

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Business Guide

Compiled by:

Swiss Business Hub United Kingdom

London, June 2009

Arrival and Departure

Swiss Citizens need a passport or an ID-Card.

Languages used for business

English

Public Holidays

Expected dates of Bank and Public holidays in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for the years 2009-2012.

England and Wales	2009	2010	2011	2012
New Year's Day	1 Jan	1 Jan	3 Jan	2 Jan
Good Friday	10 Apr	2 Apr	22 Apr	6 Apr
Easter Monday	13 Apr	5 Apr	25 Apr	9 Apr
Early May Bank Holiday	4 May	3 May	2 May	7 May
Spring Bank Holiday	25 May	31 May	30 May	28 May
Summer Bank Holiday	31 Aug	30 Aug	29 Aug	27 Aug
Christmas Day	25 Dec	■ 27 Dec	25 Dec	25 Dec
Boxing Day	▲ 28 Dec	▲ 28 Dec	▲ 27 Dec	26 Dec
■ Substitute Bank Holiday in lieu of 25 Dec				
▲ Substitute Bank Holiday in lieu of 26 Dec				

Health and Inoculations

What if I should need hospital treatment?

Under the current Regulations, certain people who are visiting the UK from a country with which the UK has a bilateral healthcare agreement are exempt from charges for National Health Service (NHS) hospital treatment in England that is needed promptly for a condition that arose after their arrival in the UK. This includes people from EEA member states and Switzerland.

In common with those ordinarily resident in the UK, anyone who meets the criteria of ordinary resident or is exempt from charges for hospital treatment will have to pay statutory NHS charges, e.g. prescription charges, unless they also qualify for exemption from these and will have to go on to waiting lists for treatment where appropriate.

If I should need hospital treatment what documents will I need?

The Regulations place a responsibility on individual hospitals to determine whether, in accordance with the Regulations, a patient is liable to be charged for treatment or not. In order to establish entitlement, hospitals can ask you to provide documentation that supports your claim that you are visiting the UK from a Bilateral Healthcare Agreement country. It is for you to decide what to supply, however examples of evidence could include:

- passport or identity card;
- travel documents;
- a valid European Health Insurance card (EHIC). The EHIC has replaced the old E111, E110, E119 and E128 forms. The quickest and easiest way to get an EHIC is to apply online (www.ehic.org.uk).

Am I entitled to access Primary Care Services?

While visiting the UK you may approach any GP practice within the area you are residing and ask to be accepted as a NHS patient. GP practices are free to decide which patients they accept on to their list of NHS patients. They are, however more likely to accept you if you are intending to live in the UK on a settled basis. If the practice does not wish to accept you on to its list of NHS patients, the practice may offer to treat you as a patient on a private, paying basis.

During your visit to the UK, if you require treatment that a GP or healthcare professional regards as emergency or immediately necessary, you will receive that treatment free of charge, regardless of whether you are registered with a GP practice or not.

Do I have to pay for emergency treatment if I have an accident?

Regardless of residential status or nationality, emergency treatment given at Primary Care Practices (a GP) or in Accident and Emergency departments or a Walk-in Centre providing services similar to those of a hospital Accident and Emergency department is free of charge.

What if I do not meet one of these exemptions from charges?

If you are not ordinarily resident or exempt under the regulations, charges will apply for any hospital treatment you receive and cannot be waived. If this is the case you are strongly advised to take out Private Healthcare Insurance that would cover you for the length of time you are in the UK.

Please note the above information gives general guidance only and should not be treated as a complete and authoritative statement of law. In all cases the Regulations place the responsibility of deciding who is entitled to receive free hospital treatment with the hospital providing treatment.

Recommended are vaccinations against Tetanus/Diphtheria and Polio

Time Zone

UK time zone is always one hour behind Switzerland: Changes from Winter time to Summer daylight saving time occur at the same moment as in Switzerland.

Electricity Supply

240 V, AC 50, Adaptors are necessary

Methods of Payment

UK is not part of the Euro zone. The national currency is the British Pound Sterling (rate: approx. £ 1.00 = SFr 1.80 – June 2009) .
There are no exchange controls restricting the transfer of funds associated with an investment into or out of the UK

Credit cards (charge cards) are useful, as personal cheques are generally accepted in shops and stores only if they are backed up by a cheque guarantee card issued by your bank. However, you may incur charges if using credit cards to withdraw cash or when obtaining cash from dispensing machines.

Transportation

Every major city can be reached by air or by train.

Hotels

www.atuk.co.uk

Communication

The country code to telephone the UK from abroad is **0044** and to call Switzerland **0041**.

Business Hours

Business hours are usually 09:00 am to 05:00 pm. However, there are some discrepancies particularly in the service industry, where much longer business hours may apply. Some large supermarkets are open 24 hours during the week; until 10:00 pm on Saturdays; 04:00 pm on Sundays.

Addresses and Opening Hours of embassies and consulates

Embassy of Switzerland

16-18 Montagu Place
LONDON
W1H 2BQ

Opening hours:
Monday- Friday from 9am - 12 noon

Telephone: 0044 20 7616 6000
Fax: 0044 20 7724 7001

Email: lon.vertretung@eda.admin.ch

Website <http://www.eda.admin.ch/london>

Consulate Belfast

Address

Consulate of Switzerland
54 Priory Park
Belfast BT10 0AE
Northern Ireland / UK

Phone

- 0044 77 33 59 55 95

E-Mail

belfast@honorarvertretung.ch

Consulate Cardiff

Address

Consulate of Switzerland
c/o Morgan Cole Solicitors
Bradley Court

Park Place
Cardiff CF10 3DP
Great Britain

Phone

- 0044 2920 48 85 33 (Tel. + Fax)

Fax

- 0044 2920 48 85 33 (Tel. + Fax)

E-Mail

cardiff@honorarvertretung.ch

Consulate General Edinburgh

Address

Consulate General of Switzerland
255 C Colinton Road
Edinburgh EH14 1DW
Scotland

Phone

- 0044 131 441 40 44

Fax

- 0044 131 441 72 38

E-Mail

edinburgh.vertretung@eda.admin.ch

Consulate Gibraltar

Address

Consulate of Switzerland
Gardiner's Road 11/1
Gibraltar

Postal address

Consulate of Switzerland
P.O. Box 1274
Gibraltar

Phone

- 00350 200 41 138 (Tel. + Fax)

Fax

- 00350 200 41 138 (Tel. + Fax)

E-Mail

vesguisan@sapphire.net.gi

Consulate Hamilton / Bermuda

Address

Consulate of Switzerland
2 Reid Street
Hamilton HM 11
Bermuda

Postal address

Consulate of Switzerland
P.O. Box HM 458
Hamilton HM BX
Bermuda

Phone

- 001 441 295 5588

Fax

- 001 441 295 5578

E-Mail

hamilton@honorarvertretung.ch

Consulate Manchester

Address

Consulate of Switzerland
c/o Thornburn & Co. Ltd
Church House, 5th Floor
90 Deansgate
Manchester M3 2GP
Great Britain

Phone

- 0044 162 552 79 96

Fax

- 0044 162 553 78 77

E-Mail

manchester@honorarvertretung.ch

Consulate St. Peter Port / Guernsey

Address

Consulate of Switzerland
c/o Rothschild Bank Switzerland (C.I.) Ltd.
St. Julian's Court
St. Julian's Avenue
St. Peter Port
Guernsey C.I. GY1 3UA
Great Britain

Postal address

Consulate of Switzerland
c/o Rothschild Bank Switzerland (C.I.) Ltd.
P.O. Box 330
St. Peter Port
Guernsey C.I. GY1 3UA
Great Britain

Phone

- 0044 1481 71 02 67

Fax

- 0044 1481 71 02 75

E-Mail

stpeterport@honorarvertretung.ch

Consulate West Bay / Cayman Islands

Address

Consulate of Switzerland
13 Staghorn Close
Coral Gables
Grand Cayman
Cayman Islands

Postal address

Consulate of Switzerland
P.O. Box 30341
Grand Cayman, KY1-1202
Cayman Islands

Phone

- 001 345 326 43 85

Fax

- 001 345 949 11 62

E-Mail

cayman@honorarvertretung.ch

Tips for initiating business contacts

On the whole, business methods in the UK are similar to those in Switzerland and Exporters are unlikely to encounter any unfamiliar situations with regard to business practice. However the following points should be kept in mind when doing business in the UK.

When referring to the citizens of the United Kingdom, it is better to refer to them as the 'British' rather than the 'English', a common mistake which can cause upset amongst the citizens of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

In the event of disputes or in making complaints, keep a civil tone and avoid raising your voice or using strong language, however difficult this may be at the time. A friendly but firm approach usually yields better results.

Formality

The business community maintains a reasonable level of formality, at least in the initial stages of their business relations, although the British are not as formal as many foreigners would believe them to be.

Forms of Greeting

Shaking someone's hand upon meeting for the first time is customary and considered important but for those that meet regularly it is not necessary.

Men should introduce themselves as Mr 'So-and-So' (with or without first name) and women by Mrs or Miss dependant on their marital status or Ms if they prefer. People who have been knighted can be referred to as Sir, e.g. Sir Anthony Hopkins or simply Sir Anthony, (but never Sir Hopkins). Contrary to the custom in Switzerland, Doctor is generally only used by medical doctors, and academic titles are often not used unless within the academic arena. The use of first names amongst all ranks is becoming increasingly common.

Dress Code

During business hours it is customary for men to wear suits with a shirt and tie rather than sports jacket and tie. For women either a suit or smart skirt/trousers and jacket with a blouse is acceptable. Socially the dress code tends to be more relaxed although it is advisable for men to wear a jacket and possibly a tie when dining out as many restaurants stipulate formal attire (people wearing jeans or sneakers could be refused entry). There are certain social customs and dress codes in British society that should be strictly adhered to. Formal attire is not necessarily only used in high-society but on festive occasions such as Gala dinners or Balls etc.

Invitations

Invitations for functions should be sent out well in advance and the dress code stipulated to avoid any embarrassment on the part of the guest.

Punctuality

Business people are expected to arrive punctually for meetings although this is not always possible due to the constraints of the British Public Transport System. It is therefore important to allow plenty of time for travel, especially in urban areas and during the 'rush hour'. If you are running very late for a meeting, it is courteous to telephone and advise your business contact.

Business Cards

In business circles, business cards are generally expected but not always a necessity.

Gifts

Business people in the UK do not expect to receive gifts from business associates. Indeed some organisations, especially those in the Public sector and Government bodies, actively discourage the acceptance of gifts. Smaller items such as pens, diaries, alcohol are nonetheless generally well received as thank-you gifts.

If you are invited to a business associate's home, a gift of flowers, chocolates or wine although not expected is still common practice.

In all cases, and most importantly, the gift should never seem inappropriately expensive.

Thank-you Cards

After attending a social engagement at a friend or colleague's invitation, it is customary to send a thank-you card to the hostess.

Tipping

In the UK tipping is very much at your own discretion and the amount depends on the level of service received. However, hotels and restaurants typically add 10-15% service charge to your bill. Taxi drivers, hair salon staff etc can be tipped at your own discretion. It is worth being aware that although restaurants are legally obliged to indicate whether or not service is included in the bill many do not make this clear. This can lead to payment being made twice or even three times (already included in the total; adding on to a credit-card slip; paying cash with the bill).

Regional Variations

The official language is English. However regional accents in the UK are noticeable and with some accents and colloquialisms bordering upon dialects, it can be difficult for outsiders to understand what is being said.

Titles – Order of the British Empire

The Order of the British Empire is perhaps the most common knighthood given today. It's frequently awarded to civilians for **public service and contributions to the nation**. Many British scientists, educators, doctors, nurses, charitable and social workers, business people, athletes, writers, actors, musicians, and artists have received this distinction.

Knight/Dame Commander – KBE, DBE

A pre-eminent contribution in any field, usually, but not exclusively at national level, or in a capacity which will be recognised by peer groups as inspirational and significant nationally, and which demonstrates sustained commitment;

CBE - Commander

A prominent national role of a lesser degree, or a conspicuous leading role in regional affairs or making a highly distinguished, innovative contribution in his or her area of activity

OBE - Officer

A distinguished regional or country-wide role in any field, including notable practitioners known nationally

MBE - Member

Service in and to the community of a responsible kind which is outstanding in its field; or very local 'hands-on' service which stands out as an example to others. In both cases awards illuminate areas of dedicated service which merit public recognition.

For example:

Envelope	Opening of letter	Verbal Address	Business card
Sir Anthony Hopkins	Dear Sir Anthony	Sir Anthony	Sir Anthony Hopkins CBE
Dame Judi Dench	Dear Dame Judi	Dame Judi	Dame Judi Dench DBE

(<http://www.honours.gov.uk/>)

One of the services provided by the SBH UK is a “Partner Search”. Please contact the SBH UK or Osec for relevant product specific advice.

Business Practices

Market Entry

The United Kingdom has the fourth largest economy in the world attracting global investors and exporters. Switzerland is ranked 12th as a goods and services exporter to the UK. The UK market is very competitive and developed, its size, maturity and openness are one of the greatest challenges. The specific market sector will determine your market entry strategy. In order to access the market, new entrants will have to prove they have a clear advantage in terms of pricing, quality or design. Generally it is advised to work with local representatives (importer, distributor, agent) which are well established and have an experience in your particular market segment.

Customs

Customs duty is assessed on the market value of imported goods at the time they enter the UK. For shipments the commercial invoice, bill of lading or airway bill, packing lists, insurance documents are required and sometimes certificates of origin, sanitation, etc. In order to avoid delays in custom clearance a copy of or the commercial invoice should accompany the shipment.

Once you have collected your baggage at the airport, you must make your way to the Customs Hall. Unless your journey originated in the EEA (an airport stopover does not count), you have to pass through the red or green 'clearway system'.

If you have goods to declare or are unsure about the import restrictions, then you should pass through the Red Channel.

The UK has severe penalties against drug smuggling. Drug traffickers may try to trick travellers: never allow someone else to carry your bags before the customs checks and never carry bags through customs for other people.

The following companies organise regular transport to/from the UK and can give additional advice:

Schäfli Transporte
Mühlentalstrasse 174
CH – 8200 Schaffhausen
Tel.: 052 644 0880
Fax: 052 644 0881
E-mail: info@schaefli.ch
www.schaefli.ch

Extra Express Transport Logistik AG
Im Wanneboden 9
4133 Pratteln
Tel.: 061 827 9393
Fax: 061 827 9399
E-Mail: info@extra.ch
www.extra.ch

Dornack International Ltd
609 London Road
West Thurrock
RM20 3BJ
Tel.: 01708 686 960
Fax: 01708 686 980
E-Mail: London@dornack.com
www.dornack.com

Luker Bros Removals and Storage Ltd
Shelley Close
Headington
OXFORD
OX3 8HB
Tel.: 01865 762 206 / 01865 740 700
Fax: 01865 750 625
E-mail: sales@lukerbros.com
www.lukerbros.co.uk

Swiss office:

Luker Freight SA
Route des Jeunes 4 Bis
Boîte Postale 1474
1211 Genève 26
Tel: 022 342 2920
Fax: 022 342 2986
E-Mail: luker@luker.ch
www.luker.ch

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Unit B
Davis Road Industrial Park
Davis Road
Chessington
Surrey
KT9 1TQ
Tel.: 020 8391 8222
Fax: 020 8391 8220
E-Mail: international@bishopsmove.com
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