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**BASLER FAEHRI BOATMEN**  
**Historic Rhine Passenger Ferries of Basel**



The Rhine River is a mighty stream. There are more than a few ferries crossing its wide flow as it courses on its way to the North Sea, most of them what you'd think of a modern ferry, car decks and diesel motored propellers fighting the powerful current. In the city of Basel on Switzerland's northwest corner where the river makes a few wide turns cutting through the old medieval town, four unique ferry boats have been carrying passengers across the river for

over 150 years.

Like the ancient Greek story of the ferryman to Hades, Acheron, who for a coin placed under the tongue of the dead, would ferry souls across the River Styx, the ferry boat men of the Basler Faehri will carry modern foot passengers across the Rhine for a handful of loose change. The historic ferries of Basel have no motors, hand-operated by tiller, they cross the Rhine by tacking against the current, held in position by a rope suspended above the river and letting the current push them across from landing to landing. To cross in the opposite direction they simply turn the boat the other way. The ferries are operated by friendly cheerful boatmen who lease them and operate them as an independent business, making them a home for much of the day. The boatman's principal skill is dodging the ship and barge traffic moving along the river, for a crossing which only takes a few minutes.



Once called the "Flying Bridges" of Basel, the Basler Ferries originated in 1854 when the Middle Rhine Bridge (Mittlere Rheinbrücke) was the only way to cross the river between the center of Basel (Grosse Basel) and its growing suburb "little Basel" (Klein Basel). There were originally two ferries, on either side of the Rhine Bridge. The first ferry crossed from St Alban to the Bürgerlichen Waisenhaus a civilian orphanage. The second, added in 1862 crossed to the Army Barracks (Kaserne). Two more were added in the 1890s and finally a fifth. The ferries fell on hard times with newer bridges and were almost abandoned, until a foundation was established to keep the city's beloved

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anachronism still in operation. Today, there are four ferries – the “Wild Maa” at St Alban, the “Leu” at Münster, the Vogel Gryff” at Klingental and the “Ueli” at St Johann.

The fare cost to cross on the Basler Faehri is 1.60 Swiss Francs for adults and .80 Swiss Francs for Children. Bicycles and Pets are .80 as well to cross. The ferries operate from 9am to 7pm in summer, sometimes until 8pm with good weather, and 11am to 5pm in winter months. The crossing only takes a few minutes. This charming old mode of transportation is certainly less practical than taking a tram across the bridges, but worth a stroll along the banks of the Rhine for a river view of the old city. © [Bargain Travel Europe](#)



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