

Press release, June 21, 2019

Leaps in Time – A Brief History of Basel

The Basel Historical Museum celebrates its 125th birthday this year and to mark the occasion is gifting the population of Basel the exhibition ‘Leaps in Time – A Brief History of Basel’ in the nave of the Barfüsserkirche. In this, the museum presents a modernised history of Basel and its surrounding region, bringing us up to the present. The exhibition is open to the public from June 22nd 2019. It is completely trilingual (German/English/French) and wheelchair-accessible.

Around 200,000 people from 200 nations live in Basel. The city is the centre of a tri-national catchment area with 1.3 million inhabitants. The region is seen as a global leader in Life Sciences. Since the first Celtic settlement on the land of today’s Novartis Campus, some 2,000 years passed by. The importance of trade runs as a common thread through the centuries. Time and again the region profits from immigrants, too: Romans introduced modern handwriting, humanists promoted book printing, Huguenot refugees drove the expansion of the silk-ribbon industry, workers kept the factories running, and innovative minds in science helped develop Basel as a research location.

With around 100 exhibits, six short films, four media installations, and texts presented in various ways, the exhibition offers an overview of the history of the city and region, from the very earliest traces of mankind to the present day. More intensely than was the case up to now, the new presentation focuses on the 19th and 20th centuries too, devoting decidedly more attention to recent history. The journey through 100,000 years of Basel history spread over ca. 500 m² is based on a strict selection of exhibits and themes. The selection made does not tell an unbroken history of events, politics and the economy. Rather, the exhibition follows various narrative threads, laying down various tracks throughout Basel’s history.

Entrance free of charge on Saturday 22nd and Sunday June 23rd

The Basel Historical Museum takes its 125th anniversary as the occasion to invite Basel residents to visit the Barfüsserkirche, the Haus zum Kirschgarten and the Musikmuseum. On Sunday June 23rd the Basel Historical Museum hosts in all three exhibition locations a wide-ranging tour programme for children and adults. On both days entrance to the events is free of charge, and participation, too. There is a new wheelchair-friendly ramp in the church nave, so that both the rood screen chapels, which are placed at an elevation, and the chancel can be accessed barrier-free.

On the opening Sunday, June 23rd, those who have created the new city history, the curator and two prominent historians, will present their work in person to the public. In conjunction with the hourly tours, those who have made the exhibition are ready for questions and discussions. This is an opportunity to learn more about the background to how the exhibition came about.

HISTORISCHES
MUSEUM
BASEL

Basel Historical Museum – Barfüsserkirche
Barfüsserplatz 7, 4051 Basel
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We are happy to send you photos by email upon request.

Information on the exhibition:

The exhibition is divided into **five areas**: in the first part, **History of Basel in 50 Objects**, fifty items relating to the history of the city are presented. They range from a hand axe, a Roman gravestone, a university sceptre and a hangman's cubicle, to a battered bread sledge and the sweater belonging to the first rapper in dialect. Each of the chosen things tells a piece of Basel history. The exhibits have been placed in front of a permanently changing background, while 100 selected key facts concerning Basel history make it easier to place the exhibits in time.

In the second part, **Basel in the 20th and 21st Century**, the exhibition has chosen an approach that tackles the recent past and current events. What concerns have Basel and the surrounding region had in recent decades, and what do people care about at present? What does the city live on? What conflicts worry them? Six short films offer a historical perspective on themes of the present, such as relations between the two Basels, migration and integration of foreigners, the significance of the pharmaceutical industry, or the way that space and nature are treated.

The third part, **Power, Sovereignty and Democracy**, which takes as its starting point the 1598 seating for elders in the Basel Münster, is devoted to the question of political power and the shift in ruling relations. Two media stations enable the public to engage with the democratic process in Basel and the current political system.

Based on city views, models, maps and also historical and current photographs, the fourth part, **Cityscape and City Development**, offers insight into the genesis of the city of Basel, especially since the mid-19th century. A comprehensive media installation sheds light on urban development not only as a spatial process of change, but also as the evolution of urban infrastructure, city working lives or urban mobility.

A fifth part, **Wells and Water Supply**, makes playful use of the integrated well sculptures, enabling an understanding of the sculptural exhibits both in regard to their artistic importance and historical function.

Educational offerings:

We have and write history for everyone

'Leaps in Time', the new exhibition on the city's history, is self-explanatory and can, of course, be visited without a tour. Yet why miss out? You've got questions, you're curious – and we've got the answers, and more besides of interest. Our tour not only provides a stimulating crash course in 100,000 years of Basel history. Thanks to an abundance of historical views and maps, a guided tour through the city over the centuries can be also be taken. What's more, themes can also be equally well focused on, and followed, through the ages: water and water supply, power and politics, catastrophes and overcoming them, achievements and their consequences, or migration and its influence on the city.

1. Offerings for schools: my, your, our Basel!

Basel is constantly changing, whether architecturally or socially. Until recently it was proud of an international airport – yet flying is already reprehensible. For centuries, no building was permitted to be taller than the cathedral's towers, which today are barely visible when looking at the city due to the sheer number of skyscrapers. In the light of the historical urban development, schoolchildren join up to get to the bottom of these changes. With the aid of the richly documented exhibition, they form small groups to discover these shifts – yet also the thread of continuity – in the various epochs, or by looking at various broader themes: the Middle Ages, the Modern Period, and the present set the framework for questions about changes in building, society and culture. Who knows: perhaps even a vision will emerge, or a prediction, of shifts in the future.

2. Offerings for schools: journey through time

50 exciting objects spanning 100,000 years invite visitors on a journey through time. The new exhibition about the history of Basel is a distillation of our past, from the Neanderthals to yesterday. After a short introduction, pupils choose the most interesting item or most exciting event. Supported by various media stations, they engage with this object, as well as with the historical context. As 'experts' they are then to whet the appetite of their fellow-pupils for taking a trip into their own epoch. Will that work, you wonder? Because everything was better in the old days? Or have we actually struck lucky b being born in our own time?

3. Offerings for schools (senior grade, from 16 years old): who actually makes history?

History reaches far back into the past, yet it began yesterday, too. And will carry on today. The exhibition in its special format shows six interpretations of controversial topics in our recent history, which still divide opinions even today:

Separated and yet Linked – The Relationship Between the Two Basels

Space and Free Spaces – The Old City Nursery

Prosperity and Dependence – Basel and the Life Sciences

Coming Here and Staying – Migration and Integration

Hazardous Accident and Turning Point – the Schweizerhalle Chemical Disaster

Passion in Red-Blue –FC Basel

Pupils form groups and debate the interpretations. The impressions and insights gained are then discussed in the group. What is history? Who makes history? Who writes history? And which events from our current lifetime will be exhibited by the Basel Historical Museum in 50 or 100 years?