



Kanton Basel-Stadt

# Basel Town Hall

A long tradition in  
the heart of the city



## THEN AND NOW: IMPRESSIVE AND MAGNIFICENT

The Town Hall is not only the seat of government of the canton of Basel-Stadt, but also one of the most beautiful buildings in Basel's old town. With its wonderful paintings and sculptures, as well as the fascinating architecture spanning different centuries, it is a significant focal point for the people of Basel and also a popular destination for visitors from both Switzerland and abroad. You can visit many of the imposing rooms with a guided tour and experience up close the multifaceted history of the Town Hall.

 Public access to Martinsgasse

### Construction phases

-  1504–1514
-  1535–1536  
and 1606–1608
-  1899–1904

### 1. Government Hall

Scan the QR code and take a virtual stroll through the hall!



### 2. Clock 1511/12

Above: the imperial couple Heinrich II and Kunigunde. Justitia in the centre.

### 3. Block construction 1899–1901

### 4. Front Chambers 1606–1608

### 5. Front part of the building with arcade 1504–1514

Entrance/exit  
Martinsgasse

3rd floor

2nd floor

1st floor

### 6. Assembly Hall

Scan the QR code for a virtual tour!



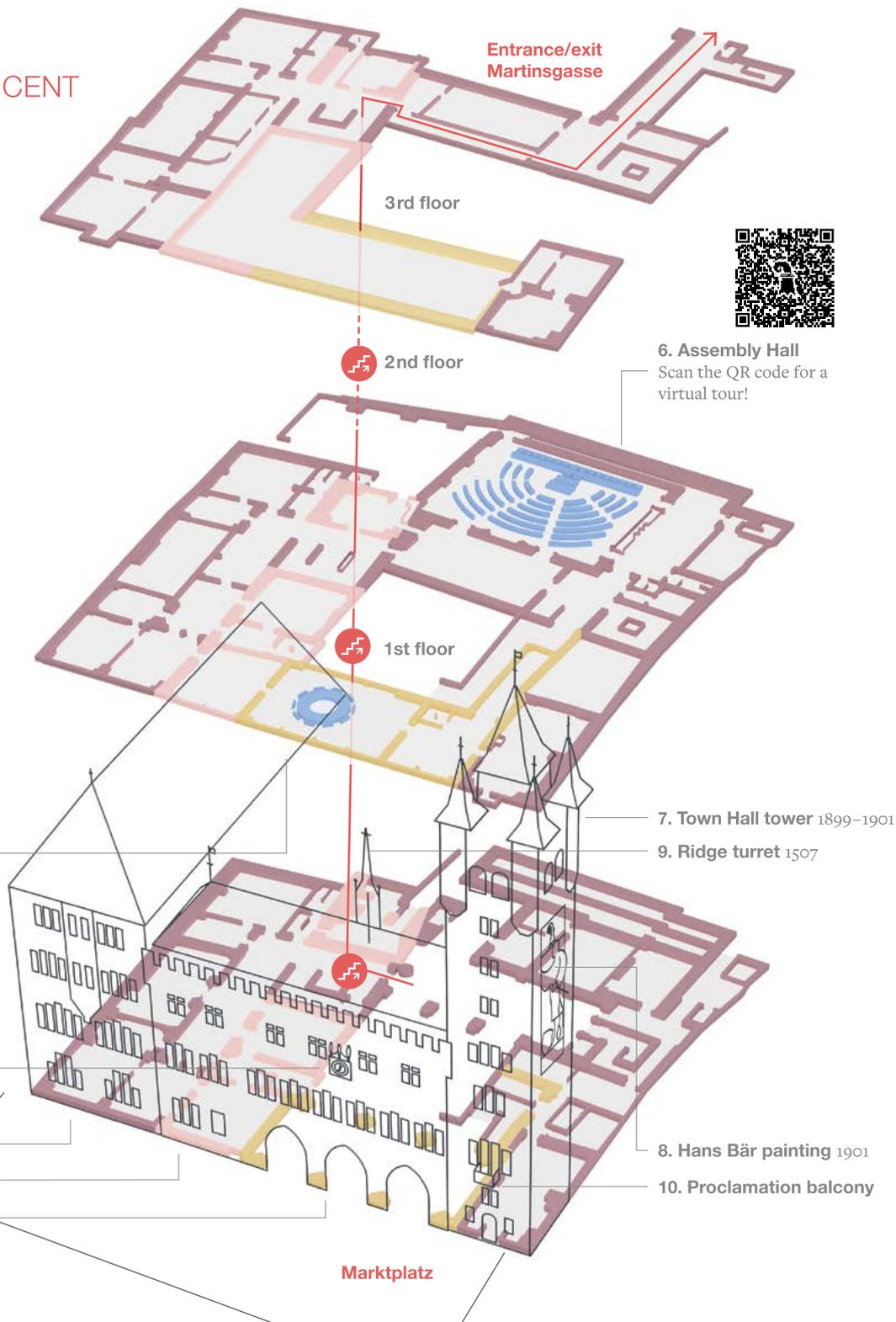
### 7. Town Hall tower 1899–1901

### 9. Ridge turret 1507

### 8. Hans Bär painting 1901

### 10. Proclamation balcony

Marktplatz





Lucius Munatius Plancus, a gift from the Basel sculptor Hans Michel from 1580

Then ...

## A BUILDING HISTORY: 500 YEARS OF REPRESENTATION

The building history of the Town Hall is long and multifaceted: old and new parts have been interconnected, extended, replaced and expanded through the centuries. Today, the Town Hall consists of three main parts, and its façade paintings, inscriptions and statues reveal many interesting details about Basel and its history.

- 1501** Basel joins the Confederation.
- 1503** The Cantonal Parliament decides to build a representative town hall.
- 1504 – 1514** The main building (5) is constructed with the three arcades and the Government Hall (1) in the upper part.
- 1517 – 1521** The rear building is extended and the first Assembly Hall (6) is incorporated.
- 1606 – 1608** The Front Chambers (4) are added on.
- 1899 – 1901** The broad block building (3) and the Town Hall tower (7) are built.

### The sculptures: From Romans to saints

In the **courtyard of the Town Hall** is a sandstone sculpture of the Roman general Lucius Munatius Plancus (1580), who is considered to be the founder of the Roman colony of Augusta Raurica. The **façade to the market square** is decorated with several sculptures by the Basel sculptor Hans Turner (all 1510/11): framing the clock are Basel's patron saint Emperor Heinrich II (2) and his wife Kunigunde (2) as well as a Justitia (2), with her executioner's sword and scales. Further above is a standard bearer of the city with a sword, proudly holding his flag up to the sky.



High above on the exterior façade: the standardbearer of the city of Basel

### The paintings: Coats of arms, battles and the Confederation

One of the basic themes of the mural is 'jurisprudence and legislation': these include the oil paintings 'Jehoshaphat Cautions the Judges', 'Herodes in Hyrcanus' (both on the side in the **arcades**) as well as 'The Final Judgement' **at the top of the council staircase** (all by Hans Bock between 1608 and 1611).

The second theme is 'Basel and its admission to the Swiss Confederation in 1501': Swiss coats of arms and paintings on the exterior and interior courtyard façade depict this imagery.

The **exterior façade** also shows a painted relief frieze on the left of childlike warriors and victory angels with laurel wreaths over the arcade arches. There are also paintings of halberd bearers and peaceful citizens.

The Basel banner bearer Hans Bär, who fell at the Battle of Marignano in 1515, is depicted (by Wilhelm Balmer, 1901) at the **south wall of the tower** (8).

Detail from the mural 'The Final Judgement', which was created as early as 1510 but repainted by Hans Bock in 1610/11.



You can find out more about the history of the Town Hall as well as obtain further information on the individual paintings on our website: [www.staatskanzlei.bs.ch/rathaus](http://www.staatskanzlei.bs.ch/rathaus)

... and now

## THE TOWN HALL TODAY: WHERE POLICY IS MADE

The Town Hall is the heart of the Basel democracy: the Great Council (which forms the Basel Parliament) as well as the Cantonal Government meet here. The State Chancellery, the Parliamentary Service and the President of the Government are also located here.



A glimpse into the historic Assembly Hall with its magnificent interior and seating for 100 councillors



The wooden ceiling of the Legislature Hall dates from the 16th century, and features carvings with fanciful animal and hunting scenes

### The Great Council: A rarity in state politics

The 100 members of the Great Council are at the same time a cantonal and municipal parliament – a concept unique to Switzerland. The council members meet twice a month to fulfil their legislative tasks.

The historic **Assembly Hall** (6) is located in the rear building and is a creative ‘synthesis of the arts’. The public gallery can be reached via the 3rd floor of the Town Hall – all Great Council meetings are open to the public.

### The Executive Council: Seven councillors for the executive branch

The seven members of the **Executive Council** make up the highest leading and executive body, and manage the cantonal and city administration. Meetings are held every Tuesday in the **Government Hall** (1), but are not open to the public.

The President of the Government chairs the meetings and represents the Executive Council both internally and externally. He or she is supported by the Department of Presidential Affairs, which – like the State Chancellery – is also located in the Town Hall.



You can find out more about Basel's seat of government at:  
[www.staatskanzlei.bs.ch/rathaus](http://www.staatskanzlei.bs.ch/rathaus)



## **Guided tours: A journey through the centuries**



Basel Tourism offers exciting guided tours of the Town Hall in German or English. Book your visit at:  
[www.basel.com/de/Media/Angebote/Fuehrung-im-Rathaus](http://www.basel.com/de/Media/Angebote/Fuehrung-im-Rathaus)

The Town Hall is accessible to the public from Monday to Friday, from 7.00 am to 12.00 pm and from 1.30 pm to 5.00 pm (though this may not apply to all rooms).

### **Publisher**

**Staatskanzlei des Kantons Basel-Stadt**  
Abteilung Kommunikation  
Rathaus, Marktplatz 9  
4001 Basel  
Schweiz  
[www.staatskanzlei.bs.ch](http://www.staatskanzlei.bs.ch)