



Paige
from
Burlington
&
Burlington North
to
Switzerland

“Why struggle in biology when you can struggle to explain your weekend”

Exchange is a strange yet amazing experience, and strange in the best way possible. One moment, you understand everything without difficulty, and then the next moment, you struggle with telling your friends what happened to you over the weekend. This has been my experience on exchange over the past 3 months. From seeing even more of Switzerland to yet another hospital visit, I hope I can give you a small glimpse into what my life has been like here over the past couple of months.

March



March was a very eventful month, to say the least. From changing to my second host family to having my birthday, a Rotary meeting, it was a lot. I ended up changing to my second host family in March, which so far has been great. Now I live in Montreux, and the city is truly gorgeous. I still go to school in Lausanne. Montreux is a great blend of having the big city amenities while still being able to feel personal in a way. Seeing palm trees on my way to school will never be normal, especially in a country like Switzerland, and seeing houses and buildings that remind me of the south of France.

My birthday had also been in March with my second host family, which was nice. I ended up going to a Rotary meeting on my birthday, and I got many good wishes from my club, which was nice. After my Rotary meeting, I celebrated my birthday later that night and I am very grateful for all of the gifts and well wishes from everyone in Switzerland and Canada.

April

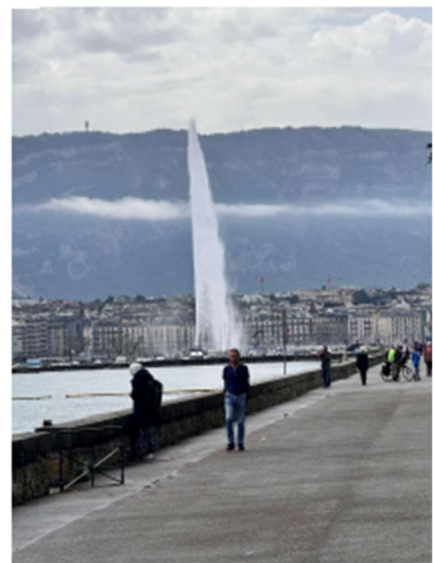
April was equally as crazy as March (I have never not been occupied here). In April, I spent a lot of my time off from school because we started the month of April with a semaine speciale, where for everyone in the first year gymnase went all over western Switzerland with our classes to also learn more about our concetrations which was a great experience, minus a twisted ankle when we went to a trampoline park.



Right after our semaine special we had 2 weeks off from school for Vacances de Pâques (Easter). I spent the week primarily relaxing and meeting up with friends and an exchange student when I could. During my vacation, I went to Luna Park in Lausanne, which is essentially a massive fair. I went with friends from my class, and it was a lot of fun, minus one ride that gave me a sore neck for 3 days. The break was a very nice break from school and a good one for my foot to heal properly.

May

So far in May, I do not have much to talk about because it has been so little time. School is starting to ramp up more because all of the teachers need to get in their final grades soon. For my classmates, that means the end of school and the start of summer break, but for me means the beginning of the end. It has been a weird mix of emotions, but I have been trying my best to take it in stride as I go. Right at the start of May, I went to Geneva with 2 other exchange students. It was nice to walk around and catch up with them. The one not-so-great thing was the fact that the weather was completely crazy. One minute it was sunny and then cloudy, and then one minute after that, it started pouring rain, and I've never seen that many people run to get under things before.



School

School has been good, and everything is starting to speed up as teachers try to finish their plans before we have to start exams. My class hasn't been stressing out about that (yet) because we finished something called the semaine spéciale. It happens in all of the gymnases in Canton Vaud, and it is a week where you go to a bunch of different places in Switzerland (for the first years). On Monday, we went to Geneva, where we did a quiz room, and the questions were based on general knowledge, with some being more French-speaking specific, and my partner ended up winning the entire thing, which I am very happy about. We ate lunch, and in the afternoon, we went to the University of Geneva, where we learnt about how pharmacists choose what medication for a certain disease/infection. On Tuesday, we went to a grotto in Vallorbe, which is nearly in France, and it was very pretty, though a lot of walking.



In the afternoon, we went to a trampoline park where I was having a lot of fun until I sprained my ankle. I am pleased that it is only a sprain and that I only have a soft brace, but I did end up missing Wednesday because of it. On Thursday, we went to Bern, where we did a scavenger hunt of locations in Bern. We had to film a video in German at each location (not scary at all when you're the only person in your class who has never studied it), and we went to the communication museum. On Friday, we played board games in the morning, which was nice to do after all of the walking. We ate pizza and went to a laser gun place in the afternoon, which was a great way to end the week.



Rotex

Concerning Rotex and Rotary in general, we just had our last weekend (which this time was only a day). We ended up going to a chocolate factory called Camille Bloch, where the chocolate was really good but also very crunchy. A playground was just behind the factory, which was nice to share with everyone. Once we finished there, there was an optional trip to go to Bienne and see the lake, which is stunning, like many of the lakes in Switzerland, which I did. It was nice and sunny, and certain people even went swimming (not me). Now, our last event for August inbound is our debriefing and eurotour, which is putting how much time I have left into perspective.

Wrap up

I seriously believe that a year ago, I was in Canada learning about Switzerland and their cultures and languages (yes, plural), being so antsy to leave and yet still being terrified of whatever Switzerland held for me to be in the last 70 days of my exchange. Habits that seemed completely foreign to me at the start of my exchange are now second nature, from asking everyone *ca va* in the morning and eating *gouter* before dinner, and absolutely nothing being open on Sundays. I



went from someone who could speak English and “speak” French to now (nearly) being English-French bilingual and can speak Italian (which involves me reading this over many times to make sure I didn't start writing in French). There are so many high moments on exchange, like when, for the first time, you don't have to translate in your head, and every low that comes with this experience. I want to say thank everyone in Canada who has supported me over these last 9 months, my family, friends and District 7080. Thank you to everyone in Switzerland who has supported me throughout these 9 months. I want to end my BeaverTale by adding this quote that I believe sums up my experience on exchange.

“You will never be completely at home again because a part of your heart will always be elsewhere. That is the price you pay for the richness of loving and knowing people in more than one place.”

Bisous,

Paige