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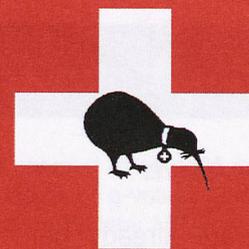
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Aargau's Aarau

Every country seems to have a stereotype. Be it a state, a province or a region that is the butt of the rest of the country's jokes. In Switzerland, the canton is Aargau.

The Swiss (and notoriously the residents of Zürich) have created a fiction about Aargau that their two-letter license plate code "AG" stand for "Achtung Gefahr!" (Watch out for danger!). When it comes to car accidents, there is no truth in Aargauers being dangerous. In fact, they have fewer crashes compared to the residents of Zürich or Bern. This is astonishing because they have people from both of these cantons commuting through Aargau all the time! When it comes to fender benders, they have fewer of those, too (16.5 per 10,000 residents, compared to 23.3 in Zürich or 24.2 in Bern).

Aargau's capital is Aarau. Though the city has been the site of civilization since the Bronze Age, the town known today as Aarau was founded by the Kyburger count Hartmann IV around 1240. There is a statue of him inside the main city gate. Located between Zürich, Basel and Bern, the canton of Aargau is in the heart of Switzerland's so-called flatlands. And despite many travellers having never heard of it, the canton is also one of the most densely populated. Aarau's dedication to improving the liveability while preserving its architectural legacy won it the Swiss Heritage Society Wakkerpreis in 2014.

The many painted eaves, the so-called "Dachhimmel" which predominantly date from the 16th century when the town underwent considerable extension, are a special feature of the old town of Aarau. It's for this reason



Photo © Tourismus Appenzellerland

that Aarau is regarded as the town of beautiful gables.

Every first Wednesday of November, the folks of Aarau celebrate the wonderful root vegetable loved by rabbits, horses and humans alike - the carrot. There is some evidence that the Aargauers were the first to cultivate carrots and other root vegetables in large numbers. The traditional Rüebliamt (Carrot Market) attracts some 35,000 visitors midweek to a town with a population of just 21,000. That alone is a feat and worth the journey to buy and try purple, yellow, red and the classic orange carrot. Eat them raw, drink them juiced, have them as soup and cake, or even steamed in a bun like a hot dog!

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