



# **GUIDELINES FOR SWISS FROM ABROAD**



**Getting Ready for a Successful Stay with a Host Family**

## Checklist for Participants

### 11 Essential Points:

- Contact your host family as soon as possible after receiving their address. Introduce yourself and discuss any questions you have about details.
- Agree with your host family on the exact dates of your stay, your travel itinerary, time of arrival and the meeting-place in Switzerland.
- The Commitments are to be respected and kept.
- Please give your travel dates to the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) as soon as you can.
- You pay for travel to Switzerland yourself, as well as your personal expenses such as souvenirs, stamps, excursions, etc.
- Please respect the regulations, arrangements and house rules in your host family and keep to them.
- Tolerance and acceptance are necessary and work both ways, for the host and the guest.
- Be open and honest with your host family.
- Agree with your host family on trips you plan. Call them if you will be home later than arranged.
- Try to use energy sparingly and have an ecological attitude (e.g. save water and electricity).
- Take part in family life and help out with the housework for example.

We wish you a successful and exciting stay.

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In an emergency you can reach us **around the clock** at 078 / 745 43 21.

## **I. Welcome to Switzerland**

We are pleased you have decided to spend time in a host family in Switzerland and will gladly find just the right family for you. We hope you have an unforgettable experience here and take advantage of this opportunity to get to know the country and its inhabitants. Why not take some time now to think about what you are expecting from a stay in Switzerland.

This brochure will give you more information on, for example, who organises your stay in Switzerland, what we want to offer you with your stay in a host family, what you must be careful about to make it a success, or where you can call if there is a problem.

Please read it through carefully before you come to Switzerland. Let us know if anything is not clear or if you need more details. We will do our utmost to answer your questions and ensure that your stay comes up to your expectations.

## **II. About the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA)**

The 'Stay in a Host Family for Young Swiss Abroad' programme is organised by the OSA.

The OSA is supported by about 750 Swiss clubs and institutions all over the world. The OSA provides a wide variety of services for the Swiss abroad : advice, support, information, contacts with the homeland, youth and training. Its aim is efficient representation of the general interests of Swiss living abroad and strengthening ties both among Swiss abroad and with their country. You can find more information on the OSA's website : [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch)

For several years now, the OSA Youth Service has been organising winter and summer youth camps in the framework of the 'Sport and Fun' programme. Since 2000, we have added 'Be a Guest in a Host Family' and 'Learn and Progress' to the programme. The 'Learn and Progress' module includes the 'Learning Languages', and 'Training in Switzerland' + Workshops options, e.g. during the Swiss Abroad Congress.

### **III. Why stay in a Host Family?**

With a stay in a Swiss family we offer you a closer look at social and cultural life in Switzerland. By living with a Swiss family you discover fast what Swiss life is really like. You will be able to observe, compare and see your own experiences in another light. You might even recognize your own typical Swiss roots.

You will also be part of an interactive process with your hosts as they too have their expectations and ideas. Swiss customs will not always coincide with yours. Actually coming face to face with these unusual, foreign attitudes and a new way of life will be a challenge.

We hope a reciprocal, intercultural exchange will result from your stay with a host family.

**Living with a family with a different cultural background involves adapting to another lifestyle, sharing frustrations and joys and gaining new, valuable insight in the process.**

#### **1. Aim of the Programme**

- Conveying a realistic, positive and lasting impression of Switzerland.
- Recognition of differences and common ground.
- Strengthening ties between Swiss from home and abroad.
- Strengthening understanding for the culture and mentality of another country.

**Meeting People  
Getting Acquainted  
Forming Friendships  
Collecting Experiences**

## IV. Fitting in with Family Life

Being able to live in a family in the host country enables you to have a closer look at the country's culture and way of life in a short time.

Ideally you will feel more like a member of the family than a guest.

This needs time. Let your host family explain their daily routine and tacit arrangements. Take the opportunity of making yourself useful around the house even if you are not used to it. Your host family will show you how you can lend a hand. This can be fun in a relaxed atmosphere and you will learn a lot about Swiss families.

### 1. Responsibility and Autonomy

Don't forget, you are a guest in a house you do not know!

During your stay in Switzerland the host family decides on the rules for living together in their house. Please stick to these rules and accept them. You are the family's responsibility. To a certain extent the family is also responsible for your behaviour outside their home. Be aware of this responsibility too.

Of course you can arrange things on your own, meet young people your own age, or stay out longer than usual every now and again. But the host parents' guidelines apply here too. So inform them if you are going on an outing; call if you are coming home later than planned and always ask first if you want to go out.

You can always talk to the host family if you do not understand rules, if you feel they are unnecessary or too strict. You are bound to find a solution together.

In general:

<p><b>Outings and entertainment are handled differently in each family and every culture. As a matter of principle you have to adapt to the values and morals of the host culture during your stay.</b></p>
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### Another request to parents back home:

During her/his stay with the host family your daughter/son will be well looked after and receive all the necessary support and supervision. We would like to request that you keep a low profile when establishing contact. Give your daughter/son the opportunity of collecting new experiences without you and of enjoying distance and autonomy. This is very important for her/him.

Warmest thanks.

## **2. Language**

Perhaps you are not familiar with the language of the host family. Take advantage of this and try to speak it. It is only natural to make mistakes, but have a go! We know it is often tiresome in the long run to have to make yourself understood in a foreign language. Inform your host parents if they are speaking too fast or not clearly enough, or if you just need a rest.

## **3. Ecological Attitude**

The OSA endeavours to set an example and encourage an ecological attitude. Please support us and – whenever possible – save water and energy. Please follow instructions for waste disposal.

## **4. Summing up : The Guest adapts**

- You respect the house rules in your host family, e.g. no smoking inside the house.
- You lend a hand with the housework, just like a member of the family.
- You are open and honest with your host family.
- You always discuss outings and trips with your host family before going.
- You also share your own culture with the host family (cooking, games, etc.)
- You try to use energy sparingly and have an ecological attitude, e.g. saving water and electricity.

## **V. Two Tips for Intercultural Understanding**

### **1. Observe and listen carefully**

Because of the cultural difference there will be things or times which you will find unusual or you will not immediately understand. Other countries, other customs! With you, your host family will also be discovering new attitudes. Take your time to find out about these new values, expectations, relationships and standards. Sharpen your ears whenever you think you have stumbled on something different and ask your host parents to explain why they do something differently from your way at home. If you do this, misunderstandings will be avoided. It does not matter!

There is no right way or wrong way in cultural affairs. And only if you ask, will you learn why certain things and activities in Switzerland – on in your host family – are different, or are done differently from what you are used to at home.

## **2. Be honest**

If a misunderstanding or uneasiness arises, discuss it openly with your host family. The sooner you express your problem, the better it will be for the family atmosphere. Honesty and openness are necessary on both sides - they create trust.

**Communication is the key for solving intercultural and interpersonal problems.**

## **VI. Commitments**

- I will take an active part in family life, I will be tolerant and loyal to the host family and the other participants in the programme, and I will contribute to ensuring that the encounter is a positive experience.
- I will follow the host family's instructions (the teacher/the leader). I will comply with the family's daily routine and school tuition.
- I will keep to the timetable and programme times.
- I will keep to the 'Fachstelle mira' personal commitment → see below.
- In order to enjoy myself I need no drugs of any kind that endanger my health or my perception, or influence my behaviour. I will keep to fundamental Swiss legal principles. These include:

- |  |
|--|
| - No alcohol under 16 years of age             |
| - No spirits or alcopops under 18 years of age |
| - Use of narcotics is forbidden                |

Excessive consumption of alcohol will not be tolerated. Alcoholic drinks are not allowed in the school or during excursions.

**→ Young people may be sent home if they violate this pledge.**

### **Children should be safe with us.**

The OSA is a member of the 'Verein und Fachstelle Mira', the Mira Foundation.

We pledge a personal commitment for the prevention of sexual exploitation.

Our position : We consider sexual exploitation and sexual transgression as a direct attack on the personality of those concerned. For this reason we will tolerate neither sexual exploitation nor transgressional behaviour in our Organisation. We insist on creating transparency in our Organisation as to what is acceptable and what is not and managing our Organisation in such a way that acts of sexual transgression are punished or – better – do not occur. Children and young people should be safe with us.

For further information, see [www.mira.ch](http://www.mira.ch)

The computers made available to you during your stay in the host family must not be used for illegal purposes. Downloading from pornographic sites is strictly forbidden as well as on to personal mobile phones.

**→ As a participant in the 'Learn and Progress' and 'Host Family' programmes you declare – with your signature - that you are prepared to respect and comply with these commitments.**

## **VII. Good to Know**

### **1. Who pays what?**

Your host family receives no reimbursement for your board. They volunteer to do it free of charge, out of pure interest in welcoming a guest from another culture. We therefore expect you to respect and appreciate this generous hospitality.

The host family provides you with board and lodging during your stay. They also pay for activities organised for the family as a whole. You pay for everything else though, such as stamps, souvenirs, outings, clothes, cinema, etc.

Rail transport in Switzerland is expensive. We therefore strongly advise you to order a 'Swiss Pass'. This is the equivalent of a general season ticket. You can travel all over Switzerland on practically any means of public transport.

In addition to this, with the Swiss Pass, you receive reduced tickets for some of the major museums. A Swiss Pass for two weeks costs CHF 270.- or CHF 370.- for four weeks.

The Swiss Pass cannot be sent abroad. When you order one, we will send it to your host family. They will give you your Pass on the day of your arrival. Be sure to have it date-stamped at a Swiss Railways counter **before your first rail journey.**

## 2. Insurance

Participants are responsible for their own insurance. However, you can take out an accident insurance with the OSA for CHF 25.- per week. You can only qualify for insurance if you request it on your application form. There is no health or liability insurance coverage available with the OSA. We therefore recommend you take out a corresponding international insurance policy.

The OSA provides digital photos of excursions and host family reunions, etc., and uses some of them for the OSA homepage and/or printed materials.

## 3. Emergencies

In case of emergency, we are available **around the clock at : 078 745 43 21**.  
During office hours, i.e. from 08.00 to 12.00 and 13.30 to 17.30, you can reach us at:  
**031 356 61 00**.

Your host family also has these numbers and can immediately contact us in case of emergency.

**We wish you an exciting, eventful and interesting time  
with your host family in Switzerland!**

Our thanks to :



**MIGROS**  
kulturprozent

Swiss Travel System 