



Liechtenstein

POP 37,132 / AREA 160 SQ KM / LANGUAGE GERMAN

Includes ➔

Vaduz	298
Around Vaduz	299
Malbun	300

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Torkel (p299)
- ➔ Hotel Schatzmann (p300)
- ➔ Adler Vaduz (p299)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Parkhotel Sonnenhof (p299)
- ➔ Familienhotel Gorfion (p300)
- ➔ Gasthof Löwen (p299)

Why Go?

A pipsqueak of a country, Liechtenstein snuggles between Switzerland and Austria, among mountain ranges that rise steep and rugged above the Rhine. Besides the sheer novelty value of visiting one of the world's tiniest and richest countries, Liechtenstein is pure fairy-tale stuff – a mountain principality governed by an iron-willed monarch, embedded deep in the Alps and crowned by whimsically turreted castles.

Only 25km long by 12km wide (at its broadest point), Liechtenstein doesn't have an international airport, and access from Switzerland is by local bus, but the journey is worthwhile.

Outdoor enthusiasts are in their element here, with a remarkable number of trails to hike and slopes to ski given the country's diminutive size. Strike out into the Alpine wilderness beyond Vaduz and, suddenly, this landlocked sliver of a micronation no longer seems quite so small.

When to Go

- ➔ Pocket-sized Liechtenstein is a place that you can visit any time of the year. That said, different months and seasons boast different charms.
- ➔ Wildflowers bring a burst of spring colour, while golden autumn days are a fine time to sample new wine and game in Liechtenstein's top restaurants.
- ➔ Slow travel is the word at cycle-happy Slow Up Liechtenstein in May.
- ➔ The country strums to Guitar Days in July and celebrates National Day with fireworks on 15 August.
- ➔ Come in summer for high-alpine hiking, and cycling along the Rhine.
- ➔ Downhill and cross-country skiers glide along Malbun's slopes in winter.

History

Austrian prince Johann Adam Von Liechtenstein purchased the counties of Schellenberg (1699) and Vaduz (1712) from impoverished German nobles and gave them his name. Long a principality under the Holy Roman Empire, Liechtenstein gained independence in 1866. In 1923 it formed a customs union with Switzerland.



Liechtenstein Highlights

- 1 Hike up to perkily turreted **Schloss Vaduz** (p298) for postcard views of the Alps, then eat like a king at **Torkel** (p299) above the royal vineyards.
- 2 Strap on walking boots or skis and head to the slopes of family-focused **Malbun** (p300).
- 3 Play among the peaks on the vertiginous **Fürstentstein** (p299), Liechtenstein's flagship walk.
- 4 Pedal along the sprightly Rhine and over to Switzerland and Austria on the **Drei Länder Tour** (p300).

Even then, it wasn't until 1938, in the wake of the Anschluss (Nazi Germany's takeover of Austria) that Prince Franz Josef II became the first monarch to live in the principality; he and his wife, Gina, set about transforming a poor rural nation into today's rich banking state. Their son, Prince Hans Adam II, ascended the throne on the prince's death in 1989.

The country's use of the Swiss franc encourages people to see it as a mere extension of its neighbour, but Liechtenstein has very different foreign policies, having joined the UN and the European Economic Area (EEA) relatively early, in 1990 and 1995 respectively.

Long known as a tax haven, the principality banned customers from stashing away money anonymously in 2000. Recently it has implemented tougher reforms in a bid to shrug off its reputation for banking secrecy and recast its image as a legitimate financial centre.

Information

For general information on the country, visit www.liechtenstein.li and www.tourismus.li. Liechtenstein's international phone prefix is 423.

Prices and opening times are comparable with those found in Switzerland, and the Swiss currency is used.

Devoutly Catholic, Liechtenstein takes off all the main religious feast days, plus Labour Day (1 May) and National Day (15 August), totalling a healthy 22 public holidays annually.

The official language is German but most speak an Alemannic dialect. English is widely spoken.

Getting There & Away

The nearest airports are Zürich and Friedrichshafen (Germany), with train connections to the Swiss border towns of Buchs and Sargans. There are frequent buses to Vaduz from Buchs (Sfr7.20, 20 minutes) and Sargans (Sfr9.40, 25 minutes).

A few Buchs–Feldkirch trains stop at Schaan (bus tickets are valid).

By road, the A16 from Switzerland passes through Liechtenstein via Schaan and ends at Feldkirch. The N13 follows the Rhine along the border; minor roads cross into Liechtenstein at each freeway exit.

Getting Around

Buses traverse the country. Single fares (buy tickets on the bus) are Sfr2.80/3.50/4.80 for one/two/three zones, while a daily bus pass costs Sfr5.60/7/9.60 for the same number of zones. Swiss travel passes are valid on all main routes. Timetables are posted at stops.

For bicycle hire, try the Swiss train stations in Buchs or Sargans, the tourist office in Vaduz, or **Sigi's Velo Shop** (4384 27 50; www.veloshop.li;