

# Rhine Times

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**Fasnacht Basel & 2008**

moorgestraich

drummler

glyggekäller

guggemuusig

waageglygge

laarve

ladäärne

pfyffer

## A Guide to the Basler Fasnacht to help newcomers understand the traditions

by Corinne Böhle

### Pre-carnival productions:

- ◇ *Mimösli* at the Häbse Theatre (near Mustermesse);  
4<sup>th</sup> January - 9<sup>th</sup> February
- ◇ *Fasnachtsbändeli* at the Theater Arlecchino (near Dreirosenbrücke);  
5<sup>th</sup> January – 27<sup>th</sup> January; weekends only
- ◇ *Pfyfferli* at Fauteuil Theatre (near Hotel Basel);  
4<sup>th</sup> January – 10<sup>th</sup> February
- ◇ *S'Ridicule* at the German Train Station;  
4<sup>th</sup> January – 2<sup>nd</sup> February
- ◇ *Charivari* at the Volkshaus (near Mustermesse);  
13<sup>th</sup> January – 26<sup>th</sup> February
- ◇ *Drummeli* at the Messe Basel (the official production!);  
27<sup>th</sup> January – 2<sup>nd</sup> February
- ◇ ... plus a few smaller shows in and around Basel. Most of these events are sold out way ahead of time, but the odd ticket can usually still be had for select performances. The style of these shows is a bit reminiscent of cabaret and includes almost all kinds of carnival acts as well as little satirical sketches discussing the most important cultural and political events of the year. All productions are in *Baselditsch*, therefore attend only if you have a rudimentary knowledge of the dialect or good understanding of German, or attend with someone who does.



**Carnival:**

Starts at 4am on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> February, and ends at 4am on Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> February, 2008. Dates change every year, but never the procedure.

**IMPORTANT!!!:** During those 72h *NO* public transport will be servicing the city centre, plus there will be a special tram and bus schedule for the entire region and extra train services to and from most nearby towns. Check your local paper for the special transport schedule a week or so before carnival or check with BVB or BLT (regional transport services) and SBB (Swiss railway) at:

<http://www.bvb.ch/>

<http://www.sbb.ch/en/index.htm> (schedule site in English)

[http://www.fasnacht.ch/?pm\\_1=21&mid=21](http://www.fasnacht.ch/?pm_1=21&mid=21) (the English section of Basler Fasnacht Online with loads of useful information, pictures and live video streaming during the 72h 📺 recommend it to your friends in the States!)

**Carnival Events:**

*Morgestraich* the official opening ceremony in downtown Basel at 4am on Monday morning

*Cortège* on Monday (1:30pm) take your kids and have a look and listen at the spectacle of this huge parade, enjoy the sounds and sights and bring bags to carry your loot (fruit, flowers, candy, verses) home with you!

*Ladäärne-Uusstellig* lanterns are displayed from Monday evening through Wednesday morning on the hill around the cathedral at Münsterplatz

*Waage- und Reggwisye-Uusstellig* floats are exhibited at the Kaserne Areal from Monday pm till Wednesday am

Children's *Cortège* on Tuesday fun for kids both as active actors and as viewers

*Gugge Concert* Tuesday night is the brass bands special time with competitive concerts at Barfüsser-, Märt- and Claraplatz.

*Cortège* on Wednesday ditto as Monday and bring some more bags!

Additionally there is *Gässle* to be enjoyed - all three nights brass and drum & fife bands walk the streets of downtown playing their tunes

*Schnitzelbängg* every night the traditional verse singers travel from restaurant to restaurant to sing their traditional poems for the audience





There is no admission fee or ticket for attending any of the street events during the 72h, there is however a *Blaggedde* (badge) in lieu of a ticket. Every year it is a different motif. This year's badge depicts a playing card, after this year's motto "We are playing...". There are three different versions: Copper (CHF 8), Silver (CHF 15) and Gold (CHF 45). There is also the modern (but small) Bijou at CHF 100, which was initiated a few years ago.

The badges are highly collectible and you are not expected to buy or wear a gold one. Buying a silver or copper to wear is, however, highly advisable as it shows you to be a supporter and creates some advantages/privileges as

active members seek out people who wear badges to interact with – especially float groups will ignore you and you will not get any goodies, just heavy showers of confetti, should you not wear a badge! Children too should wear a badge. Wear it clearly visible on your outer garment and even as soon as you buy it – like the locals do!

The expenses incurred by groups to create new presentations (costumes, masks, floats, lanterns, props and goodies) every year have to be paid for. The committee – which issues and distributes the badges – subsidizes official groups. The badges are sold through the carnival groups and 30% of the profits go directly to the groups to help offset their costs. In addition the committee rewards the best groups each year with an extra subsidy awarded a few weeks after carnival.



There is an official guide to

Carnival as well. It lists all official groups, their *Sujet* (topic), details about their presentation, and a few other interesting tidbits. It also lists the “official” rules of conduct for all participants and has a map of the *Cortège* (parade route) and special events. This guide is called the *Rädabäng* and comes out about two weeks ahead of time (in German).

Carnival is not just used as a traditional platform for political and cultural criticism, but also has benevolent aspects with charity events taking place before, during and after carnival – for example, the yearly *Sternmarsch*, (<http://www.bgg-basel.ch/>).

### A few last tips to improve your experience (from an active participant):

- ⌘ Strollers and dogs are an **ABSOLUTE NO-NO**. I also seriously advise against taking small children as the crowds and noise are not only frightening, but also potentially dangerous to such a small person.
- ⌘ There are special services available for disabled and elderly people – check with the committee (<http://www.fasnachts-comite.ch/english.html>).
- ⌘ Active participants have a very restricted view from behind their masks, therefore they have the right of way no matter what!
- ⌘ **DO NOT** pick up confetti off the floor! It is unsanitary and quite dangerous as it contains dust and dirt, but potentially also glass shards and plastic debris (eye injuries have occurred due to such confetti being used). Watch for flying objects at the *Cortège* as goodies thrown from floats do not always go the right way or are rerouted by people trying to intercept them. Accidents happen, unfortunately, and people get hit by objects unintentionally. Please take it with a smile if it happens to you. **NEVER** throw or throw back any item at active participants! Active participants have a very restricted view and throwing things at them could cause serious injury to them or other spectators.
- ⌘ Basel is very proud of its unique full facial mask tradition and does not allow outside groups to participate unless they have appropriate headgear. Adult viewers attending with painted faces are frowned upon and considered disrespectful.
- ⌘ Beware of pickpockets; do not take any unnecessary valuables with you and carry your wallet/money on your person if possible.
- ⌘ Please do not use flash photography or any light sources at *Morgestraich*.
- ⌘ If you don't like crowds or plan to attend in larger groups, stay away from the centre of the action and find less crowded areas (for example, Wettsteinbrücke instead of Mittlere Brücke at the *Cortège* or the larger *Gässli* towards University instead of Marktplatz during *Morgestraich*). Ask your Swiss friends for advice and tips, or try to join them if it's your first visit.

Have a happy and save Fasnacht!