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Ticino – Tessin

Ticino is the southernmost canton of Switzerland, named after the Ticino river. Its area is 2,812 square kilometers, of which about three quarters are considered productive. Forests cover about a third of the area,

Gandria on Lake Lugano

but also the lakes Maggiore and Lugano make up a considerable part of the total area.

The canton is split geographically in two parts by the Monte Ceneri pass. The northern, more mountainous part, called Sopraceneri, is formed by the two major Swiss valleys around the lake Maggiore: Ticino valley and Maggia valley. The southern part, called Sottoceneri, is the region around the Lake Lugano.

In ancient times, the area of what is today Ticino was settled by the Lepontii, a Celtic tribe. Later it became part of the Roman Empire. After the fall of the Western Empire, it was ruled by the Ostrogoths, the Lombards and the Franks. Around 1100 it was the centre of struggle between Milan and Como. In the fifteenth century the Swiss Confederates conquered the valleys south of the Alps in three separate conquests.

Subsequently, the upper valley of the Ticino River, from the St. Gotthard to Biasca was part of Canton Uri. The remaining territory was administered by the Twelve Cantons. These districts were governed by bailiffs holding office for two years and purchasing it from the members of the League.

The Val Leventina revolted unsuccessfully against Uri in 1755. Between 1798 and 1803, during the Helvetic Republic, the districts of Bellinzona and Lugano were separate cantons, but in 1803 the two were unified to form the canton of Ticino that joined the Swiss Confederation as a full member in the same year.

Until 1878 the three largest cities, Bellinzona, Lugano and Locarno, alternated as capital of the canton. In 1878, however, Bellinzona became the only and permanent capital.

The population of the canton (as of 31 December 2008) is 332,736. About 25.2% of the total population are foreigners. Frontalieri, commuter workers living in Italy but working regularly in Ticino, form over 20% of the

Ponte dei Salti in Verzascatal

workforce. Foreigners in general hold 44.3% of all the jobs. Frontalieri are usually paid less than Swiss workers for their jobs, and tend to serve as low-cost labor.

Italy is by far Ticino's most important foreign trading partner, but there's a huge trade deficit between imports and exports. Many Italian companies relocate to Ticino, either temporarily or permanently, seeking lower taxes and a more efficient bureaucracy.

from Wikipedia

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