

Your Start in Appenzell Ausserrhoden – Checklist

[directly after arrival](#)

[within 3 months](#)

[in the first year](#)

directly after arrival

Welcome! In this section, you will find an overview of the most important steps you should take directly after your arrival.

1. Registration

► Have you **registered with the local municipality**?

Within 14 days of your arrival, you must register in person with your local municipality. Bring your ID and rental contract.

- [Municipalities / Resident registration contacts](#)
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2. Residence Permit

► Have you received your residence permit?

Depending on your country of origin and reason for staying, you need a specific permit. The Migration Department is responsible for issuing permits. You are personally responsible for renewing your residence permit and must submit all documents on time.

- [Applications and information sheets](#)
 - [Contact Migration Department](#)
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3. Initial Information Meeting

► The Integration Information Office offers initial information meetings with translation, so that you have a good start. INFI is also happy to assist you with any further questions.

- [Contact Integration Information Office INFI](#)
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4. Political System

► Federalism: In Switzerland, responsibility is shared between the federal government, the cantons and the municipalities. This is called federalism. Many things – such as education, taxes or social assistance – work differently in each canton. Customs and traditions also vary by region.

- *Swiss Map*
- *Languages in Switzerland*

► Democratic rights: In Switzerland, only Swiss citizens aged 18 and over may vote and stand for election. Exceptions exist in the municipalities of Trogen, Speicher, Wald and Rehetobel (municipal voting right) if someone has lived in Switzerland for at least 10 years and in the canton for 5 years.

► Right to petition: All adults – including foreigners – have the right to submit petitions to the authorities at municipal, cantonal and federal level. Petitions may contain proposals, complaints or requests.

- *Brochure "Welcome to Switzerland" in many languages*
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5. Language

► The German language is essential for work, education, and daily life. Learn to speak German as soon as possible for everyday situations. There are language courses available at a reduced price.

- *Flyer with current course offerings in Appenzell Ausserrhoden*
 - *ar.ch / Affordable German courses in Appenzell Ausserrhoden*
 - *sprachtandem.ch / Conversation with other people in German*
 - *Make social contacts to improve your language skills*
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6. Family and Children

► School: Have you registered your children at school? In Switzerland, school attendance is compulsory. Registration takes place directly at the local school.

- *School Leadership Contact List*

► **Young people aged 16** and over receive support through special programs when entering the Swiss education and professional world. The Integration Information Office INFI advises young people aged 16 to 25. Book an appointment for a consultation now.

► Childcare: Parents can receive financial contributions for childcare if certain conditions are met.

► Playgroup: Playgroups allow children from 2.5 years of age to learn German through play and to develop social and motor skills – a good preparation for school entry.

- Counseling for mothers and fathers
 - Contact Integration Information Office INFI
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7. Work

► Do you have secure employment or are you **looking for a job**? Depending on your nationality, you may need a work permit.

- [ar.ch / Applications and information sheets for the work permit](#)
- [arbeit.swiss / Job-Room](#)
- [List "Important online job platforms and useful links"](#)
- [List of recruitment agencies](#)
- [Career, education and vocational counselling \(basic education as the key foundation\)](#)

► Do you know your rights as an employee? Working hours, wages, vacation entitlement and dismissal are regulated by law.

- [Infostelle Arbeit / Legal advice on labour law \(4 hours free\)](#)
- [lohnrechner.ch / salary calculator](#)

► Do you know what to do if you become unemployed? Register early with the Regional Job Placement Centre (RAV).

- [RAV / Steps to register with RAV](#)
 - [Herisau Application Office](#)
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8. Social Insurance

► The Swiss social insurance system is complex. Please inform yourself in good time to avoid problems later. Contributions are deducted directly from your salary and include the following types of insurance:

- AHV/IV/EO: Old-age, disability and loss-of-income insurance (mandatory insurance)
- ALV: Unemployment insurance (for employees)
- BVG: Occupational pension (from a certain income level)
- Accident insurance (UVG):
 - If you work at least 8 hours per week, your employer will insure you.
 - If you are not employed, you must take out accident insurance through your health insurance provider.

- [*Social insurance infographic*](#)
 - [*Social insurance in Switzerland in different languages*](#)
 - [*sovar.ch / Contact social insurance office*](#)
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9. Bank Account

► Have you opened a Swiss **bank account**? You need an account for salary, rent, and insurance.

Many banks only open an account after receiving the residence permit. Some banks accept a certificate of residence from the municipality (subject to a fee). Please inquire about which documents are required in each case.

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

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/test/directly-after-arrival

within 3 months

In the first three months, there are many topics that can help you find your way in your new life. Here you will find a list of the most important points you should take care of now.

1. Health Insurance

► Have you taken out basic health insurance with a health insurance provider? Taking out insurance is mandatory within three months – retroactively from the date of your registration in Switzerland.

► Supplementary insurance is optional and covers additional services such as better hospital choice, alternative medicine, or contributions to glasses – it must be taken out before an illness occurs.

- [Health insurance infographic](#)
- [comparis.ch / Compare health insurance providers](#)
- [Swiss healthcare system explained in different languages](#)
- [Mandatory health insurance / FAQs in various languages](#)
- [Emergency numbers](#)

► People with low income can apply for a premium reduction at the Social Insurance Office of Appenzell Ausserrhoden. The deadline is the end of March. New residents may apply after this deadline, but only in the year of arrival.

- [Application for premium reduction](#)

► Exemption from mandatory health insurance in Switzerland: In Switzerland, every person is in principle required to have health insurance. In Appenzell Ausserrhoden, the "Common Institution KVG" in Solothurn is responsible for monitoring this obligation. In certain cases, an exemption is possible. You can find more information on [the website](#).

- [kvg.org / Online request for exemption from insurance obligation](#)
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2. Housing and Daily Life

► Finding an apartment is important. The housing market varies depending on the region. Tenants must follow certain rules – for example regarding rent, termination and the house rules (e.g. quiet hours, laundry room).

- [comparis.ch / Housing market](#)
- [alle-immobilien.ch / All real estate offers](#)
- [Free legal advice on tenancy and leasehold law](#)

► A combined household and personal liability insurance protects you in case you accidentally cause damage to others or to your own home.

- [Compare household and liability insurance](#)

► Waste disposal is well organized. There are special bags, collection points and recycling rules – each municipality has its own regulations. Please check locally for details.

- [KUH-BAG plastic recycling](#)
 - [Recycling map](#)
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3. Media and Communication

► Have you set up internet, TV and phone? Compare providers and contracts. Pay attention to minimum contract durations.

- [comparis.ch / Comparison portal for mobile, internet and TV](#)

► Every household in Switzerland must pay a fee for radio and television – even without owning a device. The company Serafe sends the invoice automatically after registration with the municipality. The fee is approximately 335 Swiss francs per year per household.

- [serafe.ch / Information on the radio and TV fee](#)
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Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/test/subtest-1

in the first year

During the first year, there are many additional tasks that will help you settle in Appenzell Ausserrhoden in the long term. This checklist shows you the key points to keep in mind.

1. Integration and Community Life

► Social contacts are important for settling in Switzerland. Talking to neighbours, acquaintances or participating in a club helps to practise the language and better understand everyday life.

Those who get involved find connections more quickly – and soon feel at home.

- [Associations in Appenzell Ausserrhoden](#)
 - [Events in Appenzell Ausserrhoden](#)
 - [benevol.ch / Volunteering](#)
 - [Women's group Appenzell Ausserrhoden](#)
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2. Diplomas, Education and Further Training

► Foreign **diplomas** must be recognised in certain professions (e.g. health, education, technology) in order to work in Switzerland.

- [Check – Do I need recognition for my profession?](#)
- [HEKS MosaiQ Ostschweiz - Counselling for highly qualified migrants](#)
- [Overview of responsible authorities and institutions](#)
- [Explanation of diploma recognition – how to proceed?](#)

► Switzerland offers many educational programmes and **further training opportunities** – also for adults. Please inform yourself early about suitable options.

- [Swiss education system graphic](#)
 - [Career, study and education counselling](#)
 - [Vocational guidance explained in multiple languages](#)
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3. Mobility

► Vehicle import: If you import a car from abroad, you must register it within 12 months. Clarify in advance whether the vehicle can be approved in Switzerland – this will help you avoid problems and delays.

- Application for vehicle as part of relocation goods for the customs office
- Road Traffic Office Trogen

► Driving licence exchange: Your foreign driving licence must also be exchanged within this period, or you will lose your driving rights. Persons from non-EU/EFTA countries must also take a driving test. Driving lessons are recommended.

- Application for licence exchange
- Road Traffic Office Trogen

► Public transport in Switzerland is well developed and reliable. Many people use the train, bus, tram or regional passes like the GA or Halbtax in everyday life.

- sbb.ch / Top offers
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4. Taxes

► With a B permit, the tax is deducted directly from your salary (**withholding tax**). A tax return is usually not required.

► With a C permit, you must submit a tax return every year (**ordinary taxation**).
Special case in Appenzell Ausserrhoden: Even with a B permit, you may submit a tax return – if you apply for it in advance.

- Tax Office Appenzell Ausserrhoden
 - comparis.ch / compare taxes
 - Application for ordinary taxation
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5. Counselling and Support Services

► In many municipalities, there are counselling centres that are free of charge or low-cost – for example on questions related to work, housing, family, residence or health. These services help you to find your way and provide solutions when things get difficult.

- *[find help / Health and Social Services – Help made easy](#)*
- *[Victim support SG-AR-AI](#)*
- *[Emergency numbers](#)*
- *[Domestic Violence Brochure](#)*

► The canton also offers free legal consultations. These offer short, free legal advice to all residents. Consultation sessions are held regularly.

- *[Contacts for legal advice](#)*
 - *[Infostelle Arbeit / Legal advice on labour law \(4 hours free\)](#)*
 - *[Free legal advice on tenancy and leasehold law](#)*
 - *[Heks Ostschweiz - Counselling Centre against Racism and Discrimination](#)*
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6. Canton Portrait: Appenzell Ausserrhoden

► **Appenzell Ausserrhoden** is one of the 26 cantons of Switzerland. With a population of 56,641 people in 2024, it is one of the smaller cantons. The canton is known for its vibrant traditions and natural diversity.

- *[Short profile of Appenzell Ausserrhoden](#)*
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7. Fundamental Rights

► In Switzerland, **fundamental rights** are enshrined in the Federal Constitution. They apply to all people – regardless of origin, language, gender, religion, age or sexual orientation.

- All people are equal before the law.
- Women and men have equal rights.
- Discrimination is prohibited – for example based on origin, religion or sexuality.
- Everyone is free to choose their religion and express their opinion.
- Freedom of expression and of the press are guaranteed.
- Same-sex couples may marry.
- No one may be beaten or threatened. (→ Help in case of domestic violence)

- Federal Constitution
 - Heks Ostschweiz - Counselling Centre against Racism and Discrimination
 - Emergency numbers
 - Domestic Violence Brochure
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8. Duties

► Anyone living in Switzerland enjoys many **rights** – but also has responsibilities and **duties** towards society. These duties apply to everyone, regardless of nationality. Important duties include (you are personally responsible for the timely and correct fulfilment of the following tasks):

- Obeying the law and respecting the decisions of authorities
- Paying taxes and charges
- Taking out health insurance (mandatory for everyone)
- Complying with the school attendance requirement for children
- Fulfilling the duty to report when moving, changing jobs or during family reunification (e.g. informing the municipality of address changes)
- Separating and disposing of waste properly

► For foreigners, the following also applies:

- Personal responsibility (you are responsible for implementing all necessary measures correctly and on time)
- Compliance with residence and employment conditions
- Learning the national language and avoiding debt is essential

Respectful behaviour towards others, the environment and public institutions is also part of social responsibility

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

www.hallo-ar.ch/en/test/subtest-1-2