Kapellbrücke

The **Kapellbr**ü**cke** (literally, Chapel Bridge) is a covered wooden [footbridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Footbridge) spanning diagonally across the [Reuss](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reuss_(river)" \o "Reuss (river)) in the city of [Lucerne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucerne) in central [Switzerland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Switzerland). Named after the nearby St. Peter's Chapel, the bridge is unique because it contains a number of interior paintings dating back to the 17th century, although many of them were destroyed along with a larger part of the centuries-old bridge in a 1993 fire. Subsequently restored, the Kapellbrücke is the oldest wooden covered bridge in [Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europe), as well as the world's oldest surviving [truss bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truss_bridge). It serves as the city's symbol and as one of [Switzerland's main tourist attractions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_Switzerland).

## **History**

As part of the bridge complex, the Kapellbrücke includes the octagonal 34.5 m (113 ft) tall (from ground) Wasserturm, which translates to "water tower," in the sense of 'tower standing in the water.' The tower predated the bridge by about 30 years. Throughout the centuries, the tower was variably used as a prison, torture chamber, and later a municipal archive. Today, the tower is closed to the public, although it houses a local artillery association as well as a tourist gift shop.

The bridge itself was originally built c. 1365 as part of Lucerne's fortifications. It linked the old town on the right bank of the Reuss to the new town on the left bank, securing the town from attack from the south (i.e. from the lake). The bridge initially had a length of over 270 metres (890 ft), although due to numerous shortenings throughout the years and river bank replenishments, the bridge now totals only 204.7 metres (672 ft) in length. It is the oldest surviving [truss bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truss_bridge) in the world, consisting of strutted and triangulated trusses of moderate span, supported on piled trestles; as such, it is probably an evolution of the strutted bridge.

The Kapellbrücke almost burned down on August 18, 1993, destroying two thirds of its interior paintings. Shortly thereafter, the Kapellbrücke was reconstructed and again opened to the public on 14 April 1994 for a total of [CHF](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swiss_franc) 3.4 million.

## **Paintings**

Lucerne is unique in the fact that its three wooden pedestrian bridges, the 14th century Hofbrücke (now destroyed) and Kapellbrücke and the 16th century [Spreuerbrücke](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spreuer_Bridge" \o "Spreuer Bridge), all featured painted interior triangular frames. This feature is not replicated in any of Europe's other wooden footbridges. The paintings, dating back to the 17th century by local [Catholic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic) painter Hans Heinrich Wägmann, depict events from Lucerne's history. Out of the original 158 paintings, a total of 147 existed before the 1993 fire. After the fire, the remains of 47 paintings were collected, although only 30 were ultimately fully restored.

The wooden boards upon which the paintings were painted on were from 150 centimetres (59 in) to 181 centimetres (71 in) wide and 85 centimetres (33 in) to 95 centimetres (37 in) wide. Most of the panels were made from [spruce](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spruce) wood boards, while only a few were made from [linden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tilia) wood and [maple](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maple). The paintings were created during the time of the [Counter-Reformation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counter-Reformation), featuring scenes promoting the [Catholic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church). The paintings themselves were sponsored by the city's council members, who upon sponsoring a panel, were allowed to attribute their personal [coat of arms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coat_of_arms) on it. An explanation of each painting was printed below each scene. The paintings ran all along the bridge, dating from the life and death of Lucerne's [patron saint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patron_saint) St.Leger to the legends of the city's other patron saint [St. Maurice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Maurice).

