

Zug on Foot

# OLD TOWN

Where it all began



## Tours with a View

Mint • Capuchin Monastery • Kolin Square • Clock Tower  
Town Hall • Old Town Hall • Old Town Disaster 1435  
Greth Schell Fountain • Chapel of Our Lady



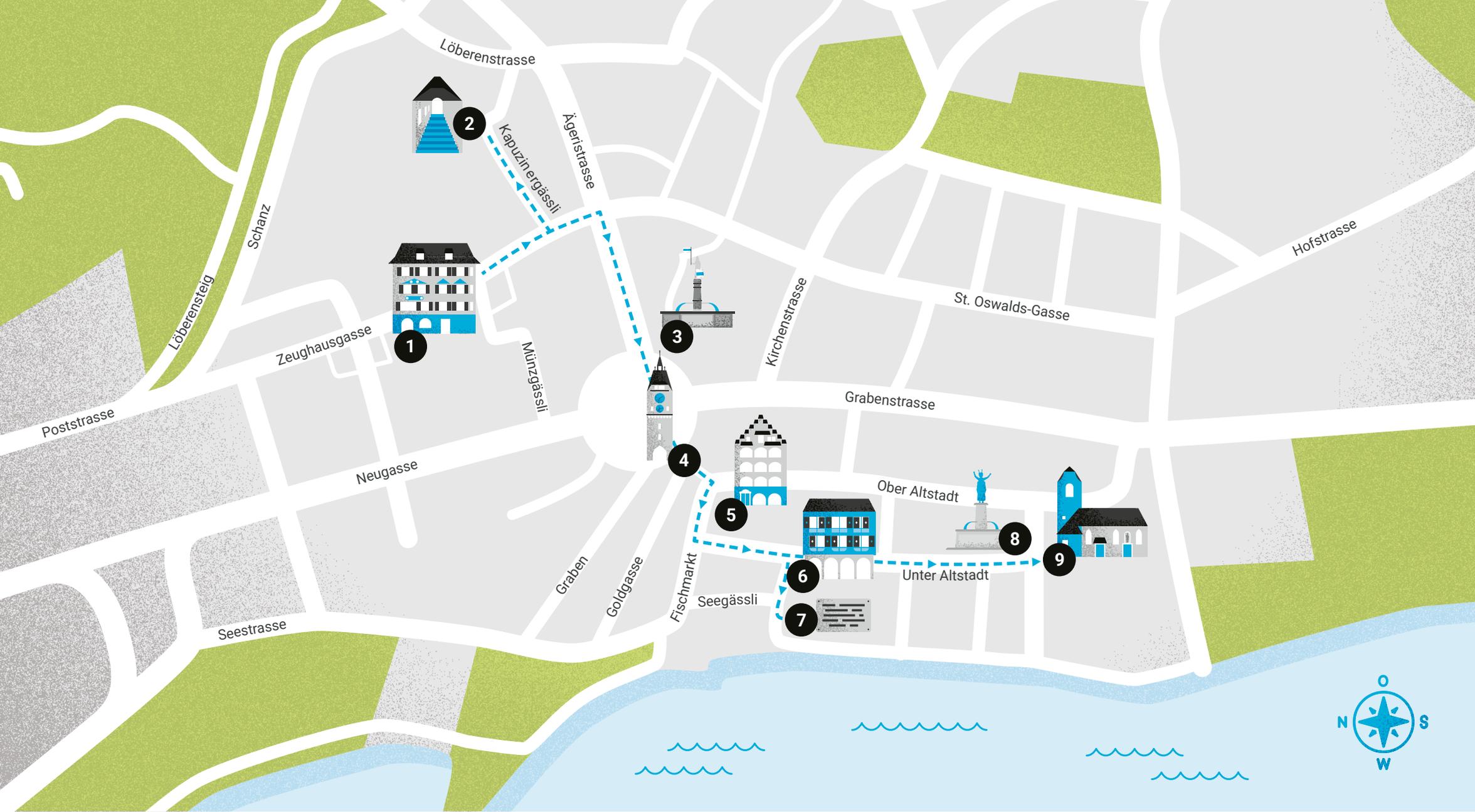
## Welcome to Zug

This brochure invites you to visit and linger in Zug's Old Town. The leaflet 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 city map and explore the city 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)

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## Map Key

- |                             |                       |                        |                                 |                             |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>1</b> Mint               | <b>3</b> Kolin Square | <b>5</b> Town Hall     | <b>7</b> Old Town Disaster 1435 | <b>9</b> Chapel of Our Lady |
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## Mint

**Wealth, spirit and passion for gardening at the Schwarzmurer Fountain. The figure on the fountain is said to represent Johann Schwarzmurer, mayor of Zug.**

Although the Baroque Haus zur Münz (the Mint) appears to be a single building, it was originally several structures. The oldest part is the Upper Mint, which was built in 1580. The so-called Lower Mint was added 24 years later. The name of the building refers to its original function as a mint in the early modern period.

Zug has always had a special relationship with money. A Zug currency was first mentioned around 1430. The right to mint its own coins is a privilege of an autonomous imperial town, which Zug has been since 1415. However, the town of Zug only made occasional use of this right. Various coins of different origins were in circulation everywhere.

The first coin made in Zug is the 'Blumentaler' dated 1564. This coin depicts the Archangel Michael with sword and scales, and a flower between his feet. Later, the so-called Schneckentaler (snail coin) and Engeltaler (angel coin) came into circulation in Zug. As of 2025, these coins have a collector's value of over 30,000 Swiss francs.

The Haus zur Münz was used as a minting workshop for over a hundred years. Between 1609 and 1714, the master coin-maker and builder of the house, Kaspar Weissenbach, and four further generations minted coins here. The house was then used for other purposes. Among other things, it housed the city and cantonal chancellery and a Kirsch distillery. In 1903/04, the buildings were renovated and decorated with elaborate facade paintings.

Next to the Mint stands the 'Glorietti', a triangular-shaped garden house in the Rococo style. Iron merchant Franz Michael Müller-Hediger commissioned it for his wife Katharina, and it was built between 1765 and 1770 as a so-called pleasure house.



Look for **the two coins** on the building. They depict the Zug coat of arms with lions and the imperial eagle. You can learn more about the inscriptions on a guided tour of the town.

## Capuchin Monastery

Called to Zug after the Reformation, the Capuchins preached the Catholic faith in and around Zug town for over 400 years.

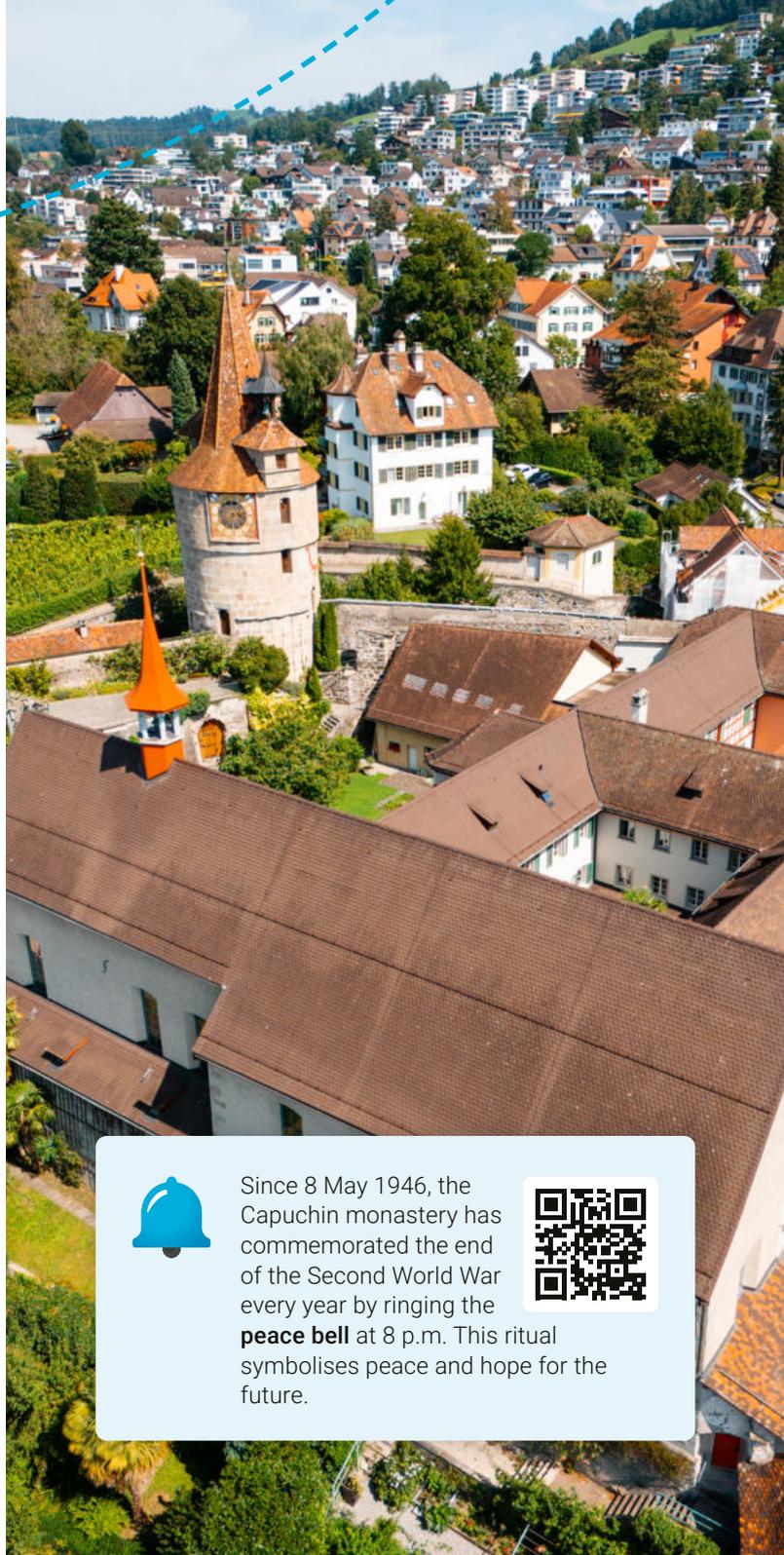
The Capuchin monastery at Kapuzinergässli 1 is somewhat hidden between the two roads Ägeristrasse and Zeughausgasse. From the Zeughausgasse, the monastery can be reached via a steep, covered stairway.

In 1595, the Capuchins, a Catholic order, founded the first Capuchin monastery in Zug. The Capuchins were particularly committed to a simple life, poverty and proximity to the people. Their goal was to strengthen the Catholic faith and support the population in need. For many generations, the monks lived and prayed in the monastery.

The monastery was built within the town walls on the so-called 'Löberen'. The Capuchin Tower, which was built 69 years before the monastery, belongs to the monastery. It is the highest tower of the town wall. No other town wall tower offers such a good view of the entire town.

The building complex was expanded several times from the 17th century onwards. The monastery church of St. Anna was built in 1675 and the monastery library in 1770.

The Capuchins shaped monastery life for 400 years. However, they left Zug in 1997 because of the ever-decreasing numbers of the order. The citizens of Zug were faced with the decision of whether to preserve the monastery as a place of worship or to find a new use for it. After several ballots, the idea of keeping the monastery as a spiritual place prevailed. Today, the monastery is home to the 'Community of the Beatitudes', a Catholic religious order.



Since 8 May 1946, the Capuchin monastery has commemorated the end of the Second World War every year by ringing the **peace bell** at 8 p.m. This ritual symbolises peace and hope for the future.



## Kolin Square

**'Other people's money is sweet music to the ears, but spells the downfall of one's social standing,' said the Zug-based playwright Weissenbach during the theatre performance on Kolin Square.**

The rich theatrical history of the city of Zug includes the famous performance of 'Das Eydgnößsische Contrafeth auff- unnd abnehmender Jungfrawen Helvetiae' (The Federal Portrait of the Ascending and Descending Virgin Helvetiae), by the poet Johann Caspar Weissenbach (1633–1678), who had written several important religious plays. He wrote partly in the dialect of the rural population of Central Switzerland. Weissenbach's drama thus became a critical reflection of Swiss history. It was performed on 14th and 15th September 1672 on what is now Kolin Square. The production was staged with great pomp and ceremony before an audience of over 3,000, for whom a three-part stage was specially constructed. Performed by around 100 male amateur actors, the play introduced Helvetia, the personified female representative of Switzerland, for the first time.

The square did not receive its current name until the 19th century. When men from the Middle Ages such as Tell and Winkelried were stylised as heroes during Swiss nationalisation, Zug also needed a heroic role model. Zug found its hero in Peter Kolin, who gave his life in 1422 in the lost Battle of Arbedo to save the Zug banner. Thus, the anonymous fountain figure on the Square became Peter Kolin, the Square became Kolin Square and Zug finally became known as Kolin-Stadt.

What was once a meeting place for the people of Zug to exchange true and false news is now mostly perceived as a noisy traffic hazard. The square has also been known as Lindenplatz or Ochsenplatz, named after the first house on the Square, one of Zug's oldest restaurants, the Ochsen.



**The Kolins** were an important family in the town of Zug, allegedly originating from Strasbourg. The Kolins sat on the Zug Town Council for generations and repeatedly held the office of Standard Bearer. The male line of the family died out in 1801, and the female line in 1819.



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## Clock Tower

**No hand on the clock at the Clock Tower stands still, allowing us to discover the irreversible passage of time.**

The Clock Tower is one of the most striking buildings in Zug's old town. It symbolises the town's long history. It is a building that is not only architecturally significant, but also of cultural and historical importance.

The tower dates back to the 13th century. The bell inside the tower bears the date 1391. As Town Gate, it formed the fortified entrance to the town and was part of the ring wall.

Over the centuries, the tower also fulfilled other functions. From 1557 onwards, it served as a watchtower in case of fire. With its extension, it took on its current form with bay windows and a steep, blue and white roof. With its cells, the tower also served as a place of short-term detention. Over time, various decorative elements have been added to the Zytturm, and it thus evolved from a defence tower into a representative landmark. The Zytturm has been renovated several times, most recently in 2024.

There are many interesting things to see on the east façade facing the main street. The clock face has been showing the time since 1480. In the centre, eight Coats of Arms of the old Swiss Confederation adorn the façade, remnants of a complete tower painting from around 1900. Between them is an astronomical clock with four hands, dating from 1574. The crescent hand indicates the phase of the moon and is connected to the sphere below the windows. The sphere rotates according to the phase of the moon and is golden at full moon and black at new moon. The sun hand points to the current month, using the signs of the zodiac. The S-shaped hand takes four years to complete one revolution and indicates the leap year between 6 and 9. The fastest hand depicts the weeks: every day it sweeps over one of the seven ancient gods who gave their names to the days of the week.



Can you tell the current day of the week, the phase of the moon and the month from the **astronomical clock**?

## Town Hall

It is one of Switzerland's most significant late Gothic buildings and continues to play an important role in urban life today. Citizens' council meetings, weddings and cultural events are held here.

The Town Hall was built between 1503 and 1509 as the largest building in the town. For centuries, it was the seat of Zug's town council. The ground floor features a stylish open hall, where merchants offered their wares and citizens exchanged news. The first floor was used as a meeting place and for dances. The council met in the small council chamber on the second floor.

The Gothic Hall, Zug's 'best room', is located on the top floor. It is one of the few late medieval council chambers in Switzerland that has been preserved. If you look closely, you will discover carved figures and coats of arms on the windows, which tell the story of the ruling families and their fates.

An impressive door leads into the Gothic Hall. It is a witness to the early days of the Town Hall. Above it, a relief depicts the biblical story of 'Christ Standing before Pontius Pilate' – a reminder that responsibility cannot be taken lightly. It is said that many a councillor paused for a moment in front of this door after long meetings before making a decision.



Discover the **'figures warding off danger and terror'** on the upper cornerstones of the main façade.



## Old Town Hall

**The house at Unter Altstadt 14 has always served the Zug community.**

In 1427/28, the town of Zug had a large wooden granary built. Just six years later, the granary was mentioned in a document issued by Emperor Sigismund – presumably as evidence of grain trading in the town of Zug.

On market days, locals and visitors alike could sell their wares in the streets of the Old Town. However, grain could only be bought or sold in the municipal granary. This exclusive right generally applied within a radius of 10 kilometres, so that a town could prosper in the long term. Private grain-trading was prohibited, and in 1622 Bailiff Zurlauben was reprimanded by the town council for doing so.

Even today, the appearance of the building is reminiscent of a sales hall with a goods depot above. It was built in the Italian style of the time. In 1500, the building was shortened on the lake side and a stone extension added. As the granary soon became too small, the town had a much larger warehouse built above the original town wall in St. Oswald's-Lane. Today, it houses the Zug Library.

In the 17th century, people in need repeatedly found temporary shelter in the unused building. In 1892, the stone extension at the rear of the building was used for cultural purposes for the first time: the Fishing Museum, which still exists today.

The Old Town Hall itself served as a public auction house until the 1960s. From 1968 to 1972, the town made it available to the St. Michael Scout Troop as a temporary workshop for youth theatre, concert and cabaret productions. From 1977 to 1990, the former grain and commodity store became an exhibition space for the Zug Art Society. Today, it is a meeting and cultural centre that is rented out for exhibitions and vernissages.



The **multi-storey timber house**, with its **sales hall**, built in the so-called post-and-beam construction style, gives us an idea of what Zug town might have looked like in the 15th century.



## Old Town Disaster 1435

On 4 March 1435, an underground rumbling and creaking could be heard in the alleys of the old town. The houses in the street began to crack. At around five o'clock in the evening, an alley and a row of houses sank into the lake, dragging over 40 people to their deaths. The disaster took the people of the old town by surprise. Many lost all their possessions in the water. Relief supplies were then sent to Zug from many places in the Swiss Confederation.

What cannot be explained tends to be romanticised in folk tales. After all, someone must be to blame or be responsible for the deaths of so many people. For years, a fairy-tale character has been blamed for the horror. In the Zug New Year's Gazette of 1882, the story of the 'Wasserfräulein' (the water maiden), which had been circulating by word of mouth for some time, was now presented in writing to the people of Zug. It tells the story of forbidden love between a mermaid and a man from the land and is intended to console people about the tragic outcome of this real-life disaster.



Today, a **plaque at the Fishing Museum** in the lower part of the old town commemorates the tragedy of the old town disaster.

### The water maiden

"The boy stood on the shore,  
Looked down into the flood,  
Saw how, in a crystal castle,  
The sea king's daughter rests.

Behold! She comes and, entwined in love,  
The delighted man holds her,  
And promises to remain faithful to her,  
What his heart has won through her.

Woe, woe, if you hesitate.  
Now you are bound to me,  
Down in the green waters  
I will create a home for you.

He spoke, and with the magic potion,  
which gave him strength and courage,  
she gave him the cold blood of fish  
against the waters.

A hundred moons passed,  
when the husband's longing returned  
to climb onto the solid land,  
and homesickness clouded his happiness.

The water nymph considers this.  
Before evening fell  
She rose from the water again,  
Brewing the old magic potion.

She mixed it with all the wells  
And commanded the shoal of fish  
To dig towards the shore  
Where her husband's house was.

Before evening returns  
The tide surges, swells and hisses.  
For two rows of houses sank  
With all the people's possessions.

Down in the waves  
Those who loved each other there  
Find their son and parents again  
In the deep, safe haven.

## Greth Schell Fountain

The people of Zug tell my story like this: “Every evening, I have to search for my husband in the drinking houses and then drag him home because he has drunk too much. The Lölis (jesters) accompany me. They are my husband’s drinking buddies. Every year at carnival on GÜdelmontag (Carnival Monday) I come to life and parade from the Casino, through the streets of the old town, with my jesters. Loud cries of ‘Grethschällebei!’ are the key to the children being thrown oranges, sweets, bread rolls, sausages and the coveted guild coins.”

It is doubtful whether this character Greth Schell really existed. However, two women from the Schell family could have been possible models for her. Jakobea Schell, who died in 1687 and was known more for her husbands’ lifestyles than for her own, fits the carnival mould. The character was named after the unmarried teacher Margaritha Schell (1672-1740). As a teacher, she appeared to many men to be overly confident and dismissive. According to council records, she paid little attention to Zug school regulations. She taught girls and boys in the same class, which was not usual at the time. However, a comparison with the carnival character Greth Schell does not hold up because the teacher Margaretha Schell remained unmarried all her life.

The carnival tradition has existed since at least 1875. A little over ten years later, the costumes and masks were sold to the Zug Carpenters’ Guild, which has been the guardian of the tradition ever since. In 1977, the guild donated the Greth Schell fountain to the town of Zug. There had been a fountain there before, but classicist in style and less humorous.



You can have a look at this **Zug Custom** by scanning the QR code.





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## Chapel of Our Lady

**This day-to-day church for Zug worshippers is first mentioned in documents dated 1266, together with the first Town Wall.**

The Liebfrauenkapelle chapel is a real gem with a fascinating history. From the outside it looks like a sturdy bulwark, but inside it surprises visitors with its delicate decoration. The Liebfrauenkapelle is the oldest remaining place of worship in Zug.

Inside the chapel, you can admire real art treasures, and marvel at the late Gothic murals, which tell the long history of the building. A special highlight is the Marian cycle of 28 wall and ceiling paintings, created between 1725 and 1727 by the Zug Baroque painter Johannes Brandenburg. Brandenburg was a sought-after painter in Central Switzerland at the time. These paintings depict scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary. Mary's life was considered particularly exemplary. The old baptismal niche is located on the wall next to the baptismal font. It is said that the baptismal water used to flow outside through a drain while the child's head was held in the hole.

The Chapel of Our Lady is not only a holy place, but also an important meeting point for the people of Zug. No wonder it is popular for weddings. Every year in June, it also plays a role in the traditional 'Chriesimärt', the Zug cherry market. People gather in front of the chapel at the start of the Chriesisturm (Cherry Storm), and then race through the old town. The famous Chriesigloggä (cherry bell-ringing) heralds the start of the race.



On **5 February, St Agatha's Day**, the altarpiece on the right is removed, and a 16th-century statue of a saint is put in its place. However, this is St Apollonia – but that does not detract from the custom of St Agatha as the Patron Saint of Bakers and Firefighters.



## 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.)

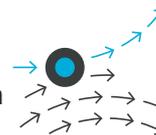
### Private guided tours (all year round)

Meeting point: Can be arranged individually

Duration: approx. 1.5 hours

Reservations via Zug Tourismus:

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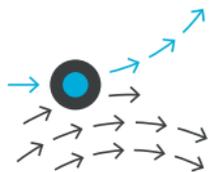
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You can find more information about the town's history and individual buildings in the book 'Zug, Der Stadtführer' (Zug: The Town Guide), which was published by the civic community of Zug in 2024.

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