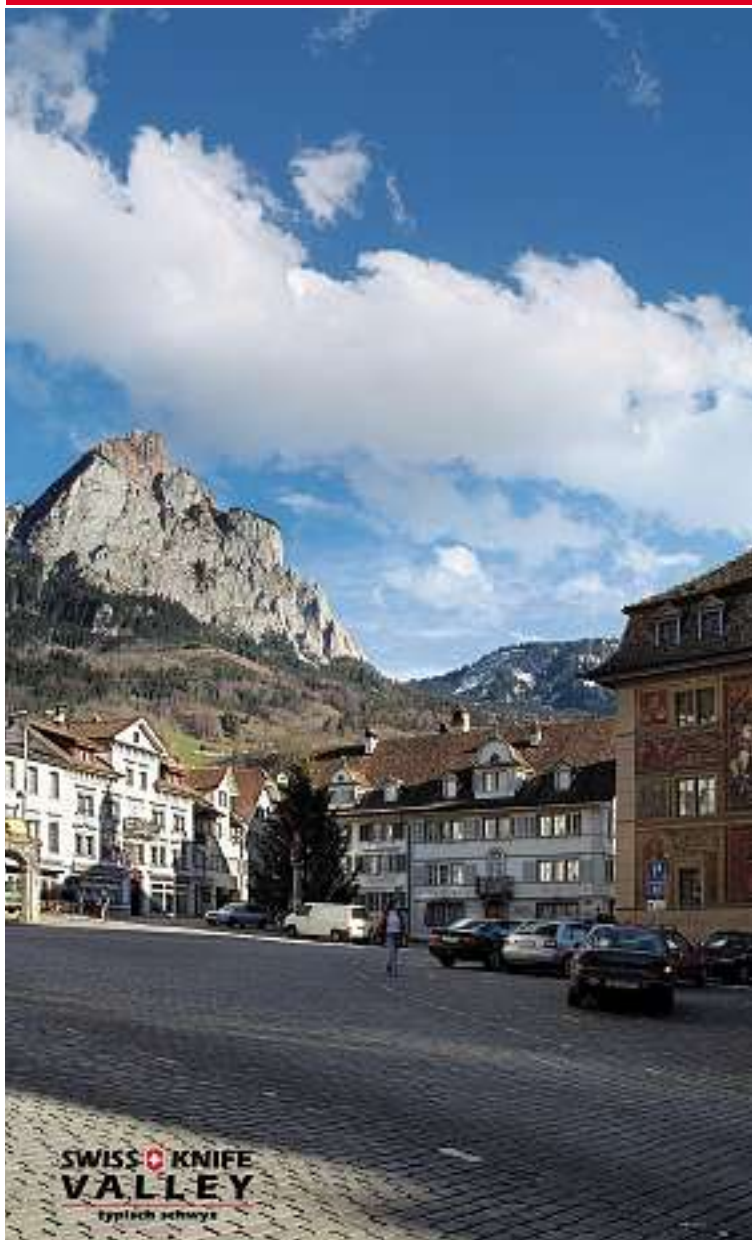


Schwyz



HISTORY • CULTURE • TRADITION



SWISS  KNIFE
VALLEY
typisch schweiz

COMMUNITY LIFE



COMMUNITY LIFE

Let the rich history, culture and tradition of the canton's central community surprise you. Enjoy the idyllic corners of the town, the expanse of the valley and the distinctive mountains.

Schwyz does not only offer interesting museums and magnificent manor houses dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries, but you will certainly discover many a treasure in alleys, squares and along rural paths. Take a stroll through the town and you will get to know Switzerland at its very origin.

Enjoy the varied community life of Schwyz and take an active part in it.





THE NAME OF «SCHWYZ»

Due to chroniclers of the 15th and 16th centuries the people called Schwyzer immigrated from the north in times of a great famine. Legend has it that Suit defeated his brother Scheijo in single combat and therefore was entitled to give his name to the recently populated country. Today scientists derive the name from the Indo-European root «sueit», which means «sing» or «burn». According to this Schwyz would be a name for a glade or pre-Alemannic clearing.

IDYLL

In the 18th century Schwyz may have appeared quite idyllic to a stranger, which is testified in Goethe's travel descriptions, for example. Undoubtedly, the quality of life for the upper classes was considerably high in those days, whereas farmers and day-labourers lived on a rather modest standard.

However, Schwyz did not know misery except for the years of famine. The lack of marked social contrasts had finally led to a combination of forces – despite considerable political differences – to defend their country against foreign intruders. The invasion of French troops proved to be disastrous for Schwyz. Thanks to the brave defence under Aloys Reding (1765 –1818) the Schwyzer could negotiate favourable armistice conditions with France.



19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

At the close of the 19th century, after assimilating to the new Federal State, Schwyz and its public rhythm changed only gradually. Community life saw a solid order. Thus the introduction of technology and the beginning of traffic and tourism in the area almost turned out to be sensational events for the mostly agriculturally orientated population. The ecclesiastical year with its baroque festivals and varied customs had a decisive influence on life in this era.

CULTURE AND FESTIVALS



CHILBI

On Monday before St. Michael's Day the big district cattle fair takes place. This event is one of the most important holidays for the rural population, yet the town people also participate actively. On the second Sunday in October Schwyz celebrates the cantonal and communal «chilbi» (commemoration of the consecration of the church), which is followed by a market and the exhibition of smaller domestic animals.



SCHWINGET (Swiss wrestling)

In mid-June, after the last snow has melted and spring has come to the Alps, the mountain of Stoos above Schwyz is the venue for one of the most popular wrestling and alpine festivals in central Switzerland. The meeting is supported by festive alphorn sounds, yodelling and folkloristic music.

MUSIC AND THEATRE

All year round cultural events take place on the small stage Chupferturm. The Hofstatt-Theatre, Stage 66 and the Children and Adolescents Theatre group regularly put new plays on stage. Folkloristic music finds widespread acceptance in this area and even the origin of the typical Schwyzer accordion lies in Schwyz.

CHRISTMAS CUSTOM

St. Nicolas has a great tradition in Schwyz. On 6 December this noble man distributes little gifts anonymously or visits families upon request. Every other year there is a huge Christmas market organized in the centre of the community. On Christmas Eve brass musicians climb the church steeple and play «Silent Night» after Midnight Mass. In January, carollers dressed up as the Magi visit the households and express cordial New Year's wishes.





GREIFLET

On the feast of Epiphany children with cowbells walk from house to house to wish a Happy New Year. While during the day the farmers, who produce ear-deafening sounds with their long whips, compete against each other on the market square in Schwyz, the 'Greifler' with cowbells and whips arrive in the evening. The 'Greiflet' is supposed to have magic character in order to defeat winter and to announce spring.

CARNIVAL

Epiphany in Schwyz means the beginning of carnival. The most important days are the following Monday, which is the first carnival day, Maundy Thursday, Monday preceding Ash Wednesday and Mardi Gras, on all of which groups in fancy dresses do special dances and play cacophonous music. The streets are crowded with traditional carnival figures such as the domino, the witch, the Old Sir and the gypsy and perform a particular series of steps («Nüsseln») accompanied by drum-rolls. Every other year there is a «Nüsseln» competition.

CHLEFELE (Swiss castanets)

During Lent (from Ash Wednesday till late in the Easter week) school children walk through the streets, lanes and squares of the community and produce a clapping sound by quickly moving two wooden plates, which are held left and right of your middle finger, against each other. Since 1964 Schwyz has organized a prize for the best 'Chlefele' artist.



TOUR OF THE TOWN

TOWN OF SCHWYZ

Do you have one or two hours or even half a day to spare to get to know the centre of the canton's principal community? We recommend a tour of the town as indicated on the map.

You will be amazed by the rich history, culture and tradition of Schwyz. Enjoy the idyllic corners of the community, the wide basin and the unmistakable mountains. You can organize the stroll through the old and new parts of Schwyz according to your wishes and interests. Eleven plaques with illustrations and short texts convey manifold information on important squares, streets and lanes, public buildings, manor houses, monasteries, churches and chapels. You will learn about events, festivals and traditions that have existed in Schwyz for decades.

The tour might motivate you to visit one or the other church, a chapel or an exhibition. Right in the town centre three museums offer profound insight into local, cantonal and national history and culture.

Visit the Ital Reding Estate with House Bethlehem, the Forum of Swiss History and the Museum of the Swiss Charters.

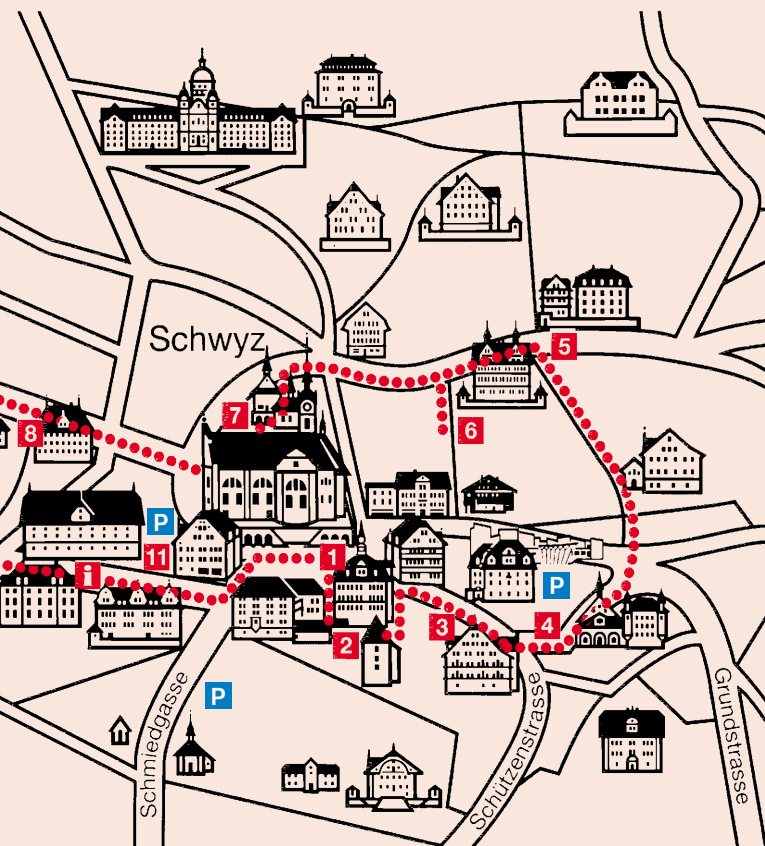
Take your time – your stay will be rewarded!

TOURS IN SCHWYZ

The Schwyz Tourist Office and the association «we animate Schwyz» are pleased to organize guided tours of the town centre with its significant sacral and profane buildings.

Competent tour guides will show you around the sights and inform you about architecture, history and culture. Our guides know numerous anecdotes and will definitely turn the tour into a memorable event.





- i** tour of the town of Schwyz, infoSchwyz Tourist Office
- 1** main square
- 2** Metzghofstatt, tower
- 3** Grosshaus
- 4** nunnery of St. Peter
- 5** Schwyz in the 18th century
- 6** Ital Reding Estate with House Bethlehem
- 7** parish church of St. Martin
- 8** Herrengasse
- 9** Capuchin monastery
- 10** Museum of the Swiss Charters
- 11** Station Road, Forum of Swiss History

MUSEUM OF THE SWISS CHARTERS



HISTORY BETWEEN MYTH AND REALITY

The Swiss Charter of 1291 is a unique historical document which has gained remarkable significance in the national history of Switzerland. The Museum of the Swiss Charters answers questions concerning this first-rate Swiss cultural object. Is the Charter of 1291 indeed the founding document of the Swiss Confederacy? What is its significance for Swiss history? How about the traditional national history with its confederates, pacts, oaths, battles and heroes?

The origin of the early Confederacy is documented with charters, freedom documents and a unique flag collection. Various objects, pictures, sound documents and important contemporary murals reflect the history concept of the Swiss population. Visitors can take part in the political and scientific discussion around the Swiss Charter interactively. The computer terminal enables an extensive investigation of the original text and presents important recent results based on research done on the early history of the Confederacy.

For schools and groups there is a medieval writing workshop available during which visitors can produce their own documents with keel, ink and authentic seal.



OPENING HOURS

1 May – 31 October
Tue – Fri: 9 – 11:30 a.m. 1:30 – 5 p.m.
Sa/Su: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

1 November – 30 April
Tue – Fri: 9 – 11:30 a.m. 1:30 – 5 p.m.
Sa/Su: 1:30 – 5 p.m.

Guided tours by appointment.

CONTACT

Museum of the Swiss Charters
Bahnhofstrasse 20
6431 Schwyz

T 041 819 20 64
F 041 819 20 69

bbm.jd@sz.ch
www.bundesbriefmuseum.ch



UNIQUE RESIDENTIAL CULTURE

The Ital Reding Estate is one of the most impressive groups of buildings of the canton of Schwyz. The magnificent rooms, their rich interior and the baroque garden reflect the splendour of an estate of the 17th century. It tells stories of the glorious, but at the same time troublesome era of mercenary services. The high standard of the estate is shown fully in its interior decoration. The garden hall on the ground floor can be used as multifunctional room for speeches, exhibitions, receptions, dinners and so on. The rooms on the first floor reveal skilfully crafted wooden ceilings and panelling with sumptuous inlaid work. First-rate tiled stoves as well as a series of excellent pieces of furniture can be admired. The garden offers unique surroundings for various occasions.

HOUSE BETHLEHEM

Within the walls that surround the Ital Reding Estate visitors can see the House Bethlehem which was built in 1287 and thus dates back to the foundation of the Swiss Confederacy. In the 16th century the wooden house was given a new foundation of stone walls. One of the rooms in the basement was redecorated and used as a tavern. On the upper floor there is the Schwyzer carnival room with a display of typical local carnival figures. Around 1700 a second floor was added and new windows were built in.



OPENING HOURS

May – October
Tue – Fri: 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.
Sa/Su: 10 – 12 a.m. 2 – 5 p.m.

Guided tours and groups as well as events available all year round.
Appointment necessary.

CONTACT

Stiftung Ital Reding-Haus
P.O. Box 504
6431 Schwyz

T 041 811 45 05
F 041 811 45 07

info@irh.ch
www.irh.ch

FORUM OF SWISS HISTORY



MEET HISTORY AND CULTURE

The MUSEE SUISSE Forum of Swiss History, opened in 1995, is a museum and place of experience at the same time: a point for tracing history and imparting culture. On the outside the original façade of a former grain house was kept, whereas the inside was designed by generous modern architecture. This national history museum in central Switzerland shows the cultural and everyday history of today's Switzerland between 1300 and 1800. The spacious history museum, based on a modern concept including four languages (G, F, I, E), is the seat of the MUSEE SUISSE-group in central Switzerland. The Forum is the only museum to offer a compact, informative and manifold survey of Swiss everyday history. On four floors, on an area of 1,400 m², there are 900 precious and significant objects from entire Switzerland on display, revealing how our ancestors traded, formed their environment and got influenced by religion and society.

The Forum of Swiss History puts strong emphasis on amazement, learning and entertainment: radio plays, interactive object databanks, videos and computer terminals expand and deepen the visitors' impressions and accompany them on their journey through the past. Topical temporary exhibitions, a wide range of educational programmes, historico-cultural events, discussions, speeches and concerts make the Forum of Swiss History a cultural platform in central Switzerland.



OPENING HOURS

Tue – Su: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Guided tours available outside opening hours by appointment.

CONTACT

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Forum of Swiss History
Hofmatt, P.O. Box 140
6431 Schwyz

T 041 819 60 11
F 041 819 60 10

ForumSchwyz@slm.admin.ch
www.musee-suisse.ch/schwyz

PARISH CHURCH

The parish church of St. Martin is the sixth church built on the same site. Archaeological excavations not only revealed Alemannic graves, but also the foundation of a little church dating back to 730. Today's parish church was consecrated in 1774 and is known as the most festive parish church in the baroque style in Switzerland.



TOWN HALL

Today's Town Hall was built after a fire in 1642 on the foundations of its predecessor of 1595. The façade murals by Ferdinand Wagner from Munich were created in 1891 on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the Confederacy. The pictures have influenced the historical concept of generations.



TOWER

The Tower, built around 1200, is the oldest architectural witness of the times before founding the Confederacy. Most probably it served as residence tower for a landowner and was later used as administration tower. Renovation work in 1776 and 1948 basically gave it its current looks. Today the Tower houses changing exhibitions organized by the Museum Society of Schwyz.



MAIN SQUARE

A big fire in 1642 destroyed the community centre to the most part. 47 out of 150 houses became victim of the fire within four hours. The new square was laid out following extremely strict regulations, so all the surrounding houses received their exact location. The baroque layout was finally achieved by having five streets lead into the square to form a crossroads.



WE ANIMATE SCHWYZ



OUR SERVICES

- tourist information
- information for community citizens
- Christmas market
- tours of the town
- coordination of events
- leaflet with gastronomic information
- advance booking
- contacts
- etc

OPENING HOURS

Mo – Fri: 6.30 a.m. – 6.30 p.m.
Sa: 7.30 – 12 a.m.

CONTACT

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