Moving to Switzerland from the UK or the US — checklist

Tick only what applies to you. Confirm every deadline with your commune and canton. This checklist follows the ArriveCH draft guide and official Swiss, UK and US government pages checked on 29 November 2026.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

- [ ] Firm job offer. Employer should file a contract that applies only if a work permit is granted.
- [ ] UK and US: employer applies to the cantonal labour / migration authority. Do not start work, and do not treat this as a job-seeker move (UK nationals cannot come to look for work).
- [ ] UK: wait for cantonal approval. No entry visa is required, but SEM says a permit must be applied for before entering to work.
- [ ] US: after cantonal / SEM authorisation, apply by mail for a national type D visa at the Swiss embassy or consulate (not VFS Global) if staying more than 90 days.
- [ ] Passport still valid under the rule that applies to your itinerary (US visa-free entry: valid at least 3 months after leaving Switzerland and issued within 10 years).
- [ ] Lease or other proof of suitable Swiss accommodation, degree / CV / references, and translations into a Swiss official language or English.
- [ ] If moving with family: original marriage and birth certificates (Zurich and Basel have extra translation rules).
- [ ] If importing household goods: goods list, form 18.44, proof you announced departure at origin, proof of transfer of residence. Two years for duty-free belongings; a car must be declared at first entry.
- [ ] If bringing a pet: microchip before rabies vaccination; first vaccination valid only after 21 days; third-country veterinary documents; no docked ears or tails on dogs. Use the FSVO entry check.
- [ ] UK loose ends: tax / National Insurance and, if relevant, cancelling NHS S1 cover — see GOV.UK Living in Switzerland. This is not a UK-tax guide.
- [ ] US loose ends: US tax and Social Security are not covered here. Complete the Swiss visa step once authorisation is issued.

ARRIVAL, REGISTRATION AND STARTING WORK

- [ ] Enter with the documents your canton (and, if US, your visa) required. Declare a car, pet or removal goods at the border on first entry connected with the move.
- [ ] Register residence within 14 days of entering, and before starting work. You may start work only after registration.
- [ ] Vaud: announce arrival in the new commune within 8 days (stricter than the federal 14-day figure).
- [ ] City of Zurich: book Personenmeldeamt appointment; all family members attend; you must already live in the city (CHF 40 per adult, plus migration fees). If the next slot is after day 14, book it anyway and request an extension.
- [ ] Geneva: announce arrival at the cantonal OCPM within 14 days, not at the commune. Third-country applicants are generally expected to have applied for the permit before arrival.
- [ ] Basel-Stadt: start the online form and book the in-person appointment within 14 days (the reservation date counts). CHF 25 per person; biometrics at the appointment for arrivals from abroad.
- [ ] Give biometrics when summoned, then wait for the L or B card by post.
- [ ] City of Zurich only, if you have a dog older than 3 months: register it with the city dog-control office within 10 days.

FIRST THREE MONTHS

- [ ] Take out compulsory basic health insurance for every family member within 3 months of taking up residence. On-time enrolment is backdated (cover and premiums). Late enrolment is not, and a surcharge may apply.
- [ ] If you work 8 hours a week or more, employer accident insurance should already apply; if less, arrange accident cover yourself.
- [ ] AHV number: usually automatic after you are reported to the migration authorities. Find it on the health-insurance card or payslip. Short-stay (L) permits may not get automatic assignment from the migration office — ask your employer or the cantonal compensation office.
- [ ] Tax at source: employer deducts it if you do not hold a C permit and are not married to a Swiss citizen or C-permit holder. Rates vary by canton.
- [ ] Serafe radio and TV fee: do not register. A bill should arrive automatically (CHF 335 a year now; CHF 312 from 1 January 2027). Annual bill due in 60 days.

- [ ] Bank account: no official legal deadline found. Practical early step for salary. Confirm the bank's own ID list.

FIRST TWELVE MONTHS, AND OPTIONAL STEPS

- [ ] Exchange your foreign driving licence within 12 months of living in Switzerland (original licence + eye exam). UK: ASTRA lists no practical control drive and no extra theory test. US: ASTRA lists no practical control drive; confirm any theory-test point with the canton. Apply before the year is up.
- [ ] If you imported a car: Swiss number plates within 1 year. Customs declaration was already due at first entry — there is no one-year delay for customs clearance.
- [ ] Optional: SBB Halbtax / Half Fare Travelcard. Adult new-purchase price CHF 190 until 12 December 2026, then CHF 195. It renews automatically unless you cancel.

UK COMPARED WITH US (EMPLOYMENT MOVE)

- [ ] UK: third-country rules + separate UK quota (2,100 B and 1,400 L in 2027). No entry visa. Services Mobility Agreement is only for certain service work of up to 90 days, not for relocating on an L or B permit.
- [ ] US: third-country rules + general third-country quota (4,500 B and 4,000 L in 2027). Visa-free visitor stay up to 90/180 days, with work exceptions. Long-term work requires a national D visa after authorisation.

Sources and fuller explanations: the companion guide page. Official pages include ch.ch, SEM, FOPH, FSIO, OFCOM, FSVO, FOCBS, ASTRA, cantonal sites for Zurich, Geneva, Vaud and Basel-Stadt, GOV.UK, Swiss representations in the UK and US, and USDA APHIS.