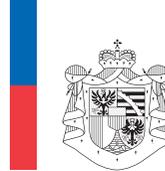


The Principality
of Liechtenstein
Encounter with
a Small State



The Principality of Liechtenstein – Encounter with a Small State

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GOVERNMENT
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN

Dear Readers

For many years, the brochure “Encounter with a Small State” has brought readers closer to the country of Liechtenstein from a variety of perspectives. Across nearly 130 pages, it provides all the essential information and insights about the Principality in the heart of Europe. In addition to text and photographs, selected sections also feature interactive elements.

May your reading offer you many interesting and lasting encounters.

Government of the Principality of Liechtenstein



Liechtenstein borders two neighbouring countries – Switzerland and Austria.

Insights about Liechtenstein

- FL – for *Fürstentum Liechtenstein* – is the traditional abbreviation of the Principality of Liechtenstein. Modern times, however, have brought changes here as well. The “Liechtenstein brand” now uses LI, while international sporting events refer to the country as LIE. Online, the domain extension .li has become established for Liechtenstein.
- In Liechtenstein, payments can be made in euros and US dollars, though the official currency is the Swiss franc. Liechtenstein adopted the Swiss franc as its official currency already in 1924, but the currency treaty between Switzerland and Liechtenstein was not signed until 1981.
- Liechtenstein is a landlocked country – it has neither an airport nor a seaport. It shares borders with Switzerland and Austria, with a total border length of 76.0 kilometres (47.2 miles): 41.1 kilometres (25.5 miles) with Switzerland and 34.9 kilometres (21.7 miles) with Austria.
- Liechtenstein’s industrial sector employs around 10,000 people across the 30 largest companies based in the country. Abroad, Liechtenstein’s industry is even significantly larger: by the end of 2022, a total of 52,927 employees were working in 271 foreign subsidi-

aries. The sector was represented by 149 branches in Europe, 40 in the Americas, 73 in Asia, six in Australia, and three in Africa.

- The people of Liechtenstein love their *Tüergga-Rebel* (cornmeal) as a national dish and are also fond of *Käsknöpfle* (cheese dumplings). But they are not averse to gourmet cuisine either. In 2023, Gault&Millau awarded high scores to no fewer than five restaurants across the country's 160 square kilometres (62 square miles).
- Liechtenstein is not only a financial centre, but also a centre of education. Three university-level institutions are available to both domestic and international students for education, basic and continuing training, and research.
- There is also a Liechtenstein Institute at Princeton University in the United States, founded in 2000 by Reigning Prince Hans-Adam II. The institute promotes research, teaching, publications, and diplomacy in the fields of self-determination, statehood, and sovereignty. Following Liechtenstein's accession to the United Nations in 1990, Reigning Prince Hans-Adam II announced an initiative on the right of peoples to self-determination, which was submitted to the UN General Assembly in 1992.
- The people of Liechtenstein are deeply engaged in community life through local clubs and associations. These are as much a part of every village as trees are of a forest. Since the right of association was guaranteed in the 1862 constitution, numerous associations have been established. One of the first was the Vaduz Reading Society, followed by theatre societies and, in 1885, the Agricultural Society, which remained the largest association by membership for many years. Today, there are estimated to be around 600 associations. The Historical Society of the Principality of Liechtenstein, founded in 1901, has demonstrated its disciplined approach to association life by publishing a highly regarded yearbook every year without interruption.

- The Romans introduced wine to the Liechtenstein region. By the end of the 19th century, wine had become one of the country's main export products. However, vine diseases and various economic and social changes led to a decline in vineyard areas. In the final third of the 20th century, numerous smaller wineries emerged around the Reigning Prince of Liechtenstein's court winery, the *Hofkellerei*. Today, there are hardly any Liechtenstein municipalities without vineyards. Even in the Walser village of Triesenberg, situated more than 800 metres (2,625 feet) above sea level, a viticulture project has been successfully launched.

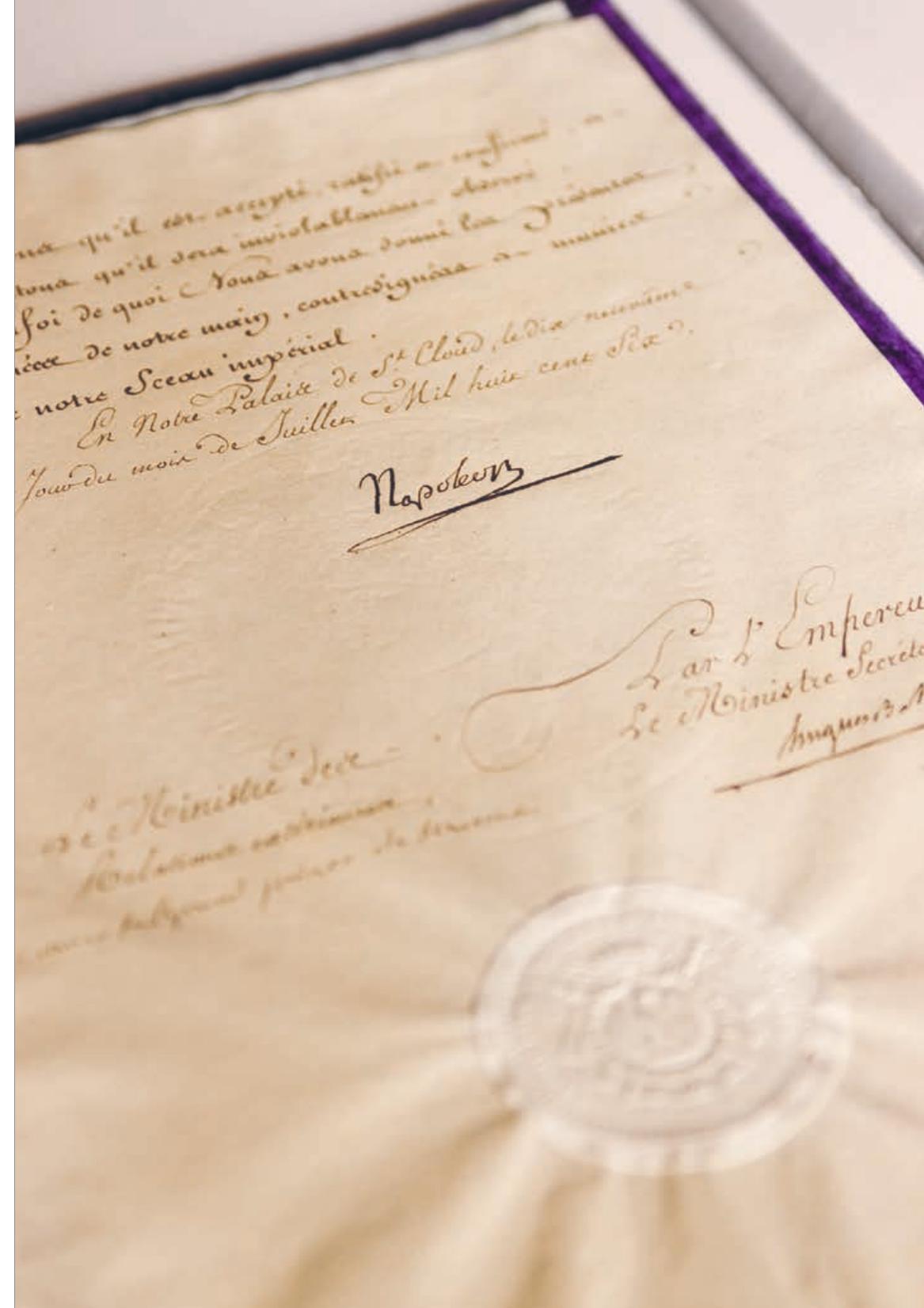
PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN – AT A GLANCE

<i>Area</i>	<i>160 square kilometres (62 square miles)</i>
<i>Population</i>	<i>40,023 (end of 2023)</i>
<i>Currency</i>	<i>Swiss franc</i>
<i>Official language</i>	<i>German</i>
<i>Colloquial language</i>	<i>Various local dialects</i>
<i>National holiday</i>	<i>15 August</i>
<i>System of state</i>	<i>Constitutional hereditary monarchy on a democratic and parliamentary basis</i>
<i>Head of State</i>	<i>Reigning Prince Hans-Adam II In 2004, Hereditary Prince Alois was entrusted with the duties of government as the representative of Reigning Prince Hans-Adam II.</i>
<i>Government</i>	<i>Collegial Government with five members</i>
<i>Parliament</i>	<i>25 members, elected for a four-year term</i>
<i>Capital</i>	<i>Vaduz</i>
<i>Municipalities</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Oberland (Upper Country)</i>	<i>Vaduz, Schaan, Triesen, Triesenberg, Balzers, Planken</i>
<i>Unterland (Lower Country)</i>	<i>Eschen, Mauren, Gamprin, Ruggell, Schellenberg</i>

Facts & figures

In 2006, the Principality of Liechtenstein celebrated 200 Years of Sovereignty. In 1806, Liechtenstein became a member of the Confederation of the Rhine and was granted sovereignty, which it has retained unchanged to this day. The founding of the Principality of Liechtenstein, however, dates back much further. The Princes of Liechtenstein acquired the Lordship of Schellenberg in 1699 and the County of Vaduz in 1712. Emperor Charles VI united the two territories and elevated them to an imperial principality under the name Liechtenstein in 1719. In 2019, the country marked the anniversary of 300 Years of Liechtenstein.

Napoleon was the protector of the Confederation of the Rhine, whose founding act was signed by 16 princes from southern and southwestern Germany on 12 July 1806.



History

The history of Liechtenstein as a principality begins on 23 January 1719, when Emperor Charles VI united the Lordship of Schellenberg and the County of Vaduz. He elevated the unified territory to an imperial principality, giving it the name Liechtenstein – after the ruling dynasty. The Principality of Liechtenstein thus became the 343rd state of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation.

Reigning Prince Johann Adam I had purchased the immediate imperial Lordship of Schellenberg from the indebted Counts of Hohenems in 1699. His aim was to secure a seat and vote in the Council of Princes of the Holy Roman Empire, for which the possession of an immediate imperial territory was a prerequisite. In 1712, Johann Adam I also acquired the County of Vaduz, as the territory of Schellenberg alone was too small to qualify for entry into the council. With the unification of the two territories and the establishment of the Principality of Liechtenstein, the Princes of Liechtenstein achieved their long-sought admission to the Council of Princes of the Holy Roman Empire.

However, the history of the country stretches back much further. Archaeological finds reveal that the area, situated at the crossroads of Alpine north-south routes and east-west migration paths, was already inhabited during the Neolithic period. The inselbergs in the Rhine Valley – such as the castle hill of Balzers in the south and the Eschnerberg in the north – have been continuously inhabited since then. Various place names suggest that the Celts were among the early settlers in what is now Liechtenstein, later followed by the Rhaetians. When the Romans subdued the Rhaetians in 15 BC, the area became part of the province of Raetia. The valley was of particular strategic importance, as the Romans built a military and trade route through it. Evidence includes a Roman fort built in the 4th century to defend against the Alemanni, along with remains of

LIECHTENSTEIN'S MILITARY

As a small country, Liechtenstein was never in a position to defend itself militarily. Within the old German Empire, however, the Principality was obliged to maintain a contingent of troops. During the time of the Confederation of the Rhine, initiated by Napoleon, a force of 40 men had to be provided. Under the German Confederation, this was increased to 80 soldiers. In the struggle for dominance within the German Confederation, war broke out in 1866 between Prussia and Austria, prompting Liechtenstein to mobilise its military contingent. Reigning Prince Johann II placed the soldiers at the disposal of the Austrian Emperor in the campaign against Italy, wishing to avoid Liechtenstein troops fighting against their "German brothers". On 18 July 1866, Liechtenstein's military was deployed for guard duty on the Stelvio Pass. On 4 September, the soldiers returned home – without ever having encountered the enemy. In 1868, following the dissolution of the German Confederation, Liechtenstein abolished its military. It had been an unpopular institution in the country. Nevertheless, between 1650 and 1850, around one thousand Liechtensteiners served as mercenaries in the armies of foreign states, typically in regiments from Graubünden, fighting for France, Austria, or the Netherlands. Many died on foreign battlefields: parish records list 176 men who died in foreign military service between 1674 and 1857.

Roman villas and coin finds, all pointing to a relatively dense population at the time. After the Romans withdrew in the 5th century, the Alemanni followed as settlers.

Following the imperial reform under Emperor Charlemagne, counties were established in Raetia. As a result of an inheritance division in 1342, the County of Vaduz was created. Count Hartmann III took up residence at Vaduz Castle, which thus became the seat of the ruling lords. A significant milestone in the region's history was the granting of imperial immediacy, officially confirmed by King Wenceslas in a charter issued in 1396. In the northern part of the country, now known as Unterland (Lower Country), power



Under Reigning Prince Johann I (on the right in the right half of the image; portrait located in the Fürst-Johannes-Saal of the Government Building), Liechtenstein became a member of the Confederation of the Rhine and thereby attained the sovereignty it continues to enjoy today.

KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF LIECHTENSTEIN

1699	Acquisition of the Lordship of Schellenberg by Reigning Prince Johann Adam I
1712	Further acquisition of the County of Vaduz from the Counts of Hohenems
1719	Unification of the two territories by Emperor Charles VI and elevation to an imperial principality
1806	Accession to the Confederation of the Rhine: Liechtenstein gains sovereignty
1815	Member of the German Confederation
1852	Customs treaty with Austria
1862	Constitutional charter
1868	Abolition of the Liechtenstein military
1919	Termination of the customs treaty with Austria; negotiations with Switzerland
1923	Customs treaty with Switzerland
1924	Introduction of the Swiss franc as the legal currency
1975	Participating state in the CSCE
1978	Accession to the Council of Europe
1990	Accession to the United Nations
1991	Accession to the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)
1995	Accession to the European Economic Area (EEA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO)
2011	Accession to the Schengen/Dublin Area
2024	Accession to the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

was once held by the Lords of Schellenberg, later by the Counts of Werdenberg-Sargans-Vaduz and the Counts of Werdenberg-Heiligenberg-Bludenz. In 1437, Wolfhart V, Baron of Brandis, succeeded in reuniting all ownership and ruling rights under a single authority. Three wars in the 15th century – the Appenzell War, the Zurich War, and the Swabian War – brought immense suffering and hardship to both territories and led to several changes in ownership. These were followed by the rule of the Counts of Sulz and subsequently the Counts of Hohenems, whose financial troubles ultimately led to the sale of Vaduz and Schellenberg to the Princes of Liechtenstein.

War and hardship also struck the country during the Napoleonic Wars. Revolutionary France sought to spread its ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity across Europe. The German princes, who saw absolutism under threat, opposed the French forces. Liechtenstein was occupied by imperial troops in 1794; in 1799, French forces entered the country and besieged the Austrian town of Feldkirch. That same year, remnants of the Russian army under General Suvorov also passed through the region. The already impoverished population suffered greatly throughout these events. Following the Peace of Pressburg in 1805, Napoleon persuaded several German princes to secede from the Holy Roman Empire and establish the Confederation of the Rhine. On 12 July 1806, sixteen princes signed the founding act of the Confederation, effectively marking the end of the old German Empire. Reigning Prince Johann I of Liechtenstein was among the founding members of the Confederation of the Rhine. With membership came the grant of sovereignty over their territories. Although Reigning Prince Johann I, serving as an Austrian general, did not personally sign the Act of Confederation, Liechtenstein was formally recognised as a sovereign state – a status it has maintained unchanged to this day.

At the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the sovereignty of the German princes was recognised. The newly established German Confederation consisted of 39 independent states, among them the Principality of Liechtenstein. When the Confederation dissolved in 1866 as a result of the war between Prussia and Austria, Liechtenstein remained an independent state due to its geographical position and was able to preserve its sovereignty.

The Confederation of the Rhine granted the Reigning Prince full sovereign rights, bringing absolutism to the Principality. Reigning Prince Johann I believed that Liechtenstein's political structure and economic development were outdated. Without regard for public opinion or opposition, he began introducing reforms. In 1808, he abolished the constitution through an official decree. He also implemented financial and land reforms. As part of a broader legal reform, new legislation was introduced after 1808, including the General Civil Code and the establishment of a land register. Serfdom was also abolished. Membership in the German Confederation came with the obligation to adopt a "constitution of the estates". Reigning Prince Johann I introduced such a constitution in 1818. However, as Liechtenstein had neither a nobility nor an urban bourgeoisie, the "estates" were limited to the clergy and the heads and treasurers of the municipalities. The assembly, which typically convened only once a year, was called the *Landtag* – a name still used today for the country's parliament.

The revolutionary year of 1848 did not pass Liechtenstein by. The estates and municipalities submitted a petition to the Reigning Prince, calling for a new constitution, the free election of representatives, and the right to participate in legislation. The people, who had been without political rights for 40 years, demanded the abolition of feudal burdens and the introduction of democratic rights. Reigning Prince Alois II made far-reaching concessions but did not fully meet the expectations of the population. A popular movement eventually succeeded in abolishing feudal duties and



The educator and historian Peter Kaiser from Mauren represented Liechtenstein at the German National Assembly in Frankfurt am Main in 1848.

levies. The archaic title *Landvogt* (bailiff) for the highest Princely official was changed to the more modern *Landesverweser* (governor). A constitutional committee was established to draft a new constitution. When the German National Assembly convened in Frankfurt in May 1848 to draw up a constitution, the people of Liechtenstein also hoped for greater freedom and fundamental rights. The historian Peter Kaiser represented Liechtenstein at the Frankfurt Assembly. However, the National Assembly's efforts to create a unified German nation-state failed. The restoration of absolutism in Austria also affected Liechtenstein. Reigning Prince Alois II revoked the concessions of the "provisional constitution" of 1849 and reinstated the absolutist constitution of 1818.

The return to absolutism paralysed progress. Economically, Liechtenstein was isolated, as customs barriers across the region hindered trade and exchange. Given the Austrian origins of the

Princely Family, who governed Liechtenstein from Vienna, it was not surprising that a customs treaty was concluded with Austria in 1852. This treaty, which went beyond a simple free trade agreement, provided the country with a stable source of revenue. Liechtenstein also adopted the Austrian monetary system. The agreement laid the foundation for further economic development in the second half of the 19th century. Local trades began to grow, the first industrial enterprises were established, and in 1861, the first bank – the *Spar- und Leihkasse* – was founded. In 1872, the Feldkirch–Buchs railway line was opened as part of the Imperial and Royal Privileged Vorarlberg Railway, connecting Liechtenstein to international transport routes. The postal system had already been administered by the Austrian postal authorities since 1817. In 1911, a postal agreement was concluded that expressly granted Liechtenstein the right to issue its own postage stamps.

The First World War brought significant changes to the history of the small Principality. The Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy collapsed in 1918, and with it, the smaller of the two customs, economic, and monetary partners lost its primary economic pillar. Liechtenstein adjusted course and turned towards its western neighbour, Switzerland. Already in 1919, an agreement was concluded regarding diplomatic and consular representation abroad, followed by a postal treaty in 1920. The most important of these agreements, the customs treaty with Switzerland, was signed in 1923 and came into effect on 1 January 1924. With Liechtenstein's integration into Switzerland's economic area, the Swiss franc was introduced as the Principality's official currency later that same year.

Geography

The Principality of Liechtenstein is located in the heart of Europe. It is a landlocked country whose inhabitants must cross at least two other countries to reach the sea. Paris to the west, Vienna to the east, Hamburg to the north, and Rome to the south are all roughly equidistant from Vaduz, the capital of Liechtenstein without a railway station or an airport.

Liechtenstein is one of the four smallest countries in Europe. The national territory covers 160 square kilometres (62 square miles). It borders Switzerland to the south and west, and Austria to the east and north, with a total border length of 76 kilometres (47 miles). The country stretches 24.5 kilometres (15.2 miles) along the Rhine, with a maximum width of 12.3 kilometres (7.6 miles).

Liechtenstein is the only country situated entirely within the Alpine massif, occupying roughly 1% of the entire Alpine region.

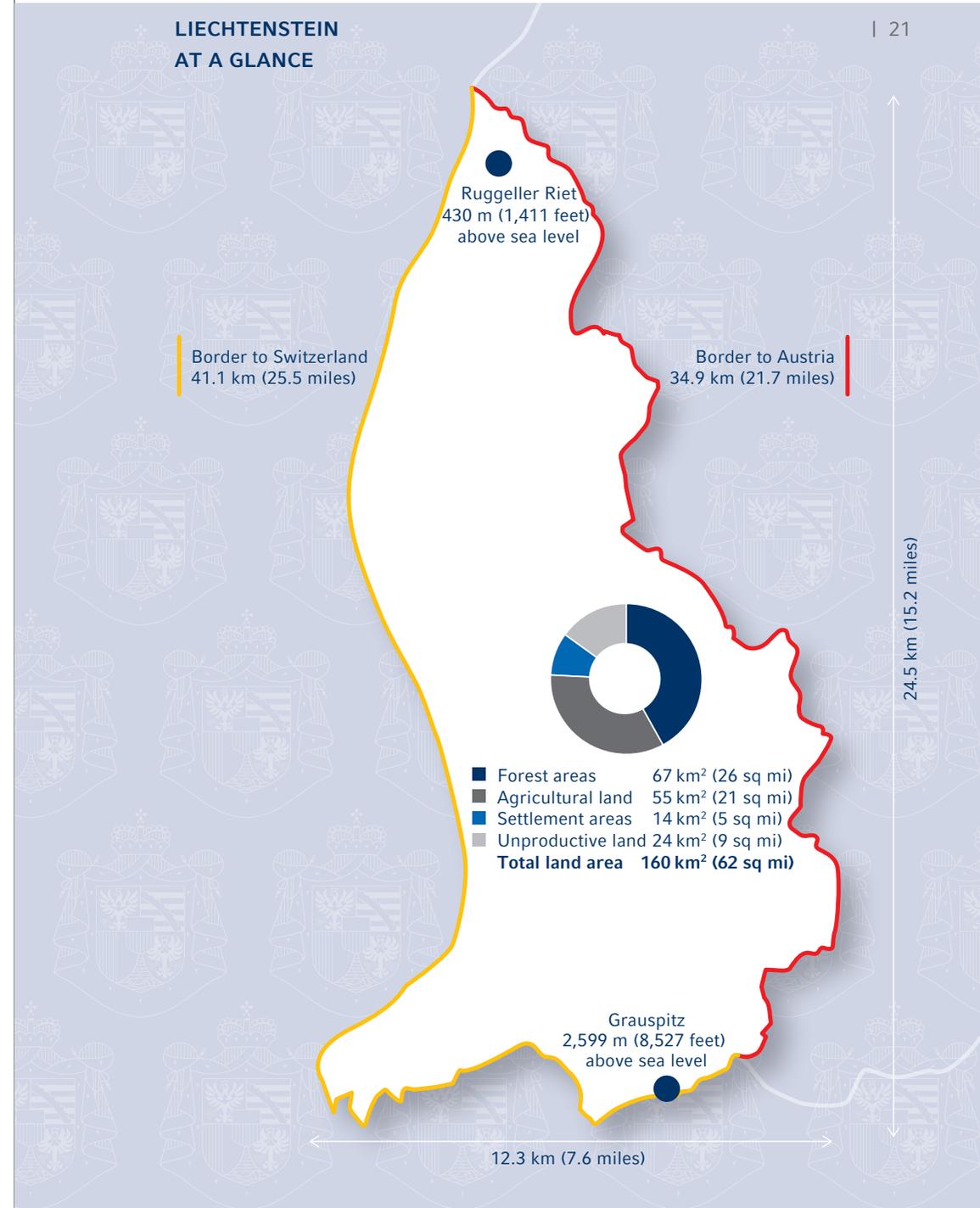
The Drei Schwestern (Three Sisters) are among the most prominent peaks in Liechtenstein's Alpine region.



Geologically, Liechtenstein is a unique area, as it marks the meeting point of the Western and Eastern Alps. Researchers find a rich variety of rock types here, with notable differences in composition even over short distances: the Three Sisters massif is made up of different rock strata than the Falknis range. The Fläscherberg in the south and the Eschnerberg in the north rise from the Rhine Valley as part of the Helvetic nappe.

Today, glacial moraines form the base of the valley and the Alpine farming areas in the mountains. The distinct layering of the steep mountains and the ease with which the rock weathers are responsible for the debris masses washed down into the valley over time. Most of Liechtenstein's eleven municipalities are situated on these debris cones. The *Rüfen* – steep, debris-laden channels – characterise the landscape on the Rhine Valley side and posed a constant threat to settlements for centuries. It was not until the late 19th century that the first engineering works were undertaken to reduce the slope and limit the flow of debris. Today, large retention basins provide a degree of safety against the tree trunks, mud, and stones that are carried down during thunderstorms or prolonged rainfall.

Despite its mountainous location, Liechtenstein's climate is relatively mild. The long-term average temperature is 10.6°C (51°F). Annual precipitation ranges between 1,000 and 1,100 millimetres (39 to 43 inches). The country enjoys between 1,500 and 1,600 hours of sunshine per year, with precipitation recorded on approximately 150 to 170 days annually.





At the end of 2023, Liechtenstein recorded over 40,000 inhabitants for the first time.

Population

In the 20th century – particularly after the Second World War – Liechtenstein transformed from a predominantly agricultural country into a modern industrial and service economy. Through its internationally oriented and globally connected business sector, the people of Liechtenstein are now linked to the entire world.

With the exception of the Walser population in the village of Triesenberg, native Liechtensteiner are of Alemannic origin. Like the people of Vorarlberg and southern Germany, they are regarded as thrifty and cautious in economic matters.

In 1815, Liechtenstein had 6,117 inhabitants. Only 808 people lived in Vaduz, the capital and most populous municipality. The national population then grew rapidly, reaching 8,162 by 1852. In the second half of the 19th century, Liechtenstein experienced several waves of emigration, which continued until around 1920. These movements were driven by various factors, one of the main ones being the poor economic situation. The country was simply unable to support a growing population.

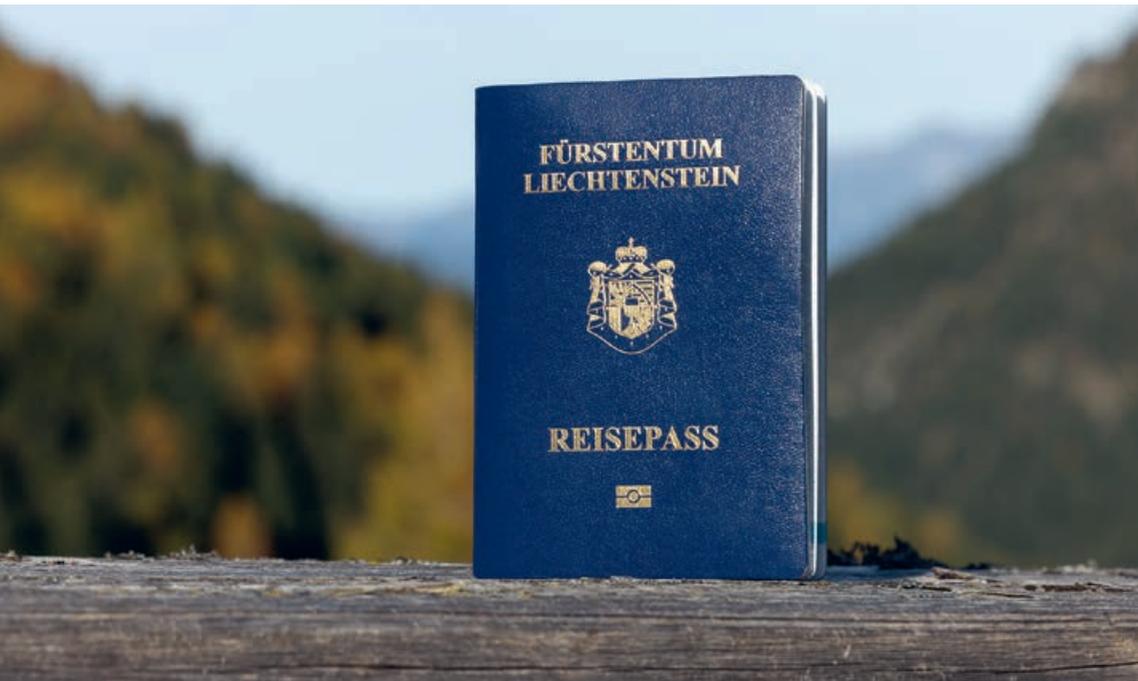
In 1852, when Liechtenstein recorded its highest population figure of the 19th century with 8,162 inhabitants, only 223 were foreigners. At the time, the proportion of foreigners stood at 2.7%. Since then, it has grown steadily and has now stabilised at around one third of the resident population. At the end of 2023, Liechtenstein had

40,023 inhabitants, of whom 65.7% were Liechtenstein nationals and 34.3% were foreign nationals.

To stabilise the proportion of foreigners at around one third, various restrictive measures were introduced. In 1981, the free movement of Swiss nationals into Liechtenstein was limited. The EEA Agreement allows Liechtenstein to impose restrictions on the free movement of persons, meaning the country is only required to grant residence to 56 EU nationals per year. On the other hand, the naturalisation process has been significantly simplified. Between 1971 and 2023, a total of 14,538 foreign nationals, whether residing in Liechtenstein or abroad, were granted Liechtenstein citizenship.

Linguistically, Liechtenstein belongs to the Alemannic language region, with the exception of the mountain village of Triesenberg, where the Walser dialect has been preserved since the immigration

Just under two thirds of the current resident population are Liechtenstein nationals.



of the Walser people from Valais in the 13th century. In the valley communities, people speak various Alemannic dialects. These local dialects are distinct, and a speaker’s home municipality can often be identified by their typical dialect. Despite these local differences, the dialects share common pronunciation features with those spoken in neighbouring regions of Switzerland and Vorarlberg. The region’s centuries-long integration has left its mark on the local vernacular.

COUNTRY AND PEOPLE

Population (2023 Population Statistics)

Total population	40,023	100%
Liechtenstein nationals	26,295	65.7%
Foreign nationals	13,728	34.3%

Religions (2015 census)

Roman Catholic Church	73.4%
Protestant churches	8.2%
Islamic communities	5.9%
Other or not specified	12.5%

Employment (2022)

People employed in Liechtenstein	42,514
Inbound commuters	24,153
from Switzerland	14,436
from Austria	8,749
from other countries	968
Outbound commuters from Liechtenstein	2,616

Princely House

The history of Liechtenstein as a principality began in 1719. On 23 January 1719, Emperor Charles VI elevated the two territories – the Imperial Lordship of Schellenberg and the County of Vaduz – into an imperial principality. The country, the 343rd member state of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, was named after the ruling dynasty. The Princes of Liechtenstein had become part of the country's history prior to that, however: Reigning Prince Johann Adam II had already acquired the Lordship of Schellenberg in 1699 and the County of Vaduz in 1712.

Vaduz Castle is the seat of the Princely House of Liechtenstein.



The current Head of State, Reigning Prince Hans-Adam II, is the 13th Reigning Prince of the House of Liechtenstein, which has reigned continuously since the purchase of Schellenberg and Vaduz. Born in 1945, Hans-Adam is the first Reigning Prince to have grown up in the Principality of Liechtenstein, where he also attended primary school. Upon the death of his father, Reigning Prince Franz Josef II, on 13 November 1989, the then Hereditary Prince Hans-Adam succeeded to the throne in accordance with the hereditary line of succession, becoming the new Reigning Prince and Head of State of Liechtenstein. Already in 1984, Reigning Prince Franz Josef II had appointed his son Hans-Adam as his representative, entrusting him with the exercise of the sovereign powers vested in the Reigning Prince.

On 5 December 1989, the new Reigning Prince Hans-Adam II addressed Parliament to declare that he had assumed the governance of the country and would reign in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. Parliament received this declaration in a special session, during which it also performed the formal act of hereditary homage. Following the precedent set by the public homage to his father in 1939, Prince Hans-Adam II publicly swore an oath to the Constitution in a ceremony held on 15 August 1990. In a joint declaration with his father, Hereditary Prince Alois pledged to work for the good of the people and the country. This act – unprecedented in the history of Liechtenstein and the Princely House – symbolically underscored the continuity of the monarchy as a hereditary institution.

Although Reigning Prince Franz Josef II had transferred the exercise of his sovereign powers to Hereditary Prince Hans-Adam, he remained the Head of State. Not long after his own accession, Hans-Adam II announced that he would follow his father's example and entrust the Hereditary Prince with the functions of Head of State. "In my family's view," Hans-Adam II stated in 2003, "it should not be illness or death that determines when the responsibilities



Reigning Prince Franz Josef II was the first Reigning Prince to reside permanently in the country.

of Head of State are passed on to a successor." The formal transfer took place on Liechtenstein's National Day, 15 August 2004. On that day, the Reigning Prince declared: "In accordance with the Constitution, and with effect from today, I entrust my future successor, His Serene Highness Hereditary Prince Alois, with the exercise of all sovereign rights vested in me, as my representative, in preparation for his succession to the throne." The Reigning Prince remained the Reigning Prince, but since then, Hereditary Prince Alois has conducted the affairs of state as acting Head of State.

Reigning Prince Hans-Adam II had decided that he would hand over the affairs of state only once the revision of the 1921 Constitution had come into force. The people approved the Princely House's proposal by a large majority in a popular vote held on 16 March 2003. This followed years of debate over the balance of power between the Reigning Prince and the people. The Reigning Prince entrusted Hereditary Prince Alois with the task of addressing questions concerning Liechtenstein's future in the 21st century. Hans-Adam II viewed the conclusion of the constitutional discussion as a necessary precondition for this responsibility. His time as Reigning Prince and Head of State was shaped not only by the

constitutional issue, but also by significant developments in foreign policy. He played a decisive role in Liechtenstein's accession to the United Nations in 1990 and strongly supported the country's involvement in the European integration process. The people approved Liechtenstein's accession to the European Economic Area (EEA) in popular votes held in 1992 and 1995.

The history of the House of Liechtenstein stretches far back into the Middle Ages. The von Liechtenstein family is one of the oldest noble families in Austria. In 1136, Hugo von Liechtenstein was the first bearer of the name to be mentioned in historical records. A new chapter in the family's history began in 1608, when Karl von Liechtenstein was granted the hereditary princely title by the Emperor. After obtaining the title of Imperial Prince, the House of Liechtenstein sought to acquire a territory with imperial immediacy. The princely title alone did not grant participation in the affairs of the Holy Roman Empire. To gain a seat and vote in the Imperial and District Assemblies, it was necessary to own

In 2004, Reigning Prince Hans-Adam II handed over the conduct of the affairs of state to his eldest son, Hereditary Prince Alois.



an immediate imperial territory. In 1699, Reigning Prince Johann Adam I (1657–1712) had the opportunity to purchase the Lordship of Schellenberg from the indebted Counts of Hohenems, along with an option to acquire the County of Vaduz. In 1712, Vaduz also came into the Reigning Prince's possession. Johann Adam I paid a considerable sum – 405,000 guilders – for the two territories. However, he did not live to see his goal fulfilled: to secure a seat and vote for the House of Liechtenstein in the Council of Princes of the Holy Roman Empire. He died on 10 June 1712, the day after receiving homage from his new subjects in the County of Vaduz. Neither Reigning Prince Johann Adam I – the founder of the Principality of Liechtenstein – nor some of his successors ever visited their distant possessions. It was Reigning Prince Alois II who, in 1842, became the first ruler to visit the country.

In 1938, Reigning Prince Franz Josef II (1906–1989), father of the current Reigning Prince Hans-Adam II, became the first Reigning Prince to take up permanent residence in Liechtenstein. Few of his predecessors – most of whom resided in Vienna – made regular visits to the Principality. On 25 July 1938, following the death of his great-uncle Reigning Prince Franz I, Franz Josef II assumed the duties of Head of State. At a time of growing pressure from the Third Reich, a public homage took place on 30 May 1939. This event held deep symbolic meaning: the people made a powerful declaration of their commitment to national sovereignty, while the Reigning Prince pledged to uphold the Constitution and placed the fate of the country under God's protection. During the Second World War, Reigning Prince Franz Josef II reinforced the unity and resilience of the people through speeches and public messages. Thanks to the skilful leadership of the Reigning Prince and the Government, Liechtenstein was able to remain neutral and stay out of the conflict. After the war, Reigning Prince Franz Josef II focused on the country's economic and social development. During his long reign, from 1938 to 1989, Liechtenstein was transformed into a modern industrial and service economy.

System of state

As its name indicates, the Principality of Liechtenstein is a principality – a monarchy. The Reigning Prince is the Head of State and represents the country in its relations with other nations. The Government, composed of five members, is elected by the *Landtag* – the name of the Liechtenstein Parliament – and appointed by the Reigning Prince. Parliament consists of 25 members, elected by the people every four years under a system of proportional representation. The people themselves hold the right of legislative and constitutional initiative, as well as the right of referendum. This means they can demand a popular vote on decisions made by Parliament.

Vaduz Castle is situated on a rocky plateau above the Government District with the Government and Parliament Buildings.



Structure of the State

Article 2 of the Constitution describes Liechtenstein's special system of state. "The Principality is a constitutional hereditary monarchy on a democratic and parliamentary basis."

Liechtenstein is a hereditary monarchy. The Reigning Prince as Head of State is not elected by the people; instead, the Law on the Princely House of Liechtenstein determines the successor. Male succession applies, with the eldest son of the Reigning Prince generally becoming the successor.

However, Liechtenstein is also a *constitutional* hereditary monarchy. The Reigning Prince is bound by the provisions of the Constitution and may exercise his rights pertaining to the power of the State only in accordance with the Constitution and the laws. As Head of State, he may conclude treaties, which become valid upon ratification by Parliament. The Reigning Prince may issue decrees through the Government. This also includes the right to issue emergency decrees. In the past, the Reigning Prince's emergency decrees were unlimited. Since the 2003 constitutional revision, emergency decrees are valid only for six months. In addition, emergency decrees cannot repeal the entire Constitution; the Reigning Prince can only restrict individual provisions for a certain period of time.

The Constitution also stipulates that the power of the State is vested in both the Reigning Prince and the people. Since the State is also founded on democratic principles, the people, like the Reigning Prince, hold certain rights. The people can influence the governance of the State through elections and popular votes. Eligible voters also have the right of initiative and referendum. An initiative can be used to propose legislation, while a referendum allows the electorate to demand a popular vote on a law or a financial decision passed by Parliament. Since the 2003 constitutional amendments, the people have the possibility to express a vote of no confidence



The *Landtag*, Liechtenstein's Parliament, consists of 25 members.

in the Reigning Prince and the right to decide on the abolition of the monarchy through a national popular vote.

Liechtenstein has a parliament with 25 members, elected by the people for a term of four years. According to the Constitution, Parliament is tasked with "representing and asserting the rights and interests of the People in relation to the Government". Its primary responsibility is legislation. For a law to be valid, it must be approved by Parliament, sanctioned by the Reigning Prince, and countersigned by the Prime Minister. Parliament is also responsible for electing the members of the Government, who are then appointed by the Reigning Prince based on Parliament's proposal.

The Government consists of a Prime Minister and four Ministers. A Deputy Prime Minister is elected from among the four Ministers. The Government operates according to the principle of collegiality and is responsible for State administration. All important matters



are subject to consultation and decision-making by the Government as a collective body.

In addition to the legislature, or Parliament, and the executive branch in the form of the Government, there is a third power: the judiciary. In the first instance, the Court of Justice rules on civil and criminal cases; in the second instance, the Court of Appeal; and in the third instance, the Supreme Court. The Administrative Court is responsible for administrative matters. The Constitutional Court serves as the highest constitutional authority.

In autumn 2024, Parliament adopted a judicial reform drafted by the Government, which is set to further professionalise the judiciary from 1 January 2026. Among other changes, the reform will streamline the judicial structure by integrating the Administrative Court into the Supreme Court, which will then rule on civil, criminal, and administrative law cases. In addition, only full-time judges – rather than part-time judges as previously – will serve on the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Court. The reform also introduces pools of judges. These thematic specialisations are intended to further enhance the quality of jurisprudence.



The Government Building was constructed from 1903 to 1905.

Municipalities

Liechtenstein has eleven municipalities. These municipalities are given a special role in the Constitution, as Article 1 already names the two regions of Oberland (Upper Country) and Unterland (Lower Country), along with all eleven municipalities. The municipalities, which evolved from former agricultural village cooperatives, do not possess sovereignty like the State. However, within their own sphere of responsibility, the municipalities enjoy considerable autonomy in carrying out their duties. This municipal autonomy includes tasks such as the election of municipal bodies, the organisation of the municipality, the granting of citizenship, and the setting of municipal levies and surcharges on national taxes.

Each of the eleven municipalities has its own municipal structure. Eligible voters elect a mayor and municipal councillors, the number of whom depends on the municipality's population.

At the municipal level, citizens also have the right of initiative and referendum. To exercise these rights, the signatures of one sixth of eligible voters are required. The highest authority within the municipality is the municipal assembly. Due to population growth, municipalities have transitioned from holding votes at public assemblies to conducting secret ballot votes – as is also the case at the national level.

The mayor (referred to as *Vorsteher* or *Vorsteherin* in all municipalities except the capital Vaduz, where the term is *Bürgermeister* or *Bürgermeisterin* pursuant to a Princely decree from the 19th century) is elected by majority vote. The municipal councillors, by contrast, are elected by the people through proportional representation. The mayors of the municipalities meet informally several times a year to discuss municipal affairs. This Conference of Mayors, chaired by the mayor of Vaduz, is not a constitutional body, though members of the national Government occasionally participate in these meet-

ings. Individual municipalities have also formed special-purpose associations to carry out large-scale projects, such as water supply and wastewater disposal. Nevertheless, municipal autonomy is not absolute. Financial management and accounting are subject to national Government oversight.

Municipalities have very limited authority to levy their own taxes – such as the dog tax. More significant for municipal finances are surcharges on national wealth and income taxes, along with defined shares in certain other tax revenues. A financial equalisation system compensates financially weaker municipalities for certain locational disadvantages.

The region of Oberland (Upper Country) – the former County of Vaduz – comprises six municipalities: Vaduz, Schaan, Balzers, Triesen, Triesenberg, and Planken. Oberland also forms the larger of the two electoral districts, from which 15 of the 25 Members of Parliament are elected during national elections.

Vaduz

Vaduz (455 m / 1,493 ft above sea level) is the capital of the Principality of Liechtenstein and the seat of Government and Parliament. Vaduz Castle, which towers above the town, is the residence of the Reigning Prince. Vaduz is home to the Kunstmuseum (Art Museum), the Landesmuseum (National Museum), and the Postmuseum (Postal Museum). Numerous banks and financial services companies are also based here.

Schaan

Schaan (450 m / 1,476 ft above sea level) is the most populous municipality and also the industrial centre of Liechtenstein. The TAK Theater Liechtenstein and the SAL are two cultural institutions with regional appeal.

Balzers

Balzers (472 m / 1,549 ft above sea level), with the village districts of Balzers and Mäls, is the southernmost municipality. The townscape is dominated by Gutenberg Castle, which is owned by the State.

Triesen

Triesen (512 m / 1,680 ft above sea level at the parish church) is one of the oldest settlements in Liechtenstein. Remains of a Roman villa and parts of the Roman road have been found there. The sunniest residential areas are on the slopes, while numerous industrial and commercial enterprises and banks have settled on the valley floor in recent years.

Triesenberg

Triesenberg (884 to 1,600 m / 2,900 to 5,249 ft above sea level) is the largest municipality in terms of area and also the highest. It was settled in the 13th century by mountain farmers from Valais. The Walser dialect is still spoken today. The Walser Museum provides an overview of Walser culture. The hamlet of Gaflei is the starting point for hikes and mountain tours. Behind the mountaintop ridge lie Steg and Malbun, with a well-developed infrastructure for summer and winter sports.



The municipal coats of arms of Oberland from left to right: Vaduz, Schaan, Balzers, Triesen, Triesenberg, Planken

Planken

Planken, the municipality with the fewest inhabitants, lies on a sunny terrace at 786 m / 2,579 ft above sea level. Surrounded by forest on all sides, it is primarily a residential community.

The region of Unterland (Lower Country) – the former Lordship of Schellenberg – comprises five municipalities: Eschen, Mauren, Gamprin, Ruggell, and Schellenberg. Unterland is the smaller of the two electoral districts, from which 10 of the 25 Members of Parliament are elected.

Eschen

Eschen (453 m / 1,486 ft above sea level) consists of the village districts of Eschen and Nendeln. The Pfrundhaus parsonage and the chapel on Rofenberg, built on a medieval place of execution, are historic buildings. In Nendeln, the foundations of a Roman villa have been excavated. Eschen has a large industrial and commercial zone.

Mauren

Mauren (472 m / 1,549 ft above sea level) consists of the village districts of Mauren and Schaanwald. Mauren is home to the memorial to the historian and educator Peter Kaiser (1793–1864), who represented Liechtenstein in the National Assembly in Frankfurt's Paulskirche in 1848.



The municipal coats of arms of Unterland from left to right: Eschen, Mauren, Gamprin, Ruggell, Schellenberg

Gamprin

Gamprin (472 m / 1,549 ft above sea level) consists of the two village districts of Gamprin and Bendern. The church hill of Bendern is one of the earliest settlement sites in the Rhine Valley. On 16 March 1699, the men of Unterland swore an oath on the church hill to the Reigning Prince of Liechtenstein, who had purchased the Lordship of Schellenberg at the time. The Liechtenstein Institute is located on the hill today.

Ruggell

Ruggell (433 m / 1,421 ft above sea level) is the northernmost municipality in Liechtenstein. It includes the lowest point in the country at 430 m / 1,411 ft above sea level. Agriculture still plays a major role in Ruggell. In recent times, industry and local businesses have settled outside the village centre.

Schellenberg

Schellenberg (626 m / 2,054 ft above sea level) is divided into three parts: Vorderer, Mittlerer, and Hinterer Schellenberg. Finds on the ridge bear witness to settlement as early as the Neolithic period. In the 13th century, two fortresses were built – Upper and Lower Schellenberg Castle – which were partially rebuilt by the Historical Society. The oldest residential building in Liechtenstein serves as a local history museum in Schellenberg.

Until the constitutional revision of 2003, the Constitution stated that Liechtenstein, with its eleven municipalities in the two regions of Oberland and Unterland, formed “an indivisible and inalienable whole”. Reigning Prince Hans-Adam II introduced a contentious amendment to the revised Constitution, which enshrines the municipalities’ right to self-determination: “Individual municipalities shall be entitled to secede from the union.” However, relatively high thresholds apply to any potential secession. First, a majority of the Liechtenstein citizens eligible to vote who reside in the mu-



Gutenberg Castle is the landmark of the municipality of Balzers, visible from afar.

nunicipality must decide in favour of initiating a secession procedure. If the secession involves joining another country and requires an international treaty, a second vote must be held in the municipality after the treaty negotiations have been concluded.

A well-connected small state

Liechtenstein is a well-connected small state, open to the world, that maintains excellent relations with its neighbouring countries, Switzerland and Austria, as well as with other key partners such as Germany and the United States. The Principality is integrated into the international community through its active membership in organisations such as the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe, as well as its membership in the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the European Economic Area (EEA). Thanks to its committed foreign policy, Liechtenstein has established itself as a reliable partner. The country's export-oriented economy contributes to its international presence. Liechtenstein has a highly developed, research-intensive industrial sector, alongside a modern and innovative financial services sector that fully complies with international standards.

In 1990, Liechtenstein became the 160th member state of the United Nations.



Priorities of Liechtenstein foreign policy

The foreign policy of the Principality of Liechtenstein is founded on clear priorities. Alongside neighbourhood and regional policy and the cultivation of relations with other key partner countries, particular importance is placed on European integration and foreign economic policy. Multilateral cooperation within international organisations has also traditionally held a high priority. Liechtenstein is committed to an efficient and solution-oriented multilateralism. Through its advocacy for human rights, the rule of law, and the strengthening and further development of international law, Liechtenstein has established a clear and distinctive profile. The country is also marked by strong public and private commitment to development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

Committed bilateral cooperation

Liechtenstein shares a common history and culture with its neighbouring countries, Switzerland and Austria. The three countries are united by shared values, pursue similar foreign policy goals, and are characterised by political stability. They are also closely interconnected economically and engaged in the process of European integration, albeit in different ways.

The customs treaty concluded with Switzerland in 1923 laid the foundation for Liechtenstein's integration into the Swiss economic area and for the adoption of the Swiss franc as its legal currency. This treaty also formed the basis for extensive legal alignment and harmonisation in economic and social law, well beyond its original scope of application. Liechtenstein has also concluded a wide range of international treaties with Austria.

Liechtenstein regards the Federal Republic of Germany as a neighbour, despite not sharing a common border. The two countries are connected by linguistic and cultural-historical ties, and above all by strong economic exchange. Within the framework of the European single market, Germany has become Liechtenstein's most important trading partner.

Alongside Germany, the United States is a key focus of Liechtenstein's foreign policy. Bilateral relations are of great significance, due to intensive trade relations and the United States' leading international role in matters relating to financial centres.

Partner in multilateral organisations

History shows that Liechtenstein's foreign policy has always been a policy of integration. The European process aligns with Liechtenstein's tradition of integration. The Principality was able to participate as an equal partner in the 1975 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), from which today's OSCE emerged. In 1978, Liechtenstein joined the Council of Europe. This was followed in 1990 by accession to the United Nations as its 160th member state, securing the country's sovereignty at the global level.

Since 1 May 1995, Liechtenstein has been a member of the European Economic Area (EEA) and thus part of the European single market. Its close relationship with Switzerland – which chose a path of bilateral agreements with the European Union – has been maintained despite differing approaches to European integration. Today, Liechtenstein is closely linked to Switzerland through a customs union, while also being part of the European single market with its four fundamental freedoms: the free movement of persons, capital, goods, and services.

International solidarity and protection of human rights

Solidarity with disadvantaged and less privileged people is a core part of Liechtenstein’s identity. A commitment to international solidarity, human rights, and the rule of law is therefore a fundamental pillar of its foreign policy. At the heart of this commitment lies International Humanitarian Cooperation and Development (IHCD). The primary focus of IHCD is the alleviation of hardship caused by crises and disasters, as well as the fight against poverty. Liechtenstein firmly believes that the protection and promotion of human rights, together with the strengthening of democracy and the rule of law, form the foundation for development, security, and peace. The Principality is particularly committed to the rights and protection of especially vulnerable groups, and to ensuring criminal accountability for serious human rights violations as a prerequisite for lasting peace.

Diplomatic representations

Liechtenstein’s personnel resources are naturally limited due to the country’s small size. In addition to its bilateral embassies in the partner states of Switzerland, Austria, Germany and the United States, Liechtenstein is primarily represented at the locations of key multilateral organisations. As of the end of 2024, Liechtenstein maintained diplomatic representations in the following locations.

DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIONS

- Switzerland** *Liechtenstein Embassy in Bern and Permanent Mission to EFTA, the WTO, and the UN in Geneva*
- Austria** *Liechtenstein Embassy in Vienna and Permanent Mission to the OSCE and the UN in Vienna*
- Germany** *Embassy in Berlin*
- Czechia** *Embassy to Czechia, based in Vienna*
- Vatican** *Liechtenstein Embassy to the Holy See (non-resident)*
- United States** *Liechtenstein Embassy in Washington and Permanent Mission to the UN in New York*
- Brussels** *Permanent Mission to the EU and Liechtenstein Embassy in Brussels*
- Strasbourg** *Permanent Representation to the Council of Europe*



FURTHER INFORMATION

Learn more about Liechtenstein’s diplomatic representations by scanning the QR code.

Centre of education

The education system of the Principality of Liechtenstein is shaped by the school systems of German-speaking countries, with neighbouring Switzerland exerting a particular influence on school structure and educational content.

Liechtenstein offers its young people a complete educational pathway from primary school to university level, with theoretical vocational training taking place at Swiss vocational schools. The majority of Liechtensteiners pursue their higher education at universities and other tertiary institutions in Switzerland, Austria, and Germany.

At the same time, Liechtenstein is itself a regional centre of education. At the University of Liechtenstein, which specialises in business and architecture, well over half of the student body comes from abroad, primarily from neighbouring Switzerland and Austria.

Since 2002, what is now the University of Liechtenstein has been located on the site of the former Jenny-Spoerry factory in Vaduz.



Since 2019, the Liechtenstein “LiLe” curriculum for kindergarten and compulsory schooling has been aligned with Curriculum 21 used in the German-speaking cantons of Switzerland. Children enter the Liechtenstein school system from the age of four. Almost all children attend kindergarten for two years, where they are playfully and practically prepared for the five-year primary school. This is followed by Secondary Level I, which lasts four years and comprises three tracks: *Oberschule*, *Realschule*, or the first level of the *Gymnasium* (baccalaureate school). The permeability between these tracks has been optimised to such an extent that transfers are possible after almost every school year, provided the necessary requirements are met.

The Mühleholz I and II school centre is home to the Vaduz secondary schools and the Liechtenstein Gymnasium.

After completing compulsory education, various general and vocational education pathways are available. The optional 10th school year offers a range of profiles and specialisations to help students orient themselves before entering vocational training. The Liechtenstein Gymnasium provides a broad general education at Secondary Level II, leading to university entrance via the *Matura* (academic baccalaureate).

Basic vocational training in Liechtenstein follows the dual system, combining practical training in an enterprise with theoretical instruction at a vocational school. While there are sufficient apprenticeship enterprises within Liechtenstein, vocational



schooling is undertaken in Switzerland. Upon completion of basic vocational training, the Vocational Baccalaureate School (BMS) in Liechtenstein offers the opportunity to earn a vocational baccalaureate, either part-time alongside work or full-time. The vocational baccalaureate certificate from the BMS enables access not only to all universities of applied sciences in Switzerland, but also to universities in Liechtenstein and Austria.

The national education strategy increasingly focuses on securing educational success for all and promoting lifelong learning. Educational institutions embrace an inclusive approach, grounded in the realisation of the rights of all learners. As such, Liechtenstein's school system offers a wide range of support measures. These include early language support, special school enrolment, additional instruction provided by special education teachers, speech therapy, and supplementary lessons for children learning German as a second language.

In addition to public schools, two private schools are officially recognised in Liechtenstein: the Liechtenstein Waldorf School, which follows the pedagogy of Rudolf Steiner, and *formatio*, which offers education from primary through Secondary Level I and the upper Gymnasium level.

Running parallel to basic education is a special education day school for children and young people with specific learning needs. The Therapeutic-Educational Centre (HPZ), a non-profit foundation under private law based in Schaan, operates this school. Its approach is life-oriented and action-based, with the aim of promoting the greatest possible independence among pupils to support their everyday lives.

Liechtenstein has two higher education institutions authorised to award academic degrees: the public University of Liechtenstein, offering study programmes in business and architecture from

bachelor's to doctoral level, and the Private University in the Principality of Liechtenstein (UFL), which offers doctoral programmes in law and medical sciences. Additionally, the Liechtenstein Institute serves as a research institution focused on topics specific to Liechtenstein.

The University of Liechtenstein is a member of the *Vierländerregion Bodensee EVTZmbH*, a network of higher education institutions in the Lake Constance region. In the fields of architecture and spatial development, entrepreneurship, finance, business law, and business information systems, it serves as a hub for critical and creative thinking as well as innovation. Through numerous projects and programmes, it provides key impulses for business, politics, and society. For 60 years, the University of Liechtenstein and its predecessor institutions have been educating and training professionals. Studies are conducted in a highly personalised environment.

Social welfare

Liechtenstein enjoys a very high standard of living. Absolute poverty does not occur, thanks to a well-developed social safety net. This comprises social insurance and public social assistance. Social insurance covers the vast majority of life's risks through a range of institutions, including unemployment insurance, disability insurance, old-age and survivors' insurance, family allowances, and compulsory health insurance. If, despite these social insurances, individuals are unable to cover their cost of living, they may apply for means-tested social assistance. The State contributes significantly to the funding of social insurance. Social security spending is one of the largest items in the national budget. To ensure social welfare, Liechtenstein also supports private institutions that help expand the range of available services and play a vital role in the social safety net.

The people of Liechtenstein can rely on robust and supportive social welfare institutions.





Old-age and survivors' insurance, disability insurance, and family allowances are mandatory elements of Liechtenstein's social welfare system.

The emergence of social insurance in Liechtenstein took place during the course of industrialisation in the second half of the 19th century. However, the origins of state welfare go back even further. Early steps towards a state welfare system included the establishment of an Orphans' Office in 1836 and the creation of a State Fund for the Poor in 1845. The 1864 Municipalities Act granted needy residents of a municipality the right to receive support. In some municipalities, poorhouses were established, often with associated farms, to provide for poor, elderly, orphaned, or sick residents who were unable to support themselves. A fundamental modernisation of social assistance was initiated a century later. The new Social Assistance Act of 1965 gave all citizens of Liechtenstein a legal right to state support if they were unable to provide for themselves or their families. Responsibility for welfare also shifted from the municipality of citizenship to the municipality of residence. This meant that citizens of other municipalities, as well as non-citizens of Liechtenstein, could benefit from social assistance as well. The Social Assistance Act also established the Welfare Office, which

was renamed the Office of Social Services in 1992. In cooperation with the municipalities, it ensures the provision of social assistance throughout the country.

Social security began with industrialisation

Liechtenstein's modern social welfare history began in 1933 with the enactment of the Accident Insurance Act, followed – in some cases after considerable intervals – by other social legislation after the Second World War. The country's relatively late development into a welfare state is explained by its socio-historical context: in the earlier, agrarian society, poverty was considered an individual fate to be mitigated by the extended family on the farm. With the onset of industrialisation after the Second World War, it became necessary to replace this traditional form of subsistence security with a state-regulated system.

In 1952, Liechtenstein introduced Old-Age and Survivors' Insurance (AHV), based on the Swiss model, to protect the population against the economic consequences of old age and death. This was followed in 1959 by the introduction of Disability Insurance (IV). In 1965, supplementary benefits to the AHV/IV were established, designed to secure a minimum subsistence level in special cases for people with disabilities and the elderly. Widows have been entitled to a widow's pension under the AHV/IV system since its inception; in 1981, a widower's pension under the AHV was introduced for men. To help families cope with the high cost of living, the Family Allowances Fund (FAK) was established in 1957, providing a monthly child allowance and a one-off birth allowance. The AHV, IV, and FAK are mandatory and are funded through contributions from employers and employees, as well as through funding by the State.

Since 2010, a care and nursing allowance has been available for home-based care, where third-party costs are incurred in providing care in one’s own home. These social benefits are jointly funded by the State and the municipalities.

Three-pillar system based on the Swiss model

Unemployment insurance, introduced in 1970, is mandatory for employees. In the case of health insurance, mandatory coverage was gradually extended only to employees until 1962. In 1972, a national compulsory system was introduced, making health insurance mandatory for the entire population to cover the consequences of illness.

Following the Swiss model, Liechtenstein adopted the three-pillar concept for social security in 1973. The first pillar consists of Old-Age and Survivors’ Insurance (AHV) and Disability Insurance (IV), designed to cover the minimum subsistence level. The second pillar is occupational pension provision, introduced in Liechtenstein as a statutory requirement in 1989. Together with the third pillar – private or personal pension provision – this system is intended to enable individuals to maintain their accustomed standard of living in old age.

SOCIAL PROTECTION IN LIECHTENSTEIN (SELECTION)

- 1910 Health and maternity insurance
Occupational accident insurance
- 1932 Non-occupational accident insurance
- 1952 Old-Age and Survivors’ Insurance (AHV)
- 1957 Family allowances
Bad weather compensation in the construction industry
- 1958 Housing construction subsidy
- 1959 Disability Insurance (IV)
- 1961 Prevention of occupational illnesses
- 1965 Supplementary benefits to AHV and IV
- 1966 Social assistance
- 1970 Unemployment insurance
- 1971 Blind person’s allowance
- 1981 Widower’s pension
- 1982 Maternity allowance
- 1985 Insolvency compensation
- 1989 Occupational pension provision
- 1999 Single parent allowance
- 2001 Rent allowance
- 2004 Premium reduction for health insurance contributions
- 2022 Exemption from health insurance deductible at retirement age

Security

Security is a fundamental need of the population and a key factor for a successful business location. Liechtenstein's security strategy is subject to constant adaptation in response to evolving threat scenarios. As the nature of potential dangers has changed, so too has the country's security framework. The traditional national hazards – flooding from the Rhine, the southerly *Föhn* wind, and debris flows (*Rüfen*) – are no longer the sole or primary threats to the safety and quality of life of the population. New forms of crime, organised crime, and threats emerging from cyberspace must now also be addressed within Liechtenstein's security architecture. A major step in the field of international security was taken in 2011, when Liechtenstein acceded to the Schengen and Dublin Agreements. This significantly enhanced international police cooperation and provided more efficient tools for collaboration in asylum procedures.

The Liechtenstein National Police serves as the central institution responsible for maintaining security and public order.



Liechtenstein is not a security island. The changing security landscape in Europe presents new challenges for the Principality as well. With the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, Liechtenstein reaffirmed its full solidarity and support for Ukraine. Since then, Liechtenstein has autonomously adopted the sanctions imposed by the EU against Russia. By doing so, the Government underscores that the flagrant violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity is unacceptable.

In addition to its traditional focus on preventing natural hazards, Liechtenstein also addresses risks stemming from technical or human error in accidents, as well as the prevention of organised crime and terrorism. Cooperation between the various protection and emergency response organisations is of particular importance. For this reason, Liechtenstein places great emphasis on the coordination of protection, rescue, aid, and care measures, as well as on building both national and international networks.

During the last Rhine flood in 1927, the entire valley area from Schaan to Ruggell (photo) was inundated.



Police, fire departments, aid and rescue organisations

The foundation of today's police force was laid in 1933 with the establishment of the Princely Liechtenstein Security Corps. Under the Police Act of 1989, this corps was renamed the National Police of the Principality of Liechtenstein. The National Police is structured into the Central Police Command and three main divisions: Central Police Service, Security & Traffic, and Criminal Investigation. In addition to these divisions, there are special units responsible for specific police duties and operations. Thanks to its participation in INTERPOL, Schengen, and Europol, Liechtenstein's National Police is well integrated at the international level. Regionally, its membership in the Lake Constance Police Chiefs' Association and the Eastern Switzerland Police Agreement ensures strong cross-border cooperation. Since 2001, a trilateral treaty between Liechtenstein, Switzerland, and Austria has formed the basis for extensive cross-border police collaboration. The treaty, which was further expanded in 2017, enables close cooperation in cross-border emergency response and crime prevention, marking a milestone in regional police cooperation.

These international and regional networks are essential for effective police work in Liechtenstein and are actively maintained and utilised. Today, security can be ensured only through international cooperation – this applies even more so to a small state like Liechtenstein than to most other countries. Cross-border police cooperation is therefore of great importance in Liechtenstein, making the country a reliable partner in the international fight against crime.

The link between the aid and rescue organisations and the Government is provided by the Office for Civil Protection, which is also responsible for coordinating and ensuring the operational readiness of these organisations. The fire departments play a key

role among the aid and rescue services, with a history dating back to the mid-19th century. Today, each of the eleven municipalities has a voluntary fire department, alongside four company fire departments that can also be called upon to assist. The Vaduz fire department additionally serves as a central base for the whole of Liechtenstein. Altogether, around 600 women and men provide voluntary service in the country's fire departments. Special units are trained to respond to traffic accidents, natural disasters, and radiation incidents. The Office for Civil Protection operates a training facility in Vaduz for national training courses and numerous exercises conducted by Liechtenstein's fire departments. These modern facilities enable a wide range of realistic training scenarios. Liechtenstein's fire departments benefit from strong infrastructure and are equipped with modern and purpose-built vehicles and gear.

In addition to the fire departments, Liechtenstein can call on six Samaritan (first aid) associations in the event of accidents. For incidents or disasters in mountainous areas, mountain rescue and avalanche services are available. In the event of avalanches, rescue dog handlers are also deployed. The Liechtenstein Water Rescue Service, made up of trained divers, is activated when people, animals, or objects need to be recovered from bodies of water. Several municipalities also maintain civil protection groups to support the fire departments and Samaritans. These groups are responsible for the upkeep of protective shelters and their infrastructure. Their tasks also include caring for individuals – such as evacuees – who are temporarily accommodated in these shelters.

On 1 February 2023, emergency meeting points were introduced throughout Liechtenstein. In the event of disasters or emergencies, they serve as central points of contact for the population. At these locations, residents can receive information and support – such as during a prolonged power outage. Each municipality in Liechtenstein has at least one designated emergency meeting point, which is set up in public buildings like schools



There are six Samaritan (first aid) associations in Liechtenstein.

or community centres. Their activation is announced by the authorities via Radio Liechtenstein, television (1 FLTV), the Alertswiss app, and online platforms.

Accession to the Schengen and Dublin Agreements

On 19 December 2011, the Schengen and Dublin Agreements entered into force for Liechtenstein. The Schengen Agreement provides for the abolition of stationary identity checks at internal borders, as well as the joint protection of external borders. Key instruments include a common visa policy (Schengen visa; Visa Information System), international police cooperation, and the shared use of security-related databases – most notably the Schengen Information System (SIS), a Europe-wide search data-



base. The European security information systems are currently being further developed (SIS Recast), and new entry systems are being introduced (EES, ETIAS).

Schengen has greatly simplified travel and commuting, bringing tangible benefits of European integration to everyday life – notably in Liechtenstein, with its large number of cross-border commuters. While customs checks on goods still take place at border crossings with Austria, there are no longer systematic identity checks on persons.

Liechtenstein is also part of the Dublin system, which ensures that an asylum application is processed only in the country of first arrival. This is supported by the Eurodac fingerprint database, which informs authorities whether an asylum request has already been lodged in another country. Since the migration crisis of 2015, comprehensive reforms to the Dublin system have been under negotiation, as it places a disproportionate burden on frontline countries, such as those along the Mediterranean.

Since Liechtenstein's accession to the Schengen Agreement in 2011, systematic identity checks at the Schaanwald border crossing have become a thing of the past.

Business location

Liechtenstein has a highly diversified economic structure. While the financial centre plays a key role in the national economy, the industrial sector also holds its own on the international stage with high-quality products. Small and medium-sized businesses are an important player in the regional market. Since 1923, Liechtenstein has enjoyed an open border with the Swiss economic area through its customs treaty with Switzerland. The country was able to join the European Economic Area (EEA) without having to relinquish its close ties with Switzerland as a key economic partner. Proximity to the Swiss financial centre was crucial to the development of Liechtenstein's own financial sector. All branches of the economy have benefited from the adoption of the Swiss franc as the official currency in 1924. Liechtenstein's population alone cannot meet the country's demand for labour – more than half of all jobs are filled by cross-border commuters from Switzerland, Austria, and Germany. The Principality has thus developed into a significant regional labour market.

The global Hilti Group has its headquarters in Schaan.



Economic framework

The Constitution stipulates that the highest responsibility of the State is to promote the overall welfare of the people. Drafted in 1921 during a time of economic uncertainty, the Constitution explicitly names the promotion of industry and trades, agriculture, and the cultivation of alps as key objectives. Since then, Liechtenstein has viewed these provisions as a commitment to creating the best possible economic framework for the country.

When the Constitution entered into force in 1921, Liechtenstein's economy was primarily based on agriculture. Several industrial enterprises that had settled in the country towards the end of the 19th century were forced to close after the First World War. The Law on Persons and Companies, introduced in 1926, remained largely irrelevant to the financial sector until after the Second World War.

Liechtenstein's economic growth began on a larger scale only after 1945, but – apart from a few short-term economic downturns – has continued steadily to the present day. The industrial upswing began in the 1950s with the establishment and expansion of industry and manufacturing, followed in the 1970s by the development of the financial services sector. Agriculture, increasingly marginalised by the growth of the industrial and financial sectors, no longer plays a major economic role. It continues to contribute partially to the basic supply of the population, but above all serves to preserve the landscape.

One of the key factors behind this “small economic miracle” has been the consistent and strategic use of Liechtenstein's favourable conditions as a business location. These include a stable social, legal, and economic order, as well as a high degree of political stability. Extremely liberal tax legislation created strong incentives for the development of small and medium-sized businesses, industry and manufacturing, and financial services. Of particular



Prime Minister Hans Brunhart signed the EEA Framework Agreement in Porto on 2 May 1992.

importance are the close economic ties with Switzerland and the adoption of the Swiss franc. Liechtenstein's accession to the EEA in 1995 likewise had a positive impact.

National budget

Liechtenstein has no national debt. As of the end of 2023, its financial reserves would have been sufficient to cover more than two annual budgets. Since 1996, the rating agency Standard & Poor's has awarded the Principality of Liechtenstein its highest possible credit rating – AAA – every year. With this top-tier rating, Liechtenstein ranks alongside neighbouring countries such as Switzerland, Austria, and Germany, as well as the financial centre of Luxembourg. Since 2005, Standard & Poor's has consistently highlighted Liechtenstein's exceptionally high level of prosperity and the strong position of its public finances in its assessments.

The global financial and economic crisis of 2008 also affected Liechtenstein's national budget. The country's financial reserves suffered from the turbulence on the financial markets, and reve-

revenues from various types of taxes no longer flowed into the national treasury as abundantly as they had before the crisis. In response, the Government implemented austerity measures and identified additional sources of income to restore a medium-term balance between expenditure and revenue. A financial framework with five core benchmarks sets out the targets that must be met over the medium term.

Although Liechtenstein is sometimes portrayed abroad as a “tax haven”, the Principality levies a range of taxes. Tax revenues are among the State’s most important sources of income.

Wealth and income taxes are levied on natural persons. A progressive surcharge is applied to the basic tax rate. In addition, municipalities may impose a local surcharge of up to 250% on the calculated tax liability. In 2023, all municipalities applied a surcharge of less than 200%.

Under the new Tax Act introduced in 2011, legal persons subject to tax in Liechtenstein pay a uniform corporate earnings tax rate of 12.5%. This flat tax is comprehensive, as Liechtenstein does not impose capital or coupon taxes, nor are there any taxes on dividends, capital gains, or liquidation gains from shareholdings. This arrangement was modified, however, at the beginning of 2024, when Liechtenstein adopted the OECD’s requirement for a global minimum tax. The corresponding law, providing for a minimum tax rate of 15%, entered into force on 1 January 2024.

Liechtenstein offers a range of advantages as a location that are actively leveraged by its business sector:

- *Stable social, legal, and economic order*
- *Customs and currency union with Switzerland*
- *Membership in the European Economic Area (EEA)*
- *Political stability and continuity*
- *Central location in Europe*
- *Political neutrality and neutral neighbouring states*
- *Cooperative social partnership*
- *Liberal tax legislation and economic policy*
- *Well-developed infrastructure*

To mark the 100th anniversary of the adoption of the Swiss franc as the national currency, Philately Liechtenstein issued several commemorative coins in 2024.





Liechtenstein has had an innovative and export-oriented industrial sector for many decades.

Industry and manufacturing

With an area of just 160 square kilometres (62 square miles), Liechtenstein represents a small domestic market for industrial goods. Nevertheless, the country's export industry has enjoyed an unbroken success story since the Second World War. Key drivers of this success include intensive research and development efforts, a highly skilled workforce, outstanding product quality, and comprehensive service offerings. A further positive factor has been the broad diversification across companies, sectors, and product lines.

Liechtenstein's export industry manufactures a wide range of goods, including instruments, electronic measuring devices, precision tools, vacuum technology, heating and lighting systems, dental products, pharmaceuticals, and food items.

Although Liechtenstein lacks natural resources, has comparatively high wages, does not offer direct government subsidies, and the State does not engage in research and development via universities or research institutes, the Liechtenstein manufacturing

sector has managed to offset these disadvantages by leveraging key advantages as a business location – namely low taxes and a liberal economic policy. Flexibility and innovation have enabled Liechtenstein's export companies to remain competitive on international markets.

Membership in the European Economic Area (EEA) has had a positive impact on the industrial sector. In the run-up to the popular vote on accession, industry stakeholders had highlighted free access to this large economic and sales area as a significant advantage.

Since Liechtenstein's accession to the EEA in 1995, the Liechtenstein Chamber of Commerce and Industry has consistently assessed EEA membership as positive. Around 50% of Liechtenstein exports go to the EEA, making it the most important economic partner for the country's industrial sector. EU enlargement has brought additional benefits, as existing free trade agreements with new EU member states were replaced by the broader and more comprehensive EEA Agreement.

Financial centre

Together with the export industry, the financial centre is one of the most important sectors of Liechtenstein's economy. Its foundations were laid with the 1923 customs treaty with Switzerland, access to the Swiss financial market thanks to introduction of the Swiss franc as legal tender, and the enactment of the Law on Persons and Companies in 1926, which allows for a broad range of company structures. Liechtenstein's accession to the European Economic Area (EEA) in 1995 acted as a catalyst for a series of fundamental reforms in the financial centre and enabled access to international markets. Whereas only five banks operated in the country before EEA accession, twelve banks were licensed in Liechtenstein as of the end of 2022, according to the Liechtenstein Financial Market Authority.

At the end of 2022, the total assets of Liechtenstein's banks amounted to CHF 84.9 billion. Nearly 17% of Liechtenstein's workforce is employed in the financial sector, including insurance. According to the Liechtenstein Bankers Association, the financial services sector accounted for around 23% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), which totalled approximately CHF 7 billion in 2023.

EEA membership also opened up new business opportunities in the investment fund and insurance sectors. With direct access to the European market, Liechtenstein offers attractive conditions for fund providers and investors. As of the end of 2023, a total of 836 investment funds were authorised, managing net assets of CHF 70.3 billion. The country's insurance sector included 32 companies at that time, with premium income totalling CHF 5.7 billion.

Globalisation and advances in information technology have led to increasing interdependence among international financial markets. To prevent misuse of its financial centre for criminal purposes, Liechtenstein has adopted international standards for combating

money laundering and terrorist financing. The criminal provisions for preventing money laundering have been tightened, and the Due Diligence Act has been amended accordingly. These obligations apply not only to banks and financial institutions, but also to lawyers, professional trustees, bureaux de change, the Postal Service, and investment and insurance undertakings. To oversee financial services, Liechtenstein has established an independent Financial Market Authority that meets international standards.

At the international level, the country is a party to all relevant UN legal instruments for combating terrorism and terrorist financing. The standards of the UN and the Council of Europe in this area have been fully integrated into Liechtenstein's criminal law.



The Liechtensteinische Landesbank is one of several banks headquartered in Vaduz.

Integrated financial centre strategy

Liechtenstein's financial centre benefits from a range of advantages as a business location: political continuity and stability, a liberal legal system aligned with European and international standards, strong legal certainty, a longstanding tradition of protecting private property and privacy, and extensive experience in private banking and wealth management. Additionally, Liechtenstein is uniquely embedded in two economic areas – the Swiss-Liechtenstein currency and economic union and the European Economic Area (EEA). The financial sector contributes around one third of the country's gross value added, making it one of Liechtenstein's key employers with a highly skilled workforce.

With the Liechtenstein Declaration of 12 March 2009, the country committed to the OECD standard for transparency and exchange of information in tax matters. Building on this commitment, Liechtenstein has pursued a clear strategy of tax compliance and has steadily expanded its network of double taxation agreements. The country actively participates in key committees of the OECD and the Global Forum, and is recognised as a reliable partner in the international community. By the end of 2022, Liechtenstein had concluded OECD-compliant tax agreements with over 50 countries. The Global Forum has positively assessed Liechtenstein's implementation of tax information exchange standards. The country has also adopted the OECD's Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) measures. Thanks to close cooperation between the Government and business associations, Liechtenstein has kept pace with rapid international developments and successfully positioned itself as a competitive financial centre. Building on the Liechtenstein Declaration and in light of major technological and regulatory shifts in the financial sector, the country has developed an integrated strategy for the ongoing development of its financial centre. This strategy focuses on ensuring unrestricted and equal access to key international markets and fostering global cooperation. It also seeks

to improve the domestic economic framework for innovative companies. According to the strategy, Liechtenstein sees itself as a modern industrial and financial hub with strong ties to Switzerland and access to the European single market. At the same time, it aims to enhance its competitiveness and attractiveness beyond the continental European legal and economic area.

Liechtenstein recognised the implications of digitalisation for financial services at an early stage. It sees significant opportunity in the innovative potential of blockchain technology for its financial centre and business location. Liechtenstein was one of the first countries in the world to introduce a dedicated Blockchain Act, establishing a legal framework for the token economy and providing clear regulatory guidance for service providers in the blockchain sector.

For Liechtenstein, digital transformation and financial technologies are key drivers of innovation in the global financial industry. Innovative fintech companies benefit from targeted support measures offered jointly by the Government and the Financial Market Authority (FMA). A Regulatory Laboratory serves as a point of contact for start-ups and established providers active in the fintech space. In addition, the Government has introduced Innovation Clubs as a national platform to improve the framework for entrepreneurial activity. These clubs foster close dialogue between market participants and public authorities, helping to establish Liechtenstein as a forward-looking and competitive location for innovative enterprises.

Small and medium-sized businesses

Liechtenstein's liberal economic system has given rise to a large and diverse range of small and medium-sized businesses. They operate primarily within the domestic market, although the surrounding region is now also considered part of their home market. Thanks to specialisation and niche offerings, the commercial sector also attracts customers from neighbouring areas. Most small and medium-sized businesses are active in traditional trades such as construction, related building trades, transport, and retail. However, a significant number serve as suppliers to larger companies or to the export industry.

The small and medium-sized business sector, which was initially sceptical or even opposed to Liechtenstein's accession to the EEA, adapted flexibly to the new economic framework, particularly the free movement of labour and the possibility of engaging in trades across borders. While the number of business licence applications rose after Liechtenstein joined the EEA in 1995, this increase cannot be attributed solely to EEA liberalisation. A strong economic climate and a growing trend towards self-employment or part-time business activities likely also played a role. Nevertheless, a significant number of EEA citizens seized the opportunity to access Liechtenstein's small market or to benefit from its favourable conditions. Since then, around one third of business licences issued annually have gone to EEA nationals, most of them from the surrounding region – particularly the neighbouring Austrian state of Vorarlberg and parts of the German Lake Constance area.

Small and medium-sized businesses, including trades and crafts, are the largest providers of vocational training in Liechtenstein. These apprenticeship companies are central to the development of skilled professionals across a wide range of sectors. Their high level of technical expertise plays a crucial role in promoting regional vocational education, which is of strategic importance for



Liechtenstein's small and medium-sized business sector stands out for its diversity and for the high quality of its products and services.

Liechtenstein as an educational hub. A substantial portion of the curriculum – especially practical skills – is taught directly in the businesses. The dual education system is characterised by its high quality, which relies on the effective transfer of knowledge and experience within apprenticeship companies. The system of qualified access to trades ensures that vocational training takes place not at a few centralised institutions but in many small, flexible enterprises throughout the country. Education remains the most effective tool in combating youth unemployment, which is correspondingly low in Liechtenstein, and it significantly improves prospects in the labour market. The demand for qualified professionals has grown in recent years and is expected to continue rising in the future.

Agriculture and forestry

Approximately one third of Liechtenstein's 160 square kilometres (62 square miles) of land is suitable for agricultural use, supplemented by alp pastures used for summer grazing. Of the roughly 55 square kilometres (21 square miles) of agricultural land, two thirds is used as pastureland, while the remaining area is dedicated to arable farming, horticulture, fruit cultivation, and viticulture.

Roughly a third of Liechtenstein's land area is suitable for agricultural use.



The economic transformation of the Principality is also reflected in agricultural statistics. Between 1955 and 2023, the number of farms declined from 1,366 to fewer than 100. As the number of farms decreased, their average size increased: while farms in 1955 had an average of six livestock, by the turn of the century this figure had risen to over 50.

Whereas agriculture after the Second World War primarily focused on food production for the domestic market, ecological considerations such as landscape conservation and environmental services have become more prominent today. The support and preservation of farms have undergone significant changes. In the past, subsidies were primarily tied to product output; today, direct payments are made to farms, independent of production volume. These payments focus on rewarding environmentally friendly and animal-welfare-oriented practices. As of 2023, around two thirds of farms operated under the principles of integrated production, while one third had already converted to organic farming.

Through the customs treaty, Liechtenstein's agricultural sector is partially aligned with Swiss agricultural policies, though the country retains the ability to enact its own regulations in certain areas. The Government has adopted a strategic framework for agriculture, in which the sector commits to ensuring food supply and crisis preparedness. In return, the State undertakes to promote an entrepreneurial and market-oriented agricultural system.

Nature and leisure

Despite its small size, Liechtenstein offers a diverse and varied landscape. Whether in the valley or the mountains, the country invites exploration of nature that often remains remarkably unspoiled. Contrasts are striking and close together: on one side, busy business premises, industrial and commercial buildings bustling with activity and traffic noise; on the other, peaceful, untouched natural areas ideal for relaxation and contemplation. Liechtenstein is well suited for leisure, sport, and enjoying nature – not only for locals, but also for visitors and holidaymakers.

In the Ruggeller Riet, irises find the best conditions to thrive, becoming a hallmark of the nature reserve.



Landscape

Apart from the narrow plain of the Rhine Valley, Liechtenstein's landscape is distinctly mountainous. Of all the countries in the Alpine arc, from France to Slovenia, the Principality is the only one located entirely within the Alps. The settlements in the valley plain, which until well into the second half of the 20th century were geographically separated by farmland, are increasingly merging. Today, the three municipalities of Vaduz, Schaan, and Triesen resemble a long, continuous village, as the previously undeveloped spaces between them have been filled with commercial buildings, industrial facilities, and business premises. This extensive sprawl shapes the landscape, which nevertheless offers an appealing variety. Three landscape types can be distinguished: the Rhine Valley, the slopes on the Rhine Valley side, and the Alpine region.

Each of these three types of landscape has its own distinctive flora and fauna. Botanists have identified around 1,600 plant species, about half of which are found in the Alpine region. The Alpine region was declared a protected plant conservation zone in 1989. Grazing areas have been designated for livestock driven up to the alps in summer. Each municipality has also designated part of its territory as a protected agricultural zone, where – with the exception of agricultural structures – no buildings may be erected. Conservation areas have also been established, such as the Schwabbrünnen-Äscher nature reserve between Schaan and Nendeln, and the Ruggeller Riet. These reserves are home to rare plant species, including uncommon orchids.

The Elltal valley near Balzers is the largest contiguous area of low-nutrient meadows in the country and is also rich in plant life. The protected Rhine Dam along the river is likewise considered by botanists to be a treasure trove of colourful and rare plants. Various orchid species bloom in hidden corners both in the valley and in the Alpine region.



The ibex is one of over 50 mammal species native to Liechtenstein.

The diverse and varied landscapes of the valley and the mountains serve as habitats for a wide range of animal species. More than 50 species of mammals find suitable conditions here, numerous bird species nest in the area, and some two dozen species of fish inhabit the local waters. Reptiles and amphibians, as well as several species of bats, have managed to survive despite changes to their original habitats. In the Alpine region, which is less affected by modern civilisation than the densely settled valley, the Alpine wildlife is still almost fully intact. In addition to roe deer, red deer, chamois, and ibex, golden eagles, mountain hares, and rock ptarmigans can be found. Marmots, whose sharp whistles alert hikers to their presence, are also common. Liechtenstein's only venomous snake, the adder, is also native to the Alpine region.

The plant life reveals itself to attentive hikers along the mountain paths that wind through valleys and across high ridges, often described as "royal trails". The entire Alpine region has been designated a plant conservation area, where remarkable biodiversity can be found in the smallest of spaces. Hikes such as the Fürstin-Gina-Weg trail to the Pfälzerhütte cabin or the mountain tour across the Three Sisters and the Fürstensteig open up breathtaking views

of Liechtenstein's mountain landscape and those of neighbouring Switzerland and Austria, offering a deep appreciation of nature's beauty. The largely unspoiled valley landscapes and the partly untouched Alpine wilderness make Liechtenstein an appealing destination for day trips and holidays. In the heart of Europe, visitors can experience not only the unique character of a principality, but also a remarkably diverse landscape within a compact area – from the light-filled riparian woodlands between the Rhine and the Inland Canal to the rugged cliffs of the steep, soaring mountains.

Food and fine dining

Liechtenstein's culinary scene is remarkably diverse. It ranges from simple traditional fare, such as *Käsknöpfle* (cheese dumplings), still a regular feature on many family lunch tables, to the refined creations served in gourmet restaurants. As a border country, Liechtenstein's cuisine has been shaped by external influences. Regional specialities are widespread – familiar dishes from Switzerland, Austria, and southern Germany frequently appear on menus. International trends have also inspired top chefs to delight guests with creative dishes prepared to the highest standards using local and regional ingredients.

Some top chefs embrace experimentation and give free rein to their creativity, while others are more devoted to tradition, serving refined dishes from classic cuisine. Yet both approaches are marked by imagination and innovation. It is no surprise, then, that Gault&Millau – the guide for gourmets – praises the “princely dining” in Liechtenstein and admires the “artistic presentation”: “The colours on the glass plate shimmered as if it were a stained-glass window by Chagall,” reads one review.

But indulgence isn't limited to the highly acclaimed gourmet establishments. Seasonal speciality weeks add to the already consistently high-quality offering. These culinary delights are accompanied by carefully curated wine lists, featuring exquisite selections: “princely vintages” from the court winery or from other vineyards in the country, which need not shy away from comparison with international wines. Wine enthusiasts in the local restaurants have compiled sometimes extensive lists that include fine wines from around the world, ensuring no desire goes unfulfilled.

In Liechtenstein, culinary pleasures even feature on postage stamps. The 2005 EUROPA stamp was dedicated to gastronomy and hospitality. With a touch of humour and gentle irony, the special edition presented the theme “The guest is king”.



The Malbun holiday and recreational area, together with Steg, forms the centre of Alpine tourism in Liechtenstein.

Sport

Time and again, athletes from Liechtenstein attract international attention. The best known are the skiers, who have claimed World Cup victories and won medals at the Olympic Games and World Championships. But footballers also carry the Liechtenstein name onto the global stage during qualifying rounds for European Championships and World Cups. Liechtenstein athletes also compete in international swimming events and achieve strong results in cycling, kickboxing, swimming, artistic swimming, motor racing, and model aircraft flying. Athletes serve as Liechtenstein's ambassadors to the world.

Tina Weirather's bronze medal in the Super-G at Pyeongchang 2018 was also Liechtenstein's tenth Olympic medal.



Liechtenstein is enthusiastic about sports. There is hardly a sport that is not practised here. Even in the absence of certain facilities, people find ways to pursue their sporting passions beyond the country's narrow borders. Liechtenstein has no airfield, bobsleigh track, or golf course – yet there are individuals who glide, skydive, bobsleigh, and play golf. Trend sports are enjoying a surge in popularity, while traditional disciplines such as gymnastics and athletics are less in demand among the younger generation. This shift reflects a broader societal trend towards greater individualisation. Many no longer wish to be subordinate to referees or coaches in conventional sports and are instead drawn to more modern, independent sporting pursuits. Nevertheless, Liechtenstein likely ranks

Grassroots and school sports hold a position of outstanding importance in Liechtenstein.



among the global leaders in terms of the proportion of club and competitive athletes relative to its population. If the membership of all sports clubs is combined, nearly every second resident actively participates in a sport – not counting the many hobby athletes who, without being club members, run marathons, cycle along the well-developed bike paths, explore the mountain landscape on a mountain bike, or glide through the skies like eagles with a paraglider.

Today, sport in Liechtenstein serves multiple purposes: promoting physical activity, providing a counterbalance to working life, enhancing well-being, and supporting public health. The State promotes sport and sports clubs in three categories – grassroots sport, competitive sport, and elite sport.

The Liechtenstein Olympic Committee (LOC) is the umbrella organisation for the country's sports federations and clubs. Already in 1935, shortly before the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, Liechtenstein established a National Olympic Committee to enable athletes to compete. This later evolved into the Liechtenstein Olympic Sports Association (LOSVA), which was renamed the Liechtenstein Olympic Committee in 2013. As of 2024, the LOC included 48 sports federations and 136 sports clubs, with more than 15,000 members.

In Liechtenstein, grassroots sport is understood as the active use of leisure time through physical activity that not only satisfies the natural urge to move but also promotes health. It also carries a strong social component: doing sport together can help break down barriers. Due to its broad diversity and significant reach within the population, grassroots sport is a key focus of sports promotion. Support takes the form of financial aid for clubs and funding for sports facilities. Beyond club-based sport, public sporting events are organised for everyone – particularly the popular municipal sports festivals, which are both athletic and social in nature. Two

notable mass-participation events, the Vaduzer Städtlelauf running race and the LGT Alpin Marathon, also attract athletes from far beyond Liechtenstein's borders.

Competitive sport refers to training and competition at the national or international level within the framework of amateur sport. The State supports this level of sport because Liechtenstein's name appears on the global stage at events such as the Olympic Games. Beyond this national interest, the exemplary role of competitive athletes is also an important factor: these athletes push themselves to their limits while balancing training, competitions, and their professional careers.

Elite athletes are even more prominent on the international stage than competitive athletes. Those who have made it to the global elite serve as unofficial ambassadors and promoters of Liechtenstein, drawing attention to the existence of the small state around the world and promoting it in a positive, athletic light. Successful elite athletes are role models and inspire young people to engage in sport themselves – perhaps even to pursue their own athletic careers. The path to becoming a top-earning professional athlete requires immense training effort and significant financial resources for coaching and competition. In addition to supporting sports federations, the State therefore also provides funding for competitive sport.

For athletes with an international track record or exceptional potential for a professional career, Liechtenstein has also introduced a framework to ensure a basic level of social and financial security. Since 1 July 2023, the LOC has offered athletes part-time employment at a 50% workload. In 2024, six athletes held such positions.

In Liechtenstein, particular attention is given to people with mental or physical disabilities. Since 2001, the organisation Special Olympics Liechtenstein has been a member of Special Olympics



One of the most popular grassroots sporting events in Liechtenstein: the LGT Alpin Marathon.

International. Its sports programme focuses on grassroots participation and promotes overall physical fitness. In addition, internationally standardised Special Olympics programmes are offered, enabling athletes with disabilities to take part in regional and international competitions.

Liechtenstein places great importance on introducing schoolchildren to sport from an early age. Physical education is anchored in the Education Act and is a mandatory part of the curriculum in public schools. In addition, a wide range of voluntary school sports is available for active pupils, supplementing compulsory physical education and enabling regular training without the need for club membership.



Special Olympics Liechtenstein offers people with intellectual disabilities the opportunity to participate in sport and excel at international competitions.

The School Sports Liechtenstein organisation is responsible for planning and delivering these voluntary school sports programmes. Through this initiative, pupils can explore different sports and prepare either for school sports championships or for joining a sports club. School Sports Liechtenstein also coordinates the national school sports championships and manages Liechtenstein's participation in international school sports competitions.

Since 2004, young sporting talent has also been supported through the Liechtenstein Sports School. The Government established this "talent forge for future world and Olympic champions" in response to rising international demands on elite athletes and the increasingly steep path to top-level sport. The school's concept is designed to meet the needs of young athletes by meaningfully integrating education with sport, training, and competition.

There are no separate classes for students at the Sports School. Instead, they benefit from reduced teaching hours and a flexible school schedule, giving them sufficient time for training and competitions. The sports federations play a central role, as they are responsible for organising and structuring the training programmes. To ensure that students keep up academically despite their sporting commitments, they receive individual support and remedial lessons to make up for any material missed during training or competitions. This approach is designed to ensure that the academic requirements of each school level are met. Sports students not only receive special support but are also expected to meet certain obligations. To prevent their academic progress from being compromised by their sporting ambitions, they commit to a strong performance ethic in their schooling, which includes higher expectations in terms of academic achievement, social conduct, and work habits. Additionally, they are required to abstain from alcohol, nicotine, drugs, and doping.

As a small state, Liechtenstein faces challenges competing with larger nations that have significantly greater human resources at major international events such as the Olympic Games or World Championships. However, there have been notable exceptions – particularly in model flying, kickboxing, and above all skiing, where Liechtenstein athletes have been successful winning medals. The most recent example is Tina Weirather’s bronze medal at the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea. Recognising that all small countries face similar challenges, the idea of hosting competitions modelled on the Olympics for the small states of Europe was born during the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Eligibility criteria

Model aircraft flying in Liechtenstein continues to produce world-class pilots, such as Stefan Kaiser.



were set: participating countries must have fewer than one million inhabitants, possess a National Olympic Committee, and be members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Since then, athletes from these nations have competed every two years in the Games of the Small States of Europe. Liechtenstein’s athletes have won numerous medals at these events to date.

LIE-GAMES

Liechtenstein hosted the Games of the Small States of Europe in 1999 and 2011. The impressive athletic performances, the camaraderie among the athletes, and the enthusiasm of the spectators created countless unforgettable moments. A short film by Filmfabrik Anstalt allows you to immerse yourself in this unique atmosphere.



Culture

Liechtenstein's culture has many roots. Once situated along an important north-south trade route, the region was exposed to a variety of influences over the centuries. The Romans left a lasting mark on its cultural development, introducing Christianity, which began to take hold from the 5th century onwards. Archaeological finds also attest to settlement in the area long before the start of the Common Era.

In 2024, the Bad Ragartz art festival once again transformed the centre of Vaduz – the Städtle – into an open-air sculpture park. The photo shows the sculpture *Dualität* ("Duality") by Peter Nutt.



As a small country, Liechtenstein has always sought connections with larger regions. These ties have brought not only political alignment and economic benefits, but also cultural enrichment. The country's small size means that Liechtenstein's cultural policy is shaped by national, regional, and international considerations alike. A key objective of cultural policy is the preservation of the country's identity. Alongside cultural heritage and values, national identity forms one of the core elements of Liechtenstein's sense of statehood.

An internationally renowned cultural institution: Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein.



Liechtenstein has a rich cultural life. However, the Principality has no cities where a vibrant cultural scene can naturally develop around cultural institutions, art academies, or music conservatories. Its small size limits the emergence and growth of diverse cultural scenes that might otherwise interact or compete with one another. At the same time, this very smallness necessitates comparison, exchange, and engagement with the wider world. As a result, cultural exchange is a vital structural element of the country. Creatives from Liechtenstein often pursue education and training abroad, while the country regularly invites international artists, musicians, and writers to contribute to its cultural landscape.

Cultural diversity in a small space

One of the guiding principles of Liechtenstein's cultural policy is that the country should be recognised and valued internationally for its distinctive cultural identity. Public funding aims to strengthen the cultural sector and foster cultural awareness among the population, helping to highlight the importance of culture in shaping appreciation for the country. Particular emphasis is placed on cultivating strong cultural ties with neighbouring countries and on international cooperation, so that Liechtenstein is seen abroad as an attractive location for sustainable cultural projects. In the context of international collaboration, Liechtenstein has joined various international conventions. Already in 1960, the country acceded to the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. By joining the European Cultural Convention in 1979, Liechtenstein committed itself to the protection of Europe's shared cultural heritage, further reinforced by ratifying the European conventions for the protection of architectural and archaeological heritage – important steps towards a comprehensive safeguarding of cultural assets and archaeological sites.

Despite its small size, Liechtenstein offers a remarkably rich cultural landscape. This diversity spans music, theatre, literature, visual arts, and traditional customs. A major contribution is made by the country's numerous cultural associations, which play a key role in preserving and promoting Liechtenstein's cultural life.

Art and art museums

Fine art is the branch of culture that has brought Liechtenstein international recognition. Central to this are the Collections of the Prince von und zu Liechtenstein, with works regularly loaned out for internationally acclaimed special exhibitions. Located in the heart of Vaduz, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein owes its existence to a group of private donors. In collaboration with the Liechtenstein Government and the municipality of Vaduz, they realised the construction of the modern building for the museum of fine arts, which was presented to the Principality as a millennium gift in 2000. The museum's temporary exhibitions feature works from the State Art Collection as well as pieces by both local and international artists. A defining focus of Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein's profile is on three-dimensional artworks from the 20th and 21st centuries, with particular emphasis on sculpture, Arte Povera and Post-Minimal Art. In 2015, the museum was expanded with the addition of the Hilti Art Foundation's exhibition building. This private collection includes outstanding works of classical modernism and contemporary art.

The Liechtenstein Art Society is also dedicated to the field of art, while the Liechtenstein Art School provides a foundation for aspiring artists.



In addition to its permanent exhibition, the Liechtenstein National Museum also presents rotating special exhibitions.

National Museum and local museums

The Liechtenstein National Museum features a thematically structured permanent exhibition that presents a comprehensive overview of the country and its people, economy and natural environment, culture and customs. Opened in 1954 on the initiative of the Historical Society, the museum is housed in the former Princely Tavern, which was combined with the former Governor's Residence to create a unified museum complex. The permanent exhibition in these two historic buildings is complemented by rotating special exhibitions. The National Museum also includes the Liechtenstein Farmhouse Museum in Schellenberg, offering insights into domestic life in Liechtenstein around the year 1900, and the Postal Museum in Vaduz, founded in 1930, which showcases every post-age stamp issued by Liechtenstein and documents the art of stamp design and production.

The museum quarter in Vaduz was expanded in 2015 with the addition of the Liechtenstein Treasure Chamber, which houses exceptional treasures from the collections of the Reigning Prince of Liechtenstein and private individuals. Under the title “From the Principality across the world into space”, the museum presents unique objects from Liechtenstein and items closely connected to the country.

This museum landscape is further enriched by a number of community museums and cultural centres: the Engländerbau Art Space in Vaduz, the Walser Museum in Triesenberg, SammlungMura in Schaanwald, the domus museum and gallery in Schaan, the Pfrundhaus in Eschen, Kiefer-Martis-Huus in Ruggell, Kulturhaus

The Liechtenstein Symphony Orchestra is one of the country’s most prominent musical ambassadors.

Rössle in Mauren, the Gasometer arts and culture centre in Triesen, and the Alter Pfarrhof in Balzers.

Music and Music School

Numerous choral societies, children’s choirs, and music associations enrich the cultural life of Liechtenstein’s municipalities. Adding to this vibrant scene are the operetta stages in Balzers and Vaduz, as well as the Liechtenstein Symphony Orchestra. Not to be overlooked is Big Band Liechtenstein, which originated from the Liechtenstein Music School.



Founded in 1963, the Music School offers instruction to children, young people, and adults in nearly all musical instruments and in voice. Since 1971, it has hosted the International Master Classes at university level, attracting musicians from across Europe to Liechtenstein each year. Every summer, the Liechtenstein Guitar Days also take place, featuring internationally renowned guitarists. Lecturers and students from both the Master Classes and the Guitar Days contribute to the summer cultural scene with a wide range of concerts. Finally, the International Music Academy supports exceptionally talented young musicians aged 10 to 25, and the Tangente association operates a jazz club in Eschen.

Theatre and TAK

Amateur theatre has a long-standing tradition in Liechtenstein, ranging from folk performances at local club events to the operetta stages in Vaduz and Balzers, as well as cabaret in various cultural centres. At the heart of the theatre and performing arts scene is TAK Theater Liechtenstein, founded in 1970 as the Theater am Kirchplatz in Schaan. Its programme is built around four main pillars: drama, concerts, children's and youth theatre, and cabaret. Literature and dance events are also held regularly. In addition to a diverse guest performance programme, TAK produces its own works, particularly in drama and youth theatre.

Since 2003, the small theatre Schlösslekeller has delighted audiences with cabaret performances. It evolved from LiGa – the Liechtenstein Gabarett – a satirical revue that took a humorous and critical look at domestic politics and local quirks. The venue also supports emerging artists by offering them a platform to perform. Meanwhile, the cultural association Schichtwechsel promotes dialogue among creatives and focuses its efforts on curating exhibitions.



With in-house productions such as *The Broken Jug*, TAK regularly wins praise from critics.

Literature and the National Library

Despite its small size, Liechtenstein has a vibrant literary scene. For a long time, the country was better known as an idyllic setting for literary works or as a place of residence for foreign authors, rather than for its own literary output. However, in recent decades, individual Liechtenstein writers have begun to attract attention beyond the country's borders. Liechtenstein has had a presence at the Frankfurt Book Fair since 2000, the Liechtenstein Literature Days have been held every two years, and regular readings are organised by the Literaturhaus and the PEN Club.

The Liechtenstein National Library offers a broad lending collection of world literature and non-fiction across all subject areas. It also maintains the Liechtensteinensia collection, which comprises all publications in word, image, and sound either produced in or relating to Liechtenstein.

National identity

At first glance, Liechtenstein may appear little different from its neighbours Switzerland and Austria. However, a closer look reveals distinct differences in language, customs, and history. In this sense, Liechtenstein is not only a community in its own right, but also possesses a unique national identity.

On the first weekend after Ash Wednesday, bonfires known as *Funken* are lit in various places throughout Liechtenstein.



Liechtensteinisch

The official language of the Principality of Liechtenstein is German. However, among themselves, Liechtensteiners typically speak in dialect. When spoken in its original form, the local dialect often allows speakers to be identified with a high degree of accuracy as belonging to a particular municipality. Strictly speaking, each municipality has its own linguistic characteristics, making such distinctions possible.

Broadly, Liechtenstein can be divided into three dialect regions: Unterland (Lower Country), Oberland (Upper Country), and Triesenberg. The dialects of Unterland and Oberland differ primarily in their vowel sounds, while the Walser village of Triesenberg forms a linguistic island at an elevation of over 800 metres (2,625 feet) above sea level. The Walser settled on this sun-drenched plateau in the 13th century, and their descendants have managed to preserve the distinct vocabulary and unique sound of their dialect. Nevertheless, all three dialect regions are increasingly affected by cross-border mobility and the global communication era. Local dialects are at risk of levelling out and gradually losing their distinctive features.

Tradition and customs

Liechtenstein offers history enthusiasts a variety of museums, including the Liechtenstein National Museum, the Walser Museum, and the Postal Museum. The exhibits at the National Museum trace the development of Liechtenstein from prehistoric times, with cultural and religious history, as well as the history of economic development, added over time. In Triesenberg, visitors can explore the history of Walser immigration and the life of mountain farmers at the Walser Museum.

Customs are closely intertwined with the museum landscape in Liechtenstein. Despite the country's openness to the world and its strong international connections, the preservation of customs holds a high priority – creating a dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity. Customs and traditions are deeply rooted in Liechtenstein's social and religious life. Like society itself, they are subject to change: many date back generations, some have faded away, and new forms have emerged over time. Traditions are especially visible during carnival season (*Fasnacht*), on *Funkensonntag* or *Küchlesonntag* (when bonfires are lit and traditional pastries are eaten), during the annual *Alpabfahrt* (cattle descent from the mountains), and at weddings.

During the *Alpabfahrt*, the flower-adorned cows announce the end of their alp summer with the loud clanging of their bells.





The State Ceremony on the Castle Meadow always marks the beginning of the celebrations for National Day on 15 August.

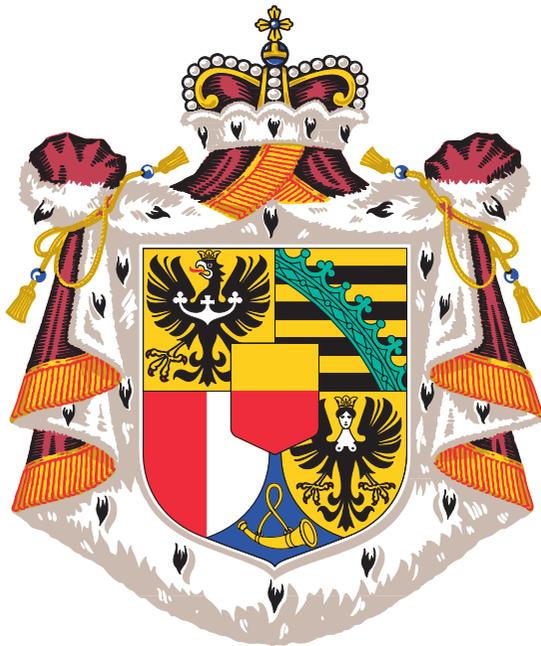
National Day

Tradition and customs in Liechtenstein also include National Day, celebrated on 15 August. It was first introduced by the Government in 1940. The date coincided with the eve of the birthday of then-Reigning Prince Franz Josef II (1906–1989) and the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, a traditional religious holiday in Liechtenstein. After the Reigning Prince's death, 15 August was retained as the national holiday and declared a public holiday. In public parlance, the day is still affectionately referred to as the *Fürstenfest* (Prince's Festival), thanks in large part to the popular festivities held in the centre of Vaduz and the spectacular fireworks display set against the backdrop of Vaduz Castle.

Coats of arms and colours

The large national coat of arms

The coat of arms of the Princely House of Liechtenstein also serves as the large coat of arms of the State. It is the emblem of sovereignty of the Principality of Liechtenstein and is used on seals and stamps as well as official signs and documents. The right of use is reserved to the members of the Princely House and the State authorities. The Government may also grant private individuals authorisation to use the large coat of arms if it is in the interest of the country.



The coat of arms is quarterly with chapé in base, charged with per fess or and gules over all. The individual shields united in the large coat of arms indicate the history of the Princely House:

- The family shield of the Princely House is per fess or and gules.
- The Silesian shield is or an eagle sable, crowned, armed or, charged with crescent trefly argent ending in crosses.
- The shield of the Kuenringe is a Barry of 8 pieces or and sable charged with crancelin vert.
- The shield of the Duchy of Troppau is per pale gules and argent.
- The shield of East Frisia or Rietberg is or a maiden eagle sable with head argent, crowned, armed or.
- The shield of the Duchy of Jägerndorf is shown chapé azure a bugle-horn or stringed or.



The small national coat of arms

The small national coat of arms is the family shield of the Princely House per fess or and gules (horizontal bands of gold and red) under the Princely crown.



The national colours

The national colours are blue and red. The flag consists of a rectangular cloth loosely affixed to a pole, with two equally wide horizontal bands, blue above, red below. In the blue band near the pole, the Princely crown is emblazoned in gold.



The colours of the Princely House

The colours of the reigning Princely House of Liechtenstein are gold and red.

National Anthem

*Oben am jungen Rhein
Lehnet sich Liechtenstein
An Alpenhöh'n.*

*Dies liebe Heimatland,
Das teure Vaterland,
Hat Gottes weise Hand
Für uns erseh'n.*

*Hoch lebe Liechtenstein
Blühend am jungen Rhein,
Glücklich und treu.*

*Hoch leb' der Fürst vom Land,
Hoch unser Vaterland,
Durch Bruderliebe Band
Vereint und frei.*

High on the young Rhine
Lies Liechtenstein, resting
On Alpine heights.

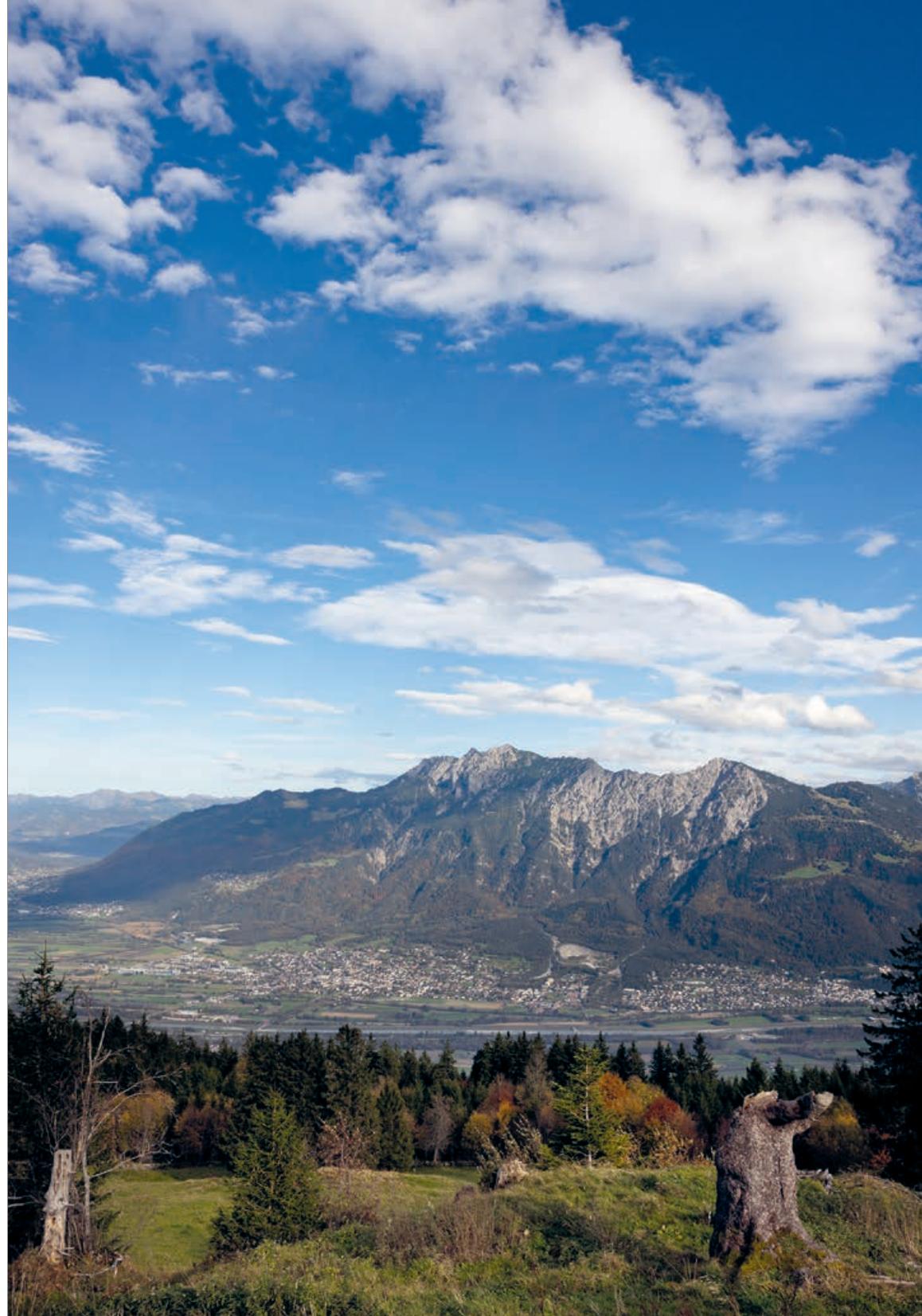
This beloved homeland
The dear fatherland
God's wise hand has
Chosen for us.

Long live Liechtenstein,
Blossoming on the young Rhine,
Fortunate and faithful!

Long live the Prince of the Land,
Long live our fatherland,
Through bonds of brotherly love
United and free!

LISTEN TO THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

*The Liechtenstein Symphony Orchestra and the Chorsemilar
Liechtenstein perform the Liechtenstein National Anthem.*



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