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Plan your trip wisely

No country is immune to the risk of terrorist attacks. The DFA advises travellers to follow the recommendations of local authorities, but does not generally advise against travel in so-called high-risk areas.

Since the devastating attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, other terrorist acts such as the attacks in Madrid in March have given rise to widespread insecurity and concern. Security services in various countries repeatedly warn the public about the increased risk world-wide and in specific regions, but without de-

tailoring the nature of the risk. Generally speaking, the risk is rated higher during religious holidays.

Swiss citizens are also affected by this general uncertainty, particularly when it comes to planning holidays and business trips. In this context, a great many travellers consult the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs (DFA) about the risk of terrorism in individual countries and air travel in general.

Pay attention to warnings!

In view of the international fight against terrorism, the tension in Iraq and generally in the Near and Middle East, the DFA points to the increased risk of violence which can be directed towards western nationals and interests. This applies not only to countries in the Near and Middle East but also in North and East Africa, the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia.

The risk of terrorist attacks has increased sharply not only in the above-mentioned regions, but also world-wide. Public and tourist facilities as well as large public gatherings must be counted among the possible targets for a terrorist attack. The terrorist's strategy is to strike where and when least expected; terrorists operate flexibly and can change their plans at short notice. Hence their actions are neither predictable nor quantifiable. It is essential to heed the warnings and security precautions of local authorities. Caution and vigilance are generally advised, especially when travelling in the Near and Middle East, North and East Africa, South East Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

For its part the DFA sees no general reason for advising against travel to the above-mentioned high-risk regions. Given the impossibility

of predicting attacks, such a measure would be inappropriate and would support the aims of terrorism: to incite anxiety and insecurity.

DFA information

At www.eda.admin.ch/reisehinweise the DFA publishes its Travel Advice containing an assessment of the security situation in various destinations. The preface ("Vorbermerkungen") discusses the risks posed by global terrorism. Travel advice is deliberately restricted to security-related information and must be regarded as supplementary to travel literature and media. The aim is to help travellers to form an opinion, but it is up to the individual traveller to decide whether or not to embark on a trip.

DFA, Political Division VI

Translated from German.

Important tips

- Before booking a trip, check the DFA's Travel Advice and consult the media and travel guides to find out about the country and people, customs and traditions.
- Before and during your trip, follow developments in the news media.
- Stay in touch with your travel agent and local contacts.
- Follow tightened security regulations and give yourself enough time for border checks and airport controls.
- Avoid public rallies and large gatherings of people, and be particularly on your guard at tourist venues and in recreational areas (e.g. night clubs).
- Leave a copy of your itinerary with your family and stay in regular contact with them.
- Remain alert to other risks such as road traffic, natural catastrophes, crime and illness.



Remoto/Ueli Hiltbold

Getting the latest security updates on your holiday destination is just as important nowadays as loading the car correctly before you set off.

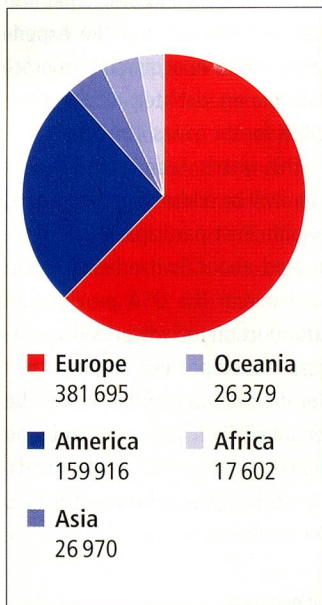
Swiss Abroad community still growing

The latest Swiss Abroad statistics show that the number of Swiss Abroad has exceeded the 600,000 mark for the first time

At the end of December 2003, 612,562 Swiss nationals were registered with Swiss embassies and consulates: 13,628 more than the figure published in 2002. 433,694 Swiss Abroad (70.8 percent) have dual nationality.

Swiss Abroad resident in the EU

France	163,034
Germany	69,619
Italy	44,544
UK	26,139
Spain	20,987
Austria	12,840
Netherlands	6,673
Belgium	6,642
Sweden	4,313
Greece	3,030
Portugal	2,695
Denmark	2,690
Finland	1,328
Ireland	1,304
Luxembourg	944
Total	366,782



Most Swiss Abroad reside in European Union countries (366,782 or nearly 60 percent). Outside Europe, most Swiss Abroad live in the USA (70,994). The statistics also show that some 59 percent of adult Swiss nationals abroad are women (276,061). The number of men is 193,736 (41 percent), while the number of young Swiss Abroad under age 18 is 142,765 (23 percent).



More and more Swiss nationals are settling abroad. The picture shows car mechanic Chris Boller, a resident of Sydney.

Of the 466,133 Swiss Abroad entitled to vote, 89,783 (or 19.2 percent) are registered with Swiss representations to exercise their voting and electing rights. The statistics can be viewed at www.eda.admin.ch/asd, under "Publikationen".

BDK

Translated from German.

Initiatives

No new initiatives have been submitted since the last issue.

Signature forms for pending initiatives can be downloaded from www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis10.html.

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Revision of the divorce law

Among other things, the law on divorce which came into force on 1 January 2000 entitles spouses to request the court for a divorce unilaterally (i.e. without the consent of the other spouse) after four years of separation.

This four-year separation period was regarded as lengthy and stressful, particularly in cases of irretrievable breakdown of mar-

riage. Since 1 June 2004 a new, shorter separation period has been in force. This has answered an apparently widespread need and simultaneously protects spouses against an over-hasty and ill-considered divorce.

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Translated from German

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Hochalpinen Institut Ftan
CH-7551 Ftan/Engadin
Tel. +41 (0)81 861 2211
Fax +41 (0)81 861 2212
www.hif.ch, info@hif.ch

