



YOU'RE GOLFING WHERE...? ...LUXEMBOURG!

Luxembourg might be one of the 'capitals' of Europe; it might be home to billions of Euro's in strangely named banks, but a home to great golf courses? Indeed it is!

Words & images: Charles Briscoe-Knight

11th hole Golf Club de Luxembourg



Only an hour from the City of London by plane, keen players can be out of the office on a summer evening and on the tee there in two hours. Flying from user friendly London City Airport, to an un-crowded Luxembourg airport, takes an hour, and with easy border controls, you can be 'on the tee' at Kikuoka CC a further hour later. It's just nine miles away!

Our journey exploring what the Grand Duchy has on offer for us golfers, started though in the northern Ardennes area.

Famous for its forest – and to war historians – as the area that saw the infamous Battle of The Bulge. Clervaux is a historic and charming town nestled in a scenic valley and home to an interesting war museum and the iconic Family of Man exhibition curated by Edward Steichen at the UNESCO heritage listed Clervaux Castle. However, up on the plateau above the town lies their spectacular golf course. The clubhouse and hotel are as one, offering magnificent views over the course and the surrounding countryside. Outside, quite a switch-back ride awaits you. Meandering amongst tall trees, dipping uphill, down dale, and over streams and past lakes. The front nine presents an excellent challenge, some

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9th hole Clervaux Golf Club

of the doglegs are tricky, none more so than the ninth, which finishes in front of the club's terrace and has the uphill second shot needing three clubs more than you'd think!

The back nine is remarkable in its need for strategy, the main example of this is the 11th – a long 556yd par five. Water snakes along the right side of a massively left to right sloping fairway, and a well protected and elevated green. Making a seven we thought we'd done well after five perfect blows to make the green! The 'piece de la resistance' has to the 16th. Another steeply downhill dogleg, with a blind drive into a U shaped fairway, an

approach to a tiny green protected by a stream across the front and a pond on the left. Be straight, be accurate!

At 6,656yards Clervaux might not be overly long. But after 18 holes we knew we'd been on some heck of a course. Little wonder the Luxembourg Federation and the R & A use it for their annual International Amateur Championship.

Whilst Clervaux is in the north, Luxembourg is smaller than Kent, so getting to the gorgeous Golf Club de Luxembourg, near Junglinster, was quick and easy, thanks to 'sat nav'. On entering the club, an impressive drive between the fairways, ends in the



7th hole Clervaux Golf Club

courtyard of a beautifully renovated 18th Century stately farm house. A grander setting it is difficult to imagine.

Out on the course the test is accuracy. Naturally length always helps, but the fairways are tight for the most part, and generally all obstacles are in front of you – apart from, ironically, the first hole, where a members' local knowledge would help determine your aim for a blind landing! The second, a 499 yard par five, is a hugely satisfying hole. Downhill all the way, with a small lake on the right, an approach shot (if you go for it in two) to a small green, protected by a lake left, and a bunker short right and greenside trap on the right. Our par here felt like a birdie!

Whilst the opening holes are relatively open and exposed to the elements, crossing back under the local 'B' road to the last, more mature,

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2nd hole Golf Club de Luxembourg

Chateau de Vig ad



18th hole Kikuoka Country Club

seven holes, we were keen to play the rather schizophrenic 13th. As a par three, it plays at an easy downhill 166yds. As a dogleg, par four, with an uphill second shot it plays entirely differently, and is far more testing. Ideal for major competitions.

Finishing the round, both the 16th – another dogleg par 5 (494yards) – and the well protected 18th (381yards) are superb tests. No wonder our colleagues on Germany's *Golf Journal* have given Golf de Luxembourg a four star ranking. Rejoining the clubhouse post round, the food, beer (good Lux and Belgian brands!) and hospitality are magnificent. Even our ham and cheese club sandwich had to be the best we've tasted – anywhere!

A short drive – further south, in the Moselle (wine) region, lies the aforementioned Kikuoka Country Club – a name conjuring up something with Japanese roots. It was founded in 1991 by Mr. Kikuoka. A sparkling venue with the 74-room Mecure hotel



9th hole Kikuoka Country Club

and spa on site, acting as the clubhouse as well as a leisure complex. Kikuoka is the jewel in the Lux crown. The layout is so good it has regularly featured on the PGA European Challenge Tour. Indeed, Henrik Stenson won over this test back in 2002.

Designed to make the best use of several levels of land, and undulating by nature, the player never feels like reaching for the oxygen mask. Yes, there are many slopes – the most intriguing is perhaps the walk down the 18th but, the majority of the holes play relatively 'flat'.

Water plays a strategic role on the second with a massive risk reward tee shot, on the ninth with two ponds on the right of the tee shot landing area, on the 10th in the front of the green, and 14 needs careful management off the tee. The 18th is a fascinating hole, maybe quirky, is a better adjective. A double dogleg, a pond on the right of the second 'leg' and water all round the left, right and back of the green. We only just managed to keep our balls in play but still came away with a double. If you can't be good, be lucky!

The spa and pool are lovely post-round luxuries, and again the Luxembourg cuisine served in their excellent restaurant is sublime. Their TV sports bar features live Champions League, and PGA Tour golf!

Luxembourg might not be a golfing alternative to the Costa's, but it is a sure alternative to Le Touquet, Hardelot, Holland and Germany. It's easy to access, great value and extremely stylish.



EXPLORE LUXEMBOURG



TRAVEL

Luxair from London City Airport
www.luxair.co.uk

GOLF CLUBS/GREEN FEES

Golf de Clervaux – Green fees: 18 holes €55. Deals: 3 nights, 3 dinners, 3 green fees €360
www.golfclervaux.lu

Golf de Luxembourg – Green fees: Weekday €70. Buggy hire €30
www.golfdeluxembourg.lu

Kikuoka – Green fees: €80 weekdays, €100 weekends. Buggy hire: €35
www.kikuoka.lu

HOTELS

Clervaux GC and Hotel – Double room: weekday €130, weekends €145
www.hoteldugolf.lu

Kikuoka Country Club/ Mecure Hotel – Double room: €70
www.mercure.com

OTHER ATTRACTIONS/SIGHTS

Luxembourg City info
www.visitluxembourg.com

Clervaux Castle
www.destination-clervaux.lu/

Battle of the Bulge War Museum and Family of man exhibition
www.steichencollections.lu

SOME RECOMMENDED RESTAURANTS

The Victoria at Chateau d'Urspelt (near Clervaux) www.chateau-urspelt.lu

Pavilion Desom (near Kikuoka CC) www.desom.lu/fr/le-pavillon

Um Dierfgen, Cote d'Eich, Luxembourg City Centre
www.umdierfgen.lu

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