

Switzerland



Switzerland: Alpine village

An Alpine village near Saint Moritz in the upper Engadin valley, Graubünden canton, Switzerland.



Switzerland



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Grindelwald, Switzerland

Restaurant in the Alpine village of Grindelwald, Switzerland.

Switzerland, federated country of central Europe. Switzerland's administrative capital is Bern, while Lausanne serves as its judicial centre. Switzerland's small size—its total area is about half that of Scotland—and its modest population give little indication of its international significance.

A landlocked country of towering mountains, deep Alpine lakes, grassy valleys dotted with neat farms and small villages, and thriving cities that blend the old and the new, Switzerland is the nexus of the diverse physical and cultural geography of western Europe, renowned for both its natural beauty and its way of life. Aspects of both have become bywords for the country, whose very name conjures images of the glacier-carved Alps beloved of writers, artists, photographers, and outdoor sports enthusiasts from around the world.

For many outsiders, Switzerland also evokes a prosperous if rather staid and unexciting society, an image that is now dated. Switzerland remains wealthy and orderly, but its mountain-walled valleys are far more likely to echo the music of a local rock band than a yodel or an alphorn. Most Swiss live in towns and cities, not in the idyllic rural landscapes that captivated the world through Johanna Spyri's *Heidi* (1880–81), the country's best-known literary work. Switzerland's cities have emerged as international centres of industry and commerce connected to the larger world, a very different tenor from Switzerland's isolated, more inward-looking past. As a consequence of its remarkably long-lived stability and carefully guarded neutrality, Switzerland—Geneva, in particular—has been selected as headquarters for a wide array of governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including many associated with the United Nations (UN)—an organization the Swiss resisted joining until the early 21st century.

Switzerland's rugged topography and multicultural milieu have tended to emphasize difference. People living in close proximity may speak markedly distinct, sometimes nearly mutually unintelligible dialects of their first language, if not a different



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La Gruyère district, Switzerland

La Gruyère district, Fribourg canton,
Switzerland.

Switzerland: Alps

The Alps in Switzerland.

language altogether. German, French, Italian, and Romansh all enjoy national status, and English is spoken widely. Invisible lines separate historically Protestant from historically Roman Catholic districts, while the tall mountains of the St. Gotthard Pass separate northern from southern Europe and their diverse sensibilities and habits. Yet, Switzerland has forged strength from all these differences, creating a peaceful society in which individual rights are carefully balanced against community and national interests.

Switzerland was formed in 1291 by an alliance of cantons against the Habsburg dynasty—the Confoederatio Helvetica (or Swiss Confederation), from which the abbreviation CH for Switzerland derives—though only in 1848, when a new constitution was adopted, was the present nation formed. Prior to 1848, internal conflict was quite common, but Switzerland has enjoyed relative domestic tranquility since the mid-19th century, and its organization has remained essentially the same: it is a union of more than 3,000 communes, or municipalities, situated in 26 cantons, 6 of which are traditionally referred to as demicantons (half cantons) but function as full cantons. Ordinary citizens are able to participate at every

level of politics and regularly exercise their will in referenda and initiatives, through which Swiss citizens directly make numerous policy decisions at the national and subnational level. Two effects of this popular involvement are evident: Swiss taxes are rather low by European standards, because voters are able to review and approve a broad range of expenditures, and political decision making tends to be slow, because contending individual claims and opinions must be allowed to be expressed at every step.

That high level of citizen involvement prompted the renowned 20th-century Swiss playwright and ironist Friedrich Dürrenmatt to allegorize Switzerland as a prison in which each Swiss citizen was at the same time prisoner and guard. Even so, the Swiss blend of federalism and direct democracy is unique in the world and is considered central to the country's political and economic success. And Switzerland is indeed a major economic power, thanks to its long tradition of financial services and high-quality, specialized manufactures of items such as precision timepieces, optics, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals, as well as of specialty foodstuffs such as Emmentaler cheese and milk chocolate. Switzerland is regularly judged to have among the world's highest standards of living.

Bern is a placid city whose name derives from the bear pits the canton's medieval rulers established there as a heraldic symbol; the bear pits are now part of the city's popular zoo. A metropolis extending along a large lake where the mountains meet the plains, Zürich is by far the country's largest and most cosmopolitan city, its famed Bahnhofstrasse rivaling shopping districts found in other leading cities in the world. Basel and Lucerne are major



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Zürich

Zürich, Switzerland.



2 of 2

Basel

The Rhine River at Basel, Switzerland.



men playing alphorns

Men in traditional attire playing
alphorns in the Swiss Alps, Zermatt,
Switzerland.

German-speaking cities, Geneva and Lausanne the centres of the country's French-speaking cantons, and Bellinzona and Lugano the principal cities in the Italian-speaking Ticino.

Switzerland has long been a model multiethnic, multilingual society, a place in which diverse peoples can live in social harmony and unite in common interest. The Swiss justifiably take great pride in this, and the point was encapsulated in the early 21st century by Ruth Dreifuss, who in 1999 became the country's first woman and first Jewish president (a post that rotates annually):

I may be a native speaker of French, but my parents originally came from German-speaking Switzerland and I myself worked in an Italian-speaking area for a while and enjoy travelling to all parts of the country.... I live in a neighbourhood in which over 100 different nationalities live together in peace and harmony.... I greatly appreciate this diversity.

Cultural life

Cultural milieu

Although Switzerland is small and relatively isolated from more well-recognized cultural centres, it nevertheless can boast an impressive list of contributors to the arts and sciences. For example, Switzerland has won more Nobel Prizes and registered more patents per capita than any other country, and the country abounds in cultural institutions, museums, and libraries, all well supported with federal funds. However, because of limited opportunities at home, some of Switzerland's most creative minds—for example, architect Le Corbusier and painter Paul Klee—went elsewhere to work. On the other hand, Switzerland's traditional neutrality and its laws of political asylum have made the country a magnet for many creative

persons during times of unrest or war in Europe. For example, writers such as the English poet George Byron, the Irish novelist James Joyce, the Romanian-born French poet Tristan Tzara, and the French writer Voltaire resided in Switzerland, and, in the 1930s and '40s, the rise of fascism caused a number of German, Austrian, and Italian writers such as Thomas Mann, Stefan George, and Ignazio Silone to seek harbour in Switzerland.

Switzerland's geographic centrality in Europe is reflected in its role as *Helvetia mediatrix* ("Switzerland the mediator"). The spirit of Henri Dunant, the founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross, lives on in

the continued sense of a distinct mission of cultural union that is shared by many Swiss, a mission also revealed in the country's extensive foreign-assistance programs for less-developed countries. Since the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the bipolar division of the world, Switzerland has had to reevaluate and redefine this traditional role. It can no longer serve as a go-between for the major power blocs; instead, international peace initiatives are often now embedded in institutions such as the UN or the EU, and, until it joined the UN in 2002, Switzerland was a member of neither.

If a "Swiss culture" can be spoken of in its broader implications beyond the arts, distinctive French, Italian, and German cultural circles must be recognized, as well as a Rhaeto-Romanic culture, which has been threatened by the increasing influence of the German language in the Romansh parts of eastern Switzerland, spread largely through the medium of television. It is mostly the common political and institutional visions—federalism, direct democracy, individualism, and the will not to be dominated by the surrounding large, often centralist countries—that both unite the Swiss and constitute their culture.

Some see the influence of the mass media as a threat to Swiss culture and tradition, both because of its homogenizing effects and because the different language groups can now receive and be influenced by television and radio in their respective cultural hearths of Germany, France, and Italy. These critics stress the important role of the national radio and television corporation in maintaining and nurturing a common understanding among all Swiss.

Daily life and social customs

Switzerland has often seen itself, or has been seen by others, as a "special case" (*Sonderfall*), largely because of multilingualism, its diversified cultural patchwork, and its institutions, but also because of its economic success after World War II. Although some of the political and institutional peculiarities still persist, the rapid modernization of daily life in Switzerland is reflected in changes in the country's habits and cuisine.



fondue neuchâtelaise

Swiss cuisine has traditionally been marked by important cultural and regional variations. Cheese dishes are typical of the Alpine regions. The national dish, *fondue neuchâtelaise* (a mixture of melted Emmentaler and Gruyère cheeses and wine into which bread cubes are dipped), and *raclette* (cheese melted over a fire and scraped over potatoes or bread) are popular not only throughout the country but in much of the world. The Swiss chocolate industry, which originally grew out of the need to utilize the abundant milk

produced in the pre-Alpine dairying regions, is world famous. Also popular are spiced, glazed honey cakes known as *Leckerli*. The preferred dish of German Switzerland is *Rösti* (fried shredded potatoes), but sausages and sauerkraut are also popular. Other popular dishes include *Zürcher Eintopf*, or Zürich-style beef stew, and, around the lakes of eastern Switzerland, the delicate fish *Zander* (pike perch). Specialty and seasonal dishes, such as the

autumn bratwurst from Sankt Gallen, distinguish one region from another, as do the country's abundant wines and beers (which now include *Maisgold*, or beer made from corn).

Western Switzerland is influenced by French cuisine and culture, and in Ticino pasta, polenta, and risotto are signs of a common culture with Italy. Despite the longevity of traditional culinary influences, modern Swiss cuisine is characterized by international trends, and restaurants with cuisines from all over the globe can be found even in smaller cities. There are many American fast-food chains, even in Alpine resorts such as Zermatt and Saint Moritz.

Visitors to Switzerland go there to eat, but more go to shop, especially along Zürich's famed Bahnhofstrasse, an avenue that is home to both fine shops—including the country's renowned jewelers and watchmakers—and leading banks. Along the Bahnhofstrasse, shoppers can find Switzerland's famous timepieces, local handicrafts, and books as well as dine in elegant cafés. Each city and town of any size has a similar venue, and some have more than one shopping district; for example, just across the Limmat River from the Bahnhofstrasse lies Zürich's youth-oriented Niederdorfstrasse, which features bistros, shops, and ethnic restaurants.

In general, the habits of city dwellers mirror those of urbanites in other parts of the world. Typical Swiss folk culture (e.g., yodeling and playing the alphorn) is still practiced in some rural areas. Early autumn's annual Alpabzug, in which cattle are driven from Alpine pastures to lower elevations, is the occasion for rural fairs and auctions that emphasize rural traditions, and many cities and larger towns host farmers' markets that join urban and rural areas. Stand wrestling (*Schwingen*), in which combatants wear wrestling breeches, can be seen in many regional festivals, and in some mountain villages, such as in Valais, traditional rural costumes are sometimes worn.

Family and household structures have considerably changed since the mid-20th century. The divorce rate nearly quadrupled between 1960 and the turn of the 21st century. The proportion of family households dropped, a reflection of both an increase in divorce rates and an aging population.

Swiss tradition survives in the country's many holidays and festivals. Fasnacht (Carnival), which marks the beginning of Lent, is celebrated in late winter throughout the country, with Basel's parades being of particular note. Although costumes and music are common features, Fasnacht exhibits regional variations, and in some places celebrants are adorned with masks said to chase away evil spirits. Masks are also part of Sylvesterkläuse (New Year) celebrations, particularly in rural Switzerland. Spring is marked by the burning of the Böögg during a festival that dates from 1818, when a guild held a parade replete with music and horses. The festival, which marks the end of winter, terminates with the burning of a large woodpile topped by a snowman. Throughout the fall there are various harvest and wine festivals. A popular holiday in Geneva is the Escalade, which is celebrated in December and marks the city's victory over the duke of Savoy in 1602. August 1 is National Day (German: Bundesfeier; French: Fête Nationale; and Italian: Festa Nazionale), which commemorates the agreement between representatives of the Alpine cantons of Uri, Schwyz, and Nidwalden, who signed an oath of confederation in 1291. The holiday itself, however, dates only from 1891, and it became an official federal holiday in 1993. Other

official holidays are religious in origin, and many of them, such as Whit Monday and Assumption, are observed in only some cantons.

The arts and sciences

Folk arts

Folk arts in Switzerland include music, poetry (usually song), dance, wood carving, and embroidery. In the cattle-breeding northern areas, there are many traditional forms of song and music, involving, for example, the yodel, a type of singing in which high falsetto and low chest notes are rapidly alternated. There are also trumpetlike instruments made of wood and bark, the epitome of which is the alphorn. Folk music in mainly pastoral areas has wide-ranging, floating melodies, whereas, in the crop-growing regions of the inner and southern Alps, more-songlike melodies of limited range are common. The most frequent themes are love and longing for the homeland, as well as historical, patriotic, pastoral, and hunting themes. The vitality of the Alpine folk culture can also be seen in dances such as the *Ländler*, which is somewhat similar to the waltz, and the *Schuhplattler* and in small musical ensembles such as the fife-and-drum presentations in Valais.

Wood carving consists partly of chip carving for the decoration of everyday objects, such as milking stools, neckbands for bells, wooden spoons, and distaffs, and partly of figure carving, especially of Nativity figures. Decoration of house facades with religious sayings is widespread in Protestant Alpine areas (in Berner Oberland and parts of Graubünden), but it can also be found in Roman Catholic regions, such as German-speaking upper Valais. Embroidery has been particularly prominent in such elements of traditional women's clothing as cuffs, stomachers, hats, and scarves. It has been a traditional home industry in parts of northeastern and eastern Switzerland.

Architecture



Sankt Gallen

Night view of the abbey at Sankt Gallen, Switzerland.

The 12th-century Romanesque architectural style found particularly rich expression in the cathedrals of Geneva, Basel, Lausanne, Sion, and Chur and in the many castles and fortresses. The Gothic style was expressed in the cathedrals of Zug, Zürich, and Schaffhausen. Notable examples of Baroque churches are located in Einsiedeln, east of Zug, and in Sankt Gallen. During the Renaissance many architectural masters, especially from Ticino, practiced their craft in Italy: Antonio da Ponte built the prisons near the Doge's Palace and the Rialto Bridge in Venice; Antonio Contino built Venice's Bridge of Sighs; Domenico Fontana designed the whole of the Lateran

Palace, the facade of St. John Lateran Church, and the Royal Palace in Naples; his nephew Carlo Maderno became architect to Pope Paul V; Francesco Borromini built San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, the gallery of the Spada Palace, and the Filippini monastery and modified the Falconieri and Barberini palaces; Carlo Fontana built

the facade of San Marcello al Corso and the Montecitorio Palace; Baldassare Longhena, from Moroggia, built the church of Santa Maria della Salute, the Rezzonico, Pesaro, and Widmann palaces, the church of Ospedaletto, and the interior of the church of Scalzi, all in Venice. Later, G.B. Gilardi rebuilt the Kremlin in Moscow; his son Domenico rebuilt the Moscow State University and a number of the city's palaces. In the 20th century Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret) was one of the major creative forces behind the International school of architecture that dominated most building trends throughout the West. More-recent prominent Swiss architects include Mario Botta from Ticino, who designed the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron from Basel, who transformed an old power station into the Tate Modern gallery in London; and Peter Zumthor from Graubünden, who is renowned for his wood and stone architecture.

Visual arts



Paul Klee

Paul Klee, 1939.

The Protestantism of 16th-century Switzerland had a strongly inhibiting effect on Swiss painting and sculpture in general; in that climate Hans Holbein the Younger, a German artist who did much of his work in Switzerland, chose to leave his base in Basel for London. Later Swiss expatriates who moved to London to ply their trade included the Neoclassical painter Angelica Kauffmann and Henry Fuseli (Johann Heinrich Füssli). Other artists of international renown include Alberto Giacometti, who derived much of his inspiration from the Etruscans; Jean Tinguely, whose complex moving

sculptures were constructed from scrap; and Paul Klee, perhaps Switzerland's most original and impressive painter. Creative photography and graphic arts flourish, examples of which can be seen on calendars, in magazines, in museums, and on the outdoor advertisements that are found throughout the country, especially in train stations. In the early 20th century the influential Dada arts movement emerged in Switzerland, centred on Zürich's Cabaret Voltaire. Today, galleries across the country represent Swiss artists, and Basel's annual art fair has emerged as a clearinghouse for their work.

Pioneering Swiss photographers include the brothers Edouard and Auguste de Jongh, Paul Senn, and Robert Frank. Important photographic repositories and museums are located in Lausanne, Winterthur, and Zürich.

Switzerland has a small film industry, characterized by movies both entertaining and profound that feature excellent acting and superb photography. The industry benefited during the 1930s and '40s from the influx of immigrants, particularly those from Austria and France, who fled persecution by Nazi Germany. In the 1960s Switzerland passed legislation that provided generous subsidies to the film industry, and that decade saw the emergence of a distinctly Swiss documentary tradition, enhanced by the expansion of television and the need for local programming. There are annual international film festivals in Locarno, Nyon, and Fribourg. Each winter, Swiss productions are highlighted at the well-attended film workshop in Solothurn.

Literature



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Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, undated
aquatint.

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portrait of Germaine de Staël

Germaine de Staël, portrait by Jean-
Baptiste Isabey, 1810; in the Louvre,
Paris.

Hermann Hesse

Hermann Hesse, 1957.

“In Switzerland, writing is only possible as an export business,”

Friedrich Dürrenmatt, one of the few internationally known Swiss authors, once remarked. The country’s small population and four official languages have worked to make it difficult for any single writer to enjoy widespread success or, perhaps more important, significant income, and most Swiss writers are little recognized elsewhere in Europe. Even though Switzerland today publishes thousands of books each year, many of the country’s literary successes date to previous centuries with such figures as the Swiss-born French Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the French-born memoirist and hostess Germaine de Staël, whose home at Coppet became a centre of European literary life, and the noted 19th-century historian of art and culture Jacob Burckhardt, whose *Civilization of the Renaissance* (1860) remains influential.

Other writers to enjoy international success include Johann Rudolf Wyss, who completed and edited his father’s novel *Swiss Family Robinson* (1812–27); Johanna Spyri, author of *Heidi* (1880–81); Dürrenmatt, whose play *Der Besuch der Alten Dame* (1956; *The Visit*) was made into a film (1964); and Max Frisch, author of *Homo Faber*.

Prominent among other Swiss nationals who wrote in German were the German-born Hermann Hesse, whose novel *Siddhartha* (1922) was a classic carried by many travelers to India, and poet Carl Spitteler, whose epics were inventive and powerful; both won the Nobel Prize for Literature, Spitteler in 1919 and Hesse in 1946. Other leading figures include narrative writer Gottfried Keller, poet Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, and novelist Robert Walser, and many exemplify the literary critic Karl Schmid’s remark that the leitmotiv of 20th-century Swiss literature is “the malaise of a small nation.”

Contemporary German-Swiss writers include Erika Burkhardt, Helen Meier, Thomas Hürlimann, and Peter Stamm. The leading figure in modern French-Swiss literature is Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz. Other writers in French include Guy de Pourtalès, Blaise Cendrars, Denis de Rougemont, Anne Perrier, and Yves Laplace. Italian-Swiss writers enjoy close connections with neighbouring Italy. Among them are Francesco Chiesa, whose work depicts rural life in the Ticino, poets Giorgio Orelli and Alberto Nessi, and novelists Anna Felder and Fleur Jaeggy. Some writers, such as Alina Borioli and Ugo Canonica, write in dialect.

Romansh literature stretches from its origins in medieval ecclesiastical writing to the late modern contributions of anthropologist Caspar Decurtins, poets Peider Lansel, Jon Guidon, and Artur Caflisch, and fiction writer Giachen Michel Nay.



Karl Barth

The German theologian Karl Barth questioned the apologetical system.

Switzerland was also among the leading centres of the Protestant Reformation during the 16th century and was home to such influential theologians as Huldrych Zwingli, Johannes Stumpf, and the French-born John Calvin. Karl Barth was one of the most important theologians of the 20th century.

Music

Church music dominated Switzerland until the 17th century, and in Protestant areas music was strictly controlled during the Reformation. In the 19th century a vibrant music scene developed. A conservatory was established in Geneva in 1835, and choral music was performed at various festivals, such as the Winegrowers Festival (Fête des Vignerons), which is still held in Vevey approximately every 25 years. Although Switzerland has not been at the forefront in music, it has produced several composers of international renown, such as the 20th-century figures Arthur Honegger, Othmar Schoeck, and Frank Martin. Under the direction of Ernest Ansermet, the Swiss French Orchestra (Orchestre de la Suisse Romande) was at the forefront of bringing modern musical culture to Swiss audiences, and today major orchestras serve Zürich, Geneva, Lausanne, Biel, Bern, Basel, Lucerne, Lugano, Winterthur, and Sankt Gallen.



Street Parade, Zürich

Street Parade, the largest techno party in the world, Zürich.

Switzerland is home to a number of international music festivals. The International Festival of Music, held in late summer in Lucerne, is a leading classical event, and the annual Montreux Jazz Festival attracts a large international audience. There are also numerous American country and western, jazz, and pop events throughout the year, and rock music—including a thriving scene in the national languages—is served by numerous nightclubs and performance spaces. Each summer, hundreds of thousands of electronic dance music fans converge on Zürich for Street Parade, one of the largest techno festivals in the world.

Theatre

Swiss theatre historically has been dominated by religious themes, such as in the Baroque Lucerne Easter Play. During the 18th century the government suppressed the performing arts, but in the 19th century patriotic plays emerged, such as those glorifying Swiss legendary hero William Tell (*Tellspiele*), and led to the construction of large municipal theatres throughout the country. During the Nazi period in Germany (1933–45), Zürich's Schauspielhaus (German: “Playhouse”) was an important centre for theatre, where many refugee writers,



Tell, William
Statue of William Tell, Altdorf,
Switzerland.



Zürich Opera House
The Zürich Opera House.



Large Hadron Collider
The Large Hadron Collider (LHC), the
world's most powerful particle
accelerator. At the LHC, located
underground in Switzerland, physicists
study subatomic particles.

directors, and actors performed or staged productions. The country's two most successful postwar dramatists, Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt, staged their debut works at the Schauspielhaus, and contemporary playwrights such as Maja Beutler, Thomas Hürlimann, and Matthias Zschokke have worked there and at other theatres throughout Switzerland.

In French-speaking Switzerland, theatrical works are often performed in schools and other "offstage" settings. Similarly, there are several independent theatrical troupes in the country's Italian- and Romansh-speaking cities and towns, which have no major municipal theatres. Zürich, Geneva, and Lausanne have opera houses. There are professional ballet ensembles in these cities and Basel, as well as several modern dance troupes.

Science

Swiss scientists have included Paracelsus (Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim), who in the 16th century brought chemistry into the field of medicine; Daniel, Jakob, and Johann Bernoulli of Basel, who made significant contributions to mathematics; the innovative mathematician Leonhard Euler; the naturalist and pioneer Alpine scholar Horace Bénédict de Saussure; and the Nobel Prize-winning chemist Alfred Werner. Zürich's Federal Institute of Technology has produced many Nobel Prize winners, among them physicists Albert Einstein, Wolfgang Pauli, and Heinrich Rohrer. The Geneva-based CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research) is one of the largest and most-versatile research facilities in the world. English computer scientist Tim Berners-Lee developed the structure of the World Wide Web while at CERN, and in 2012 CERN's Large Hadron Collider confirmed the existence of the Higgs boson.

Switzerland has also nurtured some of the leading social scientists of the modern age, including economist Jean-Charles-Léonard Simonde de Sismondi, linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and psychologists Jean Piaget and Carl Jung.

Cultural institutions

The arts are championed by renowned museums not only in cities such as Basel, Zürich, and Geneva but also in small towns such as Winterthur and Schaffhausen, which are cultural bastions far beyond the usual provincial standards. One example is the Pierre Gianadda Foundation, built over Roman ruins in Martigny. Opened in 1978,

it has become renowned for the quality of its exhibitions of international artists, including Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, Henry Moore, and Auguste Rodin. Museums of particular note are the Swiss National Museum, which houses many exhibits on Swiss culture and history, and the Museum of Fine Arts (Kunsthau), with a range of collections from religious to modern art, in Zürich; the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum, the Museum of Art and History, which houses some 500,000 items, the Petit Palais, which has a small but excellent collection of modern art, and the Voltaire Museum, in Geneva; and the Transport Museum in Lucerne.

Sports and recreation



Roger Federer

Roger Federer at the U.S. Open,
2014.

Sports are an integral part of Switzerland's national life. The Swiss Olympic Association, the national clearinghouse for sports activities, estimated that its membership embraced some 3.5 million individuals and more than 25,000 separate organizations at the start of the 21st century, and nearly every commune in the country boasts several sports clubs, from mountaineering to football (soccer) to windsurfing. Local competitions are abundant, the most famous of which is the annual *Knabenschiessen* festival, held in Zürich each September, bringing teenagers together to compete in archery and other shooting events. Along with regular Sunday-morning shooting,

other sports played in the country include Swiss-style wrestling (*Schwingen*), gymnastics, *Hornussen* (a kind of Alpine baseball), tennis, golf, ice hockey, basketball, floor handball, gliding, paragliding, hang gliding, sailing, and swimming. Swiss tennis player Roger Federer was the most dominant player in the game in the early 21st century. There is fishing in the lakes and rivers, and, when certain mountain lakes freeze over, they are used for curling and even horse racing.



skiing

An instructor teaching children to ski
near Les Crosets, Switzerland.

Fittingly for a country made up largely of tall mountains, Switzerland abounds in venues for winter sports. The country boasts dozens of major ski resorts and has an extensive system of marked cross-country ski trails. Swiss athletes have performed with excellence at every level of winter-sports competition and notably at the Winter Olympic Games. Switzerland hosted the Winter Olympic Games at Saint Moritz in 1928 and again in 1948. The 1928 Games were marred by unusually warm weather, which forced the cancellation or postponement of several events; the 1948 Games were, however, among Switzerland's finest moments in sports, with

Swiss athletes winning 10 medals. Swiss athletes have performed particularly well in curling at the Winter Games and in such summer events as rowing, shooting, volleyball, swimming, cycling, and gymnastics.

The western Swiss city of Lausanne has been the home of the International Olympic Committee since 1915. The city is also the site of the remarkable Olympic Museum and is the headquarters of a number of international

sporting organizations and events, including the Athletissima track and field competition and the Lausanne Marathon.

Media and publishing

Since the adoption of the Swiss constitution in 1874, the press has enjoyed considerable freedom, and, except in cases of national security, journalists are permitted not to reveal their sources of information. Given the country's linguistic and regional diversity, there are a wide variety of newspapers. About two-thirds of newspapers are published in German; one-fourth are printed in French; and smaller proportions of Switzerland's newspapers are published in Italian and Romansh. Most newspapers have a regional scope; among the leading daily newspapers are the *Tribune de Genève* and *Le Temps* in Geneva; *Basler Zeitung* in Basel; and *Tages Anzeiger Zürich*, which has the country's largest circulation, and the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, which is widely respected for its international coverage, in Zürich. Most Swiss newspapers and other media offer online editions.

Much of modern cultural life has been influenced by television. Both television and radio are dominated by the private nonprofit Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (Société Suisse de Radiodiffusion et Télévision), which has three distinctive networks for the German (including Rhaeto-Romanic), French, and Italian parts of Switzerland. While representing their respective cultures, they include many programs from France, Germany, and Italy. French-language television also includes shows from Canada and Belgium, whereas the German-Swiss network also presents programs from Austria. There are also a variety of other radio and television stations that operate along regional lines, and Swiss Radio International broadcasts internationally in several languages. Commercial television faces difficulties, owing to Switzerland's small and diverse market. American television and movies heavily influence domestic programming. Cable television, reflecting the Europeanization of Switzerland, has brought a wide variety of additional programming, and satellite and Internet broadcasters are especially popular with the foreign population.

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