

Fasnacht from **A**(sh Wednesday) **to** **Z**(eedel)

Every year, the 72 hours of Basel's Fasnacht are the "drey scheenschte Dääg" (three most beautiful days) for many people, when Fasnacht aficionados from near and far crowd into the city to experience the special atmosphere of this unique event. Below you'll find the schedule of events as well as explanations of these events and other Fasnacht-related terms to help you make the most of these crazy, noisy, and altogether fantastic days. To learn more about Basel's Fasnacht, visit their official websites.

www.fasnacht.ch

www.fasnachts-comite.ch





Ash Wednesday: In the Catholic Church, Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the 40-day lent period before Easter. The Basel Fasnacht starts on the Monday following Ash Wednesday.

Bummelsonntag: The three Sundays after Fasnacht are called Bummelsonntage (strolling Sundays). On these days, the **Cliques** return to the city streets—without their masks and costumes, but with their instruments—from 16:00-22:00 to stroll around and play their music as an after-taste of the Fasnacht excitement.

Clique: The Cliques are associations of like-minded people who work together all year to participate in the Fasnacht. They typically include a music group consisting of pipers and drummers. Each Clique decides on a **Sujet** for the upcoming Fasnacht, around which its costumes, wagons, and other props are designed. During the **Cortège** and other events, the Cliques march together, usually led by a small group of non-musicians (the “Vortrab”) who also distribute the **Zeedel**, followed by the musicians and then any other members of the Clique. **Practical tip:** During the Cortège, the Cliques have scheduled breaks at restaurants and restrooms; please let them go first as they have set times that they need to be back on their route. During these breaks, they need to leave drums and masks outside of restaurants; you can admire them but please do not touch them!

Cortège: On Monday and Wednesday afternoon, from 13:30 on, more than 10,000 masked participants on foot or on wagons parade along a set route through the city center of Grossbasel and Kleinbasel in the so-called Cortège. The **Cliques** display their **Sujets** accompanied by the sound of drums and piccolos while the **Gugge** music groups march to their energizing music. Most groups also hand out **Zeedel** that make fun of local events and personalities in verse form. **Practical tips:** You can find a complete map of the route of the Cortège at <http://fasnacht.ch/service/cortege-route/>. Note that tram and bus services in these areas are halted Monday-Wednesday from lunchtime onwards (check out www.bvb.ch for their alternate transit program). Because of the crowds, leave all valuable items at home; only take what you really need. Hold and watch your children carefully, especially around the **Waggis** wagons where candy and other goodies are given out. Agree in advance to a specific meeting place with your kids, in case you get separated. Also consider prearranging specific meeting times and places with friends as you simply cannot hear your mobile phone or any conversation over the incredible noise.



Fasnacht Foods: There are several different foods that are typically served during Fasnacht and the weeks leading up to it. These include Mehlsuppe (flour soup), Zwiebelwähe (onion pies), and Fastenwähen (a type of pretzel with caraway seeds).



Gugge: These music groups use a variety of percussion and wind instruments for their deafening, discordant, but often very catchy and rhythmic tunes derived from pop, rock, and jazz music. They are also dressed up in costumes and are led by a drum major who often wears a special costume. These groups participate in the **Cortège** as well as give concerts on Tuesday evening; they do not participate in the **Morgenstreich**.



Gugge Concerts: The traditional Guggemusik concerts take place on Tuesday night from 19:30-23:00. Organized **Gugge** groups meet at Messeplatz at 18:30 and march from there across Mittlere Brücke to Marktplatz and Barfüsserplatz for their concerts. Unorganized **Gugge** musicians meet at 20:00 at Claraplatz for their concert. After the concerts, the musicians disperse throughout town, with the spectators tagging along, playing their music until the wee hours of the morning. **Practical tip:** If you must bring a stroller, avoid the overly crowded areas directly in front of the stages.

Kinderfasnacht: Tuesday is the day for children; in the afternoon of this day, there is no organized procession. Instead, small or large groups of adults and children in costume wander at random through the streets, with or without playing instruments. On this day only, children (participants and spectators) are welcome to dress up. It is a fun day for kids and not as crowded and loud as the Monday and Wednesday **Cortège**.



Larve: In Basel German, this is the term for the masks that cover the faces and heads of the Fasnacht participants. They are made from plaster bases that are covered with special paper and then shaped and painted to illustrate the **Clique's** chosen **Sujet**. **Practical tip:** The masks (and instruments) restrict the participants' mobility and ability to see, so make a point of not getting in their way.



Laterne: These are huge lanterns carried or pulled along by the **Cliques** during the **Morgenstreich** and **Cortège**. They are made from a wooden frame covered with paper or canvas with paintings

Fasnacht 2023 Schedule February 27 - March 1		
Day	Time	Event
Monday, February 27	04:00- sunrise	Morgenstreich
	From 13:30	Cortège (procession)
Monday night until Wednesday morning		Lantern exhibit at Münsterplatz
Monday night until Wednesday morning		Exhibit of floats and props at Kaserne
Tuesday, February 28	From around 13:00	Kinderfasnacht (children's carnival)
	19:30-23:00	Gugge concerts at Marktplatz, Barfüsserplatz, and Claraplatz
Wednesday, March 1	From 13:30	Cortège (procession)
Thursday, March 2	04:00	The Fasnacht 2023 ends



that illustrate the **Clique's** chosen **Sujet** of the year and can be up to 3 m tall. They are typically powered by gas lights. The lanterns are exhibited at Münsterplatz from Monday evening to Wednesday morning and are illuminated on Tuesday evening.



Maske: In Basel German, this is the term for the entire costume a person wears, including the **Larve** and clothing.

Morgenstreich: The starting event of the Basel Fasnacht that takes place on the Monday following **Ash Wednesday** at 04:00. As the bells of St. Martin's church strike 4 o'clock, all the lights in the center of town are extinguished and the **Cliques** set off from their assembly points to march through the darkened town with their newly unveiled lanterns to the sounds of traditional tunes played on piccolos and drums until dawn. The participants also wear smaller lanterns on their heads, lending to the otherworldly atmosphere of the event. Large groups with big lanterns stay on the main roads, but small groups also wander through all the smaller streets and alleys in the old part of town. **Practical tips:** The Morgenstreich always draws tens of thousands of spectators. If you plan to go, please leave your car at home and check out the SBB and BVB (www.bvb.ch) for their special train, tram, and bus services during these early morning hours. The special atmosphere of the **Morgenstreich** depends on the darkness that is only relieved by the lights of the lanterns. Therefore, please do not use flashlights or flash photography. If you need to warm up, several bakeries and cafes will open to serve hot drinks and traditional **Fasnacht foods** during these early morning hours. Check their doors to see if they are open as they may have blackened out their windows to avoid light spilling onto the darkened streets!

Räppli: This is the Basel-German term for confetti, probably in memory of the 1-Rappen coin that was in use until the 1990s. Each year, tons of Räppli end up on the city streets, thrown by the handfuls, dumped on unsuspecting spectators by the bag-full, or rained on the crowds from large confetti



"cannons" on the **Wagen**. **Practical tip:** Do not pick up the Räppli from the ground and throw them at other people.

Sujet: Every year, each **Clique** selects a **Sujet** (topic) for the upcoming Fasnacht, which often picks up on a local or national event or topic of interest. Then, the costumes, wagons, lanterns, and other props of the **Clique** are designed around that topic. They often also compose a poem about the **Sujet** that is published on the **Zeedel** during the processions.



Wagen: These are the big floats, usually pulled by a tractor, that are only used during the **Cortège** and in most cases carry **Waggis**. They are decorated to match the **Clique's Sujet**. Usually some of the members of the **Clique** ride on the wagon and throw **Räppli**, oranges, yellow mimosa flowers, candy, and many other things to the spectators along the route. You can take a closer look at the floats at Kaserne, where they will be exhibited from Monday evening to Wednesday morning. **Practical tips:** Please make sure your kids stay clear of the wheels of the wagons when they go after the goodies distributed. Do not throw oranges or other goodies back at the wagons or into the crowds.



Waggis: One of the most prominent traditional Fasnacht figures in Basel, the **Waggis** is thought to represent an Alsatian farmer. Their traditional costume is a blue shirt, white pants, red neckerchief, wooden shoes, and a **Larve** with yellow hair made from bast fibers and with a huge red nose. However, the costumes may vary to illustrate the group's chosen **Sujet**, although the bast-fiber hair and grotesque nose generally remain.

Zeedel: The **Zeedel** (Basel German for "scrap of paper") is a piece of paper on which a **Clique** has printed their often sarcastic poem about their chosen **Sujet**, typically in Basel dialect. The **Zeedel** are distributed to onlookers during the **Cortège**.

