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## Practical advice



- When travelling, pay by credit card
- Open a Euro account in Switzerland. Until the end of the year Swiss banks will convert all accounts in denominations of the twelve Euro zone countries directly into Euros.
- Take Euro travellers cheques when you go on vacation.
- Spend coins and banknotes in the old denominations in the relevant country by the end of the year.
- Over the year-end period, keep sufficient cash on you since ATMs may not all be converted at once. Euro banknote dispensers will only be modified at the end of December.
- Euros will not be available in Switzerland until 3 January 2002. Do not accept any cash before this date.

• In France, for example, it will be possible from 15 December to buy your first Euros in a "kit" for FF 100.- (€ 15.24) to familiarise yourself with the new currency. From midnight on 17 February you will no longer be able to make purchases with the French franc. However, you have until 30 June 2002 to change old banknotes. After this date you need to contact the Trésor Public or the Bank of France.

Jean-Pierre F. Stern  
Director of Bank Sarasin, Zurich

Translated from the French by N. Chisholm

## swissinfo/SRI NEWS

# Everything you always wanted to know about Switzerland

Is there something you want to know about Switzerland e.g. about the population, the political system, the economy or culture? Do you need a practical tip? Log on to [www.swisshelpdesk.org](http://www.swisshelpdesk.org) and you'll find all the information you need.

Log on to [www.swisshelpdesk.org](http://www.swisshelpdesk.org) and send your queries to us: our editorial team will be pleased to assist. Originally designed for the multimedia platform of swissinfo/SRI as well as the website of "Swiss Presence" (PRS), this service provides information about Switzerland via e-mail.

When did the canton of Schaffhausen join the Swiss Confederation? How do you go about buying an apartment in Grindelwald? What is the compulsory equipment for a bike in Switzerland? Since the service was in-

The screenshot shows a web page with a blue header "Hello!". Below it is a text block: "Do you have any questions about Switzerland? Is there anything you'd like to know about its society, its political system, its economy, its culture, its languages, or anything else? Look no further. Here's the site you need. The questions are up to you, the answers are up to us. So send your questions to [swisshelpdesk](mailto:swisshelpdesk@swissinfo.org), and we'll do our best to help". Below this is a large blue "swisshelpdesk" logo. The main content area has a form with fields: "Name\*", "Family name\*", "Country\*", "Email\*", "Priority" (with "Normal" selected), and "Your Question\*". To the left is a sidebar with "LINKS" and categories like Administration, Culture, Media, Portals, Science, Health, Education, Swiss abroad, and Travel. To the right is a sidebar with "USEFULL LINKS" including Federal Authorities, Tourism, Swissair, Swiss Federal Railways, Trade, Banking, Pharmaceuticals, Electrical & engineering Industries, and Location Switzerland.

Need to know anything about Switzerland? Swisshelpdesk by swissinfo/SRI will gladly help.

augurated in June, queries have been streaming into the Swisshelpdesk of swissinfo/SRI. And they keep on coming. "We get questions about all sorts of things and from all around the world, and we try to answer them as quickly as possible," says Martin

Kreuz of the Asset Management Department at swissinfo. The basic idea is to help customers help themselves. "For instance, if someone wants to check the schedule for the open-air cinema in Geneva, we provide the customer with the relevant link."

Direct links are also suggested for additional information.

Originally launched in English, the Swisshelpdesk of swissinfo/SRI is to be improved and expanded; one of the main goals is to provide the same service in other languages. The efforts should be worthwhile since the service also offers access to other [www.swissinfo.org](http://www.swissinfo.org) services. "For example, if a user wants to find a location, our electronic maps (GIS) can be very useful," points out Martin Kreuz. In addition, Swisshelpdesk is as a highly effective barometer that reflects the aspects of Switzerland in which people are mainly interested.

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