

# Basel & Aargau



Welcome to Switzerland's most surprising 'culture vulture' region. Zürich and Geneva might be larger, but Basel can hold its own against them when it comes to high-quality galleries and museums. That's a good thing, too, for otherwise the flat, industrialised northwest of the country would have little to recommend it to visitors.

Long a patron of the arts, this densely populated area has a slew of major attractions for gallery lovers and architecture groupies. Basel's Beyeler Foundation boasts one of the most vital collections in Switzerland, there's an absorbing museum devoted to madcap sculptor Jean Tinguely, and showpieces by some of the world's best contemporary architects lie in nearby Weil am Rhein's impressive Vitra Design Museum.

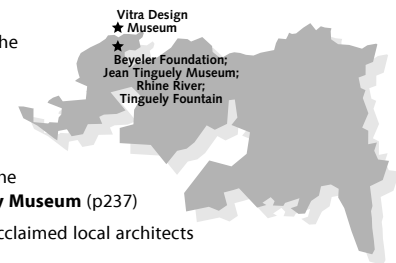
Two of the most famous working architects on the planet, Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, hail from here. Yet, while international critics shower plaudits on their designs for London's Tate Modern, Beijing's 2008 Olympic Stadium and Munich's football arena, even they have some home-turf competition; local buildings by Ticino's Mario Botta and Italy's Renzo Piano often prove to be equally eye-catching.

Basel and Aargau cantons aren't just about cutting-edge postmodernity, however. The banks of the Rhine were settled more than 2000 years ago, and the best-preserved Roman remains in Switzerland are at Augusta Raurica. Basel's 11th-century cathedral and 16th-century town hall are landmarks, while sleepy Baden is like something from the 19th century.

The fact that the region borders France and Germany is often overplayed, creating the impression this is a more vibrant, cosmopolitan place than it is. Urbane, wealthy Basel is, at heart, a serious-minded business city. But, with its airport becoming more of an international hub, it could be on the verge of becoming not just more accessible but also less insular.

## HIGHLIGHTS

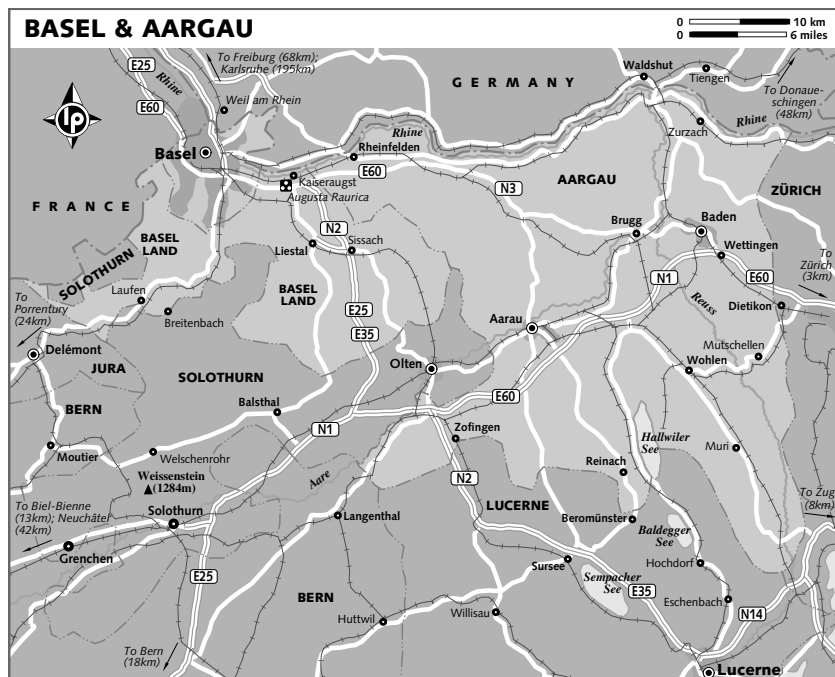
- Being wowed by the art and architecture of the superlative **Beyeler Foundation** (p237)
- Catching interior design exhibits across the German border in the **Vitra Design Museum** (p239)
- Admiring the sculptures of Jean Tinguely in the **Tinguely Fountain** (p239) and **Jean Tinguely Museum** (p237)
- Tracking down the works of internationally acclaimed local architects **Herzog & de Meuron** (p240)
- Jumping into the fast-moving Rhine River in summer or taking a **boat tour** (p243)



■ POPULATION: 1 MILLION

■ AREA: 1958 SQ KM

■ LANGUAGE: GERMAN



## Orientation

The region is well connected internationally via EuroAirport and has excellent rail and road links to France, Germany and the rest of Switzerland. For more details, see *Getting There & Away*, p243.

## Information

Basel Tourism (opposite) will handle most queries for the entire region, but if you really want to get off the beaten path, ask **Aargau Tourism** (☎ 062 824 76 24; www.aargautourismus.ch in German) for extra tips.

## BASEL

pop 166,290 / elevation 273m

Although it's famous for its Fasnacht and Vogel Gryff festivals in spring and winter, perhaps the best time to visit Basel is in summer. It is then when the city shucks off its notorious reserve to bask in, strangely for its northerly location, some of the hottest weather in Switzerland. As locals bob along in the fast-moving Rhine (Rhein)

River, cool off in the city's numerous fountains, whiz by on motor scooters, and dine and drink on overcrowded pavements, you could almost be in Italy, rather than on the dual border with France and Germany.

Of course, most visitors come for the city's many trade fairs and arrive during the more buttoned-down remainder of the year. For them, as well as other travellers during this period, the major distractions in Basel (Bâle in French, sometimes Basle in English) are a couple of the country's best art collections and some compelling modern buildings.

## Orientation

The Old Town and most sights are on the south bank in Grossbasel (Greater Basel). On the north bank is Kleinbasel (Little Basel). Historically, the 'Klein' tag was a term derogatory of the working-class locality. The relief bust of *Lälle Keenig*, or 'Tongue King' (at the crossroads at the southern end of the Mittlere Brücke), sticking his tongue out at the northern section, just about sums up the old attitude.

Grossbasel has the SBB Bahnhof, the train station for travel within Switzerland. Tram No 1 and 8 leave from here for the Old Town centre. In Kleinbasel is the Badischer Bahnhof (BBF), for trains to Germany.

## Information

### BOOKSHOPS

**Bider & Tanner** (☎ 061 206 99 99; Aeschenvorstadt 2; ☎ 9am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm Thu, 9am-5pm Sat) English books, reference books on German and Schwyzertütsch, travel guides and maps.

### DISCOUNT CARD

**BaselCard** (Sfr20/27/35 for 24/48/72hr) Offers entry to 26 museums (permanent collections only) and Basel Zoo (www.zoobasel.ch in German), plus guided tours and ferry rides.

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Net-Bar** (☎ 061 271 13 50; www.net-bar.ch; Steinen-vorstadt 53; per hr Sfr11.50; ☎ 9.30am-midnight Mon-Thu, to 1am Fri, 11.30-1am Sat, 2-11pm Sun)

### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Cantonal Hospital** (☎ 061 265 25 25; Petersgraben 2)

### POST

**Main post office** (☎ 061 266 16 16; Rudengasse 1; ☎ 7.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, to 8pm Thu, 8am-5pm Sat)  
**Post office** (☎ 061 278 54 35; Post Passage 9; SBB Train station; ☎ 7.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat, 3-8pm Sun)

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Main tourist office** (☎ 061 268 68 68; www.basel-tourismus.ch; Stadtcasino, Barfüsserplatz; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) At this address until 2007; afterwards check website for new office location. Organises English-language city tours (Sfr15; ☎ daily May-Oct, rest of the year Sat).  
**Tourist office** (☎ 061 268 68 68; Train Station; ☎ 8.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat & Sun)

## Sights

### MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

For more on the city's 35 varied museums and galleries (including the very central and obvious History Museum) grab the relevant tourist office booklet.

### Fondation Beyeler

Of all the private Swiss collections made public, former art dealers Hildy and Ernst Beyeler's is the most astounding. In the **Beyeler Foundation** (☎ 061 645 97 00; www.beyeler.com; Baselstrasse 101; adult/senior/student/child Sfr21/18/12/10,

reduced entry Sfr12/10/6/4; ☎ 10am-6pm, to 8pm Wed), sculptures by Miró and Max Ernst are juxtaposed against similar tribal figures, while 19th- and 20th-century works from the likes of Picasso and Rothko hang on the walls of leading Italian architect Renzo Piano's light-filled, open-plan building. To get here catch the No 6 tram to Riehen.

### Museum Jean Tinguely

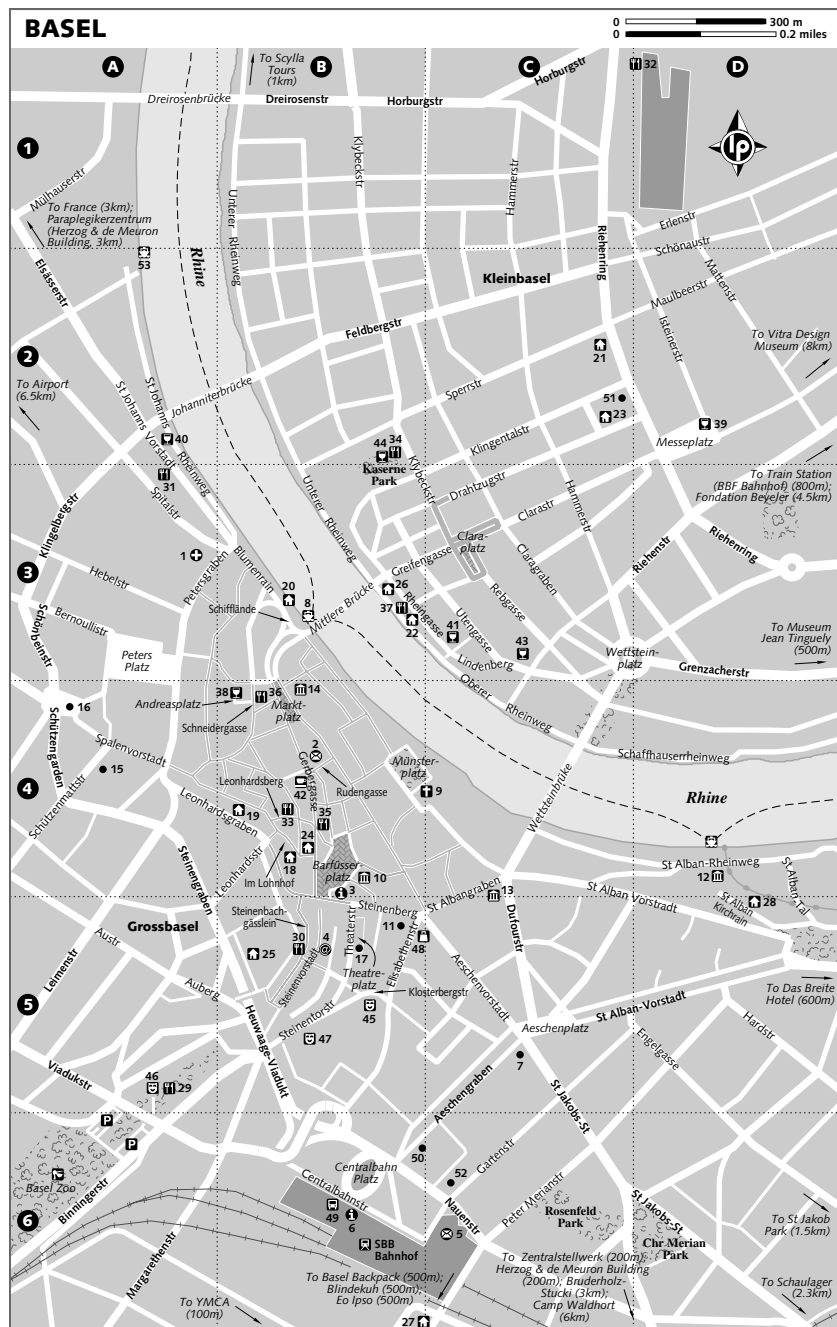
Built by leading Ticino architect Mario Botta, the **Museum Jean Tinguely** (☎ 061 681 93 20; www.tinguely.ch; Paul Sacher Anlage 1; adult/student & senior Sfr10/7; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue-Sun) resonates with playful mischievousness. Unfortunately, you're not allowed to touch most of Tinguely's 'kinetic' sculptures, which would rattle, shake or twirl if you did, but with springs, feathers and wheels radiating at every angle they look appealingly like the work of a mad scientist. Catch bus No 31 or 36 to get here.

### Schaulager

The latest hometown construction by celebrity architectural duo Herzog & de Meuron evinces a kind of 'stone-age minimalism', with the sharply cornered and otherwise white gallery partly rendered in earth dug out from around the foundations. There's an asymmetrical gatehouse to the **Schaulager** (☎ 061 335 32 32; www.schaulager.org; Ruchfeldstrasse 19, Münchenstein; adult/concession Sfr14/12; ☎ noon-6pm Tue-Fri, to 7pm Thu, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun May-Sep) and a huge video screen on the front façade giving you a foretaste of the rolling temporary exhibitions in the angled, generously sized interior. Open to the public in summer only, the gallery welcomes artists, museum workers and teachers throughout the year. Catch the No 11 tram here.

### Museum of Fine Arts

The **Kunstmuseum** (☎ 061 206 62 62; www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch; St Albangraben 16; adult/student Sfr10/5, incl Museum of Contemporary Art, free 1st Sun each month; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) concentrates on two periods: from 1400 to 1600, and from 1800 to the present day. The medieval collection includes the world's largest number of Holbein works. The smaller contemporary collection features Picassos and Rodins, and spills over into the **Museum of Contemporary Art** (Museum für Gegenwartskunst; ☎ 061 206 62 62; www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch; St Alban-Rheinweg 60; adult/student Sfr10/5, incl Museum of Fine Arts, free 1st Sun each month; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun).



**Vitra Design Museum**

Always fancied seeing the amazingly organic Bilbao Guggenheim Museum in Spain and find yourself in Basel? Then, pop across the German border to the **Vitra Design Museum** (☎ +49 7621 702 32 00; www.design-museum.de; Charles Eames Strasse 1, Weil am Rhein; adult/student €6.50/5, Basel-Card valid; 🕒 11am-6pm Tue-Sun) for a small taste of the same. Not only is the main museum building by the Guggenheim's creator, Frank Gehry; the surrounding factory complex of famous furniture manufacturer Vitra, comprises buildings by other cutting-edge architects such as Tadao Ando, Zaha Hadid and Alvaro Siza. Exhibitions cover all aspects of interior design. The museum is a 30-minute bus ride from Claraplatz; catch bus No 55 to the Vitra stop.

**Activities**

The tourist office's *Experiencing Basel...* pamphlet lists five walks across town, all starting from Marktplatz (Market Square). There you'll find the vivid red **Rathaus** (town hall), built in the 16th century and since restored. One walk takes you to the fabulous 11th-century **cathedral** (Münster), a mix of Gothic exteriors and Romanesque interiors. The tomb of the famous Renaissance humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536), who lived and died in the city, lies in the cathedral's northern aisle. Another takes you west through the former artisans' dis-

trict to the 600-year-old **Spalentor** city gate, a remnant of the former city wall.

Another walk passes the **Tinguely Fountain** (Theaterplatz), which will seem familiar to anyone who's seen the famous Stravinsky fountain outside Paris's Pompidou Centre. In Paris, however, Swiss sculptor Jean Tinguely's madcap machinery is accompanied by the plump day-glo figures of his wife and collaborator Niki de Saint Phalle. This Basel fountain is all his own doing (see also the Tinguely Museum p237).

Between mid-April and mid-October **Basler Personenschiffahrt** (☎ 061 639 95 00; www.bpg.ch in German) operates city/harbour **boat cruises** (Sfr14; departing 12.15pm Tue-Sat) and trips to Rheinfelden (one way/return Sfr38/50, departing 1.10pm Tue-Sat, 8.25am & 10.40am Sun & public holidays). All cruises depart from Schifflande, near the Mittlere Brücke. Various evening entertainment cruises are also offered.

**Swimming** in the Rhine River is a very popular summer pastime, too.

**Festivals & Events**

Basel makes much of its huge **Fasnacht** spring carnival, even though many people prefer Lucerne's exuberant celebrations. The festival kicks off at 4am exactly on the Monday after Ash Wednesday with the **Morgestraich**. The streetlights are suddenly extinguished and the procession starts to wend its way through the central district. Participants

<b>INFORMATION</b>		<b>SLEEPING</b> 🏠		Bar Rouge.....39 D2	
Cantonal Hospital.....1 A3	Au Violon.....18 B4	Cargo-Bar.....40 A2		Fischerstube.....41 C3	
Main Post Office.....2 B4	Der Teufelhof.....19 B4	Fumare/Non Fumare.....42 B4		Kaserne.....44 B2	
Main Tourist Office.....3 B4	Drei Könige am Rhein.....20 B3	easyHotel.....21 C2			
Net-Bar.....4 B5	Hotel Krafft.....22 B3	Hotel Locanda.....23 C2			
Post Office.....5 C6	Hotel Locanda.....23 C2	Hotel Stadthof.....24 B4		<b>ENTERTAINMENT</b> 🎪	
Tourist Office.....6 B6	Hotel Steinschanze.....25 B5	Merian am Rhein.....26 B3		Atlantis.....45 B5	
	Merian am Rhein.....26 B3	SYHA Basel City Hostel.....27 B6		Die Kuppel.....46 A5	
<b>SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	SYHA Basel City Hostel.....27 B6	SYHA Hostel.....28 D5		Mad Max.....47 B5	
Bank for International Settlements Building.....7 C5	SYHA Hostel.....28 D5			nt/Areal.....(see 32)	
Basler Personenschiffahrt				Stadtcasino.....(see 3)	
Boat Cruises.....8 B3					
Cathedral (Münster).....9 C4	<b>EATING</b> 🍴				
History Museum.....10 B4	Acqua Osteria.....29 A5			<b>SHOPPING</b> 🛍️	
Kunsthalle.....11 B5	Balthazar.....30 B5			Bider & Tanner (Bookshop).....48 B5	
Museum of Contemporary Arts (Museum für Gegenwartskunst).....12 D4	Café de L'imprimerie.....31 A3				
Museum of Fine Arts (Kunstmuseum).....13 C4	Erkönig.....32 D1				
Rathaus (Town Hall).....14 B4	Gleich.....33 B4				
Schützenmattstrasse 11 (Herzog & de Meuron Building).....15 A4	Parterre.....34 B2				
Spalentor City Gate.....16 A4	Susu's.....35 B4				
Tinguely Fountain.....17 B5	Weinstube Gifhüttli.....36 B4				
	Zum Schmale Wurf.....37 B3				
				<b>TRANSPORT</b>	
				Airport Bus	
				Departures.....49 B6	
				Avis.....50 B6	
				CityRent.....51 C2	
				Hertz.....52 C6	
				Schifflande Main Boat Landing Stage.....53 A2	

BASEL & AARGAU

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## EXPLORING ARCHITECTURAL BASEL

Basel likes to boast that it has buildings by seven winners of architecture's prestigious Pritzker Prize, unprecedented for a city this small. Four of those winners – Frank Gehry, Alvaro Siza, Tadao Ando and Zaha Hadid – are actually found just across the German border from Basel at the **Vitra Design Museum** (p239). However, some works by Herzog & de Meuron are slightly more central. The Basel-based duo is internationally renowned for designing London's Tate Modern art gallery, the Olympic Stadium for Beijing 2008 and the Munich football arena. In Basel, as well as the **Schaulager** (p237) & **St Jakob Park** (p243) you'll find their wonderful lace-iron façade at **Schützenmattstrasse 11** and the matt-black **Zentralstellwerk** at Münchensteinerstrasse 115 – the latter is surely the only railway goods depot to be an architectural icon! Another interesting detour is to the duo's **Paraplegikerzentrum** (rehabilitation centre) near the French border. Take tram No 3 to Burgfelden Grenze, walk a little further north and follow the signs to the right.

Italian architect Renzo Piano is responsible for the remarkable **Beyeler Foundation** (p237) and British-Iraqi Zaha Hadid is due to build over the Stadtcasino at Barfüsserplatz in upcoming years.

He hasn't won the Pritzker, but Ticino architect Mario Botta is also worth checking out; see his **Tinguely Museum** (p237) and the grey-striped offices of the **Bank for International Settlements** at Aeschenplatz 1 (incidentally, the bank most seriously implicated in the 1990s Holocaust scandal, p30).

For more, including works by seventh Pritzker winner Richard Meier, grab a copy of the tourist office's free *Architektur in Basel/Architecture in Basel* pamphlet.

wear elaborate costumes and masks, and there's a little bit of carousing in the streets. The main parades are on the Monday and Wednesday afternoons, with Tuesday afternoon reserved for the children's parade.

It's also worth visiting Liestal (Sfr4.80, 30 minutes by train from Basel) on the Sunday evening before Morgestraich for the **Chienbäse**, a dramatic fire parade.

The city's other big festival is the **Vogel Gryff** at the end of January, which symbolically chases away winter from Kleinbasel. The three key figures – the griffin (*Vogel Gryff*), the savage (*Wilder Mann*) and the lion (*Leu*) – dance to the beat of drums on a raft on the Rhine, facing the town. Later they dance in the streets of Kleinbasel.

Trade fairs have long played an important part in the city's calendar. Leading events include the **MUBA** (www.muba.ch in German) Swiss industries fair every spring, the **Herbstmesse** (Autumn Fair) in October, the **Baselworld: The Watch and Jewellery Show** (www.baselworld.ch) in March and **ART Basel** (www.artbasel.ch), the contemporary art fair in June.

The **Swiss Indoors** (www.davidoffswissindoors.ch) tennis championship, held every October, is Switzerland's biggest annual sporting event.

## Sleeping

You must book ahead if coming for a convention or trade fair, when prices also rise.

There are no trade fairs in July or August, but annoyingly some Basel hotels also close then. When you check in, remember to ask for your **mobility ticket**, which entitles you to free use of public transport.

## BUDGET

For a wide range of B&Bs, visit the website www.bbbasel.ch.

## Hostels

**Basel Backpack** (☎ 061 333 00 37; www.baselbackpack.ch; Dornacherstrasse 192; dm Sfr31, s/d/f Sfr80/96/144, breakfast Sfr7 extra; ☑ ☒) Expensively converted from a factory, this friendly independent hostel has cheerful, colour-coded eight-bed dorms and more sedate doubles and family rooms.

**SYHA hostel** (☎ 061 278 97 39; www.youthhostel.ch/basel; St Alban Kirchrain; dm Sfr31-41, s/d from Sfr80/82; ☑ reception 7-10am & 2-10pm; ☑ ☒) This is the older of the two official hostels in town, less conveniently but more attractively located in a quiet, leafy spot. Take the No 3 tram to St Alban Tor.

Also recommended:

**YMCA** (☎ 061 361 73 09; www.ymcahostelbasel.ch; Gempenstrasse 64; dm Sfr21-32, breakfast Sfr7, d Sfr104-124; ☑ reception 6.30-11am & 3.30-11pm; ☑ ☒) New, well-equipped & family-oriented hostel.

**SYHA Basel City hostel** (☎ 061 365 99 60; www.youthhostel.ch/basel.city; Pfeffingerstrasse 8; s/d Sfr75/90, with bathroom Sfr80/118; ☑ reception 7-10am & 5-10pm, hostel

closed Nov & Dec; ☑ ☒) Convenient new hostel, just across from the train station, with singles and twins/doubles only.

## Hotels

**easyHotel** (www.easyhotel.com; Riehenring 109; r from Sfr30; ☑ ☒) What's plastic and orange and cheap all over? Yep, after the no-frills airline easyJet, here's the second instalment in Stelios Haji-Ioannou's hotel empire. Rooms are functional, clean, modern and, if not especially aesthetically appealing, slightly better than in the London outlet. Variable pricing sees costs rise at busy times (up to Sfr130 when we looked, but could go above that). Book well ahead, and if possible get a room with air-conditioning so you won't have to open a window onto the noisy street.

**Hotel Stadthof** (☎ 061 261 87 11; www.stadthof.ch; Gerbergasse 84; s/d Sfr80/120) You'll need to book ahead at this cheap, spartan, but nonetheless very decent central hotel. Breakfast is not included.

## Camping

**Camp Waldhort** (☎ 061 711 64 29; www.camping-waldhort.ch in German; Heideweg 16, Reinach; adult/child/tent Sfr8/4.50/11; ☑ Mar-Oct) Six kilometres south of the SBB train station is this camping option. Catch the No 11 tram to Landhof.

## MIDRANGE

**Au Violon** (☎ 061 269 87 11; www.au-violon.com; Im Lohnhof 4; s Sfr100-110, d Sfr150-190) The doors are one of the few hints that quaint, atmospheric Au Violon was once a prison. Its understated rooms are decently sized (most comprise two former cells) and decorated in relaxing neutral tones. The hotel overlooks the city from its quiet, leafy hilltop location and has a well-respected restaurant.

**Hotel Krafft** (☎ 061 690 91 30; www.hotelkrafft.ch; Rheingasse 12; s/d Sfr145/230, with river view Sfr180/290, ste with river view Sfr380) The renovated Krafft will appeal to design-savvy urbanites. Sculptural modern chandeliers have been added to its creaky-floored dining room overlooking the Rhine, and minimalist tea bars (all stainless steel, grey and Japanese teapots) now adorn each landing of the spiral stairs. Rooms have a tasteful 1950s retro feel and classic furniture from the likes of Charles and Ray Eames. The riverbank is a popular night-time spot, however, so in summer this won't suit light sleepers.

**Der Teufelhof** (☎ 061 261 10 10; www.teufelhof.com; Leonhardsgraben 47; Galeriehotel s/d from Sfr180/255, r in Kunsthotel Sfr290-450; ☑ ☒) The more expensive Kunsthotel comprises eight modern rooms (and one suite) each decorated by a different artist, with features like musical-score murals and all sorts of dreamlike optical illusions (although the rooms were due to be revamped in summer 2006). The larger Galeriehotel annex is more about stylish everyday design. Sleek public areas and an excellent restaurant cap off a thoroughly elegant package.

**Hotel Locanda** (☎ 061 699 20 20; www.hotel-locanda.ch; Drahtzugstrasse 61; s/d from Sfr110/170; ☑ closed Jul) Away from the three leading midrange hotels already mentioned, you're looking at secondary options, dictated by price or availability. This is a humble but clean hotel featuring white walls, yellow duvets and new bathrooms.

**Hotel Steinenschanze** (☎ 061 272 53 53; www.steinenschanze.ch; Steinengraben 69; s Sfr120-210, d Sfr180-260) The rooms here are slightly more old-fashioned than the sparkling lobby might suggest, but they are extremely well maintained and comfortable.

**Das Breite Hotel** (☎ 061 315 65 65; www.dasbreitehotel.ch; Zürcherstrasse 149; s/d from Sfr130/170) This forward-thinking modern hotel, opened in late 2005, employs adults with disabilities – which generally means the service to guests is extra attentive and friendly.

**Merian am Rhein** (☎ 061 690 91 30; Rheingasse 12; s/d from Sfr91/158, s/d with bathroom from Sfr139/182; ☑ ☒ ☒) This decent four-star establishment boasts well-appointed modern rooms, lots of business facilities and a respected restaurant. The location, while central, can be a trifle noisy on summer evenings.

## TOP END

**Drei Könige am Rhein** (☎ 061 260 50 50; www.drei-koenige-basel.ch; Blumenrain 8) Due to be reopened in 2006 after a major refurbishment, the indisputably top address in town is set to be even better. Guests throughout its history have included Princess (later Queen) Victoria, Napoleon, Voltaire and Dickens.

## Eating

Basel also has a branch of the eat-in-the-dark restaurant **Blindekuh** (☎ 061 336 33 00; www.blindekuh.ch in German; Dornacherstrasse 192). See p205.

**Café de l'imprimerie** (☎ 061 262 36 06; St Johans Vorstadt 19; 2-course menus Sfr14.50-16.50; ☑ lunch &

dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) This converted print shop makes an unpretentious bistro, with chalky walls and heavy wooden tables. Filling meals at affordable prices mean it's a fond local haunt.

**Zum Schmale Wurf** (☎ 061 683 33 25; Rheingasse 10; dishes Sfr10-30, midday menus Sfr16.50 & Sfr18.50; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat & Sun) Delicious smells and an air of intergenerational bonhomie waft over this Italian antipasto, pasta and *carne* heaven on the river. Lunch-time menus also occasionally branch out into global cuisine, with *merguez* sausages or jambalaya.

**Susu's** (☎ 061 261 67 80; Gerbergasse 73; soups from Sfr8.50, mains Sfr25-45) Acqua Osteria (see boxed text right) is trendier, but this place is just as likable for its versatility. Downstairs is good for everyday coffee or a casual lunch of spicy corn soup, while the stylish bar/restaurant upstairs is suitable for everything from a romantic *tete à tete* to a company get-together. The seasonally changing menu innovatively mixes Asian and Mediterranean influences, but usually finishes with *Schogitträume* (chocolate dreams) – four shades of delicious chocolate mousse served in a line of shot glasses.

**Erlkönig** (☎ 061 683 33 22; NT/Areal, Erlenstrasse; mains Sfr28-36; ☎ dinner Wed-Sun) It's a bit of a schlep to reach Erlkönig, but you know you're off the tourist trail. Located in the nt/Areal (opposite) it's a very cool merger of squat bar/restaurant and formal dining room, serving Basler and modern international cuisine. Take tram No 1 or 14 to Musicaltheater or the No 33 bus to Mattenstrasse.

**Parterre** (☎ 061 695 89 98; Klybeckstrasse 1b; mains Sfr24-32; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat, snacks & light meals served 8am-midnight Mon-Fri, 10am-midnight Sat) Unusual dishes such as pork chop marinated in beer with apricot chutney, or green curry in tortilla shells over fried sweet potato, *mostly* come off in this slightly alternative place overlooking the Kaserne park. There's an array of newspapers and magazines, some English, to read over coffee and cake.

**Weinstube Gifhüttli** (☎ 061 261 16 56; Schneidergasse 11; mains Sfr18-48; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) It's received wisdom that this is the best place to sample local cuisine, although – if you're like us – you might find that, despite the ornate interior and impressive menu of various cordon bleus, it's slightly a victim of its own success.

### AUTHOR'S CHOICE

**Acqua Osteria** (☎ 061 271 63 00; Binningerstrasse 14; dishes Sfr12-36; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) For a special experience, head to these converted waterworks beside a quiet stream and the club Kuppel. The atmosphere is a mix of glam and industrial, with brown leather banquettes, candles and chandeliers – one over the open kitchen made from cooking utensils – inside bare concrete walls and floors. The food is Tuscan and the fact the ever-changing chalkboard menu is written in Italian might be more pretentious if this weren't multilingual Switzerland. Staff will explain all, but do book if you want a table. Basel's beautiful people drink in the attached lounge bar.

**Gleich** (☎ 061 261 48 83; Leonhardsberg 1; buffets from Sfr17.50; ☎ 10.30am-9.30pm Mon-Fri) This vegetarian restaurant is quiet and rather ascetic, but it's not bad for a healthy bite.

**Io Ipso** (☎ 061 333 14 90; Dornacherstrasse 192; most mains Sfr38; ☎ 9am-1am Tue-Fri, 5pm-2am Sat, bar only 5pm-midnight Mon) Lip-smackingly fresh produce underpins a menu ranging from Italian to American to Japanese at this trendy bistro.

Also recommended.

**Balthazar** (☎ 061 281 81 51; Steinenbachgässlein 34; lunch specials Sfr25-35, other mains Sfr25-50; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) Popular, upmarket Mediterranean restaurant, with fine wines and delicately flavoured dishes.

**Bruderholz-Stuckli** (☎ 061 361 82 22; Bruderholzallee 42; lunch menus & à la carte evening mains from Sfr75; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Gault Millau–rated *haute cuisine* in the suburbs.

### Drinking

Both Steinenvorstadt and Barfüsserplatz teem with teens and 20-somethings on the weekends.

**Bar Rouge** (☎ 061 361 30 31; Messeplatz 10; ☎ from 5pm Mon-Sat, from 8pm Sun) This plush red bar with panoramic views from the 31st floor of the *Meseturm* (or convention tower) is the city's most memorable. Hipsters, and a few suits early on weekday evenings, come to appreciate the regular DJs and films. It closes for parts of July and August, so ring ahead then.

**fumare/non fumare** (☎ 061 263 36 63; Gerbergasse 30; ☎ 8-1am Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat, 10am-midnight Sun) Overlooking Marktplatz, this Italian feeling

café/bar is a great spot to watch the world go by. And when you've finished doing that, you can retire to the buzzy atmosphere of the Mitte bar behind.

**Cargo-Bar** (☎ 061 321 00 72; St Johanns Rheinweg 46) A nice half-way house between cool and alternative, located in a tucked-away spot on the river. There are lots of art installations, live gigs, video shows and DJs.

**Fischerstube** (☎ 061 692 66 35; Rheingasse 45; ☎ 9.30am-midnight Mon-Fri, to 2am Sat, 5pm-midnight Sun) An atmospheric, smoky beer hall, with long tables, Fischerstube is famous for its Ueli-bier. It also serves Wurst and a three-course 'Bier Menu' (Sfr42), where every course features the amber liquid, even the soup and the dessert.

For even more casual outings, try the studenty **Bar der Roten Engel** (☎ 061 261 20 08; Andreasplatz 15), the alternative **Kaserne** (Klybeckstrasse 1b) or the downright grungy **Hirscheneck** (☎ 061 692 73 33; Lindenberg 23).

### Entertainment

#### LIVE MUSIC

The **Basel Symphony Orchestra** (www.sinfonieorchesterbasel.ch) and **Basel Chamber Orchestra** (www.kammerorchesterbasel.ch) both play at the Stadtcasino; ask the tourist office for details.

#### NIGHTCLUBS

**Die Kuppel** (☎ 061 270 99 39; www.kuppel.ch in German; Binningerstrasse 14; ☎ from 9pm Tue & 10pm Thu-Sat) This is an atmospheric wooden dome, with a dance floor and cocktail bar, located in a secluded park. Salsa, soul, house and '70s/'80s are regularly on the bill.

**nt/Areal** (☎ 061 683 33 22; www.arenal.org in German; Erlenstrasse 21; ☎ from 7pm Wed-Sun) A meeting point for young Baslers in the former goods yard of the German railways. In summer, outdoor projectors play light shows, while customers tuck into food and drinks inside Erlkönig (see Eating, p241). From the Areal sign at the intersection of Mattenstrasse and Erlenstrasse, head 300m straight ahead. Either catch tram No 1 or 14 to Musicaltheater or the bus No 33 to Mattenstrasse.

**Atlantis** (☎ 061 228 96 96; www.atlan-tis.ch in German; Klosterbergstrasse 13; ☎ from 6pm Tue-Fri) Bar/club Atlantis remains popular with smartly dressed punters, but it's not as unforgettably unique as the preceding two venues.

**Mad Max** (☎ 061 281 61 14; www.mad-max.ch; Steinentorstrasse 35; ☎ from 10.30pm Fri & Sat) Huge club

playing everything from rock to trance and house, and enforcing a strange door policy – nobody under 28 (or 26 for women) is allowed in.

### SPORT

FC Basel, the leaders of the Swiss football league, play at St Jakob Park, some 2km east of the main train station. The stadium, by Herzog & de Meuron, is the prototype of their mega-famous Munich creation. Its translucent skin looks best when lit up, which only happens during games, every week or so. Take tram No 14 to get there.

### Getting There & Away

#### AIR

**EuroAirport** (☎ 061 325 31 11; www.euroairport.com) serves Basel (as well as Mulhouse, France and Freiburg, Germany). Located 5km north in France, it has several routes to London on Swiss International Air Lines and low-cost carrier easyJet, with direct flights to many continental cities, including Alicante, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Brussels, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Madrid, Naples, Paris and Rome.

#### BOAT

An enjoyable, if slow, way to travel to/from Basel is via boat along the Rhine. The landing stage is between Johanniterbrücke and Dreirosenbrücke.

**Viking River Cruises** (☎ 1-818-227 1234; www.vikincruisers.com; 21820 Burbank Blvd, Woodland Hills, California) runs an eight-day trip from Amsterdam starting from around UK£1565. **Travel Renaissance** (☎ 0870 850 1690; The Bothy, Albury Park, Albury, Surrey GU5 9BU) is the company's representative in the UK, or you can call it in Germany (☎ 0800 258 46 65) or Switzerland (☎ 0800 84 54 64).

Also try **Scylla Tours** (☎ 061 638 81 81; www.scylla-tours.com; Uferstrasse 90).

#### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The E25/E60 motorway heads down from Strasburg and passes by EuroAirport, and the E35/A5 hugs the German side of the Rhine.

#### Rental

Try **Hertz** (☎ 061 205 92 22; Nauenstrasse 33) and **Avis** (☎ 061 206 95 45; Aeschengraben 31) in the Hilton Hotel. They also have branches near the SBB station and the airport. A Smart Car from **City-Rent** (☎ 061 685 70 01; www.cityrent.ch; Hotel Alexander,

## ACID HOUSE

Home to the giant Roche and Novartis companies, the Basel region is the epicentre of Switzerland's multi-billion franc pharmaceutical industry. However, it's not just prescription drugs that have seen the light of day here. In 1943, a chemist at the company Sandoz searching for a migraine cure accidentally absorbed an experimental compound through the skin of his fingertips and, oops, took the world's first 'acid trip'.

The chemist was Albert Hofmann and the drug was lysergic acid diethylamide, or LSD, which provoked a series of mind-bending, psychedelic hallucinations. Hofmann liked this experience so much, he tried the drug again, and he wasn't even deterred by his first bad trip, in which he thought a demon had invaded him and his neighbour was a witch.

Later, LSD was taken up by writers and artists, such as Aldous Huxley, who saw it as a creative force. Its mind-bending properties also made it a favourite with the 'far out' flower-power generation of the 1960s. From 1953, the CIA conducted extensive tests on LSD as a truth drug, ultimately deciding that – doh! – the testimony of people on acid was entirely unreliable. Tests on whether the drug had any clinical value were curtailed when it was outlawed in 1966.

But whatever LSD's destructive potential, it certainly didn't do Herr Hofmann much harm. He was still alive as various fans in Basel and abroad celebrated his 100th birthday in 2006.

Rienhering 83; per hr/day/week Sfr7/55/370 plus mileage) is a great way to zip around town.

## TRAIN

Basel has two main train stations: the Swiss/French train station (SBB Bahnhof) in the city's south and the German train station (Badischer Bahnhof or BBF) on the northern bank.

Services within Switzerland leave from the SBB Bahnhof; there are two fast trains an hour to Geneva (Sfr67, 2¼ hours) and Zürich (Sfr30, one hour). Trains to France also leave from this station, although from the special SNCF section within it. There are services to Paris (Sfr51, six daily, five hours), Brussels (Sfr110, three daily, seven hours) and Strasbourg (Sfr19, 17 daily, 1½ hours).

Fast intercity services into Germany stop at both stations, but if you want to get to a smaller town in southern Germany, you will need to board at the Badischer Bahnhof (BBF). Two to three trains an hour run to Freiburg (€10 to €18, 30 minutes). Main destinations via BBF are Frankfurt (€60, plus German rail supplement for fast trains, 2¼ to 3¼ hours depending on service) and Berlin (€110, seven to 9½ hours).

## Getting Around

Buses run every 20 to 30 minutes from 5am to around 11.30pm between the airport and the train station (Sfr2.80, 15 minutes). The trip by taxi (☎ 061 691 77 88, 061 271 22 22) costs around Sfr35.

Once you've booked into a hotel, your mobility ticket covers all public transport (including back to the airport). If you're not staying in town, tickets for buses and trams cost Sfr1.80/2.60/8 for up to four stops/the central zone/day pass.

There are several parking garages between the SBB station and the pedestrian zone. Expect to pay at least Sfr1.50 an hour. Small ferries cross the Rhine at various points (Sfr1.20, day passes not valid).

The SBB train station has **bike rental** (☎ 7am-9pm).

## AROUND BASEL Augusta Raurica

By the Rhine, these **Roman ruins** (admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mar-Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Feb) are Switzerland's largest. They're the last remnants of a colony founded in 43 BC that had grown to 20,000 citizens by the 2nd century. Today, restored features include an open-air theatre and several temples. There's also a **Römermuseum** (Roman Museum; ☎ 061 816 22 22; admission Sfr5, BaselCard valid; ☎ 1-5pm Mon, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun, closed noon-1.30pm Nov-Feb), which features an authentic Roman house among its exhibits.

The train trip from Basel to Kaiseraugst takes 15 minutes (Sfr5.20 each way); it's then a 10-minute walk to the site. In summer, taking the boat is another option (single/return Sfr28/47; see p239).

The Basel tourist office (p237) also runs **guided tours** (adult/child Sfr15/7; ☎ 3pm Sun May-Oct).

# AARGAU CANTON

## BADEN

pop 16,193 / elevation 388m

Baden is an old-school spa; people have been coming here since Roman times, either for its mineral baths' curative properties or to escape the stresses of the world. And although it's not the health resort featured in Thomas Mann's classic novel *The Magic Mountain* – that was Davos – parts of this sleepy, nostalgic town still feel as if they're straight from those pages.

## Orientation & Information

From the train station, you head either south for the Altstadt (Old Town) or north to the spa centre, which are a total 20 minutes' walk apart.

**Post office** (☎ 056 200 24 01; Bahnhofstrasse 31; ☎ 7.30am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 056 200 83 83; www.baden.ch; Bahnhofplatz 1; ☎ noon-7pm Mon, 9.30am-7pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat)

## Sights & Activities

There are 19 mineral-rich **sulphur springs** in Baden, believed to be helpful in treating rheumatism, respiratory, cardiovascular and even some neurological disorders. The tourist office can point you in the direction of treatments.

Pools in all the major hotels are open to everyone; entry ranges between Sfr5 and Sfr16, but whirlpool baths, saunas, solariums and special treatments cost more. The only pool large enough for swimming is the **Thermalbad** (☎ 056 203 91 12; www.thermalbaden.ch in German; adult/child Sfr16/10, plus Sfr5 for a dressing cabin; ☎ 7.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-8pm Sat & Sun) in the Hotel Verenaohf.

The Old Town centre includes a **covered bridge** (Holzbrücke) and step-gabled houses.

If you're feeling keen, you can climb the hundreds of stairs near the **city tower** (Stadt-turm) for a bird's-eye view from the ruined castle on the hill. West of the spas is **Stiftung Langmatt** (☎ 056 222 58 42; www.langmatt.ch; Römerstrasse 30; adult/student Sfr10/5; ☎ 2-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct), a stately home full of French Impressionist art.

## Sleeping & Eating

**SYHA hostel** (☎ 056 221 67 36; www.youthhostel.ch/baden; Kanalstrasse 7; dm Sfr29-35, s/d Sfr78/88; ☎ closed mid-Dec-Feb; check-in 5-10pm; ☎ (P)) One of Switzerland's best-looking hostels, this has grey slate floors, earth-red walls and top-quality materials throughout. It's as quiet as the rest of the town, though. Walk from the train station to the Old Town, cross the Limmat River at Hochbrücke, and take the first right into Kanalstrasse to find it.

**Atrium-Hotel Blume** (☎ 056 222 55 69; www.blume-baden.ch; Kurplatz 4; s/d from Sfr85/150, with bathroom from Sfr135/240) An atmospheric old place featuring a wonderful inner courtyard with a fountain and plants; it also has a small thermal pool.

**La Trattoria** (☎ 056 222 64 64; Theaterplatz 2; mains Sfr13-30, midday menus Sfr12-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) This deservedly popular pizzeria also does seasonally changing specialities and Swiss staples such as *Ghackets mit Hörnli* and *Äpler Makkaroni*.

**Roter Turm** (☎ 056 222 85 25; Rathausgasse 5; mains from Sfr25-40; ☎ 9am-midnight Mon-Sat, meals served at lunch & dinner) This is a fairly upmarket dining room, with modern European, mainly Italian, cuisine alongside traditional dishes such as cordon bleu calf.

## Getting There & Away

Baden is 17 minutes away from Zürich by train (Sfr9.80). It is also within Zürich's S-Bahn network (lines S6 and S12, 30 minutes). By road, follow the N1/E60 motorway to Zürich.

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