



**Paige**  
from  
**Burlington**  
&  
**Burlington North**  
to  
**Switzerland**

*“Time is Already Flying”*



On August 5th, 2024, I took off from Toronto to Montreal and then to Geneva, Switzerland, my home for the next year. I landed after a very long day, including changing my flight time at the last minute and losing one of my bags (air tags are your best friend here).

These last three months have been crazy. From seeing the Aletsch Glacier to the language camp, starting school, and already learning more about Switzerland's history, I have been busy, to say the least.

**August**

I arrived in August at the Geneva Airport, exhausted but ready to take on this new adventure. I was very quickly recognized as an exchange student from my bright red blazer, and someone helped me with my bags until I could find my host family (who recognized me from the blazer). We quickly left the airport, and I got acquainted with my new home and family for a year. I live in this small village where everyone seems to know everyone with 1000 people. My school is in the capital of my Canton, a town called Lausanne, a very big city.

Right after I got adjusted in Switzerland, I was sent off to my neighbouring canton Valais for a week-long intensive language camp for French. Being the Canadian of the group, there were certain expectations for my level of French, and I did not meet all of them and I made some dumb mistakes. Many times I was asked why don't you speak French already? Are you even Canadian? At the end of the week, the exchange students that were there all formed a very close bond that I will hold close to me.

During that week, we had many language lessons and also took an excursion to the Aletsch glacier, one of the biggest in Europe. Now, I have started taking online French lessons to prepare for my A2 French test.



January.

### School

Right after I finished the language camp, I started school at the same time as my host brother was heading off to his year in the United States. My school is in Lausanne, the 4th biggest city in Switzerland and the capital of my Canton, Vaud. All of my teachers have been very understanding of my French level, even though for many this is their first experience with an exchange student (from any program or anywhere) and I have tried my best to explain.

I am in the biology and chemistry concentration at my school which has proved to be a challenge, especially with all of the new science vocabulary and the high expectations of the Swiss education system. Many people have also been welcoming even if the language is a significant barrier sometimes (hand signals are great here). Many of the stereotypes that I held about Swiss people were shattered during this month, including the stereotype of being cold and closed-off. I have been welcomed into my school, even if there is some confusion sometimes. In my English class, my work has been a mix of just giving my classmates time to practice speaking or being around a native speaker. The second part is my English teacher allowing me to self-study French which has been a massive aid in my French.





## September

In September I spent a lot of time with the other exchange students in the French region of Switzerland and the whole country of Switzerland. One weekend, I went to a neighbouring city called Bulle to meet with all of the French exchange students. We went to a thermal spring with an amazing view of the Alps though I do not have any photos due to a no-phone rule. We also had gruyere cheese which is a swiss cheese brand and it was very good.

I also went to a neighbouring city called Yverdon les Bains where I went to a nature conservatory with my host family. The next weekend after that, I had a Rotex weekend with Switzerland and their Rotex organisation. We spent one day in a city called Altdorf which has a deep-rooted history to Switzerland's foundation. There was this man called Wilhelm Tell and there is a legend in Switzerland saying that he stood up to a tyrannical government and killed the leader of the tyrannical government. We went around the town and learned more about the legend of him.



We spent the night in a cabin and there were plenty of things that we could do. The next day, we went to a town called Stans and did a photo challenge where we learned even more about Switzerland and the Canton that we were in.



## October

In October, I was very busy and started a new activity. I joined a local volleyball club and have been going once a week and just using it as a way to keep myself busy and meet more people, which has been successful so far. In Switzerland, there is also a carnival called the KNIE and it was a crazy experience. I unfortunately do not have many photos of the actual thing because it was very impressive to watch. I do have some photos of a local Swiss band called Pegasus. After that, I had my vacation (autumn vacation) and I went to a

smaller island in Spain called Mallorca. By the end of the month, it was Halloween which was celebrated similarly to Canadian Halloween. There were around 50 kids that came to my host house. There was also free soup in my town's center, and I felt very welcomed in my town, especially after Halloween. It is strange how sometimes people don't know whether or not to speak English or French with me.



## November

In what little part of November that has been completed, I have kept myself busy. One weekend I went to the Charlie Chaplin Museum. Charlie Chaplin was a British comedian, but he lived in Switzerland from around 1950 to his death, not very far from where I live in Switzerland right now. They had many of his films playing and I learned many fun facts about him that I did not know before.



School is also starting to feel more real, and the routine of daily life is starting to set in for me. School is still a massive challenge for me, but it is getting easier every day, especially with language.

## Language

Before I started writing my beaver tale, I read previous Beaver tales and noticed that many highlight the positives of exchange. There are many highlights, but I want to talk about some of the harder parts of exchange that can hopefully give a future exchange student some insight into an exchange year. The first glaring problem is language, even if you have learned the language before, like I have with French. There is a large difference between having the class every day for an hour to only hearing that language. I have been given many opportunities to practice my French and I use all of them to the maximum. That is one thing that is important about exchange, using every opportunity to its fullest. Another issue is the dialects of French, especially present in Switzerland. Many words are unique to Swiss French or sub-dialects of French including Linge=towel (serviette in France French). The counting system after 60 is also unique (70 becomes septante, 80 becomes huitante and 90 becomes nonante)

I can not believe that it has already been three months and nearly 100 days since I arrived. The time is already flying by, and I know that it's only going to start flying quicker the longer my exchange lasts. I hope that any future or hopeful exchange students are able to read this and be more excited for their exchange or give them the push to apply to the program because it is truly life changing.

Adieu et Bisous,

Paige