

Canton Basel-Landschaft

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Brief Portrait

Canton Basel-Landschaft is one of 26 cantons (member states) in Switzerland. Basel-Landschaft is very diverse. From pristine natural landscapes and charming towns to castles, palaces and industrial areas, you can find everything in the Basel region.

Numbers and Facts

Canton Basel-Landschaft has over 290,000 inhabitants, a quarter of which are citizens of other countries. The canton covers 518 km², 5 districts (Bezirke), and 86 communities (Gemeinden). The capital is Liestal. The official language is German. The canton borders Germany and France, as well as neighbouring cantons Basel-Stadt, Aargau, Solothurn, and Jura.

History

Canton Basel-Landschaft was founded in 1832 after separation from Basel-Stadt. The early period of the young canton was characterised by political disputes and economic turbulence. Basel-Landschaft quickly became a place of refuge for people from all across Europe, especially Germany. After the Second World War, the economic region of Basel experienced unprecedented growth. Canton Basel-Landschaft recorded the highest growth rates in Switzerland and quickly expanded its infrastructure. Today, Canton Basel-Landschaft is still rather rural, but also has an industry with international corporations and many smaller and medium-sized enterprises (KMU) that are global leaders in the field of life sciences.

Customs and Traditions

Despite areas of substantial industrialisation and urbanisation, Canton Basel-Landschaft still has rich and lively customs. The local people passionately look after their traditions and appreciate it when you become familiar with these festivals and customs. Besides the carnival (Fasnacht), which is hugely important to the whole region and takes place in February or March, "Eierläset" on Easter and "Banntag" on Ascension Day are examples of traditional cantonal events.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-baselland.ch/en/canton-basel-landschaft/brief-portrait

Political System

The political power in Switzerland is divided into three levels: the confederation, the cantons (states), and the communities. The Swiss vote on political matters.

The Swiss Confederation

The Swiss Confederation was founded in 1848. The capital is Bern. Switzerland does not form an ethnic, linguistic or religious entity. Because it is comprised of different cultures that came together of their own free will the term "Nation by Choice" (Willensnation) is used. Switzerland takes up a neutral position in international politics.

Federalism

In Switzerland the cantons and communities have a great deal of independence. This is called federalism. The 26 cantons and over 2000 communities have fully developed state structures. Canton Basel-Landschaft has its own constitution and government, a parliament, and courts. The cantons and communities are responsible for many public duties. For instance, the school system is structured differently in the different cantons. Federal laws apply throughout the country. Cantons have their own laws which apply only within the canton. Even communities can enact their own rules. In order to fulfil their duties, the cantons and communities as well as the confederation raise taxes.

Separation of Powers

To prevent a concentration of power, Switzerland has three independent powers: the legislative power, the executive power and the judiciary power. In Canton Basel-Landschaft, the following authorities exercise these powers:

- Legislative power: Cantonal Parliament (Landrat) (90 members, elected by the public every four years)
- Executive power: Cantonal Government (Regierungsrat) (5 members, elected by the public every four years)
- Judiciary power: Various courts on the level of the canton as well as district courts

The communities also have a legislative power (community assembly or parliament) (Gemeindeversammlung, Parlament) and an executive power (city council or community council) (Stadtrat, Gemeinderat). The national government (7 members) is called the Federal Council (Bundesrat). On the national level there are various courts. The Federal Tribunal is the highest instance where, for example, cantonal rulings can be appealed against.

Democratic rights

The Swiss have the right to vote and to stand as candidates. They elect the political bodies on a community, cantonal and federal level and can run as candidates. In addition, popular votes are held on political matters on a community, cantonal and federal level (direct democracy). Popular initiatives enable citizens to bring issues that are important to them to vote. Foreigners who live in Canton Basel-Landschaft do not have the right to vote or to run as candidates. They may, however, address the authorities by filing a petition. Moreover, they often have the possibility to get involved in commissions, interest groups or associations at their place of residence.

Fundamental Rights

The fundamental legal principles are documented in the Federal Constitution (Bundesverfassung). The fundamental rights, which are based on the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), form an important part of the Federal Constitution. They protect human existence (e.g. right to life, right to assistance when in need) and protect individuals from state violence or protect groups from majorities. They guarantee that nobody be discriminated against based on origin, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation. Victims of racial discrimination receive free support and advice in Canton Basel-Landschaft. Freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press prevail in Switzerland.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

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Religion

Switzerland has a Christian tradition. Today many members of other religious groups call Switzerland home. Freedom of religion is guaranteed and public schools are religiously neutral.

Religion and State

Switzerland has been traditionally influenced by the Christian religion. The cantons are responsible for defining the relationship between religion and state. Most German-speaking cantons, including Canton Basel-Landschaft, recognise Christian religious organisations as public institutions (regional churches, Landeskirchen). In effect, the state grants the regional churches certain rights, such as to collect taxes from their members. In Canton Basel-Landschaft, the regional churches are Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Christian Catholic.

Religions Groups in Canton Basel-Landschaft

In addition to the publicly recognised religious institutions (regional churches), there are many other religious communities in Canton Basel-Landschaft. The majority of Basel-Landschaft's residents belong to a Christian religious group. In recent years, the number of members of other religions has also risen. Moreover, the share of residents who do not belong to a religious community has also grown.

Freedom of Religion

The Swiss constitution guarantees religious freedom. Everybody has a right to their religious beliefs as well as a right to express and pass on these beliefs. Nobody can be forced to join a religious group or participate in religious acts. Persons may gather to practice religious rituals and celebrations. Nobody may be discriminated against based on their religion or their beliefs.

Religion and School

Compulsory schooling is religiously neutral. This does not mean that religious issues cannot be a part of education. There are two kinds of religious education: the denominational religious education offered by the regional churches and the religious education offered by the school which is called "Ethics and Religion". This subject discusses religious and ethical matters that are relevant to all people. It is compulsory on the primary and first upper level. Participation in the denominational religious education offered by the regional churches is optional. Some other religious communities offer religious education for children outside of school.

**Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets,
brochures)**

www.hallo-baselland.ch/en/canton-basel-landschaft/religion

Leisure

Canton Basel-Landschaft offers many attractive leisure activities. Clubs are particularly important. They offer the opportunity to meet people.

Clubs

Many residents in Canton Basel-Landschaft are members of a club (Verein). There are clubs for a wide range of interests. Even small communities have athletic, cultural, and other clubs which are an excellent way of meeting people. Most clubs are open for everyone. Information regarding clubs can be found on the community websites.

Offers for Young People

For young people in Canton Basel-Landschaft, there are many recreational offers that give them a chance to meet their peers. Many communities have meeting points and various recreational activities. The young people are supervised, can contribute ideas, and realise projects (Jugendarbeit). Most offers are free. Youth clubs are an opportunity to take part in outdoor activities with peers. The offers are provided by clubs, communities, or regional churches and are open for all young people. The community of residence provides further information.

Excursions and Culture

Canton Basel-Landschaft offers many excursions and a rich cultural life. The outstanding Jura region offers many beautiful hiking and biking trails. Popular destinations for day trips include the Roman settlement Augusta Raurica, the "Wasserfallen" region, as well as the many castles and palaces that are just as much part of Canton Basel-Landschaft as the Rhine or the Birs. Baselland Tourism provides information about available excursions and events. Information on cultural events may also be found in local newspapers.

Volunteer Work

Volunteer work (Freiwilligenarbeit) is an unpaid contribution to society and the environment. In Switzerland, many tasks are traditionally performed by volunteers. A large part of the work is done by clubs. Those wishing to get involved can join a club that is involved with culture, sports, social causes, education, animal and wildlife protection, health, or other causes. Information regarding volunteer work and volunteer opportunities is provided by the office for volunteer work Benevol, the Swiss Red Cross Baselland (SRK), or the Caritas organisations in both cantons of Basel.

Sports / Culture / Education

People with limited financial means are offered discounts for athletic, cultural or educational events when using the Kulturlegi pass. Applications for the pass are made through Caritas. Caritas will provide additional information and verify whether the requirements for a Kulturlegi pass are met. As another option, the family pass (Familienpass) provides an extensive range of discounts or free offers in north-western Switzerland. For children, youths, and young adults, there are also numerous discounts and free offers including the "colourkey" or the holiday pass (Ferienpass). Additional information can be found on the respective websites.

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