



Welcome to
the University
of Fribourg!

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Foreword

Welcome to the University of Fribourg!

Bienvenue à l'Université de Fribourg !

Willkommen an der Universität Freiburg!

This guide contains information on the various administrative steps that must be taken to move to Fribourg from abroad. It is designed for foreign nationals who are joining the University of Fribourg to work or conduct research. The following information is aimed at:

- Professors
- Lecturers
- Postdoctoral researchers
- PhD students
- Visiting research scholars
- Technical and administrative staff

Should any information be missing from this guide, you are invited to contact the Welcome Center for Academics. We will be happy to offer additional help, including:

- Information on administrative procedures
- Help navigating the various services available at Unifr
- Resources and information on life in Fribourg



Prior to Arrival

Entry documents

Depending on your place of origin and on the length and nature of your stay at Unifr, you may need to apply for a visa to enter Switzerland. The following information is meant to help you determine what entry documents will be necessary for you. This information is subject to change, it is not legally binding, and it may not apply to each individual situation. The Welcome Center for Academics will be happy to offer you individualized information.

If you work for the University of Fribourg, please note that the [Human Resources Service](#) handles the work permit application, **but not the visa**.

EU/EFTA Nationals

If you are a citizen of an EU/EFTA country, you do not need a visa to enter Switzerland.



Non-EU/EFTA Nationals

If you are a citizen of a non-EU/EFTA country, you may need a visa to enter Switzerland.

Please contact the Swiss consular representation in your country of residence to initiate your visa request. As each Swiss representation may have different rules, you are encouraged to **start the process as early as possible**.

Be sure to prepare all the necessary documents requested by the local Swiss embassy or consulate. Here is an indicative list of documents that may be requested:

- A valid passport
- Your birth certificate
- Your marriage certificate (if you are married)
- The invitation letter or work contract from Unifr (in some cases)

Please note that some of these documents may have to be originals, and some may need to be translated into English, French, or German, by an official translation service.

Useful links

- [Overview of permits delivered by the Swiss government](#)
- [Do I need a visa?](#)
- [Cantonal Office for Migration and Population](#)
- [State Secretariat for Migration](#)
- [Information on family reunification](#)
- [Living in Switzerland](#)



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Housing

Unifr does not have a traditional campus; it is spread out across the whole city. This situation offers you a lot of freedom when it comes to choosing the neighborhood in which you would like to live.

If urban life is not for you, consider settling in a neighboring town; the public transportation system is safe and reliable, and it is a bike-friendly area.

If you want to rent an apartment, you should know that most apartments are unfurnished, but if you are willing to sublet a place, you may find a furnished apartment for a limited period of time (they are often offered by locals who leave the country for a while).

For a rough idea of how much rent costs, see budget on page 25. Keep in mind that it is recommended for your rent to add up to no more than a quarter of your monthly income.

PhD students can apply for [student residences](#).



Here are a few useful links to find accommodation that is not limited to students. [Facebook](#) and [Airbnb](#) may also be useful when it comes to finding short-term accommodation.

Hotels

- [Hine Adon Apparthotel](#)
- [Mercure Fribourg Centre Remparts](#)
- [Hôtel de la Rose](#)
- [Alpha Hotel](#)

Apartments

- [ImmoScout24](#)
- [Flatfox](#)
- Anibis (in [French](#) or [German](#))
- [Homegate](#)

Room in a home or shared apartment

- [Apartis](#): the guest studios are not restricted to students (A louer > Guest studios)
- [Cité St-Justin](#)
- [Foyer Beauséjour](#)

For women

- [Foyer Bel-Abri](#)
- [Foyer universitaire Le Tilleul](#)



Upon Arrival

Insurance

In Switzerland, **basic health insurance is compulsory** and is not covered by the employer. Any person who moves to Switzerland has three months to take out health insurance. Here is official [information from the Swiss government](#).

Exemptions to take out Swiss insurance can be requested in some circumstances, which are described in the Swiss Law (see Art. 2 in [French](#) or [German](#)). You may contact your municipality to ask whether you qualify for an exemption.

If you are an EU/EFTA national, bring your European Health Card. Please inform your healthcare provider in your home country prior to your stay to ensure you will be covered in Switzerland.

If you do not qualify for an exemption, you will need to choose and pay for your own Swiss health insurance. Premiums and deductibles can be adapted to your needs and will determine your monthly costs. The following website will help you compare the various options available: [Comparis](#).



Different forms of insurance:

Health insurance

- You must subscribe to **compulsory basic insurance** within 3 months of your arrival.
- Complementary benefits and premiums are not compulsory but may be added to the basic package according to your needs.

Accident

- If you work less than 8hrs/week, you must add accident coverage to your basic coverage.
- If you work more than 8hrs/week, your employer covers professional and non-professional accidents.

Personal liability and household insurance

- It may be required if you want to rent an apartment or according to the nature of your research at Unifr.

Depending on your healthcare plan, you may need to find a primary care provider (called *médecin de famille* / *Hausarzt*). Your insurance company will provide you with a list of general practitioners they work with. It will then be your responsibility to call their practice and make an appointment (note that physicians are often overwhelmed with patients, so you may have to call a few practices before finding one that still has availabilities).

Dental care is not included in healthcare plans but can be added to your basic coverage as a complementary benefit.



Registering with the canton and city of Fribourg

EU/EFTA Nationals

Step 1: Register with the canton of Fribourg to receive your residence permit

If you are staying longer than 90 days, you will have 14 days to register with [SPOMI](#) (the cantonal Office for Migration and Population) to receive a residence permit. This registration may be done electronically or through postal services, and it will be subject to a fee.

Here is a list of the documents you will need to mail to register with [SPOMI](#) (note: this list may vary according to each individual situation):

- Duly filled declaration of arrival (in [French](#) or [German](#))
- Attach all the annexes requested in the form, plus:
 - 1 recent ID photograph,
 - A copy of a valid ID or passport,
 - Any document that explains the purpose of your stay. Such as, for instance:
 - Copy of your work contract (that includes the percentage at which you will work, your start date, and the duration of the contract)
 - Invitation or confirmation letter from Unifr

You can send these documents as pdf files via email: spomi@fr.ch or via postal mail to the following address:

Service de la population et des migrants
Secteur Europe
Rte d'Englisberg 11
1763 Granges-Paccot

You will then receive an invitation to go to SPOMI in person to capture your biometric data, along with the final bill. Finally, your residence permit will be mailed to you.



Step 2: Register with the city of Fribourg

You will also need to register with the “[Contrôle des habitants](#)” within 14 days of your arrival. Please note that this registration must be done in person and is subject to a fee, too. You will find detailed information on what you should do to move to Fribourg here ([in French](#) or [in German](#)).

- Here is a list of the documents you may need to present to register with the city (note: this list may vary according to each individual situation):
 - Valid passport or ID
 - Your residence permit and/or the declaration of arrival form (which you will already have shared SPOMI: in [French](#) or [German](#))
 - Confirmation you have valid health insurance (for each member of your family)
 - Rental agreement
 - If you are married and/or have children: your marriage certificate and/or birth certificate of your children
 - CHF 20 for each adult

Note: if you are settling in another city, you will have to register with the appropriate municipality. Here is a non-exhaustive list of the closest neighboring cities:

- [Marly](#)
- [Villars-sur-Glâne](#)
- [Givisiez](#)
- [Granges-Paccot](#)
- [Düdingen](#)
- [Tafers](#)



Citizens of non-EU/EFTA states

Step 1: Register with the canton of Fribourg to receive your residence permit

Since the request to enter Switzerland was initiated by the Swiss consular representation in your home country, [SPOMI](#) (the cantonal Office for Migration and Population) will already have access to the documents you have submitted to receive your visa.

Upon your arrival in Fribourg, you will have 14 days to submit the following documents (note: this list may slightly vary according to each individual situation):

- Duly filled declaration of arrival (in [French](#) and [German](#))
- Attach all the annexes requested in the form, plus:
 - Two recent ID photographs
 - A copy of your ID or valid passport (if your passport was stamped at customs, you may want to include a copy of this page as well).

You can send these documents as pdf files via email: spomi@fr.ch or via postal mail to the following address:

Service de la population et des migrants
Rte d'Englisberg 11
1763 Granges-Paccot

You will then receive an invitation to go to SPOMI in person to capture your biometric data. Finally, your residence permit will be mailed to you along with the final bill.



Step 2: Register with the city of Fribourg

You will also need to register with the “[Contrôle des habitants](#)” within 14 days. Please note that this registration must be done in person and is subject to a fee, too. You will find detailed information on what you should do to move to Fribourg here (in [French](#) or [German](#)).

- Here is a list of the documents you may need to present to register with the city (note: this list may vary according to each individual situation):
 - Valid passport or ID
 - Your residence permit and/or the declaration of arrival form (which you will already have shared SPOMI: in [French](#) or [German](#))
 - Confirmation you have valid health insurance (for each member of your family)
 - Rental agreement
 - If you are married and/or have children: your marriage certificate and/or birth certificate of your children
 - CHF 20 for each adult

Note: if you are settling in another city, you will have to register with the appropriate municipality. Here is a non-exhaustive list of the closest neighboring cities:

- [Marly](#)
- [Villars-sur-Glâne](#)
- [Givisiez](#)
- [Granges-Paccot](#)
- [Düdingen](#)
- [Tafers](#)



During your stay

Services at Unifr

Welcome Center for Academics

Since the information in this guide can be general, do not hesitate to contact the Welcome Center directly to receive personalized guidance concerning:

- Visa application,
- Residence permit,
- Registering with the city (Contrôle des habitants) or the canton (SPOMI),
- Healthcare,
- Or any other administrative questions you may have.

The Welcome Center for Academics will be happy to offer you guidance and support as you go through various administrative steps, but for complex situations that may require legal advice, you may consider contacting a specialized service for immigrants in the canton of Fribourg: [CCSI](#). Alternately, [Fribourg pour tous](#), a service designed to offer social information and guidance, may also be able to assist you in finding the help you may need.

* The services followed by an asterisk are reserved to the students and/or employees of the University of Fribourg. They are not available to visiting researchers.



Libraries

There are several [University libraries](#) across Fribourg.

If you have a Unifr account and Campus Card, you will automatically have access to the whole catalog ([Fribourg Discovery](#)).

- Note: you may need to be on campus or use the VPN to benefit from some services.

Your library account will be connected to your SWITCH edu-ID account and your Campus Card will serve as your library card.

If you are not entitled to a Campus Card, you can apply to the Cantonal and University Library ([BCU](#) in French / [KUB](#) in German) for a temporary library card to access the BCU's documents. Here is what you (or the person who invites you to Unifr) must do to obtain this card:

You need to request the card at least one week before the desired period of validity of the card. Please email a copy of your invitation to Unifr (or confirmation of your status as a visiting researcher at Unifr) to bcu@fr.ch. The request should contain your name, your address during your stay in Fribourg, your birthdate, your phone number, your email address.

Afterwards, you can go to the BCU circulation desk with an official ID and a CHF 100 deposit to obtain your card.

The money will be refunded to you when you return your card.

Human Resources Service*

If you are employed by the University of Fribourg, the [Human resources Service](#) will answer your questions concerning your contract, work permit, salary, withholding taxes, and related topics.



Unisport*

Your Campus Card will grant you access to the [Unisport offer](#). Before participating in an activity, remember to sign up for it on [MyUnifr](#) (> Mes demandes > Inscription à un cours de sport).

Unifr has three different fitness centers: one in Miséricorde (close to the chapel), one in Regina Mundi (underground floor), and one in Périsses (under the cafeteria). To be allowed to use these gyms, you will need to purchase a pass.

If you are not receiving a Campus Card, you may subscribe to Unisport for a fee (information in [French](#) or [German](#)).

Language Centre*

The [Language Centre](#) offers a variety of [Language courses](#) that are open to the Unifr community.

Research Promotion Service*

The [Research Promotion Service](#) is designed to support researchers working at Unifr. They will answer your questions concerning funding opportunities or the elaboration of a project proposal.

Uni-Social*

[Uni-Social](#) is here to provide counseling and support with questions concerning personal, professional, administrative, and financial matters.

Restaurants and cafeterias at Unifr

There are three main restaurants at Unifr, called [Mensas](#): one in Miséricorde, one in Regina Mundi, and one in Périsses. They have various affordable lunch offers that should cater to the needs of all sorts of diets. If you are a student or a Unifr employee, your Campus card will get you a special rate.



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Living in Fribourg

The Canton of Fribourg

Whether you want to swim, hike, discover new traditions, or tour a medieval town, the [canton of Fribourg](#) will have what you are looking for!

Fribourg's central location is also convenient when it comes to reaching other cities and regions. From Fribourg, you can reach:

- Bern in 20 minutes
- Lausanne in 1 hour
- Geneva, Zurich, or Basel in 1hr30

The City of Fribourg

[The city of Fribourg](#) combines the charm of its Old Town with the convenience of modern infrastructure. With its many city walls, churches, and historic bridges, it is a paradise for history enthusiasts!

After a walk across the historic part of town, you will find that the capital of cheese fondue also has a lot to offer in terms of [good food](#).



Transportation

Airports

- [Zurich \(ZRH\)](#)
- [Geneva \(GVA\)](#)
- [Basel \(BSL\)](#)

Public transportation

The Swiss public transportation system is safe, reliable, well developed, and used by everyone. There are very few places you cannot reach using public transportation.

- The [SBB](#) (CFF in French) is the Swiss Federal Railway company. Each canton then has its own local “branch” of public transportation; in Fribourg, it is called [TPF](#).
- You may consult schedules and buy tickets for your bus, train, tram, funicular, or boat rides on the [SBB website](#) or app.
- You may also go to the SBB desk, which you will find at any major station, including that of Fribourg, to purchase one of the passes they offer. Here are the two most popular passes:
 - If you purchase the [Half Fare Travelcard](#), you can use the SBB system for half the normal price. This pass costs CHF 190 for a year.
 - The [GA Travelcard](#) will grant you access to the whole Swiss public transportation system (a few exclusions may apply for privately owned transportation companies, especially in the mountains). This pass costs approximately CHF 4000 for a year. Monthly cards can be requested at the counter (approx. CHF 355/month).



Cycling

- Biking can be a good mode of transportation in Fribourg. Most roads are equipped with a bike lane, and it is easy to find a safe spot to park your bike.
- With your Campus Card, you can subscribe to a [Publibike](#) plan that will allow you to use the public bikes (both electric and traditional) you will find across the city.

Car

The city of Fribourg is primarily designed to be navigated on foot, by bike, or by bus. You may thus find it complicated and expensive to have your own vehicle, but a car can be useful when it comes to outdoors activities or if you live in a rural area.

- If you are bringing your own car from abroad, you will have 12 months to register it with the Office for Circulation and Navigation ([OCN](#)).
 - Note that your vehicle will need to be appropriately insured.
- If you are staying in Switzerland, you can claim a Swiss driver's license within 12 months of your arrival (information in [French](#) or [German](#)).
- Parking
 - Good parking spots can be hard to find, even at your home. Often, parking needs to be added to your monthly rent and costs usually depend on the location of the parking spot.
 - There is no free parking in the city center, but you will see that there are many parking lots to choose from.
- If you are not interested in importing or buying your own car, the car-sharing company [Mobility](#) might be an interesting alternative.



Groceries

The main grocery stores are [Migros](#), [Coop](#), [Denner](#), [Lidl](#), and [Aldi](#). Most of them offer online shopping with home delivery.

Opening hours:

- Grocery stores are usually open from 08:00 to 19:00.
- Most stores are closed on Sunday.
- They close later on Friday (20:00 or 21:00) and earlier on Saturday (16:00).
- The grocery stores located in the train station have longer hours and are open on Sunday.

For locally grown produce, you can also visit Fribourg's [Farmers' market](#) on Wednesday and Saturday mornings.

Water

In Switzerland, it is safe to drink tap water.



Waste disposal

To contribute to Switzerland's reputation of being a clean country, be prepared to follow strict rules when it comes to waste disposal (in [French](#) or [German](#)).

Note: The following information applies to the city of Fribourg. If you live in another municipality, the rules, official trash bags, and schedules will be different. You will receive the information you need when you register with your city.

- You will have to use the official blue garbage bags, which you will find in every grocery store, to dispose of your non-recyclable waste. Garbage trucks will collect the bags twice a week.
- Paper and cardboard will be collected once a week.
- Recycling is strongly encouraged in Switzerland. You will find 15 [recycling stations](#) across the city, where you can dispose of used glass, PET bottles, aluminum and cans, clothes, and oils.

Mobile phone and Wi-Fi providers

- Whether you need a prepaid SIM card or a yearly plan, the main Swiss telecommunication providers are [Swisscom](#), [Salt](#), and [Sunrise](#).
- These providers often have bundle offers, so you may want to choose the same provider for your Wi-Fi and mobile phone.
- Some grocery stores also offer plans ([Migros](#), [Coop](#), or [Lidl](#), for example).
- If you wish to compare the various providers' offers, [MobileZone](#) may be able to help you.



Emergencies

If you can only remember one number, let it be **112**.

112 is the European standard emergency number that will connect you with the local emergency services, who will then dispatch your call according to your needs.

To reach the appropriate service directly, here are the main three emergency numbers in Switzerland:

- Ambulance: 144
- Police: 117
- Fire Department: 118

The main hospital in Fribourg is the [Hôpital Fribourgeois \(HFR\)](#). This is where you will find the largest (but also busiest) emergency room. The [Permanence Médicale Fribourg](#) also offers urgent care without appointment during the week and may be a good alternative.



Families

If you are moving to Switzerland with your family, you may need to apply for [family reunification](#).

The [Parents and Family platform](#) contains all the information necessary to combine family responsibilities with your new position at Unifr.

Daycare

There are various daycare options you can choose from. As the spots are limited, you will probably need to go through a waiting list. Be sure to allow enough time and register as soon as possible. The cost of daycare depends on each situation as the fee is tailored to each family's income and circumstances.

- [Daycare for Unifr employees and students](#)
- [Other options in Fribourg](#)

School

Children are required to go to [school](#) for 11 years (from the age of 4 to the age of 15). Children generally attend the school that is closest to their place of residence. The public-school system is secular and free, and it offers quality education in French and/or German. Please contact the [school authorities](#) if you have any questions.

Should you wish for your children to attend an English-speaking or international school, you may investigate private and international schools around Fribourg. The closest ones will probably be in [Bern](#), [Lausanne](#), or [Vevey](#).



Finances

The local currency is the Swiss Franc (CHF). Cashless payments are becoming more common, so most stores and restaurants are equipped with credit-card readers. Some places also accept Euros (EUR), but the change you will receive will be in CHF.

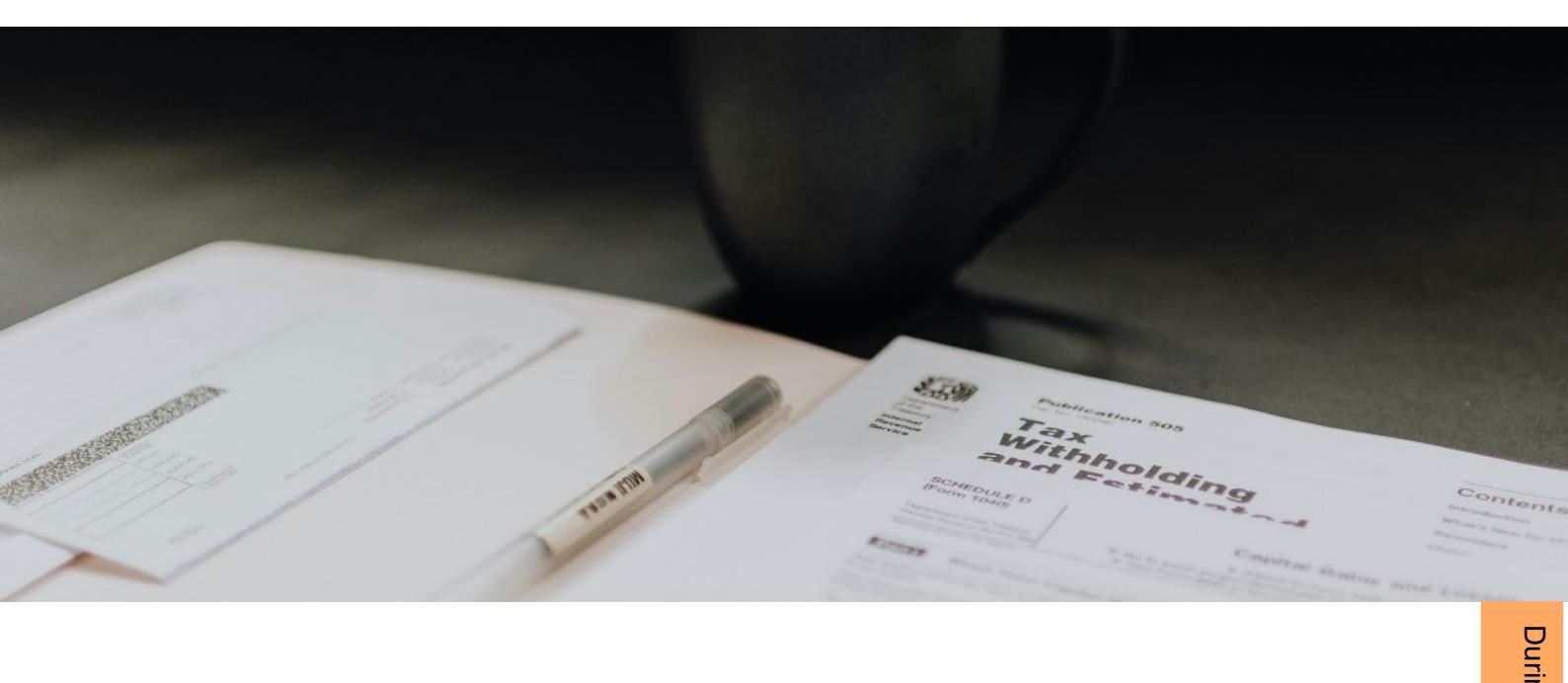
In Switzerland, the sales tax is included in all the prices you will see, and there is no obligation to leave a tip – though a few Francs to reward a job well done is always appreciated by service staff.

Banks

If you receive a salary from Unifr, you will probably need to open a Bank account with a Swiss bank or the [Swiss Post](#).

- Here are some of the documents you may need to open a bank account (note: this list is only indicative)
 - Residence permit
 - Valid identification
 - Work contract
 - Invitation letter from Unifr
- Usually, a debit card will be attached to your bank account. This card will allow you to draw money at ATMs.
- A Swiss bank account also grants access to TWINT, Switzerland's widely used payment app.

Please note that since you will need to present a residence permit to open a bank account, it may take a while for you to have a local account. Be sure to bring sufficient cash or a credit card that functions in Switzerland for the first few weeks of your stay.



Taxes

You will have to pay taxes if Switzerland becomes your official country of residence and/or if you receive a salary from Unifr.

As a foreign national, you will likely be subject to the source taxation procedure (withholding tax). It means that your taxes will be deducted directly from your monthly salary.

The taxes you will have to pay will depend on your salary, personal circumstances, and marital status. Here is the list of the different rates that are applied in the canton of Fribourg in [French](#) or [German](#).

You will be required to pay the radio and television fee ([serafe](#)). It costs CHF 335/year and will be your contribution to public media.

Anyone who does not sign up to become a firefighter will also have to pay the “non-firefighter tax.” This tax is CHF 100/year.

Approximate monthly budget (for one person)

To give you an idea of the cost of living in Switzerland, here is an overview of the various expenses you may expect:

- Accommodation
 - Rent usually includes utilities (heating, water, cleaning of common spaces, etc.), but sometimes, rent and utilities are presented separately. Keep in mind that utilities do not include electricity or internet.
 - Approximate rent
 - Room in a shared apartment: CHF 400-700
 - Studio: CHF 700-1000
 - 1-bedroom apt (2 ½ rooms): CHF 1200-1700
 - 2-bedroom apt (3 ½ rooms): CHF 1400-1900
 - 3-bedroom apt (4 ½ rooms): CHF 1600-2200
 - Deposit: usually the value of 2-3 months of rent
 - If you do not cause any damages, the deposit will be fully refunded upon your departure.
- Insurance
 - Health insurance
 - Minimum of approx. CHF 300/month
 - This sum can go up according to premiums and deductibles selected.
 - Household and liability
 - Approx. CHF 200/year
- Groceries/personal hygiene
 - Approx. CHF 500/month
- Phone/wifi/TV
 - Approx. CHF 80/month
 - Serafe: CHF 335/year
- Transportation
 - Depends on the frequency and length of your trips
 - From CHF 20/month for a few short trips to 355/month for the general travelcard (GA)
- Electricity
 - Approx. CHF 10/month

Additional costs depend on individual needs

- Couples / families
 - Daycare
 - The cost of daycare depends on the amount of time your child will spend there, and on your salary and personal circumstances. [Here](#) is an indicative grid (in French).
 - Each member of your family will need to have a health-insurance policy. These costs will depend on various factors, including their age and circumstances.



Before Leaving Fribourg

- Inform SPOMI: guidelines for foreign nationals leaving Switzerland in [French](#) and [German](#).
- SPOMI will issue “Departure Notice.” You will need to bring a copy of this document to the “Contrôle des habitants.”
 - You have 30 days to inform the “Contrôle des habitants” of your departure, and you can do it
 - In person
 - By calling them
 - By sending them an email: CH@ville-fr.ch
- Notify your insurance provider early enough – it can take a few months for them to cancel your policy.
- Inform [Serafe](#).
- Cancel your lease. Leases usually get prolonged automatically unless you cancel them. Be aware that some agencies have specific deadlines on which you can cancel your lease, so you may have to contact them a few months before your departure. Otherwise, you may be required to find another tenant yourself (rest assured it is not as complicated as it sounds).
 - Note that upon your departure, your apartment will need to be thoroughly cleaned, and you will be expected to remove all the furniture from it. It is usual for the landlord and/or agency to check the apartment for damages in person, and it is advisable for you to be present.



If you had a contract with Unifr

You will receive an email from the Human Resources Service, who will inform SPOMI of the end of your work contract.

During your employment, you and your employer will have contributed to your pension fund (commonly referred to as the 2nd pillar). In order not to lose this contribution, you will need to fill out this form (in [German](#) or [French](#)) and take the following steps:

- **If you are leaving Switzerland and are going to an EU/EFTA country:** You can transfer part of your pension benefits to your private account.
- **If you are leaving Switzerland and are going to a Non-EU/EFTA country:** You can transfer all your benefits.
- **If you have a new employer in Switzerland:** Your benefits will be transferred to your new employer's pension fund.

You will find more detailed information on the websites of Fribourg's Pension Fund (in [French](#) or [German](#)), of the [LOB Guarantee Fund Foundation](#), or of the [Swiss Confederation](#).



Contact

Welcome Center for Academics

- MIS04, office 4054
- Email: welcome-academics@unifr.ch
- Phone: +41 26 300 76 60
- Reception hours: Monday through Friday **from 10am to 12pm and from 2pm to 4pm.**
- The WCA is open beyond these reception hours and can be reached every day from 8am to 5pm. Please note that availability may be affected by punctual commitments and meetings, so it is recommended to contact the WCA prior to paying it a visit.

We wish you a great stay at Unifr!

December 2025