

→ For students at the University of Bern

Out and about sustainably in Bern



→ SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
GETTING AROUND
AT HOME
EATING & DRINKING
CONSCIOUS CONSUMPTION
CULTURE & EVENTS

Table of Contents

	Editorial	3
	Sustainable development	5
	What is sustainable development?	6
	Three strategies for sustainable development	7
	Interview on sufficiency	9
	Self-experiment	15
	Sustainable development at the University of Bern	16
	Want to get involved in sustainability? BENE!	16
	Study programmes in sustainable development	17
	Getting around	19
	Getting from A to B	20
	Getting around for leisure	23
	On the move in, on, and along the Aare river	26
	Self-experiment	30
	Eating & drinking	31
	Food waste	33
	How can I shop sustainably?	36
	Experiencing the market tour	38
	Consumption of meat and dairy products	42
	Drinking for a good cause	44
	Apps for sustainable shopping	46
	Self-experiment	47



At home

49

Switzerland's energy supply	50
Surfing the Internet more sustainably	51
Furnishing	52
Borrowing	52
Do you have a green thumb?	53
Keep it clean	55
Repair and do it yourself	56
Finance, politics, and media	58
Self-experiment	62



Conscious consumption

63

The sharing economy	64
Interview with LeihBar	66
Fashion	69
Cosmetics	71
Self-experiment	73
Greenwashing	74
BENE city map	75



Culture & events

77

Concept of culture	78
Art and cultural institutions	79
Sustainable events	81
Living and experiencing culture in everyday life	84
Self-experiment	87

Editorial

How we get around, what we consume, how we live – our behaviour and our decisions shape our environment.

This booklet invites you, as a student at the University of Bern, to think about what you need for a good, satisfying life. It follows the sufficiency approach, which emphasizes wealth in time and space over wealth in goods and money. In chapters titled **Sustainable development**, **Getting around**, **Eating & drinking**, **At home**, **Conscious consumption**, and **Culture & events** we have gathered together useful facts, ideas, and tips. In the city of Bern, there are numerous innovative stores, eateries, organizations, and associations that are committed to promoting a sustainable lifestyle. You will find a selection of them in the following pages. And while some of the links lead to German-only websites, most people in Bern speak two or three additional languages, so don't let the German deter you from getting in touch. (Many of the references are in German, too – but note that Swiss sources are often also available in French, and sometimes in Italian.)

Self-experiments are included to stimulate your creativity and inspire you to try something unfamiliar, develop new habits, and integrate them in your everyday life. The information in this booklet is not exhaustive, and we encourage you to always reflect critically on the tips we offer, considering them in relation to your own opportunities and needs. Realizing sustainable lifestyles at the societal level is not easy, but your own (consumer) behaviour can make an important contribution.

This booklet can accompany you in your everyday life as a student in Bern, give you fresh food for thought, encourage you to think independently, inspire you to try new things, and illustrate how to practise a lifestyle that benefits you and your environment at the same time.

We hope you enjoy trying things out and developing creative ideas!

This booklet wants to...

...give you, as a student at the University of Bern, insights into topics of sustainable development and sufficiency in particular,

...inspire you to try things out in self-experiments, possibly develop some new habits, and integrate them into your everyday life,

...introduce you to businesses and initiatives in Bern that are committed to sustainable development,

...show you how and where you can get involved in sustainable development.

This booklet *doesn't* want to...

...claim to be complete. There are definitely other local businesses and initiatives committed to sustainable development that are not mentioned here. This book merely offers a selection,

...be a scientific publication,

...show the only true path to sustainable development. You should always critically reflect on the tips and suggestions we offer.

Sustainable development



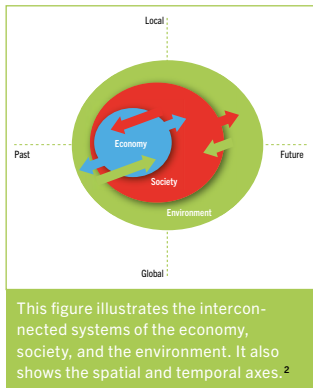
SUFFICIENCY, ECONOMY,
SOCIETY, ENVIRONMENT,
FUTURE, LIFE SATISFACTION,
FOOTPRINT



Sustainable development

What is sustainable development?

In this booklet you will find exciting interviews and features about sustainable development. But what exactly is sustainable development?



The United Nations (UN) has defined it as follows: Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.¹

This means that you shouldn't lack anything important, but you should also avoid consuming so much that, for example, there won't be enough resources for your grandchildren.

Ultimately, it's a matter of balancing the dimensions of the environment, society, and the economy. There are interdependencies and interactions between the three dimensions. A healthy environment, for example, provides the basis for beneficial coexistence and a stable economy. The economy, in turn, depends on a well-functioning society. Sustainable development is an evolving vision that invites everyone to contribute concrete ideas and content to its design. You can actively participate in its implementation and further advancement.

This all probably sounds quite reasonable and maybe even feasible, but, unfortunately, we humans are currently not succeeding at living

sustainably. On the contrary, if everyone were to live as we do here in Switzerland, we would use up the resources of 3.3 planets Earth every year.³ Compared with the global average, we live way beyond our means – leaving far too large a footprint. In countries like Switzerland in particular, resources are overconsumed and a lot of CO₂ is emitted.

The so-called “Earth Overshoot Day” vividly illustrates this trend. It marks the (shifting) date each year when humans have consumed all the resources worldwide that should actually last them the full year. In 2021, that date was 29 July.⁴ Thus, for the rest of the year, we were living “on credit” in terms of our “resource account”.



If you want to find out how big your individual footprint is and how you can shrink it, you can calculate it on the WWF website, for example.



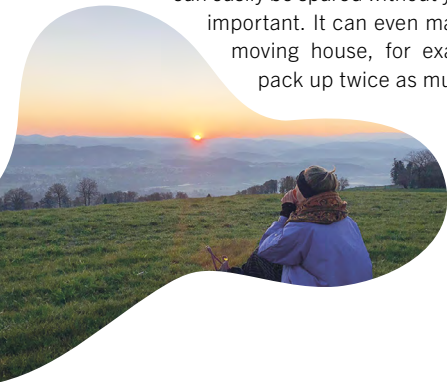
Three strategies for sustainable development

There are three strategies towards sustainable development that can help us humans exploit the Earth less. **Efficiency** is primarily about using technological innovations to achieve the same results with fewer resources. For example, an energy-saving light bulb uses less electricity but provides the same amount of light as a conventional light bulb. Or, in other examples, the same amount of resources is used, but more is produced. The car industry is emblematic of this: with the same amount of material, it is now possible to produce many more cars than before.

Consistency focuses on harmonizing nature and technology. In concrete terms, this means that materials that are not compatible with natural cycles should not be used. Waste should thus be avoided and only recyclable products should be manufactured.

The third strategy is **sufficiency**. The term comes from Latin and essentially means “as much as necessary”, or “enough”. It focuses on the question of how much is needed for a good life. What do you really need in order to lead a satisfied and happy life?

If you ask yourself this question, you will also likely realize what you *don't* need and what ultimately has no bearing on your life satisfaction. And you can stop consuming these things. This way, resources can easily be spared without you missing out on anything important. It can even make your life easier – when moving house, for example, you won't have to pack up twice as much as you actually need.⁵



Interview on sufficiency with Kirstin Schild

To understand the topic of “sufficiency” even better, we interviewed Kirstin Schild. She conducts research on sufficiency in connection with leading a good life, and also wrote a teaching tool to raise awareness of sufficiency among youth and young adults and inspire them to try out associated lifestyle practices.



Kirstin Schild studied philosophy and German studies at the University of Bern, and is trained as a secondary school teacher and in applied ethics. Her current research areas are sufficiency and what constitutes a good life. She is a research associate at the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), University of Bern.



Kirstin, what is your concept or definition of a sufficient lifestyle?

It is basically about using fewer resources and living a good life within planetary boundaries. Contemplating what constitutes a good life is part of it. Sufficiency also means “enough for a good life”. In my research interviews with pioneers of sufficient lifestyles, I noticed that they often have alternative conceptions of a happy life. The focus is not so much on financial prosperity, but more, for example, on having wealth of time and space.

How does sufficiency contribute to sustainable development or a sustainable lifestyle?

In sustainable development, there are three key strategies of action: efficiency, consistency, and sufficiency. Efficiency and consistency have more to do with new

technologies like e-mobility. Sufficiency has more to do with our own lives. It is sustainable because fewer resources are used, but also because alternative ways of living a happy life are realized. Besides, you don't need a lot of money to live a sufficient lifestyle, in contrast to buying certain new technologies. People generally only adapt their habits or lifestyle as a whole if they believe their life satisfaction will remain the same, or even be improved. In my opinion, this is possible with sufficiency.

Do the sufficiency pioneers live a very minimalist lifestyle?

No, we looked at ecological footprint calculators (for example, that of WWF). The aim is not to be as sufficient as possible in all areas of life, but rather to reduce your footprint overall. Our criteria were quite moderate, I think. We used indicators such as not flying more than once a year, or eating meat just twice a week and not changing your mobile phone more than once every five years.

It's always a balancing act and has to be weighed up. What and when is something really sustainable? We have to ask ourselves these questions repeatedly, and continuously incorporate new findings.

What are the personal advantages of a sufficient lifestyle?

The pioneers we interviewed said that they have more time in their lives. Time for their loved ones, for hobbies, or even to volunteer. Since they spend less money, they also have to work less. They feel more self-determined and free from constraints. It's a good feeling when you can shape



your life according to your values, experiencing harmony between your beliefs and your actions. Many people today live with a kind of “permanent guilty conscience”, which isn’t conducive to life satisfaction.

There are also studies showing that having a huge selection at the supermarket – of yogurt, for example – can stress us out and make us unhappy. A small selection is ideal.



When I consider the state of our climate, it becomes clear that our lifestyle can't continue to include such an oversupply of goods. A change in thinking is needed, and sufficiency is one way to go. A sufficient lifestyle also bears great potential for creativity when trying out new approaches and possibilities. For example, maybe I want to go to Madrid without flying. Then I have to plan that. I can organize

a ride and maybe sleep on someone's sofa. I might get to know people and have exciting experiences. You just have to try it yourself and experience the adventure.

What are personal obstacles or barriers to taking the step towards sufficiency?

Often you can get caught up in debates or meet with resistance. Suddenly, people start analysing very critically whether your new habit is truly sustainable and whether the rest of your lifestyle is consistent with it. I think this is because we quickly feel criticized about these issues. Es-



pecially when we know that we are living less sustainably in a given area than we might like. But it's not about being perfect in everything, it's rather about reflecting on and knowing what kind of person you want to be – and starting to act that way. Perfectionism isn't helpful here, as it can harm your motivation or lead to misanthropic views.

So far, we've just talked about the individual level. But we shouldn't forget that society, as a whole, has to consider how we can live together such that a good life remains possible for present and future generations. I think this broader discussion, which must also occur in political and economic terms, is still really lacking. We're told through various channels that it'll make us happy if we buy this or that. But is it really true? I would like to see new role models emerge who illustrate different, more sustainable paths to a happy life.

There are also external constraints that can inhibit a sufficient lifestyle. Maybe you have to fly for your job, or you need a new laptop to be able to work or study in your home office. General structures can also be a hindrance. For example, all organic vegetables are typically wrapped in plastic. So, you might have to go to several stores to really shop sustainably. But then there are new options, like a vegetable box subscription from a local farm, so you can go that way.

Feelings of powerlessness, and the sense that my individual actions hardly make a difference, can also be discouraging.

It is challenging for us as human beings to grasp and feel our responsibility to future generations.



After all, we're trying to consider people who haven't even been born yet, so it can feel quite abstract.

What small step would you advise students to take in order to embark on a more sufficiency-oriented lifestyle?

I would definitely start with something that's not too hard. In what area do you feel like trying something new? Maybe there are areas of your life that you've been wanting to change for a long time - maybe your closet is bursting at the seams, or maybe you aren't really happy about eating meat. That makes it easier to adopt a new habit. Another approach is to consider ways in which you already live sufficiently. Maybe you can expand from there. In any case, I recommend taking a playful approach.

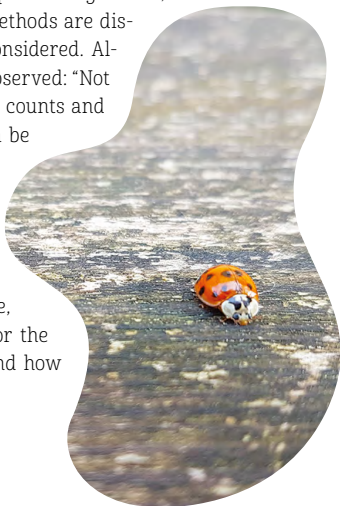


What are you studying in the area of sufficiency, and what has surprised you in your research?

I want to explore the connection between living a sufficient life and living a satisfying life. The people we surveyed were satisfied, but I don't know exactly why in each instance. To say their satisfaction should only be attributed to the pursuit of a sufficient lifestyle would be presumptuous. Nevertheless, in certain life areas, it was striking how life satisfaction appeared to be directly linked to sufficiency. For example, all our interviewees felt they had more time and were more self-determined because, for example, they spent less time working for money and less time consuming. Experiencing a feeling of self-efficacy through volunteer work and harmonizing personal values and behaviour were also cited as important sources of satisfaction.

What surprised me most was how many people kept asking for exact numbers. How much driving is still okay? How many kilos of meat per year are we allowed to eat? There are often no clear answers to these questions, or the answers are apt to change when, for example, new production methods are discovered or other factors are considered. Albert Einstein himself already observed: "Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted."

Facts and figures are important. But sufficiency also concerns the ethical question of what constitutes a good life, as well as our responsibility for the consequences of our actions and how we live.



Self-experiment

This booklet invites you to conduct small self-experiments. It suggests some concrete self-experiments and gives you many tips and suggestions. The self-experiments are meant to pique your curiosity for a sufficient lifestyle, inspire you to change, open you up to new experiences, and maybe even foster new habits.⁶ You can focus on an area in which you want to pay special attention to living more **sustainably** and **sufficiently**.

For example, you can try going plastic-free for a while, or spending as little money as possible. Why not try a vegan week or one where you use only your bike and your feet to get around? Get creative and come up with your own self-experiment. It's even easier if a few friends join in.

Sustainable development at the University of Bern

Want to get involved in sustainability? BENE!

BENE is a friendly and inspiring student association for sustainable development among Bern's institutions of higher learning.

Students are involved in the following project groups:

- Sustainability Week (read more on [page 83](#))
- *BENE Stadtplan* ("BENE city map"; see [page 75](#))
- *Studigarten* ("student garden"; see [page 55](#))
- Permaculture
- Higher education policy
- Zero waste & upcycling
- *KlimaZnacht* ("ClimateSupper")
- Clothes swap
- Biodiversity
- Sustainable economy
- Sustainable electronics



BENE Board

Want to join? Get in touch!

Website: www.bene-unibe.ch

Instagram: [@bene_unibe](#)

Facebook: [@BENEunibern](#)

Email: verein@bene-unibe.ch

In addition, BENE organizes events and other activities on the topic of sustainable development.



Learn more about BENE in this video.



Find out about current events here.

Study programmes in sustainable development

The Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) at the University of Bern offers several options for studies in sustainable development.

Bachelor Minor in Sustainable Development

This degree programme focuses on disciplinary and interdisciplinary basic knowledge on sustainable development. Theories, concepts, approaches, and methods are taught and applied through interdisciplinary work in groups and on case studies. Emphasis is placed on strengthening social skills, communication skills, and design skills, which are of fundamental importance for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration.



Master Minor in Sustainable Development

In this programme, you'll address the global societal challenges of sustainable development. You will learn about the current state and perspectives of research, as well as interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary theories and transformative approaches to sustainable development. The programme emphasizes competencies in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and project work, as well as methodological, reflection, and communication skills. As a student, you can actively contribute your own topics and interests.





CAS Sustainable Development: From knowledge to action – for the 2030 Agenda

Have you nearly completed your bachelor's or master's degree? No problem! Even if you have already started your professional life, you can further your education in sustainable development. The Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) in Sustainable Development conveys the theoretical core of sustainable development, introduces fields of action, and strengthens implementation skills.



International Graduate School (IGS) North-South

In the IGS North-South, you can attend courses in various countries together with other PhD students from different regions of the world. You will work in interdisciplinary groups on topics of global change and sustainable development based on concrete local examples.



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Getting around



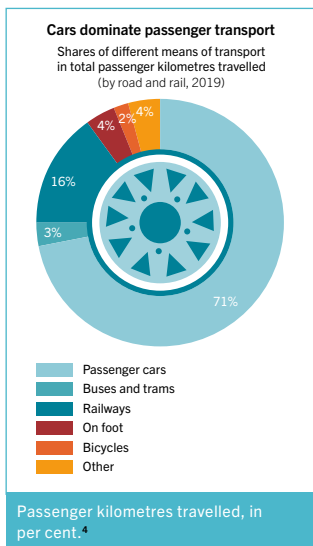
SHARING, BICYCLE,
EXCURSIONS, SWIMMING
IN THE AARE, LEISURE,
URBAN CLIMATE



Getting around

We spend an average of 1.5 hours a day in traffic. According to WWF Switzerland, Swiss people travel an average of 36.8 kilometres every day for work and leisure.¹ Commuting has an especially large “lose-lose effect”: it’s bad for our well-being and consumes large amounts of natural resources.² In Switzerland, motorized travel causes one third of all greenhouse gas emissions, in particular CO₂. Of these emissions, in turn, two thirds are caused by passenger vehicles. The number of cars, and corresponding kilometres travelled, continues to rise year after year.³ The graph below shows the proportion of kilometres that we travel by passenger transport. Cars are by far the most used means

of transport in Switzerland. The question arises as to which trips really require a car and which could easily be covered by bike or train instead.



Getting from A to B Getting around by bike

City streets can quickly get too crowded. Here, bicycles provide a useful means of short-distance transport and a good complement to public transport. New bike rental services aim to relieve pressure on the environment by reducing motorized traffic, thus helping to transform how we get around. You can easily register for the services and start riding right away. There are different subscription plans,

depending on your preferences. In Bern, for example, you will find the following offers:



PubliBike: Rent a bike or e-bike easily at one of the many stations in the city of Bern.



carvelo2go: Simply register in the app or on the website, find an electric cargo bike, pick it up, and start riding.

Bike to work

Need some extra motivation to get on your bike in the morning? Or would you like to motivate your fellow students or employees to do so?



Then sign up for “bike to work”.

This campaign takes place every summer, and you can sign up with a team of four. The aim is to cycle to work or to university as much as possible. Teams that cycle to work on at least half of the days of the campaign are eligible to win prizes.

Carsharing and ridesharing

Of course, sometimes a bicycle won't take you far enough. And maybe public transport doesn't offer a good connection for the trip you have in mind. Or you're moving house and need to transport





large furniture. Fortunately, Bern offers great options for renting or sharing a car. For example, you can catch a ride in a half-empty car. Below we've listed a few possibilities. Click through the websites or download the apps, and all avenues are open. The options shown here are just a selection.

Mobility

Mobility Carsharing has a partnership with the University of Bern, allowing students to benefit from special conditions.



You can find their offer here. They also have minivans in case you need to transport large objects.

BlaBlaCar

With BlaBlaCar you can catch a ride in a car even at very short notice.



BlaBlaCar also offers "ladies only" rides.

HitchHike

Carpool with people who travel the same routes as you. This way you can save money and CO₂, meet new people, and avoid driving around in a half-empty car.



Sign up for HitchHike here.

Getting around for leisure

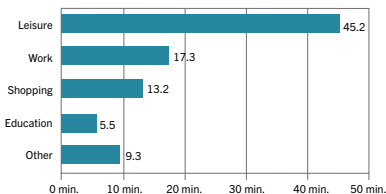
Naturally, we're not only on the move for university and work. In our free time, we also engage in activities that cause traffic. The graph below reveals that almost half of the time we spend on the road involves leisure activities. We often explore faraway places around the world, yet barely know our nearest surroundings. In the following, we offer insights into where you can go without a motor and what you can experience in and around Bern.



Sufficient leisure time

As noted in the interview on [page 9](#), time wealth is a key characteristic of sufficiency. Having enough free time, i.e. time that is not predetermined by certain activities, contributes significantly to life satisfaction. Enjoying this free time in a way that conserves resources as much as possible is another key component of sufficiency and sustainable lifestyles.⁶ Evidence shows that activities like playing sports or seeing family and friends contribute

Waiting and transfer between means of transport take up 8 minutes. Leisure is by far the most important source of traffic.



Note: as at 2015, domestic routes only; basis: resident population aged 6 years and up.

The Swiss spend 90 minutes a day in transport.⁵

most to our satisfaction – and also typically consume relatively few natural resources.⁷ Being in nature also elicits positive emotions in people.⁸ Spending your leisure time in the nearby environment or in nature is rewarding. Not only does it make you happier and keep your ecological footprint small, there is also a lot to discover nearby!

Excursions around Bern

Both in and around Bern you can discover beautiful views, enjoy nature, and get to know new things. The bike route *Grünes Band Bern* (“Green Belt of Bern”) offers you a varied excursion opportunity, along which you can discover the city, cultural landscapes, the Wohlensee lake, and the Aare river and hunt for new favourite places.



Discover the bike route *Grünes Band Bern* here.



At *bleib hier* (“stay here”), you can discover additional excursion and vacation opportunities in the region.

Change of perspective

Looking at the city from above or a little further away opens up new perspectives. Around Bern there are many hills to climb. They are perfect for a short hike and a picnic with a good view. We’ve put together a few examples.

Are you suffering from exam stress and simply want to relax and enjoy nature?

Then the Längenberg is just what you need. Along the so-called *Entschleunigungs-Rundweg* (“slow-down trail”), you can relax on various benches and enjoy the peace and quiet or a picnic.



On the Längenberg you'll find the *Entschleunigungs-Rundweg* (“slow-down trail”).

Or do you get nervous even just thinking about doing nothing?

Then maybe the Lisiberg is more your speed. Here, in addition to hiking, you can try trail running on the many small paths through the forest.



Find an appealing trail running route here.



Or scale Bern's local mountain, the Gurten, and ride down the trail on your downhill bike. The Gurten is also a good choice if sports aren't exactly your thing. You can take the funicular up and admire the view or sunbathe in the grass.



The downhill track is 2 kilometres long and covers 270 metres in altitude change.



A short hike up the Bantiger is also worthwhile. Here you can even climb the TV tower. And while others sit at home watching TV, you'll have a 360-degree panoramic view and can let the wind blow your hair.



Find your way to the 154 steps that lead up to the viewing platform.

On the move in, on, and along the Aare river

Floating in and on the Aare is simply part of summer in Bern. At 288 kilometres, the Aare is the longest river contained entirely within Switzerland.⁹ The purity of the water in the Aare is unique worldwide. The Eichholz riverside beach and the outdoor pools of Marzili and Lorraine are important local recreation areas for the city's population. Since 2017, swimming in the Aare has been included in UNESCO's list of living traditions, thus making up part of Switzerland's intangible cultural heritage.¹⁰ This bathing tradition dates back to the 18th century.¹¹ So don't miss out on the Aare! Below are some tips regarding what you can experience and explore in, on, and along the Aare, as well as important rules you must observe.



Safety first!

If you aren't used to being in or on a river, check out the following link and follow the river rules.



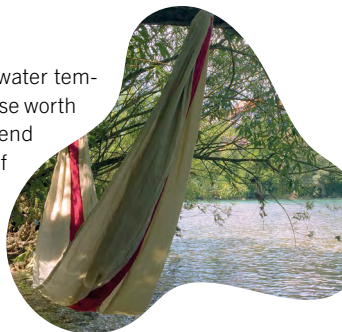
Important safety rules can be found here.

Aare oracle

To stay really well informed about the water temperature, the weather, and everything else worth knowing about the Aare, we recommend the “Aare Guru”. Not least because of the wonderful comments in the local Bernese dialect.



Download the “Aare Guru” app here.



Böötle

In recent years, the legendary *Aareböötle* (floating down the Aare on an inflatable boat) has also gained in popularity. On the stretch between Thun and Bern, up to 500 boats per hour float along on particularly hot summer days.¹² Boating in this way is fun, and for many it is a traditional part of summer in Bern. To ensure that everyone enjoys the experience, a few things should be kept in mind. For example, boaters must act responsibly towards the environment and fellow human beings. This includes consideration for animals like otters, beavers, and nesting birds. Pay attention to information boards, refrain from loud music on boats, and don't leave behind any litter. Notably, every year empty boats trigger expensive search operations, as discovery of an empty boat requires the police to assume an accident and initiate a search operation.¹³ Rubber boats are not intended for single use; and when they do fall apart, they should be disposed of properly to prevent environmental harm. Indeed, it takes up to 80 years for rubber to degrade.¹⁴ So take a minute to consider whether you really need to own your own boat.



Renting boats

You want to float down the Aare, but you don't have a boat? No problem! Ask some friends if you can borrow theirs, or just rent one.



Schlauchbootvermietung: Rent a boat from Thun to Marzili.



Aareschlauchboot: Book your boat from Uttigen or Worblaufen.

The Aare in winter

The Aare also offers recreation in winter. For example, you can visit the sauna yurts at the Lorraine outdoor pool. This will help you relax and be mindful of your own body.



Warm up in the sauna yurts at the Lorraine pool.

One way to keep fit and relax is by ice bathing in the Aare river. But you shouldn't do it alone, and you should make sure to get used to the water temperature slowly, as ice bathing puts considerable strain on your cardiovascular system. You should also avoid staying in the water for long. A few seconds are enough to give you a nice kick of cold. This releases hormones that provide a euphoric feeling after bathing.¹⁵

The Aare and Bern's urban climate

Due to climate change, summers will become hotter and drier in the coming years. We've already experienced this in recent years.¹⁶ This presents a problem in cities especially, as they are particularly affected by the heat. The air heats up faster in the city on summer days and

cools down more slowly at night than in the countryside. This leads to an increase in so-called “heat days”, with temperatures rising above 30 °C, and “tropical nights”, with temperatures remaining above 20 °C. These periods are unpleasantly hot, and also dangerous to the health of vulnerable people. Cities with many paved streets and squares store the heat with particular intensity. Dark, sealed surfaces heighten this effect. By contrast, water surfaces and green zones have a strong cooling effect. The Aare thus makes the city a little cooler.¹⁷ The Aare river is vital for fun, sports, recreation, relaxation, and mindfulness, as well as for Bern’s urban climate – reason enough to take good care of it.

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Self-experiment

Take a week of vacation in which you use CO₂-neutral means of transport whenever possible. **How do you feel when you travel (mainly) using your own physical strength? Do you feel more active, more alert, or more tired? Can you imagine spending your vacations like this more often?**

What distances do you cover in your everyday life in any given week? For one week, write down what means of transport you use for each journey. Does it correspond to how you wish to travel? For one week, try to make every journey (e.g. up to 20 km) without using any means of transport that require fuel or electricity. How do you feel about it? Do you find it difficult? If so, in what situations? Do you feel fitter after this week? Can you imagine doing this for a longer period of time?

Eating & drinking



FOOD WASTE, OUTDOOR
MARKET, ZERO WASTE,
COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED
AGRICULTURE, ORGANIC,
WATER

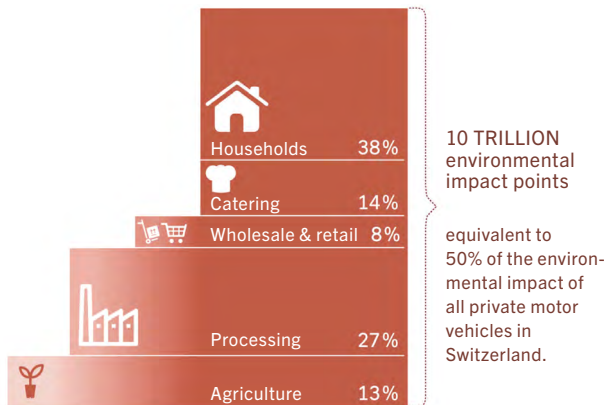


Eating & drinking

The topic of food is increasingly discussed in the context of sustainable development. One third of Europe's consumption-related environmental impacts are caused by our eating habits.¹ There are more and more nutritional trends and products on the market that advertise their sustainability. In this chapter, we would like to show you different ways to eat more sustainably.

Environmental impact of avoidable food waste in Switzerland

Food waste and loss occurs at every stage of the food chain, placing an additional burden on the environment.



Food losses in Switzerland by sector in per cent.²

Food waste

Do you wonder why sustainability is an issue when it comes to food? One crucial factor is the amount of food that's bought but not actually eaten. Indeed, one third of the food in Switzerland is thrown away. That's equal to 190 kg per person per year in Switzerland.³ This food requires energy and water for production, and various resources for harvesting, packaging, and transport to a store. Food waste essentially throws all these resources and stages of work into the garbage bin.



Anti-food-waste role models

But it doesn't have to be this way. Food waste can be avoided or at least reduced in each of the areas shown in the graph on the left. To help address impacts in the areas of "households" and "wholesale and retail", for example, there are the open refrigerators of *Madame Frigo* in Bern. These are publicly accessible refrigerators in which you can deposit items of food or drink that you have not used, but which are still perfectly good for consumption. Someone else will be grateful for it. Of course, you can also help yourself and eat or drink any delicious items that others have put in the fridge.



Additionally, *Madame Frigo* collects food from wholesalers and retailers that would otherwise be thrown away, and puts it in their refrigerators.



Here you can find the nearest *Madame Frigo* refrigerator.

At the *Ässbar* (meaning both “EatingBar” and “edible”), you can find delicious unsold baked goods from the previous day. Bread, sandwiches, and pastries get a second chance to escape the bin.



You can find the *Ässbar* in the *Länggasse* neighbourhood as well as in the city centre.

The *Gmüesgarte* (“Vegetable Garden”) fights against food waste in the field of agriculture and processing. It offers vegetables and fruits that don’t correspond to the standardized size or shape and would therefore be discarded, even though they are still absolutely fresh and delicious.



The *Gmüesgarte* also offers salads, soups, and smoothies.

In the area of gastronomy, *Mein Küchenchef* (“My Chef”) demonstrates how things can be done without food waste. Every year, the company rescues 28 tonnes of food that would otherwise be thrown away. Wonderful menus are created from the food, and in the store next to the restaurant you can buy non-standard (e.g. unusually shaped) vegetables, for example.



Find out more about the daily menu, the store, and learning opportunities at *Mein Küchenchef* here.

Anti-food-waste tips for everyday life

If you want to avoid food waste at home, you can achieve a lot by following these simple rules:⁴



Quantity: Buy only as much as you really need. Plan what you want to cook this week and write a shopping list.

Shelf life: You don't have to throw food away once it's past its expiration date. Try it first. Most foods last longer than the date indicates.



Tips: Store your food wisely, so that the shelf life is extended.

Portions: Cook only as much as you want to eat. No matter how delicious it is, you might not want to eat it more than three times in a row.



New menus: Plan a few meals in your weekly menu that make use of leftovers.



Did you know there's such a thing as climate menus?

Share: If you ever have too much food at home that you can't use yourself, then share it with friends and family – ideally, invite them over for a meal.



How can I shop sustainably?

Avoid packaging

We use plastic in numerous areas of our daily lives. But it also has many negative effects on nature and on us humans. For example, it ends up in the ocean by various routes, such as when packaging is not properly disposed of. There it harms wildlife, including

fish, which in turn we eat, enabling plastic to enter our own bodies and cause illness. Plastic also doesn't decompose completely. It breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces and persists in nature as microplastics.⁵



But there are ways you can reduce your plastic consumption. In zero waste stores, for example, you can find bulk goods on sale that you put in your own containers. This also enables you to buy exactly the amount you need. The quantity is determined by you, not by a given package size. In addition, zero waste stores strive to offer regional and organic products.

For example, you can buy packaging-free and often organic products at the following locations in Bern:

Palette Münstergasse 18, 3011 Bern

Unverpackt Bern at Villa Stucki, Seftigenstrasse 11, 3007 Bern

LOLA Lorraine Lorrainestrasse 23, 3013 Bern

LOLA Mattenhof Brunnmattstrasse 57, 3007 Bern

i-lade Spiegelstrasse 96, 3095 Spiegel bei Bern

Another option – one that also challenges you athletically – is the *Gmüsesesel* (“Vegetable Donkey”). Here you can process corn into polenta or press rapeseed oil yourself using a stationary bike or a rowing machine. On the one hand, this gives you a free workout, and on the other hand, you get to keep a portion of what you produce for your own consumption.



Don't forget to bring your own jar or Tupperware!

Bern's outdoor markets

Just like at zero waste stores, you can buy exactly the amount you need at Bern's outdoor markets, and the goods for sale here are also often free of packaging. Plus, the vegetables and fruits are mostly seasonal and regional.

Would you like to get to know Bern's various outdoor markets better and get a few tips along the way? Then sign up for the market tour with “Slow Food”. Among other things, you will get to know some producers personally, and you will learn how to store different vegetables as well as when specific foods are in season.



Here you can find out on what day of the week there is a market in your neighbourhood.



Experiencing the market tour

We tested out the market tour, leaving the house at 7:45 a.m. on a Tuesday to meet Josephine and Marco from “Slow Food”. It was a snowy December day. Arriving at the meeting point, Josephine handed out hot tea and began by describing some of the history of Bern’s outdoor markets.



Outdoor markets have been held in Bern on Tuesdays and Saturdays since the 16th century; the Saturday market is even older. In those days, some of the goods were transported to the market by rafts on the Aare river. In the evening, the streets were always bustling with people celebrating. Back then, this was the most common way of shopping. Later, a daily market emerged, and from this developed the supermarkets we know today.

Today, of course, you can still shop at Bern’s main market on Tuesdays and Saturdays. After learning a little about the history, we were very excited about the outdoor market tour that lay before us, with gentle snow flurries providing the perfect ambiance. Josephine guided us to different food stands; she and Marco know some of the producers very well at this point, as they regularly stop by their stands. On each market tour, however, the two tour guides also visit new stands, depending on the crowd levels and the availability of the producers.



“Slow Food” Bern wants to familiarize people with the outdoor market - especially young people who may not know it very well. Marco says that people who avoid shopping at the market always raise the same two arguments: it's more expensive and it takes more time. But with a little explaining, he convinces us of just the opposite. In the beginning, you have to get to know the different stands and products a bit. Once that's done, shopping at the outdoor market shouldn't take longer than at a conventional store. The market tour helps to overcome this initial hurdle and get you going with a new routine. Marco admits there are stands that sell speciality goods at premium prices. For typical food items, however, the cost is comparable to mainstream supermarkets - especially if you buy seasonally. Moreover, you can buy precisely the amount you want, so nothing has to be thrown away. His arguments make sense, and we resolve to shop at the market more often. Another aspect that inspires us is the social one: outdoor markets aren't supplied by long, complex value chains - instead, the money goes directly to the producers.



One of our favourite moments on the tour was our visit to a bread stand: the baker shared how she leavens her bread and bakes it in her wood-fired oven. And she let us sample the bread. It was wonderfully crispy and delicious, and whetted our appetite for all the other baked goods she had on offer. It is this sort of personal, authentic experience that makes the market so rewarding; you get to know who makes the products and how, and you have a chance to talk directly with producers and ask them questions.



Even at the outdoor market, however, it's important to pay attention to product origins – not everything comes from the region. Vegetable and fruit producers, in particular, often buy a few additional products so that they can offer a larger selection. But these products are usually labelled accordingly, and if you're unsure, you can always ask.

Finally, we were interested to know what motivates Josephine and Marco to offer these market tours. Above all, they cited their passion for food and high-quality products. But they also highlighted the feeling of shopping at the market and experiencing its traditions. Marco and Josephine want to share this feeling with others. Sustainable development also inspired them to create the market tour. They want people to shop locally and in season, and to think about where their food comes from. Most of the time, the sustainability of a product goes hand in hand with its quality.



The market tour, and Josephine and Marco especially, brought Bern's market to life for us. From now on we will shop there more often.



Shopping with the season

The seasonal calendar shows which vegetables grow at what times of the year throughout Switzerland's open fields.



Are you familiar with all these vegetables?



Buying seasonal vegetables from the region helps to shrink your carbon footprint by avoiding long-distance transport. Goods transported by plane, in particular, cause a lot of greenhouse gases. You also avoid buying vegetables grown in heated greenhouses, which further consume a lot of resources.

The easiest way to get seasonal and regional vegetables is to purchase a vegetable subscription. Bern now has many different offers to choose from. Here is a small selection:



Frisches.ch



Grafenried



Brunner Eichhof



Öpfelchasper



Grundstock ("essentials") is an online store for naturally cultivated local food, sourced directly from small farms around Bern.



Grundstock: Here you can order weekly vegetable bags and other food items.



Many farms that offer vegetable subscriptions are organized according to the principles of community-supported agriculture. People band together to fund and support a farm. This gives farmers the security of knowing their farm is financially sound. Relieved from existential pressure, the farmers can devote themselves to their work, cultivate rare crop varieties, and try out sustainable farming methods. Consumers, in turn, know where the food comes from and, depending on the farm, can participate in the work. This directly supports regional production and improves working conditions for farmers.



Here you can find community-supported farms where you can participate or register for a subscription.

Consumption of meat and dairy products

When thinking about eating sustainably, key concerns include meat consumption and, increasingly, dairy consumption. Both are criticized, sometimes for different reasons. But what are the problems with meat and dairy consumption?

Raising animals consumes lots of resources, especially in the form of land, water, and animal feed, with production of the latter, in turn, requiring more land to grow and plenty of water. For example, one kilogram of beef requires about 15,000 litres of water⁶ and up to 9 kg of grain⁷. Cattle also emit methane, which, along with CO₂, is a major greenhouse gas fuelling climate change.⁸ Consideration of climate change alone reveals that continued, widespread daily consumption of meat cannot be justified if we wish to achieve global sustainability goals.⁹



Thinking about your own meat and dairy consumption – and considering alternatives or reductions – is both sensible and necessary. For example, it would already be much more efficient to use plant foods (e.g. soy) directly for human consumption, not for livestock. Then much less soy would have to be grown.¹⁰



Thankfully, there are now many ways to eat more sustainably. For example, more and more people are adopting vegetarian or even vegan diets.¹¹ Both diets save resources and CO₂, and generally benefit human health as well.¹²



Other approaches promote more conscious meat consumption. This means consuming meat only rarely, and with greater awareness. And any meat consumed will preferably come from organic and ethical animal husbandry. The “nose to tail” sustainable dining movement is about eating or using all pieces of meat from an animal – not just the finest filet.¹³

In the case of dairy products, there are different ways to replace them. A comparison of soy milk and cow’s milk shows that the production of soy milk requires significantly fewer resources: 60% less land is needed and only a quarter of the greenhouse gases are emitted. Energy consumption in the production process, on

the other hand, is not much less than for cow's milk. In the case of oat milk, however, energy consumption is significantly lower and the land area needed for cultivation is even smaller than for soy milk. Notably, the location and type of cultivation behind different products strongly influence how environmentally friendly they are.¹⁴

Facts on milk and meat consumption

- On average, a vegetarian meal has three times less impact on the environment than a meat meal.¹⁵
- Soy cultivation is one of the main causes of rainforest destruction. Yet 80% of the soy grown worldwide is fed to animals.¹⁶
- Oat milk production requires only 21% of the land area needed to produce cow's milk.¹⁷
- A person in Switzerland eats an average of just under one kilogram of meat per week.¹⁸

Drinking for a good cause

Tap water

If you want to pay attention to sustainable consumption in the area of food, then your choice of beverages also plays an important role. The quality of water in Switzerland is excellent. You can drink the tap water everywhere.¹⁹ It's best to carry your own reusable bottle, so you always have something to drink from and don't produce any waste. Of course, not everywhere in the world is the drinking water quality as good as in Switzerland. "Water for Water" is an organization committed to providing access to clean water and sanitation for people in Zambia and Mozambique. It is supported by 500 companies.



Find out which companies participate in "Water for Water" and how you can support the organization yourself.



Coffee, tea, and cocoa

But water isn't the only drink to consider when it comes to sustainability. In ecological terms, a cup of black tea has 11 times less environmental impact than a cup of coffee, for example. Herbal teas with ingredients from Switzerland perform even better.²⁰

Coffee and cocoa in particular also require a lot of water during cultivation and processing from raw bean to cup of coffee or hot chocolate. For one cup of coffee, for example, up to 140 litres of water may be used.²¹ And turning our attention to the social dimension of sustainability, we see that most farmers are dependent on unstable global prices for raw beans. This means that they have no financial security, and if a crop fails, it can threaten their existence.²²

Fair trade labels that guarantee minimum prices can help to counter this, protecting farmers in the event of price collapses.²³

Soft drinks

When it comes to soft drinks, more and more beverages and brands now use organic and fair-trade ingredients, and/or donate a portion of the purchase price to charity. One example is the Hamburg-based company "LemonAid & ChariTea", whose products you can also find in stores and restaurants around Bern. The company donates part of the proceeds to social projects in the regions where its ingredients are grown.²⁴ There are also sustainable beverages made right in Bern, including "Green Leaf" and "LOLA".



→ Apps for sustainable shopping



WWF sustainable seafood guide



MyFoodways – Recipes from the fridge



CodeCheck



too good to go



Seasonal food guide



Label help

Self-experiment

How much food waste is generated in your own home? Try not to throw away any food for two weeks.

What did you have to do differently? What required special attention? Was it difficult?

Try a different diet. You could eat vegan for two weeks or test out “nose to tail” meals.

What do you find easier or more difficult than you expected? How do you feel about it?

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At home



ENERGY, INTERNET, SECOND
HAND, BALCONY, REPAIR,
MONEY, POLITICS, MEDIA

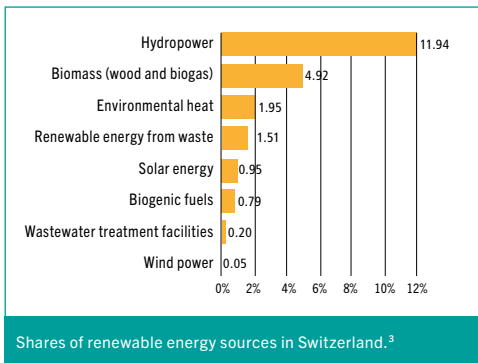


At home

Your home is the place where you can get creative and shape things. When you move house or furnish, when you clean and repair – even when you choose your electricity and water suppliers, there are many decisions you can make to benefit sustainable development. In this chapter, we offer you some thoughts and ideas.

Switzerland's energy supply

Whether you're cooking, watching movies, showering, or vacuuming – the things you do at home require energy, and this can be obtained in different ways. There are fossil fuels, like coal or petroleum. Burning them releases considerable amounts of CO₂; it also generates air pollutants. As a result, the way electricity is generated is key to sustainable development. Generating electricity from renewable sources, like wind or solar, can significantly reduce CO₂ emissions,¹ but it's important to remember that pollutants are also released in the production of solar panels.²



In 2017, the total share of renewable energy in Switzerland was about 22%. The exact breakdown can be seen in the accompanying graph. In Switzerland, there are not many raw materials from which energy can be produced; 75% of our electricity is thus imported. Of the remaining 25% that is produced domestically, half comes from hydro-power.⁴ According to the federal government's energy strategy, the share of other renewable energies produced domestically should be almost tripled by 2035.⁵

To save electricity in your home, you can completely shut off appliances that you won't be using for a while. If left in standby mode, they still consume electricity. The result is wasted energy. And you and the environment pay the costs. One solution is to use power strips that you can switch off and on. Another possibility is to switch to green electricity.



Here you can find out more about the electricity sources available in Bern.



Surfing the Internet more sustainably

News, photos, videos, and songs that are streamed or shared on the Internet require energy. The search query for a recipe, for example, is managed by a large server network. Even when an image is saved or backed up to a cloud service, it goes through a server. These servers need energy, not least because they heat up and must be cooled down. Huge cooling units ensure that the server environment always remains between 22 and 24 °C.⁶



Today, server rooms and data centres already make up 3% of all domestic electricity consumption in Switzerland.⁷ The amount of data transmitted over the Internet is increasing by about 30% every year.⁸ The energy required for this should come from renewable sources, not from fossil fuels. Research into more sustainable management of data centres has been underway for some time. For example, the excess heat produced by servers could be used to heat water or buildings.⁹

Clickclean.org looks at Internet companies to see where they get the energy for their infrastructure, data centres, and networks, and how efficiently they use it.



Here you can find out what energy source is used to power your apps, for example.

Furnishing

In the area of home furnishing, you can reduce your ecological footprint by following the principles of sufficiency, i.e. only putting in your home what you really need and use. You can also make sure that you don't buy everything new right away, but first see if you can exchange something, share it with someone, or acquire furnishings in a vintage or second-hand store.



Here you can find a list of second-hand stores in Bern.

Borrowing

Do you need a drill or another similar appliance? You might be able to borrow one from friends or find one with the help of *Pumpipumpe*. This



is a platform that makes rarely used household items visible for sharing with others. You can put *Pumpipumpe* stickers on your mailbox, enabling your neighbours to see what they can borrow from you – and you can see on their mailboxes what they offer to lend out.



You can also check this map to see what can be borrowed and where.

Another option for borrowing is *LeihBar* (“BorrowBar” or “borrowable”), which is described in more detail in the chapter on “Conscious consumption” starting on [page 63](#).

Do you have a green thumb?

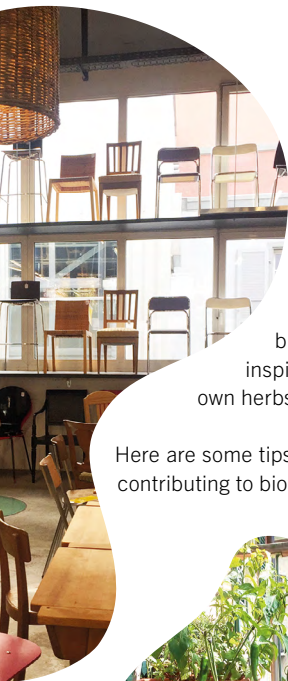
If you are lucky enough to have a small balcony or even a garden, you might feel inspired to plant something in the spring. Your own herbs always taste the best.



Here are some tips on how you can garden sustainably, while also contributing to biodiversity:

Location

How sunny or shady is your balcony? First, determine which plants can grow on your balcony. On a sunny balcony, for example, tomatoes or radishes will thrive. On a shady balcony, on the other hand, arugula or mint are ideally suited.¹⁰



Seeds

You can find seeds for vegetables and herbs at *ProSpecieRara*, for example. This foundation maintains over 4,700 edible and ornamental plant varieties, thus ensuring that our gardens and cultural landscape remain diverse. Their website offers a wealth of information about plant varieties – from wintercress to heirloom tomatoes.



You can find sources for many different plant varieties here.



Biodiversity

Many insects are beneficial in our garden or on our balcony and help support biodiversity. Ladybugs help against aphids, and ants eat snail eggs. When you plant native wild plants on your balcony or in the garden, you create important habitats for bees and butterflies.

Fertilizers and pesticides

Don't use pesticides, as they harm all insects and thus biodiversity as well.¹¹

You can also get rid of many unwanted visitors to your plants, such as aphids, with household remedies like ecological soft soap. Simply put the soap and some water in a spray bottle, spray the plant, and you're done.



Here you can find more tips on how to protect your plants effectively and naturally.

Reuse

Before you buy new flower pots or gardening tools, take a quick look at second-hand stores. There is often a great selection of such items in good condition. See [page 52](#) for an overview of how to find second-hand shops near you.

If you don't have a garden or a balcony, but would still like to grow plants, join student or permaculture garden. There you can lend a hand, learn new things about gardening and permaculture, and meet dedicated people. Of course, experienced gardeners are also welcome.



Here you can find out more about BENE's student and permaculture garden.



Keep it clean

Detergents and cleaning products often contain microplastics or substances that are highly toxic to the environment.¹² Cleaning products with an “eco” label generally don't contain ingredients that are harmful to nature. So, look for such labels when buying cleaning products. But even then, be critical: notably, not all products that advertise themselves as “sustainable” or “environmentally friendly” are good for nature.¹³ More information on the problem of “greenwashing” can be found on [page 74](#).



The CodeCheck app can help you better understand a product's ingredient list by simply scanning the barcode.

But it's not just the product itself, the packaging can also have a negative impact on the environment. So, when shopping, try to buy refillable products. These are offered in zero waste stores, but also in health food stores and some supermarkets.

Repair and do it yourself

Repair

Do you have something that needs repair, but you don't have the necessary tools or skills? There are open repair workshops in Bern where you can just drop by. Sometimes they will do the repairs for you, and sometimes they'll teach you how to do it, so you can do it yourself next time.



There are regularly scheduled times to visit Bern's "Repair Café" with defective items and receive help with repairs.

At *Flickerei* you can drop off almost anything for repair.



Reptechnik fixes electrical appliances for you.

Revento will repair your mobile phone, for example.



Here you can find additional repair offerings. You can also advertise your own offer if you have a talent for repairing things.



Do it yourself

You can make a lot of things that you need in everyday life yourself. Beeswax food wraps, make-up removal pads, and shopping bags are just a few examples.



BENE shows how it's done on their website.



Make your own wax cloths

Reusable wax cloths can replace plastic wrap or aluminium foil, which are harmful to the environment. Rainforest areas are often cleared to obtain the raw material to make aluminium foil, for example. The production process is also very energy-intensive and leaves behind toxic waste.¹⁴

For the wax cloths you need:

Fabric scraps (approx. 30 cm × 30 cm; cotton, linen, or hemp are very suitable)

Coconut oil or jojoba oil, optionally

Beeswax pellets (approx. 15 g per cloth)

Oven with baking tray and baking paper

Cut the fabric to create a cloth in the size you need. Then spread some coconut oil or jojoba oil on the cloth. This will make the cloth more pliable; however, it will also work without the oil. Put the cloth on the tray with the baking paper and spread the wax pellets evenly over the cloth. Set the oven to 60–80 °C. Leave the cloth in the oven for a few minutes until all the wax has melted. Next, remove the cloth and let it cool down. To cool it, you can hang it up with a clothespin or simply hold it in your hands for a short time.



Finance, politics, and media

The Swiss financial centre and banks

The global financial system impacts our planet in ways that should not be overlooked. So, sustainability principles are also extremely important in this area. As a globally important financial centre, Switzerland can and should assume responsibility for sustainable development in this arena.

However, so can each and every individual. You probably have a bank account where you keep your money. But do you know what the banks, or pension funds, do with your money? What they support with it, or what they invest in? As a rule, account holders are not actively informed, so you cannot rule out the possibility that your bank or pension fund is investing in the arms trade, for example, or in climate-damaging practices like burning coal.¹⁵

However, there are also financial institutions that are committed to sustainability and sustainable financial flows. Your choice of bank can have a positive or negative impact on our world, both socially and environmentally. You can help inspire your bank to act sustainably by asking what it invests in. This shows the bank that its customers care about what happens to the money they deposit and that mutually beneficial financial flows and investments are a major concern.



For more on climate-damaging financial flows, see Greenpeace's explainer video, "How banks are cashing in on the climate crisis".

Politics and the exercise of democratic rights

As we illustrate in this booklet, there is a lot you can do for sustainable development as an individual. However, individual action is not enough to achieve the wider transformation to sustainability we need in the near future. A broader shift in politics is also needed. Political initiatives can reach many more people, and through them, we can introduce overall standards that promote sustainable development. So, it's important that you exercise your democratic rights, including voting, electing representatives, and even launching initiatives yourself. You get to help decide who sits in parliament as well as which initiatives are accepted or rejected.

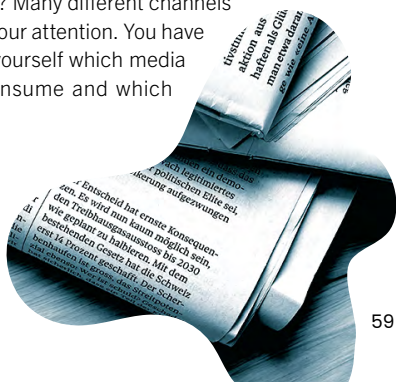


Do you have Swiss citizenship? During election cycles, “Smartvote” can help you identify the candidates who best represent your interests.



Critical media

In order to decide who or what you want to vote for – and to stay informed about world events in general – you need information and the media outlets that distribute it. Media create public opinion. But which media are good and which are not? Many different channels compete for your attention. You have to choose for yourself which media you want to consume and which you want to avoid.





It is important to take a conscious, critical approach to media contents and consumption. What is the source of the information? Who wrote the text or created the video?

What do other reports say about it? Can you sense the author's opinion? It can help to read different reports from different sources on the same topic, and to have debates with

people who think differently. Reading independent newspapers can help you form a considered opinion or help you think critically about your own opinion.

→ **Discussing issues with friends and family can also help you learn about and actively engage with different points of view on a topic.**

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Self-experiment

For one week, focus on how much time you spend on different activities at home, and then critically reflect on the overall composition. Does the amount of time you spend on different things suit your needs?

Write down how much time you would like to spend on what, and then try to live like that for a week.

Are you able to use your time how you want to for a whole week? How do you feel about it? Does it work well? Are there challenges? In which areas? How can you handle them without falling back into old patterns?

Conscious consumption



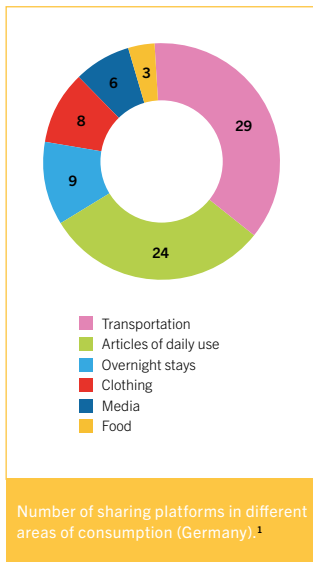
SHARING, BORROWING,
CLOTHES, LABELS, SECOND-
HAND, LIFE CYCLE



Conscious consumption

If we want to avoid overusing and wasting our resources, we have to think about our consumption behaviour. At the same time, if we want to live a good life and take part in society, we must participate in the consumer economy in one way or another. So, it's vital to take a conscious approach to our own buying and use behaviour.

In this chapter, we want to show that this is feasible – even though it isn't always easy to keep track of long, globe-spanning production chains.



The chapter focuses on non-food products, such as clothes or cosmetics. If you're looking for information on food, you'll find it in the chapter "Eating & drinking" (starting on [page 31](#)).

The sharing economy

Whether renting, swapping, or sharing, the "sharing economy" has been in vogue for several years. The graphic on the left shows that the transportation sector has spawned the most sharing platforms. Examples include "PubliBike" or "Mobility". But there are many other items you can share with others.

Sharing is a good thing, in principle, because it can save resources. But sharing benefits our ecological footprint only if it doesn't prompt added resource consumption. If car-sharing opportunities inspire people to drive rather than ride a bike, for example, it will only increase our ecological footprint. Home sharing via new platforms is also currently subject to critical discussion: some such sharing services, for example, are blamed for a shortage of housing in cities.² In this way, sharing brings both opportunities and risks for sustainable development.



Sharing goods with others can enable you to own less and keep your ecological rucksack light. Whether you're sharing kitchen utensils with roommates, using your sister's cardboard boxes to move, or loaning camping gear to a neighbour, there are many items that only need to be purchased once, by one person – and can be shared with others afterwards. Of course, items handled this way are also used more often, increasing the likelihood of necessary repairs. But considering the resources needed to create such goods, sharing them is typically better for the environment and society.



With the help of the resource calculator, you can find out what ecological rucksack comes with your lifestyle.

Interview with *LeihBar*

LeihBar (“BorrowBar” or “borrowable”) enables people to borrow, rather than buy, items they need only occasionally. We wanted to know more about the concept, so we interviewed Christof Böhler. He is a member of LeihBar’s board.



Christof, what exactly is LeihBar?

LeihBar is a library of diverse items. We believe that many things don't need to be owned – it's better to simply borrow them. We currently have about 400 things that people can borrow. For example, we have kitchen utensils, tools, electrical appliances, and leisure items. Many goods are seasonal, such as winter sports equipment. Borrowing is also practical for rarely used items that take up a lot of space at home or cost a lot, such as a bread machine, a pressure washer, or a food dehydrator.

In addition, *LeihBar* is a place where people can meet and exchange ideas. We see ourselves as a trailblazing project – we provide a tangible service, but we also form a community where people can come together and share ideas about sustainability issues. You can quickly get engaged and transform or achieve something in your own everyday life.

How did LeihBar come about, and how do you organize yourselves?

LeihBar was launched by *Stiftung für Konsumentenschutz*, the foundation for consumer protection based in Bern. I joined when the foundation was

looking for volunteers. The goal at that time was to develop the project to the point where members could organize it on their own. That's why we founded an official association; however, the foundation remains behind us as a strong partner, for example in legal matters.

We have a board of directors and hold a general assembly two or three times a year. Our active members work behind the counter and decide which new items are needed, and which are rarely borrowed and should maybe be removed. In this way, the selection can continuously evolve, depending on the needs of borrowers. But we also need a facility manager and an organizational team that communicates with the facility administration, for example, as well as a shift schedule and tidy bookkeeping. Our active members range from students to retirees. Many of them derive a sense of meaning from their work at *LeihBar*. It's important to us that everyone contributes what they are good at and what they enjoy doing. Covering all shifts requires some coordination at times, but so far it has worked well.



A major source of motivation for us was and is the direct benefit provided by *LeihBar*. It brings neighbours together to create a sharing economy. The question that unites all of us is: "Do I truly need this or am I happy without it?" Some of us are also politically engaged; but we're not trying to spread an ideology. We're just happy if as many people as possible reflect on what they really need to buy and own themselves.

How does the borrowing work?

Since we're organized as an association, you first become a member, which normally costs 60 Swiss francs a year. With this money we pay the rent, for example. The active team members, currently around 30 people, work for us on a voluntary basis. Membership allows you to borrow as many items as you want per year. So, the borrowing itself is free of charge. Most of the time you borrow something for one or two weeks. Membership comes with an online account, which you can use to reserve

desired items right from home. All items are listed on our website, including information about their characteristics and their availability. Of course, you can also just drop by spontaneously, but reserving ensures that the desired item is really there. All items are stored on site so you can take them right away. In 2020, we had about 160 checkouts per month across our two locations.

Which item is borrowed the most?

It depends on the season. In winter, snowshoes are our top item. Last winter, the outdoor fondue set was also very popular. In summer, it's more the camping equipment. These are just the kind of things that otherwise sit in the basement for half the year – so they're great to borrow.

What other items do you absolutely want to add to your selection?

We have lots of demand for binoculars, bike seats for children, bike bags, and fire bowls. If anyone has these items sitting around at home and would like to donate them, we'd be happy to accept them.

How does LeihBar contribute to a sustainable lifestyle?

It's basically the idea that you don't have to own everything yourself. It saves you money, of course, but it also reduces "grey energy". Every product that has to be made anew requires energy and material. Valuable resources are consumed for a drill, for example, which might get used for no more than 10 minutes a year. But if you share such an item, it only needs to be produced once for multiple people. A board member of ours once calculated that the manufacture of a drill consumes as much energy as a one-person household uses for electricity, heating, and water in a year. That's an awful lot for the five holes you might drill all year!

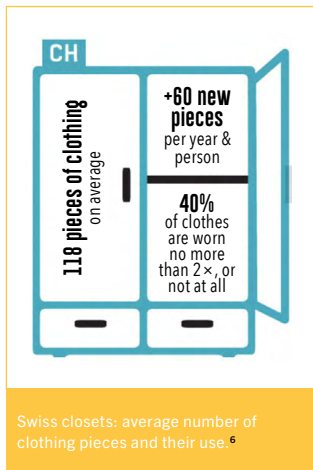


LeihBar encourages you to think about what you really need to be satisfied. It can help you shrink your ecological footprint and live more sufficiently.

Fashion

Did you know that the fashion industry is responsible for 8–10% of global CO₂ emissions?³ It's part of the textile industry, which produces 1.2 billion tonnes of CO₂ annually. That's more than all international flights and cruises combined.⁴ In addition, the production of textiles consumes a lot of water and causes water pollution, especially in the dyeing process. Transporting clothes halfway around the world also causes CO₂ emissions. Finally, the disposal of clothes also harms the environment: besides generating a large amount of material waste, it also contributes to microplastic pollution in oceans.⁵ The graphic below shows that, on average, we in Switzerland have numerous items of clothing in our closets that we rarely or never wear. This leads to unnecessary consumption of valuable resources – resources that could easily be spared with a little self-reflection and creativity.

We all need clothes...



... but they needn't always be new. There are many opportunities to swap clothes or buy them second-hand in Bern. BENE regularly informs about clothing swap events and flea markets on its Facebook page (see [page 16](#)). Or better yet, organize a clothing swap yourself with your friends and fellow students.

If you enjoy browsing in a store, you can pay a visit to “The New New” in Bern’s Länggasse neighbourhood. They carry curated second-hand clothes, shoes, and accessories.





Find out more about “The New” in the Länggasse neighbourhood here.

At the *Wirkerei* (“Knittery”), located in the *Feuerwehr Viktoria*, Bern’s former main fire station in the Breitenrain neighbourhood, you can buy great second-hand clothes and have your favourite pieces altered or mended. Stop by and enjoy browsing – or even take one of their sewing classes to realize your own creative vision.



Wirkerei – stop by, enjoy browsing.

Borrowing instead of buying

Do you like variety in your closet? If so, we recommend borrowing clothes instead of buying them. At Bern’s open closet, known as *TEIL* (meaning both “piece” and “share”), you can become a “TEILer” and regularly borrow new second-hand clothes. Keep your selected pieces as long as you want. And if you don’t want to part with your favourite piece, you have the option of buying it. This way you can save resources and resist the fast fashion trend.



TEIL – the open closet in Bern.



If it has to be new, make it sustainable

If you prefer to buy a brand-new article of clothing, then make sure you buy high-quality garments that you can mix and match, so you can enjoy them for a long time. Avoid fast-fashion chain stores and opt for items that have been produced in a socially and ecologically sustainable way.



At “Fashionrevolution” you can always find interesting news and events related to fair fashion.



“Fashionrevolution” – You can also actively participate and join the revolution yourself.

Label jungle

Though sometimes helpful, the wealth of existing clothing labels also sows confusion.



“Public Eye” can lend a hand here. In 2020, they published a useful guide to different labels.



Cosmetics

The production and use of cosmetics can also cause harm to the environment. As the cosmetics industry is a rapidly growing economic sector with a lot of innovation potential, it is vital to promote environmental and social sustainability here, too. On the one hand, the extraction of raw materials (e.g. palm oil or minerals) should be critically examined; on the other, the large amount of packaging material also poses a challenge.⁷ Shampoo, shower gel, toothpaste, face cream, and body milk – all these products are typically packaged in plastic containers that cannot be reused. In addition, animal testing is carried out to verify the



tolerability of the products, raising fundamental issues of animal rights.

In this way, the entire life cycle of cosmetics – i.e. the various stages from manufacture to disposal – plays an important role in their sustainability, just as it does for other products.⁸

There are various ways to support sustainability when choosing cosmetics. We've compiled a few tips that can help you make the switch to a more sustainable cosmetics routine:

- Less is more: limit yourself to a few products and consider whether you really need a separate product for each body part.
- Avoid buying products that contain microplastics.
- Try to buy products with as little packaging as possible, or only recyclable packaging. Switch to non-packaged or refillable products wherever possible. For example, you can use solid shampoos. There are also shower gels or soaps that can be refilled at zero waste stores (see [page 36](#)).
- Learn about the ingredients of a product before you buy it. The CodeCheck app (see [page 46](#)) can help. In the app or on the website, you will also find informative articles and contributions on the topic of sustainable consumption.

Self-experiment

Do you know what exactly you spend your money on? Try not to spend any money for a week, except for the food you need. Is it difficult? If so, in which life areas? In what areas do you find it easy?

Set a realistic time limit, say three months, and don't buy any new clothes or shoes in that period. During this period, clean out your closet and think about how you can combine the clothing articles you have in different ways. Is it fun? Do you discover new ways to combine them? Repeat the decluttering process every few weeks. Think about what you really want to keep and what you don't. Do you find yourself tempted to buy new things? How do you handle it, and what do you feel when you resist the temptation to buy something? Frustration? Pride?

Greenwashing

“Greenwashing” refers to when companies try to mislead consumers into thinking they are more committed to environmental protection than they actually are.⁹ This can happen, for example, in the clothing or cosmetics industry. In the case of cosmetics, it can be difficult to gauge how sustainable they really are, due to the many ingredients they often contain. Products may be visually presented as “green”, or individual sustainable ingredients may be advertised, but the remaining ingredients are often not sustainable.

Learn about the “seven sins of greenwashing”¹⁰ and try to be mindful of them when buying cosmetics and other products in the future.



The seven sins of greenwashing

Sin of the hidden trade-off.

Sin of no proof.

Sin of vagueness.

Sin of irrelevance.

Sin of lesser of two evils.

Sin of fibbing.

Sin of worshipping false labels.

BENE city map

Sustainable shopping, eating, and drinking in Bern? *BENE Stadtplan* – the BENE city map – shows you the best spots!

- Over 180 sustainable stores and restaurants in Bern
- 9 categories – from clothing to electronics
- 8 ecological and social filter criteria



Visit *BENE Stadtplan* on the website or download the smartphone app.

More advantages with the app

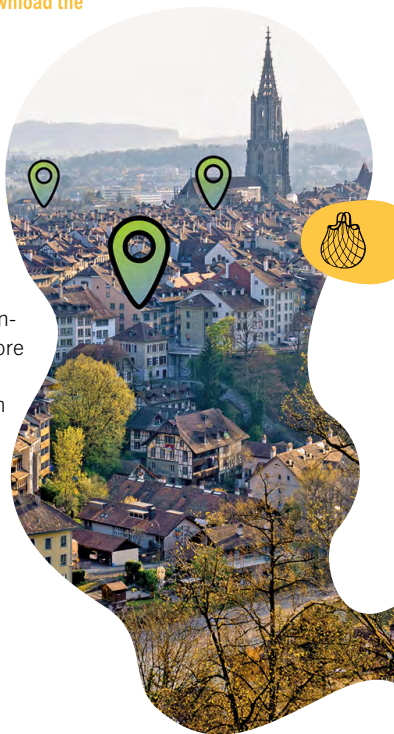
- Favourites function for your favourite businesses
- City map available offline
- Location display

The BENE city map is operated by BENE, the association for sustainable development at Bern's institutions of higher education (more on [page 16](#)).

Contact: stadtplan@bene-unibe.ch



BENE STADTPLAN



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Culture & events

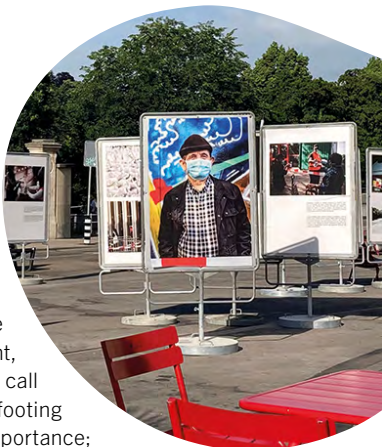


ART, WAYS OF LIFE,
TRADITION, DIALOGUE,
THEATRE, EDUCATION,
HERITAGE, NORMS AND
VALUES, FESTIVALS,
LIVING TOGETHER



Culture & events

In the introduction to this booklet, we presented the three dimensions of sustainable development (see [page 6](#)). Culture is not listed among them. One reason for this is the wide divergence of views regarding the significance of culture for sustainable development. Some see culture as the foundation for sustainable development, without which it is unthinkable; others call for a fourth dimension, on an equal footing with the other three, to express its importance; and still others view culture as an integral part of the social dimension.¹



Concept of culture

In the following, we would like to highlight various aspects of culture that we believe are important in the context of sustainable development.

To do so, we first need a common understanding of culture. For this, we are guided by the definition of UNESCO, which refers to culture as being “in its widest sense ... the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.”²

When we speak of culture in everyday life, we usually mean events and cultural goods in the artistic sense,





such as exhibitions, theatre, concerts, or books. However, culture also includes hidden, yet ever-present aspects of life that make human coexistence so unique and distinctive. It encompasses the values and norms that shape our lives together and more or less explicitly define how we behave individually and as part of society. In this way, culture is also part of our socialization process.³

“Culture spans the gap between past and future, between tradition and innovation, between preservation of cultural heritage and sustainable use. Dialogue and exchange between cultures promote tolerance. In their various manifestations, they enrich our society and ensure social cohesion.”⁴

Considering all that the concept of culture encompasses, in the remaining sections we wish to share some thoughts and information about culture both in the artistic sense and in the sense of our lives as part of society.



Art and cultural institutions

How sustainable are cultural institutions?

Museums and theatres are often imposing buildings with elaborate infrastructure. As guests, we place high expectations on these places: they should provide a comfortable ambiance, exhibitions should be attractively staged and rotate frequently, and artefacts should be perfectly presented. The resource consumption of such

cultural institutions is very high; the operation of the facilities alone requires heating and air conditioning – and thus energy. But materials like display cases or pedestals are also needed, and often these are used for a single exhibition and then



disappear into storage.⁵ Theatre stages must also be set up and new costumes sewn again and again. Additionally, there is the costly transport of artefacts and the travel of actors or musicians appearing at festivals. When it comes to ecological sustainability, cultural institutions don't have it easy, as their economic and ecological aims are often at odds. Many cultural institutions know this, aim to address it, and are seeking new, innovative ways to conserve resources.⁶



By the way: At OFFCUT in Bern you can buy great materials that cultural institutions no longer have use for.

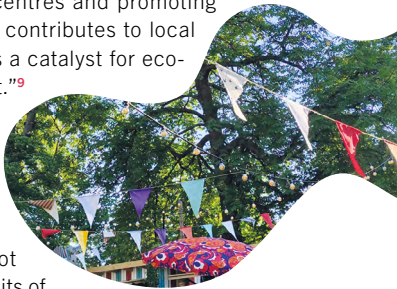
Culture's contribution to sustainable development

Cultural events can make vital contributions to sustainable development, for example, by tackling sustainability-relevant topics, opening them up for discussion, and providing space for reflection.⁷ Theatre performances, for instance, can place socially relevant, controversial topics like equality or discrimination at centre stage, quite literally. Films can bring to life issues like global food systems, migration, or climate change. The space for critical reflection and inspiration that these art forms create for participants and audiences can enable discussion and exchange of different perspectives, not least between different cultural groups. This, in turn, fosters broader sensitivity to these issues and more openness and tolerance.⁸ In this way, culture also contributes to learning processes and promotes quality of life.



Accordingly, a city's cultural offerings can make a significant contribution to both social and economic sustainability: "Artistic creativity is a means of revitalizing city centres and promoting cohesion in neighbourhoods. It contributes to local and national appeal and acts as a catalyst for economic and tourism development."⁹

After all, it also creates jobs and attracts tourists with its diverse offerings, thereby generating added economic value. Care should be taken to ensure that this added value does not exceed the ecological limits of sustainability.



From the perspective of sustainability, it is also critical that cultural activities are accessible to all.



The **PARTICIPA** website provides information about cultural offerings for people with disabilities.

Sustainable events

Here you can find cultural events and places in Bern that raise awareness of the need and opportunities for sustainable development:

Nature and environment calendar

The City of Bern's "Nature and environment calendar" lists sustainability-oriented events facilitated by associations, NGOs, and museums.



City of Bern "Nature and environment calendar".

Culture and events at the Botanical Garden

Cultural events are regularly held at Bern's Botanical Garden. For example, you can attend a reading or enjoy small concerts.



Cultural events at the Botanical Garden.

Stiftsgarten

The *Stiftsgarten*, once the garden of the cathedral chapter, is located in the middle of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Old City of Bern". Here, old varieties of cultivated plants are sown, events are held, and educational work is carried out. In addition to interesting offerings in the fields of gardening and biodiversity, there are also regular readings in the garden.



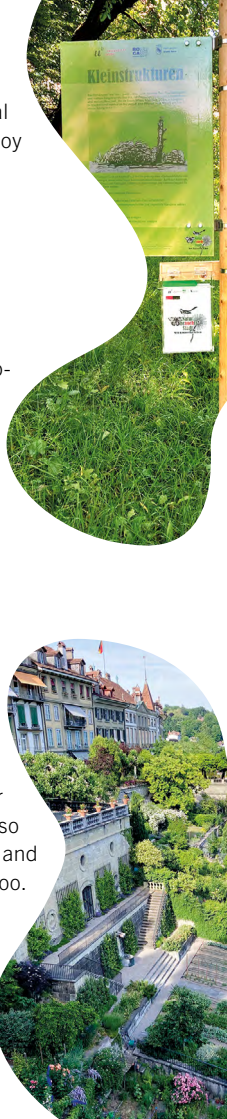
The *Stiftsgarten* is located in the middle of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Old City of Bern".

KULINATA

At the KULINATA festival for sustainable food, you can meet stakeholders from the region who are committed to sustainable cuisine. It is a lively platform for reflection, exchange, and networking. The organizers also follow the principles of sustainable event management and can be seen as sustainability pioneers in this respect, too.



KULINATA festival for sustainable food.



Laufmeter

Laufmeter (“linear yard”, a unit used in measuring out fabric or cloth) is a fashion show that takes place annually in the streets of Bern’s old town. Local fashion designers have the chance to present their studio’s “slow fashion” clothes and accessories to the public. Now you can also buy your favourite pieces in the online store.



Learn more about *Laufmeter* and explore the online store.

Bern bicycle festival

At the *Hallo Velo* bicycle festival you can explore the diversity of the Bern–Aaretal–Münsingen region for an entire day – on your bike, of course. Along the main route, reserved for cyclists the whole day, you will find a number of festival zones with all kinds of bike-related offerings and activities.



The bicycle festival also fulfils the criteria of sustainable event management.

Sustainability Week Bern

Are you interested in sustainability? Then join us for the next Sustainability Week! At events such as lectures, workshops, film screenings, and excursions you will learn new things and gain exciting insights.

The Sustainability Week in Bern takes place every year at the beginning of March. It’s part of the “Sustainability Week Switzerland” movement. Across Switzerland, sustainability weeks are organized by students at over 35 universities in 15 cities. All events are open to the public and free of charge.

Stay up to date:

sustainabilityweek.ch/bern

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**Nachhaltigkeits
Woche** Bern

Sustainability Week Bern is organized by students at Bern's higher education institutions and also receives funding from these institutions.

Social city tour

There can be no sustainability without social justice. Unfortunately, being able to live a good life is not something that can be taken for granted. Even in Switzerland, there are many people living in poverty; in 2019, they numbered 735,000.¹⁰ Poverty isn't just a matter of money – it also harms people's ability to participate in society.



On social city tours organized by *Surprise*, the Swiss "street" news magazine, people affected by poverty share their insights and show you Bern from their perspective.

Living and experiencing culture in everyday life

What is missing in your neighbourhood?

The City of Bern understands the importance of vibrant neighbourhoods in creating a sense of togetherness and belonging. So, it supports community projects that contribute to better quality of life among neighbourhood residents; sensitize people to act





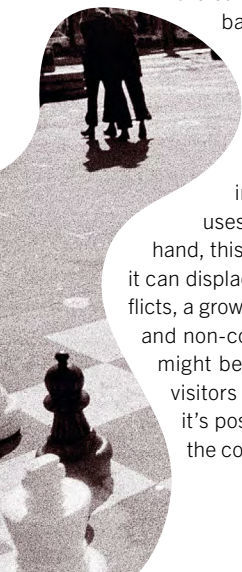
responsibly towards each other as well as resources and the environment; and promote local sustainable development. Such projects must be firmly anchored in the neighbourhood and include the participation of residents. You, too, can submit a project for consideration. Consult their website and get inspired by previous projects. You might also learn about exciting activities already underway in your neighbourhood.



Consult the website and get inspired by previous projects.

How is public space being used?

You can always experience culture, participate in it, and create something new yourself – even outside of existing offerings. Public space belongs to all of us and is shaped by how we use it. Especially in the summertime, our public parks, benches, and the banks of the Aare river transform into our living room. We meet there with friends and family for picnics, to read a book, enjoy the sun, or study for our next exam.



However, public spaces in the City of Bern are also increasingly designated for short-term commercial uses, such as pop-up bars on the Aare river. On the one hand, this can help to revitalize a given site. On the other hand, it can displace other interested parties. To prevent potential conflicts, a growing number of offerings strive to combine commercial and non-commercial uses. For example, a cultural programme might be offered alongside commercial dining services, but visitors are not obligated to purchase anything. In this way, it's possible to hold a free concert or open-air cinema, with the costs covered by profits from commercial food services.

Since non-commercial use doesn't exclude anyone, this enables and promotes interaction between different groups of people. These kinds of cultural events in public spaces can make an important contribution to linking people as well as promoting peaceful coexistence and togetherness.¹¹

City of Bern art walks

One way to enjoy non-commercial art in Bern's public spaces is to join one of its six "art walks" in different neighbourhoods.



Visit the website for details on the art walks in Bern's different neighbourhoods.



Self-experiment

For one month, pay attention to where you encounter culture in everyday life. Do you perceive the different facets of culture as sustainable? In what areas is the answer “no”, and why? Do you have ideas about how they could be made more sustainable? Learn more and think about how you could contribute to sustainable culture in the City of Bern.

Public spaces belong to all of us. From now on, pay attention to how they are used. Try to use them very mindfully for two months. Do you feel sufficiently free to perform the activities you want in public spaces? If not, what prevents you from doing so, and what would you want to change?

Are cultural events in public spaces accessible to all? Or are certain groups of people excluded or favoured? Write down your observations over the course of two months. What is positive, what is negative, and what is missing? Look for organizations or associations with which you can discuss your observations and possibly implement your own ideas.

References

Web resources were last accessed on 3 December 2021.

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^{4,7-9} Bundesamt für Raumentwicklung, Bundesamt für Kultur. 2017. *Kultur und Kreativität für die nachhaltige Entwicklung. Gute Beispiele für die Gemeinwesen* [Culture and Creativity for Sustainable Development: Good Examples for Communities]. Bern, Switzerland: Bundesamt für Raumentwicklung, Bundesamt für Kultur. <https://bit.ly/3rzi9ZN>.

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