

India

Business Travel Guide

Compiled by:

Swiss Business Hub India

Mumbai, September 2021

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE:

There are seventeen international airports in India. Travelers from abroad can arrive into India at the following cities:

- Kolkata
- Chennai
- Thiruvananthapuram
- Ahmedabad
- Amritsar
- Guwahati
- Goa
- Srinagar
- Jaipur
- Kozhikode
- Port Blair
- Delhi
- Mumbai
- Hyderabad
- Bengaluru
- Kochi
- Nagpur

Covid-19 related travel restrictions

Given that the Covid-19 situation is ever evolving, travelers are advised to refer to official sources for latest information before planning travel to/from India and Switzerland. It is also advisable to check the websites of the relevant Embassy/ Consulate, government/concerned authorities and airlines.

Business persons from Switzerland can travel to India provided they follow the procedures laid down by the authorities: getting tested for Covid-19, following visa regulations, as well as applicable health and quarantine rules of State governments. Useful links are provided as follows and you are welcome to contact us with your questions:

- [Indira Gandhi International Airport](#)
- [Ministry of Health and Family Welfare](#)
- [Ministry of Home Affairs](#)
- [Ministry of Civil Aviation](#)
- [Embassy of India in Berne](#)
- [Bureau of Immigration](#)

Business visa may be granted to a foreigner for the following purposes:-

- (i) Foreign nationals who wish to visit India to establish industrial/business venture or to explore possibilities to set up industrial/business venture in India.
- (ii) Foreign nationals coming to India to purchase/sell industrial products or commercial products or consumer durables.
- (iii) Foreign nationals coming to India for technical meetings/discussions, attending Board meetings or general meetings for providing business services support.
- (iv) Foreign nationals coming to India for recruitment of manpower.
- (v) Foreign nationals who are partners in the business and/or functioning as Directors of the company.
- (vi) Foreign nationals coming to India for consultations regarding exhibitions or for participation in exhibitions, trade fairs, business fairs etc.
- (vii) Foreign buyers who come to transact business with suppliers/ potential suppliers at locations in India, to evaluate or monitor quality, give specifications, place orders, negotiate further supplies etc., relating to goods or services procured from India.
- (viii) Foreign experts/specialists on a visit of short duration in connection with an ongoing project with the objective of monitoring the progress of the work, conducting meetings with Indian customers and/or to provide technical guidance.
- (ix) Foreign nationals coming to India for pre-sales or post-sales activity not amounting to actual execution of any contract or project.
- (x) Foreign trainees of multinational companies/corporate houses coming for in-house training in the regional hubs of the concerned company located in India.
- (xi) Foreign students sponsored by AIESEC for internship on project based work in companies/industries.
- (xii) Foreign nationals coming as tour conductors and travel agents and / or conducting business tours of foreigners or business relating to it, etc.

Duration of Business Visa:

- (xiii) A Business Visa with multiple entry facility can be granted for a period up to five (5) years or for a shorter duration as per the requirement. A stay stipulation of a maximum period of six (6) months will be prescribed for each visit by the concerned Indian Mission keeping in view the nature of the business activity for which such Business Visa is granted.

What are the documents to be submitted along with application for a Business Visa?

- (i) The foreign national must have a valid travel document and a re-entry permit, if required under the law of the country concerned.
- (ii) Proof of financial standing and expertise in the field of intended business.
- (iii) Documents/ papers pertaining to proposed business activity such as the registration of the company under the Companies Act, proof of registration of the firm with the State Industries Department or the Export Promotion Council concerned or any recognized promotional body in the relevant field of industry or trade etc.

An Indian visa can be obtained from the Embassy of India in Berne: <https://www.indembassybern.gov.in/page/visa/>, and through its outsourcing agency, India Visa Application Centre (IVAC), Weststrasse 2, 3005 Berne and directly from the Consulate General of India in Geneva. Swiss citizens will require a valid Indian visa before their travel to India. Further information on the Indian visa and applicable forms can be obtained from the VFS website (<http://in.vfsglobal.ch>)

Important for business travelers: India issues E-visas for business and business travelers are advised to check this link to obtain their E-visa: <https://indianvisaonline.gov.in/evisa/tvoa.html>

TRANSPORTATION

All major Indian cities are well connected by air, rail and road. An extensive network of railways and roadways connect most of the towns and villages. Inter-city travel can also be undertaken by private taxis on suitably well maintained expressways and freeways. Intra-city transport is mostly undertaken by local city buses, taxis/auto-rickshaws, local trains/metro systems. Online Apps (Uber, Ola, Meru, etc.) also offer convenient and comfortable round the clock taxi services.

BY AIR

India has airports in the vicinity of almost all major cities. SWISS International Air Lines has offices in Mumbai and Delhi and general sales agents in major cities like Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Goa, Hyderabad, Indore, Kochi, Kolkata, Pune and Vadodara. Other international airlines with good connectivity to Switzerland are European carriers like Lufthansa, British Airways, Air France and Gulf carriers like Emirates, Etihad, and Qatar Airways. India's national carrier, Air India, has a code-share agreement with SWISS for flights to Zürich from Mumbai and Delhi and from Mumbai/Delhi to Zurich (although currently, the direct flights have been suspended). However, due to the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic, all code share operations are cancelled and will resume after Indian government directives.

India is heading towards developing the market for budget carriers and there are domestic flights that are operated by a few private airlines (some of them budget carriers) like Indigo, Go Air, SpiceJet, Vistara, etc. besides the Government- owned Air India.

BY SEA

Passengers arriving by sea (mostly tourists on cruise liners) can avail of Immigration and Customs facilities at Mumbai, Goa, Cochin, Chennai, Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

BY ROAD

India has the second largest road network across the globe, spanning a total of 5.89 million kms. The road network transports 64.5% of all the goods in the country and 90% of India's total passenger. Inter-city connectivity is maintained by a large network of National Highways and State Highways and Expressways. These form an intricate part of the Golden Quadrilateral connecting Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai. The road network also connects major business hubs like Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Jaipur, Kanpur, Pune, Surat, Guntur, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam.

BY RAIL

Indian railways is among the world's largest railway network with its route length spread over 67,956 kms with 13,169 passenger trains and 8,479 freight trains. India's railway network is recognized as one of the largest railway systems in the world under single management.

Tickets can be purchased at railway stations or e-tickets can be bought on the online portal of Indian Railways (<https://www.irctc.co.in>). Pre-confirmed reservation in air-conditioned chair cars or sleeper wagons is recommended.

A high-speed freight corridor is presently under implementation between New Delhi and Mumbai whereas a high-speed passenger train is also proposed to run between Ahmedabad and Mumbai.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Mandatory and recommended vaccinations:

In the context of Covid-19, Government of India is following point of entry procedures for identifying international travelers, particularly at risk travelers to India through multi-pronged strategy of testing and thermal screening. There are travel restrictions being placed in India. In case any person needs to come to India will have to furnish a negative RT-PCR test report and also need to get themselves tested again upon arrival in India. However, it is recommended that the following vaccinations should be done before arriving in India:

- Diphtheria
- Hepatitis B
- Covid-19 (as approved by WHO)
- Haemophilus influenzae type B
- Seasonal influenza
- Measles
- Mumps
- Pertussis
- Rubella
- Pneumococcal disease
- Poliomyelitis (Polio)
- Rotavirus
- Tuberculosis (TB)
- Yellow Fever
- Ebola Virus
- Small Pox

Mandatory medical insurance: There is no requirement of a mandatory medical insurance in India. However, keeping in view the rising medical costs, it is recommended to have an adequate insurance cover to mitigate any contingency.

PUBLIC SECURITY / RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONS

There are 28 states (and 9 Union Territories) in India, and each state has its own police department. Like in any other country, there are crimes such theft, snatching, etc., therefore, it is advisable to take all the necessary precautions. There are certain helpline numbers which are dedicated for security purposes like women helpline, child helpline etc.

Police	100
Fire department	101
Ambulance	102
Tourist helpline	1363
Helpline for foreign national	+91 875 087 11 11
Women Helpline	1091
Child helpline	1098

The travel and other related advise can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/dfa/representations-and-travel-advice/india.html>

TIME ZONE

India follows a GMT + 5.30 hours. The said time zone is being followed across the country

TIME DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SWITZERLAND AND INDIA

- From end-March to end-October, India is ahead of Switzerland by 3 Hours 30 Minutes
- Rest of the year, India is ahead of Switzerland by 4 Hours 30 Minutes

BUSINESS HOURS

	Weekdays	Saturdays	Sundays and Nationals Holidays
Government Offices	10.00 am to 06.00 pm	Generally, 2 nd and 4 th Saturdays are holidays	Holiday
Banks	09.30 am to 04.30 pm	2 nd and 4 th Saturdays are holidays	Holiday
Shops	09.00 am to 09.00 pm	09.00 am to 09.00 pm	Varies from market to market. National Holidays are observed

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

India being a diverse country has a plethora of holidays based on national interest, religion, regional customs, etc. Checking beforehand the scheduled holidays will help plan your travel better. School holidays of children plays a vital role since most families plan their vacations during these times. Therefore, there are chances that some of the business partners may not be available during school holidays.

While private and proprietorship companies do not always conform to the "Bank Holidays" (dictated by the Negotiable Instruments Act 1881), most publicly listed companies and all Government organizations avail these holidays. The privately owned organizations follow a practice of providing holidays on certain specific occasions rather than following the bank holidays.

The following pan-India holidays are the most important ones:

- New Year Day, 1 Jan
- Republic Day, 26 January
- Ramzan Id, variable date
- Good Friday, variable date in April
- Holi, variable date in February/March
- Independence Day, 15 August
- Gandhi Jayanti, 2 October
- Diwali, variable date in October/November
- Christmas, 25 December

NATIONAL TRADE FAIR CALENDAR

The dates of the main trade fairs can be obtained from: <https://www.indiatradefair.com/>

List of selected trade fairs, events and conferences in 2021, is available at: <https://www.s-ge.com/sites/default/files/publication/free/s-ge-20212-c5-india-trade-fairs-and-events-2021.pdf>

COMMUNICATION: TELEPHONE AND INTERNET

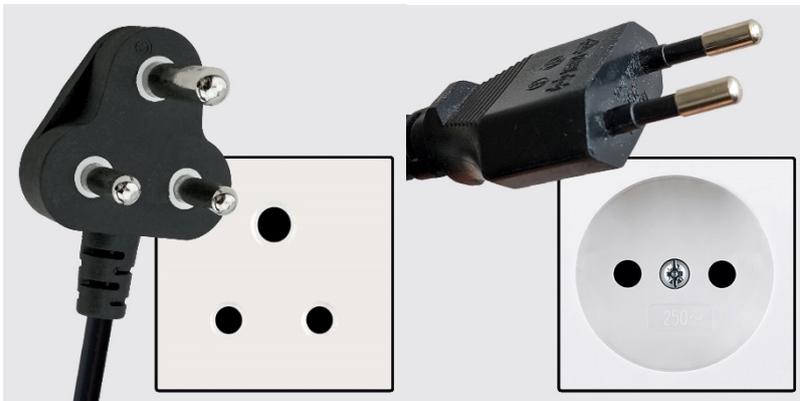
Telephone/fax: Code from Switzerland to India: +91

Telephone/fax: Code from India to Switzerland: +41

India has experienced a digital revolution in the last few years. With improved network connectivity at the competitive prices, technology has reached to people across the country. Most commonly, Indian mobile telephone system works on both GSM platforms and offers reasonably good 3G and 4G connectivity over most parts of the country. Swisscom mobile telephone numbers can work in India. Prepaid local SIM cards from domestic cellular services (like Airtel, Vodafone Idea, Jio etc) are also freely available on furnishing proper identity documentation (like passport, etc.).

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Electricity plug and socket:



230 V; a plug adapter will be needed in order to use Swiss appliances. It is recommended to get a universal adapter and converter kit.

METHODS OF PAYMENT

India's valid currency is the Indian Rupee (INR - ₹) made up of 100 paisa.

Foreign currency (in cash and Traveler's Cheques) is accepted at most renowned hotels. Foreign currency can be exchanged only at authorized foreign exchange dealers, banks or hotels where a certificate is being issued. This certificate has to be produced to re-convert excess Indian rupees to foreign exchange at the time of departure from India. If the value of foreign currency in cash exceeds US\$ 5,000 and/or the cash plus Traveler's Cheques exceed US\$ 10,000, it should be declared to the customs authorities on arrival in India. One can retain foreign coins indefinitely without any limit.

Credit cards and debit cards (e.g. American Express, Diners, Visa and Master Card) are widely accepted in most commercial establishments and restaurants in most cities. Cash continues to be used as a common mode for payments, and can be easily withdraw (INR only) from automated teller machines (ATMs) across country.

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) had introduced the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) system. The UPI system integrates bank accounts with an unique ID and funds transferred through UPI have become popular due to ease of use. The UPI platform is also being supported by various digital wallets (most commonly used in India is PayTM, Gpay, PhonePay, etc.).

	everywhere	almost everywhere	limited	not accepted
Cash (INR)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cash (USD, CHF, Euro, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
MasterCard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
American Express	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Apple Pay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Google/Samsung Pay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paytm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Phone Pay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

DOMESTIC TRAVEL, LOCAL TRANSPORT

The well connected roadways network has made it easy to commute from one place to another. The local state governments are mainly responsible for running public transportation system like buses, metro, trams, etc. Nowadays, given the ease of accessibility, people in metropolitan cities prefer private cab services such as Uber and Ola. Auto rickshaws are also available in almost all cities.

The average cost of hiring cabs/taxi per Km is as follows. However, online applications may charge an amount more than the normal rates due to surge in demand for cabs during peak hours:

Cab Type	Fare Per Km
Sedan/Semi-Sedan	INR 9 Per Km
MUV/SUV (7 Seater)	INR 12 Per Km

Payment for cab and auto rickshaw services is mostly made in cash. However, major percentage of drivers have registered themselves with PayTM, PhonePay, etc. to accept payment in digital wallets or directly to their bank accounts through UPI.

Nowadays, the concept of self-driven cars on hire is also on the rise. India has witnessed various companies tapping the market by coming out with business of plying cars on hire without driver so that passenger have autonomous decision while planning a trip/vacation. Some of the major companies are:

- ZoomCar
- Drivezy
- Revv

ACCOMMODATION, TEMPORARY OFFICE SPACE

In most major cities, there are private companies and business centers offering temporary office space, serviced apartments, as well as co-working spaces.

Major cities have 5-star hotels where services and infrastructure are at par with international standards. Amenities in other luxury hotels can also adequately fulfill the business stay requirements. Major hotel groups operating in India are the indigenous ones like Taj, Oberoi, Leela, ITC, Lalit, Lemon Tree, etc. However, there are international chains as well present in most of the cities like Sheraton, Le Meridien, Hyatt, Radisson, Holiday Inn, Intercontinental, Hilton, Marriott, Novotel, etc.

There exists a demand-supply gap in the availability of hotel rooms and prices, therefore, prices are generally on the higher side. During peak season, rooms should be booked well in advance, especially for group travel or delegations.

LANGUAGES USED FOR BUSINESS

India is a diverse country and houses various regional and linguistic communities. Most regional communities have their own language which is spoken in a specific region, and there are various regional languages which are part of the official languages in India.

While Hindi is the first official language, English is the second co-official language and predominantly used in business and judicial communication. As most States have their own language, local administrative/official forms may be filled in the local language and may require the services of a local translator. However, English is generally accepted as a medium of communication along with every other regional language.

BUSINESS PRACTICES

Tips for Initiating Business Contacts:

Even in large enterprises, majority of business control is mostly patriarchal and dynastic, and normally managed by the main shareholders themselves through management control on the board. This is unlike the delegated control found in some other economies. However, the occidental structure of management based on professional trained managers is becoming increasingly popular even in family-owned business enterprises.

Like in any other country, in India too, good relationships with business associates are valued. In order to make a place in the Indian market, one needs to have connects with the other players in the industry so as to make business run smoothly and efficiently. One of the key factor in finalizing the vendors by the procurement team is the business relationship with such vendors. Scheduling meetings with the management of the businesses, participating in different trade fairs, enrolling in various business chambers, etc. will surely help to build business contacts.

Scheduling Meetings:

Meetings plays a vital role in developing business relationships in India.

Although Indians value punctuality, it is not always possible to keep time due to external factors. Traffic is extremely heavy in Indian metropolitan cities and sometimes prevents people from getting to an appointment on time. Therefore, while scheduling a meeting, it is important to factor in buffer time.

Indian executives generally like to meet during office hours preferably in the late morning or early afternoon between 11.00 a.m. and 04.00 p.m.; and business lunches are preferred over dinners. In case of a contingency, a meeting can be rescheduled with sufficient notice.

Business attire:

In India, most corporates have a formal policy regarding acceptable attire. For Men, its business suits, formal shirt, trousers, tie, etc. For women, along with business formals, Saree is an acceptable form of business attire.

Introducing yourself:

The use of 'good morning', 'good evening', 'hello' etc. is common and acceptable everywhere. Due to the current Covid situation, it is advisable to avoid shaking hands. Greetings in India vary from region to region, and also vary with the context (for examples, elders are addressed with even more respect). As a business traveler, you might want to familiarize yourself with commonly used local language greetings.

Building Trusts:

Building a successful business relationship involves winning the trust of the Indian partner. Informal communication playing an important role, and it is common for business partners to share information about their families and visit each other's homes.

Offering and accepting gifts and invitations:

Business gifts are not normally expected at the first meeting. Gifts may be given once a relationship with your counterpart develops. However, no matter how much you value the recipient, very expensive and rare gifts may cause embarrassment to the recipient. It is common to exchange gifts on special occasions like birthdays, festivals, and so on.

Sensitive topics:

It is advisable to refrain from generalizing and passing value judgements on topics such as religion, politics, gender and culture.

BUSINESS RISKS

- As per the Global Corruption Index (GCI), India is ranked 102 with an overall classification as Medium risk.
- In 2017 India terminated all investment treaties, including the one with Switzerland, and adopted a new model of bilateral investment treaty (BIT). Negotiations between Switzerland and India on a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) are ongoing.
- It is advisable for Swiss companies to understand risks relevant to their particular sector and proposed business activity in India.

The CRC risk classification of India can be accessed at the following link

<https://www.serv-ch.com/coverpractice/list#>

Swiss Export Risk Insurance SERV insures political and *del credere* risks involved in exporting goods and services.

[Products for exporters](#)

[Product for service providers](#)

[Products for financial institutions](#)

The full range of services and products offered by SERV can be obtained at www.serv-ch.com.

Your contact person in Zurich

Verena Utzinger

Vice President, Acquisition
& Representation

Tel.: +41 58 551 5515

Email: verena.utzinger@serv-ch.com

Your contact person in Lausanne

Dominique Aubert

Senior Vice President, Acquisition
& Representation

Tel.: +41 21 613 35 84

Email: dominique.aubert@serv-ch.com

IMPORT OF SAMPLES AND CATALOGUES

ATA Carnet is an International Uniform Customs document which permits duty free temporary admission of goods without the need to submit a bond and follow customs formalities. This document is valid in member countries (including India and Switzerland) who are parties to the Customs convention on ATA carnet. In India, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) is entitled to issue ATA Carnets. It also provides a reciprocal guarantee pertaining to ATA carnets issued by associations of other countries for temporary import of goods into India, assuring the Indian Customs administration that duties and taxes in case of misuse will be paid by it.

Under the Indian Customs law, the goods imported into India under an ATA carnet are exempted from the whole of Custom duty and integrated goods and services tax (IGST)¹. The broad conditions to claim this exemption are as follows:

- Goods must be imported for display or demonstration, trade fairs, exhibitions, etc.
- Goods shall be imported under an ATA Carnet issued in accordance with the Customs Convention for temporary admission of goods and it should be guaranteed by FICCI;
- The said goods shall comply with all the specifications given in the ATA Carnet duly certified by the Customs authorities of the exporting country;
- Goods shall be re-exported within a period of 6 months from the date of importation.

In case of failure to export the goods within the specified time, FICCI and the importer should be jointly and severally liable to pay the applicable Customs duties on the date of import, along with interest. Further, Custom duty and IGST leviable on import of samples, advertising materials, price lists etc. are also specifically exempted under the Customs law². However, the said exemption can be subject to fulfillment of certain conditions and documentation requirements. A few relevant conditions are as follows:

- Import of commercial samples should not exceed INR 3 lakh in value or 50 units in number, within a period of 12 months. Further, the importer has to declare that the samples have been imported into India solely for the purpose of being shown in India for the guidance of exporters for securing or executing an export order;
- In case of bona fide commercial samples and prototypes, import value should not exceed INR 10,000.
- In case of prototypes of engineering goods being imported as a sample –
 - When the value does not exceed INR 10,000, they shall be rendered useless as merchandise by any suitable process, or otherwise, they should be re-exported within a period of 9 months of import or such extended period as may be allowed; and
 - When the value exceeds INR 10,000, it shall be re-exported within a period of 9 months of import or such extended period as may be allowed by the Assistant/Deputy Commissioner of Customs.

Additionally, commercial catalogues in book form are specifically exempted from Custom duty under the Customs law³.

¹ Notification No. 157/90-Customs dated 28 March 1990

² Notification No. 154/94-Customs dated 13 July 1994

³ Notification No. 50 /2017-Customs dated 30 June 2017

USEFUL LOCAL WEBSITES, ADDRESSES, EMAIL AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

	https://www.livemint.com/		
Business news	https://www.business-standard.com/		
	https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/		
	https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/		
Customs hotline	https://www.cbic.gov.in/htdocs-cbec/customs	180030101000	cccpdz-cbec@nic.in
Railways Booking	https://www.irctc.co.in	+91 755 661 06 61	care@irctc.co.in
Stock Market Watch	https://www.nseindia.com/	+91 22 688 823 45/46	now@nse.co.in
	https://www.bseindia.com/		corp.comm@bseindia.com
Hotel Booking	www.makemytrip.com		
	https://www.yatra.com	+91 124 289 87 47	
	https://www.trivago.in/		

ADDRESSES BILATERAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

- Swiss Indian Chamber of Commerce (SICC): <http://www.sicc.ch/>
- Confederation of Indian Industry (CII): <http://www.cii.in>
- Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI): <http://www.ficci.in/>
- Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM): <http://www.assochem.org>

ADDRESSES OF EMBASSY AND CONSULATES OF SWITZERLAND

Representation	Phone - Fax	Contacts
Embassy of Switzerland Nyaya Marg Chanakyapuri New Delhi 110021 INDIA	Phone: +41 58 4844 869 +91 11 4995 95 00 Fax: +91 11 4995 95 00	Email General: newdelhi@eda.admin.ch Email consular services: newdelhi.etatcivil@eda.admin.ch Email Visa: newdelhi.visa@eda.admin.ch Website http://www.eda.admin.ch/newdelhi
Consulate General of Switzerland 102 Maker Chambers IV, 10th floor 222, Jamnalal Bajaj Marg Nariman Point Mumbai 400 021 India	Phone: +91 22 2285 81 61	E-Mail General: mumbai@eda.admin.ch Email Civil status matters: mumbai.civilstatus@eda.admin.ch Website: http://www.eda.admin.ch/mumbai
Consulate General of Switzerland No. 26, Crescent Park Resthouse Crescent Road Bengaluru 560 001 India	Phone +91 80 4941 20 00	E-Mail bangalore@eda.admin.ch Website http://www.eda.admin.ch/bangalore

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Date	September 30, 2021
Author:	Switzerland Global Enterprise
Author's address:	Beat Ineichen Senior Consultant South Asia & Oceania bineichen@s-ge.com Direct: +41 44 365 54 35
	Bastien Bovy Consultant Export Starter, India, Middle East & Africa BBovy@s-ge.com Direct: +41 21 545 94 99