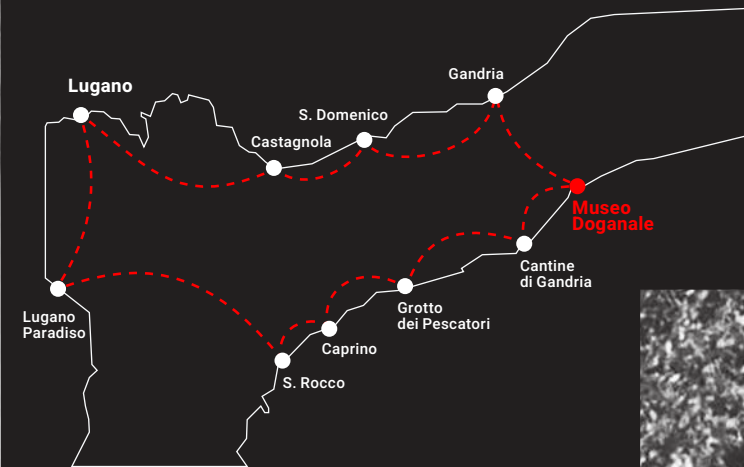


**Federal Customs
Administration FCA**
Swiss Customs Museum
Cantine di Gandria, Lugano
+41 58 463 49 22
customsmuseum@ezv.admin.ch


Opening hours
Tue – Sun, from 12 am to 5 pm

For further information see:
www.customsmuseum.admin.ch

Free entrance



**SWISS
CUSTOMS MUSEUM**
SCHWEIZER ZOLLMUSEUM
MUSEO DELLE DOGANE SVIZZERO
MUSEE SUISSE DES DOUANES

 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun Svizra
Swiss Confederation
Eidgenössische Zollverwaltung EZV
Administration fédérale des douanes AFD
Amministrazione federale delle dogane AFD
Federal Customs Administration FCA



A BORDER BETWEEN POVERTY AND PERSECUTION



A temporary
exhibition on
smugglers and
refugees
between Italy
and Switzerland
during the
Second
World War

Opening
4 April
2021





SMUGGLERS AND REFUGEES

The border with Italy was by far the area which saw the most intense levels of smuggling. The exhibition traces the history of smuggling, focusing on its most memorable period: the Second World War. Spared from the expansionist ambitions of the menacing Axis powers, Switzerland was literally invaded by an army of smugglers. Men, women and even children from the Italian border villages saw this tough and dangerous activity as a means of alleviating their difficult financial situations.



In those turbulent years, with the centre-north of Italy occupied by the Wehrmacht and ravaged by civil war, thousands of military and civil refugees, especially politicians and Jews, poured into Switzerland. Around 26,000 military and 12,000 civilian refugees were granted entry into Ticino and Mesolcina, of whom around 4,500 were Jews. But many people were also turned away. Some of the Jews who were refused entry were arrested and deported to Auschwitz, from where few returned.

THE INGENUITY OF THE SMUGGLERS

The creativity of the smugglers knew no bounds: in 1948, a homemade wooden submarine encased in metal was seized. It was three metres long and had a carrying capacity of 450kg. The

"pocket-sized submarine of Ceresio" was powered by pedals!



Smuggler dogs were introduced at the end of the 19th century. Man's loyal friend was trained to cross specific routes carrying a small pack weighing between 5kg and 10kg. The Italian border guards had orders to shoot the poor animals and killed hundreds of them. From the 1930s onwards, however, many dogs were found working on the other side, alongside the border guards.

THE CAPRINO REGISTER

N°	NOM	DATE D'ARRIVÉE	DATE DE DÉPART	PROFES- SION	REMARQUES
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The original register of refugees who arrived at the Caprino border post, where the Customs Museum is now located, is on display in one of the rooms. According to current research, this is the only document of its kind in Switzerland. It tells us about the refugees who sought refuge from persecution in Wehrmacht-occupied Italy. Dramatic, adventurous and moving stories that make us question and reflect on asylum in general and the Holocaust in particular.

THE BORDER FENCE

In order to combat smuggling, the Italian border guards built an impressive border fence network in the 1880s. The "ramina", as it is known in Ticino, had an ingenious alarm system consisting of bells attached with special springs, ready to raise the alarm if anyone tried to cross the border illegally.

