

APPENZELL – Two Cantons and One Town



As the title implies, Appenzell is the name of two cantons as well as a town. It lies in the northeast of Switzerland and is entirely surrounded by the canton of St. Gallen. Originally a single canton, there were clashes over religion and it was divided into two; Ausserrhoden and Innerrhoden in 1532.

The Ausserrhoden's population converted to the protestant reformation and Innerrhoden remained with the old catholic faith. Then with true Swiss pragmatism, the two sides reached an agreement and remained united by common business interests as well as a shared hostility to St. Gallen from whom they gained independence in the first place.

We visited Appenzell Innerrhoden for several days and were delighted with its quiriness and beauty. It is the smallest canton of Switzerland by population and the second smallest by area (Basel-City is the smallest). Nonetheless, it was the last Swiss canton to grant women the vote on local issues, in 1991, and then only because it was ordered to do so by the Swiss Federal Court after two women from Appenzell filed a lawsuit and won.

Appenzell is easily reached by public transport from Saint Gallen and it has its own extensive railway network, including cogwheel trains that run up and over mountains. However this time we went by car which allows more freedom to get around. We stayed at the beautiful spa hotel Hofweissbad in Weissbad, just a few kilometers from the town of Appenzell.
<http://www.hofweissbad.ch>.

I noticed that local car registration plates start with "AI" which is the same as most rental cars in Switzerland. This is due to the fact that taxes on cars are the lowest in Switzerland and thus most rental cars are registered in Appenzell Innerrhoden!

The alps in Appenzell are a hiker's paradise – very beautiful and easy to reach. A popular destination is Ebenalp which you can reach either on foot, which is beautiful but challenging, or by cable car that will bring you to the summit and down again without breaking a sweat. Once on the summit, the trail continues through the Wildkirchli caves (formed by underground

streams over millions of years) to a hermit's hut and chapel as well as the Aescher mountain inn that clings to the side of the rock face and makes for a dramatic view. Another quirky hike is the Barefoot trail from Jakobsbad to Gontenbad which takes just an hour and is walked on bare feet to experience a variety of sensations.. Meadows and streams are interspersed with short stony and asphalted stretches. <https://www.myswitzerland.com/en-ch/gonten-barefoot-trail>. The walk is flat and easy and passes by the village of Gonten which has an excellent restaurant/hotel called Hotel Bären that serves a great lunch. <http://www.baeren-gonten.ch>.



The town of Appenzell has a car-free center and features wooden houses with colorful facades that invite strolling. They are ornamental and symbolic. For example the local pharmacy façade has representations of medicinal plants and the tourist office has a beautiful signboard welcoming tourists. The town has several attractions, a museum, a brewery (which has an excellent free audio tour and great beer) and many culinary delights to sample.

There are the famous Appenzeller cheeses in the Käserei (cheese shop), *Mostbröckli* (cured and dried beef) at the butcher and the *Appenzeller Biberli* (soft gingerbread filled with an almond paste) at the baker. The Landsgemeinde Platz at the town entrance is the stage where debates are decided and voting takes place by a show of hands.

The tourist office in the middle of town provides excellent information, they can provide you with a walking tour of the town, many brochures on hiking and information on transport and events.