

# Can<sup>on</sup> Jura

A brief portrait

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# A brief portrait

The Jura is one of the 26 cantons in Switzerland. It is the youngest and one of the smallest cantons.

## Facts and figures

The Canton of Jura has more than 82,000 inhabitants. About 15% are foreigners.

The canton of Jura covers an area of 858 km<sup>2</sup> and is divided into four districts:

Delémont, Porrentruy, Moutier and Franches-Montagnes. There are 51 municipalities.

Each region is culturally and economically different.

The capital is Delémont and people speak French.

## History

Before 1815 the territory of the Jura belonged to the Bishopric of Basel. In 1815, at the Congress of Vienna, it was given to the Canton of Bern. But the people of the Jura retained their language and culture, which tend to the Francophone. Over time, tensions developed between this French-speaking part and the rest of the canton of Bern. At the beginning of the 20th century the idea of creating a new canton arose. Finally, on 23 June 1974 the inhabitants voted to create the Canton of Jura, which became official on 1 January 1979. Part of the Jura (the Bernese Jura) remained in the Canton of Bern. The city of Moutier joined the canton of Jura on January 1, 2026.

## Traditions and festivals

The customs of the Jura are linked to religious festivals and the seasons.

- In February, the Delémont Valley and Franches-Montagnes celebrate carnival
- In spring, Delémont celebrates the “Danse sur la Doux”
- In summer, almost every village has a “fête du village”
- In August, Saignelégier attracts thousands of visitors to the Saignelégier Horse Show (Marché Concours National de Cheval)
- Every two years, on the last weekend of August, the Braderie takes place in Porrentruy (Braderie) in even-numbered years (e.g., 2026, then 2028) and in Moutier (Braderie) in odd-numbered years (e.g., 2027, then 2029).
- In September, Le Noirmont hosts the Chant du Gros music festival
- In November, we celebrate Martinmas in Ajoie

## **Local products**

The canton of Jura is known for its local products:

- Tête de Moine AOP cheese (a local product)
- Damassine PDO (alcoholic spirit)
- Saucisse d'Ajoie IGP
- Boudin is a sausage made from pork blood that is eaten at Martinmas

Many farmers and artisans create other high-quality regional products. Every two years, a major competition for local products takes place in Courtemelon.

## **Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)**

[www.bonjour-jura.ch/en/canton-jura/a-brief-portrait](http://www.bonjour-jura.ch/en/canton-jura/a-brief-portrait)

# The political system in Switzerland

Political power in Switzerland operates at three levels: the Confederation (for the whole of Switzerland), the cantons and the municipalities. The Swiss usually vote four times a year to influence political decisions.

## The Swiss Confederation

The Swiss Confederation has existed in its present form since 1848. The capital is Bern.

Switzerland is a country of several cultures, languages and religions. It is a neutral country in international politics.

## Federalism

Switzerland is a federal country, a confederation of states. This means that it is made up of several states: the cantons. The cantons have a great deal of autonomy.

They can decide many things for themselves. This is called federalism.

There are 26 cantons and more than 2,000 municipalities with their own organisation. For example, the Canton of Jura has its own constitution, government, parliament and courts.

Federal laws apply throughout Switzerland, but the cantons also have their own laws. Municipalities may also pass laws (regulations).

The cantons and municipalities deal with various tasks such as education, health, security and transport.

Schools, for example, may operate differently in different cantons and communes.

The Confederation, cantons and municipalities collect taxes to finance their services. For example, schools, hospitals, culture.

## Separation of powers

In Switzerland, power is divided into three branches:

- The legislature (which makes the laws)
- The executive (which enforces the laws). This works to make the laws a reality in daily life.
- The judiciary (which applies the laws)

## **Powers for the whole of Switzerland (at federal level):**

- The legislative: the Federal Assembly. This is composed of the National Council (200 members) and the Council of States (46 members). Members are elected every four years by the people
- The executive: the Federal Council (seven members elected every four years by the Federal Assembly)
- The judiciary: several national courts. The Federal Supreme Court is the highest court (judges and prosecutors are elected by the Federal Assembly)

## **Powers in the Canton of Jura (cantonal level):**

- The legislative: the parliament (60 members elected every five years by the people)

The executive: the Government (five members elected every five years by the people)

- The judiciary: the Cantonal Court (2nd instance), the Court of First Instance, the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Juvenile Court (judges and prosecutors are elected by parliament).

## **Powers in the municipalities (municipal level):**

- The legislative: the Municipal Assembly (or the General Council)
- The executive: the Municipal (or Communal) Council.

## **Democratic rights (participating in voting and elections)**

All Swiss citizens aged 18 and over have the right to vote and can be elected.

They vote on political affairs, elect representatives and may stand as candidates at municipal, cantonal and federal level.

In the Canton of Jura, foreigners, who have lived in Switzerland for 10 years and in the canton for one year can vote at cantonal and municipal level.

They can also be elected at the municipal level (but not as mayor).

## **Initiatives**

Citizens can propose new laws (popular initiatives).

To do this, they must collect a number of signatures (for Switzerland: 100,000 signatures; for the canton of Jura: 2,000). Then the people can vote on these popular initiatives.

## **Fundamental rights (right to life, right to protection, freedoms)**

The Federal Constitution is the main law in Switzerland.

It describes the functioning of the Confederation and its relations with the cantons.

It guarantees the rights of the population and sets the objectives of Swiss politics.

The Federal Constitution stipulates fundamental rights such as:

the right to life, assistance in emergencies, protection against any form of discrimination. Discrimination means treating someone unfairly because of their origin, race, religion, ability, gender or sexual orientation.

In Switzerland, freedom of religion, opinion, association and the press are guaranteed.

The Bureau de l'intégration des étrangers et de la lutte contre le racisme (Office for the Integration of Foreigners and the Fight against Racism) provides counselling for those who are victims or witnesses of discrimination in the Canton of Jura.

## **Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)**

[www.bonjour-jura.ch/en/canton-jura/the-political-system-in-switzerland](http://www.bonjour-jura.ch/en/canton-jura/the-political-system-in-switzerland)

# Religion

Switzerland is a Christian country, but many people have other religious beliefs. Freedom of religion is guaranteed and public schools are neutral about religion.

## Religion and the state

Switzerland is a Christian country. Each canton decides on the relationship between religion and the state. In most cantons, Christian churches are officially recognised. The Canton of Jura recognises the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church in Switzerland. This means that the state gives them certain rights and tasks. For example, they can collect taxes from their members.

## Religious affiliation in the Canton of Jura

The majority of people in the Canton of Jura are Roman Catholics (53%). There are also other Christians (7%) and Muslims (2.5%). 16% of inhabitants say they have no religion (according to the statistical data as at 31.12.2022).

## Freedom of religion

The Swiss Constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Everyone has the right to practise and express their religion. No one may be forced to belong to a religious affiliation or take part in religious activities. Everyone has the right to assemble to celebrate religious rituals and festivals. No one may be discriminated against because of their religion or belief.

## Religion and school

Compulsory public school is neutral about religion, but religious subjects can be taught. The course "Ethics and Religious Cultures" (Éthique et cultures religieuses) at school allows students to explore different religions and humanist and religious values. Some religious affiliations offer their own religious education.

## Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

[www.bonjour-jura.ch/en/canton-jura/religion](http://www.bonjour-jura.ch/en/canton-jura/religion)

## Leisure activities

The Canton of Jura offers plenty of opportunities for leisure activities (sport, music, dance). Associations are very important and offer a way of meeting other people.

### Associations

Many inhabitants of the Jura are members of an association. There are associations for all interests. For example, sports and music associations.

Even in small villages there are sports and cultural associations.

These are open to all and offer a way of meeting people.

Information can be found on the websites of the municipalities.

### Offerings for young people

The Canton of Jura offers many activities for young people.

The Oxyjeune platform offers all the activities for young people in the Jura and the Bernese Jura.

There are youth centres in Delémont, Le Noirmont and Porrentruy.

These offer a place for young people to share their ideas and put their projects into practice.

Activities are usually free of charge.

In many villages, there are youth clubs that organise outdoor activities and allow young people to meet.

### Excursions and culture

The Canton of Jura provides many options for excursions and a rich cultural offering.

There are historic old towns, castles, rivers and ponds. You can go on beautiful bike rides or hikes.

There are also many museums with exhibitions on various subjects.

Jura Tourisme provides information on excursions and events.

The local newspapers also provide information on cultural events.

### The Culture Card (CarteCulture) makes sport/culture/learning cheaper

The CarteCulture (Culture Card) gives people with low incomes lower prices for sporting, cultural and learning events.

The card can be requested from Caritas, who will provide all the necessary information.

## **Volunteering (choosing to help for free)**

Volunteering is unpaid work to help people or the environment.

In Switzerland, many people do tasks voluntarily, without receiving any money. For example, to organise a festival or give French classes.

Much of this work is done in associations.

People can get involved in associations for culture, sport, personal care, education, animal and nature protection, health and many other things.

Bénévolat Jura provides information on volunteering and opportunities to get involved.

## **Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)**

[www.bonjour-jura.ch/en/canton-jura/leisure-activities](http://www.bonjour-jura.ch/en/canton-jura/leisure-activities)