



Country Information

Switzerland

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General

Name of the country: Switzerland

Area: 41,293 sq km

Population: 7.5 million

Capital: Bern

Cantons: 20 full cantons, 6 half cantons.

Government: Parliamentary Federal State since 1848, direct democracy.

Geography: Switzerland borders France in the West, Germany in the north, Austria and the principality of Liechtenstein in the east and Italy in the south. Three main types of landscape - the Swiss Alps, the hilly Swiss Mittelland, which extends from Lake Constance to Lake Geneva, and the Swiss Jura, a long line of rugged fold mountains. The largest cities are: Zurich 336,800, Geneva 173,500, Basel 168,700 and Berne 122,700.

Language: The three official languages are Swiss German (64%), French (20%) and Italian (7%). A few people speak Romansch (1%), but this is confined to the southeastern corner of the country. Most people know at least three languages, including English.

Time: Local time is GMT +1 (GMT +2 between March and October)

Religion: Catholic (42%), Protestant (35%), others (23%)

Electricity: Electrical current is 220 volts AC, 50Hz; plugs are of the linear, rounded three-pin type, but rounded two-pin plugs will fit the outlet.

Money

Currency: The official currency is the Swiss franc (CHF) divided into 100 centimes. Although not part of the EU many prices are nonetheless indicated in Euros and some merchants may accept Euros.

Exchange rates:

Date:	20 March 09
£1.00=	CHF 1.62847
\$1.00=	CHF 1.11953
€1.00=	CHF 1.53138

Credit cards: Visa, MasterCard and American Express are widely accepted and ATMs are widespread; many are equipped with the Cirrus or Maestro system.

Banking hours: Mon-Fri 08:30 to 16h30.

Tipping: Service is always included in Switzerland, and tips are often given only if you had outstanding service. People customarily give 1 to 5 francs for meals.

International travel

Switzerland is therefore at the crossroads of the continent. It is a focal point of international air, road and rail traffic and easily accessible within hours from major European cities.

By train:

Thanks to its convenient central location, Switzerland is also served by fast reliable [inter-European rail](#) services from at least a dozen countries. Daily services operate from major cities in Germany, Italy, Austria, Spain, France, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Scandinavia, and the Benelux countries.

By car:

For travelers arriving by road, Switzerland is linked to Europe's extensive motorway network. Cross-border travel is trouble free, with the minimum of delay and formalities.

By Air:

Swiss International Air Lines is the national carrier of Switzerland serving 70 worldwide destinations in 42 countries from its home hub in Zurich, and from Basel and Geneva international airports.

[Zurich](#) and [Geneva](#) airports are fully integrated into the Swiss railroad network and have their own railway stations. Trains to the two city run every 10 to 20 minutes, with a travelling time of approximately 10 minutes. Hourly intercity and direct trains leave right from either airport station and will connect you to many cities and towns. In Basel, a bus service links the [EuroAirport Basel Muhouse Freiburg](#) with the downtown area. The bus stops right outside the main railway station. The buses leave every 30 minutes and the ride takes 15 to 20 minutes.

Travel times:

From Zurich to the following towns and cities (in hours and minutes)

	Air	Train	Car
Basel	00:30	01:05	01:10
Berne	N.A.	01:10	01:15
Geneva	00:40	02:55	02:45

Taxi transfer costs from the airport to the town centre:

Centre Zurich:	CHF 50,00
Centre Geneva	CHF 35,00
Centre Basel	CHF 40,00

Passport/Visas

Every traveler must have a valid passport. Visas are required for a continuous stay of more than three months. For stays shorter than three months, a valid passport is enough. This applies to citizens of the following countries: countries of the American Continent (except Belize, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Peru), Europe, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

Travelers holding valid Schengen visas are accepted to enter Switzerland.

For information on visa, permanent residence as well as on work permits and business matters, please contact the Swiss Consulate General located nearest you.

Venue

Radisson Blu Hotel Zurich Airport
<http://www.zurich.radissonblu.com>

Hotel Booking Form

- [Radisson hotel](#)
- [Park Inn hotel](#)
- [Novotel](#)

Participants are responsible for their own travel to and from the event.

Health & Safety

Health Care: Personal travel insurance is strongly recommended, including coverage of personal accident, sickness, loss or damage to luggage and personal effects and cancellation charges. There is a reciprocal health agreement with the UK and most EU countries, whose citizens are entitled to free or low-cost emergency medical treatment on presentation of a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC).

Water: Tap water is safe to drink.

Climate

The climate is moderate with no excessive heat, cold or humidity. From July to August the daytime temperature range is 18 to 28 °C (65° - 82° F) and from January to February the range is -2 to 7 °C (28° - 45° F). In spring and autumn, the daytime temperature range is 8 to 15 °C (46° - 59° F). It is highly recommended to visitors to pack a sweater, good walking shoes, sunscreen, sunglasses, a compact umbrella and/or a light rain coat.

Communication and Internet access

Telephone:

The international country dialing code for Switzerland is +41. The outgoing code is 00, followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 0044 for the United Kingdom). City/area codes are in use e.g. (0)61 for Basel, (0)22 for Geneva, (0)44 for Zurich.

Emergency Calls:

- 117 Police in case of emergencies
- 118 Fire Brigade
- 144 Ambulance

Useful links

- Switzerland Tourism:
- <http://www.myswitzerland.com>
- Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
- http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/repr/eur/vbel/ref_visinf/visbel.html
- World Travel
- <http://pro.wordtravels.com/Travelguide/Countries/Switzerland>