



Marissa

from Burlington
& Burlington Lakeshore

to

Switzerland

Learning German has been an interesting experience for me.

My exchange in Switzerland so far has been a huge learning experience. It has been so amazingly interesting to see the history of this country, since it is easy to go see buildings that are hundreds of years old. My understanding of history and culture in Europe has greatly increased. Naturally I've encountered challenges in learning different customs, especially ones that go unspoken. For example, Swiss people are very against food waste (as am I), but also never seem to take the last of a communal dish, whether that be the last piece of pizza, the last handful of chips, or even the last bit of water. To me, this is an interesting paradox that I am learning how to navigate.

Also, of course, the Swiss are very passionate about their language, especially here in Valais/Wallis. This canton has a very special dialect, known to be distinct from any other dialect of Swiss German, of which each canton or even smaller areas within cantons have their own way of speaking. This presents a challenge for me as I have to often request people to speak in High German, which can sometimes make people uncomfortable speaking in a way they normally wouldn't outside of school, work or other professional spaces.

Learning German has been an interesting experience for me. A few days after arriving, I spent a week in Fiesch for an intensive German course with all other RYE students in Switzerland. I feel I made a lot of progress there, especially in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Now we are working with tutors from Flying Teachers in weekly lessons, which I am also finding quite helpful as it is easy to ask for help when I need it and easily get clarification on things I don't completely understand.

I am very fortunate to be living in a place so full of history. I have been able to visit several castles, former Roman settlements, and history and art museums featuring items often several hundred years old. The most breathtaking event, however, was trekking on the Great Aletsch Glacier. It was an enlightening experience. While I could very easily marvel at the sheer size and wonder of the landform, it was also a somewhat somber day, as I could see with my own eyes how quickly it is disappearing. It is baffling to think how what I did only a month or so ago will not be possible in mere decades.

Below are some of my favourite photos so far:

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