



A brief history of Haute-Savoie

Geneva was won over to the Reformation and drove out its Bishop in 1536, thus asserting its independence from the Dukes of Savoy. The latter held Court at various times in Turin and Chambéry, while Annecy emerged as a thriving city.

The 18th century Kings of Piedmont-Sardinia showed a clear preference for their Italian possessions over their lands on the French side of the mountains. Perhaps that helps explain the warm welcome the French revolutionaries received when they occupied Savoy. The latter divided the territory into two French Departments, Mont Blanc (principal town Chambéry) in 1792, and Léman (principal town Geneva) in 1798.

Italy was unified in 1860, and the King of Piedmont-Sardinia, Victor Emmanuel II, was crowned first King of Italy. This spelt the break-up of the duchy of Savoy, Victor Emmanuel having ceded Savoy and the city of Nice to the French Emperor Napoleon III in 1858, in return for the latter's support in the war against Austria. A referendum ratified the transfer of Savoy to France by a huge majority.

There ensued a period of economic stagnation and emigration as the region had difficulty competing with French industry. During World War II, Haute-Savoie was occupied first by Italy, then by Germany, and the Plateau des Glières became renowned as a centre of the Resistance.

Haute-Savoie has enjoyed an economic and demographic boom since the War, and especially since the 1960s.

Timeline