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## Travel Documents

Every person coming to Switzerland must have travel documents valid for their entire stay.

The rules for travel across Europe and for entry into Switzerland will not be the same for all nationalities and they can also change from one year to the next. If you are unsure of what documents are required please check with the embassy website for the countries through which you are travelling.

On tours beginning in the UK, our coaches may travel through United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Switzerland.

The Ski Company has carefully been through the guidelines and we are happy to advise but we cannot take responsibility for incorrect, invalid or out of date travel documents.

Furthermore, we suggest school party leaders should double check the travel documents prior to departure as mistakes noticed en-route could incur considerable expense. In some cases alternative travel arrangements whilst not impossible, may upset the staff / pupil ratio and therefore make a trip "illegal".

## Schengen Visa – NEW RULES FOR SWITZERLAND

The name "Schengen" originates from a small town in Luxembourg where in March 1995, seven European Union countries signed a treaty to simplify travel around Europe and many more countries have since then joined the scheme.

The Schengen Association Agreement allows member countries to share a common border and would in theory mean a "passport free zone" once you are within the Schengen area.

The co-operation between the Swiss police and other police forces within the area is known as the Schengen Information System and this began in Switzerland on 14th August 2008. The Swiss Federal Office of Migration ([www.bfm.admin.ch](http://www.bfm.admin.ch)) announced that on 27th November 2008 the JHA (Council of ministers for Justice and Home affairs) decided that the Schengen Agreement would be fully implemented as of Friday 12th December 2008.

In real terms this will mean our customers may have to satisfy new rules for entry into Switzerland if travelling from outside the Schengen area (i.e. flying from the UK or from many non-EU countries) but coach journeys from the UK will enter into Switzerland more easily as they have already



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been 'checked' at their first entry into the Schengen area which would have been at the UK / French border.

**MEMBERS LIST:** The following countries are at time of writing, members of the Schengen Visa Treaty scheme; Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the Netherlands and it is planned that Switzerland will be a member as of December 2008.

**EXEMPT LIST:** At the time of writing, citizens of the following countries are exempt and do not need to apply for a Visa for a visit or transit in Schengen countries: All European Union countries plus Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Israel, Japan, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, Mexico, Monaco, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Romania, San Marino, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vatican, Venezuela. In addition, Chinese citizens holding a Hong Kong and Macao passport are exempted from visa application.

Therefore, once Switzerland joins the scheme and whether you are travelling by air or by coach you will enter the Schengen zone when travelling with The Ski Company, so with that in mind, this is how we see it;

If your passport is issued by a country in the MEMBERS list or the EXEMPT list you do NOT need a Schengen Visa for travel to any country on the MEMBERS list or Switzerland after it joins Schengen.

If you have a permit of residency or similar from a country in the MEMBERS list you do NOT need a Schengen Visa for travel to any country on the MEMBERS list or Switzerland after it joins Schengen.

The UK is not a Schengen Visa member country so if you have a UK permit of residency you DO need a Schengen Visa for travel to any country on the MEMBERS list or Switzerland after it joins Schengen.

If you do not fit into any of the above scenarios then you are almost certain to need a Schengen Visa for your travel to Switzerland (after it joins Schengen) or to any country on the MEMBERS list.

A 'List of Travellers' form (visa waiver) allows students as part of a school trip to travel without getting a Schengen Visa but is at present not officially accepted by Switzerland. This should change after December 08 and full Schengen Area Agreement.



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