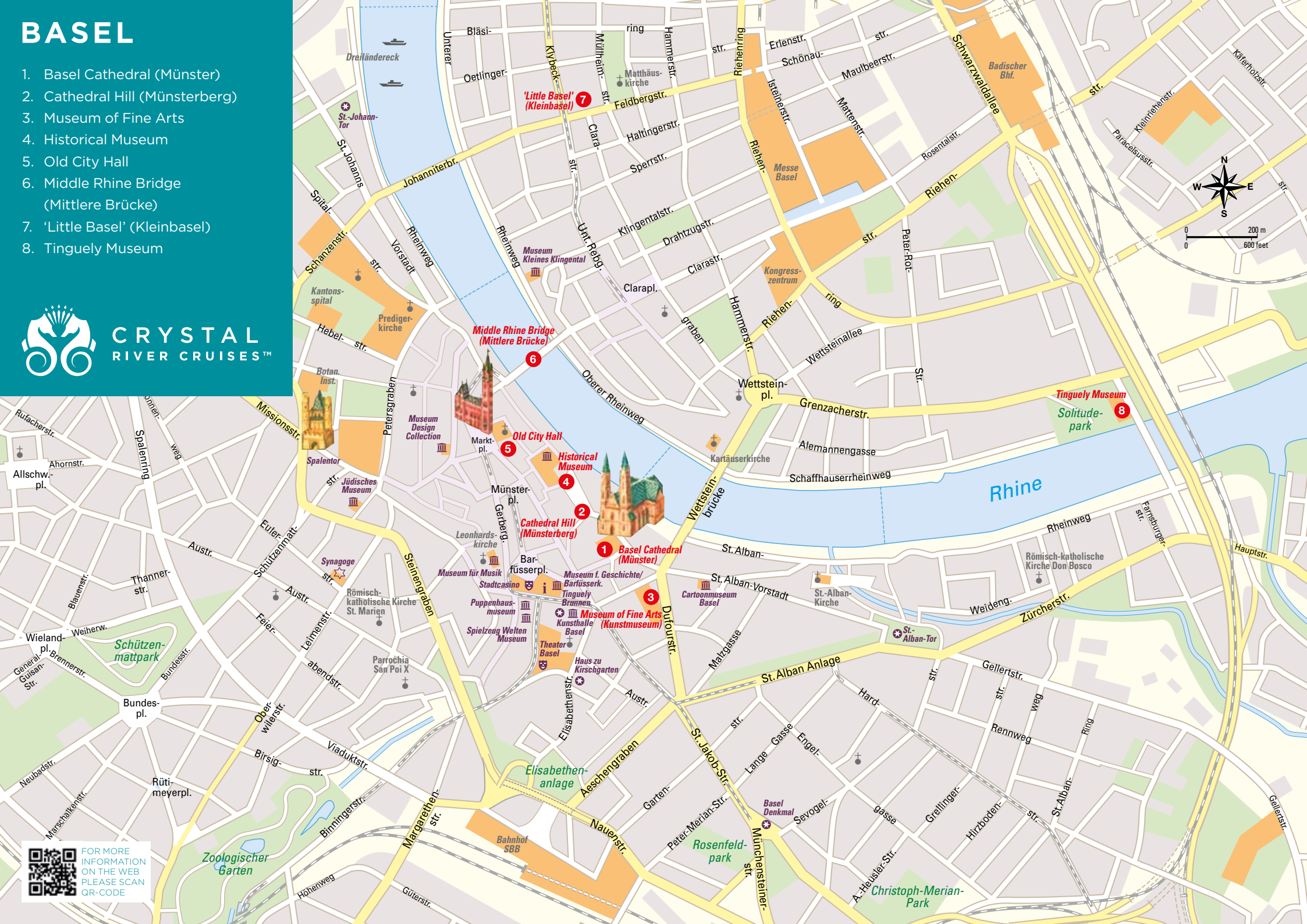


BASEL

1. Basel Cathedral (Münster)
2. Cathedral Hill (Münsterberg)
3. Museum of Fine Arts
4. Historical Museum
5. Old City Hall
6. Middle Rhine Bridge (Mittlere Brücke)
7. 'Little Basel' (Kleinbasel)
8. Tinguely Museum



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BASEL

SWITZERLAND

Geographical position: 47° 33' N / 07° 35' E

Av. alt.: 845 feet (260 m)

Area of the city: 8.8 square-miles (22.79 km²)

Population: 172,000

Region: Basel-Stadt (canton)

River: Rhine

Economy: International banking, insurance, major chemical and pharmaceutical companies, machine and metal production, textiles, river transport, publishing, trade fairs, cultural events, university, tourism



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BASEL - LOCAL SWISS PRIDE AND COSMOPOLITAN FLAIR

Switzerland's second-largest city may now be an internationally important center of industry and finance, yet a walk around its Old City is like taking a journey back in time. On the hill overlooking the Rhine, the lanes are flanked by splendid mansions spanning architectural history from the Middle Ages to the 19th century. Yet the center of Basel is much more than a mere museum of pretty houses. The city's location at the point where Switzerland, France and Germany briefly touch means that its inhabitants are both fiercely independent yet have taken pains to absorb the best of all three cultures. This is reflected not only in the bizarre local dialect but also in the city's fine cuisine and an outstanding array of museums and galleries of international standing. Basel is a city where it pays to 'go with the flow,' as this is the best way to appreciate its unique atmosphere and slightly offbeat style.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT IN A NUTSHELL

Soon after the foundation of the nearby Roman city, Augusta Raurica, in **44 BC**, a Roman fortress was built on the hill where Basel's Cathedral now stands. In the following centuries, Basilea (first mentioned in **374 AD**) grew into a sizeable settlement. By the **7th century**, Basel had its own bishop and Cathedral. The latter was destroyed in 917, when invading Magyars captured the city. Basel gained in importance when a first wooden bridge was erected over the Rhine in **1226**. Its ongoing growth was abruptly halted by a terrible earthquake in **1356**. The next century saw the almost complete rebuilding of the city, whose prestige rose with the foundation of a university here in **1460**. The following years saw Basel emerge as a center of printing and, as the Reformation began, a refuge for Protestants. Indeed, the great humanist, Erasmus of Rotterdam (1469-1536), spent the last years of his life here and is buried in Basel Cathedral. In the meantime, Basel had become an independent free city and joined the Swiss confederation in **1501**. Later growth and expansion led to the demolition of most of the old defensive walls in **1852**.

MAIN POINTS OF INTEREST

- 1. Basel Cathedral (Münster):** Basel's principal church enjoys a commanding site high over the Rhine. Its long building history embraces the Romanesque and Gothic styles. The adjoining double cloister is particularly peaceful and charming.
- 2. Cathedral Hill (Münsterberg):** To enjoy a crash course in delightful architecture spanning the 14th and 18th centuries, stroll across Münster-

platz northward to Augustinergasse before turning into Martinsgasse that leads to the 14th-century Church of St. Martin.

3. Museum of Fine Arts: This magnificent temple of the arts spans outstanding works Cranach, Holbein, Rembrandt and Rubens, as well as masterpieces by Cézanne and van Gogh. The modern extension is especially strong on post-war American art.

4. Historical Museum: The former Franciscan Church on Barfüsserplatz contains this very worthwhile museum focussing on Basel's illustrious past. The main shopping streets of Basel are located between here and Marktplatz.

5. Old City Hall: The late-Gothic Altes Rathaus dates from 1507-13 and is a striking symbol of civic pride at the time of the Reformation. If you have time, you may like to explore the lanes of the hill opposite, the so-called Spalenberg.

6. Middle Rhine Bridge (Mittlere Brücke): This elegant bridge dating from 1903-5 is adorned by a small chapel rescued from an earlier bridge.

7. 'Little Basel' (Kleinbasel): A walk along the right bank of the Rhine offers great views toward the Old City.

8. Tinguely Museum: Further upriver on the Kleinbasel side, this museum is dedicated to the quirky work of the local artist, Jean Tinguely, who created bizarre moving sculptures using all sorts of odds and ends. There is also a delightful fountain by the same artist opposite the City Theater.

ENJOYING THE LOCAL CULTURE AND LIFESTYLE

If you have a sweet tooth, you'll simply love Basel. The city's best-known specialty is Basler Läckерli, a rather chewy, spicy gingerbread often sold in elegant tins and in miniature drums. The best address for this is the Läckерli-Huus in Gerberstrasse. For a tempting array of chocolate, fudge and cream delicacies, try Brändli (Barfüsserplatz), Café Schiesser (Marktplatz) or Confiserie Gilgen (Spalenberg). While the main squares and streets have many good cafés, you can't beat the courtyard setting of Café Schmiedenhof (Rümelinplatz) or the view from the small terrace of Café Merkur (Eisengasse). Don't miss the chance to take a ride across the river on one of the small ferry boats, for example the one that moors directly below the Cathedral. If you feel a little peckish, perhaps you might enjoy Geschnetzeltes (strips of veal in a creamy sauce) or a cheese fondue. The latter contains Swiss wine, and the local vintages are a rarity indeed well worth checking out.