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### Basel Autumn Fair



Fairs have enjoyed a long tradition in Basel, since The Middle Ages in fact. The right to hold the Basel Autumn Fair "in perpetuity" was bestowed upon the Mayor of Basel, Herr Hannsen von Berenfels, by Emperor Frederick III on 11 July 1471 when the mayor travelled to the Imperial Diet in Regensburg. With this imperial privilege, Basel developed into a true trade fair city and, right up until the present it remains the biggest and most important trade fair and congress venue in Switzerland, and one of the most significant in Europe. That permission in 1471 did not come cheap. The city had to pay 1759 guilders (in today's money, about CHF 220,560), which was raised by the mayor, merchants and others. Not a bad deal when amortized over 548 years.

Today the Basel Autumn Fair, or "d'Mäss" as it is known in Swiss German, is Switzerland's biggest and oldest funfair and, with its long tradition and special customs, forms part of the city's living heritage. It is rung in at precisely 12 noon on the last Saturday of October by the bell of St. Martin's church and lasts 15 days. As a traditional inner-city fair that spreads itself through Barfüsserplatz, Petersplatz, Münsterplatz, Messeplatz, Rosental, Claraplatz and Kaserne and beyond reaching into the

surrounding region, where France, Germany and Switzerland all meet attracting around a million people to Basel each time. Games, rides, amusements and food stalls are all located side by side. In addition to the offerings in the exhibition halls.

As previously stated The Basel Fair offers many different forms of entertainment including a Medieval playground (swords and shields provided) which allows kids to take flights of fancy while their parents go gift-shopping. A children's theatre run by the Anthroposophical Society provides messages with a meaning.

The atmosphere in the City Lounge, which forms part of the hall complex designed by Basel architects Herzog & de Meuron, is unmatched anywhere in the world. Its location in central Basel and its perfect public transport links make Basel's trade fair ground into a popular meeting point for young and old alike, and not just during the Autumn Fair but throughout the year as a whole. Ultimately, it is thanks to the good and successful working relationship enjoyed with the public authorities that major events attracting several hundred thousand visitors can be held on Exhibition Square every year.

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