



Stuttford Van Lines Country Guide for

# Switzerland



Country Guides: Courtesy of Overseas Moving Network International ( OMNI )

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## 1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

**Location:** Western Europe.

**Time:** GMT + 1 (GMT + 2 from last Sunday in March to last Sunday in October).

Switzerland Travel Centre in the UK

**1st Floor, 30 Bedford Street, London WC2E 9ED, UK** Tel: (00800) 1002 0030 (toll-free in Europe) or (020) 7420 4900. Website: [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)

Embassy of Switzerland in the UK

**16-18 Montagu Place, London W1H 2BQ, UK** Tel: (020) 7616 6000 or (09065) 508 909 (recorded visa information). Website: [www.swissembassy.org.uk](http://www.swissembassy.org.uk) Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1200 (for personal visa applications).

Embassy of Switzerland in the USA

**2900 Cathedral Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA** Tel: (202) 745 7900.

**Website:** [www.swissemb.org](http://www.swissemb.org)

Switzerland Tourism in the USA

**608 5th Avenue, Swiss Center, New York, NY 10020, USA** Tel: (212) 757 5944 or (877) 794 7795 (toll-free). Website: [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)

## 2 OVERVIEW

'Europe's alpine miniature'

Small, mountainous and wealthy, with a population of just seven million, Switzerland is renowned for its enviable quality of life in a country that ticks along like clockwork. Its products are sought after the world over, from dangerously delicious cheese and chocolate to luxurious watches whose timekeeping is as sharp as a Swiss army knife, another popular export from this clever little nation in the Alps. Switzerland's famed political neutrality and isolated location, ring-fenced by mountains, have enabled it to play a safe but central role in European affairs. These factors also gave rise to the coveted Swiss bank account, whose anonymity, along with tax relief and what may be the safest banks in the world, have made Zürich one of Europe's major financial hubs. The conveniently central location in the middle of Europe has also made Switzerland a favourite meeting place for conventions and international conferences. Geneva, for instance, is home to the United Nations. Switzerland is not only a place for professionals, though. As a stylish tourist destination it offers top ski resorts like Zermatt and celebrity-studded St Moritz, while the white peaks of mountains set against blue skies make a wonderful backdrop for summertime hiking. The ancient capital of Berne provides opportunities for sightseeing and elegant shopping, while nightlife can prove to be a lot of fun, too, since the Swiss like their food and folk music even in discotheques and nightclubs.

Sylvia Huber



### 3 GENERAL INFORMATION

**Area:** 41,284 sq km (15,940 sq miles).

**Population:** 7.4 million (official estimate 2005).

**Population Density:** 181 per sq km.

**Capital:** Bern. Population: 127,000 (2005).

**GEOGRAPHY:** Switzerland is bordered by France to the west, Germany to the north, Austria to the east and Italy to the south. It has the highest mountains in Europe, with waterfalls and lakes set amid green pastures. The highest peaks are Dufour Peak, 4634m (15,217ft), on the Italian border; the Dom, 4545m (14,912ft); the Matterhorn, 4478m (14,692ft); and the Jungfrau, 4166m (13,669ft).

**Government:** Federal Republic since 1848. Head of State and Government: President Moritz Leuenberger since 2005. Recent history: Switzerland has long traditions of neutrality in its relations with the rest of the world, and it is not a member of the EU. There was a referendum in 2001 on whether to open talks about joining or not, and the result was negative. Nine years before membership of the European Economic Area was also rejected by referendum. Relations between Switzerland and the EU are now based on a wide range of bilateral agreements. There are signs that things may be slowly changing, however, as a referendum in 2005 supported membership of the EU, Schengen and Dublin agreements, bringing Switzerland into Europe's passport-free zone and increasing cooperation on crime and asylum issues. A further referendum the same year opened the job market to workers from the 10 newest EU member countries. On 10 December 2003, the National Assembly decided that the so-called 'Magic Formula' in place since 1959 - regarding the composition of the Federal Council would have to change as a result of the right-wing Swiss People's Party's electoral success that same Autumn. There are seven seats in the Federal Council, and under the old formula, the four main parties divided these between them (two seats each for the Radicals, Christian Democrats and Social Democrats and one seat for the Swiss People's Party) in an effort to try to ensure that the main languages, religions and regions were represented in the Council. However, in 2003, the Swiss People's Party gained a seat at the expense of the Christian Democratic Party.

**Language:** German in central and eastern areas, French in the west and Italian in the south. Raeto-Romansch is spoken in the southeast. English is spoken by many. Overlapping cultural influences characterise the country.

**Religion:** Roman Catholic (43 per cent) and Protestant (47 per cent).

**Electricity:** 220 volts AC, 50Hz.

**Social Conventions:** It is customary to give unwrapped flowers to the hostess when invited for a meal. Avoid red roses; never give chrysanthemums or white asters as they are considered funeral flowers. Informal wear is widely acceptable. First-class restaurants, hotel dining rooms and important social occasions may warrant jackets and ties. Black tie is usually specified when required.

Passport/Visa



**Note:** The regulations below also apply to Liechtenstein (no border control between the two countries); Passengers arriving at Basle or Geneva airports can enter either France or

<b>Switzerland, provided</b>	<b>their documents for the country of entry are in order; Both airports have two different</b>	<b>exits, one to France and one to Switzerland. Therefore passengers can exit to the French</b>	<b>part of the airport with a valid French or Schengen visa, if required; The airport of Basl</b>
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<b>/Mulhouse is located on French territory; Part of Geneva airport is located by conventio</b>	in France and some flights between France and Geneva are considered as domestic	flights while others are considered international flights. In this case, passengers must hold proper entry documents for either of the destination countries
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	Passport Required?	Visa Required?	Return Ticket Required?
British 1	No	No	
Australian	Yes	No	No
Canadian	Yes	No	No
USA	Yes	No	No
OtherEU	1/2/3/4	No	No
Japanese	Yes	No	No

**PASSPORTS:** Passport valid for three months after intended period of stay required by all except: (a) 1. nationals of Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, The Netherlands, Portugal, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and the UK holding a valid national identity card, providing not taking up employment and for stay up to three months; (b) 2. foreigners holding national Identity Cards issued by the Governments of Belgium, France or Luxembourg, provided they are resident in one of these countries. (c) 3. nationals of Austria, Belgium, France, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, The Netherlands, Portugal, San Marino and Spain with normal passports, expired for up to five years, providing not taking up employment and for stay up to three months; (d) 4. nationals of Germany with passports expired for up to one year; (e) nationals of Liechtenstein who may enter Switzerland without valid identity papers.

**VISAS:** Required by all except the following for stays of up to three months: (a) nationals of countries referred to in the chart above; (b) nationals of countries in South and North/Central America, including nationals of Caribbean island/West Indies states (except nationals of Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti and Peru who do need a visa); (c) nationals of Andorra, Brunei, Bulgaria, Croatia, Fiji, Hong Kong (SAR), Iceland, Israel, Kiribati, Korea (Rep), Liechtenstein, Malaysia, Monaco, New Zealand, Norway, Romania, San Marino, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Tuvalu and Vatican City; (d) nationals of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan (China, PR), Thailand and United Arab Emirates, if in possession of passport valid for three months after leaving Switzerland, endorsed with a valid multiple-entry Schengen visa (valid for all Schengen states); (e) nationals in direct transit travelling within 48 hours providing they hold all valid documents, except nationals of certain



countries (see note). Note: Stateless persons require a transit visa at all times. Nationals of Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Congo (Dem Rep), Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Turkey require a transit visa unless they hold a visa or residence permit for an EU country, Canada, Iceland, Norway or the USA. Tourists and business visitors who travel repeatedly to Switzerland but stay less than three months each time must apply for a residence permit if their total stay exceeds six months within a period of twelve months.

**Types of visa and cost:** Tourist; Visitor; Business; Transit; Airport Transit. All visas cost £25 (to be paid in cash only).

**Validity:** Three months. Transit visas: 48 hours.

**Application to:** Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy responsible for place of residence; see Passport/Visa Information) not more than three months before planned entry. Visa applications must be made in person; postal applications are not accepted.

**Application requirements:** Tourist: (a) Valid passport or travel document valid for three months after the intended visit to Switzerland. (b) One completed application form. (c) One recent passport-size photo (three for student visas). (d) Fee, payable in cash only. (e) Travel ticket to/from or via Switzerland to final destination. (f) Proof of sufficient funds in the form of a recent bank statement/travellers' cheques (£50 per day, £25 for students). (g) Hotel reservation. Transit: (a)-(e) and, (f) Proof of flight with an airline licensed in Switzerland. (i) Visa(s) for ongoing destination(s). (j) Valid ticket for the whole journey to the destination. Visitor: (a)-(e) and, (f) Invitation letter from Swiss resident sent directly to the Embassy, with a copy of their Swiss Passport/ID card or Resident Permit. In special cases, a 'declaration of guarantee' might be required which has to be approved by the Swiss authorities. Business: (a)-(e) and, (f) Invitation from Swiss company sent directly to the Embassy. Student: (a)-(f) and, (g) Student identity card or letter from university/college.

**Working days required:** Visas may be issued within 24 hours, but travellers are advised to apply at least one week prior to departure and no earlier than three months before proposed travel. Some applications may need to be referred to the Swiss authorities, which can take six to eight weeks for approval.

**Temporary residence:** Nationals of most European and some other countries do not require a visa if they intend to take up employment or residence in Switzerland; however, before entry they must obtain an Assurance of a Residence Permit from their employer in Switzerland.

**Passport/Visa Information:** Embassy of Switzerland in the UK 16-18 Montagu Place, London W1H 2BQ, UK Tel: (020) 7616 6000 or (09065) 508 909 (recorded visa information). Website: [www.swissembassy.org.uk](http://www.swissembassy.org.uk) Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0900-1200 (for personal visa applications). Embassy of Switzerland in the USA 2900 Cathedral Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA Tel: (202) 745 7900. Website: [www.swissemb.org](http://www.swissemb.org)



## 4 MONEY

**Currency:** Swiss Franc (CHF) = 100 rappen or centimes. Notes are in denominations of CHF1000, 500, 200, 100, 50, 20 and 10. Coins are in denominations of CHF5, 2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10 and 5 centimes.

**Eurocheques:** Eurocheques are no longer guaranteed and can not be accepted for encashments but may be useable for payments without the guarantee.

**Currency exchange:** Personal cheques within the Eurocheque system are accepted. ATMs provide a convenient means of obtaining Swiss Francs. There are Bureaux de Change at train stations and banks.

**Credit & debit cards:** American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other facilities which may be available.

**Traveller's cheques:** Pound Sterling, US Dollar, Euro or Swiss Franc cheques are accepted at airports, railway stations and banks. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in Pounds Sterling, Euros or US Dollars.

**Currency restrictions:** There are no restrictions on the import or export of local or foreign currencies.

Exchange rate indicators

DateAt time of publishing £1.00=CHF2.24\$1.00=CHF1.27

**Banking hours:** Mon-Fri 0830-1630.

## 5 DUTY FREE

**Duty-Free:** The following items may be imported into Switzerland by persons over 17 years of age without incurring customs duty by:(a) Visitors from European countries: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g of tobacco; 2l of alcohol (up to 15 per cent) and 1l of alcohol (over 15 per cent); gifts up to a value of CHF300. (b) Visitors from non-European countries:400 cigarettes or 100 cigars or 500g of tobacco; 2l of alcohol (up to 15 per cent) and 1l of alcohol (over 15 per cent); gifts up to a value of CHF300.

**Prohibited items:** Most meat and processed meat, absinthe and narcotics are prohibited. There are strict regulations on importing animals and firearms.

## 6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Below are listed Public Holidays for the January 2006-June 2007 period.

Jan 1 2006 New Year's Day. Jan 2\* Berchtold's Day. Apr 14\* Good Friday. Apr 17\* Easter Monday. May 25\* Ascension. Jun 5\* Whit Monday. Aug 1 National Day. Dec 25 Christmas Day.



Dec 26 St Stephen's Day. Jan 1 2007 New Year's Day. Jan 2\* Berchtold's Day. April 6\* Good Friday. April 9\* Easter Monday. May 17\* Ascension. May 28\* Whit Monday.

**Note:** (a) \*These holidays may not be observed in certain cantons. (b) There are additional regional holidays which are observed in certain cantons only.

## 7 HEALTH

	Special Precautions	Certificate Required
<b>Yellow Fever</b>	No	No
<b>Cholera</b>	No	No
<b>Typhoid and Polio</b>	No	N/A
<b>Malaria</b>	No	N/A

**Other risks:** Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information, see the Health appendix.

**Health care:** European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland: If you or any of your dependants are suddenly taken ill or have an accident during a visit to an EEA country or Switzerland, free or reduced-cost necessary treatment is available in most cases on production of a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). Each country has different rules about state medical provision. In some, treatment is free. In many countries you will have to pay part or all of the cost, and then claim a full or partial refund. The EHIC gives access to state-provided medical treatment only and the scheme gives no entitlement to medical repatriation costs, nor does it cover ongoing illnesses of a non-urgent nature, so comprehensive travel insurance is advised. Note that the EHIC replaces the Form E111, which will no longer be valid after 31 December 2005. Some restrictions apply, depending on your nationality. Nationals of Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Norway, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia are not covered by the EHIC in Switzerland. People who do not have UK, EU or EEA nationality are not covered. Medical facilities in Switzerland are among the best in Europe, but treatment is expensive. You will normally have to pay the full costs for treatment and services and claim a refund afterwards. You will have to pay a fixed charge for each 30-day period of treatment. This is known as the 'excess charge' or 'patient's contribution' and is not refunded. It is recommended that all visitors take out adequate private travel insurance. Go to any doctor registered with the Swiss health insurance scheme. Dental treatment is not covered unless it results from serious illness or accident. If required, you will normally be referred to a public hospital by a doctor. In an emergency, go directly to the emergency department of any public hospital. In-patient treatment in a general ward of a public hospital is covered, but not in a semi-private or private ward, or in a private hospital. As well as the excess charge, you will have to pay a small, non-refundable, fixed daily in-patient charge for the cost of board and accommodation. You will have to pay 50 per cent of the costs of ambulance transport within Switzerland, including air ambulance. Various leaflets giving information on health spas and clinics are available from Switzerland Tourism (see Top Things To Do). More information can be obtained from Gemeinsame Einrichtung KVG (Common Institution), Gibelinstrasse 25, Postfach, CH-4503 Solothurn (tel: (32) 625 4820; fax: (32) 625 4829).



## Travel - International

**AIR:** The national airline is Swiss (LX) (website: [www.swiss.com](http://www.swiss.com)).

**Approximate flight times:** From Basle, Bern, Geneva or Zürich to London is one hour 50 minutes. From Geneva to Los Angeles is 17 hours and from Zürich is 14 hours 35 minutes. From Geneva to New York is nine hours 45 minutes and from Zürich is seven hours 20 minutes.

**Main airports:** Zürich (ZRH) (Kloten) (website: [www.zurich-airport.com](http://www.zurich-airport.com)) is 11km (7 miles) from the city (travel time 20 minutes). To/from the airport: Trains run every 10 to 15 minutes from under Terminal B. Regional and night buses are available. Passengers arriving in Switzerland by air can purchase a special Fly-Rail Luggage ticket from their airport of departure which will enable them to have their luggage delivered directly to a Swiss railway station. With the Fly-Rail Baggage service, passengers leaving Switzerland can check their bags in at the railway station up to 24 hours before their flight. Taxis to the city are available (travel time 15-30 minutes). Facilities: Duty free shops, restaurants/bars, banks, bureau de change, nursery and car rental. Geneva (GVA) (website: [www.gva.ch](http://www.gva.ch)) is 5km (3 miles) north of the city. To/from the city: Taxis to the city are available. There is a regular train service to Geneva Cornavin Station (travel time six minutes). The no. 10 bus runs from the airport to the city centre. Bern (BRN) (Belp) is 9km (5.5 miles) southeast of the city (travel time 20-30 minutes). To/from the airport: Bus services are available to Bern station. A rail service runs from Bern to Zürich Airport. Taxis are also available. Basle (BSL) (Basel-Mulhouse) is 12km (7 miles) from the city. To/from the airport: A bus runs to Basle SBB Luftreisebüro. Taxis are also available.

**Departure tax:** None.

**RAIL:** Travelling from the UK, the quickest way is to travel by Eurostar through the Channel Tunnel to Paris (travel time three hours) and, from there, to Switzerland. For further information and reservations contact Eurostar (tel: (0870) 0000 792 (travel agents) or (08705) 186 186 (public; within the UK) or (01233) 617 575 (public; outside the UK only); website: [www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com)); or Rail Europe (tel: (08708) 371 371; website: [www.raileurope.co.uk](http://www.raileurope.co.uk)). General enquiries and information requests must be made by telephone. Other connections from London via the main channel crossings are available (minimum travel time of about 14 to 15 hours to Basle and Lausanne, the main points of entry). There are also through trains from Spain, Italy and Germany. Rail passes: The Inter-Rail pass offers unlimited second-class train travel in up to 29 countries (includes Morocco and Turkey) split into eight zones (A-H). Three different tickets are available: a ticket covering one zone (two to six countries, 16 days' validity), a ticket covering two zones (six to ten countries, 22 days' validity) and an All Zone Pass (29 countries, one month's validity). Ferry services between Italy and Greece are included. Passengers must be resident in Europe for at least six months before the pass is used. Travel is not allowed in the passenger's country of residence. Travellers under 26 years receive a reduction of about 30 per cent. Children's tickets are reduced by about 50 per cent. Supplements are required for some high speed services, seat reservations and couchettes. Discounts are offered on Eurostar and some ferry routes. Available from Inter Rail (website: [www.interrailnet.com](http://www.interrailnet.com)). The Eurailpass offers unlimited first-class train travel in 17 European countries. Tickets are valid for 15 days, 21 days, one month, two months or three months. The Eurailpass Saver ticket offers discounts for two or more people travelling together. The Eurailpass Youth ticket is available to those aged under 26 and offers unlimited second-class train travel. The Eurailpass Flexi allows either 10 or 15 travel days within a two month period. The Eurail Selectpass is valid in three, four or five bordering countries and allows five, six, eight or 10 travel days (or 15 for five countries) in a two-month period. The Eurail Regional Pass allows four to 10 travel days in a two-month period in one of nine regions (usually two or more countries).



Children receive a 50 per cent reduction. The passes cannot be sold to residents of Europe, Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, or the Russian Federation. Available from The Eurail Group (website: [www.eurail.com](http://www.eurail.com)). The EuroDomino pass enables holders anything from three to eight days' extensive travel within a one-month period on the entire rail network of their chosen country. It is valid in 28 European countries and North Africa, including the ferry service from Brindisi (Italy) to Igoumenitsa (Greece). To purchase a EuroDomino pass you must have been a resident in Europe for at least six months and a passport number is required at time of booking. It is not permitted to purchase a pass for travel within your own country of residence. To qualify for the youth rates, you must be under 26 years on the first date of validity of the pass. Children aged four-eleven years inclusive pay half the adult fares rounded up to the nearest pound. Children under four years travel for free. Seat reservations, couchette and sleeper charges are not included in the cost of the pass and are payable at the normal rate. Passholder fares are payable on some services. Reservation/Supplement charges are payable on all trains within Spain. Available from Rail Europe (website: [www.raileurope.co.uk/railpasses/eurodomino.htm](http://www.raileurope.co.uk/railpasses/eurodomino.htm)).

**ROAD:** Switzerland can be reached by road from Austria, France, Germany and Italy. Some approximate driving times to Geneva and Zürich by the most direct routes are: Calais Geneva: 12-13 hours (747km/464 miles); DunkirkGeneva: 12-13 hours (732km/454 miles); CalaisZürich: 13-14 hours (790km/490 miles); DunkirkZürich: 14-15 hours (880km/ 546 miles). Coach: There are coach services to Switzerland as well as scheduled coach tour operators. Contact Switzerland Tourism for further details (see Top Things To Do). In the UK, Eurolines, departing from Victoria Coach Station in London, serves Zurich and Bern twice a week (travel time - 18 hours). For further information contact Eurolines (tel: (08705) 143 219; website: [www.eurolines.com](http://www.eurolines.com)).

#### Travel - Internal

**AIR:** All services are operated by Swiss (LX) (website: [www.swiss.com](http://www.swiss.com)). Domestic air travel is fast but expensive, and with the exception of the Geneva to Zürich flight (travel time 45 minutes), many businesspeople prefer to travel by rail or road.

**RAIL:** Rail transport is particularly well developed in Switzerland, with excellent services provided by Schweizerische Bundesbahnen (SBB) (website: [www.sbb.ch](http://www.sbb.ch)) and many other operators. Use of the Swiss Pass (see below) is a superb way to view the scenery, although mainline services are geared to the needs of the hurried business traveller. Trains run at least hourly from the major centres and there is a country-wide timetable of regular services. There are dining cars on many trains, and snacks and refreshments are widely available. Independent railways, such as the Rhätische Bahn in the Grisons and the Berner-Oberland-Bahn, provide services in certain parts of the country. The SBB has introduced specialised cars for disabled people using wheelchairs. Facilities include a lift for wheelchairs, a specially adapted WC and radios adapted for people with hearing difficulties. There are also a large number of mountain railways which are sometimes the only means of access to winter resorts. Some of these are attractions in their own right: the Gornergrat-Bahn in Zermatt is one of the oldest mountain railways and climbs to a height of over 3000m above sea level, offering a spectacular panorama of the Matterhorn and surrounding mountains.

**Cheap fares:** Available from Switzerland Tourism. The Swiss Pass gives unlimited travel on rail services, those of other main regional operators, boats, an extensive network of buses and city trams, as well as reduced price travel on other mountain railways not included in the full scheme. Tickets can be purchased for four, eight, 15, 22 or one month. An STS family card allows children up to 16 years of age free travel when accompanied by parents. There are also regional tickets for unlimited travel in different parts of Switzerland at various rates. Other offers include a Swiss Transfer Ticket allowing return travel from a Swiss border or airport to a selected destination. A



leaflet describing all the schemes is available from Switzerland Tourism. A comprehensive timetable for all Swiss public transport can also be purchased. InterRail cards are valid.

**ROAD:** Traffic drives on the right. Road quality is generally good. Many mountain roads are winding and narrow, and often closed in heavy winter conditions; otherwise chains and snow tyres may be necessary. Rail is often more efficient than driving. Bus: Postal motor coaches (website: [www.post.ch](http://www.post.ch)) provide a service to even the remotest villages, but under the integrated national transport policy, few long-distance coaches are allowed to operate. Taxi: All taxis have meters for short and long trips, although it is advisable to agree the fare for longer distances out of town. Car hire: Available in all towns from hotels and airports and at all manned rail stations. All major European companies are represented. Regulations: The minimum driving age is 18. Seat belts are obligatory and children under 12 years must travel in the back of the car. Dipped headlights are compulsory during the day. Drink-driving fines are heavy. Speed limits: 80kph (50mph) on country lanes; max 120kph (75mph), min 60kph (37mph) on motorways; and 50kph (31mph) in towns. Organisations: The AA and RAC in the UK are linked with TCS (Touring Club Suisse) (website: [www.tcs.ch](http://www.tcs.ch)) and ACS (Automobil Club der Schweiz). Contact the Automobil Club der Schweiz (ACS), Wasserwerksgasse 39, CH-3000 Bern 13 (tel: (31) 328 3111; website: [www.acs.ch](http://www.acs.ch)). In emergencies, there is a breakdown service offering assistance throughout Switzerland (tel: 140). Motorway tax (vignette): An annual road tax of CHF40 is levied on all cars and motorbikes using Swiss motorways. An additional fee of CHF40 applies to trailers and caravans. The vignette (sticker) is valid between 1 December of the year preceding and 31 January of the one following the year printed on the vignette. These permits, which are available at border crossings, are valid for multiple re-entry into Switzerland within the duration of the licensed period. To avoid hold-ups at the frontier, however, it is advisable to purchase the vignette in advance: call the Swiss Travel Centre (tel: (00800) 1002 0030) for more details. Documentation: A national driving licence is sufficient. Green Card insurance is advised ordinary domestic insurance policies are valid but do not provide full cover. The Green Card tops the cover up to the level provided by the visitor's domestic policy.

**URBAN:** Highly efficient and integrated urban public transport systems serve as a model for other countries. There are tramways and light rail services in Basle, Bern, Geneva, Neuchâtel and Zürich. These and a further dozen cities also have trolleybuses. Fares systems are generally automated with machines issuing single or multiple tickets at the roadside. Tickets are also available at enquiry offices. Fares are generally zonal. There is a day ticket for travel in one or more Swiss cities on any given day at a standard fare. Taxis are widely available and drivers expect a 15 per cent tip.

**TRAVEL TIMES:** The following chart gives approximate travel times (in hours and minutes) from Zürich to other major cities/towns in Switzerland. Air Road Rail Basle 0.30 1.10 1.05 Bern 1.15 1.10 Geneva 0.40 2.45 2.55 Lugano 0.45 3.00 3.00

## 8 ACCOMMODATION

**HOTELS:** Hotels are of high quality and in high demand. All standards from luxury to family hotels and pensions are available. A service charge of 15 per cent is included in hotel bills, and an additional local tax may be payable (depending on the location). Most hotels in Switzerland are affiliated to the Schweizer Hotelier Verein (Swiss Hotels Association) (SHV). Grading: The SHV classifies all its hotels according to a 5-star rating system, which stipulates a range of facilities ranging from: 1-star (simple) to 5-star (luxury). Note: Membership of the SHV is voluntary, and there may be some first-class hotels which do not have a star rating. There are many hotels with no actual star classification that are recognised by, and members of, the SHV



as well as Country Inns, Unique hotels, Aparthotels, Mountain Inns/Traveller's Lodges and Low Service hotels. The SHV issues an annual guide of around 2500 member hotels and pensions.

**CHALETS & APARTMENTS:** Information regarding the rental of chalets, houses, flats and furnished apartments is available from local tourist offices and estate agents in Switzerland. A list of contacts is available from Switzerland Tourism (see Top Things To Do).

**SPAS:** Switzerland has about 22 different mineral springs for the treatment of various health conditions. A guide to Swiss spas, including hotels, is available from Switzerland Tourism.

**PRIVATE CLINICS:** Details of accommodation in private sanatoria and clinics is included in the publication Private Clinics in Switzerland, available from Switzerland Tourism.

**CAMPING:** There are approximately 600 campsites in Switzerland. Camping on farmland is not permitted. Local area laws and fees vary. It is advisable to make advance reservations in the summer. Camping guides published by the Swiss Camping Association and the Swiss Camping Federation can be purchased from Switzerland Tourism. A list of campsites (produced in conjunction with the Swiss tourist board) is also available online (website: [www.camping.ch](http://www.camping.ch)).

**YOUTH HOSTELS:** Visitors holding membership cards of a national organisation affiliated to the International Youth Hostels Federation are entitled to lower prices. To avoid disappointment, wardens of youth hostels should be given prior notice (at least five days) of arrival. An International Reply Paid Postcard (Youth Hostel Edition) should be used if confirmation is required. A list of Swiss youth hostels is obtainable from Switzerland Tourism.

**ACCOMMODATION INFORMATION:** Schweizer Hotelier Verein (Swiss Hotels Association) (SHV) Monbijoustrasse 130, Postfach 3001 Bern, Switzerland Tel: (31) 370 4111. Website: [www.swisshotels.ch](http://www.swisshotels.ch) The Swiss Camp Site Owners Association (VSC/ASC) 3800 Interlaken-Thunersee, Switzerland Tel: (31) 852 0626. Website: [www.swisscamps.ch](http://www.swisscamps.ch) Swiss Youth Hostels Schaffhauserstrasse 14, 8042 Zürich, Switzerland Tel: (1) 360 1414. Website: [www.youthhostel.ch](http://www.youthhostel.ch)

#### Northwest Switzerland

**JURA, NEUCHÂTEL & FRIBOURG:** The lakes of Biel, Murten and Neuchâtel are strung along the foot of the Jura Mountains. Although not one of the most popular regions for tourists, the rolling hills of the Jura mountains, the Franches Montagnes in the Neuchâtel region and the foothills of the Alps in the canton of Fribourg to the south of the lakes are excellent for hiking, camping and fishing. The waterfalls of the Doubs and the gorges of the Areuse in the Jura are very impressive. The area is also famous for its food and wines, and for the production of Swiss precision watches; do not miss the Horological Museum at La-Chaux-de-Fonds, and the watch-making factories at La-Chaux-de-Fonds and Le Locle. The striking yellow stone buildings of medieval Neuchâtel, attractively located beside a lake, were once described by Alexander Dumas as 'carved from butter'. The town itself is celebrated for its cafe culture and first-class cuisine. Worth visiting nearby is the medieval town of Romont and the unspoilt lakeside town of Murten (known as 'Morat' by its French-speaking minority). The bilingual city of Fribourg (or 'Freiburg' to its German-speaking minority), where a Romanesque-Germanic atmosphere prevails, is one of the most interesting historic cities in Switzerland. In the south of the canton of Fribourg, in the foothills of the Alps, lies the Gruyère region, famous for its dairy farming which produces one of the best Swiss cheeses: Gruyère. The ancient town of Gruyères is still completely surrounded by its old city walls.



**BASLE:** The ancient university and trading city of Basle (Basel), straddles the Rhine between the Jura, Alsace in France and Germany's Black Forest, and is a centre of art and research. During the three days of the Basler Fasnacht (a pre-Lenten carnival), no serious sightseeing should or can be done, as visitors are required to take part in grand masked parties and street parades with fancy costumes. There is even a Fasnacht Fountain in front of the City Theatre. The collection in the Art Museum ranges from Cranach and Holbein via Rembrandt to Monet, Picasso and Max Ernst. In the old city centre stands the ancient red sandstone cathedral or Münster (parts date from the ninth to 13th century). Its tower affords impressive city vistas. Other sights include the Spalentor (1370), one of the original city wall's three remaining towers, and the Church of St Peter (15th century). Away from the town, mountain paths zigzag up the Jura mountains.

**EXCURSIONS:** Although northern Switzerland is not one of the main tourist areas, there are a few well-known holiday resorts beyond Basle, one of which is picturesque Solothurn where the prevalent architectural styles are Renaissance and Baroque. Day trips to Aarau, Baden and the 13th-century moated castle at Binningen, are also recommended. During winter months, the main sport in the Jura is cross-country skiing.

#### Southwest Switzerland

**GENEVA:** Geneva is a university town situated on the Rhône-outlet of Lake Geneva (Lac Léman), at the southern foot of the Jura mountains. Its popularity is, however, not only due to its excellent surroundings. It owes its cosmopolitan nature to the presence of the United Nations, the International Red Cross and numerous other international organisations. Elegant shops, nightclubs, restaurants, fine museums and art galleries and an extensive calendar of cultural activities make it a favourite with many visitors. The old city centre is best explored on foot. One of the finest examples of Romanesque architecture is the Cathedral de St Pierre. The flower clock, with over 6,500 blooms, near the lake in the Jardin Anglais pays homage to Geneva's watch industry. A boat trip on the lake is recommended. Dominated by the Jet d'Eau, a 145m- (476ft-) high fountain, the lake is generally alive with sailing boats. A crisp breeze known as the bise (kiss) blows across the lake and there are facilities for all kinds of watersports, as well as golf and riding nearby. Geneva is also a traditional European centre for health and recuperation, and maintains state-of-the-art sanatoria such as the 100-year-old Clinique Générale Beaulieu.

**SKI RESORTS:** Geneva is the gateway to a variety of ski resorts. One especially extensive area well-suited to families but with excellent skiing for all abilities is Portes du Soleil, a cluster of small resorts forming a massive skiing circuit which straddles the French-Swiss border. Key Swiss resorts here include the pretty traditional village of Champéry, and the tranquil purpose-built mini resorts of Champoussin and Les Crosets.

**LAUSANNE:** The capital of the canton of Vaud, Lausanne is situated on the northern shore of Lake Geneva. The symbol of the city is the Cathédrale Notre-Dame in the Cité, the old centre, and the Château St Maire (1397-1431). A walk along the promenade of the old Port d'Ouchy reveals a slower pace of life. A funicular can be taken from Ouchy to the inner city of Lausanne.

**EXCURSIONS:** Several rivulets and rolling hills dominate the canton Vaud, a famous wine-producing region. Other traditional activities in the region include wood sculpture and cheese-making. Vaud also boasts one of the country's most important historic buildings: the Benedictine monastery Church of St Pierre (11th century) in the small town of Romainmotier. Montreux is renowned for its mild climate and the International Jazz Festival in July. At Villars there is an 18-hole golf course, while nearby Château d'Oex, Les Diablerets and Leysin are major sporting centres for climbing, mountain-biking, skiing, paragliding and hiking. Each summer there is a rock



festival at Leysin and there is summer skiing on the glacier at Les Diablerets (noteworthy for its panoramic views of Mont Blanc and the icy peaks and green valleys of the Alps).

**Ski resorts:** The traditional village resort of Gstaad is an upmarket, glamorous destination for skiers with extensive slopes and a thriving après-ski scene. Smaller, more family-oriented winter resorts include Château d'Oex, Leysin and Villars.

**VALAIS:** Valais ('The valley') stretches all the way from the Rhône Glacier past Brig, Martigny and Sion down to Lake Geneva. Nestling between the northern and the southern side of the Alps is a diverse landscape which will entice every visitor. Glaciers can be found on all peaks of the Valais Alps which are the highest in Switzerland: Dufour Peak (4634m/15,217ft), Dom (4545m/14,917ft), Weisshorn (4509m/14,793ft) and the Matterhorn (4478m/14,698ft). Small villages of weathered wooden-beamed houses, with flowers pouring out of the windowboxes in summer, perch in clearings high on the slopes. High transverse valleys give access to their resorts at the foot of the alpine giants such as Saas Fee in the Saas Valley and Zermatt in the Nikolai Valley; the Matterhorn provides a magnificent backdrop for the latter. In the internationally-known resort of Zermatt, cars are not allowed and transport is either on foot, by electric car or by horse and cart. There are well-posted walks and cablecars, with lifts and tows to the top of the slopes for more ambitious climbing. The highest aerial cablecar in Europe is here at Zermatt, ascending the Little Matterhorn. The ski run from here back to the village is the longest in Europe. The historic town of Brig boasts the most important Baroque castle in Switzerland, the Stockalperschloss. Sion, an episcopal town, and Martigny, with their castle ruins, are worth a visit and are also ideal starting points for excursions to the surrounding area. Castle enthusiasts should also visit Leuk, Monthey and Sierre. Any visit to the area should also include the Rhône Glacier and grotto at Gletsch.

**Ski resorts:** Valais contains some of Switzerland's most celebrated resorts including the picturesque car-free village of Zermatt, which offers excellent skiing for all abilities, lively nightlife and plenty of non-skiing activities. Trendy Verbier forms part of the extensive Les Quatre Vallées ski area, attracting serious skiers and snow-boarders to its challenging slopes and providing plenty of facilities for young people. The beautiful car-free village of Saas Fee has high, snow-sure slopes and is ideal for beginners and intermediates. The popular ski area of Crans Montana consists of chic Crans sur Sierre with its thriving nightlife, and the more down-to-earth, restrained Montana. Smaller, more family-oriented resorts in the region include Anzère, Bettmeralp, Riederalp and Zinal.

#### Central Switzerland

**BERNER OBERLAND:** The Berner Oberland, with Interlaken and the Jungfrauoch, as well as Europe's highest railway, is a major tourist area; its spectacular scenery includes famous peaks, mountain lakes, alpine streams and wild flowers. Adelboden, Grindelwald and Lenk were already famous with the European nobility and artists in the 19th century. Interlaken, situated between the lakes of Brienz and Thun, is a renowned climatic health resort and the gateway to the Berner Oberland. From here a network of roads and mountain railways such as the narrow-gauge Berner-Oberland-Bahn (BOB) serve the resorts in the Jungfrau region. Jungfrau (4158m/13,642ft), Mönch (4099m/13,448ft) and Eiger (3970m/13,024ft), whose dangerous, nearly perpendicular northern ascent was first climbed in 1938, are three of the most famous mountains in Switzerland. Their names mean the 'maiden', the 'monk' and the 'ogre'; together they are known as the Finsteraarhorn Group. Finsteraarhorn (4275m/14,026ft), the highest peak of the Berner Alps, is dominated by glaciers which stretch from the upper Aare and the Rhône valley to Lake Geneva. Also in the region, excursions up the Schilthorn mountain by funicular (made famous by James Bond in the movie *Her Majesty's Secret Service*); to the waterfalls at



Giessbach and Lauterbrunnen: to the Reichenbach Falls (where Sherlock Holmes fell to his fictional death); and to the Swiss Open-Air Museum at Ballenberg, with its charmingly preserved houses from all regions of the country displaying traditional crafts and trades, are all recommended. The popular winter resorts of Adelboden, Lenk and Zweisimmen are reached from Spiez on Lake Thun. The castle at Thun, with its historical museum located at the top of the Altstadt (old town), should not be missed.

**Ski resorts:** The popular year-round resorts of Grindelwald, Mürren and Wengen thrive during the winter ski and snowboard season (mid-December to late-March). Grindelwald is quite old-fashioned and quiet in the evenings but with excellent skiing, ideal for intermediates and beginners, and off-piste activities including tobogganing and winter walking trails. The ski network links up with the scenic ski village of Wengen, popular with British skiers, and with lots of long, gentle runs, ideal for intermediates. Nearby tiny, traffic-free Mürren counts among Switzerland's more rustic resorts, with limited but challenging skiing including the famous Schilthorn run where the British invented modern-day skiing. The quiet resort of Kandersteg is a good base for cross-country skiing.

**BERN:** This ancient capital (known as 'Berne' by Switzerland's French-speaking citizens) provides opportunities for sightseeing and shopping in the 11th-century arcaded streets. The backdrop is provided by the Jura in the northwest and the south is dominated by the Alps and their foothills. The medieval city centre is located on the Aare River between the 13th-century clocktower (Zeitglockenturm) and the striking copper spire of the Nydegg church (Nydeggkirche). Across the Nydegg bridge are the ancient medieval bear pits (Bärengraben), a reminder of the city's ursine emblem seen throughout the town in the form of flags, statues, stained-glass windows and souvenirs. There are daily vegetable and flower markets here in summer, and a celebrated onion market on the fourth Monday of November.

**LUZERN:** Luzern (known as 'Lucerne' by the country's French-speaking citizens) is located on the edge of a sizeable lake, the Vierwaldstättersee. Its medieval old town (Altstadt) remains intact; important buildings include the Hofkirche, the old Town Hall (1602-1606) and the famous Löwendenkmal, a memorial to the city mascot the 'dying Lion of Lucerne', carved out of a cliff. Spanning the River Reuss, the 170m- (558ft-) long, covered wooden Chapel Bridge, was the oldest in Switzerland (1333) until it was destroyed by fire in 1993. It has since been reconstructed. Luzern also houses the Richard Wagner Museum and the Swiss Transport Museum. An international music festival is held here every year.

**EXCURSIONS:** The Lucerne region, with its mountains, lakes, pine forests and meadows, is traditionally a very popular tourist area. Ferries on the Vierwaldstättersee service the tiny villages surrounding the lakes and connect with various mountain railways and cableways. Cablecars, passenger lifts and cogwheel railways provide transport to the Gütsch, the Pilatus and the Sonnenberg and other mountains. South of Luzern, near the small town of Engelberg, the world's first revolving cable car ascends Mount Titlis, the highest lookout-point in central Switzerland. Historians should visit Schwyz, one of the three original cantons, the country's namesake and home to the Museum of the Swiss Federal Charter and the Forum of Swiss History.

**SKI RESORTS:** The main ski areas near Luzern include the attractive, traditional village of Andermatt with reliable snow and challenging skiing, and Engelberg, with a small ski area suitable for all abilities.

Northeast Switzerland



**ZÜRICH:** Switzerland's largest city is set on its own lake, Zürichsee, on the banks of the Limmat River, and is the country's main German-speaking business and banking centre. The old part of the town (the Altstadt) is especially picturesque. On a walk through the old centre do not miss the Gothic Basilica Fraumünster (11th to 13th century) with its three naves and stained-glass windows by Marc Chagall. Across the river, the skyline is dominated by the Grossmünster with its twin towers. Other sights include the impressive Town Hall, a fine example from the late Renaissance (17th century), the Swiss National Museum and the modern art collections at the Kunsthaus Zürich. Zürich also has a full cultural programme. Plays are performed in the Zürcher Schauspielhaus, which is considered one of the most prestigious German-speaking theatres.

**EXCURSIONS:** Zürich is set in the Mittelland ('middle country'), a very lush and picturesque region scattered with small historic towns, villages and vineyards. Local trains and buses provide easy access to the hills, woods and parks that surround Zürich; during the summer, steamer cruises on Zürich's lake are popular. A day-trip to the Uetliberg, a hill to the southeast of the city, is also recommended. On clear days, the panorama from the top of the hill includes a bird's eye view of Zurich, with the Valais and Berner Alps to the west and the Black Forest to the east. The medieval castle at Rapperswil, on the bank of the lake, is well worth a visit.

**WEST AND SOUTH OF LAKE CONSTANCE:** This area of northeastern Switzerland rises slowly over the rugged range of the Churfirsten near St Gallen to the Glarner Alps. Appenzell, in the northeastern part of Switzerland, with its highest peak Säntis (2504m/8215ft), is ideal for hiking tours. Old traditions remain very much alive in Appenzell and national costume is still worn for village and folk festivals. The Rhine, which springs from Lake Toma in the St Gotthard, runs through the Bodensee (Lake Constance) and cascades near Schaffhausen into the Rhine Falls one of the largest waterfalls in Europe. On the banks of Lake Constance, Stein am Rhein is an especially picturesque small town with cobbled streets, fountains, half-timbered houses and a medieval atmosphere. St Gallen's old city centre is dominated by burgher houses from the 17th and 18th century. Not to be missed is the Baroque Cathedral and the famous Abbey Library (Stiftsbibliothek) in the courtyard of the old Benedictine monastery (incunabula and illuminated manuscripts), named a World Heritage Treasure by UNESCO.

**EXCURSIONS:** Boat trips on Lake Constance to Konstanz and Lindau in Germany or to Bregenz in Austria, and excursions to the Duchy of Liechtenstein can easily be arranged from here.

#### Southeast Switzerland

**GRAUBÜNDEN:** There are 150 valleys in the rugged mountainous region of Graubünden (known as 'Grisons' by French-speaking Swiss), the largest, least populated canton of Switzerland, famous for glamorous ski centres, spa resorts and dramatic alpine landscapes. Graubünden also has the longest history of any region of Switzerland with countless castles, fortresses, churches and chapels and, from valley to valley, the local language changes from German to Romansch to Italian. The climatic health resorts of Arosa, Davos, Klosters and St Moritz are renowned the world over, and not only for their winter sports facilities. Typical Engadine stone houses characterise the towns of St Moritz, Pontresina and Zuoz. The highest peak in the canton is the Bernina (4049m/13,284ft), bordering Italy and Austria. Chur, the capital of Graubünden and the oldest Swiss settlement, is the hub for many other ski resorts. Sights of the city include the St Lucius Church, the Cathedral (12th to 13th century) and the Rhaetic Museum. In the Engadine valley, small villages beyond Zernez and the Swiss National Park have cross-country skiing and summer walking areas. One-third of the 168 sq km (65 sq mile) Swiss National Park is covered with dense forest and is home to several wildlife species, among them roe deer, eagles, marmot and lizards.



**SKI RESORTS:** Many of the country's top ski resorts are located in Graubünden including chic, expensive Davos and Klosters, with excellent skiing facilities and lots of varied and sophisticated après-ski, and glamorous St Moritz with its top-notch on- and off-piste activities (snow-polo, horse-drawn sleighs, the Cresta run), glitzy nightlife and luxury hotels. Smaller ski resorts in the area include the beautiful spa town of Bad Scuol, the smaller resorts of Flims and Laax, and beautiful Arosa, popular with downhill skiers of all levels and also for cross-country skiing.

**TICINO:** The Italian-speaking, southernmost tip of Switzerland is the Ticino, divided from the rest of the country by the Alps but connected by road via the San Bernadino pass. Here the climate is subtropical and the atmosphere Mediterranean. From the Alpine valleys the road runs through Bellinzona with its three medieval castles, en route to the lake resorts of Southern Ticino. Locarno, on the shores of Lago di Maggiore, with its narrow streets, pavement cafes and lakeside lido is one of the most popular destinations, with a world-famous film festival in August. Further south, the health and holiday resort of Lugano lies on the Lago di Lugano between the peaks of Monte Bré and San Salvatore. The largest city in Ticino, it is a favourite holiday destination for the Swiss. Piazzas, palazzos, palms, the Cathedral of San Lorenzo and the promenade along the lakeshore give the city a special flair. Local ferries link Lugano with the scenic lakeside towns of Gandria and Morcote. During spring the area is in full bloom with fig and olive trees, pomegranates and myrtle. Local buses visit the picturesque villages of the area and funiculars run to the top of Mount San Salvatore. Coach excursions to the great passes of Furka, Lukmanier and Oberalp, and to Milan and Venice, can be arranged locally.

## 9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

**Hiking:** This is a national passion in Switzerland, and hikers are very well catered for. Approximately 50,000km of trails lead through all kinds of terrain in this spectacularly beautiful country. Hiking times are given on the signposts, and trails are graded according to degree of difficulty. The organisation responsible for maintaining the trails and for co-ordinating local hiking associations is the Swiss Hiking Federation, Im Hirshalm 49, 4125 Riehen (tel: (61) 606 9340; fax: (61) 606 9345; e-mail: [info@swisshiking.ch](mailto:info@swisshiking.ch); website: [www.swisshiking.ch](http://www.swisshiking.ch)). The Federation can supply maps and guide books, which may be purchased at a discount by members. Guided walks, weekend trips and holidays are regularly organised by the Federation and the local associations and are open to individuals and groups. Most associations run at least one day's walk per week (usually on Sunday), and these do not need to be booked in advance. All trips are led by qualified volunteer guides. Details of the walks and addresses of local hiking associations are given in the free booklet *Switzerland on Foot*, available from Switzerland Tourism or directly from the Swiss Hiking Federation. Programmes of walks are also published on the Federation's website (see above). In addition to the above excursions, there are also 'Radio Walks', which are announced during the season every Sunday at 0655 on Swiss Radio DRS in the Guten Morgen programme. The meeting point, cost, timing and route can be found online (website: [www.swisshiking.ch](http://www.swisshiking.ch)) and on the special telephone line of Swiss Hiking Trails (tel: (61) 606 9346). Participants need merely to turn up at the station or meeting point as announced.

**Mountain sports:** These are widely practised, and include climbing, ice climbing, ski touring, snow boarding, deep-snow skiing, heli-skiing and glacier walking. The Swiss Association of Mountain Guides publishes a list of approved mountaineering centres as well as a list of approved guides. Staff at the centres are all qualified, and there are strict rules governing leader-participant ratios. Further information can be obtained from Schweizerischer Bergführerverband, Hadlaubstrasse 49, 8006 Zurich (tel: (1) 360 5366; fax: (1) 360 5369; e-mail: [sbv@awwww.ch](mailto:sbv@awwww.ch); website: [www.4000plus.ch](http://www.4000plus.ch)) or from Switzerland Tourism. Accommodation is available in the



mountains in the form of alpine huts or chalets. As these are open according to season, visitors should check availability with local tourist boards before arriving. It is often necessary to book in advance. For further information on skiing, see Ski Resorts in the Resorts & Excursions section.

**Cycling:** There are 3300 km (2046 miles) of well-marked interlinked trails, most of which offer easy cycling. Bicycles can be hired at most railway stations and at many other locations. Those hired at stations can then be returned to any station at the end of the tour. There are also inline skating routes throughout the country, varying in difficulty from easy to demanding.

**Watersports:** Lakes such as Lake Geneva, Lugano, and Neuchâtel offer sailing, water-skiing and canoeing. Rowing can be done on Lake Zurich.

#### Entertainment

**Food & Drink:** Swiss cuisine is varied. The great speciality is fondue, a delicious concoction of Gruyère and Vacherin cheese, melted and mixed with white wine, flour, Kirsch and a little garlic. Other cheese specialities are Emmental and Tête de Moine. Pork sausages or salami come in a variety of local recipes including Beinwurst, Engadinerwurst, Kalbsleberwurst (calf's liver pâté), Knackerli, Landjäger and Leberwurst (pâté). A great variety of Swiss wines are available throughout the country. Swiss beer of a lager type is also available. Bottled mineral water is an accepted beverage, with local brands including Henniez. Things to know: Bars/cocktail lounges have table and/or counter service. Although there are many self-service snack bars, table service is normal. National specialities: Viande sèche (dried beef or pork) from Valais and the Grisons where it is called Bündnerfleisch, served with spring or pickled onions. Papet vaudoir (leeks and potatoes). Pieds de porc (pigs' feet). Rösti (shredded fried potatoes). Fondue Bourguignonne (cubed meat with various sauces). Leckerli (spiced honey cakes topped with icing sugar, decorated in Bern with a white sugar bear). Fasnachtküchli (sugar-dusted pastries eaten during Carnival). Gugelhopf (a type of sponge cake with a hollow centre). Schaffhausen (cream-filled cakes). National drinks: Beer, Kirsch, Marc, Pflümli and Williams (spirits). Tipping: A service charge is included in all hotel, restaurant, cafe, bar, taxi and hairdressing services by law; further gratuities are not usually required.

**Nightlife:** Most major towns and resorts have nightclubs or discos with music and dancing, sometimes serving food. There are also cinemas and theatres, and some bars and restaurants have local folk entertainment.

**Shopping:** Special purchases include embroidery and linen, Bernese woodcarving, chocolate, cheese, Swiss army knives and luxury handmade clocks and watches. Shopping hours: Mon-Fri 0830-1200 and 1400-1830, Sat 0800-1200 and 1330-1600. Most shops are closed on Monday mornings.

#### Business

**GDP:** \$251.9 billion. Main exports: Machinery, chocolate, watches, metals and chemicals. Main imports: Chemicals, textiles and minerals. Main trade partners: Germany, Austria, France, USA, UK, Spain, The Netherlands and Italy.

**Economy:** Switzerland has a typical West European mixed economy with a bias towards light and craft-based industries: Swiss precision manufacturing such as watch-making is renowned throughout the world. The country is highly industrialised and heavily dependent on exports of finished goods (in total, exports are equivalent to just under half of Swiss GDP). Lacking raw materials of its own, almost all of these must be imported. In manufacturing, the machinery and



equipment industry specialises in precision and advanced technology products: machine tools, printing and photographic equipment, electronic control and medical equipment. There is also a substantial chemical industry, employing 15 per cent of the workforce, which continues to grow steadily. Swiss firms have proved particularly adept at exploiting niche markets across a wide range of industries and products. Although half of the country's food is imported, the agricultural sector is a strong and major employer. The processed foods industry has a high international profile, particularly in such products as chocolate, cheese and baby foods. The service sector is dominated by banking, where the particular reputation of the Swiss banking community for discretion has attracted large deposits. The Government has come under some pressure to allow disclosure in the course of criminal and other investigations: recognising the international climate, the Swiss authorities have generally responded more flexibly of late. Switzerland remains one of Europe's major financial centres. Among other service industries, tourism is of growing importance: Switzerland receives around 11 million visitors annually and the industry contributes around \$12 billion to the national economy. The economy has been stagnant during the last two years, largely a reflection of conditions throughout continental Europe; the economy in 2005 was rather slow with growth at 1.8 per cent. Switzerland is not a member of the European Union, although nearly two-thirds of its exports are sold to EU countries. The government is in the process of negotiating a new set of bilateral agreements with the EU, but the prospect of it joining the Union is as remote as ever. A referendum rejected even membership of the European Economic Area a body created to reduce the economic barriers between the EU and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), to which Switzerland does belong. In May 1992, Switzerland gained admission to the IMF and World Bank.

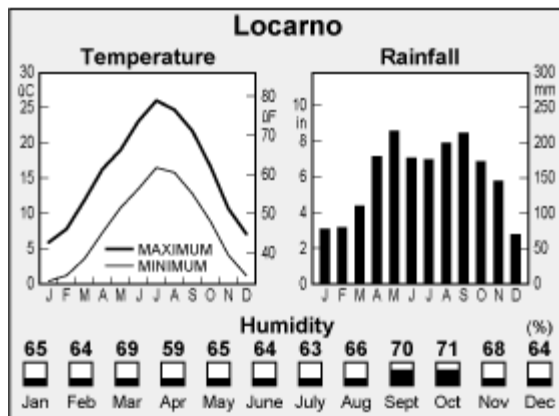
**Business Etiquette:** Businesspeople are expected to wear suits. Although English is widely spoken, it is always appreciated if a visitor attempts to say a few words in the language of the host. When visiting a firm, a visiting card is essential. Office hours: Mon-Fri 0800-1200 and 1400-1700.

**Conferences/Conventions:** The neutrality, stability and conveniently central location of Switzerland make the country a favourite meeting place for conventions and international organisations. It has an extensive and highly developed network of conference destinations with all the major cities and many of the smaller alpine and lake resorts offering hotels and convention centres which are fully equipped with a complete range of facilities including interpretation and audio-visual services. Each of Switzerland's main cities has its own Convention Bureau, whilst the Association of Swiss Convention Centres, Swiss Congress, oversees meetings activity throughout the country. The organisation is made up of the 19 leading congress locations in Switzerland and can help with the organisation of a meeting in any region of the country.

**Commercial Information:** OSEC Business Network Switzerland Stampfenbachstrasse 85, 8035 Zürich, Switzerland Tel: (1) 365 5770. Website: [www.osec.ch](http://www.osec.ch) Economiesuisse Swiss Business Federation Hegibachstrasse 47, PO Box 1072, 8032 Zürich, Switzerland Tel: (1) 421 3535. Website: [www.economiesuisse.ch](http://www.economiesuisse.ch) Switzerland Convention and Incentive Bureau (SCIB) c/o Switzerland Tourism, Tödistrasse 7, 8027 Zürich, Switzerland Tel: (1) 288 1271. Website: [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)



## 10 CLIMATE



The Alps cause many climatic variations throughout Switzerland. In the higher Alpine regions temperatures tend to be low, while the lower land of the northern area has higher temperatures and warm summers.

**Required clothing:** Warm clothes and rainwear; lightweights for summer.

## 11 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

**History:** The history of Switzerland has followed a broadly different course from that of its European neighbours, mainly because no ruler since the 14th century was able to claim more than a theoretical suzerainty over the small, well-organised and prosperous group of cantons that comprise it. In the period between 1315 and 1388, they inflicted a series of crushing defeats on the armies of the Dukes of Austria, resulting in several other cantons joining the original three in the Swiss Confederation. Their location left them well placed to interfere in the interminable power struggles of the period, and their influence was backed up by the formidable reputation of their army probably the most powerful in Europe at the end of the 15th century. The Reformation led to a division in Swiss society between the followers of the reformer Zwingli (later, Calvin) and the Catholics. The bitter controversy considerably reduced Swiss influence in Europe and the Confederation was lucky to survive a series of defeats. Swiss independence from the Holy Roman Empire was one of the results of the Peace of Westphalia (1648) that concluded the Thirty Years' War, in which Switzerland had suffered badly. In the following 100 years, little progress was made towards a formal union of the cantons and the religious controversy rumbled on; the dominance of the Protestants was not established until after the Second Villmergen War in 1712. The dramatic events of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire resulted in a confusing period, with much of the country being annexed by France. Independence was restored by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 (which also laid down the principle of the perpetual neutrality of Switzerland) but the repressive policies of the cantons and the lack of any central power continued to work against political unity and economic growth. It was not until the end of the 19th century that the federal government began to be truly effective, although the cantons continued to enjoy wide powers and do so to this day. Domestic politics since 1945 have been dominated by four political parties the Social Democrats, Radical Democrats, the Swiss People's Party and the Christian Democratic People's Party, who have consistently governed the country in



various coalition combinations. The general election in October 1999 was notable for the substantial gains made by the Swiss People's Party (SVP), which moved sharply to the right during the 1990s and sought to build its electoral position by exploiting fears about the level of foreign immigration into Switzerland. In common with other European far-right parties, the strategy has been fairly successful and the SVP made yet further gains at the most recent poll in October 2003 gaining almost 28 per cent of the vote. The principal long-term question in Swiss politics has been relations with the European Union, which accounts for 50 per cent of Switzerland's trade. The main popular concerns are the likely erosion of cantonal power (a central feature of the Swiss political system), immigration levels and the loss of the country's cherished neutrality. The division was also apparent from the result of the referendum on Swiss membership of the European Economic Area, a free-trade agreement between the EU and EFTA (of which Switzerland is a member), held in December 1992. Opponents of the pact narrowly won. Among the people, there is a rough division by age: younger people tend to favour closer links with Europe; the older tend to place more value on neutrality. Given Switzerland's continuing prosperity, economic arguments are rarely heard, although there is a broad acceptance especially in the financial community that the Euro will become a standard feature of commercial life in the near future. In 2001, two years after the inauguration of the Euro, the Swiss people voted again in a referendum to enhance links with the EU while endorsing a promise by the major parties that they would never countenance actually joining the EU. This appears to have put an end to the debate for the time being. The following year, it was Switzerland's famed reputation for banking secrecy that came under scrutiny from both the EU and USA, as part of a global crackdown on money laundering and large-scale tax evasion. Again, the Swiss found themselves divided between maintaining a cherished tradition of confidentiality and being a good international citizen.

**Government:** The present constitution dates back to 1874. There are 26 cantons (three of which are subdivided) and more than 3000 communes. The Federal Assembly is bicameral, comprising a Council of State (upper house) with 46 members and a 200-strong National Council (lower house) whose members are elected every four years. Executive power is vested in the seven-member Federal Council, elected by the Assembly and headed by an annually elected president. Whatever the legislators decide, however, the Swiss people are aware that they can take the issue to referendum by raising 100,000 signatures. Popular referenda are a routine feature of Swiss political life.

#### Travel Advice

Most visits to Switzerland are trouble-free but you should be aware of the global risk of indiscriminate international terrorist attacks, which could be against civilian targets, including places frequented by foreigners. This advice is based on information provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK. It is correct at time of publishing. As the situation can change **rapidly, visitors are advised to contact the following organisations for the latest travel advice:** British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Tel: (0845) 850 2829. Website: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk) US Department of State Website: <http://travel.state.gov/travel>

#### Top Things To See

Explore Zürich, Switzerland's largest city, pleasantly set on its own lake, Zürichsee, on the banks of the Limmat River. The old part of the town (the Altstadt) is especially picturesque. Do not miss the Gothic Basilica Fraumünster (11th to 13th century) with its three naves and stained-glass windows by Marc Chagall. Across the river, the skyline is dominated by the Grossmünster with its twin towers. Other sights include the impressive Town Hall, a fine example from the late Renaissance (17th century), the Swiss National Museum and the modern art collections at the



Kunsthaus Zürich. Visit the Horological Museum and watch-making factories at La-Chaux-de-Fonds. There are more factories at Le Locle nearby, all producing the precision watches Switzerland is so famous for. The university city of Geneva, situated on the Rhône-outlet of Lake Geneva (Lac Léman), has an old city centre that is best explored on foot. One of the finest examples of Romanesque architecture is the Cathédrale de St Pierre. The flower clock, with over 6,500 blooms, near the lake in the Jardin Anglais pays homage to Geneva's watch industry. Cross over to the northern shore of the big lake to Lausanne, the capital of the canton of Vaud. Essential sights are the Cathédrale Notre-Dame in the Cité, the old centre, and the Château St Maire (1397-1431). A walk along the promenade of the old Port d'Ouchy reveals a slower pace of life. Take the funicular from Ouchy to the inner city of Lausanne. Vaud also boasts one of the country's most important historic buildings; head for the small town of Romainmotier to discover its 11th-century Benedictine monastery. The ancient capital of Bern is worth a visit. Experience its unique 11th-century arcaded streets. The medieval city centre is located on the Aare River between the 13th-century clocktower (Zeitglockenturm) and the striking copper spire of the Nydegg church (Nydeggkirche). Cross the Nydegg bridge to see the ancient medieval bear pits (Bärengraben), a reminder of the city's ursine emblem seen throughout the town in the form of flags, statues, stained-glass windows and souvenirs. Enjoy the Baroque Cathedral and the famous Abbey Library (Stiftsbibliothek) in the courtyard of the old Benedictine monastery (incunabula and illuminated manuscripts), named a World Heritage Treasure by UNESCO, in St Gallen's old city centre which is dominated by burgher houses from the 17th and 18th century. Head for Neuchâtel, attractively located beside a lake, and admire the striking medieval yellow stone buildings in town. They were once described by Alexander Dumas as 'carved from butter'. The town is celebrated for its cafe culture and first-class cuisine. The historic town of Brig in the Valais boasts the most important Baroque castle in Switzerland, the Stockalperschloss. Castle enthusiasts should also visit Leuk, Martigny, Monthey and Sierre. Explore the Berner Oberland, a major tourist area that includes spectacular scenery including famous peaks, mountain lakes, alpine streams and wild flowers, as well as Europe's highest railway. Adelboden, Grindelwald and Lenk were already famous with the European nobility and artists in the 19th century. From Interlaken, a network of roads and mountain railways such as the narrow-gauge Berner-Oberland-Bahn (BOB) serve the resorts in the Jungfrau region. Jungfrau (4158m/13,642ft), Mönch (4099m/13,448ft) and Eiger (3970m/13,024ft), whose dangerous, nearly perpendicular northern ascent was first climbed in 1938, are three of the most famous mountains in Switzerland. Their names mean the 'maiden', the 'monk' and the 'ogre'; together they are known as the Finsteraarhorn Group. Finsteraarhorn (4275m/14,026ft), the highest peak of the Berner Alps, is dominated by glaciers which stretch from the upper Aare and the Rhône valley to Lake Geneva. Also in the region, there are excursions up the Schilthorn mountain by funicular (made famous by James Bond in the movie Her Majesty's Secret Service); to the waterfalls at Giessbach and Lauterbrunnen; to the Reichenbach falls (where Sherlock Holmes fell to his fictional death); and to the Swiss Open-Air Museum at Ballenberg, with its charmingly preserved houses from all regions of the country displaying traditional crafts and trades, are all recommended. The castle at Thun, with its historical museum located at the top of the Altstadt (old town), should not be missed. Discover the ancient university and trading city of Basle (Basel). Straddling the Rhine between the Jura region Alsace in France and Germany's Black Forest, it is a centre of art and research. The collection in the Art Museum ranges from Cranach and Holbein via Rembrandt to Monet, Picasso and Max Ernst. Visit the ancient red sandstone cathedral or Münster (parts date from the ninth to 13th century) and climb the tower for some impressive city vistas. Other sights include the Spalentor (1370), one of the original city wall's three remaining towers, and the Church of St Peter (15th century). Away from the town, mountain paths zigzag up the Jura mountains. Check out the the 170m- (558ft-) long, covered wooden Chapel Bridge spanning the River Reuss in Luzern (known as Lucerne by the country's French-speaking citizens). It was the oldest in Switzerland (1333) until it was destroyed by a fire in 1993. It has since been reconstructed and is still worth seeing. Luzern's medieval old town (Altstadt) remains intact;



important buildings include the Hofkirche, the old Town Hall (1602-1606) and the famous Löwendenkmal, a memorial to the city mascot the 'dying Lion of Lucerne', carved out of a cliff. Head south through the San Bernardino pass to the lovely, Italian-speaking, southernmost tip of Switzerland, region of Ticino. Here the climate is subtropical and the atmosphere Mediterranean. Follow the road from the Alpine valleys through Bellinzona with its three medieval castles and continue to the lake resorts of Southern Ticino. Locarno, on the shores of Lago di Maggiore, with its narrow streets, pavement cafes and lakeside lido is one of the most popular destinations, with a world-famous film festival in August. Further south, the health and holiday resort of Lugano lies on the Lago di Lugano between the peaks of Monte Bré and San Salvatore. The largest city in Ticino, it is a favourite holiday destination for the Swiss. Piazzas, palazzos, palms, the Cathedral of San Lorenzo and the promenade along the lakeshore give the city a special flair. To get close to the highest mountains in Switzerland, take a trip to Valais ('The valley'), which stretches all the way from the Rhône Glacier past Brig, Martigny and Sion down to Lake Geneva. Glaciers can be found on all peaks of the Valais Alps, which include Dufour Peak (4634m/15,217ft), Dom (4545m/14,917ft), Weisshorn (4509m/14,793ft) and the Matterhorn (4478m/14,698ft). Small villages of weathered wooden-beamed houses, with flowers pouring out of the window boxes in summer, perch in clearings high on the slopes. High transverse valleys give access to their resorts at the foot of the alpine giants such as Saas Fee in the Saas Valley and Zermatt in the Nikolai Valley; the Matterhorn provides a magnificent backdrop for the latter. Any visit to the area should also include the Rhône Glacier and grotto at Gletsch.

**Tourist Information:** Switzerland Travel Centre in the UK in the UK1st Floor, 30 Bedford Street, London WC2E 9ED, UKTel: (00800) 1002 0030 (toll-free in Europe) or (020) 7420 4900. Website: [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) Switzerland Tourism in the USA 608 5th Avenue, Swiss Center, New York, NY 10020, USA Tel: (212) 757 5944 or (877) 794 7795 (toll-free). Website: [www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com)

### Top Things To Do

Join the Swiss in their favourite pastime and go hiking. Approximately 50,000km of trails lead through all kinds of terrain in this spectacularly beautiful country. Hiking times are given on the signposts, and trails are graded according to degree of difficulty. The organisation responsible for maintaining the trails and for co-ordinating local hiking associations is the Swiss **Hiking Federation, Im Hirshalm 49, 4125 Riehen (tel: (61) 606 9340; website: [www.swisshiking.ch](http://www.swisshiking.ch))**. Guided walks, weekend trips and holidays are regularly organised by the Federation and the local associations and are open to individuals and groups. Most associations run at least one day's walk per week (usually on Sunday), and these do not need to be booked in advance. All trips are led by qualified volunteer guides. Details of the walks and addresses of local hiking associations are given in the free booklet *Switzerland on Foot*, available from Switzerland Tourism or directly from the Swiss Hiking Federation. Programmes of walks are also published on the Federation's website (see above). In addition to the above excursions, there are also 'Radio Walks', which are announced during the season every Sunday at 0655 on Swiss Radio DRS in the Guten Morgen programme. The meeting point, cost, timing and route can be found online (website: [www.swisshiking.ch](http://www.swisshiking.ch)) and on the special telephone line of Swiss Hiking Trails (tel: (61) 606 9346). Participants need merely to turn up at the station or meeting point as announced. Enjoy the mountain sports. There are plenty of opportunities to go climbing, ice climbing, ski touring, snow boarding, deep-snow skiing, heli-skiing and glacier walking. The Swiss Association of Mountain Guides publishes a list of approved mountaineering centres as well as a list of approved guides. Further information can be obtained from Schweizerischer Bergführerverband, Hadlaubstrasse 49, 8006 Zurich (tel: (1) 360 5366; website: [www.4000plus.ch](http://www.4000plus.ch)) or from Switzerland Tourism. Accommodation is available in the mountains in the form of alpine huts or chalets. As these are open according to season, visitors should check



availability with local tourist boards before arriving. It is often necessary to book in advance. In the south west, Geneva is the gateway to a variety of ski resorts. One especially extensive area well-suited to families but with excellent skiing for all abilities is Portes du Soleil, a cluster of small resorts forming a massive skiing circuit which straddles the French-Swiss border. Key Swiss resorts here include the pretty traditional village of Champéry, and the tranquil purpose-built mini resorts of Champoussin and Les Crosets. The main ski areas near Luzern include the attractive, traditional village of Andermatt with reliable snow and challenging skiing, and Engelberg, with a small ski area suitable for all abilities. Many of the country's top ski resorts are located in Graubünden including chic, expensive Davos and Klosters, with excellent skiing facilities and lots of varied and sophisticated après-ski, and glamorous St Moritz with its top-notch on- and off-piste activities (snow-polo, horse-drawn sleighs, the Cresta run), glitzy nightlife and luxury hotels. Smaller ski resorts in the area include the beautiful spa town of Bad Scuol, the smaller resorts of Flims and Laax, and beautiful Arosa, popular with downhill skiers of all levels and also for cross-country skiing. Valais contains some of Switzerland's most celebrated resorts including the picturesque car-free village of Zermatt, which offers excellent skiing for all abilities, lively nightlife and plenty of non-skiing activities. Trendy Verbier forms part of the extensive Les Quatre Vallées ski area, attracting serious skiers and snow-boarders to its challenging slopes and providing plenty of facilities for young people. The beautiful car-free village of Saas Fee has high, snow-sure slopes and is ideal for beginners and intermediates. The popular ski area of Crans Montana consists of chic Crans sur Sierre with its thriving nightlife, and the more down-to-earth, restrained Montana. Smaller, more family-oriented resorts in the region include Anzère, Bettmeralp, Riederalp and Zinal. In the Berner Oberland, the popular year-round resorts of Grindelwald, Mürren and Wengen thrive during the winter ski and snowboard season (mid-December to late-March). Grindelwald is quite old-fashioned and quiet in the evenings but with excellent skiing, ideal for intermediates and beginners, and off-piste activities including tobogganing and winter walking trails. The ski network links up with the scenic ski village of Wengen, popular with British skiers, and with lots of long, gentle runs, ideal for intermediates. Nearby tiny, traffic-free Mürren counts among Switzerland's more rustic resorts, with limited but challenging skiing including the famous Schilthorn run where the British invented modern-day skiing. The quiet resort of Kandersteg is a good base for cross-country skiing. The popular winter resorts of Adelboden, Lenk and Zweisimmen are reached from Spiez on Lake Thun. The traditional village resort of Gstaad is an upmarket, glamorous destination for skiers with extensive slopes and a thriving après-ski scene. Smaller, more family-oriented winter resorts include Château d'Oex, Leysin and Villars. Cycling is not necessarily as strenuous as the mountainous terrain might indicate. There are 3300km (2046 miles) of well-marked interlinked trails, and most of them offer easy cycling. Hire a bicycle at a railway station and return it at any other station at the end of the tour. This is possible at most train stations. There are also inline skating routes throughout the country, varying in difficulty from easy to demanding. Lakes such as Lake Geneva, Lugano, and Neuchâtel offer sailing, water-skiing and canoeing. Rowing can be done on Lake Zurich. Go on a cruise or just take a ferry trip on one of Switzerland's many lakes. During the summer, steamer cruises on Zürich's lake are popular. The medieval castle at Rapperswil, on the bank of the lake, is well worth a visit. In the Lucerne area, ferries on the Vierwaldstättersee service the tiny villages surrounding the lake and connect with various mountain railways and cableways. Local ferries link Lugano with the scenic lakeside towns of Gandria and Morcote. During spring, the area is in full bloom with fig and olive trees, pomegranates and myrtle. On Lake Constance, boat trips to Konstanz and Lindau in Germany or to Bregenz in Austria are available. A boat trip on Lake Geneva is highly recommended. Dominated by the Jet d'Eau, a 145m- (476ft-) high fountain, the lake is generally alive with sailing boats. A crisp breeze, known as the bise (kiss), blows across the lake and there are facilities for all kinds of watersports, as well as golf and riding nearby. Enjoy a theatre production at the Zürcher Schauspielhaus, which is considered one of the most prestigious German-speaking theatres in the country. Go to Basle for the three days of the Basler Fasnacht (a pre-Lenten carnival), during which time no serious sightseeing



should or can be done, as visitors are required to take part in grand masked parties and street parades with fancy costumes. There is even a Fasnacht Fountain in front of the City Theatre. Take the highest aerial cablecar in Europe at Zermatt, ascending the Little Matterhorn. The ski run from here back to Zermatt is the longest in Europe. The village is internationally known for not allowing cars. Transport is either on foot, by electric car or by horse and cart. If in Luzern, head south to the small town of Engelberg, where the world's first revolving cable car ascends Mount Titlis, the highest lookout-point in central Switzerland. The Montreux International Jazz Festival in July is always worth visiting as it constantly attracts the world's greatest jazz, blues and rhythm 'n' blues artists. Visit one of Switzerland's many climatic health resorts. The Graubünden resorts of Arosa, Davos, Klosters and St Moritz are renowned the world over. Interlaken, situated between the lakes of Brienz and Thun, is another renowned climatic health resort and the gateway to the Berner Oberland. Geneva is a traditional European centre for health and recuperation, and maintains state-of-the-art sanatoria such as the 100-year-old Clinique Générale Beaulieu, well worth a visit.

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## OverviewII

Small, mountainous and wealthy, with a population of just seven million, Switzerland is renowned for its enviable quality of life in a country that ticks along like clockwork. Its products are sought after the world over, from dangerously delicious cheese and chocolate to luxurious watches whose timekeeping is as sharp as a Swiss army knife, another popular export from this clever little nation in the Alps. Switzerland's famed political neutrality and isolated location, ring-fenced by mountains, have enabled it to play a safe but central role in European affairs. These factors also gave rise to the coveted Swiss bank account, whose anonymity, along with tax relief and what may be the safest banks in the world, have made Zürich one of Europe's major financial hubs. The conveniently central location in the middle of Europe has also made Switzerland a favourite meeting place for conventions and international conferences - Geneva, for instance, is home to the United Nations. Switzerland is not only a place for professionals, though. As a stylish tourist destination it offers top ski resorts like Zermatt and celebrity-studded St Moritz, while the white peaks of mountains set against blue skies make a wonderful backdrop for summertime hiking. The ancient capital of Berne provides opportunities for sightseeing and elegant shopping, while nightlife can prove to be a lot of fun, too, since the Swiss like their food and folk music even in discotheques and nightclubs. Switzerland's political model is based on consensus-building, and considering that the country consists of several culturally different groups speaking different languages, Swiss German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Rumantsch, the country's peaceful domestic situation is admirable. And while the Swiss in practice have been neutral in foreign affairs for several centuries, there are signs that they are increasingly willing to get more deeply involved in world affairs and deploy on the international stage the skills in democracy and diplomacy they have developed domestically. The most obvious sign is that Switzerland finally became a member of the United Nations in September 2002 .

## Communications

**Telephone:** Full IDD is available. Country code: 41. Phonocards are available for use in payphones.



**Mobile telephone:** Roaming agreements exist with most international mobile phone companies. Coverage is good.

**Internet:** Internet access is available in Internet cafes and phone booths operated by Swisscom. Charges are payable by phonecard or credit card.

**Post:** Airmail within Europe takes three days. Post office hours: Mon-Fri 0730-1200 and 1345-1830. Saturday closing is at 1100 except in major cities.

**MEDIA:** The main broadcaster in Switzerland is the public Swiss Broadcasting Corporation. It operates seven TV networks and 18 radio stations. Most of its funding comes from licence fee revenues, while a smaller proportion comes from TV advertising. Private TV and radio stations operate in the regions. Television stations from France, Germany and Italy are widely available, thanks in part to the very high take-up of multi-channel cable and satellite TV. Some German commercial broadcasters provide tailored versions of their channels for the Swiss market. Switzerland's press operates to a large extent along regional lines which reflect the country's linguistic divisions. Press: The high level of interest in local politics throughout Switzerland has led to a large number of regional newspapers. However, the most popular dailies are Corriere del Ticino (Lugano-based), Le Temps (Geneva-based), La Tribune de Geneve (Geneva-based), Neue Zürcher Zeitung (Zurich-based), and Tages-Anzeiger Zürich (Zurich-based). European and international newspapers in English, including The Herald Tribune and USA Today, are also widely available. Radio: SR-DRS, the German-language public broadcaster, operates five stations; RSR, the French-language public broadcaster, has four stations; RSI, Italian-language public broadcaster broadcasts from three stations; RR, finally, is a Rumansch-language public radio station. TV: In addition to the Swiss public broadcaster, Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, there is SF-DRS, a German-language public broadcaster that operates three channels; RTSI, an Italian-language public broadcaster with two channels; and TSR, a French-language public broadcaster that similarly operates two channels.