



How Can US Clients Be Onboarded Remotely with a Swiss Bank Through an SEC-Registered Advisor?

For US-based investors evaluating Switzerland as part of a broader wealth strategy, remote onboarding has become a practical starting point. While opening and maintaining a Swiss bank relationship involves regulatory, tax, and documentation requirements, many steps can now be completed digitally when coordinated through an SEC-registered investment advisor. Importantly, for US clients, holding assets at a Swiss bank is typically only possible through a collaboration with a Swiss-based advisor that is registered with the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). This framework is designed to align Swiss custody with US regulatory requirements from the outset.

What does remote onboarding with a Swiss bank typically involve?

Remote onboarding is structured to meet both Swiss banking standards and US compliance requirements.

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FINMA-licensed as a portfolio manager in Switzerland

SEC-registered as an investment advisor in the United States





In practice, the process may include:

- secure digital document exchange
- identity verification face-to-face
- completion of US tax documentation (e.g., W-9)
- disclosure of source of funds and wealth
- suitability and risk-profile assessments

Swiss banks maintain detailed onboarding procedures, and coordination through an SEC-registered advisor helps ensure that documentation and disclosures are aligned with US regulatory expectations. Each onboarding case remains subject to the bank's internal review and approval.

How does Alpen support US client onboarding in practice?

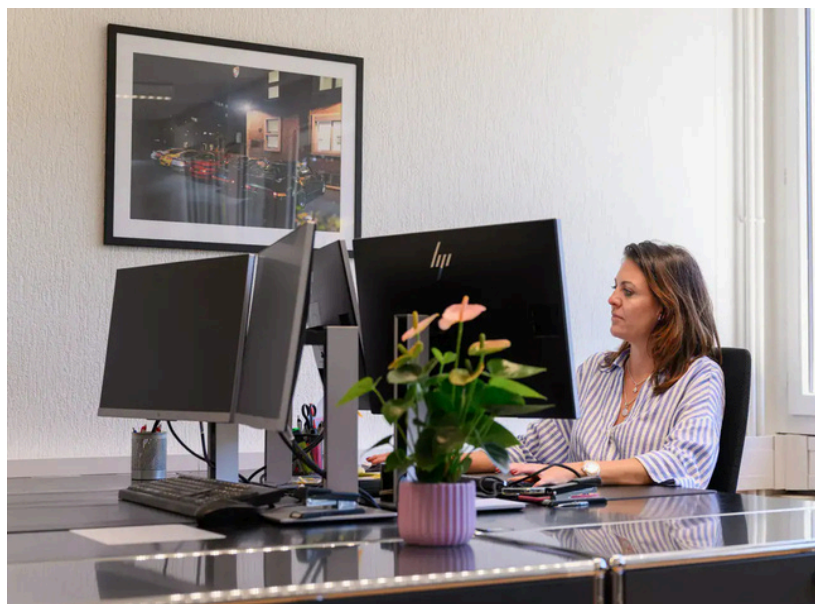
Alpen's Private Clients Services team is experienced in onboarding US clients both domiciled in the United States and living internationally. The team works closely with clients to coordinate documentation, facilitate communication with Swiss custodian banks, and guide them through each step of the onboarding process. This includes managing timelines, clarifying regulatory requirements, and ensuring that information is prepared in accordance with both Swiss banking standards and US reporting expectations. For clients navigating cross-border considerations, this structured support can help streamline what is often a detailed and multi-step process.

Why is an SEC-registered Swiss advisor required for US clients?

For US persons, Swiss banking relationships are typically accessed through advisors registered with the US Securities and Exchange Commission as investment advisors. This structure reflects cross-border regulatory requirements and operational realities.

An SEC-registered Swiss advisor generally:

- acts as the regulated point of contact for US clients
- coordinates onboarding with the Swiss custodian bank
- ensures alignment with US regulatory and reporting frameworks
- supports portfolio management under fiduciary obligations
- provides ongoing cross-border advisory continuity



This collaborative model allows Swiss banks to serve US clients within a defined and compliant framework.



What compliance considerations should US clients expect?

US clients remain subject to global tax and reporting obligations regardless of asset location. Remote onboarding therefore includes attention to:

- FATCA compliance and disclosure
- FBAR and other foreign account reporting
- consistency with US tax filings
- cross-border suitability and documentation standards

Swiss institutions participating in international transparency frameworks structure onboarding processes accordingly. Clients are typically encouraged to coordinate with their tax advisors to ensure alignment across jurisdictions.

Can the entire process be completed without visiting Switzerland?

In many cases, onboarding can be completed remotely through secure digital processes. However, depending on the bank and individual circumstances, practices may vary.

Some clients later choose to visit Switzerland to:

- meet advisory and banking teams
- review custody arrangements
- gain familiarity with the jurisdiction

While not always required, an in-person visit can complement remote onboarding by providing additional context and confidence in the relationship.





Frequently Asked Questions

Is it possible for US clients to open a Swiss bank account independently?

In most cases, US clients access Swiss banking relationships through SEC-registered Swiss advisors.

Does the advisor hold the assets?

No. Assets are held at the Swiss custodian bank; the advisor manages and advises on the portfolio.

Are US tax obligations affected by holding assets in Switzerland?

No. US persons generally remain subject to US taxation and reporting on worldwide assets.

Is remote onboarding always accepted?

It depends on the bank and client profile; final approval rests with the bank.

Summary

Remote onboarding has made it more accessible for US clients to establish Swiss banking relationships within a structured and compliant framework. The collaboration between Swiss custodian banks and SEC-registered Swiss advisors is central to this process, ensuring that cross-border regulatory requirements are addressed from the outset. With additional support from experienced Private Clients Services teams, the onboarding process can be coordinated efficiently while maintaining the necessary regulatory rigor. For internationally active investors, this approach represents a structured entry point into Swiss-based wealth management.

About the Author

Alpen Partners International is an independent Swiss-based financial advisor and global wealth planner, registered with the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) as an investment advisor. Alpen advises US and internationally active clients on cross-border wealth planning, Swiss custody solutions, and multi-currency portfolio strategies in coordination with legal and tax professionals within applicable regulatory frameworks. In addition to traditional wealth management services, Alpen also provides guidance on citizenship and residence planning, particularly where holding assets abroad may be part of a broader relocation or international lifestyle strategy.

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