



# CULTURE AND HISTORY

## RICH HERITAGE, ATTRACTIVELY STAGED

Fribourg Region has a rich cultural heritage and the inhabitants take care of it with love and pride. The narrow lanes of the medieval towns of Fribourg, Gruyères, Romont, Murten and Estavayer-le-Lac are picturesque, but full of life. Fortifications, churches and monasteries – many of them on the Way of St. James – castles and manor houses attract visitors with fascinating cultural activities. The capital, Fribourg, enchants visitors with its magnificent Gothic architecture, first and foremost St. Nicholas Cathedral,

as well as entire streets – over 200 in total – of 15<sup>th</sup> century Gothic façades. Then there are the 14 bridges and 12 historic fountains, which alone are worth the visit. La Gruyère is also a cultural region: its everyday farming and festival culture are traditions that are still practised today in some cases. They are presented in the Musée Gruérien in Bulle. All of this and a profound openness give rise to contemporary and unusual customs, as well as a great deal of culture. [www.fribourgregion.ch](http://www.fribourgregion.ch)

## FRIBOURG, AN EASILY ACCESSIBLE MEDIEVAL TOWN



**Town fortifications:** The medieval fortifications are accessible during the day from spring until autumn. Five gates, six towers, seven sections of walls, a large rampart: the most significant heritage of medieval military architecture in Switzerland is open to visitors. Exploring the impressive fortifications with a guide and historian is a good way to learn about the history of the town, built in the meander of the River Sarine, and discover the best vantage points. Book at [www.fribourgtourisme.ch](http://www.fribourgtourisme.ch)



**St. Nicholas Cathedral:** The town's landmark, whose construction began in 1283, depicts a bas relief of the Last Judgement on the main door, has magnificent glass windows, wonderful old organs and the 74-metre high observation tower.

## FUNICULAR



The Fribourg “funi” is part of the public transport system and is listed in the inventory of national cultural assets. It started running between the town centre and the lower town in 1899 and is the only remaining water ballast-powered funicular railway in Switzerland. The ballast drive is economical and never runs out, even if it is not completely odourless: municipal waste water!

## VISIT TO THE CASTLE



Ideal models for painters of fairytale castles: surrounded by the impressive Fribourg Pre-Alps, Gruyères Castle, the former seat of the Count of Gruyère, overlooks the mediaeval town from the top of the hill. A tour takes visitors through eight centuries of history and culture. The beautiful Chenaux Castle in Estavayer-le-Lac, which has overlooked Lake Neuchâtel since the 15th century, is also well worth seeing.

## GLASS ART



Romont Castle houses the Swiss Museum of Stained Glass and Glass Art. A centuries-old fascination!  
[www.vitromusee.ch](http://www.vitromusee.ch)

## BRIDGES AND FOUNTAINS



With over 200 Gothic façades, the Old Town of Fribourg is one of the largest townscapes of mediaeval Europe. Twelve historic fountains with allegorical and biblical figures supported by columns, such as the Jo Siffert Fountain by Jean Tinguely, are worth a visit. And last but not least, the appearance of the town is characterised by 14 unique bridges.

## AWARD-WINNING SACRED LANDSCAPE

The Sarine basin, with its numerous monasteries, churches and chapels, was awarded the title ‘Landscape of the Year 2018’ by the Swiss Foundation for Landscape Protection. Many of the sacred buildings in the region, which has been ‘strongly influenced by religion’, are open to visitors. The Hauterive Abbey, a Cistercian monastery built around 1138, enjoys a picturesque location in a loop of the Sarine River outside Fribourg. Here you can attend the solemn in Praise of God sung service or spend a few days in quiet

contemplation. Peace and quiet can also be found with the hospitable Cistercian nuns in the Fille-Dieu Abbey in Romont or the guesthouse of the Magere Au Abbey in Fribourg’s Old Town. Competent guides are on hand to share their extensive knowledge of the numerous abbeys, public churches and chapels, which have an eventful history and the most exquisite ecclesiastical art. An overview of the sacred heritage can be found at [www.esprit-des-lieux.ch](http://www.esprit-des-lieux.ch)



## ART AND LOVE



The “Espace Jean Tinguely – Niki de Saint Phalle” is dedicated to Fribourg’s most famous partners in art and married couple. It is a fascinating exhibition in the former tram depot in the town of Fribourg. Tinguely’s meta-mechanical devices appear to be timeless and ready to go and the “Nanas”, voluptuous female figures by Niki de Saint Phalle are also clearly non-conformist. Creativity, elaborately implemented!  
[www.mahf.ch](http://www.mahf.ch)

## MUSÉE GRUÉRIEN



The everyday life of herdsmen in La Gruyère in a bygone age is now part of the cultural heritage, while their traditional festive customs are kept alive. A wonderful interactive exhibition transports visitors to the crafts in the Middle Ages, relates the triumph of Gruyère cheese in Paris, allows them to enter an Alpine hut and take part in a Bénéichon-Kilbi festival. The museum in Bulle is well worth a visit.  
[www.musee-gruerien.ch](http://www.musee-gruerien.ch)

## FROG MUSEUM



Estavayer-le-Lac has the most quirky museum in the region: 108 stuffed frogs in satirical scenes from everyday life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It’s always popular with children!  
[www.museedesgrenouilles.ch](http://www.museedesgrenouilles.ch)

## HR GIGER MUSEUM AND BAR



The Château St-Germain in the mediaeval town of Gruyères houses a futuristic treasure, the Museum of the Swiss artist HR Giger. In 1980, he won an Oscar for the best visual effects in the film “Alien”. His sculptures, pictures and stage designs still fascinate visitors today. The HR Giger Bar opposite also gives visitors an impression of his work, as well as goose pimples. [www.hrgigermuseum.com](http://www.hrgigermuseum.com)

## MUSEUM OF ART AND HISTORY

The Museum (MAHF) is housed in the elegant Renaissance Palais Ratzehof, a 19<sup>th</sup> century arsenal and slaughterhouse. Equipped with an audio guide, visitors learn about the history of the town and its art from the Middle Ages to the present day. The collection of sculptures is deemed to be one of the most important in Switzerland. Stained glass painting and goldsmithing are additional focal points, the presentation of the history of the guilds and trades is interesting, as is the art of warfare. The mediaeval

and baroque stone sculptures in the basement of the former slaughterhouse are simply wonderful. Against the backdrop of archaic tufa blocks and the 13<sup>th</sup> century town wall, the original monumental sculptural group of the twelve apostles from Fribourg Cathedral quite rightly captures the attention of visitors. The series of 16<sup>th</sup> century town fountains – invariably with a religious sign – is also magnificent.

## LAKE VILLAGE



Our ancestors settled in Gletterens, on the southern shore of Lake Neuchatel, 5,000 years ago. The reconstructed lake village is a typical Neolithic settlement. Guides provide information about the everyday life of the lake dwellers in and around the mud houses thatched with rushes. There are workshops, for example making a fire, producing weapons, tools and jewellery, events and overnight stays. [www.village-lacustre.ch](http://www.village-lacustre.ch).

## BATTLE OF MURTEN



On 22 June 1476, the Swiss Confederates annihilated the Burgundian army, led by the Burgundian Duke Charles the Bold, with a surprise attack. Murten commemorates this victorious battle every year, for example during the "Solennität", the Historic Murten Shoot and the Murten race. The Murten Museum depicts the battle in a multimedia show, while information boards on the accessible town walls provide comments about the original sites.

## PIONEER



Father Girard was a visionary 19<sup>th</sup> century teacher who advocated education for everyone. The cultural town of Fribourg has dedicated a themed trail to him. [www.unifr.ch](http://www.unifr.ch)

## AVENTICUM / OPPIDUM VULLY



While in the Lake Murten region, history buffs can visit Avenches (VD) and Aventicum, the capital of Roman Helvetia. The forum's thermal baths, the theatre, the amphitheatre (115 x 87 m) and the Roman Museum, in particular, are worth a visit. The faithful reconstruction of the Celtic oppidum on Mont Vully, formerly part of a 600 m long fortification, is also impressive.

## SUCCESS STORY OF LE GRUYÈRE AOP

The production of cheese in La Gruyère dates back to 1115. Mediaeval records provide evidence of sales to France and Italy. At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, cheese was regularly exported to Lyon. The major upswing occurred after 1620 and the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were accordingly characterised by the increasing prosperity of the citizens and patricians of Fribourg. In 1762, the word "Gruyère", referring to the origin of the cheese, was added to the official dictionary of the French language, the "Dictionnaire de l'Académie

Française". In 2001, Gruyère was awarded the controlled designation of origin (AOC) for the entire world and in 2011, the protected designation of origin (AOP) for the whole of Europe. In 2017, Le Gruyère AOP became the leader in Swiss cheese exports; until then, Emmentaler had been the most popular Swiss cheese sold abroad. Visitors can learn more about this success story in the Musée Gruérien in Bulle, while the demonstration cheese-dairy, La Maison du Gruyère, is also interesting. [www.gruyere.com](http://www.gruyere.com)



## A LOT OF PLAYS



For theatregoers, it is worth looking at the programme for the entire canton. The Equilibre Theatre in Fribourg is impressive, not only for its distinctive architecture. Espace Nuithonie in Villars-sur-Glâne also stages a wide range of events, including comedy (with some bilingual shows), rock, opera, dance and lots of plays. The plays produced by the Ebullition Cultural Centre in Bulle and the Kellertheater Murten also include some gems.

## FILM FESTIVAL



The Fribourg International Film Festival is a highlight in the cultural calendar. The feature-length films and short films shown in the international competitions encourage dialogue between cultures. Cinematic boundaries are moreover explored far away from commercial exploitation and a wide range of events are organised. The festival is an important date for the film industry and cinema lovers. 15 – 23 March 2019. [www.fiff.ch](http://www.fiff.ch)

## ABBÉ BOVET



The composer and priest Joseph Bovet (1879-1951) had a decisive influence on the choral music of Fribourg with his many compositions, first and foremost the song “Le vieux chalet”, translated into 16 languages.

## GUSTAV ACADEMY 2019



With his Academy, Pascal Vonlanthen, alias Gustav, will once again in 2019 sponsor 20 talented musicians under the age of 26 from Fribourg, Bern, Neuchatel, Vaud and Valais. They will receive free professional coaching, courses, and opportunities to record and perform in venues from London to Fribourg, where the final show will take place in the Fri-Son music club in October 2019. [www.gustavacademy.ch](http://www.gustavacademy.ch)

## A REGION OF SINGING

Choral music is a very lively tradition in Fribourg. Around 7,200 singers are organised into 234 religious and secular groups. The choral associations also developed outside the religious milieu, occasionally also as a backlash against it. Abbé Joseph Bovet (1879-1951) succeeded in uniting all the voices. His melodies and texts are engraved on the hearts and memories of the citizens of Fribourg. A monument is dedicated to him in the Schützenmatte park in Fribourg. The Cantorama or “House of Fribourg Choral Music” in Jaun looks after this rich historic and cultural heritage, with concerts and collections. [www.cantorama.ch](http://www.cantorama.ch)

## CONTACT

We would be pleased to assist you with research trips and your search for interesting media topics.

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