



Welcome to the Canton of Bern

**Useful information for
new residents**

Englisch/Anglais



Gesundheits- und Fürsorgedirektion
des Kantons Bern
Sozialamt, Abteilung Integration

Direction de la santé publique
et de la prévoyance sociale du
canton de Berne, Office des
affaires sociales, Division Intégration

Dear New Resident

Welcome to Bern, an attractive and diverse canton. We are pleased that you have decided to come and live here.

The Canton of Bern is made up of several urban centres as well as numerous rural areas. On 1st January 2015, there were 1,009,204 people living in the canton, 15% of whom were of foreign nationality. The majority of the Bernese population lives in the towns of Bern, Biel, Burgdorf and Thun. Bern is a bilingual canton, German and French being the official languages. There are also several bilingual municipalities, although towns and villages usually have just one official language – either French or German.

It's important to us for you to feel comfortable and be able to quickly settle into the place you have chosen to live. Integration is always a two-way process which requires effort on your part as well as the understanding of the local people. This brochure gives you an overview of the services on offer to help you start your new life in the Canton of Bern. Please take advantage of them! Many municipalities also offer their own integration services. Please contact your local council directly for further information.

See also: Information platform

www.integration-be.ch

Brochure entitled

"Welcome to Switzerland"

www.bfm.admin.ch > publications)

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Advice on Everyday Issues and Integration

I've got a few general questions on living in Switzerland or would like to know more about a specific topic. Where can I turn to?

Do you have any specific questions on language? On marriage, partnership and family? Domestic violence? Schools and work? Finances, law and health? Dealing with the authorities? Immigration and old age? Or discrimination and racism?

The contact offices for integration matters provide advice for foreigners on all everyday issues and questions relating to integration. As required, these offices can also refer you to other, specialised organisations.

City of Bern:

City of Bern Centre of Competence in Integration

Effingerstrasse 21, 3011 Bern
Tel. 031 321 60 36
Email integration@bern.ch
www.bern.ch/integration

Region Emmental-Mittelland-Oberaargau:
isa Information Office for Foreigners' Issues
Speichergasse 29, 3011 Bern
Tel. 031 310 12 72
Email isa@isabern.ch
www.isabern.ch

Region Biel-Seeland-Berner Jura:
MULTIMONDO
Neumarktstrasse 64, 2503 Biel/Bienne
Tel. 032 322 50 20
Email info@multimondo.ch
www.multimondo.ch

Region Thun-Oberland:
KIO Centre of Competence in Integration
Schubertstrasse 10, 3600 Thun
Tel. 033 223 50 75
Email kio@thun.ch
www.thun.ch/kio

You will find a list of other advisory
centres and offerings at
www.integration-be.ch



Residency / Family Reunification

Where can I get information about my temporary or permanent residence permit?

You must renew your temporary or permanent residence permit regularly. Your rights and obligations depend on what type of permit you have been given as an immigrant or asylum seeker (L, B, C, G, N, F). How far in advance do you have to renew your respective permit? What rights and obligations do you have as a foreigner in Switzerland? How can you convert your residency permit from temporary to permanent? Or what must you do if you want to apply for Swiss citizenship? You can get the answers to these questions from the Canton of Bern Immigration Service (Migrationsdienst des Kantons Bern) and, if you live in Bern, Biel or Thun, from the municipal population services (Einwohnerdienste).

Migrationsdienst des Kantons Bern (Canton of Bern Immigration Service)

Eigerstrasse 73, 3011 Bern
Tel. 031 633 53 15
Email midi.info@pom.be.ch
www.be.ch/migration

City of Bern:

Einwohnerdienste, Migration und Fremdenpolizei (Population Services, Immigration and Alien Police)

Predigergasse 5, 3011 Bern 7
Tel. 031 321 53 00
(Mon–Fri 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.,
Thurs 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.)
Email einwohnerdienste@bern.ch
www.bern.ch (> Einwohnerdienste)

City of Biel:

**Bevölkerung (Dienststelle
Ausländerinnen und Ausländer)
(Population Office for Foreigners)**

Neugasse 28, PO Box 1120, 2501 Biel
Tel. 032 326 12 25
Email bevoelkerung@biel-bienne.ch
www.biel-bienne.ch (> Behörden/
Verwaltung > Direktion Soziales und
Sicherheit > öffentliche Sicherheit >
Einwohner- und Spezialdienste

City of Thun:

**Einwohnerdienste der Stadt Thun
(Thun Population Services)**

Hofstettenstrasse 14, PO Box 145,
3602 Thun
Tel. 033 225 82 49
Email einwohnerdienste@thun.ch
www.thun.ch/einwohnerdienste

**I would like my family to join me in
Switzerland. What steps should I take
and who can give me advice on this?**

Information and all the necessary forms about family reunification can be obtained from the Population Services in the cities of Bern, Biel and Thun or from the Canton of Bern Immigration Services (addresses on page 6). You can however also obtain assistance from the contact offices for integration matters (addresses on page 5). Mixed nationality couples and families can also contact the Advisory Centre for Women and Men in Mixed Nationality Relationships (frabina).

**frabina Advisory Centre for Women and
Men in Mixed Nationality Relationships**

Laupenstrasse 2, 3008 Bern
Tel. 031 381 27 01,
Email info@frabina.ch
www.frabina.ch

I came to Switzerland through marriage. What do I need to know?

Do you have any questions about marriage law in Switzerland, or about your status as a foreigner that you gained through marriage to a Swiss person or to a person with the right to reside in Switzerland? Or would you like general information about marriage or partnerships? The contact offices for integration matters will be happy to help you (addresses on page 5).

If you get married in Switzerland or live in Switzerland as a married person, you are subject to Swiss marriage law. In Switzerland the principle of equality between men and women applies – including outside marriage. This means that both spouses have the same rights and obligations and make decisions together regarding all aspects of their married life.

Domestic violence is considered a criminal act in Switzerland. In other words, the offence must be officially prosecuted under criminal law, i.e. even if this is against the wishes of the victim.

A fact sheet in 15 different languages on the main rights and obligations under Swiss marriage law can be found at:

www.bj.admin.ch (> Themen > Gesellschaft > Zivilstand > Merkblätter)

You can find more information at: www.integration-be.ch

Information on a range of topics relating to mixed nationality marriage and partnership can also be found at: www.binational.ch



German, French and Integration Courses

Where can I learn German or French?

German is the main language spoken in the Canton of Bern, with French being spoken in some regions. High German (standard German) is spoken in schools in the German-speaking areas but dialect – Swiss German – is spoken in everyday situations. In order to be able to settle well into the world of work and daily life it is important for you to be able to understand and speak the language of the area in which you now live. This will help you to make contact with Swiss people and find work more easily.

There are lots of language courses on offer in the Canton of Bern. They teach you the language you need for everyday life in Switzerland or specific topics such as work, school, children etc. There are also integration courses which provide general information about living in Switzerland. Childcare is also sometimes available whilst you attend these courses.

A list of the German and French language courses in the Canton of Bern is available at

www.be.ch/sprachkurse-migration

A list of the providers of integration courses in the Canton of Bern can be found at www.integration-be.ch

Your regional contact office for integration matters can also provide you with an overview of the range of courses on offer (see addresses on page 5). Some offices also run their own language and integration courses.



Employment

I would like to work in the Canton of Bern. How should I go about it?

If you are in possession of a valid foreigner's permit which does not contain the words "berechtigt zur Erwerbstätigkeit" (permitted to work), you should inform the population office (Einwohnerkontrolle) of your municipal authorities that you wish to start working. You should also inform this office if you change employer.

If you do not have a valid foreigner's permit or you have a tourist visa you are not permitted to work.

Information about getting onto the job market as well as current wage and working conditions can be obtained from the following two offices:

beco Berner Wirtschaft (Bernese Economy)

Ausländische Erwerbstätige
(Foreign Employees)
Laupenstrasse 22, 3011 Bern
Tel. 031 633 58 10
Email info.arbeit@vol.be.ch
www.be.ch/arbeit

Migrationsdienst des Kantons Bern (Canton of Bern Immigration Service)

Eigerstrasse 73, 3011 Bern
Tel. 031 633 53 15
Email midi.info@pom.be.ch
www.be.ch/migration

How do I go about looking for work?

Job advertisements can be found in daily newspapers, regional or local official gazettes (Anzeiger) and on the Internet. In addition to job advertisements, the platform www.treffpunkt-arbeit.ch also contains tips on looking and applying for jobs.

You can also submit your CV to the range of temporary employment agencies in your region. These agencies help people looking for both temporary and permanent employment.

You should also tell all your friends, acquaintances, relatives and neighbours that you are looking for a job. Jobs are often awarded via networks of contacts.

Some organisations offer services especially for non-Swiss people, such as mentoring programmes, projects to help find work more easily as well as further training. An overview of what's on offer as well as other information relating to the subject of work can be found here: www.integration-be.ch

Where can I get help in looking for work?

You can get advice from the regional job centres (Regionale Arbeitsvermittlungszentren, RAV). You can find the addresses of all 19 centres in the Canton of Bern at www.be.ch/arbeit

TRiiO is an organisation where you can get personal advice about work and unemployment (by appointment). It also provides free access to job sections in newspapers, the Internet and computerised workplaces. You can also get help in writing and putting together your job application documents.

TRiiO

Spitalgasse 33, 3011 Bern
Tel. 031 311 91 55
Email info@triiio.ch
www.triiio.ch

Will my foreign diploma be recognised in Switzerland?

Not all foreign diplomas are recognised in Switzerland. If you have questions about your qualifications please contact:

Staatssekretariat für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation (SBFI)
(State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI))
Kontaktstelle für die Anerkennung von Berufsqualifikationen
(Information Centre for the Recognition of Professional Qualifications)

Einsteinstrasse 2, 3003 Bern
 Tel. 058 462 28 26
 Email kontaktstelle@sbfi.admin.ch
www.sbfi.admin.ch/diploma

Information on the recognition of foreign education/training certificates/diplomas is also issued by the Career Advice and Information Centres (BIZ) whose addresses can be found at www.be.ch/biz

How can I obtain further training?

Search through the practical further training database for offers in your field of interest: www.w-a-b.ch

You can also register with the Career Advice and Information Centre (BIZ) in your region for a consultation in order to get an overview of the various further training courses on offer. You will find the addresses of the regional BIZ here: www.be.ch/biz

I would like to retrain. Where can I get ideas?

You can get information on education, professional opportunities, and further training from the Canton of Bern's Professional, Study and Career Advice Centre (BIZ). This service will also help you to get a clearer idea of your interests and skills. Contact your local BIZ directly. You can get further information and contact details at: www.be.ch/biz



Accommodation

I am looking for an apartment. How can I get about it?

Accommodation adverts can be found in daily newspapers, local official gazettes and on the Internet (e.g. www.im-moscout24.ch or www.anzeiger.ch).

You will find the addresses of search engines to help you find accommodation, tips on moving house and registering in your new area as well as the information sheet "Living in Switzerland" in 15 languages at: www.integration-be.ch

Remember that whenever you move to a new home, you must register with the Population Office within the first 14 days.

Where can I get information about tenancy law?

Information on issues relating to tenancy law can be obtained from the Cantonal Mediation Authority. The address of the authority responsible for your region can be found by going to www.be.ch/justiz > Schlichtungsbehörden. Another good point of contact is the Kantonale Mietverband - cantonal tenants' association - which offers its members free legal advice and other services relating to tenancy law problems.

Mieterinnen- und Mieterverband Kanton Bern (Canton of Bern Tenants' Association)

Monbijoustrasse 61, 3007 Bern
PO Box, 3000 Bern 23
Tel. 0848 844 844
Email mv@mverb.ch
www.mieterverband.ch

Further information and details on advisory centres for issues relating to tenancy law can also be found at www.integration-be.ch





Raising Children / Childcare / Schooling

I recently had a child and have some questions about how to care for my infant. Where can I ask?

The parents' advisory service (Mütter- und Väterberatung) offers all parents free advice and support to give them guidance, strength and confidence in their role as parents. Parents' questions vary depending on the age of their child. The parents' advisory service has specific services to offer for those soon to become parents, for the time period right after a child is born, and for the period from the child's first birthday through to kindergarten. There are advice centres in almost all the local districts in the Canton of Bern.

You can find the addresses and directions by going to: www.mvb-be.ch

How can I strengthen my role as a parent and learn more about topics relating to raising children?

The Stiftung Berner Gesundheit (Bern Foundation for Healthcare) offers regular courses at various locations in the Canton of Bern, providing support for parents in raising their children. You can find more information on these courses at www.bernergesundheit.ch

Family, maternity and local clubs also offer courses for parents. Ask for details in your local district or municipality or go to www.integration-be.ch to check what offers are available in your region.

How does the school system in the Canton of Bern operate?

Children are required by law to attend school for eleven years. The schooling and schooling materials are free.

In preparation for school, all children from the age of four attend kindergarten for two years.

After kindergarten the children go to primary school for six years and then move up to the secondary level for three years.

You can find information about school and kindergarten in a range of languages at: www.erz.be.ch/elterninfo

Erziehungsdirektion des Kantons Bern (Canton of Bern Ministry of Education)

Sulgeneckstrasse 70, 3005 Bern
Tel. 031 633 84 51,
Email akvb@erz.be.ch,
www.erz.be.ch

There is a range of options for young people once they have finished compulsory schooling. We recommend that you contact the Centre for Professional Development, Study and Career Advice (BIZ, Berufs-, Studien- und Laufbahnberatung des Kantons Bern)

(www.be.ch/biz) for information about opportunities at upper secondary level. Depending on their interests and abilities, school leavers can either do a vocational apprenticeship, an apprenticeship plus the vocational maturity examination, or continue their education at a grammar school (Gymnasium), specialised middle school (Fachmittelschule) or commercial school (Handelsmittelschule).

Switzerland has a dual vocational training system. In other words, an apprenticeship involves a practical part in a company or business and a theoretical part in a vocational school. An apprentice may also choose to take the university entrance examination which enables young people to go on to study at a university of applied science or take certain degree courses at cantonal universities. This means that doing an apprenticeship can be equal in status to attending grammar school (Gymnasium) and often leads to increased career opportunities.

Additional information on the range of educational courses can be found at: www.erz.be.ch (> Berufsbildung or > Mittelschule) and at www.integration-be.ch

You can find an information sheet in five languages on transferring to a grammar school (Gymnasium) in the Canton of Bern at:
www.erz.be.ch/aufnahmegym

Every year the “Verein fremdsprachige Eltern und Bildung” (Association for Parents speaking a Foreign Language and for Education) holds information evenings on the education system in 15 languages.

Verein für fremdsprachige Eltern und Bildung
(Association for Parents speaking a Foreign Language and for Education)

Tel. 031 331 50 63

Email fremdsprachige_eltern@yahoo.de

How do I register my child for school?

You can register your child at your local municipal council or directly with the school authorities of your municipality's school.

I would like my children to be well prepared for school and to be learning German or French before starting kindergarten. What offers are available?

Regular attendance at a childcare facility, play group, or time spent during the day with a local family (“day family”) is a great way for your child to learn and practice the national language at an early stage. For more information about these services go to www.be.ch/familie

There are also language courses for parents, with accompanying childcare services for developing the children's language skills. You can find details about the courses on offer by going to www.be.ch/sprachkurse-migration

What should I do if there are problems at school?

Talk to the teachers. You may also like to get in touch with the Cantonal Educational Counselling Service (Erziehungsberatung des Kantons Bern). The locations, telephone numbers and addresses of the 13 regional services can be found at: www.erz.be.ch/erziehungsberatung

Some local councils also employ social workers for schools who can give advice to children and young people as well as parents experiencing social or personal problems. The school itself will also help in the early identification of social problems which may prevent children from doing well at school, and take the necessary measures to resolve the problems. Contact your local school's authorities to find out more details.

I would like to arrange childcare for my children. What opportunities are available?

There is a range of childcare facilities on offer within the Canton of Bern. You can find more information about costs of and help in finding a suitable childcare place by going to: www.be.ch/familie

Gesundheits- und Fürsorgedirektion des Kantons Bern (Canton of Bern Department of Health and Welfare)

Sozialamt
Rathausgasse 1, 3011 Bern
Tel. 031 633 78 11
Email info.soa@gef.be.ch
www.be.ch/familie

Some schools also operate as day schools, providing daycare for your children before school, in the lunch hour and / or after school. This care facility is usually integrated within the local primary school and provided on the school premises. Daycare costs are calculated according to income, wealth and size of the family. A list of the local councils in Canton of Bern which offer day school facilities, along with further information, can be found here: www.be.ch/familie



Health / Social Security

I am ill. Which doctor should I consult?

You are free to choose which doctor you would like to consult. However, some health insurance models restrict the choice of doctors. Every telephone directory has a list of addresses for numerous doctors in your area. If you want to find a doctor with specific language skills, specialist area or in a particular region you can go to: www.doctorfmh.ch

We recommend that you look for a general practitioner (Hausarzt, Hausärztin) you feel you can have confidence in. If you are ill your general practitioner is your first point of contact. He/she will often even visit you at home and can also be contacted during the night or at the weekend in the event of an emergency. If necessary your general practitioner will refer you to a specialist or hospital. You should therefore only go to the Accident and Emergency department of a hospital in a life-threatening situation.

If you need an urgent medical consultation you can also take advantage of the following emergency general practitioner services:

Region Bern:

CITY NOTFALL AG

(daily 7.00–22.00 hrs.)
Bubenberplatz 10, 3011 Bern
Tel. 031 326 20 00
Email info@citynotfall.ch
www.citynotfall.ch

Praxiszentrum am Bahnhof

Parkterrasse 10, 3012 Bern
Tel. 031 335 50 00
Email pzb.bern@hirslanden.ch
www.hirslanden.ch (> Kliniken und Zentren > Bern > Praxiszentrum am Bahnhof)

Region Biel:

notfallpraxisbiel Spitalzentrum Biel

Vogelsang 84, 2501 Biel
Tel. 032 324 48 44
www.notfallpraxisbiel.ch

Region Thun:

Hausärztlicher Notfalldienst Region Thun

Krankenhausstrasse 12, 3600 Thun
Tel. 033 226 45 56
Email public@han-rt.ch
www.notfallthun.ch

I would like to know more about the Swiss healthcare system or another specific health-related topic. Where can I find out more?

Do you have a specific question about nutrition and exercise? Children and health? Love and sexuality? Or perhaps you have a general question about health services in Switzerland? You can download or order brochures in various languages free of charge at: www.migesplus.ch

How do I choose a health insurer?

Health insurance is compulsory in Switzerland. A person who comes to live in Switzerland must take out basic health insurance with a health insurance company within three months. You can find further information at www.integration-be.ch

There is a wide range of health insurance companies available. You can choose which one you would like to take out insurance with. All health insurance companies are required to give you basic coverage which pays for treatment by doctors and in hospitals in the

Canton of Bern. However, you must pay part of the doctor's or hospital bill yourself. This is called the excess.

Dentist's bills are not covered by basic health insurance.

You can compare health insurance companies to find out which is the best for you by going to: www.comparis.ch

You will find further information on the different health insurers' services and premiums at: www.bag.admin.ch

If you are on a low income you are entitled to a premium reduction. This means that the Confederation (state) and the canton in which you live pay part of your insurance premium. How much you are entitled to is usually automatically calculated on the basis of your tax return. People in possession of a B, L, N or F residency permit have to apply to the Office for Social Insurance and Supervision of Foundations (Amt für Sozialversicherung und Stiftungsaufsicht) for a premium reduction. This office can give you further information and the necessary forms.

**Amt für Sozialversicherung und
Stiftungsaufsicht (ASVS)
(Office for Social Insurance and
Supervision of Foundations)**

Abteilung Prämienverbilligung und
Obligatorium
(Department for Premium Reductions and
Mandatory Insurance)
Forelstrasse 1, 3072 Ostermundigen
Tel. 0844 800 884
Email asv.pvo@jgk.be.ch
www.be.ch/asvs

What is AHV / IV?

The Alters- und Hinterlassenenversicherung (AHV) (Old Age and Survivors' Insurance) and the Invalidenversicherung (IV) (Disability Insurance) are compulsory in Switzerland. The AHV is the state pension. Women receive an old age pension when they reach the age of 64, men when they are 65.

The IV (disability insurance) ensures that people who are unable to work either partially or completely following an accident or due to health problems from birth receive the basic minimum to live.

People aged 18 and above must pay AHV and IV contributions. These are automatically deducted from your salary if you are employed. If you are not employed or are self-employed, you have to pay the contributions directly to the AHV/IV compensation office.

**Ausgleichskasse des Kantons Bern
(Canton of Bern Compensation Office)**

Chutzenstrasse 10, 3007 Bern
Tel. 031 379 79 79
Email info@akbern.ch
www.akbern.ch

Further informations on the AHV/IV and all forms can also be found here: www.ahv-iv.ch

What other insurances should I have, even if these are not compulsory?

It is recommended that you take out the following insurances. Almost everyone in Switzerland does.

Accident insurance:

If you work you are insured for accidents via your employer. If you work for more than eight hours per week for the same employer you are also insured by the employer for accidents which do not occur at work. If you are not employed or work fewer than eight hours a week you can take out accident insurance for example through your health insurer.

Personal liability insurance:

If you cause someone injury or loss you will be held liable and therefore have to pay for it. Personal liability insurance protects you from the financial consequences of such an injury or loss. By paying just a small premium you can often be covered for very large claims. You can find out more about the various personal liability insurances here: www.comparis.ch

Household insurance:

Household insurance pays for damage to your home and belongings caused by fire, water, natural disasters (e.g. storm or flooding), theft and glass breakages. If you rent a flat, the owners usually require you to take out household insurance. This is often available in a package with personal liability insurance. You can find out more about the various household insurance policies and premiums here: www.comparis.ch

You can find out further information on insurance matters by going to www.integration-be.ch



Protection against Discrimination

Where can I get support if I become a victim of discrimination or racism?

The Canton and the municipalities are responsible for preventing and combating discrimination. The fundamental right to protection against discrimination on the grounds of race, skin colour, sex, age, language, origin, lifestyle, sexual orientation, political or religious convictions, as well as physical, mental or psychological disability applies to every person, regardless of their status of residence and nationality.

The contact offices for integration matters (addresses on page 5) provide advice for individuals who are affected by discrimination. Victims of discrimination also receive support from the following agencies:

Legal Advice for Victims of Discrimination
Berner Rechtsberatungsstelle für Menschen in Not (RBS)
(Canton of Bern Legal Advice Centre for People in Need)

Eigerplatz 5, 3007 Bern
Tel. 031 385 18 20
Email rbs.bern@bluewin.ch
www.rechtsberatungsstelle.ch

Information and Advice Centre on Violence and Racism

gggfon – gemeinsam gegen Gewalt und Rassismus
(Joint action against violence and racism)

Tel. 031 333 33 40
Email melde@gggfon.ch
www.gggfon.ch

Information, Advice and Mediation
(if there is no regional centre responsible):

Eidgenössische Kommission gegen Rassismus EKR
(Federal Commission against Racism)

Schwanengasse 2, 3003 Bern
Tel. 031 324 12 93
Email ekr-cfr@gs-edi.admin.ch
www.ekr.admin.ch

You will find further information on and services dealing with protection against discrimination and combating racism here: www.integration-be.ch





Taxation

Taxes are used by the state to finance important tasks for the good of all people living in the country. For instance, education, social services, health and transport.

How do I pay tax in the Canton of Bern?

If neither you nor your spouse holds a residency permit C, taxes are deducted directly from your salary (taxation at source). People with a residency permit, Swiss people and their non-Swiss spouses have to complete and submit their own tax return each year.

If you have questions about paying tax, please ask your employer or the cantonal tax office. On the tax office's website you will find lots of useful tips and information.

Steuerverwaltung des Kantons Bern (Canton of Bern Tax Office)

Brünnenstrasse 66, 3018 Bern
Postal address: PO Box 8334, 3001 Bern
Tel. 031 633 60 01,
www.be.ch/steuern

Do I have to pay fees for radio and television?

You have to pay for receiving radio and television broadcasts in Switzerland. Fees must be paid to an organisation called Billag AG. You must register any televisions, radios, and other devices you own with which you can receive radio or television programmes (e.g. computers and mobile phones). Only one registration is required for each household. Any number of people in the household can watch and listen to broadcasts on a range of devices.

Billag AG Contact Center

PO Box, 1701 Freiburg
Tel. 0844 834 834
Email suisa@billag.com
www.billag.ch



Getting around

How does the public transport system work?

The Canton of Bern, like the whole of Switzerland, has a well developed rail and bus network. Timetables, route networks and information about regional season tickets can be found here: www.s-bahn-bern.ch

Integrated tariff systems enable passengers to switch between the various modes of transport using the same ticket. The Canton of Bern has the following integrated tariff systems:

Region of Bern-Solothurn-Biel-Bernese Jura:

LIBERO

www.mylibero.ch

Region of Thun-Bernese Oberland:

BeoAbo

www.beoabo.ch

The Swiss Federal Railways SBB offer travelcards covering the whole of the national network. A Half-Fare travelcard allows you to use almost all forms of public transport at half-price. Information on the SBB's travelcards and timetables for the whole of Switzerland is available from any station's ticket office or at:

www.sbb.ch

If you would like to hire a car, Mobility Carsharing – as well as many other car hire companies – provides vehicles in a range of sizes at 1,400 locations in Switzerland. To use a Mobility car you must be a member: www.mobility.ch

What must I watch out for if I ride a bicycle?

The bicycle is a popular form of transport in Switzerland. It is advisable that you take out a liability insurance policy so that you are covered in the event of an accident which you cause as a cyclist. You can find more information on this on page 22.

You can find a list of the most attractive cycle routes in Switzerland at www.veloland.ch or from the organisation Pro Velo which also offers cycling courses for children and adults.

Pro Velo Canton of Bern

PO Box 6711

3011 Bern

Tel. 031 318 54 12

Email sekretariat@pro-velo-be.ch

www.pro-velo-be.ch

I have a foreign driving licence. Am I allowed to use it to drive in Switzerland?

You can use your foreign driving licence in Switzerland for 12 months after which you must exchange it for a Swiss licence. You can find further information and the necessary forms here:

www.be.ch/svsa > Führerausweise

Foreign vehicles and trailers must bear Swiss registration plates if you spend more than one year in Switzerland. If you use your vehicle(s) in Switzerland to transport people or goods for a charge you must register for this immediately.

Strassenverkehrs- und Schiffahrtsamt des Kantons Bern (Canton of Bern Office for Road Transport and Waterways Navigation)

Schermenweg 5, PO Box, 3001 Bern

Tel. 031 634 21 91

Email zfu.svsa@pom.be.ch

www.be.ch/svsa

What do I need to know as a car driver?

The speed limits listed below apply on Swiss roads. Variations to these limits are indicated by road signs.

In built-up areas: 50 km/h
Outside built-up areas: 80 km/h
Expressways: 100 km/h
Motorways: 120 km/h

A toll is charged for using the motorways. You need to buy a motorway 'vignette' sticker which you can buy e.g. from the customs authorities at the border, at petrol stations, post offices or kiosks.

In Switzerland the permitted alcohol level is 0.5 mg/ml. Professional drivers, new drivers, learner drivers, instructors as well as persons accompanying learner drivers are prohibited from consuming any alcohol before starting a journey (0.1 mg/ml). Any person with a higher alcohol level in their bloodstream who drives a motor vehicle or accompanies a learner driver will have to accept the legal consequences of their actions.

Since 1 January 2014 automobiles and motorcycles have to keep their lights on permanently when driving.

If you have your own car you must conclude a motor vehicle insurance policy. This insurance covers injury to other persons or damage to property owned by other persons. Unless you have this liability insurance, you will not get a registration plate for the vehicle from the Road Traffic Licensing Department.

Diese Broschüre ist in folgenden Sprachen erhältlich:

Deutsch, Französisch, Albanisch, Bosnisch/Kroatisch/Serbisch, Chinesisch (Mandarin), Englisch, Italienisch, Polnisch, Portugiesisch, Spanisch, Tamilisch, Thailändisch, Türkisch

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