

Housing

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Finding an apartment/house

In Switzerland, many people live in rented apartments. Finding an apartment is not always easy and rents are usually high.

The housing market

Many people in Switzerland live in rented accommodation. They are tenants. Building land is scarce. For this reason, there are not many vacant apartments, especially in cities. And rents are usually high. People often pay about one-quarter of their monthly income in rent.

Outside cities, rents are cheaper. In the Jura, public transport is very well developed. Almost all localities can be reached by public transport.

Searching for an apartment/house

Offers for apartments can be found on websites or in local newspapers. There are also advertisements on billboards or in shopping malls. Sometimes there are no public advertisements for vacant apartments. So it is useful to tell your friends and acquaintances that you are looking for an apartment.

Submitting an application

Are you interested in an apartment/house?

You must contact the landlord or the estate agency. An appointment will be made to visit the apartment/house.

Do you like this apartment/house?

You must complete a form and submit an application, with various documents: your pay slips (or other proof of income) and a recent excerpt from the Office des poursuites (Debt Enforcement Office).

You can request this excerpt from your local Office des poursuites (Debt Enforcement Office). You can also do so online.

With these documents, the landlord or agency checks whether you can pay the rent for this apartment.

There are often several applications for an apartment.

Tip: apply for several apartments at the same time.

Buying an apartment/house

In the Canton of Jura, Swiss citizens and foreigners with a C residence permit are free to buy apartments or houses to live in themselves or to rent out.

People with a B residence permit who come from a European country (EU or EFTA) can also do so.

People with a B residence permit who come from another country can buy an apartment or house, but only to live in themselves.

People with other permits (L or F) cannot buy apartments or houses.

For more information, contact the registre foncier (Land Registry).

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

www.bonjour-jura.ch/en/housing/finding-an-apartmenthouse

Renting an apartment

People who rent an apartment (the owner and the tenant) have rights and obligations. For example, the owner of the apartment or the real estate agency generally does not have the right to terminate the lease of the apartment from one day to the next. But tenants must also respect the rental rules.

The lease

Generally, the landlord (the owner or estate agency) and the tenant sign a written lease agreement. So they enter into a lease. It is also possible to enter into a lease orally, but this is not advisable. In all cases, the law (the Code of Obligations) defines the rights and obligations that must be respected when renting an apartment/house.

Rent and rental guarantee

Generally, the amount of the rent includes the net rent and the charges (heating, hot water, etc.). The charges must be clearly stated in the lease agreement. The tenant must pay the rent at the end of each month for the following month.

Often, the landlord asks for a rental guarantee (also known as a deposit) in addition to the rent. You have to pay this once only, at the beginning of the rental.

In general, the rent guarantee is equal to three times the amount of the rent.

For example, you rent an apartment for CHF 1,000. With your first rent, you will have to pay an additional CHF 3,000 for the rental guarantee.

What is the rental guarantee for?

When you leave this apartment, if you have damaged the premises, the guarantee will be used to pay for the repair work.

If everything is in order, you will receive this money back.

Higher rent.

The landlord may only ask for a higher rent if they have valid reasons.

If they increase the rent they must give notification of the increase sufficiently early and in writing, at least 10 days before the start of the notice period, using an official form. If the tenant believes that the increase is not justified, they may refuse and file an objection. Objections must be filed in writing with the local Conciliation Commission within 30 days.

Moving in to your new apartment/the inventory

When moving into a new apartment, it is important to perform an inventory. For this purpose, the landlord and the tenant look at the apartment together. They list the damage they see in the apartment: what is damaged, what is not working.

When the tenant leaves the apartment, this list shows that they are not responsible for this damage. So they will not have to pay for it.

This list is important, take a picture and keep it in your files.

If the tenant has pets, this must be stated in advance.

The owner can accept or refuse.

When you move, you have two weeks to notify the municipal administration of your new address.

Damage in the apartment/house

During the rental period, simple repairs (e.g. a new shower hose or soap tray) are paid for by the tenant.

For more serious damage (e.g. dishwasher, oven or fridge), the owner must pay for the repairs.

If the tenant is responsible for damage, they must pay for the repair themselves. For this reason, you must take out private third-party liability insurance. It is the insurance that pays some expenses. Many landlords require the tenant to take out this insurance. If you wish to make a change in the apartment (for example, paint the walls), you must contact your landlord.

If there is a significant defect in the apartment (e.g. the heating or the washing machine in the laundry room is not working, noise during works in the building, etc.), the tenant can request a rent reduction until the works are completed.

Tenant protection (ASLOCA)

ASLOCA [Swiss Association of Tenants] is an association that defends the rights of tenants. It is active throughout Switzerland.

If a tenant is a member of ASLOCA and has a dispute with a landlord, they can ask for help.

ASLOCA offers legal services. The tenant can make an appointment to receive specialist advice on rental law.

For more information, you can consult the FAQ section of their website.

Giving notice

When you want to end a lease, you have to give notice.

To give notice on a lease, certain dates must be observed. This applies to both the tenant and the landlord.

Generally speaking, in the Canton of Jura, the specified dates are 31 March, 30 June, 30 September and 31 December.

Sometimes, in some leases something different is agreed. Very often, the dates are stated in the lease.

Notice period: notice of departure must be given at least three months before the date of termination.

When the landlord terminates the lease (when requesting the tenant to leave), they must use an official document. This is mandatory.

The tenant may refuse. They may file an objection with the Conciliation Commissions within 30 days.

If you want to leave your apartment before the set date, you can propose a new tenant to the landlord or agency. If the new tenant is able to pay the rent and wants to take over the apartment under the same conditions, you can leave the apartment before the date set.

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

www.bonjour-jura.ch/en/housing/renting-an-apartment

Neighbours

Having good relationships with your neighbours makes life more enjoyable. In Switzerland, when you arrive in a new home it is normal to introduce yourself to your neighbours.

Making contact

Having good relationships with neighbours makes life more enjoyable for everyone. To facilitate good relationships, it is advisable to introduce yourself to your neighbours when you arrive in a new apartment or house.

In many districts neighbours make a habit of meeting once in a while, for example for a neighbourhood party or a barbecue. Everyone is free to have more regular relationships and friendships with their neighbours or not. You can also meet in another way; by taking part in the activities of associations and clubs in your area (sport, singing or other).

House rules

Generally, buildings with several apartments have house rules. Often, the rules are given out with the lease. This document sets out the rules for living well together. For example, how to use the laundry room and shared spaces.

It is important to respect the house rules. Above all, to respect the times for calm and rest. It's written in the law.

If you want to have a party or event, it's important to let your neighbours know. You can write a note on a piece of paper at the entrance of the house. You warn people that there may be a little noise. People appreciate being informed.

Disputes

If a neighbour does not follow the house rules, you may be bothered. If a dispute breaks out with your neighbours, it is advisable to first speak to them calmly and respectfully. If the situation does not change, you can contact the landlord or the agency.

You can also ask for mediation. The mediator is a neutral person who listens and helps people talk to each other and find a solution together.

If the situation is serious or if there is a danger to someone (e.g. threats or violence), you can call the police.

The emergency number in Switzerland is 117.

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

www.bonjour-jura.ch/en/housing/neighbours

TV/internet/telephone

There are various different providers of internet, telephone and cable TV services in Switzerland. These offerings sometimes depend on where you live. Almost all residents have to pay taxes for radio and television.

The radio and television licence fee

In every household (apartment) that has a device for receiving radio or television programmes – including a computer connected to the internet or a telephone – you have to pay a tax to use the radio and television. This is the licence fee.

This tax supports the programmes of the télévision et radio Suisse (SSR) (Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG SSR)). The company Serafe sends out the bills for the tax.

People receiving supplementary benefits (SBs) do not have to pay the licence fee.

Telephone, internet, cable TV

There are several providers of telephone, internet and television services in Switzerland. Suppliers are different from one region to another, sometimes even from one building to another. Prices and services are different from one supplier to another. Tip: compare offers.

In general, internet connections at home are very fast. Switzerland does not have not many internet cafés (or cybercafés), as almost everyone has an internet connection at home.

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

www.bonjour-jura.ch/en/housing/tvinternettelephone

Waste collection

The municipality is responsible for collecting waste. Each municipality has its own rules. Sorting waste is important, which is why there are collection points for this.

Waste sorting/recycling

Sorting waste helps to protect the environment and save money. There are places to collect recyclable or polluting waste (paper, batteries, glass, cardboard, garden waste, aluminium, metal, textiles, used oils, etc.). This waste should not be placed in garbage bags.

PET bottles and other packaging can be returned free of charge to grocery stores. Each municipality has a collection timetable or plan with the days and places to bring the different types of waste. This document is usually given out when you register in your new municipality.

It is absolutely forbidden to burn your waste or to leave it in the countryside or on the street.

Garbage bags/stickers for garbage bins

Non-recyclable waste (household waste: food leftovers, greasy paper) should be placed in official garbage bags or in bags with a waste sticker.

The waste tax is already included in the price of the official bag or sticker. Each municipality has its own bags or stickers. You can buy them in local shops, shopping malls and at the town hall.

You can leave the garbage bag at the side of the road (or at a collection point) only on the pick-up day shown on the calendar. Or you can drop them off in moloks (half-buried cylindrical containers) at the times indicated on site.

It is forbidden to drop off bags outside these days and times.

You must obey the timetable.

In some buildings, there are containers for the waste of the residents of the building.

Special waste

Some wastes are toxic or pollute nature. For example, paints, chemicals, batteries, electrical products, energy-saving lamps and bulbs (LEDs), also expired medicines. This waste should not be placed in garbage bags.

You should take them back to the shop where you bought them, or to the pharmacy (for medicines). This is free of charge. The shops are obliged to take them back.

You can also take toxic waste back to the regional collection centres for household special waste in Delémont, Porrentruy and Saignelégier.

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

www.bonjour-jura.ch/en/housing/waste-collection