

A photograph of a boat on a river at sunset. The water is dark with reflections of the sky, which is a mix of orange and blue. A large waterfall is visible on the left side of the image, with white water cascading down. The boat is in the middle ground, and the overall scene is serene and scenic.

Sechseläuten in Zurich

A Visitor's Guide

Arr von Jules Ernst



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Sechseläuten in Zurich





Welcome to Sechseläuten

Dear Visitor to Zurich's Sechseläuten,

Sechseläuten is in many ways a joyous celebration. Indeed it is Zurich's annual ceremony of farewell to the long, cold winter nights and of rejoicing in anticipation of the warmer months ahead. This spring festival usually takes place in the city on the Limmat river on the third weekend of April, starting with a colourful Children's Parade on Sunday. On Monday, the actual Sechseläuten Procession leads to the climax of the entire event: the symbolic burning away of the winter in the shape of a snowman – the Böögg. Thousands of guildsmen in their costumes and tens of thousands of enthusiastic spectators fill the streets of Zurich during the Sechseläuten weekend. Hundreds of thousands of television viewers all over Switzerland watch the Procession of the Guilds and the burning of the Böögg in suspense – for, since a number of years, the time span between setting fire to the snowman and the final explosion of the Böögg's head is seen to predict the weather tendencies for the forthcoming summer. Apart from the main highlights of this special weekend in April, which consist of the Procession of the Guilds to the fire and the reciprocal visitations to the guildhouses in the

evening, there are many other impressive and exciting events, that are not always easy to find or to get to know about. This booklet, inspired and generously sponsored by UBS, aims to give you first-hand historical background and useful information. Now you can share the enthusiasm, joy and pride that the inhabitants of Zurich feel towards their very own and unique spring festival.

We wish you "es schööns Sächsilüüte"
(a happy Sechseläuten)!



The Central Committee of the Zurich Guilds*

* The Zentralkomitee der Zünfte Zürichs (ZZZ) is responsible for the entire organization of Sechseläuten on behalf of the guilds.

With support from



Sechseläuten, Zurich's spring festival, is a tradition that has three different roots in the past: the first one being the Zurich guilds, that governed and influenced the fate of the city as important political, military, social and commercial institutions for over 450 years. Its second root is based on past guild trading regulations which determined and set the tradesmen's working hours. In the summer, it was clear to everyone that when the six o'clock bell rang "Sechs-Uhr-Läuten", it was time to stop work whereas in the winter, work would end at five o'clock due to the poor light conditions. The third and last root stems from a pagan ritual that consisted of symbolically burning the winter away to welcome and celebrate the arrival of warmer months.

*Sechseläuten: a festival
with three roots in the
past – a retrospective look*





The Zurich guild system (1336 – 1798 – 1866 – 1893 – 1934)



The Zurich guilds were founded in the year 1336, when the city was governed by knights and rich aristocracy stemming from the few magistrate families in the city, who all too often misused their privileged status to the detriment of the tradesmen. This led a number of dissatisfied aristocrats to join forces with some tradesmen on 7 June 1336, and together they stormed the town hall driving the governors out of power. Their leader, the knight Rudolf Brun, subsequently established the first Guild Constitution (the first Geschworenenbrief – a constitutional document sworn by oath), that divided the tradesmen into 13 guilds. These organizations were to have considerable influence on the government of the city and on its day-to-day life. Rudolf Brun was elected town mayor in his lifetime. He also founded the Gesellschaft zur Constaffel (Constaffel Corporation) alongside the guilds, whose members consisted of knights, like himself, noblemen and high-ranking professionals. Both the Gesellschaft zur Constaffel and the 13 guilds occupied the same amount of seats in the first municipal council, the final decision





Obstet in dem Jahr die Metzger für ein
Alle in Zürich zu Rom, als d'it d'och d'apostol
Nichtschiller's Ruff, die unerschrocken der
Und lasse dem Wuff als mit ein an Scherz
Sinnel Metzger Tavernt in dem

Um unser liebe Stadt die Giften den Rachen
Dall der Beschaffenheit, wozu Gott bald die Sachse
Die Metzger lüben zu beschützen in den Feind
Und eckelen die Welt wie ihre hand auf dem

Die Stadt und Trümmen trainen haten sich die
Und doch das ist ein mal der d'och auf die treuen
Daher von der hiesigen Metzger Metzger
Als Jahr auf die ein flos des Volkes zumachen

always being taken by the town mayor Rudolf Brun, himself a member of the Gesellschaft zur Constaffel. In this respect, the guilds were actually in a minority position in the first years of the Guild Constitution. In the years to follow, the position of supremacy held by the Gesellschaft zur Constaffel gradually diminished. The Geschworenenbriefe numbers two to seven, valid until the downfall of the guild regime in 1798, gave the guilds more influence and power in the government of the city.

It was when the French troops arrived on 5 February 1798 that the guilds abandoned their political role in the city and continued their existence as purely commercial institutions or trade associations. After the Mediation and Restoration period, the guilds still retained a modest right of vote until 1866. They subsequently completely lost their ruling privileges in the city and have since existed only as private associations according to the code of civil law. With the loss of their last political rights in 1867, the first of the "new lineage" guilds was founded: the Stadtzunft (City Guild) was

founded followed in 1893 and 1934 by a number of other "district guilds" after the two municipalizations. These were mostly patriotic associations, strongly believing in upholding traditions and recruiting their members amongst the inhabitants of the once independent "outer districts" of Zurich. Even today, these guilds are firmly established and involved in the social life of their own city district. Zunft Schwamendingen (1975) and Zunft Witikon (1981) were admitted only much later into the Association of Guilds.



The duties of the Zurich guilds in their heyday from 1336 to 1798

Guilds were primarily political organizations. Within them, the trades were split into different groups with their own representatives and boards. They also carried out other important duties in the community: they provided the war, guard and fire brigade services to the city, voted their own members into the city council and were responsible for the social welfare of their own kind. Some guilds represented independent trades and professions and were very busy as a result with issues related to these. Only men were admitted as members of a guild. Women, and in particular the widows of guildsmen, were allowed to run their own businesses according to the rules of the trade, but

were not given the permission to become members of the respective guild as a political organization.

Trading regulations, “Sechs-Uhr-Läuten” (six o’clock rings) and the first processions

Before the introduction of electricity, professional people relied on daylight to carry out their work, which meant that they could only fulfil their duties until dusk – that’s why the bell for closing time didn’t even ring in the winter. It was only in the spring, when the days got longer, that the bell began to ring at six o’clock in the evening. The changeover from winter to summer time on 21 March, when day and night are equally long, introduced the notion of “Sechsläuten” into history. The shifting of closing time was celebrated by the gathering of tradesmen in their drinking houses. These were lively gatherings: true feasts, celebrating an additional hour of work with speeches, music and reciprocal visits to other guildhouses in the city.



1818 saw the beginning of the first small night processions that were meant to express the joy felt at the arrival of longer and warmer days ahead. The individual guilds travelled around the city with music, horses and carts. In 1830, a guild decided to make its way around the city by day and in 1839, all the guilds decided to organize a first common celebration with a small festive procession in the Lindenhof, which is known today as the Platz der Kantone (Square of the Cantons). This successful début prompted subsequent common processions with specific themes, organized at irregular intervals. It was thanks to a guildsman from the *Zunft zum Widder*, Heinrich Cramer, that between 1839 and 1870 fifteen often extremely extravagant, thematic processions took place. They were given names such as "The four seasons", or "Prince Carnival's express coach travel through the ancient and the new world", or

"The power of steam unites the city of Zurich with the rest of the world". The guilds took part in these processions with their own members in costumes specifically created for each event. The guilds' commitment and financial expenditure towards these processions was considerable. When Cramer died in 1871, the "Sechseläuten-Central-Comité" (SCC), the former umbrella organization for all the guilds, was founded for the future organization of Sechseläuten Processions.





The foundation of further “new lineage” guilds was prompted by the 1894 procession, with its theme “The history of travel: some earnest and cheerful images”, when the historical guilds and the Stadtzunft (City Guild) invited newly municipalized city districts to join in the festivities. They were given the opportunity to found “associations which could join the guilds, enjoying the same rights and duties in the celebration of our spring festival” They were also recommended to adopt the names of their

district municipalities. In the difficult economic and political times at the beginning of the 20th century, the lavish and elaborate processions could not be carried out however. Several of the themes of these glorious parades of the past can still be seen nowadays scattered amongst the costumes of some of Zurich's guilds today, making amongst other things the Sechseläuten Procession a colourful journey back in time through Zurich's history.

The burning of the Böögg to symbolize the end of winter



The first concrete signs of the spring fire custom based on pagan tradition in Zurich appear at the end of the 18th century. A copper engraving dating back to that time shows a group of youths making a fire at the foot of the Lindenhof. At the beginning of the 19th century, more of these kinds of events are reported: in 1820, it is said that cheerful and lively youngsters were setting fire to woodpiles



and scarecrows on the trenches (city fortifications) and neighbouring hills of the city, as soon as the six o'clock closing time bells rang. The inhabitants of the Kratz district of Zurich were particularly associated with this custom. In 1868, the "Nachbarn-Gesellschaft im Kratzquartier" (Neighbourhood Association of the Kratz district) – area of the upper Bahnhofstrasse and the Bürkliplatz – took over the organization and financial responsibility for the burning of the Böögg. In the second half of the 19th century, other unpleasant events were burnt away symbolically instead of the winter. In 1872 for instance, the war was the main focus of attention and a Böögg armed with heavy weapons was set alight. In 1879, the city of Zurich suffered a major financial deficit and a man with a bag full of debts was burnt down. In 1890, it was the turn of the fatal influenza that hit the city to be depicted in the clothes of death carrying a watering can for germs. Children in costume accompanied the Böögg on a cart on its last journey through the city, so to speak. When the Kratz district became a victim of the city's construction boom in 1892,

the Zentralkomitee der Zünfte Zürichs (Central Committee of the Zurich Guilds), as it is known today, took over the organization of both the Böögg fire and the procession, and the guilds were made responsible for the financing of the event. From 1903, and right up to this day, the Böögg has been burnt, with very few interruptions or exceptions, at the Bellevueplatz – which has been officially named the Sechsläutenplatz since 1948.



© 2023 Zürich, Sechsläutenfeier (Verbrennung des „Bögg“)



The guilds, the Böögg and the whole of Zurich

Sechseläuten is organized by the Zurich guilds. The Böögg is the focal point of attention, and the whole of Zurich is present for the event. The custom is deeply rooted in the tradition of the local population. On Sechseläuten Monday, children get a day off school and the shops in the city centre are closed. Sechseläuten's attraction also goes well beyond the city limits, to the neighbouring cantons and abroad. Many foreign visitors travel from far to watch the colourful event in the inner city and return home with wonderful memories of Zurich and its spring festival.

The Zurich guilds

When the guilds had lost the last of their “municipal government” duties in 1866, they continued to exist as associations. Indeed, when the “new lineage” guilds were founded, the central focus of attention became the common celebration of Sechseläuten and the upholding of this tradition and custom.



Who is eligible to become a guild member?

Zurich guilds only admit male applicants for membership according to historical tradition. Future guildsmen have to have experienced the guild “way of life” for a longer period of time before admission. The best chances lie in the hands of guildsmen’s sons and sons-in-law, who are frequently invited to guild events by their fathers or fathers-in-law. Many guildsmen’s sons take part in the Sechseläuten Procession from a very early age. Admission into a guild is also open to people who have no family ties or connections to a particular guild. The preconditions are that they are introduced to the guild and invited to events by an established guild member. The number of members belonging to a guild is mostly determined by the size of its guildhouse. The admission rules vary from guild to guild. On the whole, a guild member is expected to uphold the Zurich guild traditions as well as to be a strong believer in Zurich’s past and present. A strong connection to the district in question is expected from members of the “new lineage” guilds. The applicant to all guilds is given a probationary period in which he has the opportunity to get to know the guild, its members and the “way of life” attached. This also allows the guild members to form an opinion of the candidate in question. Once the probation period is over, the guild members will have a chance to cast their vote for a definite admission.

At Sechseläuten, the guilds and their way of life are in full public view. The guild members appear on the streets in their costumes and display a tiny bit of history and tradition to the city. Throughout the year, the guilds enjoy their own internal events which include for instance the Martinmahl (Martinmas feast) or the Rechenmahl (accounts feast) for most guilds in the autumn. Here, the association’s accounts are presented to the members and the first half of the guild calendar year is celebrated, by dining in the guildhouse together with guests from other guilds. Many guilds have regular monthly events in their calendar, in which guild-specific matters are dealt with and in which traditions are upheld – conviviality and social gathering being the main order of the day. Partners and families are equally involved in the guild “way of life” throughout the year – small groups of regulars meet up, excursions and balls are organized.



Individual guilds maintain further traditions besides Sechseläuten which are acknowledged and greatly appreciated by the general public. They include:

New Year's greetings: On Epiphany, the *Zunft zu den Drei Königen* visits old people's homes and hospitals with its group of Three Kings.

St Peter's journey: At the end of January, the *Zunft zum Widder* – the butchers' guild – pays a visit to the curate of the St Peter's Church, with a traditional offering of a big joint of ham. In earlier years on Palm Sunday, the butchers used to lead the priest's donkey up to the Lindenhof. In return for their efforts, they still to this day continue to receive a gift of 101 "Fasnachtschüechli" (special filo pastry pancakes covered in icing sugar baked at the time of Lent) every year.

Citizens' Drink: The *Wiedikon Guild* invites the local inhabitants of the district to its premises after a church service for a traditional Citizens' Drink.

Sechseläuten Commemorative Print: On Wednesday after Sechseläuten, the *Zunft Hard* hands out a special commemorative Sechseläuten copper etching by David Herrliberger from its guildhouse premises.



Schifferstechen (Seamen's Jousting) tournament: Every three years, the *Zunft zur Schiffeleuten* organizes a jousting tournament on the Limmat river, called *Schifferstechen*, which is a chivalric contest on water and involves two boats gliding alongside each other. On the stern of each boat, there is a guildsman holding a padded lance. The jousters, adhering to strict rules and regulations, attempt to push their opponent on the other boat into the water whilst themselves remaining upright on their own vessel. This is a very popular event and attracts a large audience.

Zehntenabgabe (Contribution of a tenth): In September, the *Zunft zur Letzi* makes a financial contribution to the *Bachwiesen* nursing home. A group of mostly swearing and complaining guildsmen in peasants' costumes bring their taxes in the form of a tenth of their proceeds from agricultural products to the home's director, as they used to do in the past.

Sternritt (Great Ride): In September also, the Zurich guilds organize a meeting for their riders. The mounted guildsmen gather together at a given location, riding in from all directions, to participate in a riding event which concludes in a relaxed afternoon programme. This usually takes place in different places at the outskirts of Zurich.

Wümmetfäscht (Vintage Feast): In October, the *Zunft Höngg* participates in full costume at the *Wümmetfäscht* (grape harvest) procession in their district.

The dates and times for the previously listed public events are published in the *Sechseläuten* programme every year and can be found in the homepage www.sechselaeuten.ch.





Overview of the

The background is a light cream color featuring a repeating pattern of various Zurich guild crests. These crests are in different colors and shapes, including blue, yellow, orange, and green. Some crests show tools like hammers and wrenches, a ship's wheel, a white horse, a white building, a white rabbit, and a white cross on a red background. The text "city of Zurich guilds" is overlaid on this pattern in a black, cursive font.

city of Zurich guilds



Gesellschaft zur Constaffel (1336):
Councillors of the mid-14th century / Noblemen and knights belonged to the Constaffel Corporation – the famous town mayor Rudolf Brun was also a member / Own guildhouse "zum Rüden" at the Limmatquai.



Zunft zur Saffran (1336):
Patricians and uniformed people of the 18th century / Guild of the small shopkeepers with their own guildhouse at the Limmatquai.



Zunft zur Meisen (1336):
Zurich dragoons (mounted infantry) in 1770, townsfolk and councillors on Schwörsonntag (Sunday when the constitutional oath was taken) / Guild of the winemakers, saddlers and painters with own magnificent guildhouse in the Münsterhof.



Zunft zur Schmidn (1336):
Working clothes of the blacksmiths / Guild of the blacksmiths, shearers and barbers (doctors) with own guildhouse in the Marktgasse.



Zunft zum Weggen (1336):
Working clothes of the bakers and millers / Guild of the bakers and millers with a high percentage of professional people counting amongst their members right up to present times / Own guildhouse "Weisser Wind" in the Oberdorfstrasse.



Zunft zur Waag (1336):
Hat makers' costume of the Biedermeier period / Guild of the weavers and the hatters with own guildhouse in the Münsterhof.



Vereinigte Zünfte zur Gerwe und zur Schuhmachern (1336):
Tanners and shoemakers in period costumes / Guild of the red and white tanners on the one hand, and the shoemakers on the other hand, that joined forces to form one united guild in 1877 / Guild premises at the Hotel Savoy in the Poststrasse.



Zunft zum Widder (1336):
Working clothes of the butchers / Guild of the butchers and livestock dealers, who saved the city from an attempted coup by rebels on so-called Murder Night in 1350 / Guild premises in the Hotel Widder at the Rennweg.



Zunft zur Zimmerleuten (1336):
Carpenters, stonemasons and coopers in period costume / Guild of the builders and the winegrowers with own guildhouse at the Limmatquai.



Zunft zur Schneidern (1336):
Biedermeier costume of the mid-19th century / Guild of the tailors, cloth shearers and furriers with own guildhouse at the Stüssihofstatt.



Zunft Riesbach (1887):
Traditional costumes from the Wehntal region / Guild of the Riesbach district, whose own guildhouse is the "Grünes Glas" in the Untere Zäune.



Zunft zu Wiedikon (1897):
Costumes from the Manessian collection of ballads around 1260 / Guild of the Wiedikon district, which displays the oldest costumes of the Sechseläuten Procession / Guild premises in the Restaurant Falken in Wiedikon.



Zunft zum Kämbel (1336):
Bedouin robes / Guild of the gardeners, traders and oil dealers with own guildhouse at the Limmatquai.



Stadtzunft (1867):
Biedermeier costume from around 1867 / The first of the "new lineage" guilds, founded in the Schwanen Inn, hence the use of the swan in its coat of arms / Guild premises in the Hotel Zurich Marriott at the Neumühlequai.



Zunft Fluntern (1895):

Citizens of the mid-18th century, high-ranking watchmen and professional riders, Fluntern Grenadiers (1755–1780) / Guild of the Fluntern district, that feature as watchmen at the procession / Guild premises in the conference room of the Art Gallery at the Heimplatz.



Zunft zur Schiffeuten (1336):

Seaman's traditional costume of the 18th century / Guild of the fishermen, transport workers and ropemakers, who organize the "Schifferstechen" (seaman's jousting) tournament on the Limmat every three years / Guild premises in the Hotel Storchen at the Weinplatz.



Zunft zur Letzi (1934):

Armed farmers of the 14th and 15th centuries / Guild of the Albisrieden and Altstetten districts, with own guildhouse in the "Turm" at the Napfplatz.



Zunft zu den Drei Königen (1897):

Ship's crew of the 17th century, citizens of Enge from the second Rococo period / Guild of the Enge district, which includes the Three Kings group in costume / Guild premises in the Zurich Kongresshaus in the Gotthardstrasse.



Zunft Wollishofen (1900):

Farmers' traditional costume from the Knonauer Amt region / Guild of the Wollishofen district, that re-enacts the entire proceedings of a farmer's wedding at Sechseläuten / Guild premises in the Restaurant Belvoirpark in the Seestrasse in Enge.



Zunft Hottingen (1897):

Costumes from the early Biedermeier period (around 1820) / Guild of the Hottingen district, that has a special relationship to Gottfried Keller, the famous Swiss writer / Guild premises in the Restaurant Neumarkt at the Neumarkt.



Zunft Oberstrass (1925):
Regiment of guards under Louis XIV and farmers from the Oberstrass / Guild of the Oberstrass district, that distributes apples to the crowd at the procession / Guild premises at the "Linde Oberstrass" in the Universitätstrasse.



Zunft Witikon (1980):
Costumes from the times of the French Empire, 1798–1814 / Guild of the Witikon district, whose cavalry is dressed in the uniform of the Helvetic hussars / Guild premises at Sechseläuten in the Hotel Schweizerhof at the Bahnhofplatz.



Zunft Höngg (1934):
Traditional Sunday costume of the "Chli-Jogg", the specimen farmer of Katzenrüti / Guild of the Höngg district, that keeps up the tradition of local wine making in their guild activities / Guild premises at the "Mülihalde" at Höngg.



Zunft Hard (1922):
Costumes from the Zurich Rococo period around 1750: squires, burghers, craftsmen, councillors and students, town criers and side-saddle riders / Guild of the Ausersihl and Hard districts. Own guild premises in the "Werdgut" in the Morgartenstrasse.



Zunft Schwamendingen (1975):
Sunday outfits of the Zurich farmers between 1750 and 1800 / Guild of the Schwamendingen district, that was founded after its municipalization / Guild premises in the Hotel Glockenhof in the Sihlstrasse.



Zunft St. Niklaus (1934):
Costumes from the landvogt of Kyburg around 1750 / Guild of the Oerlikon, Seebach and Affoltern districts, that have a special connection to Kyburg / Guild premises in the Restaurant Carlton in the Bahnhofstrasse.

The Böögg

The name Böögg probably originates back to a good-conduct mandate from ancient times in Zurich, in which the authorities forbade “Böögen- und Butzenwerk”, i.e. the burning of fires and boisterous celebrations.

The star of the day at Sechseläuten is the Böögg. It is pulled on its cart through the streets of Zurich on its last journey on the Sunday at the Children's Parade. At half past six in the morning on Monday, the snowman is already standing majestically on the top of a woodpile in the Sechseläutenplatz filled with fireworks and explosives. It is strategically positioned to face the St Peter's Church clock so that it may witness its last hour, when it strikes.

There have been many curious stories involving the Böögg over the years. In 1900, 1901 und 1992 it refused to burn and instead, fell head first into the fire. In 1921, a young communist, who was later remembered as Böögg-Bachmann, set fire to the Böögg earlier than planned and as a matter of fact, it completely burned down in the early hours of the morning. It was only thanks to the involvement of many hardworking volunteers that another Böögg was put into position for the guilds that evening – this time holding a red flag in his hand as a sign of warning. During the wartime years of 1943/44, the Federal Government did not allow a fire to be built in the Sechseläutenplatz. Instead, a mound of potatoes was formed, which was meant to feed the people. In 1944, the Böögg gave a guest performance at the harbour of Enge, where it sank pathetically into the water and subsequently had to be thrown bit by bit into a burning fire.







The whole of Zurich

The city looks at its most magnificent at Sechseläuten. Public and privately owned buildings are adorned with flags. The guild members especially hang guild flags outside their houses and apartments.

The city's public places are full of spring flowers and an atmosphere of joy and anticipation reigns in the streets. There is no school for children on Sechseläuten Monday and the shops in the city centre are closed. In the evening, most of the shopkeepers do not illuminate their shop windows, so that the lanterns of the travelling guild members are seen at their best advantage.

In all weather conditions, thousands of Zurich men and women as well as a great number of visitors from in and outside Switzerland flock into the streets to watch the procession. Although the order of events and the proceedings at Sechseläuten are practically the same every year, Zurich's spring festival continues to attract its enthusiastic and loyal audiences. It is a celebration for the young and the old, for locals and outsiders and is undoubtedly an unforgettable annual event.

In 1988, a guild for women, the Gesellschaft zu Fraumünster (Fraumünster Corporation), was founded, which does not belong to the Zurich Guild Association. It aims to bring the history and culture of the Fraumünster Abbey to light and every three years, organizes a market in medieval style at the Münsterhof.



The Sechseläuten weekend



Sechseläuten usually takes place on the third weekend in April. It officially begins on Friday evening at the Lindenhof, the “Platz der Kantone” (Square of the Cantons). Saturday is the day for guild balls. The Children’s Parade takes place on Sunday and the Procession of the Guilds that leads to the Sechseläuten fire is on Monday. Throughout the entire weekend, a Swiss Canton is invited to join in the celebrations as a “guest” Canton and has the opportunity to introduce itself at the Lindenhof during this time. Visitors to Sechseläuten have the opportunity to discover and enjoy a lot of other small highlights during this weekend.



Friday and Saturday

The Square of the Cantons at the Lindenhof



During the entire weekend of Sechseläuten, the Lindenhof becomes the "Platz der Kantone" (Square of the Cantons). Since 1991, the jubilee year of the Swiss Confederation, the Zurich guilds have invited a particular Canton in Switzerland to join them for the celebrations of Sechseläuten. The "guest" Canton gets the chance to present itself to the population during four days at the Lindenhof, a square that lies in an elevated position in the centre of the city. This invitation strengthens Zurich's bond and relationship to its fellow Cantons in Switzerland. The "guest" Canton's presence at Sechseläuten is an ideal opportunity for it to introduce itself to a wider audience. The programme that the "guest" Canton offers Zurich during this time is extremely varied and includes cultural, economic and touristic themes, introducing amongst many other things culinary delights and specialities of the region. A lot of work and enthusiasm goes into the preparation and realization of this guest appearance. Hundreds of people from the Canton in question travel to Zurich, to take part either actively or passively in both processions or even to help out at the Square of the Cantons. The "guest" Canton also brings a group with them that will march at the head of both parades to represent them. It is up to the Canton itself to decide the theme and who to place at the head of the procession. It can range from a band, a group dressed in traditional costume, flag delegations or even cultural groups.

The Sechseläuten weekend is officially inaugurated on Friday evening at 5 p.m. at the "Platz der Kantone" (Square of the Cantons) and is attended by selected political, commercial and cultural personalities. At 6 p.m., the "guest" Canton has the opportunity to display its cultural, commercial or touristic highlights. Regional specialities are served in a covered and heated marquee. The

music programme, apart from a concert given by a particular guild's band, is also offered by the "guest" Canton. The entire population is invited to join in at Sechseläuten's lively inauguration ceremony, whilst in the meantime the "Trumme bummle" (wandering drummers) begins in the entire inner city. Drummers of both sexes march from different directions towards the town hall and then disperse into the streets of the city. They also stop at the "Platz der Kantone" (Square of the Cantons) for a short while to show off their skills there.

On the Saturday of Sechseläuten, there are no official festivities at the Lindenhof. Many guildsmen dance the night away at balls in different locations in the city, the men wearing their guild costumes and the women either in a historical or a traditional costume.



Sunday

The colourful and cheerful Children's Parade

Sechseläuten Sunday is devoted to children with its Children's Parade. Around 2 p.m., all the participants, the bands, the floats and the animals gather at the lower side of the Bahnhofstrasse. The parade starts at 2.30 p.m. and presents a historical journey through the time and the history of Zurich: from medieval times with its Romanesque style, to Gothic and Renaissance, from Baroque and Rococo periods to Biedermeier,

Belle Epoque and finally modern cosmopolitan times. The "Weltoffenes Zürich" (cosmopolitan) group is open to children from all continents of the world. The parade is headed by the "guest" Canton, various youth and guild bands, many carriages and floats which are all pulled by horses.









The Böögg is dragged along at the tail end of the parade on a medieval carriage surrounded by executioners, thus making a link to the following day when the Böögg meets its end on a woodpile in the Bellevue.

Any child can take part in the Children's Parade – as long as they wear a historical or a traditional costume, that can be hired for a small fee from the organizers of the event. The Internet site www.kinderumzug.ch provides information about the times and places for registration as well as about the hiring of costumes.

The children are looked after during the parade by helpers of both sexes from the guilds. These so-called "Chäfer" (i.e. ladybirds) – wearing ties and scarfs which are covered in ladybirds – accompany the parade, providing support where it is needed and making sure that the children are delivered back safely to their parents after the parade.

At the end of the Children's Parade, the tired but happy children gather together in the Kongresshaus for a "Zvieri" (i.e. tea break), before they are picked up by their parents.

After the Children's Parade, the various music corps spread out through the city and take position in different well-frequented places. Parents take their children out to dinner or stroll through the town with them, enjoying the very particular atmosphere in Zurich that is unique to the Sechseläuten weekend. The Chäfer (helpers) make their way, accompanied by the Boys Band of the City of Zurich, to the so-called "Chäferfest" (lady-bird's feast) at the Zeughauskeller restaurant where they receive special thanks for their work during the Sechseläuten weekend from the Central Committee of the Zurich Guilds.







Facts and figures about the Children's Parade

Around 2000 children take part in the Children's Parade each year. They are accompanied through the streets of Zurich by around 800 members of 14 music associations (of which nine youth music corps). Around 150 young helpers (Chäfer) join the parade. The cultural commission is responsible for the organization of the parade and for the maintenance of over 750 costumes, of the floats and props. Costumes are hired out for a small fee. All together around 200 people from the guild circles are involved in the smooth implementation of the Children's Parade on Sechsläuten Sunday. The organizers of the Children's Parade are supported by the city police force, as well as the transport, medical, and security services of the city of Zurich. Any child can register for participation in the parade, on condition that he or she wears a historical or traditional costume. Details for registration and costume hire can be found on the Internet at www.kinderumzug.ch.





Monday

The Procession of the Guilds, the burning of the Böögg and the evening visitations



The Sechseläuten Procession and preparations thereof

On the Monday of Sechseläuten at 7 a.m., the city is awoken by a 21-gun salute fired by a cannon. The workers of "Grün Zürich" (Green Zurich) are already hard at work in the Sechseläutenplatz setting up the Böögg onto its woodpile. Around 4500 "Bürdeli" (little bundles of firewood), wood and branches collected from the city's trees, are stacked high to form a 13-metre-high and a 7-metre-wide woodpile for the occasion. By midday already, the Böögg has taken up its position at the very top and awaits its fate. Since 1921, when the Böögg was set alight earlier than planned, the woodpile is guarded and a second Böögg is at hand – just in case.

In the morning around 11 a.m., the guildsmen make their way to their respective guildhouses where they are welcomed by their guild bands. The Boys Band of the City of Zurich takes up position in several locations of the city during the morning and plays in recognition for the support that it receives during the entire year. Until midday, when the guild members disappear within the four walls of their guildhouses for lunch, a lively atmosphere of anticipation and preparation reigns in the inner city.

At 11 a.m., the young men of the Zunft zum Weggén throw "Semmeli" (small bread rolls) out of the windows of their guildhouse into the Grossmünsterplatz in memory of Charles the Great who was very generous towards the poor people in the city and whose statue is placed at the south tower of the Grossmünster Cathedral. A large crowd of onlookers is always present for this long-standing Zurich tradition.

At 11.15 a.m., a traditional mortar shooting ceremony takes place in military formation on the Gemüsebrücke near the City Hall, organized by the Zunft zur Saffran using small historical stationary mortars. The shooting is enacted along traditional historical rules and regulations.

At the same time, Limmat longships filled with guildsmen of the Stadtzunft (City Guild) who have just had a hearty breakfast, glide down the river towards their guildhouse near the Main Station.

At midday, the Zunft zum Kämbel lays a wreath at the foot of Hans Waldmann's memorial statue in front of the Fraumünster by the Limmat, in remembrance of a controversial guildmaster and town mayor, who was once counted amongst their guild members.

The Zentralkomitee der Zünfte Zürichs ZZZ (Central Committee of the Zurich Guilds) is responsible for the entire organization of the weekend event. It consists of 200 volunteers and helpers who organize the processions, accompany the children on Sunday, arrange the programme at the "Platz der Kantone" (Square of the Cantons), see to the maintenance of the costumes, floats, equipment and props for the Children's Parade and supervise the erection of the Böögg. The ZZZ is financed by a yearly fee paid by the individual guilds and through the profits achieved by selling commemorative programmes and pins for the occasion. The many volunteers do not only work at Sechseläuten but throughout the entire year for the occasion.



At 2 p.m., the guilds make their way to the meeting point for the start of the Sechseläuten Procession. At the same time, children pour into the guilds of their fathers and forefathers, horses are led out of their boxes and groomed, the guild carriages are prepared and the floats hitched up. The best places to watch such preparations are the Limmatquai or the Münsterhof – the squares in which a number of guilds get ready for their afternoon march.





The Sechseläuten Procession begins at 3 p.m. at the lower end of the Bahnhofstrasse. It is best to watch the procession from one of the many seating places available along the route.



The so-called "Contermarsch" (countermarch) in the Bahnhofstrasse offers the opportunity to watch the procession twice, as the guilds cross paths and walk back in the opposite direction along the main street of Zurich. Tickets for seats at the Procession of the Guilds can be

purchased one week prior to Sechseläuten at given sales points in the city and the rest of the seats are sold at the Paradeplatz on the day itself.





The guilds invite prominent Swiss personalities in the fields of politics, trade, culture and military to their spring celebration. The guests spend the entire day with their host guild and are asked to deliver a "pointed" speech either at lunch or dinner, which always adds even more spice and flavour to the meal.

There can be no celebration in Zurich without flowers! It is customary that the guildsmen's wives hand bouquets of flowers or small gifts to the guild members they know at the parade. They prepare their flower baskets with much love, bake heart-shaped biscuits for the occasion and organize small imaginative little gifts to give to their loved ones and acquaintances, who thank them with beaming smiles, warm hugs and lots of kisses.

A detailed programme is on sale across the city allowing the reader to be fully informed about the day's events, the guilds, the themes of the parade, and the honorary guests. Every year lots are drawn to determine the order of appearance of the guilds at the parade.



Facts and figures about Sechseläuten Monday

Around 7000 participants in costume, 28 music corps, 350 mounted horses, 140 carthorses as well as 50 floats and carriages take part in the Procession of the Guilds. The Böögg stands in splendour on a woodpile consisting of 4500 "Bürdeli" (wood bundles) with a diameter of 7 metres. The wood comes from the trees in the avenues and streets of Zurich. The Böögg itself is 3.40 metres tall, weighs 80 kg, its body is 2.80 metres, its arms 1.90 metres and its head 1.80 metres long. Its body contains 60 Swiss bangers, 30 cannon bangers and 20 thunderclaps which make it a highly explosive entity.





The burning of the Böögg

The Sechseläuten Procession route is designed in such a way that the last guild arrives at the Sechseläutenplatz in the Bellevue in time for 6 p.m., when the organizers set fire to the Böögg's woodpile with the help of a selected prominent personality from the "guest" Canton.











As soon as the pile of wood is burning, the mounted guildsmen take turns to follow each other in groups, riding three times around the Böögg to the sound of the Sechsläuten March or to their own guild march.



A few minutes later, depending on weather conditions of course, the flames should have reached the padded man, and 110 explosive parts inside the Böögg should go off in a deafening racket and should cause it to go up in flames in a cloud of smoke and sound. Nothing is proven, but nevertheless, from six o'clock in the evening onwards, the Swiss population

pays particular attention to the number of minutes it takes for the Böögg's head to finally explode: a couple of minutes are the sign of a wonderfully warm summer – and if it takes any longer, no great meteorological hopes are placed for the hot season.







After the Böögg has burnt down and the last of the rider groups has ridden around the burning woodpile, the guilds return back to their guildhouses, where a fine dinner awaits them, that will give them the stamina to survive through the long Sechse-läuten night.



From 8.30 p.m., the streets of the inner city liven up again. The guildsmen once again prepare to leave their headquarters and light up their guild lanterns. The guild bands perform in front of the guildhouses before they set off on the nocturnal marches. The guildsmen must visit three guilds, that are predetermined by the Zentralkomitee der Zünfte Zürichs (Central Committee of Zurich Guilds), in a long and complicated distribution process before the event.

The evening inter-guild visitations





Around 9.15 p.m., a delegation from each guild sets off in a darkened city, deprived of its streetlights for the occasion, on its journey from guildhouse to guildhouse headed by the guildsman who is appointed to make a speech at the point of arrival. He holds the guild goblet in his hands and is surrounded by the many lanterns, the guild banner and the still lively music of the guild band. The guildmaster remains in his own guildhouse with his so-called "Stubenhocker" (stay-at-home) fellows, in order to welcome the visitors.

The speaker is expected to deliver a "pointed" and well-prepared speech, full of wit and provocative remarks. The host guildmaster doesn't know which guilds will visit him on the night and is expected to spontaneously react to the speech after it has been delivered. The guild spokesman has the opportunity here to honour his guild by delivering a memorable and witty speech. The guildmaster, who is usually an experienced and talented orator, is challenged here to use a high degree of quick-wittedness, in order to react appropriately and cleverly to the themes mentioned. These inter-guild visitations are normally friendly and cheerful events, however, and consolidating friendships and creating strong bonds between the guilds. They are only open to guildsmen and their guests, and are carried out in privacy behind closed doors.



Throughout the evening visitations, there is a great come-and-go atmosphere in the guildhouses. Guilds that have to wait outside the guildhouses before they are admitted entertain the general public, still present in great number, outside in the streets with spontaneous concert performances. When the going is clear, they enter the host guildhouse to the sound of the Sechseläuten March.

The Sechseläuten March has an unmistakable and catchy melody. Despite its foreign origins, it is viewed as "naturalized" since decades and is secretly regarded as Zurich's very own hymn. It was composed by Jean-Baptiste Lully, an Italian living in Paris, at the end of the 17th century and was greatly loved at the time by the Prussian King Friedrich II who called it the "Hunting March". It

subsequently found its way to the Tsar's family in St Petersburg, Russia, and to Zurich in the second half of the 19th century. The most "native" of all marches was played for the first time in 1872 when the Zünfte zur Gerwe and zur Schuhmachern were celebrating the event with the Regiment Band of Constance. The Germans played the ancient German Hunting March to the great delight of all present, and from then on, it became the anthem for Sechseläuten. It is played over and over again at Sechseläuten, when the mounted guildsmen ride around the Böögg, when the visiting guilds are waiting for their hosts to receive them in the evening or often as a spontaneous sign of joy and celebration throughout the day. There are a lot of different interpretations of the march available today.







The evening visitations last until about midnight, and then all the delegations return to their guildhouses to partake of a warming and energizing soup. At this point, the guild bands take official leave of their respective guilds to the last tones of the Sechseläuten March.

To experience and watch the evening activities, it is best to be in between the Münsterhof, Limmatquai and the Weinplatz or even to stroll around the streets of the old city. Most of the hubbub and excitement happens outside the guildhouses. Guilds pass and greet one another, guild bands play their music through the narrow streets and colourful lanterns indicate the arrival of the next delegation from afar.



The spirit of Sechseläuten continues on even **after midnight**. Spontaneously formed groups of different guildsmen, together with a few musicians from the guild bands, team up to make so-called "Saubannerzüge", and set off (this time unprepared) to visit the one or the other guildmaster and to put the latter to the test once again.

Every seven to ten years, the *Zunft zur Meisen* and *Zunft zur Waag*, whose guildhouses are both located in the Münsterhof, perform a particular ritual in the square after midnight, called the "**Siddeleritt**" (Siddele = chair, Ritt = ride). This is where the broken chairs of any of these two guildhouses are taken on their last journey. The visiting guildsmen carry the chairs into the Münsterhof, and sit on them as if mounting a horse, facing the backrest. These strange herds then proceed over to the guildhouse on the opposite side of the square, to the cries and encouragement of the onlookers and to the tune of the Sechseläuten March. The chairs are then piled up in front of the neighbouring guildhouse. Inside, another speech is delivered in traditional style followed by the joint ceremony of the burning of the chairs in the Münsterhof and the roasting of sausages in the fire. Whether, or at what time, the Siddeleritt will take place remains a tightly kept secret that is only revealed on the night of Sechseläuten itself.

When the city slowly awakes at dawn on Tuesday, the day after Sechseläuten, and when some guild members only just start to make their way home, most people in the city share one feeling in common: they already look forward to next year's Sechseläuten.



Auf Wellen und vor Anker Treu

Punft
zur
Schiffleuten

A.D. 1336

Selected insider tips for an

Friendly greetings

The people of Zurich and the guildsmen greet each other throughout the day and until the early hours of the morning on Tuesday with "Es schööns Sächsilüüte", even when the event is well over.

Giving floral bouquets

Ladies distribute flowers and small gifts to the procession participants, whom they know particularly well and like. The men thank them with hugs and kisses.

Buying programmes and pins

The official programme contains lots of information about the Sechseläuten weekend and about the themes of the Children's Parade and the Procession of the Guilds. If you wear the pin, you clearly demonstrate your support to the event and will be classified as a Sechseläuten fan!

Taking photographs

The many colourful themes and happy faces are there to be photographed. If you take the time to ask, you will also definitely be able to find out about the origins of the costumes and traditional outfits.

Evening meal

Make sure you reserve your table for dinner in the restaurant of your choice as early as possible. Most of the restaurants of the inner city are fully booked and have few tables available on Monday evening. In addition the guild-houses are not open to the general public.

Visiting the "Platz der Kantone"

Be sure to visit the "guest" Canton which has plenty on offer in the "Platz der Kantone" at the Lindenhof. There you have access to a wonderful range of food and beverages as well.

Catching sight of the Böögg

The Sechseläutenplatz is crowded at 6 p.m. Get there early enough to enjoy the spectacle of the Böögg, as there are plenty of attractive viewing positions available to the general public.

Eating during the procession

A lot of guilds distribute food to the general public during the parade: watch out for the Semmeli bread rolls from the Weggen, the sausages from the Widder, radishes from the Wollishofen, apples from the Oberstrass, Tirggel biscuits from Hard, Gerwe and Schuhmachern, dates from the Kämbel, sweets from the Fluntern, and biscuits from the Witikon. You may also be offered a glass of wine by a number of guilds.

Watching the parade

It is best to purchase tickets for a seat at the parade in advance. The popular places to sit are in the Bahnhofstrasse, where the "Contermarsch" (countermarch) takes place. Here the guilds can be seen twice and from both sides.

unforgettable Sechseläuten

Watching the "gässlen" (come and go) in the evening

The darkened streets of the old town are at their most lively and atmospheric in the evening. Delegations of guildsmen visit each other from guildhouse to guildhouse and carry their lanterns with them everywhere. The guild bands sound at their most impressive in the narrow streets of the town.

Night time entertainment

Various nightclubs have special opening times on Monday evening. Here people in costume and in civil clothes dance the night away.

Roasting sausages at the Böögg

In the latter years it has become a tradition amongst many youths to gather at the Böögg after the burning ceremony is over and once the guilds have left in order to keep warm. They also use the fire to roast their sausages and together they celebrate the event to the full.

Special issue stamps

At Sechseläuten, special issue stamps are dedicated to a particular guild. These philatelic collectors' items are only available during that weekend at specific places that are publicized in the local press.

Protection from the cold

The weather shouldn't prevent you from enjoying Sechseläuten. Make sure you are dressed in appropriately warm clothing and

that you take a small blanket, a cushion or a waterproof cover with you to put on the wooden benches for your maximum comfort and enjoyment.

Dialect is order of the day

"Züritüütsch" (the German spoken in Zurich) is a particular and multifaceted dialect. It is as difficult to copy as any other dialect in Switzerland. A special dictionary was published in 1983 – "Zürichdeutsches Wörterbuch" – which helps people who are interested in the language. On municipal holidays such as Sechseläuten, a lot of guildsmen (who do not normally speak like this) use this dialect, saying "Zouft" instead of Zunft, "Moischter" instead of Münster, "Feischter" instead of Fenster, or "Chlütter" instead of Geld.

Consult the Internet

The website www.sechselaeuten.ch will provide you with the latest information about the event (times, honourable guests, highlights, guild information, etc.). It is worth checking the website just before the event.

Make sure your children are registered for the parade

If you have children who are interested in joining the Children's Parade, you will find the conditions of participation on the Internet at www.kinderumzug.ch or in the local press. Any child who is registered and who wears an appropriate costume is allowed to take part.

- 1 "Semmeli" (bread rolls) throwing Monday, at 11 a.m.
- 2 "Sechseläutenplatz" Placement of the Böögg: Monday, from 7 a.m. Burning ceremony: from 6 p.m.
- 3 Laying of the wreath Zunft zum Kämbel Monday, before the Procession, at midday
- 4 "Siddeleritt" (chair ride) (not a regular event)
- 5 Mortar shooting Monday, at 11.15 a.m.
- 6 "Platz der Kantone" Friday to Monday evening
- 7 Point of gathering for the processions Please avoid this area!

Evening visitations

- This is where most of the action takes place

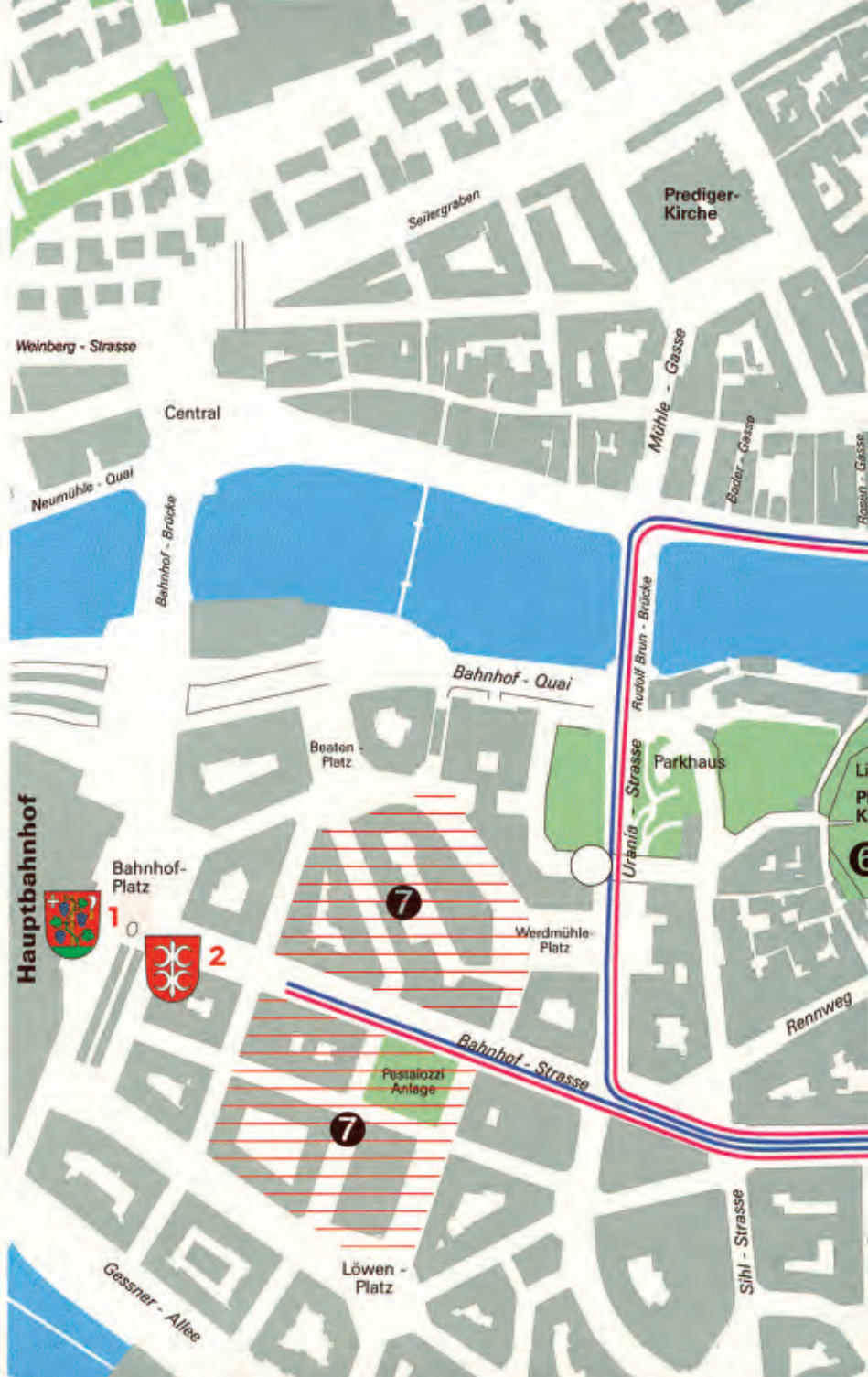
Good viewpoints to watch:

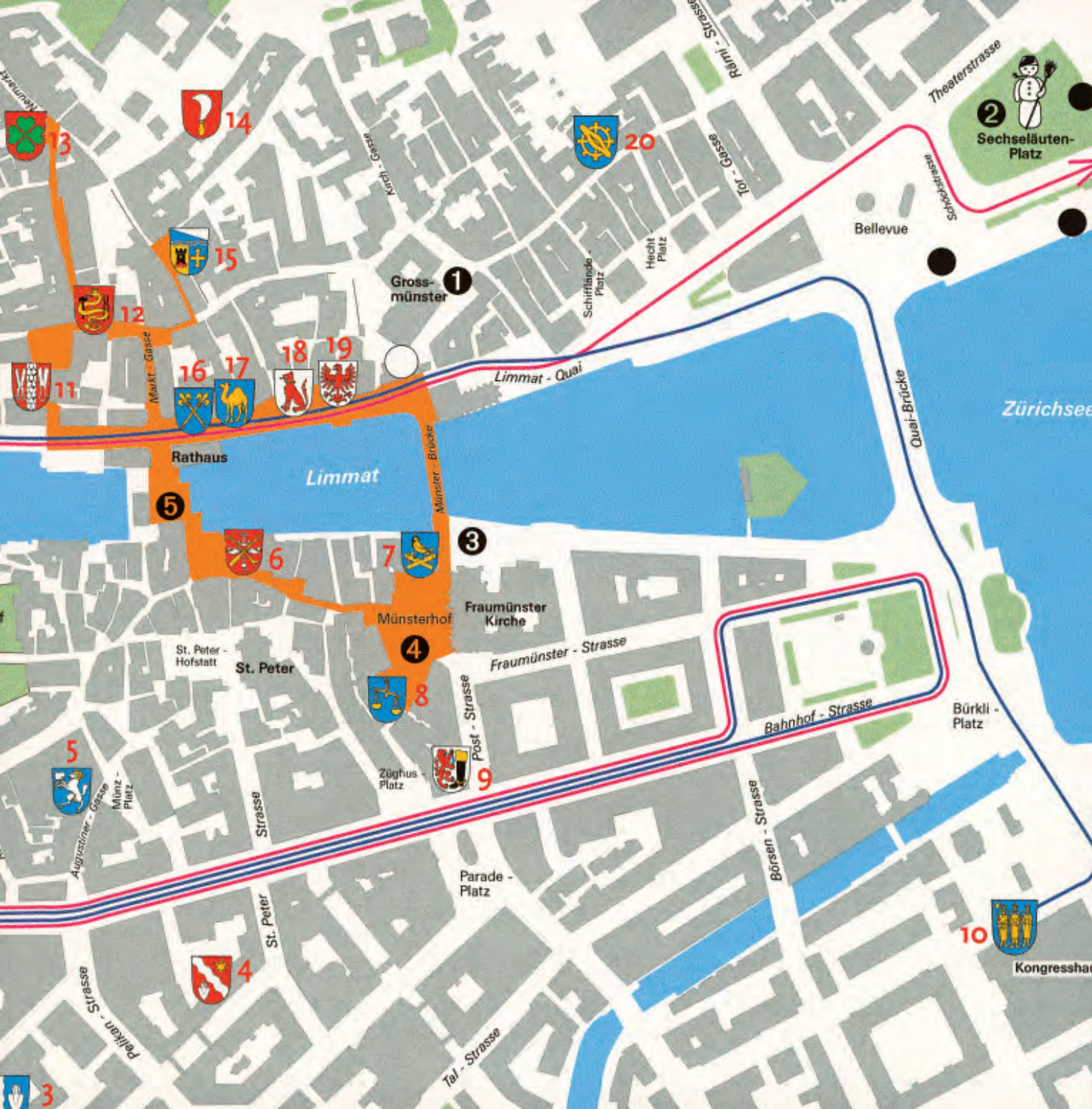
- The Procession (also along the procession route)
- The Böögg

Red line: Sechseläuten Procession route (Monday)

Blue line: Children's Parade route (Sunday)

- 1 Zunft Höggi Bahnhofbuffet
 - 2 Zunft Witikon Hotel Schweizerhof
 - 3 Zunft Schwamendingen Hotel Glockenhof
 - 4 Zunft St. Niklaus Restaurant Carlton
 - 5 Zunft zum Widder Hotel Widder
 - 6 Zunft zur Schifflenten Hotel Storchen
 - 7 Zunft zur Meisen Zunfthaus zur Meisen
 - 8 Zunft zur Waag Zunfthaus zur Waag
 - 9 Vereinigte Zünfte zur Gerwe und zur Schuhmachern Savoy-Hotel Baur en Ville
 - 10 Zunft zu den Drei Königen Kongresshaus
 - 11 Zunft zur Schneidern Zunfthaus zum Königstuhl
 - 12 Zunft zur Schmiden Zunfthaus zur Schmiden
 - 13 Zunft Hottingen Zunfthaus am Neumarkt
 - 14 Zunft Riesbach Restaurant zum Grünen Glas
 - 15 Zunft zur Letzi Restaurant zum Turm
 - 16 Zunft zur Saffran Zunfthaus zur Saffran
 - 17 Zunft zum Kämbel Zunfthaus zur Haue
 - 18 Gesellschaft zur Constaffel Haus zum Rüden
 - 19 Zunft zur Zimmerleuten Zunfthaus zur Zimmerleuten
 - 20 Zunft zum Weggen Restaurant Weisser Wind
- Stadtzunft Hotel Zurich Marriott
 Zunft Fluntern Restaurant Lake Side
 Zunft zu Wiedikon Gasthof zum Falken
 Zunft Wollishofen Restaurant Belvoirpark
 Zunft Hard Restaurant Werdgut
 Zunft Oberstrass Taverne zur Linde





Grossmünster

Bellevue

Sechseläuten-Platz



Schiffplande-Platz

Hecht-Platz



Limmat-Quai

Quai-Brücke

Zürichsee

Rathaus

Limmat

5

3



Fraumünster Kirche



St. Peter Hofstatt
St. Peter

Fraumünster-Strasse



Münsterhof

Post-Strasse

Bahnhof-Strasse

Bürkli-Platz

5



Münz-Platz



Parade-Platz

Börsen-Strasse

10



Kongresshaus

3



Paliken-Strasse

St. Peter

Tal-Strasse

Börsen-Strasse



Sechseläuten in Zurich

A Visitor's Guide

A publication of the Zentralkomitee der Zünfte Zürichs (ZZZ) for visitors to Zurich's Sechseläuten.

Second edition 2007

This booklet is also available in French and German.

It is not for sale.

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