

Jim and Emmy's Travel Journal

The Country of Luxembourg

1970, 1979, 1980, 1983, 1985, 1988, 1989, and 1991

We have visited Luxembourg each and every trip to Europe. In 1979 we arrived and departed from the Luxembourg airport via Icelandic Airlines. Emmy's cousins live just a few miles from here, and many times we visited just to buy fuel and groceries at a lower price than available in Germany.

Almost every year, on our way to or from Paris and other parts of France or Belgium, we crossed the little country of Luxembourg. One year we visited Luxembourg City to conduct some business at the US Embassy, and after our Travelers Checks were stolen, we received replacements from the American Express office in Luxembourg City. On two occasions we spent a night in the campsite just south of the Capital City.

We crossed the border many more times than mentioned in this Journal, so it would be redundant to repeat the information for each visit, for each year.

1970

D, Euskirchen, Sep 12, Sat - Josef's

This morning we left to drive to Mettlach, where the rest of the cousins live. Josef and Ida rode with us in the VW, and the Lindas went with Reinhold in their car. We made arrangements to meet in Luxembourg. The drive was very interesting, and we were able to talk quite a bit—surprising.

We stopped in Luxembourg and visited their Cathedral (Luxembourg), saw a little of the city, then drove back to Germany. Crossing the border to Luxembourg and back to Germany was no problem at all, but they did look at the passports and the papers for the camper.

1979

D, Mettlach, Aug 26, Sun

We were met at the Luxembourg Airport by Linda (she had been visiting in Europe for a few weeks), and by Bärbel, and Josef and Ida. They had been there to meet us the day before, but since the plane was one day late, they spent some time with Ida's sister, who lives in Luxembourg. It's only about 25 to 30 miles from Luxembourg to Mettlach. Got to Toni's early and took a walk around Mettlach.

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D, Mettlach, Sep 4, Tue - 145 - 145

Speedometer said 9,650 as we left Toni's at 9:30 AM to take Linda to Luxembourg to catch her plane home. Stopped to see the US Army cemetery where Gen. George Patton and 5,600 others are buried. Looked around the city for a little while, bought some macaroon cookies, but most stores are closed for lunch.

Took Linda to the airport at 1:30 PM and found her plane would be a couple of hours late. She preferred to be left by herself, so we left to drive toward Finland. We plan to go north now, and be in the south of Europe when it gets colder.

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D, Mettlach, Nov 27, Tue, 361 - 10,575

After breakfast, Josef and Ida picked us up for the drive to Luxembourg to catch our plane.

First we stopped at Ida's sister, Elsa, for lunch. Not really lunch, a big dinner. They couldn't believe we wanted real water to drink.

When we got to the airport we were told our plane was going to be a little late. They were very careful to inspect all the luggage. All the luggage was set on the ground near the plane, and we had to go out and put our own luggage into the luggage cart. Then they made sure we could not leave Luxembourg airport's Icelandic Airlines boarding area. If we packed a bomb, we rode the plane.

When we got to the boarding gate, we thought they were loading an hour early for the Iceland flight, but they told us to get on. They were closing the door when we discovered we were on the wrong plane. This one is going to Iceland, then New York, and ours is going to Iceland, then Chicago. Since both are making a stop in Iceland, it didn't matter, we just stayed on. It did make Jim wonder about all that security. If they missed us on the plane that carried our luggage, no one said anything!

1980

D, Mettlach, Aug 6, Wed - - 471 - 9,082

We drove 471 miles around in this area during the 9 days. Speedometer said 29,362 when we left Toni's for Luxembourg, at about 11:00 AM this morning. Josef and Ida came over to say good-bye.

We stopped at the large Ford dealer, located between the airport and downtown Luxembourg, where they also sell campers and RV equipment. They do buy campers for resale, but we did not discuss a price at this time. We must sell this camper before we leave Europe in a couple of months.

1983

We took an easy drive to and through Luxembourg, and on to Luxembourg City. We noticed the camper rental place that was near the Luxembourg Airport in 1979, is no longer in business. We stopped at the big Ford dealer, and they gave us the address of the Electrolux dealer in Luxembourg City. We found him, and bought a 12V-220V-Gas refrigerator. He sent us to a plumber who might be able to install it when he gets home at 4:00 PM, except he didn't get home until 5:00 PM.

Even with two helpers it was a bigger job than he had expected. They had to cut off a section of the counter top above the old refrigerator, as the new one is much larger, but it then fit in the resulting space as if it was planned. The biggest problem was fitting the US size copper tube in the camper to the European size tube on the refrigerator. As a matter of fact, the refrigerator never worked properly on gas, and we figure maybe that was a result of the installation job. The job wasn't completed until 8:00 PM.

The plumber's family was very nice. The lady was picking gooseberries and gave some to Emmy, and invited her into their house. Their older daughter spoke English, and the whole family was very friendly. The plumber didn't charge for all the time spent, since they made a couple of mistakes they shouldn't have made, and it took them longer than they would like to admit.

The campsite was just a couple of miles south of the city. It's a very nice place with a large building for indoor tennis and bowling. Cost \$3.60.

L, Luxembourg City, July 22, Fri - 2

We wandered across the countryside in a general westerly direction. We don't know or really care where we crossed the France border.

1985

We stopped at two places in Luxembourg to ask about buying tires for the camper. One place said it would take at least four weeks, and the other didn't know from nothing, and it was almost lunch time and no way to find out more. Will call him from Toni's.

As we stopped for gasoline at the Luxembourg/ German border, we asked the gasoline-only service-station man what he could tell us about the tire shop across the street. What he could tell us was, "Do not shop there!" In Trier we parked right in front of a tire shop and found they don't know much about tires this size, but they will try to find out. We will call him in a day or two.

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We had no problem at the border, and went on to the US Embassy. We found they are spending a lot of money to fortify the US Embassy in Luxembourg against terrorists. They have a new iron fence, and things that can instantly fly up out of the driveway to block the entrance in case someone tries to drive in. They have a new guard gate where they examine purses and briefcases, and people entering the Embassy must pass through a metal detector.

Vera stayed in the camper while we all went in and took care of the business. (Most likely she would not have been allowed inside, if she tried. Entering the US Embassy is like entering the US, and if someone wants to stay, it could take months or years of litigation to get them out.)

We then drove to the Villeroy & Boch sales room in Luxembourg and found nothing anyone wanted to buy. As we left the city we stopped at the US Army cemetery where Gen. George Patton and over 5000 others are buried. Vera mentioned she lost a brother in the war. As we left, Jim took a wrong turn, and we just wandered around the countryside of Luxembourg for an hour longer than planned.

We had asked Vera if she would like to see France and she said yes. Although we didn't care where we were, we saw more of Luxembourg in the next hour than some people who live here have seen in their whole life.

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D, Mettlach, Oct 20, - Sun - 110 - 12,893

The sun was shining brightly as we left Mettlach for Rotterdam at 7:15 AM. As we drove toward Luxembourg we did see some fog in the valleys. We entered Luxembourg at 7:45 just 13 miles from Mettlach. Sometimes we have a problem getting the sales tax refunds we should have been getting all these years. We buy a little here and a little there, then mail some of it home, so it's very difficult to do. This time we have the papers all ready, and have most of the items in the camper in many boxes, but we have mailed some over the months.

Jim drove across the border into Luxembourg, parked in their parking lot and walked back to the German Zoll office. No problem, they just stamped all the receipts and now all we must do is mail them back to Villeroy & Boch and hope for the best. (Worked just fine.) We did get the money refunded on the tires and the camper repair some weeks ago, and now had the papers stamped for the recent installation of the starter, in addition to all the dishes.

The drive to Rotterdam is just about the same distance as from Rancho Mirage to Phoenix, but we will be in Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium and Holland, and will see many, many interesting places in just this one day.

1988

Left at 9:30, and entered Luxembourg at 9:40, then stopped to eat breakfast high above the Mosel River. Drove along the river and through the countryside of this little country, but didn't visit Luxembourg City this time. When we crossed the border to France about 12:30, they waved us on, but Jim told them we needed our Visas stamped. Somehow we then wandered back into Luxembourg without seeing a border control of any kind, and when we came back to the French border at a different place a little later, the man just smiled, as if to say we weren't the first.

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Stopped in Luxembourg for diesel fuel (cheapest in Europe, so far), then arrived at Toni's at 5:30 PM. We drove 5,778 km, 3,611 miles, averaged 120 miles per day, and we figured gas for the Dodge in past years, would have cost \$400 more than diesel for the Renault, to travel the same distance.

1989

We took a book ("Invitation to France," what else?) to Mr. Bloom at the Auto Registration office in Merzig, visited the Cactus supermarket in Luxembourg to buy the Schinken (smoked ham) Emmy likes so much, then filled the tank with fuel.

Just a few miles further (in Luxembourg), we followed a sign to some "Roman digs" just a couple of thousand years old, and right out there in the middle of nowhere. That is just so different from in the US. And there are dozens of other places here and there, where more ancient ruins could be found. Why bother, where is the end to all the digging, and there must be a better way to spend the money.

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We arrived in Luxembourg in mid-afternoon. It's too early to camp, and too late to drive on to Toni's. Stopped at a shopping center so Emmy could look for a certain type of kitchen trash can for Toni, and finally found one here in Luxembourg. It has been raining, raining, raining.

Jim remembered the Luxembourg campsite (we camped here in 1983) was just south of town. We entered the city of Luxembourg (from a direction we haven't driven before), and when we saw a unique looking church and an odd looking intersection, Jim said, "Here's where we turn and the campsite is just south of Luxembourg City, on the left, and there is a large building for tennis, with a picture of a tennis player on the outside," and you bet he was right!

Wonder how many campsites in how many countries we have visited since the last time we were here? There must be some good way to use such information, and there is—enjoying our trip through Europe, or most anywhere else! The town name is Kockelschuler on route N6.

This is a very nice campsite, with nice facilities for showers, etc. Of course that depends on which shower is used. Jim had no problem of any kind, and plenty of hot water, while Emmy had all kinds of problems. Water too hot in one place, not hot enough in another, got her clothes wet in the third, you name it. Jim said the guys would help her with her shower, if she just came to our side!

L, Luxembourg, Mar 25, Sat - 5 - - 125 - 721

Filled with fuel again before we crossed the border to Germany, and arrived at Toni's at 9:30 AM after driving 907 km, or 566 miles, to Paris and back. As usual, we averaged between 110 and 120 miles per day, and while we saw little that was new, we saw plenty that was of interest!

In 1992 the European countries are going to remove most of the border controls, and they have started already. We have crossed the border between Germany and Luxembourg several times this year, and have not been stopped yet. In past years, the German customs officers stopped us each time to see the expiration date on the papers for the RV. Now the date is on the license plate, in plain sight. They stop a car once in awhile, but it's impossible to see what reason they have.

Americans need a visa to enter France, at the moment. Last year we had to stop and ask them to stamp the passport, and usually no one bothered, so later we didn't either. One time as we were leaving France last year, the guard was very unhappy we had not stopped and insisted on getting it stamped, when we had entered his country earlier!

This time there was no one at the border when we crossed between France and Luxembourg either time, so we didn't look for them. That would have been unheard of in past years, and it will become less and less unusual between now and 1992. Later in the year, they removed the requirement for a Visa, but didn't refund the money for the several years remaining on ours!

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D, Mettlach, June 22, Thu to Jun 30, Fri - Toni's - 176 - 8,719

Today Jim drove 25 miles or so to the American Express office in Luxembourg, they asked how many were stolen, and gave Jim new Traveler's Checks, no problem. We're sure if we miss-counted and spent more than we remembered, they'll let us know and we'll re-pay them.

This service is an important reason to buy traveler checks. At any point in time there are a billion dollars worth of traveler's checks being carried around, and American Express gets free use of all the money. Think of the interest they would earn, if the money was just deposited in a bank somewhere. Many checks are lost and/or never cashed, so it's easy to see the advertising value of replacing a few here and there, is nothing compared to the profit they make.

We have decided to sell the RV rather than store it, after all. One bed and the kitchen are quite small, and we keep saying that we don't want to travel more than a couple of months at a time. RV's are readily available in Europe (they weren't, just a few years ago). We can rent an RV for a month or so every couple of years, cheaper than buying and storing one. In addition to the loss in value while parked, we would most likely have to buy new tires and batteries after it's parked that long.

While Jim was leaving Luxembourg, it rained so hard water was standing inches deep on the highway. He had planned to stop at a large auto and camper dealer we have visited several times, but with this much rain, Jim decided to just go home. Then as he neared the airport, there was no sign of rain, so went to the main highway, and headed back toward city center, from the other side of the city. Very soon he was back in the rain, but since he was just a mile from the Ford dealer, he continued.

Jim stayed in the camper in the parking lot until the rain slowed a bit, then several people came and looked over the RV, and said they were interested.

They asked Jim to come back next week and they will have a mechanic look it over in detail.

Tomorrow is a holiday in Luxembourg, and in reply to the question, "What war are you celebrating," the man said it was the birthday of the Prince, or whoever rules his country. He agreed with Jim (in a few words of German/English and hand signals), "Luxembourg has neither won nor lost a war, we just seem to be in the way when other people are fighting their war."

Jim seems to remember his Brother Paul drove a truck into Luxembourg on the day it was liberated, and a member of the ruling family was in his truck. Jim told this to the man, and he was quite impressed, and happy to hear his story. We must check with Paul. Sometimes Jim remember things just as if they had happened. (We did, and it's true!)

Jim got on the main Autobahn and headed toward the airport, on his way to Trier. It was still raining, but not nearly as hard as 30 minutes ago, but now on the inbound traffic lanes, where Jim was just a few minutes ago, he saw the results of one of the most terrible traffic accidents he has seen.

There must have been a dozen vehicles piled here and there. A dozen Luxembourg police cars and several ambulances were tending to the injured, and bodies were lying here and there, covered as if they were dead. Sure glad it didn't happen 30 minutes earlier!

1991

In 1991 we travelled into Luxembourg for groceries and fuel several times, and drove across the country twice on a round trip to Paris, and twice during a trip to take Hugo and Maria to visit Monika in France. In past years we had to undergo a border/customs inspection as we crossed the bridge over the Mosel River which is the border between the two countries. This year, we were not stopped one time. What a difference.

1995

We arrived in Europe on May 17, spent a couple of weeks in Germany, to France, back to Germany then to Prague, Austria, two weeks in Italy (including San Marino), two weeks in France, then through Luxembourg and back to Germany.

Finally we asked some men sitting in a government truck, and they said follow us, and we did — over hill and dale, turning here and there, and it worked. We saw them turn around and go back, so they were just doing us a favor, they were not going our way. How nice.

We like to arrive at the cousins with plenty of groceries, but the Aldi's store we stopped at had such long lines, we just went on our way. When we got to the Cactus Super Market in Remich, Luxembourg, we did some shopping for milk, etc., and spent \$20 for just a few items.

As in so many places this year, we used the Visa card to pay for the food, and for the Diesel fuel at the station across the street. Jim just counted and found we used credit cards about 75 times this year, in department stores, banks (for cash), gas stations, grocery stores, and other such places. That sure is easier and safer than using cash or travelers checks.

After a month in Germany, returned to
US on August 31.