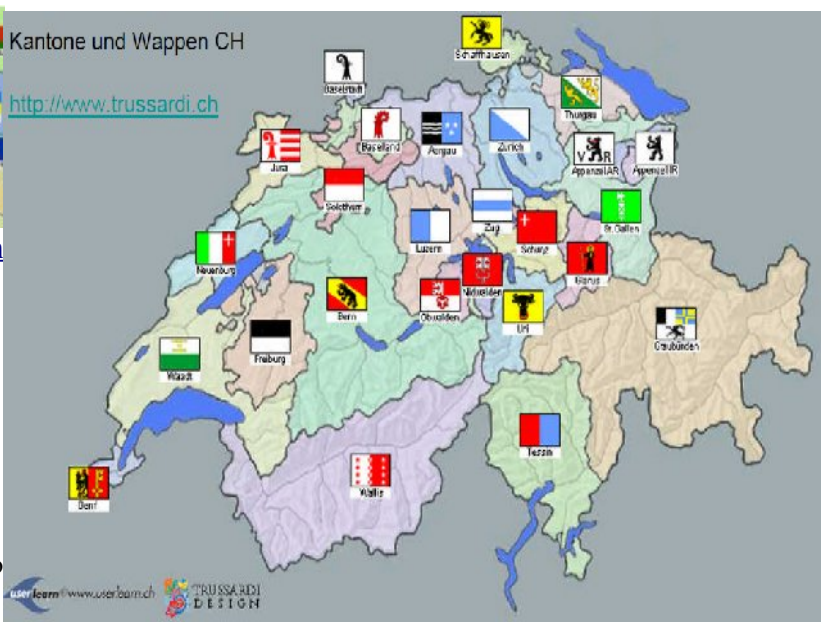


Info Switzerland (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)



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Switzerland (German: die Schweiz, French: la Suisse, Italian: Svizzera, Romansh: Svizra, officially the Swiss Confederation (Confoederatio Helvetica in Latin, hence its ISO country codes CH and CHE), is a federal republic consisting of 26 states named cantons, with Bern as the seat of the federal authorities. The country is situated in Central Europe where it is bordered by Germany to the north, France to the west, Italy to the south and Austria and Liechtenstein to the east.



Switzerland is a landlocked country whose territory is geographically divided between the Jura, the Central Plateau and the Alps; adding together an area of 41,285 km² (15,940 sq mi). Its population of approximately 7.8 million people concentrates mostly on the Plateau, where the largest cities are to be found. Among them the two global cities and economic centres of Zürich and Geneva. Switzerland is one of the richest countries in the world by per capita gross domestic product, with a nominal per capita GDP of \$67,384. Zürich and Geneva have respectively been ranked as having the second and third highest quality of life in the world.

The Swiss Confederation has a long history of neutrality—it has not been in a state of war internationally since 1815—and was one of the last countries to join the United Nations. Switzerland is home to many international organisations, including the World Economic Forum, the Red Cross, the World Trade Organization and the second largest UN office. On the European level it was a founder of the European Free Trade Association and is part of the Schengen Agreement.

Switzerland comprises three main linguistic and cultural regions: German, French, Italian, to which are added the Romansh-speaking valleys. The Swiss therefore do not form a nation in the sense of a common ethnic or linguistic identity. The strong sense of belonging to the country is founded on the common historical background, shared values (federalism, direct democracy, neutrality) and Alpine symbolism. The establishment of the Swiss Confederation is traditionally dated to 1 August 1291; Swiss National Day is celebrated on the anniversary.



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