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Basel's Best Kept Secrets Through the Eyes of the Locals

BY NEHA POTDAR | MAY 23, 2017



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Rathaus von Basel or the Basel Town Hall is a 500-year-old building that dominates the city's Marktplatz (Juri Weiss, Staatskanzlei des Kantons Basel-Stadt, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Germany, commons.wikimedia.org)

Switzerland's third largest city may be overshadowed by its relatively glamorous neighbors, Zurich and Geneva, but Basel has earned its reputation as the art and culture capital of the country with 40 exceptional, diverse art and design museums sprawling across the metropolitan area.



Even though Basel is home to the world's most important fair — the Art Basel (upcoming edition runs June 15-18), pigeonholing the city as simply an “art capital” is an underestimation of its abundant potential. We reached out to the bigwigs from the art world for an inside scoop on their favorite places in this magical city, located close to Switzerland's border with France and Germany.

Basel is home to Switzerland's oldest university, the University of Basel, dating back to 1460. Erasmus, the 16th-century Dutch scholar, worked here. A memorial to Erasmus lies inside the Münster, one of the most well-known late-Romanesque/early Gothic buildings in the Upper Rhine.



Photo Basel's director Sven Eisenhut took us on a virtual walk through Andreas Platz that is located in the heart of Basel. “The small square has two cafés, a tea store and has something for every season. From here, you can start exploring the small streets of Basel that are called ‘Gässli’ in Swiss German. My recommended and favourite route for Andreas Square is to go up the stairs at the back of the square and turn left, and you'll find yourself in a backstreet paradise. Next, follow the Pfeffergässli until you can't go any further, there you will find the Consulate of the elusive Lepmuria. The humorous and slightly perplexing sign is in fact the headquarters of a carnival group that will provide endless entertainment.

“Go back and climb the stairs again until you reach the smallest museum in Basel and quite possibly, the world; the Hoosesagg Museum, which translates as ‘the pocket museum.’ “When you reach the top of the stairs, I recommend you turn around for the most wonderful view of the Basler Rathaus town house and a truly spectacular photo opportunity.”

Stefan von Bartha, director of von Bartha, recommends the **Rhyschänzli Gruppe's Union Diner** on Stänzlergasse that has “the best burgers in Basel.” If you are in the mood for a bit of shopping, he directs us to Set & Sekt and Grimsel. Apart from his own gallery, Stefan frequents the Kunsthalle — “they have an amazing curator in Elena Filipovic, and the garden next to it is great; especially the restaurant with the very nice Campari bar.”

Artstübli's Philipp Brogli often spends time at Fondation Beyeler “to relax at the beautiful park and explore one exhibition highlight after another.” And for those of you wanting to delve into the nightlife of Basel, Philipp suggests going to one of Switzerland's most famous clubs, **Nordstern**, located “on an expo ship directly on the shore only a few footsteps away.”

Although Laleh June of Laleh June Galerie spends her time traveling in and around Switzerland, when she finds herself in Basel, she enjoys selecting flowers at Fleurs Des Rois and favors Fondation Beyeler.

“I love Fondation Beyeler. Ernst Beyeler, his gallery, his fascination with art and artists, his history and his museum all will be written as part of the art history of the 20th and 21st (centuries). It's so fresh and at the same time so historical,” she says.

Galerie Carzaniga's Meret Jaggi directed us to **Café Frühling** where she loves going for a brunch on a Sunday. “I like it for its cozy vibe and the splendid coffee it serves. The food is always fresh and hearty.” Located in Kleinbasel on the northern bank of the Rhine River, the café is in the younger and more vivid part of Basel. “Not too crowded by tourists but very popular with students and young families.”

Apart from her own gallery located in the beautiful old part of the city, Meret speaks highly of the gallery Anne Mosseri-Marlio. “She has exquisite taste in contemporary art and the Kunstmuseum is only a five-minute walk away.”

We were lucky enough to get in touch with Meret’s favorite gallery and got to chat with Anne herself. She told us about an antiques gallery called Jean-David Cahn AG where she loves spending time. Located right across her own gallery, Cahn carries “antique jewelry, small sculptures, wall reliefs, sarcophagi. I always learn something there and the archeologists who work there are very friendly and knowledgeable.”

Swiss artist Marianne Eigenheer recommended **Restaurant Hasenburg**, “try the speciality Röstis (and don’t forget to book ahead)” and the **Brauerei Fischerstube** in Kleinbasel at the Rheingasse.

“Here you can have a real Basler Beer, while seeing how the brewery functions.”

Although Marc, co-owner of Galery Henze, Ketterer & Triebold, and his team were unavailable, they were kind enough to direct us to Pascal and Nicole Ambrogi, both art collectors based in Basel. Apart from the historical Galery Henze, Ketterer & Triebold, they talked about Galerie Idea Fixa that is run by “engaged and enthusiastic young gallerists in Klein Basel promoting emerging talents.”

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