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Bundeshaus: A guided tour

The "Bundeshaus" or Swiss Parliament Building in Bern is an unforgettable part of the Bernese skyline. The following is a small extract from a brochure available from Swiss Parliament Services, outlining some of the key elements.

«**Curia Confederationis Helveticae**», the building that houses the Swiss Parliament (Bundeshaus), was erected between 1894 and 1902. It was designed by Hans Wilhelm Auer, an architect from St. Gallen. Its construction involved 173 Swiss firms, while 33 Swiss artists were commissioned to decorate it.



Bundeshaus with Bundesplatz

Ninety-five per cent of the stone used was quarried in Switzerland and the variety of materials employed is symbolic of the country's diversity. Each statue and each painting represents a particular moment in Switzerland's history.

The domed hall: This part of the building most evocatively symbolises Switzerland since it was designed in the form of a cross (echoing the Swiss flag). The magnificent staircase is dominated by an impressive group of statues: The original Confederates – Walter Fürst from Uri, Werner Stauffacher from Schwyz and Arnold von Melchtal from Unterwalden, who represent the legendary oath sworn on the Rütli in 1291.



Domed hall of the Bundeshaus

The dome's key features include **four large arched windows** just beneath the dome. These are decorated with works by four Swiss artists.

The paintings on glass show scenes from the four main industries in Switzerland in 1902.

The east window, by Albert Welti, depicts the textile industry around Lake Zurich, the north window, designed by Emile-David Turrian, illustrates the theme of trade and transport and the west window, by Ernst Bieler, is devoted to the metal industry in the Jura Mountains.



The original Confederates

The south window, which is the work of Hans Sandreuter from Basel, shows an agricultural scene with the Jungfrau Massif (Bernese Oberland) in the background.

The Swiss Cross: A mosaic from the studio of the English artist Clement Heaton, based in Neuchâtel, decorates the apex of the glass dome. The banners illustrate, in Latin, the philosophy of the Swiss political system: *Unus pro omnibus – Omnes pro uno* (One for all – All for one). The Swiss Cross is surrounded by the **coats of arms of the 22 Swiss cantons** painted on glass by Albert Lüthi (Zurich). The coat of arms of the canton of Jura, created in 1978, was placed in the arch above the three Confederates.



The dome with its intricate glass features

The chamber of the National Council: The mural by Charles Giron from Geneva, entitled "The Cradle of the Confederation", shows a magnificent view over Lake Lucerne with the **Rütli Meadow** in the foreground. This is where the three Confederates took their oath in 1291 and founded the original Swiss Confederation. The angel of peace is reclining in a cloud above the Rütli with an olive branch in her hand. In the niche to the left of the painting is a statue by Antonio Chiattone from the Tessin representing the Swiss national hero William Tell, a symbol of political freedom and action.



National Council Chamber

In the niche to the right stands a statue by Antonio's brother Giuseppe Chiattone representing Gertrud Stauffacher, who embodies "wisdom". According to legend, it was she who suggested that the three valley cantons Uri, Schwyz and Nidwalden should form a Confederation by swearing an oath ("William Tell" by Friedrich Schiller). Gertrud was the wife of one of the three Confederates, Werner Stauffacher.

The Wandelhalle or lobby is 44 m long and its curved shape lends it great depth. This is where the members of the Councils meet and talk during the sessions, as well as giving interviews and receiving lobbyists or personal guests.

Source: http://www.parlement.ch/e/service-presse/parlamentsgebäude/Documents/Brosch%C3%BCre_A5_Englisch.pdf



Wandelhalle (lobby)