

PRACTICAL COMPANION

BASEL

Gundeldingen

A spring away · early April to mid-June

THE HOME INDEX

Practical Companion

Basel · Gundeldingen

A spring away · early April to mid-June

Basel · Freiburg · Innsbruck · Aarhus · Colmar. Basel first.

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What This Guide Is For

Most writing about cities is written for people who are leaving again. This is written for people who intend to stay a while: not permanently, but long enough that the difference between visiting a place and living in it stops being theoretical.

The proposition is a season. April, May and the first part of June, spent somewhere else, in an apartment of our own, doing the ordinary things a life is made of. Five places were examined as answers to that proposition. Basel finished first. This book takes that result seriously enough to ask what follows from it. If you spend a spring in Basel and live in Gundeldingen, this book tells you what follows: where to look for a home and what it costs, where the food comes from, where to run, how to reach Zürich for the flight home, and what happens in June, when the art world arrives.

Two things this is not. It is not tourism. Basel has museums, a river and an old town, and they appear here because they become part of an ordinary week, not because they are famous.

And it is not a relocation. No house is being sold. The season has a beginning and an end, and the book is written for it.

Four places did not win, and they appear too, early and honestly, because each would have been a different and defensible spring. The reasoning behind the choice stays at the back, briefly. The book is about the place.

PART ONE

The Spring

Why Leave

By the first days of April the New England winter is over in the formal sense and not yet over in any sense that matters. The clocks have changed. The light has come back into the evenings. And the season itself is arriving the way it usually does here: slowly, unevenly, a warm afternoon followed by a raw week, the trees bare well into the month, the running paths still carrying the salt and grit of March. Nothing is wrong. Spring will come. The question is whether to wait for it.

The proposition is not to wait.

It is not an escape, exactly; the winter has already been survived. It is closer to a reallocation. Take the weeks when home is still assembling its spring and spend them somewhere that already has one, and has something more besides: a city where ordinary days work unusually well, and where Europe, for ten weeks, stops being somewhere visited and becomes somewhere lived.

What this is not. It is not a holiday. A holiday is ten days, a suitcase and an itinerary; it is too short to become anything, and you are a visitor from the first morning to the last. It is not emigration. It is the thing in between, which has no good name: going somewhere for a defined season and living there. Groceries. Laundry. A bed made every morning. A run you do without looking at a map. A bakery where they recognise you by the third week.

What ten weeks can do that ten days cannot. It changes the unit of experience from the outing to the week. On a short trip every day is a decision: where to go, what to see, where to eat. Over ten weeks almost nothing is. Habits form, and habits are the actual content of a life. You

have a supermarket. You have a Tuesday. You have a route you have run often enough to notice when the fields beside it change colour.

The life we want. Put that way, the question stops being where is spring pleasant. Spring is pleasant in a great many places. The question is where ten weeks could become a life.

Somewhere we could unpack rather than live out of a case, and start the day early and quietly with a run from the door, without turning training into logistics. Buy food on foot, from a market and a supermarket and a bakery a few minutes away. Have a spare room, so that people can come and stay long enough for it to matter, and a table for friends at dinner. Live without a car and not miss it. Know exactly where to go if one of us needs a doctor. Get by gracefully in the language of the street. Take a train on a Saturday simply because the city felt small that week. Fly home, and have people fly to us, without it becoming an expedition. And find the apartment from Wellesley, in an evening, without the search becoming the project itself.

Those are the things that decide whether a season works. Everything in this book follows from them.

Five Ways to Spend a Spring

Twenty-one places were considered for spring. Five made the final, and they are not variations on one another. Each is a different idea of what a spring away could be.

Freiburg: the gentlest spring. A university city at the foot of the Black Forest, and the most immediately lovable of the five. The residential quarter would have been the Wiehre, south of the old town across the little river Dreisam: tree-lined streets of late nineteenth-century villas and apartment houses, a few minutes from the Münster and its market, a few minutes more from the forest. Spring in Freiburg arrives early and softly. The cafés open their terraces, the vineyards on the hills turn green, and the whole city seems to be on a bicycle. It is less expensive than Basel and warmer in manner, and its running is better, with the forest at the end of the street. What held it back was ordinary and stubborn: a furnished apartment for a season is genuinely hard to find there, and April is exactly when the university's summer semester begins and every student in Germany is looking too. A lovely spring, if you can find a door to open.

Innsbruck: the spring with mountains in it. A small Alpine capital where the mountains are not scenery but part of the day. From Saggen, the handsome residential quarter beside the Inn, you could walk into the old town in a few minutes and ride a cable car from the city centre to high ground in not many more. Spring here is a strange and beautiful double season: blossom in the valley while the peaks above are still white, the Nordkette catching the evening light over the rooftops. It is safe, orderly and quiet, and its trails are superb. But its furnished-apartment market is small and built around long leases, its airport is modest, and in April the mountains it offers are still, for most purposes, winter mountains.

Aarhus: the orderly spring. Denmark's second city, on the sea, and the most quietly functional of the five. Frederiksbjerg, south of the centre, is a

grid of well-kept apartment blocks and small shops, with forest running down to the bay on one side and the harbour on the other. Everything works. People are courteous, public life is calm, and the running through the beech woods along the water is among the best of any city considered. The spring is the difficulty. It comes late to Jutland and stays cool; June is lovely and April is often not. Danish is a language we cannot shelter in, although almost everyone speaks English. And going home means a three-hour train to Copenhagen before the flight even begins.

Colmar: the beautiful small spring. An Alsatian town of timbered houses and canals, with the wine villages of the Vosges foothills scattered across the slopes behind it and France, entirely and naturally, all around. The quarter would have been the *Maraîchers*, named for the market gardeners who once worked its fields, a calm residential area a short walk from the old centre. Colmar is one of the driest towns in France, and its spring is bright and early. French is a language we live in comfortably. It is the quietest of the five and, in its old centre, the most beautiful. It is also the smallest: the ordinary week is thinner, with fewer shops, a smaller hospital system and less city to fill ten weeks, and its airport is the same one Basel uses, an hour away rather than twenty minutes.

Basel: the deepest spring. A city of about 175,000 people on the Rhine, where Switzerland meets France and Germany. The residential quarter is Gundeldingen, directly behind the main railway station: a dense, plain, practical grid of late nineteenth-century streets, with an open hill of fields and farm tracks at its southern edge. It is not the prettiest of the five, nor the quietest, nor the cheapest. What it is, is the place where the ordinary week goes furthest. Groceries, markets, pharmacy and tram are a few minutes' walk. The run begins at the door. The old town and the river are across a footbridge. Zürich is under an hour. Two other countries are a tram ride away. The airport is twenty minutes by bus. And a furnished apartment for a season can be found, booked and moved into from the other side of an ocean.

Why Basel

Basel finished first, and not by winning everything.

Freiburg is greener, gentler, cheaper and more immediately charming, and its running is better. Innsbruck and Aarhus both feel calmer and safer on the street, and both put better training ground at the door. Colmar is quieter than any of them, drier in spring, and French. Basel is the most expensive of the five by a clear margin, and Gundeldingen is the plainest of the five neighbourhoods. Those differences are real, and for some households they would be decisive. Basel did not finish first because convenience matters more than beauty, or because a railway station matters more than a forest.

Basel won on what the ordinary
week could reach.

The supermarket and the market are five minutes away, and you go constantly. The hill you run on begins at the end of the street. The old town, the Rhine and the museums are close enough that deciding to go is the same as going. Zürich is a train, Germany is a tram, France is a tram, and the airport is a bus that leaves every few minutes from the station at the edge of the quarter. Friends can reach the apartment from almost anywhere in Europe without renting a car or asking for directions. And the home itself, the thing everything else depends on, can actually be found.

None of those is spectacular. Every one of them repeats, and every one of them opens onto something further.

Ten weeks is not long. It is too short to spend any of it arranging things. A spring away works when the life can begin on the first morning, and Basel is the place where it most plainly can.

The rest is a neighbourhood (Gundeldingen, and within it the quiet blocks around Winkelriedplatz), and a book about what to do once you are there.

PART TWO

Basel

The City

Basel is Switzerland's third city and it does not behave like a Swiss city of postcards. It is a working place: pharmaceutical towers along the river, one of the busiest railway junctions in Europe, the Rhine port where barges from Rotterdam end their journey. It is also an old university city with a medieval centre, a cathedral on a hill above the river, and one of the densest concentrations of good museums anywhere in Europe.

The river is the city. The Rhine comes in from the east, turns sharply north in the middle of Basel, and leaves for Germany and the North Sea. On its southern and western bank stands Grossbasel, the older and larger half, with the Münster, the old town, the university and the main railway station. On the northern bank is Kleinbasel, flatter, livelier, with the trade fair grounds and the long riverside promenade where half the city sits on warm evenings. Bridges cross every few hundred metres, and small ferries, pushed across by the current on a cable, cross between them.

The border is inside the city. Most cities have suburbs. Basel has two other countries. France begins on the western edge of the city, Germany on its northern and eastern edges, and the regional trams run across both borders as though they were not there. For you this is not an excursion but a condition: cheaper groceries in Germany, a French bakery at the end of a tram line, three national railway networks and an airport that sits in France with a road of its own to Switzerland.

How it lives. Orderly, reserved, prosperous, and more relaxed than its reputation. The day starts early, the shops close at seven or eight in the evening and on Sundays, and dinner happens at home more than in restaurants, because restaurants are expensive. English is widely spoken, more so than in most of Switzerland, because the city's largest employers

are international. The spoken language of the street is the Basel dialect of Swiss German, which you will hear rather than speak.

What will surprise you. How small it is: you can walk from almost anywhere in Grossbasel to almost anywhere else in half an hour. How much it offers for its size: a symphony orchestra, a theatre, and museums of a quality that would be remarkable in a city ten times larger. And how easily it lets you leave: of the five places that reached the final, it is the one from which the rest of Europe is closest.

Gundeldingen

Gundeldingen sits directly behind Basel SBB, the main railway station, on the side away from the old town. The railway tracks separate it from the rest of the city so completely that it has long been described as a small town of its own, and people who live there tend to say they have everything they need without leaving it.

It was built quickly, in roughly three decades at the end of the nineteenth century, to house a city that had outgrown its walls, and its planners did something unusual for Basel: they laid it out as an almost American grid of straight, parallel streets and regular blocks. The buildings are four and five storeys, mostly from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with courtyards behind them where workshops once operated. The street names commemorate the battles of Swiss legend: Dornach, Sempach, Tell, Winkelried. About twenty thousand people live here, which makes it the most densely settled quarter of the city.

What it is, and what it is not. It is not beautiful in the way the old town is beautiful. Its green space is scarce; outside the park at Winkelriedplatz and the Margarethenpark on its western edge, the quarter is stone and asphalt. Its character is working and middle class, with a large immigrant population and a long history of small trades. But its main street was rebuilt in 2008 with wider pavements and trees, its central square has become a place people linger, and a former machine factory in the middle of it has been turned into a small village of workshops, cafés, a climbing hall and a weekly market. It is ordinary in the best sense: a place where people shop, go to school, see the dentist and argue about parking.

How it is arranged. The quarter reads in parallel bands, north to south.

Along the tracks: the modern south face of the station and the footbridge over the rails, offices and hotels. Useful and busy; noisy in places at night.

Güterstrasse, one block in: the main street, with trams 15 and 16 running into the city and up to the Bruderholz. Here are the two big supermarkets facing each other at the Gundelitor, most of the shops and cafés, and Tellplatz, the small square with the Saturday market and the evening terraces.

Dornacherstrasse, the next band south, mixed residential and commercial, with the Gundeldinger Feld, the converted Sulzer-Burckhardt machine works, on its southern side.

Between Dornacherstrasse and Gundeldingerstrasse: the residential interior, and the park at Winkelriedplatz, the largest open space inside the quarter, rebuilt by the city in 2023 with lawns, a playground, a paddling pool, table tennis and a boccia court, and since May 2026 a small park café in a converted transformer house.

Gundeldingerstrasse and south: increasingly residential as the ground rises toward the Bruderholz, the open hill of fields and farm tracks on the city's southern edge. Bus 36, the city's orbital line, crosses here.

Where to look. The quarter's noise gathers on three lines: the rail yards to the north, Güterstrasse with its trams and its terraces around Tellplatz, and the busier through-roads. The blocks between Dornacherstrasse and Gundeldingerstrasse, around Winkelriedplatz, lie between those lines rather than on them. They are five or six minutes from the supermarkets and the station footbridge, and ten or fifteen from the start of the hill.

Do this. Concentrate the apartment search on the interior blocks around Winkelriedplatz, between Dornacherstrasse and Gundeldingerstrasse. Solothurnerstrasse and Pfeffingerstrasse are promising streets to begin with. Prefer a bedroom facing the courtyard rather than the street, on the second floor or higher. Treat Dornacherstrasse and the first block north of it as acceptable if the apartment itself is right. Stay off the Güterstrasse

frontage, especially near Tellplatz, off anything facing the rail yards, and away from the immediate entrances of the Gundeldinger Feld if you sleep lightly.

From the Winkelriedplatz blocks, on foot (estimated from the street plan; to be confirmed on the ground):

TO	APPROXIMATE WALK
Supermarkets at the Gundelitor (Güterstrasse)	4-6 minutes
Tellplatz (Saturday market)	5-7 minutes
Gundeldinger Feld (Tuesday market)	5-8 minutes
Basel SBB footbridge	6-8 minutes
Walk-in clinic and station pharmacy (north side of the station)	10-12 minutes
Margarethenpark	5-7 minutes
Bruderholz water tower	25-30 minutes, uphill
Old town (Barfüsserplatz)	20 minutes on foot, or about 8 by tram

What this means for an ordinary morning. Within a walk of a quarter of an hour, Gundeldingen gives you two full supermarkets, two weekly markets, a park with a café, pharmacies, a tram line into the old town, one of the great railway stations of Europe and an open hill to run on, without asking you to live next to any of them. The station and the tram street are on the quarter's northern edge; the hill is on its southern edge; the quiet blocks where you look are in between.

Basel and Gundeldingen



The station and the tram street are on the quarter's northern edge; the hill is on its southern edge; the quiet blocks where you look are in between.

Base: Kanton Basel-Stadt, surveyed land cover and residential-quarter boundaries (open government data). Street names placed on reconstructed centrelines; confirm on the ground. Outside the canton the survey is not drawn.

The Winkelriedplatz Blocks



Stay off the Güterstrasse frontage, especially near Tellplatz, off anything facing the rail yards, and away from the immediate entrances of the Gundeldinger Feld if you sleep lightly.

Base: Kanton Basel-Stadt, surveyed land cover and residential-quarter boundaries (open government data). Street names placed on reconstructed centrelines; confirm on the ground. Outside the canton the survey is not drawn.

PART THREE

Living There

Home

You have decided. Start with the calendar.

Before anything else, make sure the days are yours. As U.S. citizens, you may each spend up to ninety days in any rolling 180-day period in the Schengen area, of which Switzerland is part. Days in France and Germany count toward the same total, and so do any Schengen days in the 180 days before arrival: a week in Paris in January or February is a week taken from Basel.

The window this book proposes is Thursday 1 April to about Saturday 12 June 2027: seventy-three days, ten and a half weeks. It ends on the Saturday before Art Basel's week begins, and it leaves a margin of Schengen days for a later trip to Europe in the same half-year. A stay running all the way to Tuesday 29 June would use the full ninety days and include the fair; the Art Basel chapter deals with that choice. Settle the dates before looking at a single apartment. Everything else in this chapter is preference. This part is legality.

A stay of this length, without work, remains an ordinary visit. No residence permit is involved.

Finding a furnished apartment for two or three months is unusually manageable in Basel. It is not cheap. Those are separate facts, and it helps to keep them apart.

The ordinary rental market here is tight; the canton's vacancy rate has hovered below one percent, and a newcomer looking for an unfurnished lease faces a slow, paper-heavy process built for residents. That is not your market. Basel's pharmaceutical companies, research institutes and university bring a steady stream of people who arrive for a few months and need somewhere to live the day they land, and a small industry has

grown up to house them: companies that own or lease whole buildings, furnish them properly, and rent them online by the month, in English, with a credit card. Some of them have buildings in Gundeldingen.

Where to look. Three channels, in order of usefulness.

The mid-term furnished operators. Blueground rents studios to three-bedroom apartments across the city, including in Gundeldingen, and at the time of writing its Basel minimum stay is three months. Check City Pop when you book; confirm its locations, unit types and minimum stay for your actual dates. Serviced-apartment houses near the station, such as VISIONAPARTMENTS on the St. Alban side of the tracks, are more hotel-like, and useful as a fallback or for guests. These are ways to carry out the stay, not decisions; the right apartment is the one that is right when you look.

The Swiss property portals. ImmoScout24 and Homegate both have a furnished filter, and Gundeldingen is a searchable quarter on both. In September 2026 ImmoScout24 showed about eighteen furnished listings in Gundeldingen and about 150 across the city. Much of it is the operators above; some is private landlords offering *Wohnen auf Zeit*, living for a limited time. These can be good value and need more care: read the contract, confirm what is included, and send no deposit to anyone you have not verified.

Holiday-rental platforms with monthly pricing. Useful for a gap of a week or two, or for a guest. For a whole season, a gamble on one host.

What to look for. An entire furnished apartment with two real bedrooms (one for you, one for guests and a study), at least 65 m², in a building with a lift, with a washing machine in the apartment or reliably available in the building, a full kitchen with an oven, a table that seats six, and ideally a balcony. If nobody is coming to stay, a one-bedroom of 50 to 60 m² with a sofa bed will do, and saves several hundred francs a month.

Two questions matter more than any photograph. Which way does the bedroom face? A courtyard-side bedroom in a Gundeldingen block is quiet in a way a street-side one cannot be. And which floor? The second floor or above, for light and for distance from the street.

What it costs. Prices move with season and length of stay, and shorter stays cost more per month. As a shape, in September 2026: two-bedroom operator apartments in Gundeldingen were advertised from about CHF 1,750 to 2,060 a month on six- to twelve-month terms, and around CHF 1,870 for a 70 m² two-bedroom on a three-month term. For a two- to three-month stay in spring, plan as follows:

APARTMENT	REALISTIC MONTHLY RANGE, ALL-IN
One-bedroom, 50-60 m ²	CHF 1,900-2,500
Two-bedroom, 65-80 m ²	CHF 2,200-3,000
Sensible ceiling	about CHF 3,200 (roughly USD 4,000)

Expect a security deposit, which comes back, and often a one-time cleaning or service fee, which does not. Ask every operator for the full price for the exact dates, in writing, and compare on that figure alone.

The rent will be noticeable; Basel's rents are among the highest in Europe. What it buys, beyond floor space, is certainty. An apartment like this can be chosen from Wellesley in an evening, and the stay can begin with two suitcases and a key code.

The three-month minimum. One practical wrinkle is worth understanding before booking. Some operators, Blueground among them in Basel, take nothing shorter than three months, and three months is almost exactly the Schengen allowance. For a ten-week stay there are two honest approaches: an apartment whose minimum fits exactly the dates you want, or a three-month contract with an early departure, treating the unused days as part of the price of the right apartment. On a unit near CHF 2,000 a month, the unused days after 12 June cost roughly CHF

1,200. That can be money well spent. It should be decided deliberately rather than discovered.

When to book. For an April arrival, begin looking in October and book by the end of December. The best units go first, and operators know what June is worth. If the stay touches June at all, book the whole period in one contract, early; a separate June booking made in spring will be priced against the fair.

Formalities. Ask the operator whether any guest registration or city tax applies to the contract; for monthly contracts it is usually handled within the price. Check the status of the EU's new ETIAS travel authorisation before flying (What to Do, below).

The Week

This is where Gundeldingen stops being an idea.

An ordinary Tuesday begins early. In the second half of April the sun rises around half past six; by June, around half past five. Start with a run from the door: south across Gundeldingerstrasse, where the ground begins to rise, and within fifteen minutes onto the farm tracks of the Bruderholz, with the city behind and the fields ahead, around the water tower and home again. Have breakfast at your own table, which is the thing a hotel cannot give and a furnished apartment does.

Tuesday is the day of the small market at the Gundeldinger Feld, five to eight minutes' walk away, from eight until one: a few stands selling organic vegetables, bread from a wood-fired oven, eggs, cured meat, flowers, in the yard of a former machine factory. Whatever the market does not cover, buy at the supermarkets at the Gundelitor on Güterstrasse, and carry the bags home in five minutes. Do the morning's work at home, in the second bedroom.

Have lunch at home, or take it to a bench at Winkelriedplatz with a coffee from the park café. The afternoon is where Basel's scale shows. Across the footbridge and through the station, the Kunstmuseum is a short tram ride or a fifteen-minute walk; the Rhine, below the Münster, is about twenty-five minutes on foot; tram 8 from the station reaches Germany in about twenty-five minutes. Decide on any of them at two o'clock and be there by three. None of them is an excursion. They are what a Tuesday afternoon can hold here.

Home by tram or on foot through the old town. Shops close at seven or eight; the streets quieten early; dinner happens at home, for two, or for

four or six with friends who came by tram from across the city or by train from Freiburg.

What matters in that day is what does not appear in it: no car, no reservation, no errand longer than ten minutes on foot, no moment when the city asks for planning. The friction that remains is the friction you choose: a steeper run, a longer walk home along the river.

The groceries. Make the Coop or the Migros at the Gundelitor the default. The two full-sized supermarkets stand almost face to face on Güterstrasse, open from early morning until eight on weekdays and until six on Saturdays. Pick one, learn its shelves, and use the other when yours is out of something. The Migros has a post counter and parcel point. A Denner, the discount chain, is in the same cluster. Migros does not sell alcohol in its main supermarkets; the Coop does.

Prices are Swiss. Bread, dairy and vegetables are dear; meat costs roughly twice what it costs across the border, and it is the price most likely to change how you cook.

The markets. Two in the quarter, one in the city.

Tuesday, 8:00 to 13:00: the Gundeldinger Feld. A handful of good producers' stands.

Saturday, 8:00 to 13:00: Tellplatz. The quarter's own market since 2009: seasonal fruit and vegetables in organic or biodynamic quality, bread and pastries, regional producers. The square is closed to traffic on Saturday mornings; in recent seasons the market has opened at nine in winter and at eight from April.

The Marktplatz. The city's main market, in front of the red town hall in the old town, on weekday and Saturday mornings: bigger, more varied, dearer, and worth combining with a trip into town.

Sunday. Swiss shops close on Sundays and public holidays. The exception is the station: the shopping arcade at Basel SBB, with its supermarkets, bakeries and a large pharmacy, opens every day of the year from early until

late, eight minutes from the quarter. Sunday bread and milk come from there.

Public holidays inside the proposed window: Saturday 1 May (Labour Day, a holiday in Basel-Stadt, which in 2027 falls on the Saturday market), Thursday 6 May (Ascension) and Monday 17 May (Whit Monday). Easter falls before the stay, on 28 March 2027.

The pharmacy. The quarter has its own pharmacies near Güterstrasse. The Bahnhof Apotheke Drogerie inside Basel SBB is open every day from 07:00 to 22:00, and a 24-hour pharmacy stands opposite the University Hospital's emergency department in the old town. Swiss pharmacists advise on minor complaints and say plainly when a doctor is needed.

The German shop. Many Basel households buy part of their groceries across the border, where meat, olive oil, coffee, cleaning products and toiletries cost substantially less. Tram 8 reaches Weil am Rhein in about thirty minutes. The limits are simple: since January 2025, goods for private use can be brought into Switzerland free of Swiss VAT up to CHF 150 per person per day, with separate quantity limits for meat (1 kg per person) and alcohol (5 litres of wine or beer per person). Above the value limit, the free QuickZoll app lets you declare and pay without stopping. A fortnightly German shop for two, kept under CHF 300, is legal, easy and worthwhile.

Defaults. Supermarket: Coop or Migros, Gundelitor. Markets: Tuesday at the Gundeldinger Feld, Saturday at Tellplatz. Sunday: Basel SBB. Late pharmacy: the Bahnhof Apotheke. Every other week: tram 8 to Weil am Rhein.

Training

Keeping the running habit intact is part of the life, and it needs no club, class or gym here. It needs a front door, a pair of shoes and about six routes.

The canton of Basel-Stadt publishes a set of measured running loops for schools, chosen because they avoid busy roads and are mostly flat. Several are within reach of Gundeldingen on foot, and they make a convenient framework for running alone.

FROM THE FRONT DOOR

The Bruderholz. The principal training ground, fifteen minutes' easy running uphill from Winkelriedplatz. The Bruderholz is an open plateau of fields, allotments and farm tracks rising roughly 80 to 100 metres above the quarter, on the boundary between the city and the neighbouring communes of Binningen and Bottmingen. At its top stands the 36-metre water tower of 1926, which you can climb (entry one franc, cash, daytime hours) for the view across the Rhine plain to the Black Forest, the Vosges and the Jura.

The canton's measured loops here are a 2 km circuit on the plateau and an 800 m loop around the water tower. A longer walkers' circuit links the water tower with the St. Margarethen observatory to the west: about 6.3 km with roughly 90 metres of climbing, mostly on gravel and farm tracks. Local runners describe routes from the Binningen side past the observatory, across the fields, around the allotments and back toward the water tower and the Predigerhof farm as among the best running in the region. It is easy to see why.

Use it for: easy Zone 2 runs (the plateau loops are gentle once you are up), hill repeats (the climb from Gundeldingerstrasse to the plateau), and long walks.

The Margarethenpark. On the western edge of the quarter, five to seven minutes on foot: a hillside park with lawns, big trees and the rink that is used for skating in winter. The canton's measured loop here is 800 m, which makes it a sensible place for strides, intervals and tempo segments on a known distance.

The quarter itself. On a rainy morning, a flat 3 to 5 km loop on the quiet residential streets between Dornacherstrasse and Gundeldingerstrasse is dull but perfectly serviceable, and the grid makes distances easy to estimate.

ONE TRAM RIDE AWAY

The Rhine. The canton's riverside loop from the Wettsteinbrücke to the Schwarzwaldbrücke is 4 km, flat, using the promenades on both banks. Take tram 15 or 16 to the centre, or walk down through the old town (twenty-five minutes) as a warm-up. Early morning is the time; by late morning in May the Kleinbasel bank is full of people who have come to sit by the water.

St. Jakob and the Birs. East of the city, tram or bus to St. Jakob: the canton's 2.7 km loop along the river Birs, and beyond it the riverside paths that run south for many kilometres. This is the natural place for a long, flat Zone 2 run.

The Lange Erlen. North of Kleinbasel along the river Wiese: a long, flat, wooded park with the canton's 3.3 km forest loop and paths that continue across the border into Germany. The softest surface in the city and the right place for your longest runs.



The softest surface in the city and the right place for your longest runs.

Photograph: Ludovicus Aurelius, September 2026

The Allschwil woods. West of the city, bus from Binningen or tram and a short walk: a 3 km forest loop and a Vita Parcours (the Swiss outdoor fitness circuit of posts and exercises, useful for the strength work otherwise done at home with TRX straps).

Do this. Make the Bruderholz the default from the door: out, up the hill, around the water tower, home. Use the Margarethenpark when a measured loop is useful. Take the tram to the Birs or the Lange Erlen for the long, flat outing.

Two practical notes. Swiss paths are shared, and walkers, dogs and cyclists all have a claim to them; the etiquette is to pass wide and without comment. And the Bruderholz is exposed: on a hot June afternoon there is little shade on the plateau, and on a wet April morning the farm tracks are mud. Carry a light shell in April; run early in June.

Running and Walking



→ The Rhine

Wettstein-Schwarzwald loop, 4 km, flat

Trams 15 · 16 to the centre, or walk down (25 min)

→ St. Jakob and the Birs

2.7 km loop; long flat paths south

Tram or bus to St. Jakob

→ Lange Erlen

3.3 km forest loop; softest surface in the city

Tram across to Kleinbasel, then north along the Wiese

→ Allschwil woods

3 km forest loop and Vita Parours

Bus from Binningen, or tram and a short walk

Make the Bruderholz the default from the door: out, up the hill, around the water tower, home.

Base: Kanton Basel-Stadt, surveyed land cover and residential-quarter boundaries (open government data). Street names placed on reconstructed centrelines; confirm on the ground. Outside the canton the survey is not drawn.

Moving

Basel is a city designed to be lived in without a car, and the design shows. Most things are a walk; the rest are a tram; everything beyond is a train. You can pass a whole season without touching a car.

THE TRAMS

Basel's green trams (run by the city's transport company, the BVB) and the yellow suburban trams (BLT) form a dense network that converges on the old town and the station. Trams run every seven or eight minutes on the main lines during the day, less often in the evening, and the timetables are kept. From Gundeldingen:

- Trams 15 and 16 run along Güterstrasse, north into the centre and south up to the Bruderholz.
- At Basel SBB you have tram 8 (to the old town, Kleinbasel and on to Weil am Rhein in Germany), tram 2 (to the Messe and the Badischer Bahnhof, Basel's German station), tram 11, tram 10 and tram 1, among others.
- Bus 36, the orbital line, crosses the south of the quarter at Winkelriedplatz and connects the outer neighbourhoods without going through the centre.
- Tram 3 runs from the city to Saint-Louis in France; tram 6 runs out to Riehen and the Fondation Beyeler.

The system is intuitive after two days. Lines are numbered and colour-coded, stops announce themselves, and the network map at every stop is readable in any language. The one discipline to learn: buy your ticket before you board. A ticket bought after departure is invalid, and fare inspection is real.

THE TICKET TO BUY

Do this. Buy a personal monthly U-Abo, second class for each of you, starting on the first full day. The U-Abo is the regional travel pass of the Northwestern Switzerland tariff network (TNW). It covers every tram, bus and regional train in all TNW zones, which includes the whole city, the surrounding countryside of Basel-Landschaft, the airport bus to EuroAirport, the German towns of Weil am Rhein, Lörrach and Rheinfelden (on their local buses and trams), and the French bus network around Saint-Louis. It does not cover French trains or SNCF regional services.

As a non-resident you pay the rate for people not registered in the TNW area: CHF 111 a month at the tariff in force since December 2023. The network has announced an average increase of about 3.4 percent from December 2026, so expect roughly CHF 115 a month in spring 2027. You can choose the start date. The network's own arithmetic says a monthly pass pays for itself after about eleven days of two trips a day; if you cross the footbridge and take a tram most days, it pays for itself in the first week and removes every ticket decision from the rest of the season.

Buy it through the SBB Mobile app, at the SBB travel centre in the station, or at the BVB customer centre at Barfüsserplatz; you will need your passport as identification, and you must carry it (or a photo ID) with the pass.

For single journeys before the pass starts: buy a ticket in the SBB Mobile or TNW apps, or at the green ticket machines at every stop.

TRAINS

Basel SBB is one of the great railway stations of Europe, and it is your local station. From it:

- Zürich HB: intercity trains roughly every half hour, about 53 minutes.
- Zürich Airport: a direct train once an hour, about an hour and a quarter; otherwise via Zürich HB.

- Bern, Lucerne, Lausanne, Geneva, Lugano: direct intercity trains throughout the day.
- Freiburg im Breisgau: about 45 minutes by German long-distance train, a little over an hour by regional train.
- Colmar and Strasbourg: French regional trains from the French platforms at Basel SBB.
- Paris: TGV Lyria, about three hours.

For intercity trips inside Switzerland, buy in the SBB Mobile app; advance "Supersaver" fares are substantially cheaper than walk-up fares on many routes. If you expect to take more than a handful of long Swiss train journeys, compare the cost of a temporary Half Fare travelcard for visitors against your plans before you arrive.

WALKING AND CYCLING

Most movement will be on foot. The footbridge over the tracks, the Passerelle, becomes the daily route to everything north: the station, the old town, the river. Allow six to eight minutes from Winkelriedplatz to the station concourse.

Basel is a cycling city, flat along the Rhine and hilly only at the edges. If you want a bicycle, rent one by the month from a shop rather than relying on sharing schemes; the south of the city toward the Bruderholz, and the river paths east and west, are pleasant riding.



Basel is a cycling city, flat along the Rhine and hilly only at the edges.

Photograph: Ludovicus Aurelius, September 2026

DRIVING, OCCASIONALLY

For the rare day a car is wanted (a trip to a village in the Jura, a visit to a vineyard in the Markgräflerland), rent one at Basel SBB or at EuroAirport. If your trip is entirely in France or Germany, renting on the French side of EuroAirport or in Weil am Rhein can be simpler and cheaper; Swiss motorways require a vignette, which Swiss rental cars carry. Parking in Gundeldingen is scarce and regulated; a car kept at the apartment is a nuisance. Rent it for the day and give it back.

The City Beyond the Door

The chapter above was about getting around. This one is about which parts of Basel stop being places you visit and become places you use, which is what changes somewhere between the second week and the fifth.

The footbridge. Everything north of Gundeldingen begins with the Passerelle, the long covered bridge over the tracks into Basel SBB. It is the most-used route of the season: to the old town, the river, the museums, the airport bus, the trains, the walk-in clinic. Six to eight minutes from the Winkelriedplatz blocks to the station concourse, and after the first week it will feel like a corridor in your own house.

The old town. Beyond the station, up the gentle slope past the Elisabethenkirche and down into the medieval centre: the Barfüsserplatz, the red town hall on the Marktplatz with the city's main market in front of it, the lanes climbing to the Münster. It is small enough that ten weeks is long enough to know it rather than to have seen it.

The Rhine. The terrace behind the Münster looks straight down on the river, and the steps below it lead to the water. On the far bank, Kleinbasel's riverside promenade is where the city sits in the evening once the weather turns. The small cable ferries cross between the banks for a few francs. The river is not an attraction in Basel. It is the city's living room, and by May it will be part of your week.



By May, the Rhine is part of your week.

Photograph: Ludovicus Aurelius, September 2026

The museums. The Kunstmuseum Basel, one of the oldest public art collections in the world, is on the edge of the old town, a short tram ride or a fifteen-minute walk from the station. The Fondation Beyeler is in Riehen, at the end of tram 6. The Museum Tinguely sits on the Kleinbasel bank. In Weil am Rhein, across the German border, the Vitra Campus gathers buildings by Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Tadao Ando and Herzog & de Meuron. None of this needs planning. Museums matter here because you can decide at two o'clock on a Tuesday to walk into one.

Kleinbasel. Across the Mittlere Brücke, the other half of the city: flatter, busier, more mixed, with its own streets of shops and restaurants and the long promenade by the water. Five minutes by tram from the old town, and where the evening goes when it wants somewhere livelier than Gundeldingen.

What the city does not have. Mountains at the door. The Black Forest, the Jura and the Vosges are all visible from the Bruderholz and all an hour or so away. For a spring that needs high ground every week, this is the wrong city, and Innsbruck was the right one.

The Spring

The three months are different enough to describe separately. In an average year (1991 to 2020 normals at the Basel-Binningen weather station), the average daily high is about 16 °C (61 °F) in April, 20 °C (68 °F) in May and 24 °C (75 °F) in June. Daylight grows from about thirteen hours at the start of April to nearly sixteen at the solstice.

April: the city resumes. Changeable, sometimes cold, often bright; the month when Basel moves back outdoors. Mornings are cool enough for a jacket in the first hour and gloves on some early runs; afternoons can reach twenty degrees on a good day; a grey, wet week is entirely possible. Fruit trees blossom on the Bruderholz and in the gardens of the quarter in the first half of the month, and by its end the chestnuts along the Rhine are in leaf.

Easter falls before the stay in 2027, so April is undisturbed: no festival, no school-holiday crush, ordinary working life. The Tellplatz market moves to its summer hours. The park café at Winkelriedplatz puts its chairs out. The first people sit on the Rhine steps in the sun, still in coats.

It is the right month to arrive. The city asks nothing. The shops, the routes, the trams and the neighbours can be learned before the season is in full flow.

Pack for: layers, a waterproof shell, one warm jumper, running gloves.

May: the best month. Basel at its most generous: warm without being hot, the evenings long and light, the whole city outdoors. It is usually also the wettest of the three months, with more rainy days than April or June, the rain tending to come as showers and thunderstorms rather than all-day grey, and the green that follows is extraordinary.

The Rhine becomes the city's living room. The Kleinbasel bank fills at lunch and after work; the ferries are busy; the first swimmers appear toward the end of the month, though the water is still cold. The terraces on Güterstrasse fill in the evenings. The fields on the Bruderholz are high and green, and the morning run is the best of the year.

Three holidays change the rhythm: Saturday 1 May (Labour Day), Thursday 6 May (Ascension, when many Swiss take the Friday as well and leave town) and Monday 17 May (Whit Monday). Those long weekends are when the city is at its quietest and the trains and roads out of it at their busiest. A good weekend to stay home, run, cook, and have the old town to yourselves.



A good weekend to stay home, run, cook, and have the old town to yourselves.

Photograph: Ludovicus Aurelius, September 2026

Pack for: light layers, an umbrella, something for warm afternoons.

June: early summer. Warm, sometimes hot, still light at half past nine, the river warming, the parks busy until late. The Bruderholz plateau becomes

an early-morning place; by midday it is hot and has little shade. And in the middle of the month the art world arrives, which is the last chapter of this part.

Pack for: summer clothes, sun protection, a hat for the hill.

*April to settle; May to live; June to leave before the fair,
or to stay for it on purpose.*

Leaving Basel

Ten weeks is long enough that at some point the city will feel small. This chapter is the answer, and it is a large part of why Basel won.

Three countries, one tram pass. The regional network was built across the borders, and the monthly U-Abo is valid on the local buses and trams of Weil am Rhein, Lörrach and Rheinfelden in Germany and on the bus network around Saint-Louis in France.

Germany, twenty-five minutes. Tram 8 runs from Basel SBB through the old town and Kleinbasel to Weil am Rhein, an ordinary German town with supermarkets, drugstores and a weekly market, where the fortnightly German shop happens and where the Vitra Campus stands on the edge of town. Lörrach, a larger town with a lively market, is on S-Bahn line S6 from Basel SBB or the Badischer Bahnhof. North of it lies the Markgräflerland, the gentle wine country between the Rhine and the Black Forest, where the villages are an hour's walk apart and the local wine is mostly Gutedel. A regional train and a walk between two villages is a spring Saturday, not an expedition. Freiburg is 45 minutes away by fast train, a little over an hour by regional train, and worth a Saturday for its market around the Münster.

France, fifteen minutes. Tram 3 crosses the border to Saint-Louis, where the bakeries, the pharmacies, the supermarket shelves and the language all change within a few hundred metres. French is a language you live in comfortably, and it is at home there. Beyond lies Alsace. Regional trains from the French platforms at Basel SBB reach Mulhouse in about twenty minutes and Colmar in about three-quarters of an hour; from Colmar the wine villages (Eguisheim, Turckheim, Kaysersberg, Riquewihr) are a short bus or taxi ride. A day in Colmar with lunch in a winstub may be the most natural cross-border pleasure of the season. French trains are not covered

by the U-Abo; buy tickets in the SNCF app. Closer in, the Petite Camargue Alsacienne nature reserve near Saint-Louis is a good place for a long, flat walk with a French café at the end of it.

Switzerland, under an hour. Zürich is about 53 minutes by intercity train, roughly every half hour. Bern, Lucerne, Lausanne and Lugano are direct. Paris is about three hours by TGV Lyria.

The local airport. EuroAirport Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg is a curiosity of European history: an airport on French soil, run jointly by France and Switzerland, with a Swiss sector and a French sector under one roof and a customs road linking the Swiss side directly to Basel. From Gundeldingen, it is a bus stop. Walk to Basel SBB, cross to the north side, and take bus 50: every seven to ten minutes from about half past four in the morning until midnight, about twenty minutes, covered by the U-Abo. Leave home forty minutes before you want to be at the terminal. A taxi from the city costs about CHF 50. On arrival, follow the signs for the Swiss sector to reach the bus.

EuroAirport handles close to nine million passengers a year and serves around a hundred destinations, most of them in Europe. Lisbon, Porto, London, Barcelona and dozens of other cities are one flight from a bus stop twenty minutes from the station. It also carries the links to both of your transatlantic alliances: KLM to Amsterdam and Air France to Paris, both Delta hubs, and Lufthansa to Frankfurt and Munich, Austrian to Vienna and Turkish to Istanbul, all Star Alliance.

The way home. Do this. Make SWISS nonstop between Zürich and Boston the default. SWISS flies the route daily, with a second daily flight for much of the year; the flight takes about seven and a quarter hours eastbound and eight and a quarter westbound, and Zürich departures leave in the afternoon. At the time of writing it is the only nonstop between Boston and the Basel region, and it is Star Alliance, where United Gold is Star Alliance Gold: lounge access and priority handling.

From the quarter: walk to Basel SBB and take the direct train to Zürich Flughafen, which runs once an hour and takes about an hour and a quarter, or change at Zürich HB in the other hours for about the same total time. The airport station is beneath the terminal. From kitchen to gate is about two and a half to three hours, most of it in a Swiss train beside the Rhine. Coming the other way, the overnight flight from Boston lands in Zürich in the morning, and Basel is reached before lunch.

When fares or schedules favour it, or when the Delta journey is wanted, fly Delta to Amsterdam or Paris and connect on KLM or Air France to EuroAirport. One stop instead of none, but the last leg lands twenty minutes from home. It suits the arrival leg particularly well.

Border formalities. Since the EU's Entry/Exit System became fully operational in April 2026, non-European visitors are recorded biometrically at Schengen external borders: fingerprints and a photograph at the first entry, a quicker scan thereafter. Queues have been long at busy times. Allow extra time on arrival.

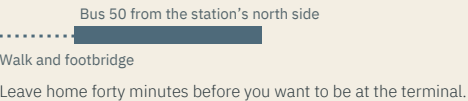
One caution. Days in France and Germany count toward the ninety Schengen days exactly as days in Basel do. The border is open; the calendar is not. And Swiss customs are real: bring purchases home within the value and quantity limits, or declare them in QuickZoll.

PLATE 5 *Airports*

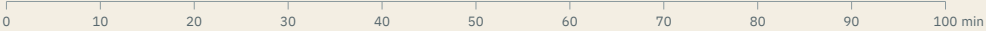
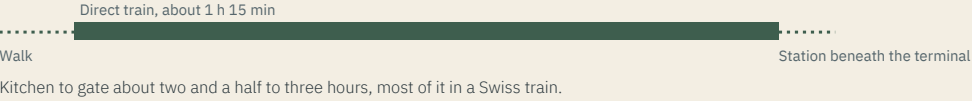


KITCHEN TO GATE · TRAVEL TIME, DOOR TO TERMINAL

EuroAirport



Zürich Airport



From kitchen to gate is about two and a half to three hours, most of it in a Swiss train beside the Rhine.

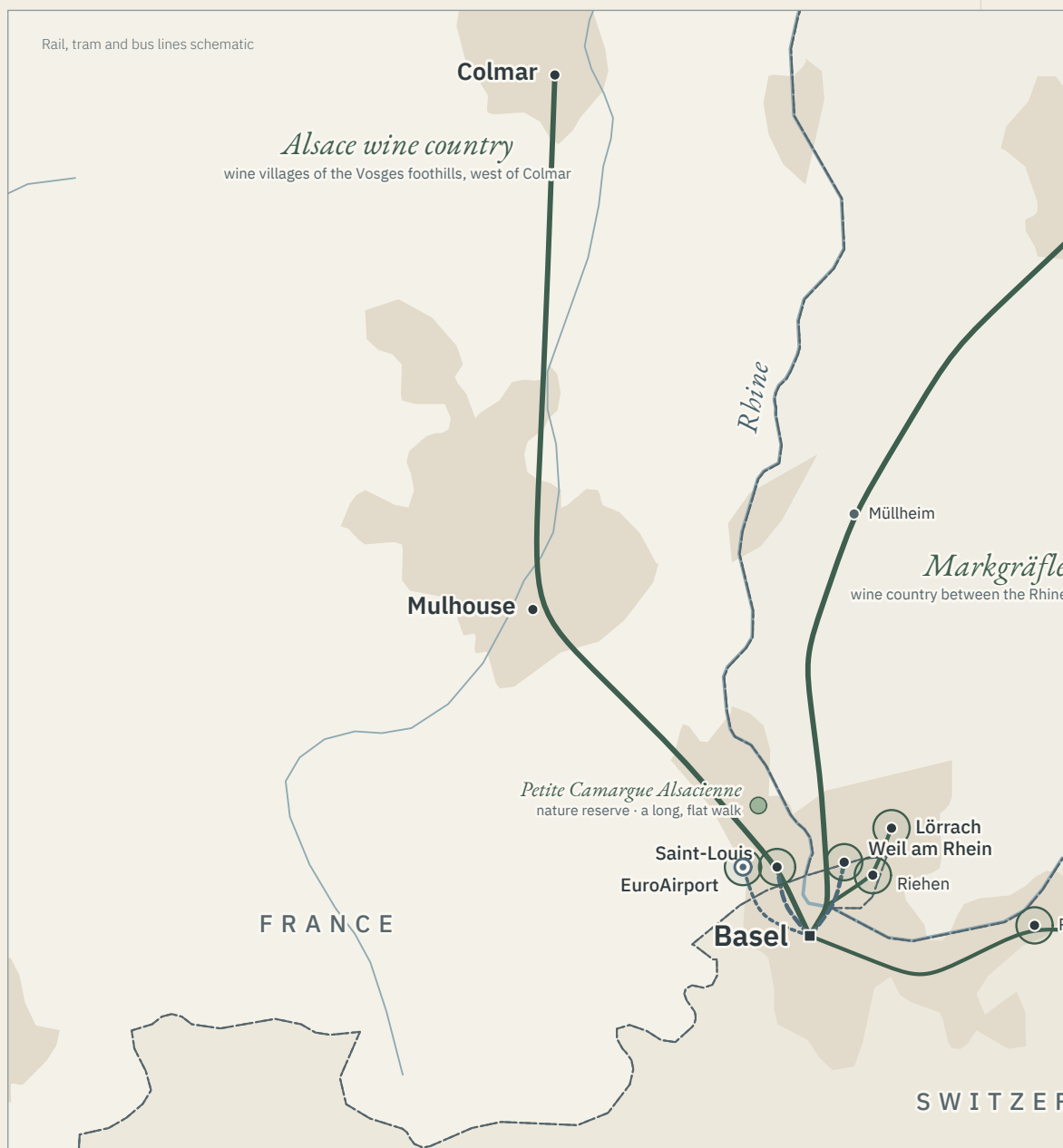
Base: Natural Earth (public domain). Rail, tram and bus lines schematic; journey times as given in this book.



Tram 3 passes the Spalentor on its way to Saint-Louis.

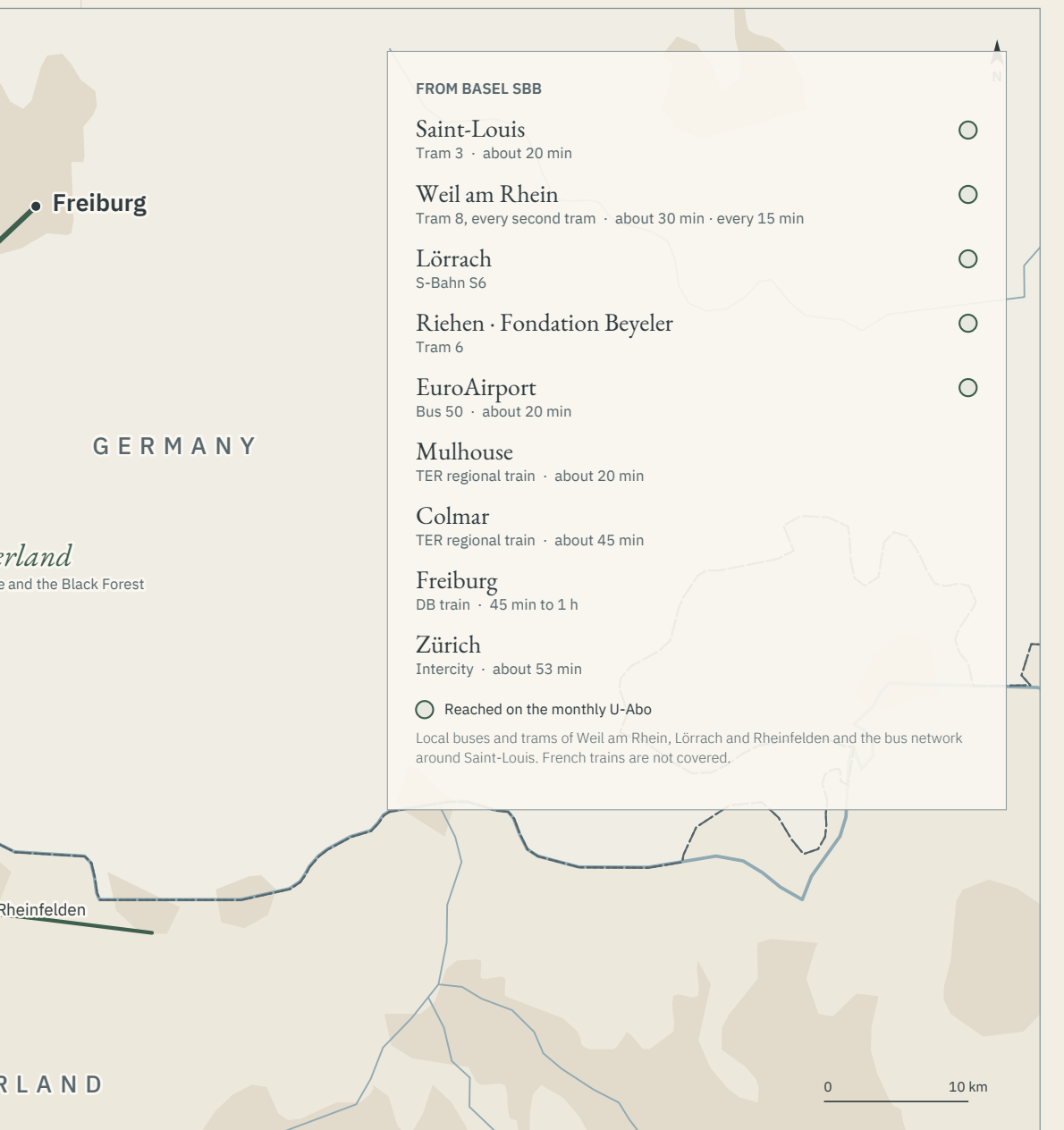
Photograph: Ludovicus Aurelius, September 2026

The Three-Country Radius



Most cities have suburbs. Basel has two other countries.

Base: Natural Earth (public domain). Rail, tram and bus lines schematic; journey times as given in this book.



Having People Come

Ten weeks is long enough that people will come. This chapter is about what happens when they do.

The shape of a visit. A week is the natural length for someone crossing the Atlantic, which means the guest has time and the days need shape. Basel supplies it easily. A market morning at Tellplatz and the Kunstmuseum are one day. The Rhine, the Münster and an evening on the Kleinbasel bank are another. The Fondation Beyeler and Riehen are a third. A day in Colmar, or Freiburg, or Lucerne, is a train. That leaves several days with nothing planned, which tend to be the ones remembered.

What the apartment needs. Two bedrooms. A guest with a room and a door is a different visit from a guest on a sofa for a week, and the difference in rent is smaller than the difference in the visit. Count the chairs and ask about the oven before booking; a furnished apartment set up for one consultant on a six-month contract may hold four chairs and two wine glasses. If so, an afternoon at the Migros solves it.

Getting them here. From the United States, a guest flies into Zürich (train to Basel SBB) or into EuroAirport through a European hub (bus 50 to Basel SBB). Either way the last stage is a walk across the footbridge with a bag on wheels, and they can be met on the platform. From elsewhere in Europe they simply arrive at the station, from Paris, Frankfurt, Milan or Zürich. For guests who prefer their own room, the hotels around the station and the serviced apartments just across the tracks are five to fifteen minutes away. Book them early for anything in June.

Dinner at home. This is where Gundeldingen is at its best. The two markets supply vegetables and bread worth serving; the Coop supplies the rest and a respectable wine selection; the quarter's specialist shops fill the

gaps. Friends in Basel come by tram or on foot. Friends from Freiburg, Colmar or Zürich come by train, and the last train home leaves late enough for an unhurried dinner. The house rules apply: in a Swiss apartment building, a dinner for six that ends at half past ten is civilised, and one still loud at midnight on a Tuesday will be remembered.

A visitor's weekend. Saturday: the Tellplatz market at nine, the Kunstmuseum at eleven, lunch by the Rhine, the Fondation Beyeler in the afternoon, dinner at home. Sunday: a walk up to the Bruderholz water tower, and for the energetic, bus 55 from Claraplatz to the Vitra Campus. Little of it needs booking, and none of it a car. Visitors may leave thinking you live somewhere much grander than a quarter behind the railway station, and in a sense they will be right.

Being Looked After

A season is not planned around being ill. If either of you is ill, the next step is obvious.

Before leaving home. Buy travel medical insurance that covers Switzerland explicitly (and France and Germany, where days will also be spent), with emergency evacuation and a clear direct-billing or reimbursement process. Swiss medicine is excellent and expensive, and many American domestic plans reimburse poorly abroad. Keep the insurer's card and emergency number on both phones and on paper. Bring enough of any regular medication for the whole stay, in original packaging, with a copy of the prescription under its generic name.

Something minor: a pharmacy first. A cold, a strained calf, a rash, an upset stomach. The quarter has its own pharmacies, and the Bahnhof Apotheke Drogerie in the station (every day, 07:00 to 22:00) is large and used to travellers. Swiss pharmacists assess minor complaints, stock more without prescription than an American drugstore, and say plainly when a doctor is needed.

Needing a doctor: the walk-in clinic. The Swiss system assumes a family doctor. For a season, a walk-in practice replaces one. Medbase Toujours Basel Bahnhof, at Centralbahnstrasse 3 on the north side of the station (ten to twelve minutes from the Winkelriedplatz blocks), is open every day of the year, staffed by general practitioners and emergency physicians, with its own laboratory, X-ray and ECG. No appointment is needed, though you can book one online. Baselmed, near Claraplatz in Kleinbasel, is a second walk-in practice (weekdays 8 to 18, Saturdays 9 to 18).

When unsure where to go, or at night, call the Medizinische Notrufzentrale on 061 261 15 15, the official 24-hour medical line for

Basel's doctors, dentists and pharmacies. A medical professional assesses the situation by phone and directs the caller to the duty doctor, an emergency dentist, an open pharmacy or a hospital.

Urgent and serious: the hospitals. For adults, the two emergency departments with a cantonal mandate in Basel-Stadt are at the Universitätsspital Basel, the University Hospital in the old town and a major tertiary centre, and the St. Claraspital in Kleinbasel. Both are open around the clock; the University Hospital is about fifteen minutes from Gundeldingen by tram or taxi. For an emergency, call 144 for an ambulance; 112 also works; police is 117.

What it feels like. Calm, thorough and administratively tidy. Clinics and hospitals work in German and English without difficulty. Expect to show identification and insurance details, and to pay for an outpatient visit on the spot and claim it back. The quality is not in question; the friction is financial, and insurance arranged before departure removes most of it.

144

Ambulance

112

European emergency

117

Police

061 261 15 15

Medical advice line · 24 h



Know exactly where to go if you need a doctor.

Base: Kanton Basel-Stadt, surveyed land cover and residential-quarter boundaries (open government data). Street names placed on reconstructed centrelines; confirm on the ground. Outside the canton the survey is not drawn.

Language

The spoken language of Basel's streets is Baseldytsh, the city's own dialect of Swiss German. It is not the language of writing: signs, menus, forms, newspapers and anything official are in standard German. On a first morning at a bakery, a greeting of "Guete Morge" will be answered in kind, and then followed by something that is not quite the German anyone learned in a classroom.

In practice this is rarely a barrier. People switch to standard German on hearing a foreigner, and in Basel they switch to English with unusual readiness. The city's largest employers are international, and its English is well above the Swiss average. At the pharmacy, the clinic, the station, the apartment operator and most shops, English carries the day.

German helps at the edges of ordinary life: the market stall, the neighbour on the stairs, the handwritten note about the laundry room. Some German, rather than fluent German, is enough for greetings, numbers, prices and politeness, and those are what change how a newcomer is received. "Merci" is as Swiss as "Danke", and "Merci vielmal" goes a long way.

French is worth more here than you expect. The border is a tram ride away, and in Saint-Louis and the villages of Alsace it is the language of everything. Italian surfaces too, in the quarter's Italian cafés and as one of Switzerland's national languages.

The social register is reserved and courteous. Neighbours greet each other on the stairs and do not invite each other in for some time. Quiet hours (evenings from about ten, and Sundays), recycling rules and the shared laundry schedule are taken seriously and followed without comment. Following them is the quickest way to become a neighbour.

Art Basel

Begin with where it happens, because that shapes everything else.

What it is. For one week each June the world's leading fair for modern and contemporary art takes over Messe Basel, the trade-fair grounds in Kleinbasel, across the river from Gundeldingen. In 2027 its public days are Thursday 17 to Sunday 20 June, with preview days for invited collectors and press immediately before. Around it gathers a week of satellite fairs (Liste, Photo Basel and others), gallery openings, parties and public installations across the city. Around ninety thousand visitors come to the fair itself, a very large share of them from abroad.

What it does to your week. Less than you fear on the street, and more than you expect on the bill.

The apartment. Hotel and short-stay prices rise sharply for the fair week and the days around it, and availability disappears early. Furnished operators know it. A June booking made late will be priced against the fair.

The quarter. Gundeldingen is not the fair district. Expect more people at the station, busier trams toward the Messe, fuller restaurants and an international hum in the old town. The interior blocks around Winkelriedplatz notice little.

Guests. Anyone who visits you in mid-June must book very early or stay with you.

And what it gives. For a week, one of the great cultural events of the year is a tram ride from home, with the whole city turned into an exhibition around it. If you love art, living here rather than visiting is the best

possible way to see it: no hotel, no taxi queue, and the freedom to go on a Thursday morning and come home for lunch.

Do this. Plan around it rather than through it. The proposed window ends on Saturday 12 June, the weekend before the fair week, and leaves the city to the art world. If you decide you want to see Art Basel, stay for it deliberately: book the whole season in one contract by December, buy fair tickets when they go on sale, and make sure no visitor needs a hotel that week. The one thing not to do is let June arrive by default.

PART FOUR

The Choice

What Basel Does Not Solve

A guide that only praised its city would be useless. Here, plainly, is what will be difficult.

It is expensive. Not only the rent. A coffee costs five or six francs; a simple restaurant main course thirty to forty. A basket of groceries costs noticeably more than in Wellesley, and the meat counter will change the menu. Cook more. Eat out less. Shop in Germany. Budget honestly, and decide in advance not to spend the season converting prices.

Swiss pricing reaches everything. A haircut, a pharmacy visit, a taxi, a replacement charger. Most of it is of high quality. All of it costs.

The language keeps a little distance. English covers every practical need. Swiss German means overhearing the city rather than listening to it, and Swiss reserve means being courteous strangers for longer than in a Latin city. Expect a season of home life and each other's company more than one of new friendships.

June needs planning. Art Basel will not disturb the street. It will disturb apartment prices, guests' hotels and the trams for a week.

Gundeldingen is useful, not pretty. Its streets are straight, its buildings plain, its green space scarce. The beautiful Basel of the river, the Münster and the old town is across the footbridge, and you will go there constantly; but you will not live in it. The trade is deliberate: the service, the quiet interior and the running ground, in exchange for the view from the window.



The old town is across the footbridge, and you will go there constantly.

Photograph: Ludovicus Aurelius, September 2026

Freiburg is softer. It is worth saying without embarrassment. Freiburg is greener, gentler, more immediately charming, less expensive and warmer in manner. Some weeks you may wonder. Go there for a Saturday, enjoy it without reservation, and come home to Gundeldingen.

The ninety days are real. The season lives inside a Schengen calendar that includes everything else you do in Europe around it. Count it before booking.

None of these is a reason not to go. All of them are reasons to go knowing.

What to Do

Where to live: Basel, Gundeldingen. The interior blocks around Winkelriedplatz, between Dornacherstrasse and Gundeldingerstrasse, with Solothurnerstrasse and Pfeffingerstrasse as the first streets to look at, off the Güterstrasse frontage and away from the rail yards.

When. Thursday 1 April to about Saturday 12 June 2027, after confirming your Schengen days are free. If you choose to stay for Art Basel, to Tuesday 29 June at the latest.

The home. A furnished two-bedroom apartment of 65 to 80 m², courtyard bedroom, second floor or higher, lift, washing machine, oven, a table for six. Budget CHF 2,200 to 3,000 a month all-in; ceiling about CHF 3,200. Look from October, book by the end of December, in one contract for the whole stay. Which operator, which building and which apartment are decisions for the moment of booking, not for this book.

BEFORE LEAVING.

WHEN	DO THIS
October 2026	Settle the dates. Count Schengen days in the preceding 180 days.
October-December	Search: the mid-term furnished operators, then the ImmoScout24 and Homegate furnished filters. Ask for all-in prices for the exact dates, in writing. Ask about bedroom orientation, floor, lift, laundry, oven and chairs. Book by the end of December.
January 2027	Book flights (SWISS nonstop Boston-Zürich as the default). Buy travel medical insurance covering Switzerland, France and Germany.

WHEN	DO THIS
February	Check whether the EU's ETIAS travel authorisation has started; if it has, apply for each of you on the official EU website only. Confirm passports are valid well beyond the stay.
March	Refill prescriptions for the whole stay. Confirm the phone plan covers Switzerland as well as France and Germany (many European roaming bundles exclude Switzerland). Install SBB Mobile, the TNW ticket app, MeteoSwiss and QuickZoll. Carry a card without foreign transaction fees and a little CHF and EUR cash. Pack two Swiss (type J) plug adapters; slim two-pin European plugs also fit.

THE FIRST FORTY-EIGHT HOURS.

Day one. From Zürich Airport, the train to Basel SBB; from EuroAirport, bus 50; then the footbridge and the walk. Collect keys, walk through the apartment with the operator's checklist, photograph any damage, test the oven, washing machine, Wi-Fi and hot water. Buy a monthly U-Abo for each of you, starting the next day. First shop at the Gundelitor. Walk the quarter in the late afternoon: Güterstrasse, Tellplatz, Winkelriedplatz, the Gundeldinger Feld. Find a bakery. Dinner at home; early night.

Day two. An easy run or walk up to the Bruderholz and the water tower. Across the footbridge to locate the Bahnhof Apotheke and Medbase Toujours; save the four emergency numbers in both phones. Down to the Rhine for half an hour on the Münster steps. Buy what the apartment lacks. Learn the building's rules: laundry schedule, recycling days, quiet hours.

The first week. The Tuesday market at the Gundeldinger Feld. The Saturday market at Tellplatz. One afternoon at the Kunstmuseum. One

long run on the Birs or in the Lange Erlen. One ride on tram 8 to Weil am Rhein, simply to learn the route. An introduction to the neighbours on the landing.

THE ORDINARY RHYTHM.

- Most mornings: out the door to the Bruderholz or the Margarethenpark before breakfast.
- Tuesdays: the Gundeldinger Feld market, then the supermarket.
- Saturdays: the Tellplatz market; guests for dinner when there are guests.
- Sundays: a long walk (the Rhine, the Bruderholz circuit, the Lange Erlen), and the station for bread and milk.
- Once a week: a museum or concert afternoon, decided that morning.
- Every other week: the German shop in Weil am Rhein.
- Once or twice a month: a day beyond the city by train (Colmar, Freiburg, Lucerne, the Markgräflerland).
- Every month: renew the U-Abo, and count the Schengen days that remain.

No car. Rent one for a specific day if a specific day needs one.

Where the Answer Changes

Four places did not win, and none of them lost badly. Change the priorities slightly, or change the spring, and each becomes the right answer.

If charm and softness matter more than reach, Freiburg. Greener, gentler, cheaper, with better running at the door and a spring that arrives early. The condition is finding a furnished apartment for the season, which is genuinely hard there in April. Start very early, or choose May and June instead.

If the spring should contain mountains, Innsbruck. High ground every day, a calm and safe small city, excellent trails. Better in late May and June than in April, when the mountains are still in winter. Expect to work harder for the apartment and the flights.

If calm and order come first, and a cool spring is acceptable, Aarhus. The most quietly functional of the five, with forest and sea at the door and English everywhere. Its spring is late, and the way home begins with a three-hour train.

If quiet and beauty come first, and French life is the point, Colmar. The calmest and the most beautiful in its old centre, dry and bright in spring, French all around. Its ordinary week is thinner, its hospital system smaller, and its city is small enough that ten weeks may feel long.

These are different questions with different answers, and only the first was ours.

Reference

ADDRESSES AND NUMBERS

WHAT	WHERE	NOTES
Emergency, ambulance	144	European emergency number 112 also works
Police	117	
Medical advice line (MNZ)	061 261 15 15	24 hours; doctors, dentists, pharmacies
Medbase Toujours Basel Bahnhof	Centralbahnstrasse 3 (north side of Basel SBB)	Walk-in, every day; 061 500 11 00
Baselmed	Near Claraplatz, Kleinbasel	Walk-in, Mon-Fri 8-18, Sat 9-18
Universitätsspital Basel, emergency	Old town (Petersgraben)	Adults, 24 hours
St. Claraspital, emergency	Kleinbasel	Adults, 24 hours
24-hour pharmacy	Opposite the University Hospital emergency department	Nights and holidays
Bahnhof Apotheke Drogerie	Basel SBB, health centre	Every day 07:00-22:00
Coop Gundeli	Güterstrasse 190	Mon-Fri 07:00-20:00, Sat to 18:00

WHAT	WHERE	NOTES
Migros Gundelitor	Güterstrasse 180	Mon-Fri 08:00-20:00, Sat to 18:00; post counter
Gundeldinger Feld market	Dornacherstrasse 192	Tuesday 08:00-13:00
Tellplatz market	Tellplatz	Saturday 08:00-13:00 (from April)
Café Sommer	Winkelriedplatz (Solothurnerstrasse)	Park café; daily, longer hours late in the week

(Opening hours change; confirm them in the first week.)

TRANSPORT AT A GLANCE

JOURNEY	HOW	TIME
Winkelriedplatz blocks to Basel SBB	On foot via the footbridge	6-8 min
Winkelriedplatz blocks to old town	Tram 15/16, or on foot	8 min / 20 min
Basel SBB to EuroAirport	Bus 50 (covered by U-Abo)	about 20 min, every 7-10 min
Basel SBB to Zürich Airport	Direct train hourly, or via Zürich HB	about 1 h 15 min
Basel SBB to Zürich HB	Intercity, about every 30 min	about 53 min
Basel SBB to Weil am Rhein	Tram 8, every second tram (covered by U-Abo)	about 30 min, about every 15 min
Basel to Saint-Louis	Tram 3 (covered by U-Abo)	about 20 min
Basel SBB to Colmar	TER regional train (not covered)	about 45 min
Basel to Freiburg	DB train (not covered)	45 min to 1 h

CALENDAR, SPRING 2027

DATE	WHAT
Thursday 1 April	Proposed arrival
Saturday 1 May	Labour Day, public holiday in Basel-Stadt
Thursday 6 May	Ascension, public holiday
Monday 17 May	Whit Monday, public holiday
Saturday 12 June	Proposed departure
The days before 17 June	Art Basel preview days and satellite fairs (confirm dates)
Thursday 17 to Sunday 20 June	Art Basel public days
Tuesday 29 June	Ninetieth day of a stay beginning 1 April

BUDGET, PER MONTH, FOR TWO

ITEM	RANGE (CHF)
Furnished two-bedroom, all-in	2,200-3,000
U-Abo, two personal monthly passes	about 230
Groceries and household	1,000-1,400 (less with the German shop)
Eating and drinking out, modestly	300-600
Trains beyond the U-Abo area	100-300
Phone and data	varies by plan
Indicative total	about 3,800-5,500

(These are planning ranges, not quotations. The rent and the U-Abo are the firmest figures; the others depend on how you live.)

CONFIRM BEFORE BOOKING

- Apartment availability and terms for your dates: all-in price, deposit, fees and minimum stay.
- The U-Abo price for 2027.
- The SWISS Boston-Zürich schedule, and the Delta, KLM and Air France connections.
- Whether ETIAS has started.
- The Basel SBB timetable after the December 2026 change, especially the direct train to Zürich Flughafen.
- Current opening hours of the places in this section.
- Art Basel preview dates, if you decide to stay for the fair.
- Swiss customs limits and the Basel-Stadt holiday details.

These change before you book. Check them at the last responsible moment.

USEFUL WORDS

SWISS USAGE	MEANING
Grüezi / Guete Morge	Hello / Good morning
Merci / Merci vielmal	Thank you / Thank you very much
Adieu / Ade	Goodbye
Gundeli	Gundeldingen, as locals call it
Drämmli	Tram (Basel usage)
Passerelle	The station footbridge
U-Abo	The regional monthly travel pass
Wohnen auf Zeit	Furnished rental for a limited period
Notfall	Emergency
Apotheke	Pharmacy

Method Note

Twenty-one places were considered for a spring stay of two to three months. Five reached the final: Basel, Freiburg, Innsbruck, Aarhus and Colmar. Basel finished first.

The ranking selected the subject of this guide. It did not write it. The chapters above begin from the chosen city and neighbourhood and ask a different question: what would actually living there require? Facts were gathered in September 2026 for a spring 2027 stay; prices, timetables and opening hours change, and the ones that matter should be confirmed before relying on them.

Colophon

The Home Index · Spring

Basel · Gundeldingen

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Plates 1 to 4 drawn from the surveyed land cover and residential-quarter boundaries published as open government data by the Canton of Basel-Stadt; Plates 5 and 6 from Natural Earth.

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