

# Liechtenstein

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **Vaduz** Snap a picture of the royal castle with its stunning mountain backdrop in this tiny village masquerading as a capital (p719)
- **Malbun** Just to say you did, write a postcard home from this ski resort. How many people really can say they were skiing in Liechtenstein? (p721)
- **Hiking trails** Check out the country's 400km of trails through stunning alpine scenery – this can be accomplished anywhere in the tiny principality (p721)

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 150 sq km (2½ Liechtensteins would fit into Andorra!)
- **ATMS** Found throughout Vaduz
- **Budget** Sfr50 to Sfr120 per day
- **Capital** Vaduz
- **Famous for** sending postcards home stamped by the country's postal service, dentures
- **Head of State** Prince Hans-Adam II
- **Language** German
- **Money** Swiss franc (Sfr); A\$1 = Sfr0.93; CA\$1 = Sfr1.10; €1 = Sfr1.57; ¥100 = Sfr1.04; NZ\$1 = Sfr0.80; UK£1 = Sfr2.34; US\$1 = Sfr1.22
- **Phrases** *guten tag* (good day), *danke* (thanks), *auf wiedersehen* (goodbye), *sprechen sie Englisch?* (do you speak English?)
- **Population** 32,860
- **Telephone Codes** country code ☎ 423; international access code ☎ 00
- **Time** GMT/UTC + 1
- **Visas** None required for citizens of the EU, USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa



## TRAVEL HINTS

The compact size of this principality means that you can stay outside Vaduz and still access all of the attractions.

## ROAMING LIECHTENSTEIN

You can tour the entire country in a day if you want to, but better to spend a night in Vaduz and another in Malbun to really appreciate all it has to offer.

It's true, Liechtenstein makes a fabulous wine-and-cheese hour trivia subject – did you know it was the sixth smallest country?... It's still governed by an iron-willed monarch who lives in a Gothic castle on a hill... Yes, it really is the world's largest producer of dentures... But if you're visiting this pocket-sized principality solely for the cocktail-party bragging rights, keep the operation covert. This theme-park micronation takes its independence seriously and would shudder at the thought of being considered for novelty value alone. Liechtenstein would rather be remembered for its stunning natural beauty. Measuring just 25km in length and 6km in

width, the country is barely larger than Manhattan. And though it might not look like much on a map, up close it's filled with numerous hiking and cycling trails offering spectacular views of craggy cliffs, quaint villages, friendly locals and lush green forests.

## HISTORY

A merger of the domain of Schellenberg and the county of Vaduz in 1712 by the powerful Liechtenstein family created the country. A principality under the Holy Roman Empire from 1719 to 1806, it achieved full sovereign independence in 1866. A modern constitution was drawn up in 1921, but even today the prince retains the power to dissolve parliament and must approve every act before it becomes law. Prince Franz Josef II was the first ruler to live in the castle above the capital city of Vaduz. He died in 1989 and was succeeded by his son, Prince Hans-Adam II, who has since clashed with the government over his proposed constitutional reforms that would limit government power.

In 2000 Liechtenstein's financial and political institutions were rocked by allegations that money laundering was rife in the country. In response to international outrage, banks agreed to stop allowing customers

to bank money anonymously. However, it remains under pressure to introduce more reforms.

In 2003 Hans-Adam demanded sweeping powers to dismiss the elected government, appoint judges and reject proposed laws. Opponents warned of dictatorship, but the prince threatened to stomp off back to Austria if he didn't get his way and the population – possibly worried about what an empty Schloss Vaduz would do to tourism – backed him in a referendum. The following year Hans-Adam handed the day-to-day running of the country to his son Alois, although he remains head of state.

## TRANSPORT

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The nearest airports are Friedrichshafen (Germany) and Zürich, with train connections to the Swiss border towns of Buchs (via Romanshorn) and Sargans, respectively. From each of these towns, there are usually three buses to Vaduz (from Buchs/Sargans Sfr2.40/3.60, Swiss Pass valid). Buses run every half-hour from the Austrian border town of Feldkirch; you sometimes have to change at Schaan to reach Vaduz.

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

By road, route 16 from Switzerland passes through Liechtenstein via Schaan and terminates at Feldkirch. The N13 follows the Rhine along the Swiss/Liechtenstein border.

### GETTING AROUND

Postbus travel within Liechtenstein is cheap and reliable; all fares cost Sfr2.40 or Sfr3.60, with the higher rate for journeys exceeding 13km (such as Vaduz to Malbun). A weekly/

#### EMERGENCY NUMBERS

The same emergency numbers apply as in Switzerland:

- Ambulance ☎ 144
- Fire ☎ 118
- Police ☎ 117

monthly pass is only Sfr10/20 (half-price for students and seniors).

The only drawback is some services finish early; the last of the hourly buses from Vaduz to Malbun, for example, leaves at 6.20pm. Grab a timetable from Liechtenstein Tourism (below) in Vaduz.

## VADUZ

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Vaduz is the kind of capital city where the butcher knows the baker – with tidy, quiet streets, lively patio cafés and a Gothic-looking castle on a hill, it feels more like a village than anything else. It's also all most visitors to Liechtenstein see, and at times it can feel like its soul has been sold to cater to the whims of tourist hordes alighting for 17 minutes on guided bus tours. Souvenir shops, tax-free luxury-goods stores and cube-shaped concrete buildings dominate the small, somewhat bland town centre enclosed by Äulestrasse and the pedestrian-only Städtle.

### INFORMATION

**Liechtenstein Tourism** (☎ 239 63 00; www.tourism.us.li; Städtle 37; ☎ 9am–noon & 1.30–5pm May–Oct, 9am–noon & 1.30–5pm Mon–Fri Nov–Apr) Offers souvenir passport stamps for Sfr2, plus all the usual tourism help.

**Main post office** (Äulestrasse 38; ☎ 7.45am–6pm Mon–Fri, 8am–11am Sat)

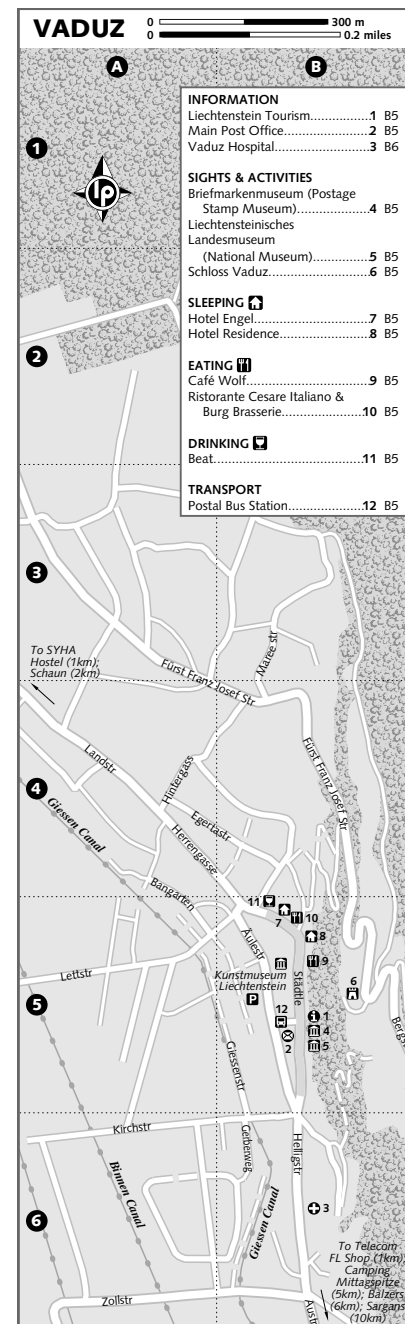
**Telecom FL Shop** (☎ 237 74 00; Austrasse 77; ☎ 9am–noon & 1.30–6.30pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat) Free internet access.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Although **Schloss Vaduz** (Vaduz Castle) is not open to the public, the exterior graces many a photograph and it's worth climbing up the hill for a closer look. At the top, there's a magnificent vista of Vaduz with a spectacular backdrop of the mountains. There's also a

#### LIECHTENSTEIN DIRECTORY

Liechtenstein and Switzerland share almost everything – currency, airports – so for more information about Liechtenstein basics, check out the Switzerland Directory (p1141). Since mid-2005, Liechtenstein has operated its own postal system.



### IT'S LIECHTENSTEIN TRIVIA TIME

- If you ever meet the prince in the pub, make sure he buys a round. The royal family is estimated to be worth UK£3.3 billion.
- There are 80,000 companies registered in the principality – that's nearly double the population of Vaduz.
- Liechtenstein bites into a large chunk of the false-teeth market – it's the world's largest exporter of the product.
- Liechtenstein is the only country in the world named after the people who purchased it.
- In its last military engagement in 1866, none of its 80 soldiers was killed. In fact, 81 returned, including a new Italian 'friend'. The army was disbanded soon afterwards.
- Until 2005, when worries came to a head about the drug TCH, Liechtenstein's cows were fed hemp to keep them chilled and producing 'better' milk.

network of marked walking trails along the ridge. For a peek inside the castle grounds, arrive on 15 August, **Liechtenstein's National Day**, when there are magnificent fireworks and the prince invites all 32,860 Liechtensteiners back to his for a glass of wine or beer.

In the town centre, the well-designed **Liechtensteinisches Landesmuseum** (National Museum; ☎ 239 68 20; www.landmuseum.li; Städtle 43; adult/concession Sfr8/5; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun, 10am-8pm Wed) provides a surprisingly interesting romp through the principality's history, from medieval witch trials and burnings to the manufacture of false teeth.

Keen philatelists will lick their lips in anticipation of the **Briefmarkenmuseum** (Postage Stamp Museum; ☎ 236 61 05; Städtle 37; admission free; 🕒 10am-noon & 1-5pm), where 300 frames of national stamps issued since 1912 are on display.

### SLEEPING

You can base yourself anywhere and still be within easy cycling or postbus distance of the town centre. Ask the tourist office for a list of private rooms and chalets outside Vaduz.

### SPLURGE

**Hotel Residence** (☎ 239 20 20; www.residence.li; Städtle 23; s/d from Sfr195/260; 🍷 📺) It's cool to see a four-star hotel doubling as a local art gallery, which is exactly what Vaduz's newest hotel does (everything on the walls is for sale). Rooms are modern, made up with lots of seagrass and muted colour schemes.

**Camping Mittagspitze** (☎ 392 36 77, 392 23 11; camp sites per adult/tent/child/car Sfr8.50/8/4.50/4; 📶) A well-equipped camping ground in a leafy spot, with a restaurant, TV lounge, playground and kiosk. It's outside Vaduz, just south of Triesen.

**SYHA hostel** (☎ 232 50 22; www.youthhostel.ch/schaan; Untere Rütigasse 6; dm/d Sfr30.50/82; 🕒 mid-Mar-Oct, 🕒 reception closed 10am-5pm) Renovated a few years ago, this hostel caters particularly to cyclists and families. Halfway between Schaan and Vaduz, it's within easy walking distance of either.

**Hotel Engel** (☎ 236 17 17; www.hotelengel.li; Städtle 13; s/d from Sfr110/165; 🍷 📺 📺) Rooms are modern but feel soulless at this recently remodelled hotel. There's an Asian restaurant (Thai and Chinese) wafting tempting aromas through the hallways.

### EATING & DRINKING

Pedestrian-only Städtle has a clutch of pavement restaurants and cafés.

**Ristorante Cesare Italiano & Burg Brasserie** (☎ 232 23 83; Städtle 15; mains Sfr15-30) Chow on pizza, burgers and salads at the downstairs café with a Parisian vibe, complete with the requisite red walls and brass fixtures. Upstairs there's a fancier Italian menu. The place is popular and often packed, and with loads of ice-cream sundaes it's a good spot for the kids.

**Beat** (☎ 236 84 84; Städtle 3; mains Sfr10-35) This spot has a linen tablecloth, candlelit restaurant at the front, and a slick bar with a lounge feel and flat-screen TVs at the back. DJs spin at night. The menu is loaded with soups, salads, pasta and Swiss-German fare.

**our pick Café Wolf** (☎ 232 43 21; Städtle 29; takeaway Sfr4-8, 2-course meal Sfr20) Locals flock here for the

set two-course dinners. The menu changes daily, but always includes a veggie option. The horseshoe bar, with orchids and low lighting, is a perfect place to unwind – there is live music some evenings. Shoestring travellers will appreciate the cheap takeaway, including pasta and brats.

## AROUND VADUZ

Outside Vaduz the air is crisp and clear with a pungent, sweet aroma of cow dung and flowers. The countryside, dotted with tranquil villages and enticing churches set to a craggy Alps backdrop, is about as idyllic and relaxing as it gets.

**Triesenberg**, on a terrace above Vaduz, commands excellent views over the Rhine valley. It has a pretty onion-domed church and the **Heimatmuseum** (☎ 262 19 26; adult/student Sfr2/1; 🕒 1.30-5.30pm Tue-Sat), devoted to the Walsen community, whose members came from Switzerland's Valais to settle in the 13th century.

There are 400km of **hiking trails** through Liechtenstein, along with loads of well-marked **cycling routes** (look for signs with a biking symbol; distances and directions will also be included). The most famous hiking trail is the **Fürstentöge**, a rite of passage for nearly every Liechtensteiner. You must be fit and not suffer

from vertigo, as in places the path is narrow, reinforced with rope handholds and/or falls away to a sheer drop. The hike, which takes up to four hours, begins at the **Berggasthaus Gaflei** (bus 30 from Triesenberg). Travel light and wear good shoes.

### MALBUN

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Nestled amid the mountains in the southeast is tiny Malbun, Liechtenstein's one and only ski resort.

The road from Vaduz terminates at Malbun. There is an ATM by the lower bus stop. The **tourist office** (☎ 263 65 77; www.malbun.li; 🕒 9am-noon & 1.30-5pm Mon-Sat, closed mid-Apr–May & Nov–mid-Dec) is on the main street, not far from Hotel Walserhof.

Although rather limited in scope – the runs are mostly novice and intermediate – the skiing is inexpensive for this part of the world and it does offer some bragging rights.

The resort has ski and snowboard schools. A one-day/week-long ski pass costs Sfr37/165 for adults and just Sfr31/137 for students under 28. Skis, shoes and poles cost Sfr44 for a day and can be hired from the **sports shop** (☎ 263 37 55) in town. A chairlift at the resort operates in summer (one way/return Sfr8/12), so you can ride up and hike down.

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