Switzerland

Swiss Confederation

5 other official names

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft ([German](#))
Confédération suisse ([French](#))
Confederazione Svizzera ([Italian](#))
Confederaziun svizra ([Romansh](#))
Confoederatio Helvetica ([Latin](#))

[Flag of Switzerland](#)	[Coat of arms of Switzerland](#)
[Flag](#)	[Coat of arms](#)

Motto: (traditional)
"[Unus pro omnibus, omnes pro uno](#)" ([Latin](#))
"One for all, all for one"

Anthem: "[Swiss Psalm](#)"

[Location of Switzerland (green) on the European continent (green and dark grey)](#)

Location of Switzerland (green)

on the [European continent](#) (green and dark grey)

Capital	None (*[de jure](#)*) [Bern](#) (*[de facto](#)*)[1] [46°57′N 7°27′E](#)
Largest city	[Zürich](#)
Official languages	[German](#) [French](#) [Italian](#)
Recognised national languages	[Romansh](#)
Common languages	[Latin](#)
Demonym(s)	English: [Swiss](#), [German](#): *Schweizer(in)*, [French](#): *Suisse(sse)*, [Italian](#): *svizzero/svizzera, or elvetico/elvetica*, [Romansh](#): *Svizzer/Svizra*
Government	

	Federal semi-direct democracy under a multi-party parliamentary directorial republic
• Federal Council	Viola Amherd (President) Karin Keller-Sutter (Vice President) Guy Parmelin Ignazio Cassis Élisabeth Baume-Schneider Albert Rösti Beat Jans
• Federal Chancellor	Viktor Rossi

Legislature	Federal Assembly
• Upper house	Council of States
• Lower house	National Council

History

• Foundation date	c. 1300[note 1] (traditionally 1 August 1291)
• Peace of Westphalia	24 October 1648
• Restoration	7 August 1815
• Federal state	12 September 1848[note 2][2]

Area	
• Total	41,285 km^2 (15,940 sq mi) (132nd)
• Water (%)	4.2

Population	
• 2019 estimate	Increase 8,570,146[3] (99th)
• 2015 census	8,327,126[4]
• Density	207/km^2 (536.1/sq mi) (48th)

GDP (PPP)	2018 estimate
• Total	$548 billion[5] (38th)
• Per capita	$64,649[5] (9th)

GDP (nominal)	2018 estimate
• Total	$704 billion[5] (20th)
• Per capita	$82,950[5] (2nd)

Gini (2018)	Positive decrease 29.7[6] low · 19th

HDI (2018)	Increase 0.946[7] very high · 2nd

Currency	Swiss franc (CHF)

Time zone	[UTC](#)+1 ([CET](#))
• Summer ([DST](#))	[UTC](#)+2 ([CEST](#))
Date format	dd.mm.yyyy ([AD](#))
Driving side	right
Calling code	[+41](#)
ISO 3166 code	[CH](#)
Internet TLD	[.ch](#), [.swiss](#)

Switzerland ([German](#): *Schweiz*; [French](#): *Suisse*; [Italian](#): *Svizzera*; [Romansh](#): *Svizra*; [Swiss German](#): *Schwiz*) is a [country](#) in [Western Europe](#). Switzerland is a [federation](#) of 26 [cantons](#).

The official name of Switzerland is *Confoederatio Helvetica* (**Swiss Confederation**). This is [Latin](#) and is not often used except for official state documents. When it was founded in 1291, Switzerland was a [confederation](#), but later became a federation, even though it has kept the word *Confoederatio* in its official name.

Switzerland does not have an official [capital city](#), but [Bern](#) is used as though it is the capital. The largest city of Switzerland is [Zürich](#).

To the north of Switzerland is [Germany](#). East of Switzerland are [Austria](#) and [Liechtenstein](#). To the south of Switzerland is [Italy](#). To the west of Switzerland is [France](#).

Switzerland is known for its [neutrality](#). A country is neutral when it does not take sides among the countries who are at war.[8] Switzerland has been neutral since 1815. However, on February 28, 2022[9] Switzerland joined the imposition of [economic sanctions](#) against Russia.

Many international organizations are in Switzerland. The [United Nations](#) has a main office (but not its headquarters) in [Geneva](#). Its predecessor organization, the [League of Nations](#), was headquartered in Geneva.

Languages

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There are four official languages in Switzerland: [German](#), [French](#), [Italian](#), and [Romansh](#). Some cantons and even towns have two [languages](#) spoken in them, and the largest canton by area, [Graubünden](#), has three. About 2/3 of the population speak German; French is spoken in the west of the country, and Italian in the canton of [Ticino](#). The Romansh language is spoken in parts of Graubünden, by less than 1% of the Swiss population.

Geography

Matterhorn in the Swiss Alps

The area of Switzerland is 41,285 km². The confederation is divided into 23 full states called *cantons*. All 26 cantons are: Aargau, Appenzell Innerrhoden, Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Basel-Stadt, Basel-Land, Berne, Fribourg, Geneva, Glarus, Graubünden, Jura, Lucerne, Neuchâtel, Nidwalden, Obwalden, Schaffhausen, Schwyz, Solothurn, St. Gallen, Thurgau, Ticino, Uri, Valais, Vaud, Zug, and Zürich.

The mountains are very tall in the center and south of Switzerland. About 60% of Switzerland is in the Alps area. Few people live there. The highest mountain is the Dufourspitze at 4,634 m.

Many of the mountains have ice all year. This ice is called glaciers. The rivers Rhine, Rhône, and many other rivers start in the mountains of Switzerland.

There are many lakes in Switzerland. The biggest lakes are all in the north and west: Lake Geneva (*Lac Léman*), Lake Zürich, Lake Neuchâtel and Lake Constance (*Bodensee*).

Mountains in the north of Switzerland are fewer and smaller. Most Swiss people live in cities and towns in the north. The Jura mountains are in the northwest of Switzerland.

Cities

map of Switzerland with dots showing places with more than 10,000 people
Population of cities with more than 10,000 people

Switzerland has 2,485 villages, towns and cities.

The largest cities are:

1. Zurich
2. Geneva
3. Basel
4. Lausanne
5. Bern
6. Lucerne
7. Winterthur
8. St. Gallen
9. Lugano
10. Biel/Bienne
11. Thun

Civil flag

Culture

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[Almabtrieb](#) at [Mels](#) in [2019](#)

There are about 8.4 million people in Switzerland. About 64% of the people speak Swiss German ([German](#) Alemannic) as their first language, in northern and central Switzerland. 19% of the people speak [French](#) as their first language, mainly in the west of Switzerland. 8% of the people speak [Italian](#), in the south of Switzerland. Only 1% of the people speak Romansh, in the southeastern part of Switzerland.[10] Romansh is an old language that is similar to Latin.

The German-speaking people of Switzerland do not actually speak "German" as their native language. Swiss people speak something called [Alemannic](#) which has its own writing language and grammar but still is normally considered a German dialect. Alemannic may be difficult for Germans to understand. Swiss people do write like the people from Germany and also speak standard German very well, especially in the larger cities.

About 23% of the people in Switzerland do not come from Switzerland.[11] They come from other places to usually work in Switzerland.

The religion of most people in Switzerland is [Christianity](#). 43% of the population follow Catholicism. 35% of the population follow Protestantism. 2% follow Eastern Orthodoxy. The religion of 4% of the population is [Islam](#). The rest follow other religions, or they have no religion.

Switzerland is famous for its [chocolate](#), [cheese](#), banking system, [watches](#) and [mountains](#).

History

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In 1291, people from Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden wanted to be free. They signed a contract to work together called the *Eternal Alliance*. Together,

they could be free from the people of [Habsburg](), who were very strong. In 1315 the people from the Eternal Alliance fought the Habsburgs in battles at Morgarten, Sempach and Näfels. The people of the Eternal Alliance won all the battles.

People from other areas signed the contract and joined the Eternal Alliance. More and more people worked together to be free. In 1648, other countries from Europe made an agreement that Switzerland was free. The name of this agreement was the *[Peace of Westphalia]()*. More areas came to be part of Switzerland.

Switzerland was important to the [slave trade]() that forced [black]() [Africans]() to be sold as slaves. Swiss companies made [indiennes](), which are a kind of cloth. These cloths were sent to Africa and exchanged for captured slaves. Some Swiss also joined French companies already making indiennes or owned [plantations]() with slaves in French [colonies]().[12]

In 1798, France invaded Switzerland. The ruler of France was [Napoleon](). He changed many laws. In 1815 Switzerland again became [independent]() from France. Other countries agreed at the [Congress of Vienna]() that Switzerland was free and neutral.

The constitution of Switzerland that was made after a short [civil war]() in 1848 was replaced in 1999. Switzerland did not fight in [World War I]() or [World War II](). Since 2002, Switzerland is part of the United Nations. It did not join the United Nations for 57 years because of its neutrality.

Politics

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> [Bern]() is the Swiss Capital

Switzerland is a [republic](). Switzerland does not have the same kind of president as the United States or France. Seven people (called ministers) do the job of president. They are called the Federal Council in English, *Bundesrat* in German, *Conseil Fédéral* in French, *Consiglio Federale* in Italian and *Cussegl Federal* in Romansh. Every year one of these people is made president. The president is not more important than the other six people. At present 3 of the 7 people are women.

The seven people are:

- [Alain Berset]() (President in 2023)
- [Guy Parmelin]()
- [Ignazio Cassis]()
- [Viola Amherd]() (Vice president in 2023)
- [Karin Keller-Sutter]()
- [Albert Rösti]()
- [Élisabeth Baume-Schneider]()[13]

There are two parts of [parliament](#) in Switzerland. The *Council of States* and the *National Council*. Only both together can make laws. There are 46 people in the Council of States. Every full canton of Switzerland can send 2 people. There are 200 people in the National Council. The biggest canton sends most people to the National Council. The smallest 6 cantons can only send one person to the National Council.

The people of Switzerland can collect signatures if they do not like a new law or a law change. This is called a *referendum*. If enough people sign a referendum, the people vote. The people can also collect signatures to change the [constitution](#). This is called an *initiative*. The constitution is the basic law of a country.

Economy

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Switzerland is not a member of the [European Union](#), but it is member of the [European Free Trade Agreement](#) (EFTA). The EFTA makes trade with other countries in Europe easier. In 1999 Switzerland and the European Union made a [contract](#). This contract makes [trade](#) even easier. They recently made two other contracts.

The [banks](#) of Switzerland and the insurance companies in Switzerland together produce eleven per cent of the [gross domestic product](#). Tourism is important in Switzerland. There are many places for tourists. [Davos](#), [St. Moritz](#), [Pontresina](#) and [Flims](#) are in Switzerland. These towns are important both in winter (for skiing) and in summer. Tourists also like the cities of [Lucerne](#), [Geneva](#), and [Zürich](#).

In 2011 the [pharmaceutical](#) industry in Switzerland directly and indirectly employed about 135,000 people.[14] The companies [Novartis](#) and [Roche](#) are the second and third largest pharma companies in the world. They both have invented many life saving drugs because of well developed [research and development](#) facilities.

Climate

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Switzerland has a [continental climate](#).

The highest temperature ever recorded in Switzerland was 41.5 °C (106.7 °F), on 11 August 2003 in Grono.[15]

The lowest temperature ever recorded in Switzerland was −41.8 °C (−43.2 °F), on 12 January 1987 in [La Brévine](#).[16]

Literature

Heidi by Johanna Spyri

The literature of Switzerland is divided according to the language used. Most Swiss literature was written in German from 1291 until 1798. French became popular in Bern and elsewhere in the 18th century and many words also in the German speaking parts of Switzerland come from the French and are not known to Germans. Italian language and Romansch-Latin literature are less common in Switzerland.

Heidi, a book for children by Johanna Spyri, is the most famous book of Switzerland.[17] It is set in the mountains in Graubünden.[18]

Sports

Ski area over the glaciers of Saas-Fee

Skiing, snowboarding and mountaineering are among the most popular sports in Switzerland. Because of the large mountain range the nature of the country is well suited for such activities.[19] Bobsleigh was invented in St. Moritz.[20] The first world ski championships were held in Mürren (1931) and St. Moritz (1934). St. Moritz hosted the second Winter Olympic Games in 1928 and in 1948. Among the most successful skiers and world champions are Pirmin Zurbriggen and Didier Cuche.

Spengler Cup in Davos

Many Swiss are fans of football. The national team or 'Nati' is widely supported. Switzerland was the joint host, with Austria, of the Euro 2008 tournament. Many Swiss also follow ice hockey. In April 2009, Switzerland hosted the 2009 IIHF World Championship for the 10th time.[21] The National League A is the most attended league in Europe.[22]

The many lakes in the country make Switzerland a good place for sailing. The largest, Lake Geneva, is the home of the sailing team Alinghi. They were the first European team to win the America's Cup in 2003. They also won in 2007. Tennis has become more popular. Swiss players such as Martina Hingis and Roger Federer have won multiple Grand Slams.

In an eight-year span, Roger Federer has won a record 17 Grand Slam singles titles, making him the most successful men's tennis player ever.[23]

Motorsport racecourses and events were banned in Switzerland after the 1955 Le Mans disaster. There were exceptions for events such as

[Hillclimbing](). This ban was overturned in June 2007.[24] During this period, the country still had successful racing drivers such as [Clay Regazzoni](), [Sebastian Buemi](), [Jo Siffert]() and successful [World Touring Car Championship]() driver [Alain Menu](). [Switzerland]() also won the [A1GP World Cup of Motorsport]() in [2007–08]() with driver [Neel Jani](). Swiss [motorcycle racer]() [Thomas Lüthi]() won the 2005 [MotoGP]() World Championship in the 125cc category.

Traditional sports include Swiss wrestling or "[Schwingen]()". It is an old tradition from the rural central cantons and considered the national sport by some. [Hornussen]() is another native Swiss sport. It is like a cross between baseball and golf.[25] [Steinstossen]() is the Swiss version of [stone put](), a competition in throwing a heavy stone. It is recorded to have taken place in [Basel]() in the 13th century. It is also central to the [Unspunnenfest](), first held in 1805.[26]

Related pages

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- [List of rivers of Switzerland]()
- [Switzerland at the Olympics]()
- [Switzerland national football team]()

Notes

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1. [↑]() The original date of the [Rütlischwur]() was 1307 (reported by [Aegidius Tschudi]() in the 16th century) and is just one among several comparable treaties between more or less the same parties during that period. The date of the [Federal Charter of 1291]() was selected in 1891 for the official celebration of the "Confederacy's 600th anniversary".
2. [↑]() A solemn declaration of the [Tagsatzung]() declared the Federal Constitution adopted on 12 September 1848. A resolution of the *Tagsatzung* of 14 September 1848 specified that the powers of the institutions provided for by the 1815 Federal Treaty would expire at the time of the [constitution]() of the [Federal Council](), which took place on 16 November 1848.

References

[[change]() | [change source]()]

1. [↑]() Holenstein, André (2012). "Die Hauptstadt existiert nicht". *UniPress – Forschung und Wissenschaft an der Universität Bern* (scientific article) (in German). 152 (Sonderfall Hauptstatdtregion). Berne: Department Communication, University of Berne: 16–19. [doi]():[10.7892/boris.41280](). [S 2CID]() [178237847](). "Als 1848 ein politisch-administratives Zentrum für den neuen Bundesstaat zu bestimmen war, verzichteten die

Verfassungsväter darauf, eine Hauptstadt der Schweiz zu bezeichnen und formulierten stattdessen in Artikel 108: «Alles, was sich auf den Sitz der Bundesbehörden bezieht, ist Gegenstand der Bundesgesetzgebung.» Die Bundesstadt ist also nicht mehr und nicht weniger als der Sitz der Bundesbehörden."

2. ↑ Andreas Kley: *Federal constitution* in German, French and Italian in the online *Historical Dictionary of Switzerland*, 3 May 2011.

3. ↑ "Bevölkerungsbestand am Ende des 2. Quartal 2019" [Recent monthly and quarterly figures: provisional data] (XLS) (official statistics) (in German, French, and Italian). Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO), Swiss Confederation. 19 September 2019. 1155-1500. Retrieved 20 September 2019.

4. ↑ Jacqueline Kucera; Athena Krummenacher, eds. (22 November 2016). Switzerland's population 2015 (PDF) (official report). Swiss Statistics. Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Swiss Federal Statistical Office (FSO), Swiss Confederation. Archived from the original on 20 December 2016. Retrieved 7 December 2016.

5. ↑ 5.0 5.1 5.2 5.3 "5. Report for Selected Countries and Subjects: Switzerland". Washington, DC, U.S.: International Monetary Fund. Retrieved 1 October 2018.

6. ↑ "Gini coefficient of equivalised disposable income – EU-SILC survey". *ec.europa.eu*. Eurostat. Retrieved 20 October 2019.

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9. ↑ "Switzerland will forego "Swiss neutrality" ". *cnn.com*. 28 February 2022. Retrieved March 3, 2022.

10. ↑ Swiss Federal Statistical Office. "Languages and religions - Data, indicators". Retrieved 2007-10-09. The first number refers to the share of languages within total population. The second refers to the Swiss citizens only.

11. ↑ Ausländerinnen und Ausländer in der Schweiz - Bericht 2008 (German) (1196 KiB), Swiss Federal Statistical Office, page 12.

12. ↑ "CARICOM Compilation Archive (CCA)". *louverture.ch*. Archived from the original on 2020-10-27. Retrieved 2020-11-11.

13. ↑ "The seven members of the Federal Council". *www.admin.ch*. Retrieved 4 March 2023.

14. ↑ Stephan Vaterlaus, Stephan Suter and Barbara Fischer, "The Importance of the Pharmaceutical Industry for Switzerland" Archived 2015-09-24 at the Wayback Machine, A study undertaken on behalf of Interpharma, September 2011.

15. ↑ "Records Suisse". Archived from the original on 2016-08-16. Retrieved 2023-02-13.

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17. ↑ "Swiss Literature". *admin.ch*. Archived from the original on 2008-02-06. Retrieved 2008-03-04.

18. ↑ (in English)Highlights Switzerland on state tourism site[*permanent dead link*]

19. ↑ [Sport in Switzerland](#) [Archived](#) 2010-09-16 at the [Wayback Machine](#) europe-cities.com. Retrieved on 2009-12-14
20. ↑ [A brief history of bobsleigh](#) fibt.com. Retrieved on 2009-11-02
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22. ↑ Geering. ["Hockeyarenas.net"](#). Hockeyarenas.net. Archived from [the original](#) on 2012-01-14. Retrieved 2011-11-03.
23. ↑ [Roger Federer's Grand Slam Titles](#) sportsillustrated.cnn.com. Retrieved on 2010-06-14
24. ↑ ["Switzerland lifts ban on motor racing"](#). GrandPrix.com & DueMotori.com. 6 June 2007. Retrieved 23 September 2008.
25. ↑ [Hornussen](#) [Archived](#) 2009-06-29 at the [Wayback Machine](#) swissroots.org. Retrieved on 2010-01-25
26. ↑ [Tradition and history](#) [Archived](#) 2011-07-06 at the [Wayback Machine](#) interlaken.ch. Retrieved on 2010-01-25

Other websites

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	Macedonia – Norway[4] – Poland – Portugal[4,6] – Romania – Russia[1] – San Marino – Serbia – Slovakia – Slovenia – Spain[4,6] – Sweden – Switzerland – Turkey[1] – Ukraine – United Kingdom[4] – Vatican City
Dependencies	Akrotiri and Dhekelia[1] – Azores[5] – Ceuta[5, 6] – Faroe Islands[5] – Gibraltar[5] – Greenland[5,2] – Guernsey – Jan Mayen – Jersey – Isle of Man – Melilla[5,6] – Svalbard
Other Countries	Abkhazia[1,3] – Kosovo[3] – South Ossetia[1, 3] – Transnistria – Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus[1,3]

1. Transcontinental country/territory that is part of both Europe and Asia. 2. Territory or with territory geographically part of North America. 3. Partially recognized. 4. Not all dependent territories are listed. 5. Territory has some form of self-rule. 6. Territory or with territory geographically part of Africa.

Cantons of Switzerland

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- t
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Aargau · Appenzell Innerrhoden · Appenzell Ausserrhoden · Basel-Stadt · Basel-Landschaft · Bern · Fribourg · Geneva · Glarus · Graubünden · Jura · Lucerne · Neuchâtel · Nidwalden · Obwalden · Schaffhausen · Schwyz · Solothurn · St. Gallen · Thurgau · Ticino · Uri · Valais · Vaud · Zug · Zürich

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