



Dan Castiglia

A slower pace of Luxembourg life

The Luxembourg Ardennes, also known as Éislek in Luxembourgish and Ösling in German, is the hilly, forested northern third of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Unlike the relatively flat rest of the country, it offers steep river valleys, plateaus and hilltop medieval chateaux (castles).

There are also sites commemorating Battle of the Bulge and Allied liberation of Luxembourg in WWII.

The Luxembourg Ardennes offers the chance to stroll picturesque historic small towns including Vianden, Esch-sur-Sûre and Clervaux.

With the region an easy 60-minute drive from Luxembourg City, it offers the chance to marry the two in a contrasting short break to fascinating a small country.

(See also : AllWays leading to Luxembourg City : www.allwaystraveller.com****)

Ashley Gibbins
Commissioning Editor
AllWays traveller



Visit Éislek



Pancake! Photographie



Visit Éislek

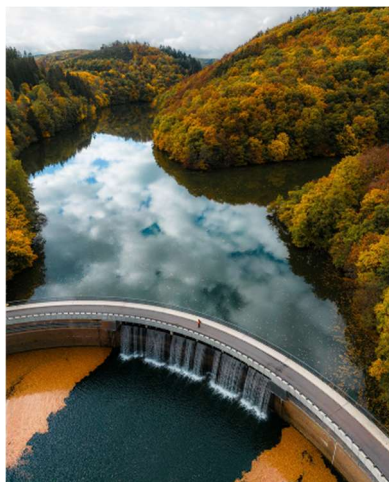
Discovering the Luxembourg Ardennes

Though easy to get to from Luxembourg City, its Ardennes region is a world away

By Ashley Gibbins



Visit Eislek



Giulio Gröbert



Alfonso Salgueiro



Chateau d'Urselt

The Chateau d'Urselt

It was then I happened, by chance, to come across the Chateau d'Urselt, a boutique hotel just outside the small town of Clervaux, in the Luxembourg Ardennes.

Taking a closer look I discovered this historic listed building has been completely restored and looked absolutely delightful (See Ann's review below).

With Chateau d'Urselt pencilled in for our three-night trip to the region, one hopes there will be enough to do and see.

Visiting these three castles would also allow us to take in the small towns that surround them and to enjoy what looked like stunning countryside found here.

We were sorted.

<https://www.visitluxembourg.com/destinations/regions/eislek>

<https://www.luxembourg-city.com/en/about-luxembourg-city/surroundings/the-ardennes-and-their-natural-parks>

There are any number of reasons one decides to visit a destination for the first time.

It may be personal recommendation from friends or colleagues who have been there or a particular interest in the history, wine and gastronomy one finds there.

Other destinations offer the chance to take in particular activities, maybe walking or hiking, skiing or mountain biking. Or, of course, mere happenstance, as was the case with our short visit to the Luxembourg Ardennes.

Ann and I had decided to add Luxembourg City to our series of *AllWays leading* features to European capitals and, having locked this in, we were keen to explore a little more of this not very large country.

The castles

As we were staying in a castle, Ann and I decided to take a look at the other castles one can visit in the Luxembourg Ardennes.

We discovered Vianden Castle, one of the largest of European castles is Luxembourg's major tourist attraction.

Château de Clervaux, has the UNESCO listed *The Family of Man* photographic exhibition and the Battle of the Bulge Museum.

And there is also Bourscheid Castle with its round towers, standing on a hilltop 150 metres above the Sûre river.

Getting there

Landing at Luxembourg Findel Airport, we found the getting through passport control and baggage claim to be speedy, efficient and hassle free.

As was picking up our Europcar, at the airport, locking google maps into its navigation system and driving to Chateau d'Urselt in just over an hour.

The LuxembourgPass

Purchasing a *LuxembourgPass* allows one to gain free or reduced entry to attractions and activities throughout the country, including those we visited in the Luxembourg Ardennes.

<https://www.visitluxembourg.com/luxembourgpass>



The castles dominating landscape and history

Three castles reveal the role played by castles in the Luxembourg Ardennes

Château de Clervaux



With the small town of Clervaux a five-minute drive from our hotel, the Château de Clervaux (Clervaux Castle) was the obvious choice for our first afternoon in the region.

Originally dating back to the 12th century, the castle suffered severe damage in December 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge, the final major German offensive on the Western Front during World War II.

After the War, the Luxembourg government of Luxembourg acquired the castle and undertook the complete restoration.

While the castle itself is impressive, a visit is all the more memorable for the *Museum of the Battle of the Bulge*, on one side of the building, and *The Family of Man* exhibition, on the other.

The Battle of the Bulge Museum



With its collection uniforms, weapons, equipment, rations and documents, *The Museum of the Battle of the Bulge* provides a sombre window into the dark days of December 1944 and January 1945.

Particularly poignant are the photographs taken during the desperate defence of the town by US GIs and the destruction and sense of hope in its successful aftermath.



Following on from the museum are a display of 22 scale models of Luxembourg's castles.

<https://www.visitluxembourg.com/place/battle-of-the-bulge-museum-1944-45-wiltz>



The Family of Man

The Family of Man photographic exhibition is a genuinely moving experience and a 'must do' when here.

Created by Edward Steichen and staged for the first time at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1955 and, after visiting museums worldwide, it found a permanent home at Clervaux Castle since 1994.

It comprises the display of 503 photographs by 273 photographers from 68 countries and was added to UNESCO's Memory of the World Register, in 2003, in recognition of its 'profound historical and cultural value as a visual declaration of global solidarity'.

The exhibition's juxtaposition of people living different lives in different places around the world, also makes one realise how similar we all are.

And each image offers its own glimpse into the lives of those portrayed.

We spent a compelling couple of hours at *The Family of Man* and could easily have spent twice the time entering the world of those lives portrayed.

<https://www.visitluxembourg.com/place/the-family-of-man>



Pancake! Photographie



Pancake! Photographie



Pancake! Photographie

The Luxembourg Pass gives free access to both *The Museum of the Battle of the Bulge* and *The Family of Man*.

The attractive town of Clervaux, surrounding the castle, has pedestrian streets lined with bars and restaurants.

<https://www.visitluxembourg.com/place/clervaux>

<https://www.visitluxembourg.com/place/the-family-of-man>

<https://www.unesco.org/en/memory-world/family-man>

Vianden Castle



Visit Eislek



Jengel Klasen



Christian Heuts

Vianden Castle sits majestically on top of a rocky ridge the Our River valley and the small town of Vianden itself.

There is free access with the Luxembourg Pass, although there is also the chance to get self-guided or personal group or individual tours, which come highly recommended.

These allow one to get a real appreciation of the castle, life as it was lived there and its political, social and economic importance to the region.

We were lucky enough to be given our tour by Christian Heuts, who is an absolute mine of information on Vianden and its heritage and history.



First stop on our tour was the 3D film presentation that revealed the castle through the centuries.

I know many people prefer to skip the film at attractions.

Not us, and with good reason.

The film is genuinely interesting and put the rest of the tour into real perspective.

As began our tour, Christian explained the Castle was built in Romanesque and Gothic style between the 11th and 14th centuries, on what had been a Roman fort,

Until the early 15th century, it served as the seat of the powerful Counts of Vianden, who maintained close political ties with the French royal family and the German imperial court.

The town of Vianden, in its shadow, grew up to 'service' the castle and, today, makes for a very pleasant stroll with a stop for 'a beer'.

Vianden Castle's status slowly diminished in the following centuries and in the early 19th Century it was allowed to fall into complete disrepair and ruin, with much of its stonework sold off.

In 1890 the castle came into the ownership of the Grand Ducal family, who transferred ownership to the Luxembourg state in 1977.

This allowed a major restoration programme to take place, and Vianden Castle became the fully restored medieval fortress it once was and the tourist attraction it is today.

Walking through the castle one gets to see the medieval rooms including the Knights' Hall, Byzantine Gallery, Gothic Chapel and the Count's private apartments.

From the battlements one has panoramic views of the Our Valley below.

The castle also stages an annual calendar of concerts and special events including the medieval festival every July.

<https://www.visitluxembourg.com/place/vianden-castle>

Vianden



Pancake! Photographie



Dietrich Hub

After a visit to Vianden Castle there's the chance to take in the delightful small town of Vianden itself, which sits on the banks of the Our River.

There is a fine riverside walk that can get you into the scenic valley.

Also in the town is a chairlift that gets you up to a hilltop overlooking the town and castle and where one can enjoy a beer and other refreshments while taking in the spectacular views.

<https://www.visitluxembourg.com/place/chairlift-vianden>

Victor Hugo Museum

Victor Hugo lived in Vianden for a short while and his Museum focuses on the life and works of the author of *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* and *Les Misérables*.

There's Victor Hugo's room with original furnishings along with original artefacts

<https://www.visitluxembourg.com/place/victor-hugo-house-literary-museum>

Bourscheid Castle



sanfai.voyager

Bourscheid Castle, with its round towers, sits in quiet reflection on a hillside high above the Sûre river.

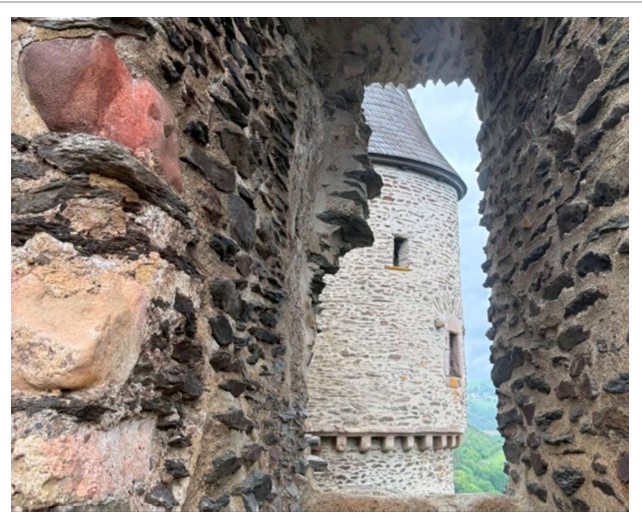
The castle was first built in the 10th century and extended during the 14th and 15th centuries, when the circular wall and six Gothic towers and watchtowers were added.

The Lords of Bourscheid, who lived in the castle at this time, were among the most influential knightly families in the region, who fought alongside the Duke of Luxembourg

The now ruined castle is classified as an historical monument and run by the Luxembourg state.

<https://www.visitluxembourg.com/place/bourscheid-castle>

<https://www.castle-bourscheid.lu/wp5/en/>



Panoramic Platform Burfelt

Spending an hour or so at Bourscheid Castle also gave us plenty of time to get to the Belvédère Burfelt panoramic platform, in the Upper-Sûre Natural Park

It provides an outlook with stunning views over the Upper Sûre reservoir and surrounding countryside.

There are a also number of trails to and around the platform that provide the chance to 'stretch one's legs' and to get a real feel for the walking, hiking and biking opportunities in the Luxembourg Ardennes.

<https://www.visitluxembourg.com/place/panoramic-platform-belvedere>

Parking :

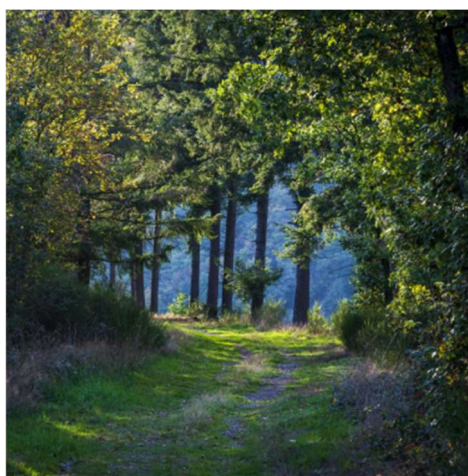
<https://maps.app.goo.gl/8HfdBtrH9TVkVqCv8>



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The chance to get out and about

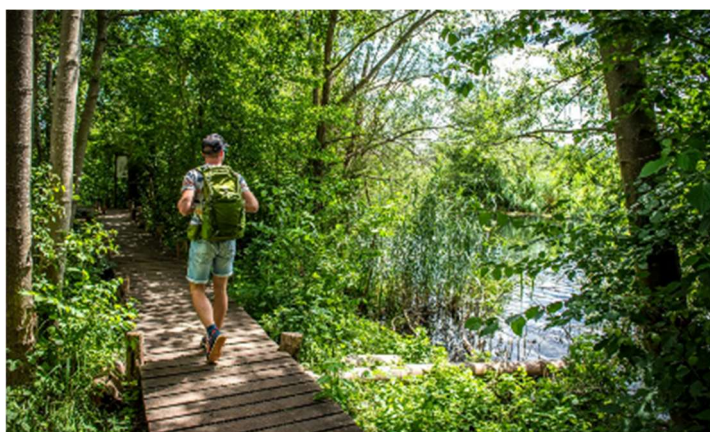
The Luxembourg Ardennes offers a tremendous range of walking, hiking and cycling opportunities



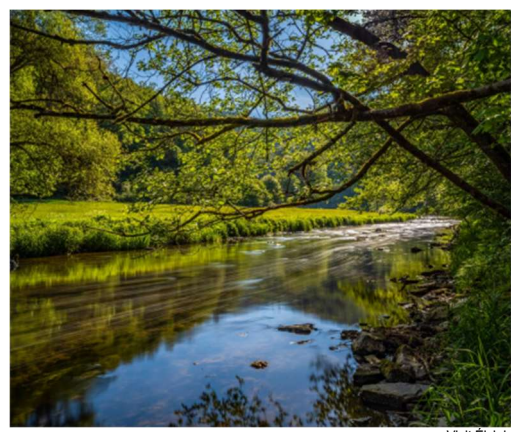
Alfonso Salgueiro



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Thomas Finkle



Alfonso Salgueiro

Our short time in the Luxembourg Ardennes was enough to get a feel for the opportunity to explore this region on foot or by bike.

We met many who were doing just that, including a couple from the Netherlands who taking advantage of the hilly terrain not found in the own flat country.

Luxembourg offers free public transport to all and, with the excellent rail and bus network available, it makes travelling with rucksack's, walking poles and bikes very easy

The Luxembourg Ardennes (Éislek region) has some 200 hiking trails with routes through its deep valleys, along rocky ridges and in dense forests.

These range from offering an easy stroll through the woods to the more challenging trails for avid and bikers.

It's the chance to get well into the Our Nature Park or to take a leisurely stroll along Sûre river and also offers a slow travel way to get to the Clervaux, Vianden the Bourscheid castles.

<https://www.visit-eislek.lu/explore-nature/hiking-through-eislek>

Luxembourg hiking map : file:///C:/Users/ashle/Downloads/Hiking_map_2025.pdf



Château d'Urspelt

The historic Château d'Urspelt is a fully restored 18th-century castle set in Luxembourg's beautiful Our region.

By Ann Mealor

Refurbished and decorated to a very high standard, the white walled chateau with its 'fairy tale' turrets, arched windows and pretty, central courtyard is a grand yet homely hotel.

Designated a National Monument, it is a blend of modern luxury and heritage, having played its part in The Battle of the Bulge in 1944.

As we made our way to reception, admiring the well-cut lawn (I saw the robot mower in action) and the finely shaped and trimmed hedging, you couldn't help but feel good about the place.

Walking along the (all-weather) red carpet towards the main entrance, I had high expectations of what lay behind the heavy oak door, which opened automatically for us as we approached.

Well trained and friendly staff greeted us in the cosy reception hall, checked us in and took our luggage.

As we had arrived early, due to the very easy drive from the airport, we relaxed in the very comfortable Library lounge for an hour. Here we had a coffee and browsed through an interesting selection of books, before setting off to explore the region.

A castle room

Late afternoon, on returning from our travels, we were shown to our Castle room in the main part of the chateau overlooking the picturesque courtyard.

It was large and airy, elegantly furnished in soothing, earthy tones with splashes of colourful crimson. The natural limestone bathroom was equipped with a powerful walk-in shower and luxurious Nuxe toiletries.

Bathrobes and slippers were laid out on the chair, ready for use in the Spa.



Our hospitality tray included a selection of teas, Nespresso coffee pods and biscuits.

The Luxembourgers like a sweet treat with their hot drinks, a custom I very much approved of and enjoyed.



Dining at the Château

The main dining room at the Château is stunning. Glittering chandeliers hang from a high, oak beamed vaulted ceiling; starched, white linen covers the tables; polished wine glasses and silver cutlery sparkle in flickering candlelight and waiters weave swiftly between diners, carrying plates of mouthwatering delights to the gentle hum of contented chatter.

As we perused the three course menu we sipped a glass of top-quality Luxembourg crémant, and savoured a silky, smoked salmon canape topped with a delicate, green pea shoot - compliments of the chef.

I started with the Seafood Carbonara, a dish filled with shrimps, clams and squid. Ashley had asparagus topped with a poached egg and parsley oil. Both were excellent.

For our main course, we both chose the seared sea bass in a lobster sauce served on a bed of fregola cooked in squid ink. Decorated with colourful, edible flowers it looked a picture on our plates and tasted just as good.

We left room for dessert which was not to be missed.

After much deliberation, we went for the 'Carrot Garden' - carrot, chocolate and luscious vanilla ice cream - an unlikely pairing - but it worked as did the Pistachio entremets - a creamy mousse with a liquid cardamom centre and a crunchy pistachio exterior.



It looked and tasted delightful - a green dome topped and surrounded by orange edible flowers.

The efficient, considerate service, careful presentation, creativity and mix of flavours made this a wonderful gourmet experience from start to finish.

Breakfast

Breakfast at the Château is a morning feast worth getting up early for. Give yourself time to linger and plan your menu, with so much on offer, it's hard to know where to start.

I wanted to try everything, but sadly knew that was impossible. After finding a table, I went to take a closer look at my options.

On the cold buffet was sliced pineapple, melon, berries and passion fruit - all incredibly sweet; smoked salmon, cheeses, sliced meats and all the condiments; on the hot plates were scrambled eggs, bacon, sausages, hard and soft-boiled eggs.

There was a selection of crusty breads, rolls and homemade jams and gateaux - donuts, coconut macaroons, chocolate brownies, banana bread and apple cake, plus honey from the Chateau's own hives.

Pastries included *pain au chocolat* and buttery croissants. There was a juicer with large pieces of chopped fruit to make your own smoothies, or if you preferred, you could help yourself to a glass of crémant.

It goes without saying that coffee, teas, cereals, yoghurts, nuts, seeds, olives, tomatoes were all available too.



It was the perfect way to fuel up for a day of walking and touring the Our region.

Nuxe Spa

The Nuxe Spa is beautifully designed and time spent unwinding in its saunas, steam rooms and whirlpools makes for a very peaceful morning or afternoon.

There is a grotto, a series of small underground caves with coloured lighting and waterfalls that can be explored at leisure, with places tucked away to sit and relax enroute before reaching the massage jets at the end.

Guests pay a fee to access the Spa, but if you have a treatment, use of the Spa is included.

I decided to have a 45-minute Essential Facial which included an aromatic facial scrub and a very relaxing massage expertly performed by Jessica.

The treatment room was lit by candles, soothing music was playing in the background and the bed was warm and comfortable.

Hot face towels were applied to be my face throughout the treatment and the massage with neroli oil was thorough as well as relaxing - it was one of the best facial massages I have had.

Following my treatment, I sat and chilled out with a herbal tea in front of the firepit in one of the many tranquil rest areas before heading back to my room fully relaxed.

<https://www.chateau-urspelt.lu/en>



Luxembourg City sets the bar very high

Luxembourg City is the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg's thriving, cosmopolitan capital that is the benchmark for a short city break

This small constitutional monarchy, is very much heart and soul European, being bordered by Belgium, France, and Germany and as a founding member of the European Union.

The City's status one of the three official seats of the European institutions, along with Brussels and Strasbourg, makes it a progressive, 'international' city.

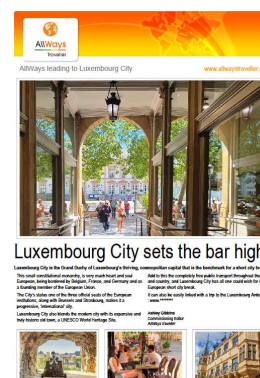
Luxembourg City also blends the modern city with its expansive and truly historic old town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Add to this the completely free public transport throughout the city, and country, and Luxembourg City has all one could wish for in a European short city break.



More information

<https://www.luxembourg-city.com/en>



(See also : AllWays leading to the Luxembourg City :
<https://www.allwaystraveller.com/allways-features/luxembourg-city-welcomes-the-world>

AllWays leading to the Luxembourg Ardennes



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More information :

<https://www.visitluxembourg.com/destinations/regions/eislek> and <https://www.luxembourg-city.com/en/about-luxembourg-city/surroundings/the-ardennes-and-their-natural-parks>

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AllWays traveller is the consumer travel magazine from the International Travel Writers, providing independent travellers with views of the world from Alliance travel journalists.

www.allwaystraveller.com



The International Travel Writers Alliance is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.

www.itwalliance.com



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