

Neuchâtel

The purest lake of Switzerland

The lake of Neuchâtel jealously defends its envied reputation of being the cleanest lake of Switzerland. You can go fishing (a lot of fish thrive in its waters) swimming, diving (it has a maximum depth of 153 metres) rowing, water-skiing and last but not least sailing.



The town of Neuchâtel

The town of Neuchâtel is the capital of the canton of the same name. When travelling by car, under no circumstances should one by-pass the town. It is definitely worth a visit. In 1994, an incredible road-building project was carried through in the aim to free the town centre of exhaust gas and superfluous traffic. A tunnel passes under Neuchâtel from one end to the other with several exits to enable one to reach the town centre, the lake-side and the suburban areas. The hasty driver passing through the tunnel will see absolutely nothing of this superb town.

History of the town of Neuchâtel

In a thousand years of history, (the town of Neuchâtel will be celebrating its jubilee in 2011), this little fishermen's town dominated by its "new castle" has become one of the 26 county towns of the Swiss Confederation. It has borne several different names throughout its existence from "Novum Castellum" in 1011 (the King of Burgundy Rodolphe III offered the town to his spouse and it is the first document that mentions the name of the town) to "Novum Castrum" in the 12th century, Neocomum in the 14th century, followed by Nuefchastel, Neufchastel, Neufchatel before being definitively called Neuchâtel from the middle of the 18th century.

Before becoming independent, Neuchâtel was ruled by a succession of princes, lords and counts; dynasties from all over Europe have left their marks each in their own way on the architecture of the town and its ancestral tradition of open-mindedness towards Europe and the world. At the time of the "Reform" Neuchâtel distinguished itself by welcoming thousands of Huguenot refugees threatened by the Edict of Nantes. In 1849, the town took a tremendous step within the conservative Swiss majority when it gave the right of vote to foreigners that had been established for at least 10 years on the communal soil (on the cantonal level one has to wait till the end of the 20th century before this is accepted). Quite recently in 1998, the parliament Assembly of the Council of Europe attributed a diploma to Neuchâtel encouraging her to pursue her "promotion of the ideal of the European Union". The Town is situated at 430 m above sea level and today has a population of 32 000 inhabitants.



The Collegiate Church and the Castle

The Castle of Neuchâtel (today the seat of the executive and parliament) and the Collegiate Church (symbol of Farel's Reform, a statue pays homage to the Reformer). Both edifices were built in the 12th century and are adjacent to the crenulated Prison Tower.



Place des Halles - the market square

A magnificent square, surrounded by remarkable buildings built between the 16th and 18th centuries. This square with its numerous cafés and terraces is a favourite gathering point as soon as the Spring sun shows its first warm rays.

