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VERTICAL LUXEMBOURG



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Photo: © Philippe de Brébant

La ville de Luxembourg

Une ville à travers des photographies ou à travers ce récit, qui propose des voyages dans la ville d'aujourd'hui et dans l'histoire, c'est une façon de relater le présent à l'épaisseur historique. Pour chacun de nous cette découverte est personnelle, intuitive, parfois conditionnée par une éducation professionnelle. Elle atteste par la beauté du paysage urbain, des matériaux, du détail d'exécution d'un élément architectural ou simplement capter l'atmosphère d'une rue et d'une place, c'est l'engagement certain que nous faisons en visitant la ville millénaire de Luxembourg. Ville ouverte, propre, soignée et construite à l'habille humaine, elle est à la fois verticale et horizontale. Au départ elle est conditionnée par sa topographie unique, escarpée, donc verticale, qui se présente par ses falaises raides, affichant des tonalités en dégradés de fils de gris. Ces pentes peuvent être déboulées de manière ingénieuse, de rangées serrées de moellons de pierres, comme du côté du plateau du Saint-Esprit à l'est, tout qu'on découvre - les barbacelles - parfois les falaises sont simplement recouvertes de végétations et on profite de la belle vallée de la Pétrouse ou les berges de l'Alzette. Ces deux cours d'eau sillonnent une belle vallée au-dessus de laquelle trône la ville millénaire luxembourgeoise.

Passer les ponts qui relient

Luxembourg est une ville comptant de nombreux ponts, qu'on appelle les casernes. Le vocabulaire luxembourgeois ou le post est un peu différent. À l'ouest, la plaine accueille des quartiers résidentiels.

Le pont Adolphe relie l'avenue de la liberté boudée d'une architecture de style haussmannien à la gare centrale quand il prend son appui du côté de la ville haute. Construit à la Belle Époque et considéré quasiment comme une merveille du monde, l'étrouveau de son ancrage en maçonnerie était en effet la plus grande jamais établie avant 1903. Cet ouvrage a été réalisé par l'ingénieur luxembourgeois Albert Rodange en collaboration avec le célèbre ingénieur français Paul Séjourné, qui a doté la ville de Constantine (Algérie) d'un pont remarquable le pont Adolphe, sur lequel circulent le tramway en 2022, vient d'être rénové en 2023. Il comporte déjà aujourd'hui une voie supplémentaire, une passerelle piétonne moderne, suspendue sous le tablier d'une longueur de 153 m et accessible exclusivement aux cyclistes et aux piétons. Les vues imprenables à travers les grandes arches du pont portent sur la belle architecture et l'architecture de la ville notamment sur la cathédrale Notre-Dame avec ses deux tours et sa flèche et le monument du souvenir composé d'un obélisque et surmonté d'une victoire appelée la « Colonne » à la fin du 19e siècle.

Le pont Grande-Duchesse Charlotte relie par un autre grand axe principal le plateau du Kirchberg à la ville haute. Ce pont à bœufilles de 355 mètres de longueur a été construit suivant les plans de l'architecte allemand Egon Jux en 1946.

Mentionnons un pont tout particulier, situé just au départ du chemin de la « corniche », **le pont du château** en gris rose et qui date de 1729. Il présente la curiosité technique d'être quatre mètres de long au lieu de deux et entre le rocher du Rock et la vieille ville. Couvrage avait permis aux soldats stationnés dans les casernes du Rock de passer ou retrancher rapidement sans monter au surface.

Un des endroits les plus romantiques de la ville se situe tout près du **pont de Steichen** ses regards s'immobilisent sous les regards de soleil. Le héros reconnaissable par son long nez et petit nez, l'ancienne abbaye de Neumünster transformée en centre culturel de renommée internationale, son beau toit mérité un retour, ainsi que l'église Sainte-Élisabeth qui comme la Vierge Noire à l'orient, une statue influencée par les sculpteurs Heinrich Füller et son fils Peter (1930-1999) qui ont révolutionné l'art gothique. À la Cour impériale de l'Empereur Charles IX, sous la direction de la maison des Luxembourg. En face, la belle promenade entre les villes basses entre elles, le Grand-Claire et le Pfaffenthal, sur un banc on peut prendre place à côté de la femme légendaire Melusine, qui se présente sous la forme d'une nymphe. Selon la légende elle avait été trahie par son mari Sigifride, qui l'avait épousée sans savoir que son bain en découvrant que son corps se terminait par une queue de poisson. À l'occasion de la fête des 1050 ans de la Ville, ce mythe du monde est représenté à travers la statue. Remise en forme des polyèdres de céramique de couleur rose, signe large fentes. On pourrait interpréter comme une allusion faite à la mondialisation qui s'opère en ce moment. Dans ce quartier des rives de l'Alzette.

Xavier Bertel, Cultural sites like the MUDAM (the Museum of Modern Art) in Kirchberg, designed by IMA, Pei, and the Casino - forum - art contemporary in Rue Notre-Dame are the standout contemporary art institutions in Luxembourg.

The statue of **Napoleon I**, although quite modest, placed in a corner niche of one of the houses of a charming street called Bissonvater in the Grand neighbourhood, recalls the arrival of the Emperor on 9 October 1804. Welcomed by the mayor, Napoleon politely refused the traditional presentation of the key to the city, which is protected by its patron, the Virgin Mary, consoling affliction after which its cathedral is called. Napoleon stopped in front of the thousand-year-old St. Michel Church, and passed near old houses like the «Bem Engel» or «Événement de Steller», which is characterized by a Gothic facade presided by arcades. Beware the hospitality of this house. It is pleasant to linger in the old town, which has become an art quarter thanks to the impact of the expanded National History and Art Museum, which was renovated in 2002 in line with the designs of the architect Christian Sauer, a Luxembourg designer. Next to this you can find contemporary art galleries and bistros, as well as some unusual spots like the «Schneidach».

The **Grand Ducs** of Luxembourg, who descended from the House of Habsburg, from the House of Habsburg, were acclaimed and welcomed in the 19th century in accordance with ancestral tradition. Ephemeral decorations such as the victory arches were erected with great pomp, accompanied with rejoicing on the part of the entire poor population, which lived at the time essentially off the land.

While touching on the subject of the victory arch, whose ephemeral raising was inspired by Roman architects, antiquarians will find a great collection of Roman and neoclassical pieces at the National Museum of History and Art. The masterpiece is a magnificent polychrome Roman mosaic of the nine muses, among them Calliope, who is the centre of the piece alongside Hermes, the prince of poets. The mosaic covers an area of about 40 m². It also has unique murals linked to it. The region was quite populated at the time of the Romans because of the importance of the city of Itern. The remains of that time are regularly found.

For our guides, the princes and kings who once visited Luxembourg, their main interest was the fortress. It had a central geopolitical role between two great territorial units, the Kingdom of France and the German Holy Roman Empire. Tensions, friction and wars were perpetually present. Before the fortification of Luxembourg was the state of the art in the sense that it was a site that was defensible and difficult to sack with its 23-m-long network of casemates in the main carved into the rock. This is without doubt why it was given the nickname «Gibraltar of the North» at the start of the 17th century. Luxembourg was considered impregnable.

Thanks to the dismantling of the fortifications, the city got a new role in Europe, that of a neutral. The country was able to evolve peacefully. The next historic step in its social and economic evolution was the development of its steel industry, then, during the second half of the 20th century, the development of its banking sector.

Due to its presence from the outset as a founder member of the European Union, Luxembourg was able to write a new chapter in its history, this one linked to its geographical position as the construction and development of European unity.

The festivals that entertain

The whole year is marked by traditions and festivals. Astrological signs can still be seen on the bronze ceilings of the ancient monks' refuge of St. Maximus as well as on the side gate of the cathedral, which indicates how our ancestors lived in symbiosis with the cycles of nature, demonstrated perfectly by the local festivals. Each area of the city organizes traditional events, like **Licite gon** or **Burgheessen** (Lundem) which signify the burials of the dead. The festival of **Bretzelsonnég** celebrates loaves, **Emaischen**, which takes place on Easter Monday in the fish market, is dedicated to pottery in particular to Reichenborn, which is the shape of birds. The **Octave** is a religious festival linked to pilgrimage to the patron of the city. It is the Octave of St. Anne, which is celebrated every two weeks. Fried fish is served. Then there is the **National Holiday** on 24 June. On the eve the people watch magnificent fireworks. In summer, the city puts on many free concerts in its squares or in the lower town in front of the Neomuseum Cultural Centre. **Schaubierfaer**, the biggest fair in the region, attracts more than two million visitors for three weeks around the feast of



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St Bartholomew (21 August) in this fair, founded in 1420, musicians round the streets of the city, clothed in the blue smocks of shepherds, playing the popular tune «Mammetschans». They come to the street with their sheep - «à Hämmer» - like that shown on the plaques on the fountain on Grand Rue, created by the Luxembourg artist Will Eddy. Lullaby there is the feast of St. Nicolas (**Neueschneidag**), which on 6 December brings presents to children, while the Christmas market, which is ramping up year after year in a city that lights up beautifully, lives as romantic or panoramic settings to take a stroll over or eat sausages in its booths.

The capital of Europe as it grows

Luxembourg, birthplace of Robert Schuman, one of the founding fathers of the European Union, became a seat of the European institutions in the 1950s. Opened in 1966, the **High Tower** (Hochhaus) was named after the tower of the father of the Caspien Tower and was designed by the Luxembourg architects Michel Moussa and Gaston Wiry. Erected in Kirchberg, with its 23 stories and height of 80 m it was for a long time the tallest and indeed only high-rise building in the country. You might see similarities with the Freix tower in Milan. Just next to it is the **Robert Schuman Building**, which still houses the secretariat of the European Parliament. The building is linked to the enlargement of the European Communities from six to nine member states. The heart of the building is a historic hall. This great hall in the first chamber reserved exclusively for members of the European Parliament. The great hall has been kept in its 1950s style in terms of architecture, décor and construction techniques. It is characterized essentially by a monumental work made up of an abstract bas-relief in zinc, which was designed by the Italian artist collective Gruppo N2: Nerone Cucchielli & Giancarlo Piretti.

Robert Schuman is famous due to his nomination as the first president of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. His childhood home in Claissen, where he was born in 1886, is located just a 100 or so metres from Europe Square. We should also recall the groundbreaking declaration of the idea of a European community guaranteeing peace, given on 9 May 1950 in Paris. In 2016, the institution of that day as an official public holiday in Luxembourg was celebrated in a ceremony, which took place in the garden of his childhood home.

Was it just simple coincidence that a little pond in which a fish-tail diver, referencing the legendary Melusine, could be found at the foot of tower where the Council of Ministers of the European Union meet regularly (the European Convention Centre)? Was this allegory in the pond undoubtedly a signal to install the old valves in a neighbourhood that was about to take things in the region? This pond is the given way to the **Luxembourg Philharmonie**, which was designed by the French architect Christian de Portzamparc and opened in 2005, and which is an architectural masterpiece as a temple of music, with 1500 seats in its large auditorium.

The third institution which has been definitively headquartered in Luxembourg since the Edinburgh Agreement (1994), is the **Court of Justice of the European Union**. On 19 September 2019 its third tower, coloured black and gold, was officially opened, next to the recent gold towers designed by the French architect Dominique Perrotti in collaboration with Jean Petit Architects and SRA Architects. They have been built in the wake of a true suburban palace which was opened in 1972. The building is surrounded by a glass ring and its original metal-structure design was drawn up by the architects Amargé, Savio Est, and Comenius.

More inaugurations followed with the opening of the **National Library** of Luxembourg on the Kirchberg Plateau on 30 September 2019, which was designed by the architect firm Bolles & Wilson based in Münster. It is easily accessible from the historic centre of the city by the new tramway. It is 15.50 m high with a wide triangular top that stands out from the roof, flanked by a corner tower that marks this building out.

If there is a district that is rapidly changing with contemporary architecture - such as the Octette Building with its urban window, by the Luxembourg architect Paul Brett - which never stops growing, it has to be the **Bar de Gasperich**. The new water tower, also designed by the architect Paul Brett, is a simple and elegant shape covered in white-coding that allows night lighting to pass through. This cylindrical tower was designed by the Luxembourg firm Clemens and went into service in March 2018. The football and rugby stadium



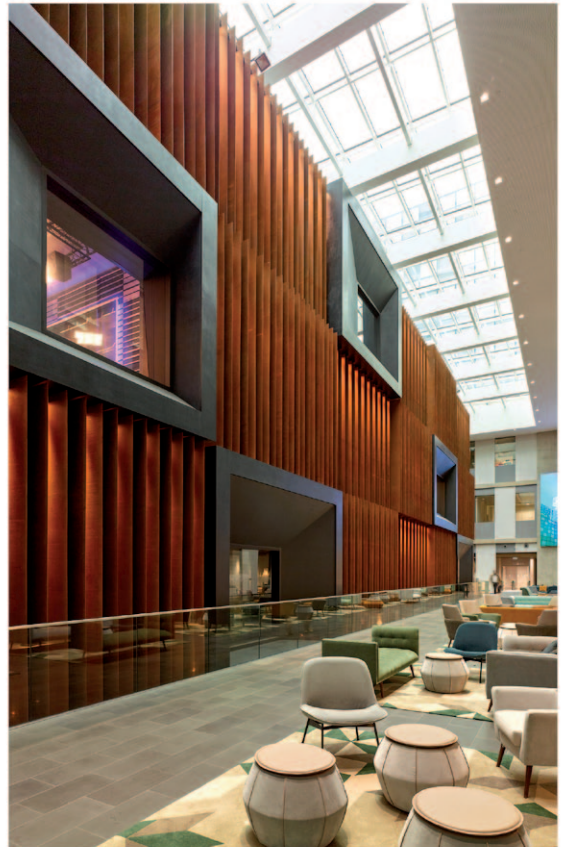
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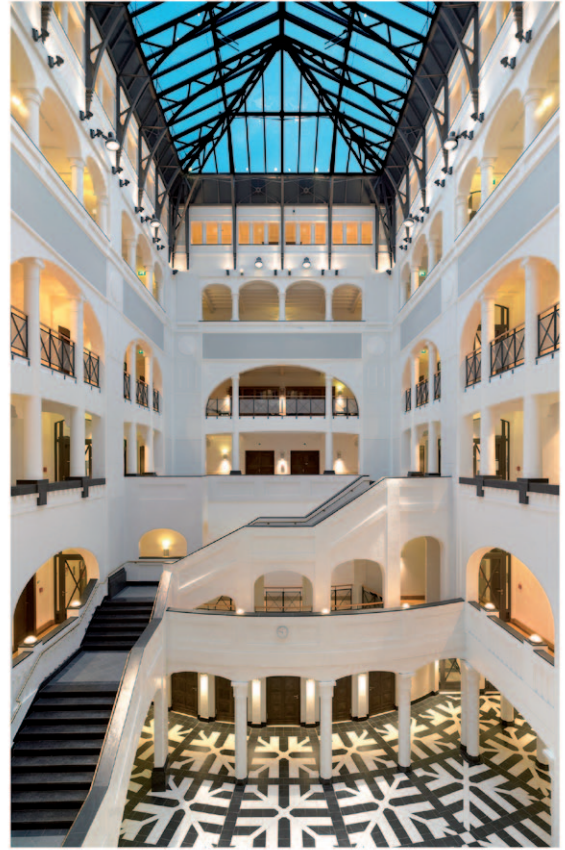
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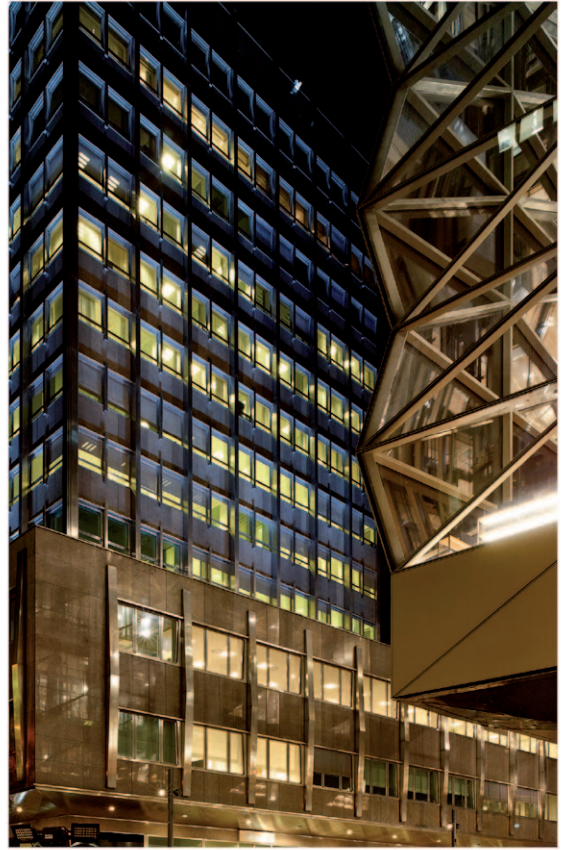
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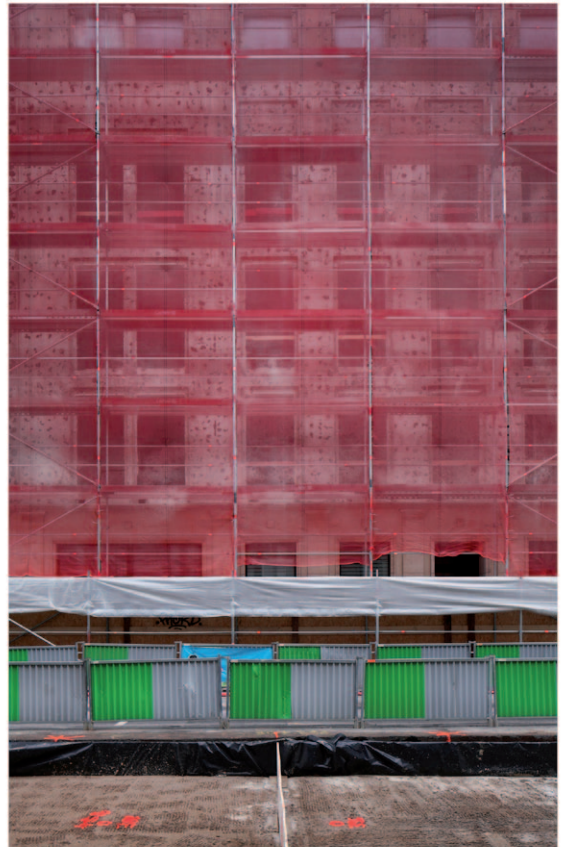
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