

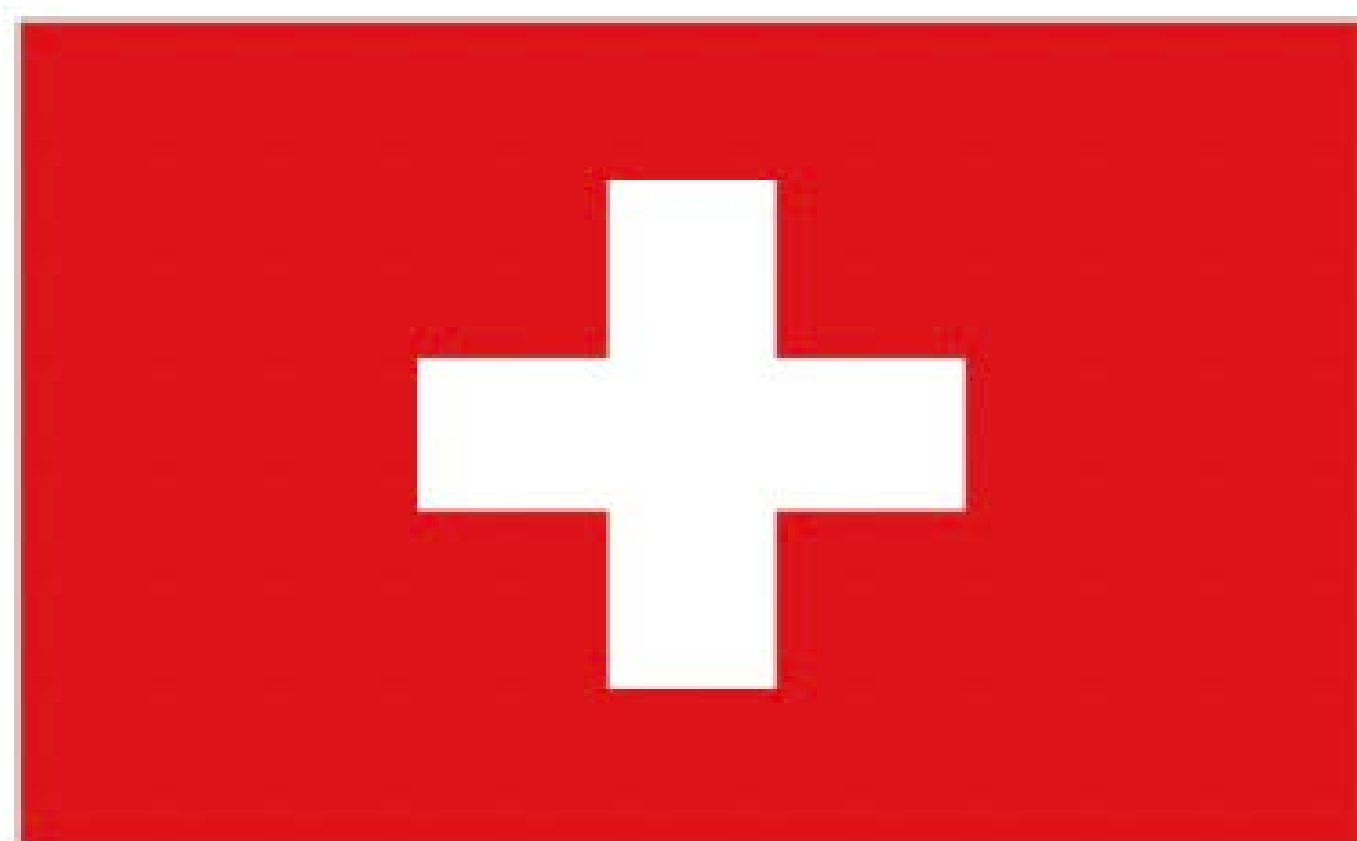
SWITZERLAND DESTINATION GUIDE



Overview and Orientation

Switzerland is an independent country located in the center of the European continent with a population of 8.8 million. Its official name is *Confoederatio Helvetica* from which the country's abbreviation "CH" is derived. The name Switzerland is derived from one of its founding cantons Schyzn.

Switzerland's flag is pictured here. It symbolizes Jesus' cross and the red blood He shed for all sinners.



Four official languages are spoken in Switzerland: French, German, Italian, and Romansch. Bern is the capital of Switzerland.

Switzerland (15,940 sq. miles) is about twice the size of the state of Massachusetts. It is made up of 23 Cantons.

You will visit the cantons of: Zurich, Lucerne, and Bern on this trip. Government takes the form of a confederation but in reality is similar in structure to a federal republic. Switzerland gained its independence on August 1, 1291.

Switzerland is a peaceful, prosperous, and stable modern market economy with low unemployment, a highly skilled labor force, and a per capita GDP among the highest in the world.

The Swiss Confederation was founded in 1291 as a defensive alliance among three cantons. In succeeding years, other localities joined the original three. The Swiss Confederation secured its independence from the Holy Roman Empire in 1499. A constitution of 1848, subsequently modified in 1874, replaced the confederation with a centralized federal government. Switzerland's sovereignty and neutrality have long been honored by the major European powers, and the country was not involved in either of the two World Wars.

The political and economic integration of Europe over the past half century, as well as Switzerland's role in many UN and international organizations, has strengthened Switzerland's ties with its neighbors. However, the country did not officially become a UN member until 2002. Switzerland remains active in many UN and international organizations but retains a

strong commitment to neutrality.

- gleaned from the CIA WORLD FACTBOOK



SWISS CURRENCY

Switzerland has its own currency known as the Swiss Franc. When you enter Switzerland, you should visit an ATM and get a two-day supply of Swiss Francs. You may need cash for food, snacks, and drinks. However, most major purchases can be made with a credit card. There are several ATM's in Lauterbrunnen and the mountaintop villages of Murren and Wengen.

Here is an estimate of items you are likely to purchase with cash: beer, glass of wine or soda=Fr. 7.5; sit-down lunch= Fr. 20-30 per person; ice cream bar= Fr. 6; chocolate= Fr. 7.

In Lauterbrunnen you can pay for souvenirs, lunches and mountain lifts with a credit card, saving your cash for the smaller items listed above.

The exchange rate for September 2024 is:
1 CHF = \$1.19 USD



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