

Moving to Switzerland:

Checklist for entry, customs, registration and settling in

Planning a move to Switzerland? Entry, customs, residence permits, health insurance, registration and household effects all need to be prepared. Thought of everything? Zebrabox has the essentials at a glance.

What to remember when relocating to Switzerland!

Grüezi Switzerland – I'm on my way!

A couple of weeks BEFORE relocating!

Moving to Switzerland

Working, studying and living in Switzerland is relatively straightforward in many cases for EU and EFTA citizens thanks to the free movement of persons agreement. Third-country nationals should check entry requirements, visa rules and residence permit requirements early with the Swiss embassy, consulate or competent authorities.

Important: A valid passport or ID card is required. Depending on your length of stay, employment status and nationality, you may also need an employment contract, tenancy agreement, confirmation of enrolment, proof of sufficient financial means, a visa or a residence permit. Self-employed people must prove their economic independence.

Useful tips: Check all your identity documents (ID card, passport, children's IDs) and important documents (driving licence, birth certificate) before relocating and renew them if necessary. If available, keep your employment contract and tenancy agreement ready. If you are moving with a pet, make sure all required vaccinations are completed and that you have the necessary [entry documents](#) ^{GO}.

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 must present a list of all the items you are importing at the customs office – this includes household items, cars and pets: these are known as household effects and must be declared using [18.44 application form](#) ^{GO}.

Important: Personal belongings and household goods can generally be imported as household effects free of duties if they have already been in personal use and will continue to be used after the move. Special rules may apply to new goods, vehicles, alcohol, food, plants, medication or animals. Keep proof of purchase documents.

Useful tips: Fill in form 18.44 while packing and create your own inventory. Number boxes and list them clearly. New items, valuables and restricted goods (e.g. alcohol, food, plants, medication or animals) must be listed separately and in more detail. The [Veterinary Office](#) ^{GO} can provide further information on importing animals.

Zebrabox tip: In Switzerland, a removal vehicle weighing 7.5 tonnes is considered a lorry. Night and Sunday driving bans apply to heavy goods vehicles, with some exceptions. Do not exceed the permitted weight. Check customs [opening times](#) ^{GO} in advance. If not everything can go straight into your new home, a storage unit can be a practical temporary solution.

Residency options when moving to Switzerland

There are different types of residence permits (short-term, temporary residence and settlement permits).

Important: A valid travel document is required to enter Switzerland.

Useful tips: Stays of up to 90 days without employment generally do not require a permit. You must prove financial independence and valid health insurance. For longer stays or employment, registration and a permit are required. Students must provide confirmation of enrolment.

Zebrabox tip: EU/EFTA residence permits are usually issued for several years and can be extended if conditions continue to be met.

Working in Switzerland

Employees in Switzerland require a residence permit.

Important: Residence and work permits are usually applied for in connection with an employment contract. Depending on the situation, the employer or the employee submits the application.

Useful tips: Many Swiss companies have flat hierarchical structures, and decisions are made directly.

Zebrabox tip: Seasonal jobs are common, especially in tourist regions.

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 will be granted if it is in the general economic interest, if certain personal, financial and business requirements are met, and if any existing restrictions on the number of foreign nationals allow it. The final decision is made by the cantonal and federal authorities.

Useful tips: Spouses of Swiss citizens or of persons holding a settlement permit may, under certain conditions, engage in self-employed activities more easily and without an additional permit.

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 is handled by the property management company? Everyday life becomes much easier if you understand and follow the rules.

Important: If you are applying to rent an apartment in Switzerland, you should be able to prove that you can afford the rent. Landlords usually require an extract from the debt enforcement register, which can be obtained from the relevant local office.

Useful tips: Official bodies, tenants' associations and advisory services provide helpful information on the Swiss rental system. Check early which documents are required for an apartment application. More information you can find in this [information booklet](#) .

Zebrabox tip: Save digital copies of important documents such as your passport, visa, tenancy agreement, employment contract and insurance certificates, and keep physical copies separately. Documents, boxes or small items you rarely need can be stored safely in a storage unit, for example in an [XXXS storage unit](#) .

Health insurance

Anyone taking up residence in Switzerland must usually take out mandatory basic health insurance within three months. This is mandatory. The insurance applies retroactively from the date of entry, meaning premiums must be paid from that point onwards.

Important: Premiums are independent of income (per capita system). Premium reductions may be available depending on income level. Basic insurance covers the same services for outpatient and inpatient treatment, as well as prescribed medication, across all providers. Dental treatment is generally not included. Supplementary insurance is optional and varies between providers – comparing options is recommended.

Useful tips: In addition to the premium, you agree on a deductible (known as the “franchise”) with your insurer. In the event of illness, you pay costs yourself up to this amount.

Zebrabox tip: If you work at least eight hours per week, you are automatically covered by accident insurance through your employer.

Car

If you want to bring your car to Switzerland, there are several important things to consider.

Important: A vehicle must be correctly declared as household effects when imported and listed on form 18.44. Keep the vehicle registration document, purchase contract, customs documents and insurance certificate ready. Special rules apply to leased or company vehicles. Also check [customs declaration](#) ^{GO}, vehicle tax, motorway vignette and later registration with the cantonal Road Traffic Office early. More important information, including information on car tax and the motorway toll sticker “vignette” is available [here](#) ^{GO}.

Useful tips: The car must be registered with the [Road Traffic Office](#) ^{GO} within one year and fitted with Swiss number plates. Your foreign driving licence is valid for a maximum of 12 months from the date of entry and must be exchanged for a Swiss driving licence within this period. A technical inspection may also be required.

Zebrabox tip: If you plan to drive a Swiss-registered vehicle, make sure to apply for a Swiss driving licence in time – otherwise fines can be high. Also remember to arrange the motorway vignette and consider any applicable taxes.

AFTER relocating

Registering

Even after relocating, there are still some important formalities to complete.

Important: You must register with the residents’ registration office of your new municipality within 14 days of entering Switzerland and, in any case, before starting work. The exact name of the office may vary depending on the municipality. Registration is usually subject to a fee and also applies to pets such as dogs.

Useful tips: You will generally need the following documents:

- passport / ID
- recent passport photo
- copy of tenancy agreement
- employment contract or proof of study (enrolment confirmation)
- confirmation from your employer or proof of self-employment
- proof of health insurance (can usually be submitted later)
- birth certificate, and if applicable, marriage certificate

In many municipalities, registration can now be completed online via [eUmzugCH](#) ^{GO}, although a personal appointment may still be required.

Zebrabox tip: If you plan to stay in Switzerland long-term, keep important documents, permits and deadlines well organised. For later steps such as a settlement permit or naturalisation, length of stay, integration and municipal requirements may be important.