

Information Visitor's Tax Adjustment

The communities of Goms and Obergoms have decided to apply the visitor's tax provisions homologated in 2016 by the Canton of Valais as from 1 November 2017. This leads to various adjustments. The information event held on 2 September 2017 served to spread the below information.

WHAT IS THE VISITOR'S TAX?

The funds gained through visitor's tax are tax payments. In its Chapter 4, Article 17, the cantonal Tourism Act defines the scope within which visitor's tax may be applied to who and on which base.

4. Chapter: Finance 1. Visitor's Tax

Art. 17 Scope

- 1 Visitor's tax is charged to those visitors who spend the night in the territory of an approved tourist office.
- 2 Said tax is collected on base of homologated rules approved by the community meeting or the general council. The affected districts are consulted in advance. In particular, these rules define the visitor's tax's amount, exemption scenarios and possible discounts, the collection procedure and what the tax will be used for.

Article 18 defines who is or might be exempted from the obligation of paying visitor's tax:

Art. 18 Exemption

- 1 Exempted from having to pay visitor's tax are:
 - a) all residents of the community subject to visitor's tax. In general, "residence" shall be defined by the respective term in the Swiss Civil Code.
 - b) all those individuals visiting a family member exempted from having to pay visitor's tax. "Family members" shall be individuals in (grand-)parental relationships as well as their spouses.
 - c) respective children younger than six years; children aged between six and sixteen years shall have to pay 50% of the said tax.
 - d) apprentices as well as school and college/university students attending schools approved and sponsored by the Canton of Valais outside the school holidays.
 - e) (resident) patients of hospitals, retirement homes, special-care homes and asylums approved by the Canton of Valais.
 - f) military and civil protection personnel, firefighters, and individuals providing similar services (as long as they are on active duty).

The state council as well as the communities are entitled to define further exemption scenarios.

WHAT IS THE BASE FOR COLLECTION SAID TAX?

Article 19 explains how the visitor's tax rate is defined. Consequently, the visitor's tax to be charged is not subject to arbitrary definition. Both, respective communities as well as tourist associations will have to observe the legal requirements.

Art. 19 Rate

- 1 The rate of the visitor's tax accounts for the holiday location's facilities as well as the type and geographical situation of accommodation. It may vary, depending on the season.
- 2 The visitor's tax rate is calculated on base of the costs caused by the services, which said tax is possibly used for according to Article 22.

WHAT IS THE TAX USED FOR?

Article 22 details the possible uses of the visitor's tax collected. In detail, Article 22 reads as follows:

Art. 22 Use

- 1 The revenues from visitor's tax shall be used in the interest of those subjected to it.
- 2 In particular, such revenues shall be used to finance:
 - a) the provision of information and booking services;
 - b) local animation;
 - c) the provision and operation of facilities that serve tourism, culture, and sports.

This shows that the visitor's tax must not be used for just anything. It is within the municipal council's responsibility to ensure the above Article is being complied with.

WHAT WILL CHANGE WHEN THE NEW RULES ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED?

By 1 November 2017, the visitor's tax rate will generally be set to CHF 3,-. Children below 16 years of age will pay 50%. Children younger than 6 years are not subject to the visitor's tax.

	Adults	Children 6-16 years	Children younger than 6 years	Collection Mode
a) Hotels	CHF 3,00	CHF 1,50	free	actual
b) Holiday apartments	CHF 3,00	CHF 1,50	free	flat rate
c) Alpine huts	CHF 3,00	CHF 1,50	free	flat rate
d) Group accommodation	CHF 3,00	CHF 1,50	free	actual
e) Camping	CHF 3,00	CHF 1,50	free	actual

Moreover, the new municipal visitor's tax rules define that up from 1 November 2017, each apartment / chalet shall charge said tax no base of a flat rate. This shall depend on the question, if the property is used by the owner, let by the owner or left to friends. As a new rule, the size of the property shall be relevant. The rules provide for three different property sizes:

up to and including 2 ½-room apartments	CHF 342,00
3- and 3 ½-room apartments	CHF 684,00
apartments of 4 and more rooms	CHF 855,00

HOW WHERE THE BASICS FOR THE NEW FLAT RATE-VISITOR'S TAX CALCULATED?

When these rules were being elaborated, it was first of necessary to determine how much property of each size "exists". Diligently, all parameters were gathered to define the calculation base for the new visitor's tax.

The let property included with the visitor's tax invoicing system of Obergoms Tourism served as basis to calculate the number of account days. The result showed that the property offered on average was let for 57 nights per year. In order to calculate the visitor's tax payable per night, the individual touristic services were included.

HOW WILL I - AS OWNER OF A HOLIDAY APARTMENT - HAVE TO PAY MY VISITOR'S TAX IN THE FUTURE?

In the future, the visitor's tax will generally be invoiced once a year (in late November, early December). Just like so far, the communities of Goms and Obergoms have assigned Obergoms Tourismus AG with this task. By paying the annual invoice, all visitor's tax will be paid. The communities of Goms and Obergoms or Obergoms Tourismus AG will not do any further collection. Please note that the tourism development tax will keep falling due for possible lettings.

ARE OWNERS ENTITLED TO ASK VISITOR'S TAX FROM THEIR GUESTS/FRIENDS?

Under the above generalization, owners will pay the visitor's tax for their property once a year. If they let their property to guests or leave it to friends, they are entitled to ask them to pay the applicable visitor's tax rates. The respective owner is entitled to command these revenues.

WHAT CHANGES WILL LEASERS/GUESTS IN HOLIDAY APARTMENTS FACE?

Basically, really not many. They are still entitled to get temporary guest cards (for their holidays) from Obergoms Tourism. They will only not have to pay the visitor's tax themselves anymore since this is already paid by the owner of their holiday apartment. Visitor's tax is thus charged to the owners directly.

GUEST CARD "EXPLORER'S PASS"

With the implementation of the new municipal visitor's tax rules, the region of Obergoms will also launch its new guest card "Explorer's Pass". It is individual and non-transferrable. In the first place, the respective lessors will hand the guest card over. Using the respective registrations, destination system Deskline will prepare and issue the guest cards. Corresponding printables can be ordered from Obergoms Tourismus AG up from October 2017.

Each guest card contains the below information: Name, first name and birthdate. All individuals registered with us who have already paid an annual flat-rate visitor's tax by now will get the guest card along with their invoice. Please note that you will have to inform Obergoms Tourismus AG about respective names - otherwise annual cards cannot be issued. However, additional cards can also be printed out at home by respective owners. The individual access data required to create guest cards independently online will still be sent out by mail. The respective paper printables will also be available at training events in October or at the tourism office's counter. Invitations for such training events will be mailed in September.

Except for the interesting services offered in the entire Brig/Aletsch/Goms region, the new guest card "Explorer's Pass" also provides some exclusive offers for overnight tourists in the Obergoms region.

MY APARTMENT IS LONG-TERM LET. DO I STILL HAVE TO PAY THE FLAT RATE?

Decisive is the question as to who the apartment is let to.

1. If the apartment is let to an individual who is registered and taxpayer in the municipality of Goms or Obergoms, the apartment is automatically declared as primary residence and thus not subject to visitor's tax.
2. If the apartment is long-term let to an individual who is not registered and taxpayer in the municipality of Goms or Obergoms, the apartment is subject to visitor's tax. A respective invoice is being issued and the lessor hands the guest card over to the tenant.



I DISAGREE WITH THE SIZE OF MY APARTMENT. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

It can happen that the size of your apartment is defined incorrectly. In the first place, this is due to the fact that we refer to the information provided in the land register record while the apartment has actually been rebuilt over the years. If you disagree with your category of apartment size, please contact the responsible community and submit all documents required within the respective objection period. Your case will then be revised by the municipal authorities. In case of doubt, they will make an appointment with you to inspect the apartment in question on site. As soon as your case has been resolved, the municipal authority in charge will provide Obergoms Tourismus AG with a report. Depending on the authority's decision, your invoice will be adjusted accordingly.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT TAX

The tourism development tax is not subject to any changes regarding the municipal rules.

VISITOR'S TAX IN SUMMER 2017

Until late October 2017, it will be charged as previously. Please inform us by mail on your overnight stays subject to visitor's tax until 31 October 2017. You will receive the retroactive invoice by the end of the year.

YOUR HOLIDAY APARTMENT'S CLASSIFICATION

According to the Swiss Tourism Association (STV), all holiday apartments already classified are to be re-classified in 2017. The current classifications and the respective number of stars awarded will become invalid at the end of 2017. There are no now periods, and the classifications will remain valid for a term of four years as from the classification date (to the end of each month). Obergoms Tourism will gladly classify the registered apartments.

NEW ONLINE SURVEY MADE BY VALAIS TOURISM OBSERVATORY WTO

Tourism in Valais is facing many challenges. Changes regarding the environmental policy, as required by LEX Weber or the Land Use Planning Act, force the destinations to elaborate strategies on how to make the building sector optimize the existing property pool. In context to these changes, secondary residences are a major issue, and knowhow regarding their impact, function, and the respective owners' expectations is crucial. Cooperating with the VSV2W (Valais Secondary Residence Association) and owner associations, the Valais Tourism Observatory WTO has prepared an online survey to gain more insight in the opinion and intent of those who own a secondary residence here. Please spare a few minutes of your time for this:

<http://bit.ly/2voqfUo>