

moving day: settling into student accommodation at aelo swiss academy

The night before I moved into my room at AELO Swiss Academy, I sat on the floor of my bedroom at home, surrounded by three open suitcases and a decision I had been putting off for weeks: what actually comes with me, and what stays behind. Everything looked essential at midnight. Everything looked ridiculous at 6am when I had to lift the bags.



If you are gearing up for your own moving day, I can tell you the honest version now, a few weeks on the other side of it. The day itself is a blur of luggage, paperwork and unfamiliar corridors, but it is also the start of the part everyone forgets to prepare you for: turning a rented room with a bare desk into a place you actually want to come back to.

getting there with too much stuff

I flew in, then took the train from the airport. Two enormous suitcases, a backpack that could have qualified as cabin crew, and a duffel bag I carried mostly with resentment. Swiss trains are famously punctual, and I can confirm the reputation holds even when the passenger is sweating through a hoodie and blocking the doorway with 40 kilos of belongings.

A small tip that saved me: the trains have plenty of space near the doors for big luggage, and there are lifts at most stations. I had imagined dragging bags up marble staircases. Reality was much kinder. If you are arriving by train instead, the same logic applies. Pack so that you can physically manage your bags for about ten minutes unassisted, because there will be a moment when nobody is around to help.

The other thing nobody warned me about: Switzerland runs on its own plug type. My two pin chargers slotted in fine, but anything with a chunky earthed plug from home was useless without an adapter. I had one. My flatmate had none and spent his first two days charging his phone in the corridor kitchen.

checking in and the first look at the room

Check-in at AELO Swiss Academy was smoother than I expected. Keys or a key card, a quick walk through the paperwork, and then the part that actually matters long term: the room inventory. You sign off on the condition of the room when you arrive, and that same sheet comes back to bite or bless you when you leave and want your deposit returned.

Take photos. Take more photos than you think you need. Photograph the wall with the scuff, the blind with the bent slat, the inside of the wardrobe, the bathroom if you have one. I spent ten minutes doing this on day one and it cost me nothing. A friend at another residence skipped it, and at move-out he was in a slow email argument about a mark on a desk that may or may not have predated him. Photographs end that argument in seconds.

The room itself was smaller than the photos suggested, which is apparently a universal law of student housing. But smaller is not worse. Swiss rooms tend to be compact and efficient, and once I stopped seeing small and started seeing everything within four steps of everything else, I came around. Bed, desk, wardrobe, a window with a view of actual mountains. I would take that over a cavernous room facing a car park.

One practical thing: measure before you buy anything. I nearly ordered a desk lamp and a shelf unit online before I had the measurements written down. The shelf would not have fit. The lamp would have lit the room like an interrogation. Patience for 48 hours saved me both mistakes.

what I packed versus what I actually needed

I overpacked. Everyone overpacks. The clothes I brought filled two thirds of my suitcase and about one quarter of my wardrobe, and the books I brought for "free evenings" went unread for three weeks because free evenings do not look the way you imagine during move-in week.

Here is the short list of things that earned their luggage space, in case it helps you make your own cut:

- A power adapter, plus a small power strip so one adapter covers everything
- Photos from home, printed, not just on my phone
- One soft thing from my bedroom at home, mine was a blanket, because beds elsewhere feel wrong for the first week
- Toiletries and a towel for the first 48 hours so I was not shopping on day one in a jet lagged haze
- Flip flops for shared showers, which I nearly left behind and used within an hour of arriving

Everything else, from extra stationery to my "just in case" kitchen gadgets, could have been bought locally or left home entirely. Supermarkets here cover the basics, and anything you forgot is an excuse for a walk and a look around your new neighbourhood anyway.

the first supermarket run

About two hours after unpacking, hunger arrived and I discovered the real rite of passage: the first shop. I walked to the nearest supermarket with no list and no idea of prices, and I learned quickly that grocery costs in Switzerland run higher than what I was used to. The budgeting advice I got before arriving turned out to be true, so I adjusted fast.

The trick most students here settle into is mixing the big chains with the cheaper ones. Do the main shop where the selection is good, then pick up drinks and snacks at the discounters and you will feel noticeably less pain at the till. Also, keep an eye out for the reduced stickers on bread and dairy in the evening. Living near a supermarket that discounts before closing is an underrated form of wealth.

My first basket was a comedy of errors: too much frozen food for a freezer the size of a shoebox, a knife set I did not need because the shared kitchen had knives, and a spice rack worth of jars when two would have done. By the second week I shopped like a person who actually lives somewhere. It happens fast.



meeting people, or the art of the open door

Move-in week is the one time in adult life when talking to strangers is completely normal. Everyone is new. Everyone is slightly lost. Everyone is standing in the corridor kitchen https://www.reddit.com/r/flyingeurope/comments/1nnhrnv/anyone_from_aelo_swiss_any_advice/ at the same time wondering how the oven works.

The corridor kitchen is where everything happens. I met my first proper friend because she was boiling pasta and I was staring at an induction hob like it was alien technology, and she showed me the setting and I helped her carry plates and that was that. Language-wise, people switch between English, German, French and whatever else walks in the door, and English carries most of the load, at least at the start.

My one piece of advice here is embarrassingly simple: leave your door open when you are in and doing nothing private. It sounds like a cliché from an orientation leaflet, but it works. Three separate people poked their heads in during my first evening and two of them are people I now eat dinner with. The closed door invites nothing. [flight training](#) The open door invites everything.

the first night, and the strange quiet

The first night is the one I was least prepared for. The bed felt wrong, the ceiling was in a different place than the ceiling at home, and the building made sounds I could not identify. Homesickness does not announce itself politely. It just shows up around 10pm and sits on your chest.

Two things helped. First, I called home, had a ten minute chat, and did not stretch it into an hour of wallowing. Second, I unpacked completely before sleeping, even though I was exhausted. Living out of a suitcase keeps a room feeling temporary. Unpacking everything, even the silly stuff, sends your brain a signal that this is where you live now.

Also worth knowing: most Swiss residential buildings have quiet hours, usually overnight and sometimes around lunch, and noise on Sundays is a sensitive topic. My first week, I hoovered on a Sunday morning and received a

gentle education on this from a neighbour. Gentle but firm. Learn the rhythm early and you will never be the person everyone talks about in the corridor kitchen.

making the room yours without spending much

A bare student room is functional and cold in equal measure. You do not need to spend much to fix the cold part. I gave myself a small budget, roughly the price of a takeaway dinner or two, and it went a long way.

What actually changed the room: printed photos taped above the desk, a cheap plant from the supermarket that I have somehow kept alive, a soft throw over the grey institutional duvet, and moving the desk to face the window instead of the wall. That last one was free and mattered most. Looking at mountains while studying beats looking at plasterboard.

One Swiss specific note on bedding: the standard single duvet size here is around 160 by 210 centimetres, which is longer than some duvets sold elsewhere. If you are bringing bedding from home, check the sizes first, or just buy locally and skip the guesswork. The residence gave me exact details before arrival, which made the decision easy.

the things I would do differently

A few weeks in, I have a clear list of what I would repeat and what I would change. If I got a do-over on moving day at AELO Swiss Academy, this is what I would tell myself:

- Photograph every wall and surface during check-in, before unpacking anything
- Measure the room before ordering furniture or lamps online
- Say yes to the first corridor kitchen invitation, even if you are tired
- Work out the laundry room booking system in week one, not in week three when you own no clean socks
- Keep a small emergency snack stash in your room for late arrivals and closed shops

That last one sounds trivial until your train gets delayed and you get home at 10:30pm to a locked kitchen and a stomach making demands. Learned that one the hard way.

learning the rhythm of the place

The shared laundry room deserves its own paragraph, because it is a genuinely Swiss experience. Machines are booked in slots, they are efficient, and they run to a schedule you plan around rather than the other way round. My first attempt, I turned up at a random time and found every machine taken. Now I book Sunday mornings and fold clothes while drinking coffee in the common room, and honestly it has become one of the nicer rituals of the week.

The wider rhythm of life here took about a fortnight to sink in. Shops close earlier than I expected. Sundays are quiet in a way that feels strange for about a week and then feels wonderful. Recycling is taken seriously, PET bottles go back to the shops, and in many places you pay for official rubbish bags, which is a surprisingly effective incentive to produce less waste. None of this is hard. It is just different, and different feels like friction until it suddenly feels like normal, and then it just feels like home.

a few weeks later

Writing this from a desk I have now personalised, with a plant still alive and a corridor of people I know by name, the thing that strikes me most is how fast the room stopped being temporary. Moving day felt like the event. It was not. Moving day was just the door, and everything that made this feel like mine happened in the small days afterwards: the first shop, the first dinner with flatmates, the first Sunday when the quiet stopped being lonely.

If you are about to do this yourself, my honest summary is this. Pack less than you think, photograph more than you think, unpack on the first night, and keep your door open. The rest sorts itself out faster than you would believe.