

# Luxembourg: A Moment in Time

This year marks the 65th anniversary of the Liberation of Luxembourg and the Battle of the Bulge. On September 10, 1944 “Letzebuerg ass frei – di éischt Amerikaner sinn do” made the headlines of local Luxembourg papers. The English translation reads “Luxembourg is free – the first Americans are here.”

## The Memory of the Battle

In a matter of three days, the 1st US Army liberated the country of Luxembourg, which had been under German occupation since 1940. There was a sense of optimism that the war would be over soon; perhaps as early as Christmas. Unfortunately that was not the case.



In the early morning hours of a dark and cold December 16, 1944, the Germans staged a massive last gamble surprise attack on the quiet sector of the Belgian and Luxembourg Ardennes to regain the offensive. This marked the beginning of the **Battle of the Bulge**, which took a tremendous toll in human lives and destruction.

Outnumbered and partially overrun in some areas, the Allied Forces offered a stubborn resistance, hampering and slowing down the Germans’ drive through the heart of the Ardennes. Bloody fighting took place under the most hostile weather conditions and it was not until shortly after Christmas that the Allied counterattack gained momentum.

Thanks to the brilliant leadership of General George S. Patton, Jr., the Third US Army succeeded in stopping the advance of the German Army and gradually pushing them back. By the end of January 1945, the majority of the Belgian and Luxembourg Ardennes were re-liberated.

Today there are over 120 memorials, commemorative plaques, streets and squares dedicated to the United States Army units that fought in Luxembourg during 1944 and 1945. In addition there are several museums, historical battlefield trails and the Luxembourg American Cemetery and Memorial where General George S. Patton, Jr. is buried. Veterans, families and military buffs can immerse themselves in Luxembourg’s recent past by visiting any of these points of interest.

## Military Museum

One of the most popular sites is the **Musée National d’Histoire Militaire** (National Museum of Military

History) located in Diekirch, Luxembourg. Since its origins, the Musée National d’Histoire Militaire has been guided by one key mission: the balanced, impartial and objective representation of the historical facts of the Battle of the Bulge.



The museum goes to great lengths to incorporate differing points of view from both sides of the conflict, as well as a civilian perspective, all the while presenting a historically-accurate, close-up detail of the major conflict. The mission is achieved through the creation of life-size, carefully-researched dioramas using WWII-era garb, weapons, and machinery and materials.

The life-like dioramas are all based on oral history records, available photographs and authentic historical materials. The museum also proudly displays memorabilia of the Luxembourg Army and soldiers who fought in the Allied ranks during World War I, World War II, and the Korean War.

The museum provides a variety of public programs and other activities that may be of interest to visitors. Specifically, the museum provides Guided Tours, Battlefield Visits, WWII Memorial Visits and Cemetery Visits, Public Lectures on the Battle of the Bulge, and use of the Library and Research Center. In addition, the museum often acts as a gathering platform for countless veterans from both sides, and participates in educational programs focused on reconciliation and collective memory issues.



The museum is currently developing a library and research center in order to provide visitors with assistance in collecting detailed information about their ancestor’s involvement in World War II and the Battle of the Bulge. The library and research center will prove to be a key planning asset for pre-travel research as well.

The long-lasting friendship between the United States and Luxembourg, which was cemented on the fields of the Ardennes during the Battle of the Bulge, has only grown stronger in the sixty-five years since that momentous history-turning battle. Both Americans and Luxembourgers played a key role in this crucial moment, without which liberation was uncertain. The Musée National d’Histoire Militaire plays

a seminal role in preserving the memory of this historic setting and is symbolic of the bond that exists between the two countries.

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<http://www.nat-military-museum.lu>

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