

Spine-chilling stories and local legends

Every year at Halloween, the veil between the living and the dead is said to be lifted, and spirits cause havoc among humans. Aside from the famed folklore surrounding the Melusina, Luxembourg is home to a number of other supernatural occurrences.

For those who have walked through the forests and rocky landscapes of the Mullerthal region, it should not come as a surprise that the rural environment is home to many a spooky story. With natural rock formations and far-reaching woodlands, the Mullerthal region is the perfect breeding ground for the otherworldly and the uncanny. And indeed, hikers should always be aware, should they start hearing a beautiful singing voice: chances are it might be the last thing they hear.

Legend tells of the wealthy and bewitching Griselinde, heir to the Heringen castle, who learned to ensnare travellers with her voice. Living alone with her fairy godmother Harmonika, she gained the ability to lure heartless nomads into the depths of the forest, where they were then turned into stone.

It is said that stony Mullerthal landscape is composed of the petrified souls of the callous and cold-hearted men, all losing their lives, wandering in the woods upon following the singing voice. Beneath the jagged, stony surface of the Mullerthal lie countless chevaliers, all fallen for not valuing the heiress' song.

One knight however, the knight of Folkendingen, became enraptured with her voice and vowed to find the woman it belonged to. His heart filled with yearning, he slowly followed the melody closer and closer to Griselinde's dwelling. Recognising the passion in her suitor's soul, Griselinde sang on, drawing him ever nearer.

At the foot of Griselinde's tower, the knight was not to be put off, and so he began to climb the steep and craggy rock face up to her. However, on his way up he lost his footing, falling to his death before the lovers could ever meet. Hearing the cries of her admirer, Griselinde rushed out to find him, only to find his lifeless body broken by the fall.

Unable to endure the weight of grief and guilt that bore down upon her, Griselinde too gave her body to the cliffs, throwing herself into their depths.

Hikers today still hear her song, a lament of love lost, echoing around the ruins of Heringerburg, reverberating between the trees.

A legend that is well known to Luxembourgers across the land is the myth of the "Kropemann".

Earning his namesake from the hook he uses to drag children into deep waters, the Kropemann's origin is shrouded in mystery.

HORROR WITH A HOOK

In his 2017 film *Kropemann*, Patrick Ernzer explores one of the possible histories of the spine-chilling water demon. The folklore follows the 16th century story of Johann, who was granted permission to reside in his castle in Meysembourg after the death of his father, son of Karl the Brave, the last duke of Burgundy. Johann enjoyed a purely symbolic reign and devoted his time and love to his only daughter, Lili, whose mother had passed away during childbirth. While Johann invested all the tenderness and support a parent could provide, time for him and his daughter ran out earlier than expected. Located in a forest close by lay a treacherous swamp: the Devil's Marshes. The day came when Lili, a child full of life who loved to explore, ran too far, and too deep into the marshes. She never returned, and no body was ever found, leaving her father to slowly go mad with grief. Unable to rest and unable to find his daughter, Johann returned to the Devil's Marshes time and time again, calling out for his beloved Lili.

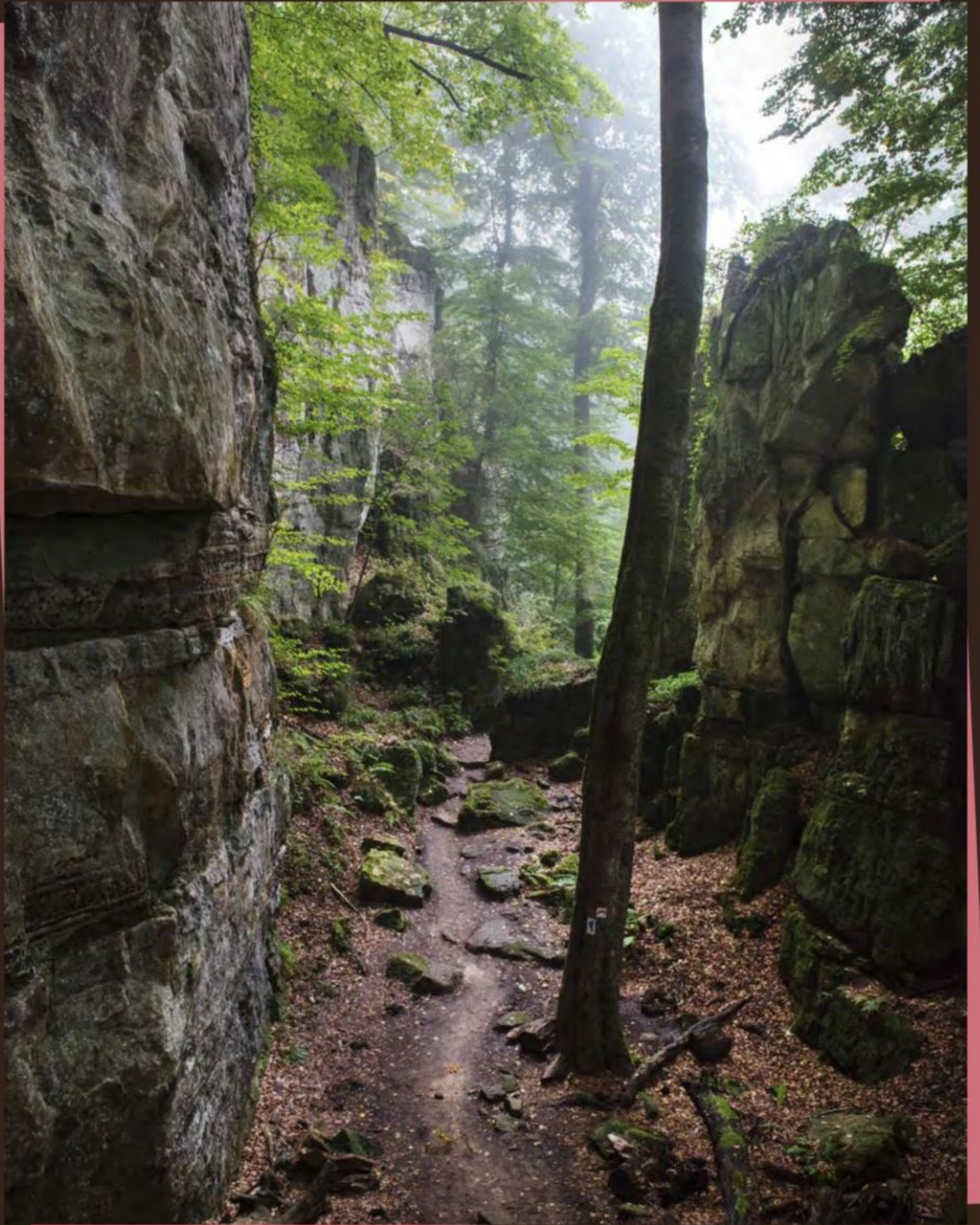
There finally came a night when Johann was so desperate he slowly began to enter the marshes in one last, frenzied attempt to recover Lili. Step by step, Johann waded into the deep, freezing waters, howling for his daughter, crying her name. Ever deeper he dragged his body, wailing for his lost daughter, until his ghastly, wan moans woke the servants of the castle. Maids and manservants rushed to the water's edge, only to witness the >

TREACHEROUS MULLERTHAL

The landscape is said to be composed of petrified souls

“EVERY LUXEMBOURGER HAS HEARD THE LEGEND OF THE KROPEMANN AT LEAST ONCE IN THEIR CHILDHOOD.”

> CAMERA OBSKURA





ripples of the watery surface. No sign of life, not even the haggard form of their former master was visible.

Far from being reunited, however, Johann's cries continued to echo around the marshes, as he resumed his fateful hunt into the afterlife. Only now, any child that came too close to the water's edge was swiftly dragged underwater, as Johann inspected every single one, in hopes of reclaiming his Lili. As his disappointment grew, so did his fury, and locals soon learned to avoid the Devil's Marshes. Johann, failing to find peace, started searching beyond his underwater realm. Thus, the legend goes, once every hundred years Johann climbs out of his watery grave to scour the land of the living once more, since the land of the dead gave him nothing but darkness.

Ernzer's film explores the legend in a contemporary Luxembourg setting, as the Kropemann haunts the country once more.

GRAVEDIGGER'S COMEUPPANCE

The last tale revolves around a gravedigger of Mamer; a drunken, violent thief. It was late one Christmas Eve, as he was busy excavating another grave, when a young man passed him on his way home, singing. The gravedigger's fiery temper flared, and he bore down on the innocent man, beating him long after drawing first blood.

When he finally desisted, the gravedigger sat down, heaving, knocking back the spirits he always

kept on his person. It was then that he caught sight of a pale figure, clad in white, sitting just four graves across from him. Staring, the gravedigger could not tear his eyes away as the apparition turned towards him. In horror, he watched as the man slowly opened his mouth, lips stretching over teeth, eyes bulging, tongue lolling. The gravedigger finally came to his senses and ran for his life.

The phantom however latched onto him, dragging him back with spectral, steely claws. The more the rogue writhed and recoiled, the stronger the grip, and before long, the phantom rang a small bell, an eerie chime that echoed throughout the cemetery. Answering his call, 12 further goblins crawled out of the shadows, and, seizing the gravedigger by the arms and legs, threw the wretch into the open grave he had been digging. Among screeching and raucous laughter, the little demons turned to him. "You're freezing!" they howled, gleefully producing a bucketful of living flames. "Drink!" they screamed and goblins forced the fire down his throat. No sooner had he finished than the man's legs were kicked away from beneath him, and his body was twisted, torn and pulled into various shapes and forms before he was thrown back outside, unconscious, with his head stuck between his legs.

Although he survived the ordeal, the gravedigger took a long time to heal, his bruises, contusions and swelling a reminder of the nightmarish torment. <

MONSTER FROM THE DEEP

The Kropemann, as envisioned in the Luxembourg horror film

CELEBRATE HALLOWEEN

Halloween has become a major event in Luxembourg over the past decade or so. Here is a selection of the best events for kids and adults.

TRICK OR TREAT

The American Women's Club of Luxembourg was the first to organise formal trick or treat events in the grand duchy. The event is now held at St. George's International School in Hamm and this year takes place on Saturday 21 October. Proceeds go to charity. www.awcluxembourg.com

HORRIBLE HALLOWEEN

The British Ladies Club is hosting its Horrible Halloween event for children at the Bambesch playground on Sunday 22 October between 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. There will be prizes for the best costume. www.blc.lu

DÍA DE LOS MUERTOS

Bellamy Bar & Cookery, Octans, Go Ten and The Tube host their third Día de los Muertos, the Mexican day of the dead celebration, on 31 October. Guests are encouraged to dress up—women in floral skull makeup coupled with refined Calavera Catrina like long flowing dresses, men in early twentieth century black coats, Victorian hats and skull masks. diadelosmuertosluxembourg

URBAN GORE

Urban Bar in the capital city was one of the first to get its staff to wear costume and gory makeup for Halloween. It remains one of the best Halloween parties in town. www.urban.lu