

An aerial photograph of a lakeside area. In the foreground, a large wooden deck extends into the water, where several people are sunbathing on towels. A green statue stands on a pedestal at the end of the deck. To the left, a green lawn is also populated with people. In the background, there are buildings, including a large white one with a curved roof and a brown-roofed house. The water is a clear, light green color.

Zug on Foot

# LAKESIDE

Along the waterside

## Tours with a View

By the Harbour • Catastrophe Bay • Post Office Square  
Landsgemeinde Square • St. Mary's House • Seeliken  
Casino Theatre Zug • Former Cantonal Hospital  
Salesianum and St. Karl's Estate



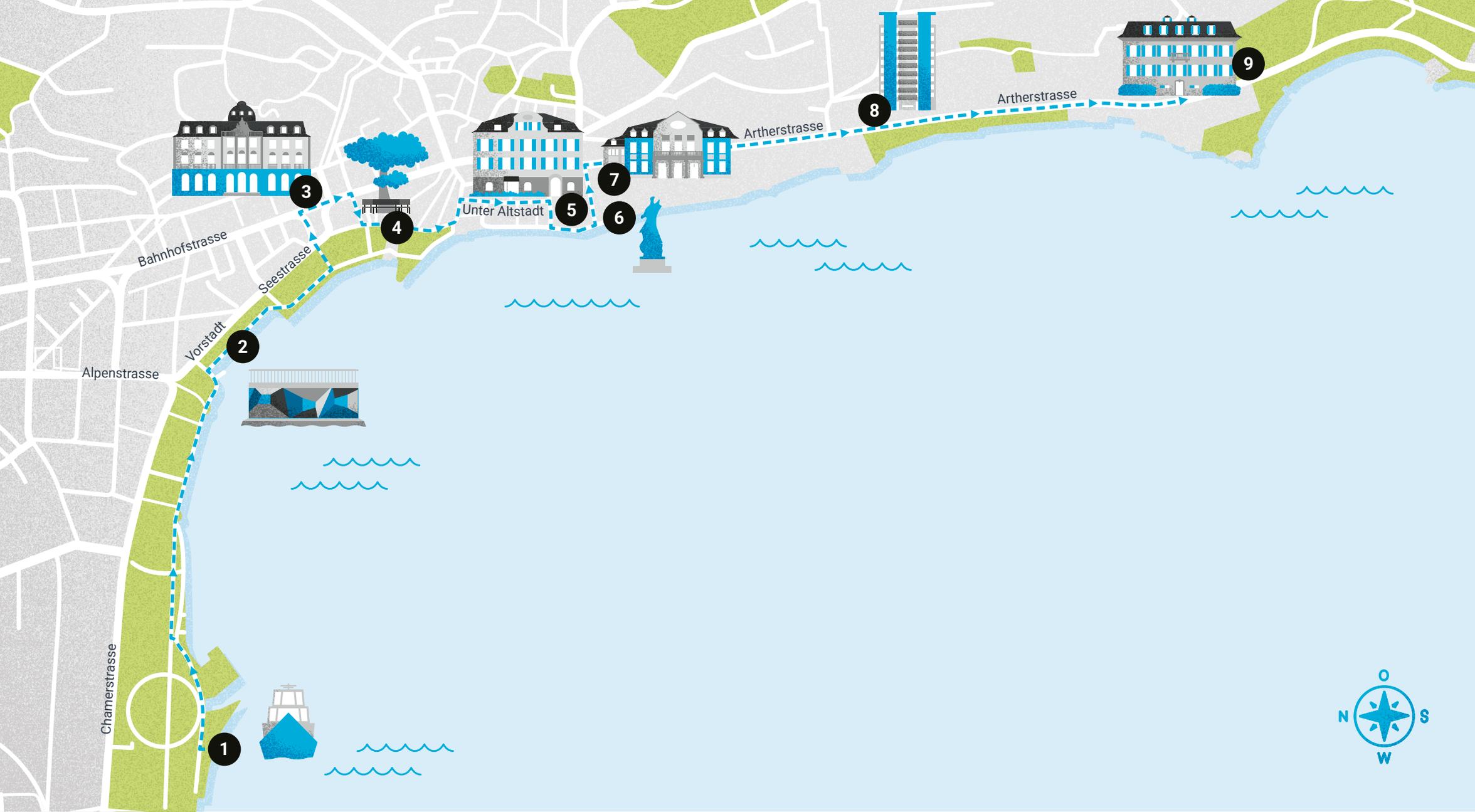
## Welcome to Zug

This brochure invites you to stroll along Zug's lakeside. It is your personal travel guide, telling you stories about some of the most striking buildings, squares and places. These are easy to find with the help of the overview map. Follow the map and explore the town and its history!

If you would like to know more, take a guided tour of the town. To book a private tour, please contact Zug Tourism:

[info@zug.ch](mailto:info@zug.ch)

+41 41 511 75 00



## Map Key

- |                          |                               |                           |                                   |   |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>1</b> By the Harbour  | <b>3</b> Post Office Square   | <b>5</b> St. Mary's House | <b>7</b> Casino Theatre Zug       | <b>9</b> Salesianum and St. Karl's Estate |
| <b>2</b> Catastrophe Bay | <b>4</b> Landsgemeinde Square | <b>6</b> Seeliken         | <b>8</b> Former Cantonal Hospital |   |

## By the Harbour

**Zug's harbour was built as part of the town's development in the 19th century and was last modernised at the turn of the millennium.**

The lake has always been of central importance to the residents of Zug. Its important role in fishing should not be forgotten. This is probably where the name 'Zug' comes from: in medieval usage, "Zug" meant a place where fishing nets were pulled in, thus referring to a good fishing spot on Lake Zug. Zug was first documented in 1092 under the name 'Ziuge'.

However, people had settled on Lake Zug much longer ago than that. This is evidenced by the three prehistoric lakeside settlements of 'Oterswil', "Riedmatt" and 'Sumpf' (approx. 4300 to 800 BC), which have been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2011. The first discovery at the 'Sumpf' site was made in 1859 during the construction of the railway line from Zug to Lucerne. The rich finds provided insights into house construction, nutrition and trade. A special feature of the pile-dwelling World Heritage Site is the fact that it is the only one located below ground or water surface and is therefore not directly accessible.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the banks of the lake near the harbour underwent extensive redevelopment. An extended promenade with green spaces, footbridges and bathing access points was created between Schützenmatt and Siehbach. Following a municipal referendum in 1990, the project was implemented in stages, with a focus on accessibility, recreation and environmental protection.

Opposite the harbour to the north is the Schutzengelkapelle (Chapel of the Guardian Angel), which was built between 1803 and 1804 by Martin Elgass, the architect of the Einsiedeln Monastery. Since the 15th century, the area surrounding the chapel has also served as a place of execution. The last execution took place in 1847. During the witch-hunting era, witches were also burned at this site, the last being in 1737.



You can find more information about the oldest known pile dwellings in Canton Zug at the **Museum of Prehistory**.



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## Catastrophe Bay

**'A homely part of town is sinking,' recalls an eye-witness, when a fisherman's hut, a garden shed and a house disappeared at half past three in the afternoon. A powerful wave followed, and hundreds of wooden beams shot out across the water like torpedoes. The roar, crash and 'screams of fleeing people spread the horror of the moment.'**

Katastrophenbucht (Catastrophe Bay) owes its name to one of the worst disasters in the town's history: the disaster of 5 July 1887. On that day, the banks of Lake Zug collapsed at a place which was then a suburb of Zug, causing 35 houses to sink into the lake. Eleven people lost their lives and several hundred were left homeless.

The cause was the ongoing construction of a lake promenade, being carried out on an unstable foundation of chalk and moraine sand. After the first cracks and subsidence had been noticed, the city council obtained expert opinion which highlighted the dangers of the construction. However, the report was ignored and the shore collapsed in 1887.

The collapse occurred in two phases: in the afternoon, the first buildings fell into the water, followed in the evening by

a second, even larger collapse, in which entire streets, including the houses, sank into the lake. This created a bay approximately 150 metres wide and 70 metres deep – today's Katastrophenbucht (Catastrophe Bay).

To prevent further collapses, all the dwellings between the Bay and Government House were demolished. The families affected by this disaster had to be relocated, and a Help Committee collected donations of all kinds. 'The first aid is the most effective,' reported the Neue Zuger Zeitung four days later.

The disaster not only claimed human lives but also had a lasting impact on urban development and the cityscape. Even today, construction on the affected section of the riverbank is strictly regulated. A memorial stone next to the 'Golden Kiosk' commemorates the tragedy.



**News of the Zug lake disaster** spread around the world. Even an American newspaper reported on the disaster in a somewhat sensationalist manner.

## Post Office Square

Before the Post Office building was constructed in 1902, Post Office Square had been called “Schanzen” Square. It was only after the prestigious post office building had been constructed that the square became the town centre and was given its current name. Today, the square is primarily Zug’s traffic hub and has become a recurring political issue, due to the parking spaces that were once present there.

The first Post Offices in Zug town were located either in public houses or in private properties. The respective inn-keeper or homeowner also served as Postmaster. However, this proved increasingly disadvantageous, which is why a representative Post Office building was erected on Schanzen Square in 1902. Designed in Italian Renaissance style, the building stood as a symbol of the prosperity of the Swiss Confederation. After 113 years, the main Post Office on Post Office Square was closed. In 2022, a restaurant opened where the counter had once been located, with the aim of ‘bringing more “Italianità” to Central Switzerland’.

Government House is located directly opposite the Post Office building. After the foundation of the Federal State, plans had been made in the late 1860s to build a representative seat of government for the Canton. More than 500 piles had to be driven into the ground and grating laid on top of them to form the foundation. The framework and the central heating had just been completed when the French Bourbaki army fled to Switzerland during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71, and Zug had been assigned the task of housing a certain number of the troops. The Canton was pleased to be able to offer these half-frozen soldiers somewhere warm to live, even if this delayed the expansion of the Government building somewhat. Previously, the Cantonal offices had always been housed in the home of the respective cantonal clerk.



On **27 September 2001**, during a meeting of the Cantonal Council, an armed man entered Government House and shot 14 members of the Councils. A **memorial** on the side of the Post Office Square commemorates this **assassination**.

## Landsgemeinde Square

To this day, Landsgemeinde Square commemorates a political ritual which lasted for centuries. Until 1847, the Landsgemeinde, an open-air assembly of men with voting rights who decided on political offices, took place here every year.

Despite its democratic appearance, this general assembly was highly elitist: women and non-citizens were excluded, and public officials only secured access through bribery i.e. acquiring votes by providing favours. The “Landammann” stood with his Sword of Justice, while next to him the Bailiff in Chief supervised the proceedings and the “sworn-in town and cantonal clerks” wrote down who had been elected. Only when it came to ‘Mehren’ (counting) could the ‘gefreyte Mann’ (free man) cast his vote by raising his hand or giving in his ballot.

The Landsgemeinde originated in the Swiss Confederation in the late Middle Ages and is documented in Zug from 1376 onwards. The Landsgemeinde was abolished with the Cantonal Constitution of 1847. During Swiss constitutional development, the Canton of Zug introduced secret, representative elections. Open Assemblies were considered impractical and outdated. Today, the Landsgemeinde only exists in Glarus and Appenzell Inner Rhoden, where women now also have the right to vote.

Nevertheless, Landsgemeinde Square remained a central location in the urban fabric. After decades of use as a car park, it was redesigned in the 1980s. Today, the largely car-free area opens onto the lake and serves as the social centre of the town. It is a popular meeting place where markets, festivals and cultural events are held.



Every Saturday from 8 a.m. to 12 noon, the **Zug Old Town Market** takes place on Landsgemeinde Square. Here you will find antipasti, beer, biscuits, cakes, fruit, vegetables, honey, cheese, kirsch and all kinds of seasonal, regional, international and exotic products.



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## St. Mary's House

**Girls and young ladies not only found accommodation here but were able to learn how to become 'capable housewives' – a concept that persisted for decades.**

Right on the shore of Lake Zug, not far from the lively Seeliken bathing area, stands a building steeped in history: the Seehof House. Many locals know it as 'St. Mary's House'. Founded in 1906 as a residential home for young women, in 1909 it became first a domestic science school and then a retirement home and has been an integral part of the Santa Maria Zug Foundation since 1999.

The Foundation was established at the initiative of the Catholic Women's Association of Zug. The association provided safe accommodation for less privileged girls and young women. The first residential home in the old town was situated in the 'Seehof' property, which they rented at the time, and two years later, purchased. The Marienheim Cooperative was then founded and the first school for further education and home economics for girls opened.

Run by the nuns from Menzingen, the "Marienheim" followed a strict Catholic regime. Prayers were said before meals, and during the celebrations of Mass the smell of incense was so intense that pupils sometimes fainted.

Everyday life was strictly regulated, and anyone who did not follow the rules was punished. A former resident of the "Marienheim" recalls: 'Punishments included having our hair pulled or not being allowed to receive visits from our families. It was an oppressive atmosphere.'

Over time, however, social conditions changed. The popularity of a school run by nuns declined. As a result, the school had to close in 1977 after 67 years.

The buildings were renovated and from then on used as living accommodation for various generations. Affordable rents, especially for single parents and single women, are the focus of today's Santa Maria Zug Foundation.



The **Menzingen Sisters** were active in many Catholic institutions in Zug. If you would like to learn more about them, visit the **exhibition 'Wo man mich braucht'** (Where I am needed) at the Menzingen Institute in Menzingen village.

# Seeliken

The first public baths in Zug were opened in 1882 at the 'Seeliken', a spot on the southern edge of Zug's old town mentioned in documents as 'matten in der selachen' (meadows in the marshes).

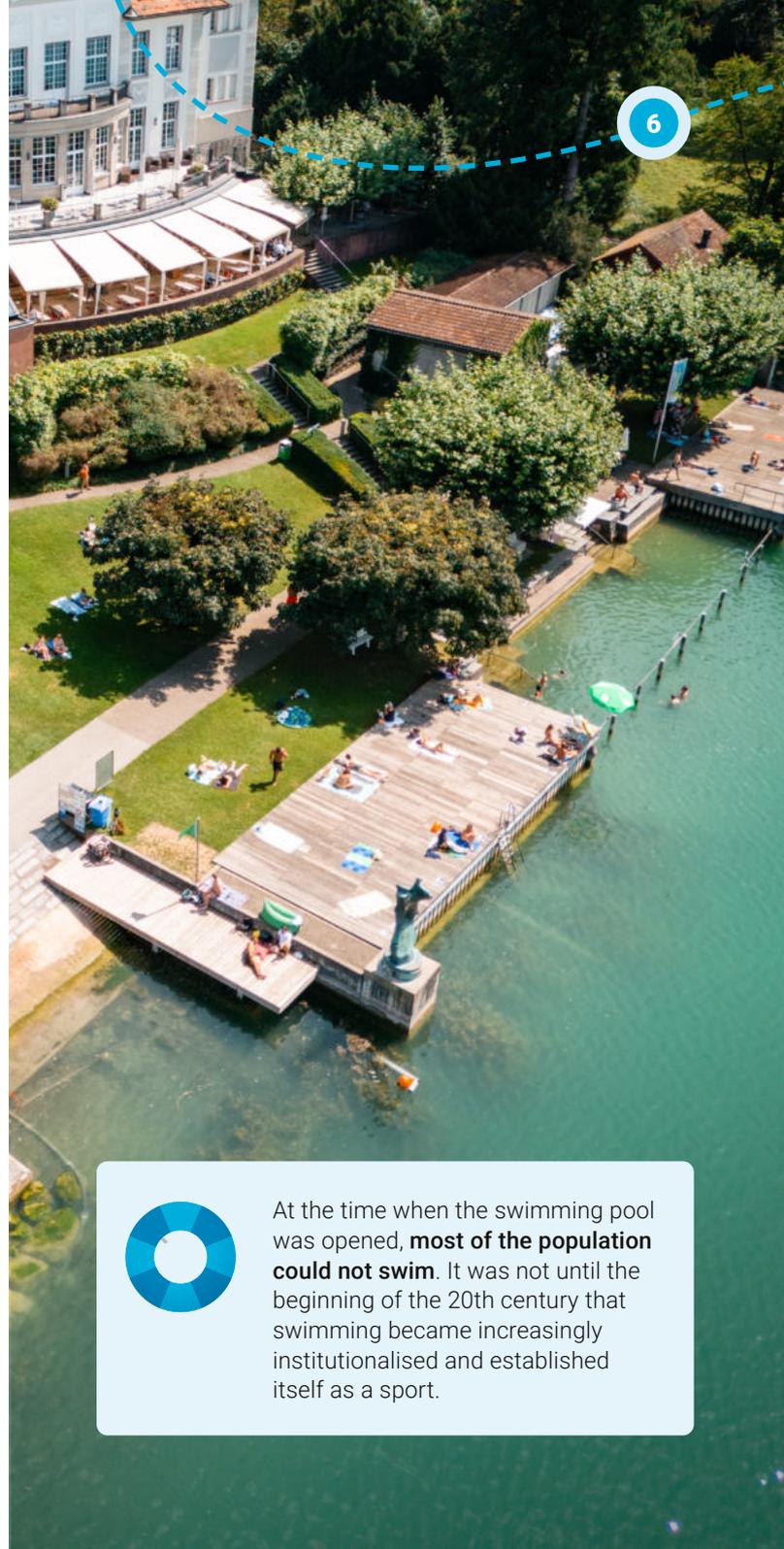
Even though people have always enjoyed cooling themselves in natural bodies of water, moral standards long prohibited them from undressing outdoors. With the spa baths of the 18th century, reserved for the upper middle class, people increasingly discovered the social pleasure of bathing in addition to its health benefits.

Initially, bathing establishments were often simple wooden structures. The aim of the architecture was basically to protect swimmers from the gaze of curious onlookers and to separate women and men.

It was not until the 1920s that a specific swimming pool architecture emerged. Switzerland experienced a real boom in the construction of outdoor swimming pools with the use of reinforced concrete for the construction of large pools – so-called 'public baths' were built, ensuring public access to lake and river banks.

In 1917, the wooden barracks in Seeliken, which dated back to 1882, were renovated and expanded to include a sunbathing facility for women. The wooden structure, which had been built on stilts in the lake and had sunken seating areas at lake level, was modified in 1924. After the Second World War, further renovations were carried out, with separate non-swimmer pools for women and men. Gender segregation was not formally abolished until 1971. During the renovation of the Theatre Casino Zug above Seeliken in 1980, the bathing area was also altered. Today, the wing with the men's changing rooms and kiosk is a remnant of the 1950s bathing facility.

When taking a photo of the beautiful sunset at Seeliken, it is hard to miss Henry Moore's sculpture 'Knife Edge'. The monumental bronze sculpture, approximately 3.5 metres high, resembles a divine figure reaching up to the sky.



At the time when the swimming pool was opened, **most of the population could not swim**. It was not until the beginning of the 20th century that swimming became increasingly institutionalised and established itself as a sport.

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## Casino Theatre Zug

The Casino Theatre is a magnificent building in the neo-baroque Heimatstil (regional style). This prodigious historic cultural centre was designed by architects from Zug and is regarded as an exceptional building far beyond the region.

Outside the walls of the Old Town, to the south on the road to Arth, stands the Theatre Casino Zug, which is operated by the Theater- und Musikgesellschaft Zug (TMGZ). The TMGZ was founded in the early 19th century by Zug citizens with an interest in culture.

This listed building was constructed at the beginning of the 20th century by Zug architects Richard Bracher and Dagobert Keiser using modern construction techniques – iron combined with traditional stonemasonry and brick. In contrast to the somewhat opulent neo-baroque façade, the architects kept the interior design sober, while playing with decorative forms of the Art Nouveau style popular at the time. In 1909, the building was officially opened with a joint concert by the Town and Harmony Music, the St. Cecilia Association and the male choir.

In addition to farces and comedies, highbrow plays and musical concerts were also performed in the early days of the TMGZ. From 1925 onwards, musical theatre, opera and operetta dominated the programme. After four decades, the need to renovate the theatre and provide a modern second stage became increasingly urgent. A donation of one-million Francs from the Zug-based Landis & Gyr Foundation in 1971 made it possible to build the annex, which opened in 1981.

The Casino Theatre Zug was not the first theatre in Zug: travelling theatres had been visiting the town for centuries, with school performances and large-scale church productions delighting the population. However, the playhouse built on Kolin Square in 1782 is considered an important milestone in Zug's cultural life. This was followed in 1843 by a theatre on what is now Post Office Square, which was closed after 60 years due to building regulations, prompting the construction of the new building on the Arth Road.



Here, **'casino'** has nothing to do with slot machines but is Italian for 'small house'.

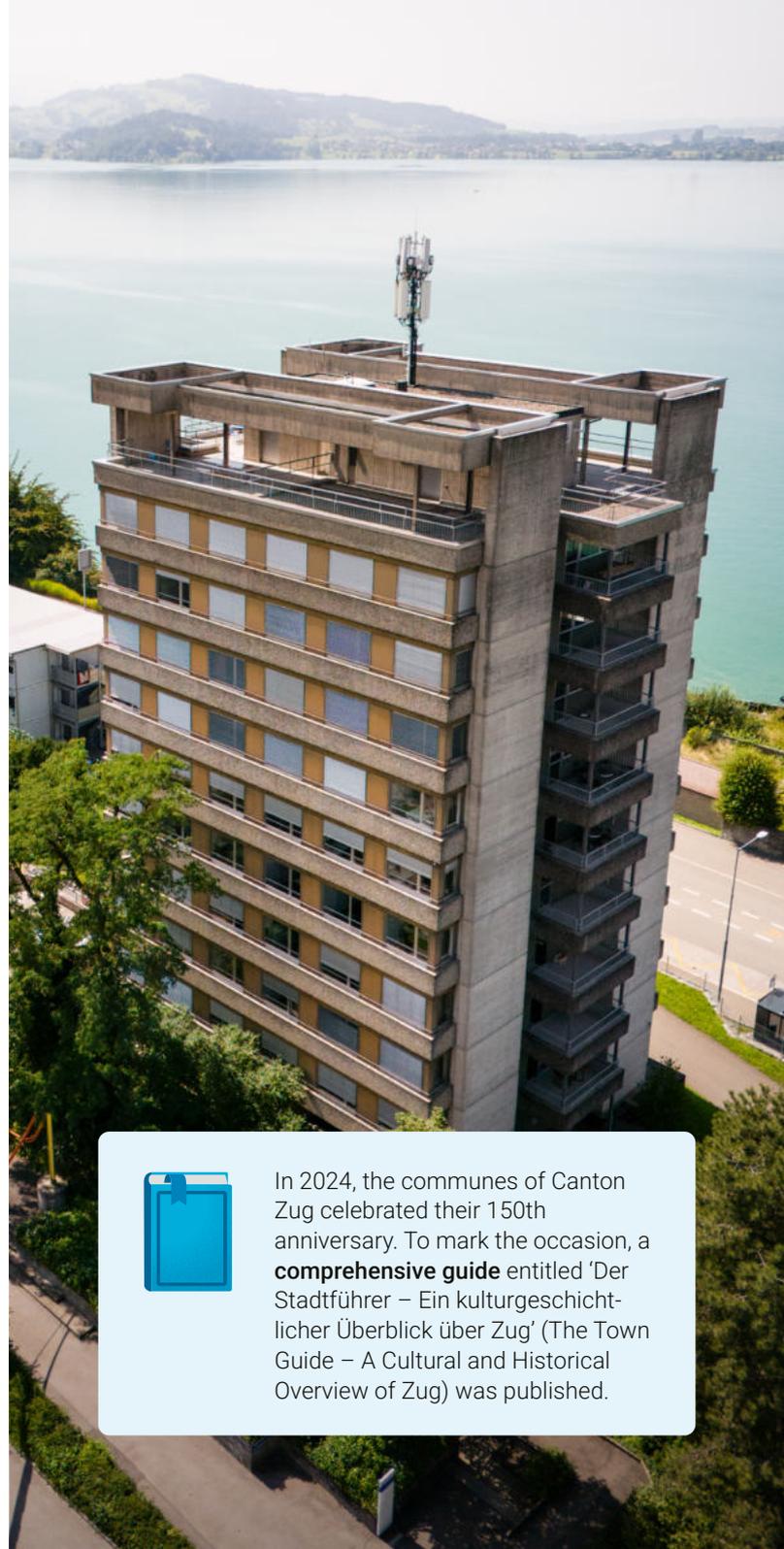
## Former Cantonal Hospital

**For fear of the spread of infectious diseases and for economic reasons, hospitals were often built outside the town walls, as was the case in Zug.**

The former Zug Citizens' Hospital was an important medical and social centre in the town of Zug. It was founded in 1857 by the Zug Citizens' Community and taken over by the Canton in 1981. It replaced the former 'Spittel' (hospital), located on the site of today's Burgbach school building in the Upper Old Town.

Since the Middle Ages, the civic communities had been responsible for various tasks, such as caring for the poor, education, nursing facilities and health care. The founding of the hospital marked the transition from charitable care for the poor to a more systematic health care system. At that time, the new building essentially consisted of the General Department of four wards with ten beds each, a few private wards, the chapel, rooms for the staff and utility rooms. Between 1934 and 1936, extensive renovation and construction work took place. Another major construction phase followed in the 1960s, resulting in the striking tower block with nurses' accommodation.

In 2007, the Cantonal Hospital, which had been in operation since 1981, was transferred to a newly-built hospital complex in Baar. After its closure, the old building was used for a variety of temporary purposes, including offices for small companies and associations, and as accommodation for asylum-seekers. In 2022, the 'Süd-See-Zug' project won the architectural competition for the redesign of the former Cantonal Hospital site, and it will be transformed into a new urban quarter, which will include a mix of affordable housing, public facilities, a hotel and restaurants. The current south wing of the former hospital is listed as a protected monument and will therefore be preserved for the future.



In 2024, the communes of Canton Zug celebrated their 150th anniversary. To mark the occasion, a **comprehensive guide** entitled 'Der Stadtführer – Ein kulturgeschichtlicher Überblick über Zug' (The Town Guide – A Cultural and Historical Overview of Zug) was published.



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## Salesianum and St. Karl's Estate

**The name St. Karlshof (St. Karl's Manor) dates back to the Archbishop of Milan, Karl Borromäus. According to legend, this Papal envoy crossed Lake Zug from Buonas on his visit to Switzerland in 1570 and set foot on Zug soil for the first time at this spot. The St. Karl's Chapel was built in his honour in 1615.**

The Salesianum, also known as St. Karlshof, is a historic estate located directly on the shores of Lake Zug. Its origins date back to the 17th century. Today, the Salesianum, together with St. Karl's Chapel and the manor house, is a listed building.

The estate has undergone continuous change over the centuries. In 1744, councillor Johann Kaspar Luthiger took over St. Karlshof and had the Baroque-inspired manor house from 1643 rebuilt. Between 1750 and 1769, the so-called middle building was constructed in French-style, connecting the chapel with the manor house. This architectural combination still characterises the appearance of the Salesianum today.

In 1840, Peter Josef Zwyszig purchased the estate. As a result of the nationalisation of monasteries in Switzerland, his brother, Alberich Zwyszig, a priest at the Wettingen monastery, which was dissolved in 1841, sought refuge at

St. Karlshof. It is said that Alberich Zwyszig composed the 'Swiss Psalm', now Switzerland's national anthem, in St. Karl's Chapel in the same year.

In 1898, the Menzingen Nuns, led by Mother Salesia Strickler, acquired the property. In the Mother Superior's honour, the house was renamed 'Salesianum'. Until 1970, it housed a 'Catholic school for brides', which later opened its doors to young women with learning difficulties.

From 2003 onwards, an international school used the property as a campus. Between 2015 and 2019, it served as accommodation for refugees and asylum seekers. In 2018, the property was sold to private purchasers and extensively renovated.



The Salesianum was the place to learn the art of cooking. Sr. Prudentia's home-style recipes became popular: her cookbook, **Salesianum Cookery Book**, published in 1913, won a gold medal at a culinary arts exhibition.



## About the Association Zuger Stadtführungen

The association aims to bring the history, culture and economy of Zug town and Canton closer to its residents and visitors. To this end, it organises tours of the town and creates resources to explain the town and its surroundings. It preserves knowledge about the region and passes it on to third parties. It supports the town Zug authorities in an advisory capacity in maintaining the quality of life in the town and its local recreation area. It promotes the diversity of the region's tourist attractions in cooperation with Zug Tourism and other organisations.

### Public tours on Saturdays

With varying themes

Meeting point: Customs house at the Zytturm

Duration: approx. 1.5 hours

For public tours in English and French, please refer to the events calendar on the website.

No reservation required.

Further information: [www.zugerstadtfuehrungen.ch](http://www.zugerstadtfuehrungen.ch) (Ger.)

### Private guided tours (all year round)

Meeting point: Can be arranged individually

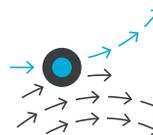
Duration: approx. 1.5 hours

Reservations via Zug Tourismus:

[info@zug.ch](mailto:info@zug.ch)

+41 41 511 75 00

Zuger  
Stadtführungen



### Legal notice

#### Publisher

Verein Zuger  
Stadtführungen

#### Project management

Stephanie Müller

#### Texts

Delia Cramer  
Ueli Fritsche  
Mercedes Lämmli  
Stephanie Müller  
Christian Raschle  
Donatus Stemmler  
Thomas Zaugg

#### Content Editing

Renato Morosoli

#### Translation

Mercedes Lämmli

#### Editing

Marilyn Buchmann

#### Proofreading

Tincan

#### Design, photography, image credits

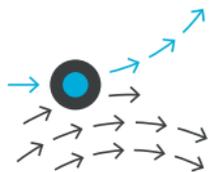
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You can find more information about the town's history and individual buildings in the book 'Zug, Der Stadtführer' (Zug: The Town Guide), which was published by the civic community of Zug in 2024.

Zuger  
Stadtführungen



## Contact

Verein Zuger Stadtführungen

P.O. Box, 6301 Zug

[info@zugerstadtfuehrungen.ch](mailto:info@zugerstadtfuehrungen.ch)



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