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# HELVEIA

Magazine for the members of the Swiss Society of New Zealand Inc  
Helvetica is in its 77th year



August/September 2011

## Switzerland – Confoederatio Helvetica



The English name Switzerland is a compound containing Switzer, a term for the Swiss in use during the 16th to 19th centuries. The English adjective

guished by the use of the definite article (d'Schwiiz for the Confederation, but simply Schwiiz for the canton and the town).

The New Latin name Con-



The lakes of the Oberengadin: lake Silvaplana and lake Sils

Swiss is a loan from French Suisse, also in use since the 16th century. The name Switzer is from the Alemannic Schwizer, originally an inhabitant of Schwyz and its associated territory, first attested in 972, ultimately perhaps related to suedan "to burn", referring to the area of forest that was burned and cleared to build. The name was extended and gradually came to be used for the entire Confederation.

The Swiss German name of the country, Schwiiz, is homophonous to that of the canton and the settlement, but distin-

foederatio Helvetica was introduced gradually only after the formation of the federal state in 1848. It is derived from the name of the Helvetii, a Gaulish tribe living on the Swiss plateau (Mittelland) before the Roman era.

The Swiss Confederation has a long history of neutrality—it has not been in a state of war internationally since 1815—and did not join the United Nations until 2002. It pursues, however, an active foreign policy and is frequently involved in peace-building processes around the world. On the European level, it

is a founding member of the European Free Trade Association and is part of the Schengen Area – although it is notably not a member of the European Union, nor the European Economic Area.

In nominal terms, Switzerland is one of the richest countries in the world. Zurich and Geneva have respectively been ranked as the cities with the second and third highest quality of life in the world. In 2010 the World Economic Forum ranked Switzerland as the most competitive country in the world, while ranked by the European Union as Europe's most innovative country by far.

Switzerland has existed as a state in its present form since the adoption of the Swiss Federal Constitution in 1848. The precursors of modern Switzerland established a protective alliance at the end of the 13th century (1291), forming a loose confederation of states which persisted for centuries.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Rede von Bundespräsidentin Micheline Calmy-Rey – 1. August	2
Carolyn Lane	3
Switzerland and its anthem(s)	4
Direct Democracy in Switzerland	5
Deadly weapons	6
Gun politics in Switzerland/ Recipe: 1st August-Weggen	7
Swiss Club News	8-13
Children's Page	14
The richest man in Switzerland	15
Red squirrel/Eichhörnchen	16