

# Countries Around the World™

## Switzerland

### Program Summary

Meet Vivienne. She and her family live in Bätterkinden, a village in the canton of Bern in Switzerland. Join Vivienne as she plays some golf amid the crisp air and beautiful scenery of Bätterkinden. Next, Vivienne and her mother drive across the Swiss plateau to reach Bern, Switzerland's capital city. Once she arrives, Vivienne begins her adventure in Bern by stopping to see some bears — Bern's symbolic animal and the source of the city's name — at Bern's famous bear pits. After watching the hourly chime show at Bern's clock tower, Vivienne and her mother browse Swiss watches and shop for chocolate before visiting the Federal Palace, the Swiss National Bank and the Münster, a Gothic cathedral. Vivienne finishes her tour of Bern with a trip to the Kunstmuseum, where she and her mother admire the pieces of modern and kinetic art. Finally, Vivienne returns home to her family, and they all sit down to enjoy some fondue.

### Country Information

- **location:** Central Europe; bordered by Austria, France, Italy, Liechtenstein and Germany
- **capital:** Bern
- **official languages:** German, French and Italian
- **type of government:** confederation
- **total area:** approximately 41,290 sq km
- **climate:** temperate, but varies with altitude; cold, cloudy, rainy/snowy winters; cool to warm, cloudy, humid summers with occasional showers
- **terrain:** mostly mountains (Alps in the South, Jura in the Northwest) with a central plateau of rolling hills, plains, and large lakes
- **natural resources:** includes hydropower potential, timber and salt
- **industries:** includes machinery, chemicals, watches, textiles, precision instruments, tourism, banking and insurance
- **agricultural products:** includes grains, fruits, vegetables, meat and eggs

### Vocabulary

**canton** — A small territorial division of a country. Switzerland is divided into 26 cantons.

**Swiss franc** — The currency of Switzerland.

**euro** — The currency of several member nations of the European Union.

**European Union (EU)** — A family of democratic European countries that are committed to working together for peace and prosperity.

**Münster** — A Gothic cathedral that is located in Bern. It was built in stages from 1421 to 1893.

**Kunstmuseum** — An art museum that is located in Bern.

**fondue** — A hot dish that is made from melted cheese and wine and eaten with bread. Fondue is also commonly made with chocolate.

**caquelon** — A pot used to make and serve fondue.

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**Gruyere** — A nutty, pale yellow, firm cheese that is made from whole cow's milk and has small holes. It is produced chiefly in France and Switzerland.

**Vacherin** — A soft, rich, seasonal cheese that is made from cow's milk and contained in a grayish-yellow blancher rind. It is produced chiefly in France and Switzerland.

**Emmenthal** — A Swiss cheese that is made from cow's milk and contains small holes.

**Tête de Moine** — French for "monk's head." Also "Bellelay." A rich, semi-soft cheese that is made in Switzerland. It is named after the monastery where it originated, the Abbey of Bellelay in the canton of Bern.

**Fribourgeois** — A cheese that is very similar to Vacherin, but firmer. It is made in the Fribourg canton of Switzerland.

**Tilsit** — A semi-hard, light yellow cheese made from whole milk that is similar in flavor to mild Limburger.

### Pre-viewing Discussion

- Lead a discussion about identity. Begin by asking students to share information about people, places and things with which they identify. How do these things represent you? What do they say about you? If you had to describe who you are as a person, what would you say? How is being a part of your community a part of your identity? How is being a resident of your state and the United States part of your identity? As they prepare to watch the program, inform students to watch for examples of Swiss identity.
- Ask students what they would do and show if they were going to give a tour of their community to a child from another country. In small groups, have students brainstorm a list of things they think would be important to show their visitor. Engage the students with questions, such as: Why are these things important to you? How are they representative of where you live? Do you think your visitor would fully understand your community if he or she experienced all these things? Why or why not?
- Discuss what makes places different from each other. Begin by having students brainstorm a list of things that they think make places unique. Follow up with questions, such as: How is climate a factor in defining an area? How are land formations or bodies of water factors? Are people a part of making a place unique? How? How would you characterize the place where you live? What makes it unique? As they prepare to watch the program, ask students to predict how Switzerland is different from their communities. After the program, follow up by asking students to compare their predictions about Switzerland with what was shown. What were some of the things that were different? Was there anything that was similar to where you live?

### Follow-up Activities

- Switzerland is an international center for banking, and its banks handle trillions of dollars each year from accounts held by people and countries all over the world. Students can pretend that they are Swiss bankers by creating a currency conversion chart that uses Swiss francs, U.S. dollars and three other currencies. Begin by having the students find prices for items that are commonly sold in the United States. Next, students can convert the prices of their items from U.S. dollars into the different currencies and organize the information in a chart.
- Switzerland is famous for its beautiful scenery and its mountains, such as the Alps in the South and the Jura in the Northwest. Students can find facts about Switzerland's mountains and build dioramas or models that show an aspect of the Swiss mountains, such as wildlife, climate, geology, avalanches, elevation or recreation. Students can write fact sheets to accompany their dioramas and models and present them to the class.
- Chess is a very popular game in Switzerland. Teach students how to play the game of chess and allow them to hone their skills in pairs. As an extension, students can find facts about the history of the game and some of its most prominent players.

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- In the program, Vivienne takes us to the Kunstmuseum, where we learn about the Swiss kinetic artist, Jean Tinguely. Have students design and create pieces of kinetic art with materials culled from a particular room of their house. And since kinetic art is open to interpretation, the only limitations on the students' work are their imaginations! Display the students' finished sculptures. For a gallery of samples of kinetic art, visit [www.kinetic-art.org/photogallery/index.html](http://www.kinetic-art.org/photogallery/index.html).
  - Fondue is one of the most popular dishes in Switzerland and is traditionally made with either cheese or chocolate. Prepare two separate batches of fondue for the class — one using Swiss cheeses and the other using Swiss chocolates. Students can even bring in different foods that they would like to dip in the fondue. (Teacher note: Be sure to check for any food allergies among students.) After the meal, take a poll to see which fondue was more popular: chocolate or cheese. Students can convert the poll results into fractions, decimals and percentages.
  - According to legend, Switzerland's capital city, Bern, received its name after the Duke of Zähringen vowed to name the city after the first animal he killed on a hunt. Ever since, the bear has been synonymous with Bern. Engage students in a study of bears. Begin by dividing students into small groups and assigning each group a particular species of bear to study. Have students create informational posters that include pictures or drawings of bears and details about the bears' habitats, appearances, food and behaviors. Students should also find out if their species is threatened or endangered, and what steps are being taken to prevent extinction. Each group can present its findings to the class. For information about bears, visit [www.bears.org/animals/](http://www.bears.org/animals/).
  - Have students create a classroom atlas that features the 26 Swiss cantons. Assign each student a canton and have him or her find information about it. Then, students can draw maps of their assigned cantons and their flags and design an accompanying page that contains information, such as population, cities and landforms. Information about the Swiss cantons can be found at [www.about.ch/cantons/index.html](http://www.about.ch/cantons/index.html).
  - The Swiss have garnered a reputation as experts in the field of precision timepieces with their exquisite clocks and watches. Students can assume the roles of Swiss clock engineers by building their own clocks for use in the Time Zone, a game in which students use math and geography skills to tell time all over the world! Begin by having students use pieces of cardboard, construction paper, markers and fasteners to make clock faces with movable hands. Then, have the students work together to mark a map of the Earth with the different time zones. Using the time zone of your school as the basis, announce the name of a city anywhere in the world (Bern, Switzerland) and a time (9:22); the first student to locate the city on the map and adjust the hands of his or her clock to the corresponding time in that city, wins. For an added challenge, factor in the International Date Line. So, get ready, and prepare to enter — the Time Zone!
  - Heidi, Johanna Spyri's beloved children's literature character, comes from Switzerland, but where do other popular characters come from? Students will enjoy finding out the origins of their favorite literary characters. Begin by having students pick characters from a class-generated list. Then, have students find out where their characters come from and mark a map of the world with the characters' names. As a culmination, students can create "character trading cards" for their characters. An interactive tool for making character trading cards can be found at [readwritethink.org/materials/trading\\_cards/](http://readwritethink.org/materials/trading_cards/).
  - Stop the presses! Students can pretend that they are publishers at a Swiss newspaper by designing and printing a newspaper page about Switzerland's history. For an interactive page maker, visit [interactives.mped.org/ppress110.aspx](http://interactives.mped.org/ppress110.aspx). Divide students into groups and assign each group a period of Swiss history to cover. As students complete rough drafts of their papers, have them exchange with another group for a peer editing session. Once they've finished making their papers, students can print copies to pass out to the class and give presentations based on their topics. For information on Switzerland's history, visit [history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch/](http://history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch/).
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- One of the things for which the Swiss are known is their delicious chocolate. In fact, Daniel Peter, a Swiss chocolate maker, invented one of the most popular forms of the sweet treat — milk chocolate! Students will have fun discovering the wonderful world of chocolate by visiting [www.fieldmuseum.org/Chocolate/about.html](http://www.fieldmuseum.org/Chocolate/about.html). Working in small groups, have students select topics and create pages for inclusion in a class book about chocolate. The book can include sections on the history of chocolate, how it is grown and produced, time lines that trace chocolate's evolution and maps that show where it originated and where different types are made. As an extension, students can seek out different types of chocolates from around the world and bring them to class to have a tasting.
  - Find out for what life is like in Switzerland firsthand by starting a pen-pal program with students who live there! Correspondence can take many forms — handwritten letters, emails, postcards or video mail. Keep track of when messages are received and share them with the class. For a school with the technological means, see if an Internet-based teleconference can be arranged.

### Suggested Internet Resources

- [www.kidskonnnect.com/Switzerland/SwitzerlandHome.html](http://www.kidskonnnect.com/Switzerland/SwitzerlandHome.html)  
This child-friendly site features basic information about Switzerland. Links to more comprehensive information are included.
- [www.swissworld.org/](http://www.swissworld.org/)  
A great site for teachers and students! Learn more about Switzerland's geography, culture, economy and more.
- [history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch/](http://history-switzerland.geschichte-schweiz.ch/)  
This site presents comprehensive information about Switzerland's history.
- [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)  
The CIA World Factbook web site presents detailed and up-to-date information on Switzerland and many other countries. Topics include geography, people, government, economy, transportation and communication. On the main page of the CIA site, click on the "World Factbook" link.

### Suggested Print Resources

- Maynard, Charles W. *Alps*. Rosen Publishing Group, New York, NY; 2004.
- Levy, Patricia and Richard Lord. *Switzerland*. Benchmark Books, New York, NY; 2005.
- Seavey, Lura Rogers. *Switzerland*. Children's Press, Danbury, CT; 2001.

Teacher's Guide written by Brian Wales, Curriculum Specialist, Schlessinger Media

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