



Holiday Guide

Living and Driving in Switzerland

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Switzerland is a land of breathtaking beauty with snow-covered peaks, glaciers, waterfalls, clear blue lakes and green meadows. Over 60% of the country is mountainous and a quarter is covered in forests. This peaceful country offers sumptuous cuisine, unlimited sports, bathing spas and medieval towns.

Switzerland was founded more than 700 years ago and now 26 cantons make up this modern federal state. It is truly in the heart of Europe with Germany to the north, Austria and Liechtenstein to the east, France to the west and Italy to the south.

General Information

Money and Banking

The unit of currency in Switzerland is the Swiss franc (CHF) which is divided into 100 Rappen ('centimes' in the French parts).

Notes: CHF 10, CHF 20, CHF 50, CHF 100, CHF 200, CHF 1000

Coins: 5 Rappen, 10 Rappen, 20 Rappen, CHF 1/2, CHF 1, CHF 2, CHF 5

Banks open for business at 8.30am and close at 4.30pm (Mon-Fri), and offer the best exchange rates. In the smaller towns they will close for lunch from noon to 2pm.

Shopping

Shops in the smaller Swiss towns usually open from 9am to noon and from 2pm to 6.30pm. They are sometimes closed on Monday mornings although they stay open until 4pm on Saturdays. In the larger towns you will see them open until 6.30pm. Once a week the shops can offer late shopping, although days vary, this is generally a Thursday.

Most towns have smaller 'Express' style supermarkets which are open Sundays and until late at night.

Museum hours

The opening times may vary from town to town so it is worth checking locally.

Public holidays

Switzerland takes the following public holidays:
2nd & 5th April
13th May
24th May
1st August

Restaurants and eating out

Swiss restaurants are noted for the excellence of their cuisine, which is strongly influenced by the neighbouring countries.

The midday meal is served from noon until 2pm, and dinner from 5pm. To eat à la carte works out more costly than a fixed price meal,

which can be very good value. To tip simply round up to the nearest CHF or add a generous 10CHF.

Telephones

Instructions are written in English in all telephone booths. When dialling long distance within Switzerland, remember to add zero before the area code.

Calls to the UK

Dial 00 44 followed by the area code and remember to drop the zero before the area code. A Taxcard is the Swiss phone card and makes a phone call from a phone box relatively easy. The CHF 5, CHF 10 and CHF 20 cards are on sale at post offices, newsagents and railway stations.

Calls from the UK

To phone Switzerland from the UK dial the international access code 00 41 and remember to drop the zero before the area code.

Clothing

Switzerland often shows the same weather patterns as Britain during the summer so a warm waterproof jacket is a good idea. The mountains are often snow capped, even during the summer so remember your strong shoes. More up-market restaurants ask for formal wear although Switzerland is essentially a casual sportswear country.

Radio World Service

The BBC World Service broadcasts in English 24 hours a day, with World News on the hour which can be picked up on (times in GMT):

From	To	Days	Frequency
00.00	24.00	Daily	648kHz
00.00	05.30	Daily	198kHz
17.00	21.00	Daily	9140kHz
17.00	22.00	Daily	6195kHz

Language

There are four recognised national languages. German (North, Central and Eastern Switzerland), French (West), Italian (South), and Romance which is derived from Latin. You will find that English is widely spoken.

Driving Information

Speed limits

Unless otherwise stipulated, the speed limits on dry roads are:

- 50km/h (31mph) in built up areas.
- 80km/h (49mph) and 100km/h (62mph) outside built up areas.
- 120km/h (74mph) on motorways. The minimum speed on motorways is 60km/h (37mph).
- Speeding incurs an on-the-spot fine.

Regulations

- Children between the age of 7 and 12 are not permitted in the front seat without a child restraint.
- The minimum driving age is 18 years.
- The alcohol limit is 0.8mg/ml, checks are frequent.

- In some places you must switch off your engine if stopped at traffic lights or rail crossings.
- No driving with sidelights on and headlights must be converted for right hand drive - converter kits are available from most motoring shops.
- Driving with dipped headlights on during the day is compulsory. You can be stopped by the Police and fined if you do not comply with this regulation
- It is compulsory to carry a warning triangle.
- It is recommended to carry a fire extinguisher, high visibility jacket, spare bulbs and a first aid kit.
- Use of mobile phones whilst driving and radar detectors are strictly forbidden.
- Drivers who wear spectacles must carry a spare pair with them.

Emergency numbers and breakdown

Fire	118
Police	117
Ambulance	117 or 144 (dependent on the area you are in)

Documents

- You must carry your driving licence, car insurance certificate and vehicle registration document (V5) at all times.
- A green card is recommended.
- A GB/IRL sticker must be displayed on your car.

Tolls

A 'vignette' (road toll in the form of a sticker to put on your windscreen as proof of payment) is required when using Swiss motorways and semi motorways. This normally costs £24, fines are imposed if the vignette is not displayed. Vignettes can be purchased at the border, and at motorway service stations leading up to the border or online www.swisstravelsystem.com.

Translations of Main Road Signs

Signs are in French and German (see translations for France and Germany).

Travel to Italy

Motor rail is a great alternative to the often very busy motorway to Italy, especially when the St. Gotthards tunnel is closed. At weekends take the car train from Kandersteg (45min from Interlaken) to Iselle (150km north east of Milan) for 90CHF. The journey takes around one hour, and needs to be pre-booked (for example at Interlaken station). During the week take the Kandersteg - Goppenstein car train. It leaves every 20 minutes and costs about 20CHF. Then drive via the Simplon pass or take the car train from Brig to Iselle, again for approximately 20CHF. Both trips take 20 minutes on the train and do not need to be booked in advance. Please ask your couriers on site for more information.