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Opening Hours / Holidays

Most shops are closed on Sundays in Switzerland with the exception of shops in railway stations. Official holidays are defined by the cantons.

Holidays

Public holidays are regulated by the Labour Law and are legally equivalent to Sundays. August 1st (National Day) is a statutory public holiday throughout Switzerland. Additionally, each canton can establish additional official holidays.

- New Year's Day
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- Ascension Day
- Whit Monday
- Swiss National Day
- Christmas Day
- St. Stephen's Day (St. Stephen's Day is not celebrated if Christmas Day falls on a Monday or Friday.)

Shop Hours

Appenzell Ausserrhoden: Longer shopping only in Herisau

In the canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden, the municipalities decide on possible extended store opening hours. This has so far only been introduced in the main town of Herisau. There, large retailers like Migros and Coop keep their stores open longer. Migros is open every day from 7 AM to 8 PM, and on Saturdays from 7 AM to 6 PM. Coop participates in the Friday evening sales.

Smaller businesses usually close at 6:30 PM. On Sundays, stores must generally remain closed, with a maximum of four Sunday sales allowed per year.

However, municipalities can issue exceptions for Sunday sales if "circumstances justify it." These criteria can include, for example, flower shops, gas station shops, bakeries, or kiosks, according to the canton on request.

Office Hours for Public Services

The cantonal public services are, in general, open Mondays through Fridays from 7.30 to 12.00 and from 13.30 to 17.00. Office hours for community public services vary greatly. Particularly small communities may have limited opening hours. Finding out in advance what the opening hours are, by telephone or internet, is recommended.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/good-to-know/opening-hours-holidays

Residence Permit

In order to live in Switzerland for an extended period of time, or in order to work here, a permit is necessary. There are different types of residence permits as well as a settlement permit.

Types of Permits

Working in Switzerland or remaining in the country for more than 3 months requires a permit. The permit is issued by the cantonal Office for Migration and Integration (Amt für Migration und Integration). There are short-term permits (up to 1 year), residence permits (temporary), and settlement permits (permanent).

- Short-term permit (L): This permit is for persons who will reside in Switzerland for a limited time (usually 1 year) for a particular reason. Most citizens of EU-/EFTA-countries who have evidence of a work contract with a duration between 3 months and 1 year are entitled to this permit.
- Residence permit (B): This permit is for persons residing in Switzerland for an extended period of time. Most citizens of EU-/EFTA countries are entitled to this permit if they have a work contract with a duration exceeding 1 year. EU-/EFTA-citizens will receive permits for a duration of 5 years. Citizens of other countries will receive permits for a duration of 1 year after which an extension must be applied for. The extension may be granted under certain conditions, such as that applicants take German classes. Applicants are not entitled to an extension. Reasons that may speak against an extension include, for example, a criminal offence or dependency on welfare. Recognised refugees are also granted B permits.
- Settlement permit (C): This permit is granted following 5 or 10 years of Swiss residency. Here, too, different conditions apply to persons from EU/EFTA states and third countries.
- Provisionally admitted foreigners (F): This permit is granted to asylum seekers who have not been officially recognised as refugees, but have been provisionally admitted. This permit must be renewed every year.

Foreigner Identification

Foreigners living in Switzerland receive a foreigner identification card. The type of identification card depends on various criteria. There are credit card format and paper identification cards (non-biometric foreigner identification card, Nicht biometrischer Ausländerausweis). Some individuals receive a biometric foreigner identification card. This ID card has a data chip, fingerprints and a picture are retained. They must have their biometric data collected in Herisau. In order to do so an appointment must be made with the biometric registration centre (Herisau). The ID card will be sent to the home address by registered mail once it is completed. Lost or stolen identification must be reported to the police immediately.

Extension

According to type of permit and citizenship the process of applying for an extension may differ. If an extension is necessary one is issued a form (Verfallsanzeige). This form must be completed and submitted to the community of residence with a valid passport at least two weeks before the permit expires. The community of residence will forward the application to the cantonal Office for Migration and Integration (Amt für Migration und Integration). They will verify whether all requirements for an extension are met. Additional questions will be answered by the community of residence or the Office for Migration and Integration.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/good-to-know/residence-permit

Personal Liability Insurance

Every adult should have a personal liability insurance. This form of insurance covers costs that arise when one has inadvertently caused damage to someone else.

Personal Liability

Persons who have injured another person or an object belonging to another person are financially responsible for the damage caused. This is the case even when the damage was caused inadvertently. Costs may be very high. If, for example, one injures a person in a skiing accident the damage may add up to hundreds of thousands of Swiss Francs.

Personal Liability Insurance

One must have personal liability insurance (Privathaftpflichtversicherung) to prevent financial difficulties in the event of damage to another person. This form of insurance is offered by most private insurance companies. Often, a private liability insurance contract can be settled for an entire household. This form of insurance is not compulsory, yet strongly recommended. Many landlords require liability insurance as well.

Insurance Benefits

Personal liability insurance covers property damage and damage to persons which the insured party has caused another party to suffer. This includes the cost of repairs, medical treatment, loss of wages, or compensation for pain and suffering. Personal liability insurance also covers damages caused by certain pets. It does not cover damages to persons living in the same household or damages as a result of intent or gross negligence.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/good-to-know/personal-liability-insurance

Alcohol / Tobacco / Drugs

Owning, consuming, or selling drugs is punishable by law. There are age limits for the selling of alcohol and tobacco.

Drugs

Owning, selling, and consuming illegal drugs is punishable by law. This also applies to small amounts of drugs. The federal Act on Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances (Betäubungsmittelgesetz) regulates which substances are illegal. Commercial drug-selling is punished severely.

Alcohol and Tobacco

There are age limits for the selling of alcohol and tobacco. In Canton Appenzell Ausser Rhoden tobacco products and alcoholic beverages may not be sold to children and young people under the age of 16. For certain alcoholic beverages, such as liquor, the age limit is 18.

Ban on Smoking

Bans on smoking vary according to the canton. Canton Appenzell Ausser Rhoden has not introduced any cantonal laws that go beyond the federal act on the protection against passive smoking. A ban on smoking applies in:

- Smoking is prohibited in closed spaces accessible to the public, particularly in public administration buildings, hospitals, nursing homes, educational, cultural, and sports facilities, and in all areas of gastronomy.
- Separated and appropriately marked rooms with adequate ventilation can be provided for smokers.
- Exceptions are regulated by the cantonal government.

Smoking is also prohibited in indoor spaces of restaurants. An exception is made for smoking rooms that are separated and ventilated, but these are becoming increasingly rare. The smoking bans aim to protect people from health risks.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/good-to-know/alcohol-tobacco-drugs

Pets

Persons with pets must observe several rules. Certain animals may not be kept in every apartment. Dog owners must pay dog taxes.

Keeping Pets

Persons living in a rented apartment may keep small pets, such as guinea pigs, hamsters, canaries, or fish. Larger animals (even cats or small dogs) may be prohibited according to the rental contract. Animals that are noisy or dangerous may also be forbidden. In addition, pet owners must observe animal protection laws. For example, certain animals may not be kept alone (for example rabbits). There are also regulations concerning the size and equipment of cages. Many animals (exotic animals) are not allowed to be brought into the country. Others require a special authorisation issued by the veterinary department.

Dogs

Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden has special laws concerning dogs. This includes a description of a dog owner's duties. Additional information is provided by veterinarians.

- All dogs in Switzerland must be marked with a microchip and registered in a database. The dog is issued a dog identification (credit card format). This form of identification is not identical to the Pet Passport which is required when persons wish to enter an EU-country with an animal.
- Dogs must be registered with the community of residence. A yearly dog tax must be paid for each dog.
- All dog owners must pick up and dispose of their dog's droppings. Not doing so may result in a fine.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/good-to-know/pets

What Makes Switzerland Tick

Every country has its own customs. In Switzerland there are several unwritten rules which should be observed.

Different Cultures

Switzerland is a culturally diverse country due in particular to the four language regions. It is not surprising that regional mentalities vary. The customs of German-speaking Switzerland need not apply to French-speaking Switzerland. Differences between urban and rural regions may also be vast. And yet, some commonalities do apply.

Greetings

A Swiss greeting involves shaking hands and eye-contact. This also applies to greetings between men and women. The common greeting is "grüezi" (friends use different greetings, such as "hallo" or "hoi"). In rural regions it is common to greet passersby even when one doesn't know them. Saying "thank-you" and "please" is very important: For example, saying "thank-you" and "please" multiple times in shops or restaurants is almost a ritual.

Punctuality

The famous Swiss punctuality is not just a cliché. If one is more than 5 minutes late one should telephone. In the professional world punctuality is particularly important. Meetings are generally planned ahead of time. Unannounced social visits are not common either.

Indirect Communication

Uncomfortable matters are often addressed indirectly in Switzerland. Many conversation partners will only use disguised criticism. Nonetheless they will expect the criticism to be taken seriously. This is not easy when one is still learning German. Direct confrontation is avoided in order to preserve harmony when conflicts do arise. For example, one may receive a letter from an irritated neighbour. If a situation is unclear it is better to ask again than not to be sure.

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/good-to-know/what-makes-switzerland-tick