

practical information



How to get to Biel:

½ hourly trains from Zurich (1 hour 10 min.), Bern (26 min.), from Basel (1 hour 7 min.); hourly connections from Lausanne (58 minutes) and Geneva (1 hour 27 min.). The **train station** hosts: the **tourist office** (at Bahnhofplatz 12; 032 329 84 84), lockers, bicycle rental, currency exchange, fast food, small shops, post office (at Bahnhofplatz), Migros supermarket (near train station, Bahnhofstr. 15), @ Internet at Lago Lodge. Another tourist office is at Zentralstrasse 60 (032 329 84 86).

www.biel-seeland.ch
www.watchvally.ch
www.backpacker.ch

budget accommodation

Lago Lodge, Uferweg 5 in Nidau (032 331 37 32), the only Swiss hostel with a micro beer brewery. A 7-min. walk from the main station, the lodge is located behind "Strandboden" – a public beach just a few hundred meters from the main station (direction lake) »www.lagolodge.ch« (For more accommodations/campsites ask at the tourist office).



On the route along the Aare River



Biel. In the old town

Biel – or Bienne, in French – located between Bern in the south and Basel in the north, offers great experiences in a small region. The city of Biel borders Lake Biel and is the only city in Switzerland where there are two official languages: German and French. Even the streets are marked in both languages in this charming city. In Biel lies the cradle of the Swiss watchmaking industry. Trademarks such as Swatch, Omega, Rolex, Tissot and many others, are closely associated with this city. It has a small but beautiful historic centre, with a Gothic church (15th century) and its many fountains decorated with flowers. The Port of Biel is the starting point for **scenic river and lake cruises**, which can take you to St.Peter's Island and the Neuchâtel and Murten Lakes (the three lakes are linked by two canals and there are countless ways of criss-crossing them). The region is a paradise of possibilities as far as the eye can see and offers lots of outdoor activities. With a wide selection of routes to choose from, Biel also makes the ideal starting point for beautiful **cycling tours**.

highlights

The main attractions are strolling in the old town, dropping in on a couple of small museums and taking a **boat ride** on the lake or the river. One of the best boat trips in the region is the river trip up the Aare from Biel to Solothurn, which takes about two and a half hours and passes a stork colony at Altreu on the way.

Biel is a small city that's easy to get around in. **Cycling** is a good means to explore some of the very beautiful places around the city. There are lots of cycling tours; a nice one is from Biel to Murten (distance 36 km, travel time 3 to 4 hours). Bicycle rentals at the train station or directly at Lago Lodge. Ask at the hostel or the tourist office for a good cycling map.

Or do you like inline skating? This is as well a good means to explore the city and its surroundings. There's also a skatepark (at Aarbergstr. 72, just two minutes from the Biel train station). But you need to bring your own skates.

Northeast of Biel is the beautiful "**Taubenloch Gorge**" (dove's gorge)! Take bus no. 1 or 2 (direction Eisbahn) until station Taubenloch. There's a well-engineered path run-

ning through the dark and craggy defile for about 2.5 km, and entry is free (there's a donation box near the entrance).

For adventure operators running canyoning trips in the gorge and for other latest adventure opportunities, ask at **Lago Lodge!**

Just 28 train minutes from Biel, you can visit the **Papiliorama**. In this garden (housed in an amphitheater which measures 40 metres in diameter and 14 metres at its maximum height) at all times around a **thousand butterflies** flutter about in an enchanting and colourful ballet. Open daily 9 am – 6 pm; admission CHF 17.–, students 14.–; there are hourly trains from Biel to the train stop Kerzers Papiliorama (you need to change the train in Lyss).

St.Peter's Island is a nature reserve well-loved and much visited. The political theorist Jean-Jacques Rousseau chose this island as his refuge in 1765, later calling it the happiest time of his life. The best way to get to the island is by boat from Biel (approx. 50 minutes), which calls at several lakeside villages en route.

events

May 27th & 28th Stedtlifescht (summer festival) in Nidau

June 3rd – 4th Stars of Sounds Festival at the town square in Aarberg (15 train minutes from Biel) with stars like Status Quo and others

June 16th – 18th Running Days Biel. European-cup of super-marathon, night-marathon and much more

July 1st – 3rd Bieler Braderie – big summer festival

July 12th – 16th Pod'Ring – local rock festival in the old town

July 16th – 29th International Chess Festival at Kongresshaus

July 27th – Aug 14th Open-air cinema at castle Nidau

July 31st Lake Biel summer-feast. Party and big fireworks

August 1st Swiss National Day – party everywhere!

August 19th & 20th Royal Arena Festival (hip-hop festival) in Orpund (10 minutes by bus from Biel)

August 26th – 28th "Altstadtkilbi", large fair in the old town of Biel

September 23rd – 28th Circus "Knie" at Gurzelen Parking

entertainment, fun & parties

- The **Lago Lodge** is not only a backpacker but also has a nice restaurant – taste their beer! They have their own micro brewery and bistro.
- St. Gervais** (Untergasse 11) is where the alternative people meet.
- Enjoy your beer at **Pooc** (about 80 different beers) or at **Baramundo** (both are near Guisan-Platz).
- Restaurant du Commerce** (Untergasse 25) is a small bar in the old town (no meals).
- Coupole Biel** (Silbergasse, opposite the congress center) is an alternative place.
- Bien Bar** (Dufourplatz / Bahnhofstrasse), lovely people, famous for good local products.
- DUO** (Kontrollstrasse 26), Fri hip-hop and Sat house music.
- Bar Hasard** (Bahnhofstrasse 4), small bar with good beer.
- Pizzeria Seeland** (Bahnhofplatz 7), good pizzas, fair prices.
- El Dorado** (Mattenstrasse 30), alternative bar, live concerts.

