

Notes from parliament

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“Anyone who goes on a journey...

...will certainly have a story to tell”. Unfortunately, not everyone’s experience of holiday or business travel is good.

Good travel preparation is time well spent and can often prevent little annoyances or even worst-case scenarios.

The following tips should help you prepare for and enjoy your best weeks of the year.

Obtaining information

Obtain information on your holiday destination in good time from travel guide books, the Internet, the media and the FDFA (see box), etc. The “Wenn einer eine Reise tut...” brochure published by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) provides lots of sound advice: www.eda.admin.ch/reisehinweise, “Tipps vor der Reise” section. This brochure can also be ordered in German, French and Italian from the Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics, Federal Publications, CH-3003 Berne.

The FDFA’s travel advice, published on the Internet, contains the department’s assessment of the security situation in more than 150 countries. The travel advice assesses security in terms of the political situation and criminality. It highlights possible risks and recommends precautionary measures to be taken when out and about. If the FDFA considers the dangers in a country or region to be particularly great, it advises against travelling there. The travel advice therefore focuses on a very specific aspect of travel. For other areas, e.g. for information on entry regulations and the spread of diseases, it provides the appropriate contact details. This travel advice is published in the three official languages – German, French and Italian – and is constantly revised and updated if the assessment of the situation changes: www.eda.admin.ch/reisehinweise

ESTHER LEUPP, FDFA, TRAVEL ADVICE

Travel documents

Find out in good time about entry regulations from the representation (embassy or consulate general) of your holiday destination (the Swiss representations are unable to provide you with this information):

- Do you need a passport or is an identity card sufficient? (for the EU: http://europa.eu/abc/travel/doc/index_en.htm)
- Is a machine-readable passport OK or is a biometric passport required? Is a provisional passport sufficient (some countries, e.g. Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain, require a visa for a provisional passport)? (Information for the USA: http://bern.usembassy.gov/niv_waiver_program.html, www.schweizerpass.admin.ch),
- Do you require an entry, transit or exit visa?
- Do you have to obtain the visa prior to departure in your country of residence or do you obtain it at the airport on arrival?
- Are there other regulations to observe before arrival? (e.g. the entry authorisation compulsory for the USA since 12.01.09: <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>)
- Do minors travelling alone or accompanied by just one parent require special travel authorisation from their parents or from the parent not travelling?

Please note that despite Schengen identification is mandatory in the EU. You must be able to provide identification at all times.

Does your passport still have enough pages and is it valid for at least 6 months after arrival at your holiday destination? Please

note that in some countries a passport must contain at least two free facing pages when you apply for a visa.

If you require a new Swiss passport, apply for it in good time (at least six weeks before use) from the representation where you are registered: www.eda.admin.ch (Representations). Provisional passports can also be issued, but they are valid for a maximum of 12 months, contain just 16 pages and cost CHF 100. Provisional passports do not contain biometric data.

Keep your passport safe when at home and out and about, and protect it against theft and loss. Make photocopies of your passport before travelling. These may prove useful if you lose it. They are not a replacement for the original passport, nor do they prevent checks and inquiries at Swiss representations, which may take some time, particularly at weekends. Request a report from the police if you lose your passport. This is required for issue of a provisional passport and for cancellation of your stolen passport.

Insurance

The cost of seeing a doctor and receiving hospital treatment is comparable with Switzerland or even higher in many countries. Even a short stay in hospital or repatriation can be very expensive.

Check the following with your insurance company before you depart:

- What is your insurance cover abroad?
- Do you have to pay bills abroad yourself, with reimbursement from the insurance company following later?
- Are cancellations covered?

If necessary, additional health and/or travel insurance is recommended.

Money

If your money runs out or is stolen, your family or friends can transfer money to you quickly via agencies such as Western Union (www.westernunion.com).

For space reasons, this is merely an abridged version of the article. You can read the full article at www.revue.ch. We hope this advice helps you enjoy an unforgettable holiday, and wish you a fabulous time and a smooth journey!

But if something should go wrong ...

Contact your family if you hear of a disaster at your holiday destination. They will undoubtedly be worried about you.

If you are unable to cope alone, contact the appropriate Swiss representation: www.eda.admin.ch (Representations). The embassy or consulate general will primarily focus on helping you stand on your own two feet again. They can, for example, arrange contact with doctors and hospitals, organise repatriation, arrange a lawyer without obligation or issue a travel document in the event that you lose your passport. The representations charge fees for certain services. Further information can be found at www.eda.admin.ch (Services – Assistance abroad). But please do not expect the impossible as representations are bound by legal provisions. They cannot act as a bank, carry out their own police-style investigations, become involved in ongoing

ing court proceedings or free Swiss citizens without prosecution if they have broken the law. Representations cannot provide money for onward travel or hotel costs. Nor can they advance money for costs in the event of a death, or for bail, fines or legal fees. A representation cannot issue a passport at the airport or apply for an entry or exit visa on your behalf.



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- Free choice of language: you can now choose for yourself the language in which you would like to read "Swiss Review" (not applicable to regional sections).

At www.swissabroad.ch you can also register to receive information by e-mail from your representation (embassy or consulate general) on issues such as culture and the economy, etc. Simple, step-by-step instructions can be found at www.swissabroad.ch or in the February edition of "Swiss Review" (No. 1/09).

I have access to "Swiss Review" through a family member and therefore wish to cancel my individual copy.

Surname/first name: _____

Date of birth: _____

Address: _____

Signature: _____

Please send this coupon to your representation.

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Statistics on Swiss abroad in 2008

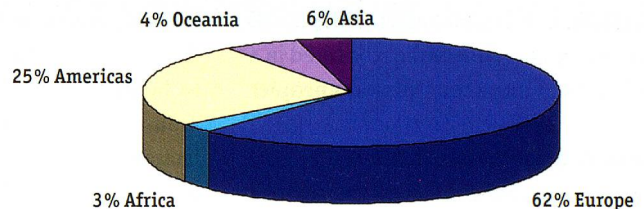
At the end of December 2008, the number of Swiss citizens living abroad was 676,176. This is 8,069 or 1.2% higher than in December 2007. The number holding dual nationality has reached 485,286 or 71.6%.

Where do most Swiss people abroad live?

Top ten

1. France	6. UK (GB & Northern Ireland)
2. Germany	7. Spain
3. USA	8. Australia
4. Italy	9. Argentina
5. Canada	10. Brazil

Statistics on Swiss abroad



57.6% of Swiss people abroad are female, and 22.5% are under the age of 18. Of those entitled to vote, 124,399, i.e. 23.9%, are enrolled on a Swiss electoral register.

The statistics in full and a detailed press release can be found at www.eda.admin.ch (Documentation – Publications – Swiss Abroad).

NEW POPULAR INITIATIVES AND REFERENDA

No new popular initiatives had been launched since the last edition at the time of going to press.

At www.bk.admin.ch/aktuell/abstimmung you will find a list of pending referenda and popular initiatives and the corresponding signature forms if available. Please complete, sign and send the forms directly to the relevant committee which is responsible for the authentication of your signature.