

HOUSING

As you may already know, housing in and around Lausanne is in high demand and finding an apartment can be very time consuming, frustrating and difficult. Through personal experience, we have learned a few tips and tricks that are especially helpful. This document is not all-inclusive and focuses exclusively on renting property and short-term housing.

If you are reading this before moving to Switzerland, do not waste your time trying to find an apartment until you arrive. Most people try to find a short-term furnished solution such as a sub-lease or one of the many extended stay studios for the first few months. To find a sublease, ask the Secretary of the lab for help. They often receive notices from the secretaries of other labs for sub leases and rentals and could help you find something.

Treat house hunting as a full time job. Check listings throughout the day, 7 days a week.

Most places require 3 months deposit upfront, so keep this in mind when deciding what you can afford. A deposit account will be opened in your name and the agency's name where the money will stay until the end of the lease. If you do not have the money for the deposit, don't worry. The University may offer a plan to help you pay your deposit and there are also companies who offer a similar solution, such as SwissCaution. SwissCaution offers the guarantee for the agency without a deposit from you but rather an annual premium. Once you've been chosen for an apartment, check with the agent/landlord if they accept SwissCaution.

HOW TO FIND AN APARTMENT IN LAUSANNE

The Basic Process The Details (and Reality!)

Step 1: Find listings matching your criteria

The listings should have most of the information you need to determine whether or not an apartment will work for you and your family. Don't forget:

- The # of rooms listed is the total number of rooms, including living rooms and small hallways, but not including the kitchen or bathroom(s).
- When checking the rent, make sure you know the total including "charges" (Concierge, Heat & Hot Water). You will establish separate agreements with other companies for Electricity, Internet, Cable, Phone, etc.
- Please beware of scams. If it looks too good to be true, it probably is....
- Apartment listings can be found on many real estate websites as well as through the sites of the agencies themselves. EPFL has created a list available at: <http://logement.epfl.ch/cms/site/habitation/lang/en/agencies-searchforums>

Step 2: Visit the listings

Listings will either indicate a time when you can view the apartment or indicate a number to call to schedule a visit. This is an important step as most agencies will not accept your application if you have not visited the apartment. Our advice is to visit as many apartments as possible. Most of the time, the earlier you respond to a listing and visit the apartment, the better your chances are of being selected. When visiting an apartment, a few important things to look for and consider:

- Proximity to transportation, shops, jobs or anything else you will want frequent access to. Local public transportation typically does not run between midnight and 5:30am, so coming home late or leaving early may require proximity to a train station or a taxi fare, unless you really enjoy walking!
- Laundry Facilities: most buildings have laundry facilities in the basement and a laundry schedule for tenants. If this is the case, you will be assigned a specific time, either every week or every other week when you can do your laundry. If you need to change this schedule, you have to work this out with the concierge of the building.
- Cave/Storage: Some apartments have a cave, or storage space, located in the basement of the building. This can be used for storing suitcases, sports equipment etc. but beware that some caves are more secure than others.

Step 3: Submit rental application dossier to the agency

What goes in your dossier:

- Copy of residence permits and/or Attestation of Residency.
- Copy of passports.
- Apartment-Specific Application Form: Available from the agency renting the apartment, usually indicated in the ad. Find online or at their office. *Write in French.
- Copy of 'Extrait pour Office des Poursuites' document. This document confirms that you are not currently being pursued for any legal matters or bad debt in Switzerland. To get your attestation, bring your ID cards and CHF 17 per person to Ch. du Trabandan 28 (entry A), 1014 Lausanne. Open Monday – Friday 8:00 – 11:30 & 1:30 – 4:30.
- Copy of 'Work Contract' to prove income.
- Optional: copies of Recommendations or References (Obtain a signed and dated recommendation, translated to French, from previous landlords or the secretary or boss at EPFL) RC insurance if you already have a policy.

*Always keep extra copies of your complete dossier with you and have your dossier ready to submit immediately after viewing an apartment (sometimes even right before if the agency is nice).

Step 4: Agency selects you to be the next tenant

As Tom Petty says, the waiting is the hardest part. It is not clear if any specific procedure is followed to select the new tenants for an apartment but it is clear that each agency has a different method. After submitting your dossier, follow up with the landlord/agency to see when a decision will be made, if they have all your paperwork, need references etc. It also does not hurt if you can convince the secretary of the lab to call in and put in a good word for you or explain how important it is that you get THIS apartment.

After accepting an apartment:

- Change your address for accounts and mail; get the "Changement de domicile" form at the post office. If you are moving to a different city or commune, you will need to announce your departure and arrival at the respective commune offices. You may also be required to pay for this registration and update your residence permit.
- Schedule appointments to set up services for your home:
 - Phone, Internet, Radio, TV, and Electricity.
- Update or Enroll Insurances (see Welcome to Lausanne section for more details).
- When you take over the apartment and receive the keys, someone from the agency will do a "state of place" inspection to detail the condition of the apartment at the beginning of your lease. It is very important to make sure this is as thorough and detailed as possible to avoid paying for existing damage when you leave.
- Consider joining ASLOCA, the Suisse Renters Association. Their goal is to assemble the renters, stand up for the renter's rights and assist them in their problems.
 - One of the first things to do once you have signed a new rental contract is to check if the increase of the rent is more than 10% of the former rent. The agency should send you a green document with the former rent information together with your contract! If the increase in rent is higher than 10%, you should check with ASLOCA, if you can object to the rental cost. But act quickly because you can only contest it in the initial 30 days after you get the keys to your new apartment! ASLOCA membership is currently 55CHF per year, more information can be found at www.asloca.ch (only in German / French / Italian). Phoning them might be a better solution, as almost all of them speak English!

Gordan, IS member from Austria says: *"even though it feels awkward always remember that in Geneva and Zürich it's even harder to find something than in Lausanne! At last one good thing: you'll get to know the city and its public transport by heart after all this!"*

Useful French phrases and vocabulary for finding housing:

pièce: room cuisine agencée: furnished kitchen meublé: furnished louer: to rent
bail/loyer: rent in CHF dépôt de garantie: deposit étage: floor, level
charges comprises: charges included gérance: real estate agency
neuf: new construction état des lieux: state of place(at beginning/end of a lease
salle de bain: bathroom salle de douche: shower
salle de séjour: living room chambre: bedroom sous-location: sublease
location: rental cuisine: kitchen cave: storage unit



International
Spouses @ EPFL

If you have any suggestions to add to this topic or you want to share some of your own experiences, please email us at InternationalSpouses@epfl.ch and let us know!

For information on other topics, please visit our website at
<http://acide.epfl.ch/InternationalSpouses>