

“Bei uns ist immer was los!”

SCHWEIZER NATIONALFEIERTAG—SWISS NATIONAL DAY

der 1. August (1291)

20 KEY DATES IN SWITZERLAND'S HISTORY

1536

Frenchman Jean Calvin arrived in Geneva – then not part of the Confederation – and promoted his reformist teachings in the following two years. The 500th anniversary of the Reformation will be celebrated in what is now known as the ‘City of Calvin’ later this year. Also in 1536, Bern conquered Vaud, which had been ruled by Savoy.

1602

The house of Savoy tried but failed to conquer Geneva, an event celebrated each December in the Escalade festival.

1648

Following the Thirty Years War, in which Switzerland did not participate, the Confederation was declared independent from the Holy Roman Empire.

1798

France invaded the Confederation under the pretext of helping Vaud drive out Bern. Bernese troops were defeated and Bern fell to the French, who abolished the old Confederation and created a centralized Helvetic Republic. New cantons were created but were not independent and had no real power.

1803

A civil war between centralists and federalists led Napoleon to pass an Act of Mediation which restored the old cantonal system and gave six former controlled territories full cantonal status – Aargau, Graubünden, St Gallen, Thurgau, Ticino and Vaud.

1815

After the fall of Napoleon, the cantons regained their autonomy in a Federal Treaty. At the Congress of Vienna, the new cantons of Valais, Neuchatel and Geneva joined the Swiss Confederation, and French-speaking parts of the Jura were given mainly to canton Bern, [sparking a separatist movement that has continued to this day](#). Foreign powers recognized Switzerland's neutrality.

1848

Fighting between liberal cantons and conservative Catholic ones led to the creation of the Swiss Constitution. This founded the federal parliamentary system and gave a new centralized government some of the powers previously in the hands of the cantons. The old Confederation of cantons therefore changed into a federal state – 1848 is now considered the date when modern day Switzerland was created. Bern was made the capital of Switzerland and the Swiss flag we know today was official adopted. Men were granted the right to vote.