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# HELVE<sup>+</sup>EDIA

Magazine for the members of the Swiss Society of New Zealand Inc  
Helvetia is in its 76th year

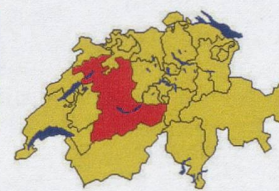
April 2010

## The Canton of Bern

The canton of Bern is the second largest of the 26 Swiss cantons by both surface area and population. The canton of Bern has a population of almost one million, of which about 120,000 are foreigners. The cantonal capital, Bern, is also the federal capital of Switzerland.

Bernese Oberland is the mountainous region which lies in the south of the canton.

The area of the canton is 5,959 km<sup>2</sup>. Of this area, 6.4% is occupied with houses, businesses or roads. 43.3% of the canton is agricultural land, and 31.0% is forested. Less than 19.3% is con-



Bern. It consists of 160 representatives, of which 15 seats are guaranteed for the French-speaking part of the canton.

The Bernese are sometimes teased for being slow; an equally valid generalisation is that they are thorough...

*from the internet*



Adelboden



Bern

The area of the canton of Bern consists of lands acquired by the city of Bern mostly between the 14th and the 16th century, both by conquest and purchase. Some French-speaking portions of the canton of Bern broke away from the canton only in the late 20th century and since 1979 comprise the Canton of Jura. Bern joined the Swiss Confederation in 1353.

The most important river of the canton of Bern is the River Aare and its tributaries. The most populated area is the Bernese Mittelland with the capital city of Bern. The northmost part of the canton is the Bernese Jura bordering the Canton of Jura. The

considered non-productive, which includes glaciers, mountains and lakes.

The canton of Bern is bilingual: both German (22 districts, with 84% of the population) and French (three districts) are spoken. The German-speaking majority speaks Bernese German, a Swiss German dialect. French-speakers live in the western and northern part of the canton. Both German and French are spoken in the bilingual city of Biel/Bienne. In the government and administration, both languages are official languages of equal standing.

The Grand Council of Bern is the parliament of the canton of

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