

# Benvenuti a Bellinzona

Inglese



Between its past and its present, the city of Bellinzona can find many reasons to face the future with confidence.

The capital of the Canton of Ticino is home to over 44,000 people and has a fascinating history to explore. It is nicknamed “la Turrita” in honour of the towers that punctuate its medieval castles and the old city walls, which were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in the year 2000. The city has kept its own distinct character and offers a high standard of living, two factors that have contributed to the cosmopolitan nature of its population. Indeed, around a quarter of those living here are not Swiss nationals and in total about 100 different countries are represented.

## A city, its history, its future

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Bellinzona is well aware of what this diversity means in terms of social cohesion. More so, given that integration is something that concerns everybody, regardless of nationality. It can fall to anyone to initiate a dialogue and push past prejudices, and it can happen at any time.

This booklet is aimed at doing just that: opening a dialogue with those arriving in Bellinzona for the first time.

## The past

Bellinzona has experienced three particularly favourable periods in its long history. The first arose at the end of the twelfth century, when it acquired an important strategic role within the Duchy of Milan. A gateway to the Alpine passes, Bellinzona found itself at the centre of a bitter struggle between the Visconti and Sforza families (the Dukes of Milan) and the Old Swiss Confederacy.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, after centuries of profound inertia, the construction of the Gotthard railway line, which links Ticino to the rest of Switzerland, was to breathe new life into the city. The first station in Ticino was built in Bellinzona, and it was here that the railway workshops were set up and continue to be of great importance to the local residents.

Then the small provincial town of Bellinzona, named permanent capital of Ticino in 1878, began to grow. By the beginning of the twentieth century, it had become a city and home to over 10,000 residents along with numerous businesses and the offices of such pillars of federal administration as the post office and Swisscom.

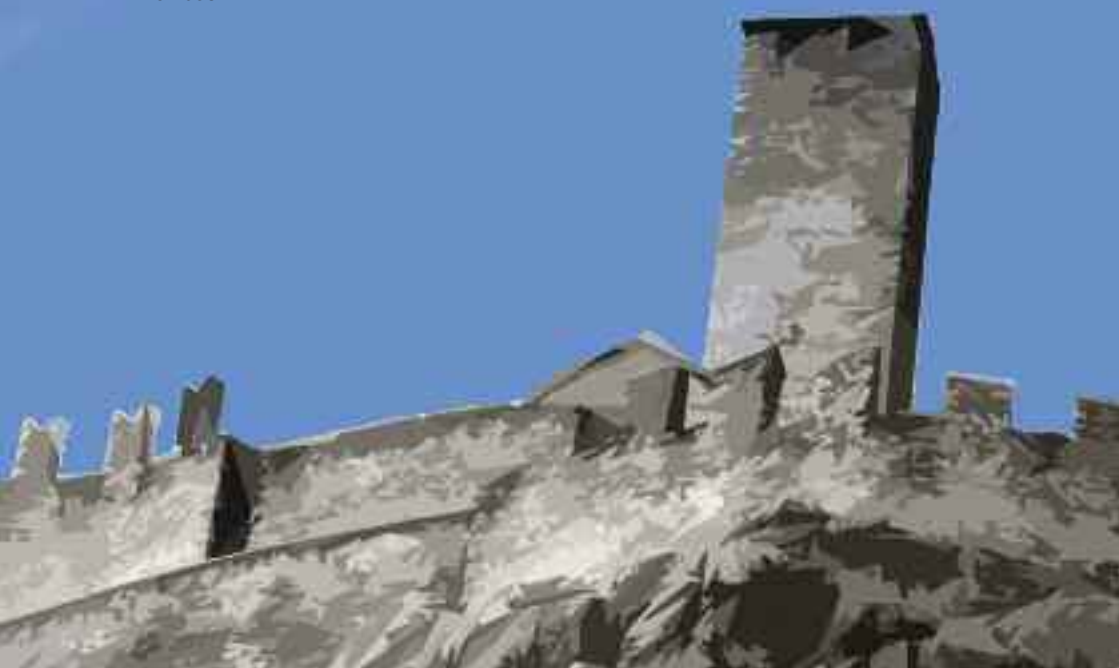
Finally, the aggregate process was concluded on the 2nd of April 2017, resulting in the union of thirteen municipalities – Bellinzona, Camorino, Claro, Giubiasco, Gnosca, Gorduno, Gudo, Moleno, Monte Carasso, Pianezzo Preonzo, Sant’Antonio e Sementina – which gave rise to the new city of Bellinzona.



# The future

Where recent history has seen a significant part of the population engaged in various areas of public administration, the future seems set to hold a series of challenges and opportunities to be taken. The opening of the Gotthard Base Line will see a sharp reduction in journey times and will in effect bring the northern and southern Alps closer together. The prospective augmentation of public transport and a new railway station in the city centre are just a couple of the important infrastructure developments planned for the next few years that will make the city more attractive in terms of living standards and job opportunities.

Just as promising, however, is the creation of a centre for research in medical and life sciences (biopolo) with the construction of the new Institute for Research in Biomedicine, the Institute of Oncology Research and the establishment of the new Swiss Federal Railway offices.



## Living in Bellinzona

Newcomers wishing to live in Bellinzona have eight days from their arrival to make a declaration at the resident registration office (Ufficio Controllo Abitanti). You should report in person to one of the multifunctional service desks dotted around the city's thirteen districts armed with your identification documentation, health insurance registration and the rental agreement for your home. If you are a non-Swiss national and would like to stay in the city for more than three months, you need to obtain a residence permit from the immigration office (Ufficio Stranieri).

If you are looking for apartments, these are advertised in various newspapers and on the internet, or you could contact one of the estate agents in the city. Information on rental regulations is available from the Swiss Tenants Association (Associazione svizzera degli inquilini), or at an association of property owners (Camera di economia fondiaria).

## Working in Bellinzona

Foreign nationals who wish to work in Bellinzona should ensure that they have the appropriate residency or residence permit for the activity in question. An individual's obligations and entitlements vary depending on the type of permit he or she possesses (the Cantonal Immigration Office can provide full details on this matter). Jobs are advertised in newspapers and on the internet. Another option is to leave your

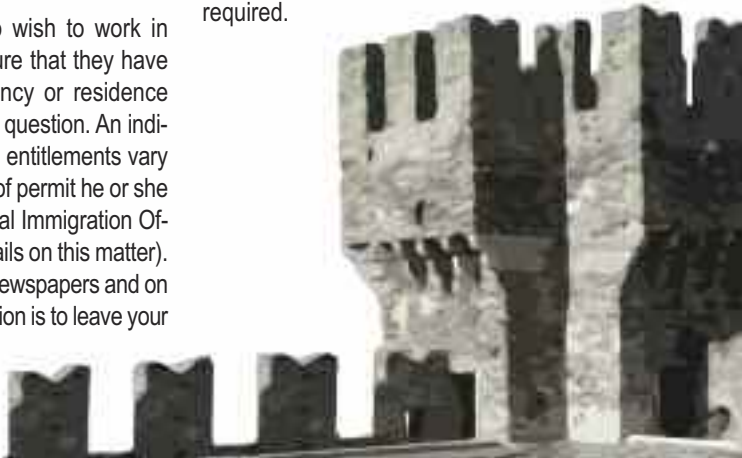
details and appropriate documents with the various employment agencies, which can occasionally provide long-term positions.

## Insurance and emergency care

In addition to the contributions deducted directly from an individual's salary (pension contributions and insurance against unemployment, old age and incapacity), residents in Switzerland are required to take out various forms of insurance: against illness (compulsory basic cover), accidents, damage to buildings and contents caused by fire or natural disasters, and car or motorcycle insurance (third-party liability) for owners of a vehicle. All other forms of insurance, on the other hand (extended illness cover, private third-party liability insurance) are optional.

There are many health insurance providers to choose from. All providers are obliged to provide basic health cover for whomever requests it. Basic health insurance covers the cost of treatment provided by doctors and hospitals.

The Accident and Emergency department at the Bellinzona e Valli Regional Hospital offers outpatient services when required.



## Health and Social Services

An individual is generally free to choose which doctor to receive treatment from. However, some insurance models limit the options available. If you wish to be seen by a doctor who speaks your own language, the regional Order of Physicians (Ordine dei medici del Canton Ticino) can advise on the best choice.

Pharmacies supply prescription and non-prescription medication and can provide useful, basic health advice. For emergencies, one pharmacy remains open on weekends and public holidays, and every evening until 8 pm. Any later and you will have to call 1811.

Bellinzona also has its own dental hospital, which is open to all residents.

## Schools

Children between 4 and 10 years of age are required to attend one of the free, state primary schools. School assists children's social development, helping them to develop their motor, affective and cognitive faculties.

There is an intercultural development officer who works in Bellinzona's primary schools to create cultural exchange opportunities for families and pupils who have recently arrived in the city.

Compulsory school attendance continues after primary school at the canton's lower-secondary schools, where pupils receive a general, all-round education. During their eleven years of compulsory education, pupils study Switzerland's other national languages (French and German), as well as English.

At the age of 16, students who wish to continue their studies start their upper-secondary schooling, which lasts for three or four years. One option available to young people is a work-experience placement, which helps them prepare for the world of work. There are also preparatory courses that provide access to one of Switzerland's ten universities or one of the two Federal Institutes of Technology.

## Taxes and Contributions

Taxes pay for important public services such as education, healthcare, transport and welfare services. Individuals who do not have a "C" (Domicile) Permit have taxes deducted directly from their salary (taxed at source). Those who do possess a Domicile Permit, however, are required to complete an annual declaration of income.

In Switzerland, a fee is levied on the reception of radio and television programmes. These are collected by Serafe AG, which also sends out annual invoices to the individuals concerned. Each household must pay a separate fee.



## Transport and mobility

The city of Bellinzona, and Switzerland in general, benefits from a superb rail and bus network.

Swiss Federal Railways and public transport providers in Bellinzona and the surrounding area, offer various types of travel cards, and the timetables of the various lines have been expressly coordinated to guarantee the connections between the arrivals and departures of the various means of public transport.

To drive, you must be at least eighteen and be in possession of a valid driving licence. The licence must be recognised by the Swiss authorities. It can be used for up to 12 months, after which the driver must obtain a Swiss licence.

Any motor vehicles or caravans brought in from other countries should be registered in Switzerland if the owner has resided in the country for over one year.

The use of motorways is subject to a tax, and drivers must have a motorway vignette. These can be purchased from the customs office at the border, and from petrol stations, post offices and newsagents.

The alcohol limit is set at 0.5 mg per ml, but in general, anyone consuming alcohol should not drive.

## Culture

Every year, Bellinzona is the setting for hundreds of cultural and recreational events. The city's crowning attractions are the Teatro Sociale - one of the most important examples of Lombard Neoclassical architecture - and the Civic Art Gallery at Villa dei Cedri, which is supplemented by other exhibition spaces, including a number in the city's three castles.

## Sport and leisure

Detailed information about the events taking place in Bellinzona throughout the year is available from the tourist information service (Organizzazione Turistica Regionale Bellinzonese e Alto Ticino), which also publishes a calendar of events on its website.

Bellinzona actively promotes sport in all its forms, professional and amateur, for young and more mature participants alike. As part of this commitment, an independent public body has been set up to oversee the running of sporting facilities and services: the Communal Stadium, the outdoor public baths and the indoor pool, the indoor and outdoor ice rinks, indoor and outdoor tennis courts...



## Citizenship and political rights

Every four years, adult Swiss nationals resident in Bellinzona elect representatives to the two bodies of the borough and city council: The Parliament (borough council), which consists of 60 elected representatives and functions as the legislative body. The Government (municipality), which consists of 7 elected officials who each direct a department (ministry), represents the executive power.

Those eligible to vote are called to exercise this right four times a year on initiatives and referendums covering national, cantonal or municipal issues. In such cases, citizens are invited to vote on topical issues, but also on individual projects that concern the city, the Canton or the Confederation.

## Integration

Bellinzona has a dedicated official who is tasked with promoting integration. Meanwhile, the office of the Delegate for the Integration of Foreigners (Delegato cantonale all'integrazione degli stranieri) operates on behalf of Ticino's Council of State in issues concerning the integration of foreign nationals.

At a national level, both the State Secretariat for Migration and the Federal Commission on Migration are involved with the integration policy.

Meanwhile, the state's anti-racism service (Servizio per la lotta al razzismo) and the Federal Commission against Racism and Xenophobia, are tasked with preventing racism.



# Impressum

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Città di Bellinzona

