

# Around the Grand Duchy



Hop, skip or jump into Luxembourg proper – everywhere is fabulously accessible from the capital.

The Ardennes, the northern region, is spectacular country. Nestled in river valleys throughout this area are beguiling towns and villages such as Vianden, Clervaux and Esch-sur-Sûre, while at almost every second turn a medieval castle, like the magnificent Château de Bourscheid, looms larger than life through the clouds.

Relive fairytales in the Müllerthal, an enchanting pocket of forested land northeast of Luxembourg City. This almost primeval landscape is fab for hikers, and there's no better base than Echternach, an old Christian centre with a strong sense of its past. Cyclists too will find Echternach a superb base for exploration, with flat riverside bike paths linking it with towns and villages along the River Sûre.

The Gutland, a heavily farmed area immediately north of Luxembourg City, is home to Diekirch and its famous war museum. Here it's easy to get a feel of life during Luxembourg's World War II occupation. This bleak period in history came to an end with the Battle of the Ardennes (also known as the Battle of the Bulge) during the deathly cold winter of 1944–45.

For something considerably lighter, tickle your tastebuds with bottles of bubbly or fruity white wines made in the Moselle Valley, one of Europe's smallest wine regions. Remich, with its rock-hewn cellars, is the place to start.

The Grand Duchy's southwest corner is home to the bustling city of Esch-sur-Alzette, one of the country's chief nightlife destinations, and its burgeoning satellite suburb, Belval.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Medieval Break** Towers in the old Christian town of Echternach (p291)
- **Enchanted Forests** Hikes in the Müllerthal (p290)
- **Castles & More** Vibrant Vianden (opposite)
- **Chill-Out Experience** The ruined Château de Bourscheid (p286)
- **Wining** The Moselle Valley (p293)
- **Artistic Journeys** Clervaux's chanting monks and 'Family of Man' (p287)
- **Wartime Memories** Diekirch's Musée National d'Histoire Militaire (p289)
- **Cycling** The Sûre from Echternach (p291) or Diekirch (p289)



## LUXEMBOURG ARDENNES

Expect highs and lows in the Grand Duchy's northern region – winding valleys with fast-flowing rivers cut deep through green tablelands crowned by castles. Of the three main towns, Clervaux, in the far north, is the most easily accessible by train. Vianden, in the east, is the most visited, while western Wiltz is best timed for its international performing arts festival.

### VIANDEN

pop 1600

This is Luxembourg at its most touristy, and understandably so. Round a bend in the road and before you rises the impeccably restored medieval castle of Vianden, framed by forest and shrouded in mist. If this doesn't bring back childhood tales of princes and princesses, baddies and beasts, nothing will.

Vianden's picturesque location – nestled in the valley of the Our River – has made it a summer beehive. On weekends the town buzzes with German, Belgian and Dutch visitors soaking up the village ambience at terrace *cafés* along Grand Rue – the steep, narrow main street. At times the bustle is too much (avoid Sundays in summer when motorcycle troops throttle through town fraying nerves and oscillating eardrums) but mostly it's not so chaotic.

Vianden's **tourist office** (☎ 83 42 57 1; www.tourist-info-vianden.lu; 1a Rue du Vieux Marché; ☹ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat Apr–Aug, 9am–noon & 1–5pm Mon–Fri Sep–Mar) is down by the river, next to the bridge over the Our. Internet (per hr €2) is available.

### Sights & Activities

Looming above all else is the famed **château** (☎ 83 41 08 1; www.castle-vianden.lu; Grand Rue; adult/child €5.50/2; ☹ 10am–4pm Nov–Feb, 10am–5pm Mar & Oct, 10am–6pm Apr–Sep). The oldest part dates to the 11th century, although a much older Roman fort is thought to have once occupied the craggy outcrop.

In the 12th century the castle was the residence of the counts of Vianden, who reigned over the town and surrounding lands. They lost control of it in 1264 following an inheritance dispute with the rival House of Luxembourg. In 1417 the castle was absorbed by the Nassau dynasty; however, they abandoned it as a residence, considering it of little worth. Finally,

in 1820, during King William I of Orange-Nassau's reign, the castle was sold to a local merchant, who pulled it down bit by bit and sold almost everything off. What remained fell into ruin until 1977 when ownership was transferred from the Grand Ducal family to the State, which initiated a long-term restoration program. The inside now houses tastefully decorated period rooms, including the massive Counts' Hall and Banqueting Hall.

To reach the castle, either walk up Grand Rue or jump on the **télésiège** (chairlift; ☎ 83 43 23; 39 Rue du Sanatorium; adult/child return €4.50/2.25, one way €2.75/1.50; ☹ 10am–6pm Easter–Oct, closed Mon Easter–May & Oct). It climbs a hill behind the château, and takes off from the lower bank of the river at the end of Rue Victor Hugo. From the open-air café at the top, it's possible to follow a forest track down to the castle entrance. Kids love this adventure.

Meander down Grand Rue to find a pathway (off to the left) to a well-restored **belfry** dating to 1603. It's closed to visitors, but the viewing platform affords an excellent town vista.

Further down Grand Rue is **Musée d'Art Rustique et Musée des Poupées et du Jouet** (☎ 83 45 91; 96 Grand Rue; adult/child €2.50/1.50; ☹ 11am–5pm Easter–Oct, closed Mon Easter–May & Sep–Oct). This museum is home to a mixed bag of 'rustic arts', furniture, kitchen utensils, dolls, toys and other memorabilia associated with the history of the town.

Back at the river is the **Maison de Victor Hugo** (☎ 26 87 40 88; www.victor-hugo.lu in French; 37 Rue de la Gare; adult/child €4/2.50; ☹ 11am–5pm Easter & Jul–Aug, 11am–5pm Sat & Sun May–Jun & Sep–Oct). Vianden was briefly home to author Victor Hugo during his 19-year exile from France and the town makes much ado about the three months he stayed here in 1871. He lived in a small brown waterfront house that reopened as a neat little four-storey museum in 2002. Opposite the house is a bust, created by Rodin, of the famous writer.

A new hop-on hop-off **bus** (☎ 021 70 85 72; www.luxembourg.co.uk/viandenlakesandcastles/; admission €8; ☹ Tue–Sun Easter–Sep) offers one-hour regional tours to old copper mines and a low-energy village. The tourist office has the timetable.

For **hiking** information pick up the local walking map (scale: 1:20,000; €3) from the tourist office. It also sells a booklet describing 17 local walks; one of the most popular is to the Bildchen Chapel (about one hour).

**Bike rental** is available from **Location de Vélos** (☎ 26 87 41 57; Pavillon de la Gare; half-/full day €10/14; ☹ Jul–Aug) at the bus station. You'll need good muscles to climb the steep hills around Vianden.



Young kids will enjoy the small riverside **playground** (Rue du Vieux Marché), about 500m past the tourist office. Older kids can test fitness levels at **Parc d'Aventures** (☎ 83 42 57 1; adult/child €10/6; ☹ Apr-Oct, closed Mon-Fri mid-Sep-Oct), located 1.5km from the castle along a forested track.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Camping de l'Our** (☎ 83 45 05; www.camping-our-vianden.lu in Flemish, French & German; 3 Route de Bettel; camp sites per adult/child/tent €4.50/2/5; ☹ closed Nov-Easter) Pleasant camping ground draped along the riverbank to the south of town.

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 83 41 77; www.youthhostels.lu; 3 Montée du Château; dm/s/d €17.50/29.50/45; ☹ closed late Dec-early Jan; ☒) In the shadow of the château (and a long 1km uphill walk from the bus station), the nondescript building shelters a modern hostel.

**Hôtel La Tourelle** (☎ 83 47 07; www.latourelle.lu; 41 Grand Rue; s/d from €40/59; ☹ Apr-Feb) Halfway up the main street. Some rooms have character – an exposed ceiling beam or four-poster bed – but others are ordinary. Ask to see a few.

**Hôtel Victor Hugo** (☎ 83 41 60; www.hotel-victor-hugo.lu; 1 Rue Victor Hugo; s/d €52.50/70; ☹ closed Dec-Easter) Opposite Hugo's house, this corner hotel was where the writer's girlfriend, Juliette Drouet, holed up during her 1871 visit. It's solid and predictable, with clean, functional rooms. The ground-floor bar can get very noisy.

**Hôtel Heintz** (☎ 83 41 55; www.hotel-heintz.lu; 55 Grand Rue; s/d from €65/80; ☹ Easter-Oct) Back in the Middle Ages, the Heintz was the inn and brewery of Trinitarian monks; today it's a bit like entering a cloister – all white with Gothic arches and a long passage to the re-

## TRAIN & BUS FARES

The fare system, valid for both bus and train travel, is simple: 1st/2nd class costs €2.25/1.50 for a short trip of about 10km or less (this ticket is valid for one hour) or €7.50/5 for an unlimited day ticket (known as a Billet Réseau). See p320 for more details.

ception out the back. While the rooms don't quite make the grade, all in all it's a delightful place, and the restaurant (mains €15 to €25) does superb local trout served in a white-wine sauce. Retreat to the tiny garden terrace for a quiet drink.

**Economat** (1 Rue du Sanatorium) This little supermarket, next to Hôtel Victor Hugo, has picnic supplies.

## Getting There & Away

To reach Vianden, take the Luxembourg City–Ettelbrück train (30 minutes, half-hourly) and then a local bus (30 minutes, 10 buses daily).

## ESCH-SUR-SÛRE

pop 240

Typical Esch-sur-Sûre rates as one of Europe's prettiest villages. Built on a rocky loop in the Sûre River off the Wiltz–Ettelbrück road, Esch is surrounded by soft distant hills that drop to steep cliffs as they reach the river. Cushioned in among all this is a true 'crumbly' – a ruined **castle** dating from 927 – around which visitors are free to wander. A new **audio-guide** (€4; in French & German) of the village and surrounding area is available from the Maison du Parc Naturel de la Haute Sûre (p286). A word of warning...summer day-trippers descend on Esch in droves – if possible, time a visit for early evening or out of season.

**Camping Im Aal** (☎ 83 95 14; fax 89 91 17; camp sites per adult/child/tent €5/1.50/5; ☹ Feb-Dec) is 800m from the village, right on the river, on the road towards Wiltz.

**Hôtel-Restaurant de la Sûre** (☎ 83 91 10; www.hotel-de-la-sure.lu; 1 Rue du Pont; s/d/tr from €33.50/67/100; ☹ closed mid-Dec-Jan; ☒) is a big place at the top of the village that caters to everyone – there are extra-long beds, nonsmoking rooms, family rooms and baby cots (€13 for the whole stay), vegetarian food and a garage for motorbikes (Dutch bikers love this place). The bar-restaurant area is nothing special, but the rooms are good. The restaurant (mains

## THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Hôtel Oranienburg** (☎ 83 41 53 1; www.oranienburg.lu; 126 Grand Rue, Vianden; s/d/ste from €55/84/130; ☹ Easter-mid-Nov) Arguably the town's most distinguished hotel-restaurant, the Oranienburg enjoys a prime sunny position at the base of the castle. The hotel's known for its gastronomic weekends – room, breakfast and two meals (€160 per person). Expect gilded mirrors and peachy paint jobs in most rooms, and regional cuisine like walnut salad and trout. And don't miss the homemade smoked ham – it's Vianden's best. Families are welcome (kids under two stay for free; from three to 12 years €15).

€13 to €22) is noted for its Gourmet vum Séi products (see below).

**Hôtel Beau-Site** (☎ 83 91 34; www.beau-site.lu; 2 Rue de Kaundorf; s/d without bath €55/75, s/d with bath from €70/96; ☹ Mar-Dec) is a riverside family-run hotel-restaurant. Décor-wise it's all very plain and old-fashioned, but you're here for the castle view, right?

**Hôtel Le Postillon** (☎ 89 90 33; www.lepostillon.lu; 1 Rue de l'Église; s/d €56/82; ☹ Feb-Dec) has a snug position on the bank of the Sûre underneath the restored tower of the old castle. It's comfortable enough, but the décor is drab.

To get here, take a bus from Ettelbrück (40 minutes, five daily) or from Wiltz (25 minutes, four daily).

## AROUND ESCH-SUR-SÛRE

West of Esch, the Sûre River was dammed in the 1960s to form Lac de la Haute Sûre, the country's largest lake (much of the Duchy's drinking water comes from here). Seven local communes have created the **Parc Naturel de la Haute Sûre**, a so-called 'natural park' that promotes environmental awareness, leisure and water activities (no motor boats allowed on the lake), as well as regional produce such as meat, cheese and honey. *Dinkel* (or spelt, as it's known in English), a long-forgotten grain, is also cultivated and used to make everything from organic bread to Simon Dinkel, a full-flavoured beer. Local restaurants supporting this produce will have a 'Gourmet vum Séi' label – try Hôtel-Restaurant de la Sûre (p285) in Esch-sur-Sûre and Hôtel-Restaurant La Diligence (see right) in Arsdorf.

The park's headquarters is the **Maison du Parc Naturel de la Haute Sûre** (☎ 89 93 31 1; www.natur-park-sure.lu in French & German; 15 Route de Lultzhausen;

museum adult/child €2/1.25; ☹ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Tue & Thu-Fri, 2-6pm Sat & Sun Jul-Aug, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat Sep-Jun), 500m west of Esch-sur-Sûre and 1km from the dam wall. Occupying an old cloth factory, it contains an information centre, nature museum and boutique, as well as an impressive collection of old looms and other textile-making machines – many of which still work.

The area is impossible to explore without your own wheels. The hamlet of **Arsdorf** makes a good base and has two attractive accommodation options. **Hôtel-Restaurant La Diligence** (☎ 23 64 95 55; www.ladiligence.lu in French; 17 Rue du Lac, Arsdorf; s/d €50/65) sits at the bottom of the village and serves delicious local fare. **Schegdenhaff** (☎ 23 64 90 81; www.schegdenhaff.gites.lu; 1 An der Hiehl, Arsdorf; apt per week €410, low season €390) is for families planning a longer stay. Two holiday apartments set in a restored farmhouse each accommodate six to eight people, and come complete with a games room, sauna and trampoline in the next-door barn.

## WILTZ

pop 4600

Wiltz is not big on the tourist circuit. But come July the town captivates crowds with the **Festival Européen de Théâtre en Plein Air et de Musique** (see boxed text, opposite).

The town has two distinct parts: the Ville Haute (Upper Town), huddled on a rocky crag, and the Ville Basse (Lower Town), sprawled along the river below. The **tourist office** (☎ 95 74 44; www.wiltz.lu in French; ☹ 10am-6pm Jul-Aug, 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat Sep-Jun) is in the Ville Haute's château. As with many of the country's castles, the rather sterile **château** (☎ 95 74 44) has a chequered history: it was originally built as

## WILTZ'S EXTRAVAGANZA

The **Festival Européen de Théâtre en Plein Air et de Musique** (www.festivalwiltz.online.lu in French) is the Grand Duchy's biggest musical event. This festival of open-air theatre plus jazz and classical music concerts takes over Wiltz for the whole of July. Performances are held in the evocative setting of the amphitheatre and formal grounds of the town's château. If ever there's a time to visit Wiltz, this is it.

a count's residence, but in the 19th century became a girl's boarding school and later was converted into a home for elderly.

The château houses two museums, neither of which are much chop. The **Musée de la Bataille des Ardennes** (☎ 95 74 42; adult/child €1.50/0.75; ☹ 1-5pm Jul & Aug) is a less-than-gripping account of the 1944 Battle of the Bulge (see boxed text, p245). The other attraction is the **Musée National d'Art Brassicole et des Arts et Métiers Anciens** (☎ 95 74 44; adult/child €2.50/1.50; ☹ 10am-6pm Jul & Aug), devoted to brewing, arts, handicrafts and machinery from earlier times.

Head down the main road from the château to see Wiltz's only other sight – a stone-sculpted **tower** that commemorates those who died or were sent to concentration camps as a result of a national strike in 1942 to protest the Nazi's introduction of conscription. The people of Wiltz instigated the strike, which lasted three days before being brutally suppressed. The memorial was designed by Luxembourg sculptor Lucien Wercollier.

The **Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 95 80 39; www.youthhostels.lu; 6 Rue de la Montagne; dm/s/d €17.50/29.50/45; ☹ closed mid-Nov-Dec, early Feb & late Apr; ☹ ☹) is a 1km climb from the train station, behind the Ville Haute. The distinguished building has character and a pleasant internal courtyard. It's a good hostel for families – there's a playground plus a nearby playground.

**Aux Anciennes Tanneries** (☎ 95 75 99; www.auxanciennestanneries.com, in French; 42a Rue Jos Simon; s/d from €73/98; ☹ closed late Aug & late Dec; ☹ ☹), in the Ville Basse, is the town's most engaging hotel-restaurant. Modern rooms in a renovated tannery overlook a babbling stream – on summer days you can dine outside on a tranquil terrace. The three-course lunchtime menu (€11.50; Monday to Friday) is great value (regular mains €13 to €20). Kids and babies are welcome.

Wiltz is easily accessible by train from Luxembourg City or anywhere along the northern railway line. The train station is in the Ville Basse. From Luxembourg City, take the train (direction Clervaux) to Kautenbach and catch another train from there (total 1½ hours).

## CLERVAUX

pop 1800

Far, far to the north of Luxembourg, hidden deep in the valley of the Clerve River, is a little town that plays second fiddle in most things tourism. Its castle isn't as grand or crumbly as others in the region. No artists of renown have graced its streets. And it doesn't boast a flashy chairlift or hop-on hop-off bus. But Clervaux does have two aces – a permanent photographic exhibition that draws visitors from all over the country and further afield, and some of the best chanting monks this side of the Rhine. If either of these are your thing, make this cosy town first string.

The **tourist office** (☎ 92 00 72; www.tourisme-clervaux.lu; ☹ 9.45-11.45am & 2-6pm Jul-Aug, 9.45-11.45am & 1-5pm Sep-Oct, 2-5pm Mon-Fri Easter-Jun) is housed in a side turret of Clervaux's castle.

## Sights

Clervaux's **castle** dates back to the 12th century, but it lost its fortified walls at the end of the 19th century and during battles in WWII it was razed. Today's gleaming white replica is famous for the '**Family of Man**' photography exhibition (☎ 92 96 57; adult/child €4.50/2.50; ☹ 10am-6pm Apr-Sep, Tue-Sun Mar & Oct-Dec) collated by Edward Steichen (1879-1973). Born in Luxembourg, Steichen was a babe when his parents moved to the USA. He compiled the exhibition of 500 B&W photos for New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1955 at the age of 76. Later it travelled the world before coming to rest in Clervaux in 1964, a gift from New York City. Now a Unesco World Heritage site, the exhibition contains images by 250 photographers from 68 countries. In Steichen's words, it was conceived as a 'mirror of the essential oneness of mankind throughout the world' and, whether you see it as an historic archive or social commentary, it's fabulous viewing.

The castle also contains the **Musée de la Bataille des Ardennes** (☎ 92 00 72; adult/child €2.50/1.25; ☹ 10am-6pm Apr-Sep, Tue-Sun Mar & Oct-Dec), another WWII museum.

Clervaux's other main sights are the Romanesque-style **church** (1910; ☹ 8am-6pm)

## WORTH A TRIP

Roughly halfway between Esch-sur-Sûre and Ettelbrück, a road winds up to the magnificent **Château de Bourscheid** (☎ 99 05 70; www.bourscheid.lu; 1 Schlasswee; adult/child €3.50/2; ☹ 9am-6pm Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar). This 1000-year-old castle, superbly situated on a rocky bluff overlooking the Sûre River, affords some of the best views in Luxembourg. Although parts of the castle have been restored, it's nowhere near as complete as the castle in Vianden, but is ultimately more attractive due to its outstanding location. A good audio-guide (in English) recounts its place in history. Listen to it as you perch like a princess on one of the cold stone ledges, letting the evocative setting conjure up images of horses, knights and invading armies crossing the distant windswept hills. The castle is accessible only by foot or car.

Families or hikers looking to bunk down nearby can stay at **Camping Um Gritt** (☎ 99 04 49; www.camp.lu in Flemish, French & German; Bourscheid-Moulin; camp sites per adult/child/tent €5/2.50/7.50, hikers' hut €45; ☹ closed mid-Oct-Easter) at the foot of the bluff. (For details on hikers' huts, see p298.)

sitting on the plateau immediately behind the castle, and the **Benedictine Abbey of St Maurice** (☎ 92 10 27), whose turrets pierce the forest skyline above town. It's accessible by a 1km track from the castle. The monks are known throughout Europe for their Gregorian chants – time your visit to listen to one of their **masses** (☎ 10.30am & 6pm Mon-Fri, 5pm Sat & Sun). There's also a permanent exhibition, **'The Monastic Life'** (☎ 9am-7pm), and a shop selling sacred art.

Little kids can let off steam at the old-fashioned **playground** (Rue de Parc) below Hôtel du Parc.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Camping Officiel** (☎ 92 00 42; www.camping-clervaux.lu; 33 Rue Klätzewée; camp sites per adult/child/tent €5.30/2.50/5.50; ☎ Easter-Oct; 🚰) About 200m from the town centre. It has plenty to keep kids happy – heated pool, ping pong and a playground.

**Hôtel du Commerce** (☎ 92 10 32; www.hotelducommerce.lu in Flemish, French, German & Lëtzebuergesch; 2 Rue de Marnach; s/d from €45/78; ☎ closed Dec–mid-Mar; 🚰) Reliable, old-fashioned hotel with a no-fuss policy, situated immediately below the castle. Families are welcome, and there's a heated indoor swimming pool and a small garden out the back. Only the décor's off-putting – brown carpet and velveteen upholstery.

**Hôtel International** (☎ 92 93 91; www.interclervaux.lu; 10 Grand Rue; s/d from €56/82, ste €174; ☎ closed 24-25 Dec; 🚰) Classy establishment in the heart of town aimed at those wanting to bliss out. The standard rooms have drab '70s décor; pay more for a plush four-poster bed and Jacuzzi. The restaurant offers a four-course

*menu terre-mer* (€23; or mains €17 to €20), and the indoor pool is heated.

**Café-Restaurant du Vieux Château** (☎ 92 00 12; 4 Montée du Château; mains €13-16; ☎ Wed-Mon) Good spot for families wanting an outdoor break. Located well away from traffic, between the two gates of the castle, watch the kids picking daisies as you sip a Bofferding (or better still a Belgian Duvel).

### Getting There & Away

Clervaux's train station is 800m from the town centre and there are no buses connecting the two. Regular trains connect with Luxembourg City (one hour, two hourly).

## GUTLAND

The Gutland (literally 'Goodland') is a heavily farmed area immediately north of Luxembourg City. It encompasses the nondescript towns of Mersch and Ettelbrück, as well as vibrant Diekirch, best known for its excellent WWII museum. The country's main railway line passes through the region, providing easy access to the main towns. To explore side valleys, you'll need a vehicle.

### VALLÉE DES SEPT CHÂTEAUX

This peaceful valley winds westward from Mersch along the Eisch River past the villages of Ansembourg and Septfontaines. As its name foretells, it's dotted with seven castles – either 'crumbly' or stately mansions – none of which are open to the public.

Should you decide to hang around overnight, there's a lovely **Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 30 70 37; www.youthhostels.lu; 2 Rue du Château; dm/s/d €17.50/29.50/45; ☎) in the village of Hollenfels. It's a stately cream-stone building located next to Hollenfels castle.

### ETTELBRÜCK

pop 7500

WWII and entertainment are the reasons to visit Ettelbrück.

Vera Lynne's unmistakable voice floats through the air as you enter the **General Patton Museum** (☎ 81 03 22; www.patton.lu; 5 Rue Dr Klein; adult/child €2.50/1.25; ☎ 10am-5pm Jun–mid-Sep), five minutes' walk from Ettelbrück train station. This modern little museum is devoted to the audacious general of the US Third Army who played a large part in Luxembourg's WWII

liberation. He reaped fame for his quote: 'No bastard ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making the other poor dumb bastard die for his'. Patton died following a car accident in Germany in December 1945. He's buried with his troops at the US Military Cemetery in Luxembourg City (see p274).

The town's **Centre des Arts Pluriels** (☎ 26 81 21 1; www.cape.lu in French; 1 Place Marie-Adélaïde) offers everything from opera, dance and theatre to magic, clowns and cabaret.

Ettelbrück is easily reached by train from Luxembourg City (30 minutes, half-hourly) or nearby Diekirch (10 minutes, half-hourly).

### DIEKIRCH

pop 6000

If you're only here for the beer – sorry! Diekirch brewery, one of the Grand Duchy's main brewers, located opposite the train station, doesn't open to visiting beer buffs. So down your disappointment with a red label at any local café and contemplate what next – for a town this size, plenty is on offer. Diekirch boasts the country's best wartime museum and it's also great for renting a bike or canoe.

The **tourist office** (☎ 80 30 23; www.diekirch.lu; 3 Place de la Libération; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 2-4pm Sat-Sep-Jun, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Jul-Aug) is a 10-minute walk from the train station, at the town's pedestrian core.

### Sights & Activities

An excellent collection of wartime machinery, artefacts and photographs detailing WWII's Battle of the Ardennes (p245) and the liberation of Luxembourg by US troops is presented at the **Musée National d'Histoire Militaire** (☎ 80 89 08; www.nat-military-museum.lu; 10 Rue Bamertal; adult/child €5/3; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Nov, 2-6pm Dec-Mar), 200m north of the tourist office. It gives real feeling to the suffering of troops on both sides during the atrocious conditions of that winter in '44. In addition there are displays on Veianer Miliz, Luxembourg's resistance movement, which was based in caves and bunkers around the northern town of Vianden. There are also paintings, drawings and other memorabilia from Tambow, a Russian camp to which conscripted Luxembourgers were sent. The museum has English-language explanations throughout.

Diekirch's other main attraction is the **Musée des Mosaïques Romaines** (Place Guillaume; admission €1.30; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Easter-Oct). It houses Gallo-Roman relics, including 3rd-century mosaics

excavated from the Esplanade, one of the main roads encircling the town. The nearby turreted **Église St Laurent** (☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Easter-Oct), east of Place de la Libération, dates back in part to the 11th century and is worth a peek for its ancient tombs and crypt.

A great way to explore Diekirch and nearby towns or villages is to travel by bike. **Rent-a-Bike** (☎ 26 80 33 76; nordstad@ciq.lu; 27 Rue Jean l'Aveugle; per half-/full day €10/15; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct), about 300m from the town centre on the road to Echternach, has a full complement of wheels. Nice, flat cycling paths follow the Sûre River all the way from Diekirch to Echternach (27km).

From April to September combine a bike tour with a **canoe trip** down the Sûre River to Echternach. Departure points vary depending on the time of year – either Diekirch (27km), Wallendorf (16km) or Dillingen (12km). Don't expect much adrenaline – the only thing resembling a rapid is near Wallendorf. The bike-canoe combo costs €25 per person. For full details contact **Outdoor Freizeit** (☎ 86 91 39; www.outdoorfreizeit; 10 Rue de la Sûre, Dillingen).

### Sleeping & Eating

**Camping de la Sûre** (☎ 80 94 25; fax 80 27 86; 34 Route de Gilsdorf; camp sites per adult/child/tent €4.50/2.50/4.50; ☎ Apr-Sep) Leafy camping ground by the river and within a few minutes' walk from the town centre.

**Hôtel-Restaurant de la Gare** (☎ 80 33 05; jamper@sl.lu; 73 Ave de la Gare; s/d €42/73) Family-run establishment opposite the train station that offers five renovated rooms and a restaurant (three-course menu €15 to €35) favoured by locals. Take to the terrace and try the homemade ham – it's the best around.

Also recommended:

**B&B Weber-Posing** (☎ 80 32 54; fax 80 06 54; 63 Rue Principale, Gilsdorf; s/d €22/44) Old-fashioned B&B, with squeaky floors and a small kitchen for guests to use. Located 2km west of central Diekirch.

**La Fondue** (☎ 80 49 92; 43 Grand Rue; mains €13-18, fondues €16-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) Simple eatery at the end of the pedestrianised main street.

**Match** (Rue Alexis Heck) Supermarket in the heart of town.

### Getting There & Around

Diekirch's train and neighbouring bus stations are 1km west of the town's pedestrianised hub.

There are good train connections from here to nearby Ettelbrück (10 minutes, half-hourly),

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Hôtel-Restaurant du Parc** (☎ 92 06 50; www.hotelduparc.lu; 2 Rue du Parc, Clervaux; s/d/tr €38/49/70; ☎ Mar-Dec) Full of character and perhaps the odd ghost, this old whitewashed mansion is one of Luxembourg's most atmospheric budget hotels. Sitting partway up a forested hill overlooking Clervaux, its seven rooms are fitted with a mix of modern and old, and some have town views. The hotel's restaurant – decked out with antiques, chandeliers, lounge chairs and old fireplaces – serves well-priced French/Luxembourg cuisine (mains €20). On warm days it's possible to dine on the sun terrace overlooking surrounding hillsides. A hidden gem.

the nation's central rail junction, and on to Luxembourg City (40 minutes, half-hourly). The usual line-up of local buses head from Diekirch to outlying villages. For details on bike rental, see p289.

## MÜLLERTHAL

Enter a world where the passage of time is visible at almost every turn, a landscape where deep gorges scoured by ancient streams through sandstone plateaus tell the tale of creation over the centuries. This is the Müllerthal, a pocket of land in Luxembourg's central east that leaves hiker's breathless. Not from sheer climbs or high peaks, but from a world that's removed from most realities, a place of delicate forests, narrow ravines, crystal creeks and strange rock formations. The Müllerthal is crisscrossed by well-marked hiking trails that are crowded on summer weekends but near deserted for the rest.

### ECHTERNACH

pop 5100

As a Müllerthal base, nothing beats the poised but vibrant town of Echternach. Stay in a medieval tower or a brand-new hostel, spend the day hiking the mysterious forests or cycling the Sûre. Take the kids boating on an artificial lake or explore the basilica, Luxembourg's most important religious building. If you're into pagentry, time a visit for **St Willibrord Pageant** (opposite) on Whit Tuesday, when dancers take to the cobbled streets in a time-honoured religious festival to celebrate the town's founding father, St Willibrord, an Anglo-Saxon monk.

Though evidence of a Gallo-Roman settlement has been found (and can be visited, see right), Echternach pretty much rose around a 7th-century abbey founded by St Willibrord in 698. St Willibrord led the conversion to Christianity in parts of the Netherlands before settling in Echternach, which later became a centre for learning and art. When he died here in 739, his body was placed in the crypt of the abbey church where it remains today (see right).

The **tourist office** (☎ 72 0230; www.echternach-tourist.lu; Parvis de la Basilique; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri Sep-Easter, 10am-5.30pm Easter-Aug) is in a courtyard next to the basilica entrance. There's an **ATM** (Place du Marché) opposite the Ancien Palais de Justice. For internet access try **Café de la Poste** (2 Place du Marché; per hr €3; ☎ 10.30am-8.30pm Tue-Sun).

### Sights & Activities

The town centre is based around the refined Place du Marché with its turreted **Ancien Palais de Justice**. This elegant former law court was built in 1520 (but is much restored) and features delicate statues dating from 1896. Biker fans should time a visit for any weekend in summer when motorcyclists en masse take to one of the terrace *cafés* on this square.

Little remains of Echternach's original abbey. The present-day version, built in the 18th century, is a huge complex that spreads out from near Place du Marché almost to the banks of the Sûre. It's home to the **Musée de l'Abbaye** (☎ 72 7472; adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-6pm Easter-Jun & Sep-Oct, 10am-6pm Jul & Aug), which contains an engaging collection from Roman mosaics to illuminated medieval manuscripts. The focal point is the **basilica** (☎ 9.30am-6.30pm), built on the site of the original abbey church, gutted in 1016. The basilica was heavily restored in 1862, but suffered substantial damage during bombing in WWII's Battle of the Bulge (see boxed text, p245). Inside it's a dark and sombre affair, with few decorations aside from stained-glass windows and a chunk of crucifix with Christ's head that adorns the left-hand wall. The crypt is the only original section to survive the centuries and contains the highly venerated relics of St Willibrord, kept in a primitive stone coffin covered by an elaborate white marble canopy.

To explore Echternach's Roman era, head to **Villa Romaine** (☎ 26 72 09 74; 47 Rue des Romains; adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun Jul & Aug, 11am-1pm & 2-5pm Tue-Sun Easter-Jun & Sep-Oct), 1km from town (off Route de Luxembourg). It incorporates old Roman ruins, including a manor house excavated in 1975, plus virtual imaging depicting life in Roman days.

Marked **hiking trails** start from near the town's bus station. A board listing possibilities gives brief descriptions plus estimated times (from one to four hours). One of the best, 'B1' (2½ hours), winds up via Troosknepchen and Wolfsschlucht, also known as the **Gorge du Loup**, a sheer-sided, moss-covered canyon flanked by dramatic sandstone formations. With stamina, continue hiking from there to the village of **Berdorf** (p292).

An enclosed **playground** behind the basilica near the riverside tennis courts is for families with kids. Alternatively try **swimming, boating** or **mini-golf** at the artificial lake, a few kilometres out of town (direction Rodenhal). **Bolliq**

(Place du Marché; adult/child/family €6.50/4.50/17.50), a little tourist train, rolls around town hourly.

Echternach is well placed for **cyclists**, with flat riverside bike paths tracing the Sûre River all the way to Diekirch (27km), or south into the Moselle. For a change of culture en route, take a pit stop in Germany at one of the villages straddling the river – Bollendorf, for example, is good for Sunday's colourful flea market. It's also possible to ride from Echternach all the way to Luxembourg City. Rent wheels from **Motothek** (☎ 72 6475; motothek@pt.lu; 17 Rue Ermesinde; half-/full day €10/15; ☎ 9am-noon & 1.30-6pm Tue-Sat), close to the bus station.

### Festivals & Events

Those in Echternach on the Tuesday after Whitsunday can celebrate the **St Willibrord Pageant** (13 May 2008, 2 June 2009, 25 May 2010), famous far and wide for its Procession Dansante in which dancers with white handkerchiefs take to the streets as they've done for centuries. It's a 9am start so don't sleep in.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Camping Officiel** (☎ 72 02 72; 5 Route de Diekirch; camp sites per adult/child/tent €4.80/2.80/5; ☎ Easter-mid-Oct; 📶) Draped along the hillside 200m from the bus station, this camping ground has tennis courts and a children's playground.

**Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 72 01 58; www.youthhostels.lu; Rue Grégoire Schouppé; dm/s/d €19.50/31.50/49; ☎ 📶 🚰) Brand-new hostel emphasising adventure, located next to the lake about 2km out of town. Sip a Mousel beer in the hip café while contemplating the hostel's star attraction, a 14m-high indoor *escalade*, or climbing wall (adult/concession €5/2.50, free if staying at the hostel; open 6pm to 10pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday). Alternatively, book a guided mountain-bike tour. Coming from Luxembourg City, take bus 110 (Luxembourg City-Echternach, 45 minutes, hourly) to the stop 'Nonnemillen/'

Lac', from where it's a 1km walk (direction Rodenhal).

**B&B Meyer-Ernzen** (☎ 72 0422; www.meyer-ernzen.lu; 1 Rodenhol; r per person €22-25) Great place for those with wheels (it's 3.5km south; direction Rodenhal). On a hill with a view towards the town and lake, this dairy farm has eight guestrooms in a separate building and accommodates overnighters or longer stays. Some rooms have well-equipped kitchenettes, making this a good family-holiday option.

**Hôtel Le Petit Poëte** (☎ 72 00 72; www.lepetitpoete.lu; 13 Place du Marché; s/d/tr €40/59/84; ☎ mid-Jan-Nov) Pick of the cheapies. Its 15 rooms (some with a view of Place du Marché) are neat and spacious, with no-nonsense modest décor. The hotel's terrace restaurant is popular for a well-priced bite (ignore the traffic noise and fumes).

**Hôtel Le Pavillon** (☎ 72 9809; dieidling@pt.lu; 2 Rue de la Gare; s/d €55/70) Chic little corner hotel-restaurant with just 10 well-equipped rooms. The décor is decidedly old-fashioned – expect cream lampshades, brown carpet and beige wallpaper. The terrace restaurant (French cuisine; mains €16 to €23) is immensely popular.

**Hôtel Puccini** (☎ 72 03 06; www.puccini.lu; 21 Rue de la Gare; s/d €68/90, studio s/d/t €95/115/135) Modern comes to Echternach. The town's newest hotel-restaurant, located on the main pedestrianised street, has minimalist furnishings and subdued tones – greys, plums and black. Studios with small kitchenettes are handy if travelling with children. It's staffed by a friendly and enthusiastic young crew, and the restaurant (Mediterranean cuisine; mains €14 to €27) does vegetarian options.

**Hostellerie de la Basilique** (☎ 72 94 83; www.hostel-basilique.lu; 7 Place du Marché; s/d/tr €91/108/135; ☎ Easter-mid-Nov; 📶) Top address in town. Fourteen tidy rooms that don't suffer decoration overkill. It has a great location near the basilica entrance, with a popular terrace restaurant overlooking a fountain. The rooms are spacious, families

### THE AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Fawly Towers it ain't. Innovative it is. The Echternach tourist board has turned four of the town's eight remaining medieval **towers** (tour in French) into self-contained apartments for tourists. If your kids love running around shooting bows and arrows, this is the ultimate holiday house. Peer through narrow slits as you munch your morning croissant or go back in time by candlelight as you dine medieval style at the top of your tower. Prices cost €385 to €500 per week, depending on size and facilities offered. Tour 1 is the smallest (two to four people) and most basic – be prepared for outside toilet dashes here. Tour 5 (we know, there are only four towers!) is the largest (sleeps six) and most deluxe. Book via the tourist office (opposite).

with small children and babies are welcome, and bikes are available for free.

**Giorgio** (☎ 72 99 34; 4 Rue André Duchscher; mains €10-30; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed Tue Nov-Mar) Casual Italian restaurant that's always full. Choose between the outdoor terrace, the ground-floor section or the cavernous cellar.

Also recommended:

**Caffè Venezia** (☎ 72 01 69; 3 Rue de la Gare) Italian-rin gelato café.

**Café de Philo'soff** (☎ 72 00 19; 31 Rue de la Gare; ☎ Wed-Mon) Art-Nouveau showpiece with laidback music and a terrace out the back. Go for the good range of Belgian beers.

**Match** (off Place du Marché) Supermarket.

## Getting There & Away

Echternach's bus station is a five-minute walk from Place du Marché – head straight along pedestrianised Rue de la Gare, the town's main shopping street. Only buses connect Echternach with Luxembourg City (45 minutes, hourly). From Echternach, buses head out to regional villages and towns.

## AROUND ECHTERNACH Schiesentümpel

With a car and a good nose for direction, it's well worth finding the Schiesentümpel bridge, about 12km southwest of Echternach. This much-photographed wooden and stone bridge arches over an attractive waterfall on the Ernz Noire, a babbling waterway that eventually joins the Sûre River. As always in this area, it's a great spot for walking. To get there, head out of Echternach on the N11 to Luxembourg City, then turn off to the village of Müllerthal. The bridge is in the middle of nowhere, on the road (CR121) between Müllerthal village and Bredweiler-Pont.

## Berdorf

pop 950

Spread out high on a plateau, Berdorf is not picturesque, explaining why it's known only to hikers and diners. Just 5km west of Echternach, it's reached by beguiling footpaths that wind through rocky chasms and past waterfalls. Indeed, this is one of the Müllerthal's most delightful hiking spots – as usual, the **tourist office** (☎ 79 06 43; www.berdorf.lu; 7 An der Laach; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-5pm Mon-Fri) sells a local walking map.

With wheels, a good place to stay is **Le Bisdorff** (☎ 79 02 08; www.hotel-bisdorff.lu; 39 Rue Heisbich; s/d €87/100; ☎ Easter-mid-Nov; P), set by a forest in

the middle of nowhere about 2km from Berdorf (direction Kalkesbach). This hotel-restaurant is reputed to be one of Luxembourg's best countryside restaurants (mains €30 to €35; open dinner Wednesday to Friday, lunch and dinner Saturday and Sunday). Owner and chef Sylvie Bisdorff has written a book on Luxembourg recipes; she inherited some of her talent from her father, who was a chef for Grand Duke Jean. Go for the good-value *demi-pension* (half-board; per person €72) deal.

## Beaufort

pop 1955

About 15km west of Echternach, Beaufort boasts a classic ruined **castle** (☎ 83 60 02; adult/child €3/1; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct), hidden in a wooded grove below the village and once the site of a Roman camp. It dates from the 12th century but was expanded in later centuries. Like many historic buildings in this part of Luxembourg, it was bombed during WWII's Battle of the Bulge (see boxed text, p245). It's all very atmospheric – wander with the sheep around the ruined remains.

From the castle, there's a 4km circular walk through the evocative Müllerthal forest – ask at either the castle or the **tourist office** (☎ 83 60 99 301; www.beaufort.lu in German; 87 Grand Rue; ☎ 8am-7pm Jul & Aug, 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun Sep-Jun) for the brochure detailing the path. The tourist office also rents **bikes** (half/full day €7.50/15).

Those resting weary limbs have various options. The big **Camping Plage** (☎ 83 60 99; www.campingplage.lu; 87 Grand Rue; camp sites per adult/child/tent €4.50/2.50/5.50, hikers' hut €43; ☎) is one of a handful of camping grounds in Luxembourg to stay open year-round, and even boasts hikers' huts (see p298). Next door is a big open-air heated **pool** (adult/child €3/1.50; ☎ May-Aug) plus an **ice-skating rink** (☎ Dec-Mar). Kids will love it.

The small, chalet-style **Auberge de Jeunesse** (☎ 83 60 75; www.youthhostels.lu; 6 Rue de l'Auberge; dm/s/d €17.50/29.5/45; ☎ Feb-Dec; ☎) is enjoyable.

The most pleasantly sited hotel is **Auberge Rustique** (☎ 83 60 86; www.aubegerustique.lu; 55 Rue du Château; s/d/tr €47/70/105), on the windy road down to the castle. It's your typical countryside Luxembourg hotel, with basic, affordable rooms and a pleasant sun terrace.

## LAROCLETTE

pop 1850

Larochette is the Müllerthal's prettiest village. Secluded in the narrow valley of the Ern

Blanche River, it's lorded over by a ruined castle and surrounded by wooded hills and sandstone plateaus. Just 26km north of Luxembourg City, it makes a delightful lunchtime or overnight stop, with a smattering of hotels and even a hostel.

The **tourist office** (☎ 83 76 76; www.larochette.lu; 4 Rue de Medernach; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri) is in the town hall, next to the church on the main road.

Larochette's 12th-century **château** (☎ 83 74 97; Route de Mersch; adult/child €2/1; ☎ 10am-6pm Easter-Oct) perches on a craggy outcrop overlooking town. In its time it must have been spectacular, well hidden within ancient forests, and appearing as if out of nowhere as you round a corner in the river valley. What's visible from street level is only the beginning of the ruin complex. Parts are slowly being restored, and it's possible to tour the site; to get there walk along the 'Mersch' road until you see the château signs.

The **Auberge des Jeunesse** (☎ 83 70 81; www.youthhostels.lu; 45 Osterbuer; dm/s/d €19.60/31.60/49.20; ☎ Mar-Dec; ☎) is a pleasant, blue building, about 600m from the town centre.

**Auberge Op der Bleech** (☎ 87 80 58; www.opderbleech.lu; 4 Place Bleech; s/d €55/75; ☎ closed 1-15 Sep), a peach-toned hotel on the main square, has spacious, minimalist rooms with a bandstand view. Children are welcome.

**Hôtel Résidence** (☎ 83 73 91; www.hotelresidence.lu; 14 Rue de Medernach; s/d from €65/75, d with castle view €85; ☎ Mar-Nov) is a stately building slung along the road, with a long breakfast room to match. The room décor is heavy – steer clear if you're allergic to flowers. Request a front location for castle views (though from this angle, it's not spectacular).

Buses from Luxembourg City (one hour, hourly) connect to Larochette; alternatively there are regular services from Diekirch (20 minutes, hourly) and Echternach (40 minutes, two hourly).

## MOSELLE VALLEY

Half an hour from Luxembourg City – not even time for the kids to start chorusing – and you'll arrive at one of Europe's smallest wine regions, the Moselle Valley. Drop in at a dozen towns and hamlets along the Route du Vin to taste test fruity whites. Remich is the best place to start.

### CRUISING THE MOSELLE

View Luxembourg's steep vineyards and German wine-making villages during a Moselle River cruise. The *MS Roude Leiw* or the *Musel III*, both departing from Remich, offer one-hour trips (adult/child €6.50/4, daily Easter to October) upriver to Schweb-sange and back, or longer voyages (adult/child from €12/6, three weekly May to September) downstream to Wormeldange, Grevenmacher or Wasserbillig. For more details, contact **Navitours** (☎ 75 84 89; www.navitours.lu in French & German).

## Getting There & Around

Like much of rural Luxembourg, getting around the Moselle Valley region takes time if you don't have your own transport. From Luxembourg City, there are buses to Remich (30 minutes, two daily). From Remich, buses run via Ehnen to Grevenmacher (30 minutes, four daily). From Grevenmacher there are buses to Echternach (40 minutes, hourly). Trains from Luxembourg City stop at the northern town of Wasserbillig (35 minutes, half-hourly) only.

## REMICH

pop 3000

Waterfront Remich, 23km southeast of the capital, is a popular weekend getaway. There's almost nothing to see – people come here to indulge in long, hearty lunches, wander the riverside promenade, check out a winery or two, and to stock up on cheap cigarettes and booze. One of the region's few **tourist offices** (☎ 23 69 84 88; Esplanade; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 1.30-6pm 15 Jun-15 Sep) is located in the bus station.

Start wine tasting at the main *cave* (cellar), **St Martin** (☎ 23 69 97 74; 53 Route de Stadtbredimus; adult/child €2.75/1.75; ☎ 10am-noon & 1.30-6pm Apr-Oct), about 1.5km north of Remich's bus terminal. St Martin produces white and sparkling wines, the latter known as *crémant*, and offers tours delving into the *méthode traditionnelle* used to process its sparkling wines. Like in champagne production, this traditionally involved turning each bottle by hand; guides at St Martin are adamant this age-old process is still carried out, though others in the industry claim all the large wineries now use machines. The tour winds through cool, damp tunnels hewn in the rock face and ends with a glass of bubbly. Bus 450 to Grevenmacher stops out the front.

On summer days cool off at the big open-air **swimming pool** (☎ 23 69 81 11), about 500m from the bus station on the road towards Schengen.

**Auberge des Cygnes** (☎ 23 69 88 52; hpcygn@pt.lu; 11 Esplanade; s/d/tr €48/65/83; ☹ closed mid-Jan–mid-Feb) is the nicest of the cheap waterfront hotels. The busy reception–restaurant area contrasts with the calm, pastel-toned rooms. It's family run and family friendly, and has a highchair and cot. The restaurant does good woodfired pizzas.

**Hôtel Saint Nicolas** (☎ 26 66 3; www.saint-nicolas.lu in French; 31 Esplanade; s €77, d with/without river view €130/105, ste €150; ☒ ☒), on the waterfront on the northern edge of town, is a delightful mix'n'match of old world and ultramodern. The 40 rooms are contemporary and comfortable, and the enclosed French restaurant (vegetarian fare included; multicourse menu from €22 to €76) comes well recommended. Children are welcome.

## AROUND REMICH

Antique wine presses announce the **Musée du Vin 'A Possen'** (☎ 23 69 73 53; 1 Rue Aloyse Sandt; adult/child €4.50/2; ☹ 2–7pm Tue–Sun May–Oct, 2–7pm Fri–Sun Nov–Apr), a block back from the riverfront in the hamlet of **Bech-Kleinmacher**, 2km south of Remich. This stone building, also known as 'A Possen', was once a local wine grower's home and now houses a tiny museum devoted to wine, folklore and nostalgia.

The town of **Mondorf-les-Bains**, 11km southwest of Remich, is Luxembourg's premier spa town, as well as a popular sporting and gambling centre. Warm waters bubble forth at **Le Domaine Thermal** (☎ 23 66 60; www.mondorf.lu; Ave des Bains), a 50-hectare relaxation complex, while **Casino 2000** (☎ 23 61 11; www.casino2000.lu; Rue Flam-mang) is for blowing your dough.

## EHNEN

pop 470

Dozing next to a river bend, the picturesque hamlet of Ehnen is an essential stop for crustacean lovers. Here you'll find **Bamberg's** (☎ 76 00 22; bamberg@pt.lu; 131 Route du Vin; s/d €65/90; ☹ Wed–Mon), a distinguished little hotel–restaurant, generally considered to be one of the best places to eat (mains €20 to €26) on the Route du Vin. The blue European lobster is delicious.

The **Musée du Vin** (Wine Museum; ☎ 76 00 26; 115 Route du Vin; adult/child €3.50/1.50; ☹ 9.30–11.30am & 2–

5pm Tue–Sun Apr–Oct), signposted on the main road, houses a vast collection of old wine-making equipment (no English explanations).

Note the village houses with flood levels posted on their façades – the big one in 1947 reached 4m.

## WORMELDANGE

pop 1300

Wormeldange's only attraction is the **Caves à Crémant Poll-Fabaire** (☎ 76 82 11; www.pollfabaire.lu; 115 Route du Vin; adult/child €2/1.25; ☹ 1–6pm Mon–Sat May–Oct). This huge salmon-coloured complex on the northern edge of the village makes one of the Grand Duchy's best *crémant* wines and offers tours and tastings.

**Relais du Postillon** (☎ 76 84 85; www.relaisdupostillon.lu in French; 113 Rue Principale; s/d €48/66; ☹), on the road parallel to Route du Vin, has pleasant if unexceptional rooms, and an atrium restaurant (serving pizza and pasta dishes). The owner happens to be the Duchy's most distinguished baker – he runs Schumacher, a *boulangerie/pâtisserie* (bakery/cake and pastry shop) next door, and is known in cake circles for his Gâteau de l'Europe and a few world records.

## GREVENMACHER

pop 3900

Grevenmacher, 20km north of Remich, is the Route du Vin's largest town and the region's workaday capital. It has a **tourist office** (☎ 75 82 75; 10 Route du Vin; ☹ 8am–noon & 1–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat Jul–Aug), but little in the way of accommodation. Internet access is available at **Kulturhuëf** (☎ 26 74 64 1; 54 Route de Trèves; per hour €2; ☹ 2–6pm Tue–Sun), a new cultural centre. **Caves Bernard-Massard** (☎ 75 05 45 1; 8 Rue du Pont; adult/child €3/2; ☹ 9.30am–6pm Apr–Oct) is one of the region's largest sparkling-wine producers. Tours through this slick, fully mechanised operation end with a glass of its best bubbles.

A cold weather treat is the **Jardin des Papillons** (☎ 75 85 39; www.papillons.lu; Route de Trèves; adult/child €5.50/2.70; ☹ 9.30am–5pm Apr–mid-Oct), a hothouse filled with butterflies, insects, birds and plants from tropical climes. Don't bother in July and August when it's too hot and crowded.

**Camping Route du Vin** (☎ 75 02 34; www.gre-venmacher.lu; Route du Vin; camp sites per adult/child/tent €3.80/2/4; ☹ Apr–Sep; ☒) is on the riverbank next to the Jardin des Papillons. It has tennis courts, a pool and a playground.

## THE SOUTHWEST

Luxembourg's southwest corner is low on most visitor itineraries. Though poetically known in tourist brochures as Le Pays des Terres Rouges (The Land of the Red Rocks), it's largely an industrial area – much of the Grand Duchy's former wealth came from here in the form of iron ore. Today money is being poured back in, with new entertainment venues and a whole new satellite suburb/business district, **Belval**, being whipped up on an abandoned industrial site to the west of Luxembourg's second largest city, Esch-sur-Alzette. Belval will also be home to many faculties of the new University of Luxembourg.

## ESCH-SUR-ALZETTE

pop 27,000

There's an unmistakable buzz in Esch these days. Investment is huge, construction intense and the future bright for this regional hub, just 17km south of Luxembourg City. But it hasn't always been like this. Although there's mention of Esch-sur-Alzette right back in 773, the city basically began early last century when Italian immigrants arrived to work in the steel industry. The population flourished up until 1960 while jobs were easy to come by. But the industry's collapse saw Esch spiral dizzily downward, along with steel towns in nearby Belgium and France. While many of its neighbours are still a forlorn state of affairs, Esch has metamorphosed into a bustling regional centre, with a pedestrianised hub that offers terrace *cafés* and decent shops, including a designer boutique or two. There's a distinctly Italian feel to the place and even *gelateria* (ice-cream shops) dot Rue de l'Alzette, the city's main street.

The **tourist office** (☎ 54 16 37; www.esch-city.lu; 25 Rue Boltgen; ☹ 9am–5pm Mon–Sat May–Sep, 9am–5pm Mon–Fri Oct–Apr) is next to the town hall, a few minutes' walk from the train station. Note the Lëtzebuergesch inscription carved high up on the town hall's façade – *'Mir wëlle bleiwe wat mir sin'* (We want to remain what we are).

Internet access is available at **Click** (☎ 54 42 45 20 0; 97 Rue de l'Alzette; per hr €2; ☹ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 2–6pm Sat).

## Sights & Activities

Without history or natural beauty on its side, Esch's attractions are limited. The main sight is the **Musée de la Résistance Nationale** (☎ 54 84 72; Place

de la Résistance; admission free; ☹ 3–6pm Thu, Sat & Sun). This resistance museum occupies the central pavilion of a large, very sombre memorial, dedicated to those killed in WWII. It stands sentinel-like at the end of Rue de l'Alzette. Very limited opening hours mean planning is essential.

Architecture is another draw, with the city noted for fine **houses** in both **Art Nouveau** (Nos 4, 61 & 96 Rue de l'Alzette) and **Art Deco** (55 Rue de l'Alzette & 14 Rue Zénon Bernard) styles. The former are not nearly as decorative as the gems in Brussels, but they're easily located and worth a look. Ask the tourist office for the architectural walk brochure (in English).

**Escher-Schwemm** (☎ 26 53 13 53; Place des Sacrifiés; ☹ 11.30am–9.45pm Mon–Fri, 8am–5.45pm Sat, 8am–12.45pm Sun) is a heated indoor pool (with a small satellite outdoor section open in summer), boasting waterslides and a highly sought brasserie (see Club-5am Park, below). It's about 700m from the city centre.

## Sleeping & Eating

Esch has no shortage of good places to sleep and eat.

**Camping Gaalgebierg** (☎ 54 10 69; www.gaalgebierg.lu; Galgenberg; camp sites per adult/child/tent €3.75/1.75/6; ☹ year-round) Pleasantly surrounded by woods, about 1km south of the train station. Kids will enjoy the large playground, and the deer next door.

**Hôtel de la Poste** (☎ 26 54 54 1; www.hotel-de-la-poste.lu in French; 107 Rue de l'Alzette; s/d Mon–Fri from €95/110, Sat & Sun €80/90; ☹) An Art Deco hotel, completely renovated in 2003 but still with touches of the original (1919) style. It's family friendly and has 20 neat rooms done out in soothing lemon tones. The fabulously friendly staff go out of their way to help.

**Club-5am Park** (☎ 26 17 57 75; Place des Sacrifiés; carpaccio €12–15, other mains €15–19; ☹ 10am–1am May–mid-Sep, closed Sun mid-Sep–Apr) Attached to the city's swimming pool and overlooking a leafy playground, this stylish modern brasserie serves the country's best carpaccio plus a host of other delicious Italian/French/vegetarian dishes. It's 700m north of the city centre.

**Acacia** (☎ 54 10 61; 10 Rue de la Libération; mains €25) Very good French cuisine is the mainstay of this restaurant, in the heart of Esch at the Hôtel Acacia.

**Namur** (☎ 54 17 78; 64 Rue de l'Alzette; ☹ 1–6pm Mon, 9am–6pm Tue–Sat) The place for salads, pastries and ice creams; dine in the big tearoom at the back.



## Entertainment

Esch is entertainment central. The country's two biggest contemporary music venues are here; tickets for both can be bought at the tourist office.

**Rockhal** (☎ 24 55 51, tickets 24 55 55 55; www.rockhal.lu; 305 Blvd Charles de Gaulle) The newest is the red and black Rockhal, part of the new Belval urban development west of Esch. The closest train station is Belval Usines, one stop after Esch (direction Pétange).

**Kulturfabrik** (☎ 55 44 93 1; www.kulturfabrik.lu in French & German; 116 Rue de Luxembourg) This cultural centre is housed in an old abattoir, 1km north of the train station on the road to Luxembourg City. It sports a solid annual line-up of music, theatre and exhibitions. Music-wise it leans towards hip acts with an edge.

## Getting There & Away

Esch and much of its surrounding region is easily explored by train from Luxembourg City – the line goes via Bettembourg to Esch (20 minutes, half-hourly) and then ambles on to Pétange (20 minutes, half-hourly).

## AROUND ESCH-SUR-ALZETTE

Six kilometres southeast of Esch, **Rumelange** is worth a stop for its **Musée National des Mines** (☎ 56 56 88; www.mnm.lu; Rue de la Bruyère; adult/concession/child €8.50/7/5; 🕒 2-6pm Thu-Sun Apr-Jun & Sep, Tue-Sun Jul & Aug, last departure 4.30pm) at Walert. This iron-ore museum occupies a disused mine shaft and

visitors are taken by train (20 minutes) 100m down to where old and new mining machinery and photos tell the industry's tale. Don yellow safety helmets for this 1½-hour adventure, and bring warm clothes.

Like Esch, the neighbouring town of **Dudelange** was heavily into steel, but it is now known for its neo-Gothic, vibrantly painted **church** (admission free; 🕒 8am-6pm).

Travelling families should consider **Bettembourg** and the **Parc Merveilleux** (☎ 51 10 48; www.parc-merveilleux.lu in French & German; Route de Mondorf; adult/child €7/4; 🕒 9.30am-6pm Apr–mid-Oct). This is Luxembourg's most popular family amusement park (though tiny in comparison to Belgium's), with a small zoo, mini-train and playground. It's been around for over half a century (the fairytale-theme houses look like they date from then) but there are also plenty of newer attractions. Old or new, little kids love it. From Bettembourg train station it's 1.5km (or take bus 304; four daily).

Camping families have **Camping Beetebuerg** (☎ 51 36 46; www.sitb.lu; Parc Jacquinet, Bettembourg; camp sites per adult/child/tent €4/2/4; 🕒 mid-Apr–Sep), opposite Bettembourg train station.

Train spotters should head to **Fond-de-Gras** for a ride on either the steam-powered **Train 1900** (☎ 58 05 81; www.train1900.lu; adult/child €7/4; 🕒 Sun May-Sep) to Pétange, or the narrow-gauge train **Minièresbunn** (☎ 50 47 07; adult/child €4/3; 🕒 Sun May-Sep) to Saulnes in France and back (via the border village of Lasauvage).