

SWITZERLAND CUSTOMS

Greetings:

A handshake is appropriate for both men and women. Close friends may exchange three kisses on the cheeks, first on the left, then the right, and back to the left. When entering or leaving an elevator or a store, most Swiss exchange simple greetings, even with strangers. Residents of small villages exchange greetings on the street.

Because the Swiss Confederation is a multilingual society, actual verbal greetings may vary. German greetings include *Guten Morgen* (Good morning), *Guten Tag* (Good day), *Guten Abend* (Good evening), and *Auf Wiedersehen* (Until we meet again). *Grütsie* (Hi) is a typical Swiss German greeting used throughout the day.

In formal situations, French speakers often say *Bonjour* (Good day) or *Bonsoir* (Good evening). Friends may greet each other with *Salut* (Hello) or *Chao* (Hi).

Gestures:

People generally avoid speaking with their hands.

Chewing gum or attending to matters of personal hygiene in public is not appropriate.

Talking to an older person with one's hands in the pockets is generally considered disrespectful.

Holidays:

Major holidays in Switzerland include New Year's Day, Easter (Friday–Monday), Labor Day (1 May), Ascension, Whitsunday and Whitmonday, National Day (1 Aug.), Federal Day of Prayers (a mid-September thanksgiving holiday), and Christmas.

Christmas is the biggest celebration of the year. On Christmas Eve, gifts are exchanged and the family gathers for a large meal. The family relaxes on Christmas Day and visits friends on 26 December. New Year's Eve is a time for parties and fireworks.