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In the canton of Zug, cosmopolitanism and rustic traditionalism go hand in hand

International flair in the heart of Switzerland



(Photo: Guido Baselgia)

Next year Zug is to host the Congress of the Swiss Abroad. Switzerland's smallest full-canton is not only rich in natural beauty, but is also an important financial centre.

The name "Zug" first appears in a 12th-century document from the All Saints Monastery in Schaffhausen. The Middle High German word "Zuge" used to refer to a region with extensive fishing grounds. Over the next

Alexandra Arnold *

few centuries the lake of Zug also dictated the region's development. The opening of the Gotthard in particular gave rise to busy traffic in goods from Küsnacht across the lake to the small town of Zug, providing the impetus for a flourishing merchant trade and crafts industry, boosted by princely revenues from transport levies and tolls. As early as 700 years ago Zug was an important transit point on Europe's North-South trading route.

Major global trading centre

Despite the relatively early onset of industrialisation, the canton of Zug's finances were no bed of roses. In 1947, just after World War II the authorities took a bold step to rectify this un-

fortunate situation by revising the canton of Zug fiscal law and massively reducing taxes. The impact of this new fiscal strategy became evident from 1960, when the number of companies moving to Zug rose dramatically.

Since then Zug has gone from strength to strength and is now one of the world's largest trading centres. Around 18 000 companies currently have their registered domicile in the canton. The strong growth in companies and jobs was accompanied by a sharp rise in the population, with the number of residents doubling between 1950 and 1990.

Lively society

The juxtaposition of local and international is a dominant feature of the can-

ton of Zug. Citizens of over 90 nations are resident here. Glass facades and office blocks rub shoulders with romantic, well-preserved half-timbered houses and picturesque alleys. Zug has many customs and traditions which date back to the last century or even earlier and are celebrated on special dates. In addition to its customs it also boasts a rich store of myths. Lenten Carnival is a time for processions and masked revels, with entertainment and atmosphere provided by the "Guggenmusigen" (travelling musicians) whose reputation extends well beyond cantonal boundaries.

Despite the many construction projects, the rustic nature of the region has been kept intact. Idyllic landscapes offer a very high quality of life. Hiking paths through the romantic gorges of the Lorze and Sihl, grottos with the greatest variety of stalactite caves in Switzerland, and the unique moraine landscapes of Menzingen make for interesting excursions.

Conference of the Swiss Abroad 2000

The canton is eagerly looking forward to welcoming Swiss Abroad to Zug next year. After all, many of its own citizens have emigrated. One such was Baar missionary Martin Schmid, who left the canton in the 17th century and whose life's work can still be admired to this day in South America. Talented among other things in architecture, he built wonderful churches in Chaco, Bolivia. ■

Visit Switzerland with "Swiss Ping Pong"

*The "Swiss Ping Pong" scheme offers Swiss Abroad the possibility of getting to know Switzerland better by living with a host family. This encounter scheme was created in 1991 under the title "Visit Switzerland – see the world", and is one of the few projects that have lasted beyond the 700-year anniversary of the Confederation. For 1999 the Canton of Zug took over patronage of "Swiss Ping Pong". Further information and registrations for the year 2000 in Zug: Stapferhaus, Schloss, CH-5600 Lenzburg, Tel +41 62 891 57 51, Fax +41 62 892 07 57
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