



57th World Congress of Chess Composition August 23-30, 2014 in Berne

Getting Here and Getting Around

Public transport

Bern is the political center of Switzerland and lies in the heart of the “Mittelland”, the “lowlands” of Switzerland that stretch from Geneva at the French border to St. Gallen and the Lake of Constance. The Mittelland is very densely populated: Besides the cities, there are hundreds of towns and villages that are sometimes only a few kilometers apart. This is one reason why the public transport system is very well developed.

Reaching Bern by train from all over Europe is very easy. Trains within Switzerland run very often (twice per hour to all major destinations); the trains are comfortable and usually on time. As almost everything in Switzerland, the public transport system is expensive, but there are special offers for visitors that are not available within Switzerland or to Swiss residents. You'll find those under <http://www.swiss-pass.ch/>. In general, the prices for the Swiss railroad system are cheaper when you buy them outside of Switzerland.

(If you have some more time to visit Switzerland, consider riding the Glacier Express <http://www.glacierexpress.ch/EN/Pages/default.aspx> that runs from Zermatt to St. Moritz. The whole trip is 8 hours long, but you can do a part of it if you prefer.)

A little known fact is that Bern has an International Airport, a very tiny one though. It's very comfortable to fly from and to Bern since you only have to be at the airport about 30 minutes before the plane leaves. The downside is there are only flights to Bern from a few European cities, and the prices are usually considerably higher than to other airports. Zurich is the most convenient big airport for traveling to Bern. There is a train station right in the airport building with frequent direct connections to Bern (1 ¼ h). At the Geneva airport, there is a train station as well, but it takes almost 2 hours to get to Bern. The airport in Basel is smaller than Zurich or Geneva, and you first have to take a shuttle bus to Basel main station to switch to the train to Bern. This trip is about 1 ½ hours long.

From Bern main station, it's a short tramway ride to the hotel. Exit the Bahnhof (=station) by going down the ramp or the stairs and follow the signs to the center and the trams; from other exits (up the escalator), finding the right tram is harder. If you stay at one of the Congress Hotels, you do not need to purchase a tram ticket. Just show proof of your registration if there is somebody to check the tickets.

Take the Tram #9 towards “Wankdorf Bahnhof” (*not Wabern!*) and exit at the Station “Guisanplatz Expo”, and you will stand right in front of the Hotel. Let us know if you need assistance to transfer from the train to the tram.

Private transport

Bern is governed by an environmental friendly city council. Cars are banned in the inner city, and the traffic flow is broken as often as possible; standing in front of red traffic lights or behind busses at bus stops is very common. With many closed roads and one way streets,

finding your way is not easy, and there are even roads that are closed during parts of the day. One more thing: Watch out for bicycles – there are many, and a lot of their riders think that the roads are only built for them. One more thing: In Switzerland pedestrians have the right of way at pedestrian crossings and in the cities this law is enforced. Watch out!

As mentioned in the Invitation, there is almost no free parking in the city (except on blue parking places from Saturday evening till Monday morning). The Hotel offers indoor parking for CHF 20.00 per day. If you are interested in a cheaper alternative in some minutes walking distance from the hotel, let us know (only limited spaces available). Parking in the inner city is even more expensive, about CHF 4.40 per hour.

Having discouraged you to bring your car, here are the driving instructions to the hotel:



A1/E25 highway from Zurich-Basel, A12/E27 from Geneva-Lausanne, A6 from Interlaken:

Take the Bern Wankdorf BEA Expo exit, follow signs for BEA Expo, turn right into Bolligenstrasse and after approx. 500 m turn right into Mingerstrasse.

Getting around

Here the Link to “Transportation in the City” on the Bern Information:

<http://www.bern.com/en/travel-planning/arrival-transport/transportation>

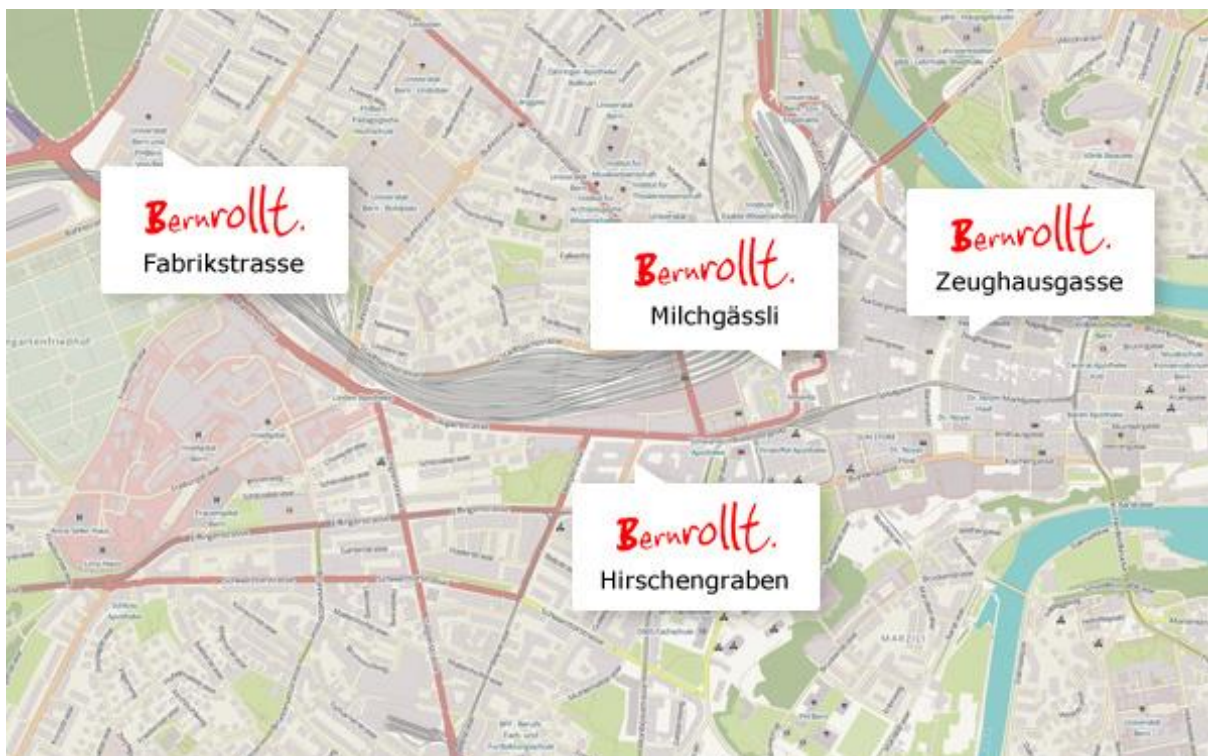
Since June 2014 all tourists staying in a hotel in Bern have tickets to trams and buses included in their hotel price. This includes the zones 100 and 101 that comprise all major sights in and around the city, even going up the Gurten, the “mountain” of Bern.

http://www.bernmobil.ch/file/!!Lageplaene_FPW2013/Zonenplan%20Libero%20Zoom%20Bern/Zonenplan_Libero_Zoom_Bern_131215.pdf

Since there is a tram stop right in front of our hotel, I advise you to use this possibility. Bern is a small city, it only takes 10 minutes to go to the main station, and the ride to the old town is even shorter.

If you intend to use trams and buses often, it might be helpful to download the app “MEZI” (Mobile Echtzeit-Information). It is free and available for Android and iOS, but unfortunately it’s only in German <http://www.mezi.ch/>. It helps you find the next stop for public transport and tells you when the next tram leaves etc. The best about MEZI: It was developed by Glue Software Engineering, where Thomas is a partner (and one of our Sponsors, too).

There is an inexpensive way to explore the city by bicycle: You can rent a bike (as well as children’s bikes, scooters and skateboards) from “Bern rollt” <http://www.bernrollt.ch> (unfortunately only in German). You need to leave an ID and CHF 20.- deposit to rent a bike. The first 4 hours are free, and from then you pay CH 1.- per hour. Even E-Bikes are available, but they are more expensive, of course. If you want to be sure to get a bike, a reservation fee of CHF 5 is applicable. Please bring your bike helmet if you want to cycle through Bern. It’s not the law but it’s much safer. Here are the locations where you can rent a bike:



You can use trains or your car to explore the surroundings of Bern. Please refer to the Swiss Pass Link above. There is a 4 day special package for the Bernese Oberland <http://www.regiopass-berneroberland.ch/home-en/>.

On this website <http://www.loetschberger.ch/Ausfluege> (sorry, only in German), you'll find suggestions for excursions and discounted packages.

I will write a little more about what to do and where to go in Bern in one of my next "Franziska's tips".

Safety

Switzerland has the reputation to be very safe, and it's earned. Still be sure to apply the necessary precautions.

Mainly when you arrive at the main station or sometimes in trams or buses, beware of pickpockets. Don't leave your wallet in the back pocket or in an open purse. Beware if you are suddenly surrounded by a group of apparently harmless people. Don't leave your luggage unattended. Avoid being alone on dark streets in the middle of the night; only a few streets are affected, but it's difficult to point those out to you. Cover your hand when entering your PIN at an ATM. Don't give change when somebody asks you for coins to feed the parking meter when nobody else is around (and if you still do, be very careful that no banknotes are taken from your wallet without your consent ;-)). As far as I know, not many cars are stolen in Bern, but bikes theft is not unheard of.

With these normal precautions, your stay should be safe and enjoyable.

In the inner city, there are many street musicians and performers during the summer. It's at your discretion if you want to give them something for their performance. (I never give them anything, since my office is in the middle of the city and it's not fun to focus on your work when somebody is trying to make music. Not all of them are talented ☺).

Begging is not illegal in Bern, but all legal residents of Switzerland get enough money for food and shelter. IMO you just support illegals or drug abuse if you give money to beggars.

That's all for today. More to come.

June 17, 2014

Franziska