

EUROPE

Royal blast from the past

BY CLAUDIA CAPOS

LUXEMBOURG CITY, Luxembourg — Our requirements for a European city in which to celebrate a milestone birthday were simple: It needed to be walkable. Old-world charm was a must. And a sense of history and culture was imperative.

The Old City of Luxembourg, named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1994, checked off all the boxes for my partner, Doug, and me.

We booked a three-night stay at the Hôtel Vauban on Place Guillaume II, or William Square, and asked for the Vauban room, overlooking the Cathédrale Notre-Dame of Luxembourg.

Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban, a 17th century French military engineer and marshal, extended and reinforced the imposing fortifications surrounding Luxembourg City, a.k.a. the Gibraltar of the North, so we felt immersed in history from the moment we unpacked.

Church bells awakened us every morning, and we threw open our French windows to see what was happening on William Square.

When we arrived, the city's Portuguese community was hosting an all-day festival, with couples in traditional costumes dancing the *vira* and boisterous vendors serving fried dough *filhoses* and beer. On Wednesday morning, local farmers arrived with crates of oranges and fresh produce to sell at the weekly market.

Every afternoon, we stopped at the Palace of the Grand Dukes on Rue du Marché-aux-Herbes to watch the changing of the royal guards, who strutted with a stiff military gait and presented arms with rifles held in white-gloved hands.

We always looked to see whether the palace flag was flying, which signaled Grand Duke Henri Albert Gabriel Félix Marie Guillaume, Grand Duchess Maria Teresa and their children were in residence. His royal highness, who became grand duke in



CLAUDIA CAPOS

A VINTAGE CANNON sits near an artillery opening in the Bock Casemates, a centuries-old system of man-made tunnels in the cliffs of Luxembourg City.

2000, is quite a celebrity, and formal pictures of the grand ducal family appear on postcards sold at gift shops.

We discovered the city's breathtaking views on the Chemin de la Corniche, dubbed the "most beautiful balcony of Europe." From the serpentine walkway along the edge of the upper Old City, we gazed down at the Grund, once an infamous penal colony and now home to trendy bars and restaurants as well as arts and entertainment venues.

To the northeast, we admired the Bock promontory, the natural fortification where Siegfried, count of Ardennes, erected his castle of Lucilinburhuc in 963, laying the cornerstone for the country. The rugged cliffs harbor the Bock Casemates, a network of man-made tunnels and chambers that sheltered the city's military defenders and residents during wartime.

After shopping at posh boutiques along Grand Rue, we joined the evening crowd on historic Place d'Armes, also called the Parlor of the City, to listen to contemporary bands performing in the central pavilion.

On our last night, we

splurged on a gourmet French dinner at Le Bouquet Garni, a favorite of the grand duke. Seated at a table beneath 500-year-old wood beams, with a window overlooking the palace, we felt a little like royalty ourselves.

To read about Old City, two tours not to be missed and where to stay and eat, go to www.latimes.com/luxembourg.

travel@latimes.com

Sources: Mapbox, OpenStreetMap
LOU SPIRITO Los Angeles Times

BRIAN E. CLARK

THE VILLAGE OF FJALLBACKA on Sweden's rocky west coast, as viewed from Vetteberget hill.

Solid spot for stories

[Sweden, from L4]

ative mind and her half-dozen-plus novels, residents of Fjallbacka get knocked off on a regular (and sometimes gruesome) basis.

Fjallbacka boomed in the late 1800s when herring filled the waters offshore, tour leader and resident Asa Cunniff told me as we walked up a street past small, colorful homes.

It became a popular vacation spot for Scandinavians early in the last century and continues to draw visitors, many of whom come to see the 3,000-year-old Tanum rock carvings, a UNESCO World Heritage site north of town.

At the top of the hill, Cunniff and I paused in front of the village church, built from handsome red granite. From there, we walked to the harbor where, by chance, we met Lackberg's mother, Gunnel, who was puttering around her waterside cottage.

Camilla Lackberg was raised in Fjallbacka, and her parents were friends of Bergman's and Schmidt's. A family photo shows the actress holding baby Camilla.

At the dock across from Ingrid Bergman Square, we boarded a boat that took us for a crayfish feast at Vade-

Sources: Mapbox, OpenStreetMap
LOU SPIRITO Los Angeles Times

roarnas Vardshus (www.vaderoarna.com), an inn on one of the Weather Islands, about 30 minutes west of Fjallbacka.

We traipsed up to a pilot's lookout tower high above the pretty yellow inn, which has 11 guest rooms, a sauna and a hot tub. Its restaurant is Taste of West Sweden-accredited, which means it's one of the region's top eateries. Be sure to ask for the mussel soup, laced with Cognac and crayfish when they're in season.

To read more about biking, hiking and kayaking along Sweden's rocky west coast, go to www.latimes.com/swed

travel@latimes.com

CANADA NEW ENGLAND

11-night cruise on Liberty of the Seas
Sailing roundtrip Cape Liberty
September 22, 2015

Visit: Portland, Bar Harbor, Halifax and Boston

- Includes roundtrip Los Angeles airfare
- 2-night pre-cruise hotel stay at Hilton Penn Station - Newark
- 9-night deluxe cruise

INSIDE Stateroom per person from \$1,399 **BALCONY Stateroom per person from \$1,999**

INCLUDES ROUNDTRIP LOS ANGELES AIRFARE Tax/transfers - \$229

800-228-8843 **TRAVEL OF AMERICA**

Open Sunday 10am - 3pm CST1015320-40

SUMMER
is
EASY
in
Puerto Rico
THE ALL STAR ISLAND

A five star vacation for your whole family is as easy as **1, 2, 3.**

- 1 NO PASSPORT REQUIRED** for US citizens
- 2 Grab a quick flight down** - over **70 DAILY FLIGHTS** from US cities
- 3 Choose beaches, rainforest, adventure** - **IT'S ALL AT YOUR REACH**



Flamenco Beach, Culebra



Toro Verde, Orocovis

SAVE UP TO **50%** ON HOTELS*
VISIT **SUMMERISEASY.COM** RIGHT NOW!

FOR MORE INFORMATION
1.800.866.7827



*Offers subject to change without notice. Offers apply to selected hotels.