

Appenzellerland Tourismus AI
Hauptgasse 38, CH-9050 Appenzell
Tel. +41 71 788 96 41
appenzell.ch

Media information – Customs and tradition.

A fascinating collection of curiosities: folklore, solemn moments, historical events.

RICH IN HISTORY – GENUINE TO THIS DAY

The Appenzell region holds celebrations on over 31 days of the year. The countless official customs and church festivals are emblematic of the eventful history that characterises this small canton in the north-east of Switzerland. Battles waged against hostile invaders, famines and religious struggles have left their visible traces in the cultural memory of this hilly countryside.

The people of Appenzell carry it in and on their person: the region's tradition and customs. In no other region are things like culture, crafts and conviviality so wholeheartedly embraced as in the green Appenzell hills. Throughout the year, this tiny community celebrates or commemorates happy (and sad) moments to honour the history of their forefathers and great-great-grandmothers.

Bells that hang on a golden band.

In many places, craftsmen remain active in professions that have long since disappeared elsewhere: be it in dairy saddlery, as a goldsmith or as a wooden roof tiler, for example. Time and time again, those with a love for "Senntumschellen", the region's unmistakable cow bells, traditional costume jewellery or simple, wooden crafted plates travel hundreds of miles to purchase unique works of art from Appenzell. One example: Roger Dörig from the Innerrhoden cantonal capital of Appenzell remains, to this day, a genuine bell saddler. He demonstrates to his visitors how much skill it takes to create studded belts, braces and bell straps. With three-millimetre-wide goat parchment threads, Roger Dörig stitches a pattern into the strap – a process that takes between ten and twelve hours – in order for the Alpine processions to remain a magnificent spectacle in the future.

A procession in rank and file to the Alp.

The lush Alpine grass beckons. Of course, there is also a colourful celebration when animals and humans alike journey to the Alp. From mid-May, Alpine dairymen don their traditional costumes and undertake the long march into the mountains. The Alpine procession is almost always led by a boy in Alpine dairyman's costume. Behind him, a "Schoppel", a group of Appenzell goats, white and without horns, trots along. A girl in children's costume keeps them on their toes – followed by the dairyman in festive costume sporting yellow leather knee breeches, a red cloth waistcoat, a black hat decorated with flowers and ribbons, braces adorned with metal emblems, white knee socks and dairyman's jewellery. On his left shoulder, he carries a beautifully decorated bucket. He is accompanied by the three most beautiful cows, which unmistakably wave the Senntum bells with ornate straps back and forth as they walk. Four herdsmen march in front of the rest of the cattle. The horse-drawn wagons carrying the Alpine equipment and the pigs form the end of the procession together with the farmer and the "Appenzeller Bläss" – his dog.

The dairyman's call is eternal.

The Alp's tranquillity is only briefly interrupted. Like a traditional ritual, shepherds on isolated Alps end the day with the Alpine prayer song. The time of the "Stobete" is also very much a source of cheer for the Alpine inhabitants. From yodelling and "Talerschwingen" (spinning a coin inside a bowl to produce a resonant sound) to "Schölleschötte" (the back and forth movement of three dairy bells) and original Appenzell string music comprising the dulcimer, bass, cello and two violins – sometimes also an accordion – the whole range of Appenzell folk music (something that enjoys great international appeal) can be heard in the mountain inns. Women and men dressed in traditional costumes can also be seen shaking a leg or two in folkloristic style. Johannes Fuchs from Appenzell, also known as "Chlinn Fochsli", is a recognised dulcimer maker and expert. He has mastered the stringed instrument, which originates from East Asia, and plays his folk music off the cuff.

Finest fabrics for the most important holiday.

On Thursday, ten days after Pentecost, the Catholic population of Innerrhoden celebrates their most important day, "Ösehegottstag" or "Corpus Christi". This colourful procession – with the holiest of all sacraments on display – is accompanied, among others, by a large procession of women in the Innerrhoden festive costume, a dress of unrivalled dignity and festive elegance. These traditional costumes are especially captivating because of their handmade embroidery. Bernadette Nef from Contebad is one of the few traditional costume tailors in Appenzell Innerrhoden. For roughly 34 years, she has produced countless pieces of women's costume with the most elaborate handwork. She learned the craft from her grandmother, who also made traditional costumes. A representative collection of Innerrhoden traditional costumes and Appenzell hand-made embroideries can be seen in the Museum Appenzell.

Who is the fairest of them all?

Women enjoy an exceptionally important standing in Appenzell. According to legend, they bravely came to the aid of the hard-pressed men during the Battle of Stoss six centuries ago. They saw the precarious situation unfolding and found themselves in the thick of it with all their household dishes. The deafening noise from the clattering of the dishes sent the Austrians running. It also caused a stir that women were not granted the right to vote or stand for election in Appenzell Innerrhoden until 1990.

Even beauty contests are a topic in the Appenzell region – albeit of a different kind. Every autumn, cows and bulls are lovingly prepared for the cat(tle)walk, for the numerous cattle shows held in various communities. The aim of this competition is to take home the most beautiful specimen in the whole region at the end of the day. See and be seen is the motto here.

“Dewiisli” – a Christmas tree ornament for decoration.

The diversity of Christmas traditions is particularly pronounced in the region of Appenzell Innerhoden. Christmas treats like “Chlausebickli”, “Räuchle”, “Filebrood” or “Dewiisli” sound rather exotic. “Dewiisli” is a delicate structure made of flour dough, which has a different shape and relief depending on the model. “Dewiisli” are sometimes shaped by hand or sprinkled in sugar. They depict images of people, scenes from everyday life, animals and flowers of all kinds. Painting techniques are used to make the contours of the pictures more prominent. Hardly anyone from Appenzell has the heart to eat such a lovely “Dewiisli”, and instead they are used as Christmas tree ornaments or as part of the “Chlausezüüg”. The term “Dewiisli” comes from the fact mottos (“Devisen”) were originally added to the pictures.

Coins on the move: the “Talerschwingen”.

“Talerschwingen” is usually heard as an accompaniment to polyphonic “natural yodelling”, “Zäuerli” or “Ruggusseli”. For this, a coin is thrown at the conical inner wall of a milk bowl, which is held on one hand. As a result of the rotating movement of the forearm, the coin circles along the rim and makes the crockery ring. Today, these bowls are no longer made for storing milk and are only specially produced for “Talerschwingen”. Yodellers from eastern Switzerland usually form a “Gspiel” (or “ensemble of three bowls”) involving pieces of crockery with different volumes.

Hierig – those who love, love to tease.

The highlight of a “Stobete”, the Alpine dairymen’s festival, is the “Hierig” – a traditional dance. In Appenzell Innerrhoden, this very special dance, which is characterised by amazing expressiveness, has been preserved. The “Hierig” is an artful love play, staged in a dramatic and strenuous solo show dance for a couple. The “Hierig” was born at the end of the 18th century and means something akin to “e Hiesigs” (= one from here). The dance consists of ten phases. The two partners first fall out as lovers, tease and mock each other, only to respectfully reconcile once more – true to the motto “those who love, love to tease”.

Between cave bears and torture chambers: the Appenzell Museum.

The Cantonal Museum of Appenzell Innerrhoden displays the diversity of Innerrhoden’s culture and history in two atmospheric buildings: the Haus Buherre Hanisefs (formerly owned by the son of a building director, a “Bauherr”) and the Town Hall (built 1560-1562). One special focus among the exhibits is on the culture and customs of the Appenzell region. Visitors can marvel at hand embroidery from Appenzell, works from peasant and furniture painting, traditional handicrafts and objects originating from folklore. The collection of traditional costumes is particularly splendid, with richly decorated Appenzell festive costumes on display.

Finds from the “Wildkirchli” cave – such as the skull of a gigantic cave bear, which weighed up to a tonne, or the skull of a brown bear (the canton’s heraldic animal) recently found in another Alpstein cave – all point to the rich history of Appenzell. Looking into the prison cell and the torture chamber, which was last used during the execution of the convicted thief and murderer, Anna Koch (18 years old) from Conten in 1849, will be sure to give you goose bumps. Another highlight offered by the museum is the collection of Appenzell coins.

Museums in the Appenzell region.

Museum Appenzell	Appenzell	www.museum.ai.ch
Kunstmuseum Appenzell	Appenzell	www.kunstmuseumappenzell.ch
Kunsthalle Ziegelhütte	Appenzell	www.kunsthalleziegelhuette.ch

Note to editorial teams.

Up-to-date photo material can be requested from Appenzellerland Tourismus AI. Please do not hesitate to get in touch for further information:

Appenzellerland Tourismus AI

Ivana Alther-Schönenberger, Project Manager for Communication

Hauptgasse 38, CH-9050 Appenzell

Direct dial +41 71 788 96 40

marketing@appenzell.ch