**CERN Visit Logistics**

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*(Information here is accurate as of 2023)*

*Google doc link:* [*https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lSBuU\_QfsMw231BaBDJ52IE6bS6ndo192U\_\_nvM8MvU/*](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lSBuU_QfsMw231BaBDJ52IE6bS6ndo192U__nvM8MvU/)

This guide goes over logistics and processes (such as visa, registration, housing, banking, transport, insurance) required for and during a summer internship/visit at CERN based on my experience and information I gathered when planning my visit. The first step is to decide the start/end dates and initiate the process with Prof. Shih-Cheh Hsu and the ATLAS Secretariat.

In case of any questions or concerns throughout the process of visa, registration or anything else related to the visit, the ATLAS Secretariat ([Atlas.Secretariat@cern.ch](mailto:Atlas.Secretariat@cern.ch)) can be contacted for guidance. CERN’s website also has detailed information on many of these steps.

**Visa**

Length of internship (and your citizenship) determines the type of visa to apply for. Less than 90 days requires the short-term Schengen visa (no visa for US citizens) and longer than that entails either the Swiss or French National D type visa. Information here is related to the Swiss visa. The type of visa and length of stay will limit where you can live. If you get a Swiss National D visa (your stay is over 90 days) you have to live in Switzerland, and the same applies to France.

Contact the Swiss consulate at San Francisco (check their website for up to date contact details, they are pretty responsive) to get specific information on documents required based on your situation (length of stay, citizenship). The D type visa does **not** require an in person interview and biometrics but the short-term Schengen visa requires it. The application is easier for D type where you just mail in your documents. Visa fee is waived either way for an internship with CERN. Both types allow for travel within Schengen.

Request the invitation letter from the Atlas Secretariat through the link (<https://atlas-secretariat.web.cern.ch/invitation-letters>) or email. This is the letter from IO that the Swiss consulate wants in the visa application.

Start the visa process 2-3 months prior to your start date. The earlier the better to account for any delays and allow for adequate time for other logistics.

For sending documents to the SF Consulate, FedEx is recommended. The consulate will provide information on how to print the return label. I would recommend using FedEx’s hold at location feature (for getting your passport back) for reliability, so you can go pick up the package at a FedEx office with a valid government ID (make sure you have one other than your passport like a state ID). Other carriers should work fine as well according to the Swiss consulate.

If notarized documents are required check out US Bank at the HUB- they notarize documents for free.

If getting a D type visa, you need to apply for a Swiss (Carte de légitimation/CDL) and French card after arrival at CERN. The initial D visa is only valid for 90 days, and thereafter the Swiss card will be your valid visa document. This will be taken care of during registration at CERN and will be handled by the Users office. Just make sure to have your documents and go through the website (<https://admin-eguide.web.cern.ch/en/procedure/swiss-cards>) for further information . Clarify your end date and the date of exiting the Schengen region if you will need the Swiss card during your travel back to apply for the Swiss card with correct dates or to request an extension (see section on leaving CERN)

To summarize:

**More than 90 days**- National D type visa, mail in documents to San Francisco Consulate, apply for CDL after arriving at CERN, have to live in Switzerland.

**Up to 90 days** - short term Schengen visa, visit consulate in person for visa interview, no CDL required, can live either in Switzerland or in France.

**PRT – Pre Registration**

Pre Registration is to get you into the system before arrival at CERN to complete your registration(<https://atlas-secretariat.web.cern.ch/new-registration>). You will likely be registered as a “User”. Ask your Team Leader to initiate PRT. ([https://prt.cern.ch/prt2/secure/?#help](https://prt.cern.ch/prt2/secure/?" \l "help))

Get the Home Institute Declaration form signed by the Chair of the Department (ECE Chair if in EE). Contact the assistant of the chair via email, they will be able to get it signed for you.

Submit required documents for PRT and wait for confirmation which should be sent a week before your start date at CERN. Contact the USERS office if you do not receive it by then. Keep a printout of this confirmation since this will be checked when you first enter CERN.

**Insurance**

You will be required to get some form of health insurance during your stay. There are many options for insurance-

* Insurance offered by CERN – partnership with Allianz, expensive
* UW – Some students have used UW’s own trip insurance which is a decent option
* or any other international coverage insurance (example: <https://www.imglobal.com/img-insurance-plans>)

**Banking/Money**

Make sure that the funding and payment plan (how many installments and when) is in place. Contact Evelina Durastanti ([evelina.durastanti@cern.ch](mailto:evelina.durastanti@cern.ch)) for any concerns related to accounts and payment.

Usually in 3 installments from CERN (includes funds from US ATLAS and Pixel)

For a short term stay, it might be easier to get paid into an American bank account. There might be some international transfer (SWIFT) fees, but it will be hassle-free and still end up being more cost effective than opening (and closing) a bank account in Switzerland.

Make a Revolut and Wise account and get their cards for short term usage and conversion. Revolut and Wise debit cards are very useful. Make sure to have this done well before your travel date to allow for enough time for cards to arrive. Note that Revolut and Wise currently do not offer Swiss IBANs so these accounts cannot be used to directly receive payment from CERN.

For a long term stay one can open a bank account in Switzerland- UBS at CERN is the most popular.

Related note – CPT is not required for F-1 students if you are getting paid through CERN (not a US company, no W-2)

Upon arrival and registration, you will get electronic documents related to payment and bank account for approval. Make sure these are approved by your supervisor on time to avoid multiple international payments (which requires SWIFT fees).

**Housing**

Contact Alexia Leyval ([Alexia.Leyval@cern.ch](mailto:Alexia.Leyval@cern.ch)), the ATLAS US & Canada Relocation Coordinator for guidance on accommodation and other logistics related to your stay. She can help find housing options in the area.

Alexia’s website ([https://espace.cern.ch/Administration-ATLAS-Secretariat/Relocation-Service/\_layouts/15/start.aspx#](https://espace.cern.ch/Administration-ATLAS-Secretariat/Relocation-Service/_layouts/15/start.aspx" \l "/SitePages/HOW-TO-GO-TO-CERN.aspx)) also has a lot of useful information.

Geneva Graduate Institute offers student housing at affordable prices. There are two locations – Grand Morillon(mostly studios) and Edgar & Daniele de Picciotto(mostly shared housing). You can sublease from current students at the student price lsited on the website. If you cannot find a sublease, try reaching out to the management. Find out the latest link to the whatsapp group from the last student who visited CERN. <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/housing/our-residences>

CERN has hostels within the Meyrin and Prevessin sites that could be a cost-effective and convenient option. However, they tend to get full fast, especially in June so try to book accommodation there early if you want to stay there. It might also be a good option to stay in the hostel for a couple of weeks before finding something more permanent if you are going to stay for longer. For 3 months, it would be best to have accommodation sorted out before arrival.

Other than CERN hostels, check Facebook groups (any Geneva Housing groups, Young@CERN), CERN marketplace, and the glocals website for accommodation postings.

Having lived on the Swiss side, I would recommend it for a short stay of around 3 months. However, for a longer stay it might be worth considering France since it is cheaper to live there – however this will likely change your visa process.

Student subleases are a good and reasonably affordable option although they tend to be far from CERN and more into the city near universities. Check public transport accessibility if you will be relying on that. It is usually convenient to live close to the 18 tram line to CERN.

Airbnb also has a few reasonably priced rentals.

**Arriving at Geneva**

You would most likely be landing in Geneva airport. If living in Geneva city, find the route to your accommodation and get a ticket on the SBB/tpg preview app or ticket machine at the bus stops using the your card.

Taxi might be a better option if going farther away but cash may be required.

You can get free wifi at the airport **after** baggage claim and crossing customs. Show your passport at the service desk to get a login code.

In this area you should also be able to get currency exchange and a SIM card if needed.

**SIM**

There may be better options for SIM cards out in the city or in France depending on your requirements. It might be worth getting a travel/data only SIM from the US for initial use until you get a SIM in the city, but it is also totally possible to manage without it. Some US plans include good international options so you may not even need a new SIM. Of course, make sure you have an unlocked phone if you are planning on getting a local SIM. Lycamobile worked decently well for me, which I got at a store in Rue de Zurich near Cornavin.

**Transport**

Tpg operates the transportation system in the Geneva area. If living in the Swiss side, I would recommend getting a unireso monthly card that covers zone 10 in Geneva (includes CERN, Meyrin). You can get this by going to the tpg office at Cornavin station (tram 18 passes through this). It should also be possible to buy/renew the monthly pass online by making a SwissPass account. There is a reduced fare for the monthly pass for people who are 25 years old or younger. You will need an address where you can receive mail to get the card.

French towns Saint-Genis-Pouilly, Ferney-Voltaire come under different zones, but there is a bus to CERN.

Download apps like tpg preview and SBB mobile (VERY useful for travel within Switzerland as well).

You can rent a bike from CERN. During the summer, it is charged at 1CHF per day. More details: https://sce-dep.web.cern.ch/mobility/bike-rental

**Arriving at CERN**

1. Get a visitor pass from your team OR get the PRT attestation proof (should be sent by Users office). This will get you a temporary card at Building 33 that will let you go to the next step.

2. Go to building 61, Users office to complete registration and sign the contract. Make sure you have all documents required according to your situation. They will also advise on Swiss/French card applications. Check the opening hours of the Users office since they may have varying hours throughout the week at times.

3. After completing registration, go to building 55 to get your access/ID card. You might have to request access to certain buildings (like SR1) but the team there will help with that.

This should be all the formalities unless there is something specific to your team/project.

**Dosimeter**

A dosimeter is required for underground visits in the detector.

Get a temporary dosimeter for 2 months – no documents required, just request it at the office in building 55.

Beyond 2 months – required to get a certificate signed by someone from UW, contact Henry Lubatti and Shih-Chieh Hsu for this.

Check out the CERN Dosimetry website (<https://dosimetry.web.cern.ch/>) for more information.

**Leaving CERN**

Return your access card, dosimeter and Swiss/French cards.

Check your affiliation with ATLAS on the glance website and make sure that it is extended as a remote external member after leaving to maintain affiliation and keep computing accounts active. Verify this with the ATLAS Secretariat and Team Leader and ask them to extend it.

**Returning Swiss/French cards**

CERN, Swiss and French authorities require you to return your Swiss and French cards as your contract ends.

But if on the National D type visa, the swiss card acts as a visa/travel document once the initial 3-month visa expires. If you have to exit Schengen you need a valid visa, so you need to carry a valid Swiss card (or a certified copy from CERN might work, verify this with the Users office). Consult the Users office for advice on this depending on your situation.

If traveling back with the card (like I did) you need to return it to Swiss authorities either directly to CERN (by mail or through a colleague), or mail it to the nearest Swiss consulate (San Francisco for Seattle) and inform the Users Office. You might have to remind the User’s Office about this since it is not a widely known option.

**Miscellaneous**

* Flying from Seattle to Geneva will likely have a layover in Frankfurt, Amsterdam or Paris. Avoid Paris especially with short layovers since the airport can be confusing.
* Plan on arriving in Geneva on a weekday. Things are closed on weekends and public transport has reduced schedules.
* Carry a Swiss plug adapter. Swiss plugs are slightly different from EU plugs so make sure the one you get is compatible with the Swiss type (there are also special adapters that work for both).
* If you don’t know French, Google translate can be helpful. Download French offline since a lot of things are in French especially in city public transport and grocery stores. But usually it is easy to get by with just English in Geneva. Things may be different on the French side though.
* Coop, Migros and Aldi (cheapest) are the most common grocery stores in Switzerland, check for these when looking for accommodation. Many people also go to France to get groceries since it is cheaper there.
* Shops generally close early, even earlier on Saturdays and are closed on Sundays. The Migros in Cornavin station is open everyday and for longer hours in case of emergencies.
* The weather will be very hot in June-August so pack accordingly. Temperatures may drop a bit in September.