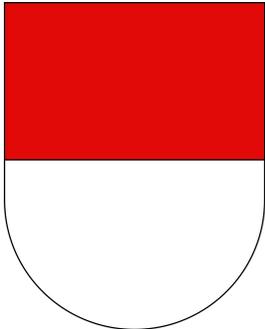


Canton of Solothurn + Jura + Alps

[Canton of Switzerland](#) —



Location of Kanton Solothurn

Coordinates: 47°9′N 7°38′E

Capital	Solothurn
Largest City	Olten
Subdivisions	122 municipalities , 10 districts
Government	
• Executive	Regierungsrat (5)
• Legislative	Kantonsrat (100)
Area ¹	
• Total	unknown operator: u'strong' km ² (unknown operator: u'strong' sq mi)
Population (12/2011) ²	
• Total	257393
Highest point	1445 m (unknown operator: u'strong' ft) - Hasenmatt
Joined	1481
Abbreviation	SO
Languages	German
Website	SO.ch

Solothurn (German: *Solothurn*) is a [canton](#) of [Switzerland](#). It is located in the northwest of Switzerland. The capital is [Solothurn](#).

¹[Arealstatistik Standard - Kantonsdaten nach 4 Hauptbereichen](#)

²[Canton Solothurn Statistical Office](#), MS Excel document - *Bevölkerungsbestand nach Gemeinden 31.12.2011* (German) accessed 29 May 2012

History

The territory of the canton comprises land acquired by the city. For that reason the shape of the canton is irregular and includes two exclaves along the French border, separated from the rest of the canton by Basel-Land, which form separate districts of the canton. Between 1798 and 1803 the canton was part of the [Helvetic Republic](#). In 1803 Solothurn was one of the 19 Swiss cantons that were reconstituted by Napoleon ([Mediation](#)). Even though the population was strictly [Roman Catholic](#), Solothurn did not join the Catholic separatist movement ([Sonderbund](#)) in 1845. Similarly, the [federal constitutions](#) of 1848 and 1874 were approved. The current constitution of the canton dates from 1987.

Geography

The canton is located in the north-west of Switzerland. To the west and south lies the [canton of Bern](#), to the east is [Aargau](#). To the north the canton is bounded by the canton of [Basel-Landschaft](#). Parts of two of the districts are exclaves and are located along the [French](#) border. The lands are drained by the [Aare](#) river and its tributaries. The landscape is mostly flat, but it includes the foothills of the [Jura massif](#). Part of this, the massif of the Weissenstein, overlooks Solothurn and the Mittelland from the north and affords spectacular views of the Bernese Alps. The flat lands are a plain created by the Aare river. The total area of the canton is 791 km².

Districts of Canton Solothurn

- [Bucheggberg](#), Amtei Wasseramt-Bucheggberg
- [Dorneck](#), Amtei Dorneck-Thierstein (unofficially *Schwarzbubenland*)
- [Gäu](#), Amtei Thal-Gäu
- [Gösgen](#), Amtei Olten-Gösgen (unofficially *Niederamt*)
- [Lebern](#), Amtei Solothurn-Lebern
- [Olten](#), Amtei Olten-Gösgen
- [Solothurn](#), Amtei Solothurn-Lebern
- [Thal](#), Amtei Thal-Gäu
- [Thierstein](#), Amtei Dorneck-Thierstein
- [Wasseramt](#), Amtei Wasseramt-Bucheggberg

Municipalities

There are 125 [municipalities in the canton](#) (As of 2009).³

³"[Liste officielle des communes de la Suisse - 01.01.2008](#)". *Office fédéral de la statistique*. . Retrieved 15 décembre 2008.

Economy

Up to the 19th century agriculture was the main economic activity in the canton. Agriculture is still of importance, but manufacturing and the service industry are now more significant. The industries of the canton are specialized in [watches](#), [jewellery](#), [textiles](#), [paper](#), [cement](#) and [auto parts](#). Until recently the manufacturing of [shoes](#) was an important economic activity, but global competition meant that the Swiss canton was not competitive enough.

There is a nuclear power plant near [Gösgen](#) which started operation in 1979.
Transport

The canton has good connections with other parts of Switzerland, both by rail and by road. There is a railway junction at [Olten](#) with direct trains to [Geneva](#), [Zurich](#), [Basel](#) and the [Ticino](#) via [Lucerne](#).

Jura Mountains www.sport-so.ch



Sport Region Solothurn



Startseite

Firmenausflug

Vereinsausflug

Polysportive Wochen

Fussball EM+WM

Velo / Biken

► **Wandern/Übernachten**

Waldwanderungen

Balmberg

Kurhaus Weissenstein

Hinter Weissenstein

Althüsli

Wandern Solothurner Jura



Countries

[France](#), [Switzerland](#)

Regions

[Rhône-Alpes](#), [Franche-Comté](#), [Vaud](#),
[Canton of Neuchâtel](#), [Canton of Jura](#),
[Basel-Landschaft](#)

Borders on

[Alps](#)

Highest point

Crêt de la Neige

- elevation

1720 m (5643 ft)

Satellite image of the Jura Mountains

The **Jura Mountains** (French pronunciation: [ʒyʁa]) are a sub-alpine [mountain range](#) located north of the western [Alps](#), separating the [Rhine](#) and [Rhône](#) rivers and forming part of the [watershed](#) of each. The range is predominantly located in [France](#) and [Switzerland](#), extending into [Germany](#).⁴

The name "Jura" is derived from *juria*, a Latinized form of a [Celtic](#) stem *jor-* "forest".⁵⁶⁷ The mountain range gives its name to the French department of [Jura](#), the Swiss [Canton of Jura](#), and the [Jurassic](#) period of the [geologic timescale](#).

Physiography

The Jura Mountains are a distinct physiographic province of the larger [Central European uplands](#).

In France, the Jura covers most of the [Franche-Comté](#) region, stretching south into in the [Rhône-Alpes](#) region. The range reaches its highest point at [Le Crêt de la Neige](#) in the departments of [Ain](#) and finds its southern terminus in the northwestern part of the department of [Savoie](#). The north end of the Jura extends into the southern tip of the [Alsace](#) region. Roughly 1,600 square kilometers of the mountain range in France is protected by the [Jura Mountains Regional Natural Park](#).

In Switzerland, the range covers the western border with France in the [Cantons](#) of [Basel](#), [Solothurn](#), [Jura](#), [Bern](#) (i.e., [Bernese Jura](#)), [Neuchâtel](#), [Vaud](#), and the border with Germany in the canton of [Schaffhausen](#). It also includes the Canton of [Basel-Landschaft](#). The Swiss Jura has been industrialized since the 18th century and became a major center of the [watchmaking](#) industry. The area has several cities at very high altitudes, such as [La Chaux-de-Fonds](#), [Le Locle](#), and [Sainte-Croix](#) (renowned for its [musical boxes](#)), however, it generally has had a marked decline in population since 1960. The Swiss Jura is one of the three distinct geographical regions of Switzerland, the other being the [Swiss plateau](#) and the [Swiss Alps](#).

In Germany, the Jura is lower in altitude, stretching into [Bavaria](#) in the [Swabian](#) and [Franconian](#) plateaus.

4Ebel, J.G. 1808. Ueber den Bau der Erde in dem Alpengebirge zwischen 12 Längen- und 2-4 Breitengraden nebst einigen Betrachtungen über die Gebirge und den Bau der Erde überhaupt. Zweyter Band. *Orell Füssli und Compagnie* 428 pp; Zürich

5Rollier, L. 1903. Das Schweizerische Juragebirge. *Sonderabdruck aus dem Geographischen Lexikon der Schweiz*, Verlag von Gebr. Attinger, 39 pp; Neuenburg

6Hölder, H. 1964. Jura - Handbuch der stratigraphischen Geologie, IV. *Enke-Verlag*, 603 pp., 158 figs, 43 tabs; Stuttgart

7Arkell, W.J. 1956. Jurassic Geology of the World. *Oliver & Boyd*, 806 pp.; Edinburgh und London.

Tourism

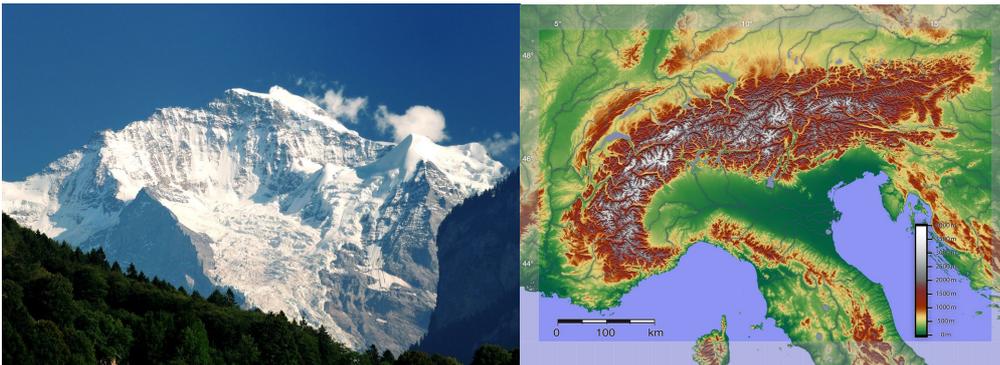
The Jura range offer a variety of tourist activities including hiking, cycling, skiing and cross-country skiing. There are many signposted trails including the [Jura ridgeway](#), a 310 km hiking route.

Tourist attractions include natural features such as the [Creux du Van](#), lookout peaks such as the [Chasseral](#), caves such as the [Grottes de l'Orbe](#), and gorges such as [Taubenloch](#).

Both [Le Locle](#) and its geographical twin town [La Chaux-de-Fonds](#) are recognised as an UNESCO [World Heritage Site](#) for their [horological](#) and related cultural past. The 11th-century [Fort de Joux](#), famously remodeled and strengthened by [Vauban](#) in 1690, and subsequently by other military engineers, is situated on a natural rock outcropping in the middle of the range not far from [Pontarlier](#).

Part of [A40 autoroute](#) crosses through a spectacular portion of the southern Jura between [Bourg-en-Bresse](#) and [Bellegarde-sur-Valserine](#), which is known as the "Highway of the Titans."

Alps



The [Jungfrau](#) in the [Bernese Alps](#) of Switzerland

Highest point

Peak

[Mont Blanc](#)

[Elevation](#)

4810.45 m (**unknown operator: u'strong'** ft)

[Coordinates](#)

45°50'01"N 06°51'54"E

Geography

Countries

Geology

[Orogeny](#)

Alpine orogeny

[Period](#)

Tertiary

Type of rock

Bündner schist, flysch and molasse

The **Alps**, one of the great [mountain range](#) systems of Europe, stretch approximately **unknown operator: u','** kilometres (**unknown operator: u'strong'unknown operator: u','**mi) across seven countries from Austria and [Slovenia](#) in the east, Switzerland, [Liechtenstein](#), Germany, France to the west and Italy and [Monaco](#) to the south.⁸ The Alps were formed over hundreds of millions of years as the African and Eurasian [tectonic plates](#) collided; the extreme compression caused by the event resulted in marine [sedimentation](#) rising and folding into high mountain peaks such as [Mont Blanc](#) and the [Matterhorn](#). Mont Blanc spans the French-Italian border, and at 4810.45 m (**unknown operator: u'strong'** ft) is the highest mountain in the Alps. The Alpine region area contains many peaks higher than 4000 m (**unknown operator: u'strong'** ft), known as the "[four-thousanders](#)".

The altitude and size of the range affects the climate in Europe; in the mountains precipitation levels vary greatly and climatic conditions consist of distinct zones. Wildlife such as [Ibex](#) live in the higher peaks to elevations of 3400 m (**unknown operator: u'strong'** ft), and plants such as [Edelweiss](#) grow in rocky areas in lower elevations as well as in higher elevations. Evidence of human habitation in the Alps goes back to the [Paleolithic](#) era. A [mummified man](#), determined to be 5,000 years old, was discovered on a glacier at the Austrian-Italian border in 1991. By the 6th century BC, the Celtic [La Tène culture](#) was well established. [Hannibal](#) may have crossed the Alps with a herd of elephants, and the Romans had settlements in the region. In 1800 [Napoleon](#) crossed one of the mountain passes with an army of 40,000. The 18th and 19th centuries saw an influx of naturalists, writers, and artists, in particular the [Romantics](#), followed by the [golden age of alpinism](#) as mountaineers began to ascend the peaks. In World War II the [Third Reich](#) invaded the Alpine countries, with the exception of Switzerland which maintained [armed neutrality](#); [Adolf Hitler](#) kept a [base of operation](#) in the Bavarian Alps throughout the war.

The traditional culture of farming, cheesemaking, and woodworking still exists in Alpine villages, although the tourist industry began to grow early in the 20th century and expanded greatly after World War II to become the dominant industry by the end of the century. The [Winter Olympic Games](#) have been hosted in the Swiss, French, Italian and Austrian Alps. At present the region is home to 14 million people and has 120 million annual visitors.⁹

⁸"[Alpine Convention](#)". *Alpine Conferences*. Retrieved August 3, 2012
⁹Chatré, Baptiste, et. al. (2010), 8

Geography

The Alps are a crescent shaped geographic feature of central Europe that ranges in a 800 km (**unknown operator: u'strong'** mi) arc from east to west and is 200 km (**unknown operator: u'strong'** mi) in width. The mean height of the mountain peaks is 2.5 km (0 mi).¹⁰ The range stretches from the [Mediterranean Sea](#) north above the [Po river](#) basin, extending through France from [Grenoble](#), eastward through mid and southern Switzerland. The range continues toward [Vienna](#) in Austria, and east to the [Adriatic Sea](#) and into [Slovenia](#).¹¹¹²¹³ To the south it dips into northern Italy and to the north extends to [Bavaria](#) in Germany.¹⁴ In areas like [Chiasso](#), Switzerland, and [Neuschwanstein](#), Bavaria, the demarkation between the mountain range and the flatlands are clear; in other places such as [Geneva](#), the demarkation is less clear. The countries with the greatest alpine territory are Switzerland, France, Austria and Italy. The highest portion of the range extends from [Mont Blanc](#) in France, through the [Bernese Oberland](#) and to the [Matterhorn](#) in Switzerland; the peaks in the easterly portion of the range, in Austria and Slovenia, are smaller than those in the central and western portions.¹⁵

The variances in nomenclature in the region spanned by the Alps makes classification of the mountains and subregions difficult, but a general classification is that of the [Eastern Alps](#) and [Western Alps](#) with the divide between the two occurring in eastern Switzerland according to geologist Stefan Schmid.¹⁶ In 2006, [SOIUSA](#) (*Suddivisione Orografica Internazionale Unificata del Sistema Alpino*), an Italian organization, proposed a new classification system for geologic and cartographic purposes. According to SOIUSA, the Alps can be subdivided into among others the [Ligurian Alps](#), the [Maritime Alps](#), the [Cottian Alps](#), the [Dauphiné Alps](#), the [Graian Alps](#), the [Pennine Alps](#), the [Bernese Alps](#), the [Lepontine Alps](#), the [Glarus Alps](#), and the [Appenzell Alps](#).¹⁷

The highest peaks of the Western Alps and Eastern Alps, respectively, are Mont Blanc, at 4810.45 m (**unknown operator: u'strong'** ft)¹⁸ and [Piz Bernina](#) at 4049 meters (**unknown operator: u'strong'** ft). The second-highest peaks are [Monte Rosa](#) at 4634 m (**unknown operator: u'strong'** ft) and [Ortler](#)¹⁹ at 3905 m (**unknown operator: u'strong'** ft), respectively.

¹⁰Ceben (1998), 22-24

¹¹Chatré, Baptiste, et. al. (2010), 9

¹²Fleming (2000), 1

¹³Beattie (2006), xii-xiii

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¹⁵

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¹⁷di Sergio Marazzi (2006), 6

¹⁸Shoumtoff (2001), 23

¹⁹Excluding the [Piz Zupò](#) and [Piz Roseg](#) located in the Bernina range, close to Piz Bernina.

Series of lower mountain ranges run parallel to the main chain of the Alps, including the [French Prealps](#) in France and the [Jura Mountains](#) in Switzerland and France. The secondary chain of the Alps follows the [watershed](#) from the Mediterranean Sea to the [Wienerwald](#), passing over many of the highest and most well-known peaks in the Alps. From the Colle di Cadibona to [Col de Tende](#) it runs westwards, before turning to the northwest and then, near the [Colle della Maddalena](#), to the north. Upon reaching the Swiss border, the line of the main chain heads approximately east-northeast, a heading it follows until its end near Vienna.

Passes

The Alps have been crossed for war and commerce, and by pilgrims, students and tourists. Crossing routes by road, train or foot are known as *passes*, and usually consist of depressions in the mountains in which a valley leads from the plains and hilly pre-mountainous zones. In the medieval period [hospices](#) were established by religious orders at the summits of many of the main passes.²⁰ The most important passes are the [Brenner Pass](#), the [Great St. Bernard Pass](#), the [Tenda Pass](#), the [Saint Gotthard Pass](#), the [Semmering Pass](#), and the [Stelvio Pass](#).²¹

Crossing the Italian-Austrian border, the Brenner Pass separates the [Ötztal Alps](#) and [Zillertal Alps](#) and has been in use as a trading route since the 14th century. The lowest of the Alpine passes at 985 m (**unknown operator: u'strong'** ft), the Semmering crosses from [Lower Austria](#) to [Styria](#); since the 12th century when a hospice was built there it has seen continuous use. A railroad with a tunnel 1 mile (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) long was built along the route of the pass in the mid-19th century. With a summit of **unknown operator: u','unknown operator: u','unknown operator: u','** (), the Great St. Bernard Pass is one of the highest in the Alps, crossing the Italian-Swiss border east of the Pennine Alps along the flanks of Mont Blanc. The pass was used by [Napoleon Bonaparte](#) to cross 40,000 troops in 1800. The Saint Gotthard Pass crosses from [Central Switzerland](#) to [Ticino](#); in the late 19th century the 9 miles (**unknown operator: u'strong'** km) long Saint Gotthard Tunnel was built connecting [Lucerne](#) in Switzerland, with [Milan](#) in Italy. At **unknown operator: u','unknown operator: u','unknown operator: u','** (), the Stelvio Pass in northern Italy is one of the highest of the Alpine passes; the road was built in the 1820s.²²

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21 *Encyclopedia Britannica. Encyclopedia Online Academic Edition.* Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved 6 August 2012

22

Glaciers

In the [Miocene](#) Epoch the mountains underwent severe erosion because of glaciation,²³ which was noted in the mid-19th century by naturalist [Louis Agassiz](#) who presented a paper proclaiming the Alps were covered in ice at various intervals—a theory he formed when studying rocks near his [Neuchâtel](#) home which he believed originated to the west in the Bernese Oberland. Because of his work he came to be known as the "father of the ice-age concept" although other naturalists before him put forth similar ideas.²⁴

Agassiz studied glacier movement in the 1840s at the [Unteraar Glacier](#) where he found the glacier moved 100 m (**unknown operator: u'strong'** ft) per year, more rapidly in the middle than at the edges. His work was continued by other scientists and now a permanent laboratory exists inside a glacier under the [Jungfrauoch](#), devoted exclusively to the study of Alpine glaciers.²⁵

As they flow glaciers pick up and carry rocks causing erosion, and over long periods valleys are carved. The [Inn](#) valley is an example of a valley carved by glaciers during the [ice ages](#) with a typical terraced structure caused by erosion. Eroded rocks from the most recent ice age lie at the bottom of the valley while the top of the valley consists of erosion from earlier ice ages.²⁶ Glacial valleys have characteristically steep walls (reliefs); valleys with lower reliefs and [talus slopes](#) are remnants of glacial troughs or previously infilled valleys.²⁷ [Moraines](#), piles of rock picked up during the movement of the glacier, accumulate at edges, center and the terminus of glaciers.²⁸

Alpine glaciers can be straight rivers of ice, long sweeping rivers, spread in a fan-like shape (Piedmont glaciers), and curtains of ice that hang from vertical slopes of the mountain peaks. Some glaciers flow in two directions such as the glacier between the Jungfrau and the [Mönch](#) in Switzerland and the [Similaun](#) glacier on the border of Italy and Austria.²⁹ The stress of the movement causes the ice to break and crack loudly, perhaps explaining why the mountains were believed to be home to dragons in the medieval period. The cracking creates unpredictable and dangerous [crevasses](#), often invisible under new snowfall, which cause the greatest danger to mountaineers.³⁰

Glaciers end in ice caves (the [Rhône Glacier](#)), by trailing into a lake or river, or by shedding snowmelt on a meadow. Sometimes a piece of glacier will detach or break resulting in flooding, property damage and loss of life.³¹ In the 17th century about 2500 people were killed by an avalanche in a village on the French-Italian border; in the 19th century 120 homes in a village near Zermatt were destroyed by an avalanche.³² cent of that in Switzerland.³³

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24Shoumatoff (2001), 63-68

25

26

27Gerrard, (1990), 132

28

29

30Shoumatoff (2001), 71-72

31

32Fleming (2000), 89-90

33Ceben (1998), 38

Rivers and lakes

The Alps provide lowland Europe with drinking water, irrigation, and hydroelectric power.³⁴ Although the area is only about 11 percent of the surface area of Europe, the Alps provide up to 90 percent of water to lowland Europe, particularly to arid areas and during the summer months. Cities such as Milan depend on 80 percent of water from Alpine runoff.³⁵³⁶³⁷ Water from the rivers is used in over 500 [hydroelectricity](#) power plants, generating as much as 2900 kilowatts per hour of electricity.³⁸

Major European rivers flow from Switzerland, such as the [Rhine](#), the [Rhone](#), the [Inn](#), the [Ticino](#) and the [Po](#) rivers, all of which have headwaters in the Alps and flow into neighboring countries, finally emptying into the [North Sea](#), the Mediterranean Sea, the Adriatic Sea and the [Black Sea](#). s.³⁹⁴⁰

Climate

The Alps are a classic example of what happens when a [temperate](#) area at lower altitude gives way to higher-elevation terrain. Elevations around the world that have cold climates similar to those of the [polar regions](#) have been called [Alpine](#). A rise from sea level into the upper regions of the atmosphere causes the temperature to decrease (see [adiabatic lapse rate](#)). The effect of mountain chains on prevailing winds is to carry warm air belonging to the lower region into an upper zone, where it expands in volume at the cost of a proportionate loss of heat, often accompanied by precipitation in the form of snow or rain. The height of the Alps is sufficient to divide the weather patterns in Europe into a wet north and a dry south because moisture is sucked from the air as it flows over the high peaks.⁴¹ The Alps are split into five climatic zones, each with different vegetation.

pe of ski slope building preserve the fragile underlayers.⁴²

Fauna

The Alps are a habitat for 30,000 species of wildlife, ranging from the tiniest [snow fleas](#) to [brown bears](#), many of which have made adaptations to the harsh cold conditions and high altitudes to the point that some only survive in specific micro-climates either directly above or below the [snow line](#).⁴³⁴⁴

34Chatré, Baptiste, et. al. (2010), 5

35

36Benniston et. al. (2011), 1

37Price, Martin. *Mountains: Globally Important Eco-systems*". University of Oxford

38

39

40Chatré, Baptiste, et. al. (2010), 13

41Fleming (2000), 3

42

43

44Shoumatoff (2001), 90, 96, 101

History

Prehistory to Christianity

About 10,000 years ago, when the ice melted after the [last glacial period](#), late [Paleolithic](#) communities were established along the lake shores and in cave systems. Evidence of human habitation has been found in caves near [Vercors](#), close to Grenoble; in Austria the [Mondsee](#) culture shows evidence of houses built on piles to keep them dry. Standing stones have been found in Alpine areas of France and Italy. The [Rock Drawings in Valcamonica](#) are more than 5000 years old; more than 200,000 drawings and etchings have been identified at the site.⁴⁵

In 1991 a mummy of a [neolithic](#) body, known as [Ötzi the Iceman](#), was discovered by hikers on the [Similaun](#) glacier. His clothing and gear indicate that he lived in an alpine farming community, while the location and manner of his death—an arrowhead was discovered in his shoulder—suggests he was traveling from one place to another.⁴⁶ Analysis of the [Mitochondrial DNA](#) of Ötzi, has shown that he belongs to the K1 [subclade](#) which cannot be categorized into any of the three modern branches of that subclade. The new subclade has provisionally been named *K1ö* for Ötzi.⁴⁷

[Celtic](#) tribes settled in Switzerland between 1000 to 1500 BC. The [Raetians](#) lived in the eastern regions, while the west was occupied by the [Helvetii](#) and the [Allobrogi](#) settled in the Rhone valley. Among the many substances Celtic tribes mined was salt in areas such as [Salzburg](#) in Austria where evidence of the [Hallstatt culture](#) was found by a mine manager in the 19th century.⁴⁸ By the 6th century BC the [La Tène culture](#) was well established in the region,⁴⁹ and became known for high quality [decorated weapons and jewelry](#).⁵⁰ The Celts were the most widespread of the mountain tribes with warriors that were strong, tall and fair skinned skilled with iron weapons that gave them an advantage in warfare.⁵¹

During the [Second Punic War](#) in 218 BC, the [Carthaginian](#) general [Hannibal](#) probably [crossed the Alps](#) with an army numbering 38,000 infantry, 8,000 cavalry, and 37 war elephants. This was one of the most celebrated achievement of any military force in ancient warfare,⁵² although no evidence exists of the actual crossing or the place of crossing. The Romans, however, had built roads along the mountain passes, which continued to be used through the medieval period to cross the mountains and Roman road markers can still be found on the mountain passes.⁵³

45Beattie, (2006), 25

46Beattie, (2006), 21

47Luca Ermini et al., "[Complete Mitochondrial Genome Sequence of the Tyrolean Iceman](#)," *Current Biology*, vol. 18, no. 21 (30 October 2008), pp. 1687-1693.

48

49Fleming (2000), 2

50Shoumatoff (2001), 131

51Shoumatoff (2001), 110

52Lancel, Serge, (1999), 71

53Prevas (2001), 68-69

The Roman expansion brought the defeat of the Allobrogi in 121 BC and during the [Gallic Wars](#) in 58 BC [Julius Caesar](#) overcame the Helvetii. The Rhaetians continued to resist but were eventually conquered when the Romans turned northward to the [Danube](#) valley in Austria and defeated the [Brigantes](#).⁵⁴ The Romans built settlements in the Alps; towns such as [Aosta](#) (named for (Augustus) in Italy, [Martigny](#) and [Lausanne](#) in Switzerland, and [Partenkirchen](#) in Bavaria show remains of Roman baths, villas, arenas and temples.⁵⁵ Much of the Alpine region was gradually settled by [Germanic tribes](#), ([Lombards](#), [Alemanni](#), [Bavarii](#), and [Franks](#)) from the 6th to the 13th centuries,⁵⁶ the latest expansion corresponding to the [Walser](#) migrations.

Christianity, feudalism, and Napoleonic wars

Christianity was established in the region by the Romans, and saw the establishment of monasteries and churches in the high regions. The Frankish expansion of the [Carolingian Empire](#) and the Bavarian expansion in the eastern Alps introduced feudalism and the building of castles to support the growing number of dukedoms and kingdoms. Castello del Buonconsiglio in [Trento](#), Italy, still has intricate frescoes, excellent examples of Gothic art, in a tower room. In Switzerland, [Château de Chillon](#) is preserved as an example of medieval architecture.⁵⁷

Much of the medieval period was a time of power struggles between competing duchies such as the [Savoyards](#) in France, the [Viscontis](#) in northern Italy and the [Hapsburgs](#) in Bavaria.⁵⁸ In 1291 to protect themselves from incursions by the Hapsburgs, four [cantons](#) in the middle of Switzerland drew up a [charter](#) that is considered to be a declaration of independence from neighboring kingdoms. After a series of battles fought in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, more cantons joined the confederacy and by the 16th century Switzerland was well-established as a separate state.⁵⁹

During the [Napoleonic Wars](#) in the late 18th century and early 19th century, [Napoleon](#) annexed territory formerly controlled by the Hapsburgs and Savoy. In 1798 he established the Helvetic Republic in Switzerland; two years later he led an army across the St. Bernhard pass and conquered almost all of the Alpine regions.⁶⁰

54Beattie, (2006), 27

55Beattie, (2006), 28-31

56Beattie, (2006), 31, 34

57Beattie, (2006), 32, 34, 37, 43

58Beattie, (2006), 41, 46, 48

59Beattie, (2006), 56, 66

60Shoumatoff (2001), 182-183

In the 19th century, the monasteries built in the high Alps during the medieval period to shelter travelers and as places of pilgrimage, became tourist destinations. The [Benedictines](#) had built monasteries in [Lucerne](#), Switzerland, and [Oberammergau](#); the [Cistercians](#) in the Tyrol and at [Lake Constance](#); and the [Augustinians](#) had abbeys in the [Savoy](#) and one in the center of [Interlaken](#), Switzerland.⁶¹ The [Great St Bernard Hospice](#), built in the 9th or 10th centuries, at the summit of the [Great Saint Bernard Pass](#) was shelter for travelers and place for pilgrims since its inception; by the 19th century it became a tourist attraction with notable visitors such as author [Charles Dickens](#) and mountaineer Edward Whymper.⁶²

[Charles VII of France](#) ordered his [chamberlain](#) to climb [Aiguille du Dru](#) in 1356. The knight reached the summit of [Rocciamelone](#) where he left a bronze triptych of three crosses, a feat which he conducted with the use of ladders to traverse the ice.⁶³ The first recorded ascent of a peak was by [Petrarch](#) who in 1336 climbed [Mont Ventoux](#) in France. In 1492 Antoine de Ville climbed [Aiguille du Dru](#), without reaching the summit, an experience he described as "horrificing and terrifying."⁶⁴ [Leonardo da Vinci](#) was fascinated by variations of light in the higher altitudes, and climbed a mountain—scholars are uncertain which one; some believe it may have been [Monte Rosa](#). From his description of a "blue like that of a gentian" sky it is thought that he reached a significantly high altitude.⁶⁵ In the 18th century four [Chamonix](#) man almost made the summit of Mont Blanc but were overcome by altitude sickness and snowblindness.⁶⁶

[Conrad Gessner](#) was the first naturalist to ascend the mountains in the 16th century, to study them, writing that in the mountains he found the "theatre of the Lord".⁶⁷ By the 19th century more naturalists began to arrive to explore, study and conquer the high peaks; they were followed by artists, writers and painters.⁶⁸ Two men who first explored the regions of ice and snow were [Horace-Bénédict de Saussure](#) (1740–1799) in the Pennine Alps,⁶⁹ and the Benedictine monk of [Disentis Placidus a Spescha](#) (1752–1833).⁷⁰ Born in Geneva, Saussure was enamored with the mountains from an early age; he left a law career to become a naturalist and spent many years trekking through the Bernese Oberland, the Savoie, the Piedmont and Valais, studying the glaciers and the geology, as he became an early proponent of the theory of rock upheaval.⁷¹ Saussure, in 1787, was the first to summit Mont Blanc—today the summits of all the peaks have been climbed.⁷²

61Beattie, (2006), 69–70

62Beattie, (2006), 73, 75–76

63Fleming (2000), 5

64

65qtd in Shoumatoff (2001), 193

66Shoumatoff (2001), 192–194

67Fleming (2000), 8

68Fleming (2000), vii

69Fleming (2000), 27

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71Fleming (2000), 12–13, 30, 27

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The Romantics

[Jean-Jacques Rousseau](#) of Geneva was the first of many to present the Alps as a place of allure and beauty, banishing the prevalent conception of the mountains as a hellish wasteland inhabited by demons. Rousseau's conception of alpine purity was later emphasized with the publication of [Albrecht von Haller](#)'s poem *Die Alpen* that described the mountains as an area of mythical purity.⁷³ Late in the 18th century the first wave of [Romantics](#) such as [Goethe](#) and [Turner](#) came to admire the scenery; [Wordsworth](#) visited the area in 1790, writing of his experiences in *The Prelude*. Schiller later wrote the play *William Tell* romanticising Swiss independence. After the end of the [Napoleonic Wars](#), the Alpine countries began to see an influx of poets, artists, and musicians,⁷⁴ as visitors came to experience the [sublime](#) effects of monumental nature.⁷⁵

In 1816 [Byron](#), [Percy Bysshe Shelley](#) and his wife [Mary Shelley](#) visited Geneva and all three were inspired by the scenery in their writings.⁷⁶ During these visits Shelley wrote the poem "[Mont Blanc](#)", Byron wrote "[The Prisoner of Chillon](#)" and the dramatic poem *Manfred*, and Mary Shelley, who found the scenery overwhelming, conceived the idea for the novel *Frankenstein* in her villa on the shores of Lake Geneva in the midst of a thunderstorm. When [Coleridge](#) travelled to [Chamonix](#), he declaimed, in defiance of Shelley, who had signed himself "Atheos" in the guestbook of the Hotel de Londres near Montenvers,⁷⁷ "Who would be, who could be an atheist in this valley of wonders".⁷⁸ By the mid-19th century scientists began to arrive en masse to study the geology and ecology of the region.⁷⁹

The Nazis

Austrian-born [Adolf Hitler](#) had a lifelong romantic fascination for the Alps and by the 1930s established a home in the [Obersalzberg](#) region outside of [Berchtesgaden](#). His first visit to the area was in 1923 and he maintained a strong tie there until the end of his life. At the end of World War II the US Army occupied Obersalzberg, to prevent Hitler from retreating with the [Wehrmacht](#) into the mountains.⁸⁰

73Beattie, (2006), 121-123

74Fleming (2000), 83

75Beattie, (2006), 125-126

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77Geoffrey Hartman, "[Gods, Ghosts, and Shelley's 'Atheos'](#)", *Literature and Theology*, Volume 24, Issue 1, pp. 4-18

78Beattie, (2006), 127-133

79Beattie, (2006), 139

80Mitchell (2007), 7-10

By 1940 the [Third Reich](#) had occupied many of the Alpine countries. Austria underwent a political coup that made it part of the Third Reich; France had been invaded and Italy was a [fascist](#) regime. Switzerland was the only country to resist invasion.⁸¹ The Swiss Confederation mobilized its troops—the country follows the doctrine of "armed neutrality" with all males required to have military training—a number that [General Eisenhower](#) estimated to be about 850,000. The Swiss commanders wired the infrastructure leading into the country, and threatening to destroy bridges, railway tunnels and passes in the event of a Nazi invasion, and then they retreated to the heart of the mountain peaks where conditions were harsher and a military invasion would involve difficult and protracted battles.⁸²

[Ski troops](#) were trained for the war, and battles were waged in mountainous areas such as the battle at Riva Ridge in Italy, where the American [10th Mountain Division](#) encountered heavy resistance in February 1945.⁸³ At the end of the war, a substantial amount of [Nazi plunder](#) was found stored in Austria, where Hitler had hoped to retreat as the war drew to a close. The [salt mines](#) surrounding the [Altaussee](#) area, where American troops found 75 kilos of gold coins stored in a single mine, were used to store looted art, jewels, and currency; vast quantities of looted art were found and returned to the owners.⁸⁴

Alpine people and culture

The population of the region is 14 million spread across eight countries.⁸⁵ On the rim of the mountains, on the plateaus and the plains the economy consists of manufacturing and service jobs whereas in the higher altitudes and in the mountains farming is still an essential to the economy.⁸⁶

Much of the Alpine culture is unchanged since the medieval period when skills that guaranteed survival in the mountain valleys and in the highest villages became mainstays, leading to strong traditions of carpentry, woodcarving, baking and pastry-making, and cheesemaking.⁸⁷ Farming and forestry continue to be mainstays of Alpine culture, industries that provide for export to the cities and maintain the mountain ecology.⁸⁸

81Halbrook (1998), 1

82Halbrook (2006), 1-3

83Feuer (2006), viii

84Mitchell (2007), 10, 151

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86Chartes et. el. (2010), 14

87Shoumataff (2001), 123-126

88Chartes et. el. (2010), 5

Farming had been a traditional occupation for centuries, although is becoming less dominant in the 20th century with the advent of tourism. Grazing and pasture land is limited because of the steep and rocky topography of the Alps. In mid-June cows are moved to the highest pastures close to the snowline, where they are watched by herdsman who stay in the high altitudes often living in stone huts or wooden barns during the summers.⁸⁹ Villagers celebrate the day the cows are herded up to the pastures and again when they return in mid-September. The *Alpanschluss* ("coming down from the alps") is celebrated by decorating the cows with garlands and enormous [cowbells](#) while the farmers dress in traditional costumes.⁹⁰

Cheesemaking is an ancient tradition in most Alpine countries. A wheel of cheese from the [Emmental](#) in Switzerland can weigh up to 100 pounds, and owners of the cows traditionally receive from the cheesemakers a portion in relation to the proportion of the cow's milk from the summer months in the high alps. Haymaking is an important farming activity in mountain villages which has become somewhat mechanized recent years, although the slopes are so steep that usually scythes are necessary to cut the grass. Hay is normally brought in twice a year, often also on festival days.⁹¹ Alpine festivals vary from country to country and often include the display of local costumes such as [dirndl](#) and [trachten](#), the playing of [Alpenhorns](#), wrestling matches, some pagan traditions such as [Walpurgis Night](#), and in many areas [Carnival](#) is celebrated before [Lent](#).⁹²

In the high villages people live in homes built according to medieval designs that withstand cold winters. The kitchen is separated from the living area (called the *stube*, the area of the home heated by a stove), and second-floor bedrooms benefit from rising heat. The typical Swiss [chalet](#) originated in the Bernese Oberland. Chalets often face south or downhill, are built of solid wood, with a steeply gabled roof to allow accumulated snow to slide off easily. Stairs leading to upper levels are sometimes built on the outside, and balconies are sometimes enclosed.⁹³⁹⁴

Food is passed from the kitchen to the stube, where the dining room table is placed. Some meals are communal, such as [fondue](#), where a pot is set in the middle of the table for each person to dip into. Other meals are still served in a traditional manner on carved wooden plates. Furniture has been traditionally elaborately carved and in many Alpine countries carpentry skills are passed from generation to generation. Roofs are constructed from Alpine rocks such as pieces of [schist](#), gneiss or [slate](#).⁹⁵

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92Shoumataff (2001), 129, 135

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94Shoumataff (2001), 134

95Shoumataff (2001), 131, 134

The Alpine regions are multicultural and linguistically diverse. Dialects are common, and vary from valley to valley, region to region. In the Slavic Alps alone 19 dialects have been identified. Some of the French dialects spoken in the French and Swiss Alps derive from [Old Provençal](#); the German dialects derive from Germanic tribal languages. [Romansh](#), spoken by two percent of the population in southeast Switzerland, is an ancient Rhaeto-Romanic language derived from Latin, remnants of ancient Celtic languages and perhaps [Etruscan](#).⁹⁶⁹⁷

Tourism

Further information: [Tourism in Austria](#), [Tourism in France](#), [Tourism in Italy](#), [Tourism in Slovenia](#), and [Tourism in Switzerland](#)

At present the Alps are one of the more popular tourist destinations in the world with many resorts such [Oberstdorf](#), in Bavaria, [Saalbach](#) in Austria, [Davos](#) in Switzerland, [Chamonix](#) in France, and [Cortina d'Ampezzo](#) in Italy recording more than a million annual visitors. With over 120 million visitors a year tourism is integral to the Alpine economy with much it coming from winter sports although summer visitors are an important component of the tourism industry.⁹⁸

The tourism industry began in the early 19th century when foreigners visited the Alps, traveled to the bases of the mountains to enjoy the scenery, and stayed at the spa-resorts. Large hotels were built during the [Belle Époque](#); [cog-railways](#), built early in the 20th century, brought tourists to ever higher elevations, with the [Jungfraubahn](#) terminating at the Jungfrauoch after going through a tunnel in Eiger. During this period winter sports were slowly introduced: in 1882 the first [figure skating](#) championship was held in [St. Moritz](#), and downhill skiing became a trendy sport with English visitors early in the 20th century,⁹⁹ as the first ski-lift was installed in 1908 above Grindelwald.¹⁰⁰

96Shoumataff (2001), 114-166

97Halbrook (1998), 2

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100Beattie (2006), 198

In the first half of the 20th century the Olympic Winter Games were held three times in Alpine venues: the [1924 Winter Olympics](#) in Chamonix, France; the [1928 Winter Olympics](#) in St. Moritz, Switzerland; and the [1936 Winter Olympics](#) in [Garmisch-Partenkirchen](#), Germany. During World II the winter games were canceled but after that time the Winter Games have been held in [St. Moritz \(1948\)](#), [Innsbruck](#), Austria (1964 and 1976), [Grenoble](#), France, (1968), [Albertville](#), France, (1992), and [Torino](#), Italy, (2006).¹⁰¹ In 1930 the *Lauberhorn Rennen* (Lauberhorn Race), was run for the first time on the [Lauberhorn](#) above [Wengen](#);¹⁰² the equally demanding [Hahnenkamm](#) was first run in the same year in [Kitzbühl](#), Austria.¹⁰³ Both races continue to be held each January on successive weekends. The Lauberhorn and is the more strenuous downhill race at 4.5 km (**unknown operator: u'strong'** mi) and poses danger to racers who reach 130 km/h (**unknown operator: u'strong'** mph) within seconds of leaving the start gate.¹⁰⁴

During the post-World War I period ski-lifts were built in Swiss and Austrian towns to accommodate winter visitors, but summer tourism continued to be important; by the mid-20th century the popularity of downhill skiing increased greatly as it became more accessible and in the 1970s several new villages were built in France devoted almost exclusively to skiing, such a [Les Menuires](#). Until this point Austria and Switzerland had been the traditional and more popular destinations for winter sports, but by the end of the 20th century and into the early 21st century, France, Italy and the Tyrol began to see increases in winter visitors.¹⁰⁵ From 1980 to the present, ski-lifts have been modernized and snow-making machines installed at many resorts, leading to concerns regarding the loss of traditional Alpine culture and questions regarding sustainable development as the winter ski industry continues to develop quickly and the number of summer tourists decline.¹⁰⁶

Transportation

The region is serviced by **unknown operator: u', 'unknown operator: u', 'unknown operator: u', ' (unknown operator: u'strong' unknown operator: u', 'mi)** of roads used by 6 million vehicles.¹⁰⁷ Train travel is well established in the Alps, with, for instance 120 km (**unknown operator: u'strong'** mi) of track for every 1000 square kilometers in a country such as Switzerland.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, plans are underway to build a 57 km (**unknown operator: u'strong'** mi)-long [sub-alpine tunnel](#) connecting the older [Lötschberg](#) and [Gotthard](#) tunnels built in the 19th century.¹⁰⁹

101"[21 Past Olympic Games](#)". Olympic.org. Retrieved August 13, 2012

102[Lauberhorn History](#). Retrieved August 14, 2012.

103"[Hahnenkamm Races Kitzbuhel](#)". HKR.com. Retrieved August 13, 2012

104[Lauberhorn Downhill](#). Retrieved August 14, 2012.

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108"[Rail](#)". Swissworld.org. Retrieved August 20, 2012

109"[The Longest Hole](#)". Swissworld.org. Retrieved August 20, 2012