

# *Information guide for new staff*

World  
Meteorological  
Organization



**INFORMATION GUIDE  
FOR  
NEW STAFF**



**WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION**  
Geneva, Switzerland  
2001

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## PREFACE

This booklet has been compiled for all internationally-recruited staff assigned to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Headquarters for the first time. It deals with different points that will, hopefully, facilitate settlement in the Geneva region including neighbouring France.

Upon arrival, new staff members are briefed by the Human Resources Management Division on all relevant administrative matters. For officials in the P-5 category and above, a publication produced by the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the International Organizations (hereunder referred to as the Swiss Mission) in Geneva entitled *The system of privileges and immunities applicable to the international organisations in Switzerland and to the permanent foreign delegations in Geneva* is available from the Human Resources Management Division. For personal as well as family questions, the WMO Social Welfare Officer is at the disposal of officials and their families.

Newcomers are advised to obtain books and other material on the Geneva region and neighbouring France. To this end, a non-exhaustive list of useful works and Internet sites is attached as an Annex. Among the books listed in the Annex, two excellent guides are highly recommended: *Living in Geneva* published by The American Women's Club of Geneva and *Moving to France* by Marion Burkimsher. The first publication can be ordered by phoning 022 736 01 20, or by fax 022 735 03 32; for information on the latter, contact [gexpert@mac.com](mailto:gexpert@mac.com). These two guides also are available for consultation in the WMO Library.

### NOTES:

This booklet provides general information for staff members. WMO makes every effort to keep the information up to date, but, with time, some information may change or become obsolete.

All information on France is intended as a guide only, and is liable to change, as a Headquarters Agreement between the Government of France and the United Nations and United Nations international agencies based in Geneva has recently been ratified. Staff members are thus urged to check with the appropriate authority/service before taking action. The WMO Social Welfare Officer can provide the requested addresses and contact numbers should they not appear in this booklet.

When calling Switzerland from another country, always use the country code 41 (which had been omitted throughout this guide). Starting on 29 March 2002, the three digits of the area code (022 for Geneva) will have to be used even when making calls within the same geographic zone. The ten-digit number is functional now.

## INTRODUCTION

The WMO Secretariat is located in Geneva, Switzerland. With a population of slightly under 7.2 million, Switzerland is surrounded by Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Liechtenstein, and lies along the Alps, which occupy three-fifths of its territory, and the Jura Mountains.

Switzerland (official name: Swiss Confederation) comprises 23 cantons, each with its own constitution, laws and executive and legislative powers. Bern, the capital of the Confederation and seat of the Federal Assembly and Federal Council, is 181 kilometres from Geneva.

Switzerland has four official languages. About 70 per cent of the population speak German, 20 per cent French and 9 per cent Italian. The fourth language, Romansch, is spoken by pockets of the population in the eastern part of the country.

The city and Canton of Geneva are located in *Suisse romande*, the French-speaking part of Switzerland, at the eastern tip of Lake Geneva (*Lac Léman*), some 375 metres above sea level. At the beginning of 2001, the city had approximately 176 435 inhabitants, and the Canton about 408,350. Geneva has more foreigners – 76 620 including 11 736 international officials at last count – than any other Swiss city.

In addition to its charm, Geneva has the advantage of being so compact that the surrounding countryside is easily and rapidly accessible. The Canton, but for a small slice of land bordering on the Canton of Vaud, is virtually surrounded by France, with the border never further than a few kilometres away. In fact, part of the Geneva International Airport lies in French territory.

Historically a place of welcome, Geneva is the epitome of an international city, as witnessed by the presence of international organizations, non-governmental organizations, diplomatic missions and numerous multinational corporations.

Members of the international community working in Geneva generally live in the Cantons of Geneva or Vaud, or in neighbouring France.

Villages in the Canton of Vaud are easily accessible from WMO and the other international organizations by highway and a lakeshore road. Except for the railway, however, there is virtually no public transport service to these locations. Families wishing to settle in the countryside will probably need two cars.

Lausanne, capital of the Canton of Vaud and with a population of about 125 000, is situated on the shores of *lac Léman* some 60 kilometres east of Geneva. Nyon, approximately 25 kilometres east of Geneva and with a population of about 15 000, is a bustling commercial centre linked to Geneva by a regular train service.

Geneva is surrounded by French territory. A growing number of international families have settled in the border zone (*zone frontalière*). The border zone lies in two French departments (*départements*): Ain and Haute-Savoie. Ain stretches to the north-west of Geneva, along the Jura Mountains, and Haute-Savoie lies to the south-east, where it abuts Mont Salève. The two departments are separated by the Rhône River. Each department exercises administrative control over the part of the border zone located within it.

Most international civil servants (*fonctionnaires internationaux*) in Ain live in the area closest to the Swiss border, known as the *Pays de Gex*. This area consists of the towns and villages between Thoiry and Divonne. Ferney-Voltaire, adjacent to the Swiss border, and the neighbouring communities of Ornex and Prévessin, are home to a large international community. In Haute-Savoie, nearly all rented housing is located in the narrow strip of territory stretching from the south-eastern edge of Geneva to the Mont Salève. The main towns in the area are Saint-Julien-en-Genevois and Annemasse.

## SOME USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT THE REGION

### Climate

Generally speaking, the climate is temperate, although extreme weather conditions do occur from time to time. Temperatures rarely exceed 30°C (85°F) in July and August, or drop below -10°C (15°F) from December to February. Snowfall varies from year to year but, unless the winter is particularly harsh, snow in town rarely lies for more than two or three days at a time. There is, however, a fair amount of rain.

### Religion

There are places of worship and religious services for many faiths and religions in Geneva and neighbouring France. Times, places and language of religious services are published in the Friday and Saturday editions of local newspapers. Outside of the immediate Geneva area, the choice is generally limited to the Roman Catholic or Protestant churches, and services are held in French.

### Legal systems

France and Switzerland are civil law countries and the main provisions of the various branches of law can be found in the corresponding codes. In Switzerland, each canton may have its own legislation on certain matters, with the result that the law and legal practice in the Canton of Vaud, where many staff members live, may differ from Geneva. Sometimes there are major differences between local laws and the laws of the country of origin or domicile of staff members. Legal issues concerning personal status and family matters can be particularly complicated because the courts sometimes apply local law, and sometimes the law of the staff member's own country. Staff members are thus advised to retain lawyers with experience in international affairs. While WMO itself is not in a position to advise staff on such matters, the WMO Social Welfare Officer can suggest where to obtain legal advice.

### Money and banks

The currency in Switzerland is the Swiss franc, which is divided into 100 centimes. Coins denominated in 5, 10, 20 and 50 centimes and 1, 2 and 5 francs are in circulation, as are banknotes in 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 1 000 franc denominations. The Swiss franc is freely convertible, and the Swiss authorities allow the import and export of any currency.

The currency in France, the French franc, also comprises 100 centimes, and is issued in the following denominations: 5, 10, 20 and 50 centime coins, 1, 2, 5, 10 and 20 franc coins, and 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 franc banknotes. French francs are convertible into any currency. The French franc is accepted in department stores, however, money is returned in Swiss francs.

It is important to note that the switch to the Euro (the monetary unit of the European Union of which Switzerland is not a member) will take place on 1 January 2002. From this date onwards, no legal documents such as a bill, a cheque, contract, etc., will be accepted in French francs. Consequently, it is advisable to no longer accept such documents (source: <http://www.euro.gouv.fr/guidesspe/index.htm>). The Euro comprises 100 centimes, to be issued in the following denominations: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 centimes as well as 1 and 2 Euros. The banknotes comprise 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 Euros. The exchange rate is fixed at FFR 6.55957 for one Euro and is variable for the Swiss franc.

Banks in Geneva and France are normally closed on Saturdays and Sundays. However, some banks in France are open on Saturday mornings but closed on Mondays. In addition to normal banking hours, a bank is open at Geneva airport from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. weekends included. No foreign checks are accepted to open a Swiss bank account.

The "EC direct" bank card can be used to pay for purchases in most shops and to withdraw money 24 hours a day from cash machines located all over town and in many parts of Switzerland. For example, there is a cash machine in the World Trade Organization (WTO) building, a three-minute walk from WMO.

Credit cards such as Visa, Eurocard and American Express are widely used, and WMO staff members benefit from special American Express discount rates. The WMO Staff Association provides information on how to apply for this discount rate.

## Financial services available to international civil servants

Staff in the P category and above can request part of their salary payments in a second currency of their choice. Forms can be obtained from the Human Resources Management Division. All staff can also benefit from membership in the following:

*International Civil Servants' Mutual Association:* The MEC, as it is known, is located in the Palais des Nations, Room B-214 (door no. 20, elevator no. 19, second floor, telephone 022 917 35 10). Accounts are in Swiss francs only and are restricted to staff members.

*United Nations Federal Credit Union:* The UNFCU (<http://www.unfcu.org/>) has two offices in Geneva, one at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 6 rue de Varembe, fifth floor (telephone 022 730 62 70), the other at the International Labour Organization (ILO), Room 3-78, 4 route des Morillons (telephone 022 799 69 74). Accounts are in US dollars and all staff including family members are eligible for membership.

## Transport

International air communications are excellent, and the Geneva International Airport, Cointrin, is linked to the nearby city centre by a regular bus and train service (<http://www.gva.ch>).

There is a train station at the airport, but Geneva's main train station, Cornavin, is located in the city centre, providing service not only throughout Switzerland but also to other parts of Europe. Geneva and Paris are linked by the TGV (*train à grande vitesse*), and the transit time between these two cities is a mere 3-1/2 hours. Fast trains, although costly, and frequent departures from Geneva make for an excellent rail service throughout Switzerland (<http://www.cff.ch>).

Geneva's public transport service (<http://www.tpg.ch>) is efficient and frequent. Bus and tram tickets can be bought from vending machines located at the stops. Note that the exact change must be used. Multi-trip tickets and weekly, monthly or yearly passes are available, as are combined train/bus passes. Special rates apply for families, students and senior citizens; children under the age of six travel on buses and trains free of charge, but are not entitled to their own seat when the vehicle is full. Those planning on making regular use of the public transport system are advised to ask for details at the information centres located at the Cornavin train station and the Rond-Point de Rive.

While there is no comprehensive public transport system in neighbouring France, the Geneva bus line does extend to some of the towns. In the Pays de Gex, a bus route links Saint-Genis-Pouilly and Thoiry to Geneva, and another runs between Geneva and Ferney-Voltaire, Orney, Cessy, Segny and Gex. In Haute-Savoie, there are bus routes serving Geneva from both Saint-Julien-en-Genevois and Annemasse. However, there is no regular bus service in the rest of the region, so the only way of getting around is by private vehicle.

There are plenty of taxis in Geneva, but they are expensive. There are several taxi stands in the centre of town and at the airport and the railway station, otherwise the easiest way to call a taxi is to dial the taxi service centre on 022 33 141 33.

Taxis are equipped with meters that display the price of the ride. There is also an additional charge for each suitcase. Note that Geneva taxi drivers are usually tipped about 10 per cent of the price shown on the meter, in addition to the extra charge for transporting suitcases.

In France, taxi drivers expect a 15 per cent tip.

## HOUSING

Most newcomers can spend several weeks or months in temporary lodgings before settling into permanent accommodation. The time taken to find suitable long-term housing depends on the choice of area, the number of rooms required, and the rent the newcomers are prepared to pay. In any event, staff members are advised not to move into permanent lodgings until they have familiarized themselves with local conditions such as commuting time, the choice of schools and public transport. Furnished houses or apartments are available for a few months or longer through an agent (*régie*), the Geneva International Welcome Centre or advertisements. The WMO Social Welfare Officer can also be of help in this regard.

The following details will help in determining the most suitable accommodation:

- To live in Switzerland (Geneva, Vaud) or in neighbouring France;
- To live in town or in the country;
- To rent or buy;
- Type of accommodation, for example a house or an apartment, furnished or unfurnished;
- Cost (staff members are advised to allow for other financial demands by limiting the cost of rent and associated charges to one-third of their salary). For examples of real estate market prices in the Geneva area and neighbouring France, consult the corresponding web sites listed in the Annex as well as the CERN site ([http://cern.web.cern.ch/CERN/Divisions/PE/social\\_e.html](http://cern.web.cern.ch/CERN/Divisions/PE/social_e.html)) under "the Cost of Living".

Other influencing factors are possible legal restrictions on residence in France, limitations on the rights of foreigners to buy property in Switzerland, the proximity of shops, schools and public transport, and job opportunities for spouses and children.

### Where to live

There is a wide variety of apartments and studios in Geneva. However, about 20 per cent of these are subsidized by the city of Geneva (HBM, HCM, HLM, HM) and are not available to international civil servants.

All bridges become traffic bottlenecks at peak hours, so many United Nations employees choose to live on Geneva's right bank which is where the international organizations are located. Neighbourhoods in this part of town contain numerous schools, parks, playgrounds, an excellent public transport system and good shopping facilities. The most common complaint about living in the city of Geneva is the high cost of rent, but its sheer overall convenience still makes it a popular choice.

The Canton of Geneva offers lodging in the form of houses, townhouses and apartments, but rents are high in this entire canton. Public transport is at best limited, and a second car is highly recommended.

Houses are the most common type of accommodation in the Canton of Vaud, and rents drop progressively the further away the house is from Geneva. Here again, a second car is highly recommended unless the house is within easy access of the excellent train service between lakeside communities and Geneva.

In principle, houses and apartments for rent or purchase in France are less expensive.

To take up residence in France, staff members must hold a Swiss *carte de légitimation* and obtain the permission of the French authorities in the form of a *carte de séjour* (residence permit). The French authorities naturally reserve the right to examine every application, and to deny residence permits on the basis of national regulations in force. The two French departments concerned are Ain (Pays de Gex) and Haute-Savoie. Please remember that before setting up residence in France you are required to obtain permission from the French authorities.

The most common complaints about living on the other side of the border in France are certain customs restrictions, occasional delays at the border and insufficient public transport. People living in Haute-Savoie, on the other side of the lake, also spend more time commuting.

Visas are now required for most visitors to France without European Union passports. Before setting up home in France, staff members are advised to ask the WMO Social Welfare Officer about possible short-term and long-term implications such as the right of spouses and children to work in France or Switzerland, etc.

## Rentals

All modern apartments in Switzerland and France have hot water and central heating. Swiss apartment buildings are equipped with a communal washing machine and laundry facility.

Note that in Geneva a four-room apartment only has two bedrooms, because the kitchen (but not the bathroom) is included in the room count. In Vaud and France, on the other hand, the kitchen is not considered as a room, so a four-room apartment (known as a T4 or F4) comes with three bedrooms.

A deposit, usually equivalent to three months' rent, is required at the time the lease is signed. The entire amount is returned when the tenant vacates the apartment, provided it is in good condition and no unpaid bills are left outstanding. Be sure that you fully understand all clauses in the lease before signing. On signing the lease, tenants are usually asked to take out household insurance.

A detailed inventory (*état des lieux*) of the apartment's contents and fittings and their condition is also drawn up at the start of the rental. Note that when the time comes to reclaim your deposit, very little – if any – wear and tear will be accepted, and we urge you to check the inventory very carefully before signing it. In the event of difficulties, including language, the WMO Social Welfare Officer can be asked to check the lease and the *état des lieux* before signature.

Most apartment complexes have a caretaker who is responsible for the upkeep and cleaning of the communal areas.

In Switzerland it is customary to avoid making excessive noise between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., or otherwise disturbing your neighbours by taking a bath or turning up the radio or television at these times.

## Diplomatic clause

There exists a diplomatic clause established by the Swiss Mission and the *Société des régisseurs* of Geneva. This clause applies to all the lease contracts with those who hold a *carte de légitimation* issued by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAE). The clause concerns cases such as the transfer of an official outside the Canton of Geneva or Switzerland by the employer as well as an early breach of the contract and dismissal from employment. Therefore, it is useful to have the clause included in the lease contract. Nevertheless, the official cannot make use of the present clause before the end of the first year of the lease.

## Rental subsidy

Internationally-recruited staff members may be entitled to a rental subsidy for a maximum period of seven years, during which time the subsidy is gradually decreased. New staff members will find a detailed explanation of the scheme in the briefing material they receive from the Human Resources Management Division.

## Looking for housing

The WMO Social Welfare Officer will advise you on how best to conduct your search.

The Geneva International Welcome Centre (<http://www.geneva-international.org>), whose role is to help foreigners settle into the Geneva region, has a housing service and provides personal assistance in the search for accommodation. It also advises on leasing laws.

Notice boards at the larger international organizations within close proximity to WMO, such as the United Nations (UN), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), International Labour Organization (ILO), World Health Organization (WHO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and CERN, are worth consulting. Check them regularly for "to let" or "for rent" (*à louer*) notices, or put up your own "rental wanted" (*cherche à louer*) sign. Those wishing to post a sign at WMO should contact the Staff Association.

Word of mouth – tell everyone you meet what you need!

**Buying real estate**

Foreign staff members should speak to the WMO Social Welfare Officer about the purchase of real estate in Switzerland, as there are a number of legal restrictions on the size and resale of the property they may purchase, as well as on renting out property as a source of income.

Such restrictions do not apply to the purchase of property in France, where prices are lower than in Switzerland. While you are free to buy, however, home ownership does not automatically give you the right to live in France. Staff members are thus advised to take the necessary administrative steps before making any purchase.

Real estate in both Switzerland and France is subject to property tax.

## EVERYDAY LIVING

For more detailed information, consult the following guides: *Living in Geneva* published by The American Women's Club of Geneva and *Moving to France* by Marion Burkimsher.

### Electricity

Domestic electricity in Geneva and surrounding areas is supplied at 230 volts. Suitable transformers (in a range of wattages) to reduce the voltage to 110 are readily available in Geneva. Many premises also have three-phase (3x400 volts) outlets for heavy machinery, which must be installed by a qualified electrician. The supply is at 50 cycles; some 60-cycle equipment (as used in North America) will not function properly even if the voltage is reduced with a transformer. Computers, tuner/amplifiers and lamps are suitable appliances for import. Lamps can be converted by replacing the plug and bulb, or fitting an adapter for use in local sockets. Large appliances such as stoves, refrigerators and washing machines can be rewired, but this must be done by a licensed electrician; it is often cheaper and simpler to purchase new appliances locally. In Switzerland there are strict laws concerning safety measures and the use of electrical current and appliances. Staff members are thus encouraged to look into these before tackling any do-it-yourself electrical jobs.

Three-pin (earthed) electric sockets and plugs are not standardized in Europe although most two-pin plugs will work in most of continental Europe. Appliances purchased in Switzerland, regardless of origin, are fitted for Swiss sockets. In France, you will need to buy plug adapters to fit other European appliances to the French sockets. In Switzerland, light bulbs are of the screw-in variety, but 'bayonet' type bulbs are readily available in France.

In Geneva, contact the SIG energy company (<http://www.sig-ge.ch>) for water, gas and electricity hook-ups.

In France, contact the EDF/GDF centre in your area (<http://www.edf.fr/html/fr/contacts/index.html>).

### Telephone

Both the Swiss and the French telephone systems provide a high-quality service. Cellular phones (called *natel*) also are in wide use. See the Annex for a list of service providers.

#### *Switzerland:*

To place an interregional phone call, dial the inter-city code (for example, 022 for the Geneva area, 021 for the Lausanne region, etc.). Starting on 29 March 2002, the three digits of the area code will have to be used even when making calls within the same geographic zone. The ten-digit number can already be used.

To call abroad from Switzerland:

- Dial the international access code 00;
- Dial the national code of the country (e.g. 33 for France);
- Dial the area code without the initial 0 or 9;
- Dial the subscriber's number.

To obtain a telephone line in Switzerland, contact Swisscom at the subscriber service on 0800 800 113 or at [http://www.swisscom.com/gd/services/services\\_support/abo/introduction\\_set-fr.html](http://www.swisscom.com/gd/services/services_support/abo/introduction_set-fr.html). All telephone lines must first be obtained from Swisscom, thereafter another service provider can be chosen. The rates are usually lower, thus quite advantageous for those making numerous long-distance calls. See the Annex for a list of service providers. For price comparisons, consult <http://www.bonasavoir.ch>, <http://www.comparis.ch> and <http://www.allo.ch>.

#### *France:*

To call abroad from France:

- Dial the international access code 00;
- Dial the national code of the country (e.g. 41 for Switzerland);
- Dial the area code without the initial 0 or 9;
- Dial the subscriber's number.

In France, contact <http://www.francetelecom.fr> to obtain a telephone line, or call 1014 for information.

### Internet access

There are several service providers in both France and Switzerland. In both countries, dial-up Internet connection is available as are analogue, digital, ISDN and cable (*télé-réseau*) connections. The preselection of a telephone provider is usually advantageous for those selecting a telephone connection.

### Television and radio

As the transmission systems are different in Switzerland (PAL) and in France (SECAM) – as opposed to NTSC in North America or Japan, for instance – imported televisions and video recorders should be checked for compatibility. Also, the PAL system used in the UK and several other countries differs from that used in Switzerland, and MESECAM does not match the French SECAM system. Therefore, multisystem TVs, VCRs and DVD players are useful for playback of different formats. Alternatively, these appliances are available locally for either purchase or rent.

Licences must be obtained for both radio and television sets in France and Switzerland. In Switzerland, contact Billag SA, <http://www.billag.ch>, to obtain your radio/TV licence. In France, contact the *Centre régional de la redevance de l'audiovisuel de Lyon*. The postal address is 12, rue des Cuirassiers, 69439 Lyon-Cédex 03, and the telephone number is (33-478) 95 73 00.

There is currently a choice of eight TV channels (three Swiss – one each in French, German and Italian – and five French) in French-speaking Switzerland and neighbouring France. A sixth French channel (Canal+) is a subscription channel, and most of its programmes can only be viewed by those in possession of a decoder. Five mornings a week (Tuesday–Saturday), Canal+ broadcasts an uncoded abridged version of an American network evening news programme. Satellite dishes can also be obtained for access to a much broader range of programmes in a variety of languages including Arabic, English, French, Spanish, German and Italian. In Geneva, many apartments are equipped with cable (*télé-réseau*) which avoids the need for a parabolic antenna; approximately 40 channels are offered, including channels broadcasting in English, such as CNN, BBC World, BBC Prime, MSNBC and MTV. Some channels broadcast a selection of programmes in *bicanal*, where the viewer can choose between the language of the station broadcasting and the original language in which the programme or movie was produced. The agencies (*régies*) can advise you on the subject.

Owing to the geographical location of the Geneva region, radio reception on medium- and short-wave bands varies hugely and is subject to a great deal of atmospheric interference. However, reception on long-wave bands is usually good, and is exceptionally good on VHF/FM channels.

### Shopping in Switzerland

Most types of food and drink are available, and several shops specialize in exotic foods. Almost all types of clothing can be purchased ready-made or made-to-measure, but dressmakers and tailors are expensive.

Prices, notably for clothing and furniture, can vary considerably depending on whether they are purchased in small shops, luxurious and highly expensive city centre shops or department stores.

There are several shopping centres in and around Geneva. Some of these malls have facilities where small children can be cared for while their parents are shopping.

There are quite a few open-air street markets where fruit, vegetables, dairy products and sometimes meat, poultry and fish are on sale. These markets vary in size and usually operate year round, but only one or two days a week. There is also an indoor market, *Les Halles de Rive*, which is open all week during shopping hours. The produce sold in these markets is very fresh and of excellent quality, but prices are higher than in supermarkets.

Shops are generally open from 8.30 a.m. to 6.30 or 6.45 p.m., but close for lunch for 1-1/2 to 2 hours. Department stores do not close for lunch, and remain open until 8 p.m. on Thursdays. Shops are required to close at 5 p.m. on Saturdays (some grocery stores close at 6 p.m.), and only newsagents, tobacconists and some bakeries are open on Sundays. Pharmacies keep normal shopping hours, but some are closed on

Thursday afternoons. Closed pharmacies always hang a sign on the door indicating which local pharmacy is on duty until late that night, as well as the pharmacies on duty during the weekends. The pharmacies at both Cointrin airport and Cornavin train station have longer opening hours and are open seven days a week.

If you need to shop outside normal opening hours, the shopping centre at Cointrin airport's train station is open 7 days a week from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., every day of the year including holidays. Additionally, at Cornavin train station a wide range of food and drinks can be bought from the vending machines and the convenience store open until 10 p.m. 365 days per year.

As a general rule, prices in Switzerland are fixed and bargaining is only possible for second-hand goods, antiques and, occasionally, watches by less well-known makers. Payment by instalment for cars, furniture, household appliances and many other items is common practice, but interest rates can be high, and for some articles it is cheaper to take out a loan and pay in full. The large sales generally are held in January and July. Some firms give discounts to staff members of international organizations, so ask about this before paying for your purchases.

The United Nations Staff Association runs a medium-size cooperative store, the *Service d'achats des fonctionnaires internationaux* (SAFI) in the Palais de Nations, where goods are available at reduced prices. SAFI stocks a wide range of food (including items from abroad that are difficult to obtain elsewhere in Geneva), spirits, perfume, cigarettes, some clothing and household articles, and small electrical appliances. Large electrical appliances such as stoves and refrigerators can be ordered through SAFI and delivered to the staff member's home. SAFI membership can be obtained at the store by presenting a Swiss *carte de légitimation* and a photograph.

There are also several discount stores in town where prices may be lower than at SAFI. However, SAFI usually provides the best deals on all electrical household appliances.

People residing in Switzerland are entitled to import limited quantities of food and drink from the French border zone. Information is available at the customs posts or by consulting <http://www.customs.admin.ch>.

It is a good idea to keep bills and receipts of all the major purchases you make during your residency in Switzerland or France, especially if it is for a limited period only. This will save you time and money when you eventually leave and are required to declare your belongings.

### **Shopping in France**

Neighbouring France offers excellent shopping opportunities, especially for food products, for which the country is renowned. Remember – the French have got eating and drinking down to a fine art! So savour the experience of shopping for food by exploring bakeries, delicatessens and open-air markets. Local French towns have large supermarkets, which in addition to food sell a wide range of household goods, newspapers and magazines, stationery, clothing, kitchenware and appliances, hardware, tools and much more.

The town of Annecy, 50 km south of Geneva, offers excellent shopping with a much wider range of goods than those found locally. Lyon, the nearest large city in France, is about 160 km away from Geneva and can be reached in 2 hours by train or 1-1/2 hours by car. Paris is a mere 3-1/2 hours from Geneva by TGV.

Opening hours are generally 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. or later, Tuesday to Saturday, but with a two-hour break for lunch. Most supermarkets are open from Monday through Saturday and do not close for lunch, and open-air street markets operate year-round, generally once a week. Most small shops, including bakeries, are closed on Mondays, but bakeries and some grocery stores are open on Sunday mornings.

As a general rule, prices in France are fixed, although they may vary considerably from store to store. There are also price differences between Geneva and neighbouring France, particularly as regards services, for labour can cost two or three times more in Geneva than in France. Nonetheless, goods in France, especially near the border, are generally comparable to those in Geneva. Owing to the high French VAT, some articles such as electronic goods can even cost more in France than in Switzerland. For residents of France, however, the principal difficulty may be a more limited choice of upmarket consumer goods than in Geneva.

French residents are authorized to import limited amounts of certain consumer products, such as food, duty free. If you are in doubt as to what your duty-free entitlements are, consult the French customs or <http://www.finances.gouv.fr/douanes/> before you buy.

### Driving in Switzerland

The volume of traffic in Geneva is heavy and steadily increasing. It is particularly dense in the centre of town, especially at peak periods when major traffic jams are a daily occurrence.

Driving is on the right-hand side of the road and, unless otherwise indicated, vehicles approaching from the right have right of way.

It is compulsory for the occupants of the front and back seats to wear seatbelts. Young children must travel in specially designed seats, and children under the age of seven may not sit in the front.

Traffic signs are standardized throughout Europe and drivers must be able to recognize them. Triangular signs carry warnings, and circular signs give instructions. Highway signs are green in Switzerland and blue in France. A copy of the Swiss traffic regulations (*Code Suisse de la route*) is available from the *Services des automobiles* (<http://www.geneve.ch/san>). A booklet entitled *Driver's Test* by Hans Meier is available for consultation in the WMO Library and can be bought from the Touring Club Suisse (<http://www.tcs.ch>) or bookshops. There are Albanian, English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Tamil and Turkish versions in print.

All drivers must carry their driving licence – which is obtained from the age of 18 in Switzerland – and car registration with them at all times. They also must have in their car (and not in the trunk) a red triangle for use as a warning to other motorists in case of a breakdown or accident.

The service for clearing public roads of snow and ice is speedy and efficient, but newcomers who have little experience in driving in icy conditions are urged to equip their cars with snow tires. The tires can be fitted at a garage. Cars are normally equipped with snow tires from late November through late March. The use of studded tires is restricted to secondary roads at certain times of year. They are not allowed on highways.

Practically all street parking in Geneva is time-limited but there are several multi-storey and underground car parks where vehicles can be left for longer periods. There are coin-operated meters that allow for 90-minute parking. There are collective meters, which dispense a ticket to be placed on the dashboard inside the car. Note that both types of meters are not rechargeable. There is also “blue zone” parking and free discs are available from automobile clubs, gas stations, supermarkets, etc. Cars can be left on the street at night in areas where parking is permitted. Most modern apartment buildings have underground garages where tenants can rent parking spaces. A list of public car parks in Geneva is available from the *Fondation des Parkings* (<http://www.geneve.ch/parkings/parkings.html>).

There is residents' parking for those living in the city centre. A sticker (*macaron*), valid for a 12-month period, can be bought which allows for unlimited parking in the “blue zone” in the neighbourhood of residence. Each resident is allowed to buy one sticker for each car registered under his or her name and address in the neighbourhood in question. Stickers can be obtained from the *Fondation des parkings*, 9, route des jeunes, 1227 Acacias.

A special sticker known as a vignette autoroutière is required for driving on Swiss highways. This must be displayed on the car windscreen, in a clearly visible place on motorbikes, and on the front left of caravans and trailers. *Vignettes* are valid from 1 January of the current year through 31 January of the following year. In Switzerland they may be purchased from post offices, gas stations, customs posts or cantonal traffic departments (*Service des automobiles*). Outside Switzerland they may be obtained from Swiss tourist offices and touring clubs. Motorists driving on Swiss highways without a *vignette* are subject to heavy fines.

The Swiss police are vigilant about observance of traffic rules. Penalties are severe, especially for speeding. In many places the speed limits are monitored by automatic cameras which take pictures of speeding cars, and the ticket is then mailed to the driver's home address, even in France. Drivers exceeding the speed limit by more than 15 km/h risk losing their licence temporarily. Laws against drunk driving are strict and, here again, penalties are severe. The maximum authorized alcohol level in the blood is 0.08 in Switzerland and

0.05 in France. Any privileges and immunities granted to the Organization and extended to staff members and their families do not exempt them from traffic rules and parking regulations.

The international green card for third party (liability) insurance (valid only in Europe) is provided by your automobile insurance company free of charge. Even in countries where the card is no longer obligatory, it may be required in the event of an accident. To avoid dispute, it is advisable to keep the card in the vehicle at all times.

For further information on the exchange of driving licences, see page 33 or contact the WMO Social Welfare Officer.

### **Driving in France**

The above information on driving in Switzerland also applies in France, with the following exceptions:

- Children under the age of ten may not sit in the front seat of a car;
- Speed limits in France differ from those in Switzerland;
- The red emergency triangle may be kept in the car's trunk;
- A full set of spare bulbs for the headlights must be kept in the car;
- A toll is charged for travelling on French *autoroutes*;
- When issuing the international green card, the insurance company also supplies an insurance sticker that must be displayed in the windscreen.

### **Car maintenance and repairs across the border**

Swiss residents are advised to have car maintenance and repair work done in Switzerland. Work of this type carried out in France is subject to Swiss import duty, as are spare parts. Similarly, French residents are advised to have their cars serviced and repaired in France.

**EDUCATION**

In Switzerland as well as in France, education is compulsory from the ages of 6 to 15 and 6 to 16, respectively.

If you have children of school age, the choice of school may be an important factor in deciding where to live, and could significantly affect your budget. The following should be considered:

- Educational system: public or private;
- Language of instruction;
- Final exam or diploma.

To register your child at a school, you will need to provide a certificate of attendance (*certificat de scolarité*) showing your child’s school reports, grades and the number of years of schooling so far. This certificate will preferably be in French, German, Italian, Spanish or English. This information plays an essential role in the selection of a class for your child.

Internationally-recruited staff members are entitled to education grants. The Human Resources Management Division supplies all the necessary information.

Below is a comparison table showing different educational systems and equivalent grades.

Age	UK / International	Swiss	French	
5–6	1	2 <sup>me</sup> enfantine	Maternelle (grands)	Primary
6–7	2	1 <sup>re</sup>	CP	
7–8	3	2 <sup>me</sup>	CE1	
8–9	4	3 <sup>me</sup>	CE2	
9–10	5	4 <sup>me</sup>	CM1	
10–11	6	5 <sup>me</sup>	CM2	
11–12	7	6 <sup>me</sup>	6 <sup>me</sup>	Secondary
12–13	8	7 <sup>me</sup>	5 <sup>me</sup>	
13–14	9	8 <sup>me</sup>	4 <sup>me</sup>	
14–15	10	9 <sup>me</sup>	3 <sup>me</sup>	
15–16	11 IGCSEs	College etc.	2 <sup>me</sup>	
16–17	12	College etc.	1 <sup>re</sup>	
18–19	13 IB	College etc.	Terminale BOI	

Source: *Moving to France* by Marion Burkimsher

**Public education in Switzerland**

In both Geneva (<http://www.ge.ch/dip/welcome.html>) and Vaud (<http://www.dfj.vd.ch/default.asp>), public education at the primary level is free of charge for all children. At the secondary level, there will be a tax a part of which can be at WMO’s charge. Optional nursery schools are available for children aged 4 to 6. Education is compulsory for children aged 6 to 15. Secondary education is taught at high schools (*collèges*), leading to the Swiss *Maturité* (university entrance) diploma, or at technical and vocational schools specializing in business, art, horticulture, domestic sciences, etc. However, each canton decides on its own educational system, and some differences exist. Admission to the upper levels of secondary schools is very competitive, and requires an excellent command of the French language.

The following tables show how the public education systems in the Cantons of Geneva and Vaud are divided by year:

## GENEVA

	Primary	Cycle d'orientation [middle school]	Collège [high school]	
Year	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6	7 – 8 – 9	10 – 11 – 12 – 13	University
			Business school, apprenticeship, etc.	

<http://www.geneve.ch/dip/matugymn/voiefor.htm>

## VAUD

	Cycle initial	Primary, level one	Primary, level two	Cycle de transition [ages 10 –12]	Secondary level, with options	Secondary level, general	Secondary level, to prepare baccalauréat
Year	E1 – E2*	1 – 2	3 – 4	5 – 6	7 – 8 – 9		
					Apprenticeship	Business schools, paramedic, socio- educational and artistic training	University

\* E1 =Nursery school

Geneva and Vaud offer introductory classes known as *classes d'accueil* for non-French-speaking students. The child attends these classes for one year only, and is then integrated into the normal Swiss system. Additionally, the *écoles de parents* offer courses specially designed for the foreign community to help parents help their children.

The University of Geneva (<http://www.unige.ch>) admits both regular students and auditors (*étudiants libres*) from the age of 18 and with a sound knowledge of French to its faculties of Arts, Science, Medicine, Economics and Social Sciences, and Theology. Students are only eligible for admission to the Faculty of Medicine if they have resided in the Canton of Geneva for at least five years. Geneva also has a School of Architecture, a renowned School of Psychology and Educational Sciences and an equally well-known School of Interpreters and Translators, as well as a Graduate Institute of International Studies, all of which are part of, or in close relationship with, the University of Geneva.

## Public education in France

The following shows how the French public school system is divided by year (<http://www.education.gouv.fr>):

	Primary school	Collège [middle school]	Lycée [high school]	University and graduate schools
Year	CP CE1 CE2 CM1 CM2*	6 5 4 3	Classes 2 and 1 – Terminale	
			Business school, apprenticeship, etc.	

\* CP = *cours préparatoire*  
 CE1 = *cours élémentaire*, first year  
 CE2 = *cours élémentaire*, second year  
 CM1 = *cours moyen*, first year  
 CM2 = *cours moyen*, second year

French public education is free of charge for all children, including those of international staff residing in France. One advantage of the French system is that it is the same in French schools all over the world, facilitating transfers.

Education is compulsory from the age of 6 onwards. However, children generally start school at the age of 3 and attend nursery schools until they are 6. Nursery schools, which are attached to primary schools, are divided into three classes: the *section des petits* (for children aged 3–4 years), *section des moyens* (4–5 years) and *section des grands* (5–6 years).

The three *lycées* in nearby France are in Ferney-Voltaire, Annemasse and Saint-Julien-en-Genevois. Under certain conditions these schools also admit foreigners living in Switzerland. The school in Ferney-Voltaire is an international *lycée*, and offers an international *baccalauréat* in addition to the French *baccalauréat*. It provides quality secondary education in Dutch, English, German, Italian, Spanish and Swedish, in addition to French.

### Private education in Switzerland and France

Costs vary substantially between schools. To make an appropriate choice, it is therefore essential that you find out which diplomas are conferred on graduation, how students are prepared for university entrance, and what extra-curricular programmes are available. Private schools can either be reached by public transport or by special bus services provided by the schools.

Owing to high demand, it is advisable to contact these schools before arrival in order to register your children well in advance.

For further information on these schools, visit the Geneva Association of Private Schools web site (<http://www.agep.ch>) or <http://www.edufrance.fr> for private education in France.

To maintain skills in their mother tongue, children may take courses in a number of languages in Geneva.

Visit <http://www.ge.ch/oofp/lie/corlie.htm> for further useful information.

### Learning French or other languages

The United Nations language courses, regular and accelerated, are open to spouses and adult dependants of staff members. The 515 Swiss franc tuition fee for spouses and dependents will have to be paid by the staff member directly to UNOG upon enrolment. The cost of the courses is paid by WMO for staff members wishing to study Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian or Spanish.

Other language courses exist in Geneva for those who wish to learn outside the United Nations system. Some addresses are listed below:

Ifage: <http://www.ifage.ch>

Ecoles privées de Genève: <http://www.agep.ch/langues.html>

Bell Language School Geneva: <http://www.bell-school.ch>

Ecole Club Migros: Genève Centre et Genève Balexert: <http://www.ecole-club.ch>

Students from Geneva University give private language courses through the University Placement Office: <http://www.unige.ch/bp/>

Summer courses in French language and culture at the University of Geneva: <http://www.unige.ch/lettres/elcf/coursete/courangl.html>

The United Nations Women's Guild arranges language courses for spouses:  
Villa Les Feuillantines, 13, avenue de la Paix, CH-1211 Geneva 10, telephone 022 917 33 86

Free French courses:

For parents of children attending Swiss schools:  
Ecole des parents, Direction générale du cycle d'orientation, avenue Joli-Mont 15 A, CH-1211 Geneva 28, telephone 022 791 78 11

Université Populaire du Canton de Genève:  
<http://www.upcge.ch/index.html>

Université ouvrière de Genève (UOG):  
rue du Cercle 10, CH-1201 Geneva, telephone 022 733 50 60

## SOCIAL LIFE AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES

The Geneva area and neighbouring France offer an endless choice of sport and leisure activities. There are numerous clubs, but it is just as easy to practise sports and other activities on an individual or family basis. In summer, *Lac Léman* and many smaller lakes in the region provide abundant opportunities for swimming, waterskiing, windsurfing and sailing. Swimming is possible throughout the year in the many heated indoor pools in Geneva.

In summer, the nearby Alps and Jura mountains are ideal for popular activities such as hiking, cycling and even rock-climbing, which you can attempt in Geneva's own backyard – the Salève.

In winter, the Alps are renowned worldwide for their downhill skiing, while the Jura offers hundreds of kilometres of cross-country ski trails.

However, newcomers should remember that an active and interesting life in the Geneva region and neighbouring France does not happen all by itself, and that a certain amount of effort will be required on their part.

Churches, clubs and other national and international focal points can assist newcomers in many ways and help them build up relationships with people outside the work environment (for example, the Geneva International Welcome Centre organizes "happy hours"). A comprehensive list of such institutions is published in a guide by GELCOS, the Geneva English Language Coordinating Service. The United Nations Women's Guild and the American Women's Club organize many social activities and provide excellent opportunities for making contacts and following interesting pursuits.

Twice a year, the American Women's Club offers an excellent six-session course on "Living in Geneva" and has published a booklet by the same name. The Club is located at 15, boulevard Helvétique, CH-1207, Geneva, telephone 022 736 01 20.

In neighbouring France, there are fewer social and recreational activities than in Geneva. Those offered in Geneva, of course, are equally available to residents in France, but distance tends to make them less convenient.

CERN (the European Centre for Nuclear Research) has many clubs and social groups serving its large population. Most of these are also available to non-CERN families.

### Eating out

You will find good restaurants in Geneva to suit all budgets. The choice is quite varied, and many national culinary traditions are represented, such as Chinese, Greek, Indian, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Lebanese, Portuguese, Spanish, Thai, Turkish, Vietnamese and, of course, French. Many restaurants specialize in Swiss national dishes such as cheese fondue and raclette.

In addition to restaurants, there are numerous cafés and bistros that serve ice creams, sandwiches and beverages of all kinds.

Brochures, which can be picked up on arrival, list the restaurants and cafés in the Geneva region, as well as nightclubs, theatres, etc.

Neighbouring France abounds in restaurants, and prices are generally lower than in Geneva. Word-of-mouth is the best way to learn where to eat out in France.

Restaurants typically serve lunch between 12 noon and 2 p.m. and dinner from 7 to 10 p.m. Most of them are closed one day a week and shut down for their month's annual vacation. Reservations may be necessary, especially at weekends and during holiday periods.

### Tipping

In Switzerland and France, service and tips usually amount to 12 to 15 per cent of the bill. This charge is always included in Swiss hotel, restaurant and café bills, but if the meal or service is exceptionally good you

may wish to leave an additional tip, which would amount to 5 per cent of the total. Additionally, and even though service is included, it is customary to leave a small amount of change for waiters in cafés, tea-rooms and bars.

Service is generally included in hotel bills in France, but this point should be checked. If in doubt, feel free to ask the receptionist; your question will not be regarded as discourteous.

Porters, barbers and hairdressers should be tipped, but theatre and cinema ushers do not expect tips. Garage attendants, on the other hand, are always happy to receive one.

### **Social do's and don'ts**

Swiss and French people generally greet each other by shaking hands, while friends kiss each other on both cheeks. The familiar "you" (*tu*) is only used for family, children and close friends, otherwise the formal *vous* form is used. It is polite to add the words *Monsieur* or *Madame* when saying good morning, thank you, etc.

Visits to people's homes are arranged ahead of time, including visits by children. If children wish to play together, their parents usually make the arrangements.

Among friends, verbal invitations are the norm. More formal, written invitations should be sent out ten days in advance. The letters RSVP mean a reply is expected.

When invited to someone's home, it is customary to present the hostess with a gift such as flowers or a box of chocolates when you arrive. But beware – some types of flowers have a particular significance! If in doubt, ask the florist for advice.

When dining, the place of honour for a woman is on the host's right, and for a man on the hostess' right. Guests are not expected to help the hostess serve food or clear the table unless they are close friends. Salad is usually served after the main course, and cheese before the dessert. Bread is served throughout the meal up to the cheese course, and should be placed on the plate or on the tablecloth to the left of the plate. The host is responsible for refilling guests' glasses.

Guests should arrive at lunch parties on time. Arriving 5 or 10 minutes late is the norm for dinner parties, but avoid arriving too late. When invited for cocktails, it is customary to leave the party at the time shown on the invitation.

Long dresses are not usually worn at dinner or cocktail parties, and men normally wear suits. Formal written invitations usually indicate the dress code. National costumes are always acceptable.

### **Newspapers**

The main Geneva newspapers are the *Tribune de Genève* and *Le Temps*. In addition to the news, both are a good source of information for leisure activities.

The main daily newspaper in neighbouring France is *Le Dauphiné libéré*, but other well-known French national papers, such as *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, can also be found. International newspapers and magazines are widely available in both Switzerland and France.

Several newspapers, including the *Tribune de Genève*, *Le Monde* and the *International Herald Tribune*, are available in the WMO Library.

### **Touring**

Touring in Switzerland is a rewarding experience, whether by car, train or even bicycle.

The Swiss railways offer special excursions which combine travel by train, mountain railway and boat, and reduced fares for families and weekend travel. The half-price rail pass is an excellent bargain, for it entitles the holder to half-price fares on Swiss trains, boats and postal buses for one or two years. Several publications which will help newcomers find their way around are available free of charge at the Geneva Tourist Office, 18, rue du Mont-Blanc, Geneva, telephone 022 909 70 00.

France also offers a wide range of travel opportunities. Rail service is excellent, though the network is not as dense as in Switzerland. The fast TGV train between Geneva and Paris is a spectacular service. While France lacks the public transport coverage for which Switzerland is famed, it has perhaps one of the densest road networks in Europe. For the motorist or cyclist it is a real goldmine, particularly the countless small roadways that serve France's agrarian population.

### **Cultural activities**

Geneva offers a rich variety for music and theatre lovers. There are frequent recitals by top musicians, regular concerts by the world-renowned *Orchestre de la Suisse romande* and other guest orchestras, and operas at the *Grand Théâtre*. Theatres put on all types of plays, and season tickets are available. Plays in French are performed by both local and touring companies. The Geneva English Drama Society, the Geneva Amateur Operatic Society and other groups put on plays and shows in English in addition to those sometimes presented by touring companies. Plays are also put on in other languages, though less frequently.

Additionally, there are many cinemas in Geneva and neighbouring France. Show times are listed in local newspapers, where the letters VO (*version originale*) mean the film will be shown in its original language with French and German subtitles. Note that although VO usually denotes English, it is not always the case – an original Chinese film would be shown in Chinese. The films shown reflect the international flavour of Geneva, with films from many countries together with new releases from France, the USA and the UK.

Geneva's museums cover a wide range of interesting subjects. The largest is the Museum of Fine Art and History, which houses the city's collection of paintings, sculpture and archaeological treasures. The modern and well laid-out Natural History Museum is of special interest to children.

The numerous art galleries in Geneva have various exhibits. Art galleries and ongoing exhibitions are listed in local newspapers.

## MEDICAL CARE

### At WMO

WMO adheres to the Joint Medical Service (JMS) of WHO. Staff members can go, during working hours, to the offices of the Joint Medical Service located at the Palais des Nations. The JMS itself, or its referral doctors, carry out the medical examinations required on appointment to WMO, as well as periodic checkups and end-of-service examinations.

The JMS is not available to family members except for obligatory vaccinations (yellow fever) when the family is accompanying the staff member on official travel (such as home leave).

The JMS medical staff may give advice on where to obtain clinical medical care locally, but the doctors of the service cannot act as private attending physicians for staff members or their families. Newcomers are thus advised to select an attending physician shortly after their arrival. Upon request, the JMS can help staff members select local doctors that meet their needs in terms of medical specialization, geographical convenience and languages spoken.

### In Geneva and Vaud

All doctors and dentists in Geneva are listed in the phonebook under the heading *Médecins*, where they are then grouped within their speciality. In addition to the general practitioners, there are many specialists. Dentists are grouped under the heading *Médecins dentistes* in the phonebook. Most doctors and dentists speak several languages, but the JMS will assist in helping you find a doctor or dentist with whom you can communicate.

Outside working hours, call the emergency service (022 322 20 20) of the *Association des Médecins*, which will give you the name and phone number of the doctor on call nearest you. Also, several private medical centres (*permanences*) in the city have a 24-hour first-aid service, and the JMS can supply information about these centres. Likewise, if you need urgent dental care, the *Association des Dentistes* will come to your aid.

The Geneva Cantonal Hospital (*Hôpital cantonal*) offers a complete range of medical and surgical services and includes, among others, maternity, paediatric and ophthalmology clinics. There are also several private clinics and hospitals in and around Geneva.

Should medicines be needed urgently at night or on a Sunday, a list of pharmacies open that week until 9 p.m., 11 p.m. or all night is published in the local newspapers. All pharmacies display a sign on their door indicating the location of the nearest pharmacy on duty.

In an emergency, call 144 and ask for the information you need.

### In France

All doctors and dentists are listed in the regional telephone book under the heading *Médecins*, where they are grouped according to their speciality. There are two hospitals in neighbouring France (Annemasse and Saint-Julien-en-Genevois). Additionally, staff members living in France are entitled to medical care at Geneva's *Hôpital cantonal* and all other medical establishments in Geneva and Vaud.

In the event of an emergency outside working hours, proceed as follows to obtain medical care.

*Annemasse*: There is a 24-hour emergency service at the hospital in Ambilly, telephone (33-450) 87 47 47.

*Saint-Julien-en-Genevois*: On weeknights, all doctors leave a recording on their answering machines with the name of the doctor on call. On weekends, phone the *gendarmerie* on (33-450) 49 20 44 to obtain the name of the doctor on call, or phone the Saint-Julien-en-Genevois hospital direct on (33-450) 49 65 65.

*Pays de Gex (Ferney-Voltaire, Gex and Divonne)*: On weeknights call your physician, as some doctors provide their own emergency service. At weekends, your doctor's answering machine will give you the name of the doctor on call. You can also call the *Centre de secours (pompiers)* by dialling either 18 or 15. Alternatively, go to the *Hôpital de la Tour* in Meyrin, Switzerland.

## INSURANCE

The following provides a brief overview of insurance for staff members living in Switzerland and France. More detailed information can be obtained from the WMO Social Welfare Officer or from your insurance company.

### Personal health and accident insurance

Under Swiss law, international civil servants are not obliged to insure themselves against illness and accident. However, they can take out a policy with a Swiss health insurance company if they wish, but they must do so within six months of their arrival. The Swiss companies (*caisses maladies*) provide basic insurance to which supplementary insurance may be added. In general, they are more expensive than the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society against Sickness and Accident.

Staff members working under a fixed-term contract and their families, and temporary staff members with a contract of at least six months but not their families, are eligible for insurance under the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society against Sickness and Accident (<http://www.unog.ch/mutuelle.htm>). Some insurance coverage is also available for temporary staff with contracts of less than six months.

Like the JMS, with whom it works closely, the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society has a list of doctors it can refer you to, taking into account their specialization, location and language ability.

Before committing yourself to any medical treatment, we recommend you contact the insurance company and find out exactly what your level of coverage will be.

The United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society has preferential agreements with a number of specialized hospitals and *permanences* in the Cantons of Geneva and Vaud. You are encouraged to use these medical services if possible, partly because they will be less expensive for you, and partly because they contribute to the financial soundness of the United Nations health insurance scheme.

Two WMO staff members, one of whom is appointed by the Organization, the other by the Staff Association, represent you at the Executive Committee of the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society. You may contact them at any time, either to obtain information, or for help in resolving sensitive medical issues confidentially.

All new participants in the scheme are encouraged to read the Executive Committee's communications. These provide information on the application and interpretation of the Internal Rules and on conditions for reimbursement. They often contain other useful information such as limits on coverage in the event of skiing accidents, geographical coverage of the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society, etc.

Temporary staff (both long- and short-term) should be aware that any break in membership will nullify all accrued reimbursement rights, which are calculated according to the length of time over which premiums have been paid. In the event of a break in the WMO employment contract (and thus in participation in the insurance scheme), the staff member may rejoin the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society at the start of a new contract, but only as a **new** member.

However, temporary staff members working under a series of contracts of six months or longer, and subject to breaks between contracts, are given the option of paying their insurance premiums in advance for a maximum period of three months after the end of each contract (50 per cent of such payments are made by the employee, and 50 per cent by WMO). This option prevents breaks in the insurance coverage, allows the staff member to continue participating in the scheme and, in time, to enjoy a higher level of insurance coverage.

The above information is taken from the Statutes of the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society against Sickness and Accident.

In addition, the WMO Statutes contain provisions on indemnities paid in the event of accident or illness incurred by staff members during the course of their duties.

**Changing from a Swiss health insurance company to the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society against Sickness and Accident**

Staff member and/or their families insured voluntarily with a Swiss health insurance company who wish to be insured with the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society should, when requesting the termination of membership to a Swiss health insurance company, adhere to article 7 of the Federal Health Insurance Act (LAMal):

“The insured person can, giving, three months’ notice, change insurance company at the end of a calendar half-year.”

Whereas Rule IV of the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society against Sickness and Accident stipulates that:

“The staff member must apply for admission in writing, using a special Society form, within 31 days of entry on duty, ... or during an annual enrolment campaign.”

In view of the above (the risk of paying contributions to two insurance companies), those wishing to change from a Swiss insurance company to the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society against Sickness and Accident should check whether it would be in their interest to wait until the annual enrolment campaign in May, before submitting an application to become a member.

**GPAFI**

Staff members may take out supplementary insurance with the Provident and Insurance Group of International Officials (GPAFI) to cover the following:

- Additional coverage by the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society;
- Loss of earnings resulting from sickness and/or accident;
- Death or disability resulting from accidents not related to professional activities;
- Medical costs resulting from accidents not related to professional activities;
- Life insurance;
- Daily hospitalization costs;
- Dental insurance;
- Health insurance for family members not eligible for coverage by the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society.

**Voluntary group life insurance scheme for staff members**

This insurance scheme is open to any staff member with a permanent or fixed-term contract. The scheme guarantees payment in the event of death or total or partial permanent disability. Disability and indemnity thereof are determined on the basis of the provisions of the Joint Staff Pension Fund.

Application forms may be obtained from the Human Resources Officer when you take up your duties. This type of insurance is recommended for staff members on whom individuals who may not be family members are financially dependent. Staff members are responsible for payment of 100 per cent of the very low-cost premiums for such insurance. Insurance with this scheme is generally required for those wishing to take out a bank loan of 10 000 Swiss francs or more.

**Swiss Social Welfare Insurance (AVS/AI/APG/AC)**

For AVS (social security), AI (disability), APG (loss of earnings) and AC (unemployment), the following is applicable for all Swiss and non-Swiss international officials and their spouses

You are advised to refer to the following documents:

- The memento to the intention of Swiss international officials and their spouses (ref. 318.119.10f)
- The memento to the intention of non-Swiss international officials and their spouses (ref. 318.119.10f)

These documents can be ordered directly at <http://www.admin.ch/edmz>.

Once officials are affiliated to the provident system of the international organization, they are no longer insured with AVS/AI/APG/AC.

Nevertheless, *Swiss officials* have the possibility to join AVS/AI/APG/AC (AC = *assurance chômage*, or unemployment insurance), if they wish to do so, as do those who obtain Swiss nationality. To this end, they should present the application for membership to the *Caisse de compensation* of their canton of residence. This will have to be done within a *delay of three months* from their affiliation with the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund or from the date of acquiring Swiss nationality. Failing to meet this time limit will result in the loss of the right to join AVS/APG/AI/AC. The contributions are calculated on the payments made by the Organization, according to the rates established for the employees whose employer is not bound to subscribe.

The spouses of Swiss international officials are obliged to be insured if they are gainfully employed in Switzerland. They are no longer insured with AVS/AI/APG/AC:

- If they are not gainfully employed when the official becomes affiliated with the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund;
- As soon as they stop such activities.

Non-active spouses of Swiss officials, resident in Switzerland, can become members of AVS/AI/APG/AC, regardless of their nationality.

On the other hand, Swiss and non-Swiss nationals who have temporary jobs in an international organization or who, due to the nature of their contract, are not subscribed to the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund are bound to take out the insurance scheme with AVS/AI/APG/AC.

*Non-Swiss officials* are not insured with AVS/AI/APG/AC and cannot apply for membership on a voluntary basis.

Under certain conditions, the spouses of non-Swiss officials can become members of AVS/AI/APG/AC if they wish to do so.

## CAR INSURANCE

### In Switzerland

#### Third party liability insurance

This type of insurance is obligatory, and staff members are urged to take out unlimited coverage. In the event of a claim, the deductible (excess) will depend on the age and number of years of driving experience of the insured party.

#### Optional vehicle insurance (*casco* (collision insurance) policy)

There are two options:

1. Partial *casco*

Covers:

- Fire;
- Theft;
- Windscreen, side window or rear windscreen breakages;
- Natural phenomena;
- Collisions with animals and, usually, damage by weasels;
- Snow sliding off rooftops;
- Vandalism;
- Further options: theft of personal effects from car, loan car.

2. Comprehensive *casco*

In addition to the coverage listed above, the comprehensive *casco* provides collision insurance. The choice of deductible on this type of insurance has a direct effect on the price of the premiums. The comprehensive *casco* also provides a no-claims bonus.

Additional coverage, such as insurance for the occupants of the car, travel and legal protection, is also available.

The cost of such insurance can seem quite high when compared with insurance in many other countries. In Switzerland, most companies require that you take out a five-year insurance contract, which is automatically renewed unless you give three months' notice; some companies offer one-year contracts. In either case, you cannot cancel the contract before it expires unless you sell the car or leave Switzerland. Similar provisions apply in France.

Cars with Swiss registration plates must be insured by a Swiss insurance company; cars with French (or other) plates cannot be insured in Switzerland.

#### No claims bonus and premium penalties

The insurance companies apply a coefficient to determine decreases or increases in the cost of your premiums, known as *bonus* and *malus* respectively. Each year, your premium will be revised upwards or downwards depending on the number of accidents you have been involved in during the year.

In order to obtain a reduction bonus from the time of your arrival in Switzerland, you will need to provide your insurer with a certificate stating how many accidents you have been involved in over the past five years.

### In France

Cars with French plates should be insured by a French insurance company. There may, however, be some agreements between European Union countries, so staff of EU-member countries should check with their insurance company in their country of origin.

Only one type of car insurance is obligatory in France – the *responsabilité civile* (third party liability). All other types of car insurance are optional, but it is advisable to insure cars less than five years old against damage to the vehicle, particularly theft.

### Third party liability insurance

French law requires motorists to take out the minimum third party *responsabilité civile* insurance, known as a *garantie au tiers*. This obligatory insurance guarantees coverage of damages you may cause a third party. In other words, if you are responsible for an accident in which you cause damages to someone else or their vehicle, your insurance company will reimburse you for the cost of those damages. However, it will not cover the cost of damage to yourself or your own vehicle. If someone else causes the accident, their insurance company will reimburse you for the cost of damage to you or your vehicle.

### Comprehensive insurance

In addition to the *responsabilité civile*, you can insure your car against all types of damage such as broken windscreens, fire, theft and natural disasters or storms by taking out all risk (*tous risques*) insurance. This type of insurance will compensate you for damage to your vehicle even if you are found responsible. However, you will have to pay the deductible (excess).

*Tous risques* insurance covers the following types of damage to your vehicle:

- Theft or attempted theft;
- All accidents;
- Damage caused by collision;
- Damage caused by fire/explosion;
- Breakage of windscreens or side-windows;
- Natural disasters;
- Attacks.

### Driver protection

Whenever you cause an accident, it seems the only person not insured is you! The purpose of driver protection (*la garantie "conducteur"*) is to provide coverage for you. If you are injured in an accident, this guarantee provides compensation, or *indemnisation*, for the amount stipulated in the insurance policy. This amount covers the difference between the compensation paid by social administrations and third parties, and the cost of the injuries.

It must be noted that it covers the cost of total or partial disability, based on an indemnification scale, but in no case will it cover loss of earnings.

In the event of death, driver coverage compensates the beneficiaries for financial loss and moral harm, and covers the cost of the funeral.

Driver coverage is available to all drivers holding a valid licence, or to learners taking a normal course of driving lessons. It is **not** available to persons previously involved in an accident while driving under the influence of alcohol, or drugs other than those prescribed by a doctor.

### No claims bonus and premium penalties

Decreases or increases in the cost of your premiums, known as *bonus* and *malus*, are determined by the French insurance code. Each year, your premium will be revised upwards or downwards, depending on the number of accidents you have been responsible for.

### Considerations regarding the type of insurance

Apart from the price, a number of factors should be taken into account before you take out car insurance. For instance:

- Check the different types of coverage provided. For example, many policies do not include driver protection;
- Check the maximum damage coverage; i.e. the most the insurance company will pay if you are involved in an accident. Also check the deductible (excess).

### CASBIA

Members of the Cooperative Association of Automobilists and Motorcyclists of the Secretariats and Offices of the International Organizations and Accredited Institutions (CASBIA) are entitled to discounts on the following:

- Insurance premiums on car and house insurance in Switzerland and France. In Switzerland, contrary to the practice of numerous insurance companies having a different premium for non-Swiss residents, a basic tariff is applied to all nationalities, in addition to a 7 per cent standard CASBIA rate reduction, as well as any other applicable reductions. In France, international civil servants receive a discount of from 11 to 15 per cent of the rate which is based on the French civil servant rate, with the final cost generally lower than that of any other types of insurance;
- The cost of legal representation (traffic accidents and personal legal defence);
- The price of cars, spare parts, tires, accessories, etc.;
- The cost of anti-pollution inspections;
- Membership dues to fitness clubs in Switzerland and France;
- Air fares.

CASBIA can be contacted at:

CASBIA  
Palais des Nations  
CH-1211 Geneva 10  
☎: 022 917 16 20  
Fax: 022 917 05 26

## **HOUSEHOLD INSURANCE**

### **Household insurance in Switzerland**

A good household policy should include coverage against fire, theft, water damage and glass breakage, and coverage of personal effects.

#### **Objects of value**

Your household insurance will cover jewellery, furs and paintings in the event of fire and water damage, but compensation will be limited. Comprehensive insurance, on the other hand, provides full coverage worldwide, and is recommended for those who possess objects of value and who travel frequently.

### **Household insurance in France**

In France, this type of insurance generally provides coverage against fire, theft of personal effects/vandalism\*, water and ice damage, electrical damage, glass breakage and physical injury, minus a deductible (excess) and in proportion with the amount insured.

Staff members in possession of valuable items are advised to take out supplementary insurance to cover their exact value.

\* No deductible (excess) is applied to compensation paid resulting from theft in the main part of a residence that was equipped with a protective mechanism such as an alarm system (with or without a TV monitor) at the time of the theft.

### **Changing insurance companies**

Termination of an insurance policy is only possible:

- At the end of the insurance contract;
- In the event the insurance company changes its rates;
- Upon settlement of a claim.

Notice of intent to terminate the contract must be received by the insurance company three months before the contract is due to expire.

## TAXATION

Employment in the United Nations system does not exonerate any staff member from the obligation to abide by his or her own country's laws concerning declaration of income and payment of income taxes. Most Member countries have passed legislation that relieves their citizens from paying taxes on their UN system salary.

Under certain circumstances, staff members who are required by the legislation of their home country to pay income taxes may claim reimbursement.

### Taxes levied in Switzerland

WMO staff members are exempt from Swiss income tax on presentation of a certificate which can be obtained from the Human Resources Management Division. However, they are subject to taxation on personal and real estate. Family members who take up employment (outside the international system) are liable for Swiss income tax in the normal way and must make annual tax returns.

The Swiss Federal Tax administration levies a withholding tax (*impôt anticipé*) on securities, assets and other personal estate located in Switzerland. Staff members residing in Switzerland may request reimbursement of these taxes under certain conditions. Information can be obtained from your bank.

Certain taxes are levied in Switzerland in exchange for services provided (such as radio and television licences, municipal taxes that cover street cleaning, maintenance and waste removal). Staff members must pay these taxes, which are not reimbursable.

### Taxes levied in France

Currently, staff members residing in France are subject to payment of some taxes (municipal taxes, property taxes, etc.) and are exempt from income tax on presentation of the certificate obtainable from the Human Resources Management Division but, as in Switzerland, they are subject to taxation on their estate. This is subject to change following the ratification of a Headquarters Agreement between the Government of France and the United Nations and United Nations international agencies based in Geneva.

### Taxation for citizens of the USA

For citizens of the USA, general information on taxes and forms can be obtained from the America Center of Geneva Association, 7 rue Versonnex, first floor, telephone 022 840 51 66, or on the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) web sites, <http://www.taxsites.com/irs.html> and [http://www.irs.gov/plain/forms\\_pubs/index.html](http://www.irs.gov/plain/forms_pubs/index.html).

## CUSTOMS PRIVILEGES, IMPORT FORMALITIES AND REGISTRATION OF VEHICLES

### In Switzerland

#### Importing household effects

When international staff members are assigned to Geneva, their personal belongings are transported at the expense of the Organization. The necessary arrangements are made by the Human Resources Management Division, which will send you information on the steps that you should take. New staff members are usually required to submit bids by three different moving companies before the move is approved. Additionally, staff members are responsible for seeing to customs formalities required in their own country for export of their household effects.

Newly recruited staff members who are not Swiss are entitled to customs exemption for new and used household effects. The shipment may include foodstuffs, alcoholic beverages and tobacco, as well as motorcycles and mopeds, so long as these articles are intended for personal use only and are imported when the staff member first moves into Switzerland, or returns to Switzerland after an absence of at least three years.

This duty-free import is limited to quantities corresponding to the normal needs of the staff members and their families. This privilege is granted once only within a period of five years from the time staff members take up their duties in Switzerland. An inventory, in French, German or Italian, of the goods being imported must be submitted to the Human Resources Management Division at least five working days before the goods pass through Swiss customs.

Within one year of the customs clearance of the first consignment, staff members are entitled to import duty-free an additional consignment of new and used articles from their own country or elsewhere. This consignment may include motorcycles and mopeds, but not foodstuffs, alcoholic beverages or tobacco. Articles imported in this way must be listed on a separate inventory, which should be submitted to the Human Resources Management Division either at the same time as the first inventory or not more than 60 days after the first consignment has cleared customs.

#### Importing animals

There are a number of veterinarians treating small animal in the region. They are listed in the telephone book under *vétérinaires*.

Staff members may import cats and dogs into Switzerland provided the animal comes with a veterinary certificate stating it has been vaccinated against rabies not less than 30 days, or more than one year, prior to its arrival in Switzerland. This requirement also applies to cats and dogs returning to Switzerland after a temporary absence.

The veterinary certificate must be written in English, French, German or Italian, and must contain the following information:

- Owner of the animal (name and address);
- Description of the animal (breed, sex, age and colour);
- Statement certifying that the animal has been examined by the veterinarian, and found to be in good health;
- Date of vaccination against rabies, type of vaccine, brand and serial number of the vaccine;
- Veterinarian's stamp and signature.

Certificates in languages other than those listed above must be accompanied by an official translation in one of the four languages. Cats and dogs without a valid certificate will not be admitted into the country.

#### Pets' licences

In the Canton of Geneva, owners must register all dogs and obtain a licence. Dog licences are valid for one calendar year, so requests for renewal must be made by 31 December each year.

The request for licence should be addressed to:

l'Hôtel des Finances  
Caisse de l'État  
26, rue du Stand  
CH-1204, Geneva

The required documents are:

- Carte de légitimation;
- Rabies vaccination certificate valid for two years;
- Attestation for third party liability insurance.

Dog owners are also required to take out insurance for any damage their dog may cause third parties. An insurance certificate must be presented to obtain the licence and the dog's identification disc. The cost of obtaining the identification disc amounts to 9.50 Swiss francs.

### Importing or buying vehicles

At the time of their first move into Switzerland, or when returning after an absence of at least three years, staff members who are not Swiss are entitled to import duty-free, or buy locally duty-free, one new car or one new motorboat for their personal use. This privilege is granted once only within a period of five years from the date staff members take up their duties.

Officials in the P-5 category and above can import or buy a vehicle or a motorboat duty-free every three years.

Additionally, cars, motorboats and aircraft used abroad by staff members for at least six months before their assignment to Switzerland, and intended for their personal use, are admitted duty-free under the customs regulations applicable to any immigrant entering Switzerland, the *régime général*. This right does not affect the privileges granted to staff members when they first move to Switzerland as described above.

Import formalities may only be carried out after new staff members have taken up their functions.

Newly recruited staff members arriving in Switzerland by car must present their international insurance card, the *carte verte*.

After arrival, further information concerning the formalities described above may be obtained from the Human Resources Management Division.

### Technical standards and car registration

Any vehicle imported by a staff member may be driven in Switzerland with its foreign number plates for one year from the date the staff member first takes up his or her duties. During this period, the vehicle will not be required to undergo a technical inspection (*expertise*). When the car is registered in Switzerland, however, a technical inspection by the cantonal traffic department will be required. All vehicles must comply with Swiss technical standards, with certain exceptions described below and applicable to international civil servants.

### Vehicles imported by fixed-term staff members

Current regulations allow P and D staff to import and register in Switzerland virtually any vehicle that is already registered abroad. Such vehicles may not be subsequently sold in Switzerland except to persons having the same privileges. Otherwise, the seller will have to show that the car complies with the normal Swiss regulations. Should the car fail to comply, it must be re-exported. Similar proof of compliance with Swiss regulations will be required by the cantonal traffic department when the vehicle undergoes its periodical inspection because the owner no longer has international status (owing to retirement, for example).

Staff members wishing to buy a vehicle for import into Switzerland should contact Swiss customs (*Direction général des douanes*) for further information.

If a staff member moves from one canton to another, the car must be registered in the new canton of residence within 14 days. Number plates issued by the original canton of residence must be returned to the relevant traffic department.

### **Periodic technical inspections**

All vehicles must undergo a technical inspection (known as an *expertise* or a *visite*) by the cantonal traffic department before they can be registered in Switzerland.

Regulations governing the registration of second-hand vehicles differ from canton to canton. In Geneva, for example, vehicles over ten years old must have undergone an inspection less than one year beforehand. In Vaud, no technical inspection is required for second-hand vehicles less than four years old, but all vehicles four years or older are required to undergo technical inspection if the previous inspection was carried out more than one year beforehand.

All costs relating to driving licences, number plates and registration formalities must be paid by staff members.

## **In France**

### **Importing household effects**

#### **1. Removals within the European Union**

The free circulation of personal effects has been allowed within the European Union since the introduction of the single market on 1 January 1993, and customs formalities for these items have been abolished.

However, certain items are restricted in order to protect human health, safety, consumption and the environment, as well as national and world heritage. Thus if you are transporting items such as arms, dual-purpose (civil and military) goods, medicines and cultural property, you must first obtain the necessary permits and accompanying documents, and may have to present these goods at the customs office. A list of the restricted items is available from French customs offices.

#### **2. Importing household effects from outside the European Union**

All persons moving to France from a country outside the European Union are authorized to import their personal effects duty-free. Such goods must be imported from the previous country of residence and must have been in personal use for at least six months.

This duty-free entitlement only applies if the persons concerned have lived outside France for at least 12 months, and this must be proved by official documents.

Personal effects may be imported up to 12 months following the date of change of residence.

Food products may be imported duty-free within the limits of normal household provisions. Alcoholic beverages and cigarettes are not admitted duty-free.

The import may take place in one or several consignments. A detailed inventory in French listing all the items to be imported, and their value in French francs, should be prepared. The make and number of each large electric household appliance must be specified. Motor vehicles (cars, mopeds, etc.) must also be included in the inventory, without indicating their value but stating their type, chassis number and year of manufacture. If the import is to take place in several consignments, inventories of the items to be imported at a later date must be submitted to the French customs along with the inventory of the first consignment when it clears customs.

The import formalities cannot be undertaken until the staff member has taken up his or her duties.

## Importing animals

Animals entering France must be at least three months old. To clear customs, the animal must be accompanied by a veterinary certificate stating it has been vaccinated against rabies, and that it is arriving from a country where no cases of rabies have been recorded for three years.

## Importing vehicles

### 1. *Special provisions for international civil servants (régime spécial)*

Staff members who are not French may import, or purchase in France, one car or motorcycle for their personal use with temporary exemption from taxes and customs duties. This concession remains in force throughout their period of employment. Thus, if the vehicle is in due course exported from France or sold in France after payment of VAT (value-added tax), staff members are again entitled to import a vehicle, or purchase one locally, on a temporary duty-free basis.

### 2. *General provisions (droit commun)*

#### a) *Transfers within the European Union*

On moving into France, a staff member may import duty-free from another European Union country a vehicle that has been registered in the normal series. VAT must have been paid on the vehicle in the European country of export, and proof of such payment must be provided.

This concession is granted in addition to the special provisions described above.

#### b) *Importing from a country outside the European Union*

On moving into France, a staff member may import a vehicle duty-free from a country outside the European Union, provided the staff member has owned the vehicle for at least six months prior to the move to France, and provided taxes on the vehicle have been paid in the exporting country.

This concession is granted in addition to the special provisions described above.

## Technical standards and car registration

Staff members who import or buy locally a vehicle built in a country belonging to the European Union must register the vehicle under the regular series (black plates). The vehicle must comply with French technical standards and the owner must produce proof of this compliance. Vehicles originating from outside the European Union can be registered under the TTQ series (in Haute-Savoie) or TTW series (in Ain) and are exempt from customs duty.

## Periodic technical inspections

A periodic technical inspection is compulsory. The inspection must first be carried out when the vehicle is five years old, and every three years thereafter. The owner of the vehicle is responsible for setting up the necessary appointment at an approved inspection centre. Vehicles registered with the red IT plates are exempt from this inspection.

## CROSSING THE BORDER

When crossing the border, the following documents must be shown either to French or Swiss customs agents or to police officers: *carte de légitimation* (obtained through WMO), national identity card or passport (with visa to enter France, if necessary), *carte de séjour* (residence permit) for those who live in France, and car registration papers and driving licence. For nationals from countries that require visas to enter France, a French visa should be obtained, and new staff members are advised to have it issued in their country of origin or residence before taking up their duties in Geneva.

### Shopping across the border

Persons living in Switzerland are allowed to import goods worth a certain amount from the French border zone duty free. Some products, such as foodstuffs, alcoholic beverages and cigarettes, are subject to import limitations. Information and leaflets on this subject are available from the Swiss customs officers.

Officials in the P-5 category and above can obtain forms for tax-exempt import of items for personal use from the Human Resources Management Division.

The same kind of restrictions (with variations regarding values and quantities of goods) are applied by the French customs for persons residing in France and importing goods bought in Switzerland. Information and a leaflet on this subject are available at the French customs offices.

### Returning to Switzerland or France after a journey abroad

The information in *Shopping across the border* above also applies on your return to your country of residence (Switzerland or France) after a journey elsewhere. Leaflets and information on this subject are available from the Swiss and French customs offices.

For information on Switzerland, consult the Swiss customs web site: <http://www.douane.admin.ch>.

For information on France, contact French customs (*Direction régionale des douanes du Léman*) in Annecy, telephone (33-450) 67 03 10, or consult <http://www.finances.gouv.fr/douanes> or the customs service web site: <http://www.interdouane.com>.

### Nothing to declare

A special nothing to declare (*rien à déclarer*) card known as a *disque vert* can be obtained from Swiss customs offices. It should be displayed in your car windscreen whenever you cross the Swiss–French border and have nothing to declare. At the main Swiss border posts there is a special fast lane for all cars displaying the *disque vert*, but use of this lane does not preclude the possibility of spot checks by customs and police officers, and misuse of the *disque vert* is punishable by a fine.

Staff members living in France can obtain a small orange sticker that enables them to use the fast lane for use at certain times of the day when entering France. The sticker should be displayed by attaching it to the *disque vert*. To obtain the sticker, French residents should fill out a special form available from French customs offices at the main border posts.

## CARTE DE LÉGITIMATION, RESIDENCE PERMIT, PASSPORT AND DRIVING LICENCE

### Carte de légitimation

WMO registers new staff members and their families with the Swiss authorities and obtains their identity cards, or *cartes de légitimation*, from the Swiss Mission. However, staff members are responsible for registering themselves and their family members with their own national embassy or consulate.

### Work and residence permits

Spouses and children of international civil servants living in Switzerland who wish to work in the country for employers other than intergovernmental organizations may obtain a special "Ci" work permit.

Children of staff members attending local schools or the University of Geneva are allowed to be employed for limited periods. For example, university students may work 20 hours per week; a maximum of three months' full-time during the July–September summer break, and possibly one or two weeks during the Christmas and Easter breaks. The minimum age of employment depends on the type of work.

Dependants of staff members are entitled to work ten hours per week without a Ci permit so long as they inform the *Office cantonal de la population* prior to taking up employment.

Staff members whose spouses or children wish to take up employment in Switzerland may obtain further information from the WMO Social Welfare Officer.

Dependent spouses and children of staff members living in the French border zone are not entitled to the above-mentioned Ci permit. They will find it difficult to obtain work in Switzerland owing to the job market regulations.

Staff members wishing to recruit domestic staff from outside Switzerland must obtain the forms issued for this purpose by the Swiss Mission and available from the WMO Social Welfare Officer.

### Passports and visas

In some cases, the cost of renewing your national passport may be assumed by WMO. Further information on this procedure can be obtained from the Human Resources Management Division. Some countries, through the offices of their Permanent Missions to the United Nations, renew passports for their nationals or issue tourist visas. Staff members are advised to check with the respective Permanent Missions for more information.

### Driving licence

Staff members residing in Switzerland and holding certain types of *cartes de légitimation* issued by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs are not required to exchange their foreign driving licence for a Swiss one (see table below). For further information, contact the cantonal *Service des automobiles*.

Type of Carte de légitimation	Restrictions on vehicle registration	Exemption from road tax	Exchange foreign driving licence for Swiss licence
B	no restrictions	exempt	not required
C	no restrictions	exempt	not required
D	no restrictions	exempt	not required
E	no restrictions	not exempt	not required
F	restrictions	not exempt	required
S	restrictions	not exempt	required
short term	restrictions	not exempt	required

  

Family members	Restrictions on vehicle registration	Exemption from road tax	Exchange foreign driving licence for Swiss licence
B (or Ci permit)	restricted	exempt	not required
C (or Ci permit)	restricted	exempt	not required
D (or Ci permit)	restricted	exempt	not required
E (or Ci permit)	restricted	not exempt	not required
short term	restricted	not exempt	required
F	restricted	not exempt	required
S	restricted	not exempt	required

Holders of driving licences issued in languages other than the official Swiss languages or English are advised to obtain an international driving licence. This document can be obtained from the *Service des automobiles* of the canton in which the staff member resides.

Depending on their nationality, drivers wishing or required to exchange their licence for a Swiss licence may have to take a practical driving test. They are only allowed to take the test once, and drivers who fail are no longer authorized to drive in Switzerland. (The cost of the test is about 270 Swiss francs.)

Staff members who move from one canton to another should contact the relevant *Service des automobiles* for information on how to obtain a licence in their new canton of residence.

Geneva residents

Service des Automobiles  
86, route de Veyrier  
Case postale 1556  
CH-1227, Carouge  
☎: 022 343 02 00  
Fax: 022 343 81 11  
<http://www.geneve.ch/san/welcome.html>

Open: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Vaud residents

Service Cantonal des Automobiles  
110-112, avenue du Grey  
CH-1018, Lausanne  
☎: 021 316 82 10  
Fax: 021 316 82 11  
<http://www.dse.vd.ch/auto/main.htm>

Open: 7:15 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.

Staff members living in France and holding a driving licence issued by a European Union country or certain other countries (list available from the Human Resources Management Division) are not required to exchange their licence for a French licence so long as they have a *carte de légitimation*.

Staff members who are required to exchange their foreign licence for a French one must do so within one year of acquiring French residency.

Staff members who are unable to exchange their licence and are not entitled to use their foreign licence must initiate procedures to take a driving test in France. To do so, contact your departmental *préfecture*, specifying that you need to take the test because you are unable to exchange your licence.

Préfecture de l'Ain  
Service de permis de conduire  
45, avenue Alsace-Lorraine  
F-01000 Bourg-en-Bresse  
☎: (33-474) 32 30 65

Préfecture de Haute-Savoie  
Service de permis de conduire  
BP 332  
F-74000 Annecy  
☎: (33-450) 33 60 08

International driving licences are no longer valid in France or Switzerland once the holder acquires "normal" residence in either country after losing *fonctionnaire international* status owing to retirement, for example.

### **Bicycle or moped licence**

In Switzerland, cyclists must purchase a bicycle sticker known as a *vignette vélo* by 31 May each year, giving details of the make and frame number of their bicycle. In addition to the sticker, they will receive a card certifying they hold third party insurance (obligatory), which is included in the price of the sticker. These *vignettes* are available from the post office.

No *vignette* is required for bicycles in France.

In Switzerland, a special driving licence is required for any two-wheeled motorized vehicle. Contact the *Service des automobiles* of your canton of residence for information.

No licence is required for mopeds in France.

Should you require further information, the WMO Social Welfare Officer will help you get in touch with the relevant administrative department.

## DOMESTIC HELP

### In Switzerland

#### **Engagement of domestic staff**

In Switzerland, it is very difficult to obtain "live-in" domestic help unless you recruit someone from outside the country. However, the rules for bringing in non-Swiss nationals to work in your home are very strict. The procedures to be followed are explained in the material issued by the Swiss Mission. The WMO Social Welfare Officer can provide you with all the necessary forms, and will explain the formalities for recruiting domestic help from abroad.

It is easier to find daily domestic help. Cleaning ladies (*femmes de ménage*) can be found by consulting the noticeboards at supermarkets or the organizations, or by placing advertisements in local newspapers.

The WMO Social Welfare Officer is able to provide information and advice, as well as copies, in English, French and Spanish, of the Directives on the engagement of domestic workers by international officials, published by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, with effect from 1 May 1998.

Officials who are authorized to hire domestic workers are: those international officials who are resident in Switzerland and who hold either a *carte de légitimation* series "B" (for members of the Directorate), series "C" (for other senior officials) or series "D" (all other professional officials).

The eligible officials may engage as a domestic worker a non-Swiss national they can bring into Switzerland for the purpose of employment in their household, or a non-Swiss national employed in Switzerland and who already holds a *carte de légitimation* (series "F").

Non-Swiss officials in the General Service category and Swiss staff are not entitled to employ domestic worker holding a series "F" *carte de légitimation*.

#### **Insurance for full-time domestic staff**

In Switzerland, household staff must have the following types of insurance by law: AVS (social security), AI (disability), APG (loss of earnings) and AC (unemployment). These types of social insurance form a whole and cannot be taken out separately. Household staff must also be insured against sickness and accident.

The first step to take with regard to these types of policies is to ascertain what kind of insurance the domestic helper already has, and then consult your insurance agent to determine whether further insurance is required.

For more information, you can consult the Directives from the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs available from the WMO Social Welfare Officer.

### In France

Non-French international officials who are settled in France may engage domestic workers, either French nationals or nationals from European Union countries who hold a residence permit, but cannot bring into France domestic workers from foreign countries other than nationals from the EU. The employer should make an engagement declaration to the prefecture of his/her department.

Since WMO has no Headquarters agreement with France, there is no specific procedure for international civil servants wishing to hire domestic staff. Your application should be sent to the *Direction Départementale du Travail* for the region in which you are living.

You can also consult <http://www.sdtefp-rhone-alpes.travail.gouv.fr/divers/carte.htm> under *Employeur*.

You can also contact directly:

*Direction départementale du Travail et de l'Emploi*

Ain

16, rue de la Grenouillère  
01000 Bourg-en-Bresse  
☎: (33-474) 45 91 19

Haute-Savoie

1, avenue Albigny  
B.P. 2332  
74000 Annecy  
☎: (33-450) 23 86 90  
Fax: (33-450) 23 86 91

## WMO STAFF ASSOCIATION

The following information is taken from the Pamphlet of the Association.

**AIMS:** "To safeguard the rights and defend the interests of all members of the staff of the World Meteorological Organization and to promote their welfare."

All members of the staff of WMO are either "members" or "associate members" of the Association. In accordance with the Statutes:

- (a) The term "member" refers to any person for whom the WMO Regulations and Rules are applicable, as well as those on short-term contracts who contribute to the Joint Staff Pension Fund;
- (b) The term "associate member" refers to any person on short-term contracts but who does not contribute to the Pension Fund.

Former staff members of WMO who enjoy a retirement pension are "retired members" of the Association.

"Associate" and "retired" members have no right to vote in assemblies, elections or referenda.

The **Staff Committee** is the executive body of the Association. It is composed of ten persons. The Committee elects from among its members a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, who constitute the Bureau. Five members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum.

The Committee protects the interests of the Association and ensures the observance of the Statutes and the execution of decisions taken by the General Assembly.

In particular, the Committee informs the Secretary-General of the views and wishes of the staff on all questions of concern and represents the staff in discussions with the Secretary-General.

Staff related issues are discussed at regular meetings of the **Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)**. This Committee is composed of the Director of the Resource Management Department (Chairperson), the Chief of the Human Resources Management Division, the President and Vice-President of the Staff Association and a Secretary appointed by the Secretary-General.

The Staff Association is also represented in different committees: Pension Board, Joint Disciplinary Committee and Joint Appeals Board.

The Committee interacts with the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA, <http://www.ficsa.org>) and participates in its activities to defend the WMO staff conditions of service which are based on the UN common system.

Information concerning the Committee is available on the Staff Association Notice Board and on the Internet.

The **General Assembly** is the principal organ of the Association. It meets once a year, usually in the autumn. Extraordinary sessions may be convened as necessary (see the Statutes of the Association).

### Subscriptions

Members are asked to pay a voluntary annual subscription which is fixed by the General Assembly. Members on short-term appointments shall be asked to pay the subscriptions on a *pro rata* basis. The subscription takes account of the grade of the member. Only members who have paid their subscriptions are entitled to the benefits offered by the Association.

The Association depends on your financial contributions to carry out its work. It also depends on your cooperation to enable it to foster the spirit of solidarity and understanding amongst members of the staff.

For more information, please check the web site (<http://www.wmo.ch/wmostaff/>) or from the WMO Home Page, choose by *subject*, click on *Other WMO Information*, and then click on *WMO Staff Association*.

## Useful glossary

### FICSA

The Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations, which promotes among its members the exchange of information and views on all questions of common interest. It coordinates their activities in defence of staff rights and interests. FICSA issues research papers, a quarterly newsletter and circulars, and briefs its members on all aspects of the conditions of service of international civil servants. It is currently coordinating the struggle for the right of negotiation with our employers.

### ACC

The Administrative Committee on Coordination, which comprises the Executive Heads of UN organizations.

### HLCM

High Level Committee on Management acts on behalf of and in the name of **ACC** on matters affecting the administrative management of all member organizations, both multi-sectoral and specific to a given area.

### Fifth Committee

The United Nations Fifth Committee, composed of representatives of UN Member States, makes decisions and recommendations on financial and budgetary questions for the United Nations, as well as on conditions of service for **all common system staff**.

### ICSC

The International Civil Service Commission, which is a technical body mandated under the terms of its Statute to carry out objective studies on the conditions of service of **all common system staff**, make recommendations to the UN General Assembly and take decisions on certain conditions of service. Fifteen members are appointed by the UN General Assembly.

## **A FEW PRACTICAL POINTS TO CONSIDER BEFORE JOINING WMO**

If you accept a position with WMO, you will be required to leave your own country. This may influence a number of factors in your personal life and that of your family. For example:

### **Pension entitlements**

You may have been contributing to a national or individual pension scheme via taxation or separate payments. Can you benefit from this even if you stop paying? Can you make voluntary contributions from Geneva, if this would be of benefit to you? Is WMO service recognized in any way for accrual of national pension rights?

### **Health insurance**

In some countries, certain health services are provided by the government via taxation, and the patient pays little or nothing when using them. Can you go back to your country and use these services at little or no cost even if you live in Geneva? Will you be able to use them free of charge when you return to your own country? Will family members not accompanying you to Switzerland be able to continue using them? Can you maintain health insurance in your home country for any chronically ill family members?

### **Children's education**

Will children staying in your home country continue to receive free education? Will children returning to your home country after several years in Geneva be entitled to free education? If they graduate from a Swiss school or an international school in Geneva, will the diplomas be recognized in your home country, and are they admissible for university entrance? Similarly, will a degree from a Swiss university entitle your children to practice their profession in your home country?

### **Driving licence and other documents**

If you take up residence in France, you might have to take a French driving test or exchange your licence for a French driving licence within a year, giving up your current national driving licence. On return to your home country, will you be able to obtain a new driving licence without difficulty?

### **Job prospects after you return**

If you are not granted leave of absence from your existing job during your assignment at WMO, you may lose an opportunity to advance your career in your home country. Will the WMO experience be considered an asset when you apply for jobs at home? In many families, this is of even greater importance for your spouse, who may have to give up an interesting position in your home country in order to move to Geneva.

These are some examples of issues that are worth considering. As it is much easier to obtain this type of information from within your home country, you are advised to look into these matters before your departure.

**WMO – USEFUL CONTACTS****World Meteorological Organization (WMO):**

7 bis, avenue de la Paix  
P.O. Box 2300  
CH-1211, Geneva 2  
Switzerland

☎: 022 730 81 11  
Telex: 41 41 99 OMM CH  
Fax: 022 730 81 81

<http://www.wmo.ch>

**Human Resources Management Division:**

☎: 022 730 82 90  
Fax: 022 730 81 15  
E-mail: [hrm@gateway.wmo.ch](mailto:hrm@gateway.wmo.ch)

**Social Welfare Officer:**

Ms Nicole Yersin  
☎: 022 730 83 47  
E-mail: [yersin\\_n@gateway.wmo.ch](mailto:yersin_n@gateway.wmo.ch)

**WMO Sport Committee:**

Mr Jalil Housni  
☎: 022 730 82 15  
E-mail: [housni\\_j@gateway.wmo.ch](mailto:housni_j@gateway.wmo.ch)

Ms Laura Biagioni  
☎: 022 730 80 74  
E-mail: [biagioni\\_l@gateway.wmo.ch](mailto:biagioni_l@gateway.wmo.ch)

**International Ski Club of Geneva:**

Open for registration on Thursdays from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

TENNIS CLUB INTERNATIONAL  
chemin Eugène Rigot  
Poste restante, Nations Unies  
CH-1211 Geneva 10

☎: 022 797 38 25

<http://www.scig.ch>

**WMO address book:**

<http://www.wmo.ch/wmoaddress/>

The search engine enables the visitor to search the coordinates of a staff member by department, division, last name, first name, telephone extension or room number.

**ANNEX – USEFUL WEB SITES AND ADDRESSES****GENERAL INFORMATION**

Geneva Welcome Centre	<a href="http://www.geneve.ch/chancellerie/protocole">http://www.geneve.ch/chancellerie/protocole</a>
Geneva	<a href="http://www.geneve-portail.ch">http://www.geneve-portail.ch</a>
	<a href="http://www.geneve-central.com">http://www.geneve-central.com</a>
Le carrefour web de Suisse romande	<a href="http://www.romandie.com">http://www.romandie.com</a>

**HOUSING**

List of real estate agents in Geneva	<a href="http://www.sr-ge.ch">http://www.sr-ge.ch</a>
	<a href="http://Members.tripod.com/~bionicd/immo.html">http://Members.tripod.com/~bionicd/immo.html</a>
Groupement de Régies Privées Genevoises (GRPG)	<a href="http://www.grpg.ch">http://www.grpg.ch</a>
Geneva International Welcome Centre	<a href="http://www.geneva-international.org">http://www.geneva-international.org</a>
CERN housing service	<a href="http://www.cern.ch/CERN/housing/Private.html">http://www.cern.ch/CERN/housing/Private.html</a>
Newspaper real estate advertisements:	
Tribune de Genève	<a href="http://www.zannonces.ch">http://www.zannonces.ch</a>
GHI newspaper	<a href="http://www.ghi.ch">http://www.ghi.ch</a>
Housing offers of the week	<a href="http://www.toutimmo.ch">http://www.toutimmo.ch</a>
ASLOCA (Geneva Association for the legal rights of tenants)	<a href="http://www.asloca.ch">http://www.asloca.ch</a>

**HOUSING (RÉGIES)****Canton of Geneva**

Besson, Dumont & Cie SA	<a href="http://www.besson-dumont.ch">http://www.besson-dumont.ch</a>
Bory & Cie SA	<a href="http://www.bory.ch">http://www.bory.ch</a>
Brolliet & Cie	<a href="http://www.brolliet.ch">http://www.brolliet.ch</a>
Burger Rodolphe SA	<a href="http://www.burger-sa.ch">http://www.burger-sa.ch</a>
CGI Compagnie de Gérance Immobilière	<a href="http://www.cgi.ch">http://www.cgi.ch</a>
COGERIM	<a href="http://www.cogerim.ch">http://www.cogerim.ch</a>
Régie de la Cité SA	<a href="http://www.regiecite.ch">http://www.regiecite.ch</a>
Comptoir genevois de l'immobilier	<a href="http://www.comptoir-immo.ch">http://www.comptoir-immo.ch</a>
Daudin & Cie	<a href="http://www.daudin.ch">http://www.daudin.ch</a>
Delaunay & Cie SA	<a href="http://www.delaunay.ch">http://www.delaunay.ch</a>
Duboux & Cie	<a href="http://www.regieduboux.ch">http://www.regieduboux.ch</a>
Dunand & Cie SA	<a href="http://www.dunand.com">http://www.dunand.com</a>
Régie Foncière SA	<a href="http://www.regiefonciere.ch">http://www.regiefonciere.ch</a>
Le Forum Immobilier SA	<a href="http://www.forum-immobilier.ch">http://www.forum-immobilier.ch</a>
Groupe GECO SA - Genève	<a href="http://www.geco.ch">http://www.geco.ch</a>
Grange & Cie SA	<a href="http://www.grange.ch">http://www.grange.ch</a>
Agence immobilière de la côte – IMMO Sales	<a href="http://www.immo-sales.com/http://www.immo-sales.ch">http://www.immo-sales.com/http://www.immo-sales.ch</a>
Julliard Immobilier SA	<a href="http://www.julliard-invest.ch">http://www.julliard-invest.ch</a>
Livit SA	<a href="http://www.livit.ch">http://www.livit.ch</a>
Régie du Mail	<a href="http://www.regiemail.ch">http://www.regiemail.ch</a>
Moser Vernet & Cie	<a href="http://www.moservernet.ch">http://www.moservernet.ch</a>
Naef & Cie SA	<a href="http://www.naef.ch">http://www.naef.ch</a>
Pilet & Renaud SA	<a href="http://www.pilet-renaud.ch">http://www.pilet-renaud.ch</a>
Prokesch Luc (Investissements immobiliers)	<a href="http://www.immogeneve.ch">http://www.immogeneve.ch</a>
Régie du Rhône SA	<a href="http://www.regierhone.ch">http://www.regierhone.ch</a>
Rosset Gérald	<a href="http://www.rosset.ch">http://www.rosset.ch</a>
Régie Schmid SA (Geneva)	<a href="http://www.regie-schmid.ch">http://www.regie-schmid.ch</a>

Simonin Jean SA <http://www.simonin.ch>  
 Société Privée de Gérance (SPG) <http://www.spg.ch>  
 Tournier & Poncet <http://www.tournier-poncet.ch>

**Canton of Vaud**

de Rham SA <http://www.derham.ch>  
 Groupe GECO SA – Lausanne <http://www.geco.ch>  
 Régie du Lac SA <http://www.regiedulac.ch>  
 Longchamp Conseils Immobiliers SA <http://www2.svr.ch/agences/longchamp/>  
 Régie Naef <http://www.naef.ch>  
 Bernard Nicod <http://www.bernard-nicod.ch>  
 Gerald Rosset SA <http://www.rosset.ch>  
 Régie Schmid SA (Nyon) <http://www.regie-schmid.ch>  
 Régie Sogirom SA <http://www.uspi.ch>  
 Fiduciaire Stratman <http://stratman.pagesjaunes.ch>  
 SVR – Société vaudoise des régisseurs <http://www.svr.ch>  
 IMMOPOOL <http://www.immopool.ch>

**France**

Housing advertisements <http://www.bonjour.fr>  
 ABI Immobilier <http://www.fnaim.fr/abi>  
 ACE Immobilier <http://www.spacimo.com>  
 Groupe immobilier Ain Habitat/St-Genis Pouilly <http://www.immoainhab.com>  
 Alpes Rhône <http://www.alpesweb.com/alpes-rhone/>  
 Century 21 France SA <http://www.century21france.fr>  
 Agence Clerc Jean-Claude <http://www.agence-clerc-jc.com>  
 Agence des Damiers <http://www.damiers-immo.fr>  
 Agence First Immobilier <http://www.first-immobilier.fr>  
 Fédération Nationale de l'Immobilier (FNAIM) <http://www.fnaim.fr>  
 FONCIA MOLLAND IMMOBILIER <http://www.sage-immo.com>  
 IFIC International <http://www.ific.fr>  
 IMMOBILIER 2000 <http://www.sage-immo.com>  
 SAGE IMMOBILIER <http://www.sage-immo.com>  
 Syndicat National des Professionnels Immobiliers <http://www.snpi.com>  
 Agence Voltaire <http://www.agvoltaire.com>

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT****Switzerland**

Federal Swiss railways (CFF) <http://www.cff.ch>  
 Geneva public transport (TPG) <http://www.tpg.ch>  
 Public parking in Geneva <http://www.geneve.ch/parkings/parkings.html>  
 Geneva International Airport <http://www.gva.ch>

**France**

French railways (SNCF) <http://www.sncf.fr>  
 European train times <http://mercurio.iet.unipi.it/misc/timetabl.html>

**SERVICES****Switzerland**

Geneva electricity company (SIG) <http://www.sig-ge.ch>  
 Telephone (Swisscom) [http://www.swisscom.com/gd/services/services\\_support/services\\_support-en.html](http://www.swisscom.com/gd/services/services_support/services_support-en.html)  
 Telephone Access Registration [http://www.swisscom.com/gd/services/services\\_support/abo/introduction-en.html](http://www.swisscom.com/gd/services/services_support/abo/introduction-en.html)

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Billag (TV and radio licence)	<a href="http://www.billag.ch">http://www.billag.ch</a>
Télégenève	<a href="http://www.telegeneve.ch">http://www.telegeneve.ch</a>
CableCom	<a href="http://www.cablecom.ch">http://www.cablecom.ch</a>
Vaud – Urbatel	<a href="http://www.lausanne.ch/lsinfo/admin/si/electricite/elemain.htm">http://www.lausanne.ch/lsinfo/admin/si/electricite/elemain.htm</a>
Choosing your telephone service provider	<a href="http://www.allo.ch">http://www.allo.ch</a>
Telephone service providers:	
3uTelecom AG	<a href="http://www.3u.net/ch">http://www.3u.net/ch</a>
Econophone	<a href="http://www.econophone.ch">http://www.econophone.ch</a>
Globalzone	<a href="http://www.mobilezone.ch/f/globalzone.html">http://www.mobilezone.ch/f/globalzone.html</a>
Multilink	<a href="http://www.multilink.ch">http://www.multilink.ch</a>
NETnet	<a href="http://www.netnet.ch">http://www.netnet.ch</a>
One Tel	<a href="http://www.onetel.ch">http://www.onetel.ch</a>
Profi Tel	<a href="http://www.profitel.net">http://www.profitel.net</a>
RSL Com	<a href="http://www.rslcom.ch">http://www.rslcom.ch</a>
Smartphone	<a href="http://www.smartphone.ch">http://www.smartphone.ch</a>
Sunrise	<a href="http://www.sunrise.ch">http://www.sunrise.ch</a>
Swisscom	<a href="http://www.swisscom.com/voice">http://www.swisscom.com/voice</a>
Tele2	<a href="http://www.tele2.ch">http://www.tele2.ch</a>
Telegroup	<a href="http://www.telegroup-ch.com">http://www.telegroup-ch.com</a>
Telesonique	<a href="http://www.telesonique.ch">http://www.telesonique.ch</a>
Victoria Telecom AG	<a href="http://www.blackeagle.ch">http://www.blackeagle.ch</a>
Mobile phone operators:	
Orange	<a href="http://www.orange.ch">http://www.orange.ch</a>
Sunrise	<a href="http://mobile.sunrise.ch/fre/">http://mobile.sunrise.ch/fre/</a>
Swisscom	<a href="http://www.swisscom.ch">http://www.swisscom.ch</a>
Tele2	<a href="http://www.tele2.ch/mobile/">http://www.tele2.ch/mobile/</a>
<b>France</b>	
Welcome to the France Telecom Server	<a href="http://www.francetelecom.fr">http://www.francetelecom.fr</a>
France Telecom: Bourg-en-Bresse Agency	<a href="http://www.bourgenbresse.agence.francetelecom.fr">http://www.bourgenbresse.agence.francetelecom.fr</a>
EDF – Services	<a href="http://www.edf.fr/html/fr/services/particuliers/index-particuliers-centre.html">http://www.edf.fr/html/fr/services/particuliers/index-particuliers-centre.html</a>
EDF – Contacts	<a href="http://www.edf.fr/html/fr/contacts/index.html">http://www.edf.fr/html/fr/contacts/index.html</a>
<b>HOUSEHOLD GOODS AND APPLIANCES</b>	
Conforama	<a href="http://www.conforama.com">http://www.conforama.com</a>
Coop	<a href="http://www.coop.ch/f/indexjs.htm">http://www.coop.ch/f/indexjs.htm</a>
Fust	<a href="http://www.fust.ch">http://www.fust.ch</a>
IKEA	<a href="http://www.ikea.ch">http://www.ikea.ch</a>
Interdiscount	<a href="http://www.interdiscount.ch">http://www.interdiscount.ch</a>
Interio	<a href="http://www.interio.ch">http://www.interio.ch</a>
Migros	<a href="http://www.migros.ch">http://www.migros.ch</a>
Pfister Meubles	<a href="http://www.pfistermeubles.ch">http://www.pfistermeubles.ch</a>
List of businesses	<a href="http://www.i-line.ch">http://www.i-line.ch</a>
<b>RADIO – NEWSPAPERS</b>	
List of FM radio stations in the region	<a href="http://www.brume.org/radios/">http://www.brume.org/radios/</a>
WRG English-language radio station	<a href="http://www.wrg-fm.com">http://www.wrg-fm.com</a>
Welcome to the Swiss French Radio site	<a href="http://212.74.180.106/view.asp">http://212.74.180.106/view.asp</a>
Le Temps	<a href="http://www.letemps.ch">http://www.letemps.ch</a>
Tribune de Genève	<a href="http://www.edicom.ch/tdg">http://www.edicom.ch/tdg</a>
Publicitas	<a href="http://www.publicitas.ch">http://www.publicitas.ch</a>

**CARS****Switzerland**

- Mobility CarSharing <http://www.mobility.ch>
- Service des automobiles (Traffic Department)  
Canton of Geneva <http://www.geneve.ch/san/welcome.html>
- For all other cantons: open the above site, then click *Liaison avec d'autres services des automobiles*
- Touring Club Suisse <http://www.tcs.ch>
- Guide on how to buy an environmentally-friendly cars – comparative chart <http://www.vcs-ate.ch/fr/produkte/aul.htm>
- Car insurance and casco for vacations <http://www.vcs-ate.ch>

**France**

<http://www.service-public.fr> (click *transport*)

**CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION**

- Switzerland <http://www.douane.admin.ch>
- France <http://www.finances.gouv.fr/douanes/>
- Customs <http://www.interdouane.com>

**CONSUMER AID**

- Federation of consumers in French-speaking Switzerland <http://www.frc.ch>
- Comparison of telephone and bank rates, as well as car, health and life insurance premiums <http://www.comparis.ch>
- Monsieur Prix (consumer price index) <http://www.monsieur-prix.admin.ch/f/home-f.html>
- Consumer's opinion <http://www.ciao.com>
- Consumer guide/price comparisons <http://www.bonasavoir.ch>
- Cost of living in Switzerland [http://www.insee.fr/fr/indicateur/indic\\_conj/donnees/doc\\_idconj\\_29.pdf](http://www.insee.fr/fr/indicateur/indic_conj/donnees/doc_idconj_29.pdf)
- Cost of living in Switzerland and neighbouring France [http://www.cern.ch/CERN/Divisions/PE/social\\_e.html](http://www.cern.ch/CERN/Divisions/PE/social_e.html)
- <http://www.insee.fr>
- Federation of Swiss lawyers <http://www.law.ch>
- Telephone directories <http://www.teldir.com>
- <http://www.pearsoft.ch>

**FAMILY**

- Portail Famille <http://www.lafamily.ch>

**Day nurseries (crèches) – Childminding and babysitting****Switzerland**

- List of crèches in Geneva <http://www.geneve.ch/dip/creches.htm>
- <http://www.versoix.ch>
- Red Cross baby-sitting and service for minding sick children <http://www1.club.ch/croix-rouge-ge/Chaperon.html>
- Job placement service for students, University of Geneva <http://www.unige.ch/bp/>
- SOS baby-sitter <http://www.baby-sitter.ch>
- Priorité Enfants childminding service 2, Rond-point de Plainpalais, CH-1205, Genève, telephone 022 321 02 77

**France**

- Day nurseries in Ferney-Voltaire <http://ferney.c18.org/fv/index.html> (click *Enseignement, crèches, garderies*)

**STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES****Switzerland**

- Recreational camps <http://www.ge.ch/slj/>
- <http://www.projuventute.ch/f/angebot/index.html>

Leisure activities for the young <http://www.intermundo.ch>

### France

Egide – Information on French Education and Training Opportunities for Foreign Students and Researchers

<http://www.egide.asso.fr>

## EDUCATION

### Switzerland

#### EDUCATIONAL ORIENTATION

EDUCA – The Swiss server of Education

<http://www.educa.ch/ff/index.html>

Which education?

<http://www.orientation.ch>

General information

[http://www.cern.ch/CERN/Divisions/PE/social\\_e.html](http://www.cern.ch/CERN/Divisions/PE/social_e.html)

Office d'orientation et de formation professionnelle <http://www.ge.ch/oofp/index.htm>

#### PUBLIC EDUCATION – CANTON OF GENEVA

Schools

<http://www.ge.ch/dip/ecoles.htm>

Public education in Geneva

<http://www.ge.ch/dip/welcome.html>

Educational system in Geneva

<http://www.ge.ch/dip/systscol.htm>

#### PUBLIC EDUCATION – CANTON OF VAUD

Public education in Vaud

<http://www.vd.ch> (click *liens externes*)

<http://www.dfi.vd.ch/default.asp>

Public education in Lausanne

<http://www.lausanne.ch/lsinfo/admin/ecoles/ecoindex.htm>

#### UNIVERSITIES

Graduate Institute of International Studies

<http://heiwww.unige.ch>

International University of Geneva

<http://www.iun.ch>

The Open University

<http://www.open.ac.uk>

University of Geneva

<http://www.unige.ch>

Webster University

<http://www.webster.ch>

#### HES (HAUTES ECOLES SPECIALIÉES)

Graduate Schools – Addresses

<http://www.sassa.ch/fr/adresses.htm>

#### PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Geneva Association of Private Schools

<http://www.agep.ch>

Private schools in Switzerland

<http://www.swiss-schools.ch>

#### CONTINUING EDUCATION

Swiss federation for adult education (FSEA)

<http://www.alice.ch>

Continuing education in Switzerland

<http://www.swissuni.ch>

Continuing education in Switzerland and elsewhere

<http://www.ge.ch/formation/welcome.html>

Certification of continuing education in human resources management

<http://www.ecolu-info.unige.ch/formcont/grh99.html>

Ifage (adult education)

<http://www.ifage.ch>

Popular nighttime courses

<http://www.ecole-club.ch>

Language courses:

<http://www.bell-school.ch/>

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

<http://www.ifage.ch>

<http://www.agep.ch/langues.html>

<http://www.bell-school.ch>

<http://www.ecole-club.ch>

<http://www.unige.ch/bp/>

<http://www.unige.ch/lettres/elcf/coursete/courangl.html>

**LEARNING ENGLISH ABROAD**

ARELS – Information Template <http://www.arels.org.uk/cgi-bin/school.isa>

**EDUCATION SUPPORT**

Education support site between generations <http://www.cyberpapy.com>

Association des Répétitoires AJETA 5, boulevard des Philosophes, Geneva, telephone 022 319 27 41

**France**

French educational system and information

<http://www.education.gouv.fr>

[http://www.nomade.fr/cat/enseignement\\_empl/enseignement/](http://www.nomade.fr/cat/enseignement_empl/enseignement/)

<http://www.cndp.fr>

<http://www.edufrance.fr>

<http://www.onisep.fr/web1/accueil>

Public schools in the Department of Ain

<http://ferney.c18.org/fv/index.html> (click *Enseignement, crèches, garderies*)

Schools listed by commune in Haute-Savoie

<http://www.edres74.cur-archamps.fr/ecoles>

Private schools in Ain

<http://www.cc-pays-de-gex.fr/plan.html>

Training opportunities in France and abroad

<http://www.egide.asso.fr>

**HEALTH****Switzerland**

In Geneva

<http://www.geneve.ch/social/welcome.htm>

Health on the Net Foundation

[http://www.hon.ch/HomePage/Home-Page\\_f.html](http://www.hon.ch/HomePage/Home-Page_f.html)

Geneva University Hospitals

<http://www.hug-ge.ch>

Health in Switzerland and France,  
useful addresses

[http://www.cern.ch/CERN/Divisions/PE/social\\_e.html](http://www.cern.ch/CERN/Divisions/PE/social_e.html)

United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society  
Against Sickness and Accident

<http://www.unog.ch/mutuelle.htm>

List of medical and social services

<http://www.edicom.ch/sante/conseils/memento.html>

Preventive health care

<http://www.prevention.ch>

Health for all

<http://www.doctissimo.com>

Useful addresses

[http://www.cern.ch/CERN/PE/social\\_e.html](http://www.cern.ch/CERN/PE/social_e.html)

**France**

Useful addresses

[http://www.cern.ch/CERN/PE/social\\_e.html](http://www.cern.ch/CERN/PE/social_e.html)

**ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES****Switzerland**

Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

<http://www.dfae.admin.ch>

Swiss Confederation

<http://www.admin.ch>

Canton of Geneva

<http://www.geneve-portail.ch>

City of Geneva, official site

<http://www.ville-ge.ch>

Institution AVS-AI

<http://www.avs-ai.ch/Home-F/home-f.html>

Official site of the Finance Department

<http://www.ge.ch/df/>

Hospice général in Geneva

<http://www.hg-ge.ch>

Canton of Vaud

<http://www.vd.ch>

**France**

The essential of the French Law

[http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/html/frame\\_accordsinternationaux.htm](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/html/frame_accordsinternationaux.htm)

All administrations in France

<http://www.service-public.fr>

French consulate in Geneva

<http://www3.itu.int/consulate/France/>

<http://www.france.diplomatie.fr>

**USA – TAXES**

IRS Pages

<http://www.taxesites.com/irs.html>

Forms and Publications

[http://www.irs.gov/plain/forms\\_pubs/index.html](http://www.irs.gov/plain/forms_pubs/index.html)

**TOURING****Switzerland**

In Switzerland	<a href="http://int.myswitzerland.com">http://int.myswitzerland.com</a>
Switzerland - Vacances sur mesure	<a href="http://int.myswitzerland.com/fr/vacationplanner.html">http://int.myswitzerland.com/fr/vacationplanner.html</a>
Geneva	<a href="http://www.geneve-tourisme.ch">http://www.geneve-tourisme.ch</a>
National information centre on the preservation of cultural property	<a href="http://www.nike-kultur.ch">http://www.nike-kultur.ch</a>
Nyon	<a href="http://www.nyon.ch">http://www.nyon.ch</a>
Lake Geneva area	<a href="http://www.lacote.ch">http://www.lacote.ch</a>
Touring Vaud	<a href="http://www.vaudtourisme.ch">http://www.vaudtourisme.ch</a>
Touring Valais	<a href="http://www.matterhornstate.com">http://www.matterhornstate.com</a>
Ville de Lausanne	<a href="http://www.lausanne.ch/">http://www.lausanne.ch/</a>
Willkommen auf der Riederalp	<a href="http://www.riederalp.ch/">http://www.riederalp.ch/</a>
VACANCES EN SUISSE – PORTAIL	<a href="http://www.schweizferien.ch/">http://www.schweizferien.ch/</a>
Association des marchés paysans	<a href="http://www.agirinfo.com/adresses/mar_pays.htm">http://www.agirinfo.com/adresses/mar_pays.htm</a>
Fed. Suisse du Tourisme Pédestre	<a href="http://www.swisshiking.ch/menu/d/06_links/links.htm">http://www.swisshiking.ch/menu/d/06_links/links.htm</a>
Ski stations, snow bulletins, etc.	<a href="http://www.hiver.ch">http://www.hiver.ch</a>
Aletsch	<a href="http://www.aletsch.ch">http://www.aletsch.ch</a>
Edicom: La cave	<a href="http://www.lacave.ch/lacave/fr/regions/suisse/suissei.html">http://www.lacave.ch/lacave/fr/regions/suisse/suissei.html</a>
Office des Vins Vaudois	<a href="http://www.vins-vaudois.com/">http://www.vins-vaudois.com/</a>
Guide des vins	<a href="http://www.magnumvinum.fr">http://www.magnumvinum.fr</a>

**BOOKS AND MAGAZINES ABOUT GENEVA**

Geneva NEWS	<a href="http://www.genevanews.com">http://www.genevanews.com</a> (guide to English-speaking Geneva, available from the Geneva Tourist Office))
Swiss Style:	<a href="http://www.anglolake.com">http://www.anglolake.com</a>
Living in Geneva:	<a href="http://www.awcgeneva.com">http://www.awcgeneva.com</a> (available from the American Women's Club)
Out and About	<a href="http://www.awcgeneva.com">http://www.awcgeneva.com</a> (available from the American Women's Club)
Book: Living and Working in Switzerland, by David Hampshire	

**France**

	<a href="http://www.europeonline.com/fra/index.htm">http://www.europeonline.com/fra/index.htm</a>
	<a href="http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/politique/democratisation/">http://www.culture.gouv.fr/culture/actualites/politique/democratisation/</a>
Pays de Gex	<a href="http://www.cc-pays-de-gex.fr/cc-pdg/fr/plaquette/perimetre.html">http://www.cc-pays-de-gex.fr/cc-pdg/fr/plaquette/perimetre.html</a> <a href="http://www.pays-de-gex.org">http://www.pays-de-gex.org</a> <a href="http://www.divonnelesbains.com">http://www.divonnelesbains.com</a>
Haute-Savoie	<a href="http://www.cur-archamps.fr">http://www.cur-archamps.fr</a> <a href="http://www.sudleman.com">http://www.sudleman.com</a> <a href="http://www.ville-annecy.fr">http://www.ville-annecy.fr</a>
Ville d'Annecy	
VNF – Voies Navigables de France	
Le Tourisme fluvial	<a href="http://www.vnf.fr/tourisme/b_tour.htm">http://www.vnf.fr/tourisme/b_tour.htm</a>
Bienvenue sur le site de la Bourgogne	<a href="http://www.bourgogne-tourisme.com/">http://www.bourgogne-tourisme.com/</a>
Books: Living and Working in France, by David Hampshire	
Moving to France by Marion Burkimsher	E-mail: <a href="mailto:gexpert@mac.com">gexpert@mac.com</a>

**HOTEL RESERVATIONS**

Hotels worldwide	<a href="http://www.hotelguide.ch">http://www.hotelguide.ch</a>
Other sites	<a href="http://www.placetostay.com">http://www.placetostay.com</a>
B&Bs: Gîtes de France – gîtes ruraux, chambres d'hôtes, hébergement chez l'habitant	<a href="http://www.gites-de-france.fr/fr/index.htm">http://www.gites-de-france.fr/fr/index.htm</a>

**ADVICE TO TRAVELLERS**

EUROTROTTER	<a href="http://www.eurotrotter.com/home.asp">http://www.eurotrotter.com/home.asp</a>
Travellers' information	<a href="http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/f/home/travel/travelad.html">http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/f/home/travel/travelad.html</a>
Medical advice for travellers	<a href="http://www.safetravel.ch">http://www.safetravel.ch</a>
Travelling doctor (WHO)	<a href="http://www.traveling-doctor.com">http://www.traveling-doctor.com</a>

**CLUBS AND ASSOCIATIONS**

The American Women's Club of Geneva	<a href="http://www.awcgeneva.com">http://www.awcgeneva.com</a>
United Nations Women's Guild	E-mail: <a href="mailto:unwg.geneva@itu.int">unwg.geneva@itu.int</a> (telephone 022 917 33 86)
List of Clubs	<a href="http://geneva-international.org/GVA/WelcomeKit/Kit/cass.F.html">http://geneva-international.org/GVA/WelcomeKit/Kit/cass.F.html</a>

**RELIGIOUS SITES**

Buddhist	<a href="http://www.buddhanet.net">http://www.buddhanet.net</a>
Catholic	<a href="http://www.cath.ch">http://www.cath.ch</a>
Hinduism	<a href="http://perso.club-internet.fr/ganapati/general.html">http://perso.club-internet.fr/ganapati/general.html</a>
Jewish	<a href="http://www.thewall.org">http://www.thewall.org</a>
Moslem	<a href="http://www.islam.org">http://www.islam.org</a>
Pastoral counselling	<a href="http://www.seelsorge.net">http://www.seelsorge.net</a>
Protestant	<a href="http://www.protestant.ch">http://www.protestant.ch</a>

**VOLUNTEERS**

International Conference Volunteers/Functions	<a href="http://www.icvolunteers.org">http://www.icvolunteers.org</a>
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**JOB SEARCH**

With the international organizations	<a href="http://icsc.un.org/vab/list.htm">http://icsc.un.org/vab/list.htm</a>
Elsewhere in Switzerland	<a href="http://www.swisswebjobs.ch">http://www.swisswebjobs.ch</a>
	<a href="http://www.100cv.com">http://www.100cv.com</a>
	<a href="http://www.idealjob.com">http://www.idealjob.com</a>
	<a href="http://www.bonasavoir.ch">http://www.bonasavoir.ch</a> (click <i>le bon web</i> )
	<a href="http://www.portail-emploi.ch">http://www.portail-emploi.ch</a>
	<a href="http://www.geneve.ch/OCIRT/sante_securite_travail/welcome.html">http://www.geneve.ch/OCIRT/sante_securite_travail/welcome.html</a>
	<a href="http://www.cinfo.ch">http://www.cinfo.ch</a>
	<a href="http://www.ge.ch/interface-entreprises/french/links.html">http://www.ge.ch/interface-entreprises/french/links.html</a>
Outside Switzerland	<a href="http://www.jobpilot.ch/">http://www.jobpilot.ch/</a>
Geneva job market, supply and demand	<a href="http://www.toutemploi.ch">http://www.toutemploi.ch</a>
<b>France</b>	<a href="http://www.rebondir.fr/pages/Portail/">http://www.rebondir.fr/pages/Portail/</a>

**PREPARING FOR RETIREMENT**

United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund	<a href="http://www.un.org/unjpsf/">http://www.un.org/unjpsf/</a>
Federation of International Civil Servants' Association (FICSA)	<a href="http://ficsa.org">http://ficsa.org</a>
Conseil des anciens de Genève	<a href="http://www.ville-ge.ch/geneve/dpt5/anciens/index.htm">http://www.ville-ge.ch/geneve/dpt5/anciens/index.htm</a>
Pro Senectute Suisse	<a href="http://www.pro-senectute.ch/f/basic.htm">http://www.pro-senectute.ch/f/basic.htm</a>
AAFI/AFICS	<a href="http://www.unog.ch/afics/afics.htm">http://www.unog.ch/afics/afics.htm</a>