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How Basel became a strategic pharma location

Last week, Swiss WorldCargo attended Lamprecht Pharma Logistics' Pharma Day in Basel, Switzerland. The event, held for the second time, is a unique platform bringing together both local and international shippers, forwarders, airlines, suppliers and others with an interest in distributing pharmaceutical goods around the world. Taking place at the Messe Basel, an exhibition centre in the heart of the city, its strategic location offers a prime opportunity for key players to come together. But, why is this, we asked ourselves? What makes this Rhineland city such an important destination for life sciences cargo?

For starters, Basel has always been Switzerland's centre for pharmaceutical production. The city has been and continues to be home to some of the world's largest industry firms. But it is also leading the way in life sciences,

research, and medicinal development. Dedicated labs from universities such as ETH, the headquarters of the Swiss Tropical and Health Institute, and one of Europe's best medical schools make it clear that a focus on healthcare permeates the entire city. And pharmaceuticals remain an important focus for Switzerland: according to the OEC, packaged medicaments made up 12% of Swiss exports in 2017.

Additionally, Basel has historically been a logistics city. With its strategic position on the Rhine river, it has attracted different shippers and forwarders with business in moving goods in and out of the city. Now different logistics firms have large offices here, giving them a central point for distributing their customers' goods throughout the world. And given the focus of pharmaceuticals, many smaller, specialized players focus on the shipment of life-saving, care-intensive goods to the highest standards.

At Swiss WorldCargo, Basel is central to our strategy of being the premier carrier for high-value goods, which of course includes pharmaceuticals. Located roughly an hour from Zurich, daily truck connections bring goods from the region to and from Zurich and Geneva. This then allows life-saving goods to reach the wider world in quick speed.

Over the years, the strategic importance of Basel being located an hour from Zurich is its proximity to several direct trade lanes. One such example is the pharma corridor which was opened between Zurich and Singapore in 2018. This partnership between Swiss WorldCargo, Cargologic and SATS encourages direct trade traffic between Basel via Zurich to Singapore, and offers the strictest, highest-quality standards to safeguard and protect all shipments. Similarly, a close connection to Zurich airport puts a number of other important pharmaceutical destinations into play: Johannesburg, Sao Paulo, Tokyo, Mumbai, Montreal, Chicago, San Francisco and many others are all just one flight away.

In 2018, Swiss WorldCargo was also part of a small group of companies which together, outlined a "Community Approach" to help Basel Airport gain IATA CEIV certification. Swiss WorldCargo played an important role here as an airline in helping the airport to gain certification. Together with Fiege, Fischer Road Cargo, Swissport, the four committed to upholding the high quality and standards needed.

The future looks positive for Basel, as it continues to be recognized as a fast-growing city. Its urban population is now over 170,000, but the greater Basel region includes over 800,000 people. And steady new developments ensure that the city will continue to come up with agile solutions that are beneficial to both its people and visitors. In the pharmaceutical industry, we expect the same. New changes and developments will continue to occur, and this powerhouse city will be at the forefront of said changes.



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