

Housing

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Finding an Apartment / House

Most persons in Switzerland live in rented apartments. Finding an apartment is not always easy and rent is high.

Housing Market

Most Swiss residents live in rented apartments. Land for construction is scarce and as a result there are not many vacant apartments, particularly in central communities. Rent is high. It is not unusual to spend a quarter of one's income on rent. Looking for an apartment outside of a central community may be worthwhile. Most smaller communities are also easily accessible by public transportation.

Looking for an Apartment / House

Apartments for rent can be found on various websites. Local newspapers also publisize real estate advertisements. Some landlords advertise apartments for rent on notice boards in shopping centres or other locations (e.g. community administration buildings). Many apartments are not advertised publicly. Asking friends and family if they have heard of a free apartment is recommended.

Tenant Application

Usually, persons who are interested in an apartment will contact the landlord or property manager and make a viewing appointment. Applying for the apartment generally requires an application form. In addition, most landlords require a document proving freedom from debt (Betreibungsregistrauszug) and a rough estimate of income. This is done in order to ensure a future tenant's ability to pay. The document can be obtained at the responsible debt enforcement office (Betreibungsamt). Because landlords usually receive many applications it is recommended that tenants apply for multiple apartments at the same time.

Buying an Apartment / House

Foreigners with a residence permit C can purchase apartments or houses in Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden without limitations. This also applies to EU/EFTA-citizens with a permit B. Persons from other countries with a permit B can only purchase an apartment or house if they plan to live in it. Persons with other permits (L, F) cannot purchase apartments or houses. Further information is provided by the responsible land registry office (Grundbuchamt).

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

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/housing/finding-an-apartment-house

Renting an Apartment

Persons renting an apartment have various rights and duties. For example, landlords must give due notice. Tenants must also abide by certain rules. After moving in, you must register with the new municipality within 2 weeks.

Rental Contract

In general, landlords sign a written rental contract with their tenants. It is possible to agree on an oral contract. However, this is not recommended. In any case, the rights and duties according to the Swiss Code of Obligations (Obligationenrecht) are always applicable.

Rent

Normally, rent consists of the net rent and additional costs (Nebenkosten) (heating, warm water, etc.). Additional costs may be charged only if they are listed in the rental contract. In general, rent must be paid monthly, in advance. Landlords may raise rent only if justified. The raise must be announced in due time with an official form. If the raise does not appear justified the arbitration (Schlichtungsbehörde) is to be notified within 30 days. Landlords may request a security deposit (Kaution) equal to a maximum of 3 months rent in addition to rent. The security deposit is returned when one moves.

Moving In

Upon moving into a new apartment it is very important that a list of deficiencies is added to the rental contract (Wohnungsabnahmeprotokoll). Landlords and tenants record existing damages to the apartment. This ensures that tenants are not made responsible for damages caused by previous tenants. Persons with pets should inquire in advance whether pets are allowed in the apartment. Please note that one must register in the new community of residence within 2 weeks of moving in.

Damages to the Apartment

Smaller damages must be paid for by the tenant (e.g. new shower hose or soap dish). Larger damages are paid for by the landlord. If the tenant is responsible for the damage they have to pay for it themselves. For such cases one needs private liability insurance. If something breaks or if one wishes to make changes to the apartment (e.g. painting) one should contact the landlord. If larger deficiencies occur (e.g. broken heating or washing machine, construction noise, etc.) one has a right to a rent reduction until the deficiency is corrected.

Terminating a Rental Contract

Landlords and tenants are only permitted to terminate a rental contract on certain dates. In Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden the dates are March 31., June 30., and September 30. In addition, notice of termination must be given in due time. Usually, termination dates and notice periods are defined in the rental contract. The minimal notice period for apartments is 3 months. In order to terminate a contract landlords must use an official form. Tenants have 30 days in which they can appeal the decision through the arbitration authority.

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

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/housing/renting-an-apartment

Neighbourhood

The level of contact between neighbours may vary in different buildings or neighbourhoods. It is highly recommended that one talk to one's neighbours - especially when conflicts arise.

Getting in Touch

In many buildings or neighbourhoods neighbours cultivate friendly relationships (through neighbourhood get-togethers, etc.). In other places this may not be the case. In Canton Appenzell Ausserrhoden it is common that persons who move in introduce themselves. If neighbours prefer not to be in contact it does not necessarily have anything to do with the new tenants. In this case, friendly coexistence will suffice. There are other ways of getting in touch with locals, for example, through clubs.

House Rules

Most buildings which house multiple tenants or owners have house rules (Hausordnung). These are often communicated upon the signing the rental contract. The rules concern living together and shared spaces, such as laundry rooms. In Switzerland following house rules is important. In particular, quiet hours which are, in some cases, legally regulated.

Conflicts

If persons in the building are breaking house rules and irritating others, one should try to talk with the person. If this does not help the landlord or property manager can be contacted. In serious cases the police may be notified (telephone 117). The police should always be contacted when violence is witnessed in another apartment and there is reason for concern about a neighbour's safety.

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

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/housing/neighbourhood

TV / Internet / Telephone

There are various offers for internet, telephone, and cable tv. They vary according to place of residence. Most residents must pay a fee for radio and television.

Radio and Television Fees

Persons who have a device in their apartment which is capable of receiving radio and television programmes (including computer and internet access) must pay radio and television fees (Radio- und Fernsehgebühren). This statutory fee supports public programming by the Swiss radio and television (SRG SSR) as well as private radio and television stations. The company serafe is responsible for collecting the fee. Persons who receive supplementary benefits may be waived the fee.

Telephone, Internet, Cable TV

There are various offers for telephone, internet, and cable TV in Switzerland. Some are only available in particular regions. Service may depend on the place of residence or even the building. Services and prices may vary. Comparison is recommended. Persons wishing to install a satellite dish should discuss this with their landlord or neighbours. In general, internet service at home is very fast. There are very few internet cafés because most households have internet access.

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

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/housing/tv-internet-telephone

Waste Disposal

Communities are responsible for waste disposal. For this reason communities have their own regulations. Separating waste is important and there are special collection stations for doing so.

Separating Waste / Recycling

Separating waste helps protect the environment and saves money. Reusable waste or waste that is harmful to the environment can be disposed of in special collecting points or at collection stations (paper, batteries, glass, cardboard, compost, aluminium, metall, textiles, oil, etc.). Such waste does not belong in the household rubbish. Every community has its own waste collection schedule (Entsorgungsplan) or rubbish collection calendar (Abfallkalender) which one receives upon moving to a community. Burning waste or dumping it in places that are not designated as collection stations is prohibited. Plastic bottles (PET-Flaschen) and other packaging can be returned to most points of sale.

Rubbish Bags / Rubbish Stickers

Rubbish which is not reusable (household rubbish) must be disposed of in official rubbish bags or in bags with rubbish stickers. The price of the bag or sticker includes the disposal fee. Every community has their own bags or stickers which can be purchased, for example, in shopping centres or shops in the community, or from the community administration. On designated days the rubbish bags must be placed on the side of the street (in rare cases there is another collection point). Depositing rubbish on other days is prohibited. Some apartment buildings have rubbish containers. The community of residence or neighbours will answer additional questions.

The KUH-BAG offers a simple way to collect mixed plastics (without PET) from households and is cheaper than the garbage bag for general household waste. Attention: PET here refers to PET bottles for drinking.

Hazardous Waste

Hazardous waste (Sonderabfälle) must be disposed of separately. It may contain poisonous substances or damage the environment. Hazardous waste includes, for example, paint, chemicals, batteries, electronics, energy-saving lamps, or expired medicine. Under no circumstances does hazardous waste belong in the household rubbish. Usually, it can be returned to the point of sale. Manufacturers and retailers are obligated to accept these waste products free of charge.

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

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/housing/waste-disposal