

Travel the Benelux

Vianden charms visitors in Ardennes

by **Tim Clark**

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Outside the gate



A fairy-tale castle set in the stunning landscape of the Ardennes, Vianden Castle sits on a hill overlooking the quaint town of Vianden, Luxembourg.

The castle was built between the 11th and 14th centuries for the counts of Vianden. From the 12th to the 15th century, the counts were the most powerful nobles in the region of the Rhine, Mosel and Maas rivers. Connections with the Royal Family of France and the German imperial court enhanced their influence.

The castle passed out of the family of the Counts of Vianden in the 16th century.

Over the centuries the castle slowly deteriorated. The low point came in 1820 when William I of the Netherlands sold the castle to a local merchant who then sold off the contents and masonry piece by piece. The castle fell into ruin.

Restoration of the castle began in 1962. The family of the Grand Duke of Luxembourg transferred ownership of the castle to the state of Luxembourg in 1977.

Restored to its former glory by the state, it now stands as a monument to its glorious past. It is one of the largest feudal castles of the Romanesque and Gothic periods in Europe.

Vianden, a charming small town that can easily be seen on foot. Small shops and restaurants line the main street with the river Our running right down the middle of town. The Trinitarian church, built in 1677, has beautiful stained glass windows.

The winding roads and pathways in and around Vianden are popular with bicyclists, hikers and bikers. Be sure to take a drive around area for some wonderful views of the castle and spectacular panoramic views of the Ardennes.

Vianden has a number of annual events, including the popular medieval festival, this year from July 25 to Aug. 2. The nut market in October – when local walnuts are on sale along with all manner of things made from walnuts – always draws a large number of visitors.



For your GPS:
Luxembourg
Vianden L-9416
From:
Mons: 215 km
Brussels: 220 km
Schinnen: 163 km



The Hugo connection

Victor Hugo, the French author of “Les Misérables” and “The Hunchback of Notre-Dame,” lived in Vianden several times between 1862 and 1871.

He documented the area in prose, poetry and sketches, doing much to promote the attractions of Vianden to the outside world. The house where he stayed in 1871 is now a museum with a few letters written in his hand, his furniture and some personal documents as well as some reproductions of drawings he made there. A bust of Hugo by Rodin, a gift to the city from the French senate, stands on the bridge next to the museum.

