



Switzerland

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HISTORY

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Starting in the 1st century B.C., the land that is now Switzerland was ruled by the Roman Empire for 500-years. It was a time of plenty with roads being built and trade coming and going throughout the land.

Things would change around 800 A.D. when the Frankish Empire took control of Switzerland under Charlemagne. For almost 500-years, Switzerland was part of the Holy Roman Empire.

Switzerland took its' first steps towards becoming an independent nation in 1291 when the three significant cantons of the area (the Schwyz, Uri, and Unterwalden families) signed the charter creating the Swiss Confederation. It was initially created as a defensive alliance, and other localities in the area would join the alliance over time.

Finally, in 1499, The Swiss Confederation gained its complete independence from the Holy Roman Empire. This land would remain a confederation until the official constitution was drafted in 1848 (ratified in 1874). This constitution would give Switzerland its' first centralized federal government.

Switzerland is a unique country when it comes to its politics. It is not a member of the European Union, nor is it a member of NATO. It is considered an armed neutral country. It didn't play any role in either of the World Wars. It is a member of the United Nations and other international organizations.



MONEY

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Because Switzerland is not a member of the European Union, the Euro is not the accepted form of currency. The Swiss Franc is the official currency, and it is issued and printed by the Swiss National Bank. This currency is also the accepted currency of Liechtenstein. Many locations will list Euro prices, and many will accept them, but they are not obligated to do so.

CREDIT CARDS

As far as travelers are concerned, the easiest way to pay for things while on vacation in Switzerland is with credit cards (traveler's checks are a great option as well). Credit cards have become a universal the world over. Mastercard, American Express, and Visa are the most widely accepted cards throughout the country.

ATMS

Many banks in Switzerland equip their ATMs with the Cirrus and the Maestro systems. They also provide cash advance service for your credit cards. Although many of us don't carry cash anymore, there is a need to have cash on you for things like transportation.



HELPFUL INFO

Climate

Switzerland sits on the European continent surrounded by France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Italy, and Austria. It is a land that is defined by its mountains, lakes, rivers, and stunning views. The mountains and the water help to shape daily life in Switzerland, and it is a part of how people conduct their lives.

The climate in Switzerland is moderate, as there is no season of extreme heat, cold, or humidity. There are four defined seasons in Switzerland. During the winter, the temperature can range from 45 degrees F down to a low of -28 degrees F. In the spring and fall, the temperature ranges from 46 to 59 degrees F.

And in the summer, temperatures range from 65 to 82 degrees F.

Electricity

Electrical sockets in Switzerland are hexagonal shaped and have three holes. They are not a socket that is compatible with other outlets abroad, but they can usually take the two-pronged European outlets. The current in these sockets is a 50-Hz, 230-V.



Technology & Communication

Switzerland has research and development centers for major global information technology giants such as IBM and Google. It is a place where new technology is being developed and implemented all the time. Information and communication technology is so important within the country; this industry accounts for around 8% of its gross domestic product.

When it comes to communication, it is not hard to find WiFi in this country, even for travelers. There are several different ways that travelers can access WiFi (so they can avoid those expensive roaming fees).

There are over 1700 public hotspots that people can pay for hourly, daily, or monthly. There are mobile hotspots that people can utilize by buying or renting a SIM-card. There are also travelers WiFi mobile hotspot that travelers can purchase for up to 10 users. There is also internet access in many of the hotels, bars, restaurants, train and bus stations across the country as well.



Infrastructure & Transportation

The transportation network throughout the country makes it incredibly easy to get around and even into neighboring countries. Whether by car, train, bus, boat, or airplane, it is not going to be challenging to get where it is that you want to go.

There are more than 18,000-miles within the public transportation network.

One of the best ways for travelers to get around is by using one of the great ticket packages that are available to them. There are three great options; the Swiss Travel Pass, the Swiss Travel Pass Flex, and the Swiss Half Fare Card.

The Swiss Travel pass gives travelers up to 50% off of mountain excursions, free admission to over 500 museums throughout the country, free public transportation (train, bus, and boat) in more than 90 different cities, and free use of panoramic trains on consecutive days.

The Swiss Travel Pass Flex gives travelers admission into over 500 museums, free public transportation (train, boat, and bus) in over 90 cities, and free use of panoramic trains on select days.

The Swiss Half Fare Card gives travelers up to 50% off travel by train, bus, boat, and public transportation in more than 90 different cities.



In Case Of An Emergency

In the case of an emergency, 117 is the number for the police, 118 for fire, 1414 for Swiss Rescue, and 144 for an ambulance.

Language

There are four main languages spoken in Switzerland; German (63.5%), French (22.5%), Italian (8.1%), other languages (6.6%), Rhaeto-Rumantsch (.5%).



Religion

Around 21% of the population doesn't identify a religious affiliation, but there is plenty of the county that does. Much of that demographic identifies as Christian (38% Roman Catholic and 27% Protestant). Christianity is not the only religious group represented in Switzerland, as some identify as Jewish, Muslim, or Buddhist. These religions add up to being just under 6% of the total population.



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Getting There

If you are already in Europe, getting into Switzerland will be no problem because of the extensive transportation network. Whether by car or by train, it is a comfortable trip.

If you are flying in, there are four international airports in Switzerland, including Bern Belp, Geneva, Zurich, and Basel. Swiss International Air Lines serves more than 100 different destinations around the world.

THE EXPERIENCE

Culture

“Unity but not uniformity” is the general attitude of the nation of Switzerland. Much like the United States, Switzerland is a melting pot of a country. Communities are mostly defined by the language that they speak. The history of Switzerland (as an independent nation) only goes back about 200-years.

These different communities have different customs, traditions, foods, drinks, music, and identities. This mixing is one of the things that makes Switzerland such an exciting place. If you are looking to visit Switzerland, you will want to research the particular area that you are planning to spend time to understand the people and their culture.



Bucket List

The Matterhorn

Rhine Falls

The Aletsch Alpine Glacier

Chillon Castle

Bernina Express

Museum of Transportation

Maison Cailler Chocolate Factory



Family Travel Highlights

Doll Museum

Papa Moll Land

Splash and Spa Aqua Park

Lido Locarno

Boat Tour on the Rhine

Blonay-Chamby Museum Railway

GWunderwald



Tourism Authority

Switzerland Tourism

Todistrasse 7

8027 Zurich

Schweiz

media@switzerland.com

Telephone: 044 288 13 17



Foods To Try

Fondue

All the cheeses

Leeks with potatoes and sausage

Rosti

Basel-style roasted flour soup

Raclette

Polenta and braised beef

Veal and Mushroom Ragout

Vacherin Mont D'Or

Chocolate

Drinks To Try

Swiss Beer

Swiss Wine (many of them are white because they are served with Fondue and other cheese dishes)

Ramseier (carbonated apple juice)

Rivella (soft drink)



Souvenirs To Buy

Chocolate
Swiss Army Knife
Watches
Cowbells
Cheese
Cuckoo Clocks

