

# Travellady Magazine <sup>TM</sup>

## Modern art Mecca in Basel, Switzerland

Rail Europe made this enchanting travel break easy

By Larry Bridwell

The crown jewel of Basel's forty art museums is the architecturally acclaimed Fondation Beyeler Museum. It was designed to showcase the splendid personal collection of Hildy and Ernst Beyeler, who owned an art gallery for nearly fifty years. The spiritual inspiration of this combination of architecture and art can be better understood by applying criteria frequently used to evaluate restaurant experiences. When dining, the taste of the meal is central, but customers also enjoy the visual presentation of food and the ambience of a restaurant. Many museums may have great art, but the viewing can sometimes be like reading an almanac: important material is available, but visually numbing.



The architecture of the Beyeler museum enhances its great collection. The best example is the thirty-foot wide painting by Claude Monet, "The Pond of Water Lillies" which is hung adjacent to a shimmering green pond visible through a four-story glass wall. Impressionistic painting, nature and architecture reinforce each other in stunning combination.

In the next room, the curator has created a fascinating tapestry of great abstract art, powerful sculpture and human portraiture. At the center, a Calder mobile is next to a black marble sculpture by Hans Arp, "Tree of Bowls." Paintings include a Picasso and a large portrait by Francis Bacon, "In Memory of George Dyer."

The Beyeler collection has several works by Picasso and frequently changes the paintings displayed.

In another room, the natural sunlight coming through the glass roof illuminates the magnificent use of color by Ellsworth Kelly and Henri Matisse. On one wall are three brilliant Kelly paintings, "Yellow White," "Green Curves," and "Lake II". These vivid solid colors are matched by a large collage of blue patterns by Henri Matisse.

Basel art is not only inside museums, but also outdoors. A playful kinetic water sculpture, "Sasnachtbrunnen," by Jean Tinguely is set downtown.



The vast variety of Basel art was demonstrated at the Kunstmuseum Basel, the main city museum. A special exhibition, "Covering the Real," focused on journalism and included "CNN Concatenated," a video parody using CNN TV footage. The artist, Omer Faust, took one-syllable clips from a series of CNN reporters and used them to create his own script. These celebrities and analysts complained that although they were so important, nobody was paying attention to

them!

Another visual delight is the historic market square with the impressive Rathaus, the red brick town hall, which is nearly 500 years old.



Traveling by train with a Eurail pass from Rail Europe facilitated our morning art stopover. My traveling companion and I had only a few hours before continuing our rail trip from Italy to Germany, but Eurail and local trolleys made our sampling of Basel art easy and inexpensive. Arriving in Basel in the morning, we stored our luggage in the train station, went to the tourist office for directions and maps, bought all-day transit passes for only eight Swiss francs (\$5), and stepped outside to a waiting trolley.

Despite its rural setting in the midst of farmlands, the Beyeler Museum is easily reached by Basel tram No. 6. The trolleys run frequently, so one can relax and not worry about schedules when visiting the Basel museums.

In the early afternoon, we returned to the central train station and with our Rail Europe passes, we didn't need to stand in line to buy tickets. Instead, we thought about lunch. Shopping at a train station is frequently better than buying food onboard, because the options in the dining car can be limited and expensive. We selected delicious chicken and salad from Migros, a food store with enticing choices, picked up chilled wine from a liquor store and had a lovely meal as we continued our European journey.

**If you go:**

Fondation Beyeler  
Baselstrasse 101

CH-4125 Riehen / Basel

41 (0)61 - 645 97 00

Infoline (recorded message): 41 (0)61 - 645 97 77

[fondation@beyeler.com](mailto:fondation@beyeler.com)

<http://www.beyeler.com>

Open: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily except Dec. 24 & 25

<http://www.beyeler.com>

Admission: 16 Swiss Francs (\$12.60) for adults

5 Swiss Francs (\$4) for students

5 Swiss Francs for children to age 16

Public Transportation: Tram 6

Kunstmuseum Basel

St. Alban-Graben 16

CH-4010 Basel

41 (0)61 206 62 62

<http://www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch>

Open: Tue - Sun 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Public Holidays (closed), February 14, 15, 16 (Carnival), March 25 (Good Friday), December 24 and 25

Free except for special exhibitions

**Rail Europe**

We had a railpass from Rail Europe, which provides many options for one, two, three or more countries. Go to RailEurope's web site (or call a reservation agent) to decide whether your trip is best done with point-to-point tickets or a pass or combination of the two. Passes are sold only to non-European residents.

<http://www.RailEurope.com> or 888-382-7245.

Photo of Beyeler Museum by Larry Bridwell

Photos of kinetic sculpture and Rathaus by Lucy Komisar