

welcometoschwyz





## WELCOME TO SCHWYZ

You will be surprised by the wide variety the capital of the canton has to offer. Discover the genteel charm of its stately patrician manors, its main square in baroque style and the Town Hall with its murals from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Did you know that two famous items distinctive to Switzerland originated here in Schwyz? Schwyz is home to the Victorinox Swiss Army Knife and the Swiss Charter – Switzerland's myth-enshrouded founding document.

The two Mythen mountains (Grosser Mythen and Kleiner Mythen) tower majestically over Schwyz. This pair of peaks gave the surrounding hiking and winter sports region its name. Experience the Alps on a visit to Fronalpstock or the Rigi massif – just two of the many destinations in the surrounding region. Schwyz is also the gateway to the Muota Valley, a veritable nature paradise.

Memorable day trips and relaxing holidays are our trademark. We wish you an unforgettable stay.



*Stately manors mark the landscape in and around Schwyz. They bear architectural witness to a vibrant history full of change.*

## BRIEF HISTORY

**The name of Schwyz.** In all likelihood, the name has Germanic roots: the word «sueit» means to scorch or to burn. According to this, Schwyz would be named after a pre-Alemannic glade or cleared woodland. The name of Switzerland was derived from the village's name Schwyz, which is also the name of the canton. Schwyz was a hamlet with an important function due to its central location, granting it market rights, but no municipal laws.

**15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century.** At the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century mercenary soldiers served in foreign armies – out of the spirit of adventure as well as out of economic necessity. Hundreds of young men went to war under the banners of influential mercenary leaders from Schwyz. Their commanders also had leading roles, for they were diplomatically competent, educated and wealthy.

**18<sup>th</sup> century.** Schwyz must have appeared quite idyllic to strangers at that time. This is verified by travel accounts, for example, by J.W. Goethe. Undoubtedly, the quality of life was high for the upper class, but the situation for the peasants and day labourers was very modest. The invasion of French troops in 1798 proved to be disastrous for Schwyz, for despite valiant resistance, the inhabitants of Schwyz were forced to surrender.

**19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.** After the new Federal State was established in 1848, changes occurred in Schwyz only gradually. Rigorous village structures and stringent moral guidelines resulted in scepticism towards innovations from the outside: technology and tourism were only cautiously accepted. The Catholic Church had a decisive influence on life at that time with its holy days of obligation and traditional customs.



## TOUR OF THE TOWN

Eleven panels with illustrations and short texts provide multifaceted information (in German) about the most important sights. The comfortable self-guided walk lasts approximately one hour, starting at the bus station «Schwyz-Post».

- 01 Bahnhofstrasse
- 02 Main square and Town Hall
- 03 Metzghofstatt
- 04 Grosshus (manor)
- 05 Convent of St. Peter
- 06 Hedlinger houses (manors)
- 07 Ital Reding Estate
- 08 Church of St. Martin
- 09 Herrengasse
- 10 Capuchin monastery
- 11 Museum of Swiss Charters



● *Schwyz Tourismus, Zeughausstrasse 10, next to the Museum Forum of Swiss History.*

#### **Guided tours for groups.**

- Historical tour: 1 hr.  
Walking tour highlighting the most important landmarks in Schwyz.
- Historical tour with a brief visit to one of the museums: 1½ hrs.
- Culture and cuisine, walking tour with degustation: 2 hrs.  
Specialities from Schwyz combined with the major sights in Schwyz.
- Manors in Schwyz: 2 hrs.  
History of mercenary soldiering with a look behind the high walls.
- Flags and flag throwing course: 3 – 4 hrs. (in German).  
99 throws, the flag collection in the Museum of Swiss Charters and a hearty lunch.

**Information, advice, reservation.** Schwyz Tourismus, T 041 855 59 50,  
[info@schwyz-tourismus.ch](mailto:info@schwyz-tourismus.ch), [www.info-schwyz.ch/guided-tours](http://www.info-schwyz.ch/guided-tours)



*The museum was opened in 1936. All Federal Charters of the old Swiss Confederation are displayed.*

## MUSEUM OF THE SWISS CHARTERS OF CONFEDERATION

On their tour of the exhibition, our visitors are given fascinating insights and more in-depth information on various areas of Swiss history (in four languages).

**History between Fact...** The original documents exhibited in the Museum of the Swiss Charters help to illustrate the varied history of the Old Swiss Confederacy, which was characterised by conflicts and divisions, compromise and cooperation. The Museum also holds a unique collection of flags, which includes the flags of the famous Battles of Morgarten and Sempach and shows the evolution of the Swiss cross.

**... and Myth.** Other themes include the «evil bailiffs», the battles of liberation, heroes, and the Oath of Rütli. Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, these myths have had a major influence on the writing of history, politics and Switzerland's perception and understanding of itself.



*The main exhibit is the Federal Charter of 1291, a document caught between the legend and reality of historical culture.*

A central aspect of the exhibition is the history of the Federal Charter of 1291, whose role in the Middle Ages and its significance for the Swiss nation state of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century are explained.

**Services.** Guided tours for groups give an informative general overview or take a closer look at specific specialist topics or themes. Drinks and light refreshments are served in the Museum café. The Museum shop stocks carefully selected publications relating to the history of Switzerland.

**Opening hours.** Tue – Sun 10h00 – 17h00.

**Contact.** Museum of the Swiss Charters of Confederation, Bahnhofstrasse 20, 6430 Schwyz, T 041 819 20 64, [bundesbriefmuseum@sz.ch](mailto:bundesbriefmuseum@sz.ch), [www.bundesbriefmuseum.ch](http://www.bundesbriefmuseum.ch)



*The Ital Reding Estate with the manor is one of the landmarks of Schwyz.*

## ITAL REDING ESTATE

**Estate.** The Ital Reding Estate is one of the most imposing estates in the Canton of Schwyz. Built in 1636 by Ital Reding, whose descendants, like him, were mercenaries and held various political offices in Schwyz and in the Old Swiss Confederacy. The Estate embodies the full splendour of a 17<sup>th</sup> century manor with accompanying baroque gardens, summer pavilions and farm buildings, surrounded by protective walls.

**Manor.** The rooms on the upper floor, the piano nobile, reveal skilfully crafted wooden ceilings and panelling with sumptuous inlaid work. This unique interior also contains exceptional tiled stoves, remarkable items of furniture and numerous portraits of French kings and of the warlords of the Reding family. The garden hall, the garden and the annexe can be hired for events.



*The grandiose living room in the «piano nobile» of the Ital Reding House.*

**House Bethlehem.** The house Bethlehem stands next to the manor. The building was constructed in 1287, originally without the stone socle and with only small slits for windows. The low-ceilinged rooms helped to retain the heat from the open hearth fires. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, wealthy owners renovated the building, installed crown glass windows and created a ceremonial hall with murals within the new stone socle.

**Farm Buildings.** The Cantonal Library of Schwyz is housed here today.

**Services.** Guided tours, group visits and events are on offer all year round.

**Opening hours.** May–October Tue – Fri 14h00 –17h00, Sat & Sun 10h00 – 16h00.

**Contact.** Stiftung Ital Reding-Haus, Rickenbachstrasse 24, Postfach 504, 6431 Schwyz, T 041 811 45 05, [info@irh.ch](mailto:info@irh.ch), [www.irh.ch](http://www.irh.ch)



*The Forum of Swiss History Schwyz is a modern museum with a cafeteria and an attractive museum shop.*

## FORUM OF SWISS HISTORY SCHWYZ

«**Switzerland in the Making**». The exhibition focuses on the foundation and early development of the Old Swiss Confederacy in the Middle Ages, with detailed information in four languages (EN, GER, IT, FR), virtual guides and innovative media stations. The museum as lived experience: the visitors become immersed in the world of the Middle Ages. Therefore, children and adults alike are given the opportunity, to follow on the trail of a freight hauler and virtually «step up» the Splügen Pass. The exhibition is an adventure circuit for the whole family.

**Special exhibitions and manifestations.** The special exhibitions in the basement, which change regularly, are very important for the region and Central Switzerland. They take up themes of topical interest and present them in a modern form.



*In the «Knight's Room» visitors can dress up as medieval ladies and boys can put on a knight's helmet and suit of armour and have their photograph taken.*

The Forum of Swiss History Schwyz opened in 1995 and is the cultural seat of the Swiss National Museum in Central Switzerland. The building, which in former times was used first to store grain and then defence equipment, now houses one of the key museums of cultural history in the alpine region. On the outside, the museum still is a baroque granary and arsenal, dating back to 1711, while the interior has been designed in a spacious, contemporary style. The Forum of Swiss History is both a modern history museum and a place to experience and encounter the country's cultural history.

**Services.** For schools and groups the museum offers guided tours.

**Opening hours.** Tue – Sun 10h00 – 17h00.

**Contact.** Forum Schweizer Geschichte Schwyz. Hofmatt/Zeughausstrasse 5, 6430 Schwyz, T 058 466 80 11, [ForumSchwyz@snm.admin.ch](mailto:ForumSchwyz@snm.admin.ch), [www.forumschwyz.ch](http://www.forumschwyz.ch)



*«Blätzverbrennen» - the traditional fire on the main square is both the highlight and conclusion of Carnival in Schwyz.*

## CUSTOMS

**«Priis-Chlepfe»** *Geisslechlepfen*. On January 6<sup>th</sup> (Epiphany), a procession of men cracking long two-handed whips gather on the main square to select their champion.

**«Greiflet»**. On the evening of the same day, the «Greifler» drive away the evil spirits with their cowbells, creating a thunderous noise as they proceed through the streets to the main square.

**Carnival**. Carnival in Schwyz ranks among the most traditional in Switzerland. It begins already on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Then starting six days before Ash Wednesday, the streets and taverns come to life with traditional Carnival figures. An important part of Carnival is a dance «Nüsseln», a particular series of steps accompanied by drum-rolls. A contest to select best of the best in Schwyz is held every year.

**«Chlefelen»**. During Lent children take part in the age-old custom of «Chlefelen» on their way to school. Their instrument (Chlefeli) is comprised of two small hardwood slats; it is also an important accompanying instrument for rhythm in folk music from Schwyz.

**Cattle fair**. The Monday before St. Michael's day is a major festival for farmers, featuring a cattle fair with awards and a parade.

**«Chilbi»** *Annual parish fair*. The convent's annual fair has taken place since 1283 making it the oldest in Schwyz. On the second weekend in October a major «Chilbi» with carousels, bars and a market is held around the main square in Schwyz.

**Christmas**. After midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, brass musicians climb the church steeple to play Silent Night in every direction. A quaint, enchanting Christmas market takes place in the centre of Schwyz every two years.



*Bethlehem House on the Ital Reding Estate, built around 1287.*

## PLACES OF INTEREST

**Town Hall.** The current Town Hall was built on the foundation walls of the previous one destroyed in a fire in 1642. The historic murals on its façade were painted by Ferdinand Wagner from Munich in 1891 to commemorate the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Confederacy. Particularly striking is the painting of the Battle of Morgarten.

**Main square.** Despite the damage, the fire enabled a new concept for rebuilding the village centre. It was enhanced with an impressive main square in baroque style and urbanized burgher houses. The parish church and Town Hall have a dominant presence on the square, which ranks among the most beautiful of this kind in Switzerland.

**Patrician manors.** More than 30 stately manors dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century can be seen in Schwyz. These patrician homes were primarily financed by incomes earned with mercenary soldiering. The architecture bears witness to Italian, French and local influences.

**Archive Tower.** The tower, built around 1200, is the oldest stone building in Schwyz. Presumably, it served as a residence and administration tower. Today the tower is used by the Museum of Swiss Charters for educational activities. In front of it lies the former communal butchery (Metzghofstatt) and communal laundry.

**Parish church.** The church of St. Martin is the sixth church built on the same site. Archaeological excavations uncovered foundations of a small Merovingian church in 730. Today's parish church was consecrated in 1774. Among experts, it is considered to be Switzerland's most festive parish church in baroque style.



## ACTIVITIES, EXCURSIONS

**Rotenflue-Mythenregion.** The Mythen summer and winter sports region lies just 15 minutes from the main square. The summit station of the Rotenflue cable car is the starting point for the hike on the mountain «Grosser Mythen», among others. [www.mythenregion.ch](http://www.mythenregion.ch)

**Stoos-Fronalpstock.** Fronalpstock lies high above Lake Lucerne at 1,922m, and just a little farther below the car-free mountain resort of Stoos, a paradise for summer and winter sports enthusiasts. [www.stoos.ch](http://www.stoos.ch)

**Schwyz circuit.** A comfortable hike with a view of the village of Schwyz, the lakes and the mountains. With changing vistas, ascents and descents, past monasteries and chapels, manors and farmsteads. Duration: 2 hrs. Start from the main square and follow the white trail signs for «Rundweg Schwyz-Tschütschi-Rickenbach».

**Lake Lucerne.** Part of the fascination of Lake Lucerne (10 minutes from Schwyz) is its scenic beauty, its fleet of boats and the historical sites located along the shore.

**Further suggestions:** [www.info-schwyz.ch/excursions](http://www.info-schwyz.ch/excursions)



*The mountain «Grosser Mythen» with Lake Lucerne, Schwyz, Rigi and Lake Lauerz.*

## HOSPITALITY

**Gastronomy.** Restaurants in Schwyz take great delight in serving you traditional dishes made from regional products as well as classic specialties. You will find a number of restaurants at the main square and in the near vicinity: [www.info-schwyz.ch/gastronomy](http://www.info-schwyz.ch/gastronomy)

**Accommodation.** Whether for a long weekend or a vacation, hotels and holiday apartments in Schwyz would be delighted to have you as their guest. Accommodation list and booking portal: [www.info-schwyz.ch/accommodation](http://www.info-schwyz.ch/accommodation)

### **Tourist office**

**Services.** We would be happy to advise you, book your accommodation and/or group tours, as well as organise club and company outings for you.

**Opening hours.** Mon – Fri 8h00 – 18h00; also on Sat from mid-May to September, 9h00 – 14h00.

**Contact.** Schwyz Tourismus, Zeughausstrasse 10, 6430 Schwyz, T 041 855 59 50, [info@schwyz-tourismus.ch](mailto:info@schwyz-tourismus.ch), [www.info-schwyz.ch](http://www.info-schwyz.ch)

infoschwyz



# SCHWYZ – GREAT EXPERIENCES



## FOR FAMILIES & CHILDREN

Excursion destinations for every age group and any weather: Goldau Animal Park, mountain paradises with playgrounds, adventure, swimming pools, rope parks, and so much more.

[www.schwyz-tourismus.ch/excursions](http://www.schwyz-tourismus.ch/excursions)



## FOR GROUPS & SCHOOL CLASSES

A variety of special offers for group and school outings designed to fulfill every wish. Spelunking, adventurous husky sledding, history and culture, flag throwing, making cheese and much more.

[www.schwyz-tourismus.ch/groups](http://www.schwyz-tourismus.ch/groups)



## FOR NATURE LOVERS & SPORTS ENTHUSIASTS

An eldorado for hikers, bikers, water sports enthusiasts and nature lovers, with 6 lakes, an extensive network of hiking and biking trails, a primeval spruce forest and caves.

[www.schwyz-tourismus.ch/sports](http://www.schwyz-tourismus.ch/sports)



## FOR GOURMETS & CONNOISSEURS

Numerous GaultMillau chefs, tasty tavern fare and rustic alpine inns, as well as authentic cuisine served at «ächt SCHWYZ» establishments. Local products such as alpine cheese and kirsch liqueur.

[www.aecht-schwyz.ch](http://www.aecht-schwyz.ch)  
[www.schwyz-tourismus.ch/gastronomy](http://www.schwyz-tourismus.ch/gastronomy)



## FOR WINTER SPORTS FANS & SUN WORSHIPPERS

Winter resorts with ski slopes, cross-country ski trails, natural ice rinks and winter walking trails – frequently above the fog. Only 1 hour from Zug, Lucerne, Zurich.

[www.schwyz-tourismus.ch/winterfun](http://www.schwyz-tourismus.ch/winterfun)

Schwyz Tourismus, Zeughausstrasse 10, 6430 Schwyz,  
T 041 855 59 50, [info@schwyz-tourismus.ch](mailto:info@schwyz-tourismus.ch), [www.schwyz-tourismus.ch](http://www.schwyz-tourismus.ch)



**SCHWYZ**  
Fire of Freedom

