



Canton Basel-Stadt

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About Basel-Stadt

Canton Basel-Stadt is one of 26 cantons (member states) in Switzerland. Basel-Stadt is located on border of Germany and France. The region has a strong economy and diverse culture, and there is a high quality of life.

Numbers and Facts

Basel-Stadt comprises three communes: the city commune of Basel and the two political communes (Gemeinden) of Riehen and Bettingen. Around 200,000 people from 160 countries live in the canton. Basel-Stadt only covers an area of 37 km². It is the smallest canton in Switzerland and the third most densely populated. The official language is German.

History

Canton Basel-Stadt was founded in 1833. It has a long and fascinating history. There was even a settlement here in the middle Paleolithic period around 130,000 years ago. Due to Basel's important strategic location, the Romans deployed their military on Münsterhügel in 30 B.C. Basel Minster can be found at this location today. The minster was once a bishop's church and was consecrated in 1019. This is why the cantonal coat of arms of Basel is a bishop's staff.

The University of Basel was founded in 1460. Basel became a centre for book printing and humanism. In the mid-16th century, many migrants fled here from Upper Italy and France. They brought with them silk weaving and silk dying to Basel. This gave rise to the modern pharmaceutical and chemical companies. Following conflict, Basel-Stadt and Basel-Landschaft separated in 1833. Today, Canton Basel-Stadt is a centre for culture, trade and economy with a focus on life sciences.

Customs and Traditions

In Canton Basel-Stadt, we have many traditions and customs that are important to us. We appreciate it when you choose to learn our traditions. The most important is the carnival (Fasnacht). It takes place over three days every year in February or March. That is why we call it the "drey scheenschte Dääg" – the three greatest days. The Basel Autumn Fair (Herbstmesse) is over 500 years old, and the Basel Christmas Market (Weihnachtsmarkt) can also look back on a long tradition. Many people are members of a club, guild or association. The matches of the football club FC Basel are well attended, and many people like to swim in the Rhine in the summer.



**Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets,
brochures)**

www.hallo-baselstadt.ch/en/canton-basel-stadt/about-basel-stadt

Political System

The political power in Switzerland is distributed over three levels: the confederation, the cantons (states), and the communes. The Swiss can vote on political matters.

The Swiss Confederation

The Swiss Confederation has existed since 1848. The capital is Bern. There is no uniform ethnicity, language or religion in Switzerland. Different cultures have come together of their own free will. This is why the country is known as the "Nation by Choice" (Willensnation).

Federalism

The 26 cantons and over 2,000 communes in Switzerland are highly independent politically, in a system known as "Federalism". Each canton and each commune has its own state structure. Canton Basel-Stadt has its own constitution and government, a parliament, and courts. The cantons and communes are responsible for many public duties. For instance, the school system is structured differently in the different cantons. Federal laws apply throughout the country. In addition, cantons have their own laws which apply only within the canton. Even communes can enact their own rules. In order to fulfil their duties, the cantons and communes as well as the confederation raise taxes.

Separation of Powers

Political power should not be concentrated on few individuals or bodies. For this reason, state power in Switzerland and the cantons is divided among three independent powers: the legislative power, the executive power and the judiciary power. In Canton Basel-Stadt, the following authorities exercise these powers:

- Legislative power: Cantonal Parliament (Grosser Rat) (100 members, elected by the public every four years)
- Executive power: Cantonal Government (Regierungsrat) (7 members, elected by the public every four years)
- Judiciary power: Various courts (Gerichte) at the cantonal level

Basel-Stadt has a special characteristic: the parliament, the government and the courts of Canton Basel-Stadt are also responsible for the city commune of Basel. The two communes of Riehen and Bettingen also have a legislative body (Communal Parliament, Einwohnerrat) and an executive body (Communal Council, Gemeinderat). At the federal level, the legislative power is split among two chambers: the national government and the council of states (Nationalrat und Ständerat). The national government (7 members) is called the Federal Council (Bundesrat). On the national level, there are various courts. The Federal Tribunal is the highest instance where, for example, appeals against cantonal rulings can be made.

Democratic rights

The Swiss have the right to vote and to stand as candidates. They elect the political bodies on a communal, cantonal and federal level and can run as candidates. In addition, popular votes are held on political matters. Here, citizens can take decisions in their commune and canton and at the federal level (direct democracy). Popular initiatives enable citizens to bring issues that are important to them to vote. Foreigners who live in Canton Basel-Stadt do not have the right to vote or to run as candidates. They may, however, address the authorities by filing a petition. Moreover, they often have the possibility to get involved in commissions, interest groups or associations.

Fundamental Rights

The fundamental legal principles of Switzerland are documented in the Federal Constitution (Bundesverfassung). The fundamental rights, which are based on the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), form an important part of the Federal Constitution. They protect human existence, such as the right to life or the right to assistance when in need, and protect individuals from state violence or protect groups from majorities. They are intended to guarantee that nobody discriminates against others based on origin, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. Victims of racial discrimination receive free support and advice in Canton Basel-Stadt. Freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom of the press prevail in Switzerland.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-baselstadt.ch/en/canton-basel-stadt/political-system

Religion

Switzerland has a Christian tradition. Today, many members of other religious groups also call Switzerland home. Freedom of religion is guaranteed in Switzerland and public schools are neutral in religion.

Religion and State

Switzerland has been traditionally influenced by the Christian religion. The cantons determine the relationship between religion and state. Like most German-speaking cantons, Canton Basel-Stadt recognises some religious organisations as public institutions. In effect, the state grants them certain rights, such as to collect taxes from their members. The following religious organisations are recognised under public law in Canton Basel-Stadt: the Evangelical Reformed Church, the Roman-Catholic Church, the Christian Catholic Church and the Israelite Community. A number of other communities are recognised at the cantonal level. These are organised under private law.

Religious Groups in Canton Basel-Stadt

Around a third of Basel's population are members of one of the four communities recognised under public law. In addition, there are many other religious communities, such as Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or more contemporary movements. Around half of the population do not belong to a religious group.

Freedom of Religion

The Swiss constitution guarantees religious freedom. This means that everybody has a right to decide on their religious beliefs themselves. Everybody has the right to express and pass on these beliefs. Nobody can force others to join a religious group or participate in religious acts. People may gather to practise religious rituals and celebrations. People may not be discriminated against on the basis of their religion or faith.

Religion and School

Compulsory schooling is neutral in religion. However, religious issues still form part of education. The subject "Nature, People, Society" is taught in primary education. It covers different ways of life and cultures. There are also denominational religious classes that children can participate in voluntarily. The subject "Ethics, Religions, Society" is taught in secondary education and is compulsory. Here, school pupils learn important skills that they need for living with different cultures, religions, ideologies and value systems. Religious communities may also offer classes outside of school for children of other faiths.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-baselstadt.ch/en/canton-basel-stadt/religion

Leisure

Canton Basel-Stadt offers many attractive leisure activities. Clubs are particularly important. Here you have the opportunity to meet people and take part in an activity together.

Clubs

Many people in Canton Basel-Stadt are members of a club (Verein). There are clubs for a wide range of interests, such as sports clubs or cultural clubs. If you join a club, you can get to know other people. Most clubs are open to everyone.

Offers for Young People

Young people can use many offers in their free time to get to know others their age. They can join a project and suggest their own ideas. Specialists supervise and support the young people (Jugendarbeit). The offers are usually free of charge.

Excursions and Culture

You can go on plenty of excursions and attend many cultural events in Canton Basel-Stadt. Many people like swimming in the Rhine in the summer or having a picnic in the park. Families enjoy visiting Basel Zoo. There are beautiful hiking trails and cycling routes in the surrounding region. Cities like Freiburg im Breisgau or Strasbourg can quickly be reached by train. Basel Tourismus provides information on what excursions you can go on and which events you can attend.

Community centres

Community centres (Quartiertreffpunkte) are open to everyone. They have offers for families, older people and anyone who is not yet fluent in German. Some community centres are family centres. Here you can find open meet-ups for mothers and fathers with their children. Community centres offer advice and support in everyday life. You can rent spaces for family parties and other events in the community centre.

Volunteer Work

You can help other people and the environment with volunteer work (Freiwilligenarbeit). "Volunteer" in this sense means you do not receive any pay for this work. Volunteers perform many tasks in Switzerland, especially in clubs. Are you interested in volunteer work? You can get involved in a number of topics at a club, such as culture, sports, social matters, education, animal welfare, environmental protection or health.

You can find information on volunteer work here:

- GGG Benevol Centre for Volunteer Work
- Swiss Red Cross Basel-Stadt (SRC)
- Caritas of both Basel cantons

Information on volunteering for asylum seekers and refugees:

- Coordination Centre for Volunteer Work in Asylum (KOFF)
- Swiss Refugee Council

Discounts off athletic, cultural and educational events

The "Kulturlegi" pass is intended for people with limited financial means. If you have a Kulturlegi pass, you pay less for athletic, cultural or educational events. You can apply for the Kulturlegi pass through Caritas. Caritas will provide additional information and verify whether you meet the requirements for the Kulturlegi pass. The family pass (Familienpass) and the family plus pass (FamilienpassPlus) are also available. The passes are for families who live in north-western Switzerland. For children, youths and young adults, there are also numerous discounts and free offers including the "colourkey" or the holiday pass (Ferienpass). Many offers are available at a lower price with the Kulturlegi pass, the family pass or the colourkey. Additional information can be found on the respective websites.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

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Culture

There are many cultural events in Basel-Stadt. If you do not have the financial means, there are a number of ways to use offers free of charge or at a reduced price.

Museums / Exhibitions

Almost 40 museums offer exhibitions and events. You can also visit many small galleries and alternative art spaces. Many works of art can also be discovered in public places.

Music / Dance / Theatre / Literature

There are many cultural events in Canton Basel-Stadt. At Theater Basel, you can enjoy operas, plays and ballets, while you can find contemporary music, dance or theatre at Kaserne. There are also smaller venues such as Vorstadttheater or Sommercasino. In the summer, you can attend a number of exhibitions and festivals outdoors. Some events are free of charge.

Architecture

You can discover plenty of modern architecture in Basel and the surrounding region. For example, in Riehen there is the Fondation Beyeler by architect Renzo Piano. In Basel city centre, you can find the new building of Kunstmuseum Basel by Christ & Gantenbein or the extension of Stadtcasino Basel by Herzog & de Meuron.

Promotion of Culture

If you are a professional artist, you can apply for money for your project. Further information is available on the Department for Culture's website, for example on how you can submit an application for funding.

Free and Discounted Offers

Many museums and event venues have special offers, where you have discounted or even free entry at certain times, for example. Entry is often cheaper or free for certain people. Free exhibitions or festivals are also held at public places. Many clubs (Vereine) and organisations dealing with migration offer a cultural programme. Many offers are cheaper with the Kulturlegi pass, the family pass (Familienpass) or colourkey. Would you prefer not to go to a museum or event alone? There are a number of offers for groups or tandem visits. Here, "tandem" means you attend the event together with another person.



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