



Basel & Aargau

POP 456,900 / AREA 1958 SQ KM / LANGUAGE GERMAN

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Why Go?

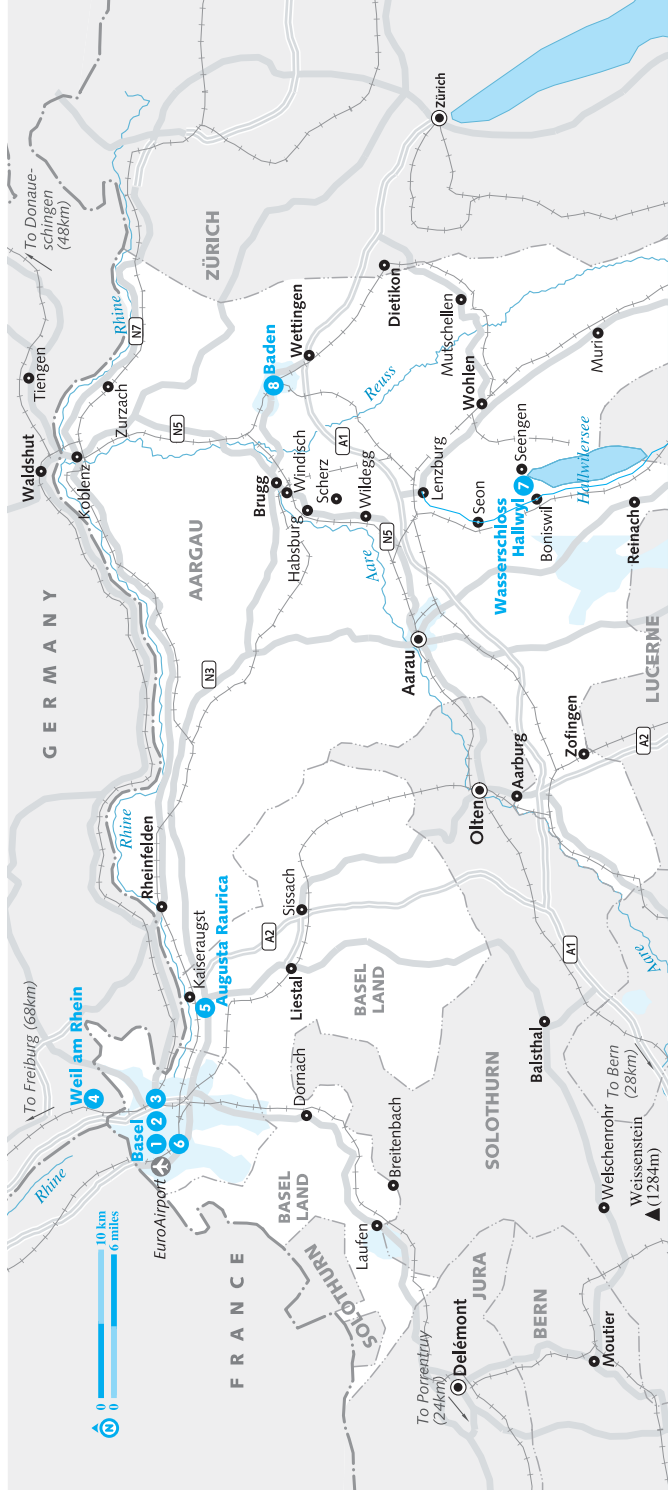
Tucked up against the French and German borders in the northwest corner of the country, business-like Basel straddles the majestic Rhine. The town is home to top-flight art galleries, museums and avant-garde architecture, and boasts an enchanting old town centre.

The Beyeler Foundation offers one of the most important art collections in Switzerland, there's an absorbing museum devoted to madcap sculptor Jean Tinguely and there are showpieces by some of the world's best contemporary architects in nearby Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein, Germany.

Excursions outside Basel lead the curious visitor to the country's finest Roman ruins at Augusta Raurica, a short train ride east of Basel along the Rhine, and to a gaggle of proud castles and pretty medieval villages scattered across the rolling countryside of Aargau canton. A journey along the Aare takes in the canton's coquettish medieval capital, Aarau, the equally fetching thermal-bath town of Baden and charming castle-topped Lenzburg.

When to Go

Although Basel is famous for its Fasnacht and Vogel Gryff festivals in spring and winter, the best time to visit is in summer. The city shucks off its notorious reserve to bask in some of the hottest weather in Switzerland. As locals bob along in the fast-moving Rhine, whiz by on motor scooters, and dine and drink on overcrowded pavements, you might feel like you're in Italy, rather than on the border with France and Germany. The *Christkindlmarkt* (Christmas market) in the Old Town creates a special magic in the four weeks leading up to Christmas.



Basel & Aargau Highlights

- 1** Take in the art at **Fondation Beyeler** (p238)
- 2** Join in the festivities of **Fasnacht** (p241)
- 3** Explore the pretty **Old Town** (p238) of Basel
- 4** Pop across the border to Weil am Rhein's **Vitra Design Museum** (p239)
- 5** Admire Switzerland's most extensive Roman remains at **Augusta Raurica** (p246)
- 6** Hit the **bars** (p244) of Kleinbasel for a big night out
- 7** Visit the pretty moated castle of **Wasserschloss Hallwyl** (p248)
- 8** Take a thermal soak in **Baden** (p247)