

# Moving to Switzerland.

## Make sure everything goes smoothly!

You're relocating to Switzerland and moving day is just around the corner, you've thought of everything and got everything to hand. Are you sure? Zebrabox has compiled a list of the most important things to remember when moving to a new country!

### What to remember when relocating to Switzerland!


Grüezi Switzerland – I'm on my way!

#### A couple of weeks BEFORE relocating!

##### Moving to Switzerland

Going to work, study and live in Switzerland is relatively simple thanks to the free movement of persons agreement for EU and EFTA citizens. Citizens of other nationalities can find out about their country's entry requirements from their consulate or embassy.

**Important:** A valid passport or ID card, an employment contract or tenancy agreement! People who are self-employed have to prove that they can support themselves financially. Everyone needs a residence permit. The same entry requirements apply to citizens from Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania.


**Useful tips:** Check all of your identity documents (ID card, passport, child ID) and other important documents (driving licence, birth certificate) before relocating to Switzerland and extend them if necessary. Get your work permit from your Swiss employer and your tenancy agreement sent to you. If you are moving to Switzerland with your pet, then make sure that they have had all the necessary vaccinations for Switzerland and that you have the required [entry papers](#)  available.

**Zebrabox tip:** As well as registering in your new home (see last point), it's also important to deregister and give notice. Already thought of everything?



- Health insurance and pension scheme
- Car insurance
- Newspaper subscriptions, telephone, mobile, internet and TV contracts
- Residents' registration office
- Church tax

#### Just before and on moving day

##### Household effects and customs

When relocating to Switzerland, you have to present a completed list of all the items that you're bringing with you to the entry customs office – this includes household items, cars and pets: they are known as your household effects and you have to list them on the [18.44 application form](#) .

**Important:** All personal belongings and household goods may be brought into Switzerland tax free. Provided that the item has been in your possession for at least six months and will remain your personal possession. That also applies to cars. So, it's best to have your proof of purchase documents to hand!

**Useful tips:** Customs officials want a precise relocation inventory list of every item, including value and weight! Fill in the 18.44 form at the same time as filling the boxes and write your own inventory list. Number your crates and boxes and write the number on the inventory list – it will be much quicker to find everything if customs officials ask! Provide a separate list with further details for the following items: new belongings, valuables, food, plants, medication and animals (see article "[Moving to Switzerland](#)" ). The [Veterinary Office](#)  can provide further information on importing animals.

**Zebrabox tip:** In Switzerland, a removal van weighing 7.5 tonnes is classed as a lorry (get in this lane at customs!). It is prohibited to drive lorries at night and at weekends! The permissible total weight of 7.5 tonnes must not be exceeded. Otherwise, you might be forced to unload and reload the goods that you're relocating after they are weighed at the border. It's better just to ask the removal company in advance.

Check the customs office [opening times](#) !

### Residency options when moving to Switzerland

There are three different residency options: short-term residence permits for stays up to a year, time-limited residence permits and settlement permits.

**Important:** Everyone wishing to enter Switzerland needs a valid travel document.

**Useful tips:** As long as you are not working in Switzerland, stays of up to 90 days in six months do not require a permit. However, you must be able to prove that you can support yourself financially (that you're not dependent on welfare benefits!) and that you have health insurance. If you are a student, you must present confirmation of matriculation from a recognised educational establishment. For longer stays abroad, you must register with the migration office in your canton as an inactive citizen. However, if you work during your stay or you're moving to Switzerland for more than three months, then you will need a residence permit.

**Zebrabox tip:** The residence permit issued to EU/EFTA citizens is valid for five years (for students it is valid for the duration of the course and renewed yearly) and it is automatically renewed as long as the requirements are still being met.

### Working in Switzerland

Employees in Switzerland require a residence permit, which can be obtained if you have an employment contract.

**Important:** The employer or you (if you have an employment contract and a statement of engagement from the employer) can apply for a work permit from the relevant canton authorities. You may only start work once you have this permit. The residence permit is tied to the work permit. It is generally valid for five years and can then be extended.

**Useful tips:** Many Swiss companies have flat hierarchical structures. Employees clarify any important questions directly with the bosses. That's surely one reason why there is a smaller proportion of trade unions and strikes are very rare.

**Zebrabox tip:** If you are looking for seasonal work in Switzerland, then keep an eye out for winter jobs in ski areas where more staff are often needed.

### Self-employed work in Switzerland

If you're self-employed and relocating to Switzerland, then you'll need a permit right from day one.

**Important:** A permit is granted if it is in the general economic interest, if certain personal as well as financial and business requirements are met and any existing restriction on the number of foreigners allows it. Have you met all the requirements? This is decided by the canton and federal government.


**Useful tips:** Spouses of Swiss citizens as well as spouses of those with a permanent residence permit do not require an additional permit in order to engage in self-employed activities.

**Zebrabox tip:** If you are self-employed, you can voluntarily pay into a pension scheme.

### Living in Switzerland

What are the normal quiet hours in Switzerland? How is rubbish organised? What does the caretaker do and what about the property manager? Everyday life is more chilled out if you understand and observe the rules.

**Important:** If you are applying to rent an apartment in Switzerland, you should provide proof that you're able to pay the rent. That will improve your chances! To do this, most landlords require an extract from the debt collection register. You can order this extract from your local debt collection office.

**Useful tips:** There are a few things to remember about the Swiss rental system. In order to prevent problems, the Swiss Federal Commission for Foreigners (EKA) have compiled this Living in Switzerland [information booklet](#)  for everyone who is relocating to Switzerland.

**Zebrabox tip:** Photocopy all of your important documents such as your passport and tenancy agreement and store them safely, for example in the smallest XXXX storage unit <sup>GO</sup>. Then if there is a fire in your apartment or you suffer a break in then you'll still be able to access the copies quickly and avoid any unnecessary difficulties.

## Health insurance

Break a leg! Every new Swiss resident has to take out health insurance (basic insurance), at the latest three months after relocating to Switzerland. It's the law! You will be covered retrospectively from your date of entry. The premiums for previous months have to be paid; months that have started are regarded as whole months and you will need to pay the whole month's premium.

**Important:** Basic insurance benefits cover the same services for inpatient and outpatient treatment as well as prescribed medication across all health insurance providers. However, dental treatment is usually not included! Additional insurance is optional and differs between insurers. It's worth comparing them!

**Useful tips:** A per capita premium system is used in Switzerland. That means that every insured person pays a monthly premium, regardless of age, location and provider – personal income is not a factor. (Tip: people on very low incomes can receive a contribution towards the premium from their municipality. Submit an application!) As well as the premium, you need to agree a deductible with the health insurance provider. Also known as the “franchise”, it is the fixed annual excess. In the event of illness, you pay up to this amount yourself.

**Zebrabox tip:** Even though the benefits provided by the basic insurance are the same amongst all health insurance providers, it is still worth comparing them because the premiums will be different! By the way, if you work at least eight hours per week, you will automatically have accident insurance through your employer.

## Car

If you're relocating to Switzerland with your car, then there

are a few things to remember so that you can drive away as normal! Only the vehicle owner is allowed to import the car!

**Important:** In order to take a used car through customs without any problems, it must be specified as a household effect at the border crossing. It is best to use a separate 18.44 form. The following also applies: the car must have been in your personal possession for a minimum of six months (remember your vehicle registration document and proof of purchase!). Store the 18.44 form that has been stamped by the customs authorities somewhere safe – you will need it to register the vehicle. Special regulations apply to foreign company cars. Either way, a customs declaration is required. <sup>GO</sup> New vehicles? <sup>GO</sup> More important information, including information on car tax and the motorway toll sticker “vignette” is available here. <sup>GO</sup>

**Useful tips:** The car must be reregistered in your local canton at the Road Traffic Office <sup>GO</sup> within one year and fitted with a Swiss number plate. Your driving licence is valid for a maximum of 12 months from the date of entry! If you get caught, it gets expensive. So, sort out all the formalities in good time: application form for applying for a driving licence, ID card, former driving licence, residence permit, possibly a sight test.

**Zebrabox tip:** You must have a Swiss driving licence BEFORE you drive a Swiss registered car outside of Switzerland! For leased vehicles, the financial institute must consent to the importation of the vehicle into Switzerland.

## AFTER relocating

### Registering

Even after relocating, the stress isn't quite over. There are a couple of important formalities that you need to take care of.

**Important:** Your first duty after entering Switzerland, if you are staying in Switzerland more long-term, is to register your new place of residence at the relevant municipal residents' registration office within 8 or 14 days. That also applies to dogs. Registration may be subject to a fee.

**Useful tips:** To register, you will need:

- ID card / passport
- Current passport photo
- Copy of your tenancy agreement
- Employment contract / enrolment confirmation (e.g. confirmation of matriculation from the university)
- Proof of basic insurance through a health insurance provider (can be provided later)
- Birth certificate, and possibly a marriage certificate
- Employment declaration from your employer or proof of self-employed activity

**Zebrabox tip:** If you're relocating to Switzerland for the long-term, then you can choose to apply for “simplified” naturalisation (marriage and a few other requirements) or “ordinary” naturalisation. No wedding in sight? Then ask again in 12 years, because that's the minimum time it takes to become a Swiss citizen.