port of Antwerp, was not reached. The American troops defended the town of Bastogne, an important road junction. Patton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army from Lorraine finally came to the rescue, pushing through to Bastogne. The north of Luxembourg, the Oesling, was practically completely destroyed. This second liberation remains firmly anchored in the collective memory of the Luxembourgers.

#### 13 Ministry of Education

On the corner of Rue Notre-Dame and Rue Aldringen stands the building of the Ministry of Education, which occupies the site of a synagogue destroyed by the Nazis in autumn 1943. A discreet plaque on the Rue Notre-Dame façade indirectly commemorates the suffering of the Jewish community. Of the approximately 4,000 Jews living in Luxembourg, about 1,300 did not survive the war.

#### 14 Hôtel de Ville (town hall)

At Place Guillaume II ("Knuedler") is the town hall, former administrative seat of the appointed German mayor. After the liberation of Luxembourg in September 1944, the town hall served as the meeting place of the "Unio'n vun de Letzebuenger Freihetsorganisatio'nen" (Union of Luxembourgish Freedom Organisations). The "Unio'n" was formed on 23 March 1944 when three large Luxembourg resistance groups merged: the "LPL" ("Letzebuenger Patriote-Liga", or Luxembourgish Patriot League), the "LVL" ("Letzebuenger Volleks Legio'n", Luxembourgish People's Legion) and the "LRL" ("Letzebuenger Ro'de Le'w", Luxembourgish Red Lion). In the great hall on the first floor 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") on 10 September 1952. It is known as "Treaty of Luxembourg".

By passing through the "Passage de l'Hôtel de Ville" opposite the town hall, we go to Place d'Armes.

#### 15 10 September 1944

Four years later, on 10 September 1944, the city's inhabitants joyfully welcomed the U.S. 5<sup>th</sup> 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 building's main façade, a plaque commemorates the city's liberation.

