

Les plaques Suisses par Xavier Hadjadj



Introduction

La Suisse est l'un des plus petits pays en Europe et l'un des pays au monde les plus difficiles en ce qui concerne l'obtention de plaques d'immatriculation. En effet, contrairement à la France ou aux USA où la plaque est rattachée à un véhicule, chaque plaque Suisse se rapporte à un citoyen depuis la période où il est en âge de conduire et jusqu'à son décès. Ensuite, la même plaque sera alors transférée à un autre individu qui acquiert pour la première fois un véhicule. Par conséquent, on peut affirmer qu'en Suisse la plaque d'immatriculation joue le rôle de carte d'identité nationale et son importance pour le citoyen est vitale dans sa vie quotidienne.

Les plaques normales

Dans le système d'immatriculation actuel, chaque véhicule possède une plaque avant (sans blason) et une plaque arrière qui est ornée d'une Armoirie représentant la Confédération Helvétique et d'une Armoirie désignant le Canton. Voir la liste des cantons, leur description détaillée (en anglais) et les blasons de chaque Canton en fin d'article.

Les plaques arrières Suisses se présentent sous 2 formats. Un format (500 x 110 mm) qui ressemble étrangement au format Français et qui sert à immatriculer les plupart des voitures de marque Européenne. Un format (300 x 160 mm) particulièrement bien adapté aux voitures de marques étrangères (Américaine et Japonaise).



Quant aux plaques avant, elles ont un format plus petit (300 x 80 mm), depuis 1973.

Le système actuel comporte 2 lettres qui identifient le **canton** suivi d'un maximum de 6 chiffres. Les caractères sont noirs sur fond blanc. Selon les Cantons, la reflectorisation possède un caractère obligatoire ou facultatif.

En ce qui concerne les voitures de location, il est à noter qu'un point noir ainsi que la lettre V étaient ajoutées après le numéro de série à 6 chiffres (jusqu'en 2000). De même, pour les voitures de garage, c'est la lettre U qui est encore ajoutée.

Les plaques spéciales

- - **Lettres noires sur fond jaune.** Plaques de motocyclettes dont la vitesse est limitée. Le véhicule ne possède qu'une plaque arrière comportant les 2 écussons et de format 180 x 140 mm.



- - **Lettres noires sur fond blanc.** Plaques de motocyclettes. Le véhicule ne possède qu'une plaque arrière comportant les 2 écussons et de format 180 x140 mm.



- - **Petites plaques avec année uniquement :** Bicyclettes

- - **Lettres noires sur fond marron**

1. Plaques de motos neiges. Le véhicule ne possède qu'une plaque de petit format.
2. Plaques de convois exceptionnel.(camion et/ou remorque). Le véhicule possède 2 plaques de taille identique a celle des véhicules de tourisme.



- - **Lettres noires sur fond vert.** Plaques de véhicules agricoles. Le véhicule ne possède qu'une plaque avant ne comportant aucun écusson et de format (300 x 80 mm).



- - **Lettres noires sur fond bleu**

1. Plaques de brigade des pompiers. Le véhicule possède 2 plaques de taille identique a celle des véhicules de tourisme.
2. Plaques des engins de travaux. 2 plaques de format classique.
3. Plaques de remorque pour engins de travaux. 1 plaque de petit format et sans écussons.



- - **Lettres noires sur fond rouge (depuis 1990).** [Plaques de bicyclettes](#). Le véhicule ne possède qu'une plaque arrière ne comportant aucun écusson et de format 80*50 mm. (Nota : les couleurs et caractères peuvent aussi varier selon le canton.)



Les plaques temporaires

Elles se présentent exactement comme les plaques normales à l'exception d'une bande de couleur rouge qui indique l'année de validité. Cette bande peut être suivie de la lettre Z qui signifie que les taxes du véhicule n'ont pas été acquittées. Autre différence notable, elles ne comportent qu'un maximum de 5 chiffres (au lieu de 6 pour une plaque permanente).



Ces plaques sont réservées aux étrangers travaillant ou résidant de façon temporaire en Suisse: lettres noires sur fond blanc mais peuvent aussi exister avec un fond bleu ou marron.

Jusqu'en 1995, la date de validité était embossée sur la plaque. Depuis lors, pour des raisons économiques, le gouvernement fédéral a décidé de ne plus produire que des plaques temporaires avec bandes rouges vierges sur lequel on appose un autocollant de validation.

Les plaques publiques

Chaque véhicule possède uniquement une Armoirie représentant la Confédération Helvétique ainsi qu'une lettre suivie d'un maximum de 5 chiffres.



Les lettres désignent les institutions publiques suivantes :

- A : l'Administration Fédérale
- P : les Secteurs Publics comme les Chemins de Fer ou la Poste
- M : les véhicules militaires



Les plaques diplomatiques

Chaque plaque se présente avec 2 lettres blanches (AT, CD ou CC) sur un fond coloré (vert ou bleu) sur la partie la plus à gauche, tandis que les autres caractères de la plaque sont de couleur noire sur fond blanc. Les 2 premiers caractères représentent le code du canton et sont suivis d'un numéro de série d'un maximum de 3 chiffres et d'un dernier numéro de série indiquant l'ambassade ou l'organisation à laquelle appartient le véhicule. Les lettres AT sont destinées au personnel administratif et technique des ambassades sises sur le canton de Berne. La couleur bleue sous le sigle correspond aux institutions internationales et aux missions permanentes, la couleur verte étant réservée aux ambassades sises à Berne.



Liste des Cantons Suisses

Voici les 23 Cantons Suisses, qui correspondent à 26 codes différents, en français et en allemand.

AG : Argovie - Aargau	NW : Unterwalden : Nidwalden / OW : Unterwalden : Obwalden
AI : Appenzell Intérieur - Inner-Rhoden	SG : Saint Gall - Sankt Gallen
/ AR : Appenzell Extérieur - Ausser-Rhoden	SH : Schaffhause - Schaffhausen
BE : Berne - Bern	SO : Soleure- Solothurn
BL : Bale - Basel Land / BS : Bale Ville - Basel Stadt	SZ : Schwyz
FR : Fribourg - Freiburg	TG : Thurgovie - Thurgau
GE : Genève - Genf - (Geneva in english)	TI : Ticino (en italien) Tessin
GL : Glaris - Glarus	UR : Uri
GR : Grisons - Graubunden	VD : Vaud - Waadt
JU : Jura	VS : Valais - Vallis
LU : Lucerne - Luzern	ZG : Zug
NE : Neuchatel - Neuenburg	ZH : Zurich

Détails sur les Cantons Suisses



Argovie Canton(AG).

Also known as Aargau in German.

Population : 423,100. The population of the canton is predominantly Protestant and German-speaking.

Surface : 1,404 sq km. Aarau is the capital of the canton.

Location : N Switzerland; it borders on the Rhein River in the north, which separates it from Germany. Argovie is an agricultural region known for its orchards and dairy produce. Industries include the production of cigars, textile and the Canton is also known for its metal, mechanical and electrical-engineering works.



History : Split in Low Argovie and High Argovie since the Middle Ages. Zurich, Berne and Lucerne Cantons conquered the 2 parts which become united in 1803. The Canton's name derived from one of the 3 River it is drained by the Aar River.

Appenzell Cantons (AR and AI).

Split into two independent half cantons (see history) : Ausser-Rhoden (AR) and Inner-Rhoden (AI).

Population : AR 50,882 in 1990.

AI 13,504 in 1990.

Surface : AR 94 sq mi (243 sq km), with its capital at the town of Herisau

AI 67 sq mi (174 sq km), with its capital at the town of Appenzell

Location : A rural and sparsely populated region, it is mainly a meadowland dotted with small farms. Appenzell retains many ancient customs and has been famous for centuries as a textile and embroidery center.



History : It was ruled after the 11th cent. by the abbots of St. Gall, against whom it revolted in 1403. In 1411, Appenzell allied itself with the Swiss Confederation, which had helped defeat the abbots. It became a Swiss canton in 1513, and in 1597 it was split into two independent half cantons. Ausser-Rhoden accepted the Reformation whereas Inner-Rhoden remained Catholic.

Bern Canton (BE).

Also known as in German.

Population : 937,365 in 1990. The population of the canton is predominantly Protestant and German-speaking. It is the second most populous and second largest canton of the country.

Surface : 2,658 sq mi (6,883 sq km). Berne , the capital, is also the capital of Switzerland.

Location : W central Switzerland, Bern comprises three sections ; the Bernese Alps, or Oberland [German, equals; highlands], with many resorts and peaks, and with meadows and pastures in the valleys; the Mittelland [midlands], in the fertile northern foothills of the Alps, and including the Emmental; and the lake region around Biel. The Jura canton to the north was until 1979 a part of Bern canton.



Tourism, cattle raising, dairying, and hydroelectric power generation are the chief means of livelihood in the Oberland. The Mittelland is the most industrialized region of the canton and a fertile agricultural region. The lake region has a thriving vine culture.

History : It was made a free imperial city by Emperor Frederick II when Berchtold died without an heir. Bern grew in power and population and in 1353 joined the Swiss Confederation, of which it became the leading member. Its conquests included Argovie and Vaud besides numerous smaller territories. The area was governed until 1798 by an autocratic urban aristocracy. Bern accepted the Reformation in 1528. When Switzerland was invaded (1798) by the French during the French Revolutionary Wars, Bern was occupied, its treasury pillaged, and its territories dismembered. At the Congress of Vienna (1815), Bern failed to recover Vaud and Aargovie, but received the Bernese Jura (the former Bishopric of Basel).

Bale Cantons (BL, BS).

Also known as Basel in German. Split into two independent half cantons (see history) : Basel Land (BL) and BaselStadt (BS).

Population BL 229,030 in 1990.

BS 190,347 in 1990.

Its inhabitants are German-speaking and Protestant.

Surface : BL 165 sq mi (427 sq km), with its capital at the town of Liestal.

BS 14 sq mi (36 sq km), with its capital at the town of Bale.

Location : N Switzerland, bordering on France and Germany. It is bounded in the N by the Rhine River (which becomes navigable in the canton) and in the S by the Jura Mtns.

As a remembrance of its glorious past, you can see the crosier or Bishop's crook in both the BL and BS crests to remind you that it once was 'the Bishops' City'.





The canton has been divided since 1833 into two independent half cantons generally comprising the rural districts Basel Land which is mainly a region of fertile fields, meadows, orchards, and forests and Basel-Stadt virtually coextensive with the city of Basel and its suburbs. Divided by the Rhine, the city consists of Greater Basel (left bank), which is the commercial and intellectual center, and Lesser Basel, where industry is concentrated. Basel is a major economic center and the chief rail junction and river port of Switzerland. It is also a financial center. The city is the seat of the Swiss chemical and pharmaceutical industry and of the Swiss Industries Fair; it also has an important publishing industry. Other products are machinery and silk textiles.

History : Founded by the Romans (and named Basilia), it became an episcopal city in the 7th cent. It passed successively to the Alemanni, the Franks, and to Transjurane Burgundy. In the 11th cent. it became a free imperial city and the residence of prince-bishops. Basel joined the Swiss Confederation in 1501 and accepted the Reformation in 1523. Although expelled from the city, the bishops continued to rule the bishopric of Basel. The oppressive rule of the city's patriciate over the rest of the canton led to revolts and the eventual split into two cantons.

Fribourg Canton (FR).

Also known as Freiburg in German.

Population : In 1990. The canton is overwhelmingly Catholic, and the inhabitants are two-thirds French-speaking.

Surface : 645 sq mi (1,671 sq km). Fribourg is the capital of the canton.

Location : W Switzerland. Located on the Swiss Plateau and amid the foothills of the Alps, Fribourg is an agricultural region known for its cattle and cheese (notably Gruyere). Industries include the production of watches and chocolate.



History : It joined the Swiss Confederation in 1481 after being enlarged with land ceded from Vaud. A new constitution was adopted in 1857.

Geneva Canton (GE).

Also known as Genf in German.

Population : 373,019 in 1990. The population is primarily French-speaking.

Surface : 109 sq mi (282 sq km). Geneva is the capital of the canton.

Location : SW Switzerland, surrounding the southwest tip of the Lake of Geneva. One of the smallest cantons, Geneva is in the plain between the Jura and the Alps. It borders on Vaud canton for 3.5 mi in the north, but otherwise it is almost entirely surrounded by French territory. The rural areas produce fruit, vegetables, cereals, and wine; industry and population are centered in the city of Geneva. Its major industries are trade, banking, insurance, and the manufacture of precision machinery, watches, jewelry, chemicals, and food.



History : It was an ancient settlement of the Celtic Allobroges and was later included in Roman Gaul. An episcopal see under the Roman Empire, Geneva passed successively to the Burgundians, the Franks, Transjuran Burgundy and the Holy Roman Empire. The bishops of Geneva gradually absorbed the powers of the feudal counts of Geneva and in 1124 became rulers of the city. The rising merchant class soon grew antagonistic to episcopal authority. In 1285, the citizens of Geneva placed themselves under the protection of the counts (later dukes) of Savoy, and by 1387 they had won extensive rights of self-rule. However, by gradually transforming the bishops into their tools, the dukes nearly succeeded in mastering the city by the beginning of the 16th cent. Incensed, the citizens allied themselves with two Swiss cantons Fribourg and Bern; expelled the bishop, and accepted the Reformation preached by Guillaume Farel. The city, annexed to France from 1798 to 1813, joined Switzerland as a canton in 1815; the last canton to join the Confederation.

Glaris Canton (GL).

Also known as Glarus in German.

Population : 37,253 in 1990. The inhabitants are mainly German-speaking Protestants.

Surface : 264 sq mi (684 sq km). is the capital.

Location : E central Switzerland. Located in the basin of the Linth River, it is a mountainous and pastoral region, with forests and meadows in the valleys. It lies between the Walensee in the north and the Glarus Alps in the south. Cattle are raised in the canton, and there are industries producing electrical and metal goods, machinery, textiles, paper, and other goods.



History : Sparsely settled by the Romans after 15 b.c., Glaris was permanently occupied about 500 a.d. by the Alemanni. The Glaris region was then christianised in the 6th cent by an Irish monk named 'Saint Fridolin' who created a huge Abbey and thus economically developed Glaris. **That's the reason why you can see a monk depicted on the Canton's crest.** It joined the Swiss Confederation in 1352.

Grisons Canton (GR).

Also known as Graubünden in German. It means the Gray League in both languages (see history).

Population : 169,005 in 1990. About a fourth of the population speaks Romansh, a Rhaetic-Romantic language, which was made a national language in 1938; a smaller minority speaks Italian, and the rest, German.

Surface : 2,746 sq mi (7,112 sq km). Chur is the capital. The largest and most sparsely populated of the cantons.

Location : E Switzerland, bordering on Italy and Austria. It is a region of Alpine peaks and glaciers, of forested highlands, and of fertile valleys. The Engadine Valley and the Swiss National Park, in the eastern part of the canton, attract large numbers of tourists. St. Moritz, Davos, and Arosa are the chief resorts. Industry is generally limited and is centered at Chur.



History : A part of Rhaetia under the Roman Empire, the territory preserved Roman laws and customs, although it nominally passed to the Ostrogoths (493) and to the Franks (537). In the 9th cent. the bishops of Chur began to attain prominence in the region. The bishops allied themselves with the rising power of the Hapsburgs. Their power, however, was checked and gradually broken by three local leagues founded between 1367 and 1436 ; the League of God's House, the **Graubunden**, or **Gray League**, and the League of Ten Jurisdictions. The three leagues, composed of communes and feudal lords, allied and joined with the Swiss Confederation. In 1799 the Grisons was forced by the French to enter the Helvetic Republic, and in 1803 it became a Swiss canton under Napoleon's Act of Mediation.

Jura Canton (JU).

Population : 64,942 in 1990.

Surface : 3256 sq mi (840 sq km). Its capital is Delemont

.Location : NW Switzerland. In the Jura Mtns., bordered by the Swiss cantons of Bern on the south and Solothurn in the east and by France in the north and west. Agricultural products, horses, and cattle are the major economic concerns. The traditional watchmaking industry has long been important in the Jura region; textiles and tobacco are also manufactured.



History : The region that now comprises Jura had been part of Bern canton until dissension between Roman Catholics (largely French-speaking) and Protestants (largely German-speaking) led to requests for an independent canton of Jura. The vote came in 1978, and the following year Jura became Switzerland's 23d canton.

Lucerne Canton (LU).

Also known as Luzern in German.

Population : 314,837 in 1990. The population is mainly German-speaking and Roman Catholic.

Surface : 576 sq mi (1,492 sq km).

Location : Central Switzerland. Lucerne is mainly an agricultural and pastoral region, with orchards and large forested areas. Manufactures of the canton include machinery, textiles, metallurgic goods, electrical equipment, paper, and wood products. Boatbuilding and automobile assembly are also important.



History : One of the Four Forest Cantons, its history is that of its capital, Lucerne. The city grew around the monastery of St. Leodegar, founded in the 8th cent. An important trade center on the St. Gotthard route, it became a Hapsburg possession in 1291. Lucerne joined the Swiss Confederation in 1332 and gained full freedom after the battle of Sempach. It became capital of the Helvetic Republic in 1798. Lucerne was one of the chief towns of the Sonderbund.

Neuchatel Canton (NE).

Also known as Neuenburg in German.

Population : 158,569 in 1990. The population is mainly French-speaking and Protestant.

Surface : 309 sq mi (800 sq km). Neuchatel is its capital.

Location : NW Switzerland, in the Jura Mtns. It is a forested region with pastures. Cattle are raised, and cheese and wine are produced. Watches, mainly manufactured at Locle and La Chaux-de-Fonds, have been an important industrial product since the 18th cent. There are rich asphalt deposits at Val de Travers and an oil refinery at Cressier.



History : A part of Burgundy by the 10th cent, Neuchatel was later governed by counts under the Holy Roman Empire. The county passed (1504) to the French house of Orleans-Longueville and in 1648 became independent. In 1707 it chose Frederick I of Prussia as its prince. It remained an autonomous principality, although in 1815 it became a canton of the Swiss Confederation, with which it had been allied since the 15th cent. In 1848 a revolution abolished the monarchy within Neuchatel, and in 1857, after some complications, the king of Prussia renounced his claim to the canton.

Unterwalden Cantons (OW - NW).

Split into two independent half cantons (see history): Obwalden (OW) and Nidwalden (NW).

Population : OW 28,323 in 1990.

NW 32,030 in 1990.

The population of Unterwalden is German-speaking and Roman Catholic.

Surface : OW 190 sq mi (492 sq km), in the west, with its capital at Sarnen

NW 106 sq mi (275 sq km), in the east, with its capital at Stans

Location : Central Switzerland, one of Four Forest Cantons . A mountainous, forested, and chiefly pastoral region. Dairying and woodworking are the main occupations of Obwalden, while the economy of Nidwalden revolves around its winter tourist facilities. In 1291, Unterwalden formed with the cantons of Uri and Schwyz a league that became the nucleus of the Swiss Confederation.





History : The two half cantons officially split from each other in 1340, although generally they continued to act as one unit. They gained sovereign status as individual units in 1803.

Saint Gall Canton (SG).

Also known as Sankt Gallen in German. The canton and its capital city, Saint Gall, take their name from the Benedictine abbey erected on the site of the hermitage of St. Gall, an Irish monk, around which the town grew.

Population : 414,718 in 1990. Its inhabitants are mainly German-speaking.

Surface : 777 sq mi (2,012 sq km).

Location : NE Switzerland. Bordering on the Lake of Constance in the north and on the Rhine River in the east, it surrounds the entire canton of Appenzell. The south is fairly mountainous, and the north is mainly a meadowland. The canton is especially known for its lace embroideries and silk and cotton textiles. Tourism is also a major industry, with many winter and summer resorts.



History : The abbots of St. Gall, who also ruled Appenzell, became princes of the Holy Roman Empire in the early 13th cent. The town became a free city of the Holy Roman Empire in 1311. Rebelling against the abbot, the city made an alliance with the Swiss Confederation (1454). The Reformation, accepted by the town but suppressed in the districts controlled by the abbot, brought about a long series of disturbances until 1718. In 1803 the town and the abbot's domains (secularized in 1798) were consolidated as a canton of the Swiss Confederation under Napoleon's Act of Mediation.

Schaffhouse Canton (SH).

Also known as Schaffhausen in German.

Population : 70,949 in 1990. Its inhabitants are German-speaking and largely Protestant.

Surface : 115 sq mi (298 sq km). Schaffhouse is the original settlement and capital of the canton

Location : N Switzerland. Entirely on the right (northern) bank of the Rhine River, the canton consists of three noncontiguous agricultural and forested areas, which are largely surrounded by German territory. Cereals, fruit, and vegetables are raised and a fine wine is produced. Nearly all of the canton's industry is concentrated in the town of Neuhausen and in the adjoining city of Schaffhouse.



History : Originally a Benedictine abbey (founded about 1050), Schaffhouse became (about 1208) a free city of the Holy Roman Empire, ruled first by its abbots, then by the Hapsburgs, and, after about 1415, by its local trade guilds. It joined the Swiss Confederation in 1501. With an 11th-century minster, a hilltop castle (the Munot), and several old houses, Schaffhouse retains much of its medieval character.

Soleure Canton (SO).

Also know as Solothurn in German.

Population : 224,183 in 1970. The population is German-speaking and 2/3 Roman Catholic.

Surface : 791 sq km. Soleure is the capital.

Location : It is mostly shaped by the Jura Mountains.



History : The ancient Roman Salodurum was dominated by the Zaehringen in the 12th cent and became an imperial free city in 1218. It joined the Swiss Confederation in 1841.

Schwyz Canton (SZ).

Population : 108,063 in 1990. The population is German-speaking and Roman Catholic.

Surface : 351 sq mi (909 sq km)

Location : Central Switzerland, one of the Four Forest Cantons . Schwyz is a mountainous and forested region, with meadows supporting livestock and orchards in the valleys. Cotton and silk textiles and wood furniture are manufactured, and there are large hydroelectric plants in the north. Its capital, Schwyz, one of the oldest towns in Switzerland, is a summer resort.



History :In the early 13th cent. the rights to Schwyz passed to the counts of Hapsburg, but in 1240 Emperor Frederick II granted Schwyz a charter making it immediately subject to the Holy Roman Empire. The charter was revoked in 1274 by Rudolf I of Hapsburg, and in 1291 Schwyz concluded with Uri and Unterwalden the pact which became the basis of Swiss liberty. The name Switzerland derives from Schwyz.

Thurgovie Canton (TG).

Also known as Thurgau in German.

Population : 201,620 in 1990. The population is mainly Protestant and German-speaking.

Surface : 388 sq mi (1,005 sq km). Frauenfeld is its capital.

Location : NE Switzerland. Bordered in the north by the Lake of Constance and watered by the Thur River, Thurgau is a fertile and cultivated region. Cereals and fruit are grown, cattle are raised, and wine is produced. It has several industrial towns, notably Arbon and Frauenfeld , the capital of the canton. Manufactures include textiles, motor vehicles, and shoes.



History : Thurgau was acquired (1264) by the Hapsburgs and was conquered (1460) by the Swiss cantons; it was ruled by the cantons until 1798, when the French invaded Switzerland. In 1803 it became a canton of Switzerland.

Ticino Canton (TI).

Also known as Tessin in French and German.

Population : 283,023 in 1990. The population is mostly Roman Catholic and Italian-speaking.

Surface : 1,086 sq mi (2,813 sq km). Bellinzona is its capital.

Location : S Switzerland, on the southern slope of the central Alps, bordering on Italy. Bellinzona is the capital. Ticino is largely a mountainous region. Although it has a pastoral economy, wine is widely produced in the valleys and corn and tobacco are cultivated. There is an extensive hydroelectric system along the Ticino River. Ticino is noted for its resorts, particularly Locarno and Lugano ; tourism is the region's most important industry.



History : A part of Transpadane Gaul under the Roman Empire, Ticino later shared the history of Lombardy until the Swiss confederates captured it (15th & 16th cent.) from the duchy of Milan. It was ruled until 1798 by Schwyz and Uri cantons and became a Swiss canton in 1803.

Uri Canton (UR).

Population : 33,511 in 1990. Its inhabitants are German-speaking and Roman Catholic.
The most sparsely populated of the Swiss cantons.

Surface : 415 sq mi (1,075 sq km). Altdorf is the capital.

Location : Central Switzerland, one of the Four Forest Cantons.
Uri is an Alpine region of glaciers and pastures,
with forests and meadows in the Reuss River valley.



Vaud Canton (VD).

Also known as Waadt in German.

Population : 571,973 in 1990. The population is French-speaking and mainly Protestant.

Surface : 1,239 sq mi (3,209 sq km). Lausanne is the capital.

Location : W Switzerland. Bordering on France in the west, it lies roughly between the Lake of Geneva, the Lake of Neuchâtel, the Jura Mtns., and the Bernese Alps. Cereals, tobacco, and other crops are grown and livestock is raised. There are watchmaking towns in the west; other towns are known for their chocolate, metal products, and cigars. Tourism is Vaud's largest industry and Montreux and Vevey are among its numerous resorts.



History : Originally occupied by Celts, the region was conquered by the Romans in 58 b.c. , then by the Franks. In 1536 it was conquered by Bern and forced to accept the Reformation. In 1798, having revolted against its Bernese rulers, it became the canton of Léman in the Helvetic Republic. In 1803 it joined the Swiss Confederation under its present name.

Valais Canton (VS).

Also known as Vallis in German.

Population : 243,705 in 1990. Most of the population is French-speaking and Roman Catholic.

Surface : 2,021 sq mi (5,234 sq km). Sion is the capital.

Location : S Switzerland. Bordering on France and Italy, it has some of the highest peaks in Switzerland. It is a transportation hub, which supports an extensive tourist trade. Mainly a livestock-raising and agricultural canton, it is also known for its fine wines.



History : Made a canton of the Helvetic Republic in 1798, an independent republic in 1802, and a French department in 1810, the Valais became a canton of the Swiss Confederation in 1815.

Zug Canton (ZG).

Population : 84,009 in 1990. Its inhabitants are mainly German-speaking and Catholic

Surface : 93 sq mi (241 sq km). Zug, its capital, and is located on the Lake of Zug and retains a medieval flavor.

Location : N central Switzerland. The smallest canton in Switzerland, it is a forested and mountainous region with orchards, meadows, and pastures in the valleys. Fruit cultivation is a main occupation, and the region has industries in textiles, beer, and metal goods.



History : Owned by the counts of Kyburg and later by the Hapsburg family, Zug joined the Swiss Confederation in 1352 and again in 1364, after a return to Hapsburg domination. In 1845 the canton joined the Catholic Sonderbund . Zug gained its current constitution in 1894.

Zurich Canton (ZH).

Population : 1,144,899 in 1990. The most populous Swiss canton. Its inhabitants are chiefly German-speaking and Protestant.

Surface : 668 sq mi (1,730 sq km)

Location : N Switzerland. Zurich is bounded in part by the Lake of Zurich in the south and Germany in the north. It is a fertile agricultural region with orchards, meadows, and forests. Machinery and other metal goods as well as textiles are manufactured. In the canton there are numerous towns and a few industrial cities, notably Winterthur and the capital, Zurich. The largest Swiss city, Zurich is the country's commercial and economic center (machinery, printing and publishing industry as well as and international banking and finance sectors).



History : Occupied as early as the Neolithic period by lake dwellers, the site of Zurich was settled by the Helvetii. It was conquered by the Romans, and after the 5th cent. passed successively to the Alemanni, the Franks, and to Swabia. It became a free imperial city after 1218, accepted a corporative constitution in 1336, and joined the Swiss Confederation in 1351.

