

# Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden

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## Brief Portrait

Appenzell Ausserrhoden is one of the 26 cantons (federal states) of Switzerland. In terms of population, it is one of the smaller cantons. Typical for Appenzell Ausserrhoden are the lived traditions and the regional natural diversity.

### Numbers and Facts

The canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden has over 56,000 inhabitants, of whom approximately 18% are foreign nationals. The canton, covering an area of 243 km<sup>2</sup>, consists of 3 districts and 20 municipalities. The main municipality is Herisau. The official language is German.

Living here is a privilege. Charming villages nestled in the gentle pre-Alpine hills offer unique opportunities to live away from the hustle and bustle, yet close to urban centers.

In Appenzell Ausserrhoden, we have:

- a robust and stable economy with a low unemployment rate
- a beautiful landscape and exciting tourism offers
- vibrant traditions
- stable, low taxes
- affordable rental and construction costs
- a well-connected transportation network
- a stable healthcare and education system

The population, economy, and politics are characterized by constructive collaboration and open dialogue. This is essential to sustainably shape the future of living environments in Ausserrhoden. For harmonious coexistence, everyone is needed!

### History

Appenzell Ausserrhoden was established in 1597 through the division of the Appenzell region into a Protestant (Ausserrhoden) and a Catholic (Innerrhoden) part. In 1513, Appenzell became part of the Swiss Confederation. Textile production shaped economic development from the 16th century onwards.

Key milestones included the first cantonal constitution in 1834 and the construction of railways between 1875 and 1913. In the 20th century, the canton saw significant political progress: in 1934, the first Federal Councilor from Ausserrhoden was elected, women gained the right to vote on the municipal level in 1972 and on the cantonal level in 1989.

## **Customs and Traditions**

As if time had stood still!

Nowhere else in Switzerland are traditions and customs lived as intensely as in the Appenzell region. From mid-May, the Sennen (herders) drive their animals to the alpine pastures wearing traditional attire. Dressed in a Kranzrock (traditional skirt), adorned with cameo jewelry, and carrying a Mailändertuch (colorful scarf), they attend the « Stobete », a cheerful festival with string music. In autumn, the most beautiful cow is crowned at the cattle shows. Our traditions accompany us throughout the year.

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

[www.hallo-ar.ch/en/canton-appenzell-ausserrhoden/brief-portrait](http://www.hallo-ar.ch/en/canton-appenzell-ausserrhoden/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 Appenzell Ausserrhoden has its own constitution and government, a parliament, and courts. The cantons and communities are responsible for many public duties. This is why the school systems are built 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 own rules. In order to fulfill 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.

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 Appenzell Ausserrhoden do not have the right to vote or to run as candidates. They may however address the authorities by filing a petition.

However, in Appenzell Ausserrhoden, there is the right to vote and stand for election at the municipal level (municipality) for foreigners, provided they have lived in Switzerland for 10 years and in the canton for 5 years. This applies to the municipalities of Trogen, Speicher, Wald, and Rehetobel.

## 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 Appenzell Ausserrhoden. Freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press prevail in Switzerland.

Those affected by discrimination can contact the "HEKS Counseling Center Against Racism and Discrimination" (HEKS Beratungsstelle gegen Rassismus und Diskriminierung).

For questions regarding labor law and equality law, women and men can receive free counseling at the Work Information Center.

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

[www.hallo-ar.ch/en/canton-appenzell-ausserrhoden/political-system](http://www.hallo-ar.ch/en/canton-appenzell-ausserrhoden/political-system)

## 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 Appenzell Ausserrhoden, recognise Christian religious organizations as public institutions (regional churches, Landeskirchen). In effect, the state grants the regional churches certain rights, such as collecting taxes from their members. In Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden the regional churches are Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Christian Catholic.

### Religion in Appenzell Ausserrhoden

In addition to the publicly recognized religious communities (national churches), the canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden is home to many other religious communities of various denominations. The canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden is shaped by the evangelical-reformed tradition.

### 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-ar.ch/en/canton-appenzell-ausserrhoden/religion](http://www.hallo-ar.ch/en/canton-appenzell-ausserrhoden/religion)

## Leisure

Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden offers many attractive leisure activities. Clubs are particularly important. They offer the opportunity to meet people.

### Clubs

Many residents in Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden 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 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 realize 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 will provide further information.

### Excursions and Culture

Appenzell Ausserrhoden offers numerous excursion opportunities and a rich cultural program. There are many beautiful hiking and cycling routes. Numerous museums offer exhibitions on a variety of topics. Appenzeller region Tourism provides information about excursion options and events. Information about current cultural events can also be found in local newspapers.

### Volunteer Work

Volunteering is a societal contribution to others and the environment, which is not paid. Many tasks in Switzerland are traditionally carried out by volunteers. A large portion of this work is done in associations. One can engage in associations for culture, sports, social issues, education, animal and environmental protection, health, and other areas. The specialized agency Benevol provides information about volunteering and opportunities for engagement.

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

[www.hallo-ar.ch/en/canton-appenzell-ausserrhoden/leisure](http://www.hallo-ar.ch/en/canton-appenzell-ausserrhoden/leisure)