SWITZERLAND (Schweiz/Suisse)

The Swiss Confederation is a country in Central Europe, bordering Austria, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, and Germany. Its name derives from the canton of “Schwyz”, one of the founding cantons of the Old Swiss Confederacy that formed in the 14th century. After the Swiss Confederacy was originally founded in 1291 and expanded throughout multiple centuries, it became independent from the Holy Roman Empire in 1499. In 1848, the confederation was replaced with a centralized federal government. Switzerland’s government operated under a federal republic and has been lead by President Doris Leuthard since January 2017. The Swiss president gets elected for a one-year, non-consecutive term from among the members of the Federal Council.

QUICK FACTS
Population: 8,179,294 (2016)
Area: 41,277 sq. km. (slightly less than 2x New Jersey)
Capital: Bern (141,762)
Languages: German, French, Italian, Romansh (official)
GDP Per Capita: $59,400
Head of State & Government: President Doris Leuthard

EDUCATION
Education in Switzerland is compulsory for a total of eleven years, consisting of eight years of primary education as well as three years of lower secondary education. After this, about 90% of students complete voluntary upper secondary education, either in the form of continuing school education or vocational training and apprenticeships. Depending on the region, the language of instruction is either German, French, Italian, or Romansh.

RELIGION
Switzerland is a predominantly Christian country, with 37.3% Roman Catholics, as well as 24.9% Protestants and 5.8% of other Christian denominations. Moreover, there are 5.1% Muslims, 0.2% Jews, 1.4% other, and 23.9% not religiously affiliated as of 2015. Freedom of religion is a basic constitutional right in Switzerland and there is no official state religion. Moreover, many of Switzerland’s festivals, customs, and local traditions have their roots in religion. Additionally, the Swiss play an important role in the Catholic religion since the Swiss guard has protected the Pope and his residence in Vatican City since 1506.

ETHNICITY & DEMOGRAPHICS
There is a multitude of ethnicities present in Switzerland. Just like there are four different official languages, there are four main ethnic groups: Germans at 65%, French at 18%, Italians at 10%, and Romansh at 1%. Additionally, 7% of the people in Switzerland are from different other ethnic backgrounds.
Switzerland’s birth rate outnumbers its death rate, and in addition it poses a positive net migration rate. Therefore, Switzerland has experienced a positive population growth rate of 0.7% in 2016. In line with the trends in most European countries, the Swiss society, too, faces the challenge of an increasingly aging population in the years to come.

Updated: 05/17/17
Lake Geneva
CONTEMPORARY SWITZERLAND & RELATION TO EUROPE

Switzerland is a prosperous and modern market economy with low unemployment, a highly skilled labor force, and a per capita GDP among the highest in the world. Its economy benefits from a highly developed service sector, led by financial services, and a manufacturing industry that specializes in high-technology, knowledge-based production. Due to its economic and political stability, transparent legal system, exceptional infrastructure, efficient capital markets, and low corporate tax rates, Switzerland is considered to be one of the world’s most competitive economies.

The success of the Swiss economy, however, is tightly linked to that of its neighboring countries in the euro zone as these purchase half of Swiss exports. In recent years, Switzerland has responded to increasing pressure from surrounding countries and trading partners to reform its banking secrecy laws to halt tax evasion.

Although Switzerland is neither part of the European Union, nor of the euro zone, nor of the border-free Schengen area, it still has brought its economic practices largely into conformity with the EU’s to enhance international competitiveness. The objective of Switzerland’s European policy is to create the best possible basis for relations with the EU, mainly through bilateral agreements. Switzerland is known around the world for its neutrality and was not involved in either world war. The country also did not become a member of the United Nations until 2002, and while being an active member now, it retains a strong commitment to neutrality.

SWISS IN THE USA

The biggest immigration wave of Swiss people to the US happened in the 1880s, with over 80,000 people migrating across the Atlantic. According to the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, there are currently around 80,000 Swiss nationals permanently living in the US. Additionally, there are more than 900,000 people that claim Swiss descent in the United States, according to the American Community Survey. The states with the largest Swiss populations are California, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

The flag is red with a bold, equilateral white cross in the center that does not extend to the edges of the flag.

FAMOUS SWISS

Famous Swiss people include American-born singer Tina Turner, tennis star Roger Federer, philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, psychiatrist Carl Jung, bicyclist Fabian Cancellara, automobile entrepreneur Louis Chevrolet, and football functionary Sepp Blatter.

SWISS-GERMAN WORDS

Hi ................................................. Grüezi
Bye ............................................. Uf Wiederluege
Good morning ............................ Guete Morge
Yes ............................................... Yo
No .................................................. Noin
Please/You're welcome .................. Bitte
Thank you ................................. Merci vilmal
How are you? ............................. Wie goots Ihne?
I do not understand .................... Ich verstand nit
I understand ............................... Ich verstand
What is your name? ................. Wle isch Ihre Name?
My name is ................................. I heisse...
Where are you from? .............. Wohär sind Sie?
Do you speak English?. Können Sie Englisch reede?

USEFUL LINKS

https://www.ch.ch/en/