

Appenzellerland Tourismus AI
Hauptgasse 4, CH-9050 Appenzell
Tel. +41 71 788 96 41
Fax +41 71 788 96 49
appenzell.ch

APPENZELLERLAND: LIVING TRADITIONS

In no other region is everyday life so steeped in its historical culture, traditional crafts and hospitality as in the green hills of the Appenzellerland. Throughout the year the people of Appenzell celebrate and commemorate joyful and sorrowful moments in the history of their forefathers and mothers. With alpine cattle drives in the spring, herdsman's festivals in the summer, cattle shows in the autumn and the «Chlausezüg» Christmas decoration at the end of the year, traditions and customs are maintained and cultivated here throughout the entire year. These are not showpieces put on for visitors, but an expression of the local people's love of their homeland. The Appenzellerland and its customs are a combination that continuously attracts and enchants outsiders.

Appenzell Innerrhoden is traditionally an agricultural area, devoted primarily to livestock breeding and the dairy industry. It comes as no surprise then that many of the customs in this small area in the north-east of Switzerland have their origins in agriculture and religion. One of the major church feast days in Appenzell is Corpus Christi, which is held ten days after Whitsun. It is known by the residents of Appenzell as «Ösehegottstag» and celebrates the sacrament of the altar, the Eucharist. The procession in Appenzell is the largest and most magnificent in East Switzerland – provided the weather allows it to be held. As well as the church dignitaries, the large numbers of women in traditional workday and feast day costumes create a colourful spectacle. In particular, the feast day costume with its large hood is eye-catching and is embellished with a large amount of hand embroidery. It is one of the most beautiful and opulent costumes to be found anywhere in Switzerland and is still worn today with pride and dignity by many women of Innerrhoden at the numerous church processions and feast days.

A special choreography

In May and June the alps in the Alpstein massif are occupied by cattle and herdsman for a few weeks until autumn arrives. Whereas in many areas of Switzerland the cattle are driven in trucks and trailers to the alpine summer pastures without singing and celebrations, in the Appenzellerland an enormous amount of effort is often devoted to the colourful alpine cattle drive. In fact, it is not just the cows that need to be spruced up for this special day, the herdsman too put on their best clothes, the men's costume («Sennehääss»).

There are numerous unwritten rules to observe during the Appenzell alpine cattle drive. A small boy in herdsman's costume leads the procession with a herd of white Appenzell goats. Often a girl in workday costume drives the self-willed animals onwards. Behind them walks the leading herdsman in the men's traditional costume and yellow leather trousers («de Geele»). Over his left shoulder he carries the elaborately carved milking pail («Fahreimer») with its removable bottom, a painted wooden disc depicting a rural subject. Following him are three cows carrying harmonically coordinated bells on elaborately decorated belts. Behind them walk four herdsman, one in full costume with yellow leather trousers and three companions in brown trousers, white shirt and bright red jacket («Liibli»). At the back of the procession comes the owner of the animals, accompanied by his Appenzell cattle dog. Sometimes a farmhand also leads a bull by a nose ring. A horse-drawn dairy wagon («Ledi») laden with the herdsman's equipment is a further integral part of a traditional alpine cattle drive.

For over 600 years, it has been traditional to call out an evening prayer («Betruuf») in the Alpstein during the summer months. This is a call by the herdsman for protection from God, Our Lady and the saints. Herdsman's balls (known as «Stobede») provide a welcome break from the rigours of everyday life on the alp. In the autumn the impressive cattle drive back to the valley farms takes place and the animals are later proudly displayed in various cattle shows.

Handicrafts just like in grandfather's day

Various handicrafts are needed to make the elaborate costumes for the men and women of Appenzell Innerrhoden. In the Appenzellerland business directory you will come across professions that are unlikely to be found in many other regions. Here there are still saddlers, coopers, goldsmiths, silversmiths and hand embroiderers. The demand for delicate jewellery, laboriously decorated braces, carefully carved milking pails or minutely crafted hand embroidery shows no signs of waning. Particularly in Appenzell, the picturesque capital of the canton, traditional craft workshops, numerous specialist shops, homely restaurants and family-run hotels can be found.

Appenzell music – an exclusive experience

Folk music has a strong tradition in the Appenzellerland. Appenzell music is widely appreciated and the local people are known for their enjoyment of music, singing and dancing. A traditional Appenzell string band consists of two violins, cello, bass and hammered dulcimer. Appenzell music is quite exclusive and is recognised internationally as typically Swiss and various current music groups have toured around the world. When a Swiss embassy or association has something to celebrate, they will often hire an original Appenzell music group. The special instrumentation creates a unique sound and gives the music its distinctive character. Naturally, the traditional costumes worn by the musicians increases the recognition factor.

Gingerbread meets sausage

The Appenzellerland is a land not just of traditions and customs, it is also a region for culinary connoisseurs. The range of specialties includes much more than the famous Appenzeller cheese and Appenzeller Alpenbitter. Appenzeller biber (gingerbread) is a popular delicacy that comes with diverse motifs and in various sizes but always the same basic ingredients – honey dough filled with a light almond paste. Another typical Appenzell pastry is the «Landsgemeendschrempfli», which used to be brought back from the Landsgemeinde (open-air parliament) by men for their loved ones at home. These are made from a sugar and egg dough with a finely ground hazelnut filling. In addition to this typical Landsgemeinde pastry, there is also a sausage that normally forms part of any traditional Landsgemeinde menu – the Appenzeller white sausage («Siedwurst»). This boiled sausage consists mainly of beef and is traditionally served with macaroni cheese or potato salad. The best way to wash down these traditional delicacies is with a glass of cold Appenzell beer or a «Flauder» – a sweet drink made from elderflower blossom and lemon balm from the Gontenbad Mineralquelle.

Delights in the Alpstein

The Appenzellerland is also home to the Alpstein massif, which contains three mountain lakes that magically reflect the landscape. The Alpstein also has a range of other delights to offer. Nature lovers have countless hiking trails from which to choose – from easy strolls to strenuous alpine hikes. The Alpstein massif is one of the most stunning mountains in the foothills of the Alps, with Säntis at 2502 metres above sea level being the highest peak. Hohe Kasten, Kronberg and Ebenalp are other well-known destinations in this popular hiking region. There are also 26 cosy mountain inns that tempt visitors with refined Appenzell specialties and offer homely accommodation. And with the establishment of a network of modern cableways to the Alpstein, the romance of an alpine hut with contemporary comforts is no longer the sole preserve of serious hikers.

Over 20 free offers for visitors staying 3 nights or more

Guests who stay for three nights or more at the same establishment in Appenzell are entitled to the Appenzell Card, which has 20 free offers for visitors, including free rail trips in 12 zones of the Appenzell Bahnen network, free trips with cableways (Kronberg, Hoher Kasten and Ebenalp) as well as admission to museums, swimming pools and other leisure facilities.

Note to editors.

Current image materials can be ordered from Appenzellerland Tourismus AI. Please contact us if you require further information:

Appenzellerland Tourismus AI

Susanne Stäheli, Leiterin Marketing

Hauptgasse 4, CH-9050 Appenzell

Tel. +41 71 788 96 41; Direktwahl +41 71 788 96 39, Fax +41 71 788 96 50

Susanne.staeheli@appenzell.ch; appenzell.ch