



Switzerland

Switzerland has an area of 41,285 square kilometers (15,940 square miles). The productive area – that is, the area without the lakes, rivers, unproductive vegetation and no vegetation at all – covers 30,753 square km (11,870 square miles). It measures 220 kilometers (137 miles) from north to south and 350 km (217 miles) from east to west.

The geography of Switzerland is notable for its great diversity. Switzerland's three main geographical regions are the Jura, Plateau and the Alps. The geography of Switzerland means that the climate varies greatly from one region to another. Depending on the area and the time of year, Switzerland experiences conditions reminiscent both of Siberia and of the Mediterranean.



Switzerland has a population of 7.6 million. Population density is high, with 234 people per square km (606 per square mile) of the productive area in 2000. In the agglomerations, which cover about 20% of the total surface area, the density is 590 per square km (1528 per square mile).

According to the national myth, Switzerland was founded in August 1291 on the "Rütliwiese". Switzerland is divided into 26 cantons and has four national languages: German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romanic. The Capital is Berne and the biggest City is Zurich with about 380,000 inhabitants. Basle is the only city, bordering two different countries.

The revolving restaurant on top of the "Schilthorn" (2,970 meters) situated in the "Jungfrau" region was stage of "James Bond 007 – On Her Majesty's Secret Service" in 1969. Lake Constance and the Verzasca reservoir were stage in the James Bond films: "Golden Eye" and "A Quantum of Solace".

Switzerland is world famous for its: Banking culture, watches, cheese, chocolate "Schoggi", cheese fondue, Raclette, Birchermüsli, Toblerone, Rivella, Ovomaltine etc.

The Swiss economy

The Swiss have a well-deserved reputation for being hard workers, but they enjoy their leisure as much as anyone else.

Switzerland's economy is based on a highly qualified labour force performing highly skilled work. The main areas include microtechnology, hitech, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, as well as banking and insurance know-how. The service sector now employs the greatest number of people.



Most of the people working in Switzerland are employed by small and medium-sized enterprises, which play an extremely important role in the Swiss economy.

The Swiss are concerned that economic activity should have as little impact as possible on the environment. Switzerland's energy and transport policies aim to be environmentally friendly.



The Swiss economy is not built on mass production, but on high-quality work and well-trained workers. Many businesses have followed what they call a “niche strategy”, concentrating on a small range of high-quality products. As a result even some small enterprises have been able to corner the world market in their own speciality.

Swiss products are famous for its high quality. But with such a strategy, Swiss companies cannot sit back on their laurels. There has to be a strong emphasis on research and development. In Switzerland, a higher percentage of people work in research and development than in other industrialized countries.

The Human Development Report for 2009, which listet R&D (research & development) expenditure for the years 2006-2008, put Switzerland on the same level as the US and South Korea for the proportion of GDP spent on this. Top of the list was Israel, which spent 4.9% of its GDP on research and development, followed by Sweden with four per cent.