

The 11 historic fountains of Solothurn



Fountains, in which women used to wash their clothes, can be found in every place. However, it is hardly impossible to find a place where the fountains are as grandly built as they are in Solothurn. They reflect the wealth that the French ambassadors brought into the city.

“Solothurn allegedly attempted to increase the number of its fountains to 11. As a result, it became, in proportion to its size, the city with the most fountains in Switzerland”, writes Fritz Wyss in his book “Die Stadt Solothurn”. Most of the fountains were built in the 16th century. By the way: Bern, too, has 11 monumental fountains in the old city.

In Solothurn water flows in many other fountains, too. In “Brunnen der Stadt Solothurn”, Adele Tatarinoff lists about fifty of them. To name but a few: the Kollegiumsbrunnen (college fountain) of 1676, the Franziskanerbrunnen (Franciscan fountain) situated south of the Franciscan church and dating from around 1759, the Pisonibrünnlein (little Pisoni fountain) (1774) next to the St. Urs tower, the Schmiedengassebrunnen (blacksmith’s alley fountain) of 1796, the Landhausbrünnlein (little Landhaus fountain) (1888) or the fountain outside of the Basel gate (1781, it was moved to its present site in 1972). The city also created fountain systems in today’s time such as the one at the vocational school (1955), the Kosciuszko fountain (1967) by the artist Schang Hutter at the Soba bank or the Heilbronn fountain (1982) at the Städtische Werke.

However, the above mentioned fountains do not have the monumental size of the other 11 ones. 11 is the holy number of Solothurn.



1 Fischbrunnen / St. Ursen-Brunnen (Fish fountain/St. Urs fountain)



The fountain was created in 1545 (Wyss: 1547) by Albrecht von Nürnberg to honour the saints of Solothurn. This fountain was first situated on the Kronenplatz (crown square) before it was transferred to the Marktplatz (market square) in the city centre. On the top of the fountain, St. Urs marches in the costume of a roman soldier with a banner, a buckler and a sword. The fountain basin was quarried from one piece of Solothurn stone.

2 Gerechtigkeitsbrunnen (justice fountain)



Laurent Perroud created the justice fountain, modeled on the 18 years older figure from Berne. The chubby figure of a woman in a light reddish dress carries the symbols of justice: a sword and a set of scales. She is blindfolded and therefore is not considerate of anything. The justice fountain has been restored.

3 Simson-Brunnen (Simson fountain)



Solothurn has the oldest Simson fountain. It was made in 1548 (Wyss: 1543) by Pagen from Nidau and Mr. Lorenz from Le Landeron. These two were also the creators of the Simson fountain in Berne. Simson, a character from the Old Testament, is a symbol for strength in the Christian world. The painting on the figure was done by Urs Amiet, a co-founder of the Lukas fraternity.

4 Mauritius-Brunnen (Mauritius fountain)



The Mauritius fountain on the Zeughaus square replaced a wooden fountain in 1556. The figure on the fountain was made by Hans Gieng from Freiburg, the hexagonal fountain basin by Jakob Pfyffer, the column by Gregorius Bienkher. The powerful Mauritius wears a medieval cuirass and carries a red-white banner and a buckler. Mauritius was the leader of the Thebean legion.

5 Dornacher-Brunnen (Dornach fountain)



The Sankt Margarithen fraternity donated a fountain in the outskirts of the city in 1930 to commemorate the battle of Dornach on 22 July 1499. Robert Rudolf, a sculptor and scholar of Richard Kissling (creator of the "Tellendenkmal" in Altdorf) carved the fountain on the top of which stands an armoured standard bearer.

6 Klosterplatz-Brunnen (Kloster square fountain)



The basin of this fountain dates from 1602, other parts are held in rococo style and date from 1828. Between 1602 and 1828, the fountain was located on the market square. In both locations it was used to keep fish.

7 Samson-Brunnen (Samson fountain)



From 1772 till 1775 the sculptor Johann Baptist Babel from Einsiedeln in Solothurn worked in Solothurn, mostly on the construction of the St. Urs Cathedral. On the bottom of the imposing stairways, there are the only two basin fountains (“Schalenbrunnen”) of Solothurn. The fountain on the right hand side (if you stand in front of the cathedral) is dedicated to Samson (also interpreted as Gideon), who was one of the judges from the Old Testament.

8 Moses-Brunnen (Moses fountain)



On the left hand side, there is the counterpart of the Samson fountain, the Moses fountain. Moses led the Israeli people into the desert. With his baton, he battered water out of rock. The water of the fountain flows from the shell in eleven little streams into the flat basin and from there freely into the curved basin.

9 Hintergass-Brunnen (Backstreet fountain)



The St. Urbangass-Brunnen (St. Urban backstreet fountain) from 1792 stands on balls and is kept in the rococo style of Louis 14. Out of the middle part, on top of which stands a vase, come out the pipes. The fountain is located at the back door of the shopping mall Manor.

10 Georgs-Brunnen (Georg fountain)



The St. Georg fountain from 1548 (Wyss 1543) first stood in the Gurzelngasse (Gurzeln alley) and was transferred to the corn market (now "Börsenplatz") in 1777. The basin is made out of a single piece of Jura limestone. The figure on top of the fountain was made by Lauren Perroud from Le Landeron and shows St. Georg in armour of the maximilian knights from the war against the Swabians.

11 Franziskaner-Brunnen (Franciscan fountain)



The fountain south of the Franciscan gate dates from 1628. Before, it stood at the "Tscharandihaus" in the main alley. In the hexagonal basin stands a channeled column with a Corinth cap.

