Experiencing Basel.

Five walks across the Old Town of Basel.
Situated on the banks of the Rhine at the point where the Swiss, French and German borders converge, Basel is a unique and fascinating city full of charm. A city where everything runs to clockwork – yet with a multicultural character to which it owes its emphatically cosmopolitan and innovative reputation.

Basel boasts a gem of an Old Town, with its narrow streets and lanes. Experience an abundance of culture and the ultimate in savoir vivre. While away your time at the sunny riverside, stroll through the quaint alleys of a beautifully kept Old Town or stop by at one of countless boulevard cafes and bistros.

One of the great advantages of Basel is its manageable size: within a short time you can see and experience so much. The best way to explore the centre of Basel is to take the five walks around the old part of the city. Each walk shows the city and its development from a different angle. Be your own guide! The walks take you through the narrow streets and lanes of Basel to its large museums and fine squares. You will not only enjoy some fascinating views from the city’s vantage points but also gain insights into everyday life inside the city. All five walks start and end at the market square known as Marktplatz (corner of the Sattelgasse). The principle of the walks could not be simpler. Choose one of the five routes which are described here. Each of these has been named after a leading figure in the history of Basel. Then just follow the signs depicting the head of the person that your chosen walk is named after. Each walk has also been given a different colour code.
This short walk takes you up the Rheinsprung to the hill on which the cathedral (Münster) stands – the scene of major events in Basel’s history. With its position of strategic importance on the Rhine and clear views across the river, it has been the site of human occupation for 22 centuries. Both the Celts and Romans established settlements here, the remains of which can be seen to this day. In 1440, during the Council of Basel, Pope Felix V was elected here. Until the Reformation (1529), the cathedral hill also served as the residence of the prince bishop. Today, it is an attractive residential area of a more secular nature, as well as home to a number of administrative offices and museums.

The cathedral square (Münsterplatz) – one of the most beautiful squares in Europe – is a place of peaceful tranquillity. However, during the numerous events which take place here in the course of the year (open-air cinema, autumn fair, concerts), it is transformed into a scene of lively festivity. The promontory on the river side of the cathedral commands a panoramic view, once enjoyed by kings and popes, that sweeps over the city and the Rhine as it changes course to flow north, and beyond to the hills of the Black Forest and the Vosges. Explore the cathedral, which boasts various Romanesque features that are still very well preserved, and the adjoining cloister with its tombs of famous Basel families. In the cathedral itself, numerous historical figures lie buried, including Erasmus of Rotterdam. The walk back to the bustle of the market square (Marktplatz) leads you down one of Basel’s main shopping streets, the Freie Strasse.

Erasmus walk
Erasmus of Rotterdam (about 1469–1536). Lived and taught from 1521 to 1529 and from 1535 in Basel, major humanist. Signposts: red on blue. Time required: about 30 minutes. Suitable for push-chairs and wheelchairs.
This walk starts at the market square (Marktplatz) and heads towards the Freie Strasse, the largest and best-known shopping street in Basel. Passing the choir of the Barfüsserkirche, you come to the theatre square (Theaterplatz). This plaza is shaped by the contrast between the modern theatre building and the neo-Gothic church, the Elisabethenkirche, which rises above it; Jacob Burckhardt would no doubt have enjoyed this contrast. The Tinguely fountain, with its enchantingly sculpted waterworks, is a meeting place for Basel’s youth both in the summer and in the winter. Nearby, at the garden restaurant of Basel’s Kunsthalle, an important centre for the contemporary arts, you may feel like stopping off for a drink or a meal under the enticing shade of its chestnut trees.

Barfüsserplatz is one of the centres of city life in Basel. The area in front of the mediaeval church is a favourite place for open-air events and markets. The church today houses the Historical Museum, which is well worth a visit. From this lively square – known affectionately as “Barfi” – the walk takes you to the mediaeval alleyways and the small shops and exclusive boutiques on Heuberg and Spalenberg. The walk ends at the colourful market square.

Jacob Burckhardt walk
Past and present in harmony

Jacob Burckhardt walk
This walk takes you first through the picturesque lanes and alleyways of a former craftsmen’s district. The street names give a flavour of the trades that used to be plied here, such as the tailors’ alley (Schneidergasse). These craftsmen used to draw their water from the river Birsig, which today flows under the market square (Marktplatz) down to the Rhine.

Leaving the bottom of this gentle valley, you now climb the hill on the left up the Spalentertberg. At the top of this hill, you leave the historical part of the Old Town and cross Petersgraben, along which the city wall used to run. If you carry on along Spalenvorstadt, you reach one of the city’s old gateways, the Spalentor, one of the finest structures of its type in Switzerland, dating back to the 14th century. Continuing from here along the city’s former outer moat, you come to Switzerland’s oldest university (founded in 1460), where Thomas Platter also studied and lectured. Next to the university is the tree-lined St Peter’s square (Petersplatz), which plays host every Saturday to a large and colourful flea market. You now pass the Gothic church of St Peter and follow the route back to the bustling market square, where you will find a wide range of fresh fruit and vegetables on sale during the week.
This walk takes you along both sides of the valley of the city’s river Birsig. You first walk up the intriguingly named “eleven thousand virgins” lane (Elftausendjungfern-Gässlein) towards the Martinskirchplatz. The church of St Martin is often the venue for official ceremonies. The impressive facades of the large town houses here bear testimony to the wealth of the old city of Basel. Today, these buildings house parts of the city’s administration. Through narrow lanes and down innumerable steps (known as “Stapfle” in the local dialect), the route takes you back into the valley. Without noticing it, when you walk over the Falknerstrasse, you cross the river Birsig, whose course between the Heuwaage and Schifflände down to the Rhine has run underground for a good hundred years. The walk now takes you to the other side of the valley. Through the old craftsmen’s alleyways, you come to the church of St Leonhard and to the Lohnhof. Once the seat of the city’s department for buildings and salaries, later a prison for people awaiting trial, the Lohnhof today houses residential apartments, the Music Museum and a small hotel-restaurant. Follow the narrow mediaeval streets back to the central market square (Marktplatz). On the way, the last steps will take you past the Pharmaceutical History Museum, where you can still see the utensils used at the time of Paracelsus.
The city’s position on the Rhine is part of the charm of Basel. You should therefore explore the city on both sides of the river. This walk takes you first to the prosperous quarters in the old part of town and up to the cathedral square (Münsterplatz), where both the secular and the church dignitaries used to live. Today, this cathedral square is the scene of many open-air events, such as the exhibition of artistically painted lanterns during Basel Carnival (Fasnacht) and some of the attractions of the traditional Basel autumn fair.

The patricians’ houses in the knight’s lane (Rittergasse) point the way to the city’s former inner moat and a well-kept residential quarter, St. Alban-Vorstadt. On the way, you will pass the Museum of Fine Arts (Kunstmuseum), where – along with the works of many other artists – you can find numerous paintings by Hans Holbein. Passing by the popular Caricature & Cartoon Museum, you reach the church of St Alban. Through an opening in the wall, you will see the courtyard of the former monastery from the Middle Ages. In this district you can visit the Museum of Contemporary Art (Museum für Gegenwartskunst) and the Basel Paper Mill. There is also a completely preserved section of the old city wall which is worth a detour. Take the ferry to cross the Rhine from Grossbasel to Kleinbasel. This former bridgehead is today a lively part of the city of Basel. In and around the mediæval houses beats the life of a multicultural part of the town. Crossing back over the bridge, known as the Mittlere Brücke, you will pass the “Lälleköning” – the head of a king sticking his tongue out – and return to the market square (Marktplatz).

---

**Hans Holbein walk**

On both sides of the Rhine

Hans Holbein the Younger (about 1497–1543). Lived from 1514 to 1526 and from 1528 to 1531 in Basel, master portrait artist. Signposts: green on blue. Time required: about 90 minutes. Suitable for push-chairs and wheelchairs.
Do you want to discover Basel on your own two feet? Simply follow the blue pedestrian signs that are located at key points in the city centre. City map signboards are situated at the Swiss railway station (SBB), Badischer Bahnhof (German railway station), Marktplatz, Messeplatz, Münsterplatz, Aeschenplatz, Schifflände and Basel Zoo.

Audiovisual city tours can be booked at the Basel Tourism information office located in the Stadt-Casino at Barfüsserplatz, or at the Swiss railway station. Hiring an iGuide PDA costs CHF 15 for 4 hours and CHF 22 for a whole day.

Basel is the first ever Swiss city to bring history alive to visitors using cutting-edge multimedia technology. Experience Basel’s five Old Town walks on your iGuide PDA, featuring commentary in English and German and with more than 500 images. As you make your way through the Old Town, you can use your PDA to select your own preferred stop-off points or even switch between tours as your own mood and interest dictates. iGuide provides you with individual views and details that you would otherwise be unaware of.

A city project of the association “Basel Erleben”, with the kind support of GGG, HEIVISCH, Novartis, Theo Ballmer & Partner and the Canton of Basel City.

© Basel Tourism, 2007
The five walks

00 Meeting point at market square (Marktplatz)
01 Marktplatz
02 Rathaus (City Hall)
03 Eisenpforte and Labekking
04 Mittlere Brücke
05 Elfinenweg/Schweizerhöhe-Gassen
06 Church of St Martin (Martinskirche)
07 Old university
08 Rheingasse
09 The Blue and White Houses
10 Augustiner fountain
11 Augustinergasse
12 Münsterplatz (Cathedral square)
13 Münster (Cathedral)
14 Gallusporta (Gallus gate)
15 Cathedral promontory overlooking the Rhine
16 Cloister
17 Marcus Gallicus
18 Zunfthaus zum Schlüssel
19 Zunfthaus zu Weinleuten
20 Kyburg and Kirchenleuberg
21 Valley lane
22 Walk up to Leutgardspromontory
23 Church of St Leonard
24 Down the hill again
25 Andenplatz
26 Zunfthaus zum Schlüssel
27 Niederberg
28 Tollerberg
29 Stadthaus
30 Barfüsserkirche and Historical Museum
31 Tinguely-Brunnen (Tinguely fountain)
32 On Leonhardssporn
33 Heuberg
34 Spiesshof
35 Spalenberg
36 The former craftsmen’s district
37 Gemsberg
38 Petersgasse
39 Spalenbrucke
40 Spalentor
41 St Peter’s square
42 Church of St Peter
43 Petersgasse
44 Sodenerhof and Predigerkirche
45 Fischmarkt
46 Schlüsselfeld
47 Petersgasse
48 Kunstmuseum (Museum of Fine Arts) and Zschokke fountain
49 St. Alban-Vorstadt and Mühlberg
50 Monastery of St Alban
51 St. Alban-Tal
52 Gallizian mill
53 Old city wall
54 Kleinkassel
55近阿尔伯特河畔
56 Charthaus (Kartausen) and Oberer Rheinweg
57 Rheingasse
58 Die Drei Ehrengesellschaften (The Three Honorary Societies)
59 Spalentor
60 Spalentor
61 Church of St Peter
62 Petersgasse
63 Seidenhof and Predigerkirche
64 Fischmarkt
65 Schlüsselberg
66 Zunfthaus zum Schlüssel
67 Zunfthaus zum Schlüssel
68 Die Drei Ehrengesellschaften (The Three Honorary Societies)