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Swiss Life: 30 Things I Wish I'd Known



Synopsis

Life in Switzerland. The not-made-for-TV version. In 2006, American Chantal Panozzo moved to a spa town near Zurich ready for a glamorous life as an expatriate. She would eat chocolate. She would climb mountains. And she would order cheese in four languages. Instead, she lived a life more in tune with reality than fantasy. Contrary to popular American belief, Switzerland isn't just a setting in a storybook called Heidi. It's a real place where someone with a master's degree in communications can't make a phone call, where you can be hired in one language and fired in another, and where small talk doesn't exist—but phrases like Aufenthaltskategorien von Drittstaatsangehörigen do. Swiss Life: 30 Things I Wish I'd Known is a collection of both published (The Christian Science Monitor, National Geographic Glimpse, Chicken Soup for the Soul Books, and Brain, Child) and new essays in which Chantal discovers that no matter how hard she wills her geraniums to cascade properly, she will never be a glamorous American expatriate—or Swiss.

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Customer Reviews

I was an expat living in Switzerland for three years. These stories rang true, although I venture that the level of tolerance towards a white man who is fluent in French and Italian, but living alone in a Swiss-German speaking engagements canton is higher than for a trailing spouse. While Swiss trains do run on time, other failings are accepted with a shrug. Two weeks in winter without heat or hot water because the pipes had not been maintained was accepted the same way. "You can take a shower at work, no?" And "buy a heavier duvet". The fear of foreigners is so very true, even among second generation Swiss. The need to integrate before becoming Swiss is not unlike a melting pot, except that as one melts one becomes "Swissified". Having returned "home" there are many things that I miss about Switzerland. But the personal freedom to mow my lawn on a Sunday, or wash my car or exceed the speed limit without fear of omnipresent traffic cameras ready to issue fines for a 5km/h transgression are liberties that I missed. Thank you Chantal for writing this. It is a must read for anyone considering the move.

When I started reading the book and the various situations the author described, the questions 'why would she do that!?' and 'what was she expecting!?' frequently came to mind. But the further I read, the more I could connect with the author, even if not always agree. I liked the way this book made me question myself and how would I behave/cope if I were an expat. It made me appreciate the expats living in my country and their efforts to fit in even more. Danke, Frau Panozzo.

This book really is more of a personal story about "my life as an expat wife" than it is about life in Switzerland. The two major points about Switzerland I took from this book are that it is a clean country and has a fastidious culture that is rather formal on the surface.

It is not a useful book for people who are moving or thinking about moving to Switzerland. It is more of a personal journal of a series of frustrating experiences in Switzerland from a white American woman's perspective whom has never been treated as a foreigner in her life in other country. If you are looking for something with more practical information, please look away.

I loved her article on her life in Switzerland and had to buy her book. She states in the introduction she almost called the book a B***h Abroad because it does seem like a lot of complaining. This is actually pretty accurate. Would have liked to see a little more about what she misses in Switzerland and how her adjustment was when returning back to the USA.

There were some interesting insights into Swiss life and culture. But the author became bogged down with her own pregnancy. The book then lost its way.

I Loved reading this book. As someone who has spent time living in Switzerland this book was eye opening and at times I was sure it was me who wrote it! I completely understood where the author was coming from because I have lived it. It also helped me to understand my actions and words after coming back to the US after being in Switzerland for an extended period! You really become so critical after living the Swiss life and then you return to the US and everywhere you look you see something just out of place! I had some good laughs reading this and I definitely recommend it. This is so well written and so dang true!! Anyone who is planning to live in Switzerland as an American needs to read this book!!

Such an accurate reflection of Swiss life for a 'foreigner'. I could relate to much of the story. A helpful resource for those planning to move to Switzerland.

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