

Travel Review

Bern City Tourism

Introduction

Bern, the capital city of Switzerland, boasts an array of facilities to assist tourists in exploring the city. Many of these have been present in the city since 1848 when Bern was introduced as the capital city. The 'medieval like' city as referred to by MySwitzerland (2019), is a unique city like no other in Europe. The parliamentary buildings are within touching distance of the general public, making it accessible to all. This is also known as direct democracy (Bern.com 2019). Bern was devastated with a large city fire in 1405 and most of its buildings were rebuilt in an unusual grey-green sandstone with red roofing (Lonely Planet 2018). In 1983 Bern was announced as a UNESCO World Heritage site making it very different to the stereotypical city with skyscrapers and factories (UNESCO 2014).

The city is home to an array of attractions and facilities that appeal to all city tourists. These span from 16th century fountains, scattered through-out the city, to the cobblestone shopping streets. Bern is able to cater to all niche city tourism requirements and preferences.

The Bern train station was amazing. Located right at the centre of the city, it had links with major cities all over the country, whether that be Zurich, Interlaken or Geneva. Its location within the heart of Switzerland makes it easily accessible from all corners of the country. The train station houses popular chain stores, such as McDonalds and Footlocker with the majority of the staff speaking; English, French and German. As a result, the train station was the busiest and most crowded area of Bern, as the rest of the city was relatively calm and almost town-like.

Bern has a very medieval aesthetic, showcasing cobblestone paths and historical buildings. There are no skyscrapers and very few modern buildings, however, there are a large number of very modern shops within old buildings. This look makes it perfect for couples or photographers as the city's layout is beautiful and perfect for pictures. Upon visiting Bern, it was evident that the main tourist activity was having pictures with the old buildings with cobblestone roads in the background. The cobblestone roads display a myriad of shops and arcades filled with a range of different products. These included jewellery, fashion, sport and traditional markets. Its six-kilometre length makes it one of Europe's longest shopping streets.

All shops are easily accessible on foot and protected against the weather as they are all sheltered by the arcades. Bern not only has a shopping street, but 2 shopping malls, Westside and Wankdorf shopping malls both house restaurants, super markets, hotels, stores and cinemas. The 2 shopping malls are easily accessible by trams and busses taking no longer than 20 minutes to reach either destination (Bern.com 2018). Bern's shopping facilities are great for city tourists as there are a number of stores that provide souvenirs and medium to luxury priced stores to cover all needs.

The self-proclaimed city of fountains lives up to its name, as Bern houses over 100 fountains put in place 140 years ago. 11 of which still stand in their original form and producing drinking water (MySwitzerland 2019). When visiting in the winter months, the fountains had

frozen and could not be used. The fountains are each believed to represent a different story with their uniquely detailed figures. These fountains make for great pictures and truly represent Bern's unusual and mystical past. These fountains are magnificently detailed and vibrant. It's clear to see how well maintained they are by not only the government but by the locals as there is little damage or graffiti on any of the fountains making them very appealing to the eye. The Kindlifresserbrunnen (the child eater) fountain was particularly interesting. This fountain has a range of different theories to why it has the creepy male figure eating a sack filled with children, no matter how strange tourists may find the fountain the detail imbedded in the figure is incredible, making it an attractive monument to visit.

Arguably Bern's most famous and most visited attraction would be the Zytglogge Clock. The astronomical clock was built in 1530 to simply provide the time for the locals of Bern but has since developed into a tourist attraction, a real eye catcher in Bern's beautiful city centre (Bern.com 2019). Tourists can access the tower and when on top of the tower on a clear day the Bernese alps are visible (O'Dea, C 2005). This was the centrepiece of the trip to Bern as it was interesting to compare it to the astronomical clock in Prague. The Zytglogge wins by a country mile, as it's located in the centre of the city surrounded by the shopping streets with very accessible tram and bus routes stopping outside of the tower.

Bern also has magnificent multi-cultural restaurants spread out through the city catering to every visitor's needs, whether it be Swiss traditional foods, American fast foods, Arabic, Italian, British pubs and a lot more. This is ideal for city tourists as not only can they try the more traditional Swiss, French and German foods Bern has to offer, but they can also have the foods they are more familiar with as not everybody likes trying new foods. A large range of restaurants made it hard to decide where to go for food which is a good thing as it means that there are a lot of different options that could have been chosen instead.

It was decided that we would eat at a traditional Swiss/German restaurant. Not only was the food at the restaurant delicious, the service was incredible. Before serving the group, the waitress was speaking to the couple in-front in French and to her colleagues in German. She was also able to speak in English without a language barrier. Every service was with a smile and common manners were used. These qualities are not common in many European countries (Matthes, K 1992). This would appeal to the city tourists as manners and going the extra mile for a customer who has more than likely been walking around the city all day and is exhausted as they would enjoy a sit down, something to eat and not to be bothered by the language barrier.

A very popular attraction to which brings tourists to Bern the most cities don't have is the Bears of Bern attraction. The city of Bern is believed to get its name from the word bear and ever since has had the bear on the cities flags, buildings, fountains and also a bear park in the city centre. The bear park (Bears of Bern) allows tourists to walk across a bridge while looking at the range of brown bears in a controlled bear park beneath them. This attraction isn't available in winter months as the bears go into hibernation and therefore cannot be disturbed. This particular attraction could appeal to city tourists as no other city in Europe has the same or similar attraction dedicated to animal that symbolises the city to this extent. The bear park excursion would also come with a guided tour to educate the tourists on Bern background and the city's relationship with the animals (Bern.com 2019).

A major tourism attraction that most city tourists want to visit are museums and Bern is the perfect city to visit for this type of tourists as the city houses numerous museums and a range

of different things, whether that be Einstein, fine art, or alpine ski. The most popular of the museums would be the Einstein museum which is home to some of the world's greatest physicist work as he lived in Bern for a period of his life. This would give the tourists an opportunity to connect with the great mind that was Einstein and see first-hand what he had done and how it has impacted life while also educating themselves on Einstein's impact on Bern and Bern's impact on Einstein (Bern.com 2019).

Conclusion

All in all, Bern is the perfect destination for a city tourist as it has the shopping malls/streets and attractions that other cities have plus more, whether that be its cultural diversity with restaurants and guests or the fact it houses the animals that the people of Bern believe they connect with and symbolises them as a city. Bern has amazing attractions whether that be interactive like the Bear park and the number of different museums or sightseeing attractions such as the fountains and Zytglogge clock, an attraction that for many years has Bern on the map, in a tourism perspective. The city is easily accessible within Switzerland and should be the next visit to any city tourist looking to go somewhere new with an immense amount of cultural identity.

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