

# The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg

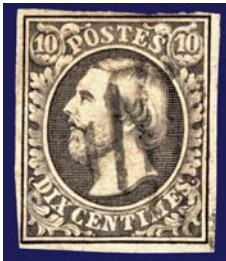
**Status:** Constitutional Monarchy in western Europe.

The world's only sovereign grand duchy.

**Population:** 491,775 (2009 est.)

**Area:** 998 sq mi

**Currency:** 100 cents = 1€ (\$1.40)



Luxembourg was a strategic outpost in the Roman defenses against the Germanic tribes, but modern Luxembourg dates from 963 when Siegfried, Count of the Ardennes, constructed a fortress on the site of older, possibly Roman, fortifications on the banks of the Alzette. The House of Luxembourg provided four emperors for the Holy Roman Empire. The country was bought by Philip the Good of Burgundy in 1443. Thereafter its fate was closely tied to the other Low Countries, coming under the domination of both the Spanish and Austrian Hapsburgs and France.

In 1795 revolutionary France annexed Luxembourg. When the boundaries of Europe were redrawn following Napoleon's defeat, the Dutch King became the Grand Duke of Luxembourg, while the Prussians were allowed to garrison the Luxembourg fortress. The Grand Duchy joined with the Belgian provinces when they rebelled against the Dutch in 1830. The Treaty of London in 1839 divided Luxembourg, with more than half being awarded to the Kingdom of Belgium. The remainder, including the garrison, remained a grand duchy under the Dutch king until 1890, when William III died without a male heir, and the grand duchy passed to a German Duke, Adolphe of Nassau.

Luxembourg joined the Austro-German postal union in 1852, which required the introduction of postage stamps. Ten centimes paid for a letter of 10 grams within the Grand Duchy and a silver groschen (12½ c) for a letter within the postal union. Thus, early stamps were denominated in two currencies.

In 1867 France felt threatened by the fortress and sought to buy Luxembourg. This created a crisis in Franco-German relations. An international conference in London resulted in the withdrawal of the German garrison, the dismantling the fortress, and a guarantee of Luxembourg's neutrality. Despite this guarantee, Luxembourg was invaded by the Germans in both world wars.

During World War I, Luxembourg was occupied by the German army, but the government declared itself neutral. Luxembourg postage stamps remained in use. The Grand Duchess abdicated following the war and her sister Charlotte assumed the crown. In 1922 Luxembourg entered into a customs union with Belgium and Belgian currency was placed in use.

During World War II, Germany annexed Luxembourg. German stamps overprinted "Luxembourg" were issued October 1, 1940 and remained valid until January 1, 1942. In late 1940, sixteen recent Luxembourg stamps overprinted in German currency were



issued. After January 1, 1942 only German stamps were available. New stamps produced by the American Banknote Company depicting Grand Duchess Charlotte were released on November 6, 1944.

Since World War II, Luxembourg has been a leader in European integration. In 1964 the popular Grand Duchess Charlotte abdicated in favor of her son Jean. He, in turn, abdicated in 2000 in favor of his son Henri.

