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Your Guide To Moving To Switzerland From The U.S.

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Moving to Switzerland from the U.S offers many benefits. The country offers one of the best lifestyles in Europe. With ski resorts, hiking trails, and city centers at your doorstep, you'll never run out of things to do.

With majestic snow-capped mountains against blue skies, cold winter nights sitting in front of a wood burning fire with Swiss fondue, and skiing in the Alps, falling in love with living in Switzerland is easy.

What Are the Best Cities in Switzerland for Americans To Live?

Lake Geneva between Switzerland and France are one of the most breathtaking cities in Switzerland. It’s one of the many city centers Americans moving to Switzerland will enjoy living in.

Geneva's Old Town Boulevard is filled with beautiful architecture dating back a thousand years. You will never run out of cafes, restaurants, museums, and historical sightings to visit. On the French side of Geneva is The Swiss Riviera where the spa Town & Resort of Évian-les-Bains resides, perfect for a weekend getaway spot.

Zurich is the global Center for banking and finance for the Swiss Economy. Niadorf hosts dozens of open-air concerts. The smaller neighboring towns offer charming countryside’s, close enough for day trip excursions.

There's much more to Zurich than having one of the world's largest stock exchanges located there. Zurich is one of the best places for Americans moving to Switzerland. There are hundreds of galleries, museums, and a top-notch transportation system making it easy to get around. American citizens moving to Zurich will find that English is spoken widely in the business sector. Learning Swiss German is recommended to interact with residents who do not speak English.

Bern, Switzerland’s capital, boasts plenty of shopping, modern conveniences and historical charm dating back to the 15th century. American citizens will appreciate the modern conveniences of this city. Visit the Bern Cathedral and climb the 400 stairs to see the best view of the Swiss Alps.

Pros and Cons of Moving to Switzerland

Pros

Expats from the United States are drawn to Switzerland because of its lifestyle. When moving to Switzerland as an American. You will benefit from the high standard of healthcare.

If you have children, the public school system is not only free; it provides some of the best education in Europe.

Switzerland has ranked second best since 2015 in University education system around the world.

American citizens looking to relocate to Zurich will find that English is widely spoken, particularly in the business sector. Swiss German is the main language and you should become familiar with it so you may interact with local residents who may not speak English.

The labor market is strong and attractive to employers. Skilled foreign workers can earn substantially high salaries.

Plenty of outdoor activities and vacations spots with scenic backdrops with incredible views.

The Swiss take great pride in public common areas making them enjoyable for all.

Cons

The costs of renting a house in Switzerland are high. Apartments have shared facilities like washers and dryers. Relative to the high cost of renting; this may not be a desirable feature for some. Landlords prefer renting to the Swiss. Seventy percent of residents are renters, making rentals harder to find.

Job opportunities are limited for those who do not speak German or French.

For some employer’s, American diplomas can be overlooked compared to having a Swiss degree.

Americans must travel far to see relatives living in the U.S which can be costly.

The Swiss maintain hiring quotas.

What Are the Costs of Moving To Switzerland?

The disparity between general utilities and day-to-day living expenses is about the same. Rentals and home prices can be substantially higher than in the U.S.

Dining out is more expensive. Meals can be double than what U. S restaurants charge for a three-course meal, costing around $100 for two people.

Transportation in the cities costs $80.00 for a monthly rail pass.

Ladies will pay about $70 dollars for a manicure and pedicure. Cosmetics can be almost double on high- end brands.

Starbucks coffee is about $7.00.

The lowest plan of health insurance is about $300.00 per month.

Purchasing power in Switzerland is higher than in the United States.

The costs of living index in Zurich, Switzerland is 128.65 compared to 77.60 in Los Angeles, and 100.00 in New York City.

What Are the Types of Housing Available in Switzerland?

Real estate prices have been steadily rising in Switzerland. Costs for homes near or in Zurich and Geneva can easily average between $800,000 to $1,000,000.00. Homes don’t flip as fast as they do in hot U.S markets, so if you are buying consider the purchase a long-term investment.

Planning well in advance while still in the U.S. is recommended. The rental market in Geneva and Zurich is tight for available apartments. If you are new to the area, renting is the best option to get familiar with the area and decide if the community suits your needs.

Foreigners coming to Switzerland from the United States may have a harder time purchasing than someone who already has a Swiss resident permit, currently residing in Switzerland. If you have a Swiss B permit you can purchase property, but you must live in the property.

What Is the Cost to Attend a University in Switzerland?

Globally, Switzerland ranks the highest in education. Finance careers are very desirable. ETH Zurich Swiss Federal Institute of Technology is the only non-EU University that ranks as the global top 10th in the world.

Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) ranks 12th in the world. The University of Geneva is the oldest university in Switzerland. Courses are taught in French for undergrads. The University of Zurich is the largest university in Switzerland. It specializes in teaching and research.

The top two technology universities in Europe are ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology) ranked joint 73rd globally, and Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) is ranked 98th respectively.

Some of the largest international corporations are in Switzerland, like Nestlé, BNP Paribas, and L'Oréal. Students from all over the world want to intern, but the competition can be fierce to apply. American students looking to move to Switzerland should become bi-lingual furthering their chances at an internship and getting a job out of college.

To receive the required resident permit to attend universities in Switzerland, you need to apply for a visa at your local Swiss Embassy prior to entering the country. The process takes about three months. Tuition costs for students coming from the U.S to attend school in Switzerland are approximately $2,000-3,000 per year, but living expenses are high, about 30,000 per year. Tuition fees are low partly because the schools are supported by Swiss taxpayers. Private universities fees will be higher.

What is The Cost of Health Insurance in Switzerland for Americans?

The Swiss healthcare system is a myriad of subsidized, public and private plans open to residents. Healthcare is not free. Expect to pay about 10% of an average yearly salary for healthcare programs.

Health insurance in Switzerland for foreigners is a requirement and must be purchased within three months of your move to Switzerland. Your residence must be registered with the local commune along with proof you have applied for your residence permit. There are many choices available to you, if you have not applied, one will be chosen automatically by the Swiss government. Changes to an insurance plan must occur in June or December, allowing three months’ notice to the insurer. You may elect to change insurers by giving 30 days’ notice towards the end of the year by November.

Students who are temporarily living in Switzerland may be exempt as long as they are covered in their own country. Health insurance is not paid for by the employer generally when working in Switzerland.

Different regions of Switzerland have different health care premiums. For example, Basel-City’s premiums are 60% higher than the lowest area of Nidwalden, which is about $369.00. Cheaper premiums are available when signing up with an HMO, and those with modest income levels.

On the bright side, attending an emergency facility will be covered by any doctor and hospital of your choice, no matter what your coverage is. Healthcare is expensive in Switzerland, but the quality of care encompasses some of the highest standards in the world.

Do I Need a Car When Moving to Switzerland from the U.S?

Switzerland has an efficient public transportation system. All transportation is environmentally conscious. The Half-Fare travelcard allows you to pay half-price fares on the entire system of buses, boats, trams, and trains.

The General Abonnement card permits free travel on public transports. For those 25 years old and under that hold a Half- Fare travel card, with Track 7 card anyone under 25 years old can travel for free between 7: PM and 5: AM. Taxis are expensive, about $7.00USD just to enter one, and an additional $3.50 per kilometer, equal to .67 of a mile.

Can I Import My Car to Switzerland from the U. S.?

It’s advised to sell your car in the U.S before moving to Switzerland. When importing cars to the country you will pay a VAT Tax of 8%, and customs duties of 4%. Insurance premiums will be more expensive as U.S insurers will not insure you in Switzerland. The navigation system is different. It is expensive to rewire a navigation system.

The good news is that if your current car was bought six months or before moving to Switzerland, there is no VAT a and customs tax if you claim moving expenses with your employer in Switzerland. You can use your driver’s license from the U.S for up to one year before you are required to apply for a Swiss one if you are driving your own car.

What is The Education System Like in Switzerland?

If you're sending your children to school in Switzerland, they can be taught to speak several different languages depending on where the school is located, one of the many advantages of raising your children in Switzerland. It is an excellent way to educate your children to conform to the Swiss culture.

The private schools in Switzerland are highly regarded as being the best in Europe. Bilingual schools teach the Swiss curriculum in two languages, English and German, English and French, or German and French. Many International students attend the Swiss education system. If you are moving to Switzerland from the US permanently or for a very long consider schools that have mostly local students, so your children can make many longtime friends.

What is it Like for Americans Doing Business in Switzerland?

Switzerland is number one in wealth management in the world. With a liberal economic system, political stability, the country is an economic powerhouse that prides itself on innovation, technology, and government transparency. Notably, the country has easy labor laws, making a desirable place for Americans looking to move to Switzerland for business reasons.

You may find doing business in Switzerland quite competitive. Many International corporations have their European headquarters located in Switzerland. The Swiss live by the rule of trust. Becoming trustworthy in the corporate world is an important factor to succeed. The business culture in Switzerland it's quite formal. Punctuality is a characteristic of doing business in the country.

While working in Switzerland you will enjoy long lunch hours like the rest of Europe, usually lasting at least 2 hours. Workdays are shorter been in the United States because of the long lunch. People tend to work from 8 a.m. 5 p.m. Companies allow four weeks of paid vacation per year- nice perk compared to two weeks paid vacation is the norm.

How Do I Get a Work Visa in Switzerland?

It is required to have a Swiss work permit to legally work in the country. Moving to Switzerland from the United States requires a resident permit to enable you to live in or near the city when working for an employer. Some employers will assist you with the process to apply for a residence permit.

Immigration to Switzerland is more scrutinized due to the European Union (EU) countries opposition to the freedom of movement policies in certain countries. The United States is not one of those countries of course, but proper documents will need to be in order when relocating.

The Swiss government has increased work permits for 2018 for people coming to live in Switzerland by 4'500 L permits for non-EU/EFTA nationals, and 3'500 B permits for non-EU/EFTA nationals. If you are working for more than four months in the country, these quotes will apply. With immigration policies tightening, it is advised to check opportunities in the labor market prior to making permanent plans to move to Switzerland from the United States.

What is the process to get a Switzerland Work Visa?

When moving to Switzerland as an American you need to apply for a visa if you are planning to stay for 90 days or more. A U. S current passport is required for all types of visas. Residence permits and work visas are approved by the cantonal migration authority.

Under the Schengen Agreement with the USA, if you are visiting only for 90 days you would apply for a tourist visa. Only legal residents of the U.S can apply for an entry visa to Switzerland for permanent residency, which does include green card holders residing in the U.S.

Visiting the consulate in your region that has jurisdiction for your Schengen visa is required. Fist time U.S. applicants that have not ever received a Schengen visa since May 2015 will need to appear in person at the Swiss consulate located in their region.

For green card holders, if your fingerprint scans are valid since 2014 an in-person appearance is not required. Proper documents required may be mailed to the consulate in your region.

Foreign nationals from the U.S who have completed their education at a Swiss University are able to stay in Switzerland for an additional six months to seek employment and are granted a work permit.

Visa fees are $72.00 for adults and children that are twelve and over. Children under the age of 11 are assessed a fee of $42.00.

How Do I Open a Swiss Bank Account?

Swiss residency is required before opening a bank account and transferring money to Switzerland. Banks in Switzerland can scrutinize new bank accounts from newly foreign citizens due to the concerns about illegal activities. It is harder for Americans opening bank accounts due to tougher regulation inquiries from the United States Department of Justice. The banking laws still will give American citizens looking to transfer funds to Switzerland a level of privacy not found in the U. S banking system.

Complete banking privacy is only allowed for banks qualified as intermediary (QI) banks. Most banks will report money transferred by U. S citizens into Switzerland to the Internal Revenue Service of the United States.

Some banks will only open accounts from residents of the canton. If you are a resident of one canton and open an account in another canton, it may not be possible.

Keep your U.S bank account open until you have opened your Swiss bank account. You can use money transfer services online to easily transfer funds from the U.S. It’s easy to transfer money to Switzerland and receive great transfer rates.

Worldfirst offers fast international money transfers with better exchange rates than you’d typically get through your bank. Contact Worldfirst to learn about products protecting you from the fluctuating exchange rates.