

Important information for incoming exchange students at the HES-SO Valais

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Important information for incoming exchange students at the HES-SO Valais

COMING TO SWITZERLAND

NON-EU students - Visa formalities

Certain **non-European** students need to apply for a visa at the nearest Swiss Embassy at least three months prior to departure. A so-called "tourist visa" is not sufficient and cannot be changed into a student permit once a student has arrived in Switzerland.

Information on type of visa required:

<http://www.bfm.admin.ch/bfm/en/home/themen/einreise.html>

If you need a visa, please call the Swiss embassy in your country for your visa application:

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rebs.html>

- You will receive an invitation letter from our school.
- Provide all the necessary documents to the Swiss embassy in your country.
- Please keep us informed about the progress of your visa application and let us know immediately when your visa is granted.

**DO NOT book your flight before you receive your visa.
The procedure might take up to three months.**

Schengen Visa

During your stay in Switzerland you may wish to travel to neighbouring countries. If your country does not have bilateral agreements to let you travel without a visa to neighbouring countries of Switzerland, there is a collective visa option called Schengen Visa. This visa will enable you to travel to Schengen member countries without problems. Apply for this visa at one of the Schengen country embassies in your own country; you may not get it once you are in Switzerland!

The Schengen Space is the territory constituted by the countries that have signed and implemented the Schengen Agreement: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Poland, and Portugal. The agreement allows free circulation of people within the territory of the member countries.

EU Students

Switzerland is not a member of the European Union. However, entry requirements have been simplified for **European students**.

All foreign students have to sign in, **within 8 days upon arrival**, at the communal Office of their place of residence, and present their passport, 2 photographs and the letter of acceptance of the school. Your student permit will cost CHF 65.- to 100.- for six months.

NECESSARY DOCUMENTS

Before you leave for Switzerland, make sure you have the following items:

- a valid passport or picture ID
- a visa (if necessary)
- proof of sufficient health insurance: European insurance card; for non-European students see “insurance”
- proof of third-party liability insurance, **for non-European students see “liability”**
- proof of sufficient financial resources during your stay in Switzerland

INSURANCE

Health Insurance

Health care is very expensive in Switzerland. According to Swiss law, all students must have health and accident insurance. Students from the European Union can present the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) as proof of insurance coverage. Please make sure that your EHIC card is valid for the entire duration of your stay in Switzerland!

Please send a double-sided copy of your EHIC card to our International Office **prior to arrival**.

Without proof of insurance coverage from the student and for non-European exchange students, we take out health insurance according to Swiss law to cover possible expenses. Part of the student grant will be used for this purpose (CHF 100.-/month). Please note that insurance coverage can only be arranged for complete months.

Refund of Health Expenses

EU students: <http://www.kvg.org>

Non-European Students who remain affiliated to their own insurance company pay up front and will receive a refund once they have returned home.

Non-European Students with health insurance in Switzerland through the International Office of the HES-SO Valais have to pay an excess of up to CHF 300.-; the rest will be covered by their insurance.

Liability Insurance

EU exchange students must provide a copy of their third-party liability insurance for the entire duration of their stay to our International Office **prior to arrival**.

The HES-SO Valais will take out liability insurance for non-EU exchange students or students without proof of sufficient third-party liability insurance. This insurance will be financed by the student's grant.

ACCOMMODATION

The HES-SO Valais has no residential campus. Foreign students usually rent a room in a private home. Prices range from CHF 450.- to 600.- per month for a single, furnished room (kitchen and bathroom facilities are often shared) or a studio.

The International Office of the HES-SO Valais helps exchange students find accommodation (see affiliation form). Please note that if the International Office makes a booking on your behalf, you will have to pay the first month of rent even if you decide to find other accommodation upon your arrival.

Erasmus students wishing to make their own arrangements can find offers on the following websites:

www.siontourism.ch/en/Place/ (Accommodation)

www.sierre-salgesch.ch/en/Accommodation/Hotels/ (Accommodation)

www.hevs.ch/AnnonceImmobiliere.aspx?lafipa=1450&OuvertureMenu=1126
Adds for accommodation in the Sion and Sierre region submitted by students.

ARRIVAL IN SWITZERLAND

Make sure to inform the International Office Move of the day and time of your arrival!

Travelling to Sion or Sierre

Switzerland has two international airports, one in Geneva and one in Zurich. Both airports have a direct train connection so that students can easily get to Sion or Sierre. For further information on train schedules see: <http://www.sbb.ch/en/index.htm>

If you have a late incoming flight, please make sure there are still trains running to Sion or Sierre.

Swiss Pass offers: <http://www.swisstravelsystem.ch/Tickets.16.0.html?&L=2>
(see also under Transport)

Arrival

We do our best to have someone pick you up at the train station in Sion or Sierre. However, this might be difficult to arrange if you arrive late at night, on a weekend or on a public holiday.

<http://www.feiertagskalender.ch/index.php>

In this case you might have to take a taxi to your accommodation. Make sure you check this beforehand with the International Office by e-mail.

Please check in at the International Office of the HES-SO Valais as soon as possible after arrival.

LANGUAGE COURSES

Most courses at the HES-SO Valais are taught in French or German. It is therefore essential that the students' French or German language skills are sufficient to enable them to take part in regular classes.

The HES-SO Valais offers weekly language classes throughout the academic year. However, students doing a study project can communicate in English with their professors.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Meals

The HES-SO Valais runs a cafeteria where hot meals are available at lunch time or snacks throughout the day at reasonable prices.

Study facilities

Registered students may take out books from the HES-SO Valais library and other university libraries throughout Switzerland thanks to our national library network NEBIS.

Most students use their personal laptop. Internet access is available everywhere in the school, but might not be available in your accommodation.

Exchange students will receive a login and an individual e-mail address from the HES-SO Valais.

Classrooms are equipped with electronic facilities, teaching and learning aids such as overhead projectors, LCD projectors etc.

Currency

The currency in Switzerland is the Swiss Franc, although many shops accept Euros. On average, the cost of living in Switzerland is higher than in the rest of Europe.

Sports

Sion and Sierre offer a wide range of sports activities. In addition to various clubs, there are several swimming pools, parks and places to go for a walk or a run. In winter, skiing and snowboarding are very popular. Some of the slopes can be reached by public transport in less than an hour.

Student associations

The HES-SO Valais student association promotes the students' interests and encourages exchanges between students from different departments. It also organises social events such as sporting events, concerts, grill parties, etc. During the semester, the MOVE Office organises activities for exchange students and invites them to participate in ESN activities organised in Lausanne: <http://www.unil.ch/international>

Public Transport

Train: <http://www.sbb.ch/en/index.htm>

Half-fare card

With the Half-Fare travelcard, you pay just half-price for your ticket. It costs CHF 165.-, is valid for one year and available in combination with a Visa card.

<http://mct.sbb.ch/mct/en/reisemarkt/abos-billette/abonnemente/halbtax.htm>

Track 7

Track 7 is available as an add-on to the Half-Fare travelcard for CHF 129.-. If you are under 25, it gives you free travel from 7 p.m. until 5 a.m.

<http://mct.sbb.ch/mct/en/reisemarkt/abos-billette/abonnemente/gleis7.htm>

Point-to-point travelpass

If you regularly make the same journey by train, then a point-to-point travelpass is just the ticket for you. Prices depend on the period of validity and the length of the journey. This travelpass can be bought online or at any railway station.

<http://mct.sbb.ch/mct/en/reisemarkt/abos-billette/abonnemente/streckenabonnemente.htm>

INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

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1950 Sion

Phone +41 27 606 85 93
Fax +41 27 606 85 15
<http://move.hevs.ch>

Martial Geiser, Head of International Relations

martial.geiser@hevs.ch

International Office Sion - Sierre

move@hevs.ch

Emergency numbers

In case of emergency, you should call the relevant emergency phone number that can also be found on the back of all Swiss phone directories:

Police : 117
Ambulance : 144
Fire department : 118
Poisonings : 145

Please tell the operator:

- your full name
- the address of your current location
- and describe what has happened.

Above all: do try to stay calm!

Links

HES-SO Valais: www.hevs.ch/

Exchange Erasmus students: <http://www.esn.ch/>

Sports and Culture

Mountain sports activities (skiing, snowboarding, hiking, walking...)

www.crans-montana.ch

www.4vallees.ch

www.verbier.ch

www.zermatt.ch

www.saas-fee.ch

www.portesdusoleil.com

www.anzere.ch/fr

<http://www.leysin.ch>

Student Associations

<http://www.aehevs.ch/>

Leisure activities

www.grande-dixence.ch/

www.derborence.ch/

www.labyrinthe.ch/

www.lac-souterrain.com/

www.loisirs.ch/

<http://www.bungy.ch/>

www.tourismesuisse.com/romandie/f_c_1_0_0-romandie.html

www.bainsdesaillon.ch

<http://www.thermalp.ch/>

www.lavey-les-bains.ch

Cultural activities

www.swisscastles.ch/valais/brig/default.htm

www.swisscastles.ch/Valais/valere/default.htm

www.gianadda.ch/

<http://www.museesaintbernard.ch/>

Festivals and local events

<http://www.fifo.ch/>

<http://www.openairgampel.ch/>

<http://www.tohu-bohu.ch/>

<http://www.caprices.ch/2012/en/>

<http://www.guinnessfestival.ch/>

Cities

www.sion.ch

www.sierre.ch