

Augusta Raurica: Off to Antiquity!

Why not embark on an exciting journey to an ancient city?

The **Colonia Raurica** in today's Switzerland was founded in 44 BC and is the earliest colony settlement on the Rhine. The site developed into a cultural centre with fora, theatres, baths and temples. After a lot of damage had been caused by warfare during the 3rd century AD, the Roman army erected an impressive fort near present day Kaiseraugst on the Rhine. During the Early Middle Ages it evolved into a settlement that was the region's Episcopal see for a while. Basle, situated further down the Rhine, began to gain importance during the 7th and 8th centuries while the formerly thriving Roman colony town of Augusta Raurica turned into a small fishing village.



2000 years ago, 20,000 people lived in Augusta Raurica. Today, more than 140,000 visitors a year stroll through the ancient ruins, the museum and the domestic animal park. This is no surprise, because the ample grounds are an ideal destination for a full-day excursion, which offers a lot while costing very little.

A considerable portion of the remnants left by the indigenous Celtic population and the immigrants from the Mediterranean in the former Roman town have now been excavated and are on show in the largest archaeological open-air complex in Switzerland. More than **30 monuments** from the ancient town can be viewed here. For instance, one can take a seat in the best-preserved ancient theatre of Central Europe; one can explore 100m of sewage canal or be enchanted by the atmosphere in an underground well house.

Finds from the excavations are exhibited in the **Museum**, including the famous silver treasure from Kaiseraugst. It is one of the most important Late Antique treasures ever found. Further exhibitions on Roman themes, such as early Christianity, Roman bathing customs or crafts in Augusta Raurica,

are located in the outdoor areas of the open-air museum.



One element of the Museum, which is particularly popular with children, is the reconstructed **Roman House**. As in Roman times, the rooms are furnished and painted colorfully. There is a kitchen, a banquet hall, bathrooms and a bedroom. The workshop contains a butcher's, a smithy and a bronze foundry. Both the workshop and the tavern overlook the street. An exact replica of a Roman carriage is parked in the entrance area and inspires much discussion about how uncomfortable travelling must have been in Roman times.

Animal breeds, known to Roman husbandry and cuisine, are kept in the **Animal Park**. Among others, there are domestic guinea fowl, grey lag geese, peacocks, woolly grazing pigs and a breed of small cattle.

Numerous activities for families with children and schools invite visitors to spend a whole day roaming through the ancient city in order to experience firsthand what it was like in Roman times. Some of the highlights from our varied programme include real archaeological excavations for everyone to participate in, baking bread in a Roman wood-burning oven, restoring sherds, and theatre plays for school children.



Particularly popular with both young and old is the annual **Roman Festival**, held in Augst at the end of August. This conveys various researched aspects of Roman life in a popularized manner. The colorful festivals have become famous far beyond the region and attract thousands of visitors, who are delighted to let themselves be transported back to Roman times.

Food is available in the Augusta Raurica Snack Bar beside the theatre (summer months only) or in one of the restaurants in the area. Or why not have a barbeque in the Roman amphitheatre?

On Your Own or Accompanied by an Expert:

Take a seat in the best-preserved Roman theatre north of the Alps

Discover the workings of the wastewater system of an ancient city

Ponder the toilet in the kitchen in the Roman house

Make sure you do not miss the largest silver treasure from Late Antiquity exhibited in the museum.

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