

Switzerland

Geography

Location: Central Europe, east of France

Area:

total area: 41,290 sq km

land area: 39,770 sq km

Land boundaries: total 1,852 km, Austria 164 km, France 573 km, Italy 740 km, Liechtenstein 41 km, Germany 334 km

Coastline: 0 km (landlocked)

Maritime claims: none; landlocked

Climate: temperate, but varies with altitude; cold, cloudy, rainy/snowy winters; cool to warm, cloudy, humid summers with occasional showers

Terrain: mostly mountains (Alps in south, Jura in northwest) with a central plateau of rolling hills, plains, and large lakes

Natural resources: hydropower potential, timber, salt

Land use:

arable land: 10%

permanent crops: 1%

meadows and pastures: 40%

forest and woodland: 26%

other: 23%

Irrigated land: 250 sq km (1989)

Environment:

current issues: air pollution from vehicle emissions and open air burning; acid rain; water pollution from increased use of agricultural fertilizers; loss of biodiversity

natural hazards: avalanches, landslides, flash floods

Note: landlocked; crossroads of northern and southern Europe; along with southeastern France and northern Italy, contains the highest elevations in Europe

People

Population: 7,084,984 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 17% (female 594,565; male 622,436)

15-64 years: 68% (female 2,375,792; male 2,448,213)

65 years and over: 15% (female 623,136; male 420,842) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 0.57% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 12.04 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 9.16 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 2.82 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 6.3 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 78.36 years
male: 74.99 years
female: 81.88 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 1.6 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:

noun: Swiss (singular and plural)

adjective: Swiss

Ethnic divisions:

total population: German 65%, French 18%, Italian 10%,
Romansch 1%, other 6%

Swiss nationals: German 74%, French 20%, Italian 4%, Romansch
1%, other 1%

Religions: Roman Catholic 47.6%, Protestant 44.3%, other 8.1%
(1980)

Languages: German 65%, French 18%, Italian 12%, Romansch
1%, other 4%

note: figures for Swiss nationals only - German 74%, French 20%,
Italian 4%, Romansch 1%, other 1%

Literacy:

total population: 99%

Government

Names:

conventional long form: Swiss Confederation

conventional short form: Switzerland

local long form: Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft (German)
Confederation Suisse (French) Confederazione Svizzera (Italian)

local short form: Schweiz (German) Suisse (French) Svizzera
(Italian)

Type: federal republic

Capital: Bern

Independence: 1 August 1291

National holiday: Anniversary of the Founding of the Swiss
Confederation, 1 August (1291)

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal

Flag: red square with a bold, equilateral white cross in the center that does not extend to the edges of the flag

Economy

Overview: Switzerland's economy is one of the most prosperous and stable in the world. Swiss per capita output, living standards, education, and health care remain unsurpassed in Europe. The country has few mineral resources, but its spectacular natural beauty sustains a substantial tourism industry.

Industries: machinery, chemicals, watches, textiles, precision instruments

Agriculture: dairy farming predominates; less than 50% self-sufficient in food; must import fish, refined sugar, fats and oils (other than butter), grains, eggs, fruits, vegetables, meat

Illicit drugs: money-laundering center

Transportation

Railroads:

total: 5,763 km (1,432 km double track)

Highways:

total: 71,118 km

Inland waterways: 65 km; Rhine (Basel to Rheinfelden, Schaffhausen to Bodensee); 12 navigable lakes

Pipelines: crude oil 314 km; natural gas 1,506 km

Ports: Basel

Airports:

total: 69

Defence Forces

Branches: Army, Air Force and Antiaircraft Command