SWITZERLAND

Idyllic snow-covered Alps, sunlit lakes, fertile green pastures, flower-laden fields, and picturesque villages form the scenic backdrop of this small and steadfast nation. Switzerland has been an independent state since 1291, and the Swiss are proud of the neutrality and freedom they have maintained for over 700 years.



AREA: 15,940 sq. miles **POPULATION:** 8,800,000 **CAPITAL:** Bern *(population: 140,000)*
GOVERNMENT: Republic **LANGUAGE:** German, French, Romansh & Italian

FOOD & DRINK In the afternoon, take a break from your shopping and touring to enjoy some bundnerfleisch (thin slices of air-dried meat), rösti (a favorite fried potato dish), and zupke (a twisted braided bread). Your independent meals will provide you with the chance to order your favorite dishes. The French fondue, German sausage, and Italian spaghetti are sure to whet your appetite. Pastries and cakes are numerous, and the Swiss have many fine wines. Try a potent wine called Marc, or a soft drink called moscht, which is a type of cider.

CLIMATE Switzerland has a moderate climate, but varies with altitude. There is more precipitation in the south and west, but drier and warmer areas north of the Alps. Winters are cold, cloudy, and snowy, and summers are cool to warm with high relative humidity and occasional showers.

BANKING HOURS Except for eight holidays, Swiss banks are open 8:30AM - 4:30PM, Monday through Friday. One day a week they are usually open somewhat longer, depending on the area. Some banks are also open on Saturday in resort areas.

SHOPPING The Swiss are known for their craftsmanship. The intricacy and beauty they put into their work can be seen in delicate lace products, gorgeous embroidery, charming cuckoo clocks, and lovely hand-carved music boxes. They are masters at making delicious cheeses and chocolates. The high altitudes of certain areas in the Alps make snow possible year-round. So, if you are shopping for winter sportswear, you will find an enormous selection. Stores are open Monday through Friday, 8:00AM - 12:00PM and 1:30 - 6:30PM. On Saturday, stores are open from 8:00AM - 12:00PM and 1:30PM - 4:00PM. Some shops are closed on Monday morning.

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