

# WELCOME TO LAUSANNE

**Introduction Video** by Lausanne Tourism and **Welcome Brochure** by the city of Lausanne.

First things first – to make your first few weeks easier, some helpful tips to help you adjust comfortably:

- Get a Mobile Phone – This is how you will set up visits for visiting apartments and how the real estate office will contact you to hopefully give you good news! Pre-paid phones are available for ~ 30 CHF and many offer free calls within the same network.
  - Unless specifically ordered, voicemail is not included.
  - To subscribe to a yearly contract, you must have your official residence permit.
- Use your work address when signing up for new accounts and services until you have found an apartment. Do not use your temporary address if you can help it. You will receive important correspondence, such as your residence permit, via the mail and you do not want to have anything lost in the mail.
- Get a Map of Lausanne (or many) – free at the tourist office on the right side of the entrance to the main train station or at the Ouchy metro station.
- Go to the lakeshore! The view of the French Alps across the lake is spectacular and will give you motivation to carry on with getting settled in your new home.

## Administrative Requirements

Within 8 days of arriving in Switzerland, you must announce yourself at the “Control des Habitants” in your commune. This will start the process of obtaining your residence permit. The Lausanne office is at Rue du Port-Franc 18, (Bring: Address, Passport with Swiss Permit, Work Contract, Passport Photo & ~110 CHF per person). A few weeks after announcing your arrival, you will receive an invitation in the mail to get your biometric residence permit. You will go to the “Service de la population Centre de biométrie et des documents d’identité” in Flon at Voie du Chariot 3, 1014 Lausanne to have your photo and fingerprints taken for your identity card. Don’t forget to bring some cash or a Maestro/Post debit card because there is a fee involved. Now all you have to do is wait on your biometric identity card to arrive in the mail... which can take anywhere from a few weeks to many months. If you want to check on the status of your permit, the best bet is to email [info.passeport@vd.ch](mailto:info.passeport@vd.ch) or go in person to the office.

## Getting Around

Public transportation is easy and fairly inexpensive in Lausanne and throughout Switzerland. There are many options for local, regional and countrywide passes that are valid for anywhere from a month to multiple years. The Swiss Rail Network (SBB in the German speaking region/CFF in the French speaking region/FFS in the Italian speaking region) in combination with regional trains will take you almost anywhere you could want to go in Switzerland.

- Trains: The train schedule and current timetables can be found at <http://www.sbb.ch/en/>.
  - EPFL students and employees are eligible to get a free half price, or demi-tarif, card through CFF. As the name states, this card entitles you to half price reductions on CFF tickets. Ask the secretary in your lab for help on obtaining your demi-tarif card. The demi-tarif card costs CHF 175 per year for everyone else.
- Bus/Metro: The Lausanne bus and metro lines are managed by tl (transports publics de la région lausannoise). Regional maps and timetables can be found at <http://www.t-l.ch/>.
  - If you use public transportation often, it is a good idea to check this site often for updates on new or revised routes and upcoming modifications to the usual schedule.
  - tl offers a monthly and yearly regional pass for Grand Lausanne which includes zones 11 and 12.
  - If you do not purchase a pass, the Galaxy card is a rechargeable prepaid card used to buy tickets. This is a good alternative if you don't want to get stuck at a station asking for change! By buying a Galaxy card for 50 CHF you'll get 5 CHF for free. ;-)

If you have your own car, be warned that it can be very hard to find parking and getting a permit or renting a space can be expensive (60 – 120 CHF/month). If you chose to keep your car in Switzerland for more than one year, you must register your car with the Cantonal Road Traffic and Maritime Navigation Office at Av. Du Grey 110, 1014 Lausanne.

Renting a car is a fairly inexpensive alternative to bringing a car from home and can be helpful when moving or if you simply want to take a trip. Car sharing is also available through Mobility and employees and students of EPFL get a special discount.

A driver's license from most countries is valid for 1 year in Switzerland before it is considered invalid. You are allowed to transfer to a Swiss license within one year of arriving without taking additional tests. More information is available in French at <http://www.vd.ch/themes/mobilite/automobile/>.

*Betsy, IS member from the US says: "We imported our car, which we found to be very useful as we packed it to the brim with all of our belongings- making it a very efficient moving box. We had a year to change our U.S. license plates. We also had to have the car inspected to make sure that it met emissions standards. Importation cost about \$4,000 and other associated costs (e.g., inspection, registration, taxes) probably came to about 700 CHF. "*

To exchange your license for a Swiss license, bring the following documents with you to the "Service des Automobiles et de la Navigation", Av. Du Grey 110, 1014 Lausanne. The office is open from 07h15 - 16h15 non stop, Monday-Friday.

- Completed "Demande de permis de conduire" form.
- Take above form to any optician and get eyes tested.
- Take above form & residency card to your Office of the Commune. Have it stamped.
- A single Passport photo.
- Swiss Residency Permit.
- Current driver's license.
- Optional: Driver records from your home country.

## Financial Matters

It is important to open a Swiss bank account as soon as possible so that EPFL has somewhere to deposit your highly anticipated and welcomed first paycheck! There are several options, including Credit Suisse who has a branch on the campus of EPFL near the Esplanade. Another option is a Postfinance account managed by the Swiss Post.

After opening a bank account, make sure to give your account information to the HR department at EPFL. EPFL Payday occurs at the end of each month, on the 25th. To calculate your take home salary after taxes, divide the annual salary by 13 and deduct 20% for taxes and you should have a safe estimate. The number 13 comes from the fact that you receive 2 paychecks worth of your income in November, if you have been there a year. If arriving mid year, make sure to inquire if any of your paycheck is being set aside for November's big payday.

For non-Swiss citizens, all taxes and compulsory insurance contributions are taken directly from your take home salary. The compulsory national insurance contributions for a salaried employee are:

- Pension and disability insurance, and income replacement scheme (AVS/AI/APG)
- Occupational pension plan (LPP)
- Unemployment insurance (AC)
- Professional accident insurance (LAA) \*if you work more than 8 hours a week, this is mandatory, and will not be necessary as part of your personal health insurance!
- Health insurance (LAMal)

The pension system in Switzerland is based on three pillars: AVS (first pillar), which is compulsory and universal; the second pillar, which is a compulsory add-on to the AVS for employees, to which the employee and the employer make equal contributions; and the third pillar, which is private and non-compulsory.

## Household Insurances

In Switzerland, if you cause harm to a third party, you are responsible and expected to pay compensation. Personal liability insurance (RC or Responsabilité Civile) covers the financial consequences of the harm you cause. It also defends you against unjustified claims against you. This is not mandatory but is recommended and is sometimes required for renting certain apartments.

ECA Insurance is a mandatory insurance in the canton of Vaud. This insurance covers damages from fire and natural disasters. If you do not receive an informational packet in the mail, go to <http://www.eca-vaud.ch> to download the forms. You will need to do an inventory of your household items to determine the necessary coverage. The good news is the annual premium is quite low. For example, for a 2-room apartment with basic household items the annual premium is under CHF 40.

## Recycling and Waste Disposal

If you live in Canton Vaud, it is mandatory to use special trash bags when disposing of household waste. You can purchase these green and white bags at any local grocery store in various sizes. A roll of ten 17L bags will cost CHF 10. If you are caught using an illegal trash bag you will be charged a fine. Therefore, it is in your wallet's best interest to recycle as much as possible. Recycling centers are found throughout the region and larger centers for furniture and miscellaneous items are set up a few times a month in each neighborhood.

### Useful French phrases and vocabulary for settling in Lausanne:

sac poubelle: trashbag    permis de conduire: driver's license    voiture: car  
étranger: foreign    abonnement: subscription    arrêt: stop (bus, metro, train etc)  
horaires: transportation timetables    carte: map    réseau: network    natel: cell phone  
lac Léman: Lake Geneva    gare: train station    assurance: insurance    împot: tax



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](mailto:InternationalSpouses@epfl.ch) and let us know!

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