

Press Information

Basel Cathedral and its Hidden Stories

However close the Emperor and the devilish «Prince of this World» may be to one another on the main portal of Basel cathedral, the stories that surround them could not be further removed from each other. The guidebook *Basel Cathedral – A Guide to the Stories behind the Stones* (Christoph Merian Verlag) starts its entertaining tour around and through the impressive Basel landmark with these stone figures. The author Oswald Inglin offers many detailed anecdotes related to the figurative depictions on and in the building. The richly illustrated book enables the cathedral's figures and stones to come to life by linking historical fact and fascinating myth at 25 'stations', thus making the striking building accessible to all those interested in a whole new way.

In October 1019 – the previous buildings date back to the 9th century – the benefactors of Basel Cathedral, the imperial German couple Heinrich II and Kunigunde, personally attended the church's consecration. Their dignified statues have been prominently placed at the main entrance in the western façade. The other figures across from them, however, give rise to a number of questions. Is the devil, presented in St John's Gospel as the «Prince of this World», flirting with the young woman? Indeed, what are we to think of this man who is smiling peculiarly and has two snakes and three toads on his back?

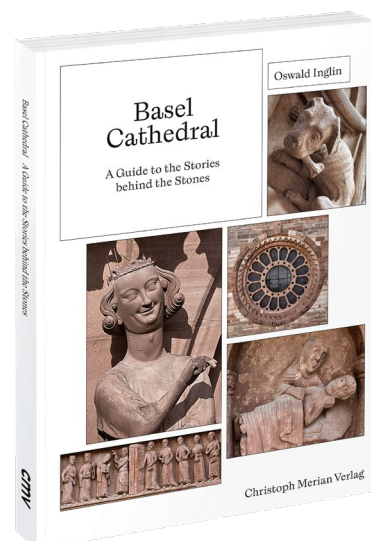
The tour proceeds along the exterior of the building, then into the church. What do the delightful three-dimensional figures of elephants and lions on the exterior at the windows of the choir termination stand for? Whatever happened to the cathedral's once amply filled vault? Answers to these questions are to be found either on site with this guidebook in your hand – plans inside the cover help with orientation – or from a relaxed distance, given that all the details discussed are consistently illustrated. Often the numerous impressive close-ups show more precisely than in situ just how much imagination and craftsmanship went into both the building and each one of its figures. Inglin has classified everything from a historical, art historical or architectural viewpoint, yet without overloading the individual 'stations' with expert knowledge.

The main focus is on the narratives about the major figures, most of them unknown to us today, and on the stories of all the dignitaries, saints, torturers and animals that enliven the cathedral inside and out. This new and innovative guidebook to Basel cathedral invites readers to re-discover the imposing attraction located above the knee of the Rhine.

The German edition of the book is entitled *Das Basler Münster und seine Geschichten – Ein Rundgang* (ISBN 978-3-85616-992-3)

About the author:

Oswald Inglin (*1953) is a historian and Anglicist. He has been taking old and young visitors on guided tours around the Basel Minster, the Town Hall and different residential quarters in the city since 2005.



Oswald Inglin

Basel Cathedral – A Guide to the Stories behind the Stones

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