

ZURICH

Little BIG City

HISTORY

1291 is the date to remember in Swiss history. Tradition has it that it was on August 1st of that year that men from the three forest cantons of Uri, Schwyz & Unterwalden met in the Rütli meadow by Lake Lucerne. They pledged their mutual aid & support against the powerful Habsburg Emperors. This union was the precursor of the Swiss Confederation.

Switzerland's mountain chains have always tended to split the country into different communities, but by 1513, 13 different cantons had joined together into a confederation.

The next 50 years saw the religious ideas of the Reformation – Martin Luther in Germany, Ulrich Zwingli & Jean Calvin in Switzerland – shaking Catholic thought in Europe. Zwingli began preaching in Zurich in 1518. Calvin's presence in Geneva, a little later, was responsible for the strong Protestant presence around Basel, Bern & Geneva.

After the defeat of Swiss forces by Francis I of France at the Battle of Marignano in 1515, Switzerland entered a period of enforced neutrality in the dispute between France & Italy. One hundred years later, during the 30 Years' War (1618-1648), Switzerland tried to maintain this neutrality, & by the Peace of Westphalia (1648) the great powers guaranteed the independence of the Swiss cantons.

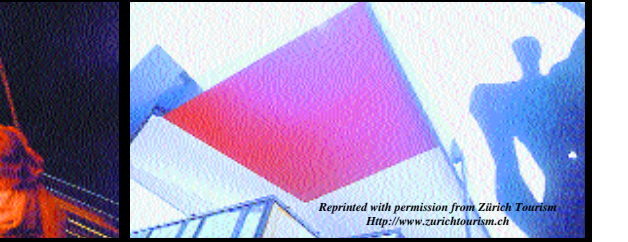
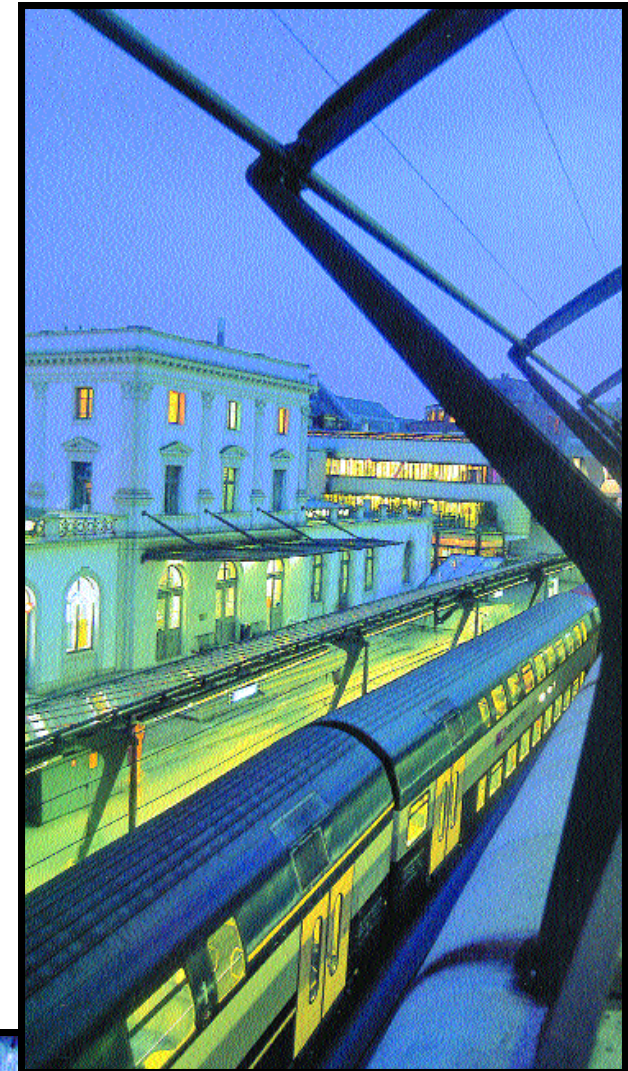
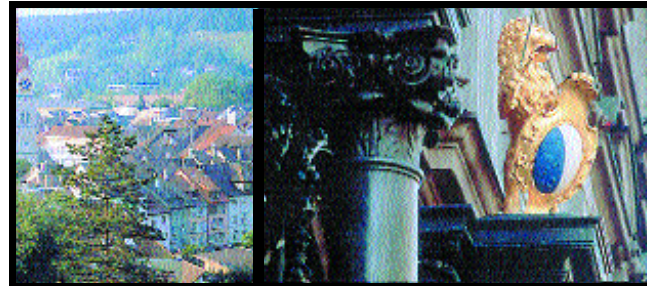
In 1798 Switzerland was seized by Napoleonic forces but, after the fall of the Emperor in 1815, the Congress of Vienna assured its independence again. In 1847 a short struggle took place between seven Conservative Catholic Cantons, who had made their own alliance (the Sonderbund), & the Protestant Cantons. The dispute ended in Jun 1848 with the foundation of a federal state with progressive republican ideas, in the heart of a Europe made up of restored monarchies. The following year the new constitution was accepted by popular vote. Further revisions to the constitution have taken place reconciling one sector of society to another.

Switzerland remained neutral throughout the two World Wars, although criticism has been levelled at the Swiss for their alleged laundering of Nazi money during & after the war.

Even today consensus remains a problem in Swiss politics, & this makes for difficulties, as there are those who are changing their loyalties from a cantonal government in favour of a strong federal government.

Through the City: A map is helpful, but you may enjoy just strolling through the warren of streets and alleys on the left side of the Bahnhofstrasse past the street that crosses the Rudolf Brun Brücke.

Sankt Peter Kirche set in a little square atop the hill is notable for its clock face, the largest in Europe. (The site of the original Roman outpost (the city's original name in Latin was Turicum) is not far from the church.) Working your way down the hill toward the river and walking in the lake direction you'll find the Fraumünster with marvelous stained-glass windows by Marc Chagall.



FACTSABOUT ZURICH

Population: 1,198,000

Area: 1,729 sq. km.

Languages: German, French, Italian, English

Religion: 50% Roman Catholic, 50% Protestant

Currency: Swiss Franc



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