The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is a country in Western Europe, bordering Belgium, France, and Germany. Founded in 963, it became a grand duchy in 1815 and an independent state under the Netherlands. In 1839, it lost a lot of its territory to Belgium but gained more autonomy in the process. Eventually, Luxembourg gained full independence in 1867 under the condition of staying perpetually neutral. After it was overrun by Germany in both world wars, it gave up the neutrality and joined both the Benelux Customs Union and NATO. Luxembourg operated under a constitutional monarchy, with Grand Duke Henry as the head of state and the government being led by Prime Minister Xavier Bettel since December 2013. June 23, Grand Duke Henry’s birthday, is National Day, Luxembourg’s national holiday.

RELIGION

The vast majority of people in Luxembourg are Roman Catholics, with around 90% subscribing to this denomination. Other religions present include protestants, Jews, and Muslims. Freedom of worship and public practice of religion and freedom to manifest religious beliefs are guaranteed in the Luxembourg Constitution. Moreover, religions in Luxembourg are considered to have a public role. Therefore, the constitution also governs the spheres that require cooperation between Church and State through conventions. In 2015, the Luxembourgish government and the religious communities signed an agreement to reform the relationship between each other. It is going to be adapted to social reality, a common "values education"-class is going to be implemented in public schools, and church property rights will be reformed.

ETHNICITY & DEMOGRAPHICS

The outstanding feature of society in Luxembourg is its multiculturality. Almost 45% of the population of the grand Duchy are not Luxembourg nationals. In total, the country now counts more than 170 different nationalities. The most dominant ethnicities are, aside from the 53.3% Luxembourgers, Portuguese at 16.2%, French at 7.2%, Italians at 3.5%, Belgians at 3.4%, Germans at 2.2%, and British at 1.1%. Luxembourg’s birth rate significantly outnumbers its death rate, and it possesses an enormous positive net migration rate. Thus, Luxembourg had a 2.05% population growth rate in 2016, a trend that has been going on for many years now.
Famous Luxembourgers include bicyclists Andy Schleck and Fränk Schleck, President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, author Hugo Gernsback, actress Désirée Becker, and historian Arno J. Mayer.

Luxembourg constitutes a small, stable, high-income economy that has historically featured solid growth, low inflation, and low unemployment. While the financial sector is the leading sector in Luxembourg’s economy, the industrial sector has become increasingly diversified as well. The country continues to enjoy an extraordinarily high standard of living. GDP per capita is among the highest in the world and the highest in the euro zone, and it maintains a healthy budgetary position and the lowest public debt level in the region. Due to pressure from the EU and the OECD, Luxembourg has lost some of its advantages as a favorable tax location because it ended banking secrecy in 2015 to comply with EU requirements.

After giving up its perpetual neutrality because of the experiences of both world wars and joining NATO in 1949, Luxembourg became one of the founding member states of the European Union in 1958. Moreover, it is also an initial member of the euro zone since 1999 and has been part of the border-free Schengen area since March 1995. Luxembourg holds six seats in the European Parliament and has held the revolving presidency of the Council of the EU 12 times between 1960 and 2015.

Between 1841 and 1890, Luxembourg experienced a series of poor harvest which led many Luxembourgers to emigrate to the United States. In total, about 50,000 Luxembourgers have emigrated to the United States by now, with most of them living in the Midwest in states such as Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa. In 2004, the Luxembourg American Cultural Society, Inc. was founded in Wisconsin, and a Luxembourg-American Cultural Center opened in 2010.

The flag is composed of three equal horizontal bands of red, white, and light blue. The coloring is derived from the Grand Duke’s coat of arms.

**USEFUL LINKS**
http://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/luxembourg_en