

March 2018 / English
(Englisch)

ZÜRICH FOR YOU

ESPECIALLY FOR NEW RESIDENTS: THE CITY OF ZÜRICH INFORMATION BROCHURE

A heartfelt welcome to Zürich!

We are delighted that you have moved to our city. For your convenience and to familiarize yourself with your new place of residence, we have produced a brochure providing an overview of the range of information and services that the city has on offer.

- The **Portrait of the City** presents a short introduction to Zürich. Besides information about the city, you also obtain a glimpse into its history and politics.
- The **Useful Information** chapter features information and addresses completing what you need to know about daily life in Zürich. It also includes links to other websites with additional information (in English if possible, although mostly in German).

Zürich offers an ideal environment for a high quality of life. Situated on the shores of Lake Zürich, inhabited by cosmopolitan people and featuring a dynamic economic life, Zürich will hopefully become a city for you to feel at home in and enjoy; and perhaps you will even wish to commit some of your time in return for the benefit of the community at large.

Is there anything this brochure does not address? Do you prefer to be given information in person? If so, please visit our [Welcome Desk](#) at the town council offices. Our office is open Monday through Thursday 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.; information services are free of charge.

I Portrait of the City of Zürich

1. A Cosmopolitan City in the Green

Zürich is the capital of the Canton of the same name and is the largest city in Switzerland. As the centre of a metropolitan area, the City of Zürich enjoys substantial national and international importance. Zürich has a population of more than 420,000; more than one third of the city's population is made up of non-Swiss nationals. Every year, approximately 15,000 people move from abroad directly to Zürich.

Lying at one end of Lake Zürich, the city is embedded between two forested hills and spreads across the two rivers Limmat and Sihl. The old town in the city centre, historically grown neighbourhoods and former industrial zones converted into new city districts account for a multi-faceted urban structure. Zürich has both a compact and

clear lay-out, and distances are short: thus it is of no surprise that many Zürich natives either chose to walk, cycle or use public transportation to get around town.

Zürich promotes a careful use of natural resources and has enshrined principles of sustainability objectives in its constitution. Particular value is attached to maintaining a high quality of buildings, streets, and squares, as well as to providing enough spaces of a green and natural environment. In periodically-held surveys, the inhabitants express themselves very positively with regard to their city, and enjoy a climate of safety and security. Looking at international city rankings, Zurich has unsurprisingly long occupied top ranking positions.

2. Diversity and Plurality

Zürich is home to around 170 nationalities. The diversity of population and lifestyle shapes the city's character, and will undoubtedly contribute to its ongoing transformation in the future. This pluralistic understanding of society is rooted in the principles of the rule of law, democracy, solidarity and individual rights.

New residents are most welcome in Zürich. The city creates the necessary conditions for everyone to feel at home with its cosmopolitan style, good living and working conditions and active cross-cultural and integration policies. The people living here all relate to different cultural, religious and social reference points. The heterogeneous social web marks the urban philosophy of the city and constitutes an important part of the re-sources and strengths of Zürich.

3. Culture and Nightlife at its Best

The broad offer of cultural and leisure activities draw visitors from all over the region and far beyond. Choose from a variety of shopping and entertainment opportunities. More than 2,000 restaurants, movies with films shown in their original language, and thrilling nightlife make Zürich a popular city to go out and about.

Every day, you will find up to 70 events of a broad cultural variety. The city is home to internationally renowned cultural institutions such as the Schauspielhaus (Zürich Theatre), the Kunsthaus (City Art Museum), the Opernhaus (Opera House), the Tonhalle concert hall and the Rietberg Museum. Many other theatres featuring plays and dance, numerous music clubs, alternative cultural centres as well as significant art galleries add to the abundant offer. The City of Zürich actively promotes and sponsors artists and creative activities.

4. Economy and Science

Zürich is an important location for business and a recognized centre for science and research for companies and individuals from all over the world. In addition, the city is an internationally important financial centre. Successful enterprises make Zürich prosper, and ensure the implementation of a policy striving for a higher quality of life and social cohesion. In return, the city is interested in promoting promising lines of business such as creative industries, hence contributing to economic diversity.

With its excellent public elementary schools, institutes of applied sciences and two internationally renowned universities (the Zürich University and the Federal Institute of

Technology (ETH Zürich), Zürich offers an internationally competitive standard of education. All in all, approximately 50,000 students are enrolled at the universities and technical colleges; numerous highly qualified scientists work in over 50 research institutions.

5. 6,000 Years of History

About 6,000 years ago, the first prehistoric stilt house settlements were built around the lake basin; they were superseded by settlements on the surrounding hills around 4,000 years ago. Around 15 BC, the Romans built a military customs point called “Turicum” on the Lindenhof (located in the Old Town). This Latin name subsequently developed into “Zürich”.

In the early and high Middle Ages, the city found itself under the influence of the church; its formal ruler was the abbess of the Fraumünster church. During the “guild revolution” of 1336, the craftsmen started to take over power. The city then went on to join the Swiss Confederation in 1351, with a territory approximately similar in size to the current canton of Zürich.

The year 1519 marked a new era in Zürich’s history, with Ulrich Zwingli leading the Reformation in Switzerland and giving the city European significance. However, the economy experienced stagnation, until the arrival of persecuted Protestants – such as the Huguenots in the 16th and 17th centuries – breathed new life into trade and industry.

In the late 19th century, Zürich experienced intensive development: In 1893, eleven neighbouring municipalities were merged into the city; in 1934, another eight followed. Both Switzerland and Zürich were spared from the ravages of the two World Wars; during both conflicts Zürich served as a shelter for political refugees.

During the boom of the post-war period, the city developed its economic relevance, in particular in the service sector and as a financial centre. The close proximity of Zürich Airport and the construction of the suburban train lines (S-Bahn) favoured the expansion of the agglomeration, establishing the city of Zurich as the centre of a thriving metropolitan area.

6. Politics for All and with All

Every four years, the adult population of Zürich carrying a Swiss passport elect their Parliament and Government. The City Parliament, the “Gemeinderat”, consists of 125 members and represents the legislative authority. The City government is called “Stadtrat“, or City Council, and has nine members, each of whom heading one department of the City’s administration. The voters are not only called to elect, but also to vote around four times a year on various factual issues as for example on urban projects and far-reaching undertakings.

For Zürich, it is self-evident that the [residents have a say](#) when it comes to developing their city and their neighbourhoods. Although foreign inhabitants don't have the right to vote and elect, they do have a voice in Zurich – the [Advisory Committee of Foreign Residents](#). (Ausländerinnen- und Aulsänderbeirat) As mouthpiece of the non-Swiss residents, the Advisory Committee makes recommendations and submits proposals to the city government.

7. Facts and Figures of Zürich

| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| Residents (January 2018) | 423,368 |
| Share of non-Swiss residents | 32.4% (137,060) |
| Largest group of foreigners | Germans (33,788) |
| Second largest group of foreigners | Italians (14,764) |
| Third largest group of foreigners | Portuguese (8,100) |
| Wage and salary earners in the city of Zürich (December 2017) | 456,600 |
| Daily commuters | approx. 230,000 |
| Overnight stays of foreign visitors (2017) | 3,194,598 |
| Total area including water | 91.9 km ² |
| Total forested area | 21.8 km ² |
| Highest point (peak of Üetliberg Kulm mountain) | 871 m above sea level |
| Water table of Lake Zürich | 406 m above sea level |

For further data and information, please refer to the Statistical Yearbook of the City of Zürich and check the Zürich Website on statistics: www.stadt-zuerich.ch/statistik.

II Useful Information

1. The First Days and Weeks upon Arrival

After you have moved to Zürich, you will need to complete formalities in order to start life here in an orderly manner. For example, you will need to communicate your new address to various offices and business connections and to have identity cards reissued.

Please observe the following points:

- New residents need to report within 14 days to the district office ([Kreisbüro](#)) responsible for their neighbourhood. The following documents are needed for your registration:
 1. Valid passport or identity card (certificate of origin for Swiss nationals)
 2. Foreign citizens identity card (if available)
 3. Confirmation of residence permit (if available)
 4. Registration fees (depending on the country of origin, CHF 120 max)
- Health insurance ([Krankenversicherung](#)) is compulsory; all residents in Switzerland must conclude a health cover within the first three months after registration.
- In Switzerland, school attendance is compulsory. Children from 4 to 15 years must be registered at the District School Council ([Kreisschulpflege](#)) of your city district.

The colloquial language in Zürich is the Swiss German dialect. In German-speaking Switzerland, all documents are written in High German. In order to communicate in everyday life, it is absolutely necessary to know German. The Integration Office of the City of Zürich provides information on German language courses on offer ([Deutschkursberatung](#)); there is a full range of German courses ([Deutschkurse](#)) in the City of Zürich, and the language information service of the Office for Cross-Cultural Issues will gladly help you to find the right course.

New residents are invited to a [Welcome Event](#) informing on additional cross-cultural events and courses. Also, the [Welcome Desk](#) in the City Hall offers a range of information on the City of Zürich and its institutions. All staff members at the Welcome Desk are ready to support you in personal or legal matters in connection with your residence in Zürich.

2. Living in Zürich

Administrative offices are open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4.30 or 5 p.m. Most shops are open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Smaller shops often close at 6.30 p.m. On Saturdays, opening times are usually from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. At the main station (Hauptbahnhof) shops also open on Sunday.

The population of Zürich enjoys a high degree of mobility. Two thirds of the people walk, ride a bicycle or use public transport. Public transportation ([öffentlicher Verkehr](#)) in Zürich features a reliable traffic network with a high frequency of service. Public transportation serves both the municipal area and its surrounding regions.

If you come to Zurich with your vehicle, please observe regulations for the blue parking zones ([Blaue Zonen](#)) and the residents' parking cards ([Anwohnerparkkarten](#)). The Road Traffic Office of the Canton of Zurich ([Strassenverkehrsamt des Kantons Zürich](#)) is responsible for exchanging driver's licenses and for questions on importing vehicles.

Garbage collection regularly tours the city neighbourhoods for household garbage – please find all relevant information in the multi-language waste-disposal calendar ([Entsorgungskalender](#)) and in the free [Sauberes Zürich smartphone app](#). Fees are charged for garbage collection; these fees are included in the price of the white garbage bags called “Züri-Sack” which you can buy in department stores and in retail shops. Garbage bags must be placed in the waste containers no later than 7 a.m. on the day of collection. Please find further information on the biweekly paper collection as well as the disposal of glass and metal in the waste-disposal calendar. It also features additional waste disposal possibilities.

3. Working in Zürich

In general, **citizens from EU/EFTA countries** benefit from the Personal Mobility Agreement (Personenfreizügigkeit). However, the agreement does not provide for an automatic but a gradual transition to the free movement of workers and self-employed persons. Access to the labour market may therefore (still) be restricted [depending on nationality](#). In any event, you will need to register with your district office ([Kreisbüro](#)) prior to starting your new job.

The Swiss Law on Foreign Nationals qualifies citizens from non-EU/EFTA countries as **third country nationals**; for the purpose of taking up gainful employment, these foreign nationals also require a work permit ([Arbeitsbewilligung](#)). Employment may only be taken up if approval has been granted. Please find answers to frequently asked questions on this application procedure [here](#).

Usually, vacancies are posted on the Internet or in the local and national press. The Vocational and Career Counseling Service ([Berufs- und Laufbahnberatung](#)) as well as the Regional Employment Centres ([Regionale Arbeitsvermittlungszentren RAV](#)) of the City of Zürich support you in starting a professional career.

For information on starting a career ([Informationen zum Berufseinstieg](#)) for people who have arrived in Zürich as part of a family reunification or a partnership, please visit the Integration Office website, which will also provide guidance on the recognition of foreign diplomas.

If you have any questions regarding labour law, you can obtain advice free of charge from the Labour Court ([Arbeitsgericht](#)) or ask the Welcome Desk for a suitable advice centre.

4. Housing Situation in Zürich

The majority of Zürich's residential property is privately owned. Yet, in comparison with other cities, people with limited income may benefit from a considerable non-profit housing offer ([gemeinnützige Wohnungen](#)). In Switzerland, most people rent their homes; individually owned property is rather untypical.

In the City of Zürich, the housing market is overstretched despite the fact that the construction industry is busy building homes. Therefore, if you are looking for a place to stay, please use all available search options ([Suchmöglichkeiten](#)).

Living together under one roof is a demanding task and easily leads to misunderstandings or avoidable conflicts. Here, house rules help the neighbours to get along with each other. Please refer to the multi-language poster usually found in the entrance area of your house and get familiar with the most important house rules ([Hausregeln](#)).

5. Health

The City of Zürich provides an excellent health care system with practicing doctors, city hospitals ([städtische Spitäler](#)), the University Hospital Zürich ([Universitätsspital](#)), the municipal health care services ([städtische Gesundheitsdienste](#)) and a comprehensive prevention and care service system.

The Swiss healthcare system is first of all based on GP practices ([Hausarztpraxen](#)). General practitioners in your neighbourhood are also important contact persons in emergency cases; usually they are available in an appropriate time frame. Medical staff in many doctor's practices have proficient language skills ([Sprachkenntnisse](#)). In addition, pharmacies with multilingual staff ([Apotheken mit mehrsprachigem Personal](#)) provide information on basic medical care. The health of children is taken care of by specialized paediatric practices ([Kinderarztpraxen](#)).

The compulsory health insurance ([obligatorische Krankenversicherung](#)) pays for comprehensive medical care. Residents with low income may benefit from reduced health insurance premiums. The Department of Health and Environment of the City of Zürich mails out a letter of information to all new residents and offers German explanatory leaflets ([Merkblätter](#)) on health insurances and premium reduction ([Prämienerbilligung](#)).

6. Children and Youth

The community and neighbourhood centres ([Gemeinschafts- und Quartierzentren](#)) (cf. also item 9) offer children and young people a place to meet and enjoy various leisure activities. These centres often feature parental counselling offices ([Mütter- und Väterberatungsstellen](#)) supporting parents and children in every kind of questions.

Zürich provides various forms of pre-school external childcare: Day nurseries ([Kinderkrippen](#)), day-care parents ([Tageseltern](#)) or playgroups ([Spielgruppen](#)) look after children either for a few hours or for the whole day.

It is recommended to obtain early information on [available external childcare places](#). The City of Zürich [subsidizes](#) day nurseries and school care centres (see below).

7. Schooling

Children in the Canton of Zürich must attend school for at least 11 years – starting from compulsory nursery school (Kindergarten) through upper school. Four-year old children are admitted into nursery school and may also attend school care centres ([Horte](#)) if additional external childcare is required.

School care centres provide professional childcare for kindergarten and school-age children. The children and carers usually structure the time spent out of school in mixed age groups of approximately 20 children. Care can be for the full day from Monday to Friday, or on certain days, or just in the morning, at lunchtime or in the afternoon.

Children are registered for nursery school (Kindergarten) or school through the District School Council ([Kreisschulpflege](#)) responsible for your neighbourhood. Primary school ([Volksschule](#)) is free of charge; parents' participation ([Mitwirkung der Eltern](#)) in the school is greatly appreciated. Please find the most relevant information about the educational system in ten languages in our «Language Folder» ([«Sprachmappe»](#)) issued by the Zurich School Board. Here, ten chapters clearly structure what you need to know about kindergarten to secondary level.

8. Partnership and Family

In every chapter of one's life, there are family and private events entailing changes that need to be reported. The Civil Register Office ([Zivilstandsamt](#)) registers births, arranges wedding appointments or registers partnerships. The Funeral and Cemeteries Office ([Bestattungs- und Friedhofamt](#)) provides all services in connection with the interment of a deceased person.

The Social Centres ([Sozialzentren](#)) of the City of Zürich advise and support families in social and economic questions. The [Welcome Desk](#) of the City of Zürich as well as MIRSAB Legal Advice ([Rechtsberatung MIRSAB](#)) will answer all questions on family unification. The [Infodona](#) Advice Centre offers guidance in family, legal, financial or health matters, as well as assistance with administrative tasks.

9. Leisure and Associations

In many neighbourhoods of the city you will find community or neighbourhood centres ([Gemeinschafts- oder Quartierzentren](#)) with playgrounds and a full range of events for all generations. In all parts of the city, there are the PBZ libraries ([Pestalozzibibliotheken](#)) offering a wide selection of media in various languages ([Medienangebot in verschiedenen Sprachen](#)) for children, young people and adults. The City Office for Sports ([Sportamt](#)) operates numerous sports facilities and promotes popular sports ([Breitensport](#)) that can be enjoyed by everyone. If you are interested in voluntary charity work, please refer to [Kontaktstelle Freiwilligenarbeit](#) or to neighbourly help ([Nachbarschaftshilfe](#)).

In Switzerland, many social activities are organized by incorporated associations ([Vereine](#)). Migrant organizations ([Migrantenorganisationen](#)) and religious communities ([religiöse Gemeinschaften](#)) usually choose to form associations as well. The [Welcome Desk](#) provides you with further information and addresses.

10. Tax System

The Swiss tax system is divided into the federal tax ([Bundessteuer](#)) and both the cantonal and local tax ([Kantons- und Gemeindesteuer](#)). Every person living and working in Switzerland is liable to pay tax and has to fill in an annual tax form declaring earned income and assets. In the Canton and in the City of Zürich, tax liability starts with the first day of residence.

Non-national job holders living in Zürich who have no residence permit or who are not married to a Swiss citizen or to a person with a residence permit are liable to pay withholding tax. The withholding tax ([Quellensteuer](#)) is deducted directly from the salary.

11. Insurance

Social Insurance ([Sozialversicherungen](#)) is compulsory for every person living in Switzerland. The Swiss social security system is divided into five areas:

- Old age, survivors' and invalidity insurance (AHV/IV)
- Protection against the consequences of illness and accidents
- Income compensation allowance in case of military service and in case of maternity (EO)
- Unemployment insurance (ALV)
- Family allowance

With the exception of health insurance contributions are directly levied on income. Concluding a household and liability insurance ([Hausrat- und Privathaftpflichtversicherung](#)) is not prescribed by law but highly recommended. You will find a [summary brochure](#) (only in German) on the Integration Office website.

12. Emergency Numbers

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Fire Brigade | 118 |
| Police | 117 |
| Ambulance | 144 |
| Emergency Medical Assistance («Ärztetefon») | 0800 33 66 55 |
| Toxicological Centre, Poison Information | 145 |
| Women's Shelter Violetta | 044 350 04 04 |
| Parental Hotline | 0848 35 45 55 |
| Children and Youth Hotline | 147 |