A Day in Basel

Basel, Switzerland

(1) Why should your city be visited

It’s manageable size and it’s location on the borders of France and Germany make Basel a great place to visit - you can see and experience a lot in a short time.

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Basel - the small ‘big’ city.

Reflecting its location at the heart of Europe where the borders of Switzerland, France and Germany meet Basel has an international flair. With its almost 40 museums, some of world renown, Basel is also a European cultural centre. A beautiful historic Old Town, the Rhine River flowing through the city, excellent shopping and nearly unlimited leisure opportunities are appreciated by tourists and the locals alike. Tourist information offices: at SBB (Swiss) railway station and in the Stadt-Casino at Barfüsserplatz www.baseltourismus.ch

Inquire at tourist office about the BaselCard – reductions on boat trips and various restaurants plus free entrance to various attractions. (also available for purchase in some hotels)

(2) Must see/Do NOT miss attractions

- Marktplatz – the market place, where fruits and vegetables are sold, is dominated by the beautiful City Hall
- Münsterplatz – the Cathedral on the square is imposing and the terrace behind affords a wonderful view of the city, late-baroque and classical building line the square
- Spalentor – the most impressive of three surviving city gates that formed part of the early city fortifications
- Mittlere Brücke – one of the oldest Rhine crossings, the Middle Bridge connects Grossbasel (large Basel) and Kleinbasel (small Basel), take a look at the Käppelijoch halfway along – the scene of executions during the Middle Ages
- if you are limited for time take the 2 hr. city tour: a journey through the history of Basel - daily from May 1, 2:30 – 4:30 pm, starts at tourist information office in the Stadt-Casino at Barfüsserplatz www.basel.com

1. Ladies Day

- Botanical Garden of the Basel University, rain forest in oldest botanical garden in northern Europe - famous for its collection of cacti and orchids
- Spalenberg – the boutiques on Spalenberg have a special charm, the Johann Wanner Christmas House supplies products to the Vatican, the White House and the head of the British monarchy
2. **With spouse or partner**

- Basel Rhine Port – point at which barges begin their journey north, good view of the port and surrounding area from Silo-Turm
- Rhine Shipping Museum – a scale model of the port area and models of 19th and 20th century Rhine ships (located at Rhine Port)
- The Historical Museum Basel in the Barfüsserkirche at Barfüsserplatz – houses the most important collections of cultural history in the Upper Rhine region including town and guild antiques and historic weapons
- Brunch, lunch or dinner boat cruise on the Rhine. [www.bpg.ch](http://www.bpg.ch)

3. **Family Day**

- Puppenhausmuseum at Barfüsslerplatz – discover the world’s largest collection of old teddy bears and beautiful dolls and doll houses, exhibits date back to beginning of 19th century [www.puppenhausmuseum.ch](http://www.puppenhausmuseum.ch)
- Museum of Natural History – geology and mineralogy exhibitions and archeological finds
- Basel Zoo – known as one of the best in Europe, home to 600 different species [www.zoobasel.ch](http://www.zoobasel.ch)
- Tierpark Lange Erlen – animals native to Europe, pools for model sailing boots
- The Rhine Ferries – cross the Rhine by any of four cable-guided ferries [www.faehri.ch](http://www.faehri.ch)
- Rhine boat trip – discover the city from the water on a trip through the locks or a harbor tour [www.bpg.ch](http://www.bpg.ch)
- Vintage tram ride – 1 hr. journey through the 2,000 year history of Basel, Sundays 10:30 am, starts/ends at tram station in front of Euler hotel at SBB railway station, adults Sfr. 20 (Euro 15) children Sfr.10 (Euro 7) – tickets available starting at 10:15 am
- Läblekönig – grotesque crowned head with protruding tongue and eyes operated by a special mechanism, located near the Mittlere Rheinbrücke above restaurant Läklekönig
- Hammering Man – 13.5-metre sculpture of man hammering on Aeschenplatz

(3) **Very good things to do/see**

- Dreiländereck, Three Countries’ Corner at Basel Rhine Port – the borders of France, Germany and Switzerland meet near the port in the middle of the Rhine River, the point is marked by a pylon
• Theater-Brunnen – artist Jean Tinguely’s mobile fountain art in large pool in front of Opera house
• Kunstmuseum, Museum of Fine Art – including works of 15th and 16th century and important Picasso collection
• Beyeler Museum – E. Beyeler’s renowned collection of modern art in Riehen
• View of city from Towers – Cathedral on Münsterplatz (ascent to tower 238 steps), Elisabethankirche (ascent of spire)
• Basel’s fountains – particularly worth seeing are the Late Gothic Fischmarkbrunnen and the Gemsbergbrunnen

(4) Good restaurants (list type of food and price range)

Thanks to its unique location, Basel’s cuisine is both excellent and eclectic – for a complete list of restaurants: www.basel-restaurants.ch

Upscale:
• Zum Schützenhaus (swiss specialties) – restaurant in historic 16th century Renaissance building
• Schloss Bottmingen (Haut-Cuisine) – romantic castle surrounded by water
• Safran Zunft (traditional dishes and seasonal specialties) – historic restaurant with medieval atmosphere

Midscale:
• Löwenzorn (seasonal Swiss cuisine) – authentic atmosphere, historical rooms from the 16th century in Basel Old Town
• Hasenburg (Swiss and French) - warm kitchen until 10 pm
• Gifthüttli (typical Basel fare and inventive dishes) – cozy Basler restaurant
• Hotel Brasserie Au Violon (traditional French) - lovely shaded garden
• Café Restaurant zum Schmale Wurf (Mediterranean flair) – cozy, on shore of Rhine
• Restaurant Café Schmiedenhof - homemade pies and cakes, reasonably priced dishes

Lowscale
• Brötli-Bar – 30 different open-faced sandwiches daily, also take-away
• Coop-Restaurant Pfauen – self service with good quality in Pfauen department store
• Restaurant Manor – self service in Manor department store in Kleinbasel
• Restaurant Linde – cozy atmosphere, reasonably priced lunch specials

Vegetarian: Tibits, warm food all day

Note: Service is included although the bill is often ‘rounded up’ or a small extra tip given for especially good service.

(5) Favorite Walks/areas of town

• Walking Tours – five different color-coded, self-guided tours leading through the narrow streets and lanes of Basel, beginning and ending at Marktplatz
• St. Alban district and Spalenberg (near the Spalentor) – quiet streets with quaint shops
• Rheinpromenade – stroll along the river Rhine under shady lime trees

(6) **THE place to have a relaxing beverage and take in the atmosphere (wine or coffee & cake)**

• Schiesser at Marktplatz – classical Vienna style coffee house on the first floor tea room
• Des Art’s bar at Barfüsserplatz

(7) **Shopping recommendations (list of what to look for there)**

In Basel is the perfect city to combine shopping with sightseeing – from small boutiques and old antiques shops to chic department stores - the easiest place to start is on the Freie Strasse.

• Schlossberg Boutique – large collection of quality household linens
• Läckerli-Huus – “Läckerli” these sweet biscuits are a Basel specialty
• Schweizer Heimatwerk – top quality Swiss craftwork
• Gloggehus – souvenirs from Basel and Switzerland in Kleinbasel near Messeplatz

(8) **Three things people might be surprised to learn about city a/o people**

• Basel is known as the City of Fairs – numerous trade fairs are held throughout the year including the renowned Watch and Jewelry Fair and the Basel Art Fair
• Founded in 1460 the University of Basel is one of the oldest in Europe.
• The local language is Baseldütsch (one of the many Swiss German dialects), ‘proper’ or ‘high’ German (Hochdeutsch) is taught in the schools and used by the media.
• Basler Fasnacht - the people of Basel describe their famous carnival as the “three most wonderful days in the year”. Morgestraich marks the beginning as the city is suddenly plunged into darkness at 4.00 am in the morning of the Monday after Ash Wednesday.

(9) **Best time to visit (weather, etc.)**

Favored by a mild climate Basel can be enjoyed throughout the year – however to see colorful flowerbeds and window boxes May to September is the best time to visit. It is advisable to bring an umbrella as it can rain any time throughout the year.

(10) **Transportation recommendations**

**Within the city**

• Basel has an outstanding tram/bus system. All trams and buses run at 7 minute intervals until 8 pm and then every 15 minutes until midnight. Visitors who spend the night at a Basel hotel receive a free *Mobility Ticket* at the reception desk giving hotel guests unlimited tram and bus travel in Basel. [www.bvb.ch](http://www.bvb.ch)
• Tourists are recommended to take the panoramic tour of the town on trams 15 and 16 – their route runs through the city centre with two crossings of the Rhine, passing by many of Basel’s places of interest (free for holders of “Mobility Tickets” – see hotel info below)
Do not attempt to travel without a ticket as if caught fines are stiff and you’ll not be excused on the plea that you’re a tourist.

Getting to the city

- Basel Train Station SBB (Swiss railway) – connections to most Swiss cities, Italy, Germany and Austria [www.sbb.ch](http://www.sbb.ch)
- French station SNCF (French railway) – adjacent to SBB [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com)
- German Station Badisher Bahnhof (DB) in Kleinbasel – for trains arriving from Germany [www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de)
- Euroairport Basel-Mulhouse (airport serving Basel and Mulhouse, France) [www.euroairport.com](http://www.euroairport.com)

(11) Other insights that would be of interest (little know sights or facts)

- The Basel area is comprised of 2 half-cantons or states, urban Basel – Basel-Stadt (including the communities of Riehen and Bettingen) and rural Basel – Baselland.
- Due to its’ geographical position Basel is a center of commercial importance, not only as the largest inland port of Europe but also as an important center for international finance and the site of several large chemical and pharmaceutical firms.
- The Euroairport is the world’s only airport operated by two countries (Switzerland and France) – it is located on French territory and reached from Basel via a toll-free fenced in road.
- The CH sticker that you see on car bumpers and the `.ch’ at the end of website addresses stands for the Latin name for Switzerland – Confoederatio Helvetica.

(12) If you have more than one day (could be a day trip)

- Augusta Raurica – best preserved ancient Roman theatre north of the Alps, a Roman villa replica and large silver treasure [www.augusta-raurica.ch](http://www.augusta-raurica.ch)
- Mariastein, Flüh – pilgrimage site, impressive Late Gothic Benedictine Closter-church [www.kloster-mariastein.ch](http://www.kloster-mariastein.ch)
- Wasserfallen near Reigoldswil - take aerial cable-car to top for spectacular view of Jura foothills (option - thrilling scooter ride back down) [www.wasserfallenbahn.ch](http://www.wasserfallenbahn.ch)
- Rheinfelden – Historical Old Town, located idyllically on the Rhine [www.rheinfelden.ch](http://www.rheinfelden.ch)
- Colmar, France – pretty old town and ‘Little Venice’ quarter [www.ot-colmar.fr](http://www.ot-colmar.fr)
- Freiburg i. Breisgau, Germany – Gothic Minster, magnificent Baroque buildings and Old Town alleys [www.freiburg.de](http://www.freiburg.de)
• Rigi – Mt. Rigi is one of Switzerland’s favorite excursion destinations, breathtaking panoramic view of the Alps, hiking and walking trails [www.rigi.ch](http://www.rigi.ch)

(13) **Hotel recommendations (please include area of town and price range)**

- Grand Hotel Les Trois Rois***** and Krafft*** - hotels overlooking the Rhine
- Euler**** and Victoria**** - located near SBB train station
- Au Violon (***comparable) – former prison facility turned hotel, near Barfüsserplatz
- Ibis (** comparable) – near SBB train station

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**Weekend in Basel** – special weekend rates in all hotel categories (in July, August and December offer also valid on weekdays) – book on [www.basel.com](http://www.basel.com).

B&B - for list: [www.bed-andbreakfast.ch](http://www.bed-andbreakfast.ch)

**Youth hostels:**

- Basel Back Pack - Sfr. 79 (Euro 52) single / Sfr. 99 (Euro 65) double [www.baselbackpack.com](http://www.baselbackpack.com)
- Jugendherberge - Sfr. 95 (Euro 63) single / Sfr. 128 (Euro 86) double [www.youthhostel.ch/basel](http://www.youthhostel.ch/basel)

(14) **Things to be aware of or to be avoided**

- Switzerland, which is not a member of the European Union (EU), has it’s own currency the Swiss Franc (Sfr). The rest of Europe uses the Euro.
- Be aware of purse-snatchers and pickpockets – practice common sense.

(15) **Websites to check-out**

- [www.basel.com](http://www.basel.com)
- [www.baselmuseums.ch](http://www.baselmuseums.ch)
- [www.baselland-tourismus.ch](http://www.baselland-tourismus.ch)
- [www.local.ch](http://www.local.ch)
- [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)

(16) **How disabled friendly is the city?**

A city plan detailing wheel-chair accessible public places and bathrooms and handicapped parking is available at Tourist Information or under [www.procapbasel.ch](http://www.procapbasel.ch).