

Swiss travel know-how...

...and all you need to know about Switzerland



Switzerland was founded over 700 years ago (1291). Today 26 politically sovereign cantons make up the modern federation of Switzerland.

general information

Currency: Swiss Franc “Franken/franc”, CHF 1.– = 100 cents “Rappen/centimes”. Exchange rate (fixed on February 18th 2011): CHF 1.– corresponds to 0.77 Euros / 1.05 US\$.

Cinema: In the German part of Switzerland, cinemas nearly always show films in their original language (e.g. a film marked E/f/d means spoken in English with subtitles in French and German). Cheaper admission on Mondays! There are many open-air cinemas during July and August.

Democracy: The Swiss vote, a few times each year, on local, cantonal and federal issues like public building, raising taxes, and environmental and international participation.

Emergency phone numbers: 117 Police, 144 Ambulance, 118 Fire Brigade.

European Union: Switzerland is not a member of the European Union (EU).

Health Insurance: As there is no state medical health service in Switzerland, and as

medical treatment must be paid for, it is advisable to take out insurance against personal accident and illness.

Internet / E-mail: Most hostels offer internet access and even WLAN, and in most towns and cities you’ll find at least one Internet café; see “Practical Information” of each section.

Lockers: Almost every railway station has lockers where you can leave your baggage.

Population / Languages: Switzerland has a population of about 7.5 million. The national languages of Switzerland are Swiss-German (north, central and east), French (west), Italian (south) and Rhaeto-Romanic (south-east).

Phoning: Most public phones accept cards only (no coins). Taxcards are sold at post offices, at all “kiosks” (small shops where you find newspapers, cigarettes and sweets), at train and petrol stations, and at most hostels. For national and international directory information see www.directories.ch or call 1811 or 1818.

Post: Postcards and letters (if under 20 gr weight) within Europe CHF 1.20 (priority 1.30), overseas CHF 1.40 (priority 1.80).

Tipping: Tips are included on all hotel/ hostel and restaurant bills. It is neither necessary nor expected to give an extra tip. Tip when the service is nice and friendly.

Water: Tap water is fine to drink nearly everywhere. Some fountains carry the sign “Kein Trinkwasser” or “eau non potable.” This means no drinking water!

Weather, Clothes and Climate: The climate is moderate with no excessive heat, cold or humidity. March to May, October & November the daytime temperatures range from 5 to 15 degrees (Celsius), from June to September from 18–30 degrees. Depending on the altitude, the temperature range may vary!

Work: Switzerland is known as a country with a restrictive policy regarding foreign labor. And if you get caught working illegally you can be fined and deported.

accommodation

Swiss Backpackers (www.swissbackpackers.ch): a group of independent hostels uniting the Swiss Backpacker Hostels have dormitories as well as private rooms, all conveying a friendly and international atmosphere plus self catering kitchen and/or reasonably priced restaurant. Most of their addresses are listed on **page 2 + 3** (marked with **SB**) and under »www.backpacker.ch

Swiss Youth Hostel Association (www.youthhostel.ch) is affiliated with the Hostelling International network HI. The cheapest way to become a member is to register in your country before you depart. As a non-HI member you have to pay a surcharge of CHF 6.– per night (families CHF 12.–). Their most important addresses are listed on **page 2 + 3** (marked with **HI**) and under »www.backpacker.ch

Hostels: There are many more hostels all around Switzerland, some of them also listed at »www.backpacker.ch. Another affordable hotel group is **Etap Hotels** »www.etaphotel.com

food

Restaurants: The variety of food served is wide, from traditional to international cuisine. Most Migros and Coop supermarkets have cheap restaurants and, of course, you’ll also find McDonald’s. In the cities check out the wide range of take-out stands, for example, turkish kebab, falafel or just simple pizza and burgers.


Supermarkets: There are plenty of supermarkets like Coop and Migros where you can stock up on your provisions.

Traditional Swiss Dishes: Traditional and regional dishes play an important role in the Swiss diet. The ones most widely known are: cheese fondue (a blend of melted cheese served up in a big stoneware pot into which bread or hot potatoes are dipped); Raclette (melted slices of cheese with boiled potatoes and mixed pickles); Rösti (German-Swiss dish: grated, fried potatoes, sometimes with egg, sausage, onions or bacon).

transport

Public Transport: Cities and towns have excellent transportation networks. Buy your ticket from a ticket machine, which you'll find at almost every stop. **For discounts, check the list below!**

Railway System: You will appreciate Switzerland's extensive railway system. It is relaxing and comfortable and will allow you to fully enjoy the scenery. Normal point-to-point tickets and reservations can be purchased at every railway station. Seat reservations are only required on special scenic trains like the Glacier Express, the Bernina Express, etc. For all train information, call 0900 300 300 (CHF 1.19 per min.) or see »www.rail.ch

 **Train Tickets:** Single train tickets are expensive, so if you're frequently using the train in Switzerland, "Swiss Travel System" offers a wide range of **tickets to cut costs**. The rates for 1 person are: **Swiss Youth Pass** and **Swiss Pass** (valid 4, 8, 15, 22 days or 1 month), 4 days for CHF 200.– respectively CHF 266.– and up. **Swiss Flexi Pass** (3 days up to 6 days within a month), 3 days for CHF 254.– and up.

Swiss Half Fare Card, 1-month half-fare card for CHF 110.– (with this card you pay only 50% of the normal fare). For a second person or more, passes are available at 15% reduction. Kids under 16 travel for free with the Swiss Travel System Family Card. The tickets can be ordered online or by phone at 00800 100 200 23 (foc). In Switzerland, Swiss Passes are available at major railway stations. Swiss Pass holders not only get unlimited access to the train, bus and boat network, but also a generous discount on most mountain transport (see transport **discount list below**) and **free admission** to practically all of Switzerland's world class **museums** and exhibitions! »www.swisstravelsystem.ch/en

Post Buses: The Swiss post buses are ideal if you want to travel off the beaten path. With some of the post buses you can cross alpine passes. The **Swiss Passes** (see above)

are all valid on post buses (surcharge on some mountain routes!) »www.postbus.ch


Bicycles: Cycling is very popular in Switzerland. You'll find well-marked cycling routes throughout, particularly in the urban areas. Bicycles can be rented at most railway stations. In the cities of Bern, Geneva, Lausanne and Zurich you can borrow **bikes free of charge!** For more information about this great deal check the pages of each particular city.

Walking / Hiking: Switzerland, with its well-kept paths and trails, is an ideal country for hiking! Maps of trails are available from local tourist offices. You'll find some hiking tips inside this newspaper!

Guided tours / excursions: Best of Switzerland Tours is a Swiss company with professional multilingual guides, focusing all their efforts on showing you the best of the marvellous Swiss mountains, landscapes and other places of interest (i.e. Mount Titlis or Mount Pilatus, the cities of Zurich or Lucerne). For information / booking ask at your hostel, at the tourist office or see »www.switzerland-tours.ch

The other Swiss company, Swizzbuzz, offer adventurous activities in Switzerland with a flexible service for backpackers off the beaten track for local culture and alternative activities – and unlike an ordinary

Swiss bus tour you have the option to get off and stay longer in any place. For information see »www.swizzbuzz.ch or call 076 245 99 82.

 **Rough Guide** is the best travel source for your trip through Switzerland. »www.roughguides.co.uk

homepages:
www.myswitzerland.com/en
www.backpacker.ch
www.swisstravelsystem.ch/en

 **save money**

Supersaver tickets give you big discounts on selected train journeys. It's worth buying early as there are only a limited number of Supersavers for each train. Supersaver tickets are only available during a special offer period. **You can only buy them online** at the SBB Ticket Shop »www.rail.ch » Travel » Ticket Shop » Supersaver tickets (special conditions), that you print yourself (print@home). This is a great deal; make use of it!

All information is subject to change. ««

Public Transport – List of Discounts

With the following tickets you get a discount or can travel for free (your ticket must be valid on the day of travel).

Means of transport	Eurail	Inter Rail	Swiss Pass / Swiss Flexi Pass / Swiss Youth Pass	Swiss Half Fare Card / Swiss Card ^{1.)}	General Season Ticket (GA/AG)
Swiss Federal Railway (SBB/CFF/FFS)	free	free	free	50%	free
The Swiss POST bus lines	–	–	free ^{2.)}	50%	free ^{2.)}
Geneva city transport (TPG)	–	–	free	–	free
Lake Geneva steamers (CGN)	free	50%	free	50%	free
Montreux – Zweisimmen (MOB)	free	free	free	50%	free
Montreux – Gllion – Rochers-de-Naye	–	50%	50% ^{3.)}	50%	50% ^{3.)}
Lake Neuchâtel / Morat steamers	free	–	free	50%	free
Lake Biel / Biene steamers (BSG)	free	50%	free	50%	free
BLS AG (Bern – Lötschberg – Simplon)	free	free	free	50%	free
Bern city transport (Bernmobil)	–	–	free	–	free
Lake Thun and Brienz steamers	free	50%	free	50%	free
Interlaken – Lauterbrunnen / Grindelwald	25%	–	free	50%	free
Kleine Scheidegg – Jungfrau joch	25%	–	25%	50%	50%
Wilderswil – Schynige Platte (SPB)	25%	–	50%	50%	50%
Lauterbrunnen – Wengen (WAB)	25%	–	free	50%	free
Wengen – Kleine Scheidegg – Grindelwald	25%	–	25%	50%	50%
Grindelwald Grund – Männlichen	25%	–	50%	50%	50%
Lauterbrunnen – Mürren (BLM)	25%	–	free	50%	free
Stechelberg – Mürren (LSMS)	25%	–	free	50%	free
Mürren – Schilthorn (LSMS)	25%	–	50%	50%	50%
Brienz – Rothorn (BRB)	–	–	50%	50%	50%
Zermatt – Gornergrat (GGB-ggb)	25%	50% ^{4.)}	50%	50%	50%
Brig – Visp – Zermatt (MGB-bvz)	–	–	–	–	–
Brig – Göschenen / Disentis (MGB-FO)	25%	50% ^{4.)}	free	50%	free
Zermatt Bergbahnen (ZBAG)	–	–	50%	50%	50%

Means of transport	Eurail	Inter Rail	Swiss Pass / Swiss Flexi Pass / Swiss Youth Pass	Swiss Half Fare Card / Swiss Card ^{1.)}	General Season Ticket (GA/AG)
Saas Fee – Mittelallalin (LSF)	–	–	50%	50%	50%
Lucerne city transport (VBL)	–	–	free	–	free
Lucerne – Stans – Engelberg	–	–	–	–	–
Lucerne – Meiringen – Interlaken Ost	free	free	free	50%	free
Lake Lucerne steamers (SGV)	free	50%	free	50%	free
Mount Pilatus (PB)	30%	30%	50%	50%	50%
Mount Rigi Railways (RB)	50%	50%	free	50%	free
Stanserhorn (SthB)	50%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Mount Titlis (BET)	50%	–	50%	50%	50%
Centovalli train (Locarno – Domodossola)	free	free	free	50%	free
Lugano city transport (TPL)	–	–	free	–	free
Lugano – Ponte Tresa (Caslano)	–	–	free	50%	free
Lake Lugano steamers (SNL)	–	–	free	50%	50%
Rhätische Bahn (RhB)	free	free	free	50%	free
Glacier Express	–	–	–	–	–
St. Moritz – Chur – Disentis (RhB)	free	free	free	50%	free
Disentis – Brig – Zermatt (MGB)	25%	50% ^{4.)}	free	50%	free
Zurich city transport system (VBZ)	–	–	free	–	free
Lake Zurich steamers (ZSG)	free	50%	free	50%	free
Lake Constance steamers	35 – 50%	–	free	50%	free
Braunwaldbahn (BRWB)	–	–	free	50%	free

1.) On transfer days the Swiss Card offers the same advantages as the Swiss Pass, BUT is not valid on urban transportation systems
2.) On selected postal bus lines (e.g. Alpine passes), the supplement "Alpine Ticket" is mandatory
3.) Montreux – Gllion – Caux free
4.) Reduction only for InterRail YOUTH-Pass
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