



מבט נוסף

WELCOME to the SWISS ALPS

Insights into Swiss Customs



Welcome to Switzerland

Switzerland is home to some most beautiful places, and especially the Swiss Alps are a popular destination for numerous Jewish travelers – you can discover many touristic attractions. There is a Jewish headcount of around 18,000 (around 0.2% of the total population) with a thriving Jewish religious life at different synagogues in several cities.

This guide is intended to provide you with an overview not only on kosher food and synagogues, but also other important things which can be helpful during your visit. This guide is not a halachic guidebook.

It may also be helpful to prevent frictions between Jewish tourists and the locals. Such frictions unfortunately have led to some very unpleasant reports about Jewish tourists in Switzerland. This is why we want to emphasize how essential it is to become familiar with Swiss culture and local codes of behavior when you prepare visiting Switzerland. We all represent the Jewish people, and this is a responsibility which we must take seriously.

Thus we hope that this guide will help to clarify some of this kind of issues, and help everyone to have an even better vacation experience in Switzerland.

We wish you a very pleasant stay!

Welcome to Switzerland

Kosher Food

As products sold in regular supermarkets do not have hechsherim, please refer to the kosher list which specifies all available kosher products in Switzerland. There are two main supermarket chains – Migros and Coop –, and at least one of them is present in almost every village. Most of the products mentioned on the kosher list are available at either Migros or Coop stores. Sometimes you might even find products with a kashrut stamp in these stores.

You can find the kosher list here: <http://www.irgz.ch/koscherliste/>

If you use Chalav akum you may also refer to the following list: <https://igb.ch/de/religioses/koscherupdates>

More information about kosher life in Switzerland is available here:

www.swissjews.ch/en/jewish-life/kosher-in-switzerland/lists-of-kosher-products/

Business Hours

Banks are usually open Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Once a week they extend their hours; please check locally. In any event they are closed on Sundays and public holidays. Many banks have automated teller machines (ATMs) that accept overseas bank cards. Please check with your local bank before leaving if your bank card is valid in Switzerland.

Post offices are usually open from 8 a.m. to 12 noon and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays, while some branches located in shopping centers generally adapt the opening hours of the center. All post offices however are closed on Sundays.

Shops in smaller towns and villages are typically open from 8.30 a.m. to 12 noon, and again from 2 to 6.30 p.m. In larger cities they do not close for lunchtime, and shops generally extend their hours till 8 p.m. on one evening of the week, mostly on Thursdays.

Currency

Please note that Switzerland remains with the Swiss Franc, usually indicated as CHF. Many prices are also indicated in Euro so that visitors may compare prices.

Merchants may accept Euros but are not obliged to do so. Change given back to the client will most likely be in Swiss Francs.

Electricity

The voltage in Switzerland, as in most of Europe, is 230V/50 Hz.

Switzerland uses type C (2-pin) and Type J (3-pin) plugs. (Type C 2-pin plugs also fit J sockets.)

Most power sockets are designed for three pin round plugs. The standard continental type plug with two round pins, applied for many electric travel products, may be used without any problem.



Welcome to Switzerland



Swiss Culture and Social Norms

The official languages spoken in Switzerland are German, French, Italian and Romansh, according to the country's four regions. Most people can also communicate in English. Residents of Switzerland are known to be friendly, punctual and organized. Please note that there are certain social norms which are particular for Switzerland. Some of the rules listed below are truly important, and it is helpful to adhere to them.

Here are a few tips to make your trip as smooth as possible, and help you feel more comfortable during your stay in Switzerland. Always remember the saying: «When in Rome do as the Romans do!» (Refer also to the Jewish concept of Dina de Malchuta Dina).

Greet & Meet

Greeting

In Switzerland, particularly in villages, even among people who do not know each other it is customary to greet any person who passes by in the street. You can say «Guten Tag», «Grüezi», «Bonjour», or simply «Hello». When meeting friends and colleagues, people shake hands for greeting. Most people are not aware of the Jewish concept of Shomer Negia. If this is important for you, before appearing impolite you should explain that strictly observing men and women do not touch each other for religious reasons.

«Please» and «thanks»

It is common to say «bitte» (please) and «danke» (thank you). Probably more than anywhere else, people in Switzerland use these terms a lot.

Considerations, Respect & Politeness

Quietness

One of Switzerland's advantages is quietness, especially at night. Locals and visitors alike keep their voice down in public areas (such as public transports), also when speaking on the mobile phone. For people used to loud city noises which require loud conversation, it may take some adjustment, but the quiet atmosphere adds to the Swiss charm and relaxation.

Cleanliness

Switzerland is known for its cleanliness, and visitors are expected to adapt to these standards. Littering is perceived as highly rude. Public waste bins should always be used when traveling, going for walks or hiking. In Switzerland, all cities and municipalities know waste systems that are subject to charges. Therefore, care should be taken to obtain and use the locally valid waste bags or bins. Illegal waste disposal can result in high fines. Landlords or tourist offices can provide information on this. It is also not permitted to dispose of household waste in public waste bins. If on your hiking or excursions no bins are available, then please collect your waste and dispose it later in an appropriate way.

Fairness

Public and free attractions such as playgrounds, play boats, climbing installations are here for everyone. It is standard to use such facilities for a reasonable limited time so that other children and/or people can use them as well.

Patience

In Switzerland, things take time and everybody patiently waits in line. In public transport people wait until all passengers have disembarked before boarding a train, tram, bus or mountain railway. At stopping points of buses, trains or mountain railways, waiting people queue up and get in without pushing.

Priority is given to those who came first. Also children should stand in line and should be briefed accordingly.

It is indeed helpful to always stay calm and friendly!

Activities

Swimwear

Most swimming pools and lake shores beaches are open for men and women at the same time. It is not an accepted practice to go swimming while wearing a T-Shirt or any other garment that is not destined for pool use.

Non-kosher restaurants

When going to non-kosher restaurants, ordering only tap water is inappropriate. Each person shall order at least one beverage (it is impolite to share one beverage with numerous people). There are designated picnic areas for consuming own food. Consuming your own food in restaurants is forbidden.

Toilets

The use of toilets in restaurants or hotels is only permitted in combination with consumption. Sometimes you have to pay to use a toilet in a restaurant or hotel (between 50 Rappen and 2 Francs).

Prices

Consumer prices are non-negotiable. Some facilities may offer reductions on ticket prices for big families. It is always mandatory to pay tickets also for children, according to their ages.

Guest passes or tickets

The holiday regions often provide their guests with free tickets or passes. These are mostly personalized and allow only the owner whose name is written on the card to use them. Often these tickets or passes are only valid together with a passport or identity card. Passing them on to others is not allowed and is equivalent to stealing.

Rented Apartments & Hotels

Shabbat rules

When spending Shabbat in a hotel or an apartment, you might need to make certain arrangements with your host. Generally, non-Jewish people are not familiar with our Jewish habits, and it is recommended to inform them and even ask them in advance for their permission regarding preparations you need to make, i.e., things like:

- using a key instead of an electronic card for the hotel room
- keeping certain lights switched on over Shabbat
- covering the light sensors
- removing the light bulbs of e.g. the fridge
- asking for a safe place to light candles ahead of time

Rented apartments

Please be aware that rental contracts normally run from Saturday to Saturday. Therefore it is necessary to negotiate with the owners of the apartments in advance. When departing an apartment or hotel room, it is imperative to leave it in a tidy and clean state even if one paid for cleaning. Final cleaning is subject to a charge, but the apartment is still to be handed over tidy and broom-clean. Don't forget to clean the bathroom. All waste must be properly disposed of by the tenant. The thorough cleaning, such as shampooing the floors etc. is carried out by the landlord's employees. Check the subject clauses in your rental agreement for any further information regarding your duties.

Kasher

If you undertook to kasher an apartment, it is an imperative to bring it back to the original state. Never heat all four hot plates at the same time and then pour hot water over them as this damages the thermostat. Heat only one or two plates at a time, let them cool down and only then pour hot water over them. Only thick aluminum oven foil should be used to cover the hotplates. The thin household aluminum foil burns into the hotplate and can hardly be removed. Ceramic glass cooktops cannot be kashered. Precautions should also be taken if you kasher a gas stove.



Travel & Safety

Bigger groups

The common visit of large groups or families with many children can bring the busses and gondolas partly to their capacity limits. If possible, try to travel separately and meet again at the destination or on the mountain. Advanced information to the transport operators can help you and them in their preparations.

Pedestrian crossing

Rules for pedestrian crossing are very rigid and strict. Pedestrians have always first right of way. Whenever possible, streets should be crossed on pedestrian stripes.

Halt the car

Stopping your car randomly on the street is forbidden on many roads. Therefore, crossroads, pavements, bus stops etc. are not suitable for letting passengers in or out of the car. This can lead to dangerous situations and the police can impose fines. Please only halt or park at the signed areas. A stop sign requires a traffic participant to fully stop his vehicle before driving on.

Road traffic law

Please note that road traffic law is severely enforced and fines are very high.

Safety in The Mountains - Tips

In the mountains a hiking trip needs preparation, even if it is just a «one hour walk». Sticking to the rules will make your excursion a safe and nice experience.

Preparation

Difficulty level

Do not underestimate hiking and prepare your trip in advance. There are usually different routes for different levels of difficulty. Many paths in the mountains are high alpine hiking trails. These are often steep and very narrow paths that cannot be used with prams.

Daylight

Start your hike as early as possible in the day. Consider when it will get dark.

Weather

Keep an eye on the weather and adjust your plan if rain, snow, fog or heavy winds are expected.

Keep in contact

Make sure that someone who is not hiking with you (e.g. friends at the hotel) know which route you will take that day and when you plan to return from your hike.

First aid

Take a first aid kit with you that includes compress dressings, gauze pads, bandages and more.

Trail Safety

Marked route

Never leave the marked trail. There are signposts and marks on fences, rocks and trees that help you to get to your destination safely.

Shoes

Always wear solid and proper footwear.

Water

Take enough water with you, even if it is not hot and sunny.

Crossing

Experiencing nature together with the family is a pleasure. On the narrow hiking trails, the hikers form a line to make it easier to cross with oncoming hikers.

Health

Always take the time to ascend when traveling to high altitudes. This will give the body time to adjust. Headaches, dizziness, nosebleeds, and difficulty breathing are all symptoms to watch out for. Pregnant women and people with a history of heart or lung disease should consult their physician before vacationing in high altitudes.

Throwing rocks

Do not throw rocks over cliffs, because other hikers might be below you. The picking of flowers in the mountains is strictly forbidden.

Nature & Rules

Nature

Use always the marked trails not only for your safety, but also for the sake of the nature. It is often not allowed to step on flowers, grassland, meadows, pastures, and to enter the property of private farms, even if you do not see any fences.

Fire places

Always use the marked fire places and do not try to make fire on places which are not intended for it. Whenever you light a fire make sure that you had made it out before leaving the place. The risk of forest fire is high.

Waste

In nature, including the lakes and mountains, the motto is to leave them the way they were found. Therefore, no waste is left behind in nature. Everything that is taken up and not consumed/used in the mountains is to be taken back to the valley (see also page 9).

Rest rooms and toilets

For excursions in nature (e.g. mountains, lakes, playgrounds, etc.) it is mandatory to use the public toilets (see also page 10).

Assistance in Emergency Situations

Have the phone numbers of rescue services at hand and contact them in case you need assistance.

Security & Anti-Semitism

Switzerland is a safe place and there are no dangerous cities or neighborhoods. However, it is advisable to be aware of what is going on around you, especially during evening hours and in places where young adults get together on weekend nights.

If you feel threatened, immediately dial 117 to alert the police.

Should you experience any kind of anti-Semitic incident, please report this to the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities:

<https://www.swissjews.ch/en/antisemitism/>

Please note that not every misunderstanding is an anti-Semitic incident. In most cases a short explanation can solve the dispute and de-escalate the situation.

Phone Numbers

117 Police

118 Fire Department

144 Emergency Rescue Service (Ambulance)

For the REGA air rescue service that provides emergency medical assistance especially in remote regions dial 1414 or +41 333 333 333.

Hazoloh +41 44 202 30 60





SIG

What is the Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities

The Swiss Federation of Jewish Communities [SIG] is the political umbrella organization of Swiss Jews and represents Jewish interests at the national level vis-à-vis federal authorities, national institutions, and the media. The SIG fosters dialogue with other religious communities, promotes knowledge of Judaism in Switzerland and represents Swiss interests in international Jewish organizations. Furthermore, the SIG coordinates and supplements the cultural, youth and social work of the member communities.

Among SIG's main tasks are the prevention of any form of anti-Semitism and racism and support of Jewish religious concerns, particularly the supply of kosher meat in Switzerland.

Feel free to contact us for any questions:

Hotline for travelers: +41(0)43 305 07 65

Contact us: travelers@swissjews.ch | www.swissjews.ch/travelers

SIG

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SIG
Schweizerischer
Israelitischer
Gemeindebund



FSCI
Fédération suisse
des communautés
israélites

In cooperation with the GRA Foundation against Racism and Anti-Semitism
and the member communities of the SIG:

- ❶ Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Baden
- ❷ Israelitische Gemeinde Basel
- ❸ Jüdische Gemeinde Bern
- ❹ Jüdische Gemeinde Biel / Communauté Juive Bienne
- ❺ Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Endingen
- ❻ Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Endingen
- ❼ Communauté Israélite de Fribourg
- ❽ Communauté Israélite de Genève
- ❾ Communauté Israélite de Lausanne et du Canton de Vaud
- ❿ Communauté Israélite du Canton de Neuchâtel
- ⓫ Jüdische Gemeinde St. Gallen
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- ⓯ Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Zürich
- ⓰ Israelitische Religionsgesellschaft Zürich

