Travelling through Luxembourg

FORESTS, ROCKS, RIVERS AND VINEYARDS

By Mohammed Reza Amirinia

CATEGORY: TRAVEL DESTINATIONS



MULLERTHAL REGION
"Little Switzerland"

ECHTERNACH ABBEY
The oldest town in Luxembourg

SCHENGEN ACCORDS
Signed in 1985

THE BITTER YEARS
Edward Steichen

SMALL BUT VERY DIVERSE

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Luxembourg is small but its rich heritage heart beats fast in these modern times.

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Vineyards in part of the Moselle region

I arrived late in the evening and stayed in my hotel in the Kirchberg neighbourhood which is in the north of the city. I loved seeing the old town again, visiting the palace, museums, churches, shopping streets and beautiful squares and spending time in trendy cafes and restaurants.

However I decided to skip the city tour and spend more time in other regions to get a wider sense of what makes this small, but very diverse country.

I began my exploration by going to the Mullerthal region in the north of the capital in an area called "Little Switzerland." I could straightaway see and feel why the region has been given this nickname as it impresses with its vast forest vistas and the best hiking tracks along pine trees and rocky formations that you will find in the country.

I

LITTLE SWITZERLAND



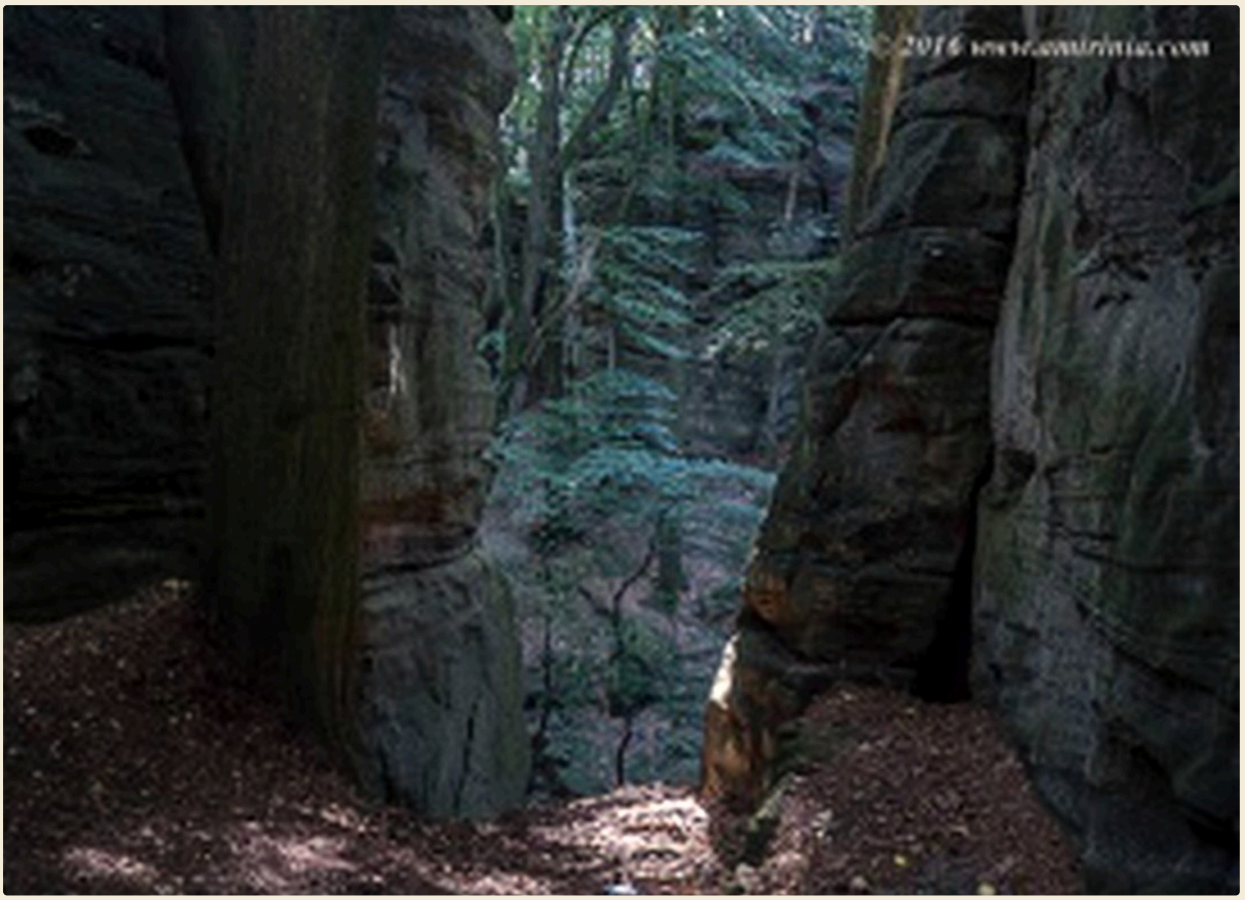
the Abbey of Echternach

On our way to trails in the region we arrived in Echternach close to the German border, the regional capital of Mullerthal as well as being the oldest town in Luxembourg. It has all the charms of a countryside village with stone buildings and colourful houses, the outsides of which are decorated with hanging flower baskets.

The small commune was established in the 7th century around the Abbey of Echternach, which dominates the town. It is here that you will find the tomb of St Willibrod who founded the abbey in the crypt of the basilica. You will also find, nearby, a war memorial for allied forces that fought during World War II against Germans in Echternach.

II

THE ROCK CLIMBING AREA OF WANTERBACH



the rock climbing area of Wanterbach

I continued my journey to Berdorf where the sandstone cliff, Wanterbach, is located. This is an area of rock-climbing but available only to members of climbing associations. So I took a path in the woodland next to a camping site to get to the cliff. After a short walk along a path next to a camping site we arrived at the top of the cliff which was decorated with the roots of trees. From there I had a great panoramic view of the green forest beneath our feet, looking at the beautiful velvet landscape of the Mullerthal in the far horizon.

I stepped down through a narrow gap criss-crossing a maze of high rocks. It was very narrow across some trenches and there were many dark and drafty tunnels to pass through before getting to a wooded valley. Rocks had been cut neatly by environmental conditions over time, creating an amazing ecological environment. The green moss-grown rocks are perfect for climbing to the peak of these sandstone cliffs.

III

THE WHEEL OF THE MOULIN DE HERINGEN WATER MILL



the wheel of the Moulin de Heringen water mill

As I entered the woodland, my heart stilled to the peace and tranquility of a silent and picturesque scene which was only occasionally broken by the sounds of birds.

My journey continued along another track and, after a while, I reached a small waterfall. Finally the restored seventeenth century Moulin de Heringen water mill came into view. It is now a visitor centre providing information about regional trails and hire equipment. The visitors can see the functions of the old mill's water wheel which was used for grinding flour. The mechanical gears and stones to grind the flour are exhibited in the centre and in the basement next to the wheel. Heringer Millen Brasserie and restaurant behind the mill is a good place to relax and enjoy traditional local food.

After lunch, I visited the ruins of the eleventh century, medieval Beaufort Castle located in a valley. An impressive fortification it is built on rock and protected by a ditch. Next to the ruins is the seventeenth century renaissance or "new" castle of Beaufort, which is intact and has been inhabited since 1649. Both old and new castles have their own unique charm and characters. As I walked through the rooms in the ruins next to the stone pillars looking through windows opening onto breathtaking landscapes, I imagined how life would have been hundreds of years ago. Walk further and you will see a chapel in the castle and a torture room in the lower floors.

IV

THE EUROPEAN MUSEUM IN SCHENGEN



the European Museum in Schengen

Despite a long day, I was determined to explore the Moselle region in the south east of Luxembourg, a fertile valley with fruit tree plantations and steep vineyards perfect for wine-growing. Here there are beautiful walking trails along the hillsides and banks of the Moselle River and, apart from forming a natural border with Germany, provide locals with many opportunities to take a complete break from their offices.

The small village of Schengen on the Moselle River is a largely unknown wine village which only became better known after the signing of the Schengen Accords in 1985. The historic treaty initially brought five European countries together by removing all border controls among them.

The European Museum in Schengen, next to where the agreement was signed on a boat, exhibits the information about the cause and impact of the agreement on Europe. It is closed at the moment for refurbishments but will re-open next year.

I ended my discovery of Moselle by visiting the Biodiversum which is close to the nature reserve of Haff Réimech. This is known for the sheer variety of birds that flock and nest here as well as diverse range of flora and fauna. Visitors can observe samples of all kinds of vegetation and wildlife exhibited on two floors of the museum and learn about the history of the nature reserve. It was late in the evening and I regret not having time to go on a tour of this highly recommended reserve.

V

THE RED ROCKS REGION



The Edward Steichen exhibition of photographs, The Bitter Years.

The next day, I headed towards the Red Rocks region in the south of Luxembourg and arrived in the small town of Dudelange near French border to visit the exhibition of The Bitter Years by Edward Steichen. The permanent exhibition is located in an old Water Tower complex, which used to be a steel mill, next to the Centre National de l'Audiovisuel (CNA), which holds Luxembourg's film, music and photographic archives.

Steichen's collection features over 200 images as part of a photographic project looking at rural America during an intense period of the Great Depression between 1935 and 1943. A number of other photographers also participated along with Steichen to document and portray to the world the ongoing crisis in America, which caused suffering for many families. The collection was curated in New York in 1962 and is now part of world photographic history.

The Red Rocks region got its name from the red metal substances extracted from the rocks in the area, which boosted the success of the steel industry in Luxembourg during the period of industrialisation. Today, the former industrial sites characterise a new identity combining technology and culture in a new educational environment.

Today, visiting industrial heritage sites has become more appealing to visitors. The Belval industrial complex is now a city with a university attached.

The furnaces are now on tourist itineraries. They will be on mine when I return.



The striking architecture of the Biodiversum

PLAN YOUR JOURNEY

Today, the Schengen Area unites 26 countries under one single border.

For more about Luxembourg, go to www.visitluxembourg.com.

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